

Virtue Reality: Axiology and Imagination in the English Renaissance

By

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*To my nephew, Christopher*

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## PREFACE

If we let slip a yawn at the mere mention of virtual reality, cyberspace, and embodied virtuality, or roll our eyes at the naming of telepresence, teletopia, and electronic cloning, it is because something has been missed in the headlong rush to exit the common-or-garden experience of everyday life for the apparent wonderment of the latest technologies.

—David B. Clarke<sup>1</sup>

Before turning to this project's early modern focus, I should address some points raised by Clarke's observation. Clarke made this claim in 1999, when people like N. Katherine Hayles and Henry Jenkins were working passionately to establish disciplinary grounds for intellectual discussion of things like "cyberspace" and "embodied reality." By any measure, they succeeded: in the intervening years, we have seen the rise of new media studies and videogame criticism, to say nothing of the boundless philosophical and critical literature on "virtual reality." Even so, the general attitude described by Clarke seems to have changed little since 1999. Given disciplinary confusion created by the rise of the digital humanities, some today may find these questions even more exasperating than they did twenty years ago. I want to push against this resistance, but I also want to acknowledge that deadening sensation we may feel as we approach these rusted trinkets. The virtual has become at once too-real and all-too-familiar: we are all wearily aware of the presence of virtual things in our lives, so we greet such newness with "apparent wonderment." These terms and concepts rest on a conceptual horizon that lies at the boundary between that which we can envision, something like a "practical" future, and this thing we already know—a theoretical future that resides in the past. Technological futurity seems then to furnish an archaizing effect, that impulse to look back or *turn away* when faced with contraptions

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<sup>1</sup> See "Virtual Worlds: Simulation, Suppletion, S(ed)uction and Simulacra."

that propel us by design to a time yet to come.

Undoubtedly, this impulse is what sent me exploring for virtuality in pre-modern archives. What I discovered, on the one hand, was exciting but fairly obvious: during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a range of thinkers across Europe developed both exotic devices and exotic theories of reality and selfhood that do indeed smell and taste like “telepresence, teletopia, and electronic cloning.” These conceptual linkages did not surprise me, since my suspicions regarding the existence of an early modern “pre-history” of the virtual had already been intimated by a number of critics. Nor was I surprised to encounter the view that “virtuality,” or something like it, has always been present; indeed, as Elizabeth Grosz claims, “We did not have to wait for the computer screen or movie projector in order to enter virtual space; we have living in its shadow more or less continually” (79).<sup>2</sup> I *was* surprised, however, by precisely that which ought to have been most obvious: that these fanciful theories required me to turn not to the “apparent wonderment” of technological or scientific progress, but to “the common-or-garden experience of everyday life” from which rather mundane questions regarding the nature of the real and the possible emerge.

The title of this project, as well as the project it describes, asks that we linger for a moment in this uncannily pedestrian terrain. *Virtue Reality: Axiology and Imagination in the English Renaissance* enters this terrain, most obviously, by dredging up a pun that insinuates an etymological and conceptual link between “virtue” and a theoretical “virtual” vis-à-vis the juxtaposition of the former term with “reality.” In linking “virtue” with “reality,” this project asks that we consider the existence of realities erected through *the effective force of virtue*, or

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<sup>2</sup> See “Cyberspace, Virtuality, and the Real” in *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. MIT Press, 2001.

that radiant potency that obtains as my imaginative capacities merge with my intentions. I want ultimately to pursue the question of how one makes manifest in the real that which is latent as possibility, that which is potential but not yet present—but *ought to be*.

## INTRODUCTION: THE VIRTUE EFFECT

No doubt the inventor of the phonograph had to study the properties of sound, which is a reality. But his invention was superadded to that reality as a thing absolutely new, which might never have been produced had he not existed. Thus a truth, if it is to endure, should have its root in realities; but these realities are only the ground in which that truth grows, and other flowers could just as well have grown there if the wind had brought other seeds.

—Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*<sup>1</sup>

‘Twas God the Word that spake it:  
He took the bread and brake it;  
And what that Word did make it,  
That I believe and take it.

—Unknown<sup>2</sup>

Composed in the Tower of London the year before More’s execution, Thomas More’s brief “Treatise on the Blessed Sacrament” (1534) assays the epistemological contingency of Eucharistic reception. More concedes that God, made flesh, cannot refuse “to enter bodily into the vile bodies of those, whose filthy minds refuse to receive him graciously into their soules.” Yet God-as-meat retains a curious agency over both non-believer and sacrament itself. More presents the possibility of God’s power to subvert the very process by which he is made present through impanation. “But then do suche folke receive him only sacramentally, & not *virtually*, that is to wit, they receive his very blessed Bodie in to theirs, under the sacramental signe, but they receive not the thing of the Sacrament, that is to wit, *the vertue and the effect therof*, that is to saie, the grace, by which they should be lively members incorporate in Christes holie mystical

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<sup>1</sup> Mabelle L. Andison’s translation. Page 256.

<sup>2</sup> Often attributed to the young Lady Elizabeth I, associated with her “Opinion Concerning Transubstantiation.” See *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* edited by Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Beth Mary Rose.

Bodie” (STC 230:04, my emphasis). In choosing to doubt, non-believers engage the sacramental process to “receive” seemingly some version of God, but not an assenting one; such assent yields not materially, through the mere ingestion of blessed body and blood, but through a “virtual” power arising from “the vertue and the effect” of the consecrated ritual. One must *believe* in God’s presence, in the immanence of his grace, in order for the contract obtained through sacrament to take effect. Pantomiming the sacramental act therefore yields not so much the denial of divine presence as it does the false apprehension of such presence, rooted in a base materialism that results not only in God’s disavowal but also his “judgment” and “damnation” (230:04). As damningly, such disbelief precludes one from membership in the community of believers who with the ingestion of Eucharist become “incorporate in Christes holie mystical Bodie.” The dissembler thus becomes a stranger not only to God and Christ but also his fellow man.

Given More’s predicament at the time of his writing, his “Treatise” is perhaps most remarkable for its explication of sacramental contingency as residing in virtual potentiality.<sup>3</sup> If God’s presence is not in fact available to all at all times, at the very least, he will show himself when his blessed flesh is ingested in the right manner. Indeed, while More concedes that God is present materially in transubstantiated matter, his claim that “the Sacramental signe” alone will not effect God’s presence among those who consume his transmuted flesh presupposes that godly power resides properly *elsewhere*, even as one must affirm that God is capable of being everywhere at once. The receiving subject must thus perceive God as existing both locally, in the bread and wine, and as it were virtually—within the cosmic order of things from which he is

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<sup>3</sup> To be sure, More had no doubts regarding his *own* salvation: “Such is the wonderful bounty of Almighty God that, He not only doth vouchsafe, but also doth delight, to be with men, if they prepare to receive Him with honest and clean souls, whereof He saith, *Deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum*. My delight and pleasures are to be with the sons of men” (STC 230:04).



therein summoned. The catalyzing force of the Eucharistic ritual, then, is belief not merely in God himself but in the counterfactual immanence of his presence—belief that true presence may be apprehended in and through the sacramental act, despite the knowledge one may possess of God as residing properly in the heavens above.

Eucharistic logic under More thus weighs belief in that which cannot be ascertained against trust in one's empirical assessment of the real. In the Eucharistic sacrament, what we see is both what we get—a piece of bread—as well as its consecrated counterfactual, God's transmuted presence. Belief in God's presence as imbued in blessed matter comes at a curious cost: the receiver must suspend judgment of that which she perceives as "real" in order to perceive the thing in its "real" or proper state. Such is the dilemma of virtual reasoning, which asks that we apprehend a perceptual reality as it stands as well as its *potential* for unforeseen transformation in time and space. Such a notion of the virtual comports with Brian Massumi's claim that virtuality defines the condition of matter as that which is invested in a temporal becoming—the radical potentiality of things as we apprehend them.<sup>4</sup> The basis for Massumi's claim lies in the very etymology of the term "virtual":

Derived from the Latin word for strength or potency, the base definition of the virtual in philosophy is "potentiality." What is in potentiality may come to be; and what has been, already was in potential. The virtual must thus be understood as a *dimension* of reality, not its illusionary opponent or artificial overcoming. The conundrum is that potential never appears as such. What appears is that to which it gives rise—which is precisely not it, but its fulfillment (54).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896).

<sup>5</sup> See Massumi in the *Oxford Handbook on Virtuality* (2015).

More's passage is striking for elucidating, at such an early date, the skeletal pressure points that allow us to consider the virtual as indeed "a *dimension* of reality," even as it presents counterfactual possibilities or "potentialities" for perceiving the nature of this reality.<sup>6</sup> As important for my purposes, More's passage provides a representative definitional relationship of the terms "virtue" and "virtual," as these occur in the early modern period and as we might attempt to understand the relationship between these terms in a broader historical context. In contemporary use, to be sure, no strong relationship links these terms. What, if anything, does "virtue" have to do with the "virtual," in any senses of these terms we now recognize? The contention of this project is that literary, religious, philosophical, and political texts from the early modern period not only answer this question, but in doing so betray a conception of virtuality as that which reveals its axiological underside.<sup>7</sup> In cleaving virtue with the virtual, More betrays a mystical yet concomitantly material potency that obtains in and through an economy of counterfactual valuation: a potency whose nonvisible or immaterial presence requires a summoning of belief in that which one cannot affirm empirically. Following More's claim that the virtuality of a thing arises from "the vertue and the effect" of its power, and that

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<sup>6</sup> While God is present in some form in the bread once it is blessed, he assents to his true presence only in the act of ritual; even then, only those who *believe* that the bread has been divinely transformed will receive his grace. For this reason, we must acknowledge that the stress More places on belief pertains as much to questions of faith as it does to virtual presence.

<sup>7</sup> Axiology is, simply, the study of value: how and why we assign values to objects and concepts in the world. Though the term was coined in 1902 and likely not used in English until 1908 (and does not even appear in Webster's 1932 *Unabridged*), it names a conceptual field that long precedes the twentieth century. See Risieri Fondizi's *What is Value? An Introduction to Axiology* (1971) for a book-length study on the topic. As Fondizi clarifies, "values do not exist for themselves, at least in this world; they need something in which to be embodied or a carrier. Therefore, they appear to us as mere qualities of these value carriers: beauty *of* a picture, elegance *of* a garment, utility *of* a tool" (7). Values are in this sense "potentials" or "unreal" qualities: "They are unreal in the sense that they do not constitute part of the object in which they are embodied, as extension, shape and other primary and secondary qualities do. You may take the value out of a physical object without destroying it; you cannot do the same with extension, for instance" (9). Naturally, these questions become more complex when addressing issues of *moral* value, which I take up throughout this project.

this power is synonymous with “the grace” that yields one’s constitutionalization “in Christes holie mystical Bodie,” I take literally his insight that the virtual is the very “effect” of virtue: a constitutive force that creates new possibilities for existence through the power of counterfactually invested belief. One might deduce that presence is in fact activated by belief in such power: a virtual or remote power thereby comes into intimate proximity.

This project argues that early modern virtual forms of presence and worlds—like More’s *Utopia*, or Sidney’s “second nature”—depend upon the radiating force of virtue, or the “power inherent in a thing; a capacity for producing a certain effect; an active property or principle” (*OED*). One of my purposes here will thus be to limn the many meanings of “virtue,” a term that has fallen out of use in contemporary times, just as its early adjectival form has exploded in use with the advent of virtual reality devices and technologies and through various philosophical schools preoccupied with questions of the real and the possible. While “the virtual” seems a contemporary term and preoccupation, *Virtue Reality* argues that virtual spaces and theories of subjectivity began to proliferate in England during the era of the Tudor dynasties and reached a saturation point of interest during the Glorious Revolution some 125 years later. Though significant work on early modern virtuality has been directed toward the “New Science,” this project focuses, primarily, on the epistemological and material conditions that may be said to have preceded and made possible this movement.<sup>8</sup> An investigation into the theological,

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<sup>8</sup> Surprisingly little research has focused on this particular aspect of the early modern virtual. While Shapin and Schaeffer theorize “virtual witnessing” in the early modern period, their investigation focuses on epistemologies of fact and testimony that came to inform scientific discourse of the mid-to-late seventeenth century. I am concerned, instead, with early modern discourses of potentiality and possibility, which in turn provide a sense of virtue’s “virtual” or activating force. See chapter two of Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer’s revised *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2011) for their definition of “virtual witnessing,” a process whereby informed testimony, aggregate reporting, and the “morality” of the reporter come to inform early modern epistemologies of fact. Regarding Boyle’s air pump, they argue, “Boyle proposed that matters of fact be established by the aggregation of individuals’ *beliefs* ... Matters of fact were the outcome of the process of having an empirical experience, warranting it to oneself, and assuring others that grounds for their belief were

political, and poetic concerns of Tudor-era England shows that through the prism of virtue, early modern writers began to engage emerging doctrines of time and materiality alongside discourses on ethics that challenged prevailing dogmas of civic life, thereby forcing an analytic lens upon gaps between actual and ideal worlds. These writers draw attention to the changing nature of *potentiality*: that which I have deemed *possible* but which has not yet been given formal expression in the real. *Virtue Reality* pursues the logic according to which writers writing about virtue in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries stage alternative or “counterfactual” visions of history, time, and material embodiment, as happens in works that present or presume the existence of a heterocosmic order. It likewise draws critical attention to those “second worlds” given shape and dimension through the effective force of axiological intent: worlds dependent, that is, on the constitutionalizing effect of virtue.<sup>9</sup>

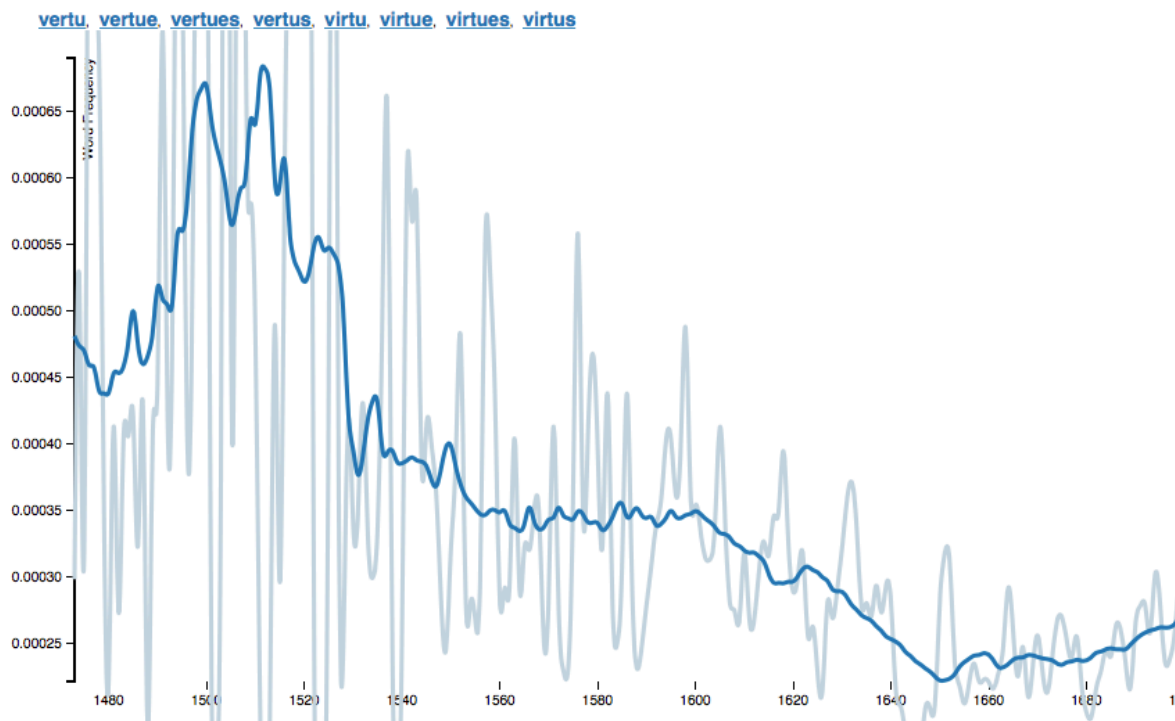
These questions imply a theory of early modern virtue that bears no necessary relationship to “goodness.” As Shakespeare’s diabolical Iago shows no better, my virtue, or “the element or factor which makes something powerful or effective” (*OED*), need not ascribe to any traditional code of morality. At the same time, this inner force is resplendent with a literally visionary *imaginative* power that molds the contours of the real itself. I therefore seek to explore the value-based or axiological aspects of early modern imagination; for even as the virtual or the “effect” of virtue comes to jettison any absolute ties to the *virtuous*, it implies the emergence of a radically creative and malleable theory of human potentiality. I argue that this new conception of human potential was shaped, in part, by policy reforms under Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell,

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adequate” (25, emphasis in original). Shapin and Schaffer’s focus on the function of belief in processes that establish or rescind truth-values in the empirical world inform the ways in which I read early modern fictive texts, as well as the computational methods I deploy to test such claims on large-scale corpora.

<sup>9</sup> More’s “virtue effect” points to the nascent moments of a critical modality in early modern Europe whereby “virtue” and “the virtual” come increasingly to occupy the same epistemological and performative space.

who claimed that ability or *virtù*—not ancestry or bloodline—ought determine one’s potential to exercise political power.<sup>10</sup> These matters were coincident with the gradual erosion of the Aristotelian and pagan virtues, which had come to define one’s place in the Western world for centuries. Strikingly, over this period of time, interest in and fascination with the “virtual”—both as term and concept—increases markedly. Computational methods support these claims. An n-gram of a regular expression of “virtue” and variants (including “*virtù*” and “*virtus*”) using the EEBO-TCP corpus lends credence to what early modern virtue ethicists have long known: that “virtue” declines precipitously throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:



**Figure 1. Regular Expression of "Virtue" and Variants (1500-1700)**

<sup>10</sup> For studies on Cromwellian nobility, see W. Gordon Zeeveld’s *Foundations of Tudor Policy* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1948) and G. R. Elton’s response to Zeeveld in *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).

Below, an n-gram of “virtual” and its variants over the same span of time:

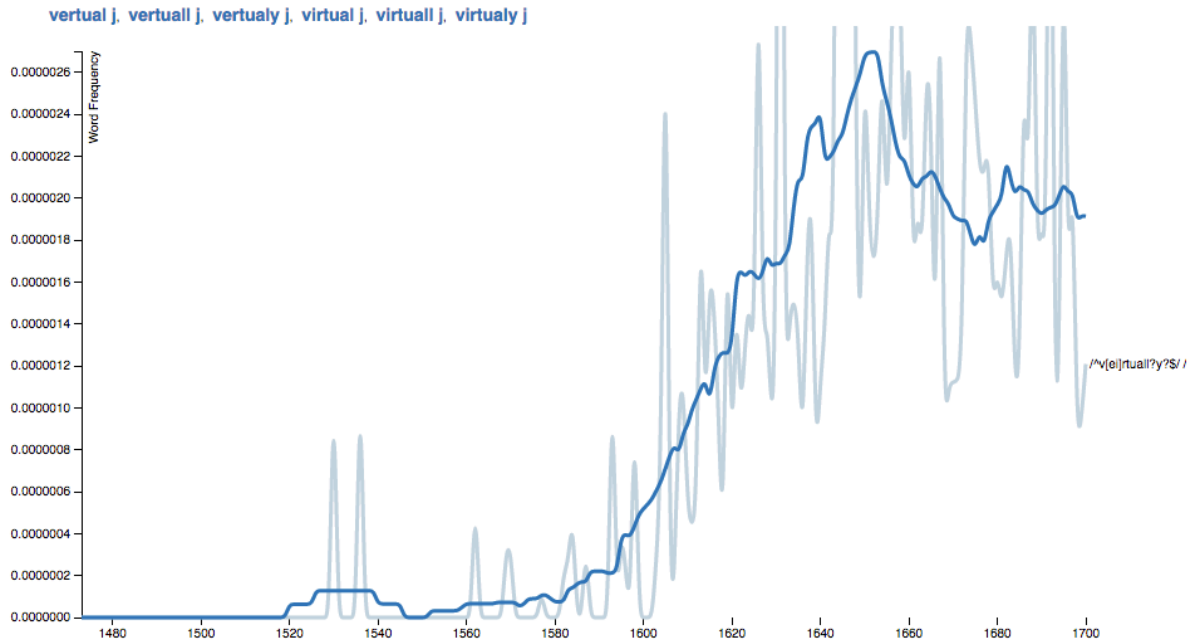
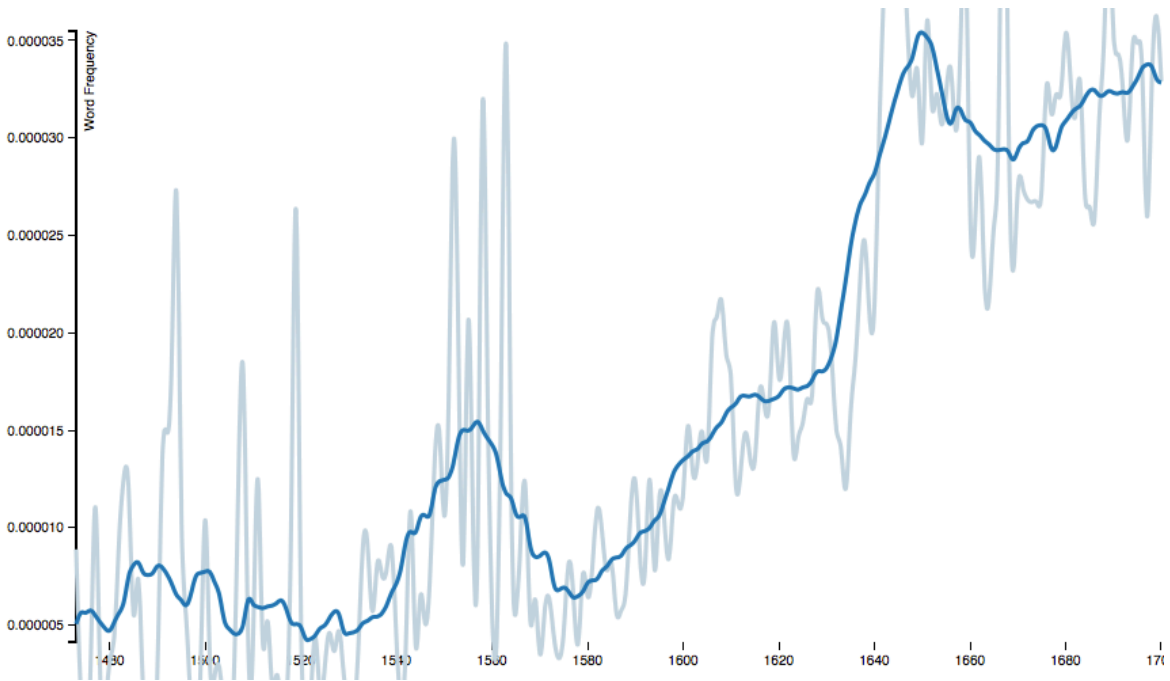


Figure 2. Regular Expression of "Virtual" and Variants (1500-1700)

I should comment first on what is most obviously gleaned from these images: that from 1500 to 1700, we witness the simultaneous decline of “virtue” and ascendancy of “the virtual.” This project is concerned, in part, with exploring this striking asymmetry.<sup>11</sup> To capture more clearly the *sense* of virtuality I am interested in exploring (as opposed to terms that may or may not describe this particular “effect”), I produced a tri-gram of the phrase “by virtue of,” which denotes either “the power or efficacy of” a person or thing or “by the authority of” a person or thing (*OED*):

<sup>11</sup> I submit this data in a “qualitative” spirit: as but one component in a larger story, a story in which idea eventually comes to inform method. In other words, I submit with the understanding that this data is radically malleable, insofar as it represents a *dual moment*: the moment it is capturing and the moment in which it was captured. In 2017, the EEBO-TCP corpus still leans toward religious documents, a fact that must also be considered when assessing these figures. These graphs were created using the EEBO n-gram machine at [www.earlyprint.wustl.edu](http://www.earlyprint.wustl.edu). I would like to thank Steven Pentecost at the Washington University in St. Louis Digital Humanities lab for his technical assistance with this data.



**Figure 3. Regular Expression of "By Virtue Of" (1500-1700)**

With “by virtue of,” virtue comes to be construed as a means of *proxy* power: I have quality *X* *by virtue* of my access to it. Its power or actionable force increases my own, but exists independent of me, accessible only through some means outside of me. Not surprisingly, “by virtue of” corresponds roughly to the pattern in Figure 2, indicating a general change in how “virtue” was being put to use. It is this sense of “virtue”—“the power, benefit, or worth of a thing; the element or factor which makes something powerful or effective” (*OED*)—that I seek to isolate and examine in this project.

To be clear, I will not be occupied with searching out and elaborating upon specific examples of these or related terms and phrases; I am interested, rather, in an emergent sensibility that accompanies shifts in the uses and applications of these terms. This sensibility is captured in

an early example of “by virtue of” that appears in *The Pardoner’s Tale*.<sup>12</sup> Chaucer invokes the virtual to account for the healing power of baptism, which cleanses Adam of his sins. “By vertu of baptism” and “the grace of god through penitence,” he may gain access to or control over an inner power that seems actively to resist temptation, which itself “may wel wexe feble and fayle” when confronted with the power or “effect” of baptismal virtue (STC 5082). Bequeathed to him from without yet inhering within, this power is something that has the strength to enfeeble the forces of temptation. Preceding More’s “virtue effect” by hundreds of years, Chaucer’s “by virtue of” points to the nascent moments of a critical modality in pre-modern Europe whereby “virtue” and “the virtual” come increasingly to occupy the same epistemological and performative space. We can see then how Chaucer’s “by vertu of” bears upon Thomas More’s “effect” of virtue: residing in active potential, it is a constitutive force that acts upon and *gives way* to the real.

Given these preoccupations, I am less interested in tracing the “spike” we see in Figure 2 than in examining what lies beneath its ascendant curve. By focusing on the features of early modern literature and political theory that speak to this quality, I have been able to push the generic boundaries of this study from the sermon or religious tract (Luther’s *On Christian Liberty*, Chapter 1) to the epic romance (Sidney’s *Arcadia*, Chapter 2) to dramatic work (*Othello*, Chapter 3) to the coterie lyric (Shakespeare’s “The Phoenix and Turtle” and *Love’s Martyr*, Chapters 3 and 4). While I focus in this project on male writers, I hope in this work to have established sufficient terminological and theoretical terrain to examine, in the future, the work of

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<sup>12</sup> The full text of the section in question runs as follows: “hit is Impossible but he be tempted som tyme and noyed in his flesh to synne / And thys thyng may not fayle as longe as he lyueth / hit may wel wexe feble and fayle by vertu of baptesme / And by the grace of god through penyence / But fully shal it neuer quenche That he ne shal somtyme be meuyd in hym self / but yf he were al refreynd by sykenes or by malice of sorcerye or colde drynkes. / For what saith saynt Poule / The flesh coueyteth ayenst the spiryte / And the spiryt ayenst the flesh they ben so contrary. (STC [2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed.] 5082, my emphasis). See *Canterbury Tales*. Westminster: Printed by William Caxton, 1477. Print.



women writers such as Amelia Lanyer and the Countess of Pembroke—figures who came to typify, in Julie Crawford’s words, “the Christian neostoic constancy associated with aristocratic critique” (37).<sup>13</sup> To this end I engage the work of feminist critics and philosophers such as Judith Butler, whose writing on virtue and community significantly informs the critical spirit of this project. I also turn to philosophers of race, such as Lewis Gordon and Frantz Fanon, whose reconceptualization of Sartrean facticity and transcendence in terms of a “racial epidermal schema” (112) provides the context for my reading of *Othello*.<sup>14</sup>

In what follows of this chapter, I examine first the history that produced the near-collapse of Aristotelian scholasticism in order to contextualize the intellectual and political ramifications of early modern virtuality. I therefore dedicate time to discussing the work of virtue ethicists such as Alisdair MacIntyre, whose widely influential *After Virtue* (1981) came to define the “aretaic turn” in modern ethics. This focus is necessary in order to explicate not only the centrality of axiology to my conception of the virtual, but also to provide intellectual and historical context for what has been called the early modern “virtue crisis.” First, however, I focus attention on scholarship on contemporary notions of the virtual.

## Virtue Alert

While the literary parameters of this project are early modern, I take a broad critical view of “the virtual,” engaging contemporary perspectives and methodologies in new media, gaming, information theory, and the digital and computational humanities. In the following pages, I aim to summarize the state of what may one day be called “Virtuality Studies,” and to elucidate the nature of my intervention in this vast, multidisciplinary field and in early modern studies on

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<sup>13</sup> See *Mediatrix : Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> See *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952. New York: Grove Press, 1967.

virtue more generally.

While contemporary scholarship on virtuality is often preoccupied with the ethics of the virtual reality, the question of virtuality's relationship to virtue is generally passed over as though self-evident relationships between these terms exist.<sup>15</sup> Ongoing confusion over what “virtuality” means may stem from this problem, which I see as a problem to be solved by working through intellectual history by way of etymology — a close encounter with and recovery of the virtual in historical and textual specificity. I begin then with a provisional “history” of the virtual. I cite in full the succinct yet capacious definition provided by media scholar Michael Heim, as it appears in the *Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media*:<sup>16</sup>

The “virtual” for first-century Romans indicated manly strength and straightforward power (Latin *vir*), what Italian courtiers would in the Renaissance dub *virtù*. Medieval thinkers downshifted the meaning of the Roman word as scholastics such as Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1250) distinguished a power existing in something “inherently” or *virtualiter* as opposed to essentially (*essentialiter*) or actually (*actualiter*). Here the virtuality of a thing is no longer its power to be present straightforwardly with strength. The strong but now less visible intrinsic power fades even more in the fourteenth-century English term, which was borrowed from the French *virtuel*, by which “virtual” came to mean something that is implicit but not formally recognized, something that is indeed present but not openly admitted—something there virtually but not really or actually there.

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<sup>15</sup> Attention to ethical questions raised by the possibilities and limits of virtual reality has indeed become a focal point in the literature. In fields ranging from economics to social psychology, these questions are generally framed in terms of social isolation, social threat, and racial and other forms of discrimination. I thank Jay Clayton for drawing my attention to this important distinction.

<sup>16</sup> See his “Virtuality” chapter in *Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2014.

(514-515)

The progression of the term from its early sense indicating “manly strength” to that which is “implicit but not formally recognized” indicates that over time, “virtuality” increasingly suggests both “weakness” and a turn toward the immaterial. While a plausible assessment, one might challenge this interpretation on the grounds that the earlier sense is retained at least through the late seventeenth century, as the Machiavellian conception of *virtù* gets imported to England, and also because virtual objects are often said to depend upon a time-based materialism for their intelligibility. Prevailing upon virtuality’s more recent encounters with information theory, scholars such as N. Katherine Hayles observe that virtual objects must be understood both as information and as matter, temporally inscribed.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, scholars in the Bergsonian and Deleuzian traditions provide definitions of virtual matter that point to a paradoxical ontology of the thing whereby the thing is, in its Deleuzian becoming, its incessant movement through time, precisely that which is no longer.

Strangely, however, none of these scholars have attended to a study of the virtual that accounts for its relationship to virtue, or to axiology, the study of “value.” Even Massumi, who explicitly raises the issue of the virtual’s ethical or “axiological” dimensions, has avoided plain discussion of virtuality’s indebtedness to virtue. Indeed, while scholars of the virtual often draw upon loose etymologies such as that provided by Heim, a substantive history of virtuality understood as that which is grounded and subtended by “virtue” has not been produced.”<sup>18</sup> On

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<sup>17</sup> Hayles’ provocation that “Virtuality is the cultural perception that material objects are interpenetrated by informational patterns” (69) has been particularly influential. Citing an example from molecular biology, Hayles explains that the gene (information) produces the body (material), such that “[an] informational pattern triumphs over the body’s materiality” (185). See *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (2000) and “The Condition of Virtuality” in Jeffrey Masten’s (et. al) *Language Machines* (1997).

<sup>18</sup> Claims such as “virtuality has always been present” run the risk of contributing reductive notions of what constitutes the virtual while obscuring the historically specific nature of virtuality. While nearly every study of the

the one hand, scholars of media studies focus attention on optical devices such as the *camera obscura*, the phenakistoscope, the film projector, and optical concepts generally;<sup>19</sup> Anne Frieberg, who gave us the compelling image of the “virtual window,” considers the broader philosophical implications of these interventions within movements such as Bergsonianism and Deluzian poststructuralism.<sup>20</sup> Scholars in this tradition have contributed to a rich interdisciplinary history of virtual imagery and philosophy.<sup>21</sup> However, the stakes and implications of such optics-focused criticism obscure not only a complete consideration of virtuality’s axiological character, but also, as I aim to show, a more nuanced apprehension of the optical *qua* philosophical nodes that have become touchstones of research within the field.

A related body of research on virtuality, comprised mainly of literary scholars, conceives of virtuality in terms of a broader conception of the imagination and the so-called “second lives”

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virtual seeks to define “the virtual” at the outset, often using the *OED* or a similar source, scholarship on virtuality has been dominated by transcendent and sometimes totalizing theories. Such generalizing elides the matter of imagining a point of origin for an intellectual history of the virtual, and perhaps more importantly, a sense of historical development in relation to terms and concepts with which it meaningfully intersects. This project thus aligns itself closely with virtual scholarship that seeks to forge purposeful links with devices and schools of thought rooted in the etymological history of virtuality. In this regard, I find myself once again working with Massumi, whose contention that one must attend to the “ethical” or “axiological” dimensions of the virtual finds particular force in this argument.

<sup>19</sup> See Friedrich Kittler’s *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1999) and *Optical Media* (2013); Lev Manovich’s *The Language of New Media* (2002); Sigfried Zielinsky’s *Deep Time of the Media* (2008); W. J. T. Mitchell’s *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (1986); Roland Barthes’ *Image-Music-Text* (1978) and *Camera Lucida* (1980); Marshall McLuhan’s *Understanding Media* (1964) and *The Medium is the Massage* (1967); Miriam Brartu Hansen’s *Cinema and Experience* (2011); Wolfgang Ernst’s *Digital Memory and the Archive* (2012); Gilles Deleuze’s *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (1983) and *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (1985).

<sup>20</sup> See *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (2009).

<sup>21</sup> This scholarship has been notably augmented by the indispensable *Oxford Handbook of Virtuality* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014) edited by Mark Grimshaw, which contains nearly 50 essays on the past and present state of the virtual. For a thanatological take on “second lives” in early modern texts, see Emily Shortself’s “Second Life: *The Ruines of Time* and the Virtual Collectives of Early Modern Complaint” (*Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* (13.3) 2013, 84-104).

thereby constructed.<sup>22</sup> Generally working in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these scholars argue for a proto-virtual reality arising from literary projects and resultant imaginative communities to which they gave rise, seeing in certain fictional worlds a strong lineage to contemporary theories and representations of virtual reality. Vital to a history of the virtual, these projects ground their understanding of community in imaginative, but not axiological, terms. In short: for literary scholars, the virtual achieves its meaning proleptically, in direct relation to contemporary notions of virtual objects, theories, and practices; for media scholars, the virtual is discerned primarily in an inverse process whereby a series of historical developments, generally technological in nature, progressively simulate the effects of what we now perceive to be the virtual. Both are essentially archeological processes that have, along with the science of virtuality itself,<sup>23</sup> created a rigorous yet still-unnamed discipline wherein one may conceive of an object-oriented evolutionary history of the virtual as well as attendant approaches toward understanding and selfhood arising from the construction of complex imaginative communities through these and other developments.<sup>24</sup> Yet as I aim to show, both approaches benefit substantially from a clearer understanding of virtue in an early modern context, when virtue's adjectival form retained a fleeting yet powerful analogical resonance to its master-term. The

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<sup>22</sup> See Michael Saler's watershed *AS IF: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012) and Peter Otto's equally compelling *Multiplying Worlds: Romanticism, Modernity, and the Emergence of Virtual Reality* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011). Earlier work by literary scholars and media theorists such as Janet Murray (*Hamlet on the Holodeck*, 1997) and Jay Clayton (*Charles Dickens in Cyberspace*, 2003) could be argued to have paved the way for these more recent approaches to the literary virtual.

<sup>23</sup> For material produced by scientists of virtuality, see the *Oxford Handbook of Virtuality* as well as Jim Blascovich and Jeremy Bailenson's informative yet informal *Infinite Reality: The Hidden Blueprint of our Virtual Lives* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> See for example Jesper Juul (*Half-Real*, 2005) Edward Castranova (*Synthetic Worlds*, 2005), T.L. Taylor (*Play Between Worlds*, 2006), N. Kathryn Hayles (*How We Became Postmodern*, 1999), Ian Bogost (*Unit Operations*, 2006), and Alexander Galloway (*Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*, 2012), theorists of virtuality and virtual worlds who have collectively amassed a rich body of criticism that builds upon the insights of Plato, Bergson, Deleuze, Baudrillard, and developments in posthumanism and information theory.

history of the virtual's eventual "splitting" from virtue, I claim, is one that requires us to look specifically at the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is from this period that an emergent virtual selfhood, poised at the intersection of these two seeming polarities, arises from the ashes of the virtue crisis.

### Virtue Ethics<sup>25</sup>

As studied by virtue ethicists, the "virtues" are to be divided in two categories. The classical or "cardinal" virtues, derived from the Greek tradition, are justice, prudence, temperance, and courage. Derived from scripture, the Christian or "theological" virtues are faith, hope, and charity or "love." Today, the catalogue of virtues in its totality is often referred to, simply, as "Aristotelian." This is because under medieval scholastics such as Aquinas, the cardinal or pagan virtues, seen as synonymous with virtue as presented by Aristotle in *The Nichomachean Ethics*, were synthesized with the theological virtues so as to establish the tenets of a morality deemed fundamentally Christian in nature. Collectively, these virtues and their various subsets and analogues, attended to rationally, are said to provide meaning and purpose, indeed an endpoint or *telos*, to one's personal life as well as one's life within a larger community; this *telos*, according to Aristotle, grants one access to *eudaimonia*, a profound happiness that results from what virtue ethicists term "human flourishing." In short, as MacIntyre notes, "the virtues are precisely those qualities the possession of which will enable an individual to achieve eudemonia and the lack of which will frustrate his movement toward that telos"

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<sup>25</sup> In studying this field closely, one would wish to distinguish between Platonic, Aristotelian, and Augustinian versions of virtue, as well as the Ciceronian conception, and how these schools were variously taken up and rejected by figures in the early modern period and beyond. My task here is mainly to provide a macro-level take on the field, which requires me to focus on Aristotelian virtue. For a comprehensive and lucid history and assessment of virtue ethics with a strong focus on early modern philosophers, see Jennifer Herdt's excellent *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

(148).<sup>26</sup>

The most noted contemporary proponent of virtue ethics, MacIntyre claims that modernity brought about conditions that resulted in an “[unrecognized] catastrophe” (3) that came about through the gradual disintegration of Aristotelian virtue ethics through and beyond the early modern period. Inaugurated in part by his *After Virtue*, over the last thirty years ethical discourse has witnessed a resurgence of interest in virtue ethics; this work, in part, gave rise to more focused work on early modern virtue.<sup>27</sup> Jennifer Herdt assesses the impact of MacIntyre’s thesis on the state of early modern scholarship on virtue: “Of course, if modernity names the time ‘after virtue,’ lack of attention to the discourse of virtue seems only natural. Why waste energy looking for something that isn’t there?” MacIntyre’s aim, however, was hardly to show that virtue discourse had disappeared, but rather to show that it had become deployed “in a fragmentary, impotent way.” Herdt notes, “Given the loss of a shared telos in the form of a common conception of the good life, and of the virtues as essential to the realization of the telos, morality was reduced either to rules constraining desire or to rules for the maximization of desire

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<sup>26</sup> In focusing on the character and historical development of the classical and theological virtues, virtue ethicists should be distinguished from deontologists or consequentialists primarily by their emphasis on “being” versus “doing”; for virtue ethicists, what one *is* rather than what one does is of greatest importance.

<sup>27</sup> This body of literature is enormous. I cannot here provide sufficient context on the evolution of virtue ethics from its classical to early modern conception. That said, Jennifer Herdt succinctly explains the origin of the virtues and their intersection with Christian ethics: “The language of the virtues comes from the classical tradition: Christian thinkers absorbed and transformed Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic accounts of the virtues and their place in moral life. As they did so, they grappled with tensions among these various classical schools and between classical and Christian understandings of moral psychology, agency, and the good life. Is virtue a matter of knowledge or of habituation? Does virtue secure happiness or does happiness require external goods? Were the pagan heroes virtuous? Can the virtues be acquired through human effort, or only by divine gift?” (4). MacIntyre provides the Aristotelian context: “Human beings, like the members of all other species, have a specific nature; and that nature is such that they have specific aims and goals, such that they move by nature toward a specific telos. The good is defined in terms of their specific characteristics. Hence Aristotle’s ethics ... presupposes his metaphysical biology. Aristotle thus sets himself the task of giving an account of the good at once local and particular—located in and partially defined by the characteristics of the polis—and yet also cosmic and universal” (148).

and satisfaction” (1).<sup>28</sup>

How, exactly, did this “shared telos,” or collective striving toward *eudaimonia*, lose so much ground?<sup>29</sup> First, as MacIntyre and numerous scholars point out, interest in the virtues radically changed following the decline of scholasticism and Aristotelian ethics in early modern Europe. This lapse was coincident with a more general attack on Aristotelian logic and physics, precepts that had dictated notions of sense, reason, time, space, and presence for centuries. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, marked disapprobation of scholasticism can be found in the writings of an astonishing range of influential thinkers across the early modern continent, especially in Italy, where “humanism” is generally said to have been conceived.<sup>30</sup> In 1439, Francisco Valla wrote the work known as *Dialectical Disputations*, the aim of which, in Lodi Nauta’s words, was “to demolish the foundations of Aristotelian-scholastic metaphysics, ethics, and natural philosophy by the scholastics into a rhetorical-grammatical dialectic tailored to the practical needs of public debate, communication, and argumentation.”<sup>31</sup> Valla’s critiques of

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<sup>28</sup> See Herdt’s edited collection in the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* (42.1: 2012) titled “Virtue, Identity, and Agency: Ethical Formation from Medieval to Early Modern.”

<sup>29</sup> One could argue of course that *telos* can exist independent Aristotelian virtue. This would seem to imply Aristotle’s *telos* striped completely of value, or rather of necessary relationships between one’s outward manifestation of the good and one’s inner conception and *valuation* of it. In terms of this new value system, vice must be viewed as existing on the same axiological continuum as virtue—the two are hardly opposite. In this sense the effective force of one’s vice is also the effective force of one’s virtue: it is the latent or potent force *within* that ultimately bears expression in the real. In this view, Iago is the very twin of Sidney’s Cecropia, a fiendish deviser of tricks who schemes for political purposes while *seeming* to be other than that which she is. These figures represent a coalescence of imagination and vice. The early modern *vicely imagination*, which I hope to explore in future work, precedes and enables modern day anti-heroes like Bryan Cranston in *Breaking Bad*, Cersei Lannister in *Game of Thrones*, and Frank and Claire Underwood in *House of Cards*.

<sup>30</sup> This anti-Aristotelian spirit permeated much of early modern culture, including the arts. See *Aristotle and Phyllis* (1510) woodcut in Appendix B.

<sup>31</sup> Valla’s criticism of the syllogism is particularly scathing; as Nauta writes, “He regards it as a type of artificial reasoning, unfit to the employed orators because it does not reflect the natural way of speaking and arguing.” Nauta paraphrases the example given by Valla in *Dialectical Disputations*: “What is the use of concluding that Socrates is an animal if one has already stated that every man is an animal and that Socrates is a man, thus that he is one of them?” See “Lorenzo Valla and the Rise of Humanist Dialectic” in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance*



Aristotle, and the literature that followed, resulted, according to Charles Trinkaus, in a “new mentality” in early modern Europe, one that was “beginning to find some of the fundamental aspects of Aristotelian scholasticism questionable, despite the continuing influence of scholastic natural philosophers through their university teaching . . . . and their own deeply entertained convictions of the correctness of their theories.”<sup>32</sup>

Against this intellectual and theological background, Martin Luther—a controversial figure in virtue ethics—is very much a man of his time. His infamous invectives against Aristotle and Aristotelian virtue were part of his larger program of cutting ties with an immoral pagan past that gave rise to a pompous and prideful Christianity, marked by frivolous and sinful attachments to ornament and display.<sup>33</sup> As Herdt notes, “Instead of redefining and baptizing heroic virtue . . . Luther rejects the category of virtue as essential pagan. We may speak of growth in faith or growth in Christian righteousness, but the language of virtue implies a self-assertion inherently antithetical to our properly passive stance before God” (7). Lutheran reformation is thus linked not to the “redefining” or reformation of pagan virtue, but seemingly, to its outright elimination.

The “catastrophe” MacIntyre refers to is therefore in part a consequence of Lutheran reformation, insofar as Luther and fellow reformers sought to institute temporal as well as divine purpose in a world in which the virtues had been stripped of value. Reformers such as Luther

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*Philosophy*. Note also Figure 9 in Appendix B; this anonymous woodcut emblemizes the early modern critical spirit regarding the function of human agency in the naming and indexing of the natural world.

<sup>32</sup> See “Lorenzo Valla’s Anti-Aristotelian Natural Philosophy,” *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance* 5 (1993) 279-325.

<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Luther and Machiavelli shared a distaste for the two most influential classical thinkers of the early Renaissance, Aristotle and Cicero. Characteristically, Luther is blunt in his attacks. Regarding Cicero, he writes, “The heathen word of Cicero: ‘Virtue increases when it is applauded’ is rightly denied and rejected in the church of God” (Romans 43). As for Aristotle, the criticisms are both vicious and endless, but one could suffice with this: “The whole Aristotelian ethic is grace’s worst enemy” (*Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, 269). Like Pico, Valla, and Ramus, Luther was indeed one of the most virulent critics of the Aristotelian program. While his attacks are far-ranging, he most consistently derides the Aristotelian conception of virtue.

sought to redefine the very means by which one ought to live a fulfilling moral life. MacIntyre conveys the net effect of these efforts:

The conception of a whole human life as the primary subject of objective and impersonal evaluation, of a type of evaluation which provides the content for judgment upon the particular actions or projects of a given individual, is something that ceases to be generally available at some point in the progress—if we can call it such—toward and into modernity. It passes to some degree unnoticed, for it is celebrated historically for the most part not as a loss but as self-congratulatory gain, as the emergence of the individual freed on the one hand from the social bonds of those constraining hierarchies which the modern world rejected at its birth and on the other hand from what modernity has taken to be the superstitions of teleology ... The peculiarly modern self ... in acquiring sovereignty in its own realm lost its traditional boundaries provided by a social identity and a view of human life as ordered to a given end (34).

One would be hasty and quite wrong to attribute the birth of this “peculiarly modern self” wholly to Lutheran and related reforms, or even to the sphere of early modern religious upheaval. Shorn of *telos* yet having acquired “sovereignty in its own realm,” the so-called “modern self” is said to have emerged as a result of the “self-fashioning” habits that have come to define the early modern period. Stephen Greenblatt situates these concerns in the context of the early modern court from which, under the spell of Baldassare Castiglione and similar influencers, emerged a comprehensive “philosophy” of artifice and manners: “Where old-fashioned philosophers used to struggle to prove below the appearance of things their essence,

modern moralists need only pay scrupulous attention to surfaces” (183).<sup>34</sup> This culture was shaped by faddish trends in Renaissance rhetoric, which informed how elites came to perceive and recalibrate morality. “[Rhetoric] offered men the power to shape their worlds, calculate the probabilities, and master the contingent, and it implied that human character itself could be similarly fashioned, with an eye to audience and effect. Rhetoric served to theatricalize culture, or rather it was the instrument of a society which was already deeply theatrical” (182). The origins for such “theatricalization” may in turn be traced to the Latin grammar schools, where boys of varying classes gained access to the language of virtue through the inculcation of rhetorical methods. With its focus on rhetoric, the humanist grammar school curricula indeed gave rise to a culture obsessed with the *articulation* or outward appearance of virtue.<sup>35</sup> As Markku Peltonen argues, “Elizabethan and early Stuart schoolboys learned that the virtues were not so much intrinsic values of morality as instrumental values of rhetoric” (159).

Noting the Machiavellian overtones to such a claim, Herdt ventures to speculate that the “virtues were not cultivated as an end themselves but as a means to more effective speech. Of course, we could push the line of questioning one step further and ask about the end of rhetoric. Rhetoric was understood as a tool to be used in the active life of *civic virtue*, an arena in which appearances mattered, in which virtue had to be *seen* and effective” (9).<sup>36</sup> According to such reasoning, one might infer that the Latin grammar schools provided the grounds for a cultural

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<sup>34</sup> See *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>35</sup> See studies cited by Lisa Jardine, Anthony Grafton, Markku Peltonen, and Lynne Enterline.

<sup>36</sup> As Tinkler notes, classical rhetoric contains its own set of virtue categories: “In demonstrative rhetoric, there were three loci—physical characteristics or *corpus*, external circumstances or *re externae* and qualities of character or *animus*. Each of these loci had numerous subdivisions: *animus*, for instance, was divided into the four cardinal virtues (justice, wisdom, courage, and moderation), and each of these was further subdivided into numerous particular virtues” (190). See “Rhetorical Approaches in More’s *Utopia* and Machiavelli’s *The Prince*” (1988).

transition toward the visualization, ornamentalization, and subsequent instrumentalization of virtue. As Walter Ong and other scholars have noted, such reforms would, under the influence of Petrus Ramus and his legion of followers, contribute to the further visualization and “decay” of virtue by way of a diagrammatic process that evacuated textual objects of meaning.<sup>37</sup>

We may thus come to see the nascent intersecting processes by which virtue itself became virtual; became, in short, a *substitute for another set of ideas or beliefs*, capable of containing or bounding values evacuated of originary purpose or meaning.

### The Virtual Self

The semblances and appearances of all things cunningly couched, are the principal supporters of our Philosophy: for such as we seem, such are we judged.

—Philibert de Vienne, *The Philosopher of the Court* (1547)<sup>38</sup>

With my examination of Thomas More’s “Treatise,” I began to argue that emerging early modern systems of belief foster radical reappraisals of the real. As I will show in later chapters, such reappraisals extend to political, ontological, and rational or logical ends. To ground this project, I focus here primarily on the extent to which one’s beliefs may reshape the bounds of perception. Thus I ask: to what extent is our inhabitation of the virtual dependent on systems of belief? To what extent is one in another “world” or realm when one reads a novel or dons a virtual reality headset? As per Martin Luther, how or by what means does one intuit the presence of the Christian (or any) God when one interprets the Word? Against the often-cited Coleridgean

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<sup>37</sup> See Walter Ong’s *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

<sup>38</sup> Translated by George North in 1575. See Christina Malcomson’s *Renaissance Poetry*. London: Routledge, 1998, page 56.

theory that virtuality requires a “suspension of disbelief,” I contend: belief bestows a reality on the virtual. To the extent that one submits to a given fantasy or that the fantasy holds—that is, to the extent that one *believes* in the illusion of whatever presence one occupies—one inhabits that reality’s virtual presence.<sup>39</sup> Virtuality is thus entailed in the beliefs one holds regarding the reality of one’s presence; thereby, it draws attention to the radical contingency of the real, against which it is usually contrasted.

I should say more about what exactly is suggested here by the term “presence.” A crucial term in research on both virtuality and the sacramental transaction, “presence” is defined by neuroscientists Giuseppe Riva and John A. Waterworth as a “core neuropsychological phenomenon the effect of which is to produce a sense of agency and control: subjects are ‘present’ if they feel themselves able to enact their intentions in an external world.”<sup>40</sup> We might say, for example, that we are “present” in a constructed or virtual environment if within that environment we retain our ability to exert actions that correspond to our intentions. In a virtual world, such as a computer-generated immersive reality, “presence” may also be understood to constitute *telepresence*, or “the sense of being both here and present elsewhere” (512).<sup>41</sup> If, for example, I strap on a virtual reality headset and begin to cross a thin plank dividing a gaping chasm, and in doing so I begin to tense, to sweat, to feel in short as if I am indeed *in* this virtual

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<sup>39</sup> See Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* (1817), especially Chapter XIV, wherein Coleridge discusses the motivations behind his involvement in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).

<sup>40</sup> See Giuseppe Riva and John A. Waterworth’s “Being Present in a Virtual World,” *The Oxford Guide to Virtuality*, 206.

<sup>41</sup> Scholars of virtual reality sometimes distinguish “telepresence” from “virtual presence,” noting that in the latter case, the user is situated in an illusory or computer-simulated environment. “Telepresence,” a term coined in 1980, suggests the transportation of self from one physical location to another. I use these terms interchangeably throughout this project, since distinctions such as these do not pertain meaningfully to early modern notions of presence. See Ken Hillis, “Virtual Reality” in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2014).

space, my physical reactions indicate that I have succumbed to the thrill of the experience. The success of my immersion in the environment, which corresponds to its ability to “effect” my intentions within it, establishes grounds for my belief in its presence as well as my presence within it. And yet of course, I maintain awareness of and belief in my inhabitation in “another” location or environment, that is, the physical world containing both my actual body and the computer equipment to which it is rigged.

While seemingly a novel concept, the ability to be “both here and present elsewhere”<sup>42</sup> is the defining trait of what I shall term the early modern virtual “I.” Such a concept depends upon an understanding of the evolving place and function of Renaissance virtue, a complex system of classical and theological signifiers that came to adjudicate self-worth as well as one’s “place” in the Western world for centuries. It did so, I claim, by negotiating the ways in which *behavior ought to correspond to belief*. It thereby succeeded in securing relationships, imputed from without, between public and private, self and state. In other words, virtue came to function as an *interface* between these domains.

Alexander Galloway defines the interface not as an object but as an “effect,” insofar as it brings about “transformations in material states” (vii); he describes it also as “a process of translation” (33) between states or forms of media.<sup>43</sup> Early modern projects that succeeded in uprooting or rejecting this system resulted not in the evisceration of virtue, but rather, fostered a

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<sup>42</sup> Neuroscientists Jim Blascovich and Jeremy Bailenson argue that this quality may constitute the very basis of our sleeping dreams. See their *Infinite Reality* (2012).

<sup>43</sup> See Galloway’s *The Interface Effect* (2012). Galloway claims here that “Interfaces are back, or perhaps they never left. The familiar Socratic conceit, from the Phaedrus, of communication as the process of writing directly on the soul of the other has ... returned to center stage in the discourse around culture and media. The catoptrics of the society of the spectacle is now the dioptrics of the society of control. Reflective surfaces have been overthrown by transparent thresholds. The metal detector arch, or the graphics frustum, or the Unix socket—these are the new emblems of the age” (25).

keen sense of *critical distance* toward it. Such uprootedness and critical distance between the self and that which had acted as interface between it and the external world results in the emergence of a self capable of negotiating, on its own terms, that ability to be “both here and present elsewhere.” A product of the tumult of Lutheran Reformation and Machiavellian political reform, this virtual self arose from the wreckage of sustained and grueling attacks on virtue ethics, a system that was never completely destroyed.

Luther himself advances such a theory of “uprootedness” in his *Lectures on Romans*.<sup>44</sup> He claims, “God does not want to save us by our own but by an extraneous righteousness which does not originate in ourselves but comes to us from beyond ourselves, which does not arise on our earth but comes from heaven. Therefore, we come to know this righteousness which is utterly external and foreign to us. This is why our personal righteousness must be uprooted” (4).<sup>45</sup> Luther regards the “uprooting” of one’s “righteousness” as fundamental to the process of acquiring grace and dispensing with the Aristotelian conception of virtue, which he associates with Hebraic heathenism. Curiously, his rejection of external works, one of the tenets of Aristotelian virtue, places him in the counterintuitive position of rejecting any righteousness dependent upon “our own” assumptions about salvation; for him, it arises “from beyond ourselves,” challenging and subsequently reconfiguring our perception of self and the world. Salvation is therefore achieved, seemingly, not by any inner process, but through access to an outside or external force. Luther associates the acquisition of grace with both a depletion of

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<sup>44</sup> Throughout this chapter, I refer to Wilhelm Pauck’s translation of *Romans* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961).

<sup>45</sup> Here, Luther theorizes the Biblical “transition from vice to virtue.” He argues, “the exodus of the people Israel has for a long time been interpreted to signify the transition from vice to virtue. But one should, rather, interpret it as the way from virtue to the grace of Christ, because virtues are often the greater and worse faults the less they are regarded as such” (4).

desire and a deep internal emptiness:

In reality, the word of God comes, when it comes, in opposition to our thinking and wishing ... This is so because the word of God ‘crushes the rock’; it destroys and crucifies all our self-satisfaction and leaves in us only dissatisfaction with ourselves. Thus it teaches us to have pleasure, joy, and confidence in God alone and to find happiness and well-being outside ourselves or in our neighbor (298).

By not allowing “our thinking to prevail” (298), the Word creates an epistemological void that cedes to a clearing. For it is only through radical “opposition” and uprootedness and a resulting “scattering” of self that the very fragments of one’s identity may be inaugurated through self-reflection. Greenblatt defines such a moment as “the point of encounter between an authority and an alien,” noting that “what is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack ... [hence] any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss” (9).<sup>46</sup> What is most striking about Luther’s passage, however, is its insistence that no identity or sense of self quite emerges from this “encounter”; one has recourse to “happiness and well-being” only “outside ourselves or in our neighbor.” The godly encounter, for Luther always contingent upon the reading or hearing of the Word, seemingly begets joy only insofar as it institutes a radically reconfigured sense of self *in relation* to something outside of or alien to me. Crushed to bits by God’s staggering presence, the Lutheran subject has been reduced only to that which it can perceive outside of it. It is in this sense transformed, literally, into a selflessness, or mere contingency.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*.

<sup>47</sup> Elsewhere Luther refers to this “I” or self as the “inner man, who by faith is created in the image of God”; such a person is “both joyful and happy because of Christ in whom so many benefits are conferred upon him; and therefore it is his one occupation to serve God joyfully and without thought of gain, in love that is not constrained. While doing this, behold, he meets a contrary will in his own flesh which strives to serve the world and seeks its own



Such at least is the conception of Lutheran subjectivity as construed by Greenblatt, who claims that human actions “must constantly be referred to an inner state that must, nonetheless, be experienced as the irresistible operation of a force outside the self, indeed alien to the self” (131). I would like to suggest that what resides “outside the self” is not necessarily “alien to the self.” I argue, instead, that Luther’s negatively-construed subject demands and begets a positive theory of *community*. For it is in and through the very process of being “[crushed]” that we are goaded “to find happiness and well-being outside ourselves or in our neighbor.” A confrontation with Luther’s God produces a “selflessness” that achieves coherence in and through imaginative access to a theoretical community of others that shares my beliefs, effectively constituting me as a syntagmatic subject. Access to the creatively destructive presence of God therefore reconfigures my sense of self in relation not to the alien “Other” but to *others*, that is, to those with whom I choose to share my virtue or *the effective force of my imagination*. In this way, the “contrary will” (16) that takes hold of the subject in Luther’s epochal encounter inaugurates access to a shared or communal imagination. The relationship between subjectivity and community implied by Luther suggests, in Judith Butler’s words, a theory of community whereby “a subject only emerges through a process of abjection, jettisoning those dimensions of oneself that fail to conform to the discrete figures yielded by the norm of the human subject” (141).<sup>48</sup> Luther posits, in short, a subjectivity that resides in critical awareness of what Hegel calls *Geist* or “Spirit.” While notoriously difficult to pin down, I accept R.C. Solomon’s

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advantage. This the spirit of faith cannot tolerate, but with joyful zeal it attempts to put the body under control and hold it in check” (Hillberbrand, Hans J., *The Protestant Reformation*, 16-17).

<sup>48</sup> See *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2010). For further theorization of community as shared vulnerability or precarity, see Butler’s *Precarious Life* (2006) as well as Robert Esposito’s work on “*communitas*,” especially his trilogy, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (2008), *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (2010), and *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life* (2011).

definition of *Geist* as that which “refers to some sort of *general consciousness, a single ‘mind’ common to all men*” (emphasis in original). Solomon elaborates:

‘Geist’ is a convenient way of talking about the common properties of a society, of a people, or of all people while ignoring, but not denying, their differences. This sympathetic account of “Geist” eliminates the absurdity of talking about some actual mind common to all people. Geist is universal only in that it is the name of those properties had by every human consciousness: it is not universal in the sense that it is the name of a single entity (mind) common to every individual ... The concept of “Geist” is the hallmark of a theory of self identity, a theory in which *I* am something other than a person. (632, emphasis in original).<sup>49</sup>

*Geist* presents the possibility that I may retain my subjectivity even as it is reconfigured by a dominant rational order. It suggests the acquisition of what I call perceptual telepresence: that sensation that I may be both “here and present elsewhere” at the same time.<sup>50</sup> Against claims that “self-fashioning” and “possessive individualism” came totalistically to define the early modern period, then, I would like to suggest that Luther’s attack on Christian righteousness illustrates a paradigmatic moment whereby identity comes to be defined not in terms of alterity, but in terms of *community*, a neighborly “other” that both belongs to and reconstitutes the self.

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<sup>49</sup> His succinct and clear definition continues as follows: “In the *Phenomenology*, we are first concerned with the inadequacy of conceptions of oneself as an individual in opposition to others (in the “master-slave relationship”) and in opposition to God (e.g., in “contrite consciousness”). This opposition is first resolved in ethics, in the conception of oneself as a member of a family, of a community, of Kant’s “Kingdom of Ends,” as a citizen of the state, and then in religion, in which one conceives of oneself as “part” of God and a religious community. Absolute consciousness is the explicit recognition of one’s identity as universal Spirit.” See “Hegel’s Concept of “Geist” in *The Review of Metaphysics* 23.4 (1970); see also Solomon’s *From Hegel to Existentialism* (1987).

<sup>50</sup> While Anthony King argues against the notion of *Geist* as inhering in a single subject, Judith Butler claims that *Geist* may indeed be thought of as “a fiction of infinite capability, a romantic traveler who only learns from what he experiences” (Salih 23). And yet, as Sarah Salih puts it, “he is a deluded and impossible figure who, like Don Quixote, tilts at ontological windmills in his pursuit of reality” (24). See Salih’s introduction to *The Judith Butler Reader*.

The self is not, in Greenblatt's words, marked by "signs of its own subversion or loss"; it is, rather, a complex perceptual space endowed with keen critical awareness of that which it has *uprooted*. The mark or "sign" of the encounter is therefore projected into the commons, through forms of communitarian expression that transform the very surfaces from which the self has been ripped asunder. One begins to record, in short, one's experience of having been interpellated by *Geist*: the process by which one achieves recognition of one's place *within* a given order.<sup>51</sup>

This project argues that the processes that lead to such a conception of self-in-community are bound up inextricably with mounting critiques of and critical distance fostered toward the pagan and theological virtues. This reconfigured sense of the self was linked to profound shifts in the material conditions of early modern people. In her capacious study of early modern vagrants and the working poor, Patricia Fumerton provides an account of early modern subjectivity that subtly yokes virtuality as a subjective mode with the ongoing virtue crisis. Indeed, Fumerton assigns a "virtual 'I'" to early modern itinerant subjects whose voices have either been lost to history or mediated in the archives by other, more literate, selves; she places particular emphasis on individuals marked by conditions of "wandering."<sup>52</sup> She opines that "the scarcity of introspective accounts by lower-order subjects might point not only to a lack of evidence or writing skills but also to a subjectivity that was by nature not introspective or inward-turning,"; she perceptively contrasts these largely vagrant or "wandering" subjects with "lowly Puritan

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<sup>51</sup> Rebellion against *Geist* therefore constitutes a form of critical resistance synonymous, for Michel Foucault, with "virtue" itself. This image conjures up, in ways I will discuss further in Chapter 4, E.M.W. Tillyard's notion of Elizabethan degree. See *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943).

<sup>52</sup> See *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), in which she further notes, "one of the defining features of the vagrant outlined in the statutes of the period was an inability to give proper 'reckoning' of his or her life. In delineating legally vagrant occupations, the 1572 statute, for instance, includes as vagrants those who 'can give no reckoning how he or she doth lawfully get his or her living' ... We might recall that when the pregnant Margaret Legg (alias Jackson alias Smyth) 'was found wandering as a vagrant,' the report confirmed her pregnancy with the addition 'not giving any account or reason of her wandering. Similarly, the entry for April 8, 1605, regarding 'Dorothy Greene *alias* Percye, a wanderer,' concludes, 'She is not able to give account of her life' (47-48).

nonconformists” such as Rogwer Lowe and John Bunyan, “devout subjects” who are “very placed” in at least one important regard: “he or she is securely housed or anchored by God” (48).

The inward-searching Bunyan, for instance, though often appearing to be hopelessly and damnably afloat in a secular world, is in fact by virtue of his tireless soul-searching at all times placed, however agonizingly, by the godly eye / I ... I would further question whether subjectivity defined primarily in theological terms may not be subjectivity at all from our modern, and an emergent early modern, perspective. Of course, one could counter that such a notion of God-based subjectivity was precisely what contemporaries were encouraged by their culture to find, which cannot be denied. But a new kind of subjectivity was simultaneously emerging in the period that speaks more to a modern notion of singularity and disconnection—a detached “I”—and unsettled poor subjects may well have had greater access to it than did their better-off contemporaries (48-49).

Fumerton’s argument appears to suppose that vagrants are proto-secular subjects, unable to be similarly “anchored by God.” While she makes a compelling case, one must confront the possibility that the advent of any such virtual or “detached I” in the period may also have been born precisely out of those very traditions that had long succeeded in “anchoring” individuals under the persistent gaze of a watchful God. In short, Fumerton’s “virtual I” overlooks the greater possibility that almost no one, however devout, might retain internal stability or coherence through the tumult of and following the Reformations.

Of course, any such notion of stability or “anchoring” is complicated by multitudes when one situates these concerns in the arguably greater context of the early modern virtue crisis.

Shorn of teleology, which had provided inner purpose and thus an increased sense of communal

purpose, early modern subjects assume, in MacIntyre's words, a "ghostly 'I,'" or "an abstract and ghostly character" (33).<sup>53</sup> "The self is now thought of as lacking any necessarily social identity, because the kind of social identity that it once enjoyed is no longer available; the self is now thought of as criterionless, because the kind of *telos* in terms of which it once judged and acted is no longer thought to be credible" (33). Such a perspective on virtue, wherein virtue is detached from self and viewed as an entity to be put to use in the public sphere, a mask to be worn rather than integrated into one's character, suggest a certain critical distance had emerged between the self and these systems of belief that had long determined what one "ought" do in moral affairs. Radically critical and suspended by structures of self-reliance, the virtual, ghostly, or detached self, stripped of the shackles of prescriptive pagan virtue, is in fact a product of broader early modern tensions around the decline and subsequent reinscription of the pagan and theological virtues into the external spheres of public adjudication and approval. Indeed, as de Vienne unironically puts it, "for such as we seem, such are we judged."

And so one must ask: does the "ghostliness" MacIntyre ascribe to the modern self indeed entail a diminished role or function on behalf of virtue? To be sure, critique and awareness of virtue, especially feminine virtue, was a defining activity of the early modern period.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>53</sup> MacIntyre turns to Sartre and Goffman to elaborate: "In Goffman's anecdotal descriptions of the social world there is still that ghostly 'I,' the psychological peg to whom Goffman denies substantial selfhood, flitting evanescently from one solidly role-structured situation to another; and for Sartre the self's self-discovery is characterized as the discovery that the self is "nothing," is not a substance but a set of perpetually open possibilities" (32).

<sup>54</sup> Joan Scott, Kathryn Schwarz, and Jessica C. Murphy have shown the ways in which virtue becomes relegated to the sphere of feminine will and conduct. Mary Poovey, in *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), and Jay Clayton, in *Romantic Vision and the Novel* (Cambridge UP, 1987), have explored the consequences of this relegation of virtue to the sphere of the feminine in the eighteenth-century novel. Indeed, an utter explosion of interest in the limits of virtue—particularly the "feminine virtues" of chastity and obedience—defines the conduct and exemplary literature of the period. This body of work points, ostensibly, to an emergent crisis of masculine will and intention that is resolved through the policing of feminine agency. I believe that it attests equally to a loosening and repositioning of cultural coordinates around the language of virtue. Indeed, as Schwarz argues, "Feminine virtue is neither a narrow subset nor a deceptive translation of social policy; the principles that

then, not so much a collapse of interest but a recalibrated attention to the virtues emerges through this process of detachment and critical suspension; an awareness that may prove useful (*quid utile*) in certain domains while not in others, in life as in rhetoric. Such critical distance arguably fosters less a schism in subjectivity, as MacIntyre proposes, or a consolidating effect, as per Greenblatt, than a multiplicity or surplus of possibilities for existence—a sense that one may don or adapt the virtues at will. This view on virtue neither entails that the subject lives a life of vice or dishonesty, nor that she lacks “rational” understanding of the virtues she may wish to adopt.<sup>55</sup> To the contrary, such an understanding of virtue suggests that early modern subjects began to inhabit with critical acuity moral codes that had theretofore subjected them to external and indeed artificial notions of how behavior ought correspond to belief.

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In Chapter 1, “Simulacra and Dissimulation: Virtue and *Virtù* in Luther and Machiavelli,” I argue that a two-pronged assailment of this unchallenged system of correspondence brought about tumultuous changes in the domains of early modern religion and politics. I focus mainly on the transformative theories of virtue and *virtù* posited, respectively, by Martin Luther and Niccolò Machiavelli. On the one hand, this chapter limns the political implications of Lutheran virtue theory by examining it in the context of the larger virtue crisis to which it contributed so

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inform chastity, maternity, and filial duty are to a substantial degree identical with heterosocial ideology on its broadest scale” (4). See recent work by Schwarz (*What You Will*, 2011) and Murphy (*Virtuous Necessity*, 2015).

<sup>55</sup> In Book II of *The Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines virtue as a “state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i. e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it” (II.6, 30). Lesley Brown’s gloss clarifies what is meant here by the term “mean”: “if you choose a certain designation, such as *spite*, or *murder*, you already locate the item as a vice. *Envy* is by its very name *inappropriate* distress at another’s good fortune (whereas distress at underserved good fortune is a virtue: righteous indignation or *nemesis*, II.8, 1108b1). The same is true of *murder* (always wrong) as opposed to killing, of which there may be a mean, i.e. appropriate occasions of killing, for example of a condemned criminal” (216, emphasis in original). See David Ross’s translation of *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009).

singularly. Ultimately, I investigate Luther's stance toward mediated confessional presence, as well as his stance toward and participation in the production of print media. The "virtual self" thereby engendered is not so much a product of virtue's decline as it is of significantly increased critical attention to that which may or may not constitute virtue. A new kind of relationship between power and imagination is necessary in order to erect and inspire, for Machiavelli, a robust and well-governed principality, or for Luther, the possibility for "Christian liberty" or freedom from "slavery."<sup>56</sup> As I have already shown, Luther countervails classic Aristotelian virtue theory by insisting that virtue comes from an inner source, and yet is inaugurated through an earth-shattering encounter with God that results in the reconstitution of subjectivity. Machiavelli, on the other hand, argues that prevailing conceptions of "virtue" must, in a politically viable world, cede temporally and materially to "*virtù*" or sheer "ability," for only *virtù* can face and crush the fickle *fortuna*. For Machiavelli, then, traditional notions of Aristotelian and other forms of virtue are "necessary" only insofar as they prove to be *useful*; that is, only insofar as one might equip one with the skills of artifice so as to *appear* virtuous in the public domain, thereby cultivating favor among one's subjects.<sup>57</sup>

By turning to the prose and fiction of Philip Sidney, my second chapter investigates the shape and character of early modern heterocosm, those "second natures" erected by the God-given virtue of the poet. Harry Berger defines Renaissance heterocosm as "literally a second world because it [is] set over against not *an* other world or *a* first world but *the* first world" (16). With its interest in the activating or actionable power of virtue, I argue that Sidnean heterocosm

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<sup>56</sup> See Luther's *On Christian Liberty* (1520).

<sup>57</sup> For, Quentin Skinner observes, "when it comes to assessing the behavior of princes, even the shrewdest observers are largely condemned to judge by appearances. Isolated from the populace, sustained by the majesty of his role, the prince's position is such that 'everyone can see what you appear to be' but 'few have direct experience of what you really are'" (49).

is concerned less with the imaginative potential of a “second world” than it is with the active formation of a virtual world, that is, a “first” world erected and sustained by the very “effect” of virtue. The virtual is in this sense very much a “dimension of reality.” I argue from this position that Sidney advances a virtue-based poetics that both theorizes and materially constitutes a virtuous and lettered polity. In Sidney, imagination and ethics conjoin without colliding. One might imagine what Sidney calls “castles in the air” (216), but nothing will come from mere fancy; a new kind of relationship between power and imagination, grounded in poetics, is necessary in order to establish a just polity.

Sidney’s virtuously defiant heroines in the *Arcadia* draw explicit attention to the transformative or “radiological”<sup>58</sup> power of virtuous critical resistance, synonymous for Michel Foucault and Judith Butler with “virtue” itself. Just as Foucault claims, “There is something in critique which is akin to virtue” (43), Butler posits that virtue is “established through its difference from an uncritical obedience to authority” (311).<sup>59</sup> In Chapter 3, I investigate the logic according to which resistance to an “uncritical obedience to authority” informs two Shakespearean works known for the “impossibility” or “irrationality” of the universes they present. “The Phoenix and Turtle” (1601), one of Shakespeare’s most complex and cryptic lyrics, offers up a Phoenix, almost universally understood to represent the dying Queen Elizabeth, committed to an “eternitie” of death; at the conclusion of the poem, its remains are inexplicably buried in an “urn.” I argue that the poem’s recursive nature, as well as its evisceration of reason

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<sup>58</sup> This term aptly synthesizes a force that is both “radiant” and “materializing.” I thank Kathryn Schwarz for this suggestion.

<sup>59</sup> See “What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault’s Virtue” (2000) in *The Judith Butler Reader* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), edited Sara Salih. In Chapter 2, I further explore Butler’s essay as well as Foucault’s use of the term virtue, and I define more precisely this project’s understanding of axiology, or the relationship between aesthetics and ethics.



and surprising turn to complex scholastic principles, requires readers to imagine more than just metaphoric doubling of words and concepts. It presupposes an alternate reality and history, governed by a logic and set of communitarian values alien to its time, in which the doomed Phoenix and Turtle and their historical correlates might actually live on. The poem's incisive power is predicated not on the ground of presaging a world without future, but rather, its apocalyptic closure suggests the opening of an entirely new order: a formal and perceptual revolution grounded in an eschatological poetics that requires one to imagine the very destruction of reason as commonly understood.<sup>60</sup>

In *Othello*, the audience likewise bears witness to impossible but inevitable deaths. In making apparent the meticulous logic according to which its protagonists are banished from what Robert Heilman calls “the whole world of rational demonstration” (Curtis 118), *Othello* inveighs against epistemologies of fact that lead to the creation of what we call, in 2017, “alternative facts.” To this extent, *Othello* interrogates the possibility for Othello to be utterly confined by or to transcend his factic attributes, what Frantz Fanon calls “the fact of blackness.”<sup>61</sup> But the play is also, ultimately, about the dangers of succumbing to pure transcendence: Iago seemingly is pure intellect, pure mind. Since so much of *Othello* is organized by Iago, who occupies far and away the most lines, he becomes the architect or effective force of an alternate reality. The consequence of his diabolical scheming—what we might indeed call his *virtù*—is the very distortion of the real itself. I argue that *virtù* therefore inaugurates a virtual world, that is, a vicely reality that arises from “the vertue and effect” of Iago's incomparable imaginative powers.

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<sup>60</sup> The poem may therefore be said to challenge Lee Edelman's provocative and influential antirelational thesis regarding queer futurity. See *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*.

<sup>61</sup> Chapter 4 of this dissertation will provide precise definitions of these and related Sartrean-Fanonian terms.

I conclude this project with an experiment of sorts. Chapter 4, “Virtual Authorship and *Love’s Martyr’s* Digital Body Politic,” extends the focus of my work on Lutheran textuality and Sidnean virtual corporeality while developing claims and positions made in my work on “The Phoenix and Turtle.” Printed at the height of the Poet’s War and toward the end of Queen Elizabeth I’s long reign, *Love’s Martyr* (1601) provides a compelling test-case for the theories of virtual materiality and community that I articulate in Chapters 1 and 2. Written chiefly by the volume’s editor, an obscure poet named Robert Chester, *Love’s Martyr* contains a stunning group of “Poetical Essays” composed by “the best and chiefest writers” of the age: George Chapman, John Marston, Ben Jonson, and William Shakespeare. This chapter examines the production circumstances by which virtual identities are summoned into being through print. I will show that early modern virtual identities arise in print through a logic that distinctly recalls and echoes the logic of telepresence, according to which the king’s two bodies coheres into law. The “virtual” dimensions of early modern textuality will be explicitly addressed in this chapter using digital tools and methods that suggest the possibility of editorial intervention in Chester’s main narrative by one or more of the volume’s guest poets. These findings are detailed and further developed in a large Appendix of data, “*Love’s Martyr’s* Digital Data” (Appendix C), and in a website that contains additional graphics and features.

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## CHAPTER 1

### SIMULACRA AND DISSUMULATION: VIRTUE AND *VIRTÙ* IN LUTHER AND MACHIAVELLI

If virtue no delighted beauty lack  
Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.

—*Othello*

And therefore is the outward beauty a true sign of the inward goodness.

—Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier*<sup>1</sup>

If the aim of this project is to follow the contradictory logic according to which the early modern period marshals a retreat from Aristotelian virtue ethics, then this chapter attends to this contradiction by yoking “virtue with “the virtual”—in effect, by exploding Alisdair MacIntyre’s contention that early modernity brought about an epistemological crisis that resulted in “simulacra of morality.”<sup>2</sup> At stake here is the notion that axiological coherence may be *inherited* from another, or that teleology or inner purpose is derived in and through adherence to epistemologically stable categories that neither belong to one nor are makings of one’s own.<sup>3</sup> While my greater project explores the stakes and implications of this crisis, which I claim contributed significantly to our modern sense of a virtuality detached from virtue or axiological aspect, this chapter will be occupied with tracing foundational moments in the trajectory of these

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<sup>1</sup> McGuire 201.

<sup>2</sup> Put differently, I seek to realize Massumi’s more recent claim that “the virtual is ethical.” Derived powerfully from a Deleuzian conception of the virtual, Massumi’s claim does not examine virtue ethics per se when accounting for the virtual’s axiological character.

<sup>3</sup> An equally critical question, which I aim to explore elsewhere, is how a movement obsessed with the regulation of feminine conduct came at the problem of waning virtue by placing agential limits on feminine will, self-determination, and intention itself.

historical ruptures. To this end, I focus significantly on the theories and practices of Martin Luther, whose departures from Aristotelian and Augustinian perspectives on virtue and godly presence speak to a crisis in early modern virtue that gets resolved, ultimately, through virtue's radical externalization in print. As I have begun to argue, Luther's strident anti-Aristotelianism and his insistence on eradicating the mediating confessional presence give way to an emergent virtual selfhood in early modern Europe.<sup>4</sup> Symptomatic of shifting material conditions in early modern Europe, such a self depends upon both radical awareness of and *detachment from* the self, or that which had come to be recognized as such through the early sixteenth century. Seen this way, Luther and Niccolò Machiavelli become unlikely bedfellows. I will argue that Machiavelli's formulations of *virtù* and *fortuna* as well as his theories of simulation and dissimulation betray similar concerns in the domains of princely authority and performance. These tactics contribute to the externalization and ornamentalization of virtue in the public domain, processes that give way to what early modern virtue ethicist Jennifer Herdt has referred to as a "theatricality of virtue."<sup>5</sup>

In what follows, I examine the processes by which both men, having cast away Aristotelian virtue, create a kind of leveling, a purgation that forms an epistemological clearing: an *Ur*-moment in their respective enterprises that is predicated upon the erasure, rejection, or diminution of pagan virtue. From this position, Luther claims newfound perceptual and existential clarity, thereby establishing grounds for belief freed from the shackles of virtue's

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<sup>4</sup> In advancing such a claim, I do not make any claims regarding the non-existence of parallel, alternative or even countervailing notions of the "self" that exist in or emerge from the period. In this sense I am allied with Stephen Greenblatt, who writes in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, "There is no such thing as a single 'history of the self' in the sixteenth century, except as the product of our need to reduce the intricacies of complex and creative beings to safe and controllable order" (8).

<sup>5</sup> See *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: U Chicago Press, 2008).

external imposition. This eradication provides a productive ground from which reformation of the self before the eyes of God and in communion with others becomes possible. Similarly liberated from virtue, Machiavelli can thereby advance the case for a conception of virtue linked not to *quid honestas* but to *quid utile*, that is, his theory of political *virtù*. Running completely counter to dominant theories of statecraft underpinned by sunny Ciceronian virtue, Machiavelli's *virtù* becomes the force that defines the attributes of great princes and secures government against the tyranny of *fortuna*, or chance.

Luther and Machiavelli thus pave the way for revolutionary thinking about selfhood and state through their critique and rejection of virtue. Specifically, in both cases, Aristotelian virtue cedes to the establishment of perceptual and ontological conditions that call for critical attention to the causes that underlie actual or *unmediated* presence. In Luther, this occurs through an affirmation of “inner presence” obtained through contact with the Word vis-à-vis one's unmediated faith in God. Analogously, Machiavelli forges his path toward *virtù* through heightened awareness of the temporality and materiality of the now—his defiant “*is*,” contrasted with the prescriptive “ought” associated with the theological and cardinal virtues that emphasize the possible or imagined as opposed to the *unimagined* but actual present in which one is always absorbed by *fortuna*, or what Louis Althusser refers to as the “aleatory materialism” of the encounter between *virtù* and *fortuna*.<sup>6</sup>

## Works and Action

Luther's critique of pagan or Aristotelian virtue is centrally concerned with Aristotle's conception of *action*, to which the virtues are fundamentally tethered. According to Aristotle,

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<sup>6</sup> See *Machiavelli and Us* (2000).

virtue is not bestowed upon us naturally; it comes about through actions cultivated by habit or *ethos*. To be virtuous, that is, one must quite literally *work*, or put one's virtue to practice. These iterative acts lead to either a good or ill-disposed life: "It is well said, then, that it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man; without doing these no one would have even a prospect of becoming good" (28).<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere Aristotle notes in a similar vein, "by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by being habituated to feel fear or cowardice, we become brave or cowardly ... It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather *all* the difference" (II.3 1103b, 24). Such a view of virtuous action is anathema to Luther and other reformers. Aristotle's criticism of the imperative to show one's "work," and to be accounted for it before the eyes of God, is seen as a prideful and externalized display of what ought to be one's inhabitation of God's grace.

Luther rails endlessly against the notion of works throughout his writings. In *Lectures on Romans* (1515-1516), he claims, "The righteousness of God must be distinguished from the righteousness of men which comes from works—as Aristotle in the third chapter of his *Ethics* clearly indicates. According to him, righteousness follows upon and flows from actions. But, according to God, righteousness precedes works and works results from it" (18); similarly, "the moralists, who rely on their good works, hope to this day to obtain salvation of a kind that corresponds to their works. But the fact that they are interested only in the size and extent of their works is the most certain sign by which one can recognize them as unbelievers who, in their pride, despise the word" (291). In *On Christian Liberty* (1520), Luther extends his attack on works to considerations of law and freedom. The rejection of works forms the very basis of

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<sup>7</sup> In *The Nichomachean Ethics*.



Luther's conception of liberty, which stipulates that a truly free Christian is liberated not only from works but also "is free from the law"—including the laws of the Old Testament—because such a person "makes the law and works unnecessary for any man's righteousness and salvation." Indeed, such a person "has in his faith all that he needs, and needs no works to justify him" (12).<sup>8</sup>

Nowhere is Luther's rejection of works more vividly portrayed than in his repeated evocation of the rotting or flourishing tree of Matthew 12:33. For Luther, the metaphor underscores the notion that reliance upon external action attenuates one's ability to focus on belief in God, which is one's duty above all. Moreover, these passages indicate that Luther's rejection of virtue is due precisely to its externalization and investment in works; true virtue should arise from within, as though it were a part of one's nature, rather than enforced artificially from without. As Luther puts it in *Romans*:

... the Lord says in Matt. 12:33: "Either make the tree good and its fruit good; or make the tree evil or its fruit evil," in other words: If the "prudence of the flesh," which is an evil tree, is not changed into the "prudence of the spirit," which is a good tree, it cannot produce good fruit even though it appears to bear good fruit.

The fruit does not produce the tree but the tree the fruit. Works and actions do not produce virtue, as Aristotle says, but virtue determine actions, as Christ teaches.

For a second act presupposes the first one, and *the prerequisite of an action is substance and power just as there is no effect without a cause.* (228, my

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<sup>8</sup> One could cite many more instances of Luther's attack on works as well as his reasons for this, which extend beyond criticisms of virtue. To cite but two more, in *On Christian Liberty*, Luther claims that "it is a blind and dangerous doctrine which teaches that the commandments must be fulfilled by works. The commandments must be fulfilled before any works can be done, and the works proceed from the fulfillment of the commandments" (16); in addition, "they who imagine they are fulfilling the law by doing the works of chastity and mercy required by the law (the civil and human virtues) might not be confident that they will be saved; they are included under the sin of unbelief, and must either seek mercy or be justly condemned" (13).

emphasis).<sup>9</sup>

Even as Luther claims righteousness may arise only through the utter destruction of self and a radical *dependence* on external sources, the process by which virtue is constituted or made manifest becomes radically *internalized*. The Aristotelian notion that one must “habituate” or perform one’s virtues in the world in order for them to inhere—in order for them actually to become virtues—is rejected in favor of a method whereby an inner power, bestowed by an apocalyptic encounter with God, gives form to one’s virtue. The tree metaphor is apt: it indicates the sensibility by which one’s virtues follow as if in corporeal plentitude from an inner essence, a series of multiplying births. “Works and actions do not produce virtue, as Aristotle says, but virtue determine actions, as Christ teaches”: virtue in the Lutheran sense *succeeds by disappearing*, by becoming a determinant in a process in which its function is invisible. As Heim notes, the “paradox” of virtuality is indeed that it does precisely this; “at its diaphanous best, virtuality vanishes in sheer transparency” (515).<sup>10</sup> At the same time, its presence is undeniable; since “the prerequisite of an action is substance and power just as there is no effect without a cause,” one must suppose the existence of the “tree” should one observe that which it has fructified. The power of Lutheran virtue therefore lies in its very unverifiability, its basis in belief and not in the pagan pragmatism of Aristotelian ethics, predicated on external show and the iterability of actions.

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<sup>9</sup> Consider also: “No good work helps justify or save as an unbeliever. On the other hand, no evil work makes him wicked or damns him; but the unbelief which makes the person and the tree evil does the evil and damnable works. Hence when a man is good or evil, this is effected not by works, but by faith or unbelief . . . And Christ says the same: ‘Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad [Matthew 12:33], as if he would say, “Let him who wishes to have good fruit begin by planting a good tree.” So let him who wishes to do good works begin not with doing of works but with *believing*, which makes the person good, for nothing makes a man good except faith, or evil except unbelief. (70-71, my emphasis). From John Dillenberger’s *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (New York: Anchor Books, 1962).

<sup>10</sup> See Heim’s “Virtuality” entry in the *Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2014).

While the workmanlike iterability of Aristotelian ethics makes it “grace’s worst enemy,” such a perception does not lie in necessary contradiction to the soteriological position that righteousness may be achieved through direct commune with God. For these ideas truly to contradict, Luther’s implicit stance must be that belief must not be externalized; put differently, virtue, borne of belief, must precede any outward manifestation of deed. As is well known, Lutheran ethics would thus seem to place an inordinate premium on the inwardness and intimate nature of virtue, in distinction to the entire scholastic-Aristotelian and Augustinian traditions from which it so radically departed.

But we must here reconcile a yet another seeming contradiction in the Lutheran virtue system. How is it that a religious sect bent on the internalization, indeed the privatization, of virtue put to use the most radically *externalizing* force one might conceive of by which to disseminate its ideas? That is, by means of print. The answer may seem at once obvious and paradoxical. Reformers, placing primacy on the Word over and against the ways in which it may be corrupted by Papist institutions, naturally place primacy on the ways in which to grant as much access to as many as possible to the unmediated presence of God. But of course, the Word as such—relegated in type—becomes its own mass-produced media object. The iterability of the Word thus enables a different form of privatization or relationship of the “inner man” to God: a relationship where God’s *virtual presence* may be accessed directly by whomever has access to a Bible. The true believer may access and commune with God anywhere and everywhere; the Church no longer has the ability to sanction when, how, or under what conditions people may gain access to the Word. A rapturous engagement with God occurs when one reads or hears the words, which are, as it were, virtually communicated to the receiver from God to print without

mediator.<sup>11</sup> As Grant Maddox notes, such access has the ability to transform the self:

Individual responsibility for spiritual observance also meant a responsibility to read, study, absorb, and interpret the scriptures for oneself . . . reading scripture was no antiquarian pursuit but meant a passionate engagement with the Word of God as presently spoken, and as illuminated by the presence of the Holy Spirit (559).

The presence of the holy spirit is thereby effected through an external and indeed material encounter. Even as Luther rejects the external and material world, the print culture in which Luther himself was centrally engaged provided the means by which his reformation became possible. In the preface to the first part of his *Works* (1539), Luther writes, “it was our intention and our hope, when we began to put the Bible into German, that there would be less writing, and more studying and reading of the Scriptures. For all other writings should point to the Scriptures, as John pointed to Christ; when he said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Loc. 77).<sup>12</sup> It goes without saying that the collective works of Luther vastly outsize the Bible. Even so, his writings do indeed “point to the Scriptures,” if indirectly, by pointing as often to the evils of Aristotle, the papists, and heathens of all designations (but particularly, and infamously, the Jews). Indeed, the sheer profusion of written material about the Bible, in addition to the number of actual Bibles now in circulation, allows one to concede the possibility that reformation could

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<sup>11</sup> As John Robinson, a Puritan evangelist put it: “I am verily persuaded that the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of this holy word . . . I beseech you to remember it is an article of your church covenant that you be reader to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God” (559, Maddox).

<sup>12</sup> Regarding the publication and legacy of his own works, Luther is characteristically unsentimental: “I would gladly have seen all my books forgotten and destroyed; if only for the reason that I am afraid of the example. For I see what benefit it has brought to the churches, that men have begun to collect many books and great libraries, outside and alongside the Holy Scriptures; and have begun especially to scramble together, without any distinction, all sorts of ‘Fathers,’ ‘Councils,’ and ‘Doctors.’ Not only has good time been wasted, and the study of the Scriptures neglected; but the pure understanding of the divine Word is lost, until at last the Bible has come to lie forgotten in dust under the bench” (Loc. 77). See T. E. Schmauk’s *Works of Martin Luther with Introductions and Notes, Vol. 1* (Philadelphia: Holman Company, 1915).

have a self-cancelling effect. In other words, evil or ill-intent may likewise spread from these very same sources. Luther confronts this possibility in *Romans*:

The Scripture or rather its translator frequently uses “hearing” and “seeing” for “that which was heard” and “that which was seen” ... This is so, first, because that which is proclaimed is invisible and can be perceived only by hearing and believing, and, secondly, and more appropriately so, because the word of God is very good in itself but as it is spread to man it becomes something diverse, and, *being itself without any variety, it must undergo variation* (Pauck 303-304, my emphasis).

Here, Luther anticipates and frames the radical contingency of the critical *qua* performative act. While the Word is everlasting and unchanging, it “[undergoes] variation” insofar as the scriptural “translator” articulates, in speech, the Word with each new encounter in order to reveal to himself and to others that which “is invisible and can be perceived only by hearing and believing.” The material nature of Lutheran belief is therefore twofold: the human voice itself comes to act as second-order interface between the printed Word and that which it reveals. Insofar as these material sources cede to the immaterial and non-verifiable presence of God, they may be construed as “mediums” that produce a virtual effect. Critically, then, we witness here the process by which “inner” virtue, imparted to the subject through an investment of belief in an external source, establishes the conditions not only for God’s virtual presence but for a community subtended by virtuous principles: a recognition, that is, of the community of fellow believers who share a common understanding of the Word as it “[spreads] to man” and becomes, among them, “something diverse.”

## Belief and Presence

Lutheran virtual materialism thus accords one a provisional relationship between virtue and the virtual as follows: virtuality may be understood as *the acquisition of belief in virtue itself*, disconnected from any externalization of that belief, i.e., the prescriptive pagan or Aristotelian sense of virtue.<sup>13</sup> Virtuality is not so much about presence, or presence alone, as *belief* in that presence. Believability in what is or is not in one's presence lies at the heart not only of virtuality but of virtue, and is the lost middle term connecting the two. In this way, Luther's "uprooting" and rejection of pagan virtue in favor of a method whereby the self convenes directly with God vis-à-vis printed material marks the beginning moments of early modern virtuality. The "inward" self thereby becomes decentered and radically *unselved*, insofar as "our personal righteousness must be uprooted" in order to receive God's grace, which "destroys and uproots and scatters everything." At the same time, the inner subject or "I" accrues heightened critical awareness of the processes by which it attains true virtue, possible only when one first rejects the virtue categories per se.

Luther's stance on the sacrament, however, somewhat complicates these formulations. For despite the emphasis Luther places on belief in that which cannot be verified empirically, he argues, *contra* More, that one does *not* need to believe in order to receive the sacrament. According to the logic of the sacrament, the body and bread form a union of two distinct natures: once the materials are consecrated externally, the process has nothing to do with belief. Unbelievers therefore *can* receive it. However, since the dissembler is deprived of faith, she can inculcate neither true virtue through access to God's presence nor belief in God through the mere

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<sup>13</sup> As I explore in Chapter 2, it is in this sense akin to the Sidnean conception of poetic imagination and its power to reproduce in its own image by virtue of the poet's belief in engendering permanence through print. Sidney will further illustrate the ability of the imagination to create multiple worlds—to access others through the expansive powers of imagination, which can be shared through print.

reception of blessed material. How does Luther reconcile these positions?

Luther provides an explanation for Christ's bodily presence when he imparts the logic according to which transubstantiation and impanation cohere as rituals. Once again, human agency cedes to belief in a greater power: "We do not make Christ's body out of bread. Nor do we say that his body comes into existence out of the bread. We say that his body, which long ago was made and came into existence, *is present when we say*, "This *is* my body." For Christ commands us to say not, "*Let* this become my body," or, "*Make* my body there," but "This *is* my body" (*Luther's Works* 37 187, my emphasis). The Word itself, and it alone, effectively summons Christ into presence upon being uttered by he who possesses belief in his virtual presence. Existing in the eternal now or "to be," the indicative mood of Christ's command trumps all human imperatives or attempts to bend the material world to its will; one cannot "will" the act of transubstantiation, no matter the strength of one's beliefs.

The stakes of these distinctions become clearer as Luther discusses the real presence versus his "sacramental union," defined by him in his "Confessional Concerning Christ's Supper" (1528). He asks, "Why then should we not much more say in the Supper, "This is my body," even though bread and body are two distinct substances, and the word 'this' indicates the bread? Here, too, out of two kinds of objects a union has taken place, which I shall call a "sacramental union," because Christ's body and the bread are given to us as a sacrament."<sup>14</sup>

Of course, debates regarding the literal "place" of Christ in Christian ritual long precede Luther. As Harry Eis notes, "from some Anglican perspectives the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist does not imply that Jesus Christ is present materially or locally. This is in accord

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<sup>14</sup> Luther continues, "This is not a natural or personal union, as is the case with God and Christ. It is also perhaps a different union from that with the dove has with the Holy Spirit, and the flame with the angel, but it also assuredly a sacramental union." See *Luther's Works* 37, 299-300.

with the definition of the Roman Catholic Church, as expressed, for instance by St. Thomas Aquinas, who, while saying that the whole Christ is present in the sacrament, also said that this presence was not ‘as in a place.’ Real does not mean material: the lack of the latter does not imply the absence of the former. The Eucharist is not intrinsic to Christ as a body part is to a body, but extrinsic as His instrument to convey Divine Grace.”<sup>15</sup> Even so, the logic of telepresence becomes central to grasping the disorienting physics of the sacramental union. Using the words of institution from the Last Supper, Luther differentiates sacramental union from not only transubstantiation but also impanation:

If were to say over all the bread there is, ‘This is the body of Christ,’ nothing would happen, but when we follow his institution and command in the Lord’s supper and say, ‘This is my body,’ then it is his body, not because of our speaking or of our efficacious word, but because of his command in which he has told us so to speak and to do and has attached his own command and deed to our speaking.

(8)

In effect, Luther notes, through the words of the institution—the very uttering of them—Christ attains a hypostatic union with the one who blesses the sacraments. The presence of Christ in these sacraments therefore depends not only on one’s belief in them as sacraments per se, but on believing that the priest has come into a kind of contact with the virtual body of Christ in instituting the word—a merging of bodies through speech that allows for the ritual’s coherence. Another way of interpreting the logic of these passages: though this sacrament, in this presence, eternal (or sacred, divine) and temporal (or profane, human) time come to co-exist, yet remain

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<sup>15</sup> See *Divine Madness* (2011).



separate.<sup>16</sup>

The importance ultimately of preserving the ritual goes back itself to the power of the Word: the word of God as Christ who through the Instantiation (or Consecration) sets the terms of the ritual and belief system. The procedure foregrounds the notion that in feast among the company of fellow believers, in the act of communal consumption among those of shared belief within a magic circle of sorts,<sup>17</sup> one may witness a return to the physical presence of the living deity that has died. This ritual return to the word enacts a literal reification of the word (it thus becomes *the Word*), and imparts to the Word a signifying and animating power over objects and things.

Spoken during the Last Supper, Christ's words mystically covert bread to body and blood to wine, emphasizing in the Christian context the power of words to convert or newly constitute matter, while that matter retains its originary properties. The body of Christ therefore has what Thomas Cranmer refers to as a "double nativity," that is, a capacity for a double-life: one here on earth, embodied materially either in man or in consecrated objects, and one in heaven, where Christ-as-God generally resides.<sup>18</sup>

In the context of the foregoing discussion on virtual things and bodies, one might therefore ask: how did early modern theologians wrestle with the matter of Aristotelian physics

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<sup>16</sup> Chief theorists of ritual have maintained this general position; see Ernst Cassirer's *The Myth of the State* (1946), Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (1957), and Victor Turner's *The Ritual of Theater: From Human Seriousness to Play* (1982).

<sup>17</sup> I allude here to Johann Huizinga's influential theory of the magic circle, which I discuss further in Chapter 2. See *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1938).

<sup>18</sup> Cranmer claims: "Christ, being both man and God, hath within him two natures; so hath he two nativities, one eternal and the other temporal. And so likewise we, being as it were double men, or having every one us two men in us, the spiritual man and the carnal man, have a double nativity: one of our carnal father, Adam . . . and one of our heavenly Adam, that is to say, Christ, by whom we be made heirs of celestial benediction" (421). See H. Jenkyns' *The Remains of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, Vol. II* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1932).

when faced with the contradiction of Christ's two natures? I contend that they appealed to his *virtue*: God's unique ability to express his power everywhere, and to be present everywhere *virtually*, that is with regard to his vast and incomparable virtue, enabling him to embody in the figure of Christ an earthy presence while at the same time maintaining a Godly presence in the heavens. This virtual power is thus linked and inextricably connected to the very virtues possessed by Christ-as-God, the two-natured man-God able to live and be at more than one place at one time precisely because he possesses a dual nature.<sup>19</sup> Observe the following theological explication, typical of those from the early modern period:

... the *body of Christ*, by reason of the *inhabitation of the Deity*, cannot be said to know all things, or to be everywhere; but the God-head that dwelleth in that body, *may be*, and is every where: for though the humanity of Christ *subsisteth* in the person of the Sonne of God, (and in that respect may be said to be every where, because that having no subsistence of it owne, it subsisteth in a person that is every where,) yet in respect of *Essence*, being a *finite creature*, it is no wayes capable of the diune properties: And therefore though Christ *personally* may be said to be in all places, or the Body of Christ virtually, *respectu virtutu servatricis*, that is, in respect of his having vertue, as the *Sunne*, which is essentially in Heaven, but vertyually in all inferior bodies, may be said to be *every where*; yet the *Body* of Christ locally, or the manhood of Christ solely considered, must needs be in one place: Otherwise how could his manhood be *contained* within the *straights* of the Virgin wombe, if his manhood was every where? How

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<sup>19</sup> Ernst Kantorowicz demonstrates that this sensibility becomes expressly political in the early modern period with the development of the theory of the king's two bodies, whereby the hypostatic union of divine and corporeal qualities converges in the sovereign through law. See *The Kings Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957).

could his body by *nayled* to the Crosse, *wrapped* in clothes, *laide* in the Sepulcher, if that his body was so *spacious* as that no limits could *containe* him? Or how could the *Angell* say, *He is not here*, if he was every where? (emphasis in original).

Defying any conception of ordinary physics, God's power works by way of his expansive and radiating virtue. It is like the telepresent sun, capable of extending its rays or its virtual "effect" upon "all inferior bodies," even as the substance of the sun resides properly in the heavens. Christ achieves this virtual effect precisely because of his virtue, "that is, in respect of his having vertue." Christly virtue thus has no responsibility to biology, physics, or even logic, insofar as his virtue-power exerts totalizing domination over all forms of temporal matters, including presence and reason.

The sun-son analogy was extremely popular in early modern Europe, often used to express the power of a sovereign. Note, for example, George Chapman's application of the analogy in his little-studied history, *Caesar and Pompey*.<sup>20</sup> In a powerful scene that opens the play, the soldiers of an approaching army are likened to the "beames" of the sun to explain the force of a remote sovereign:

*Cato*: For their conspiracy, onely was to make  
One Tyrant ouer all the State of *Rome*.  
And *Pompeys* army, sufferd to be entred,  
Is, to make him, or giue him meanes to be so.

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<sup>20</sup> Dating for this play is notoriously difficult, as scholars have next to no information about its stage history. Relying on stylistic data, E.K. Chambers supports T. M. Parrot's date of 1612-1613. The play was registered in 1631 and published later that year by Thomas Harper. See E. K. Chambers' *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923).

*Metellus:* It followes not.

*Cato:* In purpose; clearely Sir,

Which Ile illustrate, with a cleare example.

If it be day, the Sunne's aboue the earth;

Which followes not (youle answe're) for 'tis day

When first the morning breakes; and yet is then

The body of the Sunne beneath the earth;

But he is virtually aboue it too,

Because his beames are there, and who then knowes not

His golden body will soone after mount.

So *Pompeys* army entred *Italy*,

Yet *Pompey's* not in *Rome*; but *Pompey's* beames

Who sees not there? and consequently, he

Is in all meanes enthron'd in th'Emperie. (STC 1631, emphasis in original)

Cato's dialogue with Metellus, a senator and member of Caesar's party, illustrates that virtual power constitutes a form of princely telepresence, or rather, that true princely power is *always* telepresent. Chapmanian virtuality materializes as a power that extends a body over time and space to effect an underlying political intention; this yields not a dual existence for the entity in question, but rather a physical and metaphysical extension of that entity's power. That is, the prince comes to exert his virtual presence through the potency of those under his command. While superficially analogous to the virtual power of Christ, Pompey's power exceeds the bounds of his corporeal nature due not to his incomparable virtue, but as a consequence of the

threat his forces pose to Italy's peace. Such is the power not of Lutheran or Aristotelian virtue but indeed, of *virtù*, an earthly or temporal force that comes centrally to define Machiavelli's conception of the successful prince and his principality.

### Machiavelli's *Virtù* Reality

We are much beholden to Machiavelli and other writers of that class, who openly and unfeignedly declare or describe what men do, and not what they ought to do.<sup>21</sup>

--Francis Bacon, *De Augmentis*

*The Prince* (1513) may have been the most popular and detested work of the sixteenth century. The papacy placed the book on the *Index Librorum Prohibitum* in 1559, and it was initially banned in England and not published in English until 1640. Even so, copies of it in Latin, Spanish, French, and Italian circulated widely among the political class of Elizabethan England, and Machiavelli's influence was felt in many spheres.<sup>22</sup> While Bacon's response to Machiavelli is typical of its time, he appears to be responding to one particularly noteworthy

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<sup>21</sup> As it turns out, Bacon had quite a bit to say about Machiavelli. He is referenced in Bacon's essay "Of Goodness and Nature" in *Essays* (1620), and also in his letters. "As for the Evil Arts, if a man would propose to himself that principle of Machiavelli, 'that virtue itself a man should not trouble himself to attain, but only the appearance thereof to the world, because credit and reputation of virtue is a help; but the use of it is an impediment (Prince 15, 18 paraphrased by Bacon for emphasis); or again, that other principle of his, 'that a politic man should have for the basis of his policy the assumption that men cannot fitly or safely be wrought upon otherwise than by fear; and should therefore endeavour to have every man, as far as he can contrive it, depend and surround by straits and perils; ... if any one, I say, takes pleasure in such kind of corrupt wisdom, I will certainly not deny (with these dispensations from all the laws of charity and virtue, and an entire devotion to the pressing of his fortune), he may advance it quicker and more compendiously. But it is in life as it is in way, the shortest way is commonly the foulest and muddiest, and surely the fairer way is not much about" (*Works*, 75-76; or cite directly from *The English Face of Machiavelli: A Changing Interpretation 1500-1700*, Routledge, New York by Felix Raab. 1964, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> See Hugh Grady's *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from Richard II to Hamlet* (2003). This influence of course extends to the theatre. A range of Shakespearean plays bear the impress of Machiavellian thought, notably in politically mendacious figures appearing in works such as *Richard III*, *1 and 2 Henry IV*, *Othello* (Iago), *Antony and Cleopatra* (in the character of August Caesar), *King Lear* (Edmund), *Hamlet* (Claudius, and perhaps even Hamlet himself). Richard III, Iago and Edmund are perhaps the most blatantly or superficially "Machiavellian" characters in Shakespeare insofar as they manipulate virtue and engage in acts of political deception. Many more figures can be unearthed in Shakespeare and throughout early modern literature, including in Machiavelli's own literary work.

passage. It appears in Chapter XV of *The Prince*:

... since my intention is to write something useful for anyone who understands it, it seemed more suitable for me to search after the effectual truth of the matter rather than its imagined one. Many writers have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in reality. For there is such a distance between how one lives and how one *ought* to live, that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done achieves his downfall rather than his preservation” (53, my emphasis).

Machiavelli faces the Ciceronian rhetorical distinction between *quid utile* and *quid honestas*, opting to forgo *honestas* entirely in order to pursue his practical course. In this context, disregarding the critical directive toward *honestas* entails a logical unity between the rejected rhetorical strategy and the very *fabrication* or supposition of realities. For Machiavelli, imagined political realities must be abandoned not because they are “dishonest,” but because they are useless. Machiavelli thereby subtly discloses and delivers, in rhetoric, the very terms of his argument: dissimulation, in prose or in life, is preferable to honesty, given the context and particularity of one’s motivations.

Following this passage, Machiavelli concludes that the prince “need not worry about incurring the infamy of those vices without which it would be difficult to save the state. Because, carefully taking everything into account, he will discover that something *which appears to be a virtue*, if pursued, will result in his ruin” (54, my emphasis). Crucially, Machiavelli links his expelled “*ought to be*” explicitly with virtue, associated with imagination and fancy, as opposed to the “real” world of arms and territory which we presently and always face. Such is the “reality” of Machiavelli’s “*is*,” a temporal state residing in the grip of *fortuna*, which must be

vigilantly observed.

Nestled in this famous passage, we thus find a Machiavellian conception of both the real and the imaginary. Central to this formulation is his theory of *virtù*. Machiavellian *virtù* constitutes both a rejection of traditional notions of virtue as well as the summoning of ancient beliefs regarding its function. On the one hand, it is derived from a tradition of thought on virtue's relationship to the goddess *Fortuna*, to which it is irresistibly drawn. As Quentin Skinner notes, "Following his classical and humanist authorities, he treats [*virtù*] as that quality which enables a prince to withstand the blows of Fortune, to attract the goddess's favor, and to rise in consequence to the heights of princely fame, winning honour and glory for himself and security for his government" (40).<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, and crucially for Machiavelli, it is precisely that force which rejects traditional virtue in favor of political necessity and adaptability:

... he divorces the meaning of the term from any necessary connection with the cardinal and princely virtues. He argues instead that the defining characteristic of a truly virtuoso prince will be a willingness to do whatever is dictated by necessity – whether the action happens to be wicked or virtuous – in order to attain his highest ends. So *virtù* comes to denote precisely the requisite quality of moral flexibility in a prince: 'He must be prepared to vary his conduct as the winds of fortune and changing circumstance constrain him.' (44)

In other words, "virtue" is useful only insofar as it merges with and becomes subordinate to *virtù*, Machiavelli's reality-principle: the force in Machiavelli tethered to the instant of political action.

As revealed in *Discourses on Livy* (Chapter XXV), Machiavellian dissimulation extends

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<sup>23</sup> See Skinner's *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

even to matters of ritual and city architecture.<sup>24</sup> In a new principality, Machiavelli claims, it is of paramount importance that the public be quelled and maintained by the *illusion* of its continued traditions. This may require tactics of open deceit:

Anyone who desires or tries to reform the government of a city in a way that is acceptable and capable of maintaining it to everyone's satisfaction will find it necessary to retain *at least the semblance of its ancient customs*, so that it will not seem to the people that its institutions have been changed, though in fact the new institutions may be completely dissimilar from those of the past, because men in general live as much by appearances as by realities: indeed, they are often moved more by things as they appear than by things as they really are (79, my emphasis).

He then cites the example of the Roman tradition of electing a "king of the sacrifice" to perform public sacrificial duties that had once been performed by the king himself, who no longer existed even as a figurehead; "so that in this way the people came to be satisfied with that sacrifice and never had any reason, for lack of it, to desire the return of kings" (80).<sup>25</sup> In short, Machiavelli calls not for dissimulation but the outright *simulation* of the ancient ritual, transposed in new form. This habit, he proclaims, "should be observed by all those who wish to abolish an ancient way of life in a city and guide it to a new and free way of life: since what is new may change men's minds, you must arrange it so that these alterations retain as much of the ancient ways as possible" (80).

The Machiavellian tactic of preserving "the semblance" of the ancient customs suggests

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<sup>24</sup> I refer throughout to Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella's translation (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> In Book II, Chapter 2, Livy notes, "Certain public rites had always been performed by the kings in person, and so that the lack of a king be nowhere regretted, a 'King of the Sacrifice' was created. This office was made subordinate to the high priest, lest the combination of office and name threaten the people's liberty, which at that time was a leading fear" (171). See Peter Constantine's *The Essential Writings of Machiavelli* (2007).



more than mere “deception” on behalf of the prince or his government. This practice indeed extends Machiavellian political manipulation to beyond the mere feigning or *wearing of virtue*; such practices, advocated by Machiavelli and widely attended to in the period, suggest merely the means by which dissimulation establishes a mode of presence divested of belief. However, with Machiavellian simulation, that which we see establishes *positive grounds* for belief in something that had, in reality, been uprooted; in this case, the perpetuation of an illusory past. This approach to dealing with public appearance foreshadows Jean Baudrillard’s theory of the simulacrum:

To dissimulate it to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn’t have. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But it is more complicated than that because simulating is not pretending: “Whoever fakes an illness can simply stay in bed and make everyone believe he is ill.

Whoever simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms” (Litre).

Therefore, pretending, or dissimulating, leaves the principle of reality intact: the difference is always clear, it is simply masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between “true” and “false,” the “real” and the “imaginary.” (3)<sup>26</sup>

In this sense, Machiavelli’s “king of the sacrifice” succeeds not only “because men in general live as much by appearances as by realities,” but also because they have been presented with and *take as real* a “semblance” of reality itself. Precisely because “simulating is not pretending,” the simulacral aspects of Machiavellian *virtù* in turn come to simulate the ethics of virtue itself: it becomes, in essence, an echo or effect of the original form, retaining the *potency* and the form yet evacuated of content. In this way, *virtù*, instrumentalized vis-à-vis rhetoric to

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<sup>26</sup> See *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

the aims of civic virtue, likewise comes to “threaten” the boundary between the “real” and the “imaginary.”

Indeed, while Luther’s quest to publish the Bible in the vernacular led to the increasing instrumentalization and mechanization of virtue, Machiavelli’s conception of instrumental power transparently contributed to a transition in the meaning and use of the term.<sup>27</sup> This complex transitional process may be regarded as the process by which virtue decays as an ontological category and simultaneously gains currency as a force of *capital*.<sup>28</sup> Through this process virtue becomes a public and visual commodity, a component more of political, and less of spiritual, culture.<sup>29</sup>

### Machiavellian Imagination

In declaring the subordination of virtue to *virtù*, Machiavelli posits that the public and private spheres constitute distinct moral realms, each consisting of and made possible by separate

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<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the decline of Aristotelian virtue was met with the simultaneous recuperation and sublimation of feminine will: feminine *fortuna* must be met with *virtù*, a strongly masculine sense of virtue that seeks to maintain order in a chaotic world governed by fickleness and chance. For early modern masculinity to remain self-determining, it needed to rid itself of the shackles of pagan virtue; at the same time, it transformed this category into an instrument of politics vis-à-vis rhetoric and civic virtue. In this sense, virtue does not disappear, as MacIntyre and other virtue ethicists have suggested; rather, it materializes in and through rhetoric, performance, ornament, and public display, through virtue’s newly constitutionalizing force. I therefore posit, for future work, the question of how the taming of feminine will in the name of a greater social good, which came about precisely to support a secularizing agenda toward will and self-determination, works to support and preserve normative heterosociality.

<sup>28</sup> These perspectives on virtue’s relationship to action and belief—in short, the critique of virtue as an entity acting as a temporal interface between human agency and God himself—spread quickly to England. Among English proponents, William Tyndale was especially outspoken in his criticism of Aristotelian methods and of the virtues in particular. Greenblatt notes, “Tyndale goes out of his way to condemn the classical moral virtues when pursued for their own sake and to assert that actions which seem worthless or evil in the world’s eyes—even robbery and murder—may in fact be the fulfillment of God’s commandments and the manifestation of true faith” (130). Following his execution by strangulation and burning in 1535 for charges of heresy against the king, Tyndale’s lifelong efforts will result in the production of the Bible in English vernacular, sanctioned by Henry VIII himself.

<sup>29</sup> In this way, one might ask, the decay of virtue in the early modern period and its corresponding ascendancy in the Enlightenment inversely mirrors the ascendancy of reason, which expels or contains fortune and chance. This may be worth exploring using digital tools—especially in light of larger questions regarding “possessive individualism.”

sets of moral codes. These codes, however, are unfixed; one must be ready to *adapt* to circumstance, that is to *fortuna*, or else be swallowed by it. Such a view of morality and of civic behavior thus dispenses, on principle, with the notion of categorical morality. Adherence to any set of moral precepts according to which one *ought* live, including and especially the virtues, may be politically disastrous. The idealizing impulse attending to “oughtness” is thereby condemned by Machiavelli as fanciful, belonging to the imagination (*The Prince* 53). He thus conjoins virtue with imagination as he expels both as principles of statecraft and princely conduct.<sup>30</sup>

The Machiavellian attack on virtue would seem to constitute an attack on imaginative thinking. One might even go so far as to perceive echoes of the Platonic distrust of poetry, insofar as Machiavelli appears view to the imagination as politically dangerous; indeed, if the good prince, pining after what “ought” to occur, falls, he brings with him the security and stability of both his state and his citizenry. In this way, the eudaemonic telos one supposedly achieves by embracing the virtues constitutes a fanciful and potentially disastrous pining after the moral good for one’s own sake. Doing so is therefore an evasion of responsibility in the here-and-now, governed by the terrors of circumstance.

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<sup>30</sup> Even so, there are moments notable in which Machiavelli appears to hold virtue, or at least one or more of the virtues, in some regard. In “Allocution Made to a Magistrate” (~1520), which I shall later examine, Machiavelli claims that among all virtues, justice “alone, among all other virtues pleases God,” for it “engenders unity in the states and kingdoms; such unity in turn gives them power and maintains them” (Parel, “Allocution,” 526). But in “Exhortation to Penitence” (1523), no doubt a satirical speech given before the Company of Piety to which he had been admitted in 1495, Machiavelli claims that charity is the greatest virtue; “this is the only thing that has more worth than all the other virtues of men.” He goes on, bombastically, “Oh divine virtue! Oh, happy are those that possess you! This is that heavenly garment in which we must be clad if we are admitted to the celestial marriage feast of our Emperor Jesus Christ in the heavenly kingdom! This is that in which we must be dressed if we are not to be driven from the banquet and put in the everlasting fire!” (173). One may chortle at the notion of Machiavelli delivering these lines with any sincerity before a confraternity of pious men, perhaps few of whom were likely to grasp the ironic character of his words. Indeed, insofar as we are to expect consistency of thought in Machiavelli’s work, “charity” is not only far removed from justice as a virtue of statecraft, but is explicitly assailed in *The Prince*, wherein Machiavelli bequeaths an entire chapter to the dangers of princely generosity or “liberality.” See Chapter XVI, “*De liberalitate et parsomina*.”

One would be in error, however, to treat Machiavelli as either a pure pragmatist, as is far too often done, or as one whose suspicions of virtue and idealism constitute a totalizing rejection of the imagination. In *Machiavelli and Us*, Althusser asks us to consider seeing in Machiavelli one who stands “at the limits of the possible in order to think about the real.”<sup>31</sup> He reads the banishments of virtue from Machiavelli in these terms: “The utopia of an ideal city, uncultivated and pure, virtuous in the moral sense, is ruled out *once and for all*, since it does not correspond to the conditions on which Machiavelli has his sights: *self-defense* and *expansion*” (57). To illustrate his two-pronged thesis regarding Machiavellian power, Althusser seizes upon a key early passage in *Discourses on Livy*: “although one man alone is capable of instituting a government, what he has instituted will not long endure if it rests upon the shoulders of a single man, but it endures when it remains a matter of concern to many and when it is the task of many to maintain it.” On the one hand, the ruler alone must, in a monarchical mode, command territory through *virtù*; this is the establishing moment of the state, in Althusser’s words, its “beginning” (64). On the other hand, “this moment is itself unstable, for ultimately it can as readily tip over into tyranny as into an authentic state. Whence ... the second moment, that of *duration*, which can be ensured only by a double process: the settlement of laws and the emergence from solitude—that is to say, the end of the absolute power of a single individual” (64-65). Althusser is obviously drawn to the proto-Marxist overtones of the latter “moment”—“the moment of the forms which permit state power to take root in the people, via the intermediary of the laws, and render the state capable of both *enduring* and *expanding*” (65); here indeed, one is at liberty to apply these seemingly contradictory Machiavellian principles to

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<sup>31</sup> Note these relevant additional remarks: “Machiavelli’s insistence on referring to a New Prince and a New Principality is located in this extreme position, where he is condemned to thinking the possible at the boundary of the impossible” (56).

the establishment of democratic republics.

More abstractly, such an enterprise goads one to read Machiavelli not as a pragmatist but indeed, as an idealist, a forger of new worlds and potentialities.<sup>32</sup> Althusser turns to Machiavelli's terminology not to seek a resolution of the paradoxes enforced by them, but rather to push against the very "limit" to which I have referred, wherein his theory of the "materialism of encounter" emerges:<sup>33</sup>

The peculiarity of *virtù* is to master *fortuna*, even when it is favourable, and to transform the instant of *fortuna* into political duration, the *matter* of *fortuna* into political form, and thus to structure the material of the favourable local conjecture politically by laying the foundations of the new state—that is to say, by rooting itself (we know how) in the people, in order to endure and expand, while remaining ever mindful of "future power" and aiming high to reach far. (75)

"Rooting itself ... in the people," *virtù* comes to instantiate through constitutional republicanism its very "effect" in and through its dissemination in and absorption by the body politic. That is, *virtù*'s constituting and radiating force extends from the prince but is *secured* (or given the chance to "endure") by its "rooting" in people and the institutions. Althusser thus comes to define the encounter as the *effect* of *virtù*, that is to say a virtual power arising from

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<sup>32</sup> There is a long tradition of reading Machiavelli in such a fashion, particularly in modern Italian criticism. Gramsci's formulation of "The New Prince" may be the most famous of such readings. See Benedetto Fontana's *Hegemony and Power: The Relation between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>33</sup> Althusser repeatedly invokes the concept of the Machiavellian "limit," comparing and contrasting it to his own conception of "the void." Citing Machiavelli's famous archery metaphor, Althusser claims, "A new principality poses such 'difficulties that in order to found one it is necessary to emulate 'skillful archers ... when their target seems too distant': 'knowing well the power of their bow, they aim at a much higher point, not to hit it with the arrow, but by aiming there to be able to strike their target'" (73). For Althusser, "to aim at a much higher point" is to "aim *beyond what exists*, so as to attain a goal *that does not exist* but must exist ... to aim above all existing principalities, beyond their *limits*" (73).

princely telepresence, as such power becomes invested in and absorbed by institutions and bodies. As with Chapman's sun-like Pompey, *virtù* is instituted by the radiating effects of constitutional power, which emanate from the seat of the sovereign and attain substantive or material form in bodies which in turn fortify the power of the prince through the principle of obedience, that is, by erecting a mirror to princely power.<sup>34</sup> One may thus regard the "rooting" effect of political *virtù* as a countervailing response to the very "uprooting" of Lutheran righteousness, or the process by which virtual awareness becomes possible. In short, *virtù* takes root where and when virtue has been uprooted.

#### Time and Imitation

With its aspirations toward "future power," Althusser's idealistic materialism runs the risk of overlooking the extent to which the "instant" of the encounter entails also a deep imbrication and palimpsesting of the past. In his preface to *Discourses*, Machiavelli stresses the active and indeed *activating* principle of history, and of the potentially animating force of one's encounter with ancient texts. He laments the poor methods by which his contemporaries read and understand history, leaving them no "recourse to the examples of the ancients":

I believe this arises ... from not possessing a true understanding of the histories, so that in reading them, we fail to draw out of them that sense or to taste that flavour they intrinsically possess. As a result it happens that countless people who read them take pleasure on hearing about the variety of incidents they contain without otherwise thinking about imitating them, since they believe imitation is

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<sup>34</sup> One might therefore argue that the material nature of the encounter between *virtù* and *fortuna* presupposes also a series of encounters at the level of *virtù*, where the radiating force of the constitutional act informs the seriality of interlocking layers of power: from the monarch or consulate, to the aristocracy or senate, to the populace or the tribunes. The entire apparatus of governmentality is thereby grounded in principle by the prince's virtual authority.

not only difficult but impossible, as if the sky, the sun, the elements, or human beings had changed in their motions, order, and power from what they were in antiquity. (16)

In revealing his method, Machiavelli prepares the reader for a fundamentally new kind of encounter with the past. Machiavellian historiography, if one permits the term, is predicated on an immersive absorption in the past with a keen and critical eye to current affairs. History is thus neither an antiquarian pursuit nor an idle hobby, intended to sate one's "pleasure," but rather a source of activity that requires an *activist* commitment: the means, indeed, by which one will better oneself and one's state.

We might pause for a moment over Machiavelli's use of the word "imitation." He explicitly advocates here for the imitation of past events. Such a stance would seem to contradict the principle, foundational to the political theory of *The Prince*, that there is no such thing as an ideal principality insofar as one must be ever-ready, wielding the force of *virtù*, to adapt to one's circumstances so as to erect such a place on one's own terms. As Machiavelli points out endlessly, merely imitating the efforts of someone who had once attained glory can lead to misery and ruin, for the circumstances dictated by *fortuna* change over time and across geography. What, then, might Machiavelli mean by this term, so central to the methodology of his opus?

I would like to suggest that in this passage and in *Discourses* generally, Machiavelli challenges the reader to a reconceptualized notion not only of history's efficacy, but also of classical theories of imitation, predicated as they are upon systems of simulacral representation. Citing in his preface disdain for the leisurely antiquarian who, having "purchased a fragment from an ancient statue at a great price just to have it near him, to decorate his home, and to have

it imitated by those who delight in that art” (15), Machiavelli explicitly decries such a form of imitation as superficial and indeed, without apparent use-value. For here as in *The Prince*, one does not simply dig up the elements of history, as one might the arm of an ancient statue, and then proceed to bask in its perfect beauty or attempt merely to replicate it; to the contrary, one must position oneself in relation to these artifacts so as to see the possibility of engaging them *critically*. That is, one must view them as capable of radical epistemic renewal. The events of the past are thus like Luther’s Word, which “as it is spread to man it becomes something diverse, and, being itself without any variety, it must undergo variation.” In this way, history teaches us lessons that assist in the cultivation of *virtù*, that is, of one’s ability not to imitate but to *adapt* to one’s own moment, which is forever subject to its own unique set of challenges.

Machiavellian imitation therefore has nothing to do with the mere imitation of the actions or qualities of the ancients, or even the methods by which the ancients came to conquer fortune and achieve glory. Rather, it invites one to grasp “that sense or to taste that flavour [the ancients] intrinsically possess.” Historical study as such becomes a kind of sensual encounter between past and present, a process that—like Luther’s creatively destructive encounter with God—brings about epistemological and perceptual reconfigurations of the real, configured as such by the activating power of *virtù*.

The Machiavellian virtual in this sense is deeply pragmatic—that is, invested in and tethered to that which it construes as real—yet utterly dependent on the meticulous exhumation and examination of artifacts from the past. Revitalized by the powers of critical inquiry and speculative imagination, Machiavellian virtuality maintains ontological coherence by virtue of its ability to reconstitute the present vis-à-vis the glorious resurrection of dead histories and bodies. For despite Machiavelli’s admonitions about the utopic imagination, residing in the



counterfactual “ought” of an idealized time and place, his pragmatism and realism depend upon counterfactual investigations into and encounters with ancient records as well as explorations of the limits of possible futures.

The Machiavellian conception of study in *Discourses* thus yields a more developed, if attenuated, notion of *virtù*: it becomes a force synonymous with the acquisition of ability or agency *in time*, giving one the power to interact with and give shape to the circumstances of history itself. As we see throughout *The Prince* and *Discourses*, such practices come to inform and transform the past as well as the present. The past is not treated as something inert or static, but as a force waiting to be taken up and activated; just as Machiavelli studies the past to give literal shape to his present, he frequently applies lessons *from* contemporary affairs *to* the past in order to understand better what happened in a given historical context. For example, to come to terms with how Alexander the Great’s successors maintained power of his vast dominions after he conquered them and died shortly thereafter, Machiavelli compares the conquered government to contemporary power structures in France and the Ottoman empire. Alexander and his successors succeeded due not to “the greater or lesser virtue of the conqueror,” but as a result of “the different characteristics of the conquered territories” (18). Mining his contemporary evidence, he reports that France, a kingdom predicated upon hereditary rule that is doled out to nobles who are “loved” by his subjects, “is easier to occupy” than the Ottoman empire but “extremely difficult to hold on to,” whereas “for the Turk the difficulty lies in taking possession of the state, but once it has been conquered it is very simple to hold on to” (17). “Therefore,” Machiavelli concludes, “no one should be surprised at all by the ease with which Alexander held on to the region of Asia, or by the problems others encountered in preserving the territory they acquired” (18).

Machiavelli's imaginative use of historical time extends to of-the-moment matters of state. Even though his active political career seems to have ended with the sack of Florence and the return of the Medicis in 1512, he was summoned in either 1519 or 1520 to produce a "Protest of Justice" to be presented by a member of the Gonfaloniers of the Companies, one of Florence's advisory colleges, before the new Signora (Black 274). In this little-studied work, known as "Allocution to a Magistrate," Machiavelli adheres to the traditional allocutionary form, which requires the speaker to praise his topic by referring to both classical and Christian sources. Following the exordium, Machiavelli fulfills the first of these duties by referring to "the first age of the world" wherein "the ancient poets ... began to give laws," and in which "men were so good that the gods did not consider it beneath their dignity to come down from heaven and to dwell among them on earth" (525). However, as "virtue became scarce" among men, the gods retreated to heaven; Machiavelli tells us that the last to remain on earth was the goddess Justice. While her departure caused the "ruin of kingdoms and republics," she would on occasion return, but never "universally among men"; rather, she would extend her beneficence to "this or that particular city," which under her temporary auspices would grow great and powerful. Of the belief that Italy was on the verge of such a moment, as captured in the stirring concluding chapter of *The Prince*, Machiavelli exhorts his "honorable fellow citizens" to exert justice in their daily affairs; "If you do this ... [Justice] will return to dwell in this city" (526-527). To become great, one must in effect be alert to the ever-shifting presence of Justice. One must seize upon and claim Justice when Fortune is on one's side—that is, when the *time* is right.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> A. J. Parel makes the following inference about the contrasting conceptions of time presented in the "Allocution": "there is a contrast between existence in the golden age and existence in time, between an ideal, ahistorical conception of life and a real, historical conception of it. For Hesiod, the golden age comes to an end with the end of timelessness. In Machiavelli's cosmology, time necessarily 'disorders' the 'matter' of the body-politic. What is implied by Machiavelli is a cyclical theory of time according to which, as *The Prince* states, time drives all things forward and takes with it good as well as bad and bad as well as good" (538). See "Machiavelli's Notions of Justice"

Such a view of Machiavellian temporality becomes clearer as one turns to the ecclesiastical requirement of the “Allocution.” Machiavelli cites not the Bible, but yet another poetic source: Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. He recalls the familiar tale of Trajan who, confronted by a poor widow seeking revenge for the murder of her son, attempts to stall her:

And he was answering: ‘Wait now until I have returned.’ And she, as one in whom grief pressed urgently: ‘And, lord, if you do not return?’ And he: “The one who’ll be in my place will perform it for you.” She: ‘What good can others’ goodness do for you if you neglect your own?’ He: ‘Be consoled; my duty shall be done before I go: so justice asks, so mercy makes me stay.’”<sup>36</sup>

The moral lesson, of course, is that justice “cannot wait.” Mystically allied with *Fortuna*, justice indeed demands and commands the present. The maid’s series of conditionals—the sequence of “ifs” that attend her “grief presently urged”—draw attention to the ever-present possibility of fortune intervening in one’s affairs. To reject the conditional as well as the correlative notion of *the return from action* is therefore akin to seizing upon the present, the very moment in which *virtù* can conquer *fortuna*.

There is, in short, a dynamic sense of temporality in Machiavelli; through rigorous critical engagement, historical time becomes an entity affording one not only a virtual glimpse into the past but also a method by which to manipulate it, in effect, to teach the past lessons gleaned from the experience of the present. More to the point, the “was” of Machiavellian time becomes in this light a now or eternal “*is*,” a present reconstitution of the past or an encounter

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(1990). I also use Parel’s translation of the “Allocution” (1990) throughout.

<sup>36</sup> From *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Purgatorio*, translated by Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley: UC Berkeley Press, 1982), canto 10, lines 90-93.

with the past mediated by the now. Such is the means, in short, by which *historical time becomes a principle of virtù*.

Despite Machiavelli's rejection of virtue and Platonic idealism, then, one would be at pains to claim that Machiavelli's work is either lacking in imagination or is indeed critical, in any consistent way, of a conception of the imagination by which new possibilities and potentialities for existence may be possible.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, his very method in *Discourses*, *The Prince*, and "Allocution" suggests that the imagination plays a significant role in his conception of *virtù*, which requires a succession of virtual encounters with the past in order to make sense of and give shape to the present. Machiavelli's rejection of prescriptive virtue or the "ought" of Platonic republicanism therefore forms the very basis of his conception of virtuality, an eternal "now" or present that is in perpetual dialogue with the past.

That such dialogue is both critically informed and sensuously attended to is clear when we consult perhaps the most famous image to be recovered from Machiavelli's letters. One will observe that the "intimacy" of unmediated Lutheran exegesis is mirrored in Machiavelli's letter to his friend and ambassador to Rome, Francesco Vettori. Written upon the conclusion of *The Prince* and while he was in political exile, Machiavelli describes his technique by which the virtual resurrection and reanimation of historical figures becomes possible:

When the evening has come, I return to my house and go into my study. At the door I take off my clothes of the day, covered with mud and mire, and I put on my regal and courtly garments; and decently reclothed, I enter the ancient courts of

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<sup>37</sup> This is to say nothing, of course, about Machiavelli's dramatic and poetic output; these include his ambitious *Asino* (1517), two *Decennali* (1504, 1514), four *capitoli in terza rima* (1506-1518), numerous other poems, and several comedies, including *Andria* (1517), *Mandragola* (1518), and *Clizia* (1525), a prose work. For more on Machiavelli's poetic works and conception of poetic thought, see Albert Russell Ascoli and Angela Matilde Capodivacca's "Machiavelli and Poetry" in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli* (2010).

ancient men, where, received by them lovingly, *I feed on the food that alone is mine* and that I was born for. There I am not ashamed to speak with them and to ask them the reason for their actions; and they in their humanity reply to me ... I deliver myself entirely to them.<sup>38</sup>

“I feed on the food that alone is mine and that I was born for”: one sees a distinct echo of Machiavelli’s word of warning to the idle antiquarians who, in reading the ancients for mere pleasure, “fail to draw out of them that sense or to taste that flavour they intrinsically possess.” By invoking the sensorium to describe his encounter with the dead, Machiavelli accords a sumptuous and indeed *material* dimension to historiographical practice.

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Assembling a list of the five greatest “person of the millennium,” conservative political commentator George Wil included Martin Luther, Machiavelli, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln. John N. Najemy notes that the selections for this “competition” were based on the notion that “two great, and related, developments of this millennium are the nation-state and political freedom, which involves limiting the state” (7). While Jefferson “won,” Wil went on to laud Luther and Machiavelli for being “hammer[s] that helped to shatter suffocating systems of thought and governance” (7).<sup>39</sup> Wil’s populist stance is reflected in and perhaps amplified by Victoria Kahn’s critical assessment: “In the imagination of their contemporaries, Machiavelli and Luther contributed equally to the new secular discourse of

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<sup>38</sup> The letter is dated December 10, 1513. Excerpted from Filippo Del Lucchese’s *The Political Philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

<sup>39</sup> See Najemy’s “Introduction” in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*.

politics. Although Machiavelli famously wrote that he loved his country more than he loved his soul, Counter Reformation writers correctly intuited that Machiavelli and Luther were mirror images of each other” (245).<sup>40</sup> Barbara Riebling sees in Luther’s political views an echo of Machiavellian nihilism:

One can ... see an affinity with Luther, whose bleak view of humanity is the basis on which he justifies the need for coercive government: without rule by force, “seeing that the whole world is evil and that among thousands there is scarcely one true Christian, men would devour one another, and no one could preserve wife and child, support himself and serve God; and thus the world would be reduced to chaos” (285).<sup>41</sup>

Yet arguably, what unites the two figures is less a tendency toward a given ideological system, or any tendency toward secularism, “bleakness,” or “humanism,” than in their desire to establish new origins for belief itself, that is, methods by which to come to pure understanding by means of a stripping down to bare principles. This involved, for Luther, the unmediated facing of as well as turning to the Word; for Machiavelli, this required a close inspection not only of the events of history, but of the “ancient men” who, “in their humanity,” whisper truths of their motivations from the beyond. Indeed, as Graham Maddox notes, the broader early modern project seeking to establish new grounds for foundational belief requires a “return to first

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<sup>40</sup> See “Machiavelli’s Life and Reputation to the Eighteenth Century” in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*. Here Kahn adds just how pervasive “Machiavelli” was in the early modern atmosphere: “By the late sixteenth century, it was not necessary actually to read Machiavelli to know what he said or, perhaps more accurately, what he meant for his contemporaries. Just as we modern Westerners ‘know’ Freud and Marx from the air we breathe, so Renaissance men and women ‘knew’ the author of *The Prince* (245). Needless to say, the same could be said for Luther, or even some of his interpreters, such as Calvin.

<sup>41</sup> See also Hiram Haydn’s *The Counter-Renaissance* (New York: Scribner’s, 1950) for Machiavelli’s “Protestantism.”

principles,” especially in the case of these figures. “For Luther, the sources of authority were Jewish and Christian scriptures, the writings of the Church fathers—particularly Augustine—and the unmediated instruction of the Word . . . Machiavelli, too . . . partook of the humanist impulse to place his own experience in a wider framework by garnering the discoveries of the ancients, with whom he shared a peculiar intimacy” (540).<sup>42</sup>

As Luther and Machiavelli show, one attains intimacy when the veil of prescriptive virtue is lifted. In the process, new realities, indeed, are unearthed; as it turns out, these realities were already standing before us. The virtual in the Lutheran-Machiavellian sense is thus not some “alternate reality” but the truth of the world as revealed to us in the here and now, mediated only by the critical distance afforded us by an earth-shattering encounter from the beyond.

The virtual worlds of Luther and Machiavelli, in this context, are simulacra of an *a priori* present concealed as that which seems otherwise; a possible or potential world is thereby reduced to the moment one inhabits and the ground upon which one stands. It is, in short, a radically eternal *now*, attendant to the lessons of history yet shorn of attachment to the virtues that would have us repeat the catastrophes of the past.

As I will show in the following chapter, Philip Sidney illustrates in *The Arcadia* and argues in his *Defense* that virtue so deeply colors our perception of the world as to render it alien or otherworldly; it results in the creation of a golden world, a “second nature” that overlays and materially alters the “first nature” we inhabit. For Sidney, however, history or attention to that which “was” is the very force that stands in opposition to true virtue, which is to be found in the animating imagination of the “right minded” or virtuous poet. While this “effect” of virtue qualifies it for banishment from the world-building systems erected by Luther and Machiavelli, it

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<sup>42</sup> Graham Maddox, “The Secular Reformation and the Influence of Machiavelli” (2002).

becomes the very basis for Sidney's conception of virtual materialism, a methodology predicated upon the acquisition of feminine will and critical resistance to patriarchal authority.



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## CHAPTER 2

### ACTION, AGENCY, AND THE VIRTUAL LOGIC OF PHILIP SIDNEY'S GOLDEN WORLD

Probably every writer making a secondary world, a fantasy, every sub-creator, wishes in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that he is drawing on reality: hopes that the peculiar quality of this secondary world (if not all the details) are derived from Reality, or are flowing into it.

—J.R.R. Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories”<sup>1</sup>

Divine providence wants to show that the great poems are not the invention of men but gifts from Heaven.

—Marsilio Ficino<sup>2</sup>

The preceding chapter argues that virtuality is not so much about the witnessing of presence as establishing grounds for *belief* in what one has come to witness. Ascertaining believability in what is or is not in one's immanent space—a process that places one at the crossroads of reason, sensory apprehension, and empirical fact—lies at the heart not only of virtuality but of virtue, and is the lost process connecting these two now-distant terms. In this sense the “figuring forth,” in Philip Sidney's words, of counterfactual enargeia works to undermine the brute logic of empirical determinism.

This chapter pursues the question of why early modern speculation over the godlike power of poetic invention circulated so insistently around questions regarding the limits of such logic and related modalities.<sup>3</sup> The notion that poets might be makers of alternate natures or realities,

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Monster and his Critic and Other Essays* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), 155.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter addressed to Antonio Pelotti and Baccio Ugolini, 4 March 1474. Translated by the Language Department of the School of Economic Science, London. See *Meditations on the Soul: Selected Letters of Marsilio Ficino* (Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> In establishing this link, I do not presume that a “defense” or “apology” for poetry during the Elizabethan period assumes a static position regarding the role of divine power or human agency. While questions regarding the



thus possessing a kind of temporal divinity, pivoted around the confounding observation that men could know and thus represent that which they cannot directly perceive and experience. In *The English Arte of Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham claims that poets are nothing less than “creating gods,” as “they be able to devise and make all [such] things of them selves, without any subject of veritie.” He cites Homer, “being but a poore private man, and as some say, in his later age blind,” as poet-god par excellence: “Otherwise how was it possible that Homer . . . should so exactly set foorth and describe, as if he had bene a most excellent Captaine or Generall, the order and array of battels, the conduct of whole armies, the sieges and assaults of cities and townes?” (58).<sup>4</sup> Likewise, in *Centuries of Meditations*, Thomas Traherne celebrates the poet’s capacity for divinely inspired invention: “God hath made you able to create worlds in your own mind which are more precious unto Him than those which He created” (90). Following his description of the poet’s “golden world” in *The Defense of Poesy* (1578), Sidney similarly proclaims, “Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man’s wit with the efficacy of nature; but rather to give right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as poetry, when with the force of a divine breath be bringeth things forth surpassing her doings” (217).<sup>5</sup> The dominion Sidney’s poet-god holds over this “second nature” betrays in turn the existence of a “first” or primary

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divinity of poetic creation circulate in the apologist literature of the time, no singular narrative emerges from this body of work. Even so—and against the grain of recent Sidney criticism, which has taken a decided turn against matters of religion—the contours of these arguments ask that we examine the ways in which Sidney and others envisioned poetic practice not only as a mode of political critique, but as a system of representation informed by structures of belief in the limits of the natural world.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Gavin Alexander’s *Sidney’s The Defense of Poesy and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise specified, when citing the *Defense*, I use Katherine Duncan-Jones’s *Oxford World Classics’ Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008).

nature, wherein poet and god mystically commune in order to create alternate fictive realities grounded not by empirical fact or “vertie,” but by the very virtue of a benevolent god’s grace.

Among early modern poetic treatises, Sidney’s *Defense* posits perhaps the most insistent and at times confounding calculus of relations between the poet as creator and empirical observer. In *The Defense*, he argues at length for the supremacy of poetry among all forms of earthly knowledge, from geometry to astronomy, arts which “take upon them to affirm” (235) that which cannot be demonstrated beyond doubt. Yet Sidney’s poetics are predicated upon rather conventional Aristotelian notions of observation and imitation. To wit, his golden world arises from a strange physics that appears to demand both an imitation of the real as well as its counterfactual supplement.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, he dedicates much of his essay to debunking various fact-based epistemologies. The poet, who “never affirmeth,” becomes a paragon of virtue by disclaiming fact and distancing himself from the trappings of history: “The poet never maketh circles about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true what he writes. He citeth not authorities of other histories, but even for his entry calleth sweet Muses to inspire into him a good invention; in truth, not labouring to tell you what is or is not, but what should or should not be” (235).

Feigning to disclose “what is or is not,” Sidney’s smug historian mistakes the factual for

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<sup>6</sup> Sidney’s theory of imitation is derived from the Aristotelian notion of the poetic copy; as Puttenham notes uncontroversially, “Poesie an art not only of making, but also of imitation. And this science in his perfection, can not grow, but by some divine instinct, the Platonicks call it *furor*” (58). Sidney addresses Platonic “*furor*” in his definition of the poet as “vates” or seer as well as “maker” of other worlds. Synthesizing the classical Aristotelian view with Horatian principles, Sidney posits famously that “Poesy is therefore an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in the word *mimesis*—that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture—with this end, to teach and delight” (217, emphasis in original). He borrows elsewhere from Plato’s *Sophist*, from which the terms “eikastike” and “phantastike” imitation derive. In a classic essay, John McIntyre provides a succinct sense of Sidney’s contrasting of these two forms: “Although God creates absolutely, producing both realities and images, still, man according to his degree also produces realities and images, which correspond to the earlier distinction of icastic and phantastic imitation. For Sidney poetry is icastic because it recreates the real; only its abuse results in phantastic imitation, or what Plato would call mimicry” (McIntyre, 29). For Sidney true poetry therefore yields “honest dissimulation.” In this paradoxical context, one must ask—and this chapter will later address—how does dissimulation lead to “honesty”?

the counterfactual and vice versa, thus earning Sidney's chiefest scorn. Sidney's distrust of history emerges clearly in his repeated mockery and condemnation of the historian, whose belabored consultations with "antiquities" and "old mouse-eaten records" leave him "better acquainted with a thousand years ago than the present age, and yet better knowing how this world goeth than how his wit runneth" (220). A man "whose greatest authorities are built upon the notable foundation of hearsay," the historian is flawed both in his methods of acquiring knowledge and in his attitude towards its application in the social world. After misquoting Cicero, the preening historian quips, "The philosopher . . . teacheth a disputative virtue, but I do an active. His virtue is excellent in the dangerless Academy of Plato, but mine showeth forth her honourable face in the battles of Marathon, Pharsalia, Poitiers, and Agincourt" (220). For Sidney, the historian's conception of reality as well as his ability to impart virtuous action—"the ending end of all earthly learning" (219-220)—remains fatally tethered to the facticity of an aleatory material world.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike history, virtuous poetry does not bend to chance, fortune, or ill-begotten fact gleaned from certitudes built upon uncertainties. To the contrary, through the very power of the virtue it commands, poetry alone marshals these forces to its will: "For indeed poetry ever set virtue out in her best colours, making Fortune her well-waiting handmaid, that one must needs be enamored of her . . . But the [historian], being captive to the truth of a foolish world, is many times a terror from well-doing, and encouragement to unbridled wickedness" (225). As one held "captive" to the particularity of the past event or example when reflecting on present matters or

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<sup>7</sup> As Sidney notes in a letter to his nephew, the main purpose of history or "historiography" should be "principally to note the Examples of Vertue or Vice," such as to be witnessed in "the Establishements or Ruines of greate Estates with the cawses, the Tyme and Circumstances of the Lawes then write of, the entrings, and endings of Warrs and therein the Strategems against the *Enimy*, and the Discipline vpon the Soldiour, and thus much a *Historiographer* Besides this the *Historian* makes himselfe a discourser for profite and an Orater, yea Poet sometimes for Ornament." See *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney, Volume II* edited by Roger Kuin (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 1007.

future possibilities, Sidney's historian suffers from an inability to distinguish causality from correlation—in short, a certain logical dim-mindedness that leads, in the all-important arena of virtuous education, to the teaching of errors and false truths:

And whereas a man may say ... in saying such a thing was done, doth warrant a man more in that he shall follow—the answer is manifest: that, if he stand upon that *was* (as if he should argue, because it rained yesterday, therefore it should rain today), then indeed hath it some advantage to a gross conceit; but if he know an example only informs a conjectured likelihood, and so go by reason, the poet doth so far exceed him as he is to frame his example to that which is most reasonable (224, my emphasis).

The historian's lessons fail due not merely to his fixation on that which purportedly "was," but through his seeming incapacity to imagine alternative possibilities beyond brute, empirical fact. He may gesture to the future, but his vision is clouded by falsehoods and seeming truths. Forming lessons based on examples that yield "conjectured likelihoods," the historian overdetermines facticity so completely as to invert truth itself; "affirming many things," the historian "can, in the cloudy knowledge of mankind, hardly escape from many lies" (235). In its capacity to feign veracity as truth itself, history thus serves not only to misinform but also to mislead one down the path toward virtuous action. To "stand upon that *was*" is, in effect, to prop oneself upon a heap of "hearsay" and self-deception.

As Robert Stillman reminds us, Sidney's rejection of history has political as well as epistemological consequences. Stillman argues for a Sidnean poetics *qua* politics of liberation, crystallized in the evocation of his virtuous hero, Xenophon's Cyrus, who through poetry conquers history itself and enters the golden world in a glorious multiplicity of "many Cyruses."

“Set free from history (unlike those historical and philosophical poets confined within the fold of the proposed subject),” the right poet ranges “with no law but his own wit ... into the divine consideration of what may be and should be” (102).<sup>8</sup> A historical fact made counterfactually virtuous through poetic re-creation, Xenophon’s Cyrus “emerges from Sidney’s argument most meaningfully as a liberator ... Liberty matters to a poetics in which the right poet creates rightly only when freed from the tyranny of historical verisimilitude and the opacity of abstruse philosophy and topical allegory” (1287). Even as Sidney’s poet-god draws from the annals of history, he creates new worlds containing new possibilities for existence altogether, thus liberating time from the tyranny of those who would malign it with falsehoods. Inspired by divine virtue and the intent to “teach and delight,” the poet therefore cannot lie or mislead. Rather, through his “honest dissimulation,” the poet cannily cleaves the counterfactual with the potential and the possible, insofar as the poet’s words are an always-already locus for virtuous motivation among those who encounter them.

In what follows, I further develop Sidney’s theory of the poet’s virtuously motivating imagination as that which makes possible forms of “nature” that mystically overcome and substantially modify empirical reality itself. Through his vision of the poet bringing forth a golden world composed of “many Cyruses” as opposed to the “brazen” natural world wherein only one Cyrus may ever reign, Sidney exalts the counterfactual possibilities of divinely inspired poetic virtue. Sidney’s skeptical empiricism yields a theory of the poet’s “nature” by explicitly contrasting a virtuously-activated second nature not only with the illusory world of historical fact, but also with lesser imaginative constructs—what Sidney refers to as mere “castles in the

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<sup>8</sup> Stillman argues that Sidney’s rejection of history in favor of poetry is a fundamentally “liberating” act linked to the Phillipist and tyrannomachist political circles in which Sidney was imbricated. See “The Truths of a Slippery World: Poetry and Tyranny in Sidney’s *Defence*” (*Renaissance Quarterly* 55.4, 2002).

air” (216), lacking “substance.” Sidney’s golden world is not merely synonymous with “imagination,” nor is it mere “phantastick” (as opposed to icastic) imagination, as is often glossed; it is, I argue, imagination suffused with virtuous power. Imbued with the force to effect its own radiant imprint upon the world, it is, in the Lacanian sense, “more real” than the real itself.<sup>9</sup> Sidnean second nature, composed “substantially” (216) and materially of its many Cyruses, a community of readers brought to virtuous understanding and action vis-à-vis communication with the “vates” or poet-maker, therefore constitutes a virtual community—indeed a *polis*—that is itself subtended by virtuous principles.

Sidney scholars generally agree that masculine “action” in the name of Protestant nationalism is the defining purpose of this virtuous polity, yet early modern fluctuation in the use and understanding of virtue must be taken into account when assessing the political and epistemological status of his fact-resistant golden world. I argue that the *Defense* must also be understood as a call for *agency*, defined by Suzanne Woods as “the ability to act and the knowledge to make choices that *lead to action*” (165, my emphasis).<sup>10</sup> Sidney’s remarks regarding Cyrus’s virtuous female twin, a self-actualized Lucretia who refuses the scene of her own rape, situates his clarion call for action in explicitly agential terms. Sidney carefully distinguishes “the meaner sort of painters, who counterfeit only such faces as are set before them, and the more excellent, who having no law but wit, bestow that in colours upon you fitting for the eye to see: as the constant though lamenting look of Lucretia, when she punished in

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<sup>9</sup> David Rudd is the only scholar yet to rigorously apply Lacanian psychoanalysis to the study of the virtual. He argues, controversially, that the mirror stage provides necessary grounds to conclude that “as beings in the Symbolic, where our existence is represented in terms of signifiers, we have already left behind the Real, the material ‘stuff’ of the universe; our reality is thus, itself, virtual: we are creatures of *meaning*, not just being” (257, emphasis in original). See “So Good, They Named it Twice? A Lacanian Perspective on Virtual Reality from Literature and the Other Arts” in *The Oxford Handbook of Virtuality* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> See “Freedom and Tyranny in Sidney’s *Arcadia*” in *Sir Philip Sidney’s Achievements* (New York: AMS, 1990).

herself another's fault, wherein he painteth not Lucretia whom he never saw, but painteth the outward beauty of such a virtue" (218). Like the divinely-inspired poet-maker, the "excellent" painter seeks to deform reality and history itself through radically virtuous representation. Crucially, the right-minded painter attempts not to depict a debased Lucretia "whom he never saw," but to "range, only reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of *what may be and should be*" (218, my emphasis). By presenting Lucretia as agent, the proper painter "[borrows] nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be," creating instead for the doomed heroine a counterfactual universe wherein "the outward beauty of [her] virtue" (218) moves the viewer not only to virtuous purpose, but to a position of creative empathy regarding Lucretia's plight and her newfound resistance to it, defying time and materiality alike. A "defense" of poesy is therefore a defense not only of the polis—of virtue's radiating and constituting effects—but of feminine will itself.<sup>11</sup> The *Defense* posits counterfactual enargeia whereby female agency resides as potential in virtue's activating power.

Establishing that Sidney's golden realm consists materially and not just in terms of "imaginative" properties will constitute a significant focus of this chapter. Such findings not only implicate Sidney's work in early modern materialist paradigms but also require us to imagine a place for Sidney within the new materialism,<sup>12</sup> as has been achieved with figures such as Shakespeare and Machiavelli, as well as within media studies, where work on virtual

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<sup>11</sup> As I hope to argue in future work, early modern conceptions of feminine will and agency are entailed within larger-order debates regarding the decline of pagan virtue and the eventual rise of "virtual witnessing" in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. One may decipher in the collapse of Aristotelian virtue ethics under Renaissance humanism the very rise of morbid fascination in feminine virtue.

<sup>12</sup> Contemporary scholars have devoted surprisingly little explicit attention to issues of materialism in Sidney despite earlier focus on proto-Marxism and the tyrannomachist, Phillipist politics that infuse the *Defense* and questions of nature and natural law that inform both the *Defense* and the *Arcadias*. I seek to extend these considerations beyond the so-called new materialism by discussing Sidnean materialism vis-à-vis the question of his "second nature" and virtual matter, as that which consists materially, substantively, between prime nature or matter and the world of virtuous action consecrated by the poets. These questions are best addressed not in Sidney's *Defense*, but in his literary works, particularly, the *New Arcadia*.

communities and realities has been largely confined. Naturally, such work also necessarily engages the vibrant feminist scholarship on Sidney, most notably recent work on feminine virtue and chastity by Julie Crawford and Katherine de Zur. Toward these ends,<sup>13</sup> I begin by situating Sidney's work in discourses on early modern matter and virtuality. Next, I examine Sidney's "many Cyruses" and the curious (meta)physics of the golden world wherein they are said to exist. This chapter will show that the multiplication of virtue through Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* sees its counterpart in his *Arcadia*, particularly as revealed by actions of critical resistance to patriarchal authority and violence. Engaging what I will demonstrate to be a Butlerian conception of virtue, female or female-signifying figures such as Pamela, Parthenia, and even the cross-dressing Zelmane recast feminine subjection as a mode of political critique that results in the reclaiming of agency. In doing so, these figures attest to what I term an emergent axiological selfhood: a self forged through aesthetic and ethical bonds grounded in a position of iterative critical resistance to tyranny. Arising from the Sidnean schema by which virtue comes about through learning as well as the delight one acquires through such learning, such resistance generates forms of virtuous enargeia wherein new possibilities for subjectivized existence become postulated. Imbued with the force of divinely-inspired virtue, these possibilities, subject to no prior history, subsume the factual with the power of radiant counterfactuality.

In short, I seek here to show that the *Arcadia*, and especially the *New Arcadia*, asks one to situate Sidney's thinking on belief, chance, divinity, and duplicative or "second" natures within contemporary philosophical paradigms on feminine agency and virtual forms of presence

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<sup>13</sup> Later in this chapter, I demonstrate that Sidnean "second nature" depends upon a notion of virtue as that which feeds and ultimately yields virtual power, thereby implicating his *Defense* and literary works within early modern discourses on the real and the virtual. In doing so, I situate Sidney's poetics in an intellectual history of early modern bodily presence whereby bodies effect material properties without self-reproduction, as is described in early modern texts focused on divine and corporeal entities, the king and his kingdom of subjects, and the radiating powers of celestial bodies (as epitomized in Ficino's theory radiating images).



and reality.

### Aleatory Matters

The defense of poetry .. is a defense not of poetry as against prose but of fiction as against fact. Our sixteenth century critics are ... contributing to, or concluding, an age-old debate: and that debate, properly viewed, is simply the difficult process by which Europe became conscious of fiction as an activity distinct from history on the one hand and from lying on the other.

—C.S. Lewis<sup>14</sup>

Petrus Ramus's anxious commentary on Vergil's *Georgics* reveals the chance that gets expelled as a trace of the past to support a countervailing notion of here-and-now purpose—how to deal with the threat of Lucretian matter when it cannot be so easily dismissed. As George Passannante has observed, “Ramus could not afford to see the threat of Lucretius in Vergil as total disaster, as an ideological collapse of either the poem or the system. In recounting the passages from *De Rarum Natura* in Macrobius, Ramus was forced to contain the terrifying irony of Lucretian chaos percolating beneath the surface of Vergil, to quarantine the problem of chance and contingency and therefore not only the end of the third book of the *Georgics*, but the ends of method itself” (821). Lucretian material becomes in this sense “untimely,” as Jonathan Gil Harris has postulated: a trace of the past imbricated in a present reconstitution of elements, asserting the “then-in-nowness” of operative systems.<sup>15</sup> While Harris focuses on the untimeliness of matter, Ramus's struggle with Lucretius indicates that the dialectical process by which the here-and-now achieves its “untimeliness” applies as forcefully to intellectual history. The ways in which Lucretius is “contained” effects not so much a “subversion” of his presence but rather its vivid re-materialization within in a system of capacious orderliness to which Vergil himself has, from a great distance, summoned the brooding poet.

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<sup>14</sup> In *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954).

<sup>15</sup> See *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: U of Penn Press, 2008).

In the *Defense* and the *New Arcadia*, Sidney likewise summons Lucretian principles of chance and contingency by way of analogy to the aleatory nature of historical extrapolation from that which “*was*”—an object unknowable and unverifiable in itself, because our senses cannot be trained upon anything other than that which we directly apprehend. Sidney’s decision to place a divinely imparted virtuous poetics in direct comparison with sensory access to an illusory and illicit material world aligns his poetics with a proto-Kantian conception of the virtual, as that which escapes nature and history so as to instantiate its own proper “nature,” to which the senses have no consistently verifiable access. The notion that the virtual is a “dimension” of the real or actual is therefore fundamental to Sidney’s conception that understanding of and *belief* in the golden world, in its myriad counterfactual possibilities, provides the means by which virtue achieves its activating force. For Sidney, a eudaimonic groundedness in virtue produces a *radiating* effect, whereby an entity may impart an aspect of its material self in the surrounding world; in essence, this is how one Cyrus begets many. Such a “virtual imprint” is not so much a “copy” as it is an effect or *consequence* of a constitutionalizing radiating force. Crucially, the imprint is actualized only insofar as its power is understood and believed in by the subject; thus Sidney’s declaration that poetry much teach *as well as* delight in order for its power to be realized. In this sense, virtual power creates not a counterfactual or aleatory “second world” circumscribed from primary nature, as is frequently theorized by scholars of virtuality. Rather, as Kathryn Schwarz has posited, counterfactuals “irrupt into social logic and, with the promiscuous flick of a sideways glance, reveal alternatives to social time” (15).<sup>16</sup> This process yields new or “secondary” possibilities for existence within a primary world wherein one’s beliefs are grounded. This primary world is radically transformed by belief in what it has experienced. The

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<sup>16</sup> See “Just Imagine” in Dymphna Callaghan and Suzanne Gossett’s *Shakespeare in Our Time: A Shakespeare Association of America Collection* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

“virtual” yielded through such acts therefore is not merely a “secondary” realm to which one may escape, but rather a constitutive force that deforms the very parameters of the real itself. Suffused not only with sheer potentiality but with *belief* in such potentiality, virtual presence thus fortifies the real with the force of the imaginary. Primary nature anneals anew with newfound belief in counterfactual possibility.

The virtual in this sense may be seen as “more real” than the natural world ascertained through empirical observation alone.<sup>17</sup> Yet to insist on the “realism” of Sidney’s golden world would be entirely to miss the point. Sidney’s celebration of creative potentiality and rejection of he who “[stands] upon that *was*” recalls Jose Muñoz’s thesis that “queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on the potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (1).<sup>18</sup> As Barbara Shapiro has shown, such a view of poetry’s world-building potentiality, read over and against the universes of fact to which history and natural history are epistemologically tethered, was characteristic of the early modern period:

As history moved away from the rhetorical tradition, now increasingly associated with imaginative literature and fiction, and emphasized impartial accuracy, it was forced to relate its claims of truth to those of logic and “science,” and thus to confront disciplines it had earlier rejected and epistemological issues it had previously ignored ... Patrizzi, a correspondent of Galileo, concluded that history, though it aimed at truth, could at best achieve a rough approximation of certain

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<sup>17</sup> Such a notion of reproduction implies a radical notion or sensation of enclosure; the sense of a thing or body capable of reaching other things or bodies not through ordinary reproductive means, but rather, through virtual means; that is, by the very power and force of a *singular* or “particular” virtue. One might refer to this as virtual power. Such imaginative modes of substantive reproduction resist natural modalities of regeneration completely. Despite volumes of Sidney scholarship on nature and natural law, Sidney himself explicitly rejects nature in favor of a realm that might be regarded as “more real” than nature itself, nature imbued with the actionable power of virtue.

<sup>18</sup> See *Crusing Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009).

knowledge because it ultimately depended on sources whose reliability could not be fully known. Despite the lack of certain knowledge of the past, critical evaluation of the reliability of sources would enable historians to narrate the probable course of events” (121).<sup>19</sup>

A liberator from the tyranny of empirical fact, Sidney’s poet-seer works in mystical commune with the divine to usher forth virtuous realities that cannot yet be imagined. In doing so, the poet-god places poetry in the political position not only to shape minds, but to fashion altogether new political possibilities.”<sup>20</sup>

Debates regarding the precise relationship between a first world of “brazen nature” and a second “golden world” erected by the divinely-inspired poet has been a consistent focus of Sidney scholarship. In *The Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye claims that “[Sidney’s] ... golden world is not something separated from nature but is ‘in effect a second nature’: a unification of fact, or example, with model, or precept” (59). Addressing the nature of this

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<sup>19</sup> Shapiro elaborates on the interrelationship between trends in Renaissance literature and shifting attitudes toward knowledge and its acquisition: “efforts to devise a theory of knowledge, and consequently of language, that would allow a more complete synthesis of theoretical and empirical findings led to a revised attitude toward the literary arts, and particularly toward poetry. Where a principal item on the intellectual agenda is to render factual statements more precise and to distinguish carefully statements supported by evidence from mere speculation, there is bound to be an impact on literature. This impact must be all the greater when a principal literary form—poetry—is closely linked to rhetoric, and rhetoric in turn is seen as a barrier to precise factual statement” (228). In her chapter on “History,” Shapiro brings her argument full-circle, thus presenting an argument in substantially agreement with Shapin and Schaffer’s theory of virtual witnessing: “The attempt to reconstruct the natural sciences on an empirical basis had major implications for history, which, since the early Renaissance, had become closely related to rhetoric. As the natural sciences became more empirical, more grounded in facts gathered by imperfect observation, it became possible for history, which also dealt in uncertain observation of matters of fact, to develop serious intellectual contact with the natural sciences. The growth in intellectual power of the natural sciences was accompanied by changes in the reputation and function of rhetoric, which was increasingly linked to poetry and conceived as an instrument of moral instruction and aesthetic pleasure” (119-120).

<sup>20</sup> History liberated from the constraints of time itself becomes part of his golden realm, to which poets alone have access through “second nature.” In this sense, the poet indeed commands a kind of divinity. As Puttenham puts it, “A poet is as much to say as a maker. And our English name well conformes with the Greeke word: for of *poiein*, to make, they call a maker *Poeta*. Such as (by way resemblance and reverently) we may say of God: who without any travail to his divine imagination, made all the world of naught, nor also by any patterne or mould as the Platonicks with the Idees do phantastically suppose” (57). In this vein, I posit Sidnean reproductive virtual power as a form of queer natality, whereby a person or thing achieves “another nature” through counterfactual modes of representation and reproduction. I will further explore and define this term either in revision or expansion.

facticity, Dorothy Connolly adds, “The force of Sidney’s ‘golden world’ of poetry is the realm of the natural, not the celestial Venus” (21).<sup>21</sup> A number of critics oppose this vein of materialism. Walter R. Davis argues that “The object of poetic emulation does not exist in nature at all, but only in the mind of the Poet. Poetry becomes, for Sidney, the animation of a Platonic Idea” (30). Likewise, Forrest G. Robinson claims “the poet derives his materials, not from his experiences in the phenomenal world, but from an internally viewed universe of more ideal, more general truth” (132).<sup>22</sup> Merging these idealist and materialist critical trajectories, Harry Berger first used the term “counterfactual” to describes Sidney’s poetic aims and achievements. In his classic “The Renaissance Imagination: Second World and Green World” (1965), Berger posits:

Implicit in such formulas as “once upon a time” is the assumption, “(let us suppose or imagine that) in some place and time, some world, other than this . . . ,” *this* being the actual place, time and world in which we live. For Sidney, the logical first moment of fiction consists in a framing or bounding gesture of this sort, in which what I should like to call the counterfactual nature of fiction is clearly established. Thus to abandon adherence to factual or propositional truth—the truth of correspondence—is to disjoin the imaginary from the actual field of experience, to win for it greater freedom and autonomy” (41-42).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Connolly usefully extends discussion on the nature of love in Sidney to the doctrine of the two Venuses, particularly as articulated by Ficino. In *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium*, Ficino notes, “Venus is two-fold. The first, by intimate love is stimulated to know the beauty of God; the second, by its love, to procreate the same beauty in bodies. The former Venus first embraces the Glory of God in herself then translates it to the second Venus. The latter Venus translates sparks of that divine glory into earthly matter. There is a love in each case: in the former, it is the desire of contemplating Beauty; and in the latter, the desire of propagating it; both are honorable and praiseworthy, for each is concerned with the divine image (trans. Sears R. Jayne, 1944, p. 142). Excerpted from Connolly’s *Sir Philip Sidney: The Maker’s Mind* (1977).

<sup>22</sup> See Davis’s *Idea and Art in Elizabethan Fiction* (1969) and Robinson’s *The Shape of Things Known: Sidney’s Apology in its Philosophical Tradition* (1972).

<sup>23</sup> In this essay, Berger also makes critical distinctions between Frye’s “green world” and Abrams’ theory of heterocosm. His articulation betrays his New Critical leanings: “From a modern standpoint the difference between

Berger prepares us to consider Sidney's disdain for the historian, subject to the brutish facts of an adventitious world, as well as the poet's rightful place within the primary world, wherein second nature is summoned through recourse to divine power and the poet's talent for describing images of virtue and vice. Berger's tripartite model for understanding the particularly early modern features of heterocosm in turn denote the means by which a "virtuous selfhood" may be conceived and activated:

There is, first, the artist's delight in making and the reader's or spectator's delight in the recreative occasion of entertainment; second, coherence, beauty, etc., —a delight which is ideally fulfilled by the relevance and significance of the image, by the re-creation of the first world within the autonomous unity of the second; third, *ethical delight* in the content or "teaching," the phase in which the mind disengages itself from the second world and gathers up what it has made into the revised, the continually changing, context of its own concerns. In the transition from the second to the third phase we find both continuity and disjunction: continuity insofar as the moral return begins, so to speak, midway through the second world with the controlled readmission of life into the prepared space of art and is then carried beyond art out to life; disjunction in that the disengagement from art is usually effected by some gesture of release, some form of technique which psychoanalysts call breaking the transference. (37, my emphasis)

That precise fictive moment at which the "ethical delight" of the work takes hold—when

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Frye's green world and Abrams' heterocosm is fairly sharp. As a place of withdrawal or experiment, an ideal of one sort or another, the green or golden world possesses determinate content. But insofar as the heterocosm entails no assumptions about the quality of experience to be found in such a world, its content is neutral or indeterminate. Heterocosm in its barest and most generic sense is simply a *gestalt*, a unified field which—like any system—is coherent, self-sufficient and finite" (50).

the demand for a summative value judgment rises to the aesthetic surface of the work—is that very moment wherein axiological equilibrium is established between the work’s didactic or ethical impulse and the aesthetic mode established through the fostering of belief in its second world, what one might in this context call its fantasy. In effect, first nature resurfaces as second nature recedes. These moments are inherently paradoxical: just as the audience is faced with an ethical dilemma it must confront on its own, non-fictive terms, the fictive world of the text effectively establishes itself as ethically self-contained. Such equilibrium often occurs toward the end of a work, in a moment of reckoning in which contradictory values and impulses are sorted out; Berger cites Rosalind’s and Prospero’s respective returns from Arden and the island as such moments. “The withdrawal has made everything clear: golden and brazen forms have been distinguished, are made to confront and reform each other. Now as the play world turns to artifice before our eyes, as the characters turn back into actors, we are asked to share the playwright’s responsibility” (37).

In the vein of Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, this quality of acquired “moral perception” in turn implores the spectator or reader to consider these moral quandaries—to overlay them, effectively, upon one’s own psyche—thereby effecting a potential transformation in the audience not only in the act of observing the fictive experience, but afterwards, in the “actual world” to which the audience must return. The seeming chasm between “actual” and “virtual” worlds, residing respectively in nature and fiction, is thereby bridged through the animating power of virtue: the transferal of axiological power from art to life, which yields a chastening of moral consciousness in the observer. What is established, in effect, is a form of virtual awareness fostered by virtue—heightened awareness of one’s own moral attitudes attained vis-à-vis a process of withdrawal from the domain in which these attitudes constitute themselves. As Berger

notes, “this withdrawal from life to fiction is seen as fulfilled in a return to life which has two aspects: a return to the image of life within the play-world of art, and a return to life itself at the end of the fictional experience” (42).<sup>24</sup> Residing at the crux of the ethical and aesthetic, this mode of fictive withdrawal suggests a potential transformation that hinges upon the value and belief systems of the perceiver. In this very real sense, the witnessing of fictive virtue effects a transformation in consciousness or subjectivity, a mode of “transference” that in turn works upon one’s agency as well as the actions one engages in the physical world. Images of virtue and vice, metastasized in art, thus become catalyzing forces for action and existential reconstitution.

Through these claims I posit a theory of early modern subjectivity that is inaugurated in and through acts of moral perception and interpretation. I term this axiological selfhood, insofar as it is a form of selfhood activated through the syncretic power of aesthetics and ethics. While other early modern scholars have advanced theories of an emergent “virtual subject” in the Renaissance—most notably, Patricia Fumerton has argued that the early modern period inculcated forms of itinerant experience that resulted in the birth of a virtual or “detached I”<sup>25</sup>—

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<sup>24</sup> Here Berger distinctly echoes Johann Huizinga’s classic *Homo Ludens*, the Ur-text of contemporary gaming studies: “The second world is the playground, laboratory, theater or battlefield of the mind, a model of construct which the mind creates, a time or places which it clears, in order to withdraw from the actual environment. It may be the world of play or poem or treatise, the world inside a picture frame, the world of pastoral simplification, the controlled conditions of scientific experiment. Its essential quality is that it is an explicitly fictional, artificial, or hypothetical world. It presents itself to us as a game which, like all games, is to be taken with dead seriousness while it is going on. In pointing to itself as serious play, it affirms both its limits and its power in a single gesture. Separating itself from the causal and confused region of everyday existence, it promises a clarified image of the world it replaces” (46).

<sup>25</sup> See Patricia Fumerton’s *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

“The inward-searching Bunyan, for instance, though often appearing to hopelessly and damnably afloat in a secular world, is in fact by virtue of his tireless soul-searching at all times placed, however agonizingly, by the godly eye / I ... I would further question whether subjectivity defined primarily in theological terms may not be subjectivity at all from our modern, and an emergent early modern, perspective. Of course, one could counter that such a notion of God-based subjectivity was precisely what contemporaries were encouraged by their culture to find, which cannot be denied. But a new kind of subjectivity was simultaneously emerging in the period that speaks more to a modern notion of singularity and disconnection—a detached “I”—and unsettled poor subjects may well have had greater access to it than did their better-off contemporaries” (48-49).



none have done so with an eye toward the specifically literary and artistic developments of the period. In turning, next, to Sidney's theory of Cyrean materiality, I seek to define early modern axiological selfhood by way of the virtual polis erected through the radiating power of virtuous principles. I argue that this polity, emblematic of the coterie literary community of which Sidney himself was a part, materializes through an interpretive interface that places persons and texts in animating reciprocal bonds.

### Many Cyruses

For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them.

—John Milton, *Areopagitica*

In his formulation of the poet's golden world, Philip Sidney unveils the peculiar logic according to which Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* "worketh not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and how that maker made him" (216-217). Sidney foregrounds a distinction between the natural "particular" and the poetic "many" and introduces the notion of the poet's "second nature," wherein many Cyruses may exist, in an earlier passage:

Only the poet ... lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like: so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging within the

zodiac of his own wit. Never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, not whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden (216).

In this catalogue, Sidney establishes a clear-cut hierarchy between the poet and “the narrow warrant” of nature with whom the poet may traverse “hand in hand” but also be free to range “within the zodiac of his own wit,” thus granting him access to “another nature.” Untold ink has been spilt over these lines, yet most scholars agree that they demonstrate the singularly reproductive power of the poet’s imagination as opposed to that of “brazen” nature, from which can arise only one genetic Cyrus. As Kathryn DeZur notes, “Poetry’s scope both fulfills nature’s function by ‘creating’ a particular individual ‘as nature might have done,’ and exceeds it by ‘reproducing’ that individual within the reader of the text” (xxv).<sup>26</sup> Robert E. Stillman pushes the line further, arguing that such reproductive power works toward the ends of action and civic duty: “When Sidney celebrates the poet’s powers as a maker, in his critically important evocation of the golden world, he highlights the substantive, metamorphic agency of the fictive narrative, its power to make a Cyrus in order to bestow many Cyruses upon the world ... The multiplication of Cyruses is crucial to the genesis of action. Go forth and multiply” (219).

Crucially, the poet’s second nature yields not only a community of learners who will become like Cyrus “if they will learn aright why and how that maker made him,” but also itself “worketh ... to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency as nature might have done.” In other words, Sidney’s poet-maker has the power to replicate nature through artifice as well as to make copies of the things it has designed through the power of poetry’s ability “to teach and delight.”

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<sup>26</sup> See *Gender, Interpretation, and Political Rule in Sidney’s Arcadia* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2013).

Sidney's *Defense* indeed betrays a marked fascination with what one might call the language and logic of imaginative reproduction. At one point, Sidney even exclaims that poetry literally "[breeds]" virtue (249). Despite this attention—or rather, as a result of it and the critical tendencies it has engendered—I pivot emphasis on such language toward a reconsideration of Sidney's thesis on virtuous power. Sidney's theory of the imagination, as that which channels virtue in order to exceed and transform the bounds of nature, asks one to conceptualize a theory of virtue that enables its multiplication through non-reproductive means. To wit, the second Cyrus's power, understood as consisting in both a virtual replication of the actual hero and a textual embodiment of his heroic deeds, denotes "reproduction" only insofar as it denotes technological reproducibility through textual apparatuses. More to Sidney's point, the second Cyrus's power lies in its radiant *singularity*, that is, its ability to remain ontologically discrete while capable of imprinting its effects upon a community of others—those moved to mindfulness and action through learning—through the simultaneous gathering and dispersal of immense virtuous power. The second Cyrus thus preserves its integrity as a "particular" being while at the same time radiating forth virtuous energeia vis-à-vis its power "to teach and delight," as Horatian *qua* Sidnean verse must effectively do. Second Nature Cyrus as such exists both "substantively" *and* imaginatively, a thing made actual and material through the hero's "activation" in the bodies of those who "will learn aright why and how that maker made him." In this critical sense, Sidnean virtuous power obtains not through reproduction or multiplication, but rather through radical consolidation, "figuring forth" like a starburst from a singular poetic act. Such a process allows in turn for Cyrean effects to reach their intended ends—the activation or "movement" of the learned subject toward both civic-mindedness and action. Viewed this way, Sidnean poetic virtue, exalted above "brazen" reproductive nature, partakes indeed of its own "second nature" as

well as of particular laws that govern its movement.

With his emphasis on “action,” Sidney himself seems to make the distinction explicit, privileging the radiating ability of the poet-maker over the reproductive power of nature. Sidnean poetic imagination beckons one to be active, to go forth and *do* things, particularly public and heroic things—to animate the world, create moral communities. It can do this because this second nature is itself virtuous. A virtuous poetic imagination can in turn create virtuous worlds, wherein heroic deeds may be recorded; this golden world constitutes a larger ideal community to which readers belong. In this way the poet's virtue is multiplied through reading; a virtual community arises through the insinuation and multiplication of poetic virtue.

Sidnean second nature thus consists of two dimensions. On the one hand, Sidney is talking about bodies—human bodies—as they enter the discourse of poetry into virtuous poetic inspiration, moving them to deed or action. Therefore, this second nature that the poet commands is, strictly speaking, the world of the poet's imagination. Yet Sidney makes a distinction; this world is literally substantive; *people* populate this world; people have learned and read in this world; they have learned and read from Xenophon and Homer and been moved to virtuous intent. The golden world is thus a poetically-infused virtuous world palimpsested over the world of humankind, a first nature made of flesh-and-blood readers and learners: people who have accessed and understand the poet's language. This is how one Cyrus begs many: though a process whereby individuals of sound and virtuous mind engage in reading and understanding, moving them toward positions of agency and action within Sidney's polity.

Second, Sidney's theory requires one to consider the functional materiality of the objects that produce this radiating and reconstituting effect. The materiality of Sidney's second world consists not only of activated bodies, but of *data* that fuels this activation, imprinted in books and

texts. Sidney thus presents a fundamentally mediated, *text-based* model of acquiring or achieving virtue. Predicated upon the transformative power of poetry rendered into print, the substance of his second world depends upon the circulation of virtuous enargeia from poet to print house to perceiver.

While Sidney's does not explicitly engage the "matter" of printed material in the *Defense*, his theory of poetic imagination and imitation anticipates seminal twentieth-century arguments regarding the function of mechanically reproducible media. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), Benjamin examines the ontological properties of art objects when subjected to mechanical and other forms of reproduction.<sup>27</sup> He ascribes particular value to the originary object's location in time and space, and to site-specificity generally, noting, "even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (219). Sidney's theory of "activation" by poetic matter, in particular, anticipates Benjamin's argument regarding the artwork's aura and its relationship to the perceiver. As Benjamin notes, "In permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object produced" (221). In a text-based context, such an encounter with the "auratic" properties of the original work might be regarded as a virtual encounter with the divinely inspired moment of poetic creation itself. Made possible by the proliferation of print media, such encounters have the capacity to transform perception and reality at a great distance from the site and temporal

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<sup>27</sup> While Benjamin's focus is on "process-based" media such as photography and film, I posit that his argument takes on a particular valence in an early modern context, wherein works of print media may be regarded in loose analogy to later attempts at capturing and imitating the real. Despite his lack of attention to the medium of print, Benjamin addresses the early modern context of his argument in his discussion of aura's relationship to ritual: "the secular cult of Beauty, developed during the Renaissance and prevailing for three centuries, clearly showed that ritualistic basis in its decline and the first deep crisis which befell it .. art reacted with *l'art pour l'art*, that is, with a theology of art. This gave rise to what might be called a negative theology in the form of the idea of "pure" art, which not only denied any social function of art but also any categorizing by subject matter" (223).

moment at which the work was conceived.

As I have posited it, a Sidnean theory of virtual radiation bears further upon Benjamin's broader claims regarding the status of the early modern machine. Thomas Sawday notes that machines, in contrast to biological entities, were considered irreproducible; despite (in the case of the printing press, the "war" machine, the engraving) the many copies of things that could be yielded from certain devices, they were consecrated as ontologically singular.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, the machine introduces an inverse yet analogous relationship to acts of both reproduction and productivity: machines are like people in that they are capable of "making copies," yet they cannot, quite literally, replicate themselves or bear offspring. Machines are "more than" human in another respect, in that the objects they produce bear no ontological or genetic relation to themselves; they literally exceed themselves in their capacities for re-production. The ontological qualities of machines therefore inculcate new ways for subjects to imagine not only, per Benjamin, the ontologies of machines and the mechanically-reproduced objects they in turn dispense, but also the very metaphysics of human subjectivity and reproductive process. In a Sidnean sense, then, virtuous radiation vis-à-vis a technologically reproducible yet ontologically discrete object—such as a copy of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*—yields not mere copies of the object deprived of aura, but instead, genetically identical instantiations of it. Each person who reads and comes to virtuous understanding by reading the work is in turn connected to a virtuous-virtual community of others who have shared in the poet's divinely communicated message, attained through a process of radiant mechanical dissemination.

Sidnean virtual radiation proffers, in this sense, a utopic vision of textual reproduction. However, not all of Sidney's contemporaries shared such optimism. Early modern anxieties

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<sup>28</sup> See Sawday's *Engines of the Imagination: Renaissance Imagination and the Rise of the Machine* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

regarding the limits of technological reproducibility featured prominently in a broad swath of literature in various discourses, including poetry. Book I of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* memorably introduces "Errour," a sac-like beast in which female monstrosity is conjoined with the practice of book-making. Located in a notably "Wandering" Wood, Errour is the first obstacle that the Redcrosse Knight, hero of Book 1, encounters. The romping pace of the opening stanzas is interrupted by the hero's chance encounter. Surrounded by a moat of "fruitful cursed spawn" (1.22.6) as "blacke as inke" (1.22.7), the Den of Errour is both the antitype of and analogue to the Bower of Bliss, arresting the knight-errants' quest in an undulating dilation of textual and sexual energies. The beast having been strangled, both Errour and the text itself vomit forth a disgusting and confusing stream of organic and textual matter:

Therewith she spewd out of her filthy maw  
A floud of poyson horrible and blacke,  
Full of great lumpes of flesh and gobbets raw  
... Her vomit full of bookes and papers was,  
With loathly frogs and toades, which eyes did lacke (1.20.1-3, 6-7).

Impregnated with "bookes and papers," Errour is a biological analogue to the printing press itself—a half-formed, Papist aberrance that must be purged from Spenser's pristine allegorical landscape by the spear of "Holiness" in order for the narrative to proceed on proper rational and moral footing. Part woman and part beast, "whom God and man does hate" (1.13.7), Errour's horrific propagation and reproduction of further "errors" results in the mass-suicide of her many "yong," who explode upon consuming the flesh of their murdered mother. The battle between Redcrosse and Errour betrays the logic according to which, as Benjamin puts it, "the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many

reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence” (221). The slaughtered woman-dragon, allegorizing the stench of Catholic dissimulation, is a machine propagating images not of virtue but of *vice*. In putting Errour to the sword, Redcrosse effectively puts an end to one “tradition” while creating requisite spiritual and material space for another.<sup>29</sup>

Spenserian and Sidnean theories of imitation and reproducibility challenge scholars to see the early modern virtual as consisting in something more or other than the corporate body, or “the kings two bodies,” where the several harmoniously assemble into one.<sup>30</sup> In particular, Sidnean virtuality goads us to consider a theory of virtual radiation, where the one imparts a multiplicity and in doing so creates new possibilities for virtual community. One must therefore consider not only the notion of a Sidnean virtuous community, brought together by the virtuous action of the poet, but also of a virtual community made possible through the constituting act of poetic virtue. In doing so, one must consider the material dimensions of Sidnean virtuality. The poet’s virtuous community is contrasted directly with “clouds of castles” conjured up by an unsubstantiated imagination—imagination without virtue, that is, or imagination that literally does not *matter*.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> As the young knight-errant soon discovers, however, the slaughter of Errour does not in itself guarantee that error will not propagate. Almost immediately upon defeating the beast, Redcrosse observes the false Una (“Truth”) tempting him and troubling his conception of what Una—the person and concept—is presumed to represent. The quest for certainty and the desire to vanquish error thus begins, just as it simultaneously interrupts, this epic tale of knight-“errancy.” Redcrosse’s eradication of Errour therefore proves to be a necessary but ultimately pointless task. As the remaining volumes of *The Faerie Queene* attest, error and errancy remains in force as both tactical and methodological instruments marshaled by characters within the text and by the author himself. The all-important evisceration of Errour proves to be an illusory battle, one that quite literally yields illusions of “truth” upon its completion; and the knight-errant’s sense of autonomy, both shaped and tested by battle, emerges stronger only to be chiseled away by further trials and, indeed, further “errors.”

<sup>30</sup> For further discussion of early modern selves and corporations as virtual enterprises, see Albert Rolls’ *The Theory of the King’s Two Bodies in the Age of Shakespeare* (2000), Marie Axton’s *The Queen’s Two Bodies* (1977), Janel Mueller’s “Virtue and Virtuality: Gender in the Self-Representations of Queen Elizabeth I” (2001); and recently, Henry Turner’s *The Corporate Commonwealth: Pluralism and Political Fictions in England, 1516 – 1651* (2016).

<sup>31</sup> One might plausibly consider here that Sidney may be hailing theories of celestial radiation from Ficino. Though he is an avowed Platonist, Ficino’s “material image,” borne of our late medieval discourse on celestial radiation, may productively inform the “zodiac of wit” to which Sidney refers in his *Defense* and force us to consider the ways



Sidnean materiality in this sense addresses what Maurice Merleau-Ponty has described as the body's native function as a "virtual center for action" (121).<sup>32</sup> Supported by studies on computer-generated virtual bodies by cognitive scientists and psychologists, Marco Caracciolo claims, "human embodiment does not coincide with the material boundaries of our body, since it spans the whole range of our possibilities of interaction with the world" (504).<sup>33</sup> What scholars of virtuality have thus far failed to illustrate is the extent to which "the material boundaries of our body" may be transformed by that which cedes to virtuality in the first place: the radiating imprint of virtue itself, a potency of investment in counterfactual belief and the environs these beliefs engender. Sidney's theory of the golden world demonstrates that sixteenth century theories regarding virtual community serve to further illuminate just what a "virtual body" is or may be, even in the context of computer-generated "second" worlds.

Closer to our task here, Sidnean virtuality attests to a theory of action adduced through a radical notion of the imagination which posits textual inhabitation and interpretation at the interface of understanding and agency, acquired in and through the acquisition of virtue. This feature of Sidnean virtual embodiment may perhaps be no better exemplified than through the complex allegorical structures that suffuse his *Arcadias*. As Julie Crawford has shown, "The relationship between the symbolic forms of female constancy and the actual women who played out this symbolism in the public sphere of late Elizabethan England is precisely what the

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in which early modern textual objects radiate forms of energy that have a material presence. Indeed, how does virtue travel, multiply, form communities, become visible, and thus become newly embodied and substantially activated?

<sup>32</sup> *Phenomenology of Perception*, Translated by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Extending Merleau-Pontian phenomenology to the consideration of machine- or computer-generated bodies, Caracciolo claims that a virtual body "exists at the interface and in the interaction between a real, human body and a machine" (503). See "Virtual Bodies" in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

deciphering imperative of the *Arcadia* illustrates” (39-40).<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the “deciphering imperative” of the *Arcadias* show that the lovers that populate Sidney’s pastoral romance not only exist *substantively*, in the actual world, but that these aristocratic figures—many of them women—occupy positions of great political power so as to radically transform the “first nature” to which they belong.

I conclude this study with analysis not of these figures or power relations, as this work has already been done. Rather, in what follows, I explore both *Arcadias*, but principally the *New Arcadia*, to argue that Sidnean virtual embodiment depends upon the radiating force of feminine virtue recast as radical political critique. Crucially, I mean not to suggest, as generations of mostly male critics have, that feminine virtue in the *Arcadia* functions predominantly to “correct” and compensate for an overdetermined masculine *virtus* that undergirds the plot, or that it serves primarily to generate images of idealized feminine conduct. Rather, I argue that Sidnean feminine virtue provides the means by which critique in the face of the absurd and unjust achieves an activating force—a force that constitutes and in turn makes available new possibilities for agency—within and beyond the world of the text.

### Imaging Virtue

In *The Second Common Reader* (1932), Virginia Woolf famously describes *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* as an antiquated relic, a book having sunk “as if by [its] own weight down to the very bottom of the shelf” (40). Though praised as succeeding in “willfully flouting all contact with fact,” thus producing “another reality” (41), the romance as a whole collapses under the weight of elaborate stylistic patterns that offend the sensibilities of modern readers:

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<sup>34</sup> See *Mediatrix: Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014).

... how easy it seemed in the beginning to tell a story and amuse a sister—how inspiring to escape from here and now and wander wildly in a world of lutes and roses! ... But alas, softness has weighed down our steps; brambles have caught at our clothing ... [*The Arcadia*] becomes one of those half-forgotten and deserted places where the grasses grow over fallen statues and the rain drips and the marble steps are green with moss and vast weeds flourish in the flower-beds. And yet it is a beautiful garden to wander in now and then. (48-49)<sup>35</sup>

In an attempt to grasp the mood and character of Elizabethan culture, Woolf describes her maddening experience of reading Gabriel Harvey's diaries in a similar vein: "it has to be admitted that to read Harvey's pages methodically is almost beyond the limits of human patience. The words seem to run red-hot, molten, hither and thither, until we cry out in anguish for the boon of some meaning to set its stamp on them. He takes the same idea and repeats it over and over again" (16). Woolf's indictment of sixteenth century prose, and of Sidney in particular, held sway through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An incomplete work that finishes mid-sentence, the revised *Arcadia* was the most popular and republished prose fiction written in English for over 200 years. With the advent of the modern novel, Sidney's heroic prose-poem became chiefly read and commented on by literary scholars. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sidney's first draft of the *Arcadia*, which circulated only in manuscript during his lifetime, was finally published; with its publication, most scholarly and critical attention shifted to this earlier work, which is widely regarded to be more aesthetically coherent. The "Old" *Arcadia* (*OA*) is therefore considered a more quintessentially "Sidnean" work, insofar as he is certain to have written and

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<sup>35</sup> Even so, Woolf's rejection of Sidney is not wholehearted. Her descriptions of his prose often border on praise: "It is this inequality and elasticity that lend their freshness to Sidney's vast pages. Often as we rush through them, half laughing, half in protest, the desire comes upon us to shut the ear of reason completely and lie back and listen to this unformed babble of sound; this chorus of intoxicated voices singing madly like birds round the house before anyone is up" (44).

edited it himself in its entirety, whereas the revised or “new” *Arcadia* (*NA*) indeed suffered a variety of editorial bastardizations.

Despite these criticisms, I focus chiefly on *NA* because it, and not *OA*, was the very text that fostered centuries of “virtuous images” in the public consciousness. Indeed, as Maurice Evans notes in his introduction to the revised text, a “book which pleased so many for so long can be no period piece; and besides affording perhaps the best insight we have into the tastes of the Elizabethan Age, the *Arcadia* is a great work in its own right, offering ample rewards to the modern reader who is willing to adjust to the demands made by its conventions” (10).<sup>36</sup> These “conventions,” against which Woolf directs much of her criticism, pertain chiefly to the text’s elaborate displays of rhetoric and fanciful imagery; decried by earlier critics such as Hazlitt, Evans sees in them the quintessence of the Elizabethan pictorial imagination:

The *Arcadia* is a poem in this sense: its aim is to awake the love of virtue by an infinity of ‘speaking pictures’, as Sidney’s own contemporaries clearly recognized. Greville calls Sidney ‘this excellent image-maker’ and praises him for turning the barren precepts of philosophy into the ‘pregnant images of life’ ... His purpose, says Greville, was to ‘limn out such exact pictures of every posture of the mind.’ Hoskins too praises the ‘many notable and lively portraits’ of human attitudes and situations with which the *Arcadia* is stocked, and the printer of the 1590 edition shows how it struck a contemporary, in the little abstracts which he gives at the beginning of each chapter: ‘A verbal crafty coward *portrayed* in Clinias ... Brave courage *imaged* in Amphialus.’ (24, emphasis in original).

To be sure, *NA* is teeming with so many virtue-inducing “lively and noble portraits” that one can doubt neither the sincerity of Sidney’s principles as laid out in the *Defense* nor his

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<sup>36</sup> See Maurice Evans’ “Introduction” in *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* (London: Penguin Books, 1987).

intention to enact these principles in his own poetic work. The many examples of virtuous imagery in *NA* suggest a feature of early modern rhetoric that comes to acquire axiological currency in the making of literary worlds. Poetic imitation results in the distortion or counterfeiting of the real or actual as one approaches the imaging of virtue, a system whose pedagogical effectiveness resides in the positing of vivid contrasts and dramatic pictorial and emotional inversions. In order to narrate virtue, one must seemingly be able to envision it as well as its potential to work extra-narratively, in an actual or possible world one might inhabit; a place wherein one might “test” the meaning of what one has encountered. In short, one must picture the virtue-image in such a way that one can imagine its having an existence independent of the textual environs of which it is a part. Take for example this typical Sidnean image, of princess Philoclea confronting her confounding same-sex desire for Pyrocles, now a man-disguised as the captivating Amazon, Zelmane:

But as some diseases, when they are easy to be cured they are hard to be known, but when they grow easy to be known they are almost impossible to be cured, so the sweet Philoclea, while she might prevent it, she did not feel it; now she felt it when it was past preventing, like a river, no rampires being built against it till already it have overflowed. For now indeed love pulled off his mask and showed his face unto her, and told her plainly that she was his prisoner. (240)

Ensnared in a dense metaphor that slowly folds on itself, revealing the chiasmic structure that undergirds it, Philoclea becomes entrapped by both her situation and the rhetorical structure that renders it intelligible. Love having been portrayed a disease now known, and so now impossible to escape, a gushing river descends upon her, quashing an array of imaginary “rampires” that only hindsight could have erected. Mirroring Philoclea’s very dilemma and

disposition, the first of Sidney's sentences achieves a suffocating intensity and effect followed by a sense of shock of revelation with the second, bluntly-delivered image. As if escaping from the deluge of the preceding multi-clausal sentence with impossible dexterity, the ominous masked figure ensnares the young lover, thereby revealing himself to be none other than the very thing Philoclea most desires in the world. In all, the image vividly recasts Philoclea's dilemma with Zelmane as one wherein she must confront a forbidden desire in order to remain true to her herself. This story, part of Philoclea's larger project of envisioning a virtuous path toward agency and self-determination, occupies much of the latter books of *NA* and also foreshadows her literal imprisonment by her aunt, the villainous Cecropia. At the same time, the image serves a wholly didactic function: it teaches a lesson about the pain of ambiguous and seemingly impossible queer desire. The vividness with which it is portrayed renders it memorable to those who encounter it; therein, as an extra-textual entity, it serves to "delight" the senses. The image dances like a hologram, taking on a life of its own, even while remaining tethered to the fictional universe of the text.

Herein we detect the double-natured quality of Sidnean descriptive prose, akin in many respects to Spenserian verse; virtuous aspects or features become chiseled or etched in place such that one may twist them about in one's mind and view them from varying perspectives. In this way, complex rhetorical structures—what one might regard as forms of literary sculpture—give way to virtual impressions that reside primarily in the mind as they radiate or "project" outward from the text, claiming a space in the memory of the subject. This is how Sidnean images come to teach, fulfilling their morally didactic purpose, as well as "delight" by way of vivid representation. Sidnean poetics thus synthesize moral instruction with aesthetic pleasure so as to fulfill the two-sided nature of axiology, the branch of philosophy that comprises and subsumes

the totality of value judgements. It is therefore of no surprise that Sidnean prose is so often called “emblematic”: like the emblems of the period, such images are morally didactic, visually concrete, and require immersion, contemplation, and afterthought in order to comprehend and “digest” them. Unlike the emblem literature, Sidney’s prose-poem offers a fully-fleshed “second world” of fantasy in which these images may be further allegorized and understood in a broader imaginative context.<sup>37</sup>

### Agency and Intention

Addressing the matter of allegory, Julie Crawford argues that in the *Arcadia*, “female constancy, particularly in the face of male tyranny, serves as allegory for aristocratic power, resilience, and critique” (32). Crawford points out that the history of scholarship on the *Arcadia* is marked by a tendency to politicize the heroics of Pyrocles and Musidorus while depoliticizing Pamela and Philoclea: “Their constancy and virtue are seen as in limited keeping with the roles of women under patriarchy, or they are seen as exemplars of ‘feminine virtue,’ a quality that caveats and / or corrects the masculine and marital *virtus* of the heroes” (31). My claim is that Sidney politicizes the project of feminine virtue not by valorizing it, but by exposing its flaws and inconsistencies with ironic distance. In the service of justice and self-determination, Philoclea, Pamela, Parthenia, and even Zelmane-Pyrocles, presenting and acting as a woman, break with expectations of feminine will at critical moments throughout the text. They do so,

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<sup>37</sup> Evans suggests that the geographic setting of Sidney’s fantasy—the fabled-yet-actual land of Arcadia itself—is the very site of this dualistic vision of the imagination. “Throughout the book we are conscious of the two Arcadias, the ideal one of poetic tradition and the real one of the story from which the pastoral peace has been driven by neglect of human reason . . . like Spenser and Shakespeare who both used the Arcadian myth, Sidney saw it as an ideal to be striven for but never achieved in full. The Arcadian idyll owes both its poignancy and its appeal as myth to the fact that it can never be attained” (38). Evans notes, further: “[Sidney’s] heroes are not imitated from life was created to remind life of what it lacks. They represent the ideal reality which the all too fallen world must be wooed to love and hence to emulate . . . For Sidney, the hero is the ultimate speaking picture: he belongs to poetry, not history” (39-40).

notably, through acts of radical critique. In doing so they do not merely “compensate” for the overdetermined masculinity that encroaches upon the later books. Rather, feminine virtue comes to represent a countervailing force for a resistance-based theory of free will, in the case of Pamela, and of action, in the case of Parthenia. In all cases, feminine virtue comes to signify a power that deforms and transforms the parameters of the real itself.

One encounters both an instantiation and critique of the specifically “Cyrean” quality of this power in the very first pages of *NA*. While musing over the surpassing beauty and virtue of the shepherdess Urania, the shepherds Claius and Strephon ask us to consider that Urania’s virtuous power lies in her ability to change the material world:

... let us in such sort think, I say, that our poor eyes were so enriched as to behold, and our low hearts so exalted as to love, a maid who is such, that the greatest thing the world can show is her beauty ... indeed, as we can better consider the sun’s beauty by marking how he guilds these waters and mountains than by looking upon his own face (too glorious for weak eyes), so it may be our conceits, not able to bear her sun-staining excellency, will better weight it by her upon her works upon some meaner subject employed. And, alas, who can better witness that than we, whose experience is grounded upon feeling? Hath not the only love of her made us, being silly ignorant shepherds, raise up our thoughts above the ordinary level of the world, so as great clerks do not disdain our conference? Hath not the desire to seem worthy in her eyes made us, when others were sleeping, to sit viewing the course of the heavens; when others were running at base, to run over learned writings; when others mark their sheep, we mark ourselves? (250, Chapter 1 Book 1).



As Tiffany Werth perceptively claims, “Claius articulates the hope of many humanist scholars that a well-read man might counsel a prince” (41). Even so, the passage emphasizes the relative sense of virtuous pomposity these shepherds accrue merely by having stood in Urania’s sightline. A figure absent in this scene, and who does not later appear in the romance, Urania’s power resides, literally, in her ability to impress virtue upon others. Like the single Cyrus who, though the power of example, begets many, Urania’s goodness and virtue transforms the physical and social world she inhabits. Moreover, Claius indicates that her virtue—her explicitly coded feminine virtue—has the power to cross gender boundaries. Indeed, the example of Urania prepares us for the gender transformation that Pyrocles will soon undergo, also in the name of love and explicitly in defense of feminine virtue.

However, what may be most revealing about this episode is the way in which it interpellates feminine virtue as a system that becomes subject to critique. Feminine virtue is simultaneously exalted and exposed as a perceptual prism that deforms the parameters of the real and actual, in ways that appear to threaten or deceive. The entire narrative of *NA* is framed in terms of this seemingly idyllic scene, wherein virtue is verbally and visually invoked as a series of commitments are forgotten and reclaimed. As the ship in which the heroes, Musidorus and Pyrocles, is destroyed off shore, the philosopher-shepherds reminisce not only about Urania’s beauty, but also the nature “remembrance.” Strephon’s dialogue explicitly invokes the notion of the memory palace: “What doubt is there but that the sight of this place doth call our thoughts to appear at the court of affection, held by that racking steward remembrance? . . . But what is all this? Truly no more but as this place served us to think of those things, so those things serve as places to call to memory more excellent matters” (62-63). Precisely as this discourse unfolds, Claius and Strephon seem not only to lose reliable access to their perceptual faculties, but also

their ability to execute volitional acts. Their discourses on vision and memory prevent them from observing, until an alarmingly late moment, that a fast-dying naked man is crouched upon a coffer, floating by the seashore. That man is Musidorus, a prince of Thessalia, whom they eventually rescue. Following this, Musidorus impels them to rescue his cousin, Pyrocles, whom they spy on the mast of a burning ship filled with slaughtered bodies. Our first encounter with Pyrocles is one of Sidney's great images of figurative beauty:

... but upon the mast they saw a young man—at least if he were a man—bearing show of about eighteen years, who sat as on horseback, having nothing on him but his shirt which, being wrought with blue silk and gold, had a kind of resemblance to the sea on which the sun (then near his western home) did shoot some of his beams. His hair (which the young men of Greece used to wear very long) was stirred up and down with the wind, which seemed to have a sport to play with it as the sea had to kiss his feet; himself full of admirable beauty, set forth by the strangeness both of his seat and gesture. For holding his head up full of unmoved majesty, he held a sword aloft with his fair arm, which he often waved about his crown as though he would threaten the world in that extremity. (66)

Sidney's stunning evocation of the beautiful boy, at once captive prince and fear-inducing demi-god, brings to mind Coleridge's spectral ship in *Ancient Mariner* and the divine poet of *Kubla Khan*, encircled by awestruck and fearful admirers. Indeed, as it turns out, Claius and Strephon miss their opportunity to save the prince; as they pass the young man at mast, "their simplicity bred such amazement and their amazement such a superstition that (assuredly thinking it was some God begotten by Neptune and Venus that had made all this terrible slaughter), as they went under sail by him, held up their hands and made their prayers" (66-67).

We are taught, as per Sidney's way of instructing through images, that the very enterprise of feminine virtue is flawed. Admiration of Urania's virtue may have "[raised] up our thoughts above the ordinary level of the world," but to a fault; blinded by the transformative power of beauty, the men have lost any sense of ordinary perception and reasoning faculty. As a result, Pyrocles is quickly abducted by pirates, and the two cousins engage a series of misadventures before reuniting.

Indeed, in *NA*, dramatic encounters with virtuous images tends to make one see what wishes to see or *believes* is before one, facticity be damned. Sidney provides perhaps no better example of this tendency than in the figure of Pyrocles-Zelmana. The mysterious Amazon is adored in varying ways by the foolish King Basilius, his wife, Queen Gynecia, and their daughter, the incomparable Philoclea. For Basilius, Zelmana is the picture of stately feminine virtue, the very "mistress" of his forbidden desires; in Gynecia's eyes, Zelmana is a beautiful young man in woman's disguise, testing her matrimonial chastity; and for Philoclea, she is seemingly neither man nor woman but the fury of love itself, confounding reason and the natural boundaries of desire. For each of the afflicted, the love invested in the charismatic Amazon literally reconstitutes the material world—notably, not quite as they wish it, but rather, as they *orient* or *intend* it, even if the result is unhappiness or seeming self-destruction. The logic of Arcadian love thus places intention at odds with agency: what one *tends* toward may in fact thwart one's possibilities not only for happiness, but also one's ability to act meaningfully upon one's intentions. To wit, Zelmana's very presence serves to undermine Basilius's intent in engaging a pastoral retreat from princely duty so as to avoid the awful prophecy revealed to him by the oracle. Dangerously alluring yet unquestionably virtuous, Zelmana's prismatic presence embodies the Sidnean principle that immense virtuous power may deform the parameters of the

real itself, in effect creating multiple intersecting universes each governed by contravening intentions, love-logics, and parameters for desire and attraction.

Early modern discourse on intention, generally confined to philosophical and religious treatises, explicitly invokes the language of virtuality. In *The Court of the Gentiles* (1677), Theophilus Gale argues establishes causal ground between “actual” and “virtual” intentions and temporal or earthly action:

To *intend* any thing, as Suarez well observes, is *to tend* towards it by al manner of vehement desires, and important endeavors ... the mind, when it acts, must requiesce in the love, not of the Creature, but of God. For this is most certain, according to Augustine, that an habitual Intention only without *actual* or *virtual* wil not suffice; because the just, when asleep, have *habitual Intention*, yet they cannot be said to refer their actions to God. Wherefore there is always necessary an actual, or at least virtual intention of referring althings to God. A virtual intention in human acts hath the same force as actual intention: for it acts in virtue and force received from some former actual intention. A right intention is the deliberation of a bended wil towards God as the last end: for where the intention is right, God is the predominant end. The end of an action discovers its kind: and the intention discovers the end: For intention properly belongs to the Wil, whose office it is to refer al to the last end. (Wing 1284:18, 24-25, emphasis in original).

Derived from medieval Christological discourse, particularly the schools of Richard of Middleton, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus,<sup>38</sup> moral theology designates virtual intention as

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<sup>38</sup> Of the three forms of intention, Scotus writes, “in one way actually, just as someone actually thinking of the end loves it and wills something for its sake (*propter illum*); in another way virtually, just as someone reaches the willing of this being for an end out of the knowledge and love of the end [...]; in a third way habitually, for instance, if every act referable to the end, remaining with charity that is the principle of referring, is said to refer habitually”

an intention one harbors “in effect,” by virtue of the power (*virtus*) of one’s “actual” intention to commit an act. Bonaventure provides an example: consider a person on a journey who, temporarily focusing on or *tending* toward other matters (the weather, conversation, etc.), nonetheless bears the greater intention of her committed will (the journey) in mind such that she successfully arrives at her destination. The intention, while not foremost on one’s mind over the substantive duration of the voyage, continues to exert manifest power over the agent. Acting “in virtue and force received from some former actual intention,” the power of a “virtual intention” ensures the unison of volition with action over time, such that “the end of an action discovers its kind.”

Numerous anecdotes and images place virtuous intention at odds with personal agency.<sup>39</sup> Toward the end of Book II, the evil Queen Andromena jails Musidorus and Pyrocles, presenting the princes with a true virtue dilemma: they cannot take action save themselves because strict, by-the-book adherence to virtuous code and conduct prevents it (348). Doing so would effectively dishonor the King, Plangus’s father, while also shaming a woman—however vile—who is acting out of love. This sense of duty leads to their being freed by the “actual” Zelmane, whom Pyrocles loves, and the “actual” Palladius, son of Andromena. Through this conflict, we learn that Zelmane has been disguised as Daiphantus, a male page, all along. Shortly thereafter, virtuous intent once again contravenes agency: Pyrocles must assist the tyrant Plexirtus, father of Zelmane, to honor her dying wishes, despite his knowledge of the ruin this could bring. Even Musidorus assists in the scheme, offering to fight a fabled warrior and his giant alone while

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(Osborne, 362). See “Aquinas and Thomas on Individual Acts and the Ultimate End” in *Philosophy and Theology in the Long Middle Ages* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the dilatory structure of Sidney’s romance follows intention in this manner. Recounted histories and minor interruptions of various kinds, reminiscent of both Spenserian errancy and the episodic nature of *Don Quixote*, nonetheless orient themselves toward a necessary teleology informed and undergirded by the guiding light of virtuous intent.

Pyrocles fulfills his duty. The episode exposes the simultaneous fragility and stolidity of masculine virtue, which effectively consumes itself, even as it demonstrates how clearly important it is for the heroes to uphold its code, no matter the cost. It is, as Sidney presents it, a code of reasoning and conduct that forsakes reason and action in the name of “conduct” itself.

The stakes of *NA*'s weighing of intention against agency are articulated most clearly in moments of virtuous critique uttered by the female or female-signifying characters. This occurs, for example, when Basilius accosts Zelmane in the forest. Having devised multiple schemes to rid herself of his advances, Zelmane, at long last, tells the king where to go:

Zelmane, keeping a countenance askance as she understood him not, told him it became her evil to suffer such excessive reverence of him, but that it worse became her to *correct him to whom she owed duty*; that the opinion she had of his wisdom was such as made her esteem greatly of his words, but that the words themselves sounded so as she could not imagine what they might intend.

‘Intend?’ said Basilius, proud that he was brought in question, ‘What they intend but a refreshing of my soul, and a swageing of my heat, and enjoying those your excellencies wherein my life is upheld and my death threatened?’

Zelmane, lifting up her face as if she had received a mortal injury of him, “And is this the devotion your ceremonies have been bent unto?” said she: “Is it disdain of my estate or the opinion of my lightness that have emboldened such base fancies toward me? “Enjoying,” quoth you! Now little joy come to them that yield to such enjoying.’ (324, my emphasis)

Zelmane’s defiant rebuttal, which sends the bumbling, licentious king after his youngest daughter for counsel, represents a crucial moment in the text’s assertion of feminine will in the

face of violent masculine intrusion. Though we know Zelmane is Pyrocles, she signifies as a woman, and her actions render her, in her own words, subject to the problems that beset “womankind.” Her refusal to capitulate to Basilius’s advances as well as her decision, ultimately, to “correct him to whom she owed duty” suggest a conception of virtue rooted in agential power. Specifically, Zelmane’s stance signifies here as *critical*, in the Foucauldian sense. Foucault argues that early modern forms of governmentality shaped the ways in which subjects came to critique and refuse absurd limits imposed by sovereign and more local forms of power and, thereby, to cultivate forms of agency and self-determination:

... in this great preoccupation about the way to govern and the search for ways to govern, we identify a perpetual question which would be: “how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles” ... it seems that one could locate therein what we could call the critical attitude. Facing them head on and as compensation, or rather, as both partner and adversary to the arts of governing, as an act of defiance, as a challenge, as a way of limiting these arts of governing and sizing them up, transforming them ... there would have been something born in Europe at that time, a kind of general cultural form, both a political and moral attitude, a way of thinking, etc. and which I would very simply call the art of not being governed or better, the art of not being governed like that and at that cost. (44-45, emphasis in original)<sup>40</sup>

Seizing upon the “political and moral attitude” that characterizes such “defiance,” Foucault defines this mode of critique as synonymous with virtue itself. “There is something in critique which is akin to virtue. And in a certain way, what I wanted to speak to you about is this

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<sup>40</sup> See “What is Critique?” (1977) in the Foucault anthology, *The Politics of Truth* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007). Ed., Sylvère Lotringer; translations, Lisa Hochroth and Catherine Porter.

critical attitude as virtue in general” (43). “Virtue” in this sense is best understood in relation to that which it is not. A self-cultivated power that resists tyranny and convention, it is, in Judith Butler’s words, “established through its difference from an uncritical obedience to authority” (311).<sup>41</sup>

Arising from, in this sense, Zelmane’s virtue as well as her virtual intention—her overpowering and overdetermining love for Philoclea—her critique and rejection of Basilius effectively quashes two forms of governmentality. On the one hand, Zelmane defines the terms according to which one must uphold and regard her honor and womanly chastity; therein, she simultaneously defends her (concealed) masculine pride. Moreover, by literally defying, scorning, and critiquing the actions of a wayward king, Zelmane articulates and moves into action the mechanism by which the power structures in Arcadia—and in *The Arcadia*—come first to dissolve and shift toward anarchy, then to a place of political reconciliation.

Butler concedes that Foucault’s conception of virtue appears to be synonymous with “resistance,” or rather “becomes the means by which it is redescribed” (312). “Moreover,” she queries, “this virtue is described as well as an ‘art,’ the art of not being governed ‘quite so much,’ so what is the relation between aesthetics and ethics at work here?” (312). Butler turns to Foucault’s theory of the “arts of existence,” found in *The Use of Pleasure*, to answer the question:

... when he introduces the notion “arts of existence” Foucault refers to such arts of existence as producing subjects who “seek to transform themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre.” We might think that this

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<sup>41</sup> See “What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault’s Virtue (2000) in *The Judith Butler Reader* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), edited Sara Salih. In my introduction, I further explore Butler’s essay as well as Foucault’s use of the term virtue and define for my project the precise relationship between aesthetics and ethics, fields which are encompassed and constituted by axiology, or the study of value.



gives support to the charge that Foucault has fully aestheticized existence at the expense of ethics, but I would suggest only that he has shown us that there can be no ethics, and no politics, without recourse to this singular sense of poesis. (320)

Thus understood, Foucauldian virtue upholds the Sidnean principle that virtual potency effects a constitutionalization, i.e., the radiating force of a quality obtained through investment in counterfactual belief. Engendered through a process whereby individuals “transform themselves in their singular being,” Cyrean multiplicity works its effects materially by fostering visions of liberty and affective “resistance” to the brutish facticity of a godless or unjust political order just as it depends upon the gestation and practice of virtuous principles obtained through learning. It is through this very process that critique becomes possible. Axiological selfhood in this sense resides at the crucible of resistance and generation, the Sidnean “figuring forth” of virtuous energeia; or, as Foucault puts it, the “putting forth [of] universal and inderable rights to which every government, whatever it may be, whether a monarch, a magistrate, an educator or a pater familias, will have to submit” (X). This self is constituted through radical awareness fostered through moral perception, which brings to light conditions of alterity; as Butler claims, “Moral experience has to do with a self-transformation prompted by a form of knowledge that is foreign to one’s own” (308). Thus to have been “taught” (to have learned an ethical lesson from an external agent) and “delighted” (to have reconstituted one’s feeling for joy in light of this change) is to have experienced the full sensation of the interpretive critical act, whereby one attains heightened consciousness of the political order to which such acts and acting bodies are bound.

For Sidney, poetry fulfills this critical imperative, goading the self toward heightened axiological engagement in the world. We recall that poetry achieves this because it has the

potential to create virtuously-activated “second worlds” in which the god-like power of the poet is directed in all its creative fury, whereas the dictums of history hold us “captive to the truth of a foolish world.” In fostering critical virtue, Sidney’s fact-resistant golden world breeds resistance not only to political tyranny but to “that which *was*,” highlighting the radical potentiality of the process by which poetic imagery comes to exert epistemological power—or inculcate learning—over willing and able minds. At the same time, the golden world delights by “figuring forth” potentialities for living in aesthetic harmony with these divinely-inspired images. Thus, while critics such as Stillman have shown that the golden world promises and delivers “liberty,” Sidney more accurately foregrounds the *technique* whereby liberty, or freedom from tyranny, is attained. Liberty comes through *interpretation*—not only of virtuous poetry, but of the wide array of intellectual and perceptual material one encounters.

### Accepting Resistance

As Kathryn Schwarz has shown, when examining the politics of early modern feminine virtue, “resistance” may also mean capitulation; indeed, the actions of Zelmane, Philoclea, Parthenia, and Pamela show that feminine “obedience” can mean more than what it seems. In quite different ways, these virtuous women capitulate to certain feminine norms so as not only to destabilize other, more threatening aspects of patriarchal authority, but also to engage willfully in the dissolution of tyrannical upheaval and its oppressive value system, which seeks to silence and literally hold captive virtuous women or those who signify as such. (Notably, the doltish shepherdess Mopsa is not taken prisoner, while Zelmane, who holds no known claim or title, is taken captive).

These matters crystallize in a debate between the virtuous and “constant” Pamela and her

eventual captor, the wicked Queen Cecropia. Their debate on beauty, chance, and atheism demonstrates Sidney's skepticism regarding the aleatory materialism that defines Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* while also recalling his condemnation of the historian, whose "was" is based both on conjectural knowledge and on the particularity of the event or example. The quintessential female Machiavel, Cecropia provides further consideration for Sidney's conception of virtue and justice. In Cecropia, virtue becomes conspicuously detached from both its iconic pagan aspect as well as conventional early modern notions of feminine virtue, yet linked vividly to a sense of perverse feminine will. Leaving nothing to chance—to Machiavelli's whorish *fortuna*—Cecropia becomes its very embodiment and representative in action, principle, and speech. Even as she represents a dangerous capitulation to feminine will and power, her shocking atheism, tyranny, wearing of false virtues, and suppression of feminine will in others mark her precisely as the antitype to Sidney's exalted poet-maker.

Cecropia is with good reason commonly compared both to Mary, Queen of Scots and Catherine de Medici, figures who emblemized early modern Protestant Europe's fear and loathing of the "Catholic harlot." While these associations certainly make sense in an English Protestant as well as more local Sidnean political context, such reasoning belies Cecropia's most marked vice, her atheism. As frequently thought of as a female Machiavel, Cecropia may more capaciously represent the Machiavellian whore-goddess *Fortuna*, whose sovereignty over fate and chance must be met and crushed by masculine *Virtù*, to which the goddess is also irresistibly attracted. In a Sidnean twist, however, *Fortuna* is not crushed by virtue, designated as straightforward masculine force; she is, rather, defeated by its *effect*. No sword or strong hand, but rather a blend of furious feminine will, recast in the guise of God-serving virtuous perfection, ultimately tames and silences the forces of tyranny circulating throughout *NA*. I argue that

Cecropia is destroyed not by straightforward masculine *virtus*, but by virtuality itself—that is, by the potency and effect of radiant feminine virtue, which in Sidney’s universe blots out all falsehoods and forms of tyranny.

Cecropia’s “supernatural” power, her evocative wonder, is in fact based on dissimulation—her ability to manipulate the physical world to deceive the senses of her victims. Speaking with her son, Amphialus, she describes at length her seductive allure in court: “In my presence, their tongues were turned into ears, and their ears were captives unto my tongue. Their eyes admired my majesty; and happy was he or she on whom I would suffer the beams thereof to fall” (X). As Barbara Brumbaugh has shown, Cecropia’s ostentatious display of external virtue would have recalled John Foxe’s Pornopolis: “Pornopolis delineates (from the Protestant perspective of Foxe and his audience) the superstitious awe purposely instilled within the laity for high-level clergy of the ‘Babylonian’ Romish church by that church’s ‘traditions’ as well as its reliance upon external displays, such as the vestments, and ritual” (21). Even so, according to Tiffany Werth, “these pejorative Catholic dimensions reveal that Cecropia’s threat lies less in her magic skills than in her practice of false magic and manipulative stagecraft, destroying Arcadia’s peace” (67, *Fabulous Dark*). Indeed, Cecropia’s staged executions of Philoclea and Pamela, testing the strength and indeed constancy of those captors who witness them, are mere tricks of the eye, based not on virtuous activation of the imagination but rather petty deformation of the real. Cecropia thus reveals the aleatory nature of the physical world over which she contemptuously holds court. Her meddling with facticity, in short, recalls not the talents of the magician, but the faults of the historian.

At the same time, Sidney neither banishes wonder nor transmutation of facticity from his golden world. Zelmane is but a pretender at being a woman, albeit one who feigns toward the

virtuous end of fostering love. Sidney reimagines feminine virtue not by emasculating Pyrocles, as was done comically to Hercules; rather, Pyrocles undergoes a virtue transformation inaugurated through his attachment to Philoclea's portrait. In doing so, *NA* reclaims masculine purpose in a world suddenly unraveled by the uncertainty of female love by commanding femininity itself to conquer fortune.

Such feigning of virtue in the name of virtue itself—that is, in the name of or toward the ends of love—dominates *NA*. Examples of Sidnean “honest dissimulation” abound: most notably, even before the narrative events begin, Musidorus (Palladius) and Pyrocles (Daiphantus) agree to disguise their princely names, which they reject upon losing one another after the catastrophic sea voyage that sets the narrative in motion; each prince subsequently engages in elaborate transformations of either gender (Pyrocles / Zelmane) or class (Musidorus / Dorus) in order to gain access to their intendeds. Moreover, both princes subtly forge their respective histories, recounting to friends and lovers alike the heroic deeds of the valiant cousin-princes Musidorus and Pyrocles, said to be slain at sea, in the third-person.<sup>42</sup>

Such “virtuously deceptive” acts are not confined to the book's two principal characters. Parthenia, *NA*'s very image of conventional feminine virtue, disguises herself *as herself* following her facial disfigurement and subsequent recovery, presenting herself to her beloved Argalus as a perfect physical copy of the dead woman he had once loved. Declining the woman's offer, Argalus effectively passes the virtue test. Parthenia's deception is never questioned; the two joyously embrace and marry in the next chapter. In a striking parallel, following Argalus's

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<sup>42</sup> The quantity of similar, smaller-scale deceptive acts are too numerous to recount. We might however also note Dorus's thoroughly deceptive courtship of the shepherdess Mopsa; the virtuous intention here is for Musidorus to demonstrate his capacity for love to his actual love, princess Pamela, and to deflect Basilius from suspecting his true intentions. In another notable moment, Pyrocles-as-Zelmane undergoes yet another gender transformation as the “ill-apparelled knight” who wins a tournament in honor of Philoclea's beauty toward the end of Book I, besting her cousin, Dorus, disguised now in a suit of black armor.

death by combat against Amphialus, Parthenia attempts to avenge her husband by disguising herself as the mysterious “Knight of the Tomb,” carrying a shield bearing the horrific impresa of “a beautiful child, but having two heads, whereof the one showed it was already dead; the other alive, but in that case, looking for death” (526). Attended by a procession of eight “damosels,” “all upon palfreys, and all appareled in mourning weeds” (526), Parthenia’s display of knightly valor is at once exalted and macabre; she willfully and knowingly submits to her death in this act of critical and political defiance. Her impossible battle against Amphialus, who had just defeated the most famous knight in the world, vividly demonstrates how the *NA* pits female agency against intention. In her very moment of critical *and* martial resistance to both patriarchal authority and political tyranny, the famously silent, constant, and obedient Parthenia loses her life so as to gain another; in the throes of death, she proclaims to Amphilaus, “There rests nothing now but that I go live with him since whose death I have done nothing but die” (529). Even as the contest provides dramatic pictorial and emotional closure to the great romance between the text’s two paragons of gendered virtue, it once again illustrates the allure and folly of adhering strictly to gendered codes of virtuous conduct.

Cecropia’s meditations on conventional feminine beauty draw ironic attention not only to Parthenia’s heroism, but also to the potent yet potentially deceptive nature of virtue. Despite the fact that Philoclea is praised unironically by Pyrocles as “the ornament of the earth, the model of heaven, the triumph of Nature, the life of beauty, the queen of love” (146), Sidney cautions his readers not to fall prey to the vainglorious effects attributed to feminine beauty, against which masculine will is but powerless. Having failed in her enterprise to gain the affections of Philoclea, whom she hopes to woo on behalf of her son so as to make him heir to Arcadia, Cecropia turns to her older sister Pamela with the same intent. She flatters Pamela excessively,

then goads her to put her beauty to good use by marrying Amphialus:

How do men crown, think you, themselves with glory for having either by force brought others to yield to their mind, or with long study and premeditated orations persuaded what they would have persuaded! And see, a fair woman shall not only command without authority but persuade without speaking. She shall not need to procure attention, for their own eyes will chain their ears unto it. Men venture lives to conquer; she conquers lives without venturing. She is served and obeyed, which is the most notable not because the laws command it, but because they become laws to themselves to obey her ... she need not seek offensive or defensive force, since her only lips may stand for ten thousand shields, and ten thousand unavoidable shot go from her eyes. (485)

Standing upon the metaphorical rock upon which Cecropia's impregnable castle rests, Pamela responds deferentially but incredulously, noting that her aunt "will make me not only think myself fairer than ever I did, but think my fairness a matter of greater value than heretofore I could imagine it" (486). Pamela's critique, though subtle, is significant; in this gesture she implicitly critiques the institution by which feminine worth ought to be judged. She claims, moreover, that in order to marry Amphialus, she would need to procure her father's permission: "how beautiful so ever I be, I am his daughter; so as God claims at my hands obedience, and makes me no judge of his imperfections" (487). Cecropia then concocts a scheme to "make her less feeling of those heavenly conceits" (487), prompting her complex discourse on atheism. Recalling Sidney's commentary on the historian in the *Defense*, Cecropia's commentary underscores the claim that belief in a "supernatural" agent rests upon faulty knowledge of causation:

I would not you should love virtue servilely, for fear of I know not what which you see not, but even for the good effects of virtue which you can see. Fear, and indeed, foolish fear, and fearful ignorance, was the first inventor of those conceits; for when they heard thunder, not knowing the natural cause, they thought there was some angry body above that spake so loud; and ever the less they did perceive, the more they did conceive. Whereof they knew no cause, that grew straight a miracle; foolish folks not marking that the alteration be upon particular accidents ... Be wise, and that wisdom shall be a God unto thee. (487-488)

Pamela's ensuing speech, one of the longest and most erudite in all the *NA*, upbraids Cecropia's in form and content. Her critique hinges principally on Cecropia's liberal application of the principles of contingency and chance in human and natural affairs. These principles are derived transparently from Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*.<sup>43</sup> The passage in question concerns Pamela's description of atomic matter and the movement of bodies in space:

Chance is variable, or else it is not to be called chance: but we see this work is steady and permanent. If nothing but chance had glued those pieces of this All, the heavy parts would have gone infinitely downward, the light infinitely upward, and so never have met to have made up this goodly body ... you may, perhaps, affirm that one universal Nature, which hath been for ever, is the knitting together of these many parts to such an excellent unity. If you mean Nature of wisdom, goodness and providence, which knows what it doth, then say you that which I seek of you ... But if you mean a nature, as we speak of the fire which goeth upward, it knows not why; and of the nature of the sea, which in ebbing and

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<sup>43</sup> Curiously, contemporary scholarship on *NA* does not engage this critical connection. See [INSERT]



flowing seems to observe just a dance, and yet understands no music, it is but still the same absurdity superscribed with another title (490).

“First nature” according to Pamela, does not consist of a series of randomly connected events or atoms strewn about through space. Against the Lucretian doctrine, she proclaims that first nature—like the poet’s second nature—is indeed “governed” by an “eternal intelligence” (491), and that in such a world, “the good effects of virtue which you can see” are purposefully emplotted. In like fashion, Pamela herself is where she is, even as prisoner, for a reason; her constancy in the face of Cecropia’s verbal and physical assaults, as one “built upon so brave a rock, that no shot . . . could reach it (469), serve to cultivate an intense virtual intention that no temporal force can contravene. Like Parthenia, Pamela effectively establishes that death would be preferable to succumbing to Cecropia’s godless demands. In this act of critical defiance, Pamela obliterates vice through the power of radiant virtue, through which volition and intellect unite in defiance not only of literal constraint, but of the symbolic constraints placed upon her by conventional codes of feminine conduct. To wit, Pamela incisively contravenes Cecropia’s earlier claim that “a fair woman shall not only command without authority but persuade without speaking.” In bequeathing to Pamela a virtuous disposition as well as passion, reason, and vast rhetorical power, Sidney paints a picture of indignant yet fully self-possessed fury; in short, a person, like the poet, “in whose mind virtue governed with the scepter of knowledge” (438). Pamela thus embodies what Julie Crawford has called “principled constancy: the Christian neostoic constancy associated with aristocratic critique” (37).

This trait has material effects, indeed bending fortune to agency. Philoclea’s and Pamela’s simultaneous rejection of Amphialus ultimately sends the warrior in despair and rage after his mother, before whom he intends to kill himself. Seeing him approach, armed with a

sword, Cecropia loses herself and steps back, falling from the castle heights to “receive her death’s kiss at the ground: and yet she was not so happy as presently to die, but that she had time with hellish agony to see her son’s mischief” (573). Amphialius then stabs himself with Philoclea’s confiscated knives, which he kisses repeatedly (575).

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Pamela’s victory against the forces of tyranny begs the question: to what extent is liberty possible in a universe governed by anything other than one’s own intentions? Put differently, how does one account for one’s agential status when one’s virtual intentions may be thwarted by one’s own volition? Virtue has the power to shape minds, actions, and political realities, but the question of *fortuna*—that which makes tyranny possible in the first place—remains. In the *Defense*, Sidney is not altogether clear on this point. While aleatory forces have the potential to inflict “many a terror,” they also stand to serve he or she who is “fortunate,” who happens to be standing on the right side of chance. It is on this point that one may demarcate a clear yet subtle distinction between Sidnean and Butlerian virtue. Butler claims that “it is not the case that a subject is formed and then turns around and begins suddenly to form itself,” for:

if we think this aesthetic mode of self-making is contextualized within ethical practice, [Foucault] reminds us that this ethical labor can only take place within a wider political context, the politics of norms. He makes clear that there is no self-forming outside of a mode of subjectivation, which is to say, there is no self-forming outside of the norms that orchestrate the possible formation of the subject. (322)

In the *Arcadia*, Sidney confounds the Foucauldian-Butlerian distinction between

subjectivation and the art of “self-making” by appealing to the “norms” of early modern virtue itself. While the male or male-signifying heroes of the Arcadia are seemingly invincible athletes, their female counterparts, through acts of bold critical resistance, reveal and come literally to embody the contingent and precarious nature of patriarchal tyranny. This is achieved through processes whereby feminine volition signifies as and ultimately “re-describes” virtual intent. Sidney’s complex heroines subsequently inhabit and deform the conventions of early modern feminine virtue so as to attain internal axiological coherence. In doing so, the “effect” of their virtue, itself in critical crisis but seemingly never *in question*, in turn destabilizes the greater antifeminine infrastructures of the golden worlds they inhabit.

As I will show in the next chapter, Shakespeare comes to acknowledge these conventions so as to reveal the existential dangers they present. Feminine virtue becomes as often a force of creative radiance, as with Rosalind in *As You Like It* (1599), as it is a force of self-destruction, as with Desdemona in *Othello* (1604). As the reputation of Desdemona’s unparalleled virtue diminishes in Othello’s eyes, she comes to embody the play’s moral uncertainty. The aleatory status of her virtue is the driving force of Othello’s madness. Ultimately, he kills her not merely because she has deceived him but because she has become chance incarnate, the whorish wheel of fortune, always “turn, and [turning]” (4.1.253-254) before his eyes, with “Cassio’s kisses” virtually impressed upon her lips (3.3.344). The idea that this perfect being might be made in error—having in itself some internal corruption or having been “tarnished”—is so incomprehensible, Othello must eradicate her existence. The trace of error she either contains or is supposed to contain is the seed of Othello’s doubt and rage, for it is an inverse reflection of his own natural aberrance: this seed of truth regarding her darkness consumes and comes to reflect his own conception of self.

In light of Othello's conquests and performances—in light, that is, of his staggering presence—it is possible to overlook that it is Desdemona who typifies Foucauldian virtue, or the Renaissance spirit of virtuous critical resistance to circumstance.<sup>44</sup> An astute communicator and capacious thinker, she also typifies the Renaissance conception of ideal or “right” reason. Her decision to bypass patriarchal approval of her marriage is the shocking event that precedes and enables the play, as well as the blueprint for its unfolding as a tragedy.<sup>45</sup> Her “failure” to convince Othello that she is not unchaste, to save herself and effectively rationalize her way out of being executed, may likewise be regarded as the spectacular failure of Renaissance reason and rhetoric.

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<sup>44</sup> Such a reading contravenes Camille Paglia's speculation that “The cool, tensionless consistency of identity of Spenser's godly Una ... appears in Shakespeare only in helpless maidens like Ophelia, Cordelia, and Desdemona, who are destroyed by their plays” (196). See *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (1990).

<sup>45</sup> As a minority of scholars have suggested, if this were a comedy, their wedding would effectively function as conclusion to the events that follow. Indeed, it resembles comedy insofar as it involves verbal games and skirmishes, contains vulgar language, and brings a number of improbable elements into play at once. Recent digital data (2016) produced by Michael Witmore and Jonathan Hope supports this theory.

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### CHAPTER 3

#### "TRUTH MAY SEEM, BUT CANNOT BE": POTENTIALITY AND IMPOSSIBILITY IN *OTHELLO* AND "THE PHOENIX AND TURTLE"

I regard this as Sartre's fundamental insight into the human condition: that whatever we are is not always what we have to be.

—Lewis R. Gordon<sup>46</sup>

And what impossibility would slay  
In common sense, sense saves another way.

—King of France, *All's Well that Ends Well*

I have been arguing that virtuality is the effective force of virtue: a radiant potency that reanimates the real through forms of engaged critical resistance. In Sidney this occurs through the radiological projection of feminine will, which transforms the politico-material world of the *Arcadia*. Put differently, Sidnean virtue is one's God-given power to erect second worlds that in turn redescribe one's effective force within the polis. Virtue becomes, in a sense, a perceptual modality that reinscribes new possibilities for potentiality itself, and so a vehicle for self-authorship. It therefore presupposes the existence of something akin to a perceptual *qua* political *a priori*—an epistemological schema routing intention to action.<sup>47</sup> If so, to what extent, for whom, and by what means does such an apparatus become available for use?

In Shakespearean terms, the above question may be rewritten to ask, simply: Why am I not able to realize or "effect" my potential? What, indeed, is the purpose of virtue in an

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<sup>46</sup> In *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism* (1995).

<sup>47</sup> In this view, that is, virtue would seem not only a natural right, but a political one.

impossible world? If Sidney aligns virtue with the utopic activation and materialization of one's inner goodness, then Shakespeare holds such reverence in deep suspicion. This chapter will show that *Othello* (1604) and Shakespeare's cryptic masterpiece, "The Phoenix and Turtle" (1601), theorize this suspicion by elucidating the strange logic according to which perfect or idealized virtue succumbs to or enables its own destruction. Seventeenth century critics of "Phoenix" and *Othello* recognized this jarring quality, questioning the "reality" that these works presuppose as either impossible or beyond reason.<sup>48</sup> John Marston's untitled response to Shakespeare's "Phoenix," which appears in the same volume, aptly captures the sense of revulsion and disbelief engendered by Shakespeare's radical claim that the traditionally imperishable phoenix does not rise from its ashes:

*A narration of and description of a  
most exact and wondrous creature, arising  
out of the Phoenix and Turtle  
Dove's ashes.*

O 'Twas a moving *Epicidium!*  
Can fire? can Time? can blackest Fate consume  
So rare creation? No; 'tis thwart to sense,  
Corruption quakes to touch such excellence,  
Nature exclaims for Justice, Justice Fate,  
Ought into nought can never remigrate.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Similarly, in "Phoenix," with the surprise death of its majestic and immortal protagonist, the poem's voice of "Reason" effectively declares the death of "Truth, Beauty, and Rarity, / Grace in all Simplicity" (X).

<sup>49</sup> All excerpts of "Phoenix" have been transcribed from a copy of Robert Chester's 1601 pamphlet archived at the Folger Shakespeare Library. Modernizations have been adopted from the 1997 edition of *The Riverside Shakespeare* edited by G. Blakemore Evans.

The voice of these lines is astounded and possibly offended at what it has witnessed. Marston's contribution to *Love's Martyr* begins with a reassertion of terms: properly and traditionally, a "most exact and wondrous creature," a new phoenix, should arise from the ashes of the dead phoenix, a fabulous and "rare creation" that consumes itself in a self-fecundating fire every 500 years.<sup>50</sup> He proceeds with a series of questions and a sharp critique: Shakespeare's poem is not only "corrupt" in its treatment of the subject but also "thwart to sense," illogical and implausible.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, Shakespeare's poem departs from every important poem on this subject by committing the phoenix to a doomed affair publicly mourned by a procession of beasts, acting in various roles as funereal spectators. By enacting a version of love that defies normative logic—Shakespeare's phoenix and turtle metamorphically, and impossibly, become one being—the lovers mysteriously perish. Their unusual "Propertie" is discussed and their fate is seemingly sealed in a metaphysical court of law presided over by personifications of Reason and Property. The poem concludes with Reason conducting a threnody to the "concordant one" it aesthetically admires, but whose very existence places its own powers, and perhaps its own being, into question. Shakespeare's "mourning *Epicidium*" leaves us with nothing as its close: there are no heirs, and in madness or epistemological darkness, no clear moral lessons are learned. Both the audience and characters depart with an overwhelming sense of confusion because everything that

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<sup>50</sup> See studies cited by Harrison, Hill, and G. Wilson Knight for discussions of the phoenix myth in European literature. Also, see Fairchild's study on Shakespeare's "Phoenix" and Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*.

<sup>51</sup> To be sure, Shakespeare's ironic treatment of the allegorical phoenix and the turtledove, her mortal companion, is both uncharacteristic of the poems that appear in *Love's Martyr* and, scholars agree, as a composition it is unique in early modern European literature, Ralph Waldo Emerson, often credited with rescuing this poem from obscurity, opines in *Parnassus* (1874) that "this poem, if published for the first time, and without a known author's name, would find no general reception. Only the poets would save it" (vi). In the most recent edition of *The Riverside Shakespeare*, Hallett Smith composes an evasive preface, speaking for generations of critics when he notes, simply, "there is nothing else like it" (1889). I. A. Richards says more or less the same thing: "Is it not fitting that the greatest English poet should have written the most mysterious poem in English?" (86). B. H. Newdigate claims that "the lines on the Phoenix and Turtle . . . present one of the most difficult problems to be found in [Shakespeare's] works" (xvi); and Ranjee G. Shahani, making the most comprehensive assessment, concludes that "As a composition 'The Phoenix and Turtle' is unique in European literature" (99). If there is critical consensus on any point regarding the "The Phoenix and Turtle," it is that the poem is both odd and unusually difficult.

was is gone, and everything that might be is no longer possible or foreseeable.<sup>52</sup> Like *Othello*, the poem narrativizes the decay and destruction of potentiality itself.

It is therefore not surprising that *Othello*'s earliest critics were similarly confounded by its presentation of an "impossible" world, a kind of utopia or comedy turned inside out.<sup>53</sup> In *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693), Thomas Rymer famously indicts *Othello* for being an amalgam of "improbable [lyes]," a work "fraught" with "improbabilities" (2). Rymer describes the succession of "improbable lyes" one encounters in this play.<sup>54</sup>

The Character of [Venice] is to employ strangers in their Wars; But shall a Poet  
thence fancy that they will set a Negro to be their General; or trust a Moor to  
defend them against the Turk? With us a Black-amoor might rise to be a  
Trumpeter; but Shakespear would not have him less than a Lieutenant-General.  
With us a Moor might marry some little drab, or Small-coal Wench: Shake-spear,  
would provide him the Daughter and Heir of some great Lord, or Privy-  
Councillor: And all the Town should reckon it a very suitable match. (2)

The rhetorical effect of Rymer's repetition, "with us," is to insert a cultural and moral chasm between "us" and *Othello*'s Venice. "With us," things are reasonable; here, things are both unsound and out of tune. There is of course a glimmer of truth in Rymer's racist presumptions, which reflect less the common sense of Shakespeare's time than of his own, when racial

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<sup>52</sup> "Phoenix" declares the "Reason" of its world effectively unstable and unreliable by subjecting "Reason" itself to critical inquiry, much as the final unfolding of *Othello* is not unlike a series of drawn-out testimonies directed at Iago and his horrendous crimes.

<sup>53</sup> One might suppose Coleridge's reading of Iago's soliloquy in Act 1, scene 3 as falling in line with this view; he describes "the motive-hunting of motiveless malignity" of the character.

<sup>54</sup> For when an object is "not rightly apprehended," it is "delivered otherwise than it standeth in nature," and then is "the hart moved to a disorderly passion." (190). Timothy Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie* (London 1586).

taxonomies borne of the slave trade<sup>55</sup> came to influence notions of the practical and possible. We hear Rymer's complaint clearly: one *such as* Othello has no right to his position, his wife, the favors and honors bestowed upon him in and by the Venetian elite. Like "Phoenix," the play produces outcomes that directly affront the notion of a unified and stable reason. This "improbable" world in turns leaves its audience filled with disbelief: we are not only shocked and horrified at Othello's execution of Desdemona, but in bearing witness to its fruition, we are goaded to adjust the levels of trust we place in our perceptual faculties. Indeed, it is ultimately the audience that must bear the epistemological chaos engendered by Iago's horrific and seemingly pointless machinations.<sup>56</sup>

In the following pages I pursue readings of "Phoenix" and *Othello* that attempt to make sense of that feeling of shock, confusion, and loss we feel at their respective conclusions. The prevailing sentiment, I believe, is one of injustice at blind reason. The logic that leads each work entelechically toward self-evisceration—a kind of perfection informed by deviant reason, or reason standing outside of history—demands a reconfiguration of traditional boundaries asserted by identity, reality, and potentiality. The intersubjective bond forged between Othello and Desdemona is therefore akin to that allegorized between the phoenix and turtle: an ideal form has met its complementary opposite at the explosive site of pure potentiality. Their virtue, in its impossible perfection, cannot be explained or understood in terms of Aristotelian or other forms of logic that dictate parameters for the possible. Indeed, I argue, these works ultimately leverage a blow at Aristotelian rationality by showing "reason" itself to be an artificial construction that

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<sup>55</sup> See *Saltwater Slavery* and Collette Guillamin's definition of racism in "The Specific Characteristics of Racist Ideology" (1996).

<sup>56</sup> [Digital implications? Fact-based epistemologies, such as those employed in the DH fields. Does this produce a different Shakespeare?

may lead to absurd and tragic conclusions.<sup>57</sup>

“Phoenix” mobilizes these concerns in a cryptic, allegorically dense poetic frame that enacts and indicts the tenets of Aristotelian logic, equated for centuries with common sense itself.<sup>58</sup> While evaluating Shakespeare’s controversial choice to commit the traditionally imperishable phoenix to an “eternity” of death, I will explore his decision to place Reason, a character and construct in “Phoenix,” in dialectical conflict with a version of reason summoned by the mythic affair between the poem’s protagonists—a version of reason that accounts for the paradoxes of love by understanding these paradoxes to be artificially constructed, and therefore subject to evaluation. Two competing versions of reason emerge in the poem, both equally compelling: the mystically conjoined Phoenix and Turtle exhibit either “The truth of love” (X) and are perfect, or true love’s impossibility, and are aberrant. “Phoenix” therefore suggests that reason, particularly as conceived by scholastic-Aristotelian commentators, is itself a fallible concept, an epistemologically unstable construct of the mind that has nothing to do with the physical world over which it grafts arbitrary ontological markings. Aristotelian rationalism, relentlessly parodied and appropriated by the poet, receives its most clear-cut and strident critique in an apocalyptic love poem that equates reason with absurdity and the death of virtue.

In indicting the logic that claims the lives of the Phoenix and Turtle, the poem levels a critique not just of deductive or syllogistic logic, but of logic masquerading as physics: the truth values assigned in language, the poem insists, may not correspond to any physical reality. The syllogism may lead to necessary conclusions, but these conclusions are not truths, and may not be used to make determinations about what “is” or “is not” in the physical world. “Phoenix”

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<sup>57</sup> Unless noted otherwise, I refer to Richard McKeon’s edited collection of works (1946) when discussing the works of Aristotle.

<sup>58</sup> It is worth noting in this context that “Phoenix” is often argued to be the first “metaphysical poem.”



therefore exposes the limitations of a system of reasoning that demands absolute correspondence between words and things, and a physical model of the universe, such as that imagined by scholastic-Aristotelians and their followers, governed by dogmatic adherence to *a priori* categories and spurious dichotomies.

One might say that *Othello* inscribes within the rational order of Venice the allegorical or asocial potentiality—and impossibility—of “Phoenix.” Like the brilliant, erotically-charged extinction of the Phoenix in Shakespeare’s poem, Othello dramatically exists history itself. As Leah S. Marcus claims, “In killing himself and the Turk within him, Othello symbolically rids the Venetian state of an internalized version of the Ottoman menace” (436). Indeed, in his dying words, Othello gives instructions to be *recorded*, integrated into a sociality and history in which he cannot be logically reasoned to belong while alive. To the end, Othello issues impossible orders. As in “Phoenix,” in *Othello*, a physics of actuality form the theoretical basis for an existing person or things’s impossibility. What is born as or becomes errant must be banished so as to restore reason to history.<sup>59</sup> I refer not to Sidney’s belabored and imagination-free history, concocted through the uninspired collecting and consulting of “mouse-eaten records,” but a conception of history that accounts for its own rational unfolding.<sup>60</sup> I refer to Hegel’s *Geist*, or “Spirit,” summarized by Anthony King as follows:

For Hegel, the *Geist* referred not to any individual mind or spirit ... *Geist* referred broadly to the consciousness of a people of itself and the world in which they lived. It referred to a people’s self-understanding. It denoted the practices which a

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<sup>59</sup> It is therefore like a glitch or error in the system: the glitch that reveals the flaw in the object’s design as well as blueprint for its reproduction.

<sup>60</sup> These questions goad us to ask, What is the relationship between *Geist* and *fortuna*, or *Geist* and *virtù*? One must understand and exist in *Geist* in order to know one’s vantage, thereby positioning one to command *fortuna*. *Virtù* without *Geist* is like axiology without imagination: one’s pure potential or ability has been stripped of meaning or purpose.

people regard as appropriate, the kind of social intercourse in which that people engaged and, finally, the kind of world there was for that people (x).<sup>61</sup>

Such a view contrasts with Charles Taylor's position that "there is a single supra-individual entity, *Geist*, and ... all that exists is to be thought of as part of the development of this single, supra-human individual" (118).<sup>62</sup> But as R.C. Solomon argues in his classic essay on the topic, philosophers have misunderstood the meaning of *Geist* by overlooking the extent to which Hegel has transposed from Kant:

... the subject of philosophy is not a person, is not an individual, but must be referred to *simpliciter* as subject, without any pretense toward identification or individuation with persons. But this notion of subject is precisely Hegel's notion of *Geist*. For Hegel, the Transcendental Ego, as *Geist*, is a literally general or universal consciousness, as it ought to have been for Kant. Hegel's *Geist* is Kant's Ego without the unwarranted claim that there is one Ego per person. *Geist* is simply the underlying unifying principle of consciousness and, at the same time, the underlying rational will "behind" all practical reason and action (660).<sup>63</sup>

The stars of both "Phoenix" and *Othello* are "impractical" subjects who have effectively been excised from the seat of subjectivity itself, from the "underlying rational will" of the world,

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<sup>61</sup> See King's *The Structure of Social Theory*.

<sup>62</sup> See *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*.

<sup>63</sup> See also Sandra Bonetto, who situates *Geist* in the context of early modern racist discourse: "the more liberated from nature and the natural condition (*Naturzustand*), the greater will be man's spiritual progress. Once a man's basic needs are met, his mind is liberated to contemplate what is 'higher'. The greater the 'consciousness of freedom', as manifest in concrete socio-political institutions and practices, the less dependant on or influenced by nature a people is said to be. Again, the influence of Montesquieu is apparent, for he argued that, the further a people are from nature, or, in other words, the more elaborate and sophisticated their institutions and methods of work and thought, the less these institutions and methods can be explained as effects of climate and geography (Plamenatz, J., 1963: 7). The measure of progress for Hegel is, therefore, freedom and its concrete appearance in the world, and this necessarily implies, firstly, freedom from nature. For life in the 'state of nature' is not the proper life for man as far as Hegel is concerned. Indeed, freedom, in the Hegelian sense, is not attainable in such a natural condition" (1). See Bonetto, Sandra. "Race and Racism in Hegel—An Analysis." *Minvera: An Internet Journal of Philosophy* 10 (2006). Web.

which is another way of saying that they live in critical or existential opposition to rather than in harmony with *fortuna*. The realities in which they subsist, in which they are theoretically possible as subjects, are the very worlds from which they are prescriptively excluded by virtue of their perfection—which is to say, their errant or deviant natures.

I want to investigate the nature of this errancy, what Arthur Little, referring to *Othello*, calls the “monsters that the play at once invents and naturalizes, declaring them improper, even as it implies that they were always ‘naturally’ there” (311). For these reasons, I will investigate the intersecting logics undergirding epistemologies of fact that lead, on the one hand, to the deaths of the Phoenix and Turtle, and on the other, to Othello’s conclusion that Desdemona is guilty and therefore must die. While “Phoenix” provides a conceptual and technical vocabulary that underscores the early modern virtue crisis to which I refer throughout this dissertation, *Othello* situates these concerns in a political reality that destroys both its protagonist and its ideal love. As Othello cedes power to Iago, he is further stripped of what Jean Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon would call his “transcendence,” or ability to freely enact his will. His fall reveals an epistemological partition that stands between belief and action.<sup>64</sup> On these lines, one may see that *Othello*’s proto-empiricism is predicated not merely on the fallibility of fact or the fantasy of “ocular proof,” but of the ethical exigencies that subtend the real. It is concerned with the processes by which we arrive at *judgments*, or establish grounds for facticity predicated upon

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<sup>64</sup> This “partition” is commonly erected in the comedies, to great effect. In a *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, a literal “Wall,” played by Snout, functions as both a conduit and an impasse preventing authentic communication between Pyramus and Thisby, whose tragic deaths are parodied by the mechanicals’ crude performance and the commentary these performances elicit. As the lovers approach “Wall,” Pyramus, played by Bottom, exclaims: “And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall, / That stand’st between her father’s ground and mine! / Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall, Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne! / [Wall holds up his fingers.] / Thanks, courteous wall; Jove shield thee well for this! / But what I see? No Thisby do I see. / O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!” (5.1.172-80). The “chink” in the wall is a tear or fissure in knowledge that misleads the lovers, resulting ultimately in their deaths and, simultaneously, in laughter from the now-multiply layered interpretive audience. Quince’s Wall, at once “courteous” and “wicked,” may thus be regarded as the literal stage-material of Shakespeare’s epistemological divide. Its presence underscores the idea that confusion has become a condition for the intelligibility and laughter of this production, and of the production of which it is a part.

belief and trust in a world in which truth may only “seem,” as Reason puts it in “Phoenix,” and in which knowledge accrues through the accumulation of data that may come from sources over which we have no *supervision*.<sup>65</sup> What I come to know, I know in part through the testimony of others; certain of these others become experts because their testimony is deemed more morally credible. *Othello* is thoroughly obsessed not only with the fallibility of establishing grounds for belief and trust in matters of fact, as well as what comes to constitute a fact, but the moral-epistemological status of engaging in and bearing witness to the construction of “false” or indeed “alternative” facts, as we call them in 2017.<sup>66</sup>

In the following sections, I explore, first, the game-like logical and grammatical apparatus of “Phoenix.” This reading in turn illuminates my reading of *Othello*’s thwarted potentiality.

#### Deviant Reason and “The Phoenix and Turtle”

“The Phoenix and Turtle” was composed in a climate of intellectual volatility and uncertainty that circulated almost entirely around principles unearthed in the rediscovered works of Plato, Aristotle, and other ancient writers. Scholars commonly note that these texts, however mistranslated or misunderstood, vastly influenced contemporary intellectual activity in Europe in domains ranging from philosophy to painting to poetry.<sup>67</sup> With “Phoenix” before us, there can be

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<sup>65</sup> By which come to see the world, by which vision serves as interface between knowledge and fact.

<sup>66</sup> The notion of virtual testimony or witnessing implicit in an epistemological calculus that undergoes critique in the play. As such, the virtual witness has roots in legal and ethical discourse—and in the theater. The morality not of the accused but of the witness is called into question.

<sup>67</sup> Rosemond Tuve finds one of the most compelling manifestations of this change in poetic works of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, a period, in her words, “dominated by logic.” Tuve notes that “there is at this time definite connection between logical training and the methods of forming and using images, with a considerable relationship between the Ramistic re-organization of logic and the lines of development taken by imagery in the first half of the seventeenth century.” Following the death of Petrus Ramus in 1572, “It is scarcely

no doubt that Shakespeare was familiar with these movements. Perhaps Shakespeare's most obscure work, it assumes on behalf of the reader basic knowledge of scholastic principles. Since it is short and notoriously difficult, I provide the full text of the poem (See Appendix A, "Transcription of 'The Phoenix and Turtle'").

Any reading of "Phoenix" must confront two basic, incontrovertible facts: that this poem is at least metaphorically about a Phoenix, and that its treatment of the subject requires one to look at the language of scholasticism. As numerous studies have shown, this most obvious feature of the poem is the very feature that presents such interpretive difficulty. Without question, the technical features of "Phoenix" refer specifically to Aristotelian scholasticism. J.V. Cunningham's classic reading of these features has been particularly influential.<sup>68</sup> "The characteristic feature of scholasticism for our purpose," Cunningham explains, "is its terminology. The whole system, in fact, may be said to be implicit in the definition of its terms ... Consequently, if we find that Shakespeare uses such a scholastic term as 'essence' in its technical sense and in a technical context we may presume not only that he was acquainted with scholastic notions but also that he was capable of thinking and feeling in those terms" (265). Cunningham's essential position cannot be doubted. However, in limiting his discussion to Neoplatonism, he produces a reductive interpretation, Christian in nature: "The relation of the Phoenix to the Turtle is now clear ... It is conceived and expressed in terms of the scholastic doctrine of the Trinity. The Phoenix and Turtle are distinct persons, yet one in love, on the analogy of the Father and the Son in the Holy Ghost" (276). While consideration of the poem's

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necessary... to give evidence for the currency and importance in England of Ramus's reorganization of what had been for centuries an educated man's chief tools of thought and expression." See *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery*.

<sup>68</sup> Interest in this aspect of "Phoenix" peaked in the scholarship of the 1950's and 1960's. Cunningham and Walter Ong were the most influential of these critics.

place in the scholastic movement is a crucial component of research on this work, studies like Cunningham's tend to overlook important intellectual trends during the English Renaissance. By the sixteenth century, the deductive logic of scholasticism had lost significant intellectual ground to the inductive methods of modern natural philosophy, and the movement's theological preoccupations were called into question with the emergence of humanism. Few studies seeking to make sense of the poem's scholastic language have turned to the intellectual history of the period in which this poem was written to see what this language might have indicated to a contemporary audience, educated on matters of general philosophical import.

The untitled poem known as "The Phoenix and Turtle" was published in 1601 as one of fourteen "Poetical Essays" appended to a longer work by Robert Chester under the title *Loues Martyr: or, Rosalins Complaint. Allegorically shadowing the truth of loue, in the constant fate of the phoenix and turtle*. Chester's strange multi-genre allegorical poem, "Love's Martyr," occupies the bulk of the volume dedicated to the 1586 marriage of Sir John and Ursula Salusbury. There are two poems signed "Vatum Chorus," one "Ignoto," and several others by the "best and chieftest of our modern writers": John Martson, George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and Shakespeare. "Phoenix" is comprised of eighteen stanzas, fifteen quatrains followed by five tercets, and is organized into three sections, each containing and largely defined by a distinct rhetorical voice. The first five stanzas describe a gathering or invocation spoken by an unidentified voice that is the organizing principle of the poem's central act, an "obsequy" (12) or "Requiem" (16) to which certain birds described in these stanzas—those of "chaste wing" (4)—are summoned, and from which others—those of "tyrant wing" (10)—are banished. This is followed by an "Anthem" (21) seven stanzas long, sung either by the Swan or by the entire chorus of birds gathered at the funeral, in which the nature of love between the Phoenix and

Turtle is articulated, then evaluated, by Reason. The poem concludes with a dirge or threnody in which Reason takes the stage and discusses the implications of the birds' deaths. The separately titled "Threnos" appears on its own page, elaborately decorated and flourished with the cursive inscription, "William Shake-speare."<sup>69</sup> Because the poem is short and notoriously difficult, I include a transcription of it in the Appendix (see page 254).

An examination of the form and temporal "frame" of the poem establishes certain conditions by and against which it may be understood as a poetic object. The first part of the composition, the invocation, is wholly conditional: these birds have not yet arrived, although the speaker seems to be addressing them directly, as if they are about to take a seat at an event. Set in the imperative or *irrealis* mood, the authorial voice of the first five stanzas establishes conditions regarding who may or may not attend. What may or may not eventuate, come to be, form the foundations for the main event—the poem's central act—which is contained in the lines that follow. That is to say, the author here describes an event that may never *happen*.

Indeed, the poem's temporal structure is so condensed as to betray the possibility that it lacks one altogether. In the invocation, a speaker establishes conditions for an event yet to happen; it is suggested that the speaker directly addresses the attendants.<sup>70</sup> The speaker immediately calls for an "antheme," and either it, the Swan, or the chorus of birds sing it.

Notably, the speaker calls for the anthem not by invoking time but space: for it is "*Here*" that

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<sup>69</sup> On this basis--and observing also that each of the other poets who contributed to Chester's volume contributed multiple poems—William Matchett has argued that the "The Phoenix and Turtle" is two works, "Threnos" its own, though highly dependent, piece of poetry. While "Threnos" does appear on its own page, it make little critical sense to expound upon this observation unless one is willing to argue (as some scholars have) that the two works ought to be understood independently or that Shakespeare might not have been the author of the first thirteen quatrains of "Phoenix."

<sup>70</sup> With regard to "matter," then, if the "bird of loudest lay" is indeed the Phoenix, then the phoenix along with the rest of the "troupe" physically materialize in this opening act; from here, presumably, they gather around Reason's urn.

“the anthem doth commence.” The anthem is specified not to begin at a given time, but rather a given place. Intuitively, we substitute “now” for “here.” But in fact “here” is the logical continuation of “troupe,” “session,” and “requiem.” These increasingly social and ceremonial connotations become wholly abstracted with “Here,” a now-and-ever present that suggests the angelological temporality of *aevum*.<sup>71</sup>

The temporal structure of the final portion of the poem is perhaps most confusing. Inspection of these lines indicates that Reason’s concluding “threne” begins *before* it actually is performed. According to the anthem, Reason conducts its threne in the midst of the anthem itself: “Whereupon it made this Threne ... As chorus to their tragic scene.” The anthem tells us that the threne is itself embedded within the anthemic narrative, so it technically is *not* a performance unto itself, even if it is typographically represented as such (See Fig. 12).

In sum, the first part of the poem discusses an event that is about to happen; the second part, occurring in the present, describes an event that has passed through wholly immaterial means; the third part, “Threnos,” is an event supposed at first to be occurring in the present, but which is actually the chronological conclusion to and continuation of the narrative established in the anthem. This reading complicates the poem on two levels. First, this means that the poem has a bizarre *atemporality*, by which I mean that it literally does not possess a *moment* or secure its own presence in time; its momentousness is contained entirely in a description of events that

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<sup>71</sup> See Kantorowicz on angelological time (79-81) as well as his writing on the phoenix, directly relevant to this project’s conception of the virtual: “Baldus ... when epitomizing the arguemnts about the decretal Quoniam abbas, availed himself of that aspec t of the symbol, which allowed him to draw the accurate philosophical conclusion: ‘The Phoenix is a unuque ancmost singular bird in which the whole kind (*genus*) is conserved in the individual.’ Evidently, Baldus had a clear analogy in mind. To him the Phoenix represent one of the rare cases in which the individual was at once the whole existing species so that indeed the species and individual coincided. The species, of course, was immortal; the individual, mortal. The imaginary bird therefore disclosed a duality: it was at once Phoenix and Phoenix-kind, mortal as an individual, though immortal too, because it was the whole kind. It was at once individual and collective, because the whole species reproduced no more than a single specimen at a time” (389-390).



occurred in the past, as related by observers. Likewise, the poem is nearly without color or matter. It is all voice: pure poetry, poetry *qua* poetry.

Second, and more problematically in terms of the poem's plausibility as a narrative: Reason's absorption into the anthem requires us to allow for the possibility that the birds assembled in the anthem have arrived at a duplicate or "virtual" space, a simulacrum of the described event. Indeed, these various fowl may ultimately be arrayed around the urn to which Reason refers, but this "reality" is never concretely established by the poem in grammatical form. In a poem in which temporal gestures are spelled out exactingly, we must question the logic of Shakespeare's "Whereupon" and its consequences. By aleatory or providential means, Reason might be at the ceremony. But it is equally possible—and by purely grammatical logic, more likely—that it is not.

How does such a reading advance an understanding of virtue's glorious yet ultimately "defunctive" force in this poem? First, one must consider that Reason is *literally not present* at any point. Even so, its presumed presence secures the expulsion and ultimate "absence" of the Phoenix and Turtle. Dazzled and "confounded" by love's paradoxes, Reason has been absorbed by and in a sense conjoined into "Phoenix's" paradoxes. It has become part-and-parcel of the metaphysical chasm into which the birds descend, the "flame" of perfect love burning and blinding them. Property, likewise, exists in anthemic limbo: logic, time, and matter become suspended with and by the energies of the dying phoenix. Lacking substance, temporality, and literal "Reason," the poem becomes pure sound: a "blast" of music existing for itself, for the sake of being sung.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Such an interpretation suggests that this motley crew of birds have convened to witness and mourn the very death of reason. Moreover, the poem's atemporality intersects with its virtuality in a precise way: the poem's universe exists entirely in *virtù*. That is, it provides a representation of something that cannot be seen: its own radiant potentiality.

This is all to say, again, that the poem's *moment* does not exist; it lacks a "presence." What I mean to emphasize is that the very condition of possibility for its being sung—its "intelligibility," insofar as the poem may be concerned with this project—is predicated upon recognition that is *other* than what it is. What what it represents cannot be, except through processes of belief invested in and by the reader of these lines. It is only through the interpretive act that the poem achieves either presence or temporality; therein, one may discern and indeed impart one's own "virtue reality," or the status of the poem's reality as one informed entirely by the subject's virtual activation of it.

The opening line of "Phoenix" begs the foundational question of this work: is this "bird of loudest lay" (1) the resurrected Phoenix, or something else? Volumes have been dedicated to the question of who or what is represented by the bird of line one. Perched atop on "the sole Arabian tree" (2), this bird appears at first to be the Phoenix. But this is later shown to be impossible: the phoenix is dead before the poem begins, its remains "enclosed" (55) in an "urn" (65) around which the "chaste wings" (4) described in the invocation are gathered. Some critics argue that the poem's ambiguities and paradoxes allow one to place the Phoenix of this poem in these opening lines. This interpretation is supported by what we know about the phoenix myth; in it, traditionally, the Arabian bird is reborn after consuming itself in a fire. In *The Tempest*, Sebastian, awed by Prospero's magical talent, demonstrates Shakespeare's familiarity with the myth and the terms he uses to describe it: "Now I will believe / That there are unicorns; that in Arabia / There is one tree, the phoenix' throne, one phoenix, / At this hour reigning there" (3.3.21-24). Perched atop "the sole Arabian tree," is the "bird of loudest lay" an earthly replacement for the dead Phoenix, or has the Phoenix returned from the dead—bizarrely, to perform the role of "herald sad and trumpet" (3) at its own funeral, before it has been

pronounced to be dead? If so, we must grant that some Phoenix is still alive. If so, we must ask: what is the purpose of the Swan's song, Reason's lament, or of this poem whatsoever? If the Phoenix is reborn, Reason is acutely mistaken; and Shakespeare's "mourning *Epicidium*" might be, as a minority of scholars have suggested, a "leg pull," or even a comedy.<sup>73</sup> Whether or not my own reading courts these possibilities, it is worth stressing that "Phoenix" explicitly states that the Phoenix and Turtle, allegorized Love and Constancy, are "dead," finally and forever. This is stated in these lines from "Threnos":

Death is now the Phoenix' nest,  
And the Turtle's loyal breast  
To eternity doth rest. (56-8)

Metaphysically addressed in these:

Truth may seem, but cannot be,  
Beauty brag, but tis not she,  
Truth and Beauty buried be (62-4),

And made absolutely clear in the poem's final line:

For these dead Birds, sign a prayer. (67)

Nothing could be more final, more physically concrete and less philosophically abstract, than the words "dead Birds." In an excellent and influential mid-century study, William Matchett attempts to settle the issue by addressing the *function* of the "bird of loudest lay":

The 'bird of loudest lay' need not be identified specifically; the only point is that the bird with the loudest melodic voice is to issue the sad and dignified summons. The very fact that the bird is not identified gives to the opening of the poem an element of mystery at the same time that it limits the irrelevant associations

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<sup>73</sup> See Bonnard and Bates.

brought in by any direct identification . . . Most specifically, the bird is not the phoenix (236).

Matchett's reasoning is compelling and instructive. However, I take issue with his reductive conclusion, found at the end of his long and meticulous close study, in which he contradicts this very mode of reasoning: "Shakespeare's poem necessarily made a statement about Essex and the Queen" (187). Matchett's study joins a long and often ingenious history of criticism seek to elucidate the poem's mysteries by supplying historical analogues to the birds that appear in it.<sup>74</sup> Following Matchett's intuitions, scholars who arrive at "Phoenix" as "Elizabeth" interpretations often read deeply into the 1601 Essex rebellion, which resulted in the execution of Essex in February of that year. Following Essex's disastrous 1599 campaign to end what would be later known as the "Nine Year's War" in Ireland, he was committed to house arrest and shunned by the Queen. His assets frozen and his political life in ruins, Essex mounted a rebellion on February 8, 1601, was convicted of treason on February 19, and executed one week later. For Matchett, A. B. Grosart, Anthea Hume, Alzada Tipton, and numerous others, the

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<sup>74</sup> Studies of this poem are dominated by a tendency in scholarship that seeks to elucidate the poem's mysteries by supplying historical analogues to the birds that appear in it. Ralph Waldo Emerson may also be credited with having inaugurated this tendency in scholarship. In *Parnassus*, he proposes a competition, and goads scholars to take a closer look at the poem by revisiting "tendencies of the age in which it was written." Four years after this directive, A.B. Grosart, citing "evidence" chiefly contained to the pages of Chester's poem, produced a reading that argued, laboriously and confusedly, that Shakespeare's Phoenix is Queen Elizabeth I, and the Turtle, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. The critical view toward Grosart's study is typified by the remarks of Hyder Rollins, who, in his 1938 study and variorum of scholarship on Chester's book, declared "Grosart's 'evidence' has been thoroughly discredited . . . Nearly all later scholars have mentioned Grosart's theory only to ridicule it." Whatever its flaws, Grosart's study inaugurated unprecedented interest in this previously obscure collection of verse and gave shape to a body of twentieth-century scholarship obsessed with discrediting or rescuing aspects of his reductive thesis. A significant number of studies follow suit, sometimes assigning other figures to the birds—most convincingly, John and Ursula Salusbury, to whom the volume is dedicated, and less so, Essex and Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. The most dubious of these studies support the notion that Shakespeare may have been a Catholic recusant. Law professors John Finnis and Patrick Martin join Clare Asquith in suggesting that the poem is about Jesuit martyrs; for Finnis and Martin, the Phoenix is Anne Line, a Catholic executed in 1601 and the Turtle, her exiled husband, Roger Line. For a "Salusbury" reading see Carleton Brown's *Poems by Sir John Salusbury and Robert Chester*; for a "Southampton" reading see Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel's "The Phoenix and the Turtle": Notate zur Entstehung des Werks und zur Entschlüsselung seiner Figuren als historische Persönlichkeiten." For a full critical history of the poem up to 1937, I direct the reader to Hyder Rollins' 1938 variorum; for a survey of scholarship from 1938 through 1974, see Richard Allen Underwood's doctoral dissertation on the poem.

deaths of the Phoenix and Turtle are thus metaphors for the execution of Essex and the prophesied death of the aging Queen, who died unmarried and childless two years later. Certainly, this idea is one of many metaphoric possibilities announced by the mere presence of the phoenix, equated at the time with Elizabeth in both writing and portraiture (In Appendix B, see *The Phoenix Portrait* [1576] and its companion, *The Pelican Portrait* [1575]).

Given these tantalizing details, the possibility that Shakespeare may have been allegorizing a looming royal *coup d'etat* cannot be excluded from consideration. With the aging queen on the verge of death and in seclusion mourning Essex, the question is: how might he have gotten away with it? Read in these terms and through the various historicist methods that frequently accompany them, the poem performs a subversion that *must* be contained; its meaning, if made clear, would border on treasonous.<sup>75</sup> While I resist the temptation to reduce Shakespeare's contribution to *Love's Martyr* to analogical metaphors, the fact that he engages allegory vis-à-vis a form of distant bird watching, inheriting well-worn conceits from Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowles*, grants us explicit permission to explore the metaphoric possibilities contained in his language. He does so by dabbling, both playfully and seriously, in language that seems at once to salute and refute scholastic-Aristotelian notions of what is reasonable and rational. The poem's refusal to make sense, even to contemporary interlocutors; its inability to be "read," even by the characters contained within its very stanzas; and its self-consciously illogical iterations and recursions draw attention to the malleable nature of reason and the absurd pathways down which it may lead. Shattering all conventions of the heteronormative phoenix myth, the poem's radical and subversive power is contained only by its opaqueness and obscurity.

Following evaluations made by studies of the poem's scholastic language, I propose an

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<sup>75</sup> See Hume and Tipton.

alternative method by which to perform a reading of “The Phoenix and Turtle,” one that hails its hermetic and scholastic features while also drawing attention to its radical porosity and the intellectual climate that produced it. In a pointedly post-Aristotelian turn, “Phoenix” yields no single avenue of interpretation, since no single voice of reason can be said to exist. This point is best understood using language and tools provided by Aristotle himself, who had become a polarizing figure in early modern England before and especially after Petrus Ramus' infamous 1536 proclamation, “*quaecumque ab Aristotele dicta essent, commentitia esse*” (“everything Aristotle had said was false”). Ramus’s immense celebrity as a publisher and teacher, and his martyrdom following his murder in the 1572 St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, created a cultural climate in England in which non-university educated Elizabethans might think critically about logic and in which poet-logicians such as Philip Sidney offered praise to Ramus and his controversial pedagogical methods.<sup>76</sup>

Despite Ramus’s interest in method and syllogism, he, along with a chorus of dissidents

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<sup>76</sup> That Ramist methods were popularly digested across early modern Europe in both Latin and vernacular languages is made clear by Walter Ong, the authority on Ramus, and evidenced by these relatively astonishing numbers: 250 editions of Ramus’s most popular work, *Dialectica*, were published between 1550 and 1650, adding to a total of 1100 editions of various work by Ramus published in this period (Ong 5). Despite Ramus’s immense appeal, Aristotelian methods continued to dominate in universities until the early seventeenth century, and Aristotelian science was still the dominant mode of scientific discourse until the middle seventeenth century. At both Leyden and Bologna, students began their studies with the *Organon*, the *Physics*, and the *Metaphysics*, then proceeded into Aristotle’s scientific treatises such as *Historia Animalium* and *Meteorology*; advanced students would then read Galen and Avicenna. Franco Burgersdijck, a professor at Leyden in the 1620’s and 1630’s, published *Idea Philosophiae*, which navigated three generations of students at Leyden and Bologna through the standard Aristotelian curriculum. This book, and Burgersdijck’s logic treatise, *Institutionum Logicarum Libri Duo*, were among the most reprinted academic textbooks of the seventeenth century; *Libri Duo* was published in 1637 and reprinted seven times, until 1680 (Howell 309). Burgersdijck partitioned contemporary discourse on logic into three groups: the Aristotelians, the Ramists, and those who attempted compromise between the two. In his discussion of Ramus’ place in contemporary logic, Aristotle is the clear victor, and Burgersdijck does not equivocate in his feelings toward Ramus: “Petrus Ramus is the leader of the family, a man elegantly learned, but audacious, indiscreet, and how very hurtful to antiquity” (Howell 310). In Burgersdijck’s discussion of physics, the Aristotelian definition of movement, from potentiality to actuality, is preserved, and in his discussion of divinity and heaven, the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* are cited along with Jesuit textbooks. Most importantly, Burgersdijck looked upon Aristotle’s disciplined argument—the “disputation”—as, in Hugh Kearney’s words, “the most acceptable way of studying physics” (Kearney 50). Through the mid seventeenth century, Aristotelian methods of logic exerted measurable force over how natural philosophers perceived and studied the world. There was still, in practice, no sharp distinction between logic, physics, and metaphysics, and as late as 1661, doctoral candidates in medicine at Bologna were forced to swear to allegiance to Aristotle when taking the Hippocratic Oath (Kearney 52).

across the early modern continent, directed scorn to logical concepts articulated in the *Organon* and the *Metaphysics*.<sup>77</sup> Aristotle famously quibbles of his opponents: “There are some who . . . assert that it is possible for the same thing to be and not to be, and say that people can judge this to be the case . . . But we have now posited that it is impossible for anything at the same time to be and not to be, and by this means have shown that this is the most indisputable of all principles” (McKeon 793). These principles form the tenets of propositional logic, which demand observance to three laws, paraphrased here:

Law of Identity: P must equal, and equal only, P ( $P = P$ )

Non-Contradiction: P must not equal not-P ( $P \neq \neg P$ )

Excluded Middle: for any proposition, either P is true its negation is (P or  $\neg P$ )<sup>78</sup>

I turn now to a famous thought experiment provided by Descartes in the *Meditations*. It illustrates an oversight in Aristotle’s laws, and it demonstrates the means by which one may imagine a departure from Aristotelian or binary logic to a multivalued or “fuzzy” logic.

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<sup>77</sup> See Ong’s *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, 174-175. Ong tells us here and elsewhere that Ramus was known as the “usurious” or “usufructuary” of his time, a confused but persuasive thinker “living off the increment and intellectual capital belonging to others” (9). Ong notes, with typical condescension, that Ramus is “extremely difficult to summarize in a way that does justice to the confusion of his thought. He systematically misinterprets Aristotle’s positions and frequently resorts to highly mythical self-dramatization, picturing dialectic as a tree of knowledge with golden apples hanging from the boughs (rami) surrounded by screeching and frustrated Aristotelian hobgoblins” (174). Lisa Jardine’s and Anthony Grafton challenge of this view: Why, they ask, do historians tend to “insist on the banality and triteness of Ramus’ intellectual contribution to the liberal arts” while at the same time conceding the “*succes fou*’ of Ramism within the arts institutions across Europe?” (162). Goeglin aptly summarizes Grafton and Jardine’s argument: “They conclude that we have been unwilling to acknowledge a shift in the theory and practice of ‘humanism,’ a shift from a moral idealism to a practical pedagogy embodied in the ‘humanities’ curriculum to which Ramist pedagogy was particularly well suited” (79). Perhaps more importantly, particularly for the purposes of this study: Ramus devised a popular method by which poetry might be understood to elucidate the aims of logic, and he grants popular permission and occasion, by virtue of his immense celebrity and subsequent martyrdom, for non-University educated Elizabethans (and post-Elizabethans) to think about and critique Aristotle. That Ramus was not “original” (he was not) or “successful” in his endeavor (this is still being debated) is not relevant to this study. For a valuable study on the “Ramistic reorganization of logic and rhetoric” and its importance in early modern poetry, see Tuve (370).

<sup>78</sup> This principle is not to be confused with “bivalence,” which stipulates that every proposition is either true or false. For full and technical definitions of these laws and related terms see Irving Copi’s chapter on syllogism in *Symbolic Logic*.

Consider a ball of wax standing before an open flame, slowly but surely morphing into a misshapen puddle. Pursuing a critique of empiricism, Descartes observes that the object loses all of its sensible properties in this transformative process—as it approaches the flame, “the smell evaporates, the colour alters, the figure is destroyed, the size increases, it becomes liquid, it heats, scarcely can one handle it, and when one strikes it, no sound is emitted”—yet one must reasonably conclude that the ontological essence of the thing is intact; “none would judge otherwise” (X). While Descartes’ uses this thought experiment to demonstrate the superiority of reason over and against the malleability of data imported through the sense organs,<sup>79</sup> the experiment begs a question that requires one to imagine the very obverse of this intuition. As we observe the object dissolve, might we ask instead: At which point, precisely, does so-called “ball” become “not-ball”? Paradoxically—at least in Aristotelian logic, which equates reality with valid propositions and statements, as well as the grammatical structures that bind them—the point at which the ball is half-melted is the same point at which the ball is half-formed. While Descartes declares “none would judge otherwise,” we might also ask, What exactly *is* this half-melted object? Any child will recognize it for what it is and will not hesitate to shout, “it’s a half-melted ball of wax.” But for scholastic-Aristotelians, such a statement cannot be true, because its truth-value can only be derived from a set of premises that contradict each another. (“This thing is wax” / “This thing is a candle”). As real and as hot as that candle-wax is, its ontology cannot be explained according to either the law of identity or non-contradiction, and must therefore either be rejected as “impossible” or “excluded” from access to the real. Useful as they may be, Aristotle’s laws do not begin to mirror the complexities we intuitively perceive in reality. This observation, indeed, formed the basis of mounting early modern hostility toward Aristotelian

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<sup>79</sup> Note Descartes’ concluding remarks: “We must then grant that I could not even understand through the imagination what this piece of wax is, and that it is my mind alone which perceives it.”



schemas, as evidenced by scathing critiques from philosophers and rhetoricians such as Ramus, Fransisco Valla, William of Occam, and of course Francis Bacon.<sup>80</sup>

“Phoenix’s” conflict arises from Property’s complaint, which warrants a closer look.

Property was thus appalled

That the self was not the same:

Single Nature’s double name

Neither two nor one was called. (37-40)

Property, “appalled” that “the self was not the same” ( $P = \neg P$ ), issues a complaint to Reason: the Phoenix-Turtle, “single nature’s double name,” exists in violation of the law of Identity ( $P = P$ ) and Non-Contradiction ( $P = \neg P$ ). Impossibly, “Phoenix” equals “Phoenix-Turtle,” and vice versa.

Reason responds:

Reason in itself confounded

Saw Division grow together;

To themselves yet either-neither,

Simple were so well compounded. (42-4)

Reason’s observation, “To themselves yet either-neither,” accords with Property’s complaint.

“Division” commits a mathematically impossible act: it “[grows] together,” the two beings becoming one. The unitive love between the Phoenix and Turtle, characterized, in Reason’s words, by “Beauty, Truth, and Rarity, / Grace in all simplicity” (52-3), nonetheless dissolves the proper boundaries of Property. Reason, “confounded,” carries Property’s complaint to its logical conclusion: “Love hath reason, Reason none, / If what parts can so remain” (47-8). Why must

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<sup>80</sup> Despite these critiques, which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 1, it will take more than 500 years for logicians such as John Stuart Mill and Bertrand Russell to pave a path to the post or indeed anti-Aristotelian formulas of multivalued or “fuzzy” logic, a late twentieth century emendation of Aristotle. By the 1970’s, the term “multivalued” thus formally enters logical discourse as opposed to binary, bivalent, or Boolean forms of logic, the many progeny of Aristotelian syllogism.

Love's version of reason, yielding "a concordant one" (46), "simple" and "well compounded," not "remain"? As described in a dazzling specular metaphor in stanza nine, the love between the two birds resists logical categorization or containment:

So between them love did shine,  
That the *Turtle* saw his right  
Flaming in the Phoenix' sight;  
Either was the others mine. (33-36)

Love, if it "hath reason," would express it thus: "Phoenix" is "Phoenix-Turtle" or "Turtle" is "Phoenix-Turtle" ("either was the others mine"). The chain of logic reads: if "Phoenix" is "Phoenix-Turtle," then "Phoenix" must be "not-Phoenix" ( $P = \neg P$ ) and "Turtle" must be "not-Turtle" ( $P = \neg P$ ). Therefore, according to the "reason" of Love, Aristotle's Law of Identity ( $P = P$ ) is false. "Neither two nor one were called": the Phoenix-Turtle, defying the laws of Identity and Non-Contradiction, and so too the Excluded Middle (either  $P$  or  $\neg P$ ; "Phoenix" is "Phoenix," "Turtle" is "Turtle"), is a third or fuzzy object, one that cannot be rendered in terms that logically satisfy any of Aristotle's laws. The creature is, in short, an "error" insofar as it cannot be comprehended in terms that satisfy prevailing conceptions of reason. Yet, the form of non-normative love it summons into being with the dove, along with the shocking unreasonableness of their demise, calls into question the potential "erroneous" laws governing the ways in which their bodies have been identified and subsequently eviscerated. That these immutable tenets dictate the parameters of desire and existence for bodies is the focus of the poem's critique is made apparent when one examines the nature of the birds' "infirmity," detailed in the "Antheme":

So they lov'd, as love in twain

Had the essence but in one;  
Two distincts, division none:  
Number there in love was slain.

Hearts remote, yet not asunder;  
Distance, and no space was seen  
'Twixt the turtle and his queen;  
But in them it were a wonder. (25-32)

Love, assuming “essence” not merely metaphysically but *bodily* “in twain,” disgusts Property, which holds not only sovereignty but an acute sense of judgment over the realm of material entities in its domain. Given this crucial distinction, the pressing intellectual dilemma of “Phoenix” cannot, as J.V. Cunningham and others have argued, be consigned to Neoplatonic discussions on the nature of unity in love. If that were the case, there is no logical reason why the bodies of the Phoenix and Turtle must perish. In the poem, love unproblematically contradicts reason; this determination might be the only logically stable one made at all. It comes of course as no surprise: very few would argue that love and reason ought be included in the same sphere of discussion. But Reason, meddling clumsily in affairs of the heart in language that cannot begin to account for its infinite subtleties, poses an absurd parallel that results in nothing less than the death of “Beauty, Truth, and Rarity.” That is to say, with the death of the Phoenix, the poem effectively declares the death of virtue itself. Reason commits a most profound error in judgment, for which the Phoenix-Turtle, once-living proof of the fallibility of Aristotle’s syllogism, must perish. Reason’s decision places reason—and perhaps “Reason” itself—in jeopardy. Absurdly, following its conclusion ( $P = \neg P = \text{false}$ ), Reason piously laments the birds’

deaths then proceeds to expose their “infirmity” (60). If, as Marston exclaims, Reason is making any sense at all, it is near impossible to locate the *kind* of sense it is making.

That the poem levels a critique of Reason’s error in judgment is reinforced by its very language, which places the “Threnos” over which it presides in both technical and aesthetic jeopardy. Reason’s stifled, stumbling verse, composed in the same seven-syllable line as the visionary, authoritative voice of the first thirteen quatrains, condenses poetic form by eliminating the binary couplet, the “separate” but unifying structural center of the poem before entering the final portion of the composition. Consider stanza thirteen, the last we hear of the Swan. Having in the previous stanza quoted Reason, whose surprise at this “concordant one” prompts its decree, “Love hath Reason, Reason none / If what parts, can so remain,” (46-8) the Swan’s song comes to its close:

Whereupon it made this Threne  
To the Phoenix and the Dove,  
Co-Supremes and stars of Love,  
As Chorus to their Tragic Scene (49-52)

Now consider the couplet alone: “To the Phoenix and the Dove, / Co-Supremes and stars of Love.” The lines form a self-contained imagistic unit, each gracing the other as though symbiotically attached. Like a lover in chase, the second line of the couplet metamorphically replicates the first, qualifying its plaintive language with a cosmological metaphor. At a length of three and one half- feet long each, the lines yearn, with a desire that is oddly but precisely mathematical in nature, to form wholeness by completion in number: a whole unit of seven discreet iambs, as opposed to two incomplete units of two iambs and one dactyl or anapest, a line more commonly associated in Shakespeare with comedic skits or magical rites (notably, as in

Puck's concluding soliloquy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the witches' invocation in *Macbeth*). Such union-in-duality destroys the couplet, which then becomes, absurdly, a fourteen syllable line interrupted with a caesura: an outdated style used by Shakespeare primarily in parodic skits, as in Quince's play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. If one were to surgically remove the couplet but retain the stanza, the first and fourth lines follow quite naturally: "Whereupon it made this threne ... / As chorus to their tragic scene." The binary power of the couplet repels literary enjambment. Logically then, with regard to narrative progression, we don't need the couplet. The first and fourth lines form the architectural frame of the stanza, while the couplet becomes, so to speak, its inhabitant. The couplet may thus be regarded, formally, as the "essence" of the stanza, its imagistic and sonic (as opposed to narrative and mathematical) heartbeat.

In "Threnos," immediately following this stanza, the couplet, and all discussion or appreciation of union-in-binaries, disappears as Reason commences its dirge in a succession of five cascading tercets.<sup>81</sup> The malleability and multiplicity of Reason's "reason" reaches its apex when we turn to its "conclusion" in "Threnos," and to the poem's most puzzling and vexing stanza:

Leaving no posterity,  
'Twas not their infirmity;  
It was married Chastity. (59-61)

Ronald Bates observes that the lines "sound almost like a Falstaffian quip at some over fanatic Puritan pair. The double-rhyme, extended for three lines, could scarcely help hovering on the verge of comic" (28). Using simple, unadorned language, Reason reveals the explicit nature of

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<sup>81</sup> The number three, never mentioned but often suggested in this poem (the "treble-dated Crow," a carrion bird, is nonetheless granted access to funerary proceedings by the speaker; "threne" and "Threnos" might be overlooked puns), might be Aristotle's excluded middle, the betweenness of "Propertie" (37) that his laws of Identity negate.

the birds' "infirmity," arguing in enthymeme: "Leaving no posterity / 'Twas not their infirmity"; then it is something else, "married chastity." If Elizabeth is the Phoenix, are we to understand the poet to be referring to her many years of "married chastity" as an "infirmity" deserving of punishment in the form of death?

This is an admittedly speculative question. Yet, we are left with a poem that refuses to grant its multiple coterie audiences little more in the way of interpretive access than delight, or dismay, in the face of pure speculation. If Elizabeth is the Phoenix, then, in this strange work, she is also, necessarily, not-Phoenix. There is no single "bird of loudest lay, / On the sole *Arabian tree*" (1), just as there is no one version of Reason, Property, or Beauty to be understood. In its announcement, "Truth may seem, but cannot be," Reason, the presiding judge of "Threnos," effectively abdicates the throne of reason. If there is no truth, Reason is just an absurdity, a stage-presence, a clever myth-giver, as sincere and as foolish—and as paradoxically self-eviscerating—as Falstaff, the archetypal clown or court jester whom Shakespeare casts in moments of epistemological crisis.

Upon examining the nature of the "Infirmity" through an Aristotelian lens, we are left with a poem that prevails upon logic to demand ambiguity. In this poem, as in Shakespeare's plays, "reason"—the very term—is most often the construct that stands between ideal love and its actualization. Reason, in other words, comes not merely to "oppose" but to assist in the very formation of understanding and "sense" itself.

"Reason" and the Plays

Let's be no Stoics nor no stocks, I pray,  
Or so devote to Aristotle's checks  
As Ovid be an outcast quite abjur'd.  
Balk logic with acquaintance that you have,

And practice rhetoric in your common talk,  
Music and poesy use to quicken you;  
The mathematics, and the metaphysics,  
Fall to them as you find your stomach serves you:  
No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en.  
In brief, sir, study what you most affect.

—*The Taming of the Shrew* (1.2.31-40)

Given the interpretive abyss presented by “Phoenix,” scholars have long turned to the plays for context and assistance. While “Phoenix” does not require such assistance, I turn nonetheless to the broader aesthetic and political Shakespearean context wherein “reason,” a term and concept that can mean so many things, and which appears in virtually every work by Shakespeare, receives a critical evaluation. One such moment occurs in *King Lear*. Edgar, horrified by Lear’s crown of weeds and flowers and his incongruous speech, exclaims in an aside: “O, matter and impertinency mix'd! / Reason, in madness!” (4.6.174-175). While Lear is clearly mad, Edgar’s aside indicates that Lear’s speech makes a certain kind of *sense*, a fact that renders his circumstances all the more tragic. That Edgar communicates his dismay to a presumably rational public reinforces the idea that “reason,” and so too “madness,” are perceptual modes that require collective spectatorial assessment; these terms and attendant states are not self-evidently stable or “actual.” In and through his very cry, Edgar mobilizes requisite critical distance to reassert his own rational subjectivity.

Throughout *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, “reason” is invoked to elicit roughly the opposite response. After Puck erroneously applies Oberon’s eye-elixir to Lysander, the youth awakens beside Helena and finds himself suddenly enamored of her rather than the woman he fled from Athens to marry:

Content with Hermia! No; I do repent

The tedious minutes I with her have spent.

Not Hermia but Helena I love:  
Who will not change a raven for a dove?  
The will of man is by his reason sway'd;  
And reason says you are the worthier maid. (2.2.111-16)

Not for a moment confounded by his burst of love for Helena, Lysander chooses to invoke reason to justify his obviously, and multiply, nonsensical desires. The metrical pattern, rhyme, and musicality of his language reinforce the otherworldly nature of the “reason” to which he has succumbed. He continues:

Things growing are not ripe until their season  
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;  
And touching now the point of human skill,  
Reason becomes the marshal to my will. (2.2.117-20)

Far from deploring reason, Lysander “marshals” it to his will; it is the very tool, ironically and hilariously, that he adopts to reconstruct his imaginary love affair with Helena. The conceit is revisited again in Act II, following Titania’s newfound infatuation with Bottom. Bottom, having similarly “tricked” the affection of Titania (and having likewise been deceived, his head now “translated” by Puck), provides one of the most comic and memorable moments in the play. Stumbling into Titania’s voluptuous fairy bower while singing a song about, coincidentally, an assortment of birds—the “cock,” the “throstle,” / “The finch, the sparrow and the lark” (3.1.136-7)—and presumably imitating the various sounds they make—Bottom awakens the bewitched queen from her sleep.

Titania:     And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me  
                  On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.



Bottom: Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason  
for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and  
love keep little company together now-a-days; the  
more the pity that some honest neighbours will not  
make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

Titania: Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful. (3.1.140-7)

What is Shakespeare suggesting here about “reason”? In *Lear*, in *Dream*, and across the vast topography of his work, the poet is acutely concerned with problems posed by the assumption of a single, unified notion of what is ultimately most reasonable. Like the virtue system that had come to dictate notions of morality and purpose for centuries, Aristotelian logic reveals itself to give way to “false” versions of the things its purports to represent. “Reason” may therefore be argued to serve the function of an epistemological axis in the plays. What is reasonable or unreasonable to me may not to another, or indeed to a rational observing audience; this may be why we are urged to cry with Helena while laughing at her, and likewise urged to laugh at Lear while crying with him.

In this vein, “Phoenix” may be read as a veritable nexus of tensions regarding the function of reason in its moment of production.<sup>82</sup> In the poem’s anthem, Reason is posited as “confounded,” standing outside the very bounds of comprehension. A return to the poem’s original 1601 typographical context reinforces such a reading (See Fig. 12).

Reaƒon in itſelfe confounded,  
Saw Diuiſion grow together,  
To themſelues yet either neither,

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<sup>82</sup> Moreover, it may be understood as a ludic, even game-like indictment to modes of perception that place love and understanding in conversation with structures of logic, reason, mathematics, and attendant cognitive and perceptual matters.

Simple were so well compounded.

That it cried, how true a twaine,

Seemeth this concordant one,

*Loue hath Reafon, Reafon none,*

If what parts, can Jo remaine. (176, emphasis mine)

What are the interpretive stakes of insisting upon a return to the original typographic context of the second to last line? According to most editors, lower-case “reason,” a concept or mode, is explicitly contrasted here with “Reason,” the character who presides over the funeral of the Phoenix and Turtle and issues the series of judgments that lead, one must presume implicitly, to their inexplicable and unexplained deaths. What might be the implications of asserting, as the original language of the text seems to do, that “Love *hath* [upper-case] *Reason*,” the personified, speaking figure of this poem, and not merely “reason,” the attendant but categorically distinct perceptual mode? In other words, might “Love’s” grasp of “Reason” in the face of the dazzling paradoxes presented in the poem’s anthem have altered its character—changed its very essence—thereby enabling it to declare its own annihilation in “Threnos”? If so, might then the very “reason” of “Love,” and the rhetoric of purposiveness and futurity appointed to a heteronormative conception of the term, have become destabilized in these lines?

Again, these are admittedly speculative questions. Yet, the poem’s demonstrated concerns with problematizing normative categories of Aristotelian binaries requires one to imagine a poet keenly aware of the intellectual, cultural, and indeed erotic consequences of adopting terms such as “reason” in any normative sense. The recursive and self-reflexive nature of “Phoenix” is most thoroughly envisioned in stanza seven, sitting at the precise midpoint of the thirteen quatrains

preceding “Threnos.”

So they loved as love in twain,  
Had the essence but in one;  
Two distincts, Division none:  
Number there in love was slain. (25-8)

As earlier articulated, the poem must be read as having three distinct progressions, each containing its own rhetorical voice. The threnody is conducted by Reason; the anthem is composed by the Swan or the entire chorus of birds in attendance; and the invocation is given voice by an authorial, hieratic presence that looms over the poem like the Eagle, the all-seeing “feath’red king” of “tyrant” birds (9-10). Markedly, the voice of the invocation, with its strident tone and concern with the social order and rank of the attendants, its lofty proclamations and decrees (“To this troop come thou not hear,” says the speaker to the owl, “shrieking harbinger” and “precurrer of the fiend”[4-8]), contrasts both with Reason’s “confounded” posturing in “Threnos” and the mathematical lyricism of the anthem. Its language and tone recalls Genesis, and in Shakespeare, can be found in the rousing military speeches of the *Henriad*. That two self-contradictory voices dominate the first thirteen quatrains and markedly contrast each other in tone and intent may be demonstrated, amusingly, by severing the quatrains in half. At the exact mathematical center of these 54 lines, we find the couplet: “Had the essence but in one, / Two distincts, Diuision none,” followed by the line: “Number there in loue was slaine.” Here it is instructive, again, to consult the 1601 edition of the poem, which typographically reinforces the idea that this kind of “Diuision,” while “logical,” makes little sense; at precisely this point, between lines 26 and 27, the page splits. The speakers’s invocation and the Swan’s anthem are absorbed and conjoined by the couplet, which refuses to “divide” even when severed in two.

Like the blindly-enamored doppelgangers of *Dream*, the binary couplet functions to preserve the illusion of wholeness in a universe commanded by the “tyrant,” the too-certain, the suddenly mistaken. “Threnos,” composed in meandering, mock-syllogistic tercets free of binary couplets, dissipates into a sigh of relief. Truth and Beauty dead, Reason no longer has a reason to exist, unless it is to contemplate the mysteries of  $P = -P$  before the cinders of love’s undying offspring, a tedious metaphysical project that Shakespeare would rather leave to the philosophers.

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“The purity of love,” claims Daniel Seltzer, “while stronger than any other human achievement, cannot survive in the reasonable world” (93). In Robert Heilman’s words, true love is that which resists “the whole world of rational demonstration” (Curtis, 188). These critics might as well be speaking of “Phoenix” but in fact address *Othello*, a play that confounds rational expectations and defiantly resists normative conceptions of what constitutes reason and “proof.” In what remains of this chapter, then, I will explore the dangers of living outside of Seltzer’s “reasonable world,” against which the love between Othello and Desdemona so profoundly militates. I will explore, too, the logic according to which Othello is excluded membership not only from Venetian society, but from “whole world of rational demonstration,” from *Geist* itself.

Such a view may seem to court readings of Othello as a godlike or romantic hero, a historically transcendent figure trapped in time by circumstance—trapped, that is, in a time in which he doesn’t *signify as real*. In this light, Othello is sheer potentiality without actuality: a distillation of perfect virtue, *virtus*, and *virtù*, he is the metaphysical embodiment of him who conquers all, who overcomes all odds and adversities, yet whose self-destruction is always

frightening close at hand. He has not learned how to conquer *fortuna* because he has, seemingly, a perceptual-epistemological problem: he courts and invests undue meaning in the statements of those who mislead him while dismissing the claims of those who actually love him. Othello's powers of reason, once coolly aligned with his ethics and subjoined by his "perfect soul" (X), are co-opted by Iago in a frighteningly condensed period of time. Not unlike the tyrannical Volumnia in *Coriolanus* (~1605), who exactingly plots her son's bloody rise, Iago comes effectively to puppeteer masculine virtue itself. I want to suggest that Iago likewise comes to exert control of Othello's transcendence, that is, of his literal potentiality, while reducing him to what Fanon calls "the fact of blackness." Iago's claim, "In following him I but follow myself" (1.1.60), indicates that Iago is interested not merely in Othello's destruction, but in *controlling the circumstances* that lead to his undoing.

To conclude this chapter, I address these questions while exploring the ways in which "reason" conspires with perception to produce what the Duke calls "modern seeming," those "thin habits and poor likelihoods" (1.3.108) or "alternative facts" that in turn give rise to alternate or virtual realities. Such "habits" and "likelihoods" constitute the perceptual and epistemological features of *Othello* that lead to the formation of a value system undergirding a conception of the real as that which is inflected and infused by the animating power of virtue. These systems presume the existence of what I call virtual realism, which posits that our perceptual faculties are always-already determined by ethics, or axiology, such that the real may be understood as the outward projection of beliefs regarding what we encounter.<sup>83</sup> Virtual realism comports with Frye's theory of "aesthetical epistemology," which he defines as a system

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<sup>83</sup> As I argue elsewhere, these beliefs allow for the possibility of microcosm, or worlds within worlds: for realities predicated upon "alternative facts" that do indeed exist as a necessary condition for the existence of a given reality. Virtual realism supposes what we might call "moral perception." The relativism entailed by such a stance or worldview is the subject of Alisdair MacIntyre's critique of the virtue crisis, which I explore at length in my introduction to this project.

of “[referencing] ways of seeing reality, or of identifying and organizing salient elements in the reality which is seen” (323). Frye elaborates:

Adapting vision to epistemology, we illuminate problems, observe developments, get perspective on situations, visualize ways of doing things, and demonstrate solutions. Again and again we chart our meanings or our understandings of truth by referring to what Walter J. Ong has aptly described as “the sight-intellectual equation.” (323)

I want to argue that *Othello* bears witness to the risk of “adapting vision to epistemology” without attending to the moral or ethical dimensions of reason. Indeed, the play shows vicely power to be radiological without being radiant, potent with its own impotence, that is, its own undoing—a devouring malignity that infects and infests the material world. As Iago shows no better, *virtù* without virtue aggressively cannibalizes that which it erects. Shakespeare’s ultimate portrayal of imagination without ethics, Iago is in a sense *pure* imagination, a source of undiluted radiological potentiality. As numerous critics have pointed out, the entire play is a construction of his diabolical imagination. Iago essentially becomes architect of this “second world,” a “virtue reality” supported precariously by a delicate lattice of vicely power.

In what follows I will limn a theory of presence that these manipulations of the real presume. How does *Othello* theorize the nature and potency of the “thin habits” upon which it rests? Relatedly, I seek to understand how *someone like* Othello obtains presence—that ability to enact one’s intentions within *Geist*, or “the whole world of rational demonstration,” so as to keep *fortuna* at bay. I want to understand, in short, the logic according to which Othello becomes possible as a presence.

## Othello, the Impossible

Blackness marks a social relationship of dominance and abjection and potentially one of redress and emancipation; it is a contested figure at the very center of social struggle.

—Saidiya Hartmann<sup>84</sup>

If one imagines Othello as Hartman's representative "contested figure," then who or what lies at the "center" of his struggle? Does Othello—or *Othello*—have any such center? Like "The Phoenix and Turtle," *Othello* does not merely "resist" reason; it articulates the confounding logic according to which potentiality may or may not be realized. Mounting criticism seemingly confirms that this is the primary question demanded of the play. *Othello's* critics tend to argue for modes of "dominance and abjection" that render him either a staggering Other whose presence precludes access to subjectivity, or a man lacking any coherent sense of identity whatsoever. Jyotsna Singh, for example, argues that Othello's "claims to any identity—either as a savage or as a Christian and a tragic hero—are tenuous and derivative" (298-99).<sup>85</sup> Viviana Comensali shows that "Through Iago's virulent racist attacks ... Othello is constructed as neither subject nor other, but, in Fanon's words, 'an object' cut off from his 'own presence'" (93). Stanley Cavell locates Othello's loss or "lack" of self not to Iago's perfidious machinations, but to a failure on Desdemona's part to assuage his dessicating potency: "To say he loses Desdemona's power to confirm his image of himself is to say that he loses his old power of imagination. And this is to say that he loses his grasp of his own nature; he no longer has the same voice in his history" (486). Perhaps the most representative and influential such reading is Arthur Little's analysis of the "primal scene" of racism in *Othello*. Little claims, "[Othello] has

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<sup>84</sup> See *Scenes of Subjection*, page 57.

<sup>85</sup> In "Othello's Identity, Postcolonial Theory, and Contemporary African Rewritings of Othello" in *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, 298-9.

no literal self that is not already metaphorically lost or missing ... Either he is 'far more fair than black' and therefore does not have a metaphorical black identity, or he really is black and is therefore entrapped by those pre-textual histories of blackness as an essential absence" (307).<sup>86</sup> In every case, Othello is reduced by circumstance to pure alterity, a factic thing or "object" that loses any claim to agency or selfhood. In this view, *Othello* is indeed a vast, festering periphery lacking any locatable or stable "center," unless it is Iago's very wit; and the Moor is who he is merely *by virtue* of the agents and circumstances that constitute him and goad him entelechically toward something beyond mere "absence." *Othello* is about Othello's—and *Othello*'s—self-destruction. As in "Phoenix," the audience bears witness to the very obliteration of an ideal but impossible personhood.

While "fair"-skinned comedic heroines like Portia and Rosalind demonstrate a kind of perfectly efficacious virtue, not unlike that of Sidney's virtuous Arcadians, a figure like Othello tests the axiological limits of idealized potentiality precisely by demonstrating his inability to realize, or demonstrate the "effect" of, his own potential. He seems indeed to suffer from a "potency" problem. Stripped of his "transcendence" and reduced to his "facticity," or what Frantz Fanon calls "the fact of blackness," Othello gradually loses control of his once-famous ability to create; as Cavell puts it, he loses access to his "imagination." I would simply call this quality his *virtù*, or ability to merge his imaginative intentions with those of the system in which he rose to power.<sup>87</sup> It is indeed his dissipating *virtù* that corresponds to his waning presence in the play. In an astoundingly brief period of time, Othello loses mastery over his ability to access

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<sup>86</sup> See "'An Essence that's Not Seen': The Primal Scene of Racism in *Othello*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44.3 (1993) 304-324. Print.

<sup>87</sup> He loses therein an understanding of the relationship between vision and belief. The effective force of his virtue is not his, but Iago's. Circumscribed by an antiblack racist sociality, Othello effectively cedes power to the demonic Iago, who convinces him that virtuous Desdemona is but a "whore."



and effect his potential; Iago has educated him not only out of reason, but of time, place, and history. Trapped in and by a “virtue reality” to which he has lost all perspective and over which he has no control, Othello’s decaying potency returns at the play’s close to fulfill the ultimate racist fantasy: an innocent white woman wrongly accused and subsequently murdered by her deranged black husband.

To take seriously the reality of Othello’s political crisis, then, seemingly requires one to accept *eo ipso* that his blackness reduces him to a condition of non- or un-reality: that he is or becomes a facticity devoid of agency, tragically but romantically precluded from realizing his intentions. As Comensali puts it, he is stripped of presence. The question raised by *Othello*, in this light, is how does Othello lose access to his own presence? How indeed does one acquire such access in the first place?

Insofar as *Othello* does provides ample opportunity to investigate the ways in which virtue, or a lack or perversion thereof, gives shape to facticity, it invites one to consider the possibility for and nature of Othello’s *escape* from facticity—that is, his own understanding of his racialized position. Doing so draws attention to his blackness as the symbolic site of human liberation and subjugation. So when Hartmann claims, “Blackness marks a social relationship of dominance and abjection and *potentially* one of redress and emancipation” (my emphasis), I take seriously her use of the word “potentially.” For Hartman, “redress and emancipation” are those prescriptive aspects of sociality that reside in perilous potential for a black-skinned person living in an antiblack racist culture. While blackness “marks a social relationship,” it is not a concept; it is rather a “figure,” a somatized sociality straddling the precarious boundary between abjection and liberation. As Lewis Gordon suggests, at the threshold of this boundary is the very “fact of blackness,” or what W. E. B. DuBois would call “the veil”—a force that, in Fanon’s words,

“overdetermines” the subject from without.<sup>88</sup> Even so, or precisely because of these constraints, it is crucial to bear in mind, in Gordon’s words, that “whatever we are is not always what we have to be.” In short, it is crucial not only to examine the circumstances that produce Othello’s facticity, but also those aspects of his identity that draw attention to the limitless potentiality of his character, his famously “perfect soul” (1.2.31). I seek, in short, an Othello who is not mere absence or factic object, nor sheer potentiality precluded from presence, but one who is both present and aware of the condition his nationality and skin color has produced and is in the process of producing.

#### Race, Facticity, and Transcendence

I have been using “transcendence” here and throughout in its specifically Sartrean-Fanonian sense: one’s ability or lack thereof to transcend one’s factic attributes. “Facticity,” according to Sartre, designates the myriad physical, social, psychological, and historical properties of an individual that one can ascertain through third-person observation; such “facts” may include observations regarding one’s bodily appearance, system of beliefs, intellectual abilities, historical experiences, and so on. While one’s facticity may, on some level, delineate the ways in which the world outside the individual chooses to perceive, define, and categorize that individual, one’s existence ought not, in existential terms, be limited to or defined strictly in relation to one’s factic attributes. The reason for this is that one’s being cannot be properly or wholly relegated to those aspects of one’s identity to which only the outside world, or the third-person observer, has access; this would deny that the individual possesses an irreducibly unique character, something that cannot be “pinned down” or known strictly in factic terms. This would also deny that the individual who possesses these attributes has a stance or attitude *towards* those

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<sup>88</sup> See *The Souls of Black Folk* and “The Fact of Blackness” in *Black Skins, White Masks*.

terms. The position I take toward my facticity is my transcendence, defined by Taylor Carman as “the free, future-directed, first-person, conscious relation in which I stand to the world, including my own facticity. My facticity provides the setting and context of my transcendence, but my transcendence in turn determines what is important and salient for me in my facticity” (Carman, 236). In terms of black identity in an antiblack racist culture, then, my “transcendence” designates the process whereby I may escape self-definition strictly in terms of my brute facticity, or those somatic (and other) markings that the external world imposes upon non-white individuals.

While numerous scholars have explored *Othello* by turning to the “racial epidermal schema” (112) detailed by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), to my knowledge, none have done so while accounting for what Sartre calls “bad faith.”<sup>89</sup> One partakes in “bad faith” when one permit oneself to make determinations by denying either or both one’s facticity (what the outside world perceives me to be, the third-person perspective) or transcendence (my interpretive position with regard to my facticity). In other words, if I’m living in bad faith, I engage in processes whereby I self-identify and act solely in terms of my capacity to transcend while denying my facticity (as in Sartre’s example of the “woman seduced”), or whereby I self-identify and act solely in terms of my facticity while denying my transcendence (as in Sartre’s

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<sup>89</sup> Fanon’s stance is derived from a larger theory regarding the construction of subjectivity. He notes, “Sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseechingly to others. Their attention was a liberation, running over my body suddenly abraded into nonbeing, endowing me once more with an agility that I had thought lost, and by taking me out of the world, restoring me to it. But just as I reached the other side, I stumbled, and the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. (109). The “other side” to which Fanon refers may echo DuBois’s “veil,” the invisible line separating the self from the “other.” In terms that may expressly recall and refer to DuBois’s double consciousness, Fanon declares this “racial epidermal schema” that has forced him into a position of being made aware of his body not “in the third person but in a triple person” (112). “Unmercifully imprisoned” by the “other,” the white man, Fanon becomes “responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors” (112). Like DuBois, Fanon’s perceives of his signification as a black-skinned person as determining his sense of self and his sense of history from without. According to Fanon, then, the paradox of having black skin is that it seems to endow one with vision (a “second sight”) while precluding access to “transcendence.”

example of the “garçon de café,” invoked by both Frantz Fanon and Ian Hacking).<sup>90</sup> In other words, one engages in bad faith when participating in processes of *self-deception* with regard to one’s factic attributes or one’s authentic attitude toward those attributes, or when one seeks intentionally to deceive others by denying or exaggerating aspects of either one’s facticity or transcendence. Lewis Gordon claims that “bad faith” may be understood as follows:

The core assumptions of bad faith are that human beings are aware, no matter how fugitive that awareness may be, of their freedom in various situations, that they are free choosers of various aspects of their situations, that they are consequently responsible for their condition on some level, that they have the

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<sup>90</sup> In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre presents these types as examples of individuals engaging in bad faith. The “woman seduced” example may be summarized as follows: while on a date with a man who is obviously very enamored of her, she neither refuses the advances of her seducer nor states a position of interest or disinterest. Instead, as the man takes her hand, she avoids confronting him with her feelings of ambivalence by passively allowing him to hold her hand, thus presenting to the seducer the illusion that she may have emotional or sexual interest in him. In avoiding commitment and feigning interest, she is both lying to herself and deceiving the seducer. The other, more famous example of bad faith Sartre provides is of the obsequious “garçons de café,” whom Sartre describes as follows: “His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly, his eyes express an interest too solicitous for the order of the customer (Sartre, *Being*, 59). The garçons de café, in other words, enacts a role for himself that is in no way fundamental to his own being; he is merely “playing a part.” As Sartre says, “He is playing, he is amusing himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it; he is playing *at being* a waiter in a café” (59, emphasis in original). Like the young woman, the waiter is *aware* that he is engaging in self-deception, for in no possible world is the category of “waiter” fundamental to one’s being. He could choose, in short, to do something else with his life, but instead allows this role to determine his actions. He has, in effect, reduced himself to his facticity and stripped himself of his transcendence in order to “play” this role. While compelling, Sartre’s example becomes complicated when we hear what he has to say about people “playing” in other, similar professions: “The waiter in the café plays with his condition in order to *realize* it. This obligation is not different from that which is imposed on all tradesmen. Their condition is wholly one of ceremony. The public demands of them that they realize it as a ceremony; there is the dance of the grocer, of the tailor, of the auctioneer, by which they endeavor to persuade their clientele that they are nothing but a grocer, an auctioneer, a tailor. A grocer who dreams is offensive to the buyer, because such a grocer is not wholly a grocer. Society demands that he limit himself to his function as a grocer, just as the soldier at attention makes himself into a soldier-thing with a direct regard which does not see at all, which is no longer meant to see, since it is the rule and not the interest of the moment which determines the point he must fix his eyes on (the sight ‘fixed at ten paces’). There are indeed many precautions to imprison a man in what he is, as if we lived in perpetual fear that he might escape from it, that he might break away and suddenly elude his condition” (*Being*, 59-60, emphasis in original). As D. Z. Phillips notes, Sartre’s “garçons de café” example and his extension of it to other “tradesmen” is perhaps unfortunate, not merely in its class implications, but in that it seems to suggest that *any* waiter (or grocer, or auctioneer, or tailor) can only ever “perform” while doing his job; he can never, in a sense, *not* be engaging in bad faith, regardless of the level of “play” or affectation he brings to bear in his position. Thus, according to Phillips’ reading of Sartre, the dilemma of bad faith seems to be an unavoidable aspect of the *very position* such a person has chosen to inhabit rather than a symptom of his “performance” in that position. See Phillips, “Bad Faith and Sartre’s Waiter.”

power to change at least themselves through coming to grips with their situations, and that there exist features of their condition which provide rich areas of interpretive investigation for the analyst or interpreter (*Bad Faith*, 5- 6, emphasis in original).

It perhaps goes without saying that Iago is a paragon of bad faith. In his sacrilegious utterance, “I am not what I am,” Iago effectively declares that what you see is both what you get *and* not what you get. Consider the moment of his “confession” to Roderigo:

When my outward action doth demonstrate  
The native act and figure of my heart  
In complement extern, ‘tis not long after  
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve  
For daws to peck at. I am not what I am (1.1.60-64).

Adopting the same “fuzzy” or multivalued logic that allows for the impossible conjunction of the Phoenix and the Turtle, Iago’s proclamation constitutes a blunt rebuttal of Aristotle’s law of identity. It also subtly recalls the doctrine of the king’s two bodies, as theorized by Ernst Kantorowicz: having laid out his plans for exerting “control” over Othello, he may be seen to have initiated the process by which he will assume sovereignty over a second body.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, moments before his blasphemous declaration, Iago claims, “As sure as you are Roderigo, “Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago” (1.1.54-55). With “I am not what I am” and “Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago” (1.1.54-55) before us, it is possible—logically sound, even—to infer that Iago has elected to take on Othello’s very identity.<sup>92</sup> In Iago’s extreme case,

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<sup>91</sup> See Kantorowicz and also Chapter 4 of this dissertation, where this doctrine is explicated.

<sup>92</sup> In 2017, the image of a white mastermind scheming for control over the agency of a black subject instantly recalls Jordan Peel’s terrific horror film, *Get Out* (2017). In the film, a young black man is kidnapped, subjected to brain

then, bad faith seemingly results in the very usurpation of identity. As Othello's reality changes to accommodate Iago's intentions, he effectively becomes a virtual extension of Iago.<sup>93</sup>

While it may not be possible to stress the extent of Iago's perfidy, one cannot lose sight of the fact that Othello, too, is a product of same value system. It is a system that emphasizes, in Iago's words, "forms and visages of duty" (1.1.49). Put differently, to grasp Othello's presence may require us to consider the possibility that he, too, is capable of bad faith. How else might we describe his attitude when he allows Desdemona to apply her "napkin" to his aching head? At this point, he is already convinced of her unfaithfulness; he is merely awaiting the "ocular proof" (3.3.363) of that which he has already determined to be true. So whether or not he actually has a headache, his silence and compliance show that he is just as capable of "seeming" as anyone in this play. Such an Othello, I argue, is a modern, cosmopolitan figure, an *actuality* as opposed to a mere possibility. In perceiving Othello this way, my approach aligns with Emily Bartels':

In opposition, then, to the now-dominant view that Othello's vulnerability lies in his position as an alien, a Moor not fully secure within Venetian society, I see

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washing, and nearly lobotomized; his body is prepared to "host" the brain of a dying man, a member of an exclusive circle of affluent white people who sip champagne while bidding at auction for attractive black bodies. These bodies are effectively "controlled" by white "subjects." Insofar as these bodies have been surgically de- and re- constructed so as to unite the newly-constituted bodies with their hosts, they may be said to effect simultaneously the continuation of the life of the white subject and the death of the black subject. The black body becomes the fecund site of white self-perpetuation. Yet, horrific as the body-snatching premise is, the true monster of the film is revealed to be the protagonist's white girlfriend: a free-thinking and notably liberal-minded cosmopolite, she claims, "My dad would have voted for Obama a third time if he could have. Like, the love is so real." And yet it is this seemingly innocent woman who is responsible for seducing dozens of young black men and bringing them to her parent's lobotomization lab.

<sup>93</sup> Why would Iago reveal these plans to a person like Roderigo? Does he believe that he will be understood or misunderstood by this interlocutor? Indeed, the scene unfolds as if Roderigo were *not* present; as if it were an aside, with a privy witness. Iago not only freely confesses his duplicitous schemes, but also states without equivocation that these schemes arise from a duplicitous nature. Either Iago does not yet intend to harm Roderigo,<sup>93</sup> or he does not care if Roderigo, hearing these words, will understand them.<sup>93</sup> In revealing—to a witness—that he is willing to do whatever necessary to achieve his purposes, Iago gives context to the scope of his bad faith. His vice will roil the political apparatuses of Cyprus and Venice.

Othello as not merely a Moor in Venice but *the* Moor of Venice, whose deepest values and sense of self are fully consonant with those of Venice's other inhabitants. The warrior who believes that military service to the state "makes ambition virtue" (3.3.350) is articulating a central tenet of civic humanism. Interpreting Othello's Venetian values as alien cultural norms tenuously adopted can imply that his transformation from defender of justice to murderer is one of a black barbarian emerging from behind his civilized mask and reverting to his savage origins. (384)<sup>94</sup>

I likewise perceive Othello as partaking wholly, even indulgently, in aristocratic Venetian sociality, which seems to have rewarded him generously *and* appropriately for his dazzling array of intellectual and martial skills. While the play demonstrates that Othello is ultimately cut off from this world, from *Geist*, we have ample evidence that he was very much a man of his time. A foreign-born soldier who is a complete outsider to the Venetian political order, Othello nonetheless earns the trust and respect of the state through his valiant deeds and commandeering presence. His very marriage to the rich and beautiful Desdemona, who "paragons description and wild fame" (2.1.62), is but the ocular proof of his successful integration into a political order from which he ought be proscribed by nature. "An extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere" (1.1.134-135), as Roderigo refers to him, Othello nonetheless finds himself at the very center of the highest circles of Venetian political and social life. Though he enters the play-world as somatically-marked outsider, through his radiant *virtù*, his "perfect soul," he achieves military fame and overcomes adversity and prejudice. He comes, in short, to embody a

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<sup>94</sup> Indeed, as Leah S. Marcus puts it, "by killing his wife (in full view of the audience!) and thereby sinning against an 'established code of universal courtesy to women' Othello shows that he is insufficiently acculturated to the social system of a civilized land" (XX).

conception of virtue and nobility that accounts for the influence of Machiavelli's political thought.

It is important, then, to take an exacting look at Venetian "civic humanism" in all its decadent glory. For this world that makes "ambition virtue" is the very same world in which "virtue" is, in Iago's words, but a "fig" (1.1.320). Indeed, as Bartels claims, "If Iago was created out of the English stage tradition of Machiavellian villains, Othello was shaped by the discourse of civic humanism to which Niccolò Machiavelli's *Discorsi* was a major contribution" (381-82). I therefore situate Othello's rise against the background of Renaissance nobility theory, ushered in by activists working directly under the supervision of Henry VIII.

### The New Nobility

In sixteenth century England, the term and concept "nobility" underwent a profound shift in meaning that may be attributed, on the one hand, to tumult of the Protestant Reformation, and on the other, to the growing influence of Machiavelli in the court of Henry VIII. Talented "upstarts" like Thomas Cromwell came to occupy some of the most powerful positions in Tudor government. Richard Morison, Cromwell's secretary and writer of Machiavellian tracts under Henry VIII, argued that "nobility" is to be determined not by blood or heritage but by one's "singular virtues" (208). These changes came to inform literary depictions of noble virtue, such as that seen in Sidney's *Arcadia*. Amphialus's virtue, despite his mother Cecropia's wickedness, indicates the extent to which early modern theories of the virtuous self began to argue against the premise that heredity, "blood," or ancestral origin ought determine one's nobility. Indeed, Pyrocles's namesake, Zelmane, is herself daughter of the evil Plexirtus. As W. Gordon Zeeveld



argues in his classic *The Foundations of Tudor Policy* (1948), these attitudes represent a larger attack on hereditary nobility, associated with the degradation of “Aristotelian” virtue:

Redefinition of the concept of nobility in terms of politics was necessary, and Richard Morison . . . . recognized the need. For a man who was familiar with the works of Machiavelli, the transposition of values was easy. In Morison’s address to the Pilgrims, Aristotelian virtue has been replaced by Machiavellian *virtù*, Christian humility by ambition, theoretical by practical motives as a basis for social equality (207-208).<sup>95</sup>

It is this version of “social equality” that *Othello* observes and deconstructs. To be sure, it is a Machiavellian approach, or is at least derived from his ideas. Machiavelli makes nearly the same claim in *Discourses*: “all men, having had the same beginning, are of equally ancient birth, and nature has made them all in the same fashion. Were we stripped naked you would find us alike; dress us in their clothes and they in ours, without doubt we should seem noble and they mean, forasmuch as it is only novelty and riches that make us unequal” (133).<sup>96</sup> These values are reflected in *Othello*’s Venice, where conventional notions of princely hierarchy and nobility are threatened and then restored to order. We know that Othello labored in the “tented field” (1.3.86) and was a sold into slavery, yet is of “royal siege” (1.2.22).<sup>97</sup> Through it all, Othello emerges most fundamentally as an effective storyteller, a modern cosmopolite whose claims to past glory render him at times desperate and at times brilliantly aware of *fortuna*, of the political stakes in

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<sup>95</sup> See Zeeveld. He notes, further, “What [needs] emphasis is the fact that most of these changes were accelerated by commoners whom Henry VIII had elevated to the highest offices in the kingdom. Wolsey, Cranmer, and Cromwell were obscure men until the King chose to disregard class distinctions and employ their services” (192-193).

<sup>96</sup> See *The Life and Times of Machiavelli* by

<sup>97</sup> “Unlike the work of Marlow, Marcus claims, “[Shakespeare’s] plays acknowledge cosmopolitanism and religious diversity but simultaneously reject them in favor of an achieved communal harmony that is at least implicitly based on commonality of belief and custom” (435); indeed, she claims, his “cultural imaginary is bounded by the Mediterranean” (435).

which he is embroiled. Such a man is no Shakespearean impossibility or idea, but instead, the very embodiment of the early modern political doctrine of nobility, which stipulates that that *virtù*, not ancestry or “bloodline,” ought determine one’s potential to access political power.

To conclude this chapter, then, I want to explore the ways in which Othello imagines a world in which an equalitarian elite based on “virtue” or ability might be erected, yet in which the “purity of blood” ultimately prevails.<sup>98</sup> For it is Cassio, Desdemona’s erotic doppelgänger—not Iago, himself a Spaniard and therefore an outsider—who ultimately presides over Cyprus. I am suggesting that the play is about the illusory nature not only of “virtue” but of *virtù*, of ability or potentiality itself: for it, too, is shown to be circumscribed by institutional constraints. In a racist political reality such as that in which Othello outwits and exceeds all of his peers, it would indeed seem “impossible” for him *actually* to govern a place like Cyprus.<sup>99</sup>

Perhaps what is most shocking about Iago is that he, like Othello, embodies this Renaissance ideal of nobility. Or, as Stephen Rogers puts it, “it is frightening to realize that Iago represents the Renaissance conception of the man entirely controlled by reason” (135).<sup>100</sup> That Othello does not recognize Iago’s nobility may be one of the lessons of Othello’s fall. For it is Othello, presumably, who recommends Cassio for the position of lieutenant, despite the fact that

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<sup>98</sup> Ania Loomba explores medieval texts to conclude an “association of skin color and bodily attributes with particular faiths or moral qualities” (504). She uses the terms “monogenesis”—the notion that we are, in St. Augustine’s words, “Adam’s progeny [*protoplastos*]” (504)—and “polygenesis,” which brought about the notion of distinct species. She claims, “although monogenesis theoretically facilitated the possibility of conversion, its actual possibility was severely limited by several prejudices and practices. One was the belief about the fixed moral being of Jews and Muslims, and their inability to change. This fixity was routinely compared to the indelibility of blackness, as in the 1560 Geneva Bible’s lines: “Can the black Moor chance his skin or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. The comparison between faith (an inner, unseen quality, and one which is theoretically changeable) and color (a visible marker, supposedly fixed) is reinforced in many medieval and early modern texts—both literary and nonliterary—that convey the difficulty of converting unbelievers by drawing upon the image of an “Ethiope,” “Man of Inde,” or “blackamoor” who cannot be washed white” (504-5).

<sup>99</sup> In this context, it is indeed revealing that Cyprus had been *actually* governed by the Turks since the 1570’s.

<sup>100</sup> See “*Othello*: Comedy in Reverse.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 24.2 (1973) 210-220. Rogers here recalls and summarizes Theodore Spenser’s view in *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* (1949).

he has less experience in martial affairs—less *virtù*—than Iago. Why, indeed, would someone who has spent his life commandeering *virtù*, a prince once a slave now again a prince, reward an effete “counter-caster” like Cassio when his good friend, Iago, is in fact more qualified for the job? Might it have something to do with Othello’s evolving acumen of Venetian politics? Insofar as the handsome, rich, white-skinned Venetian is precluded access to his peer rightful mate, Desdemona, he is rewarded by Othello with a prestigious post. In the eyes of a Machiavellian—which is to say, the eyes of a typical member of the sixteenth century court—the political scales are now even.

In short, I’d like to suggest not that Othello has a perceptual problem, or some innate epistemological incapacity that predisposes him to Iago’s manipulations. Rather, I want to suggest that he was of the type I have been describing: a *novus homo*, or new man.<sup>101</sup> A Machiavellian Othello knows he is to marry Desdemona, an act that seals his romantic and political interests. To achieve this he must elope, which will in turn disrupt the ethical decorum of the order in which he rose to power. To emend this, and to balance the political scales, Othello appoints or encourages the promotion of Cassio, who has no battle experience but great wealth and excellent “reputation,” as he himself sees it. Flanked literally and symbolically by paragons of Venetian purity, power, and whiteness, Othello commands with his station and virtuoso rhetoric—in short, his *presence*—which he brilliantly exploits to escape public shame and death and to secure promotions to the highest levels of military governorship.

This is no controversial reading of *Othello*. And yet, a majority of critics argue from the

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<sup>101</sup> See Ian Smith’s “Othello’s Black Handkerchief” in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 64 no. 1, 2013, pp. 1-25. Smith’s argument coalesces around the notion of “commodified identity,” which he describes as “the interdependent relation between subject and object, and the apparent transformation of subject by and into and object” (7). He claims that the handkerchief be read in terms of Othello, not Desdemona, and in doing so the handkerchief emerges as a black object that sediments Othello’s radicalized identity with the materiality of black cloth. It could be argued that the cloth also functions in this sense not only to materialize Othello’s skin but also to associate him with a rare luxury object.

presumption that Othello is somehow inherently *good*; his virtue and his “reputation” have been tarnished by Iago’s schemes. The madness of jealousy, the toll of racism, and the intensity of his beliefs take him down; at some point, he loses practical function over the relationship between belief and action. Critics often turn to his phrase, “my perfect soul,” to provide evidence of Othello’s inner goodness. Othello claims he possesses such a soul, and therefore we must believe that he does. But we must recall Othello’s experience and intellect. As his speeches show, Othello is expertly trained in the Ciceronian art of florid, emotionally manipulative rhetoric. Using it, he escapes death. Consider his words before the Venetian elite in the “trial” scene:

She swore in faith ‘twas strange, ‘twas passing strange,  
‘Twas pitiful, ‘twas wondrous pitiful;  
She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished  
That heaven had made her such a man. She thanked me  
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,  
I should but teach him how to tell my story  
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake:  
She loved me the dangers I had passed  
And I loved her that she did pity them. (1.3.161-170)

Observing these lines, Ayanna Thompson asks, “How well does [Othello] understand her love, or his own?” (149).<sup>102</sup> This reading implies and assumes, of course, that Othello believes the things that he is saying. His “perfect soul” contrasts with Iago’s barren ambition, his “I am not what I am.” So his utterances must be true. Othello’s speech to the makeshift tribunal is therefore delivered from a place of complete authenticity.

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<sup>102</sup> See the Arden *Othello* (2016).

Given Othello's encounter with this "veil" of racism, what else might he mean when he claims, "She loved me the dangers I had passed / And I loved her that she did pity them"? I want to suggest that reading Othello's oration as anything *other* than performance risks minimizing the literally vital function it plays in keeping him alive. As is made clear, his life rests on the quality and believability of his testimony.<sup>103</sup> This may explain the critical unease at these lines. Stephen Greenblatt argues that Othello submits to "narrative self-fashioning" on Iago's part because he himself engages in such self-fashioning: "his identity depends upon a constant performance . . . of his 'story'" (245). Marcia Macaulay shows that Catherine Bates makes nearly the same point: "Othello falls prey to Iago's story-telling because he is himself a storyteller, a man whose tale seduces Desdemona and has the power, according to the Duke, to win all the daughters of Venice" (260).<sup>104</sup> I want to argue that Othello's story performs the subtle rhetorical function of rendering his and Desdemona's mutual love as both idealized and decorporealized, a metaphysical depiction of an unexpressed-but-present image that is, at its core, the very imaginative force of miscegenation. The function of the story is to cleanse his love for Desdemona of its miscegenative aura. Othello's words cleverly and pointedly draw attention *from* the body, from suggestions of sensuality and desire. The special effect of the lines is to induce in his audience a feeling of submerged corporeality, for it is ultimately a "story"—albeit a vivid one, the kind that would "win my daughter too" (1.3.172)—that is the wooing agent.

Othello has, in Houston A. Baker Jr.'s terms, acquired great skill at the "mastery of form," which designates the process by figures such as Booker T. Washington and Charles Chestnut adopted rhetorics of "minstrelsy" to gain the favor of a white reading audience. Baker

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<sup>103</sup> Who knows how many times he has been subjected to such a "tribunal" in the past?

<sup>104</sup> See Macaulay's "'When Chaos is Come Again': Narrative and Narrative Analysis in *Othello*" (2005) and Bates' "Weaving and Writing in *Othello*" (1993).

notes that Washington's "adoption of tones and types" was a tactic designed "to keep his audience tuned in" (30); and that "these tones and types . . . are reassuring sounds from the black quarters. Although the narrator [of Washington's autobiography] may be stunningly capable of standard English phraseology, crafty political analyses, and smooth verbal gymnastics . . . there can be no worry that the Negro is getting 'out of hand.' For at all proper turns, there are comforting sounds and figures of a minstrel theater that we know so well" (30-31). Othello's performances serve to remind the Venetian elite of two things: that he is either unaware of or claims to be unaware of his own exceeding rhetorical skill ("And therefore shall I little grace my cause / In speaking for myself" [1.3.89-90]), and that such skill has emerged from a most unlikely source, one who deals with "medicinal gum" (5.2.349) and "the Anthropophagi" (1.3.145). Paradoxically, then, Othello must engage in bad faith so as to declare his very presence.<sup>105</sup> As DuBois would put it, Othello manifests the perceptual and existential dilemma of "double consciousness," or critical awareness of and recognition that

The worlds within and without the Veil of Color are changing, and changing rapidly, but not at the same rate, not in the same way; and this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism. (145, my emphasis).

Like Baker's "minstrel," Sartre's waiter, or Fanon's "triple person,"<sup>106</sup> DuBois's "seventh

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<sup>105</sup> The corollary term in Baker's conceptual lexicon is the "deformation of mastery," exemplified by "radicals" such as DuBois. Baker notes: "The deformation of mastery refuses a master's nonsense. It returns—often transmuting 'standard' syllables—to the common sense of the tribe. Its relationship to masks is radically different from that of the mastery of form. The spirit house occupying the deformer is not minstrelsy, but the sound and space of an African ancestral past" (56).

<sup>106</sup> In terms that may expressly recall and refer to DuBois's double consciousness, Fanon declares this "racial

son” may choose or be required by circumstance to use “double words and double ideals” so as to command *fortuna*.<sup>107</sup> Othello acts on this principle through his performances and, most critically, in his judicious summoning of Desdemona to the senate floor, a political victory informed by the Renaissance conception of just reason, or reason informed by ethics.

Desdemona deftly summons the logic of female obedience to reason her case against her father and the state: the “duty” she owes to Brabantio has been legally eclipsed, for just like her mother, “preferring you before her father, / So much I challenge that I may profess / Due to the Moor my lord” (1.3.187-189). In using patriarchal logic to defend her “challenge” to the patriarchal order itself, Desdemona effectively lays the groundwork for her own exit from *Geist*. An astute and dexterous communicator, Desdemona’s “failure” to convince Othello that she is not unchaste in the horrific moments preceding her execution signals the spectacular collapse of Renaissance reason and rhetoric. Like the Phoenix of Shakespeare’s poem, perfection itself is obliterated by way of utterly nonsensical laws.

*Othello* may ultimately be regarded as a joust in which one Machiavel out-deceives another, bringing down an array of problems and pestilences in the social order with one swift blow. With Othello’s death and Iago’s imprisonment, Cassio finally assumes his rightful position, thereby bringing Cyprus, the literal and symbolic center of the Turkish threat, under proper governmental and symbolic control. Cassio’s appointment to Othello’s post represents the

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epidermal schema” that has forced him into a position of being made aware of his body not “in the third person but in a triple person” (112). “Unmercifully imprisoned” by the “other,” the white man, Fanon becomes “responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors” (112). Like DuBois, Fanon’s perceives of his signification as a black-skinned person as determining his sense of self and his sense of history from without. According to Fanon, then, the paradox of having black skin is that it seems to endow one with vision (a “second sight”) while precluding access to “transcendence.”

<sup>107</sup> One may thus read the “revolt” and “radicalism” of figures such as DuBois and Lawrence Dunbar as symptoms of double consciousness and as decisions to *tear down* or “escape from” the same veil behind which figures such as Washington and Chestnut conducted, according to Baker, a “hypocritical” retreat. One may read the “pretence” and “hypocrisy” of figures such as Washington as both a symptom of double consciousness and as a decision to retreat “within the Veil.”

triumph of white supremacist reasoning. This picture of political order, so far easier to envision than what preceded it in actuality, celebrates the reclamation of reason from a corrupted and threatening political errancy to a dominant or universal rationality, synonymous in *Othello* with the very reason that informs the racist and misogynist discourses of the day.



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## CHAPTER 4

### VIRTUAL AUTHORSHIP AND LOVE'S MARTYR'S DIGITAL BODY POLITIC<sup>1</sup>

The cryptic Latin inscription on the title page of Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr's* reveals a curious moment in the text's history as a work-in-translation. Below Chester's long-winded title, the following epigram from Martial materializes in delicate cursive:

*Mutare dominum non potest liber notus* (1.66).

The line is generally understood to read, "A famous book is not able to change its author"<sup>2</sup> or "A well-known book is not able to change its author."<sup>3</sup> These translations elide the sense in which "*dominum*" functions here to indicate, literally, "master" of or over the "famous" book to which the line refers both literally and metatextually.<sup>4</sup> Given *Love's Martyr's* content, its mysterious publishing and editorial circumstances, its list of illustrious collaborators, and the background of early modern collaborative authorship against which it must be understood, this newfound sense of "mastery" strikes a curious, if not altogether ironic, note. First, the epigram conjures up the image of a book that is singly authored; it suggests, moreover, that this sole author is a "master." However, the book's principal author, Robert Chester, was at best an amateur poet, known only

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter has been substantially modified from my essay, "Can Conversation Be Quantified? A Cladistic Approach to Shakespeare's and Jonson's Influences in *Love's Martyr*" in Kristen-Abbot Bennett's *Conversational Exchanges in Early Modern England: 1549-1640* (2015).

<sup>2</sup> See Bednarz, *Shakespeare and the Truth of Love* (2012).

<sup>3</sup> The entirety of the epigram reads: "You are mistaken, insatiable thief of my writings, who think a poet can be made for the mere expense which copying, and a cheap volume cost. The applause of the world is not acquired for six or even ten sesterces. Seek out for this purpose verses treasured up, and unpublished efforts, known only to one person, and which the father himself of the virgin sheet, that has not been worn and scrubbed by bushy chins, keeps sealed up in his desk. A well-known book cannot change its master. But if there is one to be found yet unpolished by the pumice-stone, yet unadorned with bosses and cover, buy it: I have such by me, and no one shall know it. Whoever recites another's compositions, and seeks for fame, must buy, not a book, but the author's silence" (59). Translation by Henry G. Bohn from *The Epigrams of Martial*. London: Bel and Daldy, 1865.

<sup>4</sup> To be sure, "*dominum*" does not translate literally as "author."

to have published this volume of verse in his life. With the assistance of his patron, the recently knighted Sir John Salusbury of Llewni, he managed to recruit the four “the best and chiefest” (177)<sup>5</sup> literary stars of the day—George Chapman, Ben Jonson, John Marston, and William Shakespeare—to contribute to the volume’s concluding “Poetical Essays” and perhaps to other material. In the context of this compositional and editorial collective, Martial’s “*dominum*” communicates not only “mastery” in the authorial sense, but also hierarchical, competitive, and indeed princely overtones that the term “author,” alone, does not. The inscription thus betrays a feature of early modern authorship whereby authors come increasingly to assume control—here, a sense of sovereign “authority”—over works they produce. At the same time, the epigram draws attention to the unstable nature of authorial and textual materiality in the early modern period. Indeed, it asks us to consider, just *how* might a famous book go about “changing” its master? “Book,” in this sense, occupies both the subject and *subjectivity* of the epigram, elusively encoded by a dualism to be found only in translation. *Love’s Martyr’s* appropriation of Martial thus presents us with a riddle of bibliographic sovereignty, where—hinging ultimately on the “fame” the book may or may not attain—the “master” of this text, in 1601, remains an open question. As readers in 2017, we are provoked to mull the status not only of the author over the text, but strangely, of text over author.

The interpretive malleability of Martial’s epigram presents, periscopically, an epistemological dilemma regarding the nature, features, and function of authorship that subtends the entire enterprise of which it is a part. Moreover, it begs questions within the broader context of thought on early modern authorship, particularly as these questions intersect with theories of

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<sup>5</sup> Excerpts from *Love’s Martyr* here correspond to Alexander B. Grosart’s still widely-cited 1878 edition. In later sections, excerpts of texts provided by G. Wilson Knight refer to both Grosart’s text and the 1601 edition, which was accessed at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

early modern time, materiality, and subjectivity. Just as authors such as Ben Jonson came to articulate increasingly proprietary relationships to their work—what Joseph Loewenstein refers to as “possessive authorship,” or the early modern bibliographic ego<sup>6</sup>—these works themselves, I argue, may be seen partaking of a life of their own, a virtual or second life independent of yet inextricably connected to the “masters” who create them. Prevailing upon theories of early modern intertextuality and authorial ontology,<sup>7</sup> this study will trace ontological contours and boundaries, both actual and virtual, within collaborative early modern printed material. In doing so, I aim to give voice to the “active powers issuing from nonsubjects” (Bennet ix) that suffuse multiauthor pamphlets such as *Love’s Martyr*, where multiple and often-intersecting voices materialize in unexpected spaces—out of place, that is, and out of time.<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Gil Harris has established that such material is to be understood both as matter itself and as temporally inscribed:

The relations between matter and temporality have been largely occluded in recent scholarship on objects, which has tended to transform the “material” of material culture into a synonym for “physical”—thereby freezing not just the object in time but also time in the object ... For Aristotle as much as for Marx, matter is both past material that has been reworked as well as present, reworkable potential that presumes a future. (*Untimely* 8)

Harris’s “polychronic” matter points to a paradoxical ontology of the thing whereby the thing is, in its Deleuzian becoming, its incessant movement through time, precisely that which is no

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<sup>6</sup> See *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (2002).

<sup>7</sup> See especially Marcus’s *Unediting the Renaissance* (1996) and Masten’s *Textual Intercourse* (1997).

<sup>8</sup> See Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010).

longer.<sup>9</sup> Timothy Murray relates Deleuze's reflections on the "time image" in cinema to his thinking on the virtual, one of the conceptual touchstones of *Difference and Repetition*: "The body or shape of time, the event within which we find ourselves, is itself something of a phantom oscillating between the not-yet and no longer, virtual but graspable in the actual" (Murray 240).<sup>10</sup> Murray's exacting usage of "virtual" designates the sense in which the term and concept may productively animate Harris's already-virtual "untimely matter"; namely, the untimely imagines "a practical theory of how to rework temporality, of how we might use the past to imagine alternatives to the present and to chronology itself" (13). It is in this spirit that I take the early modern sense of "virtual"—as that which exists foundationally or pre-potentially in matter as *form*—and step into our present time, so to speak, to conjoin with it the "practical theory" that emerges from engagement with digital tools and methods.

To conclude this dissertation, then, this chapter will engage the digital to foreground the virtual as both theory and method. Working with and handling digital, archival, and bibliographic materials in tandem, digital practitioners implicitly engage in virtual work, i.e., a juggling of "past material that has been reworked as well as present, reworkable potential that presumes a future." Such a way of perceiving one's work impels one to recognize not only the material in the digital, but also the digital in the material. To engage humanistic work digitally is to recognize relationships between, for example, print and digital editions: between texts residing in the past (as any printed work, no matter how recently printed, necessarily does) and their

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<sup>9</sup> See Harris's discussion of these terms in *Untimely Matter* (3-4). In brief, Harris defines and distinguishes Serres's terms "multitemporal" (the "materialization of diverse relations among past, present, and future"[4]) and "polychronic" [as that which "draws on the ... chronological meaning of time in asserting that objects collate many different moments, as suggested by Latour's polytemporal toolbox"(4)]. He defines the "untimely," in an early modern context, as that which is "out of time with itself" or "out of joint" (4-5); he will enmesh this term in a critical tradition initiated by Friedrich Nietzsche and extending to Frederick Jameson, Gilles Deleuze, Elizabeth Grosz, and Jacques Derrida (11-13).

<sup>10</sup> In *Digital Baroque: New Media Art and Cinematic Folds* (2008).

digital analogues living in the sempiternal, digital present.<sup>11</sup> Such an approach to digital materiality affirms both the ontologies of materials we can touch as well as the untimely nature of digital materiality itself, often misunderstood to be the static, lifeless, and indeed “timeless” facsimile of the decaying matter that occupies libraries, museums, and archives. Rather, to work digitally means to apprehend textual matter in all its sensuous and multitemporal plentitude while understanding the ontological contingency of the digital edition, which is as prone to glitch, error, and indeed “corruption” as any medium preceding it. Virtual work, I argue and seek to demonstrate, thereby forces us to reimagine the very ontology of textuality in its material form; by proxy, it reveals formal structures that “contain” virtual bodies and establish boundaries for their existence, preservation, and posterity.

This sense of “virtual” comports with Michael Heim’s contention that it is “something that is implicit but not formally recognized, something that is indeed present but not openly admitted.” It is this sense in which the epigram on *Love’s Martyr’s* title page, composed in the first century, palimpsests meditations not only on the nature of authorial “masters” and the intersecting yet independent lives of their printed materials, but also the forms of temporality that these beings respectively inhabit. In late medieval and early modern Europe, the very existence of a “famous book” presupposes the existence of an emerging temporality—the notion of eternal duration, or unlimited continuity—whereby corporeal beings and the communities they constitute may be said to “outlive” the lives of the eroding, material world in heretofore unimaginable ways.<sup>12</sup> As Ernst Kantorowicz notes in his opus on political theology, “finally, the

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<sup>11</sup> For further perspectives on “digital work,” see the watershed collaborative volume, *Digital Humanities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012) by Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunefeld, Todd Presner, and Jeffrey Schnapp.

<sup>12</sup> Examine, for example, the following Christological metaphor, excerpted at length from Richard Baxter’s *Of Justification: Four Disputations* (1658): “... the *body of Christ*, by reason of the *inhabitation of the Deity*, cannot be said to know all things, or to be everywhere; but the God-head that dwelleth in that body, *may be*, and is every

unlimited continuity of the human race bestowed a new meaning on many things. It made meaningful, for example, the craving after worldly fame” (277).<sup>13</sup> That is to say, the doctrine of eternal time give fame a *purpose*; now, famous persons and deeds recorded in text will be remembered immemorially, potentially even past the Final Judgment. In this way, following scholastic debates regarding the orders and capacities of time, printed material and their masters acquire distinctly theological characteristics. I call this shift is a virtual one, whereby early modern subjects become occupied with corporeal and constitutional entities that acquire capacities exceeding the bounds of scholastic-Aristotelian notions of temporality and self-same identity.

Perhaps nowhere is this shift in early modern subjectivity more evident than in the realm of printed text. As Elizabeth Eisenstein has most pointedly demonstrated, the Gutenberg revolution endowed words, and by extension their creators, with quasi-magical properties; depending on their positions, early modern subjects variously extolled or feared the divine-or-

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where: for though the humanity of Christ *subsisteth* in the person of the Sonne of God, (and in that respect may be said to be every where, because that having no subsistence of it owne, it subsisteth in a person that is every where,) yet in respect of *Essence*, being a *finite creature*, it is no wayes capable of the diune properties: And therefore though Christ *personally* may be said to be in all places, or the Body of Christ virtually, *respectu virtutu servatricis*, that is, in respect of his having vertue, as the *Sunne*, which is essentially in Heaven, but vertyually in all inferior bodies, may be said to be *every where*; yet the *Body* of Christ locally, or the manhood of Christ solely considered, must needs be in one place: Otherwise how could his manhood be *contained* within the *straights* of the Virgin wombe, if his manhood was every where? How could his body be *nayled* to the Crosse, *wrapped* in clothes, *laide* in the Sepulcher, if that his body was so *spacious* as that no limits could *containe* him? Or how could the *Angell* say, *He is not here*, if he as every where?” (544).

<sup>13</sup> See *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (1957). For intellectual context, see Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology* (1922) and *The Concept of the Political* (1927), which greatly influenced Kantorowicz's theory as well as his framing and presentation of “political theology.” According to Schmitt, the sitting sovereign inherits in states of emergency the theological authority invested in God. The sovereign achieves this power by becoming he who must execute the will of the state when social order is threatened. Facing emergency, the sovereign is mired in jurisprudential paradox; Schmitt notes, “Although [the sovereign] stands outside the normally valid legal system, he nevertheless belongs to it, for it is he who must decide if the constitution needs to be suspended in its entirety” (*Political Theology* 7). The sovereign thus resides at once inside and outside the bounds of law. As Kantorowicz coyly intimates in the introduction to *The King's Two Bodies*, the very phrase “political theology” had acquired unpleasant associations following public disclosure of Schmitt's Nazism, which he never recanted.

demonic nature of printed material.<sup>14</sup> Understood as virtual proxies for actual, corporeal selves—bodies that, unlike their typographically-reified counterparts, exist in the *tempus* of ordinary, terrestrial time, and are therefore subject to forces of decay—early modern printed bodies or “corpuses” partake in a form of artifactual life that duplicates, and thereby extends, the lives of authors themselves.<sup>15</sup> Such an understanding of authorship engages and extends Kantorowicz’s theory of the king’s two bodies, which seeks to clarify “confusing distinctions between the King’s sempiternity and the king’s temporariness, between his immaterial and immortal body politic and his material and mortal body natural” (20-21). While the *king*’s body may be decay, the *King*’s body—a “body politic” comprised of all subjects in the realm, to which he is mystically conjoined while alive—resolutely and legally cannot die, for the realm itself is said to exist in a state of eternal duration. According to the logic of metempsychosis, whereby the life of a living being passes on to another upon dying, the Kingships’s sempiternity is thereby confirmed both juristically and theologically; upon coronation, he is “incorporated” as “head” of a “body” that lives without end, independent of his age, imbecility, or infirmity.<sup>16</sup>

Given the pervasiveness of this doctrine, which influenced discourses ranging from jurisprudence to physics to theater, I pursue the analogy to early modern authorship. In this formulation, the Author assumes a form of virtual sovereignty over his or her Text upon

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<sup>14</sup> As Eisenstein and others have pointed out, this fear may have had something to do with Gutenberg’s one-time business associated, Johanna Fust, popularly rumored to be Faust incarnate. See Eisenstein’s *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979) and especially, *Divine Art, Infernal Machine* (2012).

<sup>15</sup> Authorship thus understood partakes in the controversial doctrine of eternal duration, debated furiously among early modern scholastics of every disposition.

<sup>16</sup> In addition to Kantorowicz’s general formulation of the theory, I recommend commentary by Marie Axton (*The Queen’s Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession*, 1979) and Albert Rolls (*The Theory of the King’s Two Bodies in the Age of Shakespeare*, 2000); see also “The Sovereign Body and Sacred Body” in Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995); Jonathan Gil Harris’s *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourse of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (1998); and “First Session” in Jacques Derrida’s *The Beast and the Sovereign, Vol. 1* (2009).

committing a work to print; the “Realm” thus becomes the “Text” to which he or she is virtually tethered, just as emerging discourses regarding proprietary authorship and copyright form the legal, indeed even theological, bases for contracts that exist between *Author* (as print house and Register), *author* (as creator), and institutional apparatuses regulating the production and dissemination of Text. As such, the “corpus,” as *Text*, lives on and eventually accrues an immaterial ontology predicated upon the fact of its legal rights, connected to living bodies and institutions, yet distinct from them. The *Author*’s “body politic” by extension may be regarded as the “work” in all its diversity: the collection of letters, words, collocations, sentences, and other “corporate entities” that may be said to comprise his or her “corpus.”

Such a view of authorship recalls C. B. Macpherson’s explanation of the phenomenon whereby a “possessive quality” over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries comes gradually to define conceptions of the self. According to Macpherson, this quality “is found in its conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them ... The relation of ownership, having become for more and more men the critically important relation determining their actual freedom and actual prospect of realizing their full potentialities, was read back into the nature of the individual. The individual, it was thought, is free inasmuch as he is proprietor of his person and capacities” (3).<sup>17</sup> Such a view of personhood in turn prompts us to look toward early modern authorship with an eye to the “possessive” qualities it may be said to have acquired. Joseph Loewenstein distills such a theory in *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (2002):

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<sup>17</sup> The rest of Macpherson’s frequently-cited definition and explanation of possessive individualism goes as follows: “the difficulties of modern liberal-democratic theory lie deeper than had been thought, that the original seventeenth-century individualism contained the central difficulty, which lay in its possessive quality ... The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of larger social whole, but as an owner of himself. ... The human essence is freedom from dependence on the wills of others, and freedom is a function of possession. Society becomes a lot of free equal individuals related to each other as proprietors of their own capacities and of what they have acquired by their exercise. Society consists of exchange between proprietors” (3). This definition has been challenged and emended by scholars such as Étienne Balibar, queer economist Richard Cornwall, and Joseph Loewenstein.



In the Early Modern period, the proper-ness of books is shaped, even determined, by the ways in which quasi-proprietary claims were asserted by the possessors of manuscript copies, by printers, by publishers, and by authors. And although individual authors might experience this connectedness idiosyncratically, we may speak of the cumulative effect of such experiences, which was to transform authorship into a form of public agency increasingly distinguished by possessiveness. (2)

My concluding chapter to this project turns to early modern textuality with an eye to the “possessive” qualities it may be said to have acquired. However, I seek to explore these “[forms]of public agency” not merely in terms of early modern authors, as Lowenstein has done, but in terms of textuality itself. I will argue that such logic finds expression in *Love’s Martyr* in three ways, each quite divergent from the other. On the one hand, Ben Jonson will be shown to exert increasing proprietary control over his portion of the work, even rejecting the assistance of the Muses; yet he seems also to have contributed anonymously to a work said to have been written by the entire poetic collective. Shakespeare, possibly shirking this “possessive” paradigm, appears to have contributed far more than his signed poem to Chester’s project; stylometric evidence indicates that he or someone remarkably good at imitating him may have extensively edited the “Cantos” that appear in the volume. Meanwhile, John Marston launches a critique of the ontology of the authorial subject in his *What You Will* (1607), a work that directly references and parodies unattributed prose in *Love’s Martyr*. I will analyze these instances by deploying comparative digital methods that create traces of authorial activity in the text. Through this process, I seek to illustrate, in graphical form, the text’s virtual or second life, the

sempiternal “body politic” to which it has been consigned in the realm of digital print.<sup>18</sup> The analytic method I have selected, what is called hierarchical cladistic analysis, attempts not merely to convert text into data or to present this data as epistemologically impenetrable. Derived from models first used in population genetics, the graphics I generate seek to betray textual energies, mutations, and syntheses that honor the ludic nature of early modern collaboration and intertextuality.

In what follows, I situate this study’s methods and argument within critical discourse on *Love’s Martyr* and its historical context history, after which I detail the nature of this study’s “polychronic” methodology. That virtual authorship—understood, in the context of this study, to be an inherently collaborative or co-authorial enterprise—is revealed by cladistic methodology will be elaborated by way of exploring the text’s authorial structures in themselves and as they compare to other works by authors who contributed to the volume. As will be shown, Shakespeare’s “presence” receives particular focus in light of startling questions regarding the sheer *pervasiveness* of this presence; namely, I will confront the specter, first raised more than half a century ago, of his having composed or assisted in composing work signed by one of his collaborators.

### *Love’s Martyr* in Context

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<sup>18</sup> Now that this print is accessible digitally, one might argue that its typographic topos has achieved a new temporality—the *aeternum*, the now-and-ever of godly time—or that this sempiternity has been reified by digital means. In light of the rhetoric of progress generally ascribed to digital methodologies as well as longstanding assumptions regarding authorship in poststructuralist theory, the stakes of such a stance are worth contemplating. Importantly, the “second life” or incorporate body of the text, rendered in digital code, neither negates nor countervails poststructuralist notions of the author’s death and the scriptor’s ascendancy; rather, this project posits that digital methods excavate traces of the “corpse” from the “corpus” while retaining the spirit of this tradition’s attack on Romantic individualism. Indeed, as will be demonstrated, virtual authorship posits a less than Romantic image of this chapter’s locus of study, a cluster words either signed or speculated to be written by William Shakespeare. Second, while no authoritative digital edition of *Love’s Martyr* is currently available, one certainly may be created; and this text may be meticulously searched, cited, patterned, and plotted so as create the illusion of its being composed of “data” rather than textual, incorporate entities.

Robert Chester's dedicatory preface to the collaborative pamphlet known as *Love's Martyr* (1601) begins with an explicit reference to the striking yet elusive conversational energies that animate its pages. Following the book's grandiose title page, Chester implicates his project within a greater compositional collective and beseeches the pardon of his patron, the recently knighted Sir John Salusbury of Llewni, should "the common back-biting enemies of good spirits" (4) find his verse in bad taste:

Honorable Sir, hauing according to the directions of some of my best-minded friends, finished my long-expected labour; knowing this ripe iudging world to be full of enuie, every one (as sound reason requireth) thinking his own child to be the fairest although an Aethiopion, I am emboldened to put my infant wit to the eye of the world under your protectio knowing that if Absurdutie like a theefe haue crept into any part of these Poems, your well-graced name will ouer-shadow these defaults. (3-4)

Fortunately for Chester, it seems all but certain that these "best-minded friends" happen to have been some of the greatest literary talents of his, or of any, time. The volume's supplement, its "Poetical Essays," contain a collection of poems signed by George Chapman, Ben Johnson, John Marston, and William Shakespeare.<sup>19</sup> In fact, despite Chester's esteemed company and whatever "directions" he may have received, as well as passages that betray technical mastery that seems to have come from nowhere, the majority of verse signed in his name is regarded generally to be amateurish. Chester, "although an Aethiopion," an unknown poet who published only this

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<sup>19</sup> As countless scholars have noted, Shakespeare's dazzling proto-metaphysical poem, "The Phoenix and Turtle," may be the sole reason Chester's volume has been rescued from complete obscurity.

volume of verse in his life,<sup>20</sup> managed not only to recruit these famous writers to his enterprise, but also to convince them to ascribe to a poetic conceit he seems to have invented.<sup>21</sup> How he or his patron, John Salusbury, organized this remains up for debate. The allegorical valences and political circumstances of the volume, printed after the Earl of Essex's rebellion and subsequent execution, likewise incite endless critical speculation. As discussed briefly in Chapter 3, does the Phoenix of Chester's poem "represent" the Queen, on the verge of death herself in 1601? Might the Turtledove, then, stand in for the fallen Essex? Was *Love's Martyr* published to honor Salusbury's recent knighthood, bestowed upon him for his opposition to and suppression of the rebellion? Questions such as these dominate the history of scholarship surrounding both Chester's long, multi-genre work and the collection of "Poetical Essays" that follow his and conclude the volume.

A smaller body of scholarship on *Love's Martyr*, to which this study seeks to contribute, resists the tendency to assign potentially reductive analogies to figures that appear outside of it. Observing either a range of stylistic abnormalities that appear in the text, or that it was published at the height of the Poets' War and contains work by its two most contentious figures, scholars such as G. Wilson Knight and Charles Cathcart have focused on *Love's Martyr's* paratextual, collaborative, and conversational dimensions. These scholars have shown, on the one hand, that poems not signed by Chester indicate striking conversational dynamism between these authors;

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<sup>20</sup> In 1913, Carleton Brown discovered several manuscripts by Chester in the Salusbury family archives. I discuss the implications of his research in this chapter's concluding section.

<sup>21</sup> While the phoenix was an enormously popular subject in Elizabethan England, Chester apparently invented the "phoenix and turtle" trope. According to Chester's mythology, the fabled phoenix falls in love, unprecedentedly, with a mortal turtle dove, who then joins the phoenix in a sacrificial fire. The poems in *Love's Martyr* signed by Chapman, Jonson, Marston, and Shakespeare indicate familiarity not only with Chester's novel formulation but also with a critically engaged response to it and to the ways in which the other poems execute contrary or intersecting visions of the phoenix's newfound symbolic possibilities for romantic love, death, rebirth, and futurity. See William Matchett's widely-cited 1965 close reading of *Love's Martyr: The Phoenix and Turtle: Shakespeare's Poem and Chester's Loues Martyr* for more on the collaborative and intertextual aspects of *Love's Martyr*; see also James Bednarz's 2012 study, *Shakespeare and the Truth of Love: The Mystery of 'The Phoenix and Turtle.'*

they suggest that each poet must have read some version of the volume draft before publication, as evidenced by the responses they make to each other and by the fact that each ascribes (either with seeming compliance, ironic indifference, or paradoxical acceptance that results in rejection, as in Shakespeare's case) to Chester's conceit. On the other hand, as Knight alone was at pains to demonstrate in 1955, throughout the "Cantos" section of Chester's work, one can discern patterns of language that are strikingly *un*-Chesterian in style. Neglected and sometimes mocked in its time,<sup>22</sup> Knight's study suggests provocatively that Shakespeare "doctored" (174) significant portions of text signed by Chester.<sup>23</sup>

In an attempt to elucidate conversational and collaborative practices occurring in *Love's Martyr*, this chapter applies hierarchical cladistic analysis, a method of representing varying levels of similarity among groups of data that can be classified as distinct from one another, to the volume.<sup>24</sup> In doing so I resurrect claims in Knight's study and highlight issues raised by scholars concerned with the potentially intersecting authorships of the volume's unattributed works, those signed "Vatum Chorus" and "Ignoto," with which the "Poetical Essays" commence. The findings of this study show that Shakespeare may, in fact, have had a hand in collaborating

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<sup>22</sup> The critical attitude toward Knight's book on *Love's Martyr* and the sonnets, *The Mutual Flame* (1955), may be typified by the remarks of Matchett: "Being unfair to [Knight] is frequently unavoidable, as others have discovered" (128).

<sup>23</sup> Knight alone among serious Shakespeare scholars has made such a strong claim, but he is not the first to have suggested Shakespeare's involvement in the overall effort. Grosart, in his edition of the text, notes in his introduction "I think I can detect in some of [Chester's] lines a reflex or resemblance of the rhythm of Shakespeare's lines" (lxvii); his annotations throughout the volume also demonstrate stylistic similarities between verse in *Love's Martyr* and verse by Shakespeare. C. Knox Pooler's 1911 *Arden* edition of Shakespeare's poems also speculates on the matter (xcii). The particulars of Knight's analysis will be taken up in a later section of this chapter.

<sup>24</sup> Until recently, the vast majority of research involving cladistic analysis has focused on biological taxonomies; to this day, the *OED* defines "cladistics" as the "systematic classification of groups of organisms on the basis of shared characteristics thought to derive from a common ancestor. Also, the study of the branching of evolutionary lines of descent and the relationship between branches." Contemporary cladistic analysis originates principally from German entomologist Willi Henning's work on phylogenetic systematics; other important studies making use of cladistics include Cavalli-Sforza's decades-long work on population structures (1974-1994), which yielded his controversial dendrogram of population dispersals. The relatively recent application of cladistic methodology to textual domains is explicated in full in Appendix C, "*Love's Martyr's* Digital Data."

with Chester in certain parts of this volume; interestingly, these sections are themselves structured as “conversations” between the Phoenix and Nature, or between the Phoenix and the Turtle. Moreover, my findings suggest that the unattributed works were more likely composed by Ben Jonson than by any writer involved in the text’s production, even as certain historiographic and textual details resist this interpretation. Although this chapter does not submit “conclusive” data, it does claim that further and more sophisticated engagement with cladistic analysis and related methods may prove fruitful in assessing *Love’s Martyr’s* collaborative and conversational features. In short, this study’s stylometric findings give credence to earlier bibliographic analyses regarding editorial, collaborative, and conversational practices in *Love’s Martyr* and suggests that cladistic methodology may provide a sound basis for testing stylistic claims.

### Digital Methodology

It is worth emphasizing that the goal of this chapter is *not* to linger over attribution issues *per se*, but to foreground cladistic analysis as a quantitative methodology for engaging collaborative and conversational dynamics that in turn reveal the presence of *Love’s Martyr’s* virtual structures. Admittedly, it is disingenuous to claim that such an approach is not concerned with attribution. In order to discuss the ways in which conversation and collaboration might occur in a text as strangely palimpsested as *Love’s Martyr*, one must first locate *stylistically stable sites* within the text and, using more traditional investigative approaches, make attempts to map these patterns onto authors, of whom we can then speak as potential collaborators / conversationalists. As I will demonstrate, the process outlined above is, in essence, what cladistic analysis provides to scholars who are interested in using quantitative methods in conjunction

with textual, archival, historiographic, and other forms of data.

Given this caveat, it is worth pausing to note what is at work when one attempts to graft an authorial “hand” onto such data, whether tabulated by persons or produced by computers. Long before computer-assisted stylometrics, generations of scholars turned to stylistic and terminological patterns in the attributed and contested works of Shakespeare to address the contentious “authorship question.” The first to do so was likely one Richard Roderick, whose 1758 “Remarks on Shakespear” called into question the authorship of *Henry VIII* by observing metrical, stylistic, and tonal inconsistencies that occur in the play.<sup>25</sup> Recent studies by MacDonald P. Jackson, T. H. Howard-Hill, Lukas Erne, John Jowett, and David Scott Kastan have drawn attention to the various factors in play when one seeks to map authorial presence in contested early modern works.<sup>26</sup> Jowett’s watershed 2011 Arden edition of *Sir Thomas More*, which synthesizes traditional and stylometric methods to establish Shakespearean authorship for Hand D, serves as a representative approach for contemporary scholarship in attribution studies. Jowett summons R.W. Chambers to argue that “verbal associations” and “turns of phrase” in Hand D are so “distinctively Shakespearean” that, in Chambers’ words, it “becomes absurd to speak of fortuitous combinations” (*More* 19). Jowett also notes the importance of thematic context as well as attitude, or the author’s approach toward “doctrinal issues” when assessing the status of Hand D. In the text’s appendix, Jowett takes a more objective stance, establishing criteria by which “the hand” of Shakespeare might be identifiable; to paraphrase, these factors include handwriting, spelling, vocabulary, collocations, and idioms (*More* 437-453). Drawing upon studies by MacDonald P. Jackson, Ward Elliot, and Robert Valenza, Jowett’s conclusions

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<sup>25</sup> See Brian Vickers’ *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays*, which contains a discussion of Roderick’s findings (333-5).

<sup>26</sup> Representative studies appear in the bibliography.

rest, in large measure, on the strength of terminological associations between Hand D and other works by Shakespeare. Jowett's approach seems to have gained broad acceptance in attribution studies. Given the widely-accepted notion that poets and playwrights in early modern England frequently invented words to suit particular needs, twentieth and twenty-first century philologists have tended to focus more exclusively on vocabulary frequency and distribution as key indicators of authorship.<sup>27</sup> Building upon the work of such scholars, this chapter advances its argument and methods from the increasingly uncontroversial presumption that there is a bridge between the stylistic and terminological decisions authors make and authors themselves.

Despite the growing body of serious work in the field of early modern stylometric analysis, scholars engaging in attribution studies of early modern works – particularly if Shakespeare is involved – may face skepticism or accusations of bardolatry, or be perceived to be doing “fringe scholarship.”<sup>28</sup> Referring to ongoing controversies over *More*, T. H. Howard-Hill notes, “The discrepancy of the results of stylistic studies and critical judgment tends to bring only the first into disrepute, for whereas critical evaluations of the merits of a composition depend ultimately on critical taste and experience, the ‘scientific’ methods of stylometrics are discredited when stylometrists disagree on particular issues or their methods are not understood by critics” (4). Moreover, despite a resurgence of interest in the notion that early modern poets and playwrights engaged in near-continuous collaborative production, many early modern scholars continue to resist the notion that computational methods may elucidate questions of

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<sup>27</sup> Studies methodologically as far-ranging as Bonnard's “Shakespeare's Contribution to R. Chester's *Loves Martyr*” and Vickers' *Shakespeare, Co-Author* and “Incomplete Shakespeare: Or, Denying Coauthorship in ‘1 Henry VI’” make the case.

<sup>28</sup> “Shakespeare,” of course, continues to attract an unusual range and density of what may be best regarded as “pseudo-scholarship.” Emphatically, this project departs from dubious studies that attempt to suggest some person other than Shakespeare composed what are generally regarded to be Shakespeare's works. Rather, this study aligns itself with the work of noted computational Shakespeare scholars such as Brian Vickers and Marina Tarlinskaja, both of whom resist the skeptical tendency while still producing rigorous scholarship that has appeared in journals such as *Shakespeare Quarterly*.



potentially-intersecting authorships, settle disputes regarding collaborative or conversational processes, or raise new questions regarding authorial style, editing practices, and collaborative modes based on data that is retrieved. As Brian Vickers notes:

To understand the situation of the Elizabethan dramatist we need to project ourselves back in to the Renaissance, when a very different mode of artistic production was recognized . . . Against the Romantic notion of individual inspiration, free of any financial considerations, *we need to conceive of an artifact produced by a work-sharing process, in which certain elements of the composition are delegated to other hands under the supervision of the master craftsman.* (Vickers, “Incomplete Shakespeare,” 312, my emphasis)

The italicized segment of Vickers’ quote draws explicit attention to the type of problem this chapter is attempting to limn. Commissioned by Sir John Salusbury, himself a poet of minor stature; printed by Edward Blount, perhaps the most esteemed publisher of his day; and “supplemented” with cryptic yet often dazzling poems by the several of the most prominent literary figures of the early seventeenth century, *Love’s Martyr* is, on more levels than can be treated in this chapter, a thoroughly collaborative text teeming with contradictions. What makes *Love’s Martyr* unique among texts attributed to any of these figures is that the “work-sharing process” was supervised not by a “master craftsman,” but by the mysterious Robert Chester, who never published another work in his entire life. Scholars have long speculated as to why and under what terms the literary stars Chester enlisted could justify appending their names and contributions to an often ineptly-handled work like “Love’s Martyr.” Following statistical analysis of the text, I now have a hypothesis as to how this might have happened. The theory is in line with intuitions made by Knight nearly sixty years ago:

In his dedication to Sir John Salusbury, Chester speaks of his “long-expected labour” as having been completed “according to the directions of some of my best-minded friends.” Shakespeare may have been one of them; or, if not, the necessity of revision may have been so obvious to the various poets lending their names to the publication that Shakespeare was asked to do some final polishing, and, once started, he might not have known where to stop. (176)

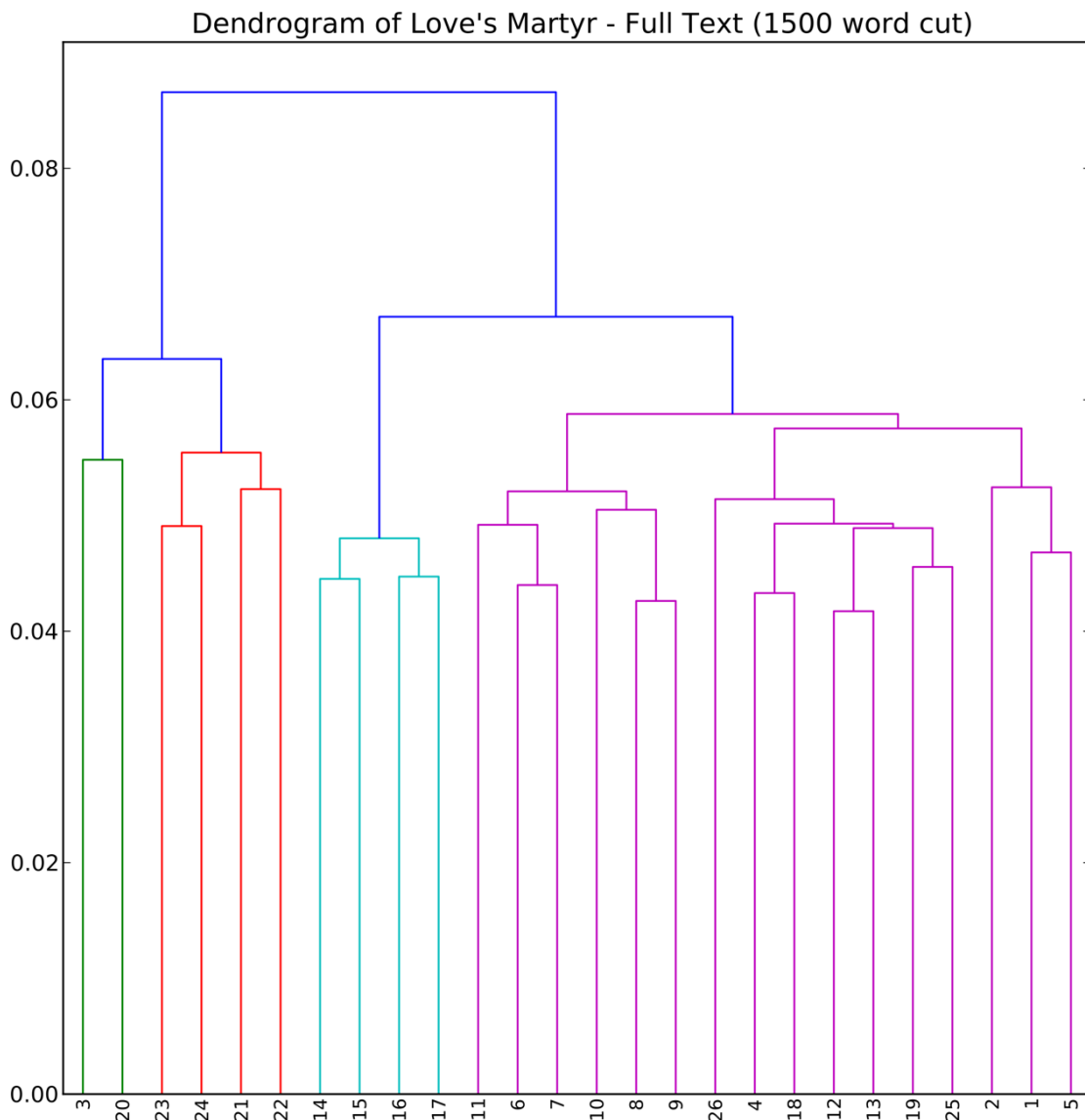
Critics of Knight’s time were correct to dismiss this claim as pure speculation. Today, one may still find innumerable grounds to dismiss the claim. Even so, cladistic analysis of *Love’s Martyr* demonstrates that its “work-sharing process” was, on a stylistic if not authorial level, lopsided and highly irregular. To be sure, the person or persons who composed the long and often baffling hodgepodge of poems known as “Love’s Martyr” does not possess a stable or unified authorial style. As will be discussed, the possibility of authorial intervention in the larger project is only amplified by the fact that it had something of a public afterlife, as evidenced by lines from the unattributed poems referenced in Marston’s *What You Will* (1601), wherein the language is used to mock his rival’s vocabulary choices and poetic taste. In yet another bizarre twist, this obscure coterie pamphlet then rears its head in the most public theatrical debate of the time, at the very crest of the so-called Poets’ War.<sup>29</sup>

While complete findings from this project are available either in interactive form at <http://shakespeareeditor.weebly.com> or in Appendix C, “*Love’s Martyr’s* Digital Data,” I provide a summary of the data and accompanying methodology in the following pages. This

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<sup>29</sup> The fact that *What You Will* did not get staged until 1607 is a separate matter, one of ongoing scholarly debate, yet bears noting in the context of this discussion.

graph represents, to my knowledge, the first attempt at a stylometric analysis of *Love's Martyr*.<sup>30</sup>



**Figure 4. Dendrogram of *Love's Martyr***

The dendrogram is partitioned into segments of 1500 words, yielding 25 segments of 1500 words and one final segment of 1381 words. Therefore, the segments do not correspond to

<sup>30</sup> Completing a dendrogram of *Love's Martyr* in the Lexomics engine, which I use for several graphs, involved three steps. The first step involved “scrubbing” the text of all formatting and punctuation and replacing all capital letters with lower-case letters, noting potential confusions that may occur in this translation process.<sup>30</sup> The “scrubbed” text was then partitioned into boundaries of segments. Finally, the scrubbed, partitioned text was processed to produce the resulting dendrogram. Due to the complexity and size of the dendrograms in this study, Greek letters have not been applied; doing so would have compromised readability.

natural boundaries that appear within the text (i.e., divisions between poems known or said to have been written collaboratively, or poems known or said to have been written by particular authors). The rationale for approaching the text in this way was, quite simply, to see what the program would produce without breaking the pamphlet into boundaries, some of which may be too minute to trace using lexomic methods. Moreover, The lexomics group<sup>31</sup> generally uses the brute “cut at 1500 disregarding all boundaries” approach as a screening device, as it allows them to know where more careful arrangements of boundaries may be informative. As comparative data shows, the dendrogram corresponds felicitously with the most interesting natural boundaries that present in the text, thereby rendering the need for more refined (and possibly less useful) data unnecessary for the purposes of this project.

While I discuss this comparative data in detail in Appendix C, I focus here on here on what the dendrogram tells us about the text’s macro-level structures. The graph was read and interpreted from bottom to top, and comparisons were made between segments appearing in the dendrogram and natural boundaries occurring in *Love’s Martyr*. Segment 3, of particular interest, corresponds to pages 12 through 17 of the original volume, or 20 though 27 of Grosart’s edition, which many scholars continue to use for reference.<sup>32</sup> Segment 3 includes a prayer prefaced by a short poem titled “An Introduction to the Prayer,” the prayer itself, titled “A prayer made for the prosperitie of siluer coloured Doue, appyed to the beauteous Phoenix,” and a three-stanza poem written “to those of light beleefe.” Additionally, this segment contains the first fifteen stanzas of “A Dialogue” between Nature and the Phoenix, in which the despondent bird laments her “Beauty” as a “fading flower” (25), opines, “What is my Beautie but a painted wal” (24), and asks, “What is my Vertue but a Tablitorie: / Which if I did bestow would more increase? / What

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<sup>31</sup> See Appendix C for an overview of lexomic methods. See also <http://wheatoncollege.edu/lexomics>.

<sup>32</sup> For this reason, I refer throughout to Grosart’s pagination.

is my Wit but an inhumane glorie : / To that my kind deare friends would proffer peace?" (25). In response to these complaints, Nature wonders who "blots that Beauty with foule *Enuies* crime, / And locks thee vp in fond Suspicious cage?" (26), then threatens to "chaine foule *Enuy* to a brazen gate" so that the Phoenix may "catch the hot Sunne with thy steeled glasse" (26) and join her in the chariot to Paphos to greet the Turtle.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps importantly, segment 3 is our first "conversation" that appears in the text. The dialogue continues, albeit in greatly modified form, as the two board the chariot and observe the features of Britain over which they pass. The remainder of this dialogue, the content of which abruptly turns pedantic, comprises segments 4 and 5.

Following the dialogue, Chester's multi-genre narrative of the "Birth, Life, and Death of Honourable Arthur King of Brittain" (42) commences and proceeds for a significant portion of the volume (85). Next comes "A Dialogue" between the Phoenix and Nature, in which the two pontificate over the qualities of various plants, herbs, vegetables, trees, gemstones, and beasts. This continues at length until, at long last, the Phoenix is united with the disconsolate Turtledove at Paphos, the "Dialogue" suddenly turns impassioned (131), and the birds prepare for and enter the sacrificial fire (139). The event is followed by commentary first by the Pelican, observing the spectacle in a nearby bush, and then by Chester himself, offering his own signed commentary (139 - 142). Next, the "Cantos, Alphabet-wise," contained wholly in segment 20 of the dendrogram and therefore also of special interest, begin; following these are the "Cantos Verbally written" (149). These riddling love lyrics and acrostics, constructed as a conversation between the Phoenix and Turtle, continue through the conclusion of the Chester's signed narrative (149 - 175), whereupon we encounter the "Poetical Essays" (178 - 195), which close

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<sup>33</sup> It may go without saying that this language distinctly recalls the language of both the Sonnets and other early Shakespearean works; to these matters I will later return.

the project.

To summarize and clarify, the dendrogram's segments correspond to the text of *Love's Martyr* as follow. Highlighted segments denote those of particular interest.

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Segment 1: Prefatory matter, dedications; blazon of the Phoenix begins  
Segment 2: Blazon ends  
Segment 3: Prayers; first fifteen stanzas of "A Dialogue" between Nature and the Phoenix  
Segment 4: Dialogue turns to historical detail; annotations being to populate the margins<sup>34</sup>  
Segment 5: Dialogue turns to monologue; Nature instructs the Phoenix on world history  
Segment 6: The "Birth, Life, and Death of Honourable Arthur King of Brittain" begins  
Segment 7: "Arthur" continues  
Segment 8: "Arthur" continues  
Segment 9: "Arthur" continues  
Segment 10: "Arthur" continues  
Segment 11: "Arthur" ends  
Segment 12: "A Dialogue" between Nature and Phoenix begins; flowers, herbs discussed  
Segment 13: "A Dialogue" continues; herbs, "balmes," vegetables considered  
Segment 14: "A Dialogue" continues: plants, "rootes," trees, fruit  
Segment 15: "A Dialogue" continues: fish, gemstones, ores, spices  
Segment 16: "A Dialogue" continues: mammals, monsters, mythical beasts  
Segment 17: "A Dialogue" continues: insects, reptiles, birds  
Segment 18: Nature departs; Phoenix meets Turtle; their "Dialogue" begins  
Segment 19: "Dialogue" continues; the sacrifice is done; "Pellican" and Chester lament  
Segment 20: "Cantos, Alphabet-wise" begin and end  
Segment 21: "Cantos Verbally written" begin  
Segment 22: "Cantos Verbally written" continue  
Segment 23: "Cantos Verbally written" continue  
Segment 24: "Cantos Verbally written" end; Chester signs off  
Segment 25: "Poetical Essays" begin; unattributed poems; poems by Shakespeare, Marston  
Segment 26: "Poetical Essays" end; Chapman's poem; Jonson's poems

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**Figure 5. Text Diagram of *Love's Martyr***

One might assume that stylometric evidence would confirm what we already know while demonstrating something that we could not necessarily predict: that vocabulary frequencies in

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<sup>34</sup> Though the section is still titled "A Dialogue," very little in the way of conversation occurs in segments 4 and 5, and the tone changes dramatically; content turns to dry historical details; marginalia such as "England first diuided into Shires, being King of Northumbers" (34) and "Alfred buried in the Cathedrall Church of Winchester" (34) supplement the verse.

the “Poetical Essays” would distinguish them, cladistically, from the larger body of Chester’s poem and also, potentially, from each other. However, these poems are very short in length, the shortest (Chapman’s) a mere 225 words long, thereby presenting difficulties for macro-level analysis of the type attempted here.<sup>35</sup> As noted above, a significant portion of the “Poetical Essays” fall into segment 26, the final “chunk” of text in the pamphlet, which appears in the middle of the right-hand clade, distinguished from all other end-of-text chunks that precede it. Given current software limitations, it is not uncommon for the final segment of a text to behave erratically. Further inquiry into segment 26 and all supplementary verse therefore requires a more focused analysis, the data and implications of which will be assessed in the final pages of this chapter.

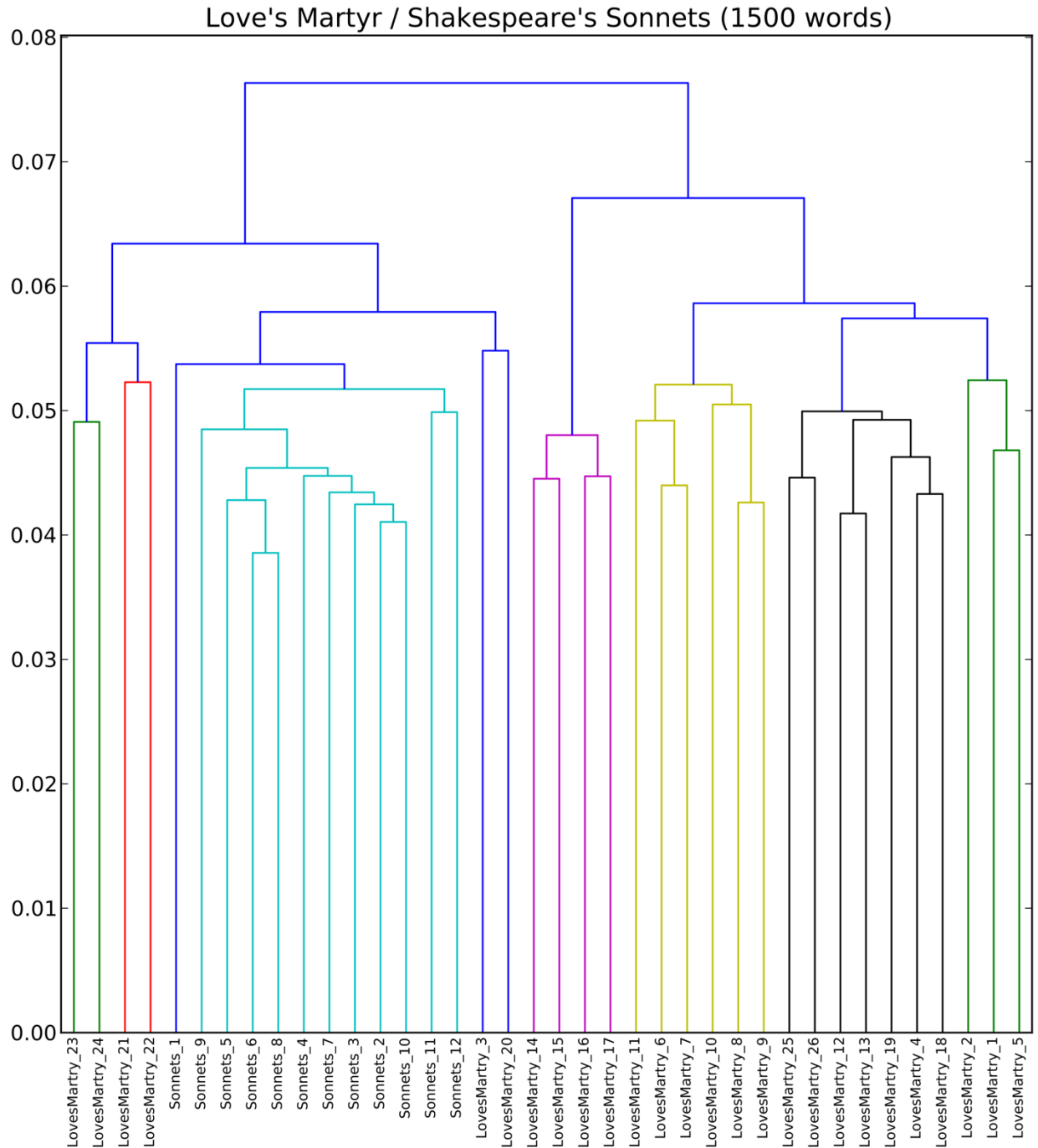
The second step toward making meaningful use of the data required testing the cladistic structures of *Love’s Martyr* against representative works by authors known to have contributed to the volume. 1500-word brute dendrograms demonstrating levels of similarity and difference between *Love’s Martyr* and Chapman’s *All Fools*, Marston’s *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio’s Revenge*, Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair* and *Every Man out of His Humour*, and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and the Sonnets were produced.<sup>36</sup> In every instance but two—*Romeo and Juliet* and Sonnets—the data produced remarkably similar structures, as typified by the dendrogram containing *Love’s Martyr*, *Antonio and Mellida*, and *Antonio’s Revenge* (See Figure 14). Both *Romeo and Juliet* (See Figure 16) and Sonnets (below) produced results that support

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<sup>35</sup> Given the unusual thematic specificity of *Love’s Martyr*, one might expect to see a cluster of terms associated with the phoenix myth (various bird species and metaphysical, Platonic, or scholastic language, for example) appear in all or most of the appended poems. Thus, it is not entirely surprising that the lexomic toolset has clustered the appended poems together, though this does not explain why Chester’s poem, which also uses such terms, and such language, appears so remarkably dissimilar in the dendrogram.

<sup>36</sup> Texts were selected based on appropriateness to the project’s goals and accessibility to works containing original spellings. The majority of texts were extracted through *EEBO*; in certain cases, textual gaps were filled based on archival material accessed directly at the Folger Shakespeare Library and through the Titania database. Folio versions of Shakespeare’s plays were used.

G. Wilson Knight's theory regarding Shakespearean editing or "doctoring" in the Cantos, which appear in Segments 21-24:



**Figure 6. Dendrogram of *Love's Martyr* and the Sonnets**

In this dendrogram, segments 20-24 and segment 3 fall into the same large clade with the



known Shakespearean text, therefore signifying as “more similar” to this work than to the bulk of work signed by Chester. Moreover, the bifolious clade containing segments 3 and 20, which returns conjoined in every test, appears even closer in kind to the material of the Sonnets than it does to the material that appears in segments 21-24 of *Love’s Martyr*.

Collectively, these results suggest, above all, either that someone other than Chapman, Martson, Jonson, or Shakespeare wrote the majority of *Love’s Martyr*, or that a collection of persons did; to be sure, the data reveals that the poem known as “Love’s Martyr” simply cannot be the work of a single stylistic (and hence, perhaps, authorial) presence. Moreover, the data also indicates that segments 3, 20, and 21-24—a significant portion of material for a volume of this size—are distinguished completely and consistently from everything else in *Love’s Martyr*. Finally, data reveals that no contributor to *Love’s Martyr* other than Shakespeare likely had a significant hand in writing or editing material that appears in these segments. We can say conclusively that specific portions of *Love’s Martyr* (3, 20, 21-24) are stylistically more consistent with *Romeo and Juliet* and the Sonnets—but interestingly, not *Hamlet*—than with any other segments of text in the volume, including those segments of texts containing the collected poems written by Chapman, Marston, Jonson, and Shakespeare himself.

The graphs prompt at least two obvious questions. First, what is distinctive about the text contained in those segments? Second, how might one account for stylistic similarities that appear between those segments and the sampled Shakespearean texts, when *Hamlet*, written at approximately the same time as *Love’s Martyr*, does not betray any similarities?

### *Love's Martyr's* "Cantos"

In asking the foregoing questions, it may be fortuitous to pause and recall the means by which a theory of virtual authorship foregrounds the data we have before us. Upon encountering these "graphs, maps, and trees"<sup>39</sup> we may be tempted to regard them as immutable statements of fact; cold, unkind, even patriarchal. To some extent, quantitative modes of research may always yield impressions like these, even to digital practitioners who work with quantitative tools and forms of articulation and output. However, when approaching these data through the lens of polychronic matter—by regarding them, quite literally, as virtual manifestations of originary textual bodies to which they have come in contact, and from which they have subsequently massaged information regarding structural and stylistic corporations—we may be better prepared to regard these diagrams as something other than crude interpretations of the texts to which they refer. Rather, recognizing that these graphics are indeed *representations* of this very content, we may also regard them with a sense of wonder. For in addition to whatever practical knowledge may be gleaned from these diagrams, they likewise present us with a virtual image, a distortion or pixilation of an event in time that has been instantaneously destabilized.<sup>37</sup>

As noted, segments 20-24 comprise the "Cantos, Alphabet-wise" of *Love's Martyr*, a long and often riddling dialogue between the Phoenix and Turtle; segment 20 contains "Cantos Verbally written." While Knight was not the first scholar to notice "Shakespearean reminiscences" (171) in these pages, he was the first to mount a case that Shakespeare "may, indeed, have written, or doctored" the "Cantos" (174). Knight amounts pages of comparative evidence. Below is one excerpt, representative of his attunement to thematic patterns, collocations, and idioms in the Shakespearean canon:

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<sup>37</sup> Some of this text has been adapted from "Visualizing Textual Data," which was posted to Harvard's metaLAB blog in December of 2015.

With ‘map of sorrow’ (125 / 133) and ‘great map of beauty’ (136 / 144), both applied to a person’s outward appearance, compare ‘Thus is his cheek the map of days outworn’ in Sonnet 68 and ‘thou map of honour’ at *Richard II*, V, i, 12; with ‘Fall thou a tear’ (125 / 133) compare Antony’s ‘Fall not a tear’ at *Antony and Cleopatra*, III, ix, 69. Phoenix’ breasts as ‘two crystal orbs of whitest white’ (4 / 12) recall the ‘ivory globes’ of *The Rape of Lucrece*, 407. ‘Thoughts are his heralds, flying to my breast’ (151 / 159) recalls Juliet’s ‘Love’s heralds should be thoughts,’ and ‘Shame is ashamed to thee obstinate’ (139 / 147) recalls ‘Upon his brow shame is ashamed to sit,’ at *Romeo and Juliet*, II, V, 4 and III, ii, 92. ‘Quite captivate and prisoner at thy call’ (138 / 146) parallels ‘Leading him prisoner in a red-rose chain’ at *Venus and Adonis*, 110, and the ‘liquid prisoner pent in glass’ of Sonnet 5. With ‘my love-lays in my love’s praise always written’ (143 / 151) compare Sonnet 76, especially ‘you and love are still my argument’; also Sonnet 108. With ‘singing thy pride of beauty in her height’ in Sonnet 16, and also ‘this golden time’ and ‘crowning the present’ in Sonnets 3 and 115. ‘To thy sweet self’ (139 / 147) reminds us of ‘sweet self’ in Sonnet 144 and ‘as thy sweet self grow’st’ in Sonnet 126. (171-172)

Such comparisons continue for pages. Here and elsewhere, references to the Sonnets and to early Shakespearean tragedies dominate discussion. Knight discerns not only terminological, stylistic, and metrical similarities between the “Cantos” and these works but also thematic similarities. As Knight points out, themes that course through the Sonnets appear throughout the “Cantos”; the poet’s preoccupation with the fair youth’s transient beauty, his reputation, and the attention he receives from competitors are recalled, often vividly, in *Love’s Martyr* dialogues

between the Phoenix and Turtle. One representative example, cited and modernized by Knight, appears in segment 21 of the dendrogram:

My care to have my blooming rose not wither,  
Self-loving envy shall it not deny,  
And that base weed thy growth doth seek to hinder,  
Mine hands shall pull him up immediately.  
Are they not envious monsters in thine eye,  
Always with vain occasions to enclose  
Thine ever-growing beauty, like the rose? (153-154)

As Knight opines, “the thoughts and impressions,” here and throughout the “Cantos,” “continually suggest the theme of Shakespeare’s sonnets” (174). He provides further evidence: “phrases such as ‘the fresh bloom’d rose within her pride (137 / 145) and ‘singing thy pride of beauty in her height’ (139 / 147), recalling the ‘youth’s livery so gaz’d on now’ of Sonnet 2, are more obviously applicable to a youth whose charm is evanescent than to a lady whose beauty might be supposed to grow from strength to strength” (174). In this very section of the dialogue, we also see the line: “Look, Phoenix, to thyself do not decay” (145); the Phoenix of these lines is, Knight notes, “a rose which, if not gathered at the time of ‘chiefest beauty’, will be thereafter neglected” (174). It is difficult to disagree that the style and sensibility is thoroughly early Shakespeare.

At this juncture it bears stressing that a significant number of observations made by Knight as “Shakespearean” appear in segments 3, 20, or 21-24 of *Love’s Martyr* – those very chunks of text that appear “as” or “more” similar in kind to *Romeo and Juliet* and the Sonnets than to other passages contained within *Love’s Martyr*.

Stylometric and textual data suggest several possibilities. First, it is conceivable, as Knight argued, that Shakespeare edited or altogether composed certain parts of the “Cantos.” Thus, a collaborative or conversational authorial dimension may be mapped on to the “Cantos,” which, as mentioned, is formally structured as a “conversation” between the two birds, and two lovers at that. At this point, we may be at a closer point in explaining why *Hamlet* does not fit the same stylistic pattern established by *Romeo and Juliet* and the Sonnets. First, as Jowett urges in his study of *More*, one must consider matters of theme, content, and context when assessing authorial style. Like *Romeo and Juliet* and the Sonnets, *Love’s Martyr’s* “Cantos” are dominated by the voices of ardent, argumentative, risk-taking lovers. There is little in the way of protracted philosophical meditation; thought generally turns to erotic tension and the potential chaos that may be unleashed. While *Hamlet* certainly pulls on these strings, it is more of a revenge tragedy than a love story, so it is not surprising that it shares little, stylistically, with a work such as *Love’s Martyr*; for that matter, common sense tells us that it shares little in common with either *Romeo and Juliet* or the Sonnets. Alternatively, the data may indicate that Chester, perhaps even John Salusbury, might have learned a few “rare words” or Shakespearean turns of phrase and made editorial changes reflecting this knowledge; on this matter we can only speculate. At the very least, these findings demonstrate that such doctoring most certainly *did occur*, and that our master doctor did his work with a strikingly Shakespearean – and not Jonsonian, or Marstonian, or Chapmanian – sense of style, wit, and wordplay.

In short, segment 3 of *Love’s Martyr* and its “Cantos” (segments 20 – 24) demonstrate both consistent dissimilarity with the rest of the poem and consistent *similarity* with early Shakespearean works of drama and poetry. Joining Knight, then, one might reasonably conclude that Shakespeare collaborated with Chester in writing or editing these segments of *Love’s*

*Martyr*, or that someone masterfully doctored only those sections of the volume using strikingly Shakespearean language, style, thematic concerns, and metrical patterns. Again, given the quality of Chester's general work, it is doubtful that he could have been up to the job alone. Though further and more refined stylometric analysis of these segments will be needed to confirm suspicions raised by Knight and highlighted by this study, cladistic and textual data strongly suggest that the collaborative or conversational contract between Chester and Shakespeare extended far beyond the 330-word poem Shakespeare deposited at the very end of the volume.

In light of data that has been presented, the following bears emphasizing: Shakespeare, like the other poets, certainly read parts of "Love's Martyr" before composing his own poem, so *even if he did not* write or edit portions of the "Cantos," he likely would have noticed that the language in those sections was utterly dissimilar to language appearing in Chester's main narrative. In subsequently contributing his work and signing it, he gave his consent to the doctoring, lifting, or transplanting of ideas that most certainly took place. Shakespeare either made these edits himself, or he noticed that someone other than him doctored text to resemble his work. Thus, it is next to implausible to excuse the author's approbation, if not direct intervention and supervision, of the segments in question.

Might these undeniably "Shakespearean notes" in the text be one cause for the excision of Robert Chester's name from *Love's Martyr's* title page, and so too his dedication to John Salusbury, when the book was reprinted in 1611? Again, one can only speculate. Referring to religious attitudes that prevail over genial conversation among the diverse learned men in Bodin's *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*, Lesser and Robinson note, "If conversation announces certain social and political responsibilities, Bodin's text also reminds us of the limits of those possibilities . . . that conversation produces arrangements of social power and forms of exclusion"

(*Textual Conversations* 3). While the nature of both the “conversations” and the “work-sharing process” between Chester and Shakespeare may remain a mystery, the findings of this study suggest that these processes occurred, and that they resulted in outcomes we can now measure with degrees of healthy skepticism.

### The Poetical Essays

The question of who authored the poems signed “Vatum Chorus” and “Ignoto,” which introduce *Love’s Martyr’s* “Poetical Essays,” has occupied some Jonson and Marston scholars as well as those generally interested in the Poets’ War.<sup>38</sup> Following a close study of these poems alongside various dramatic works by Jonson and Marston, Charles Cathcart concludes that the “various features of the ‘Vatum Chorus’ poems, of the ‘Essays’ themselves, and of independent writings by Jonson and of Martson, consistently implicate the two poems in the pair’s rivalry” (28). At the same time, Cathcart notes that “each item of evidence” to which he has drawn attention “potentially admits of the theory that either one of the poets was responsible for their composition”; that is, “the same items of evidence seem jointly to indicate two possible conclusions” (28). Cathcart concludes that his evidence “hardly [supports] the possibility that the collective designation” was “consecrated ‘by them all generally,’” as is advertised in the title page of the “Essays.” In other words, according to Cathcart, one and only one author, whoever he was, likely composed those poems. Given the totality of data and other forms of evidence that can be extracted from the final pages of *Love’s Martyr*, I challenge Cathcart’s conclusion. While, as noted, data will show that Ben Jonson is the most likely composer for the unsigned poems, compelling evidence likewise implies a collaborative aspect to the text that has yet to be

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<sup>38</sup> See especially Cathcart (2008), Jackson and Neil’s *The Selected Plays of John Martston* (1986), and James Bednarz’s *Shakespeare and the Poet’s War* (2001).

confronted.

Context on *Love's Martyr's* unlikely role in the rivalry between Marston and Jonson will be useful before providing data on the speculated material. Cathcart rightly demonstrates that verse from the dedication to Salusbury in the "Essays" appears as a collocation in *What You Will*, where the language is satirized and inserted into the mouth of Lampatho Doria, who has been generally accepted to represent Jonson. In Act Four, Lampatho performs a series of overwrought lines before a group of bystanders; while performing, Quadratus comments upon the quality of his verse and draws particular attention to the line, "if thou canst taste the purer juice of love." Here Quadratus interrupts Lampatho and proceeds to humiliate him:

Quadratus: 'If thou canst taste the purer juice'; good still, good still. I do relish it, it tastes sweet.

Lampatho: Is not the metaphor good, is't not well followed?

Quadratus: Passing good, very pleasing.

Lampatho: Is't not sweet?

Quadratus: Let me see't. I'll make it sweet:

I'll soak it in the juice of Helicon.

[Thrusts the sonnet into his wine.] (1539 - 45)

As Cathcart points out, the line is a near precise collocation taken from the dedication to Salusbury in the "Essays":

Noblest of minds, here do the Muses bring

Unto your safer judgments taste,

Pure juice that flow'd from the Pierian Springs. (180)

The ensuing lines all but confirm, in Cathcart's words, "that Marston opens the poem to a public



reproof within his comedy” (21). Following the exchange, Lampatho claims, “I’ll be reveng’d”; Quadratus responds, “How prithe? in a play?” (1555). At first glance, the logic here seems to point to a clear end: Marston, mocking Jonson in these lines, seems also to be mocking lines Jonson is likely to have composed, perhaps even wishing to “expose” him as the author of the bombastic verse that opens the “Poetical Essays.” In making this move, Marston may be distancing himself from *Love’s Martyr’s* collaborative dimensions and from the vehicle itself, thereby implicitly drawing attention to his role as sole author of two very specific poems in the volume. If one follows this line, Jonson is, of the two, the likely author of the unattributed poems. The second possibility, posited by MacDonald P. Jackson and Michael Neil, neither precludes Marston’s involvement nor casts Lampatho as a mere stand in for Jonson; rather, it posits Lampatho as a “teasing anamorphic double-portrait” (*Selected Plays* xiv).<sup>39</sup> Following this line, one might concede that in *What You Will*, Marston is mocking himself, and perhaps the entire poet’s “conflict,” in these lines.

I want to suggest that Marston’s “anamorphic double-portrait” and the consequences it entails suggest a feature of early modern literature whereby authorship functions as a site of projection and play into multiple literary spheres and attendant publics. From a coterie pamphlet like *Love’s Martyr* to the most public of poetic debates, lines of early modern verse became mobile; and as these lines exchanged hands and purposes, they carried with them the “essences” of the poets and playwrights to which they referred. The form of play Marston engages presupposes the notion that one’s ontology is bound up in one’s writing such that the appropriation of one’s writing, even in bits and parts, might constitute a kind of defamation.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *The Selected Plays of John Marston*, ed. Jackson and Neil (1986).

<sup>40</sup> See Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern’s *Shakespeare in Parts* (2007). Additionally, as Margreta de Grazia, Peter Stallybrass, and Jeffrey Todd Knight have demonstrated, early modern texts were malleable objects understood to

Such play suggests that a unified conception of one's character might be extracted and passed along into other forms of textual personae. I call this feature of early modern authorship "virtual" because it presupposes that people, while ontologically discrete in time and place, may exist elsewhere, serve other purposes, be dressed in new clothes; may, in short, engage in forms of textual telepresence. The logic according to which the offending, unattributed line in *Love's Martyr* ended up in Lampatho *qua* Jonson's mouth thus complicates Joseph Loewenstein's theory of possessive authorship, according to which authors become increasingly stressed by proprietary claims over intellectual property. It suggests, rather, a conception of authorship, and of selfhood generally, that *can itself be possessed*. Such an authorship seems to acquire multiple lives existing in multiple overlapping spheres, each with distinct political and aesthetic valences that can be captured, repurposed, and indeed "played" by others.

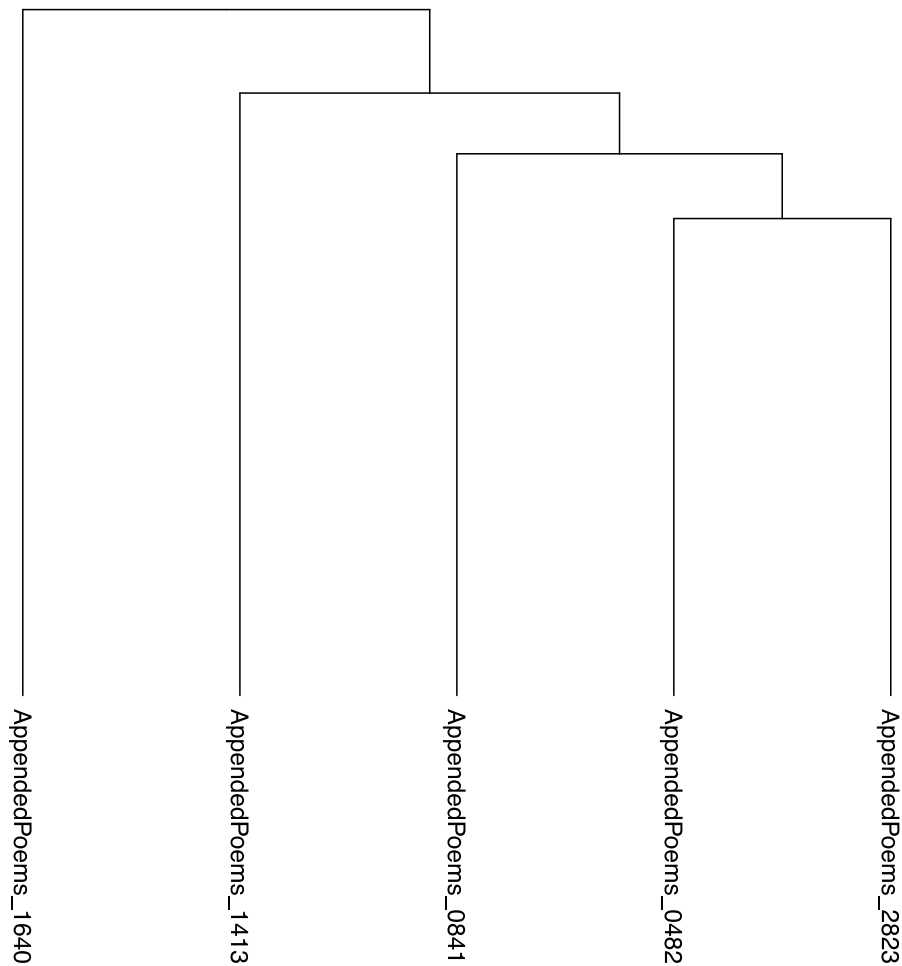
Focusing on Jonson's contributions to *Love's Martyr*, C.H. Herford Percy and Evelyn Simpson lend credence to the view that *Love's Martyr* may function as a site of coterie heterocosm. They point out that Jonson's first signed contribution to the "Essays," his "Praeludium," begins with an extended invocation that contradicts the rhetoric appearing in the unattributed works. In "Praeludium," he categorically rejects the assistance of all muses, exclaiming, "No, we bring / Our owne true Fire; Now our Thought takes wing / And now an Epode to deep eares we sing" (190). Why, the reasoning goes, would Jonson have written two opposing invocations, one ecstatically drawing upon the muses and the other firmly yet dispassionately rejecting them? Cathcart suggests that the clash may suggest "two divergent but independent attitudes" that stem from Jonson's "wish to dissociate himself from an 'Invocatio' in

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exist in component, even interchangeable, parts, resembling only superficially the ontologically discrete objects we regard today as "books." See J.T. Knight's "Making Shakespeare's Books: Assembly and Intertextuality in the Archives" and de Grazia and Stallybrass's "The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text."

the composition of which he had no part, which he deplored, and with the demerits of which he was unwillingly implicated through the claim that the poem was a collective one” (24). Cathcart amasses a wealth of additional terminological, technical, and personal details, including extensive evidence from *Poetaster* and other works, that variously favor Jonsonian or Marstonian authorship (16-34). Oddly, though, he argues against the notion that the poems might have been written collaboratively; his insistence that “the same items of evidence seem jointly to indicate two possible conclusions” precludes “a plural composition for the two poems” (28) does not, in my estimation, follow necessarily from the wealth of impressive evidence he gathers.

These debates and matters aside, cladistic analysis of the “Poetical Essays” does, in fact, provide strong evidence for Jonsonian authorship of the unattributed verse. Figure 7 is a dendrogram of the appended poems cut precisely at natural boundaries in the text. Numbers below leaves refer to the last counted word in the excerpted segment. Segment 0482 refers to the 482-word section of text that includes “Vatum Chorus,” “Ignoto,” and the prefatory material, which appears at the beginning of the appended section; this is followed by segment 0841, Shakespeare’s “The Phoenix and Turtle”; segment 1413 contains Marston’s poems, the first of which responds directly to Shakespeare’s; next is segment 1640, containing Chapman’s sole contribution; and finally, in segment 2823, the largest of them all, are Jonson’s poems.



**Figure 7. Dendrogram of *Love's Martyr's* "Poetical Essays"**

The clade containing segments 2823 (Jonson's work) and 0482 ("Vatum Chorus" and "Ignoto") suggests strong similarity between these two excerpts. Interestingly, the dendrogram also demonstrates that stylistic features in 1640 (Marston's work) render this segment least similar to the clade containing 2823 and 0482. In other words, cladistic analysis tells us that of all the poets whose works appear in the "Poetical Essays," Marston was the *least* likely to have composed the unsigned works. The data suggests, in short, that Jonson more likely than not composed the "Vatum Chorus" and "Ignoto" sections entirely. This finding would be in keeping with Jonson's reputation for seeking control over works signed in his name, even if that work is

signed “anonymously.” Speaking of an altogether different text and community of collaborators, Vickers tellingly notes, “When [Jonson] came to publish *Sejanus*, he took the extraordinary step of rewriting his coauthor’s scenes, adding this haughty tone to his address ‘To the Readers’:  
‘Lastly I would informe you, that this Booke, in all numbers, is not the same with that which was acted on the publicke Stage, wherein a second Pen had good share: in place of which I haue rather chosen, to put weaker (and no doubt lesse pleasing) of mine own, then to defraud so happy a Genius of his right, by my loathed vsurpation’” (Vickers, “Incomplete” 317). While other methods of stylometric analysis should be performed to confirm suspicions raised by the dendrogram, the data reveals a pattern in *Love’s Martyr* that may appear in other works over which Jonson had authorial or editorial control.

There is one caveat to add to this finding, which to my knowledge has yet to be discussed in authorial debates regarding either the “Vatum Chorus” or “Ignoto” texts. As Jowett discusses at length in his edition of *More*, spellings in early modern English texts often vary tremendously from author to author; he notes that Shakespeare tended to favor peculiar spellings for certain words, and that such idiosyncrasies must be regarded as part of a whole when assessing stylistic (and, therefore, authorial) patterns, even when it comes down to a single word. In Jonson’s final poem, his “Ode,” he describes “Iudgement,” personified female, as “Cleare as a naked vestal / Closde in an orbe of Christall” (195); however, in the “Invocatio” signed “Vatum Chorus,” the “silver Morne,” also personified female, is described as having a “Chrystall presence” (179). An *EEBO* search on Jonson and all variants of the word “christall” show that never in his career did he choose the spelling that appears in the Invocation; never once any variation of “crystal” with a “y.”<sup>41</sup> Likewise, a search for Marston and the term returned no results. Yet, throughout *Love’s*

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<sup>41</sup> The speculative nature of this approach cannot be underscored enough. It must be noted, first, that I do not consider the entirety of Jonson’s work in manuscript, which would require additional archival research. Second, it is

*Martyr*, variants of the word “Christall,” “Cristall,” “Chrystall,” or “Crystal” appear twelve times, and of these, seven times the “y” form is chosen. I performed a search on *EEBO* of the term in all texts from 1595 through 1623 (so as to include the first folio) to see if any meaningful patterns would emerge. Overwhelmingly, “y”-spellings were contained to sermons, religious tracts, related moralistic texts, histories, and translations; a small minority of such spellings were associated with original dramatic or poetic works. Over the same period, a search for “i”-spellings returned not only a significantly larger number of hits and records (1322 hits versus 515; 534 records versus 190) but also a significantly greater number of results in categories of original prose and poetry.

Given these findings, it is statistically unusual that any work of non-religious poetry composed originally in English during this period would contain so many “y”-spellings. Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that the “y”-spellings are contained in clades we can safely distinguish from Shakespearean doctoring; they appear, respectively, in clades 1, 2, 4, 12, and 15. Could it be possible, after all, that our mysterious “master craftsman,” Robert Chester, also *collaborated with* “the best and chiefest of our moderne writers,” or at least with the stately Ben Jonson, family friend of the Salusburys, to produce the mawkish Invocation that does, indeed, sound Jonsonian in the most strained and affected sense? Might, then, Robert Chester *qua* Ben Jonson be the “anamorphic double portrait” Marston chose to mock in his play?

The few details we know about Robert Chester lend some credence to these speculations. In 1913, Carleton Brown challenged Grosart’s long-standing assessment that our “Robert Chester” was Robert Chester, Esq., of Royston, Hertfordshire. This judgment placed Chester on equal social footing with the volume’s patron. As countless scholars have noted, Chester’s

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not yet known if Jonson, unlike his contemporaries, was known to spell words consistently. My suggestions here therefore require additional research, which I intend to take on in future work.

deferential dedicatory tone severely compromises this position. Carleton's research, in any case, has given us a definitively different perspective on who Chester was. In the library of Christ Church, Oxford, two manuscripts that had once been in the possession of the Salusbury estate contained a number of poems, including several identified as the work of Salusbury and a "Robert Chester," whom Brown identifies, with excellent plausibility, as the Robert Chester of *Love's Martyr*. Brown published these poems in a short collection titled *Poems by Sir John Salusbury and Robert Chester* (1913), and in his preface, he gives a detailed history of the Salusbury family and a hypothesis regarding Chester's place in it. In light of evidence that has been amassed in this chapter on both "Love's Martyr" and the "Poetical Essays," Brown's position is as compelling now as ever it was. On the basis of both historical details and verse signed in Chester's name, Brown posits that Chester was not a social equal of Salusbury; to the contrary, Chester was close to the Salusbury family and likely served as the family chaplain. If, for reasons that have yet to be explored fully, "y"-spellings of words such as "Chrystall" correlate strongly with the writings of those preoccupied with religious and moralistic themes,<sup>42</sup> Chester's station as Salusbury's family chaplain seems only to support claims for his unexpected compositional or editorial intervention in the "Poetical Essays" supplement. Moreover: Chester's title page alleges that "Love's Martyr" was "*translated out of the venerable Italian Torquato Caeliano, by Robert Chester.*" While scholars have not been able to identify either the motives behind this strange and apparently made-up gesture, or the precise identity of this Italian poet,<sup>43</sup> it is worth noting that "y"-spellings identified during the period also correlate strongly

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<sup>42</sup> Might the association of "Christ" with "Christall" (and not "Chrystall") account for the statistical pattern?

<sup>43</sup> Focusing on *Love's Martyr's* paratextual material, James Bednarz joins previous scholars in speculating that "Torquato Caeliano" is likely a conflation of Torquato Tasso and Livio Caeliano. He suggests that this may have been "as an insider's jest, calculated to baffle general readers before the poet reveals his true identity as ["Love's Martyr's"] creator (not translator) in his dedication to Salusbury" (*Shakespeare and the Truth of Love* 46-47). While a sound enough explanation, one must wonder why a man such as Chester, with no literary reputation, would have

with works that are or claim to be translations.

The poems Brown unearthed in Chester's name, uniformly deferential to Salusbury, bear stylistic similarity with the typically pedestrian verse in the main narrative of "Love's Martyr."

Below is one such poem, modernized by Brown:

I charm the coldness to forsake my hand,  
I conjure up my spirits at this time.  
Good-meaning tells me he my friend with stand,  
To under-prop my tottering rotten rhyme;  
And I being arm'd with a presumptuous love,  
From my goodwill disdainfulness will shove:  
Therefore to thee, sole patron of my good,  
I proffer up the proffer of my heart,  
My underserved favours understood  
To thee and none but thee I will impart.  
O grace them with thy gracious gracing look  
That in pure kindness much have undertook. (Brown 15)

Dwelling upon these lines, Knight inquires, "How does the writer's paucity of vocabulary compare with the technical virtuosity of our Cantos? A note to 'kindness' tells us that it was crossed out in the manuscript; and so might have been. Peter Quince could have done as well" (175). Indeed – cladistic and all other forms of quantitative data aside – upon inspecting the entirety of the volume, it is difficult to disagree with Knight's damning but fair conclusion:

"Chester's poems in Carleton's Brown's collection are far weaker than John Salusbury's, and do

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been concerned with such a scheme, whose name in any case appears on the title page. Again, perhaps, the issue may circulate back to the "directions of his best-minded friends," whose names, Bednarz emphasizes, do not appear on the title page.



little to associate him with any of the best pieces of *Love's Martyr*" (174). It is difficult to imagine that the writer who composed the above lines also composed these below, which appear in clade 24, closely associated with the Sonnets:

Yet my soules life to my deare lifes concluding,  
Nere let Absurditie that villain, theefe,  
The monster of our time, mens praise deriding,  
Lesse in perseuerance, of small knowledge chiefe,  
Keep the base Gate to things that are excelling,  
Thou by fair virtues praise maist yield relief,  
My lines are thine, then tell Absurditie,  
Hart of my deare, shall blot his villainie. (171)

One is at pains to find fault with Knight's appraisal that here, as in the lines excerpted earlier from segment 3, "there is a quality in the use of abstraction and personification that I would call deeply Shakespearean. The firm statement, so vividly recalling Sonnet 121, finds exact place in the poetic argument" (176). Moreover, we recall that Chester seems to have borrowed directly from these lines in his dedication to Salusbury: "if Absurditie like a theefe haue crept into any part of these Poems ..." (3-4). Or, perhaps, might Chester's dedication, too, have been written in collaboration?

To our modern sensibilities, something like "Absurditie" seems to have crept "like a theefe" into this volume. The findings of this study reveal that Shakespeare's hand, or one extraordinarily adept at imitating his "style" – in virtually all senses of the term – "crept" into specific passages of *Love's Martyr*. These tests demonstrate that continued comparative analysis of *Love's Martyr* is likely to yield further insight into the roles its various players made before its

unlikely architect nearly vanished from literary history at the precise moment he entered it alongside the most luminous figures of his day.

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## AFTERWARD

This project has been fascinated, fundamentally, with the question of how one makes manifest in the real that which is latent as possibility. This is another way of asking, How does one reproduce one's imagination through *action*? Having commanded *fortuna* with *virtù*, one bends abstract possibility to one's *intention*: this thing here that was merely possible is now motivating and undergirding my actions. Possibility is seemingly foreclosed, then, when it becomes a pure intention, or aspect of the will; that is, when it is placed in interface with and subsequently eventuates action. The moment possibility becomes intention, imagination merges with virtue, or one's value system: what was once "possible" or outside of the real (having been foreclosed) is now recognized as working matter, a thing that bears upon actuality as well as facticity. As Bergson tells us, my intentions exist because they *persist in memory*, because they cross a kind of threshold into the actual, in turn working upon matter.<sup>1</sup>

Questions like these may indicate that this project is concerned exclusively with subjectivity. While I do indeed discuss "the virtual self" as well as a theory of "axiological selfhood" in previous chapters, this focus should not occlude the abiding interest I have taken in matters of *shared* value. Such recognition requires us to align these questions in the context of community. Indeed, *Love's Martyr's* formal imposition of the poetic collective by way of its mysterious coterie epistemology foregrounds the conceptual means by which we may regard the virtual *as* community. My interest in the relationship between shared value and potentiality therefore places this project's concerns at the crux of contemporary debates over the status of

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<sup>1</sup> See *Matter and Memory* (1896).

integral subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> I first raised this specter in my discussion of the Lutheran encounter with the Word, through which Luther claims:

In reality, the word of God comes, when it comes, in opposition to our thinking and wishing ... This is so because the word of God ‘crushes the rock’; it destroys and crucifies all our self-satisfaction and leaves in us only dissatisfaction with ourselves. Thus it teaches us to have pleasure, joy, and confidence in God alone and to find happiness and well-being outside ourselves or in our neighbor (298).

Luther goads us to consider that early modern selfhood is not interested in the notion of an integral subjectivity *per se*, but drives instead toward the discovery that we must look *outside*, toward others or “in our neighbor,” to find our very own inner “happiness.” Even so, it is our wills—our *virtù*—that makes this very encounter possible. So while we may think in terms of a “self-fashioning” or “possessive” early modern self when looking at works like *Othello* and *Love’s Martyr*, we must bear in mind that it is only through *communion with others* that such a self comes to claim its very “possessiveness.” Indeed, such a version of the self is made both conceivable and apparent when I challenge communal and other forms of authority, those aspects of sociality that seek to confine or contain my being. My virtue arises not out from nowhere, but as Luther shows, in an encounter between my authority and a *larger* authority, a set of macro-

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<sup>2</sup> See George Bataille’s critique of integral subjectivity, with its insistence that “communication” cannot proceed from one full and intact individual to another” (19). See also Jean-Luc Nancy’s *The Inoperative Community*, who argues that communism’s failure to succeed, along with its many “betrayals,” has placed the very understanding of “community” in crisis: “In a sense, all ventures adopting a communitarian opposition to ‘real communism’ have by now run their course or been abandoned, but everything continues along its way as though, beyond these ventures, it were no longer even a question of thinking about community” (2-3). Contra Bataille, Nancy also posits “love” as a generatively fracturing rather than unitive force in community making; he writes, “love, provided it is not itself conceived on the basis of the politico-subjective model of communion-in-one, exposes the unworking and therefore the incessant *incompletion* of community. It exposes community *at its limit* (38, emphasis in original). See also Judith Butler’s *Frames of War* and *Precarious Life*, as well as Roberto Esposito’s trilogy on community. I am especially interested in Butler’s question of “how a collective deals with its vulnerability to violence” (2004, 231) as well as Esposito’s claim that “What men have in common, what makes them more like each other than anything else, is their generalized capacity to be killed: the fact that anyone can be killed by anyone else” (13). While “precarity” defines the living conditions of marginalized subjects, “precariousness,” according to Butler and Esposito, is an equalizing force, something inalienably common to all humans.

order values against which mine emerge positively through acts of critical resistance. Such a conception of self ultimately capitulates to Stephen Greenblatt's "encounter between authority and alien" (9) while redescribing the social and political parameters of this epochal encounter.<sup>3</sup> It does so by extending notions of the self from consisting internally to residing in the *outside*, in and among others, in persons and things and places over which I have neither "possession" nor supervision. Such is the view underpinning Hannah Arendt's theory of community in *The Human Condition* (1958). While Arendt does not focus sustained attention on a critique of the subject,<sup>4</sup> she advances a critique of discourses, particularly scientific and mathematical languages, that have erected epistemic partitions between "men" and the communities they constitute.<sup>5</sup>

There may be truths beyond speech, and they may be of great relevance to man in the singular, that is, to man insofar as he is not a political being, whatever else he might be. Men in the plural, that is, men insofar as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves. (332)

For Arendt as much as for Luther, it is in and through community that one acquires something like "meaningfulness," or what this study has called "presence." Arendt describes the

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<sup>3</sup> *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980).

<sup>4</sup> Despite Arendt's claims not to attend explicitly to such matters, the point can certainly be contested when considering Arendt's thesis regarding the *vita activa* ("active life") and *vita contemplativa* ("contemplative life").

<sup>5</sup> Prophetically, Arendt notes, "The 'truths' of the modern scientific world view, though they can be demonstrated in mathematical formulas and proved technologically, will no longer lend themselves to normal expression in speech and thought ... it would be as though our brain, which constitutes the physical, material condition of our thoughts, were unable to follow what we do, so that from now on we would indeed need artificial machines to do our thinking and speaking." (320). Arendt's use of the term *need* in this context is not insignificant; it is a term that distinctly parts company with either "trust" or "dependence." One need only investigate the contents of a typical middle-class household to verify Arendt's claims; objects like smartphones and GPS devices would seem to prove the technological point.

mystical yet entirely pedestrian means by which I acquire satisfaction in the world when my imagination aligns not merely with my intention, but with the *intentions of others*, those others who work to shape the reality I inhabit.

## Appendix A. Transcription of “The Phoenix and Turtle”

The version of “The Phoenix and Turtle” below is transcribed directly from the Folger copy of *Love’s Martyr*. It strictly observes the punctuation, spelling, italicization, and capitalization of the original text.<sup>6</sup> Likewise the poem is here untitled, as it originally was, with the separately titled and signed “Threnos” following it.

Let the bird of lowdeſt lay,  
On the ſole Arabian tree,  
Herauld ſad and trumpet be:  
To whose ſound chaste wings obay.           4

But thou ſhriking harbinger,  
Foule precurrer of the fiend,  
Augour of the feuer’s end,  
To this troope come thou not neere.           8

From this Seſſion interdict  
Every fowle of tyrant wing,  
Saue the Eagle feath’red King;  
Keep the obſequie ſo ſtrict.           12

Let the Prieſt in Surples white,  
That defunctiue Muſicke can,  
Be the death-diuning Swan,  
Leſt the Requiem lacke his right.           16

And thou treble dated Crow,  
That thy ſable gender mak’ſt,  
With the breath thou giu’ſt and tak’ſt,  
Mongſt our mourners ſhalt thou go.           20

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<sup>6</sup> The transcription is based on direct consultation with the book at the Folger Shakespeare Library. Images of the poem appear in Appendix B.

Here the Antheme doth commence,  
Loue and Conſtancie is dead,  
Phoenix and the Turtle fled,  
In a mutuall flame from hence. 24

So they loued as loue in twaine,  
Had the eſſence but in one,  
Two diſſincts, Diuiſion none,  
Number there in loue was ſlaine. 28

Hearts remote, yet not aſunder;  
Diſtance and no ſpace was ſeene,  
Twixt this Turtle and his Queene;  
But in them it were a wonder. 32

So betweene them love did ſhine,  
That the Turtle ſaw his right,  
Flaming in the Phoenix ſight;  
Either was the others mine. 36

Propertie was thus appalled,  
That the ſelf was not the ſame:  
Single Natures double name,  
Neither two nor one was called. 40

Reaſon in it ſelf confounded,  
Saw Diuiſion grow together,  
To themſelues yet either neither,  
Simple were ſo well compounded. 44

That it cried, how true a twaine,  
Seemeth this concordant one,  
Loue hath Reaſon, Reaſon none,  
If what parts, can ſo remaine. 48

Whereupon it made this Threne,  
To the Phoenix and the Dove,  
Co-ſupremes and ſtarres of Loue,  
As Chorus to their Tragique Scene. 52

Threnos.

Beautie, Truth, and Raritie,  
Grace in all ſimplicitie,  
Here encloſed, in cinders lie. 55

Death is now the Phoenix neſt,  
And the Turtle's loyall breaſt,  
To eternitie doth reſt. 58

Leauing no poſteritie,  
Twas not their infirmitie,  
It was married Chaſtitie. 61

Truth may ſeeme, but cannot be,  
Beautie bragge, but tis not ſhe,  
Truth and Beautie buried be. 64

To this vrne let thoſe repaire,  
That are either true or faire,  
For theſe dead Birds, ſigh a prayer. 67

--William Shake-ſpeare

Appendix B. Media

Figure 8. *Aristotle and Phyllis* (1510)



Woodcut by Hans Baldung Grien depicting the scandalous myth of Aristotle and Alexander's wife or mistress, usually named Phyllis. Having succumbed to the beautiful Phyllis, Aristotle is observed by Alexander (and sometimes a friend) as she mounts the philosopher with a bridle and forces him to carry her on his back through a garden. This story was popularly known throughout Europe and inspired a range of important Renaissance works by artists such as Leonardo DaVinci, Lucas Cranach, and Jan Sedeler I.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: Sarton, George. "Aristotle and Phyllis." *Isis* 14.1 (1930), 8-19.



Figure 9. *Untitled Woodcut (~1500)*



An early sixteenth century engraving, artist unknown. A figure brandishes a sword with the word “syllogismus” carved into it; in the other hand, an axe bearing the Latin word for “question.” The figure is attended by hounds that represent “truth” and “falsehood.” Nature is represented as a morass of fallacies, and one can discern the names of various philosophers and schools of thought in the brush.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Kearney, Hugh. *Science and Change: 1500-1700*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971. p 29.



Figure 10. *The Phoenix Portrait* (1575)



The self-begetting phoenix was frequently associated with Queen Elizabeth I. In *The Phoenix Portrait* (1575) and *The Pelican Portrait* (1575), possibly by court miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard, the queen is depicted in an impossibly artificial manner of dress. Showered in pearls, a Renaissance symbol of chastity, she is literally armored by virtue. A pearl necklace trickles suggestively around her waist down the front of the gown, as in *The Armada Portrait* (1588).



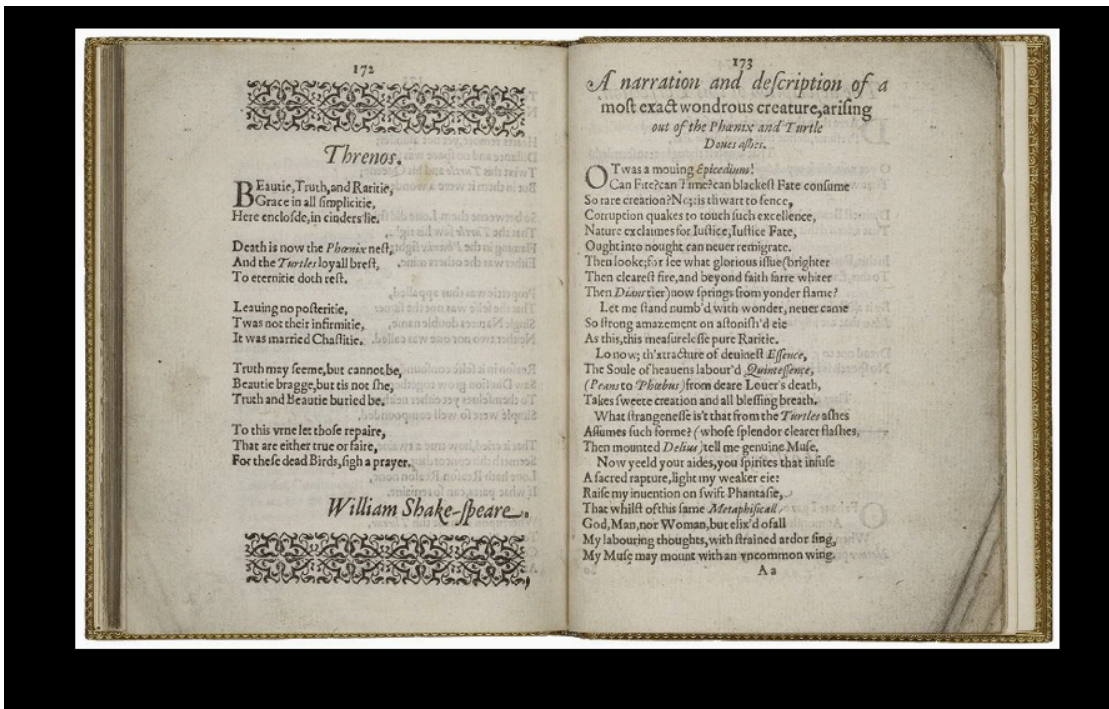
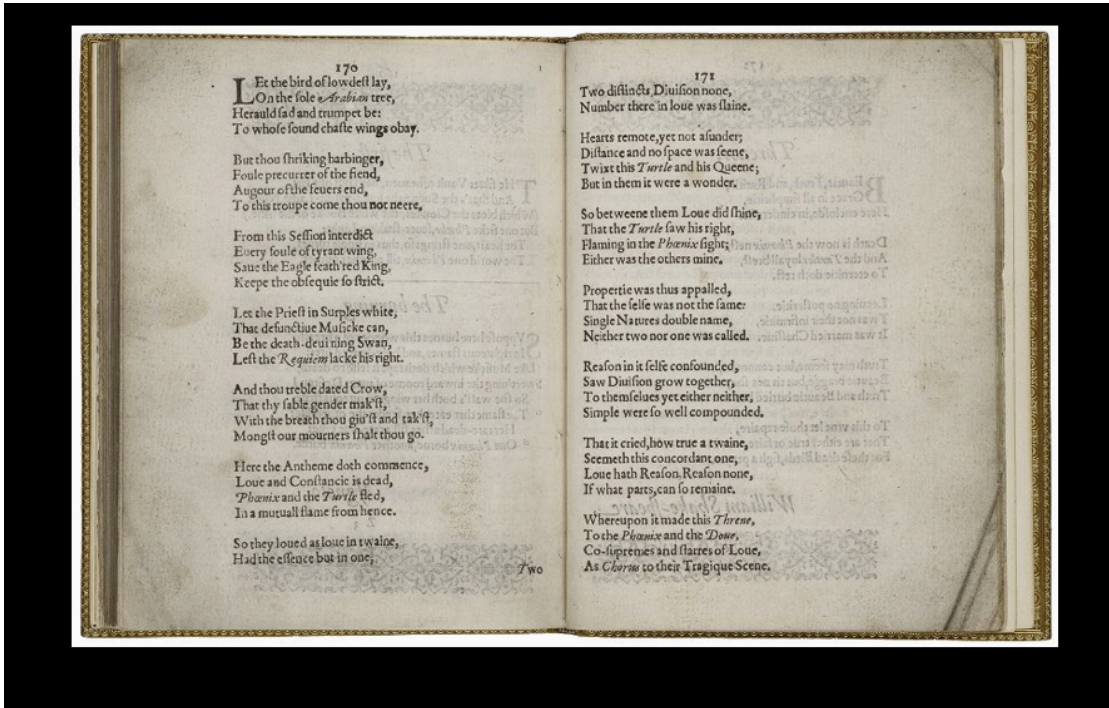
Figure 11. *The Pelican Portrait* (1575)



*The Pelican Portrait* is even more severe than *The Phoenix Portrait*. Here Elizabeth announces her undying love for her people, symbolized by the Pelican, which was fabled to feed its young with its own flesh and blood. The cuffs on the dress, resembling ram's horns or elephant's tusks, suggest Elizabeth's harmonious synthesis of martial and virtuous power. As with *The Phoenix Portrait*, the intricacy, steadfastness, and power of feminine will is mirrored in the dress pattern.



Figure 12. "The Phoenix and Turtle" and Marston's "Response"



### Appendix C. *Love's Martyr's* Digital Data

It is necessary to explore the possibilities and limitations of the primary toolset utilized for this study, the NEA-funded Lexomics program developed by Wheaton College (MA). The Lexomics toolset was chosen to provide the cladistic structures that drive this study due to its functionality and accessibility, as well as the relative elegance of its presentations. Michael Drout, co-developer of the toolset, has noted that statistical analysis of large literary data is modeled on methodological approaches that continue to dominate the fields of bioinformatics and population genetics. He observes not only that these methods have roots in traditional philological analysis, but also that genomics and bioinformatics drew upon philology to form “textual” readings of DNA sequences:

The genome of every organism is composed of millions of small chemical units called nucleobases, whose arrangement along a strand of DNA provides the recipe for the development of the organism. Bioinformaticists analyze patterns of bases in DNA and by treating bases as an alphabet and genomes as texts, they have reinvented a number of techniques originally developed by philologists. But the sheer size of genomic texts has also forced bioinformatics to move beyond traditional philological methods and to use information processing and statistical techniques to analyze patterns that are otherwise too large or too subtle to be noted by the unaided eye. (Drout, et. al., “Of Dendrogrammatology” 301)

Put simply, cladistic analysis provides scholars with a visual representation, or a “dendrogram,” of word frequency in a text or set of texts.<sup>1</sup> These frequencies can be used to analyze

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<sup>1</sup> While biological taxonomists refer to these objects as “cladograms,” the lexomic scholars use “dendrograms,” a term that will be used in this study.

relationships between texts and their authors, sources, and other texts.<sup>2</sup> At first rendered as a series of points on a two-dimensional graph, a “hierarchical agglomerative clustering”<sup>3</sup> of these points, which demonstrate distances between points, is the raw data used to construct a branching diagram, or dendrogram.

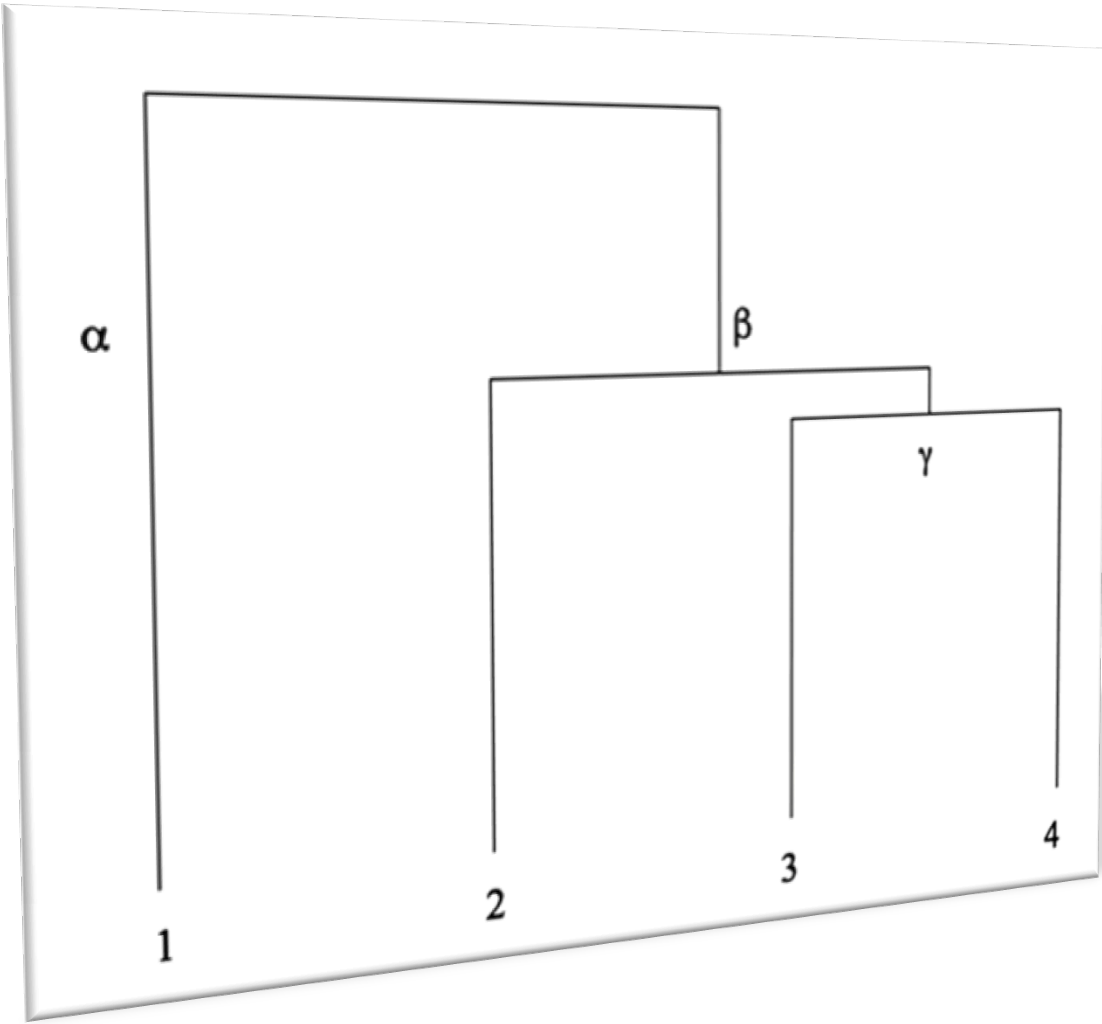
The dendrogram itself is based on simple mathematics. Producing one involves computing the relative frequencies of each word in a text by dividing the number of times it appears in a segment, pre-defined by the user, by the total number of words in that segment. With those frequencies calculated, the analyst can apply statistical methods to compare the segments. Downey, Drout, Kahn and Leblanc (2012) present a cogent summary of how to interpret a generic dendrogram.<sup>4</sup> For the sake of maintaining consistency with the designers of the toolset I will be using, I use the generic graph they provide (Fig. 10) and quote their analysis of it in full:

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<sup>2</sup> Much of what is presented here has been paraphrased from the lexomics tutorials available on Wheaton College’s website (<http://wheatoncollege.edu/lexomics/>). Downey (et al) provides a technical overview of lexomic methods, included here for the sake of completeness: “[Lexomic analysts] use the free implementation of hierarchical, agglomerative cluster analysis ... to group the texts and create branching diagrams, or dendrograms, of their relationships ... This clustering method uses a dissimilarity (or distance) metric for the grouping of texts without prespecifying the number of groups .... [Analysts] use the most commonly used distance metric, Euclidean distance, a multidimensional extension of Pythagoras’s theorem for right triangles. This metric makes use of all  $n$  words in a collection of texts to measure the dissimilarity between two texts. The distance measure is computed for each pair of texts among  $T$  texts, resulting in  $T \times (T-1)/2$  distances, which are then used to create groupings, or clades, of texts by clustering texts that are most similar ... The dissimilarity between two clades (i.e., two collections of texts) is the average of all Euclidean distances between two texts, one from clade 1, the other from clade 2” (“Books Tell Us,” 6-7). These terms and calculations will be elucidated in the generic graph presented in Figure 10.

<sup>3</sup> See Downey (et al), “Books Tell Us,” 6.

<sup>4</sup> Generic cladistic graph presented in “Books Tell Us,” 7.



**Figure 13. Generic Dendrogram**

The dissimilarity between clades<sup>5</sup> is represented by the vertical length of the line connecting the clades. This graphical representation of the distances indicates, in our sample figure, that texts 3 and 4 are most similar; text 2 is closer to the clade,  $\beta$ , that contains both 3 and 4, and text 1 is least like the other texts. In this example, the vertical distance between text 2 and clade  $\beta$  is very small, indicating that they are very similar, while the vertical distance between 1 and clade  $\beta$  is

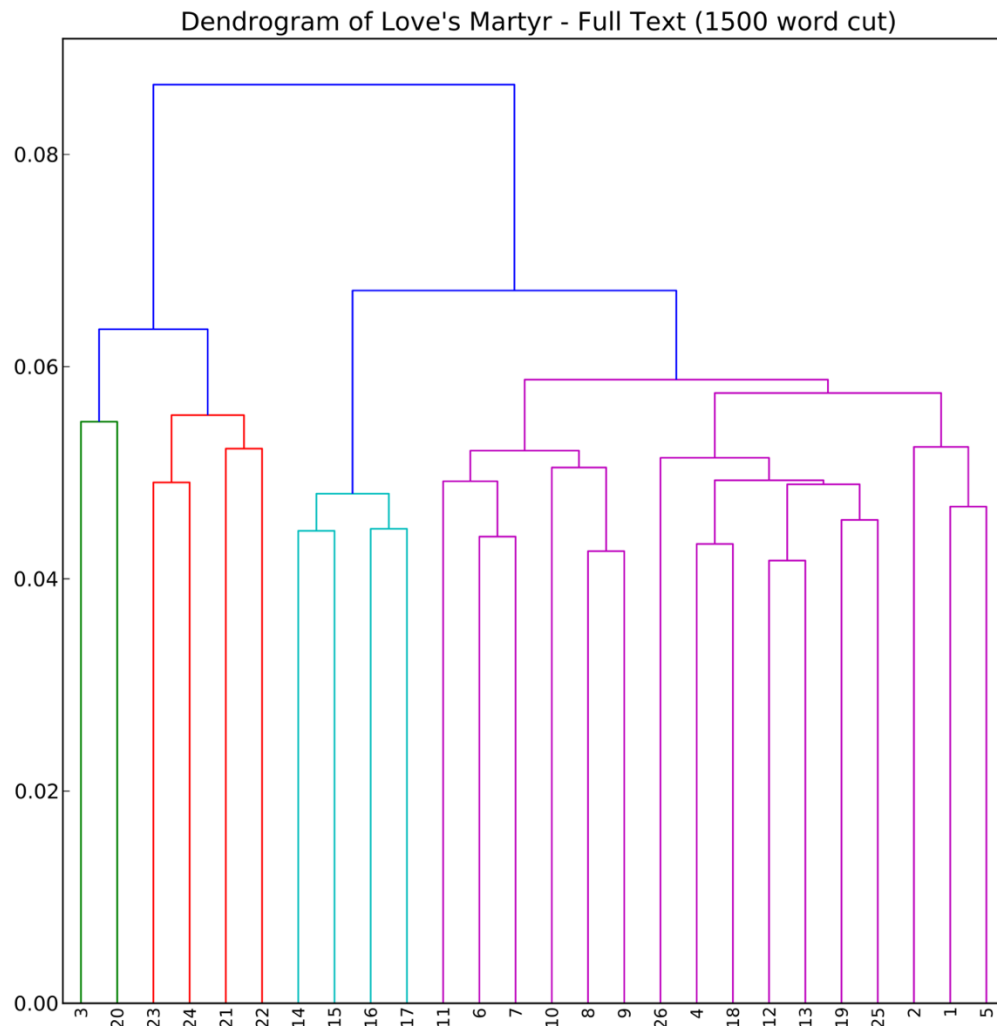
<sup>5</sup> To clarify: “clades” are merely gatherings or “clustering” of text that are of greatest similarity to one another; each clade consists of “leaves,” which represent chunks of text of a certain size prespecified by the analyst.

much larger, indicating that 1 is quite different from the remaining texts. Any level of the branching diagram can be identified as a clade, and we label clades from left to right using Greek letters, first labeling all clades at the same level of the hierarchy and then descending to the next level and again labeling left to right. Thus [above], the text is made up of two major clades,  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . Clade  $\alpha$  contains text 1; clade  $\beta$  contains 2, 3, and 4; and clade  $\gamma$  contains only texts 3 and 4. Because clade  $\alpha$  contains only one text, it is said to be single leafed or simplicifolious. (Downey, 6-7)

The following analyses demonstrate that lexomic methods yield data on *Love's Martyr* that support both common sense and controversial philological claims raised by earlier scholars, suggesting that a “work-sharing process” was most certainly afoot, and that Shakespeare likely had a hand in it. Moreover, the data contributes to ongoing debates regarding the unsigned poems, a subject of contention among Jonson and Marston scholars.

For the sake of clarity, I reproduce first the dendrogram of *Love's Martyr* that appears in Chapter 4, after which I delineate the lexomic findings numerically.





1. Most obviously, the text is partitioned into two higher-level clades: the clade structure on the left and everything else in the text.

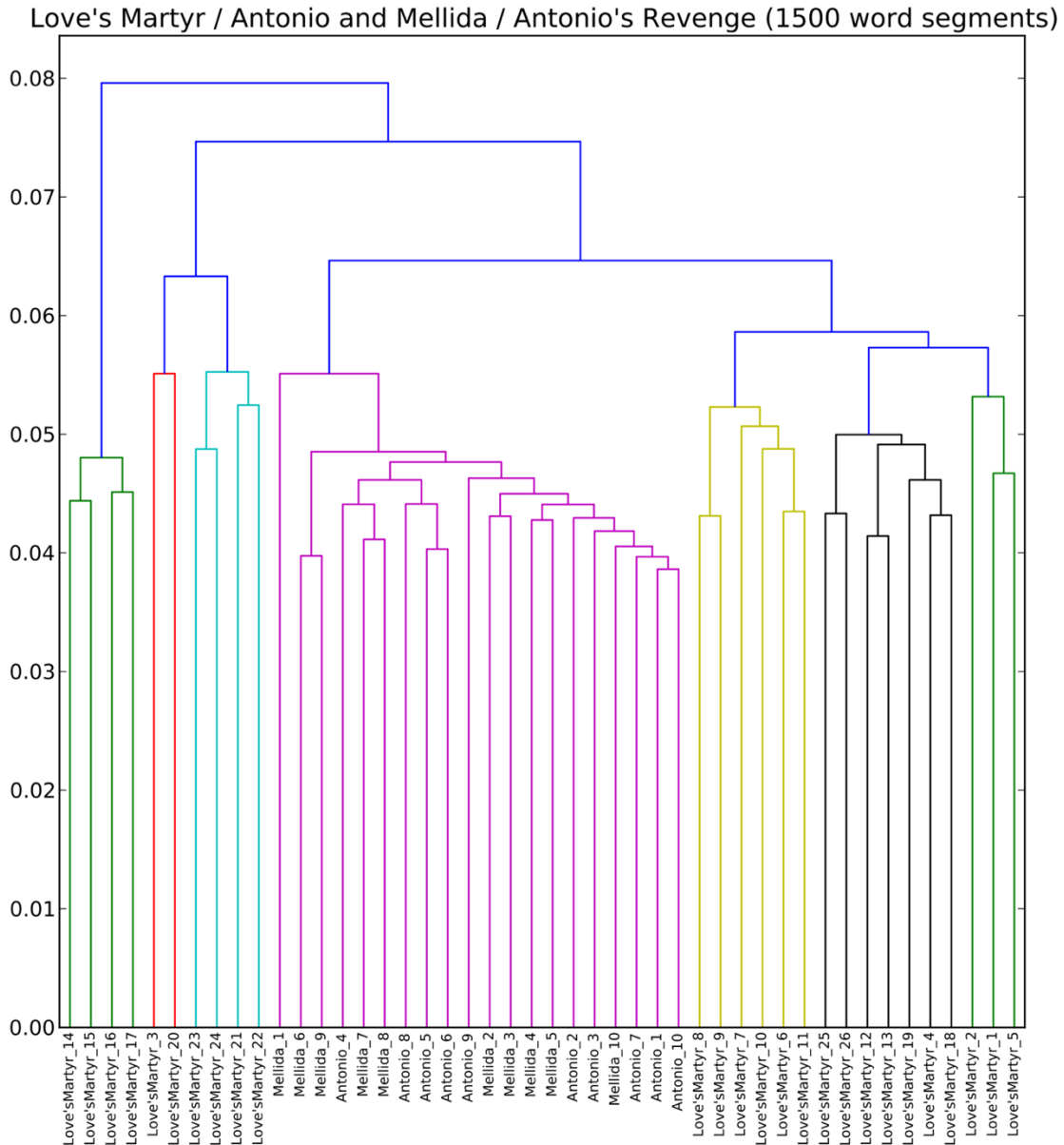
2. Looking closer at the left-hand clade, segment 3 “sticks” with what is otherwise a run of end-of-the-text chunks; there’s a distinct division between the left-hand clade containing segments 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 3 with the rest of the poem. What, then, is at the end of the text that is distinct from the rest? What is at the beginning of *Love’s Martyr* (section 3) that “forces it” with the ending sequence?

3. There are "runs" inside several clades: segments 14-17 form a set of consecutive chunks in a clade that, for the most part, hangs together.

4. The first (1), second (2), and fifth (5) chunks – all from earlier portions of the text – cohere into a lexomic grouping. The fourth (4) and as noted, third (3) segments hang elsewhere.

5. The large clade structure that runs to the immediate left of the one that appears to the rightmost position of the dendrogram is an interestingly mixed grouping. The very short vertical distances between the branch points indicate significant similarity.

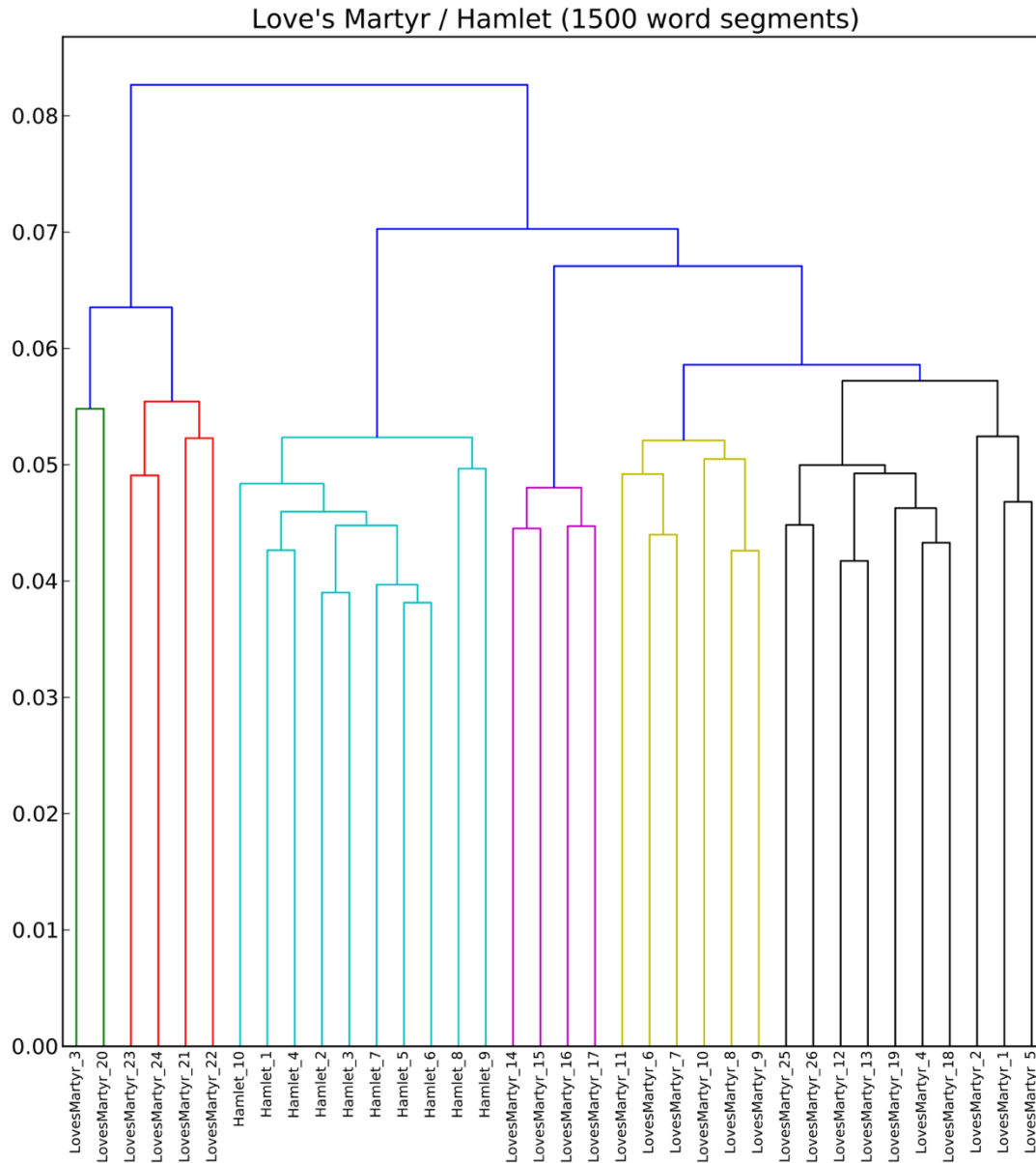
6. Within the large right-hand clade, there is a division between the 4-branch clade that includes segments 14, 15, 16, 17, and the rest of the poem. What distinguishes this grouping from the rest of the poem? Moreover, one might wonder what is in segments 18 and 19 – since with those exceptions, most of the end of the poem is in the two separated clades.



**Figure 14. Dendrogram of *Love's Martyr* and works by Marston**

But for the inclusion of Marston's plays, which hang together loosely within the same large clade, the dendrogram's presentation of *Love's Martyr's* cladistic structures is remarkably similar to what we see in the *Love's Martyr*-only graph. Segments 14-17 (containing the catalogue of fish, birds, and beasts) of *Love's Martyr* cluster together in a separate clade structure, though in this dendrogram, that clade even further distinguishes itself from the rest of *Love's Martyr*, appearing as an altogether dissimilar entity. Consecutive segments 21-24

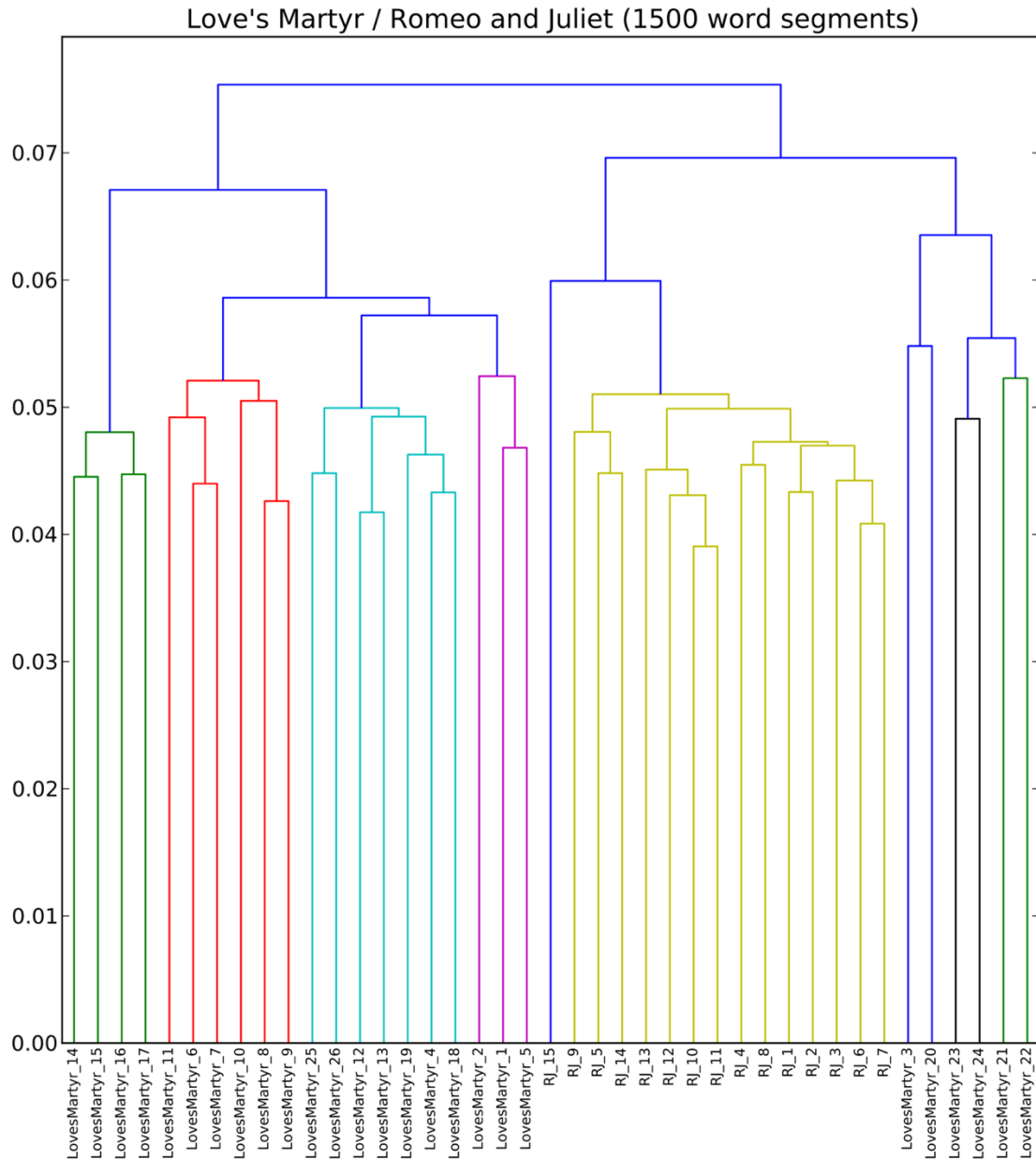
(“Cantos Verbally written”) likewise still hang together in single clade, as do segments 1, 2, and 5 and segments 20 (“Cantos, Alphabet-wise”) and 3 (our first “Dialogue”), which falls in the same clade as the other end-of-text chunks. Yet segments 25 and 26, which contain the entirety of the signed collaborations, suddenly stick together in a clade alongside other segments signed by Chester (12, 13, 18, 19, and 4). Apparently, when the work of another collaborator is introduced, no matter who this collaborator is, segments 25 and 26 reposition themselves within the clade structure; somehow, they become “more similar” to one another yet never “more similar” to the work that has been introduced. This basic pattern recurs in dendrograms performed on *All Fools*, *Bartholomew Fair*, *Every Man out of His Humour*, and *Hamlet* (Fig. 13).



**Figure 15. Dendrogram of *Love's Martyr* and *Hamlet***

In Figure 13, *Love's Martyr's* cladistic structures shift in place but the leaves remain stubbornly attached to patterns that appear in the original, *Love's Martyr*-only dendrogram; clades containing consecutive segments 6-11, 14-17, and 21-24 remain in place, as do segments and 3 and 20. Likewise, segments 25 and 26 cluster with earlier portions of the poem. Again, this basic pattern holds for all works tested using the program but for the Sonnets and *Romeo and*

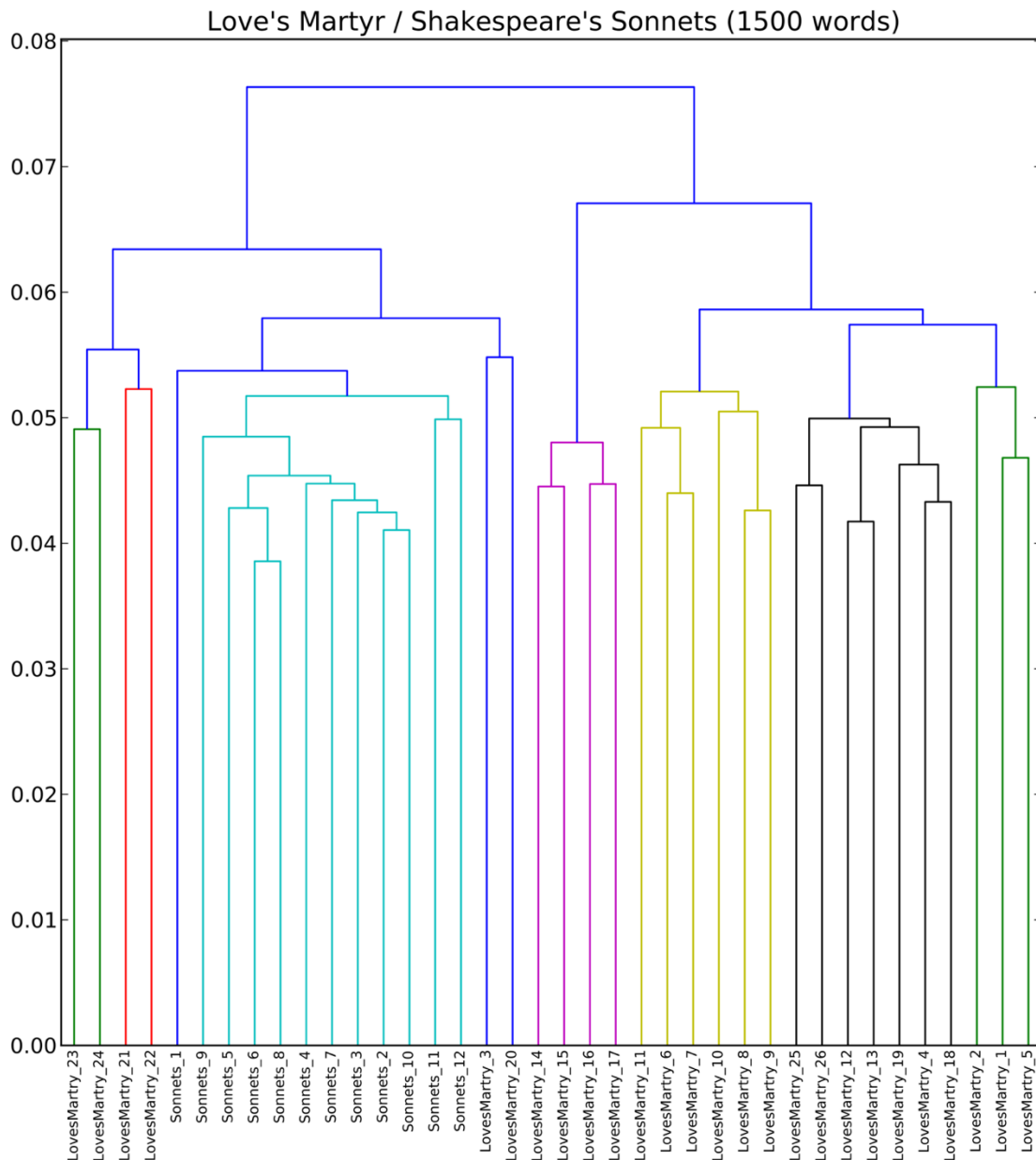
*Juliet*, works chosen due to stylistic similarities between them and segments of *Love's Martyr* noted by Knight and observable by anyone who has read these texts attentively. *Romeo and Juliet* (Fig. 14) introduces a subtle but significant shift in hierarchical arrangement:



**Figure 16. Dendrogram of *Love's Martyr* and *Romeo and Juliet***

While *Love's Martyr's* lower-level cladistic structures appear nearly identical to those we see in Figures 12 and 13, Figure 14 indicates that segments 20-24 and 3 of *Love's Martyr* are, in

terms of vocabulary frequency and style, “more similar” to *Romeo and Juliet* than they are to the rest of *Love’s Martyr*, more similar even to the chunk of text containing Shakespeare’s signed contribution, which lies in segment 25. The dendrogram of *Love’s Martyr* and the Sonnets (Fig. 15) demonstrates a similar pattern:

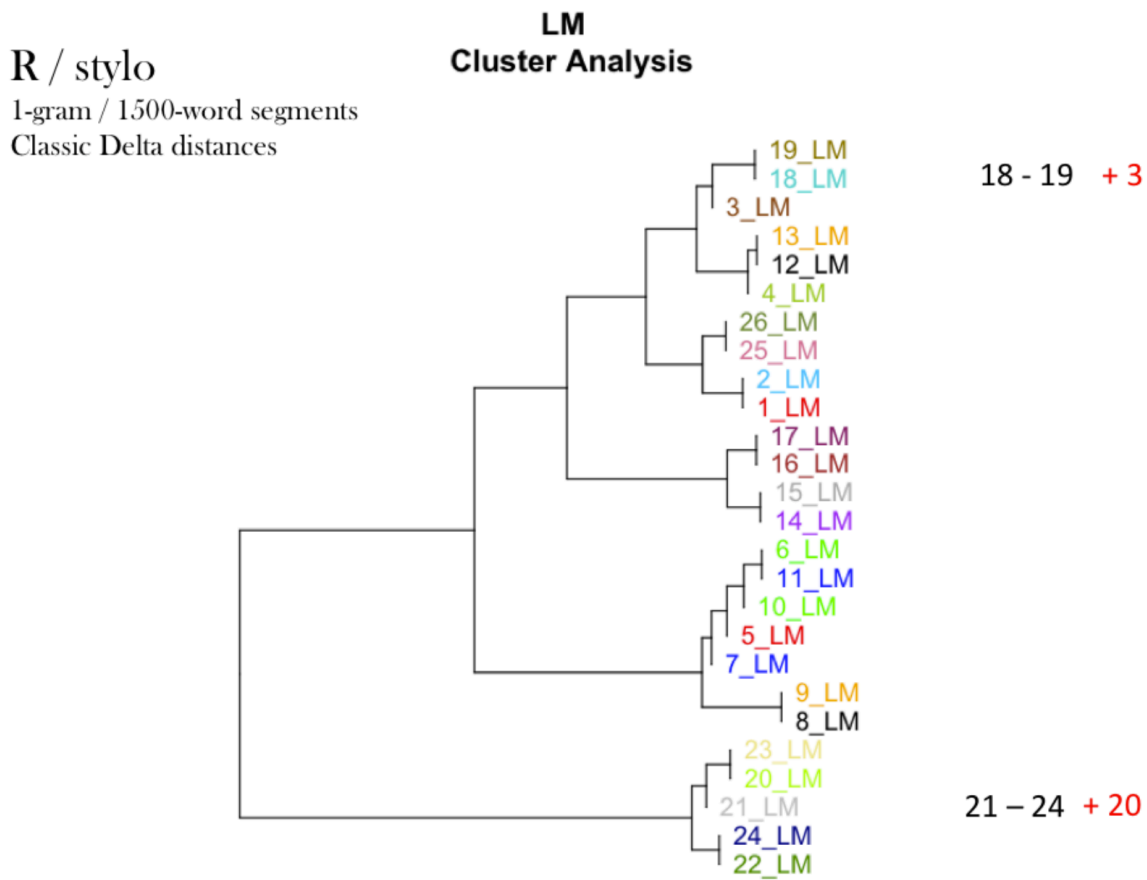


**Figure 17. Dendrogram of *Love's Martyr* and the Sonnets**

In this dendrogram, segments 20-24 and segment 3 likewise fall into the same large clade

with the known Shakespearean text, therefore signifying as “more similar” to this work than to the bulk of work signed by Chester. Moreover, the bifolious clade containing segments 3 and 20, which returns conjoined in every test, appears even closer in kind to the material of the Sonnets than it does to the material that appears in segments 21-24 of *Love’s Martyr*.

To ensure the accuracy of these results, I turned also to the high-powered stylometry suite in *R*, called “stylo.” Below are several cluster analyses representations of the same data using this tool:



**Figure 18. Cluster Analysis of *Love’s Martyr* in R / stylo**



*Love's Martyr*  
 The Sonnets  
 1-gram / 1500-word segments  
 Classic Delta distances

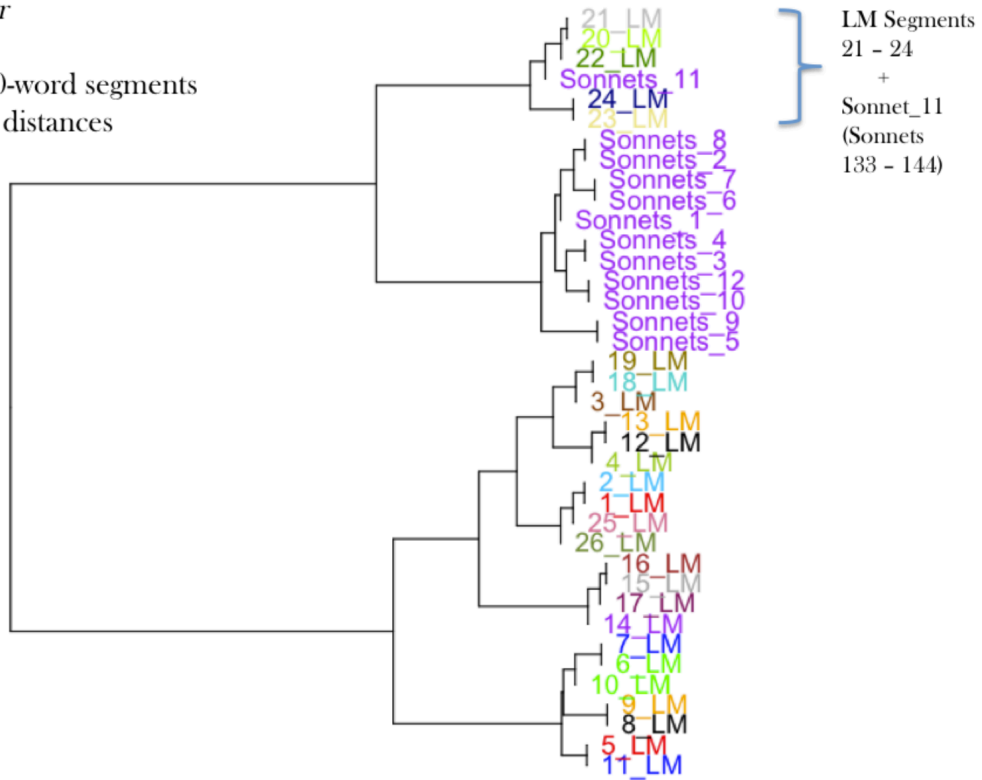


Figure 19. Cluster Analysis of *Love's Martyr* and the Sonnets, Classic Delta Distances

Love's Martyr  
The Sonnets  
1500-word segments  
Euclidian distances

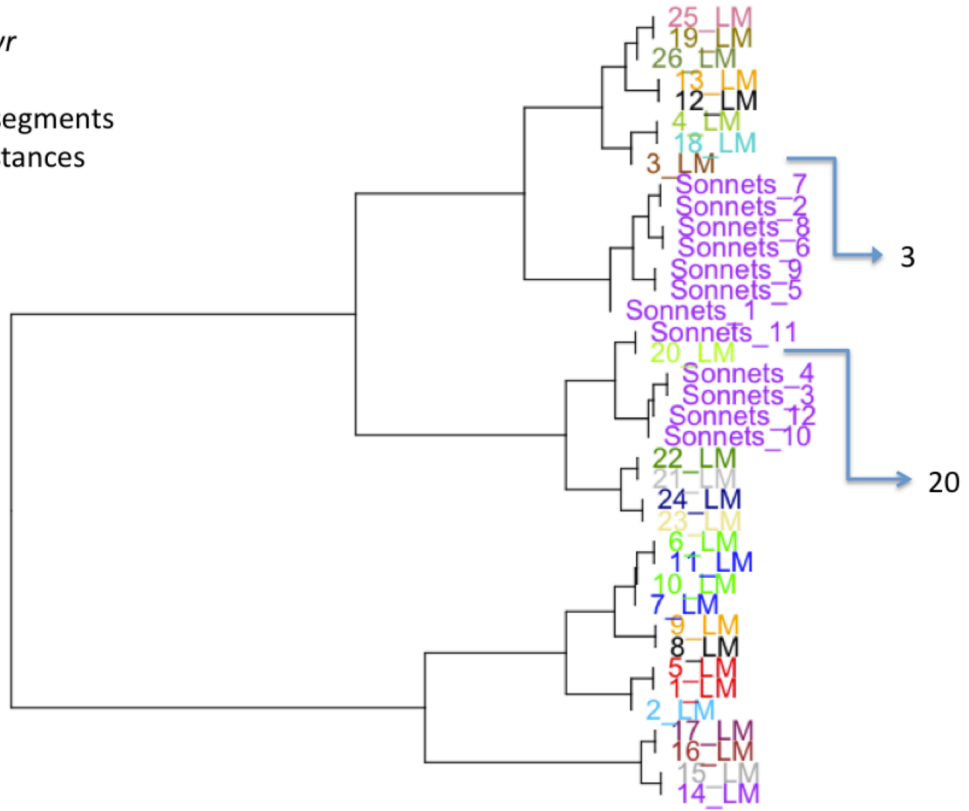


Figure 20. Cluster Analysis of Love's Martyr and the Sonnets, Euclidian Distances

## Principal Components Analysis

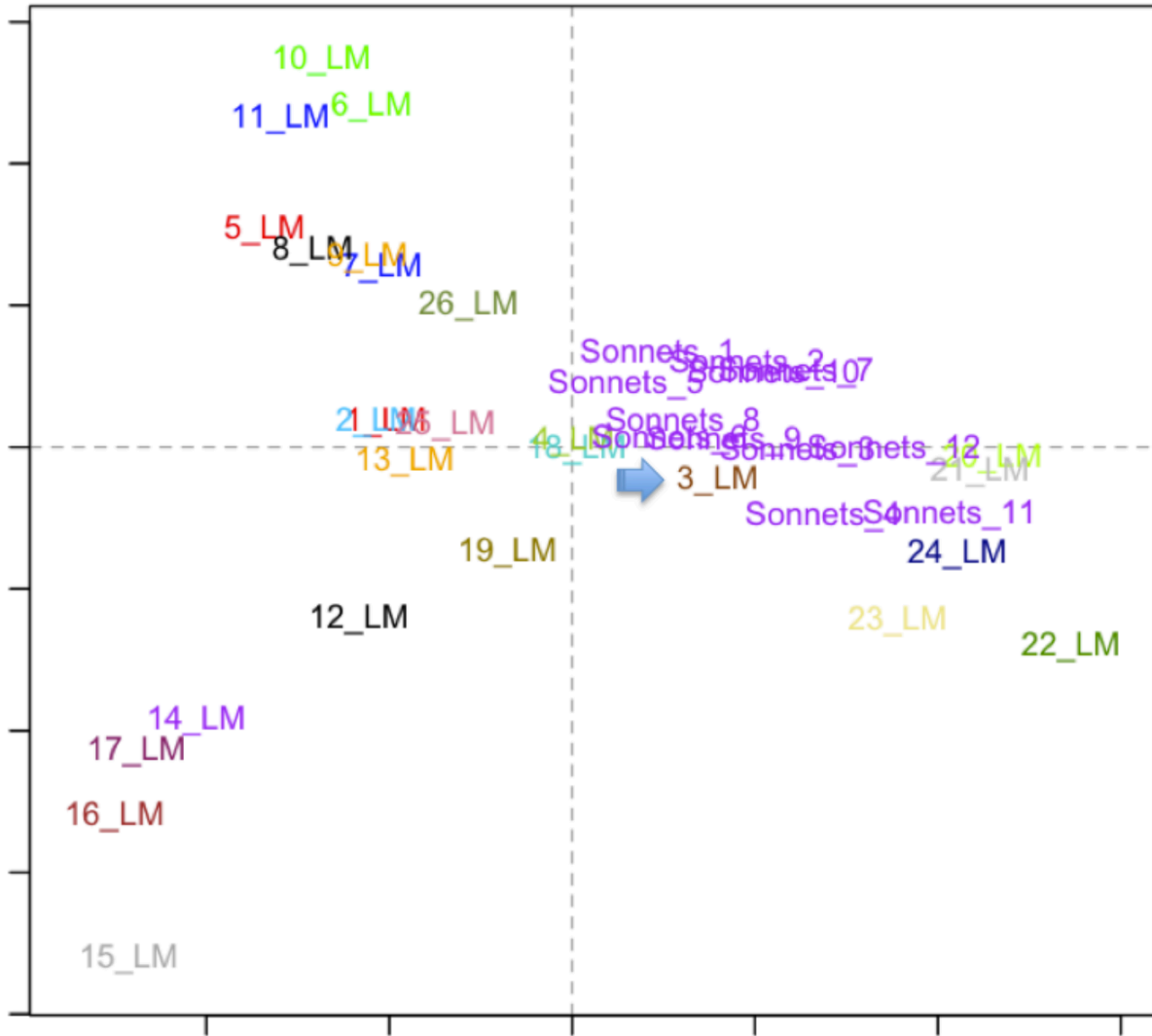


Figure 21. Principal Component Analysis of *Love's Martyr* and the Sonnets

For further evaluation and data, including principal component analyses of *Love's Martyr* and the Sonnets, see: <http://shakespeareeditor.weebly.com>. All works referenced here are cited in Chapter 4.

Appendix D  
Interactive Data: *Shakespeare, Editor*

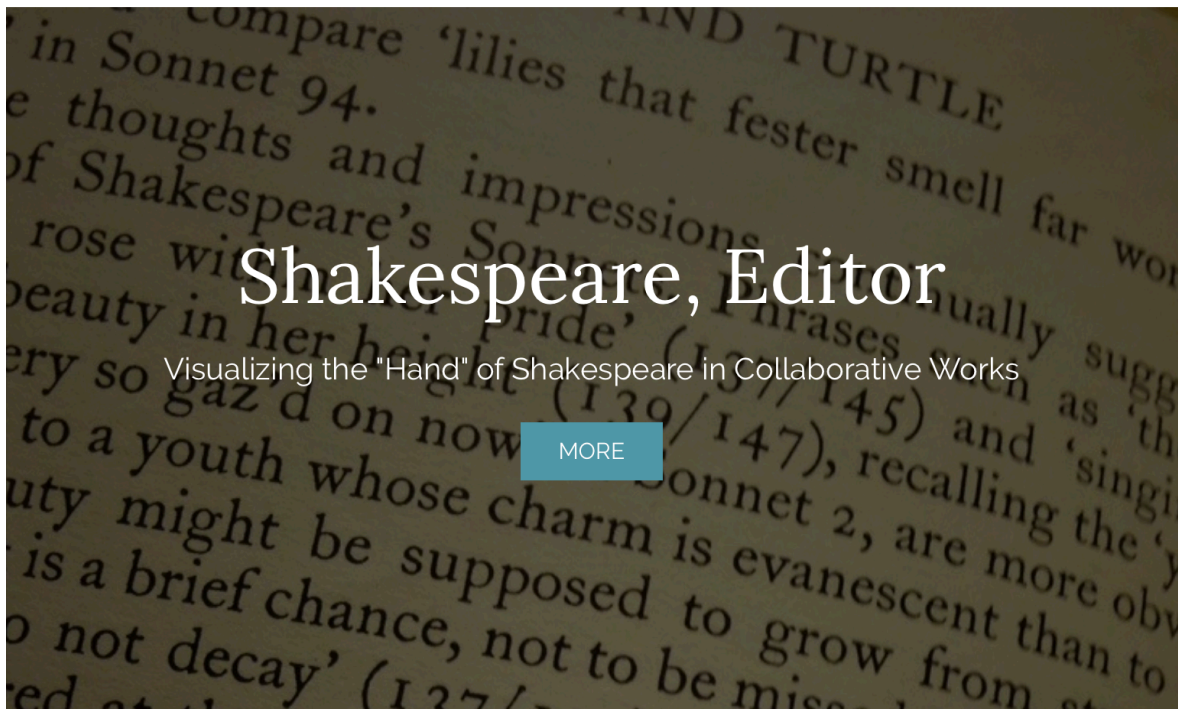
HOME

OVERVIEW

RESEARCH CONTEXT

DATA

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<http://shakespeareeditor.weebly.com>.

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