Damaging Intimacy: Reimagining Communities in Early Modern Drama

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to my appa, umma, dongsaeng
and my alter ipse, RJ

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To find that one's life is also the life of others means that one's boundary is at once a limit and a site of adjacency, a mode of spatial and temporal nearness and even boundedness. The bounded and living appearance of the body is the condition of being exposed to the other, exposed to solicitation, seduction, passion, injury, exposed in ways that sustain us but also in ways that can destroy us.

—Judith Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation"[1]

"Literary communism" indicates at least the following: that community, in its infinite resistance to everything that would bring it to completion (in every sense of the word *achever*—which can also mean "finish off"), signifies an irrepressible political exigency and that this exigency in its turn demands something of "literature," the inscription of our infinite resistance.

—Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*[2]

One of the earliest recorded uses of the English verb "to secure" comes from the mouth of Queen Margaret, in a plea to Henry VI to flee in order to avoid battle with York:

What are you made of? you'll nor fight nor fly:

Now is it manhood, wisdom and defence,

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[1] Judith Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 26.2 (2012): 134-151, esp. 141.
[2] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1991), esp. 80-1.

To give the enemy way, and to secure us

By what we can, which can no more but fly. (5.4.3-6)[3]

Here, we see the formerly assertive and powerful Queen Margaret urging the King to "fly" and to abandon his honor in order to protect his life. In her desperate appeal, she lays bare the fundamental priority affirming our status as mortal beings: a drive for "defence," for security, for protection against the vulnerable quality that the play suggests is characteristic of all human life. We have seen the tumultuous reign of Henry VI, a reign plagued by treasonous nobles, sinister plots, and orchestrated rebellions in which the striving for security is the decisive factor galvanizing the plot. In this extremely violent play where Shakespeare focuses on actual human bodies maimed, brutalized, and destroyed by contending forces, it seems inevitable that the motive to secure one's life is every character's primary concern. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines, "to secure" means "to keep safe *from* danger, harm, or loss; to ensure the safety of, to protect, to guard *against* danger, harm, or an undesirable outcome."[4] In inhabiting a world that has become increasingly concerned with security, protecting and policing borders, and protecting "our own," being exposed to contingency is generally regarded as a nightmare—a loss of all security, all orientation, all order. And yet, *Damaging Intimacy* seeks to show how insecurity and vulnerability, destabilization and endangerment, are fundamental qualities of shared human life.

Damaging Intimacy explores the portrayal, in Renaissance texts as well as in early modern and current political theory, of how radical risk-taking and vulnerability can form the basis for community. Whereas scholars traditionally regard the bounded self and the individuated

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[3] *The Norton Shakespeare 2nd ed.: 2 Henry VI*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 229-316.
[4] See "secure, v.1, 2" *OED Online* (Oxford, Oxford UP, January 2020).

body as the basic unit of interpersonal relations, I trace the dangers and breaches of bodily integrity as an alternative means of community formation in Shakespearean and Marlovian drama. Arguably the most renowned early modern English playwrights, these two literary giants shaped the development of popular theater and it is through this dramatic medium—one largely accessible, communal, and a site of disruptive threat to the Crown and social order more broadly—that I aim to tease out radical models of intimate bonds. Complicating the longstanding critical tendency to read Renaissance texts as early experiments in the republicanism, liberalism, and humanism that would come to characterize the Enlightenment and the modern, bourgeois subject, my project instead lingers on spectacular moments that resist those ideologies. The texts I analyze reveal a submerged tradition of dramatic performances in which communities are constructed, not through the reinforcement of possessive individualism, but rather through the often violent dissolution of the boundaries that delineate self from other. By exploring alternate models of community undergirded by annihilative desires (as against a humanist view of community built on rational self-preservation), I argue that *Coriolanus, Tamburlaine the Great, The Merchant of Venice,* and *Edward II* mobilize forms of radical interrelation that potentially destabilize the social orthodoxy of how interpersonal bonds work. These plays experiment with communities of intersubjective existence and unconditional vulnerability that exposes itself without limit to the coming of the other. This shared existence is a radical, endless openness to the other, allowing us to imagine an affirmative politics that embraces death as it does life. By presenting moments of excessive and boundless bodies that compel interrelation and where interpenetrative violence emerges as a kind of ethical imperative, my project inhabits the future conditional temporality of "what could be" in the pursuit of alternative visions, politics, and communities that celebrate the surplus of every sociality over every solitude.

Histories of the Self

Damaging Intimacy returns metaleptically to the early modern period to take up crucial

questions about the individual, community, and their interrelation in order to rethink theories of

selfhood that are viable alternatives to the modern, autonomous subject. I see this modern subject

as constructed through a number of intersecting discourses. The first of which is humanism, a

progressive political creed that bears a privileged relation to two other interlocked ideas: human

emancipation in the pursuit of equality and secularism through rational governance.[5] The second

of which is liberalism, a political philosophy grounded by abstract promises of human freedom,

rational progress, and social equality coupled with liberal affirmations of individualism, civility,

mobility, and free enterprise.[6] And lastly, republicanism, a political ideology centered on

freedom from tyranny and an emphasis on individual civic duty and *vita activa* more generally.[7]

While I recognize the complex, complicated, and distinct genealogies and principles

undergirding these movements, I nonetheless emphasize that they are all predicated on an

individual, bounded subject that has become synonymous with the modern self. Thus attempts to

recover the genealogical roots of humanism, liberalism, and republicanism in the Renaissance

have led to an overdetermination of this unitary, singular subject and the precipitation of human

exceptionalism.

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[5] See Rosi Braidotti who defines the cultural logic of universal humanism as a Eurocentric paradigm which implies the dialectic of self and other, the binary logic of identity and otherness. She argues that subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behavior whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart. See Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), esp. 15.

[6] My understanding of modern liberalism is largely drawn from Lisa Lowe who defines it broadly as the branches of European political philosophy that include the narration of political emancipation through citizenship in the state, the promise of economic freedom in the development of wage labor and exchange markets, and the conferring of civilization to human persons educated in aesthetic and national culture—in each case unifying particularity, difference, or locality through universal concepts of reason and community. See her *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke UP, 2015), esp. 3-4.

[7] My view of the legacy of early modern republicanism is largely drawn from James Kuzner who does a comprehensive overview of this political ideology, from its Ciceronian roots into the English Civil War and beyond. See his *Open Subjects: English Renaissance Republicans, Modern Selfhood and the Virtue of Vulnerability* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011), esp. 10-24.

In standard accounts of what, with obvious Darwinian echoes, has been called "the ascent of man," it is the Renaissance that signals the truly decisive breakthrough for individualism.[8] According to numerous critical and historical accounts, reaching back to that of Jacob Burckhardt, questions about selfhood were increasingly turning into questions about bounded selfhood.[9] With the arrival of Renaissance humanism, the subject was presented with new possibilities for cultivating a more interiorized, clearly discrete existence, fulfilling the cherished ideal of "being yourself" (or, as Polonius put it in *Hamlet*, wearying his son Laertes with unwanted advice, "above all things, to thine own self be true"). In England, such enabling possibilities included, but certainly were not limited to, the explosion of print which afforded diverse experiences of private reading and individual interpretation, the rising popularity of theater and theatricality, growing opportunities for property acquisition, expanding codes of civility that enjoined individuals to keep the body and its processes as private as possible, heightened Protestant emphasis on individual conscience and personal scripturalism, the shift from the Galenic body and its four humours to William Harvey and the circulatory system, new cultural genres like the self-portrait, the diary, and the biography (categories some historians call "ego-documents"), and the rise of the principles of participatory government and personal liberty. I cite these intersecting phenomena in order to highlight the numerous circulating discourses that all confluence in this particular historical moment to reinforce the narrative that

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[8] For instance, Lionel Trilling claims that the transformation from a man to an individual occurred during the Renaissance: "[C]ertain things he did not have or do until he became an individual. He did not have an awareness of what one historian, Georges Gusdorf calls internal space." See his *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1972), esp. 24. For more on the rise of a separate, interiorized space in early modern England, see Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1983); Katharine Eisaman Maus, "Proof and Consequences: Inwardness and Exposure in the English Renaissance," *Representations* 34 (1991): 29-52; and Patricia Fumerton, "'Secret' Arts: Elizabethan Miniatures and Sonnets," *Representations* 15 (1986): 57-97.
[9] Burckhardt has acclaimed Renaissance Italy as the time and place when mankind began to liberate itself from the chains of custom, conformity, and the Church, taking a leap forward into self-discovery and self-fulfillment. See Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1981; 1st edn, 1859).

the evolution from a premodern to a modern self is synonymous with the evolution from an unbounded to a bounded self. Whether it be Michel de Montaigne who posed the elemental question: *Que sçais-je?* (what do I know?) and then arrived at the answer that man possessed an *arrière boutique toute nostre* (a room behind the shop all our own) or René Descartes who staked out a new role for the individual by making the basis of his *Discourse on Method* (1637) the famous proposition, *cogito ergo sum*, a new sense of personal singularity radiates from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The *OED*, too, tells us that in England, the "self" emerges, grammatically, as a "living formative element" at some point around the middle of the sixteenth century and reaches its apogee in the mid-seventeenth.[10] Such a history bears a privileged relation to the values of individualism, autonomy, responsibility, and self-determination, reinforcing the seeming inevitability of what political theorist C. B. Macpherson famously termed "the possessive individual" and marking the Renaissance as the period when the modern idea of "selfhood" (or, at least, an integrated rhetoric of the self) emerges.[11]

And despite the complex, often contradictory nature of humanism, liberalism, and republicanism, it has been brought to bear on the present political moment mostly in order to illuminate and augment strains of thought that emphasize the potential of community to minimize vulnerability and thus to foster selves who are bounded, discrete, and delineated. Cast as the autonomous bearer of rights, man became the basic building block in a political liberalism that rebutted old Divine Right and absolutist theories with the declaration that the individual was prior to the state. Mastery of one's self and one's property was fundamental to historically specific, male-connoted ideas of autonomy and freedom. Community, thus, was the *product* of

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[10] See "self, pron.1" *OED Online* (Oxford, Oxford UP, January 2020).

[11] C. B. Macpherson challenged the canonical interpretation of seventeenth century English political theorists by exploring their allegiance to "possessive individualism," the idea that man's normative essence consists in his self-ownership. See his *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1962).

free men, contracting together in the state of nature to set up a political society to protect fundamental rights to life, liberty, and property.[12] This is true of work across various disciplines over the last several decades—in, for instance, the literary criticism of Andrew Hadfield, Patrick Cheney, and Annabel Patterson;[13] the historical work of Thomas C. Heller, Markuu Peltonen, and Norbert Elias;[14] and political theory ranging from that of Steven Lukes to that of Jonathan Scott.[15] Historians of selfhood as disparate as Charles Taylor, Erving Goffman, and Jerrold Seigel, likewise, present pictures of a modern self whose boundaries become increasingly well-fortified.[16]

For all their differences, these accounts conflate the self with its most unassailable connotations of unity, integrity, and interiority. In this, they narrow the field of possibilities within which early modern and modern selves may move. My project offers an alternative history of selfhood, tracing in Shakespearean and Marlovian drama a more complex and relational subject framed by embodiment, sexuality, affectivity, desire, and death as core qualities. Defined within a philosophy of multiple belongings, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity, this disintegrated subject is always already in communion with others. What is revealed through early modern representations of individual subjectivity is that the

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[12] Studies of community in early modern England tend to range from imagined political or religious communities (the nation, the people, Protestants), to cohorts of the like-minded (readers, trade guilds, personal acquaintances) to groups of like-doers (criminals, agrarian workers, or town denizens).

[13] Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005); Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

[14] Markuu Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995); Thomas C. Heller, *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, eds. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1987); Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process, vol. 1, The History of Manners* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

[15] Steven Lukes, *Individualism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Jonathan Scott, *Commonwealth Principles: Republican Writing of the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

[16] See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989); Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor, 1959); and Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

violent loss of borders paradoxically ensures one's subsistence. In lieu of a self of bounded, protected existence, I uncover selves both celebrating and suffering from permeable borders, unexpected violence, dispossession, and fear, and forced to come to terms with a fundamental dependency on others. I am invested in illuminating interpersonal relations that constitute us as individuals; yet at the same time, these social bonds emerge as the most potentially disintegrating impetus to our individual existence. This persistent staging of radical models of community—all which contest and exceed a hegemonic understandings of politics and are undergirded by a violent, interpenetrative, and *pre*consensual bondage—reveals that the English commonwealth itself is dependent on selves subject to extreme openness, to lost will, and to shared plight.

Although understandings of modern, bourgeois selfhood are often predicated on understandings of the body as a closed network—a somatically sealed unit—the early modern period was besieged with spectacles of corporeal unboundedness. With the advent of anatomical theaters and what Jonathan Sawday terms the early modern "culture of dissection," the public displays of spectacular corporeal punishment (e.g. stake burnings, traitors' heads regularly displayed on London Bridge [which playgoers would have had to walk under no less], disembowelings, quarterings, and torture on the rack), along with three epidemics of the bubonic plague in the seventeenth century alone, death was everywhere. Shakespeare and Marlowe, themselves, were born in a plague year. This was a unique historical moment where the spectacle of the open, breached, dismembered, and decomposing body was ubiquitous; where violence and its immediacy were encountered on a daily basis. I analyze early modern dramatists' recuperative and reparative representations of corporeal openness and self-shattering, representations that bring forth the possibility of a community of continuous being that extends through and beyond life. Literary critics such as Margreta de Grazia, Gail Kern Paster, and Cynthia Marshall have

shown how constructs of bounded selfhood were far from pervasive within the early modern imagination and in *Damaging Intimacy*, I show how this was also, differently and strikingly, true of English communities. Within this frame of analysis, any notion of the ascent of individual selfhood is but an idle teleological myth, a hagiography of humanism. Instead, by registering an alternative social scene, I aim, not to tell an alternative history of individual selfhood, but an alternative history of communities as part of the work of resisting homogenizing definitions of identity.

For it is impossible to speak of the individual without the other, unthinkable to think of a life that is not always already shared. We do not choose to join a community for protection but rather are constituted, violently and at times against our will, through and by others. And it is the Renaissance stage where we might see alternative understandings of the self that are grounded in risk and in loss.

Archive and Methodology

Dialectical and theoretical, my methodology engages queer theory as a deconstructive anti-identitarian critical and political practice. To develop my notion of queer communities that are predicated on radical risk-taking and intoxicating self-forfeiture, I reconcile two seemingly conflicting lines of thinking through community: that of thinkers like Judith Butler, Isabell Lorey, and Michel Foucault and that of thinkers like Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Derrida, Georges Bataille, and Giorgio Agamben. The former imagines the quotidian, everyday experience of community as vulnerability to one another predicated on our natural state of precarity; the latter envisions community as an impossible shared horizon—an unattainable community in death that we may continually strive for but which is ever receding. These two lines of thought may appear

incompatible: one premised on our constant, unremitting access to community while the other precludes our access to community entirely. In actuality, though, both approaches presume the individual body as always already porous, fragmented, and transient—the basis of our shared commonness is our embodied vulnerability, the ever-present susceptibility to do violence and to be violated. Further, both envision community relations as unavoidable, never-ending obligations to the other; these interpersonal bonds are ethical demands preceding consent. What binds us morally has to do with how we are addressed by others—unbidden, unexpected, and unplanned—in ways that we cannot avert or avoid. Finally, both theorizations of community are undergirded by desires for individual dispossession and death; this fundamental relationship between community and death has the potential to disrupt conventional social bonds. Thus *all* are radical in a particular way, adopting positions of particular interest here in that they argue for the impossibility of bounded selfhood and identify the dangers that come from insisting on such. And I use the term "radical" in all its suggestive valences: as unorthodox and innovative, forcing us to reconceptualize the social and imagine a counterfactual; and as that which is inherent in the nature or essence of things, the humour or moisture once thought to be present in all living organisms, connecting us all. Ethical interpersonal relations require our individual unboundedness and an acknowledgement of death, not as an inanimate state of matter, but rather as a position on the spectrum of vitality—this denouement is ever as costly as it is pleasurable.

These current theories of community that emphasize its vulnerable, obligatory, and self-expropriative nature do not solely belong to the present. We can hear the remnants of the potential of community to dismantle human exceptionalism and individual possessiveness both in classical and Renaissance times. As Cicero states:

Beginning with the bonds of affection between family and friends, we are prompted to move gradually further out and associate ourselves firstly with our fellow citizens and then with every person on earth. As Plato wrote to Archytas, we bear in mind that we are born not just for ourselves but for our country and our people, so much so that only a small fraction of us remains for ourselves.[17]

Making a similar point much later, sixteenth-century Scottish humanist George Buchanan would actually oppose man's desire to protect private interests and his desire for community. Whereas "utility indeed to some seems to be very efficacious, both in begetting and conserving the publick society of mankind," Buchanan argues, "there is a far more venerable, or ancient cause of mens associating, and a more antecedaneous & sacred bond of their civil community."[18] The desire to protect private interest cannot be what gives rise to civil association, because "if every one would have a regard to his own private advantage, then surely that very utility would rather dissolve than unite humane society together."[19] Community cannot be grounded in political association in view of the useful or the profitable but is founded on *philia* that is older than subjectivity and its borders. Interrelationality involves more loss than gain and in this way is without utility.

Further distinguishing community from normative sociality, Roger Coke, speaking of Hugo Grotius, states:

As the first thing in his Preface is Societas & Communitas; whereas Societas is as different from Communitas, as black is from white; Societas, according to the definition of Aristotle, being *Unum quid ita constans ex diversis personis, ut fit unum quod imperet,*

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[17] Cicero, *On Moral Ends*, ed. Julia Annas, trans. Raphael Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), esp.41-2.

[18] George Buchanan, *De jure regni apud Scotos,* 1680, 12.

[19] Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, esp. 12.

alterum quod pareat (Society is one thing so made up of diverse persons, that one may

command, another obey); Whereas community is, where any company of Creatures are,

without the offices of commanding and obeying.[20]

Community eschews hierarchized protected differences; its constitution begins with the

defection, the exodus from domination relations. And Coke later concludes, that "[t]he

community which then was, was nothing else but what was simply opposed to property"—or, in

other words, that the opposite of community is ownership.[21] Community for these thinkers is

manifest in the transitive act of giving, losing, and expenditure.

Further expounding on the potential of community to exceed the principle of identity or

any figure of integrated totality, Thomas Smith concedes that our very humanity resides in the

capacity to think beyond our self-preservative impulses: "we be not born only to ourselves but

partly to the use of our country, of our parents, of our kinfolk, and partly of our friends and

neighbors. And therefore all good virtues are grafted in us naturally, whose effects be to do good

to others, wherein shows forth the image of God in man whose property is ever to do good to

others and to distribute goodness abroad, like no niggard nor envious thing."[22] And although

Restoration republican Algernon Sidney imagines community as a kind of protective social

clothing,[23] he, in the same breath, argues that when "publick powers are emply'd for publick

benefit, [men] do not spare their persons, purses, or friends."[24] Likewise, Anthony Ascham,

recapitulating the value of sharing over possession, believes "there yet remains some common

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[20] Roger Coke, *A Survey of the Politicks of Thomas White, Thomas Hobbs, and Hugo Grotius* (London, 1662), esp. 32.
[21] Ibid, esp. 106.
[22] Thomas Smith, *A Discourse of the Commonweal of This Realm of England,* ed. Mary Dewar (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1969), esp. 16-7.
[23] Algernon Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, ed. Thomas G. West (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1996), esp. 22.
[24] Ibid, esp. 272.

right or natural community among all men, even in impropriations; so that that which is necessary to an other belongs justly to me."[25]

    I do not mean to suggest that we can trace a teleological line of thinking through community from the Renaissance to the present; nor do I intend to engage in retroactive mapping or applications of contemporary theory as a prefabricated, mechanistic system of thought on early modern texts. I do, however, want to emphasize the resonances, disruptions, and the shimmers of intimacy, friction, and difference between Renaissance and contemporary conversations on community to underscore that intimate bonds require risking the integral self. Rather than write a competing linear narrative about the history of selfhood, I aim to discover the lateral possibilities and alternatives such a vulnerable self may beget in order to reconfigure the present field of possibilities of how we might form bonds with one another. By analyzing early modern tracts on social contract and friendship, treatises on the Galenic body, and English statutes concerning political sovereignty, personal property, and subjects' natural rights alongside present-day community thinkers, I seek to show that an acknowledgement and embrace of our embodied vulnerability may pave the path to a more ethical, liberating, and collective life.

Why Queer?

Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive—recurrent, eddying, *troublant*. The word "queer" itself means *across*—it comes from the Indo-European root -*twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (traverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English "athwart.

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[25] Antony Ascham, *A Discourse: wherein is examined, what is particularly lawfull during the Confusions and Revolutions of Government* (London, 1648), esp. 48.

—Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies*26

I use queer theory as a heuristic that allows me to critique literary, critical, and historical

presumptions of sexual and gender (hetero)normativity in cultural contexts and in textual

subjectivities. It allows alternative imaginings of sexual identities and positionalities that today

have come to be called lesbian, gay, and transgender, but also narcissistic, perverse, and

masochistic; it is these queer possibilities that make available new ways to think about

interconnectedness as fundamentally risk-laden, unrestrained, and expropriating. Queerness thus

materializes as a discursive mode of violence by privileging self-undoing, working both within

and against hegemonic dominant ideology that organizes the world through binaries:27 using the

same terms but (con)fusing their distinctness, queer sites emerge as threatening realms of

subterfuge, transgression, and violent interrelation—it is a momentary manifestation of

communal *jouissance* to which erotic excesses fasten that escapes hierarchical, socially-

sanctioned bonds.

Queer theory further affords a conceptual framework for which to explicate desires for

self-annihilation and death—desires that contest our primal instinct for self-preservation.

Working within the space amidst thinkers like José Esteban Muñoz and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

who argue for queer ways of existing within the social and thinkers like Lee Edelman and Leo

Bersani who argue that queerness must ultimately explode the social, I argue that there are

alternative ways of being and belonging in hegemonic sociality that may not be legible but

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26 See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993), esp. xii.
27 As Eve Sedgwick argues, "all modern Western identity and social organization" is built on the binaries between categorical "master terms." She then catalogues binarisms, examples of which include "private/public," "masculine/feminine," "majority/minority," "natural/artificial," "new/old," "active/passive," "in/out," "wholeness/decadence," and the list goes on. See her *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: U of C Press, 2008), esp. 11.

nevertheless can circulate and percolate within. (As a brief aside, by hegemonic sociality, I borrow Antonio Gramsci's definition of hegemony as a multilayered system by which a dominant group achieves power not through coercion but through the production of an interlocking system of ideas which persuades people of the rightness of any given set of often contradictory ideas and perspectives, or an instance of Althusserian Ideology.[28] Applied to the social, this translates into the dominant State-sanctioned bonds between individuated, governable, and disciplined bodies—whether this be the Roman Republic, the State of Denmark, or the Persian Empire that views community as property or as territory to be partitioned off and defended against those who do not belong to it). By exceeding the logic of symbolic events and thwarting our self-preservative instincts, these annihilative desires are socially illegible and can be galvanized as a source for political resistance in the way James C. Scott astutely notes: "Illegibility, then, has been and remains a reliable source for political autonomy."[29] Through queer illegibility, we may begin to exceed the dangerous limits that have been placed on the very possibility of imagining alternatives themselves and be given a way for these ideological limits to be contested.

Many of the radical experiments in community I consider ultimately "fail" in the traditional sense, but here I join Jack Halberstam who argues for the value, and, I'd go so far to say the necessity, of failure in exploring the history of alternative political formations. In *The Queer Art of Failure,* Halberstam insists on the efficacy of failure: "Under certain circumstances, failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world. Failing is something

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[28] Antonio Gramsci, "Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc," in *The Gramsci Reader: Selected writings, 1916-1935*, ed. David Forgasc (New York: New York UP, 2000).
[29] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999), esp. 54.

queers do and have always done exceptionally well."[30] The history of alternative selfhoods and community formation is important because it contests social relations as given and allows us to access traditions of political action that offer models of contestation, rupture, and discontinuity for the political present. These histories that offer extreme instances of interpersonal connection through self-undoing, ecstatic expropriation, and utter loss may fail in the sense of being momentary or untenable, but we might build on these potent avenues of failure. These failures may offer us potential models of how to counter the logics of security, protection, and possession that have emerged from the dominance of human exceptionalism and the bourgeois ideology of autonomous existence. Moving from the antirelational thesis of queerness to the being singular plural of queerness, I understand queerness as collectivity—as a mode of longing that allows us to imagine a different kind of future. In envisioning alternative reimaginings of community that explode borders, boundaries, and binaries—historically, theoretically, and materially—we might seriously consider vulnerability, destabilization, insecurity, and endangerment as the path to a more ethical way of sharing life with others.

Chapter Descriptions

Damaging Intimacy is organized around several Shakespearean and Marlovian plays exploring the queer communities that form in the context of sovereignty and the state. Each chapter begins by theorizing the specific, alternative modes of interpersonal bonds that form in each play and then moves onto discuss the potential residual effects of each radical experiment in community on hegemonic sociality. Chapter One begins with Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, a play whose notorious titular character has been portrayed as a solitary being embodying the ideology

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[30] Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham & London: Duke UP, 2011), esp. 2.

of radical individualism and complete severance from community. However, I contend that Coriolanus figures an alternative community of soldiers framed around the absenting of both hetero- and homonormative structures and the production of a sphere which celebrates masochistic desires and male bodies riddled with wounds (*vulnus* being the etymological root of vulnerability).[31] The desired and reciprocal penetrations that constitute battle are the calls and responses to an interpersonal requisite that exceeds self-preservation. Chapter Two continues exploring the erotics of battle through *Coriolanus*' Marlovian counterpart, *Tamburlaine the Great*. Drawing on French sociologist Marcel Mauss's influential notion of *potlatch*, a total system of gift giving in a competition to see who is the richest and also the most madly extravagant, I argue that Tamburlaine disrupts the logic of commodity culture. Within the hypermilitarist and hypermasculine economies of war, he creates a world of inoperative *joussiance* where death becomes another form of interconnectedness. By deeply implicating himself in all the bodies of those he encounters, Tamburlaine stages an alternative model of social and economic organization much more radically utopian than the Persian Empire. Chapter Three pivots from the context of battle to that of law in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. I argue that the bond-of-flesh between Antonio and Shylock augurs a new mode of interrelation, evoked by the melancholic condition, undergirded by desire for violence, and insured through risking death. Drawing from Georges Bataille's "law" that human beings are only united to each other through wounds, *The Merchant* mobilizes an imaginative possibility whereby reciprocal damage constitutes kinship. Contrasting such communion with the Christian sociality of Venice, I identify the paradox that sociality, premised as it is on the protection of autonomous

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[31] By homonormativity, I am thinking about the socially sanctioned homoeroticism that characterized same sex friendships in the Renaissance. Despite the overwhelming anxiety around sodomy, male-male friendships nevertheless modeled the apex of the purest, idealized interrelation. See Laurie Shannon's *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001).

subjectivity, disallows the union for which sacrificial communion strives. Chapter Four shifts

from the erotics of law to the erotics of sovereignty to explore the experience of communal

suffering in Marlowe's *Edward II*. I engage the discourse of Petrarchism within the play to

expose its sodomitical underpinnings which stages the incomprehensible changeability of the self

which is so violent as to call its own identity into question. As a poetics of radical fungibility and

violent self-alienation, sodomitical Petrarchism affords an overarching discourse for the play in

which vulnerability and suffering inheres. Taking up the early modern pneumatic cosmology of

the universe, I examine how Edward II's sovereign body transposes an experience of isolated

suffering (the body-in-pain as a violently individualizing experience, an ante-linguistic sealing

off of oneself from others and from the world) into a communal event. The humoral body affords

a conceptual framework whereby a body's boundaries can be, literally and figuratively,

extended, infectious, and haunting. The sovereign body thus functions as a stretching out of the

individual's life outside itself, a remaining beyond itself, a substance that continually exceeds its

own proper site and bounds.

In envisioning a history of alternative political formations, of alternative selfhoods that

privilege unruly forms of relationality, *Damaging Intimacy* posits community not as a failed

experiment or an anachronistic formation, but as a viable, even if not durably functional,

alternative to normative sociality. This line of thought about unbounded selves as constitutive of,

by, and through community can cast new light on imaginative worlds where social bonds are

laden with cost and with risk. This relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity, that is to

say a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, becomes the

foundation for an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and other. I aim to trace the

moments where bonds are formed between unlikely characters—between warriors and their

archenemies, a bondsman and his lender, a king and his minion—to underscore that community is an obligation, and often one that is against our will. Rather than seek to minimize vulnerability and divide it into hierarchized differences of whose lives count and whose lives do not, we must recognize that it is our shared human condition and find ways to embrace and inhabit it. Acknowledging that one's life is dependent on anonymous others must be the basis on which we reimagine a new kind of world.

At a time when we are at what feels like a crucial juncture about the basis for global political community, about the fate of the reality of certain lives and of certain deaths, and about the realistic viability of interpersonal connection, nothing seems more appropriate today than thinking about community. I argue that early modern drama affords a productive locus for rethinking radical ways of being and belonging that drives my project's strong, affective core made of convictions, vision, and active desire for change. I aim to write with a grammar of possibility and remain open to unpredictable outcomes to reimagine how we might think about the great costs and great joys offered by damaging intimacy.

Chapter II

Annihilative Intimacy and the Masochistic Erotics of Battle in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*

I have nightly since

Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me—

We have been down together in my sleep,

Unbuckling helms, fisting each other's throat—

And waked half dead with nothing.

—Aufidius, *Coriolanus,* 4.5.121-5[32]

It is good to rely upon others. For no one can bear this life alone.

—Hölderlin, "The Titans"

In Nazi Germany, Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* was presented as a paean to Hitler's strong

leadership. Fascists in Germany, France, and Italy embraced the play for what they took to be its

contempt for liberal democracy and its celebration of the martial heroism of a fearless leader. A

1934-school edition told its young readers that the *Führer* Coriolanus is trying to lead the Roman

Volk to a healthier society "as Adolf Hitler in our days wishes to lead our beloved German

fatherland," which prompted American occupation forces to ban it for eight years after 1945.[33] In

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[32] All references to the play are to *The Norton Shakespeare 2nd ed.: Coriolanus*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 1059-1146, cited parenthetically. I have followed conventional usage for the spelling of characters' names.
[33] Rodney Symington, *The Nazi Appropriation of Shakespeare: Cultural Politics in the Third Reich* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005). For an overview of different translations, adaptations, and independent versions of *Coriolanus* in Germany, see Martin Brunkhorst, *Shakespeare's "Coriolanus" in Deutscher Bearbeitung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973), esp. 157.

Stratford-upon-Avon in 1959, Laurence Olivier performed the death scene by leaping headfirst from a twelve-foot platform without the support of wires, his ankles caught last minute by two actor soldiers, and dangling upside down in a manner deliberately reminiscent of Benito Mussolini's execution.[34] In the most recent 2011 British film adaptation, Ralph Fiennes said his models for the role included Russia's Vladimir Putin and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi.[35] And the *LA Times* recently published an article entitled "No mercy in him: Reading Shakespeare's 'Coriolanus' in the age of Trump," comparing Donald Trump to this same notorious leader.[36] What all of these representations rely on is a reading of Coriolanus as an authoritarian dictator and symbol of complete autonomy—a totalitarian singularity completely set apart and above the masses.[37] Throughout its performance history, Coriolanus has, time and again, been portrayed as a solitary being embodying the ideology of radical individualism and complete severance from community. "Alone I did it" (5.6.117) and history seems to agree.

This chapter begins by retelling the story of Coriolanus, one of the most (in)famous literary "superheroes" memorialized for his unmatched martial prowess and hypermasculine excess. I aim to revise the popular understanding of this character as a larger-than-life proto-fascist leader by addressing questions concerning what constitutes warrior subjectivity and what kinds of interpersonal bonds are formed in battle:[38] what modes of identity construction and models of interrelation are mobilized in a hypermasculine space of unbridled, reckless violence?

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[34] For a more detailed discussion of the similarities between Olivier's performance and Mussolini's execution, see Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture* (New York: Random House, 2008), esp. 69.

[35] Ralph Fiennes, interview by Rob Carnevale, indielondon.co.uk.

[36] Michael Hiltzik, "No mercy in him: Reading Shakespeare's 'Coriolanus' in the age of Trump," *Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 2017, https://www.latimes.com/business/hiltzik/la-fi-hiltzik-coriolanus-20170821-story.html.

[37] Although Coriolanus's birth name is Caius Martius and it is not until the battle of Corioles that he is renamed "Coriolanus," I will refer to him throughout this chapter as Coriolanus to avoid any confusion.

[38] I use the term "interpersonal" in lieu of "intersubjective" because I want to emphasize my investment in bodies and the materiality of selves. My argument is largely premised on the notion that the Western objectivist/subjectivist metaphysics are reconfigured in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*.

How does the battlefield delineate space within and/or outside the sphere of Roman political power? This concern with power and Roman culture shifts to scrutinize the erotics of warriors in their military relations—erotics framed around the absenting of hetero-/homo-normative systems that continually exceed, question, and thwart strict bounded structurality.39 Rather than facilitate socially-sanctioned masculine homosocial amity, the erotics of battle are couched in an explicitly masochistic register that give way to unbound conditions of being.40 Through the masochistic erotics of violence, we witness the emergence of an interpersonal intimacy predicated on an exchange of desires and an exchange of damage. Rather than securing masculine subjectivity through a kind of impenetrable invincibility, martial heroism is shown to inhere in bloody wounds. Warriors construct their subjectivity by exposing their bodies to deadly risks, by inhabiting extremely vulnerable states of being where life is constantly intruded upon by death. Their honor is not in maintaining an autonomous, impenetrable, closed body as the increasing attention to bourgeois subjectivity, liberal individualism, and the subjective right to self-protection in early modern England facilitated, but rather provides an alternative—yet still viable—mode of being: that of a masochistic ethos and praxis wholly dependent on a fully intersubjective existence and one's willingness to be undone.41 Countering the early modern

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39 By naming both hetero- and homonormative systems, I am claiming that the masochistic erotics of battle exceed both the heterosexual marriage bond and the socially sanctioned homosocial bonds of friendship between men which Laurie Shannon claims is a consequence of early modern's "special emphasis of likeness." See Shannon's *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001), esp. 2.

40 Given the necessity of reading history "retroactively," in Slavoj Žižek's term, an important concern in this chapter will be discovering the reasons why a masochistic erotics of violence tends to emerge in the early modern period as a viable mode of interpersonal relations that gives way to unbound conditions of being. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality* (London: Verso, 1994), esp. 89.

41 Since Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* and Harold Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, the narrative that the "liberal" or 'bourgeois" subject with newfound interiority emerged on the early modern stage has been repeatedly asserted. For instance, Catherine Belsey charts the production in the Renaissance of a meaning for subjectivity that is identifiably modern. The subject of liberal humanism—self-determining, free origin of language, choice, and action—is highlighted as the product of a specific period in which man was the subject to which woman was related. See Belsey's *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985). Annabel M. Patterson further contends that liberalism's central ideas were

humanist program that ostensibly helped to "forge ideas of individuality and a culture of self-fashioning," the literary battlefield emerges as a kind of extrasocial hyperspace where the body's bounds are continuously traversed and the integral individual relentlessly damaged.[42] Even as significant discourses were effecting the emergence of the modern autonomous self, an efficacious textual tradition made available another way of thinking about violating personhood as a means to connect intimately with others. Coriolanus's legacy as the literary paragon emblematic of *homo clausus* actually obscures the play's investment in celebrating self-forfeiture and unprotected existence.[43]

I move on to consider what occurs when the battlefield is grafted back onto Rome's political arena which cannot accommodate fully intersubjective subjects and annihilative desires. Resisting a much broader critical practice of recuperating early modern texts as republican, protoliberal documents, I argue that the mapping of the battlefield onto the republic reveals the play's investment in imagining other modes of co-existing that may not even be considered political at all.[44] A rift materializes between the state's political community and the mode of

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formulated by seventeenth century English writers in defiance of their society's norms and then transmitted to the American colonies. See Patterson's *Early Modern Liberalism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997).

[42] Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, eds. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), esp. 11.

[43] Norbert Elias theorizes the evolution of the notion of the self as "ego" completely separate from the environment. Elias contends that the early modern period witnessed the emergence of *homo clauses*. See Elias, *The History of Manners*, vol. I, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmond Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). David Hillman builds on this narrative by arguing that during the early seventeenth century, a slow move toward an idea of the "individual" was in process, a transition from Galen and the humors to Harvey and the circulatory system. This newly bounded self is divided from the rest of the cosmos and its surroundings, enclosed in a sealed, penetrable shell—cut off from the external world and from its own inner body, sealed in an armor-like skin that serves to protect it from all that is outside its boundaries. See Hillman's *Shakespeare's Entrails: Belief, Scepticism and the Interior of the Body* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), esp. 8-9. I aim to chart a literary antiphon to this purported cultural transition from Galenic fluidity and openness to a closed, self-contained body.

[44] For a sampling of scholarship that read early modern texts as precursor to republican, protoliberal texts, see Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005); Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theater and The Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2007); David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric, and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999); Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005); Howard Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics: Shakespeare to Dryden* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge:

interrelation forged between Coriolanus and Aufidius, the former privileging individuation and

security and the latter privileging exposure and destruction. Taking up the recent body of

scholarship that engages the dialogue between community and precarious, living bodies by

thinkers such as Jean-Luc Nancy, Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, and Isabel Lorey, I argue that

Coriolanus's commitment to radically intercorporeal states of being irrevocably disrupts social

orthodoxies and opens a new path to intimacy. And by intimacy, I borrow Lisa Lowe's

formulation of the term as "a constellation of asymmetrical and unevenly legible 'intimacies'"

(that both include and extend beyond erotic relations) that decenter liberal, individual self-

possession.45 By imagining and inhabiting modes of self-*dis*possession, Coriolanus becomes

such a threat to the state's security that the state enacts its own autoimmunization, marking

Coriolanus as other through the rhetoric of disease and banishing him in the name of the people.

And yet, the very move that fabricates Coriolanus *as* Coriolanus confers upon him a Roman

identity of geographic conquest so his elimination inevitably comes back to haunt Rome.

Although the play ends with the death of this extraordinary warrior, for a brief moment, we are

confronted with the aporia that lies at the heart of every political community and offered a

glimpse into a potential "world elsewhere" (3.3.139): one that profoundly disrupts the hegemonic

state whose power relies on the potent combination of the fear of death and the imperative of

self-preservation. Alternatively, we are invited to reimagine our bodies by embracing radical

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Cambridge UP, 1995); and *Marvell and Liberty*, ed. Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

45 Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke UP, 2015), esp. 18. Lowe's comprehensive and nuanced discussion of intimacy unsettles the dominant notion of intimacy as the possession of the individual as she considers both the residual and emergent forms of intimacy through sources as disparate as the *OED,* political theorists like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, and Antonio Gramsci, and literary critics like Lauren Berlant and Raymond Williams, to name a few. I am indebted to her careful consideration of the dynamic and unstable formation of intimacy in different political, juridical, and historical spaces.

porosity and rethink intersubjectivity through valuing masochistic, reciprocal violence as a potentially liberatory means to intimacy.

Holey Hypermasculinity

Coriolanus is often considered something of an anachronism.[46] His military prowess which channels extreme aggression and anger into feats of extraordinary strength aligns with the Roman warrior-hero figure of an archaic military code that renders him politically incompetent in a time of incipient civil order.[47] According to Jennifer Feather and Catherine E. Thomas, the arrogation of military power to the Tudor monarchy spawned narratives that describe the early modern period as supplanting a violent medieval past.[48] An increasingly mercantile economy moved the function of the aristocracy away from martial exploits and toward diplomatic concerns as dynastic feudalism gave way to a burgeoning sense of nation. In many ways, relative decline in interpersonal violence seems a necessary prerequisite for and the consequence of the

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[46] Coriolanus, as Herculean warrior-hero, fails to embody the man of moderation advocated by humanist education. While there are some scholars such as Donald Hedrick who contend that Coriolanus presents a new valuation of a kind of hypermasculinity fit for Elizabethan theater, the prevalent readings claim that Coriolanus's heroic ideal is antithetical to moderation which is requisite to collective decision-making in civic society. See Hedrick's "Male Surplus Value," *Renaissance Drama* 31 (2002): 84-124; Unhae Langis, "*Coriolanus*: Inordinate Passions and Powers in Personal and Political Governance," *Comparative Drama* 44.1 (2010): 1-27; Paul Jorgensen, "Shakespeare's Coriolanus: Elizabethan Soldier," *PMLA* 64 (1949): 221-35; Cathy Shrank, "Civility and the City in *Coriolanus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 54 (2004): 406-23. Katharine Maus, following Paul Jorgensen's lead, argues that "Coriolanus's military prowess is not merely irrelevant to peacetime employment but indeed renders him politically incompetent or even dangerous." See Maus's Introduction to *Coriolanus* in *The Norton Shakespeare 2nd ed.: Coriolanus*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), esp. 2787; and Pradip K. Datta, "The Paradox of Greatness and the Limits of Pragmatism in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*," *CLA Journal* 38.1 (1994): 97-107.
[47] For a comprehensive overview on early modern masculinity as control, temperance, and moderation, see Todd W. Reeser, *Moderating Masculinity in Early Modern Culture* (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Press, 2006), esp. 11-48; Alexandra Shepard, *The Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford UP, 2003); Catherine Bates, *Masculinity, Gender and Identity in the English Renaissance Lyric* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2007); Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996); and Coppèlia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1981).
[48] Jennifer Feather and Catherine E. Thomas, Introduction to *Violent Masculinities: Male Aggression in Early Modern Texts and Culture,* eds. Jennifer Feather and Catherine E. Thomas (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), esp. 5.

rise of humanism. Early modernity is frequently cited as this period where chivalry became

courtiership and where military prowess was replaced with *sprezzatura*, but what typically gets

overlooked is that these ideals *still* lead to violent assertions of male self-constitution.[49] For

instance, while Roger Ascham may refer to Thomas Malory's *Morte Arthure* knights as "full of

bold bawdrye and open mans slaughter…that do kill most men without any quarell, and commit

fowlest aduoulteries by sutlest shiftes,"[50] denigrating the practice of violence and suggesting

other reading material for young men, Thomas Elyot recommends the reading of classical

literature specifically for its tales of masculine prowess.[51] Elyot dedicates entire chapters in *The

Boke Named the Governour* to "only speake of those exercises, apt to the furniture of a

gentilmannes personage, adapting his body to hardnesse, strength, and agilitie, and to helpe

therwith hym selfe in perile, whiche may happen in warres or other necessitie" and goes on to

detail wrestling, handling weapons, and horse-riding to name a few.[52] The distinction made in

these humanist authors between "open mans slaughter" and the virtuous actions of gentlemen

obscures their similar investment in violent manifestations of masculinity and actually

perpetuates the cultural significance of male violence; yet I argue these same aggressive

expressions unexpectedly lead to self-destruction and self-loss in practice. Rather than "adapting

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[49] Elias famously charts the "courtization of the warrior" in which the violent impulses of the Middle Ages are curbed by an increased internalization of codes of conduct that are meant to facilitate ever-increasing chains of reliance on others. See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell (Malden: Blackwell, 2000). Moreover, Woodbridge reminds us that "anxiety about the effeminizing effects of peace helps account for the shift from the medieval chivalric ideal, in which violently warlike behavior could coexist with courtly love, to a Renaissance separation between the soldier and the lover: the one staunchly masculine, the other effeminized." See Linda Woodbridge, Introduction to *Women, Violence, and English Renaissance Literature*, eds. Linda Woodbridge and Sharon Beehler (Tempe: Arizone Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003), esp. xv.

[50] Here and in quotations from other first editions, I have modernized the early modern "v" and "u," "I" and "j" and expanded common shorthands such as the use of tildes above letters to indicate an omitted "m" or "n."

[51] Roger Ascham, *The scholemaster or plaine and perfite way of teachyng children, to understand, write, and speake, the Latin tong but specially purposed for the private brynging up of youth in gentlemen and noble mens houses, and commodious also for all such, as have forgot the Latin tong…* (London, 1570), 27r and Thomas Elyot, *The boke named the governour* (London, 1531).

[52] Thomas Elyot, *The boke named the governour* (London, 1531).

his body to hardnesse, strength, and agilitie," heroic acts in war are effected by bodily risk and the ever-present potential of bodily harm. *Coriolanus* textually stages these transformative, violent excesses in the breakdown of the autonomous subject, valorizing wounds and a bloodied, exteriorized existence.

Often read as the literary exemplar most desirous of complete autonomy, I aim to show that Coriolanus desires precisely the opposite. Coriolanus does not desire the bounded body but a completely shattered, inside-out, annihilated one. By defining hypermasculine identity in gaping wounds, the play invites us to witness the con-/de-struction of an identity that acknowledges one's vulnerability, situated, partial, and unfinished constitution in relation to others. The non-integral disintegrated body of the warrior is emphasized from the play's very beginning, recurring with Jean-Luc Nancy's critique and refiguration of the origin (or ontology) of Being:

> Being is singular plural dis-position. The distancing of disposition is *nothing*; this "nothing," however, is not the negative of anything. It is the incorporeal by which, according to which, bodies are with one another, close to one another, side by side, in contact and the thing itself: the thing as being-itself, that is, the being-such of every being, the mutual exposition of beings that exist only in and through this exposition.[53]

Dis-position can be read in its double meaning here: as a being's fundamental constitution as well as the way in which things are arranged in relation to other things. That is, being singular plural is both from within and without. What I want to emphasize here is Nancy's insistence on the "nothing" of Being as something other than pure negativity; instead, somewhat surprisingly, there is insistent bodily presence, "the thing as being-itself" requires bodies "with one another, close to one another, side by side, in contact." The origin of the subject then is "nothing" but a

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[53] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), esp. 91.

nothing with substance where we can fleetingly grasp identity in our estrangement from it. The key here is "mutual exposition": that reciprocal, joint exposure without which we would cease to exist. So then, what does it mean that *Coriolanus* falls seven years after *Hamlet*, a play that in Marjorie Garber's apt terms, "situated on the cusp of what has come to be known as the modern subject"?[54] It is this construction of identity along and against a historical trajectory of selfhood (including what Jonathan Goldberg, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Patricia Fumerton among others have characterized as a rhetoric of inwardness and privacy that becomes highly developed in the Renaissance) that I examine here.[55] By literalizing Coriolanus as "a kind of nothing" (5.1.13), we are forced to confront the unsettling preposition that the origin of our being—this inward space—is not a property or presence but precisely a breach, a lacuna, and a dis-possession. Just as he is named "Coriolanus" by removing his patronymic "Caius Martius," so too is he defined primarily by his missing, scarred, lacerated, bloodied, maimed flesh.

Many critics have read *Coriolanus* as a venture into the pitfalls and possibilities of the bounded, discrete, and delineated model of masculine, somatic integrity.[56] For instance, psychoanalytic critics Janet Adelman and Cynthia Marshall see in him a frantic (and failed) attempt to break from his phallic mother and secure a coherent masculine identity.[57] In a slightly

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[54] Marjorie Garber, "*Hamlet*: Giving Up the Ghost" in *Hamlet,* ed. Susanne L. Wofford (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1994): 297-329, esp. 303.

[55] Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989), esp. 86; Katharine Eisaman Maus, "Proof and Consequences: Inwardness and its Exposure in the English Renaissance," *Representations* 34 (1991); Patricia Fumerton, "'Secret' Arts: Elizabethan Miniatures and Sonnets," *Representations* 15 (1986), esp. 90.

[56] For instance, Madelon Sprengnether conceptualizes the play as focused on "the exaggerated violence of relationships among men based on the exclusion of femininity." I argue that masculinity in this play is not predicated on a fear or rejection of femininity but rather on rejecting a bounded, viable, politically-recognizable body. See Sprengnether's "Annihilating Intimacy in *Coriolanus*," *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1986), 89-112, esp. 92.

[57] Janet Adelman, "'Anger's My Meat': Feeding, Dependency, and Aggression in *Coriolanus* in *Shakespeare: Pattern of Excelling Nature*, eds. David Bevington and Jay L. Halio (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1978), 108-24; and Cynthia Marshall, "Wound-man: *Coriolanus*, Gender, and the Theatrical Construction of Interiority" in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, eds. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dympna Callaghan (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 93-118.

different vein, Jennifer Low contends that as one who has "penetrated" cities in battle, Coriolanus "refuses to render himself to figurative penetration."[58] Similarly, Lisa Starks-Estes argues that when Coriolanus refuses to show his wounds to the masses,[59] he reveals a more deeply rooted fear of his own passivity and the potential permeability of his body which follows Coppélia Kahn's logic that the Latin word for "wound" is *vulnus*, the root of "vulnerability" which is easily associated with women, as they show the flesh to be penetrable, prove it can bleed and make apertures in the body.[60] In a more explicitly political reading, Annabel Patterson argues that *Coriolanus* advocates drawing borders around the self and in doing so, calls for a new community, one that would jettison the notion of a body politic governed by an absolute sovereign in favor of a republic which actively fosters empowered, discrete subjects: the potential bearers of rights.[61]

While these critics discuss Coriolanus's attempt to achieve masculine, somatic autonomy in different terms, all see it as evident and excessive. For them, Coriolanus predicates his masculine identity on and ideal of total boundedness, absolute sovereignty, and complete distinction from others (which the play's performance history also corroborates). However, I argue that Coriolanus's masculine identity is predicated precisely on a broken, externalized,

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[58] Jennifer A. Low, "'Bodied Forth': Spectator, Stage, and Actor in the Early Modern Theater," *Comparative Drama* 39.1 (2005): 1-29, esp. 19.

[59] When Coriolanus refuses to show his wounds to the plebeians, the scene may seem incompatible with this argument since he declines to occupy the position of the masochistic martyr on display and denies his corporeal vulnerability. However, this action is consistent with Coriolanus's refusal to be made a viable, legible social subject of exchange, and further, accelerates his own undoing as it leads to his banishment from Rome and subsequent death wish. He is refusing to be exchanged in the public eye and can only show his wounds to other fellow soldiers who partake in this economy of vulnerability.

[60] Lisa Starks-Estes goes on to argue that *Coriolanus* dramatizes the dangers, tensions, and anxieties resulting from the emergence of a "bounded" or closed impenetrable self to replace the earlier Galenic model of an open porous body. Yet this historical shift from the porous to the bounded body is more fraught, nonlinear, and occurs over a longer timeline than is presented. See Starks-Estes, "*Virtus,* Vulnerability and the Emblazoned Male Body in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*" in *Violent Masculinities: Male Aggression in Early Modern Texts and Culture,* eds. Jennifer Feather and Catherine E. Thomas (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), esp. 169.

[61] Annabel M. Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford & New York: Blackwell, 1989).

inside-out body where the number of wounds—the literal signs of interpenetration—are testament to his virile masculinity. As James Kuzner cogently argues, Coriolanus "points the way to a life that is openly vulnerable but also livable, to a Sodom whose residents would renounce the constructs of discrete social identity and bodily integrity alike, a place in which subjects would perish but life would not."[62] Although Kuzner aligns the figure of Coriolanus most closely with Leo Bersani's gay outlaw, stressing a "specifically *sexual* 'world elsewhere,'" I want to emphasize his notion of "openly vulnerable life" and the play's modeling of radical openness needed to move beyond rigidly defined borders (either political, physical, or psychological).[63] By underscoring the *corporeality* of this radical openness as constitutive of Coriolanus's valor, I aim to show that Coriolanus stands for other forms of unprotected life existing outside of Rome's fictions. And yet, when imported into Rome during a time of crisis, the Romans actually validate and extol this mode of existence. For instance, as Coriolanus returns home from the battle at Corioles, the exchange between his mother Volumnia and father-figure Menenius confirms that Rome values Coriolanus by fetishizing him as a fascicle of wounds:

> Menenius: Is he not wounded? He was wont to come home wounded.
>
> Virgilia: O, no, no, no!
>
> Volumnia: O, he is wounded, I thank the gods for't!
>
> Menenius: So do I, too, if it be not too much. Brings a victory in his pocket, *the wounds become him*.

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[62] James Kuzner describes Coriolanus's love of blood and battle as his desire to exceed the boundaries of the self. Drawing on the work of Giorgio Agamben, Judith Butler, and Jean-Luc Nancy, Kuzner aligns Coriolanus's undoing most fully with the transgressive figure of Leo Bersani's "gay outlaw" and the early modern sodomite in Jonathan Goldberg's work. Kuzner argues that the play's political potential may be located in the "sodomitical outside" of his relationship with Aufidius. See Kuzner's "Unbuilding the City: *Coriolanus* and the Birth of Republican Rome," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58 (2007): 174-99, esp. 175.

[63] Ibid, 175, emphasis mine.

…

Menenius: Where is he wounded? God save your good worships. Martius is coming

home. He has more cause to be proud. Where is he wounded?

Volumnia: I'th' shoulder and i'th' left arm. There will be large cicatrices to show the

people when he shall stand for his place. He received in the repulse of Tarquin seven

hurts i'th' body.

Menenius: One i'th' neck and two i'th' thigh—there's nine that I know.

Volumnia: He had before this last expedition twenty-five wounds upon him.

Menenius: Now it's twenty-seven. Every gash was an enemy's grave. (2.1.106-110, 129-

142, emphasis added)

This moment of fetishizing Coriolanus as a body of wounds ("wound" is repeated seven times in

this short exchange) confirms that the Romans legitimate his masculinity in a fantasy of a body

penetrated. Virgilia's and Volumnia's initial "O"s substitute for the wounds on Coriolanus's

body and Menenius proclaims that Coriolanus "brings a victory *in his pocket,*" doubly evoking a

body riddled with holes. Every "gash" Coriolanus sustains is a metonym for another holey

image: "an enemy's grave." Rome's victory is contingent on the condition that Coriolanus be

fleshed out, increasingly and aggressively exteriorized. Volumnia further claims that "there will

be large cicatrices to show the people when he shall stand for his place," carving out, for

Coriolanus, the trace of a hole scarred over.[64] Rather than the wounds signifying vacuity,

Volumnia's insistence on "large cicatrices" underscores a stubborn scabbiness. Far from "a

feminizing attention to his wounds undermin[ing] the hero's power" as Cynthia Marshall

contends, the wounds actually testify to the fact that Coriolanus has, in Volumnia's rhetoric,

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[64] According to the OED, a "cicatrix" is "the scar or seam remaining after a wound, sore, or ulcer is healed." See
"cicatrix, n.1," *OED Online* (Oxford, Oxford UP, January 2019).

"proved himself a man" (1.3.15).[65] Like his Marlovian counterpart Tamburlaine who mutilates himself to affirm his own status as warrior, proclaiming "[a] wound is nothing, be it ne'er so deep;/ Blood is the god of war's rich livery./ Now look I like a soldier" (2:3.2.115-7), Coriolanus affirms his masculine subjectivity through damaging the body.[66] Volumnia and Menenius' meticulous counting and anatomical categorization of each wound betray their desire to insist on Coriolanus's dis-integrated corporeality, locating masculine heroism in his wounds. As a record of his willingness to face grave physical peril in battle, his twenty-seven wounds literally inscribe masculinity on his body and present an indelible record of his martial acts. A perverse desire for divesting Coriolanus of an uncompromised, integral self fuels Menenius's repetitive question: "Where is he wounded?" and is a striking divergence from his customary jovial manner. The language of battle is the language of body counts, the description of wounds, and the naming of injured, if not severed, limbs—at its core, the language of battle is the language of damaged bodies. These "wounds become him"—Coriolanus's masculine body is rendered holey, shattered, and scarred.

Moreover, the maneuvers on the battlefield portray Martius as the visual testament to a violence that has always already cut across the narrative. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Coriolanus's return to the battlefield from out of Corioles, in which the image of Coriolanus provides the visual signifier for the end of war. The play need only produce Coriolanus drenched in the blood of the Volscians and his orificial body gaping from its own wounds, and his bloody visage ends the war outright. In the economy of a single stage direction—"*Enter* MARTIUS,

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[65] Marshall, "Wound-man," 96.

[66] After instructing his son Calyphas on the gloriousness of being wounded, Tamburlaine stabs himself in the arm. In this moment, Tamburlaine confirms that masculine subjectivity is paradoxically marked by wounds which, in his own words, "is nothing." The blank perfection of his skin actually becomes a shameful defect that he must remedy, once again confirming that masculine heroism inheres in gaping wounds. See Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II*, ed. John D. Jump (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1967).

bleeding, assaulted by the enemy"—Coriolanus conquers Corioles and he *wears* his victory. In fact, Coriolanus underscores his status as a body turned inside-out by drawing fellow-soldier Lartius back to the visual spectacle of his body: "The blood I drop is rather physical/ Than dangerous to me" (1.6.18-9) and later refers to himself as "this painting/ Wherein you [Cominius] see me smeared" (1.7.68-9).[67] He is "smeared" inside an aesthetic coating of his own blood commingled with that of his enemies, as a tableau "that does appear as he were flayed" (1.7.21-2).[68] This flayed figure would suggest the mythological figure Marsyas, who was flayed alive by Apollo and described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as "all entirely one wound,"[69] a spectacle of the bloody male body hung on a tree. Jonathan Sawday describes Marsyas as a "body caught in a moment of violent homoerotic possession; stripped of his skin;…transformed into 'one whole wound' into which curious spectators gaze."[70] As "one whole wound," Coriolanus embraces his aesthetic self-expropriation and transmutation into a surficial, exteriorized, unrecognizable "thing of blood" (2.2.105). As the apotheosis of "the warrior," what is glorified is not the closed, uncompromised body of masculine somatic wholeness, but the bloody wound of an irreparably damaged body. Or, to put in another register, the heroic body is

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[67] Coriolanus's corporeal self turned inside out and marked with blood is mentioned several times throughout the play. For instance, Coriolanus says that "I have shed my blood,/ Not fearing outward force" (3.1.76-7) and Menenius remarks that the blood that Coriolanus "hath lost…/…is more than that he hath" (3.1.299-300).

[68] This image would also have evoked the late medieval depictions of Christ as "a bloody smear." Bynum notes that visual images of Christ drenched in blood abound in this era. These visual depictions, which amount to a "cult of blood," attest to the "violent quality of the religiosity itself—what we might call its visual violence, especially the prominence of the motifs of body parts and of blood." Christians were encouraged to meditate on portrayals of fragmented and bleeding bodies, which would often lead to a mystical experience with flowing blood as an erotic release, as "ecstasy," See Carolyn Walker Bynum, "Violent Imagery in Late Medieval Piety," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 30 (2002), esp. 11, 3, 3 and 23.

[69] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Charles Martin (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2004), esp. IV.555.

[70] Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), esp. 186. Cynthia Marshall and Rodney Poisson also connect Coriolanus to the figure of Marsyas. See Marshall, "Wound-man: Coriolanus, Gender, and the Theatrical Construction of Interiority," in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, ed. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dympna Callaghan (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), esp. 107; and Poisson, "*Coriolanus* I. vi. 21-24," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15 (1964), esp. 449.

precisely Mikhail Bahktin's grotesque body where "the stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the apertures or the convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots."[71] This open and unfinished body—diametric to the classical ideal of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man—is the body that is an excessive presence, the body that is even more insistent where one's individuality merges with other bodies and with the world.[72]

The language and literality of wounds, scars, and blood abound in these passages, reaffirming bodily injury as foundational to warrior identity and figuring a space beyond protective imperatives. The world of battle paints a new community of bodies and the endless contagion that combines, overlaps, soaks, coagulates, and blends them. A permutation of Julia Kristeva's formulation of the abject as that which is "neither subject nor object," I propose that what we witness is the ongoing process of becoming no longer subject, no longer object.[73] I am invested in no longer subject over non-subject which is the transitive verb of dis-pos(sess)ition rather than a constant noun implying the stability of a possession. While masculinity (and especially hypermasculine violence) has traditionally become synonymous with hegemonic oppression or anxious overcompensation, we can also see a mode of self-making that exposes the

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[71] Bakhtin distinguishes between what he terms "grotesque realism" and the "classic canon" or the "new bodily canon." Against the principle of the "grotesque," Bakhtin posits the "classical body" which is unchanging, closed, and complete: "That which protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off (when a body transgresses its limits and a new one begins) is eliminated, hidden, or moderated. All orifices of the body are closed. The basis of the image is the individual, strictly limited mass, the impenetrable façade." See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1968), esp. 26, 320.

[72] Leonardo da Vinci's iconic Vitruvian Man is the emblem of Humanism, the classic ideal of "Man" first formulated by Protagoras as "the measure of all things" and later renewed in the Italian Renaissance as a universal model. Faith in the unique, self-regulating, and intrinsically moral powers of human reason forms an integral part of this high-humanistic creed. For more on the history and development of Humanism into a civilizational model, see Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Malden: Polity Press, 2013), esp. 13-6.

[73] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), esp. 1.

dis-integrated, internally fractured nature of the self. As Helkiah Crooke describes them in

Microcosmographia; or, A Description of the Body of Man (1615), bodies are "*transpirable* and

trans-fluxible,"74 unsparingly and recklessly exposed to their social and ecosystemic contexts. In

the figure of the warrior, the subjectivist and objectivist metaphysics get lost and we are left with

new ways to be penetrable and permeable. By refusing to calculate possible harm to himself or to

others, Coriolanus slides between thing and no-thing, a creaturely identity comprised of only a

hollowed-out "name" hallowed by bloodshed. His agnomen is commemorative of mutilation that

expropriates him of his initial property, namely, his very subjectivity. He partakes in a process of

violent self-formulation that precipitates bodily destruction, literalizing the disquieting notion

that the constitution of being is ceaseless oscillation and exposure.

Masochism, Intersubjectivity, Annihilation

Overlaying this non-unitary subject that constitutes the warrior, a fully intersubjective

mode of being emerges through the discourse of masochism.75 That masochism provides an apt

framework for war is no revelation in itself. One need not look further than Aufidius's dreams of

beating and fisting Coriolanus, Volumnia's maternal fantasy of her son making his rival bend

over in submissive posture ("He'll beat Aufidius' head below his knee/ And tread upon his neck"

[1.3.43-4]), and the rhetoric of dominance/submission between warring soldiers to see the

intimate coupling of masochism and war. Niccolò Machiavelli's influential treatise *Arte della*

guera (1521) which proved enormously influential in Elizabethan England (published in 1560

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74 Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia; or, A Description of the Body of Man* (London, 1615).
75 Masochism seems to have developed in Western culture simultaneously with a modern subjectivity. Roy F.
Baumeister reports that, beginning with "isolated cases around 1500, it [masochism] began to spread during the
1600s, and it became a widespread and familiar feature of the sexual landscape during the 1700s," although only in
the nineteenth century were sadism and masochism isolated as identifiable perversions. See Baumeister's
Masochism and the Self (Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1989), esp. 53.

and reissued in 1573 and 1588, more editions than any other translation of a military work)

concludes with 27 "general rules" of war, the first of which is "[w]hatever is of service to the

enemy must be prejudicial to you; whatever is prejudicial to him must be of service to you."[76]

However, this reduction of masochism into a zero-sum economy with a clear victor and victim

actually provides a countermodel to how masochism is mobilized in *Coriolanus,* as the victor

and victim exist in a much more fraught, complex, and even collaborative relation to one

another. Masochism does not fix the positions of dominant and submissive; on the contrary, it

troubles the boundaries of subjective identity through disavowal, repetition, and fantasy. Within

the masochistic framework, benefit and harm are not distinct but constantly imbricated and

implicated. Thus, my interest in evoking this discourse is less in exploring masculine subject

formation based on subjugating the other, but more in what possibilities of intersubjective,

intercorporeal relations this discourse impels. Since masochism reimagines how the subject is

negotiated, questioned, adapted, and broken down, I find a term suggesting variability and

plurality like masochism appropriate.[77]

    As a brief aside, I want to be clear about how I understand masochism. Instead of

viewing masochism as a psychosexual perversion (as Richard von Krafft-Ebing first coined in

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[76] This treatise, the only one of Machiavelli's works published during his own lifetime, proved enormously influential both on the Continent and forty years later, in Elizabethan England. Peter Whitehorne's English translation—with a dedicatory epistle to Elizabeth—was published in 1560 and reissued in 1573 and 1588. See Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Art of War*, trans. Neal Wood (Cambridge: Da Capo, 1965), esp. 202. See Neal Wood's introduction to Machiavelli's *Art of War*, esp. lxxxiv. See also Peter Whitehorne's translation, *The arte of warre, written first in Italia[n] by Nicholas Macchiavell, and set forthe in Englishe by Peter Whitehorne, studient at Graies Inne* (London, 1562).

[77] I am thinking mainly through Freudian, Lacanian, and post-Lacanian psychoanalytic theories of masochism which emphasize the complexity and instability of the subject to think through early modern textual representations of destructive passions as a self-eroding force. Leo Bersani, drawing from Jean Laplanche's reading of Freud to outline a concept of the sense of self as formed in response to a wish for its own dissolution and constituted through that wish, has also greatly shaped my thinking. See Bersani's *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990), esp. 40.

Psychopathia Sexualis),78 I am thinking of masochism's literary and psychoanalytic roots, originating from the fiction of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, developed by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Jean Laplanche, and explicated most recently by Gilles Deleuze in *Coldness and Cruelty*.79 In his thorough investigation, Deleuze identifies five basic characteristics of masochism, summarized as follows: 1. the "special significance of fantasy"; 2. the "suspense" (waiting, delayed) factor; 3. "the persuasive feature"; 4. "the provocative fear"; and 5. the necessity of "contract."80 My understanding of these features in relation to the Coriolanus/Aufidius axis are as follows: 1. fantasy as the oscillation between life and annihilation, as repeatable moments of coming out of and into being; 2. suspense as the anxiety of existing and acknowledging one's vulnerability in relation to the other; 3. persuasion as coming from the mouth of the victim; what we are dealing with is a victim in search of a torturer who must educate, persuade, and conclude an alliance with the torturer in order to realize their mutually imbricated desires; 4. fear, for it is the victim who speaks through the mouth of his torturer, without sparing himself; and 5. contract as mutual consent.

In *Being Singular Plural*, Jean-Luc Nancy contends that "a single being is a contradiction" and uses the word singularity as necessarily constituted by its multiplicity and relationality.81 He goes on to assert that "*[t]he plurality of being is at the foundation* [fondement]

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78 Krafft-Ebing presented four categories of what he called "cerebral neuroses," the final category of "paraesthesia" or misdirected sexual desires in which he grouped homosexuality/bisexuality, sexual fetishism, sadism, masochism, and pedophilia. See Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis: Eine klinisch-forensische Studie,* 1st edn (Stuggart: Enke, 1886).

79 I am deliberately using the term "masochism" in lieu of "sadism" or the misbegotten "sadomasochism" that links these two perversions together haphazardly. I find "masochism" to be most appropriate for my analysis for it operates with disavowal and suspension (whereas sadism operates with pure negation) and is structured by contract (whereas sadism is institutional). For more on the differences between sadism and masochism as well as the literary techniques in the art of Sade and Masoch, see Gilles Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty* (New York: Zone Books, 1989), esp. 134.

80 Ibid, 74-5.

81 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), esp. 12.

of Being" which forms the "political space and the site of community."[82] Thinking about community as a shared mode of being in which one's singularity is perpetually ingrained in others plurality allows us to avoid the statist boundary of the uncompromised self and view the elusive subject as mutually constituted by others. Nancy's hypothesis about the subject concludes:

> [W]hat is at stake is no longer thinking:
>
> > —beginning from the one, or from the other,
> >
> > —beginning from their togetherness, understood now as the One, now as the Other,
> >
> > —but thinking, absolutely and without reserve, beginning from the "with," *as the proper essence of one whose Being is nothing other than with-one-another* [l'un-avec-l'autre].[83]

This provisional, relational, multiple, differential subject is, in one iteration, the masochistic subject whose identity is imagined, framed, and constituted through another. Nancy's understanding of the subject disavows complete distinction or separateness (he insists we must no longer think "beginning from the one or from the other")—there is no "me" independent of "you." He further disavows the capital-O Other, diverging from Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of ethics which relies on putting the Other always before the self, the model which Judith Butler largely draws from in her provocative *Precarious Life*.[84] The "face of the Other" which

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[82] Ibid, 12, 15.

[83] Ibid, 34, italics in original.

[84] Levinas writes, "[t]o expose myself to the vulnerability of the face is to put my ontological right to existence into question. In ethics, the other's right to exist has primacy over my own, a primacy epitomized in the ethical edict you shall not kill, you shall not jeopardize the life of the other." See Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," in *Face to Face with Levinas* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), esp. 23-4. Levinas develops this conception first in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority,* trans. Alphonso, Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1969), esp. 187-203. While I agree with many of Levinas's claims about the ethics of interrelation as premised on receptivity, response, and responsibility, his insistence on the dichotomy between one and the Other proscribes

interrupts one's narcissistic circuit and demands a response depends on a presumed dualistic distinction between one and the Other;[85] a distinction that I find much more fraught and imbricated than perhaps Levinas or Butler understand. And finally, Nancy disavows any notion of totality or fusion ("beginning from their togetherness") which is also paramount in my analysis for I want to resist a kind of homogenizing, reductive tendency that so easily gives way to fascist, nationalist, or ethnocentric thinking that plagues our contemporary world. Rather, he implores us to think, "absolutely and without reserve, beginning from the '*with*.'" The prepositional "with" intimates space, but that space is not one of separation; rather, it is one of contact, touching, and exposure. In what follows, I propose that the mutually constituting identities of Coriolanus and Aufidius provide one potential manifestation of Nancy's disturbance of relatedness, and yet the characters' construction through the discourse of masochism and the context of war actually underscores the *violence* inherent in such meetings. Although Nancy repudiates violence by contending that it is precisely because we are constituted by the other that we cannot harm the other (for to do so would be to harm oneself), Coriolanus and Aufidius provide us with another mode of being "with" that necessitates violence. These two adversaries assume dominant and submissive identities that are fundamentally constructed by and dependent on psychically and physically "beating" the other. Their violent collisions are the basis of their intense homoeroticism and shared potency, countering the idea that aggression always results in

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any thought of one being constituted through and by the other. Instead, there is a kind of forced and unbridgeable separation.

[85] I am primarily thinking of Chapter 5, "Precarious Life," where Butler makes use of the Levinasian face, culturally transposing his philosophy to see how dominant forms of representation "can and must be disrupted for something about the precariousness of life to be apprehended" and that those who remain faceless do not appear within public life and cannot be mourned. See Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006), esp. xviii. Though her wide-ranging analyses of modern terrorism, grievable deaths post 9-11, governmentality and prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, and censorship and anti-Semitism are certainly compelling, her reliance on Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of ethics effectuates too sharp a distinction between us versus them, eschewing other versions of the self that move beyond these binaries.

divisions between combatants and that militant masculinity necessarily valorizes only invulnerability. Alternatively, through their interrelation, the play presents identity as traversed, projected, violated, and imagined through and by others.

Looking closely at the Coriolanus/Aufidius relationship, we can see their sense of self depends on the masculine prowess of one dominating the other; the structuring principle of their bond is the interplay between the dominant and the submissive.[86] Contrary to Adelman's claim of the Coriolanus/Aufidius axis as a kind of mirror-image equality (she claims Coriolanus's "need to create a man who is his equal is in fact one of the most poignant elements in the play"[87]), there is less an equality between them than a strict framework of mutually-constitutive positions of dominance and submission. In their first verbal exchange, Coriolanus spits at Aufidius, "Let the first budger die the other's slave" (1.9.5). At the outset, the vocabulary of master/slave already infects their speech. And it is Coriolanus's domination of Aufidius that catalyzes and structures the erotics of Aufidius's oft-quoted dreams: "Thou has beat me out/ Twelve several times, and I have nightly since/ Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me" (4.5.102-4).[88] Rather than a singular event, Aufidius has received multiple, repeated beatings from Coriolanus. The repetition of dreaming, beating, and bringing the self back into being over and over again in relation to the other confirms the temporality of interrelation as *each* time; it is

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[86] I aim to both build on and diverge from much psychoanalytic scholarship that has argued for Coriolanus's love-union with Aufidius as a substitute or displacement for his fears of being castrated by the phallic mother, Volumnia. See, for example, Emmett Wilson Jr., "Coriolanus: The Anxious Bridegroom," *American Imago* 25.3 (1968): 224-41; Rufus Putney, "Coriolanus and His Mother," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 31 (1962): 364-81; and Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to the Tempest* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[87] Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, esp. 156.

[88] In Freud's *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905), Freud's analysis of Tasso's "moving poetic pleasure" of repetition compulsion leads Freud to recognize repetition as a key to masochism. See Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works (Penguin Freud Library),* trans. James Strachey (Eastbourne, UK: Gardners Books), esp. 180.

a continual, punctuated creation which brings the simultaneity of living and dying into view. Living is precisely dying through these repeatable moments of violence.

On the battlefield itself, Coriolanus and Aufidius assume more clearly demarcated roles of victor and victim, yet these roles are in constant contestation and reversal. In their perpetual oscillation between presence and absence, being and nonbeing, and struggle for domination, inflicting pain and visible marks confirm the masculinity of the dominant, underscoring the necessity of external, violent exposure in the encounter. It is this tactic which Coriolanus attempts to reinforce to the Volscian lords when Aufidius taunts him as "boy of tears" (5.6.104). Coriolanus replies by recasting himself *again* as dominant over Aufidius:

> Boy? O slave—
>
> Pardon me, lords, 'tis the first time that ever
>
> I was forced to scold. Your judgments, my grave lords,
>
> Must give this cur the lie, and his own notion—
>
> Who wears my stripes impressed upon him, that
>
> Must bear my beating to his grave—shall join
>
> To thrust the lie unto him. (5.6.105-11)

Coriolanus begins his denunciation of Aufidius by naming him "slave," attempting to overturn his own submission as "boy." The interjection "O" separating the positions of boy and slave reminds us of the wound and is emblematic of the already-damaged identity which Coriolanus attempts to "thrust" back onto Aufidius. Moreover, this moment picks up on the pun of linguistic and sexual lying (the repetition of "lie" drawing attention to its multiple meanings, recalling the *Sonnets* and the troubled feelings about sexuality that haunt the sequence) and returns us to the

hypereroticized violence of Aufidius's own dreams of Coriolanus.[89] Aufidius, as Coriolanus's

own submissive, becomes the visual marker and ocular proof of his master's masculinity as he

bears "my stripes impressed upon him," signifying "my beating to his grave." What Coriolanus

seems to signify is the profound erotic force and prerequisite of violence with which his beating

reinforces his virile masculinity.

What's more, their masochistic interrelation demands their identities not only constantly

oscillate but be mutually constitutive. On this account, masochism relies upon the very

(con)fusion of domination and submission so that Coriolanus cannot be dominant without

Aufidius as his submissive and vice versa.[90] As Katharine Eisaman Maus contends in her

introduction to the play, "[t]he warrior loves his adversary because he needs a manly competitor

against whom to establish his own identity. The striving for autonomy depends on the existence

of something set off against, beside, or below it."[91] Maus's formulation underscores the irony

that "striving for autonomy" depends on an-other. Coriolanus cannot perform as Coriolanus

without his constitutive state of hatred for Aufidius: "I'll fight with none but thee," he swears

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[89] I am thinking first and foremost of Sonnet 138: "When my love swears that she is made of truth,/ I do believe her, though I know she lies" (1-2). In the absence of the preposition and its object, "she lies" can imply either "lies to me" or "lies with me" (for the latter, after all, are the lies the speaker knows). These alternatives tend to imply and become equivalent with each other (with "lies with other men" merely an internal, wholly subjective middle term— just as the fantasy of an adulterous liaison that Desdemona lies to him about serves to mediate Othello's own repressed sense of what lying with her involves for him)—as if what the speaker had to overcome were not his awareness of her promiscuity but his own "knowledge" of her sexuality. Joel Fineman argues of sonnet 138, that the dark lady "comes to occupy this peculiarly charged erotic place ('therefore I like with her, and she with me,/ And in our faults by lies we flattered be')." See Fineman's *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye: The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986), esp. 17.

[90] This fusion of subject and object and the mutually constitutive identities that the sadomasochistic relation posits demands resonance with Lacan's thinking that the masochistic arrangement conflates subjectivity and objectivity by fashioning the subject into the very lost object that founds the arrival of the subject. Subjectivity and objectivity in the masochistic arrangement are thereby indistinguishable and indissoluble. Therefore, in perversion, "the subject is always in some way present and involved in that fantasy" and perversion sustains itself "on precisely the same level as neurosis." See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VI: Desire and Its Interpretation 1959-1960*, trans. Cormac Gallagher (unpublished translation from unedited French manuscripts), meeting of 24 June 1959, esp. 16.

[91] Katharine Eisaman Maus, Introduction to *Coriolanus* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et. al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997): 2785-2792, esp. 2790.

(1.9.1). He fixates on the need to compete for dominance with Aufidius, consequently fixing his very self. The play acknowledges the implicit interdependency of Coriolanus and Aufidius in such a way that Coriolanus's stability of himself-as-subject depends on Aufidius: "There is the man of my soul's hate, Aufidius/ *Piercing* our Romans" (1.6.10-1, emphasis added). Here, in his first invocation, Aufidius is named as a man who penetrates the Roman army (presupposing Coriolanus's own penetration). Moreover, his presence becomes the tool to hollow out an interiority in Coriolanus so that hatred for Aufidius is what guarantees in Coriolanus the presence of a fixed, immortal "soul."

Sacher-Masoch's complex sense of "ourselves" can help us better understand the mutually interdependent and interpenetrative identities of Coriolanus and Aufidius. For Sacher-Masoch, masochism arises when the subject forfeits any illusions about one's *own* desire and rather strives to sustain selfhood only in the first person *plural,* anticipating Nancy's rethinking the subject as "being singular plural" over 100 years later.[92] And yet, the singular-plural subject in this play reveals itself, not through bonds of amity or affection, but through bonds of violence and opposition. For instance, when Coriolanus first learns that it is Aufidius who is leading the Volscian army, he confesses, "I sin in envying [Aufidius's] nobility,/ And were I anything but what I am,/ I would wish me only he" (1.1.221-3). Coriolanus's desire is revealed here as not one of vanquishing his sworn archenemy, but rather as one of *being* Aufidius. The internal rhyme of "me" and "he" in the last clause blurs the boundaries between these two characters and erodes the borders of their individual, autonomous selves. Imbricated in a masochistic relation, the play then literalizes Coriolanus's wish, hypostatizing their interdependency and plurality of selfhood, as it projects Coriolanus and Aufidius directly onto (or more appropriately, *in*to) one another.

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[92] Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel, Penguin Classics series (New York: Penguin, 2000), esp. 26 (originally published 1870).

When Caius Martius is renamed Coriolanus, he replies, "I will go wash,/ And when my face is fair you shall perceive/ Whether I blush or no" (1.10.67-8). As soon as Coriolanus exits, Aufidius mirrors and redoubles the action of the previous scene: "Where I find him…would I/ Wash my fierce hand in's heart" (1.11.24-7). The very move that fabricates Coriolanus as Coriolanus, conferring upon him an identity of conquering Aufidius, effectively splits his character into self and representation of that self, so that the renaming not only constructs his identity through that of another, but constantly reminds him of his fracturing. Coriolanus washes his face: Aufidius washes his hand in Coriolanus's heart. Coriolanus is reincarnated with Aufidius's hand in the center of his being. Like the stranger's heart Nancy writes of in "The Intruder" which reflects on the near-decade he lived as the recipient of the gift of a transplanted heart, "I was already no longer inside me. I'm already coming from somewhere else, or I'm not coming any longer at all…The subject's truth is its exteriority and its excessiveness; its infinite exposition. The intruder exposes me to excess. It extrudes me, exports me, expropriates me. I am the illness and the medicine."[93] The alliterative "ex" in this passage is arresting: "exteriority," "excessiveness," "infinite exposition," "exposes," "excess," "extrudes," "exports," "expropriates." From the Latin "ex" meaning "out of, from," what this salient sequence of words demonstrates is that the subject is constituted by losing, lacking, leaving; it is fundamentally expropriating and involves no return. There is no concern for acquisition or accumulation promised by the more proprietary conceptions of personhood but rather, it is a sense of existence as expenditure. And the key figure in this passage is the classic one of the *pharmakon*,

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[93] Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Intruder" in *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham UP, 2008), esp. 163, 170. In 1991, at the age of 51, Nancy received an anonymously donated heart and in 1997, he was diagnosed with lymphoma, a side-effect of his immunosuppressant regimen. As part of the cancer treatment, stem cells were extracted from Nancy's white blood cells, frozen, and then returned to his body to regenerate his intentionally destroyed immune system. In 1999, he published his reflections on these admittedly atypical medical experiences as *L' Intrus* or "The Intruder."

understood from the beginnings of the philosophical tradition in the double sense of medicine and poison.94 To be both "the illness and the medicine" harbors these aporetic contradictions, carrying within itself the ability to break down, intrude, convert one thing into its opposite but without it, "I'm not coming any longer at all."95 While Nancy grasps this singular-plurality through a very literal stranger's heart now beating inside him, the figure of the heart in the play comingles and fuses Coriolanus's and Aufidius's bodies together, forcing a massive redefining of relationality of criss-crossed selves.96

Later, Aufidius repeats this bodily melding, though notably in a more explicitly sexual fashion:

Let me twine

Mine arms about that body where against

My grainèd ash an hundred times hath broke,

And scarred the moon with splinters. Here I clip

The anvil of my sword, and do contest

As hotly and as nobly with thy love. (4.5.105-10)

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94 I draw primarily from Jacques Derrida's well-known essay "Plato's Pharmacy" to conceptualize *pharmakon*: "Philosophy thus opposes to its other this transmutation of the drug into a remedy, of the poison into a counterpoison. Such an operation would not be possible if the *pharmakon-logos* did not already harbor within itself that complicity of contrary values, and if the *pharmakon* in general were not, prior to any distinction-making, that which, presenting itself as a poison, may turn out to be a cure, may retrospectively reveal itself in the truth of its curative power." See Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Literary Theory: An Anthology,* eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Hoboken: Blackwell, 2004), esp. 443.

95 Roberto Esposito uses Nancy's essay to illustrate Donna Haraway's claim that postmodern bodies have been disaggregated and dispersed in a biotechnical network, citing "The Intruder" as "probably…the most radical and at the same time most sobering state of awareness regarding the meaning of the technicity of one's body." See Esposito's *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of* Life, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Malden: Polity Press, 2011), esp. 151-2.

96 Their relation, which precedes and supersedes any individual sense of self, also finds resonance with Judith Butler's postulation of an "ethical relation": "I am already bound to you, and this is what it means to be the self I am, receptive to you in ways that I cannot fully predict or control…In other words, you may frighten me and threaten me, but my obligation to you must remain firm." See Butler's "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26.2 (2012): 134-151, esp. 141-2.

Aufidius is intertwined with Coriolanus physically, sexually, and figuratively. While they are locked in a physical embrace, Aufidius hearkens back to memories of their interpenetrations in battle while metaphorically fusing them around a phallic figure, "the anvil of my sword." He does not only "contest" love for Coriolanus but is, quite literally, *in* love with him. Far from battle being directed towards heteronormative homecoming (as in *Antony and Cleopatra*), the incessant interweaving of their bodies—wrestling, fisting, piercing, mirroring, embracing— attests to the way in which the two are entirely interdependent.[97] "He's mine, or I am his!" (1.11.12) Aufidius proclaims, nullifying any possibility of an autonomous life. The erotic dynamics of power that structure their masochistic relationship erode any separation between them as individualized beings. In *Before Intimacy*, Daniel Juan Gil, adopting Leo Bersani's theory of erotic experience as a "beneficent shattering of the self," outlines a "socially dysfunctional sexuality" where "characters are torn out of the functional social world and dropped into a kind of parallel society where the pain of interpersonal breakdown is recast as a pleasurable connection to another body."[98] While I take exception with his conclusion which maintains that erotic affects "energize a privileged sexual experience in which people are driven together by the allure of a shared humanity only to be plunged apart at the last moment by a resurgent sense of fundamental, blood-borne difference and almost bodily incompatibility," there is a way in which the masochistic relation in battle creates a kind of "parallel society" that

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[97] Another way to think about the self-shattering and antisocial community Coriolanus and Aufidius create is through Leo Bersani's figure of the "gay outlaw" who "renounce[s] self-ownership and agree[s] to that loss of boundaries" that allows them, like Nancy's singularities, to become "shifting points of rest in a universal and mobile communication of being" (128). Doing so brings about a state in which one "*is,* briefly, the contact between himself and the world," the self reduced to a bodily ego that has eroded its own borders (120). See Bersani's *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995), especially his chapter "The Gay Outlaw," 113-81.

[98] Daniel Juan Gil, *Before Intimacy: Asocial Sexuality In Early Modern England* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006), esp. xiii, 74, xii.

galvanizes community through damaged and somehow inter-constituted flesh.99 The interrelation

between Coriolanus and Aufidius manifests the perverse mutuality of fear, revulsion, shame, and

pain their intimacy demands and, like Georges Bataille proposes, founds community in a

contagion caused by the breakdown of individual borders and the mutual infection of wounds.100

For these two warriors, there is no existence except in relation to the existence of the other—they

mutually interpellate one another and their coming into being is a violently destructive

experience.101 It is fitting that Coriolanus's only soliloquy, a monologue which ostensibly reveals

the innermost, private thoughts of a singular character, solidifies his plural identity with

Aufidius:102

> Friends now fast sworn,
>
> Whose double bosom seem to wear one heart,
>
> Whose hours, whose bed, whose meal and exercise
>
> Are still together, who twin as 'twere in love
>
> Unseparable (4.4.13-6).

Their queer coupling models the disruptive violence and radical openness of "socially

dysfunctional sexuality" needed to move beyond rigidly defined borders. By sharing one heart,

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99 Ibid, xi. I am indebted to Gil's provocation to analyze sexuality that doesn't "work" though I depart from his stance that people of different social ranks "are driven together by the allure of a shared humanity only to be plunged apart at the last moment by a resurgent sense of fundamental, blood-borne difference, and almost bodily incompatibility" (xi). Instead, I do want to continue his theorization of sexuality that "cannot be reduced to any functional social terms" in order to describe an erotic relationality that escapes Roman political or civil legibility (14).

100 In Bataille's final presentation to the Collège de sociologie, he "propose[d] to admit, as a law, that human beings are only united with each other through rents or wounds." See Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1985), esp. 251.

101 I am using interpellation in the Althusserian sense of "hailing" where Coriolanus and Aufidius mutually hail and fashion one another. See Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1979), esp. 173.

102 Even the Latin derivation of the literary device profoundly ironizes the moment since *soliloquy* is derived from the Latin word *solo*, meaning "to himself," and *loquor*, meaning "I speak."

one bed, the same temporality and communion, they embody the precept of absolute reciprocity which threatens their identity and exposes them to the contagion of the relation with others.

Moreover, I want to suggest that their interrelation is framed through the language of hatred, not as a constitutive state in-itself but as a kind of ambiguous relation that exceeds normative structures of signification. For Nancy, the intimate relation must be framed through the language of love: "The nearest is that which is utterly removed, and this is why the relation presents itself (1) as an imperative, (2) as the imperative of a love, and (3) as a love that is 'like the love of myself.'"[103] And yet, Shakespeare marshals the language of hate to exceed, contest, and confuse that of love. Indeed, the first lines that Coriolanus speaks to Aufidius are "I'll fight with none but thee, for I do hate thee/ Worse than a promise-breaker" (1.9.1-2), and Aufidius answers in kind: "We hate alike" (1.9.2).[104] Most often, *Coriolanus* mobilizes hatred in its diegesis to mark some sort of intense feeling outside of and beyond love. Coriolanus does not *hate* the Roman citizens; he merely regards them with *contempt*: "Thou wretch," Coriolanus spits at Sicinius, "despite o'erwhelm thee!" (3.1.166). His "despite," or contempt, for the Romans as well as the Volscians is textured by none of the respect or mutuality which Coriolanus accords Aufidius; treating the Romans with contempt seems simply to convey disgust rather than any complicated, self-determinative function: "All the contagion of the south light on you,/ You shames of Rome!" Coriolanus roars at the Roman soldiers in the battle of Corioles (1.5.1-2). Instead, hatred is to be deserved and conferred upon a worthy partner: "Who deserves greatness/ Deserves your hate," Coriolanus announces to the plebeians (1.1.165-6). Within the eroticized

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[103] Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, esp. 79.
[104] The masochistic framework that yokes these two adversaries together also invokes the figure of the sinthomosexual, a figure who, like Bersani's gay outlaw, undoes operative community. This figure refuses the future, "loves his neighbor enough to say no, to give him the kick that he's begging for and from which he gets his kicks." See Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke UP, 2004), esp. 100.

sphere of the battlefield, hatred seems to exist as a kind of relation that evokes but is not contained within the play's normative conception of love, which has to do with masculine homosociality and the family unit.[105] Hatred, as "not-love," constitutes a bond not encased within the erotic frame of the play but is a potentially devastating alternative to socialized desire that is expressive of respect, duality, mutuality, and a kind of violent intimacy upon the field. In fact, the play repeatedly foregrounds that Coriolanus's own place as warrior rests upon the condition of hatred that he and Aufidius share. For instance, when Lartius returns to Rome having reached a peace settlement with the Volsces, Coriolanus is less interested in the political consequences of the agreement than the status of Aufidius:

> Coriolanus: Saw you Aufidius?
>
> …
>
> Coriolanus: Spoke he of me?
>
> Lartius: He did, my lord.
>
> Coriolanus: How? What?
>
> Lartius: How often he had met you sword to sword;
>
> That of all things upon the earth he hated
>
> Your person most; that he would pawn his fortunes
>
> To hopeless restitution, so he might
>
> Be called your vanquisher.
>
> …
>
> Coriolanus: I wish I had a cause to seek him [at Antium]

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[105] The play's normative conception of love comprises masculine homosociality, the exemplar *par excellence* of which may be the relationship between Coriolanus and fellow-soldier Cominius as Cominius greets him as "Flower of Warriors!" (1.7.33) and the heterosexual family unit, the Oedipal structure and the triangulation of desire between Coriolanus, Virginia, and Virgilia of which have been the subject of much scholarship.

To oppose his hatred fully. (3.1.8-21)

Hatred here becomes the constitutive condition of both Coriolanus and Aufidius; Aufidius's hatred for Coriolanus infuses his virility with a central mission, even to the point of "hopeless restitution." Coriolanus, moreover, anticipates Aufidius's hatred and eagerly craves to know that Aufidius has been thinking of him—a gesture he wishes to reciprocate in his own hatred for Aufidius. This moment privileges Aufidius's speech in such a way that Aufidius authenticates Coriolanus as bodily signifier in his own verbal affirmation. Hatred works deconstructively to reveal its own excess—that is, its supersignification value as a term suggesting respect, mutuality, and intimacy, casts it as a term that exceeds its basic signifying function to approach something closer to love. Hatred shared between Coriolanus and Aufidius presents their relationship in excess of love. In a masochistic fantasy beyond limit, these queer erotics reproduce one another over and over and over again in a web of intricate inter-dependences.

Through the language of hatred, these two soldiers on the battlefield (and in Aufidius's dreams) derive pleasure from the visceral and highly eroticized struggle for dominance itself. Even at the most tender moment of their embrace, Aufidius confesses, "We have been down together in my sleep,/ Unbuckling helms, fisting each others' throat" (4.5.124-5). As Aufidius "twine[s]/ Mine arms about that body" of his sparring partner and "do[es] contest…hotly and nobly with [his] love," that love is still framed within the violent contest for domination in which their embrace is supplemented by and conflated with the action of fisting (4.5.105-6; 109-10). The "love" which constitutes the Coriolanus/Aufidius axis also constitutes their masochistic desires, creating the conditions for subjects to encounter their own self-shattering in fantasy and access, if just for a moment, alternative modes of being. The pleasurable disappearance and

reappearance of the subject and the abandonment of socially-sanctioned identities occasioned by

the masochistic fantasy creates a mode of interrelation that, as John K. Noyes cogently puts:

> …requires the subject's encounter with death. In this way, it forces a choice between the
>
> logic of fantasy and the logic required within a political technology of bodies. The
>
> masochistic fantasy acts like a forced encounter with the sublime. It promises a fictional
>
> position from which the subject may initiate a Lacanian dialectic of self-fulfillment and
>
> self-destruction.106

This closely echoes Cynthia Marshall's claim in *The Shattering of the Self* that Renaissance texts

register an "impulse to undo or negate the emergent self" and describes early modern subjectivity

as fragmented, volatile, and above all defined by masochism's characteristic "movement of the

self against the self."107 While the pervasive pattern of annihilative desires and movement

towards self-destruction in early modern texts has been frequently noted, these studies tend to

advance a nihilistic and (if not outright anti-social) solipsistic thesis.108 What I want to suggest is

that these masochistic, self-damaging desires have as their aim: community. The desire for

community is necessarily configured as the negation of isolated, individualized life, pushing life

toward what is outside it and what can destroy it. In our own context, Judith Butler writes that

vulnerability is friendship's inevitable, but also potentially valuable, outcome. We are, she

writes, "attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of

violence by virtue of that exposure"; "[w]e're undone by each other…[a]nd if we're not, we're

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106 John K. Noyes, *The Mastery of Submission: Inventions of Masochism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997), esp. 161.
107 Cynthia Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002), esp. 7, 35-6.
108 For more on how the figures of the narcissist and self-slaughterer are indicative of early modern attitudes to interiority, see Eric Francis Langley, *Narcissism and suicide in Shakespeare and his contemporaries* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009); Anne Ferry, *The "Inward" Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983); Marshall Grossman, *The Story of All Things: Writing the Self in English Renaissance Narrative Poetry* (Durham: Duke UP, 1998).

missing something."[109] Butler's emphasis on risk, exposure, and vulnerability is taken up by Isabel Lorey who suggests recognizing existential vulnerability as an affirmative basis for politics. Speaking of the Precarias and care communities (or *cuidadanías*), Lorey articulates their investment in more liberatory and cooperative forms of affect that contest "traditions of thinking that refuse our fundamental social relationality, warn against infection by others, maintain a logic of individualism and security, and thus perceive precarization solely as a threat."[110] It is not protection we should covet but precarity we ought to value. For these thinkers, community is grounded in our shared vulnerability and the weave of (potentially harmful) relationships in which we live rather than the ideologeme of security or safeguarded individuality. Contra Rosi Braidotti who maintains that a shared form of vulnerability is a kind of negative unity in its reactionary character in the face of common threats, vulnerability in *Coriolanus* becomes an affirmative bond that the eponymous hero continually pursues and exploits.[111] By taking the injunction of existential vulnerability as an affirmative basis for politics to its logical extreme, Coriolanus actively seeks self-destruction and shatters the fantasy of autonomous existence.

This movement towards self-damage motivates Coriolanus's every action. He chooses to enter Corioles the moment the Roman army flees. He speaks in haughty and absolutist terms when entreating for the consulship, helping the tribunes advance their goal to throw him off the Tarpeian cliff; and later, he chooses to listen to his mother at the moment he is supposed to solidify his allegiance to Aufidius and the Volscians. Rather than act to preserve an autonomous,

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[109] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), esp. 20, 23.
[110] Isabel Lorey, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious,* trans. Aileen Derieg (New York: Verso, 2015), esp. 94.
[111] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Malden: Polity Press, 2013), esp. 50. Braidotti maintains that "[t]he posthuman recomposition of human interaction that I propose is not the same as the reactive bond of vulnerability, but is an affirmative bond that locates the subject in the flow of relations with multiple others." Though I find her reconceptualization of the posthuman subject as non-unitary, differential, and relational compelling, her quick association of vulnerability with a shared negative affect seems to reinforce one of the "lethal binaries" she is so invested in dismantling.

omnipotent existence, Coriolanus consistently acts in ways that facilitate and accelerate his own

destruction. He is radically annihilative, pushing the experiment of desubjectivization further

than the precept of self-preservation allows. "Call[ing] the subject into question," as Michel

Foucault explains, "meant that one would have to experience something leading to actual

destruction, its decomposition, its explosion, its conversion into something else" and that

something else concerns community.112 As Jacques Lacan advises us in *Seminar VII* to "Read

Mr. Sacher-Masoch and you will see…[that] the perverse masochist [harbors] the desire to

reduce himself to this nothing that is the good, to this thing that is treated like an object, to this

slave whom one trades back and forth and whom one shares," Coriolanus reduces himself to this

nothing by the end of the play.113 Yet it bears repeating that this "nothing" Lacan speaks of is not

the equivalent of nonbeing; rather, there is an insistent present-ness of the flesh, present-ness of

the body in the "thing that is treated like an object," the one who is "trade[d] back and forth and

whom one shares." Through the masochistic fantasy, Coriolanus repeats the event of being

shared, ruptured, and divided by others. He embodies what Nicholas Coeffeteau describes as the

"contrary motions and desires…which we strive against,"114 what Thomas Wright refers to as

"internall combate,"115 and what Robert Burton analyzes as the tumultuous feelings that pull one

apart: "We are torn to pieces by our passions, as so many wild horses."116 As a body objectified,

torn apart, and used in common, Coriolanus actualizes the masochistic fantasy of radical

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112 Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," in *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: New Press, 1994), esp. 247.
113 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960)*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976), esp. 239.
114 N[icholas] Coeffeteau, *Table of Humane Passions*, trans. Edw[ard] Grimeston ([London]: Nicholas Okes, 1621), esp. 4-5, 16-7.
115 Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in Generall* (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes for Walter Burre, 1604), esp. 69-71.
116 Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York: New York Review Books, 2001), esp. I. 69.

fracturing and lets himself be killed: "Cut me to pieces, Volsces. Men and lads,/ Stain all your edges on me" (5.6.112-3). His existence, from this point of view, isn't anything except the irrepressible radiating and spilling out into what does not belong to his existence but of which he nevertheless is a part. How portentous is Sicinius's claim that "this viper/...would depopulate the city and/ Be every man himself" (3.1.263-5), reinventing himself as a heterogeneity of surfaces each time, and in each instant, simultaneously. Coriolanus constitutes the undefinable, infinitely reducible excess that resists the biopolitical grasp on life, even at its limits. He repeats these events of utter exposure, of fatal trespass threatened and perpetrated upon his person.

Coriolanus and its masochistic erotics of battle approach this "world elsewhere" (3.3.136)—the play's value lies in giving us access, however fleeting, into a world where political bodies may no longer exist but livable, vulnerable, unbound bodies do. Whereas many liberal theorists advocate a framework wherein bordered subjects join communities so as to give voice to common social goals and further secure members' borders, *Coriolanus* works from the premise that community exposes and destroys the individual. Coriolanus is, ultimately, a kind of nothing. After his banishment, Sicinius asks Menenius, "Where is he, hear you?" to which Menenius replies, "Nay, I hear *nothing*./ His mother and his wife hear *nothing* from him" (4.6.19-21, emphasis added). Even before his banishment, Coriolanus, speaking of the wounds which define him, refuses to "hear my nothings monstered" (2.2.73). By the end of the play, Coriolanus's "nothings" fuse into a nameless unidentifiable political body: "'Coriolanus'/ He would not answer to, forbade all names./ He was a kind of nothing, titleless" (5.1.11-3). Yet being titleless, a kind of nothing, inscribes Coriolanus as something that is not yet legible to this Rome. The play literalizes Coriolanus as "a kind of nothing" in its final moments, when the people scream, "Tear him to pieces! Do it presently!...Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!" (5.6.121-2;

130). The incessant, excessive repetition of "kill" draws attention to this moment of death and profoundly ironizes it, for the cry to dismember, rip apart, and kill Coriolanus answers his demand for visceral annihilation at the close of Act Three. His being torn to death fulfills the masochistic formulation the warrior lays out in claiming pain, vulnerability, and unboundedness as constitutive of his valor, his masculinity, and indeed, of himself. As Rosi Braidotti aptly points out, "death as a constitutive event is behind us; it has already taken place as a virtual potential that constructs everything we are" and later, that "death is the becoming-imperceptible of the posthuman subject and as such it is part of the cycles of becoming, yet another form of interconnectedness, a vital relationship that links one with other, multiple forces."[117] Extending her logic beyond just the posthuman subject, we might say that understanding both life and death as mutually constituting has the potential to, ultimately, transgress ego and dissolve the boundaries between subjective individuals. The play presents this alternative model of living in relation to others, always with the risk of dying. Beyond a kind of continuum that still places life and death on opposite poles, the play leaves life and death intimately entwined with the other.[118] In *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas writes of "pollution powers which inhere in the structure of ideas itself and which punish a symbolic…joining of that which should be separate" about which Judith Butler writes in *Gender Trouble* that "any kind of unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment."[119] Coriolanus is this site, a figure of contradiction, threat, and contamination, and it is to this "unregulated permeability" that I turn next.

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[117] Rosi Braidottti, *The Posthuman*, esp. 132, 137.
[118] This is the fundamental lesson Nancy learned from his experience as a biomedically extended life: "Isolating death from life—without leaving one intimately entwined with the other, and each intruding upon the heart of the other—this we must never do." See Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Intruder" in *Corpus,* trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham UP), esp. 165.
[119] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York & London: Routledge, 1990), esp. 168.

Immunizing the Threat

When Wars are ended abroad, Sedition begins at home.[120]

—Sir Walter Raleigh

   Coriolanus is often considered Shakespeare's most political play. It opens with a scene of

rebellious plebeians rioting against the patricians (recalling the Midland Revolt of 1607, a

peasant uprising against land enclosures),[121] which is answered by Menenius's (misused)

analogy of the body politic to the human body. It then moves to the appointment of two tribunes

as "representatives" for the masses and later showcases a "democratic" process to elect Rome's

consul. Rome then banishes its best defender, leaving its security and future uncertain. A

rebellion, an election, an exile, a political assassination, and the "birth of the Roman Republic"

all occur. Those who have investigated community in *Coriolanus* have tended to do so along

these political lines[122] since, as Aristotle famously claimed in Book I of *Politics*, "it is evident

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[120] Walter Raleigh, *Three Discourses of Sir Walter Raleigh* (London: 1702, written originally in 1602), esp. 136.
[121] Edmund Howes's account of the Midland Revolt of 1607 is as follows: About the middle of this moneth of May, 1607 a great number of common persons, sodainly assembled themselves in Warwickshire, and some in Lecestershire, they violently cut and brake downe hedges, filled up ditches, and laid open all such enclosures of Commons, and other grounds as they found enclosed, which of ancient time hadde bin open and imploied to tillage. See Howes's *Annales, or a Generale Chronicle of England from Brute until the present yeare of Christ 1580 by John Stow Continued by Edmund Howe* (London, 1615), esp. 889. The view that Shakespeare intended topical references to the Midlands Revolts is now widely accepted. See, for example, E. C. Pettet's "Coriolanus and the Midlands Insurrection of 1607," *Shakespeare Survey* 3 (1950): 34-42 and Brian R. Parker's introduction to *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), esp. 189.
[122] Unhae Langis argues that the lack of virtuous moderation in the eponymous hero, Rome's first citizen, reflects the collective immoderation of the entire polity: the state's inability to bring its various parts into salutary corporate balance, thus overturning its pro-republican advances which recurs with Arthur Riss's argument that *Coriolanus* dramatically registers the declining ideological authority of the English elites claims for a natural correspondence between the hierarchical unity of the human body and the feudalistic organization of the ruling political body. In his view, "*Coriolanus* demonstrates that in 17th century England, the analogy of the body politic was fast becoming an 'outmoded fiction.'" See Langis's "*Coriolanus*: Inordinate Passions and Powers in Personal and Political Governance," *Comparative Drama* 44.1 (2010): 1-27 and Riss's "The Belly Politic: *Coriolanus* and the Revolt of Language" *ELH* 59.1 (1992): 53-75, esp. 53. Other critics like Rita Banerjee and Annabel Patterson argue that a new form of Republican ideals and governance as well as prioritization of the "common good" are staged in *Coriolanus*. See Banerjee's "The Common Good and the Necessity of War: Emergent Republican Ideals in Shakespeare's *Henry V* and *Coriolanus*" *Comparative Drama* 40.1 (2006): 29-49 and Patterson's *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal."[123]

Shakespeare's last tragedy has long been the testing ground for those who speculate about his own political affiliations, particularly his attitude toward absolute monarchy, on the one hand, or some kind of protodemocratic populism on the other. Recently, Andrew Hadfield identifies his critical task as an exercise in historical "recovery" or "archaeology," commencing with the provocative question, "was Shakespeare a Republican?"[124] Whereas many critics feel they must answer Hadfield's question one way or the other, it is precisely the deep ambivalence of Shakespeare's treatment of the emergent polity, and politics more generally, in this play that concerns me.[125] I am more interested, as is Julia Reinhard Lupton, in Shakespearean moments where "certain political questions come up against problems of life and living."[126] My conception of community thus far has extended beyond the political, so much so that it cannot be the object or the telos of a politics. Similar to Gil who argues that all Shakespearean states— from the most republican to the most tyrannical—strip subjects of the identities they are supposed to secure, allowing selves to enter into what he calls "the life of the flesh," or a "luminous fleshliness," I too contend that Shakespeare is more interested in experimenting with alternative, antipolitical forms of life that celebrate an unencumbered vulnerability.[127] However, counter to Gil's contention that Shakespearean plays "launch a nihilistic critique of state

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[123] Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Peter L. Phillips Simpson (Chapel Hill and London: U of North Carolina Press, 1997), esp. 44.

[124] Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), esp. 1-3, 13-4.

[125] For instance, Andrew Hadfield and Annabel Patterson are notable critics who have a protorepublican reading whereas William Hazlitt and Clifford Huffman argue for a conservative, antipopulist Shakespeare. See Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (London: Thomson, 2004); Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Huffman, *Coriolanus in Context* and Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845) (the essays themselves were first published in 1817).

[126] Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Thinking with Shakespeare: Essays on Politics and Life* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011), esp. 8.

[127] Daniel Juan Gil, *Shakespeare's Anti-Politics: Sovereign Power and the Life of the Flesh* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), esp. 9. For Gil, "seeing Shakespeare as a partisan of either absolutism or civic republicanism misses the fundamentally anti-political drive in his literary-political imagination" (1).

power,"[128] I push against an inevitable nihilism and argue that the impossibility of immediately translating an experience of extreme vulnerability but also of extreme connectedness into a political system should not dictate political paralysis. On the contrary, this kind of community demands a political response since it provides a sharp sense of the abstraction of reigning State ideologies and forces us to reevaluate and reimagine the very aims and designs of governing regimes.

Coriolanus's virility as a political force is manifest as potential consul and, certainly, as the icon of Roman masculine heroism. The virile force that "Coriolanus" expresses is initially revealed as dependent upon and relational to Rome. For instance, when Cominius renames Caius Martius, he does so because "Rome must know the value of her *own*" (1.10.20-1, emphasis added). This moment is among the first in a series of moves that reinforce Coriolanus as Roman via neat metalepsis. Coriolanus is bound to Rome because he fights for Rome so effectively. Even Coriolanus's enemies grudgingly admit that he is indispensable to Rome's security. Yet, though he is "brow-bound with the oak of Rome" (2.2.94), he nevertheless exists outside of Roman political life. Like Othello, once he is off the battlefield, he never truly inhabits the political space of civilian life.[129] He is antipathetic to civilized, civil, and civic society. Throughout the play, Coriolanus is both bound to and in excess of Rome—cast beyond the space of "the human" as martial hero and ultimately unable to find "a world elsewhere" impervious to Rome. Rome itself marks its hero as other without allowing him any other space than

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[128] Ibid, 2.
[129] For critics who have noted Coriolanus's inability to inhabit civilian life, see Paul A. Jorgensen's treatment of the conflict between military and civilian life in *Shakespeare's Military World* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1956), esp. chapters 5 and 6 ("War and Peace" and "The Soldier in Society: From Casque to Cushion"), 169-314 and Cathy Shrank's "Civility and the City in *Coriolanus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 54.4 (2003): 406-23.

relationality to Rome. Far before Rome banishes him, Coriolanus is tightly bound to a city that has already cast him out.

When Coriolanus first enters the diegesis five lines into the play, he is portrayed as set against the Roman people: "First, you know Caius Martius is chief enemy to the people" (1.1.5) and reappears shortly after as "a very dog to the commonality" (1.1.24). Coriolanus does not even enter as Roman; instead, the citizens inscribe him into the play as a figure set *against* Rome. Yet only a few lines later, Menenius asks the rebelling plebeians, "Will you undo yourselves?" (1.1.54) to which the First Citizen presciently responds, "We cannot, sir. We are undone already" (1.1.55). Immediately, we are presented with an irreconcilable paradox in the figure of Coriolanus himself: how can the Roman Republic (for whom Coriolanus ostensibly stands as her metonymic sword) also cast him out as Rome's "traitorous innovator,/ A foe to the public weal" (3.1.177-8)? Here, I want to invoke the notion of autoimmunity as a new form of regulation whereby those in power in Rome maintain their influence by simultaneously exploiting their subjects' need for security and increasing instability. By casting Coriolanus as "chief enemy to the people," the play reveals that the Republic's investment is principally in its ideological preservation. To do so, rather than eliminate fear, the state's task is to render it certain, thereby eradicating a disorder entrusted to the impulse of desire and the vertigo of risk (manifest in Coriolanus) to instate an order governed by the law of necessity and the rule of terror.[130] In *Communitas,* Roberto Esposito aptly recognizes that the reflexive invocation of corporeal preservation marks the birth of modernity and that the historical significance of

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[130] I am indebted to Isabel Lorey's work which traces and explores how our everyday precarity has itself become a regime, a hegemonic mode of being governed and governing ourselves. She argues that "in the neoliberal dynamic of governmental precarization, the illusion of individual security is maintained specifically through the anxiety over being exposed to existential vulnerability." I work from the premise that it is precisely our desire for security that has established it as the ultimate political ideal. See Lorey's *State of Insecurity*, esp. 90.

Thomas Hobbes' political paradigm was "rais[ing] what was unanimously considered the most disreputable of the states of mind (i.e. the fear of death) to the primary motor of political activity."[131] This is precisely what the Roman state attempts to reinscribe: self-preservation as the first law of nature.[132]

Let us turn to Jacques Derrida's definition of autoimmunity as a starting point to see how Rome exploits this first law of nature to maintain hegemonic rule:

> The immunitary reaction protects the "indemnity" of the body proper in producing antibodies against foreign antigens. As for the process of auto-immunization, which interests us particularly here, it consists for a living organism, as is well known and in short, of protecting itself against its self-protection by destroying its own immune system.[133]

For Derrida, autoimmunization is the process by which the protective system of the body destroys *itself* (its own immune system). He goes on to posit a political analogue to this biological phenomenon, arguing that autoimmunity is both the condition and consequence of modern democracy, especially in the face of terror.[134] However, I want to suggest that Derrida

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[131] Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010), esp. 21.

[132] The self that was to be preserved, Hobbes claimed, was one's physical existence: "A LAW OF NATURE (Lex Naturalis,) is a Precept or general Rule, found out by Reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same; and to omit, that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved." See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*, ed. Michael Oakeshott (London: Collier Macmillan, 1962), esp. 103.

[133] Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion at the Limits of Reason Alone," in *Religion* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), esp. 73.

[134] Jacques Derrida uses the measures taken by the Bush administration following 9/11 as his primary example for while restricting democratic freedom under the *pretext* of protecting democracy, the administration failed to recognize that the risk is always already inside and therefore cannot be definitively erased. Thus, rather than facing up to the challenge that "there is no absolutely reliable prophylaxis against the autoimmune" (See Derrida, *Rogues*, trans. Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University [Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005], esp. 150-1), the US administration has defined its own fear (resulting from the "risk" and the uncertainty) as a "threat" coming from the outside: they called it "terrorism", and waged "a war against the 'axis of evil'" (See Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida" in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, ed. Giovanna Borradori [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003], esp. 41).

slightly misuses this term, since in actuality, the immune system destroys the body's cells and tissues by misrecognizing them as foreign. Contrary to his suggestion, in autoimmune diseases, the immune system does not make itself vulnerable. Instead, it works all too well and attacks the body's own cells which includes the banishment or deportation of elements erroneously considered "non-self." What autoimmunity reveals is that the binary between self-protection and auto-destruction is untenable and inevitably collapsible. Extending this analogy to the political body, we can conclude that governing, protective regimes always contain within themselves the possibility of their own undoing and in the case of the *Coriolanus'*s Rome, the instrument of its destruction—the misrecognized, banished other—is paradoxically its eponymous hero.

Coriolanus, as Rome's martial superhero, is consistently portrayed as outside the realm of the human; he is immediately othered and marked as "non-self" which only accelerates his impending banishment.[135] "O 'tis Martius!" Lartius exclaims when Martius first appears following his triumph in Corioles (1.5.32). The exuberance and heroism of the moment plays over the uneasiness which Lartius anticipates, for Coriolanus is first identified as an "it." This "it" becomes particularly nonhuman in Cominius's representation of the battle, when he relays to the senate that "straight his doubled spirit/ Requickened what in flesh was fatigate," so that Coriolanus's spirit somehow operates outside and beyond the limitations of the flesh (2.2.112-3). The moment hints at the way Shakespeare valences Coriolanus as, in part, a machine—a "thing of blood" (2.2.105) that "struck/ Corioles like a planet" (2.2.109-10), "a thing/ Made by some

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[135] I am using the term "other" in the way Judith Butler's model of the abject approximates this kind of expelling an other (once recognized) being outside of its borders: "The 'abject' designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered 'Other.' This appears as an expulsion of alien elements, but the alien is effectively stablished through this expulsion…The construction of the 'not me' as the abject establishes the boundaries of the body which are also the first contours of the subject." See Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York & London: Routledge, 1990), esp. 169.

other deity than nature" (4.6.94-5). Accordingly, in the play's most vivid description of

Coriolanus in battle, Menenius claims:

> When he walks, he moves like an engine, and the ground shrinks before his treading. He
>
> is able to pierce a corslet with his eye, talks like a knell, and his "hmh!" is a battery. He
>
> sits in his state as a thing made for Alexander. What he bids be done is finished with his
>
> bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity and a heaven to throne in. (5.4.15-20)

Menenius' language not only evokes and rangers over the mechanical, but it does so through a

series of refracting metaphors which collide against one another: "he moves like an engine"; he

"pierce[s] a corslet with his eye"; he "talks like a knell"; and "his 'hmh!' is a battery." That

Menenius proffers each of these analogies over the course of two sentences sets up a frame in

which they constantly replace one another in a series of mixed metaphors, creating a

Frankensteinian deity/monster. His language manufactures mechanical metaphors and fuses them

together in an amalgam which stands in for Coriolanus-as-human. What's more, Coriolanus is

figured as a mythical monster, "grown from man to dragon. He has wings, he's more than a

creeping thing" (5.4.10-1). A monstrous combination of ophidian and crocodilian structures,

Coriolanus is said to have wings, defying the rules of nature that separate reptilian and

mammalian forms. He is a superhero who constantly falls outside "the natural" space of Rome:

as excess, as noble, as god (we might recall Brutus's words to him: "You speak o'th'people/ As

if you were a god to punish, not/ A man of their infirmity" [3.1.79-81]), but also laced with the

attendant anxieties that he is a "thing," unnatural, and diseased.[136]

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[136] Coriolanus has seemed to some recent critics to exemplify the "bare life" typified by the archaic Roman *homo sacer* in the work of Giorgio Agamben. Ineke Murakami, for example, argues that the beast language in the play corresponds to a medieval conception of natural law, a zone of intersection between theology and politics that simultaneously forms and abjects the "creaturely" or bare life that gives it rise. Rebecca Lemon argues that Coriolanus inhabits the dual space of sovereignty and exile typified by Agamben's *homo sacer*, whose "exemplary" status that is also exceptional only via exile. Nichole E. Miller builds on their initial claims to argue that Shakespeare's political economy is one of sacrifice in which Coriolanus is Rome's suspended grace. See Agamben's

The anxiety accompanying Coriolanus's divine and monstrous superheroism also produces Coriolanus himself as potentially most fatal to Rome's security by framing him within the language of chronic illness and terminal disease. Coriolanus—the war hero, protector, and patriot—becomes recast in terms of poison, disease, and treason against the polity.[137] Sicinius declares that Coriolanus's is "a mind/ That shall remain a poison where it is,/ Not poison any further" (3.1.89-91). And yet, that poison does poison further by the end of the scene when Coriolanus's contagion threatens a sort of epidemic: "Pursue him to his house and pluck him thence," Brutus commands, "Lest his infection, being of catching nature,/ Spread further" (3.1.310-2). Like a plague, Coriolanus must be contained and eliminated so that in the very following scene, Brutus and Sicinius excise Coriolanus in his banishment.[138] That Brutus and Sicinius frame Coriolanus's space outside of "the natural" in the language of disease illuminates their profound anxiety and paradoxically undercuts the way that Coriolanus's superheroism frames him as a kind of social machine interpellated by the state or in Foucauldian terms, a "docile body."[139] Coriolanus would indeed seem to fit Foucault's schema of the "body as a machine" quite precisely: that machinic body entails "its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its

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Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998); Murakami's "The 'Bond and Privilege of Nature' in *Coriolanus*," *Religion and Literature* 38.3 (2006): 121-36; Lemon's "Arms and Laws in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*," in *The Law in Shakespeare*, ed. Constance Jordan and Karen Cunningham (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 233-4; and Miller's "Sacred Life and Sacrificial Economy: Coriolanus in No-Man's-Land," *Criticism* 51.2 (2009): 263-310.

[137] I disagree with West-Pavlov's contention that Coriolanus's closed body indicates a personal self that becomes equated with a "new civic virtue." See Russell West-Pavlov's *Bodies and their Spaces: System, Crisis and Transformation in Early Modern Theatre* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), esp. 134.

[138] Giorgio Agamben observes that "a being radically devoid of any representable identity would be absolutely irrelevant to the State" and that irrelevant beings, those who do or will not belong, are "the principal enem[ies] of the state." See Agamben's *The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993), esp. 86-7.

[139] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House Inc., 1995), esp. 135-8.

integration into systems of efficient and economic controls."[140] Yet although Coriolanus was

built into *the* efficient killing machine in Rome's service, he has become the unforeseeable threat

that the State's proliferation of "docile" bodies has produced. In refusing servile functionality,

Coriolanus disobeys the hegemonic State and breaches existing relations of domination.

Although his earlier renaming in speech-act as "Coriolanus" binds him as subject to the

community that produces this hegemonic sphere of discourse and meaning (as defender of Rome,

he is bound to Rome), the mere fact that he is treated as a disease that can infect and spread

ironically prescribes his containment and elimination for the Roman Republic to function.

Thus, to eliminate Rome's metaleptic signifier, the state catalyzes its own

autoimmunization. Once Coriolanus is othered, they must determine whether integration or

amputation is the proper course. Sicinius mandates that "[Coriolanus is] a disease that must be

cut away" (3.1.296) and reconstructs Coriolanus from Rome's metonymic sword to her

synecdochal "gangrened foot" (3.1.308). By fabricating an imminent threat to Roman lives, the

tribunes bring the care for these lives within the state's purview and seize extrajuridical power to

"defend" the republic.[141] In *The State of Insecurity*, Isabel Lorey aptly observes that the

safeguarding of political communities uses the "process of *othering*" to split the community into

two discrete parts:

> one part that is considered, in relation to immunization, as "capable of integration", and
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> another part that is constructed as "incurable" and deadly for the community and that
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> must therefore be completely excluded. The security of the community is regulated

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[140] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), esp. 139.

[141] This move effectively devolves Rome into a "state of exception," characterized, as Giorgio Agamben explains, on the one hand by the extension of military authority's wartime powers into the civil sphere with full executive powers and on the other by a suspension of due process protecting a citizen's rights. Agamben proposes a theory of "the state of exception is not a 'state of law' but a space without law, a zone of anomie." See Agamben's *State of Exception* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005), esp. 50-1.

through the integration of a neutralized and domesticated potential danger, which is in

part produced by security techniques for their own legitimization.[142]

Though initially deemed capable of integration (and indispensable during wartime), the tribunes

have now declared Coriolanus "incurable" and "deadly for the community." He has become

quickly cancerous, proliferating, and out of control. Menenius, in entreating on Coriolanus's

behalf, underscores the tribunes' suicidal enactment of autoimmunity in banishing Coriolanus,

pleading "[t]hat our renowned Rome…like an unnatural dam/ Should now eat up her own"

(3.1.292-5) and later, "O, he's a limb that has but a disease—/ Mortal to cut it off, to cure it

easy" (3.1.297-8). Menenius recognizes that eliminating Coriolanus entirely will be fatal for

Rome and equates Coriolanus's banishment with a kind of unnatural auto-cannibalism.

Ironically, Menenius does uphold the tribunes' process of "othering" Coriolanus by continuing to

frame him within the language of disease. Yet Menenius insists that Coriolanus can be cured and

integrated into the state, a potentially even more violently homogenizing outcome. In either case,

to friends and foes alike, Coriolanus is identified as non-self, a terror to Rome. Thus, in an

attempt to immunize and protect itself from destruction, the state destroys itself by closing off,

unifying, and essentializing the multiplicity that enables the formation of the republic in the first

place. The plurality of the people must be contained and restrained in a political community: "the

people" (1.1.6), "the commonality" (1.1.24), or "the common body" (2.2.48) of which

Coriolanus refuses to be a part.[143] The move to morph a heterogeneous collectivity into a

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[142] Isabel Lorey, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious,* trans. Aileen Derieg (London & New York: Verso, 2015), esp. 43.

[143] For a discussion about the discourse of totality in politics and how *Coriolanus* exposes the paradoxical rhetorical space between the opposing poles of fragmentation and wholeness, see Zvi Jagendorf, "*Coriolanus:* Body Politic and Private Parts," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41.4 (1990): 455-69.

homogenous unity brings about inevitable exclusions and elisions, and for Rome, the fatal

omission is Coriolanus.

Clearly, Coriolanus is isolated from the patricians, the governors of his city, and his

family for the representatives of all three live in a world whose existence he cannot or will not

admit. *His* Rome is a community of intersubjective existence and unconditional vulnerability that

exposes itself without limit to the coming of the other, beyond rights and laws, exceeding

juridical, political, or economic calculation.[144] *His* Rome is antigenerative: willfully set against

the perpetuation and the preservation of life. Because "politics" does not exist for him, he cannot

recognize either the need to assure his control of the state by accommodating himself to the

expectations of the people, nor the need to handle Brutus and Sicinius with circumspection and

outmaneuver them in their bid for power. Indeed, Coriolanus's prior refusal to show his wounds

to the masses and allow the citizens to "put our tongue into those wounds and speak for them"

marks his refusal to exchange in the perverse political currency of his wounds (2.3.6-7).[145]

Instead, he disavows the state, radically contesting the validity of that which is and urges the

patricians to speak up against it:

> You that will be less fearful than discreet,
>
> That love the fundamental part of state
>
> More than you doubt the change on't, that prefer
>
> A noble life before a long, and wish
>
> To jump a body with a dangerous physic

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[144] My notion of "unconditional vulnerability" is indebted to Jacques Derrida's notion of an "unconditional hospitality that exposes itself without limit to the coming of the other, beyond rights and laws, beyond a hospitality conditioned by the right of asylum, by the right to immigration, by citizenship, and even by the right to universal hospitality." See Derrida's *Rogues*, esp. 149.

[145] As Žižek contends, "This is what Shakespeare's Coriolanus had in mind when he refused to 'here my nothings monster'd': he preferred to become a traitor rather than resort to public self-praise and lay open that 'nothing' which was the kernel of his being." See Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment* (New York: Verso, 2006), esp. 78.

That's sure of death without it—at once pluck out

The multitudinous tongue; let them not lick

The sweet which is their poison. Your dishonor

Mangles true judgement, and bereaves the state

Of that integrity which should become't,

Not having the power to do the good it would

For th'ill which doth control't. (3.1.153-164)

With the patricians more concerned to stifle such vehement excess than to ponder its validity,

Coriolanus is cast out from his own class. The "multitudinous tongue"—a perversely accurate

metonym for the state—exposes as fiction the logic undergirding the republic that requires the

existence of some common body like "the people." Coriolanus's speech is interrupted by the

tribunes' cry of "traitorous *innovator,*" signifying that Coriolanus possesses a potentiality for

rethinking community that exceeds the bounds of Rome (3.1.174, emphasis added). The

patricians, on the other hand, "love the fundamental part of state/ More than [they] doubt the

change on't." And to secure it, Sicinius pronounces Coriolanus's sentence:

in the name o'th' people

And in the power of us the tribunes, we,

Ev'n from this instant, banish him our city,

…

I'th'people's name,

I say it shall be so. (3.3.103-5, 108-9).

Sicinius's chiasmic pronunciation of the verdict "in the name o'th'people"/ "I'th'people's name"

forms a crux, the two caesurae marking time, marking out this reiterated moment of popular

ventriloquism that underscores its hypocrisy. The juxtaposition in the final two lines between

"I'th'people's name" and "I say" further accentuates this hypocrisy. And yet, this sanctimonious

pronouncement carries the potency as speech-act to enact Coriolanus's banishment. Thus,

Coriolanus's reaction to this autoimmunization—his sentence of exile—is to reverse its terms.

Rome has long been the place he has been inextricably bound to, created in its image of martial

superheroism; now it shows him diseased, monstered, othered. *He* has remained constant, but

his community has turned traitor to itself: "*I* banish *you*/ And here remain with your *uncertainty*"

he cries, "There is a world elsewhere" (3.3.127-8, 139, emphasis added). In a striking maneuver

that ratchets around his banishment to be *his* choice, Coriolanus's mere ability to imagine

walking away from Rome and being something other than Roman is extraordinary. As Nancy

asserts, "to exist is a matter of going into exile"[146] which Hannah Arendt re-articulates as "[i]f

men wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they must renounce."[147] Lorey, too, asks:

> Can the relationality of life, our connectedness with others, be the object of a
>
> strike?...The care strike is intended to emphasize exactly these debates and struggles,
>
> starting from them in order to create, in Donna Haraway's sense, the "instruments of
>
> vision" that "vision requires"… Social relationships are "striked," according to the
>
> Precarias, by producing excesses that *flee* from the interests of profit. This refusal, this
>
> flight, already takes place in everyday practices, but it must be composed, articulated,
>
> actualized, constituted."[148]

By fleeing, refusing, disavowing the State, Coriolanus suspends belief in it and neutralizes the

given in such a way that a new horizon opens up beyond the given and in place of it. His massive

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[146] Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, esp. 78.
[147] Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin, 1977), esp. 165.
[148] Isabel Lorey, *State of Insecurity,* esp. 97, emphasis mine.

defection from Rome opens the possibility of instituting a radically new form of being, creating the space in which some new vision can emerge. Repudiating the State's alternatives of being Roman or anti-Roman, Coriolanus is able to imagine being *not* Roman entirely—his imagination extends not just beyond Rome but at the exclusion of Rome.

Coriolanus's banishment immediately leaves Rome defenseless and open to destruction. In the very following scene, his mother Volumnia predicts Rome's fate: "Now the red pestilence strike all trades in Rome,/ And occupations perish!" (4.1.14-5). "Red pestilence" is the first of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, associated with infectious disease and plague. By autoimmunizing a potential threat from within, Rome has brought about exactly what motivated this defensive, reactionary process in the first place. Coriolanus himself echoes Volumnia's sentiments: "I shall be loved when I am lacked" (4.1.16) and "My hazards still have been your solace" (4.1.29). Coriolanus has been created by exceptional circumstances to perform exceptionally. He is valued when Rome and its "common men," paralyzed, need him to suffer beyond what they can endure. His risks have guaranteed Rome's security and his banishment now augurs Rome's devastation.

Cataclysmic events quickly fall into succession. Volumnia is seen on the streets berating the tribunes: "Whom you have banished does exceed you all" (4.2.45) and when Coriolanus is rumored to have joined the Volscian forces, Menenius laments, "We are all undone unless/ The noble man have mercy" (4.6.113-4). The First Watchman of the Volscians, rebuking Menenius and condemning Rome, sums up the destruction the Romans have brought upon themselves through autoimmunization:

Can you, when you have pushed out your gates the very defender of them, and in a

violent popular ignorance given your enemy your shield, think to front his revenges with

the easy groans of old women, the virginal palms of your daughters, or with the palsied

intercession of such a decayed dotant as you seem to be? Can you think to blow out the

intended fire your city is ready to flame in with such weak breath as this? No, you are

deceived, therefore back to Rome and prepare for your execution. You are condemned,

our general has sworn you out of reprieve and pardon. (5.2.39-49)

In a desperate attempt to insure Rome's security, its immune system has worked all too well and

weaponized its best defender against itself. Banishing Coriolanus allows him to join with

Aufidius and unleash a violence on Rome strong enough "[t]o unbuild the city" itself (1.1.199).

The banished Coriolanus returns to haunt the supposed sovereignty of Rome's "common body"

as he is able to turn to Aufidius and imagine an affirmative politics that embraces death as it does

life:

> For if
>
> I had feared death, of all the men i'th'world
>
> I would have 'voided thee, but in mere spite
>
> To be full quit of those my banishers
>
> Stand I before thee here. (4.5.79-83)

And yet, at the end, Rome is saved. The work that Volumnia performs in her plea to

Coriolanus accomplishes its political goal: a peace treaty with the Volscians which will save

Rome from sure defeat by re-Romanizing the Coriolanus who has just newly imagined another

way of being. Volumnia's dismantling of her son works several tropes at once, so that she saps

the force from Coriolanus's attack by recasting her son as Roman while she theatricalizes her

own position of submissive: "dear mother," the "poor hen" (5.3.62-3). That is, Volumnia

transports Rome into the battlefield by arriving as Rome's representative, so that, in Adelman's

terms, "as she announces her intention to commit suicide, she makes absolute the identification of her country with herself."[149] As representative, Volumnia re-situates her son not outside of Rome but *within* it, as when she speaks of the terror of "the mother, wife, and child [seeing]/ The son, the husband, and the father tearing/ His country's bowels out" (5.3.103-4). In her speech, Coriolanus is no longer a virile warrior defined in relation to Aufidius (or even a superhero defined in relation to his country); Volumnia re-Romanizes Coriolanus by domesticating him into a new tripartite set of roles: son, husband, and father. And as Roman son/husband/father, Coriolanus must assume a protective role over the now-helpless Volumnia, whom he "lets…prate/ Like one I'th'stocks" (5.3.160-1). Volumnia effectively sets into motion Coriolanus's downfall by making him Roman again, prompting a Senator to proclaim "Unshout the noise that banished Martius,/ Repeal him with the welcome of his mother" (5.5.4-5). Among the definitions of "repeal" offered by the *Oxford English Dictionary,* is first, the "recall of a person, esp. from exile." A second meaning noted as "obsolete" is "to repudiate or renounce (one's actions); to give up or abandon (a thought, feeling, etc.)" and a third meaning marked both "obsolete" and "rare" is "to recall to a proper state or course."[150] While the first definition may be the one most easily and literally applied to Coriolanus, the more residual ways of construing the sense of repealing as renouncing one's actions and being "recall[ed] to a proper state" may more accurately reflect his experience as he is recalled to Rome. Coriolanus immediately recognizes Volumnia's speech as his death warrant when he cries, "O mother, mother!/ What have you done?...for your son, believe it, O believe it/ Most dangerously you have with him prevailed,/ If not most mortal to him" (5.3.183-4, 188-90). His lament is doubly valenced: both

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149 Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to the Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), esp. 37.
150 See "repeal, n.1," "repeal, v.1.2," and "repeal, v.1.3a," *OED Online* (Oxford, Oxford UP, January 2019).

bewailing "O mother, you have killed me" and "O mother, you have made me Roman again." The way Volumnia concludes then in the reintegration of the battlefield and Rome—the reintegration of Coriolanus into Rome—is by addressing the power of the superhero only to undo it. She ennobles the position of her vengeful son, and that ennobling quickly reveals itself as a virtuoso way to eliminate him as a threat. She invokes him only to clear him away, paradoxically sacrificing life itself in order to preserve life. Done and undone, constructed and dismantled, both thing and nothing, Coriolanus is unexpectedly destroyed by being recalled to Rome.

In the final scene, Coriolanus's emblazoned body is now finally on display, his wounds open and bleeding in full view, the visual spectacle accompanied by Aufidius's qualified praise. Just as Coriolanus's banishment returned to haunt Rome, his death as Rome's savior and the memorialized figure of self-sacrifice is sure to return. We tend to forget Coriolanus's ability to think beyond and at the exclusion of Rome because we know how the story ends. Yet, Coriolanus's final conversion to become Roman again is only made possible by his prior ability to imagine a mode of existence beyond Rome. And it is his capacity to embrace extreme violence and vulnerability as a means to intimacy on the battlefield that we ought to dwell. Coriolanus's exodus from domination relations, the defection from ways of being governed, does not necessarily lead to individualistic dispersion but can also form itself anew in founding, in constituting new ways of being. And though at the end Rome is saved, what kind of political future lies ahead? What kind of political community can be newly imagined or implemented? What viable alternatives have emerged from Coriolanus's defection and subsequent repeal, viable not in the sense that they can be infinitely sustained but imaginative possibilities that have the potential to leave Rome behind?

Conclusion

Coriolanus is a play about the pain and necessity of bodies that don't maintain their integrity as a means to intimacy. It takes the image of a sole individual—the strictly limited, hermetically sealed mass—and hollows him out. It takes the seemingly autonomous, wholly self-sufficient being and shows him completely constructed by and dependent on others. It takes a man championed for his unmatched singularity and overinflated notion of possessive individualism and completely annihilates him. It takes the ideology of self-preservation and guaranteed security and exposes its untenability. Shakespeare's "extreme" study of "bourgeois individualism" paradoxically reveals the instability of the very concept of personhood and goes beyond human exceptionalism.[151]

I began with the Roman ideal of martial heroism, showing that Coriolanus—as the emblem of masculinity—is a wound; he is an excess who is also an absence as wounds are literally the signs of damaged integrity and interpenetration. I moved on to the interrelationality between warriors on the battlefield, engaging the discourse of masochism as an exchange of desires and an exchange of damage to reveal the fully intersubjective identities of Coriolanus and Aufidius. Their interplay as dominant and submissive identities are mutually dependent on and constituted by the other in an infinitely imbricated interrelation of catastrophic bonds. I invoked the mobilization of annihilative desires which occurs on the battlefield as a literal manifestation of the inter-porosity of precariousness, the willingness to risk the body for an incredible intimacy brought about through violence. The final section imported the battlefield back into the Roman Republic where the clash between the political community of Rome and Coriolanus's newly

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[151] Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), esp. 73 and Peter Stallybrass, "Shakespeare, the Individual, and the Text," *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichier (London: Routledge, 1992), esp. 607.

imagined model of interrelation revealed the latter's untranslateability into a workable (or at the very least, Roman) political system. We witnessed the political response to the threatening notion of community Coriolanus embodied and the destructive process of autoimmunization the state enacted to maintain its power. The tribunes marshalled the threat of insecurity in order to rule by fear, only to be retroactively haunted by what they had excluded. And finally, we saw Coriolanus maintaining even unto death the possibility of an alternative political order for thinking through how we may live out our exposure and our shared life. Though this tragedy ultimately ends with his death, Coriolanus does expose the corruption of Rome's political community, damaging the idea of "the people" and revealing as fantasy a democratic polis that can only exist as a homogenous totality. The politics of *Coriolanus* are neither proto-fascist nor proto-republican, do not advocate absolutism or civic republicanism, but rather are a politics of individual self-abnegation.

Coriolanus is a reversal of Shakespeare's great tragedies. He lacks the exquisite interiority of a Hamlet, Macbeth, or Cleopatra because *Coriolanus* is a play more concerned with exploring intersubjectivity than individual interiority, a play more concerned with exploding the contours of the political body and exposing vacuity, porosity, and vulnerability as inherent to subjectivity, a play more concerned with challenging and exceeding political communities in favor of showing us the potential of what communities *could* be. The concern of this play is always living flesh that is constantly at the risk of dying but taking that risk in the name of interrelation.

We may be left asking why pursue this thought of community that looks nihilistic, only realizable in death? What *Coriolanus* reveals is that community is not an entity, nor is it a collective subject or a totality of subjects (as Rome's political community is), but rather is the

relation that makes them no longer individual subjects because it closes them off from their

identity with a line, which traversing them, alters them. *Loss* is constitutive of community itself.

Community is the with, the between, the threshold where individuals meet in a point of contact

that brings them into relation with others to the degree to which it separates them from

themselves. It is this nothing held in common that joins us in the condition of exposure to the

most unyielding absence of meaning—death—and simultaneously to that opening to a meaning

that still remains unthought. Shakespeare's figure of extreme individuality reveals that the

individual does not and cannot signify as a singularity; rather, the exposed being is plural,

relational, multiple, singularly plural and plurally singular.

Chapter II

"He razeth all his foes with fire and sword": The Politics of Gift Exchange in Marlowe's

Tamburlaine the Great

Desiderans dissolvi

—Latin motto

Black are his colors, black pavilion;

His spear, his shield, his horse, his armor, plumes,

And jetty feathers menace death and hell;

Without respect of sex, degree, or age,

He razeth all his foes with fire and sword.

—Messenger, *Tamburlaine* 1:4.1.59-63[152]

Perhaps the first piece of criticism on *Tamburlaine the Great* is also the most suggestive. Richard Mulcaster explicitly condemns Tamburlaine in *Positions* (1581): "I do not hold *Tamerlane,* or any barbarous and bloody invasions to be meanes to true nobilitie, which come for scourges."[153] Seven years later, Robert Greene in his preface to *Perimedes the Blacksmith* attacks "two Gentlemen Poets" who

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[152] All references to the play are to *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II*, ed. John D. Jump (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1967), cited parenthetically. I have followed conventional usage for the spelling of characters' names.
[153] Richard Mulcaster, *Positions*, ed. R. H. Quick (London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1888), esp. 218.

had it in derision, for that I could not make my verses iet vpon the stage in tragicall

buskins, euerie worde filling the mouth like the faburden of Bo-Bell, daring God out of

heauen with that Atheist *Tamburlan*, or blaspheming with the mad preest of the sonne:

but let me rather openly pocket vp the Asse at *Diogenes* hand: then wantonlye set out

such impious instances of intolerable poetrie, such mad and scoffing poets, that haue

propheticall spirits as bred of *Merlins* race.[154]

Some 50 years later, Marlowe is included in Ben Jonson's list of bad examples where a clear

distinction is made between the artistic practice of the "true Artificer" and that of the abuser of

language, who "will…run away from nature, as hee were afraid of her; or depart from life, and

the likenesse of Truth…with the *Tamerlanes*, and *Tamer-Chams* of the late Age, which had

nothing in them but the scenicall strutting, and furious vociferation, to warrant them to the

ignorant gapers."[155] In its ostensible reliance on the official intellectual norms and orthodoxies of

the humanist ethos—the inspiration of the vigorous neoclassical strain which characterized

England's literary Renaissance—Jonson's critique of "scenicall strutting, and furious

vociferation" coupled with Greene's condemnation of Tamburlaine's impiety and Mulcaster's of

his barbarity reproach the play for its hyperbolic displays of violent excess. These contemporary

responses anticipate the most vexed and debated question about the play today: how to reconcile

its immense popularity with its aesthetic, political, and ethical concerns.[156] How can we explain

irrational superfluity and extravagant cruelty without getting entangled in the aesthetic liabilities

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[154] See Robert Greene, *Perimedes the Blacke-Smith* (London, 1588), sig. A3; EEBO STC (2nd edition) 12295.
[155] C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson*, VIII (Oxford: Calrendon Press, 1947), esp. 587. *Timber*, published posthumously in the 1640 Folio, was probably written between 1623 and 1635. *Tamar Cham* is a lost two-part play of the late 1580s or early 1590s; its title role was played by Edward Alleyn who also played Tamburlaine.
[156] Richard Levin has carefully compiled contemporary reports of *Tamburlaine*, reaching the conclusion that "the overwhelming impression created by all these allusions is that Tamburlaine was perceived as a triumphant figure who possessed and wielded tremendous power." See Levin's "The Contemporary Perception of Marlowe's Tamburlaine," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 1 (1984): 51-70, esp. 56.

that have haunted readings of this very play? How should Marlowe's barring of conventional

moral judgments and Christian humanitarian feelings from compromising the almost unbounded

admiration that he wishes to excite for his hero's prowess be read? Some critics have argued that

Tamburlaine is other or more than human, and that his actions are beyond our judgment and

comprehension.[157] Others have criticized the play's structure, condemned the violence it

represents, and both questioned and praised Marlowe's experimentation with form.[158] Still others

have endeavored to detect in the aspirations and choices of the "scourge and wrath of God"

(1:3.3.44) as to the elusive playwright's own sensibility; they have debated whether Marlowe

tempers our admiration with ironic displacements or whether Tamburlaine's challenge to

orthodoxy dovetails with Marlowe's own.[159] At the heart of the critical disagreements is what

John Gillies memorably calls the play's "aesthetic dyslexia."[160]

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[157] See Emily Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe* (Philadelphia, 1993), esp. 6; Donald Peet, "The Rhetoric of Tamburlaine," *English Literary History* 26 (1959), esp. 153; and Herbert Rothschild, "The Conqueror-Hero, the Besieged City, and the Development of an Elizabethan Protagonist," *South Central Review* 3 (1986), esp. 62-3.

[158] On the play's structure, see Helen Gardner, "The Second Part of *Tamburlaine the Great*" in *Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine Part One and Part Two: Text and Major Criticism* (Indianapolis, 1974), esp. 202; John Gillies, "Tamburlaine and Renaissance Geography," in *Early Modern English Drama: A Critical Companion* (New York, 2006), esp. 35. On the play's violence, see Eugene Hill, "Marlowe's 'more Excellent and Admirable method' of Parody in *Tamburlaine I,*" *Renaissance Papers* (1995), esp. 38; Gillies, "Tamburlaine and Renaissance Geography," esp. 46; Ethel Seaton, "Marlowe's Light Reading" in *Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies in Honor of Frank Percy Wilson* (Oxford, 1959), esp. 20. On the play's experimentation with form, see C. L. Barber's "The Death of Zenocrate: 'Conceiving and subduing both' in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine,*" *Literature and Psychology* 16 (1966), esp. 16; and Kimberley Bentson, "'Beauty's Just Applause': Dramatic Form and the Tamburlainian Sublime," in *Christopher Marlowe* (New York, 1986), esp. 214.

[159] For critics who condemn Tamburlaine by means of a pervasive irony that undercuts Tamburlaine's "apparent" triumphs and reduces them to a series of failures culminating in his death so that his entire career and its outcome are presented as a kind of negative *exemplum* or admonitory moral lesson, see Roy Battenhouse, *Marlowe's "Tamburlaine": A Study in Renaissance Moral Philosophy* (Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1964); Douglas Cole, *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1962), esp. Ch. 2; Charles Masinton, *Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision: A Study in Damnation* (Athens: Ohio UP, 1972). However, most of the original audience, if we are to trust the many contemporary reports that Richard Levin has compiled, were delighted with Tamburlaine. See Johnanes H. Birringer, "Marlowe's Violent Stage: 'Mirrors' of Honor in *Tamburlaine,*" *ELH* 51.2 (1984): 219-39; Thomas Cartelli, *Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the Economy of Theatrical Experience* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1991); Ruth Lunney, *Marlowe and the Popular Tradition: Innovation in the English Drama before 1595* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002).

[160] See John Gillies, "Marlowe, the Timur Myth, and the Motives of Geography," in *Playing the Globe: Genre and Geography in English Renaissance Drama* (Madison, 1998), esp. 208.

This chapter works to sever our appraisal of the play from a rational humanist framework and approach Marlowe's playmaking as an act that scorns and subverts his culture's ethical certainties. Rather than judge the protagonist within the "full rights of English-men"[161] such as laws preserving "the right and liberty of the subjects in their lawful and free trades, mysteries, and manual occupations as in their lands and goods" as prominent MP Nicholas Fuller remarked in 1610, we are prompted to take seriously a new world order predicated on conspicuous destruction and senseless luxury.[162] In one of the first popular successes of London's public stage, a heroic fiction is born out on the explicit premise of a transgressive linguistic strength. By making clear that *Tamburlaine* will initiate a radical break with both the theatrical fashion and the acceptable moral precepts of the day, the prologue heralds the creation of revolutionary world building:

> From jigging veins of rhyming mother wits
>
> And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,
>
> We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,
>
> Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine
>
> Threat'ning the world with high astounding terms
>
> And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword. (Prologue, 1-6)

The self-conscious annunciation of an agonistic principle of Word and Sword, and especially the exulting manner in which the new poetry is introduced, sets up a new horizon of expectations for the audience, even though the militant images of presumptuous ambition seem to imply an

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[161] In the seventeenth century, the language of rights became more familiar to lawyers such as Sir Edwin Sandys' reference to the "full rights of English-men" in *Le Case del Union d'Escose ove Angleterre*, 1. Moo. 790, 793 (K.B. 1606).

[162] See Nicholas Fuller in Proceedings in Parliament, 1610 ii. 152 (E. R. Foster ed, 1966). There are numerous references to rights and liberties in the great debates on the liberty of the subject in the 1628 Parliament.

ethical evaluation of the new "terms" the listeners are about to "hear." Diametric to the deference and the relaxed ease of the present tense typical of Shakespearean prologues (as, for example, in the Chorus speeches of *Henry V*), Marlowe's commanding tone and the forward thrust of the future tense takes hold of us, exorcising all memory of the "jigging veins" of unskilled rhymers. The play thus pushes us towards awe before we even encounter Tamburlaine and prefigures a hero from the margins who throws into disarray established orthodoxies and who interrogates boundary structures, dividing lines, and the mechanisms employed to institute social discipline. As Charles Whitney observes, the Prologue promises "a new reach of poetry, a new martial and tragic seriousness, a new challenge to order and degree, and a new respect and license of the audience's power of judgment."[163] It is precisely this new political and ethical economy instated by Tamburlaine that this chapter examines.

I begin by teasing out of the play's complex political landscape two competing exchange economies: that of commodity culture and that of gift exchange. Whereas Tamburlaine is commonly portrayed as the most insatiable sovereign and conqueror—obsessed with accumulating land, wealth, and subjects—I argue that he is not interested in participating in commodity culture at all. Instead, Tamburlaine creates and partakes in an alternate political economy of irrational, disruptive, destructive, and erotic gift exchange that inevitably implicates other bodies. An abundance of affects are produced by the ceaseless actions, interactions, and counteractions between all bodies Tamburlaine encounters, shattering any fantasy of autonomy or ownership over one's body. Drawing on Marcel Mauss's influential notion of *potlatch* (a kind of orgy of generosity in certain tribal societies where power and prestige is paradoxically gained by who gives away or destroys the most riches, demonstrating that these ostensibly valuable

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[163] See Charles Whitney, *Early Responses to Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, 2006), esp. 17.

commodities have no power over you), I argue that Tamburlaine gives the purest gift of all:

death. By giving the gift that can never be returned or reciprocated, Tamburlaine disrupts the

cycle of and logic behind how commodity societies function and replaces it with a general

economy in which the expenditure, rather than the production, of wealth is the primary object.

Within the hypermilitarist and hypermasculine excesses of war, he relentlessly extracts bodies

from the hegemonic society of accumulation, commodification, and profane circulation,

liberating life from life itself. By creating a world of inoperative *jouissance* where ethics

becomes the pure culture of the death drive, Tamburlaine bypasses "the well regulated

community"—the creation of well-governed and well-governing political subjects—to engage in

a more radical understanding of collective life.[164] And yet, his inability to compromise or accept

anything but absolutes creates a devastating holocaust that seeks not merely to expend energy,

but to eradicate it altogether. By giving the gift of death that can never be returned or

reciprocated, Tamburlaine's economy of excess hits a point at which it turns back on itself and

becomes an excess of the genocidal biopolitics of what is all too familiar.

Commodity Culture, Gift Culture

 Tamburlaine the Great mobilizes two models of interpersonal exchange that can be read

productively alongside Marcel Mauss's distinction between commodity exchange (which is

evident in industrial societies that are characterized by social class and division of labor in which

self-interest, independence of both giver and recipient, and frequent impersonal relationships

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[164] Sixteenth-century writing on statecraft conceived of the collective through the "*commune ben regolato*" and the "*moltitudine confuse, & licentiosa*" ("the well regulated community" and the "confused and licentious multitude"), as John Wolfe puts it in his introduction to his 1584 edition of Machiavelli's works. See John Wolfe, introduction to *I Discorsi de Nicolo Machiavelli, sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, bound with *Il Prencipe di Nicolo Machiavelli*, by Machiavelli (London: Printed by John Wolfe, 1584), 2v.

predominate) and gift exchange (which is associated with tribal cultures dominated by kinship

and group relations).165 Or, to put in another register, Mauss's distinction between these

exchange economies coincides with Georges Bataille's distinction between restrictive and

general economies. For Bataille, the restrictive economy involves the production and circulation

of commodities that serve utilitarian ends, where the prime motives for exchange are acquisition

and saving. In contrast to the proprietary nature of the restrictive economy, the aim of the general

economy "is not necessity but its contrary, *luxury*," and the primary aim of circulation is the

"expenditure" (the "consumption" of wealth, rather than the production).166 Critics tend to read

Tamburlaine through the lens of the former (commodity exchange operating within a restrictive

economy), painting the titular character as an insatiable protocapitalist, consumed with the desire

to accumulate more wealth, more lands, more "commodities."167 For instance, Ipek Uygur argues

that Tamburlaine "burn[s] with an unappeasable desire to accumulate imperial honor and

material wealth rather than his god-ordained authority as a divine scourge" which Daniel Vitkus

buttresses by contending that there is no motive for Tamburlaine beyond the possession and

control of a global network that will funnel wealth and commodities back to him.168 In a more

explicitly economic reading, Stephen Greenblatt maintains that Tamburlaine personifies "the

acquisitive energy of merchants and adventurers, promoters alike of trading and theatrical

companies," and that the "historical matrix" of Marlowe's drama was Elizabethan commerce,

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165 See Carl Olson, "Excess, Time, and the Pure Gift: Postmodern Transformations of Marcel Mauss' Theory," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 14.3/4 (2002): 350-374, esp. 353.
166 See Georges Bataille's *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy Vol. 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991), esp. 12, 9.
167 In fact, throughout most of Part I, Tamburlaine is consistently referred to as a thief: "a greater [task]/ Fits Menaphon, than warring with a thief" (1:1.1.87-8); "is this Tamburlaine the thief?" (1:2.4.41); "a devilish thief" (1:2.1.20); "To Tamburlaine the great Tartarian thief?" (1:3.3.171); "a sturdy felon and base-born thief" (1:4.3.12); "Tamburlaine…famous for nothing but theft and spoil" (1:4.3.66ff); and so on.
168 See Ipek Uygur, "Tamburlaine the Great: 'The Scourge and Wrath of God,'" *Social and Behavioral Sciences* 158 (2014): 155-9, esp. 158 and Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (New York: Palgrave, 2008).

since "it is his countrymen that he depicts."[169] Richard Wilson further historicizes Greenblatt's claim, reading *Tamburlaine* as a response to the crisis in the Muscovy Company, England's first joint-stock enterprise, when the Turks cut the route from Russia to Persia in 1580.[170] Within the context of commodity culture, Tamburlaine's final command, "Give me a map, and let me see how much/ Is left for me to conquer all the world./ That these boys may finish all my wants" (2: 5.3.123-5), fits quite neatly. His determination to conquer the world follows the logic of venture capitalism or, what Gordon Braden calls, "the recurrent compulsive theme of imperial pathology"[171]: gaining power through ever-increasing accumulation, predicated on individualism and alienation.[172] Tamburlaine's use of the map metaphor allows him to conceive of the world as a space which can be materially possessed by translating unknown regions into nameable, legible units which participate in a textual system representing total conquest.[173] The reduction of land and bodies to standardized objects ripe for subjugation becomes Tamburlaine's driving impetus.

Yet, what if we were to shake the very foundation on which this characterization of Tamburlaine stands? Rather than cast *Tamburlaine* as perpetuating commodity culture—an assumption frequently baked into interpretations of this text—what if the play instead imagines a new system of political economy entirely, prompting us to attend to the utopic? Tamburlaine's

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[169] See Stephen Greenblatt, "Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Play" in *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama,* ed. Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton (London: Longman, 1992), esp. 58.

[170] See Richard Wilson, "Visible Bullets: Tamburlaine the Great and Ivan the Terrible," *ELH* 62.1 (1995): 47-68.

[171] See Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985), esp. 5.

[172] In fact, throughout most of Part I, Tamburlaine is referred to as a thief: "A greater [task]/ Fits Menaphon, than warring with a thief" (1:1.1.87-8); "is this Tamburlaine the thief?" (1:2.4.41); "a sturdy felon and base-born thief" (1:4.3.12); "Tamburlaine…famous for nothing but theft and spoil" (1:4,3,63); and so on.

[173] Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, in her work on the impact of printing on Renaissance culture, reminds us that Marlowe composed *Tamburlaine* with a copy of Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* on his desk, and emphasizes the importance of the accessibility, made possible by printing, of world maps "projecting uniform data according to a standardized system." See Eisenstein, "The Advent of Printing and the Problem of the Renaissance," *Past & Present* 45.1 (1969): 19-89, esp. 70. For a detailed account of the influence of Ortelius on the composition of the play, see Ethel Seaton, "Marlowe's Map" in *Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine Parts I and II: Text and Major Criticism*, ed. Irving Ribner (Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1974): 163-86.

hunger for ceaselessly projecting and realizing hyperbole may, in fact, be the engine driving the

hero's successfully disruptive rise. We might remember Gaston Bachelard's claim that "in

prolonging exaggeration, we may have the good fortune to avoid the habits of *reduction* and thus

that we should follow the poet to the ultimate extremity of his images" and follow Tamburlaine

to the extremity of his.[174] To do so, I want to invoke Mauss's influential theory of gift culture

and particularly *potlatch*, which is the most extreme manifestation of this exchange model.

Mauss's *Essai sur le don forme et raison de l'echange dans les sociétés archaiques* is a study

that is widely considered a classic in anthropology and religious studies but less widely known in

literary studies.[175] And yet, by approaching the *The Gift* as a literary text, we may see it, not

merely as a sociological study attempting to record the entire credit history of a community, but

as a theory of human solidarity. Notably, the earliest formulation of the concept of consideration

(which shifted contract law from a gift- to an exchange-economy) was in 1549 and it was in the

1560s that accountability of agreements came to depend on the presence of consideration; this

principle was affirmed in *Golding's Case* (1586).[176] The essentials involved were neatly stated

by the then Solicitor General, Egerton: "In every action upon the case upon a promise, there are

three things considerable, consideration, promise, and breach of promise."[177] However, by

returning to the idea of the gift economy in lieu of contract law, we can see how it comprises all

the associations—symbolic, interpersonal, and economic—that we need to understand the

Tamburlanian ethos. Mauss identified the three tenets of gift exchange as follows:[178] first, "it is

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[174] See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon 1969), esp. 219-20.

[175] Mauss's *The Gift* was first published in *L' Année sociologique* in 1924 and republished in 1950 by the Presses Universitaires de France.

[176] See A. W. B. Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract: the Rise of the Action of Assumpsit* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), esp. 318-9.

[177] See Luke Wilson, *The Oxford Handbook of English Law and Literature, 1500-1700*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017), esp. 397.

[178] By studying the tribes of the Northwest Coast American Indians and Melanesians and moving onto Polynesia and then to ancient texts, Mauss elaborated his concept of the gift cycle as a theoretical counterpart to the invisible hand.

not individuals but collectivities that impose obligations of exchange and contract upon each other"; second, what is exchanged is not solely property and wealth but "the passing on of wealth is only one feature of a much more general and enduring contract"; and finally, these "total services and counter-services are…strictly compulsory, on pain of private or public warfare."[179] Mauss is suggesting that a gift is something personal and alive with a special power that not only generates itself, but also possesses the power to renew the relationship between the giving and receiving parties; by giving oneself in the gift, a being not only participates in it but this also creates a spiritual bond between persons. These principles of communal, reciprocal obligation, the act of exchange as forging bonds of alliance and commonality, and a total system operating in a general economy finds its most radical manifestation in the phenomenon of *potlatch*, and it is through this framework that we may begin to rethink the relentless, all-consuming thrust of Tamburlaine's imaginative desire. His frenzied mode of consuming, using up, transforming, and violating the bodies he encounters confirms that death is another mode of interconnectedness where one experiences life as an existence shattered through and through.

The *Potlatch*

The word *potlatch* essentially means "to feed," "to consume." It is also the word Mauss adopts to describe the kind of institution practiced in certain tribal societies that he deems "total services of an agonistic type":

[W]hat is noteworthy about these tribes is the principle of rivalry and hostility that prevails in all [*potlatch*] practices. They go as far as to fight and kill chiefs and nobles. Moreover, they even go as far as the purely sumptuary destruction of wealth that has been

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[179] See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*," trans. W. D. Halls, (London: Routledge, 1990), esp. 5.

accumulated in order to outdo the rival chief as well as his associate…There is a total

service in the sense that it is indeed the whole clan that contracts on behalf of all, for all

that it possesses and for all that it does, through the person of its chief. But this act of

'service' on the part of the chief takes on an extremely marked agonistic character. It is

essentially usurious and sumptuary.[180]

The purpose of the *potlatch* is manifold: it is used to redistribute wealth, establish social status,

trace family lineages, pass on ceremonial names and hereditary positions, recognize rights and

privileges, and, most importantly, *inter alia*, fulfill social obligations. Not only does the *potlatch*

disrupt the established politico-socio-economic order and, in the process, implicate all bodies

involved; it also enables its participants to encounter death, which is symbolized by the dramatic

destruction of goods. Tamburlaine takes this phenomenon even further, not merely

"symboliz[ing]" but actualizing his culture's contact with death, making death intimately

intertwined with life and moving beyond the destruction of luxurious goods to the destruction of

life itself. In this way, Tamburlaine renders self-destructive energies generative and reimagines

losses as fortunate events. The operating principle underlying *potlatch* and, by extension, the

total system of reciprocal bonds Tamburlaine forges is that one gains the most by losing one's

goods and one's self the most. It is catastrophic destruction, which goes against judgments on the

basis of a rational economy, that is the object of Tamburlaine's feverish pursuit.

In *Tamburlaine*, interpersonal relations are characterized by extreme antagonism and

rivalry (hence, "total services of an *agonistic* type"); it is not enough to defeat his rivals, but

Tamburlaine sets out to utterly humiliate them. Much attention has been drawn to the

protagonist's project of global violence and subjugation as Tamburlaine marshals hordes of

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[180] See Mauss, *The Gift*, esp. 6.

soldiers to the battlefield, and penetrates, cleaves, and slaughters his way to worldwide

domination: the deaths of Mycetes, Cosroe, Arabia, and Sigismund, the shooting of the Captain

of Balsera, the stabbing of Calyphas, the "braining" of Bajazeth and Zabina, the suicide of

Agydas, the drowning of the Babylonians, the skewering of the seven virgins of Damascus, the

burning of Larissa, the chaining and murder of the Governor of Babylon, and the spilling of

Tamburlaine's own blood in a bizarre baptismal rite of succession. From Timothy Francisco's

assertion that Tamburlaine is rendered queer through bestial acts of dominance and abjection, Per

Sivefors tracing of the play's frequent allusions to the bridling of the human tongue, to Graham

Hammill's claim that the bio-politics of massacre make up *Tamburlaine'*s latent political

content, scholars have exhaustively commented on the play's dramatization of brutal

dehumanization.[181] While focusing on different manifestations of dehumanizing acts, these

interpretations nonetheless agree that Tamburlaine's sadism is expressive of his obsession with

the visible signs of his power. His chariot drawn by conquered kings, Bajazeth's cage, and

Tamburlaine's footstool are all effects of dramatic literalization by which Tamburlaine can ratify

his absolute sovereignty (which follows, once again, the logic of commodity culture as this

implies his exaggerated materialism). Marlowe's "theater of cruelty," to borrow Janet Clare's

felicitous phrase, seems to be an end in itself.[182]

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[181] See Timothy Francisco, "Marlowe's War Horses: Cyborgs, Soldiers, and Queer Companions" in *Violent Masculinities: Male Aggression in Early Modern Texts and Culture*, eds. Jennifer Feather and Catherine E. Thomas (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): 47-65; Per Sivefors, "Conflating Babel and Babylon in *Tamburlaine 2*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 52.2 (2012): 293-323; Graham Hammill, "Time for Marlowe," *ELH* 75.2 (2008): 291-314.

[182] Janet Clare opened an article entitled "Marlowe's 'Theater of Cruelty'" as follows: "It is a commonplace of our understanding of Marlowe that he produced a theater of consistently violent techniques and effects. Confronted with a combination of Renaissance eloquence and extreme acts of aggression, it can be difficult (unless undue emphasis is placed on the fascinating details of the life) to find an appropriate critical vocabulary for Marlowe's dramaturgy." See Clare's "Marlowe's 'Theater of Cruelty'" in *Constructing Christopher Marlowe*, ed. J. A. Downie and T. Parnell (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000): 74-87, esp. 74.

Yet within the context of *potlatch*, Tamburlaine's humiliation of his enemies (and Bajazeth, in particular) is not merely reflective of some kind of inherent sadism and uncontrollable need to appropriate everything as a visible sign of his glory. Instead, these degrading acts become a necessary prerequisite for forging interpersonal bonds in a system where one must not only give, receive, and reciprocate, but give, receive, and reciprocate *with interest*. The rivalry entails the return of a greater gift: in order to get even, the giver must not only redeem himself, but he must also impose the "power of the gift" on his rival in turn. The added compulsion of outdoing one's rival puts in motion a skewed reciprocal relation where exchanges are fueled by increasingly (self) destructive acts of aggression. In lieu of a stable cycle of equal exchange and mimesis, a more explosive cycle of eclipsing competition takes its place. In these excessively dehumanizing interchanges, Tamburlaine reveals an unexpected intimacy that inheres in relations characterized by extreme antagonism and rivalry.

The "Feast of Crowns"

Conceptually as well as dramatically, the Tamburlaine-Bajazeth axis is where we can see the logic of *potlatch* played out most clearly as these competing sovereigns become distorted mirrors of one another; specifically, Tamburlaine seeks to outdo his rival by enacting Bajazeth's rhetorical threats. As numerous critics have observed, Tamburlaine imitates Bajazeth's boasting and he adopts Bajazeth's idea of having his chariot drawn by conquered enemies.[183] Before they meet in battle, Tamburlaine mentions the underfed Christian slaves on Bajazeth's galleys (1:3.3.47-58); this image later seems to provide the inspiration for his starving Bajazeth in a

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[183] See Matthew Greenfield, "Christopher Marlowe's Wound Knowledge," *PMLA* 119.2 (2004): 233-46; Johannes Birringer, "Marlowe's Violent Stage: 'Mirrors' of Honor in *Tamburlaine*," *ELH* 51 (1984): 219-39; Mark Thornton Burnett, "'*Tamburlaine* and the Body," *Criticism* 33 (1991): 34-47; and Douglas Cole, *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christophe Marlowe* (New York: Gordian, 1972).

cage. While imprisoned, Bajazeth gives Tamburlaine several other ideas. Cursing Tamburlaine, Bajazeth apostrophizes the "priests" of Mahomet who, "sacrificing, slice and cut your flesh,/ Staining his altars with your purple blood" (1:4.2.3-4). Two scenes later, Tamburlaine threatens to "make thee slice the brawns of thy arms into carbonadoes and eat them" if Bajazeth does not take the bit of meat he has been offered: "Are you so daintily brought up you cannot eat your own flesh?" (1:4.4.43-5, 36-7). Here, a transposition of the sacrificed animals takes place. Bajazeth, and later his queen, becomes, at least metaphorically, the sacrificed animal whose body must be eaten by all members of the clan—the "carne" of the carnival feast. In their oscillation, these two adversaries feed off (quite literally) one another as they attempt to bring increasing shame onto their rival. And though it is Tamburlaine who, at the moment, has the upper hand, Bajazeth is still his model.

The "feast of crowns" is a scene in particular I want to dwell on as it illuminates and amplifies many of the tenets of *potlatch*. Beyond the simple connection that the word *potlatch* means "to feed" and the "feast of crowns" is a celebration of conspicuous consumption, the feast becomes the epitome of the violence, exaggeration, and hostility that *potlatch* arouses. As Mauss asserts:

> In a certain number of [*potlatch*] cases, it is not even a question of giving and returning gifts, but of destroying, so as not to give the slightest hint of desiring your gift to be reciprocated. Whole boxes of olachen (candlefish) oil or whale oil are burnt, as are houses and thousands of blankets. The most valuable copper objects are broken and thrown into the water, in order to put down and to "flatten" one's rival. In this way one not only promotes oneself, but also one's family, up the social scale. It is therefore a system of law and economics in which considerable wealth is constantly being expended

and transferred…As may be seen, the notion of honor is, in this case, really

destructive.[184] (37)

These destructive *potlatches* are of an extremely agonistic nature and work to overturn

established hierarchies. There is the potential for these *potlatches* to shatter commodity culture's

precept of accumulation and possession since the eclipsing factor of the exchange begets

increasing loss. The bloodthirsty banquet, conducted in a context of antagonistic curses and

malicious jokes about cannibalism, becomes an apt expression of Tamburlaine's superior rank

and his mad extravagance. The three mythological allusions to Hercules, Jason, and Tereus,

which Marlowe incorporates into the first 25 lines of the scene, only help to compound this

effect by invoking impressions of murder, excess, suffering, guilt, gluttony, and dishonor.

Destruction of goods extends to destruction of flesh and Tamburlaine's honor becomes

indissoluble from Bajazeth's humiliation as Tamburlaine himself asserts, "I glory in the curses of

my foes" (1:4.4.29). Note that Tamburlaine does not dwell on his own accomplishments or his

own actions in perpetuating these degrading acts; instead, it is the curses emanating from

Bajazeth, his inability to top Tamburlaine, that confirm Tamburlaine's superior status.

The tone of the banquet is combative from the start, beginning with a battle of words

between Tamburlaine and Bajazeth:

Tamb.: Bajazeth, hast thou any stomach?

Baj.: Ay, such a stomach, cruel Tamburlaine, as I could

Willingly feed upon thy blood-raw heart.

Tamb: Nay, thine own is easier to come by. Pluck out that

And 'twill serve thee and thy wife. (1:4.4.10-4)

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[184] Mauss, *The Gift*, esp. 37.

Bajazeth expresses a desire to feast on Tamburlaine's "blood-raw heart," mobilizing the rhetoric of cannibalism that will percolate throughout the feast.185 To the early modern medical understanding, blood, in particular, was a complex, viscous fluid with powerful pharmacological significations. When drunk, it was believed to have an extraordinary healing function, possessing what Camporesi describes as "regenerative virtue and salvific power…miraculous and divine, for the doing of deeds wondrous and grand, which all but raise the dead."186 By consuming another man's flesh, one may sustain and indeed create anew one's own body. Tamburlaine counters with his own suggestion that Bajazeth partake in auto-cannibalism, not only to feed himself but also his wife, propagating the fraught instances of contaminating violence in the play. We could read this verbal exchange as petty, gross mockery, as many critics do by interpreting the scene as farce or carnival, but to do so may be to discount the polluting cannibalistic intercorporeality and the fluidity of beings and bodies in this banquet.187 The disquieting spectacle before us increasingly transforms hyperbole and metaphor into fact, into the more-than-literal, and we are thrust into a kind of hyperreality that glorifies the consumption of flesh—a permutation of *potlatch*'s destruction of goods—that really goes beyond all bounds.

Tamburlaine continues to humiliate Bajazeth, taunting "[a]re you so daintily brought up, you cannot eat your own flesh?" and later, effectively force-feeds his slave: "Here, eat sir! Take it from my sword's point, or I'll thrust it to thy heart…Take it up, villain, and eat it, or I will

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185 As Stephen Gosson asserts in *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579), "In *Crete, Scythia, Persia, Thracia*, all the Lawes tended to the maintenance of Martiall discipline. Among the *Scythians* no man was permitted to drink of their festival Cuppe, which had not manfully killed an enemie in fight. See Gosson's "*The Schoole of Abuse*" and "*A Short Apologie of the Schoole of Abuse*," ed. Edward Arber (London: Alex. Murray and Son, 1868), esp. 48.

186 Piero Camporesi, *Juice of Life: The Symbolic and Magic Significance of Blood*, trans. Robert R Barr (New York: Continuum, 1995) esp. 31, is quoting from Fioravanti, *De capricci medicinali* (Venice: 1602).

187 For instance, Mark Thornton Burnett argues that "in the 'feast of crowns' scene, Bajazeth (at sword's point) is forced to eat, to open his mouth (orifice) and partake of the 'low' activities of the carnivalesque." See his "'Tamburlaine' and the Body," esp. 35. Johannes H. Birringer also argues that "the grossness of the mockery could only be redeemed in this situation by heavily overacting it—indeed by pushing the mode into farce, toward the kind of horrid laughter a farce such as *The Jew of Malta* can provoke." See his "Marlowe's Violent Stage," esp. 231.

make thee slice the brawns of thy arms into carbonadoes and eat them" (1:4.4.36, 40-4).

According to the *OED*, "carbonado" is defined as "a piece of meat or fish scored across and grilled over coals."[188] By reducing Bajazeth's arms to charcoaled meat, Tamburlaine forces all present participants to confront the disturbing fact that their bodies are, essentially, consumable flesh that may be exchanged. What is deemed fundamentally and unassailably one's possession—one's very body—is shown to be inherently incapable of individual control or ownership. The spectacle of a former sovereign caged, humiliated, and reduced to rations shatters the fantasy of sovereign omnipotence, even while Tamburlaine stages this spectacle to showcase his immense power. Instead, absolute sovereignty is exposed as untenable as the stable structure of specularity is broken by the need to repeat the act of exchange, to continue the cycle of reciprocating with interest. Through this perversion of the act of eating, "the starting place of self-artifice" as Elaine Scarry attests, Marlowe exposes *Tamburlaine*'s attempt to remake the world or, at the very least, to rethink one's place in it.[189]

Moreover, the second course of crowns is notable in both literalizing and trivializing the symbols of sovereignty.[190] The banquet's most outwardly political act is crowning and uncrowning, the ritualistic transfer of power; it is here we witness hierarchical rankings overturned, contested, bestowed, and accepted.[191] This sudden improvisation of what is normally

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[188] See "carbonado, n.1," *OED Online* (Oxford, Oxford UP, December 2019).

[189] See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1985), esp. 251.

[190] The introduction of something like "king cake" or "Twelfth Night" cake—a festive delight traditionally served in England on The Feast of the Epiphany, January 6, and commonly shaped like a king's crown with a bean baked inside—during the banquet seems to connect the play to the common Shrovetide traditions of Elizabethan England. See Marc Jacobs, "King for a Day: Games of Inversion, Representation, and Appropriation in Ancient Regime Europe" in *Mystifying the Monarch: Studies on Discourse, Power, and History,* eds. Jeroen Deploige, Gita Deneckere (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2006), esp. 117.

[191] In a way, as Meads argues about other plays, Tamburlaine's banquet scene does double duty as well: it "exploits the public display of order implicit in the banquet formality and ritual," while at the same time "disguising moral malaise and/or incipient political schism" based on social difference. By showing Tamburlaine dishing out "crowns" to his loyal followers in the likeness of dessert cakes, the play both celebrates and openly challenges traditional

the occasion for a ceremonial state scene—the crowning of kings—is both an open manifestation of Tamburlaine's political power but also underscores its precarity:

[*Enter a second course of crowns*.]

Tamburlaine: Theridamas, Techelles, and Casane, here are the cates you desire to finger, are they not?

Theridamas: Ay, my lord, but none save kings must feed with these.

Tamburlaine: Well, here is now to the Soldan of Egypt, the King of Arabia, and the Governor of Damascus. Now take these three crowns, and pledge me, my contributory kings. I crown you here, Theridamas, King of Argier; Techelles, King of Fez; and Usumcasane, King of Moroccus. How say you to this, Turk? These are not your contributory kings.

Bajazeth: Nor shall they long be thine, I warrant them.

………

Theridamas: And since your highness [Tamburlaine] hath so well vouchsaf'd

If we deserve them not with higher meeds

Than erst our states and actions have retain'd

Take them away again and make us slaves. (1:4.4.105-16, 127-30)

The dessert "cates" can be read as a type of "king cake," part of the common European and British tradition of the "Twelfth Night Cake," which was made to resemble a king's crown. In the middle of the cake was a buried bean or trinket, which, once discovered, made a person the king for the day and rule the feast. This festival time of Twelfth Night was a temporary period of misrule when social roles were often reversed: the commoner became a king for the day, or the

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notions of royal superiority. See Christopher Meads, *Banquets Set Forth: Banqueting in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Manchester UP, 2001), esp. 70.

slave the master, as in the ancient Saturnalia on which the English tradition of hiding a bean is based. The ritual of king cakes is echoed here to subvert the sacred law of noble blood which locates royalty in family lineage.[192] The hierarchy of top and bottom is inverted, a king and his suffering are mocked, and a mere shepherd like Tamburlaine is transformed into an emperor. I follow Ken Albala who argues that the "meal re-stages…a central human drive to dominate, to woo, to challenge. Each banquet is also a kind of play…a highly structured and carefully staged performance…a 'dumb show' for the real power relations that took place outside the banquet hall."[193] This momentary capsizing of Elizabethan social reality is an attempt to disrupt, however fleetingly, the rigid social distinctions that exist outside the theater.

Tamburlaine's subsequent dishing out of "crowns" to his loyal followers in the likeness of dessert cake during the feast further underscores the instability of social rank. As Mauss asserts, "The obligation to give is the essence of the *potlatch*…And he can only prove this good fortune by spending it and sharing it out, humiliating others by placing them 'in the shadow of his name.'"[194] It is this gesture of sharing and expenditure that structures the system of gift-giving; by granting empires, Tamburlaine places both enemies and followers "in the shadow of his name"—bound to him, willingly or not. Later in the play, Theridamas offers Tamburlaine "[m]y crown, myself, and all the power I have,/ In all affection at thy kingly feet" (2:1.3.115-6) after which Tamburlaine gives it all back. If the ratification of Tamburlaine shows him staking sovereignty directly in the being of the collective, this ritual exchange individuates that investment, showing that Tamburlaine demands "all" from each being within the collective.

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[192] See Marietta Rusinek, "Cake: The Centerpiece of Celebrations" in *Celebration: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery*, ed. Mark McWilliams (Oxford: Oxford Symposium, 2012), esp. 311.
[193] See Ken Abala, *The Banquet: Dining in the Great Courts of Late Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2007), esp. 6.
[194] Mauss, *The Gift*, esp. 29.

Hierarchies are thus inverted, kingships overturned, and Tamburlaine stands as a reminder that supremacy is not given but made—and made out of others' visions and voices. When Leo Bersani explicates his notion of "intimacies devoid of intimacy," he asserts:

> It proposes that we move irresponsibly among other bodies, somewhat indifferent to them, demanding nothing more than that they be as available to contact as we are, and that, no longer owned by others, they also renounce self-ownership and agree to that loss of boundaries which will allow them to be, with us, shifting points of rest in a *universal and mobile communication of being*.[195] (128)

Bersani's notion of irresponsible body mobility might be extended to that of social identity, migrating from the corporeal to the social. It asks us to consider the potential value of the relinquishing possession, and partaking in a "universal and mobile communication of being" which embraces the fluidity both of bodies and of social ranks. This lack of differentiation produces a kind of lawlessness, for members of this new, utterly exposed social field dispense with notions of stasis of identity and so do not recognize the other's, let alone have regard for or act so as to fix them. This alternative social field operates along the principles of flux and interchange, an instance of which is staged by the banquet. The action of the banquet reinscribes the crown as a token of *exchange,* drawing it into a symbol of repetition, an economy governed by giving and reciprocating. "Crownes" and "crowne" are mentioned over 30 times in this play, many of which involve a transfer of power. By maximizing the profound ambiguity of artifice, the "feast of crowns" transforms a theater of monarchy into a drama of subversion, exposing the untenability of a univocal spectacle of power. This banquet celebrates a cycle of exchange that

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[195] See Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995), emphasis mine.

adheres to a logic of outdoing, and the reciprocal pattern of returning with interest that creates

obligations among the parties.

Visceral Knowledge

The continuous cycle of exchange characterized by extreme antagonism, rivalry, and

humiliation which is illustrated by the Tamburlaine-Bajazeth axis through distorted mirroring

and one-upmanship seems to foreclose any notion of a bond of alliance or commonality. And

yet, another essential element of *potlatch* is that the gift is actually alive and forms a vital part of

the giver; thus, the transitive act of giving and receiving forms a spiritual bond between the two

parties:

> [O]ne must give back to another person what is really part and parcel of his nature and
>
> substance because to accept something from somebody is to accept some part of his
>
> spiritual essence, of his soul. To retain that thing would be dangerous and mortal, not
>
> only because it would be against law and morality, but also because that thing coming
>
> from the person not only morally, but physically and spiritually, that essence, that food,
>
> those goods, whether moveable or immovable, these women or those descendants, those
>
> rituals or those acts of communion—all exert a magical or religious hold over you.[196]
>
> (12)

Mauss proposes that when a person presents a gift to someone else, that person is not merely

giving some inert or neutral object but is, rather, giving an active part of oneself, which suggests

that a gift is inalienably connected to the giver. A gift is something personal and alive with a

special power to renew the bond between the giving and receiving parties. By giving part of

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[196] Mauss, *The Gift*, esp. 12.

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oneself in a gift, a person not only participates in it, but this also creates a lasting relation between persons. While it appears that a tyrant who punctures, perforates, dismembers, breaches, cleaves bowels, lances, and spears his enemies may share nothing with his foes, there is something of a shared intimacy at the very visceral level of the body. Tamburlaine is intimately intertwined with those he conquers, as bodies breached become a site of contestation and disagreement. The act of penetration confounds and complicates individuated bodily boundaries, forcing selves to confront their vivid corporeality and embodied vulnerability. In fact, Tamburlaine succeeds in conjuring a world where those he encounters become disconcertingly cognizant of their bodies as a mobile, split, and multiple self, a subject of pleasure in processes of exchange; a world in which security is not the norm but bodies threatened by death, disorganization, disease, and discomfort are.

One of Tamburlaine's earliest conquests, the Persian Cosroe, usurps his brother's throne and is promptly betrayed by Tamburlaine, beaten in battle, and mortally wounded. Imagining his body as a walled fortification that has been breached, Cosroe laments:

An uncouth pain torments my grievéd soul,

And Death arrests the organ of my voice,

Who, ent'ring at the breach, thy sword hath made,

Sacks every vein and artier of my heart. (1:2.7.7-10)

Cosroe's desire to view his body as a somatically sealed structure is quelled by Tamburlaine's sword. The sword makes intimate contact with each "vein and artier," short-circuiting the flow of blood to Cosroe's heart, the organ which is "the seat and fountain of life, of heat, of spirits, of pulse and respiration—the sun of our body, the king and sole commander of it—the seat and organ of all passions and affections. *Primum vivens, ultimum moriens*, it lives first, and dies last

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in all creatures," according to Robert Burton.[197] Yet death is delayed a little while longer:

Cosroe's voice holds out for another fourteen lines, most of them devoted to a more detailed

physiology of his dying. He even finds time for a short treatise on Galenic humoral theory:

> My bloodless body waxeth chill and cold,
>
> And with my blood my life slides through my wound
>
> ………
>
> The heat and moisture which did feed each other,
>
> For want of nourishment to feed them both,
>
> Is dry and cold, and now doth ghastly death
>
> With greedy talons gripe my bleeding heart
>
> And like a harpy tires on my life. (1: 2.7.42-4, 46-50)

Cosroe's body has a strange transparency to his consciousness: what should be hidden in the

clouds of simple pain has the strongly etched lines of a Vesalian illustration. A split self

effectively emerges: it is as though he, like Tamburlaine, is an outside observer, dissecting his

own body at a distance. With the phrase "uncouth pain," Cosroe's death speech, a kind of

necroventriloquism, further challenges the normative familiarity or possession of one's body.

"Uncouth" means not only crude, as in modern usage, but also unknown, unaccustomed, foreign,

or mysterious.[198] Cosroe recognizes his sensations as pain, but it is pain of an unfamiliar type or

intensity. The final simile likening his death to a harpy's "greedy talons grip[ing] my bleeding

heart" rhetorically performs this same work of estrangement. His entire verbal self-dissection

gestures towards the images of self-dismantling corpses that were common in Renaissance

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[197] See Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), esp. 1.152-3.
[198] See "uncouth, adj.1," *OED Online* (Oxford, Oxford UP, February 2019).

anatomy books[199] and, as Matthew Greenfield aptly observes, "emblematize[s] the quest for self-knowledge, for a wisdom, possibly even a sacred wisdom, concealed deep in the interior of an embodied self."[200] And yet, I would argue that this is an elusive self-knowledge; Marlowe's self-anatomizing figures show us what it might mean to find a body—a body multiple, split, and shared—where one expects to find an individual self.

This pattern of Tamburlaine's victims gaining an intimate understanding of the innerworkings of their bodies in a manner that draws attention to embodied vulnerability persists throughout the narrative. For instance, when the captain of the city of Balsera is mortally wounded during a siege later in Tamburlaine's career, he also speaks like a surgeon presiding over a vivisection:

> I feel my liver pierced, and all my veins
>
> That there begin and nourish every part
>
> Mangled and torn, and all my entrails bathed
>
> In blood that straineth from their orifex. (2: 3.4.6-9)

The captain not only describes his wound precisely, but he also interrupts this description with a parenthetical remark explaining the physiological function of veins. Like Cosroe, the captain displays the morbid curiosity of an anatomist, gaining in-depth, visceral knowledge of his body. Moreover, Marlowe seems perversely interested in the violently damaged interior—the focus on the captain's sliding entrails pushes towards the grotesquely macabre, the reveling in bodily

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[199] For instance, engravings in Berengarius's *Commentaria* and Spigelius's *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* show flayed corpses obligingly peeling away flaps of their abdomens to reveal their viscera. See Katharine Park, "The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1993): 1-33, esp. 23-6; and Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), esp. 112-9. Michael Schoenfeldt likewise reproduces Hendrick ter Brugghen's picture of Thomas palpating the wound in Christ's side and his frontispiece shows an iconographically similar self-portrait by Albrecht Dürer. See his *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), esp. 1-2.
[200] See Matthew Greenfield, "Christopher Marlowe's Wound Knowledge," esp. 238.

excess. Entrails, defined by the *OED* as "the internal organs (viscera) of a person or animal" are fundamentally circumscribed to be *inside.*[201] On the face of it, the body's hidden inner realms are profoundly unsuitable for presentation onstage; they would seem to be inherently antitheatrical. Yet it is for this very reason that the gesture towards exteriorizing the interior draws profound attention to somatic precariousness and the instability of boundaries.[202] Marlowe's scenes of self-dissection seem to make his audiences aware of the precarity and the strangeness of their own experience of embodiment. The body's bounds are revealed—not as impenetrable, fortified walls—but as easily "pierced," porous, and mutable. These moments when that which should remain safely within the body is brutally externalized stage not merely open bodies but open*ed* bodies.[203] Tamburlaine's penetrative acts galvanize other characters' alternative ways of viewing their bodies and their deaths.

The visceral engrossment of Tamburlaine's victims extends to the protagonist himself, as that which he gives—death—remains an integral part of his own being. It is death that cannot be removed from either the donor or the recipient. In contrast to Mark Thornton Burnett who argues that Tamburlaine desires the closed, classical body (an inherently aristocratic ideal) and spurns the populist, antihierarchical grotesque body (often understood as feminine with multiple orifices subject to penetration and leakage), I argue the opposite.[204] The world Tamburlaine creates and

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[201] See "entrails, n.1," *OED Online* (Oxford, Oxford UP, February 2020).

[202] For a comprehensive study of the staging of entrails and interiority broadly writ on the early modern stage, see David Hillman's *Shakespeare's Entrails: Belief, Scepticism, and the Interior of the Body* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[203] This fascination with depicting extravagantly opened bodies is not merely a Marlovian trope. Some of the most memorable images of early modern drama consist of moments where the body is viciously exteriorized: Hieronymo's self-castrated tongue at the ending of Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Annabella's displayed heart in Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, Gloucester's extracted "vild jelly" in *King Lear* (3.7.83).

[204] Mark Thornton Burnett persuasively argues that Tamburlaine programmatically humiliates and feminizes his enemies by cutting open their bodies. Burnett bases a reading of *Tamburlaine* on Mikhail Bakhtin's opposition between two ideas of embodiment: the closed, classical body and the open, grotesque one. See his "*Tamburlaine* and the Body," *Criticism* 33 (1991): 34-47.

partakes in is the world of grotesque bodies. In fact, he refuses to be exempt from bodily damage

and performs his own self-mutilation. When Calyphas, Tamburlaine's nonmilitant son, voices his

concern over the risks of war, Tamburlaine becomes enraged: "Villain, art thou the son of

Tamburlaine,/ And fear'st to die, or with a curtle-axe/ To hew thy flesh and make a gaping

wound?" (2:3.2.95-7). Theoretical exposition is shelved in favor of practical demonstration as

Tamburlaine then cuts his own arm:

> View me, thy father, that hath conquered kings,
>
> And with his host march'd round about the earth,
>
> Quite void of scars and clear from any wound,
>
> That by the wars lost not a dram of blood,
>
> And see him lance his flesh to teach you all.
>
> *He cuts his arm.*
>
> A wound is nothing, be it ne'er so deep.
>
> Blood is the god of war's rich livery.
>
> Now look I like a soldier
>
> ………
>
> Come, boys, and with your fingers search my wound,
>
> And in my blood wash all your hands at once,
>
> While I sit smiling to behold the sight. (3.2.110-28)

In a hyperbolic gesture to affirm his own status as a warrior, Tamburlaine feverishly mutilates

himself. In this moment, he reveals a deep anxiety that perhaps he only looks "like" but is not a

soldier.[205] The blank perfection of Tamburlaine's skin is actually a shameful defect which hearkens back to Coriolanus whose martial heroism inheres in bloody wounds. The self-mutilation reflects not only a desire to instruct his sons but also a desire to damage the body and to exteriorize that which is inside. He has gone his entire life fighting wars, continually putting his body at risk, but must lacerate himself as a last resort when his body remains unbreached. As Cicero maintains in *Tusculan Disputations II,* "man's particular virtue is fortitude, of which there are two main functions, namely scorn of death and scorn of pain"[206] which Thomas Elyot buttresses by asserting that "men all inflamed in martial courage…do run into the battle, regarding no peril,"[207] *Tamburlaine* affords a powerful vision of the complex investment in risking and violating bodies in which the play is implicated. The body is affirmed in this play only by wounding and destroying it; the astonishing sadism aside, most apposite here is the stress on physical self-sacrifice.

Moreover, Tamburlaine's self-wounding, like Marlowe's Faustus's (as he cuts his arm, Faustus professes, "Lo Mephistopheles, for love of thee,/ I cut mine arm, and with my proper blood/ Assure my soul to be great Lucifer's" [A Text.2.1.53-5]),[208] echoes several aspects of the iconography of Christ. Stephen Greenblatt suggests that Tamburlaine's invitation to the boys to search the wound parodies Thomas's exploration of the wound in Christ's side.[209] One might also adduce Catholic imagery of the Virgin touching the sacred heart. Additionally, having the

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[205] As Karen Cunningham observes of Marlowe's dramatic practice, "he exaggerates what the ruling figures sought to minimize, the profound ambiguity of artifice." See her "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death," *PMLA* 105 (1990): 209-22, esp. 210.

[206] See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. J. E. King (London: Heinemann, Loeb Classical Library, 1927), esp. 197.

[207] See Thomas Elyot, *The Book Named the Governor*, ed. S. E. Lehmberg (London: Dent, 1962), esp. 33.

[208] See Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* in *The Complete Plays*, ed. Frank Romany and Robert Lindsey (London: Penguin Classics, 2004).

[209] See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980), esp. 210.

boys wash their hands in the blood evokes Pilate's hand washing and the sharing of Christ's

blood in the communion ceremony. Just before Tamburlaine stabs himself, he talks of the

concoction of blood from wine in the veins of his wounded soldiers, another echo of the

communion. Communion, here, is achieved through the medium of external blood; it is this vital

substance that is given by Tamburlaine and received and shared by his sons that cement their

spiritual bond. Tamburlaine's desire to shed and share blood points to this complex imbrication

of giving blood with ideas and feelings about kinship and community, and the place of the body

and its capacities within this constellation of concepts.

What's more, though this wound differs in many respects to those inflicted upon his

enemies (not the least of which is being self-inflicted), we might consider it as more than an

ornamental blemish. Early modern surgeons warn that wounds to the arm are exceptionally

dangerous, even when inflicted for medical purposes. Renaissance surgeon William Clowes

describes how a citizen of Reading "received a puncture or pricke into the sinewe or nerve of his

right arm, by a most impudent and ignorant bloodletter, which did prick the sinewe in stead of

the liver veyne." The consequences of such wounds, Clowes warns, include "extreame paine,

inflammation, a feaver shivering, raving, and oftentimes convulsions."[210] The surgical manuals

of Jacques Guillemeau and Thomas Vicary also warn of the exceptional danger of wounds to the

arm muscles.[211] If Tamburlaine's self-wounding is a mere demonstration of martial honor, it is a

dangerous one that poses real harm and one that may be linked to his death.

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[210] See William Clowes, *A Prooved Practice for All Young Chirurgians, concerning Burnings with Gunpowder, and Wounds Made with Gunshot, Sword, Halberd, Pyke, Launce, or Such Other* (London, 1588), *Early English Books Online* February 2020 *STC* (2nd ed.) 5545.

[211] Jacques Guillemeau, *The French Chirurgerye, or All the Manualle Operations of Chirurgerye, with Divers, and Sundrye Figures, and among the Rest, Certayne Nuefownde Instrumentes, Verye Necessarye to All the Operationes of Chirurgerye*, trans. A. M. Dort. Issac Canin (1598), *Early English Books Online* February 2020 *STC* (2nd ed.) 12498); Thomas Vicary, *The Surgions Directorie, for Young Practitioners, in Anatomie, Wounds, and Cures, etc. Shewing the Excellencie of Divers Secrets Belonging to That Noble Art and Mysterie* (London, 1548, 1651), *Early English Books Online* February 2020 *STC* (2nd ed.) V335.

Bodies and the Life Death Continuum

Beyond the incredible intimacy requisite in the act of damaging bodies, Tamburlaine

creates a world where bodies are constantly intruded upon by death. Death is explicitly brought

to the fore in all of his encounters and presented as inseparably bound to life. Notably,

Tamburlaine's victims' sense of surprise at their imminent and untimely deaths are typical of the

danse macabre tradition (for instance, Death "*arrests*" Cosroe's voice and Sigismund "end[s] all

my penance in my *sudden* death" [2:2.3.7]). Originally a genre of theater that developed in

fourteenth-century Germany and France, the dance of death found widespread popularity in late

medieval Europe. Plays were performed in churchyards, with a troupe of actors representing the

full range of human existence from pauper to emperor. In due course, skeletal Death figures

would emerge, dressed in black, their bones painted in yellow. One by one, the earthly

representatives would be seized by Death and led off stage to the grave. Typically, a victim

would resist in some way, claiming a prior engagement or begging for mercy. But the smiling

Death figures could never be assuaged. Warriors, popes, emperors, peddlers—the full social

spectrum of mortal life would be marched off to an equal destiny. As the play had started with a

sermon, so it would end with one, affirming that Death was the great leveler and that none could

escape its skeletal grasp.212

In Tamburlaine's world, the precarity of life and inevitability of death—the apothegm

underlying the *danse macabre* tradition—is the inescapable backdrop. He demands all those he

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212 In the sixteenth century, the most celebrated visual representations of the *danse macabre* appeared in two books
of Hans Holbein The first, *Imagines Mortis*, was published in Lyons in 1538 and the production of a third edition in
Latin in 1542 confirmed its cross-European importance; the second, *Icones Historiarum Veteris Testamenti* (1547)
was translated into English within two years and found enormous popularity across Europe. The standard *topos* of
Death—brutal, irresistible, triumphant—was a familiar and brazen predator in the literary and artistic landscapes of
Marlowe's time. See Hans Holbein, *Imagines Mortis* (Lvgdvni, svb scvto coloniensi, 1545); Hans Holbein, *Icones
Historiarum Veteris Testamenti* (Lvgdvni: apud Ioannem Frellonium, 1547). For a more comprehensive history of
the *danse macabre*, see Sophie Oosterwijk, "Of Corpses, Constables and Kings: The *Danse Macabre* in Late
Medieval and Renaissance Culture," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 157.1 (2004): 61-90.

encounters, not merely to accept the certainty of death, but to accept the understanding of death as part of the spectrum of life. When describing new ways to view the boundary between death and life, Rosi Braidotti attests, "death as a constitutive event is behind us; it has already taken place as a virtual potential that constructs everything we are."[213] Because of its unavoidability, death is understood by consciousness as a precursor for existence. The actual event of death is simply an iteration of the potential that has always already existed. Death is not an indifferent and inanimate state of matter, but rather a position on the spectrum of vitality. For this reason, "death is the becoming-imperceptible of the posthuman subject and as such it is part of the cycles of becoming, yet another form of interconnectedness, a vital relationship that links one with other, multiple forces."[214] We can extend this beyond the posthuman subject and see how being synchronized with death shapes the construction of Tamburlaine's world. By obliging others to receive death, Tamburlaine exposes death as the common experience that all share. Death has dallied in the folds of Tamburlaine's brows (1:2.1); it has perched precociously on the spears of Tamburlaine's horsemen (1:5.1); it has directed Agydas in the proper reading of the "naked dagger" which Tamburlaine shortly sends him (1:3.2.88-9). By revising the question from "what is death?" to "when is death," Tamburlaine imbues death with its own kind of vitality, radically reshaping death as connection rather than termination. As Renaissance poet George Wither neatly summarizes, "Death is no Losse, but rather, Gaine;/ For wee by Dying, life attaine."[215] The luxury of death is regarded, first as a negation of ourselves, but then—in a sudden reversal— as the profound truth of that movement of which life is the manifestation. Tamburlaine gives the gift that institutes the possibility of a network where life/death is shared by everyone, where, as

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[213] See Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), esp. 132.
[214] Ibid, esp. 137.
[215] See George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne* (1635), ed. Rosemary Freeman (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1975) 21 (Emblem XXI).

Jean-Luc Nancy reflects, "life is connected with death, where the incommunicable is in communication."216 By exploding the potentiality that has always been, Tamburlaine creates moments of communal squandering and the excess of death.

Perhaps the most salient example of death as part of, rather than the end of, the spectrum of vitality is Tamburlaine's own. In what we might expect to be the most climactic scene of the entire play, Tamburlaine's passing is arguably anti-climactic as it is more an acceptance of expiration (his life ends with the words "Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die" [2:5.2.249]) and a promise of continuation than a spectacular end. When Tamburlaine feels death upon him, he states: "My flesh, divided in your precious shapes,/ Shall retain my spirit, though I die,/ And live in all your seeds immortally" (2:5.3.172-4). Indeed, *Tamburlaine Part II* sets up its ending as an ending only to suggest continuity. As David Riggs points out, Tamburlaine, rather than paraded as an example of what happens to sinners in the last days of the world, "dies at peace with himself," even being assured that his sons "shall retain my spirit though I die" (2:5.3.173).217 Although suitably crestfallen, Amyras does in fact sit up in his father's chariot to succeed him. By doing so, he suggests a continuation of Tamburlaine's upward movement even beyond the latter's demise: "Heavens witness me, with what a broken heart/ And damnéd spirit I *ascend* this seat" (2:5.3.206-7, emphasis mine). For Braidotti, the death of the individual cannot be seen as the teleological end of life because life is not an inherent property of the individual, but rather the opposite: the mortal individual is best understood as a kind of temporary echo chamber for *zoe* (her term for the vitalist force of life itself), the temporality of which inherently means that death has always already occurred. That is to say, both life and death are impersonal,

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216 See Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Intruder" in *Corpus*, trans. RA Rand (New York: Fordham UP): 161-70, esp. 166.
217 See David Riggs, "Marlowe's Quarrel with God," in *Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Emily C. Bartels (Farmington Hills: Cengage Gale, 1997): 39-58, esp. 52.

general expressions of *zoe* and understanding them as such as the potential to, ultimately, transgress ego and dissolve the boundaries between subjective individuals, such that the primary focus of each individual becomes the sustained existence of *zoe*.[218] As Braidotti opines: "Sustainability does assume faith in a future, and also a sense of responsibility for 'passing on' to future generations a world that is liveable and worth living in."[219] That Tamburlaine views his death as a passing on and through, rather than a final termination, speaks to the notion of *zoe* as a universal, affirmative life-force. He has created a world where bodies are constantly intruded upon by death, forcing a massive reconceptualization of the shifting boundaries between life and death including his own.

A Sovereign with no Polity

Marlowe's dramaturgy is suffused with death—from the carnival of savagery that parades through *The Massacre at Paris* to the scythe-bearing Mower of *Edward II*. Yet it is Tamburlaine who practices virtual genocide against his enemies and ethnocide against their cities, religions, and ways of life. Susan Richards suggests that Tamburlaine has attained "the ultimate power in terms of human life—the power of giving death, which is the essential power of the warrior-emperor, the cause and result of his position."[220] Lisa S. Starks believes that "Tamburlaine's sadism…is obvious in his aggressive desire to break laws, torture victims, kill virgins," arguing further that Tamburlaine believes in "a kind of 'moral' structure in the

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[218] In another philosophical register, we might turn to Bataille's notion of a general versus a restrictive economy. Describing the general economy, Bataille states, "[Economic science] does not take into consideration a play of energy that no particular end limits: the play of *living matter in general* involved in the movement of light of which it is the result. On the surface of the globe, for *living matter in general*, energy is always in excess. See Georges Bataille's *The Accursed Share*, esp. 23.
[219] Braidotti, The Posthuman, esp. 138.
[220] See Susan Richards, "Marlowe's *Tamburlaine II: A Drama of Death*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 26 (1965), esp. 375.

universe, an inversion of traditional moral order in promoting evil in its purest form."[221] And

Stephen Greenblatt calls Tamburlaine "a desiring machine that produces violence and death."[222]

I have argued in the previous section that Tamburlaine creates a world that celebrates the

essential imbrication of life and death without expectation of compensation or return through a

radical manifestation of *potlatch*. And yet, Tamburlaine's insistence on giving a *pure* gift is what

short-circuits interconnection and threatens catastrophic destruction. The world he creates has the

potential to take an affirmative biopolitical stance that embraces death as it does life—as a gift—

but his uncompromising, absolutist stance devolves into its opposite: genocide. If Mauss wants

to strip the irrational from the notion of the gift and emphasize its harmonious reciprocity,

Tamburlaine, by pushing *potlatch* to its extreme, emphasizes the disruptive, excessive, and

annihilative nature of the gift that can never be repaid.

Returning to Mauss's notion of a gift, a gift can be any object or service that possesses a

uniqueness, that is given within a web of social interrelationships, imbued with vitality and of an

obligatory nature. A person gives to another because one is obligated to act in this way, and the

person receiving a gift is then involuntarily obligated to return the gift. The threefold sequence of

obligation—to give, to receive, and to reciprocate—forms a never-ending cycle of exchange that

constrains both the giver and the recipient because of the obligations imposed on both parties.

However, the binding effect of the gift is destroyed when a recipient rejects the gift because one

is also rejecting the social relationship enhanced and reinforced by the gift and the giver's

concern for the recipient. In other words, the gift, unlike an impersonal commodity, is too

personal and very integral to the identity of the giver for someone to merely reject it. It is within

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[221] See Lisa S. Starks, "'Won with thy words and conquered with thy looks': Sadism, Masochism, and the Masochistic Gaze in *1 Tamburlaine*," in *Marlowe, History, and Sexuality: New Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Paul Whitfield White (New York: AMS, 1998), esp. 180.
[222] See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, esp. 195.

the phenomenon of *potlatch* that this cycle becomes all-encompassing. The *potlatch* is structured and constrained by obligation because no one can refuse to participate or refuse to be a recipient of a gift. If one refuses, it is indicative of one's fear of having to reciprocate and losing in the exchange, dramatic proof that one is unequal to the giver and unable to meet the challenge offered by the gift. In fact, the giver surpasses oneself in the act of gift-giving because one acquires a power, which is connected with contempt for the riches that one gives away. Thus, there is a relationship between power, a surpassing virtue of gift-giving, and renunciation. The power closely associated with the gift is interrelated with its paradoxical nature because the gift becomes reduced to the acquisition of power. Put differently, the gift is the opposite of what it seems to be: to give is obviously to lose, but the loss apparently brings a profit to the one who sustains it.

The obligatory nature of the gift is what interests me most. If the recipient is always expected to reciprocate with interest, does that nullify the definition of a gift in the first place? Is there such thing as a free gift, a pure gift? I want to turn here to the notion of a "pure gift" as understood by Jacques Derrida. Derrida seeks a thinking that can do the act of giving in an excessive sense, to give beyond the proper norm, to give excessively. Agreeing in principle with Bataille's emphasis on the excessive nature of the gift, Derrida states that "[t]he problem of the gift has to do with its nature that is *excessive in advance, apriori exaggerated*."[223] In fact, it is only an excessive gift, a giving without calculation and measure, that is truly speaking a pure gift, which is one without borders.[224] By accepting a gift, the recipient is caught in a trap because

[223] See Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: 1, Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992), esp. 38.
[224] Derrida arrives at this conclusion through his reading of the story of Abraham from the Hebrew Bible: "Abraham is in a position of nonexchange with respect to God, he is in secret since he doesn't speak to God and expects neither response nor reward from him." The exchange of gift and counter-gift are put at risk in the sense that Abraham expects nothing in return. And yet, Abraham's son is given back to him because "he renounced calculation." The situation of Abraham indicates the not of the gift—its aneconomy—which represents in the story a gift of life or,

the exposed donee places oneself at the mercy of the donor. This point is exemplified by Derrida's characterization of the gift as an *annulus*, which suggests a ring, collar, necklace, or the chain of the gift: "To give means-(to say) to give an annulus, and to give an annulus means-(to say) to guard, to keep: guard the present. (I) give (you) therefore-gift [donc as don] (I to you) give an annulus therefore-gift (I) guard, keep (you). I lose therefore-gift I win."[225] By following Derrida's deconstruction of the gift, one can trace its circular outcome: the giver becomes the recipient's keeper. The placing of the personal pronouns between parentheses highlights the circulating nature of the gift economy and the expectation of self-return, of reappropriation.

Yet, the gift Tamburlaine seeks to give is one that annuls the possibility of reciprocity entirely; by giving excessively, beyond all bounds, Tamburlaine time and again seeks to gain the most power and prestige by giving the gift of death, the senseless expenditure of life. The play forces us to recognize the limits of a gift, for Tamburlaine's economy of excess reaches a point at which it becomes an excess of genocidal biopolitics, an eradication of ungrievable lives, an excess of what is all too familiar. Returning to the idea of *potlatch* operating in a general (as opposed to a restrictive) economy, Bataille begins with a basic fact:

> The living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life; the excess energy (wealth) can be used for the growth of a system (e.g. an organism); if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must

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from another perspective, a gift of death. See Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992), esp. 96, 97.

[225] See Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986), esp. 244.

necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or

catastrophically.226 (21)

Energy, which constitutes wealth, must ultimately be spent lavishly (without return) and a series

of profitable operations has absolutely no other effect than the squandering of profits. Although

the *potlatch* is not equivalent to a sacrifice, it does, however, function in a complementary way

by withdrawing wealth from productive consumption. Bataille elaborates further that "[i]n

general, sacrifice withdraws useful products from profane circulation; in principle the gifts of

potlatch liberate objects that are useless from the start."227 This is the model that recurs with

Tamburlaine's worldview, where the gratuitous, unlimited destruction of accumulated wealth

becomes synonymous with the destruction of human life. His relentless march to conquer city

after city, the ceaseless energy with which he passes from battle to battle, is motivated by the

force to destroy the surplus energy himself rather than pay the price of the inevitable explosion.

Convinced he has the power to give the gift of death, Tamburlaine rids the world of what he

believes to be in excess, not simply the physical world of cities and nations, but more radically,

the world of human life. He declares that he is not "made arch-monarch of the world,/ Crown'd

and invested by the hand of Jove,/ For deeds of bounty or nobility." Instead, he asserts, he

"exercise[s] a greater name,/ The Scourge of God and terror of the world," and so must "apply

[him]self to fit those terms,/ In war, in blood, in death, in cruelty" (2:4.1.151-8).

This fantasy is most notoriously worked out in the episode of the Slaughter of the

Virgins, where Tamburlaine's inclination towards useless consumption makes him refuse

Damascus's surrender.228 In Act V of *Tamburlaine I*, Damascus's governor dispatches four

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226 Bataille, *The Accursed Share,* esp. 21.
227 Ibid, esp. 76.
228 Along similar lines, Alan Sinfield argues that Tamburlaine's divine mission "obliges him to be more vicious than he otherwise might." See his "Legitimating Tamburlaine" in *Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Richard Wilson, Longman

virgins bearing laurels who hope to dissuade Tamburlaine from further efforts to sack their city.

The "God of war," as the governor calls our hero, already displays over his tents outside

Damascus the black flags that signal the expiration of his mercy (1:5.1.1). Not even the virgins'

"unspotted prayers…will melt his fury into some remorse" (1:5.1.20, 22). Ensuing speeches from

both camps emphasize Tamburlaine's "custome" (1:5.1.13, 67) of committing genocide once the

black flags have been raised on the third day of siege. Declaring herself "wretched" because she

has lived to see such calamities—"Damascus' walls dy'd with Egyptian blood," "[t]he streets

strow'd with dissever'd joints of men," "heavenly virgins and unspotted maids" "hoisted up" on

"horsemen's lances" and so on (1:5.1.258-67 passim)—Zenocrate laments that Tamburlaine was

"the cause of this" (1:5.1.275). According to René Girard, blood spilled violently is imbued with

the same polluting properties as the violence: "Its very fluidity gives form to the contagious

nature of violence."[229] Its contagious nature finds further echoes in the works of Erasmus, who

argues that war is the "universal demoralization of life" that "floods like a contagious

disease."[230] The overflowing blood creates the endless contagion that combines, overlaps, soaks,

coagulates, and blends human bodies. Tamburlaine becomes the polluting cannibal threat,

providing the double-edged *pharmakon* and we are prompted to wonder whether he is the

remedy or poison, the purifier or pollutant, for the Persian state. The dread disease of violence

becomes a unifying motif of the play. Tamburlaine's black signal flag, of "last and cruelest hew"

(1:5.1.8), portends genocide of a people who will be "spent, willingly or not, gloriously or

catastrophically." By overrunning Damascus and destroying human life, the conqueror "blacks

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Critical Readers (London: Longman, 1999), esp. 117. Even his own son Calyphas is not exempt from his death-dealing, which is the only incident in *Tamburlaine* 2 where his friends and relations attempt to dissuade him from an intended course of action.

[229] See René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1979), esp. 33.

[230] See Desiderius Erasmus, *The Adages of Erasmus*, trans. Margaret Mann Phillips (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1964), esp. 314.

out" its culture, which must submit to his own "custome" of merciless genocide. Refusing to swerve from his plan, Tamburlaine affirms what for him is the undertaking of wasteful expenditure: giving the gift of death that cannot be returned or reciprocated.

Tamburlaine's grievous misstep is to neglect the costliness of death as a gift. By giving death as a gift, he puts his recipient in a position of nonexchange, where the exchange of gift and counter-gift are now impeded. By viewing human lives as acceptable loss, Tamburlaine exposes the dangers of *potlatch* and of a general economy in which giving precipitates a cataclysmic cycle of ever-increasing destruction; where, as Olympia neatly puts, "every period ends with death,/ and every line begins with death again" (2:4.2.46-8). This pure gift of death is tainted by its indiscriminate violence and foreclosure of reciprocity; a violence that rebuffs any claims to its generosity and possibility of repayment. By trying to conceive of a non-instrumental, luxurious economy, he falls into the thanatopolitical risks that attend any such effort. He removes us entirely from the realm of *reciprocal* obligation, damage, sacrifice, or even annihilation—from any world that could be described as communal, in short—and returns us to a world of absolute hierarchical relations. By giving others the gift of death, Tamburlaine overtakes his recipients by giving too much, and as soon as it is accepted, the other is taken, caught in his trap. Unable to anticipate, the recipient is overtaken, imprisoned, indeed poisoned by the very fact that something happens to him in Tamburlaine's presence of which he must remain—having not been able to foresee anything—defenseless, open, and exposed. What *Tamburlaine* reveals is that such violence may be considered the very condition of the gift, its constitutive impurity once the gift is engaged in a process of circulation, and once it is promised to indebtedness and repayment. Ultimately, Tamburlaine cannot convert the threat of pollution, instability, and danger into a source of productiveness; to make death yield meaning that could sustain society.

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Conclusion

Do ut des

I give so that you may give

Marlowe's play departs from humanist envisionings of community as associated with harmonious interactions among individuals. His "tragic glass" imposes on its audience a turbulent dramatization of extravagant destruction and engages them in violent fantasies of indulging the death drive. He gives no pastoral world or fairyland within which he can create well-governed and well-governing subjects, proto-republican citizens formulated through humanist ethics. Instead of writing within norms of civility and governance, Marlowe points to new—less socially operative but also less solitary—foundations on which bonds may be constituted and community might be built.

I began by teasing out two competing political economies or forms of interconnection within *Tamburlaine*: that of commodity culture and that of gift culture. By invoking Mauss's theory of *potlatch* as a series of counter-gifts that creates a debt encountered in a subsequent ritual context that tends to maximize the compulsion of giving in even greater amounts, I aimed to show how Tamburlaine pushes this phenomenon to its extreme, setting out to utterly humiliate his rivals. Through the personal and generative nature of the gift, Tamburlaine is intimately connected to those he conquers, at the very visceral level of the body which exposes the human condition of embodied vulnerability and instability of boundaries. He creates a totalizing system—one which operates in a general economy where destruction, rather than production, is the aim—where death constantly intrudes on life. By pushing the gift to its limit and giving the gift of death, *Tamburlaine* helps us grasp some of its more radical implications, emphasizing the

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excessive nature of the gift that manifests its violent nature, connecting it with its apocalypse and subsequent holocaust—a pure gift.

Tamburlaine asks us to insist on connections which expose our radical vulnerability and erode our social identities, even if these connections must be continually renewed and cannot be made to last. Doing so would initiate the overhaul of relationality for which Bersani calls, one that certainly could not qualify as socially operative, rendering unthinkable both falsely bounded subjects and the states that fabricate them. No longer socially workable, action would show itself, unrelated to sanctioned ends. It would neither make nor preserve any boundary, since life would take place in a pure exteriority outside and without any law. Rather than coming into relation with others, we would become that relation, given over to existence on the surface, to communicating nothing but the fact of our shared being in death. If this makes *Tamburlaine* the most utopian of my texts of focus, it also makes the play the most forceful statement both of the pitfalls of bounded selfhood and of the possible value of embodied vulnerability.

Marlowe engages with the shape that collective life might take in some space outside the biopolitics of sovereignty that he unfolds, through the exchanging of gifts. We might recall Robert Esposito's description of the *munus* as "the gift that one gives because one *must* give and because one *cannot not* give."[231] The overwhelmingly deontological nature of the *munus* challenges the "canonical" proprietary conception of community as "what belongs to more than one, to many or to everyone" and reveals a "less obvious" sense of community as what members properly *owe,* rather than *own* in common.[232] Even more risky than the grounding of individuals' identities in the agonistic exchange of *potlatch* gifts, the *munus* "threatens their identity,

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[231] See Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010), esp. 5.
[232] Ibid, esp. 3-4.

exposing them to possible conflict with their neighbor, exposing them to the contagion of the relation with others."[233] *Tamburlaine* paves the way for this kind of thinking without actually completing the thought. The play preserves the potential of political thought as the basis for forms of collective life that remain to be thought through and leaves us with a final question: what might it mean to consider such dangerous gifts to bring forth a community based on a joyous sense of loss?

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[233] Ibid, esp. 13.

Chapter III

"He grows kind": Radical Communion in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

Whether we are dealing with sensuality or crime, ruin is implied for both agent and victim.

—Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess*[234]

Let the forfeit

Be nominated for an equal pound

Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken

In what part of your body pleaseth me.

—Shylock, *The Merchant of Venice,* 1.3.144-7[235]

In *The Merchant of Venice*, social bonds are formed in peculiar ways: through couples eloping, suitors choosing caskets, and lovers exchanging rings, but none as notorious as a lender offering a loan of 3,000 ducats at no interest for a "pound of this poor merchant's flesh" (4.1.39). While the Venetians recoil in horror at Antonio and Shylock's bloody bond, the play invites us to witness the genesis and development of a new mode of interrelationality, evoked by the melancholic condition, undergirded by desire for violence, and insured through risking death. As the play opens, Antonio self-identifies as melancholic—victim to an inexplicable, impenetrable disease that bars elucidation and understanding:

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[234] Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl, Carl R. Lovitt, and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1985), esp. 30.
[235] All references to the play are to *The Arden Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice*, ed. John Drakakis (New York: Arden Shakespeare, 2010), cited parenthetically. I have followed conventional usage for the spelling of characters' names.

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad,

It wearies me, you say it wearies you;

But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,

What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,

I am to learn;

And such a want-wit sadness makes of me

That I have much ado to know myself. (1.1.1-7)

The knowledge of melancholy's transference, its materiality, and its origin are all precluded,

immediately forming a barrier that impedes connection between himself and his surrounding

masculine Christian homosocial community.236 The people with whom he ostensibly communes

respond in a vocabulary that cannot reach him: Salanio and Salarino project their own

mercantilist anxieties onto Antonio, Gratiano accuses him of calculated posturing, and Bassanio

asks him for another loan to pursue his hetero-orthodox marriage plot. However, beneath all their

sanitized social transactions lies a vocabulary of violence and wounding that awaits

exteriorization. And it is finally through the disquieting, irruptive terms of the bond that Shylock

and Antonio enter into—with Shylock's insistence on a pound of Antonio's flesh as remittance

for an unpaid debt—that Shylock answers Antonio's appeal to "have much ado to know myself."

As they negotiate their bond's terms through exchanges of "kindness," they recalibrate what

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236 I am using "homosocial" in the way Eve Sedgwick conceptualizes this term as "the whole spectrum of bonds between men, including friendship, mentorship, rivalry, institutional subordination, homosexual genitality, and economic exchange—within which various forms of the traffic in women take place." See "Sexualism and the Citizen of the World: Wycherley, Sterne and Male Homosocial Desire," *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984), esp. 227. For a more extended discussion, see her *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985).

"kind" as kin can extend to mean.[237] Their bond of flesh promises alternative, inchoate, and yet potent structures of intimacy founded on a willingness to risk damage.

In this essay, I argue that the bond between Shylock and Antonio, one easily dismissible as destructive, violent, and hostile, is unexpectedly intimate, vulnerable, and desirable. While the bond may conjure up the anti-Semitic stereotype of the bloodthirsty Jew, interpretations that focus on the threatening aspect of the bond cannot account for Antonio's eagerness to enter such a bloody agreement.[238] Alternatively, I propose that through the bond's terms, *The Merchant of Venice* mobilizes an imaginative possibility that cannot offer us the comforts of the idyllic, but rather suggests that the mutually-willed infliction of wounds can constitute a viable link between individuals. Antonio's melancholia solicits penetrative violence against his integral being, while the correlative consumptive desire on Shylock's end bespeaks a fierce hunger for communion predicated on corporeal destruction. Rejecting the fantasy of the autonomous, integral self, Antonio and Shylock form a frictional and reckless relationship with the ever-looming potential of both physical and psychic ruin. Their bond of flesh generates an alternative future for a more sacrificial mode of interrelation. Unexpectedly, the violence and self-abnegation expressed by both parties may offer a more ethical mode of interrelationality that exceeds and challenges a Christian humanist view of community built on rational self-preservation.

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[237] Kindness as "Kinship, near or special relationship; (also) natural affection arising from this" See "kindness, *n.3*," *OED Online* (Oxford, Oxford UP, September 2018).

[238] James Shapiro argues that the phobia of the castrating Jew motivates the play's portrayal of the ruthless Jew thirsting for a pound of flesh. Others have continued this line of thinking by interpreting the removal of flesh as the dreaded adult circumcision of a Christian. See Shapiro's *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996); Gabriel Egan, "Gilding Loam and Painting Lilies: Shakespeare's Scruple of Gold," *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* 11 (2003); Douglas A. Brooks, "'I'll Mar the Young Clerk's Pen': Sodomy, Paternity, and Circumcision in *The Merchant of Venice*," in *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, ed. Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 225-37; and Patricia Parker, "Barbers and Barbary: Early Modern Cultural Semantics," *Renaissance Drama* 33 (2004): 201-44.

Cleft Community

While a number of scholars have explored community by attending to the religious

conflict at the heart of *The Merchant of Venice*, I want to think instead about the varying models

of interrelation mobilized by the play.[239] *The Merchant of Venice* reveals a paradox within the

idea of "community" itself by simultaneously inaugurating a community we might understand as

"sociality" and one we might understand as "communion." The orthodox sociality of this

Venetian community is well-articulated by Elizabethan social theorist Thomas Smith who

defines a commonwealth as "a societie of common doing of a multitude of free men, collected

together, and united by common accord and covenauntes among themselves, for the conservation

of themselves aswell in peace as in warre."[240] Alliterative "c's" bespeak this community's tenets:

"common," "collected," "conservation." This narrow conception of community closely echoes

Thomas Elyot's popular *The Boke Named the Governour* definition of "Respublica": "a body

lyvyng, compacte or made of sondry astates and degrees of men, which is disposed by the ordre

of equite and governed by the rule and moderation of reason."[241] Both Smith's commonwealth

and Elyot's republic presume social harmony as dependent on a shared belief system between

like-minded men. The Venetian community at the play's outset typifies such sociality: a

prioritization of "conservation," not only of the status quo, but also of the individual's

recognizable and "sondry" subjectivity which is presumptively governed by commonly observed

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[239] For readings that theorize community in this play along religious divisions between Jewish and Christian practices and beliefs, see Allan Bloom, "On Christian and Jew: '*The Merchant of Venice*'" in *Giants and Dwarfs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990): 64-82; Paul Cantor, "Religion and the Limits of Community in '*The Merchant of Venice*,'" *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (1987): 239-58; and Julia Reinhard Lupton's influential study, *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005). My thinking of community most closely aligns with Amy Greenstadt whose argument, while religiously grounded, argues for a kinship between Shylock and Antonio through the act of circumcision in "The Kindest Cut: Circumcision and Queer Kinship in *The Merchant of Venice*," *ELH* 80.4 (2013): 945-80.
[240] Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum* (London, 1583).
[241] Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour* (London, 1531).

law. Portia's passing comments to Lorenzo on the nature of friendship enunciate this law of

similitude as the basis of social relationships in Venice:

> in companions
>
> That do converse and waste the time together,
>
> Whose souls do bear an equal yoke of love,
>
> There must be needs a like proportion
>
> Of lineaments, of manners and of spirit;
>
> Which makes me think that this Antonio
>
> Being the bosom lover of my lord
>
> Must needs be like my lord. (3.4.11-5)

Even before Portia meets Antonio, she presumes that one is the mirror of the other—alike in

character ("manners"), temperament ("spirit"), and even physical features ("lineaments"). Their

love is predicated on "like"-ness, eschewing any difference.[242]

Smith goes on to reveal the exclusive nature of his commonwealth, one in which "if one

man had as some of the old Romanes had v. thousande or x. thousande bondmen whom he ruled

well, though they dwelled all in one citie…yet that were no common wealth: for the bondman

hath no communion with his master,"[243] which resonates with Elyot's distinction between "Res

publia" (the privileged aristocracy) and "Res plebia" (the masses).[244] Both paradigms disqualify

the socially disenfranchised. The *Merchant*'s Venice creates this kind of artificial, reductive, and

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[242] For "homonormative" pairings and endings in Shakespeare's dramas, see Laurie Shannon, "Nature's Bias: Renaissance Homonormativity and Elizabethan Comic Likeness," *Modern Philology* 98 (2000): 183-210.
[243] Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*.
[244] Elyot maintains that "consequently there may appere lyke diversitie to be in englisshe betwene a publike weale and a commune weale, as shulde be in latin betwene *Res publica* and *Res plebia*. And after that signification, if there shuld be a commune weale, either the communers only must be welthy, and the gentil and noble men nedy and miserable, or else, excluding gentilitie, al men must be of one degre and sort, and a new name provided." Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*.

homogenizing social order where its members are expected to act in accord with culturally-inscribed norms that masquerade as affective ideals of "Christian mercy and love."[245] As presented in the trial scene, the law presupposes an assumption that all Venetian inhabitants—citizens and strangers alike—will conform to the principles of Christian mercy. Both Portia and the Duke insist upon Shylock's participation in this mode of community, even as they express his position outside of it: "Then *must* the Jew be merciful" (4.1.178, emphasis added) and "We all *expect* a gentle answer, Jew!" (4.1.33, emphasis added). To borrow Janet Adelman's formulation, Shylock functions here not as "the stranger outside Christianity but the original stranger within it."[246] Clinging to the language available in a classical humanist context, the Christians attempt to inculcate Shylock in the "proper" language of relationality, all the while insisting on his strange-ness. They seek to turn Shylock into an echo chamber for their Christian values and eliminate an alien vocabulary of violence.

Countering a normalizing Christian sociality, the bond forged between Shylock and Antonio emerges as an alternate mode of community that is illegible on Venice's conventional, orthodox social terms. I read Antonio and Shylock's bond of flesh as two persons united not by a shared property but precisely by an obligation or a debt. These antagonists willingly establish a contract of threat and injurability—a debtor unreservedly bound to his lender with the potential for perilous consequences. While Michel de Montaigne argues in "Of Friendship" that "all things being by effect common betweene them…; and their mutuall agreement, being no other then one soul in two bodies,…they can neither lend nor give out to each other," Antonio and Shylock's

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[245] For the argument that Venetian society and its lending practices derived legitimacy from their conceptual basis in idealized Christian affections of amity, trust, and mercy that all members were compelled to observe, see Lauren Garrett, "True Interest and the Affections: The Dangers of Lawful Lending in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 14.1 (2014): 32-62, esp. 36.

[246] Janet Adelman, *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in "The Merchant of Venice"* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2008), esp. 7.

bond fulfills the promise of Montaigne's precept at its logical—and thus potentially radical—extreme.247 Though Montaigne explicitly maintains that "they can neither lend nor give out to each other," this is true only on sociality's conventional terms: they cannot lend nor give to one another *as discrete subjects*. Yet Montaigne's image of one soul in two bodies almost by definition does damage to the notion of autonomous selfhood. His paradigm gestures towards an implicit forfeiture of the integral self. This kind of radical extreme, a bond of risk resisted by Smith and Elyot and prefigured by Montaigne, recurs with the formulation of communion occasioned by Georges Bataille: "I propose to admit, as a law, that human beings are only united with each other through rents or wounds…If elements are put together to form a whole, this can easily happen when each one loses, through a rip in its integrity, a part of its own being, which goes to benefit the communal being."248 His "law" resonates with Antonio and Shylock's bond of flesh where their communion comprises a mutual desire for an intimate intercourse that "corresponds to excess, to an exuberance of forces…*independent of consequences*," for which there is no adequate preparation.249 Leo Bersani, drawing on Bataille, further develops the value of potential self-loss by critiquing "the sacrosanct value of selfhood" or "self-hyperbole."250 He urges us to move away from fetishizing the uncompromised, internal self and suggests that self-shattering may constitute a more ethical mode of being.251 Within this framework then, bodily transience and heightened vulnerability constitute communion; its members are not concerned with self-sovereignty, but rather actively practice forms of self-making that start from dependence on others.

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247 Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes*, trans. John Florio, 3 vol. (London, 1603), 1:93-4.
248 Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, 251.
249 Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche* (London: Paragon House, 1992), esp. 17, emphasis in original.
250 Leo Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave?: and other essays* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2010), esp. 30, 25.
251 For more on Bersani's widely recognized theory of "self-shattering" as "the risk of self-dismissal, of *losing sight of the self*" as an ethical praxis of nonviolence, see his *Is the Rectum a Grave?*, esp. 30.

This disjuncture between community as sociality and community as communion is exacerbated when both are simultaneously operative. The former is preoccupied with self-preservation while the latter with self-forfeiture. I want to be clear here that in my rationale, words such as "injurious," "annihilative," and "violent" do not describe the negative effects of the social, but rather the potentially generative operations of the communal to bring about a more sacrificial mode of interrelation. Antonio and Shylock's bond of flesh is initially incomprehensible to the Venetians who can only understand community in terms of sociality and resist engaging other possibilities that threaten their survival. They speak in a language of commonness, homogeneity, and security, refusing to legitimate a language of risk, wounds, and expenditure of one's autonomous selfhood. This irreconcilable aporia of community is mobilized most evidently by Antonio's melancholy, the divergent responses to which constitute the play's crux. By taking us through the processes of how others attempt to draw out Antonio from his solitude, the play reveals the limits of sociality that ensure equity within the closed circle of the Christian gentleman and the efficacy of communion that exacts sacrifice between strangers. Here, two antithetical discursive models of community collide and compete.

Provocative Melancholy

As a melancholic, Antonio's bodily integrity is inextricably intertwined with his state of mind, and both are presented as resolutely intact and unbreachable.[252] This kind of indomitable psychosomatic impasse appears antithetical to communion through individual dispossession and

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[252] For more on early modern melancholy and the psychosomatic impasse it creates, see Jacques Bos, "The Rise and Decline of Character: Humoral Psychology in Ancient and Early Modern Medical Theory," *History of the Human Sciences* 22.3 (2009), esp. 29; Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999); Angus Gowland, "The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy," *Past & Present* 191 (2006): 77-120; and Drew Daniel, *The Melancholy Assemblage: Affect and Epistemology in the English Renaissance* (New York: Fordham UP, 2013).

unboundedness. As a result, the requisite openness to wounding that constitutes communion seems a foreclosed possibility for Antonio at the start of the play. Surprisingly though, his seemingly impermeable melancholy emerges as a precondition for mobilizing the language of violence and ruin subtending the discourse of sociality. The façade of self-containment immediately provokes aggression against it.

Much scholarship on early modern melancholia favors a Galenic definition of atrabilious disease as a pathology of inward fluid imbalance and outward symptom.[253] What is most notable about this disease is that although its symptoms are readily palpable, it is impossible to discover, much less understand, its cause from an outside-the-body perspective. Robert Burton's central tenet of melancholy is as follows: "a kind of dotage without a feaver, having for his ordinary companions, feare, and sadnesse, *without any apparent occasion.*"[254] This disease may be further understood through the concept of inwardness as it was perceived in the English Renaissance; Katharine Maus notes that the question of "what relation holds between the overt and the covert, the visible effect and the invisible cause"[255] was a considerable preoccupation and that social life demanded the constant practice of induction, or what early modern physician John Cotta calls "artificial conjecture:"[256] reasoning from the superficial to the deep, from the effect to the cause, from seeming to being.[257] Consequently, melancholy's epistemological deadlock precipitates a

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[253] For more on the clinical predominance of Galenism during this period, see Douglas Trevor, *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004); and Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004). In regards to the portrayal of Antonio's melancholy, it may also be useful to return to the Aristotelian model of genial melancholy. See Aristotle, "Book XXX: Problems Connected with Prudence, Intelligence, and Wisdom," in *Problemata*, ed. E. S. Forster, vol. 7 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), esp. 953-33; and Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642* (East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1951), esp. 58-72.

[254] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), esp. 1.169-170, emphasis mine.

[255] Katharine Eisaman Maus "Proof and Consequences: Inwardness and its Exposure in the English Renaissance," *Representations* 34 (1991): 29-52, esp. 35.

[256] John Cotta, *The Trial of Witchcraft, Shewing the True and Right Method of Their Detection* (London, 1616).

[257] What Lacey Baldwin Smith characterizes as the "paranoid mode" of English Renaissance political life is also instructive to think about melancholy and the anxieties it dredges up between "the conviction that things are never as

collaborative dynamic in which a community forms around finding the afflicted's diagnosis.

While I want to be careful not to automatically translate Antonio's melancholy into Freudian

melancholia, I do believe Freud's simile of melancholia as an open wound can help to inform my

reading of Antonio's melancholy and the kind of morbid fascination and synergic frenzy it

inspires.[258] As Freud states in "Mourning and Melancholia," "the complex of melancholia

behaves like an open wound, drawing to itself cathectic energies—which in the transference

neuroses we have called 'anticathexes'—from all directions, and emptying the ego until it is

totally impoverished."[259] Although Freud uses this analogy to describe how the actual complex

of melancholia draws in all surrounding psychic energy until the ego is exhausted, I argue that

the patient of melancholia behaves in a similar way. By exhibiting the symptoms of melancholia

and all its epistemological ambiguity, Antonio's body that presents itself as hermetically sealed

in fact behaves as an open wound, drawing in spectators who desire a reliable means of

communication and understanding. This melancholic physical impenetrability that "do[es] cream

and mantle like a standing pond" begs to be fleshed out in a somatic and communal way,

presaging the damage of interrelatedness that the bloody bond finally fulfills.

Suppressive Sociality

The parochial, exclusionary Christian sociality of Venice binds Antonio's male Christian

friends, restricting their understanding of his melancholy within these narrowly circumscribed

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they appear to be—a greater and generally more sinister reality exists behind the scenes" (36). See *Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986).

[258] Another fruitful analogy for Antonio's melancholy is drawn out by Julia Kristeva who argues that "the metaphor of the 'black *Sun*' for melancholy admirably evokes the blinding intensity of an affect eluding conscious elaboration" (10). The continuity of an outward sign of impenetrability drawing in spectators to discover a blinding interior that evades human understanding exists between the understandings of early modern melancholy, Freudian melancholia, and post-Freudian melancholia. See "On the Melancholic Imaginary," *New Formations* 3 (1987).

[259] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1916), esp. 253.

conditions. Salanio and Salarino suggest that Antonio's sadness is not a mystery at all but a predictable consequence of his dangerous business ventures.[260] Salanio proffers, "Believe me, [Antonio], had I such venture forth/ The better part of my affections would/ Be with my hopes abroad" (1.1.14-6) which Salarino buttresses with "My wind cooling my broth/ Would blow me to an ague when I thought/ What harm a wind too great might do at sea" (1.1.21-3).[261] Their insistent evocation of the first-person subject position to understand Antonio is an interpersonal praxis of projection and assimilation in lieu of opening and exposure. The frippery of their diagnostic procedure can be understood through Burton's explication of the sympathetic response: "To laugh is the proper passion of a man, an ordinary thing to smile; but those counterfeit, composed, affected, artificiall and reciprocall, those counter-smiles, are the dumbe shewes and prognostickes of greater matters, which they most part use, to inveagle and deceave…for they apply it all to themselves."[262] This reliance on a solipsistic, singular experience of the world to connect interpersonally has the integral subject's imaginative capacities as its constitutional bounds. To Salanio and Salarino, bonding with Antonio consists of "counter-smiles": an interrelation of self-interested mirroring. Salarino ends his speech:

> Shall I have the thought
>
> To think on this, and shall I lack the thought

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[260] *The Merchant of Venice* has long been associated with the anxieties of England's emerging capitalist economy, characterized by the expansion of urban centers (particularly London), the rise of banking and overseas trade, and industrial growth with its concomitant need for credit and large amounts of capital. See, for example, Richard H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1947); Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution 1603-1714* (New York: Norton, 1982); Walter Cohen, "*The Merchant of Venice* and the Possibilities of Historical Criticism," *ELH* 49 (1982): 765-789; and Luke Wilson, "Drama and Marine Insurance in Shakespeare's London" in *The Law in Shakespeare,* eds. Constance Jordan and Karen Cunningham (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[261] See also Henry S. Turner's reading of Salario and Salarino's diagnostic response as a desultory projection of their own mercantilist anxieties on Antonio in "The Problem of the More-than-One: Friendship, Calculation, and Political Association in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 57.4 (2006): 413-442.

[262] Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, esp. 3.90.

> That such a thing bechanced would make me sad?
>
> But tell not me. I know Antonio
>
> Is sad to think about his merchandise. (1.1.35-9)

The repetition of "I" and anaphoric "Shall I" introducing rhetorical questions underscore Salarino's dependence on first-person narrative to understand Antonio. His sympathetic yet narcissistic response exposes the vocabulary of sociality as one of insularity and immunity.[263] Thus, Salarino's final proclamation, "I know Antonio" dissolves in the face of Antonio's curt response: "Believe me, no" (1.1.40).

However, lying beneath Salario and Salarino's superficial projections, a repressed vocabulary of violence and wounding threatens to erupt. I am particularly interested in Salario's metaphor, which not only explains the reason behind, but also describes the state of Antonio's melancholic body. The constitutive blankness of Antonio's malady forecloses all possibility of communication as long as he remains unbreached. In his speech explaining the cause of Antonio's sadness, Salario states:

> Should I go to church
>
> And see the holy edifice of stone
>
> And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks
>
> Which, touching but my gentle vessel's side,
>
> Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
>
> Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks

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[263] For a compelling theory of social immunization as the means by which the individual is defended from the "expropriative effects" of community, protecting the one who carries it from the risk of contact with those who do not (the risk being precisely the loss of individual identity), see Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007), esp. 47. For a comprehensive overview that situates Esposito's line of thinking in the methodology of Georges Bataille, see Timothy Campbell, "'Bios,' Immunity, Life: The Thought of Roberto Esposito," *Diacritics* 36.2 (2006): 2-22.

And, in a word, but even now worth this,

And now worth nothing? (1.1.28-35)

Salario's image of a loaded merchant vessel bursting open and revealing, while simultaneously losing, its contents figures the task of meaningful communication itself: the rock pierces the sturdy side of the ship, penetrating to the treasured content within which then intermixes with the "roaring waters." The parallelism between "now worth this,/ And now worth nothing" points to an instantaneous moment of continuity between "this" and "nothing"—a juncture connects this profound excess to a profound loss. As Adelman argues, Salario's speech "images Antonio's body as a container of riches—its own variant of infinite riches in a little room—made visible only by the touch that would annihilate him."[264] Because the melancholic's body was understood as one flooded with black bile and in need of purging, Antonio's body is proleptically imagined as an inner space that demands opening up and liquidation; to be known and healed, it must also be marked as a site for corporeal annihilation. Here, the play is taking apart the sanitized version of sociality where all transactions are reciprocally affirmative of the integral self by mobilizing and making visible the productive potential of risk-laden, dis-integrated communion. And yet, this kind of interpersonal intimacy mainstayed by violence is only obliquely imparted through metaphor. Antonio's Christian friends insist on a vocabulary of guarded sociality even when a more volatile grammar subtends their social transactions within the play.

Gratiano, too, proposes his own explanation for Antonio's melancholy, exhorting him not to use the stagnant face of melancholy as some do to appear venerable and wise whilst containing nothing within:

There are a sort of men whose visages

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[264] Adelman, *Blood Relations*, 118.

> Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
>
> And do a willful stillness entertain
>
> With purpose to be dressed in an opinion
>
> Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit. (1.1.88-92)

Beneath Gratiano's comic register lurks this same vocabulary of violence resembling Salario's earlier speech. Gratiano accuses Antonio of exploiting the melancholic trope, creating the illusion of interior depth and profound knowledge beneath the surface of a deceitful "standing pond." Gratiano's explanation is further supplemented by fishing imagery as his final request to Antonio is to "fish not with this melancholy bait/ For this fool gudgeon, this opinion" (1.1.101-2). Gratiano's advice imagines Antonio's body as bait for others' consumption, as though Antonio dangles his melancholic self as a tantalizing lure, provoking others to know his interior through corporeal feeding. The treachery of his stoic, melancholic exterior is figured as a premeditated affront that not only justifies but actually incites violence against it in a desire to find the supposed truths this subterfuge obscures. Drew Daniel cogently observes that through the figure of Antonio, "being known, being open, and being destroyed" are all brought into a charged proximity at the play's opening.[265] By emphasizing the potential for "being destroyed," I trace the pattern through which Antonio's melancholy proliferates an array of others' destructive desires. Antonio both baits and is bait. Ironically, even within protective sociality, the privileged Christian gentlemen's speech is nonetheless infiltrated by this language of violence. Although the Venetian social tenets of self-preservation and complete autonomy proscribe the actualization of interrelationality through wounding, the potential exists, albeit figuratively. At this point, the

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[265] Drew Daniel, "'Let me have judgment, and the Jew his will': Melancholy Epistemology and Masochistic Fantasy in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 61.2 (2010): 206-234, esp. 211.

formulation of ripping someone open and using it as a process of connecting with him operates

in a counterfactual space, a rhetorical conditional as opposed to a corporeal actuality.

The relationship between Antonio and Bassanio—which best exemplifies Renaissance

amicitia and the biblical "greater love" of male-male friendship—reaches the nearest relation to

realization of this imaginative possibility of openended, dis-integrated communion.[266] Through

the intense homoeroticism that binds them together, we most clearly see the possibility of an

interrelation predicated on costly sacrifice.[267] Though Bassanio responds to Antonio's

melancholy by requesting a subsidy for his courtship plot,[268] the language surrounding this loan

most explicitly bespeaks ruin. Antonio confesses his financial limitations: "Thou know'st that all

my fortunes are at sea;/ Neither have I money, nor commodity/ To raise a present sum" (1.1.177-

9). Regardless, Antonio agrees to fund Bassanio by assuming the debt himself: "Therefore go

forth:/ Try what my credit can in Venice do,/ That shall be racked even to the uttermost/ To

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[266] *Amicitia* was a complex Renaissance institution operating on a social continuum from old-boy networking to sexual intimacy to love. For readings that examine the play in terms of the erotic and romantic dimensions of *amicitia*, see Steve Patterson, "The Bankruptcy of Homoerotic Amity in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50 (1999): 9-32 and Joseph Pequigney, "The Two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*," *ELH* 22.2 (1992): 201-221. For a compelling theory of early modern friendship as governed by a politics of likeness or "homonormativity," see Laurie Shannon's *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002).

[267] For key works that focus on the bond of flesh as illuminating the intensely homoerotic relationship between Antonio and Bassanio, see Keith Geary who observes that Antonio's desperate bond with Shylock is his way of holding on to Bassanio in a heternormative community in "The Nature of Portia's Victory: Turning to Men in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Survey* (1984): 55-68; Edward J. Geisweidt who argues that the play exposes and queers the role of the state as the silent third party in marriage unions in "Antonio's Claim: Triangulated Desire and Queer Kinship in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare* 5 (2009): 338-354; and Drew Daniel who interprets the bloody contract as designed to produce a kind of helplessness in Bassanio that ports subjection outward to this viewer, bringing him into affective alignment with Antonio in "Let me have judgment, and the Jew his will."

[268] For readings of Bassanio's turn to courtship and the heterosexual marital bond at the expense of homoerotic friendship as fitting into the behaviors of a burgeoning system of alliance in which, as Lorna Hutson puts it, "the contracting of matrimony will ensure productive social relations" (70-1), see *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Coppélia Kahn's "The Cuckoo's Note: Male Bonding and Cuckoldry in *The Merchant of Venice*" in *Shakespeare's "Rough Magic": Essays in Honor of C. L. Barber*, ed. Peter Erickson and Coppélia Kahn (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1985), esp. 106; and Lawrence W. Hyman's "The Rival Lovers in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 21.2 (1970): 109-116.

furnish thee to Belmont to fair Portia" (1.1.179-82). Antonio encourages Bassanio, a self-professed prodigal, to solicit another loan from him in a manner that invites self-devastation: "My purse, my person, my extremest means/ Lie all unlocked to your occasions" (1.1.138-9).[269] Many critics have argued powerfully for the homoerotic suggestiveness of Antonio's metaphor and the intensity of their same-sex male bond;[270] I build on these readings to argue that it is precisely their relation's homoerotic charge that makes visible the counterfactual possibility of interrelation through self-expropriation. The rhetorical disturbance of interrelatedness approaches its radical extreme: a consummated sexuality, perhaps, but certainly a consummated vulnerability. Antonio's language portends his own bodily suffering, which will indeed be racked "to the uttermost" to furnish Bassanio, and Bassanio seemingly responds in kind:[271]

> To you, Antonio,
>
> I owe the most in money and in love,
>
> And from your love I have a warranty
>
> To unburden all my plots and purposes
>
> How to get clear of all the debts I owe. (1.1.130-4)

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[269] Lars Engle has described the inverse debt relation between Antonio and Bassanio "whereby the creditor, by the magnitude of the investment, becomes the thrall of the debtor, who can cause ruin by defaulting on or repudiating the debt" (83). See "Money and Moral Luck in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespearean Pragmatism: Market of His Time* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993), 77-106.

[270] James O'Rourke argues that when Antonio offers Bassanio free access to his "person," the audience is set up to believe that they have spotted a "semi-covert homosexual [who] is excluded from the center of the social structure" (379) which Seymour Kleinberg echoes by calling Antonio "the earliest portrait of the homophobic homosexual" (120). See O'Rourke, "Racism and Homophobia in *The Merchant of Venice*," *ELH* 70.2 (2003): 375-397 and Kleinberg, "*The Merhant of Venice*: The Homosexual as Anti-Semite in Nascent Capitalism," *Journal of Homosexuality* 8 (Spring/Summer 1983). For more explicitly psychoanalytic readings which cast Bassanio as the lost object of Antonio's melancholic love, see Alan Sinfield, "How to Read *The Merchant of Venice* Without Being Heterosexist" in *Alternative Shakespeares* 2, ed. Terence Hawkes (London: Routledge, 1996): 122-139; W. Thomas MacCary, *Friends and Lovers: The Phenomenology of Desire in Shakespearean Comedy* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985); and Catherine Belsey, "Love in Venice," *Shakespeare Survey* 44 (1992): 41-53.

[271] Rack as "an instrument of torture, usually consisting of a frame on which the victim was stretched by turning two rollers fastened at each end to the wrists and ankles." See "rack, *2b*., *n.3*," *OED Online* (Oxford, Oxford UP, September 2018).

Bassanio's speech is heavy with a sense of obligation to his dearest friend, of owing debts both financial and emotional.

And yet, though their homoerotic love brings them closest to the habitation of this counterfactual of damaging sacrificial bonds, this realization is foreclosed by a sociality predicated on bonds between indivisible subjects. In Bassanio's speech, the rhetoric of violence and wounding becomes more explicit but still remains immaterial. An interrelation that would involve some openness to self-forfeiture is more perceptible yet still cannot be realized in this privileged, masculine homosociality. For instance, when Bassanio receives news that Antonio's ships are lost, he laments:

> I have engaged myself to a dear friend,
>
> Engaged my friend to his mere enemy,
>
> To feed my means. Here is a letter, [Portia],
>
> The paper as the body of my friend,
>
> And every word in it a gaping wound
>
> Issuing life-blood. (3.2.260-5)

By invoking the image of a gaping, bloody wound through a letter, Bassanio reminds us that his pledge of flesh is in words only and the true bond of flesh is between "my friend to his mere enemy"; the only imaginable "gaping wound/ Issuing life-blood" is Antonio's. While Antonio and Bassanio's interrelation approaches substantiating this potential of anticipatory corporeal destruction, it is only through its transitive relation with Antonio and Shylock's bloody bond.

Although Salario and Salarino's, Gratiano's, and Bassanio's reactions to Antonio's sadness differ, a consistent yet proscribed vocabulary of violence nevertheless characterizes each of these interactions. Salario's and Gratiano's unusual imagery posit Antonio as a closed body

that must be penetrated and consequently annihilated before true communion can be achieved (a rich merchant vessel that must be pierced by a rock and a still pond that must be fished in); and Bassanio and Antonio's homoerotic love comes closest to substantiating damaging sacrificial bonds as a viable mode of interrelation. Venetian sociality exposes its own latent investment in the potential violence of interpersonal bonds predicated on risking damage. However, the Christian community can only figure Antonio's body as desiring self-destruction in a tropological register; these socialized gentlemen refuse engaging the potentiality of communion that risking self-annihilation might produce. The possibility of damaging bonds of dis-integrated communion exists in a counterfactual space, a model of interrelation that is visible but not fully accessible. Yet increasingly, the violence abeyant in their figurative language exists in slippery relation to the actual. The bonds of risk circulate as rhetorical conditionals awaiting functionality; as the play progresses, the figurative and the material begin to converge.

Violent, Intimate Desires

Antonio's melancholy both provokes drastic interrelation precipitating the annihilative desires of others and defines a precondition of his *own* desire for self-destruction. As Burton asserts, "*vivere nolunt, mori nesciunt*, live [melancholics] will not, die they cannot" and later, "because they cannot obtain what they would, they become desperate, and may at times either yield to the passion by death itself, or else attempt impossibilities, not to be performed by men."[272] The melancholic's impulse towards death is further articulated by Julia Kristeva who posits, "the narcissistic ambivalence of the melancholic affect alone finds, in order to represent itself, the image of death as the ultimate site of desire."[273] The ambivalent excess of psychical

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[272] Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1.432, 3.393
[273] Kristeva, "On the Melancholic Imaginary," 10.

energy is in overabundance of its use, prompting an annihilating expenditure; Antonio thus

manifests his own will for annihilation.[274] Antonio's anagnorisis occurs at the moment of his

expressly visceral farewell to Bassanio:

> Repent but you that you shall lose your friend
>
> And he repents not that he pays your debt.
>
> For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
>
> I'll pay it instantly, with all my heart. (4.1.274-7)

Antonio shows absolutely no regard for his personal safety and bodily security, eagerly awaiting

his death. The heart figures both literally and metaphorically, symbolizing Antonio's unwavering

love for Bassanio; although Antonio faces imminent danger, his commitment to his dear friend

remains firm. His readiness to sacrifice his body and will for remembrance as the dis-integrated

figure of sacrifice manifests in his desire for self-destruction.

Yet the only character who speaks in a vocabulary that responds to Antonio in kind and

who is willing to form a communion so costly, angry, and reckless is Shylock, the Jew.[275]

Shylock and Antonio work in tandem to exteriorize the language of communion as risk, risk as

communion. Shylock's sadistic desire to maim Antonio's body is extra-social, only in the sense

that it realizes the injurious potential of the intrasocial. Though they appear irrational and

excessive, such desires work to substantiate the violent vocabulary undergirding Antonio's many

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[274] For a reading of Antonio's desire for self-forfeiture as "obscene, narcissistic, and perversely self-destructive" (33), see Luke Wilson, "Monetary Compensation for Injuries to the Body, A.D. 1602-1697" in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 19-37.

[275] For a cogent account of the complex position of Jews in Venetian society as both a source of salvation for Christians and markers of the "sin of usurious lending", see Brian Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice, 1550-1670* (Totowa: Barnes & Noble Books, 1983), esp. 121; David Hawkes, *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), esp. 67-71; and Miles Mosse, *The Arraignment and Conviction of Usurie* (London, 1595). Moreover, the Jewish body has a history of being depicted as monstrously deformed and his lusts (a confusion of greed, sex, and profanity) as sodomitical. See Marc Shell, "The Wether and the Ewe: Verbal Usury in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Kenyon Review* I (1979): 65-92 and Sander L. Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (London: Routledge, 1991).

other social interactions outlined earlier. For instance, Shylock's justification for desiring

Antonio's corporeal body and death above all else is revealed in his reaction to the news that

Antonio's ships have been lost:

> Salario: Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take/ his flesh. What's that good for?
>
> Shylock: To bait fish withal. (3.1.46-8)

The promised extraction of the pound of flesh threatens to literalize Gratiano's previous

metaphor of "fishing with melancholy bait" as Shylock imagines himself baiting fishhooks with

mutilated fragments of Antonio's body. Shylock's sardonic remark both echoes and confirms

Gratiano's prior insight that the melancholic uses his body as bait, dangling it before others and

inciting annihilative desires. However, a more compelling interpretation of this remark emerges

from how Shylock sees the possibility of the dead productively forming interconnections. I read

Shylock's desire to fish with Antonio's flesh as a means to keep said body in circulation—a post-

mortem practice of utility and intimacy that horrifies the Venetians. Through the terms of the

bond, Shylock imagines harnessing the excess of Antonio's body to nourish other life. He figures

the bits of dead flesh as a synecdoche symbolizing Antonio's whole body whose work of

connection in death is paradoxically more fruitful than Antonio's melancholic body in life. While

a "standing pond" of melancholy "cream[s] and mantle[s]," existing only by and for itself, the

terms of the bond engender a new vocabulary which must necessarily extend even beyond death.

Therefore, while Venetians like Salario regard flesh as worthless, excremental matter, Shylock

discovers the possibility of continuing transaction through Antonio's lifeless body, imagining a

kind of posthumous futurity that will continually sustain and galvanize the community.

Shylock thus innovates a disquieting register of consumption that disrupts sociality's

sanitizing project. Bataille argues that human beings under the necessity to communicate are

"compelled to *will* evil and defilement, which, by risking the being within them, renders them mutually penetrable each to the other."[276] Shylock *wills* Antonio's corporeal dis-integration as a guarantor to their communion. His lust for revenge exceeds killing or harming Antonio, consistently appearing as a *hunger* of the soul—a desire to forge communion on the most basic level of bodily incorporation. Several lines in the play articulate Shylock's longing to penetrate surfaces, which registers as hunger for Antonio's physical wreckage. Shylock tells the perplexed Salario that "If [Antonio's flesh] will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge" (3.1.48-9) and mutters in an aside, "If I can catch [Antonio] once upon the hip/ I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him" (1.3.42-3); similarly, Shylock tells Antonio "Your worship was the last man in our mouths" (1.3.56) and later declares "I will have the heart of him" (3.1.114-5). Even the contract stipulates that the pound of flesh to be removed be nearest Antonio's heart (as Shylock emphatically asserts in the trial scene, "So says the bond, doth it not, noble judge?/ 'Nearest his heart': those are the very words" [4.1.249-50]). This hunger to rip, feed, and consume invokes a new vocabulary that licenses the dissolution and transformation of individual subjectivities.

The repeated images of feeding on Antonio's body highlight the contingency and changeability of bodily boundaries in social interactions. Shylock imagines incorporating Antonio's body into his own bodily constitution, partaking in the most intimate kind of communion where cannibalism mystifies loss and boundaries between autonomous individuals.[277] His hunger for boundary violations underscores the movement of matter from

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[276] Bataille, *On Nietzsche,* 25, emphasis in original.

[277] For more on early modern cannibalism and the complex relationship between individual defilement and contact with alterity, see Catalin Avramescu, *An Intellectual History of Cannibalism*, trans. Alistair Ian Blyth (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2011); Richard Sugg, *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires: the History of Corpse Medicine from the Renaissance to the Victorians* (London: Routledge, 2011); Louise Noble, *Medicinal Cannibalism in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); and Emily King, "Spirited Flesh: The Animation and Hybridization of Flesh in the Early Modern Imaginary," *Postmedieval* ed. Kathryn Schwarz and Holly Crocker 4.4 (2013): 479-490.

body to body, creating a vision of continued animacy. The threatening vocabulary of Shylock's desire to "plague [Antonio]; I'll torture him" upends the superficial discourse of sociality, exteriorizing the latent concepts of risk, exposure, and annihilation that constitute communion (3.1.105). Shylock's hunger for flesh answers Antonio's melancholic desire for expenditure. Shylock's will to destroy is the correlative of Antonio's will for destruction. These two counterparts assume an active will for devaluing and damaging individual integrity, which the play unexpectedly authorizes despite its surface appeals to Christian humanism.

Consent and Reciprocity

Antonio's melancholic death wish and Shylock's cannibalistic hunger are inextricably imbricated desires that are only realizable through their mutual receptivity and voluntary consent in engendering this mode of communion. While their bloody bond is initially entered into as a result of Antonio's supposed magnanimity toward Bassanio, it is Shylock who transforms this strictly economic agreement into one that imperils the individual integrity of both parties.[278] In a maneuver strikingly incongruous with Shylock's stigmatization as "a creature, that did bear the shape of a man,/ So keen and greedy to confound a man" (3.2.274-5), he offers Antonio an interest-free loan if Antonio consents to forfeit basic human needs and violate his somatic wholeness:

>   let the forfeit
> Be nominated for an equal pound
> Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken

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[278] For scholars who have addressed the flesh penalty's commensurate monetary value, see for example Amanda Bailey, "Shylock and the Slaves: Owing and Owning in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.1 (2011): 1-24; and Thomas Wilson, *A Discourse Upon Usury* (London, 1572).

In what part of your body pleaseth me. (1.3.144-7)

The forfeiture of a pound of flesh that Shylock chooses speaks both to loss over what is ostensibly one's own and to a violent loss of individuated borders. Shylock's final assertion maintains his desire to take Antonio's flesh from "nearest his heart"—"the seat and fountain of life, of heat, of spirits, of pulse and respiration, the sun of our body, the king and sole commander of it" according to Burton.[279] Shylock desires damaging the elemental, constitutional organ of the integral self.

It is not enough, however, simply to acquiesce to the terms of communication; one must actively *will* this kind of intimate violence. Bataille's formulation of communion requires consent given freely and willingly by both parties: "[Communication] only replace[s] isolated humanness if there's some consent, if not to annihilation, then to *risking* yourself and, in the same impulse, *risking* other people."[280] Bataille's italicization visually embosses his emphasis on the mutual consent to *risking* annihilation, not to annihilation itself. What is at stake in this interrelation is the acceptance, rather than the consummation, of death; death is a necessary hazard, not an inevitable outcome. By creating a new, communal being, both individuals must consent to an integral loss, opening themselves up to unknowable consequences that Slavoj Žižek characterizes as "pure autism, a psychic suicide, surrender to the death drive even to the total destruction of the symbolic universe."[281] This disruption of the social is not merely self-shattering but has the revolutionary potential to shatter and irreversibly reshape sociality as well.

Shylock's determination of the bond's terms and his relentless hunger for Antonio's flesh affirm his consent to enter the contract, while Antonio conveys his reciprocal consent in his reply

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[279] Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1.152-3.
[280] Bataille, *On Nietzsche,* 26, emphasis in original.
[281] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1989), esp. 75.

to the new, perilous terms: "I'll seal to such a bond,/ And say there is much kindness in the Jew" (2.1.148-9). In fact, Antonio only agrees to the deal once it involves a corporeal, rather than a monetary, investment. While Bassanio protests "You shall not seal to such a bond for me,/ I'll rather dwell in my necessity" (1.3.150-1), Antonio's surprising consent to a contract where his death is a realistic possibility reveals Antonio and Shylock's mutual reception and conjoint answerability. Unlike Bassanio who immediately rejects this model of communion, Antonio recognizes an ethical and spiritual kinship with Shylock. Not only does Antonio agree to Shylock's terms, but he recognizes "much *kind*ness" in them—Shylock presents the terms of the bond as kindness and it is received by Antonio as kindness. The scene ends with Antonio's observation, "The Hebrew will turn Christian; he grows kind" (1.3.174). The word "kind" in Renaissance English means not only "compassionate" but "similar" or "akin."[282] Through this seemingly innocuous observation that Shylock grows more benevolent and more Christian, the coded meaning of "kind" as "akin" reveals the unforeseen connection, affection, intimacy, and obligation between them:[283] their shared, destructive desires expand, rather than violate, the limits of viable social contract, revealing that bonds of intimacy need not be conventionally idealized bonds of affection and amity. Rather than read Antonio's acceptance of the bond as rash or ill-considered, I read his eager acceptance of the bond *because*, and not in spite, of its terms. Antonio and Shylock's trading back-and-forth of "kindness" during this scene forcefully

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[282] "kind, *1b.*, *n*.," *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford UP, September 2018).

[283] For more readings of the play's structural identification and parallel between Shylock and Antonio, see Rene Girard, *A Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare* (New York: Oxford UP, 1991), esp. 246-55; Lars Engle, "Money and Moral Luck in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespearean Pragmatism: Market of His Time* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993), esp. 87-92; and Lawrence Danson, *The Harmonies of the Merchant of Venice* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1978). For a reading that takes Shylock as reflector of others even further, see Avraham Oz, *The Yoke of Love: Prophetic Riddles in The Merchant of Venice* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1995); Oz argues that Shylock is a "composite construct" of contradictory materials, a "bigger than life stereotype [who] may represent no one and everyone" (102).

torques what the idea of "kind" can mean: beyond a "kind" of privileged sameness or pastoral

eroticization, it is far more radical for them to recognize kinship in each other.[284]

The mutual consent of this bond notwithstanding, the contract still appears one-sided:

there is a distinct wound-er and wound-ee rather than a willingness of both participants to

communicate through mutual wounds. *The Merchant of Venice* invites us to recognize the

complexities of risk in a sacrificial context where the stakes for each party differ drastically.

While Bataille argues that true communication with another being requires both participants to

lean over the abyss beyond human bounds, jointly approaching the asymptote of death,

Shakespeare pushes further and presents us with a model where the shared risk is

asymmetrical.[285] The ecstatic and implicitly egalitarian self-annihilation that Bataille deems the

essence of communion proves inadequate to describe accurately the lender/debtor dynamic

forged by Shylock and Antonio who operate under differently-informed consent. What Antonio

and Shylock's bond demonstrates is that a meeting point at a site of collective endangerment can

be created even if the demands imposed on each participant differ. As long as both parties are

willing to inhabit the condition of being exposed to each other (exposed to solicitation,

seduction, passion, and injury), then the potential for communion emerges. Their shared,

consensual will for individual unboundedness is the requirement to engender true

communication rather than a shared, identical wound. By speaking in a language that Antonio

recognizes as "kind," Shylock partakes in his own kind of wounding, binding himself to his

fiercest enemy through this vocabulary of violence that gives way to mutually destructive

[284] For Bersani's critique of the "pastoralizing…domesticating, even sanitizing project" of the most oppressive demonstrations of power, see *Is the Rectum a Grave?*, esp. 29.

[285] As Bataille formulates, "[Communication between two beings] is fully disclosed only when the other *similarly* leans over the edge of nothingness or falls into it (dies). 'Communication' only takes place between two people who risk themselves, each lacerated and suspended, perched atop a *common* nothingness." See Bataille, *On Nietzsche,* 20-21, emphasis mine.

desires. Shylock deliberately forgoes the practice of usury and instead insists on lending to Antonio in "kindness," that courtesy reserved by the play's characters for those of their own kind:

> I would be friends with you and have your love,
>
> Forget the shames that you have stained me with,
>
> Supply your present wants, and take no doit
>
> Of usance for my moneys; and you'll not hear me.
>
> This is the *kind* I offer. (1.3.134-8, emphasis added)[286]

By proposing a bond of flesh that has the potential to mobilize their damaging desires, Shylock answers Antonio's language of interrelationality. The freely-given consent and mutual understanding in their communicative exchange creates a more dangerously expansive concept of "kind-ness" than the Christian "kind" can accommodate.

And yet, how can we reconcile their shared desire for communion with their structurally hierarchical differences within Venetian society? While Venice's economic, capitalist interests manifest pretensions to equality for all before the law, it nonetheless favors Christian religious belief and ethnic belonging; hence, Antonio is automatically cast in a position of privileged citizen and Shylock in one of abject alien. Within the framework of their bond, however, Antonio and Shylock's hierarchical relation is recalibrated. Antonio's abuse of Shylock is both sanctioned and prescribed by normative Venetian sociality yet he willingly consents to a position of abjection within the contract. While Antonio's earlier aggression is framed in specifically anti-

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[286] That the bond between Shylock and Antonio is an instance of interest rather than usury was observed three decades ago by Walter Cohen: "The crisis of the play arises not from [Shylock's] insistence on usury, but from his refusal of it. The contrast is between usury, which is immoral…and interest, which is perfectly acceptable…Antonio immediately recognizes that Shylock's proposal falls primarily into the latter category" (769). See "*The Merchant of Venice* and the Possibilities of Historical Criticism," *English Literary Renaissance* 49.4 (1982): 756-89.

Semitic terms, their mutually reimagined relation of "kindness" is newly articulated by their bond. Through their bond, they have found themselves inextricably joined to one another and bound to respond to each other's solicitations in its language. After they willingly enter into the bloody bond, Antonio no longer physically or verbally abuses Shylock and merely awaits his death. Even in the trial scene which abounds with anti-Semitic slurs and castigations, Antonio disengages. He revels in his abjection ("I am a tainted wether of the flock,/ Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit/ Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me" [4.1.113-5]) rather than join the chorus of xenophobic voices.[287] He drops out of the shared social rather than claim a kind of easy, predictable power of sociality's anti-Semitism. Antonio's language is now the language of the bond: while the word "Jew" reverberates from all those who communicate in the language of sociality, Antonio effectively cries "Cut me!" *The Merchant of Venice* sketches a mode of sacrificial obligation that poses an efficacious alternative to prevailing power structures. Even Venice's Christian gentleman par excellence willingly relinquishes his easy privilege in sociality to occupy the antipodal position of abjection in the bond.

Bound to the Law

Venetian law is the instrument through which the latent violence within the figurative language of sociality and the explicit violence of Antonio and Shylock's bond become operable possibilities. Through the bond's terms, Shylock and Antonio forge an alternative mode of interaction that is available within and consistent with Venetian civil law. Shylock's claim to the bond's forfeit and Antonio's death wish are paradoxically propelled by the regulatory function of the law which ensures the protection of all economic transactions. By presenting the case as a

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[287] If we take Leviticus 19:22-26 as an intertext for the play's courtroom scene, we find in it a key to Antonio's self-comparisons to tainted rams and weak fruit: Antonio is both somatically compromised and a sacrificial offering.

breach of a commercial agreement, Shylock and Antonio make possible the satisfaction of their

socially-irruptive desires; the legitimacy of their contract is authorized by its bureaucratic

legality. As the bond becomes the letter of the law, its terms disturb the law's smooth functioning

and co-opt it from perpetuating Christian hegemonic sociality to substantiating dis-integrated

communion. Their extralegal bond supplants and then exceeds the juridical.

In the trial scene, every Venetian citizen is bound to the law. While the Duke, Salario,

Bassanio, Gratiano, and Portia-as-Balthazar all exhort Shylock to be merciful, he refuses to

surrender his bond. Shylock's speech accumulates a forceful potency as he reiterates, "I stay here

on my bond" (4.1.238). When the Duke asks why he desires a "pound of this poor merchant's

flesh," Shylock responds: "You'll ask me why I rather choose to have/ A weight of carrion flesh

than to receive/ Three thousand ducats. I'll not answer that!" (4.1.39-41) and later, "So can I give

no reason, nor I will not…I am not bound to please thee with my answers!" (4.1.22, 58, 64).

Shylock is bound only by the legal bond of flesh to Antonio—no longer answerable to reason,

economic interests, Venetian sociality, or the "gent(i)le" acts of friendship, hospitality, and gift-

giving. Shylock's extra-social (as alien, Jew) yet intra-legal (as Venetian denizen) status works

here to his advantage as not even the Duke's sovereignty can trump civil law. In an instance of

what Michel Foucault terms "the point where the law is inverted and passes outside itself, and

where the counter-law becomes the effective and institutionalized content of the juridical

forms,"[288] Shylock's unique position as legal, though foreign, body authorizes his use and claim

to counter-law.[289] The bond becomes the counter-law, threateningly "invert[ing]" and exceeding

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[288] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), esp. 224

[289] This moment can also be read productively as what Slavoj Žižek terms "*overidentifying* with the explicit power discourse—ignoring this inherent obscene underside and simply taking the power discourse at its (public) word, acting as if it really means what it explicitly says (and promises)—[as] the most effective way of disturbing its smooth functioning," See "Da Capo senza Fine" in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* (London: Verso, 2000), esp. 220, emphasis in original.

the ideology of Christian self-preservation the law was meant to protect. The threat to normative

Venetian sociality develops in Shylock's speech as an excess that is no longer governable, that

grows from within protective regulation and beyond what can be controlled. The bond as

counter-law fulfils the illicit will of the law, revealing that the seamy underside of Venetian law

permits risking and damaging the integral self.

Shylock becomes the only coherent, hyperinsistent voice of the law; he ends this speech

with the obligatory demand that the law speak:

The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,

Is dearly bought; 'tis mine and I will have it.

If you deny me, fie upon your law:

There is no force in the decrees of Venice.

I stand for judgement. Answer: shall I have it? (4.1.98-102)[290]

Shylock's demand for the law to answer and faithfully execute the bond's letter puts Venetian

law in the awkward position of facilitating his cannibalistic desires. The law becomes a

wonderfully troubling antidote to sociality. Portia's oft-quoted lines about the quality of mercy

that "droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven" are notable not so much for their eloquence, as for

their impotence—they are of no use, fall on deaf ears, *do* nothing (4.1.180). Shylock, on the

other hand, speaks for a decidedly enlivened—animate, mobile, volatile—extralegal version of

the law itself that forces the Venetians to recognize the efficacy of the discursive register he

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[290] Although Althusser argues that the true power of ideology is in its internalized "obviousness," the power of Venetian law is precisely *not* obvious for Shylock. Shylock becomes the threatening site of extreme consistency, literality, questioning, and demand, of forcing the law into a kind of explicitness that makes the law speak for, justify, and answer to itself. See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation." In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, 121-73 (London: New Left Books, 1971).

invokes.[291] His words mock and make a mockery of all sentimental claims to a "higher truth"

clothed in elevated rhetoric that cannot produce its credentials in the State's court. A gap opens

between the utterly ineffectual appeals to mercy's operations in sociality and the forcible,

extralegal counter-law of violence of men operating in radical communion that in this moment

precariously fail to coincide. The shift from law to counter-law accentuates this disjuncture

between sociality's sanitized fantasy of reciprocity between integral subjects (Christian "mercy")

and its violent inter-injurious contracts (the bond of flesh).

Similarly, Antonio cannot provide a socially-legible rationale for his annihilative desires.

His death wish surfaces in his willful acquiescence to his sentence. In fact, Antonio can only

realize his desire for death through the ostensibly impartial and unalterable law:

> since [Shylock] stands obdurate,
>
> And that no lawful means can carry me
>
> Out of his envy's reach, I do oppose
>
> My patience to his fury, and am armed
>
> To suffer with a quietness of spirit,
>
> The very tyranny and rage of his. (4.1.7-12)

The law appears to give Antonio the right to his bond and authorizes his plea to "make no moe

offers, use no farther means,/ But with all brief and plain conveniency/ Let me have judgement,

and the Jew his will!" (4.1.80-2). This asymmetrical, oppositional bond has become the most

powerful mode of contract. Antonio's self-annihilative desires to be remembered as a dis-

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[291] For an argument that identifies Shylock as both the construct and agency through which Venetian institutions such as the law are demystified, see John Drakakis, "Historical Difference and Venetian Patriarchy" in *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. Martin Coyle (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

integrated sacrifice become realizable through the law's execution of duties and sufferance of penalties.

Both Antonio and Shylock, then, share a will to break and remake boundaries, a will to violate their legible subjectivities through Antonio's transformative death. Shylock asserts "by my soul I swear/ There is no power in the tongue of man/ To alter me. I stay here on my bond" (4.1.235-7) which Antonio directly echoes with "Most heartily I do beseech the court/ To give the judgement" (4.1.238-9). Implicit within the neutral vocabularies accessible to social subjects, the contract and the law function as a site for violent desires, generating the promise of a self-destructive satisfaction for Antonio and of a correlative cannibalistic satisfaction for Shylock. Their bloody bond ushers in languages of being undone as discrete beings, embracing an interrelation that supersedes individuation. The possibility of the bond's realization is put on display in a public space, demanding members of the Venetian community to partake actively (as witnesses, lawyers, judges) in desires of destructive intimacy that have thus far remained latent.

And yet, the contract is aggressively foreclosed both by Portia's distorted semantic interpretation and by an exigent law against foreigners that forces Shylock's conversion. A divergence emerges between the bond's actual terms as the two contracted parties have consented and how Portia as an outsider chooses to interpret it. Portia's interpretation of the bond insists that it "give [Shylock] here no jot of blood./ The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh'" (4.1.301-2)—a difference without a distinction. And later, she invokes a kind of martial law which strips "alien[s]…who seek the life of any citizen" of all their goods and wealth (4.1.344-6 passim). As Julia Reinhard Lupton notes, the trial produces a "miniature state of emergency" where "if the life of a citizen is at risk, so too is civic life, *bios politikos*, more generally."[292]

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[292] Lupton, *Citizen-Saints*, 96

Portia's extraordinary question as the voice of law, "Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?" (4.1.169), marks a confusion that should never have been possible, putting Venice's entire social polity in crisis. Thus, to restore sociality, civil law must be converted to criminal law, breach of contract refigured as attempted murder, the Jew's consent to the bloody bond transformed into his content with Christian conversion. Extreme measures are taken to reinstate a Venetian community to which Shylock can never belong. Yet this bond of shared risk that Antonio and Shylock promulgate during this scene unexpectedly becomes the one with greater efficacy to resonate far beyond the trial. The near-realization of their bond of flesh causes it to migrate outward from the counterfactual into what is operable.

Bound to the Violent Bond

Shylock's disappearance from the final act of the play seems to motivate an inevitable recentering of Christian sociality.[293] The critical impulse to repastoralize community or recuperate the *Merchant's* system of bonds after the trial scene does so at the expense of Shylock. Karen Newman's recuperation of Portia's agency requires Shylock's excision; Portia's power and prestige as Venice's "Big Man" is assumed by giving an unreciprocal gift: that of allowing the city to preserve both its law and its Christian citizens.[294] Alan Sinfield focuses his analysis of the final scene on Portia, Bassanio, and Antonio, proposing the possibility of a

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[293] For scholarship that underscores the trial's outcome and Shylock's subsequent disappearance from the play to argue that this hostile and hypocritical Venetian community is merely reinscribed and validated by this very trial scene, see James L. O'Rourke, "Racism and Homophobia in *The Merchant of Venice*"; and Kim F. Hall, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? Colonization an Miscegenation in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Renaissance Drama* 23 (1992): 87-111. Other critics have a more generous reading and posit Portia as one who learns "the grim prose of the law in order to restore it to its true function" (262). See Sigurd Burckhardt, "*The Merchant of Venice*: The Gentle Bond," *ELH* 29.3 (1962): 239-262; Engle, "'Thrift is Blessing': Exchange and Explanation in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37 (1986): 20-37; and Harry Berger, Jr., "Marriage and Mercifixion in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1981): 155-162.
[294] Karen Newman, "Portia's Ring: Unruly Women and Structures of Exchange in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38.1 (1987): 19-33, esp. 26, emphasis mine.

polyamorous relationship that extends beyond the heterosexual couple where hints of a ménage a

trios for these three exist.295 By banishing Shylock from the final act, *The Merchant of Venice*

tempts us to forget him. As Jonathan Goldberg argues, the play's conclusion is a never-ending

Christian carnival where "Shylock is literally the final subject of the strictures of carnival; once

everything has been wrung out of him, the Christians are seemingly freed of all constraints."296

He posits Shylock as the one who supplies the raw material for the Christians' carnival, an

isolated scapegoat who forever remains the used victim.297 Yet if we affirm that Shylock has in

fact been excluded or used up, we may be ignoring the unsettling causatum of the bond Shylock

has forged with Antonio. What if, instead of accepting Shylock's excision from the play through

his use/scapegoating or turning away from Shylock, we recognize the non-consummation of the

bond as a catalyst and thus recognize as well that its afterlife remains with the community?

The final scene deliberately returns to Belmont, conventionally perceived as a private

realm of love, closer to the setting of one of Shakespeare's romances.298 Yet this jarring

transition, along with the conventions of comedy that make compulsory the language of love,

marriage, and happiness are feeble attempts to cover the ripples of destabilization that the

language of the bond has introduced.299 Even if Shylock is absented from this scene, the idea of

interconnection mobilized by the bond of flesh between Antonio and Shylock still persists. In a

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295 Alan Sinfield, *Shakespeare, Authority, Sexuality: Unfinished Business in Cultural Materialism* (London: Routledge, 2006), esp. 84.

296 Jonathan Goldberg, "Carnival in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Postmedieval* 4.4 (2013): 427-38, esp. 432.

297 Similarly, Kathryn Schwarz contends that Shylock is "the perfect instrument, useful and disposable. [Shylock's] forced conversion and compelled bequest do not make him a good Christian patriarch; they kill him without the nuisance of visible blood." See "Comedies End in Marriage" in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, ed. Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016), esp. 284.

298 Camille Wells Slights, *Shakespeare's Comic Commonwealths* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993).

299 For critics who find the play's last move to Belmont jarring, forced, or otherwise problematic, see Katharine Eisaman Maus's Introduction to *The Merchant of Venice: The Norton Shakespeare,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt et. al. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997); John Russell Brown, *Shakespeare and his Comedies* (London: Routledge, 1957), esp. 65; Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (London: Routledge, 1974), esp. 121; and Tony Tanner, "The Merchant of Venice," *Critical Quarterly* 41.2 (1999): 76-99.

sense, the final ring episode functions as a prototypical ending of a comic marriage, yet the language surrounding the ring transactions continues a newly capacious understanding of interpersonal bonds.

Bassanio now stands before Portia as Antonio stood before Shylock. Bassanio's explanations, his appeals to circumstances and motives fall on deaf ears; Portia insists on the letter of the pledge and claims the forfeit. The ring becomes the bond transformed and is made to stand out as "bond" did in the trial scene, with a parodic but still ominous iteration:

> Bassanio: If you did know to whom I gave the ring,
>
> If you did know for whom I gave the ring,
>
> And would conceive for what I gave the ring,
>
> And how unwillingly I left the ring,
>
> When nought would be accepted but the ring,
>
> You would abate the strength of your displeasure.
>
> Portia: If you had known the virtue of the ring,
>
> Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
>
> Or your own honor to contain the ring,
>
> You would not then have parted with the ring. (5.1.192-201)

The repetition of "ring" at the end of each line enacts what it speaks: the rhyming of "ring" with itself reverberates through their speech, no other bonds suffice, becoming a contagion that inflects the language of sociality. Like the bond, the ring is fused with flesh so that we can hardly tell whether it has made flesh into metal or has itself become flesh. Portia conceives of the ring as "[a] thing stuck on with oaths upon your finger,/ And riveted with faith unto your flesh" (5.1.167-8). Flesh, therefore, may have to be cut off for it. Bassanio replies, "Why, I were best to

cut my left hand off,/ And swear I lost the ring defending it" (5.1.176-7). And in the end,

Antonio must, once again, bind himself as surety for Bassanio:

> Antonio: I once did lend my body for his wealth,
>
> Which, but for him that had your husband's ring,
>
> Had quite miscarried. I dare be bound again,
>
> My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
>
> Will never more break faith advisedly.
>
> Portia: Then you shall be his surety. (5.1.248-253)

Only with this renewal of the bond is the secret disclosed and the true meaning of Portia's

equivocations revealed. Shylock may be defeated and dismissed, but the bond of flesh he forged

has not lost its catching effect. The violent potentialities implicit in the earlier language of

Salario, Salarino, Gratiano, and Bassiano have now become explicit modes of contract. This

vocabulary of bonds, debts, risk, and sacrifice enters into the marriage contract and is now

requisite to its consummation. The language of the bond, in which interpersonal relations are

sealed by the promise of a corporeal sacrifice, reshapes the language of sociality. *The Merchant

of Venice* reveals both its capacity for ideological critique and for enabling fictions of human

community. The play ends with a scene in which the bond of flesh may become a new

organizing principle of interrelation. Thus, Antonio and Shylock are avatars for the imaginative

possibilities that exceed them, establishing a radical communion that is utterly incapable of

producing effects of commonality or similitude. Venetian sociality's logic of homogeneity as the

basis of social relationships has undergone an irreversible modulation; the bond of flesh that

threatened to explode the bonds of sociality actually becomes sociality's new operable mode.

Communion does not protect us; on the contrary, it exposes us to the most extreme of risks: that

of losing, along with our individuality, the borders that guarantee its inviolability in relation to others. Communion founded on shared intimacy, violence, and risk ultimately becomes a crucial and costly reimagining of community that exceeds any measure of self-preservation and self-love.

Chapter Four

"Let him frolic with his minion":

The Erotics of Sodomitical Petrarchism in Marlowe's *Edward II*

come, Gaveston,

And share the kingdom with thy dearest friend.

—Edward II, 1.1-2[300]

If men wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they must renounce.

—Hannah Arendt[301]

Perth, Scotland. On 22 August 1582, an attempted coup d'état that included the

abduction of the young James VI and may have been motivated by his troubling relationship

with his older cousin, Esmé Stuart, transpired in what would later become known as the Ruthven

Raid. Multiple contemporary accounts refer to the public displays of affection between the young

king and his cousin, the French courtier and suspected Catholic, Esmé.[302] James showed his love

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[300] All references to the play are to *Edward II* in *Christopher Marlowe Four Plays, New Mermaids Anthologies*, ed. Brian Gibbons (New York & London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2019), 331-462, cited parenthetically by scene, line number. I have followed conventional usage for the spelling of characters' names.

[301] See Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (London: Penguin, 2006), esp. 163.

[302] Not only did the Frenchman's rapid ascent at court cause concern among the Presbyterians in Scotland, but the relationship foretold future political conditions under James as an English monarch as well. As King of England, he packed his Privy Council with Scots, creating a powerful inner circle that tended to exclude native English officials. The Scottish makeup of the Bedchamber brought about tension and fueled the general perception that this inner circle was a secretive, deviant group. See Neil Cuddy, "The Revival of the Entourage: The Bedchamber of James I, 1603-1625," in *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. David Starkey (London: Longman, 1987), esp. 180-1.

materially and symbolically, making his thirty-seven-year-old "minion" Lord Chamberlain (an office that had gone unoccupied since 1569) and eventually Duke of Lennox, Scotland's only such peer of that rank. In a letter read aloud at a Scottish assembly meeting at the Convention of the Estates in February 1581, Elizabeth expressed serious concerns about James's much-discussed vulnerability as a young and inexperienced prince. Esmé's proximity was problematic, not just because of his undue influence, but also because as James's nearest male relative—his father's cousin—he was a candidate for the Scottish throne. His access to James seemed dangerous to those who assumed that religious subversion and political ambition motivated him: "To bring the person of the young king in danger" would be "easy to be done" for the "*possessor of his person.*"[303] Like the nobles in Marlowe's *Edward II* (ca. 1592), Scotland's "auld Nobilitie" professed to be guarding the King by removing "the corruptions and confusion entered into the body of the commonwealth…[by] wicked persons, who did seek to corrupt him in manners and religion."[304] Esmé was depicted by his enemies as someone who aspired to control the king through seduction and deception, manipulating his desires and affections. One need only look to the Spanish ambassador's comments at the end of 1581 to recognize Lennox's newfound power: Esmé, a man viewed by the Scots as a foreign heretic, was "governing the king 'entirely and the whole country.'"[305] Following the Negative Confession of Faith in 1581, which was meant to remove "suspition of Papistrie from the Court," the conspirators of the Ruthven Raid declared that they wanted merely to "schew his Majestie whow all things went wrang be the misgoverning

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[303] See David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. Thomas Thomson (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1843), esp. 3:491, emphasis mine.
[304] See John Spottiswood, *The History of the Church of Scotland* (Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh, 1851), esp. 2:294, qtd. In Lawrence Normand, "'What Passions Call You These?,' *Edward II* and James VI," in *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture*, ed. Darryll Grantley and Peter Roberts (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), esp. 184.
[305] See David Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006), esp. 135.

of that new Counsall com latlie from France."[306] Rather than forging intimate interrelations with

foreign favorites of dubious motivations, James should take counsel from his "auld Nobilitie."

Although Marlowe does not directly allude to James and Esmé's relationship, he is

extraordinarily attuned to the mimetic possibilities engendered by Gaveston's foreign identity

and his role as a minion. According to the play's phobic antagonists—Mortimer Junior, the Duke

of Lancaster, and their followers—sodomy is a desire that can scarcely be named. "*Diablo!*"

Lancaster cries, "What passions call you these?" (4.320). Here, a Spanish exclamation signifies

an act of linguistic displacement, as opposed to one of epistemological difficulty. Lancaster

knows very well what Edward's passions are. Since he would rather not name them, he uses a

foreign term to respond to the monarch's socially illegible desire. In his invocation of Catholic

Spain as the proper location of such abject behavior, his reference to the devil indexes a

fundamental Christian humanist anxiety about sodomy. Similarly, Gaveston's Italianate fashions

link him to flamboyant transgression and inform the class resentments of the English aristocrats.

After all, "*Bugeria* is an Italian word," the learned Justice Coke writes in his *Laws of England*.[307]

Gaveston and Edward's sodomitical interrelation poses a dangerous socio-sexual disturbance to

the English State, so much so that, in the words of Kent, "your love to Gaveston/ Will be the ruin

of the realm and you" (6.205-6).

This chapter begins by teasing out of *Edward II*'s socio-sexual economy the erotics of,

what I will term, "sodomitical Petrarchism." By tracing the interpersonal relations between

Edward and his "minions" (most notably, Gaveston, but also Spencer Junior and Prince Edward),

I aim to reconceptualize Petrarchism, conventionally understood as a heteronormative paradigm,

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[306] See James Melvill, *The Autobiography and Diary of Mr. James Melvill, with a Continuation of the Diary*, ed. Robert Pitcaim (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1842), esp. 133.
[307] *The First Part of King Henry IV,* ed. A. R. Humphreys (London: Methuen, 1960), esp. xlviii.

to expose its sodomitical underpinnings. By reading *Edward II* productively alongside this courtly love paradigm, we bear witness to Petrarchism's prescribed roles being played more improvisationally, fleetingly, and promiscuously. Troubling the assumption that Petrarchism's overarching theme is the discovery of a male poetic voice predicated on fragmenting the female body, I posit that Petrarchism's mechanism within the play is staging the incomprehensible changeability of the self which is so violent as to call its very own identity into question. Edward and his minions come to embody a baffling, disquieting coexistence of both subject/object, Petrarch/Laura, Actaeon/Diana that underscores the always-contingent and interdependent condition of being. Through a reckless shattering of both the lover and the beloved, a model of irresponsible relations where one's life is not one's own but held in trust emerges. To form the bonds of sodomitical intimacy—the bonds that sustain community—means to give oneself over to susceptibility and to irremedial loss. As a poetics of radical fungibility and driven by intense forms of self-abandonment, sodomitical Petrarchism thus affords an overarching discourse for the play in which vulnerability inheres.

Sodomitical Petrarchism's paradigm of openness and vulnerability can pervade psychological and social spheres, and even pass into corporeal ones, blurring the boundaries that secure social identity and bodily integrity alike. I move onto the king's suffering body as a messy, heterogeneous corporeal-rhetorical site where we bear witness to leaky bodies that exhibit a strange permeability not only to surroundings, but also to words. Working within and against Elaine Scarry's distinction between pain as that which destroys language and suffering as that which is representable, I read Edward's body-in-pain as one that is insistently visible. The king's suffering body becomes utterly porous and fixes him more firmly in the web of collective obligations. Rather than read his pain as a profoundly isolating, individualizing, indeed anti-

communal, experience, we might read his pain as that which demands a response from others. As a property defined by its very plasticity, transferability, and expropriability, Edward's suffering body galvanizes a community of compassion and underscores that one's responsiveness to another's pain is not a choice but an obligation. Engaged at the crossroads of Michel de Montaigne's tracts on compassion, suffering, and contagion, the pneumatic cosmology of the Galenic body, and theorizations of communal obligations advanced by thinkers like Judith Butler and Emmanuel Levinas, I aim to reparatively reimagine communities of suffering and compassion. Suffering can beget an experience of humility, of impressionability, and of dependence and these can become resources if we do not seek to resolve them so quickly. *Edward II* constructs a constellation of suffering and compassion that serves as a socially vitalizing force, underscoring a universal ethical responsibility that has its roots in a shared bodily vulnerability.

Friendship/Sodomy

Edward II opens with Gaveston, the king's favorite minion, imagining extravagant, erotic entertainments designed to please and "draw the pliant King which way" (1.52) he desires:

And in the day when he shall walk abroad,

Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad,

My men like satyrs grazing on the lawns

Shall with their goat-feet dance an antic hay;

Sometimes a lovely boy in Dian's shape,

With hair that gilds the water as it glides,

Crownets of pearl about his naked arms,

> And in his sportful hands an olive tree
>
> To hide those parts which men delight to see,
>
> Shall bathe him in a spring. (1.56-65)

This is how Gaveston introduces audiences to his relationship with Edward, envisioning pageboy attendants cross-dressed as female wood spirits and a beautiful bathing boy in the tantalizing "shape" of the goddess Diana. He unabashedly paints a tableaux of sensuous luxury and hypererotic delights, the work of "wanton poets, pleasant wits" (1.50) who will provide "Italian masques by night,/ Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows" (1.55-6). Marlowe's provocative opening celebrates the profligacy of gratuitous sexuality, explicitly provoking transvestism, homosexuality, voyeurism, pederastic pedagogy, and sadism. It should come as no surprise that *Edward II* holds a privileged place in discussions of Renaissance homoerotic friendships and sodomy evinced by queer readings of the play led by scholars like David Thurn, David Stymeist, and Stephen Orgel.[308]

In his reading of *Edward II*, Alan Bray has argued that the play is couched in the normative language of friendship, and that its "dark suggestions of sodomy" inhere in such moments as the theatrical debauch of Gaveston's opening lines.[309] Bray's point is that friendship and sodomy are always in danger of (mis)recognition since what both depend upon physically— sexually—cannot be distinguished: "Marlowe describes in this play what could be a sodomitical relationship, but he places it wholly within the incompatible conventions of Elizabethan

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[308] See David Thurn, "Sovereignty, Disorder, and Fetishism in Marlowe's *Edward* II" *Renaissance Drama* 21 (1990): 115-141; David Stymeist, "Status, Sodomy, and the Theater in Marlowe's *Edward II*," *SEL* 44.2 (2004): 233-253; and Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996). Purvis Boyette opened the door to queer readings of *Edward II* with his 1977 article "Wanton Humor and Wanton Poets: Homosexuality in Marlowe's *Edward II*," which was followed by Alan Bray's 1982 comprehensive study *Homosexuality in the English Renaissance*.
[309] See Alan Bray's important essay "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," *History Workshop Journal* 29 (1990): 1-19, esp. 9.

friendship, in a tension that he never allows to be resolved."[310] One switching point for the proper intimacy between men to be called sodomy rather than friendship was, as Bray argues, precisely the transgression of social hierarchies that friendship maintained, those transgressions of the kind for which Gaveston is accused when he usurps the privileges that the peers believe belong only to them. Building on Bray's crucial insights, Jonathan Goldberg has provided perhaps the most influential account of the political meaning of sodomy in the play by arguing that accusations leveled at Edward are sparked not by heterosexist disgust at the idea of male-male desire, but rather by the transgressiveness of Gaveston's upward mobility. Goldberg, thus, takes at face value Mortimer Junior's description of the conflict:

> his wanton humour grieves not me,
>
> But this I scorn, that one so basely born
>
> Should by his sovereign's favor grow so pert
>
> And riot it with the treasure of the realm,
>
> While soldiers mutiny for want of pay. (4.403-7)

But while social transgression is seen as sodomitical, Goldberg argues, relations between men in *Edward II* are openly erotic as a matter of course: "in this play…the lubricant of 'love' smooths the paths of friendship, clientage, and promotion. 'If you love us, my lord,' Mortimer Senior says, 'hate Gaveston' (1.79). The peers, as much as the minion, want the king's love."[311] As Goldberg would have it, *Edward II* is radical in that it sees homoerotic relationships as unremarkable while seeing class transgression, instead, as sodomitical.

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[310] See Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003), esp. 187.
[311] See Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992), esp. 119.

This is a provocative yet overly-stated argument. For one thing, epithets like "wanton" take on an accusatory tone at several points in the play (1.131, for example), belying the seemingly sharp distinction drawn by Mortimer Junior between the peers' political complaints and the king's "wanton humour." Insofar as wantonness—an ambiguous concept, simultaneously suggesting free-floating Eros, irresponsibility, and general hedonism—is involved in accusations leveled at Edward, it becomes impossible to separate the erotic from the political (as buttressed by Mortimer Junior's sexually-charged pun on "pert"). Further evidence for the inextricable imbrication of the social and the sexual can be seen in Mortimer Junior's description of Gaveston as "a night-grown mushrump" (4.284), or mushroom. This analogy is proverbial, a comment on the favorite's ability to grow overnight.[312] But since Mortimer's epithet also contains a pun on the word "rump," it associates the social transgressiveness of Gaveston's spectacular rise with the nebulous socio-sexual transgressiveness of sodomitical intimacy. For another, the play demonstrates more ambivalence about the proper functioning of "friendship, clientage, and promotion" than Goldberg lets on: when Mortimer Senior says "If you love us, my lord, hate Gaveston," he seems to be distinguishing between two kinds of love. The king's love for Gaveston, whatever else it may be, is personal; Mortimer asks the king to choose an impersonal love for a corporate "us"—the peers—over the love of his favorite. Government based on intimacy, as opposed to this impersonal kind of institutionalized "love" hinted at by Mortimer Senior, attracts accusations of sodomy in the play because it seems to the peers to lead to violations of normative social hierarchies of rank and blood.

And yet, Goldberg is correct to note that Mortimer, in asking for the king's "love," uses the conventional language of Petrarchism. This suggests, despite the animosity of the peers

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[312] On the proverbial meaning of the mushroom analogy, see Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1950), esp. 486.

towards Gaveston, that they do conceive of monarchy as personal and of royal favor as intimate. The problem inheres in Edward's instantiation of, in Goldberg's apt terms, a sodomitical order:

> If, as Foucault argues, *sodomy* is the word for everything illicit, all that lies outside the system of alliance that juridically guarantees marriage and inheritance, the prerogatives of blood, as the linchpin of social order and the maintenance of class distinctions, then what is remarkable in Marlowe's play is the way in which one normative system of alliance—friendship—is unleashed against another.[313] (122)

It is this understanding of Edward's sodomitical regime—in the extended sense of the term sodomy as not only the ruination of the maintenance of male/male hierarchies through friendship but also as the explosion of the marital tie (Queen Isabella's adulterous relationship with Mortimer Junior)—that I aim to build on. If "sodomy was a category of forbidden acts," then these acts—or accusations of their performance—emerge into visibility only when those who are said to have done them can also be called traitors, heretics, or, in the case of Edward, tyrants.[314] Sodomy, as Bray suggests, fully negates the world, law, nature and reading for sodometries, as Goldberg proposes, is to read relationally.[315] By reading these massively destabilizing bonds through which the play unmoors any notion of being and works to destroy the social as constituted, I turn now to the discourse of Petrarchism to see how this ostensibly heteronormative, misogynistic paradigm becomes disruptive in a sodomitical order.

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[313] See Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries*, esp. 122.
[314] See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. I, *An Introductions*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978), esp. 43.
[315] See Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982) and Joanthan Goldberg, *Sodometries*, esp. 23.

Sodomitical Petrarchism

Discussions of Edward II's relations with his minions have predominantly privileged sodomy and homoerotic rhetoric, largely overlooking Petrarchism—itself a discourse of extremes—and the conventions of courtly love. This may in large part be due to Petrarchism's fraught cultural legacy that demands from its critics a rhetoric of qualifications and modulation. Critics part company on the most basic issues: Is their fundamental aim the praise of the lady, as some scholars of an earlier generation assumed, or the establishment of the poet's own subjectivity, as many of their contemporary counterparts would assert?[316] Is the final poem the culmination of a movement towards spiritual transcendence or an instance of the ways that movement has been compromised throughout the sequence?[317] Far from resolving such paradoxes, Petrarch's early commentators and imitators have confounded them. As Roland Greene acutely demonstrates, all sonnets after the *Rime sparse* are "post-Petrarchan" in that they reinterpret their heritage.[318] Nor have contemporary critics achieved a consensus.[319]

Generalizing about Petrarchan love is, then, almost as perilous as practicing it. In this chapter, I aim to counter such risks partly by delimiting my own agenda: my intent is not to survey the entire tradition but to underscore particular characteristics in relation to Edward and

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[316] For instances of these positions, see, respectively, Leonard Forster, *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969), esp. 9; and Gordon Braden, "Love and Fame: The Petrarchan Career," in *Pragmatism's Freud: The Moral Disposition of Psychoanaysis*, ed. Joseph H. Smith, M.D., and William Kerrigan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986).

[317] Many critics have espoused each of these positions; for example, see Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Petrarch's Genius: Pentimento and Prophecy* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991), esp. 149; and Robert M. Durling, *The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1965), esp. 83-4.

[318] Roland Greene, *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of Western Lyric Sequence* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991).

[319] For instance, see the competing arguments between Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle's claim that the *Canzoniere* exemplify the theological and spiritual values expressed elsewhere in the canon, Aldo S. Bernardo's assertion that the *Triumphs* achieve the fusion of the classical and heavenly for which Petrarch has striven with varied success in the *Rime sparse*, and John Freccero's contrast between Augustine's spirituality and Petrarch's fallen vision. See Boyle's *Petrarch's Genius: Pentimento and Prophey*; Bernardo's *Petrarch, Laura, and the Triumphs* (Albany: State U of New York P, 1974); Freccero's "The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics," in *Literary Theory/ Renaissance Texts,* ed. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986).

his minions' love. By complicating the notion that Petrarchism is the poet's attempt to sustain an imaginary unity, identity, and totality in a structure of narcissistic reflection—a preemptive defense to establish order and individuated autonomy and to obscure its inevitable failure, *Edward II* unworks the paradigm to expose its sodomitical underpinnings.[320] In its refusals of fixed boundaries and ordered hierarchies, the play moves us away from the subject/object dichotomy of a patriarchal paradigm in which, as Karen Newman observes:

> Analyses of women as objects of exchange based in anthropology and history too often participate in a discourse of oppression that produces woman as victim…[But] even the most cursory glance at the history of hermeneutics suggests that texts can be mobilized to tell other stories that produce what Adorno called a *Kraftfeld* or force field in which subjects and objects are mutually constituting, mediating in which power circulates as do the positions of subject and object themselves. To quote Adorno again, the subject is the object's agent and, perhaps most importantly the object is no longer a "subjectless residuum"—its subjective attributes or qualities cannot be eliminated.[321] (50)

Rather than participate in this "discourse of oppression" that has been all too easily mapped onto the dynamics of Petrarchism, I endeavor to produce something closer to Adorno's *Kraftfeld* which I believe *Edward II* allows us to do.[322] The elegant ritual of male subjugation to a woman in courtly love is transformed into a new paradigm of men embracing insecurity, destabilization, and endangerment for other men. Through Edward and Gaveston's sodomitical love, Petrarchism

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[320] See, for example, while acutely acknowledging the threats to the sovereignty of the Petrarchan poet, Gordon Braden nonetheless argues that the tradition focuses instead on his achievements. See Braden's "Love and Fame," and "Beyond Frustration: Petrarchan Laurels in the Seventeenth Century," *SEL* 26 (1986): 5-23.

[321] See Karen Newman, "Directing Traffic: Subjects, Objects, and the Politics of Exchange," *differences* 2.2 (1990): 41-54, esp. 50.

[322] Perhaps the most influential essay inscribing Petrarchism as a violently heterosexist paradigm of love is Nancy Vickers's "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme," *Critical Inquiry* 8.2 (1981): 265-70, esp. 278-9. In it, Vickers focuses on the Actaeon/Diana myth, arguing that Petrarch's "poetics of fragmentation" requires the woman's repetitive dismemberment so the speaker's self (his text, his "corpus") is unified.

becomes a multimodal and multilateral assault on the imaginary constructions that maintain self and state. "The history of Petrarchism," as William J. Kennedy aptly observes, "is a narrative of multiple Petrarchs," and I'd argue that *Edward II* gives us yet another iteration in which the subject and object of love poetry themselves elide.[323] Unlike Marlowe's earlier plays, *Edward II* does not present a single charismatic figure whose drive for mastery represents itself in compelling moments of (illusory) totality and identity: whereas Tamburlaine's sights of power, Faustus's spectacles of magic, and Barabas's scenes of reckoning extend and stabilize the movement of mastery, Edward's scenes of embrace represent precisely the abdication of power, the exodus from domination relations, the dissolution of the imaginary subject.

With this understanding of Petrarchism as a poetics that radically confounds and overturns subject and object positions, trapping its players in a ceaseless cycle of mirroring and reversals that eschew any semblance of a fixed or even comprehensible identity, I'd like to return to Gaveston's opening speech. Gaveston conceives the king's delight in the language of Ovidian transformation: the figures of this speech blur the distinction between the animal, the human, and the divine ("sylvan nymphs," "men like satyrs," and boys in the shapes of Diana and Actaeon [1.57, 58, 60, 66]), between actors and spectators, active and passive (the daytime spectacle seems to include Edward as participant, while Actaeon appears himself as a spectator in a scene which ends with the hunter becoming the hunted), and between the masculine and the feminine: the "lovely boy in Dian's shape" holds "an olive-tree/ To hide those parts that men delight to see" (1.63-4). Critics have long noticed the sexual ambiguity of "those parts that men delight to see": it is unclear whether we are meant to imagine male or female sexual "parts."[324] Like

[323] See William J. Kennedy, *The Site of Petrarchism: Early Modern National Sentiment in Italy, France, and England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003), esp. 1-2.
[324] For example, see Jeffrey Rufo, "Marlowe's Minions: Sodomitical Politics in *Edward II* and *The Massacre at Paris*," *Marlowe Studies: An Annual* 1 (2011): 5-23; Matthew D. Lillo, "Rereading Transvestism and Desire in

Petrarch who vertiginously metamorphoses into different voices, genders, bodies, and forms—

transforming not only into his beloved, but into nature (like trees, rocks, green laurels), into

Ovidean characters (like Actaeon, Diana, Echo), and into gods (like Jupiter and Semele)—the

Edward/Gaveston dyad represents a force of volatile fluidity. The instabilities of this moment are

part and parcel of the contagious infection the text both sees and perpetuates—capriciously

violating borders, hierarchies, and differences. Gaveston complicates Edward's gestures of

identification and self-possession because his fluid, protean nature undermines the very

possibility of stable reference that such gestures assume. He is frequently associated with water,

with the sea and its creatures—Mortimer Junior calls him "that vile torpedo," a dangerous

stinging fish "[w]hich being caught, strikes him that takes it dead" (4.222-3) and later, "Proteus,

god of shapes" (4.412), while Lancaster represents him in his heraldic device as "a flying-fish/

Which all the other fishes deadly hate" (6.23-4). Gaveston is linked with a thematic pattern of

language that replaces a principle of integral identity with the possibility of displacement and

mutability. Travesty is once again transgressive.

The incessant reversals of subject/object positions Petrarchism demands can be seen by

an analysis of how Gaveston and Edward become virtually indistinguishable from one

another.[325] Marlowe extends to its limit the entwining of self and other, the "thee in me" motif

developed in Chaucer and adapted in nearly all English Petrarchan lyric. Gaveston speaks the

first words of the play—or, more accurately, Gaveston speaks Edward's written words: "'My

father is deceased; come, Gaveston,/ And share the kingdom with thy dearest friend'" (1.1-2).

Christopher Marlowe's *Edward the Second*, *SEL* 58.2 (2018): 285-305; David Stymeist, "Status, Sodomy, and the Theater in Marlowe's *Edward II*, *SEL* 44.2 (2004): 233-53; Jonathan Crewe, "Disorderly Love: Sodomy Revisited in Marlowe's *Edward II*, *Criticism* 51.3 (2009): 385-99; Mario DiGangi, "Marlowe, Queer Studies, and Renaissance Homoeroticism" in *Marlowe, History, and Sexuality: New Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Paul Whitfield White (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1998): 195-212.

[325] The fusion of subject and object, Joel Fineman reminds us, is common in love poetry. See his *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye: The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986).

Gaveston here becomes the male poet who, to redeploy Margaret Homans's phrase, bears the word of another.[326] His voice collaborates with Edward's text to articulate an interrelation based on the friendship doctrine of communal property. Shortly after, in their first encounter on stage, Edward asks Gaveston, "Why shouldst thou kneel? Knowest thou not who I am?/ Thy friend, thyself, another Gaveston" (1.141-2). The mutual gaze in which Edward and Gaveston hold each other—Edward's "eyes are fixed on none but Gaveston," who in turn longs for Edward, "in whose gracious looks/ The blessedness of Gaveston remains" (8.63, 4.120-1)—represents the loss of imaginary self-sovereignizing in favor of a fundamentally expropriating social bond. The two exchange portraits of the other so that their bodies always bear the face of the beloved (4.127-9). Edward, as he invites a perception of Gaveston and himself as mirror images of one another, speaks the language of Renaissance male friendship: "true friends should be two in body, but one in minde,/ As it were one transformed into another," Pythias says in Richard Edwards's *Damon and Phythias* (1564).[327] But Edward also speaks the language of courtly love, as Philip Sidney does when he promises in *Astrophil and Stella* (1591), "thou shalt in me,/ Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see."[328] Edward's use of Petrarchan rhetoric imbues socially-sanctioned homoeroticism with political and sexual risk. "They love not me that hate my Gaveston," Edward warns his lords (6.37). Edward's desire to make himself and Gaveston indistinguishable from one another and his demand that the nobles bestow the same affection

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[326] See Margaret Homans, *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986). Lynn Enterline makes a similar point when she argues that "alienation from one's own tongue is both a physical predicament in Ovidian narrative and, at the same time, the condition of being able to speak at all." See Enterline's *The Rhetoric of the Body: From Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), esp. 31.

[327] Richard Edwards, qtd. In William C. Carroll, introduction to *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, by William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare 3rd series* (London: Thomas Learning, 2004), esp. 6. Carroll's introduction offers a comprehensive review of male friendship in Renaissance society and of recent critical attention to it.

[328] See Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* in *An Apology for Poetry and Astrophil and Stella: Texts and Contexts,* ed. Peter C. Herman (Glen Allen: College Publishing, 2001): 127-210, 150, XXXIX.13-4.

unto each of the two men ironically predict the nobles' eventual choice to share Edward's perspective with the outcome that the lords hope to eliminate Edward as equally as they hope to eliminate Gaveston.

The rhetoric of sodomitical Petrarchism pushes the rhetoric of Renaissance male-male friendship to its logical extreme, exposing the desirable yet terrifying self-forfeiture that such an interrelation precipitates. Laurie Shannon argues that "*amicitia* is a power specifically attaching only to 'private persons'" and is therefore "one capacity denied to the sovereign."[329] She suggests that when a king tries to undertake amicitia, he can only produce *mignonnerie,* a violation of the more general likeness principle she calls homonormativity as a positive principle ordering ideas about desirable unions.[330] Yet rather than read relations that traverse the divides of hierarchical difference as a perversion of friendship and instance of "misrule," what if we were to read the relation between a sovereign and his *minion* as the most proper form of friendship? Not proper as in socially ordering, but proper as in performing the radical sameness of *alter ipse.*[331] The proliferation of Renaissance terms—*minion, creature, catamite, familiar, copesmate, parasite, favorite, delicate, copartner, ingle* or *ningle*, *privado, placebo, fere*, and doubtless others—indicates enormous preoccupation with relations transgressing degree and rank and a desire to preclude such relations from the proper realm of friendship. Yet what if *mignonnerie* and friendship are not a difference in kind but a difference in degree? Instead of a friendship originating in likeness, one finds a relationship threatening to produce it by blurring the roles of

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[329] See Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002), esp. 127.

[330] Ibid, esp. 127, 133.

[331] Erasmus's *Adagia* (1536) offers as economical a formulation for friendship as one could hope to find: "Amicitia aequalitas. Amicus alter ipse" ("friendship is equality" and "the friend is another self.") See Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Adagia,* trans. Margaret Mann Phillips, in *The Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1982), 31:31 (bk. 1, sec. 1, adage 2).

who began as superior and inferior, lover and beloved.[332] Although Renaissance rhetorician

Angel Day, in his influential *The English Secretarie*, maintains that "Twixt the party commanded

& him that commaundeth, there is no societie, and therefore no *Friendship*," sodomitical

Petrarchism reverses and confounds the proper order of degree;[333] the ruler and the ruled are

mutually defining, reciprocally constituted.

As the most radical manifestation of male-male friendship then, sodomitical Petrarchism

portrays the precarious yet luxuriant experience of lost will and shared, circulated weakness

which Edward regards as the highest species of friendship. So, too, does Francis Bacon in his

popular essay "Of Friendship," but with the caveat that favorites often violate the great trust

placed in them:

> It is a strange thing to observe how high a rate great kings and monarchs do set upon this
>
> fruit of friendship whereof we speak; so great, as they purchase it many times at the
>
> hazard of their own safety and greatness. For princes, in regard of the distance of their
>
> fortune from that of their subjects and servants, cannot gather this fruit, except (to make
>
> themselves capable thereof) they raise some persons to be as it were companions and
>
> almost equal to themselves, which many times sorteth to inconvenience. The modern
>
> language gives unto such persons the name of favourites, or privadoes, as if it were a
>
> matter of grace or conversation. But the Roman name attaineth the true use and cause
>
> thereof, naming them *participes curarum*, for it is that which tieth the knot. (113-4)[334]

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[332] I am not alone in reading *Edward II* as the fulfillment of Elizabethan friendship ideals. For example, with respect to the notion of communal property, Laurens Mills views Edward as "fulfilling…[a] condition of the classical views on friendship." Mills does suggest that Edward's excessive devotion to "private pursuits" is inappropriate for a king and forebodes political catastrophe while I'd argue that these "private pursuits" are fundamentally self-expropriating. See Laurens Mills, "The Meaning of *Edward II*," *Modern Philology* 32 (1934-5): 11-31, esp. 29.

[333] See Angel Day, *The English Secretorie* (London, P. Short, 1599), esp. 118.

[334] See Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, 1625, in *Francis Bacon: A Selection of His Works*, ed. Sidney Warhaft (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1965), esp. 113-4.

Unwilling to celebrate this potentially transgressive closeness outright, Bacon's qualified

account of sovereign-subject friendship gestures towards wider cultural suspicions surrounding

affective bonds between monarchs and their subjects. Yet despite the suggestion that a powerful

favorite might subvert the state, it is telling that Bacon's essay is titled "Of *Friendship*." His

description of friendship offers two salient points: first, that friendship is "*purchase[d]…many*

times at the *hazard* of their *own safety and greatness*" and second, that the Roman name he

attaches to favorites is "*participes curarum*, for it is that which *tieth the knot*." Friendship is

costly; it is driven by an embrace of peril and susceptibility to potential violence. Thus the most

intimate friends are those for whom self-sufficiency gives way to susceptibility. The prince

hazards his safety by depending on the favorite's intimate involvement not only in household

manners "of grace or conversation" but by *participes curarum*—sharing cares, anxieties, and

one's very self. Tellingly, *participes curarum* was the name Tiberius gave to Sejanus who

Tiberius raised "from obscure, and almost unknown gentry…to the highest, and most

conspicuous point of greatness" (5.563-5), according to the story's dramatization in Ben

Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall*.[335] On its surface, Tiberius's usurpation by his co-consul seems to

establish the classical precedent of *Edward II* in which the favorite's claim to friendship with the

monarch is generally represented as a threat to the sovereign's power and authority. And yet, I'd

argue that these cautionary tales of a lowborn favorite's access to the monarch merely reaffirm

the central tenets of idealized friendship. Even Robert Cecil, Principal Secretary to both

Elizabeth I and James I, describes the sovereign-subject relation in similar terms: "As long as

any matter of what weight is handled onely between the Prince and the Secretary: Those

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[335] See Ben Jonson, *Sejanus His Fall* in *Ben Jonson: Five Plays*, ed. G. A. Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981).

Councells are compared to the mutuall affections of two lovers, undiscovered to their friends."[336]

As with Cecil's "mutuall affections," Bacon's "*participes curarum"* joins together the language

of equivalency with the language of affect, characterizing the interrelation in terms of

vulnerability and exposure, and tying these traits to the transfigured forms of sovereign and

subject. If the legitimate favorite is expected to serve as shared companion and counselor, at

what point, and according to whose authority, does the favorite's intimacy with the king become

perceptible as something other than friendship—as sodomitical Petrarchism?

In order to delegitimize Edward's minions then, the peers must perform the ideological

work of representing them, in Bacon's terms, as "hazards." While the "flower-strewn" language

of twinning and merged economies of the self come from Edward (even after Gaveston has been

killed, Edward maintains this doubled-soul language, referring to his "sweet favorite" as "my

dearest friend,/ To whom right well you knew our soul was knit" [13.9, 6-7]), those around him

consistently refer to Gaveston as the king's "minion." Even Mortimer Senior, who attempts to

justify the king's deportment, citing Alexander, Hercules, Achilles, and even Socrates and Cicero

as legitimating precedents, employs a deliberately unclassical term when he claims that kings

will have their "minions" (4.392). The peers further delegitimate the king's minions by

describing the favorites as parasites on the royal body. The text is riddled with images drawn

from the sociopolitical sphere of invaders and defenders, hosts and parasites, and of borders and

identities that are threatened with dissolution. Lancaster protests that "arm in arm, the king and

[Gaveston] doth march" as if of equal status (2.20).[337] Lancaster's image of parasitically

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[336] Robert Cecil, *The State and Dignitie of a Secretarie of Estates Place, With the care and perill thereof* (London, 1642), esp. 3.

[337] Similarly, Elizabeth Cary romantically idealizes Edward and Gaveston's attachment: "A short passage of time had so cemented their hearts, that they seem'd to beat with one and the self-same motion; so that the one seem'd without the other, like a Body without a Soul, or a Shadow without a Substance" (4-5). She later adds that "their Affections, nay their very Intentions seem'd to go hand in hand" (20) thereby appearing to naturalize what she had initially presented as a kind of excess of nature itself. See Cary's *The History of the Life, Reign and Death of*

intertwined limbs is elaborated by Mortimer, who scorns Gaveston as "a night-grown

mushrump" and fashions for his own chivalric emblem a "lofty cedar tree" besieged by a

"canker" grown equally high (2.16-8). Like "the Greekish strumpet" Helen, Gaveston is reduced

to a promiscuously erring body (9.15) who "will, if he seize [Edward] once,/ Violate any promise

to possess him" (9.64). And even with Gaveston's execution at the end of scene 10, the play's

engagement with sodomitical Petrarchism continues unabated; Spenser Junior is compared to

syphilitic male genitalia that disease the kingship: "a putrefying branch/ That deads the royal

vine whose golden leaves/ Impale [Edward's] princely head" (11.162-4). The peers' rhetoric of

contamination underscores the quaking of each border of the self coming to propagate itself onto

all the others.338 It is a contagion born of contact and of a kind of touching that foils every

strategy of protection, partaking in what Linda Peck calls early modern culture's "language of

corruption."339 Through the use of metaphor (itself a semantic transference back-and-forth that

says something is what it is not), the polluted(ing) relationship between Edward and Gaveston is

condemned by the peers who fear that a single transgression will repeat and multiply.340

      However, underlying these metaphors of parasitical contamination and virality lies a

more positive valuation of love and friendship. These images of parasitic mobility and

malignancy obscure the fact that in Renaissance emblem books, intertwined limbs and branches

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Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland. With the Rise & Fall of his great favourites, Gaveston & the Spencers. Written by E. F. in the year 1627. And Printed verbatim from the original (London, 1680).

338 In returning to Plato's speech/writing dichotomy in *Dissemination*, Derrida argues that, like writing, metaphor is portrayed as a dangerous supplement, a *pharmakon*, a parasite, a contaminant. It is, as he puts it in a later essay, a "bad" *mimesis* that "haunts" or "contaminates" good *mimesis*. See Jacques Derrida, "The Rhetoric of Drugs: An Interview," trans. Michael Israel, *Differences* 5.1 (1993): 1-25, esp. 7.

339 See Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart* England (Boston and London: Routledge, 1990), esp. 11.

340 Heather Dubrow suggestively argues that one of the deepest fantasies in Tudor and Stuart England is uncontrolled repetition emanating from a single case, a single error—a metaphoric rendition of contagion. She cites, for instance, Spenser's description of Error's brood and Milton's case study of Sin's obstetrical records to argue that the fear that one error will breed another recalls original sin. See her *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995), esp. 38.

have more virtuous connotations. The vine embracing the elm is a common emblem of mutual love within marriage or male friendship, popularized after the publication of the first emblem book, Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber* (1531).341 The motif of the vine and the elm appears in it with the title *Amicitia etiam post mortem durans* (Friendship lasting even after death). Yet to promote their own interests, the peers translate an archetypal image of loving support into a sign of the favorites' destructive ambition. Likewise, even in descriptions of the physical intimacy between Edward and Gaveston, the barons' accusations belie their approbation. Lancaster notes their passage "arm in arm" (2.20); Warwick discovers Gaveston "leaning on the shoulder of the king" (2.23); Isabella complains that her husband "clasps his cheeks, and hangs about his neck,/ Smiles in his face and whispers in his ears" (2.52-3). By delimiting their observations to the upper bodily regions, these accounts might sound like neutral observations or even admiration of male intimacy. To stoke sexual and moral suspicion, the peers convert the conventional signs of acceptable and sentimental male friendship into the basis for a sodomy charge. They invalidate Edward and Gaveston's relationship by inferring a moral fault on both sides: namely, that the superior partner appears excessively susceptible to appetite that renders him dependent, and the inferior one is presumed to have questionable motives that he pursues by corruption. And yet, this might be precisely the kind of friendship we ought to strive for—a friendship that corrupts another and its attendant openness to being engulfed, contaminated, infected by that which resides outside of one's self. It is a friendship that must welcome contamination, or at the very

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341 The popularity of the vine embraced to the elm as a symbol of Friendship—or Love in its supreme form—reached its zenith after the publication of Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber*. The translated text in Alciato's book is "A vine shady with green foliage embraced an elm tree that was dried up with age and bare of leaves. The vine recognizes the changes wrought by nature and, ever grateful, renders to the one that reared it the duty it owes in return. By the example it offers, the vine tells us to seek friends of such a sort that not even our final day will uncouple them from the bond of friendship." See Alciato's *Emblematum liber*, ed. Heinrich Steyner (Augsburg, 1531). For a comprehensive bibliographic catalogue of Alciato's emblems, see Henry Green, *Andrea Alciati and his Book of Emblems. A Biographical and Bibliographical Study* (London: Trübner, 1872).

least, the *risk* of contamination. Oft characterized as the "love-sick" or "brain-sick" king (see, for instance, 1.124 and 4.87), Edward's "sickness" is recast as a desirable poisoning by the contagion of another improper body. The language of sodomitical Petrarchism between superior persons and those beneath them destabilizes that order along with the identities it accords. By obeying the logic of parasitism which suggests that the self is always already contaminated by the other (or better yet, that self and non-self can no longer simply be recognized), Edward and Gaveston's interrelation celebrates the necessary violation of self by other that *Amicus alter ipse* occasions.

Costly Love

This is not to suggest that contamination does not come at a cost. Quite the contrary. Sodomitical Petrarchism works not only to radically breakdown distinctions of self and state but also to push the abnegation of the self to its limit. Upending the Petrarchan tendency to idolize the image of the beloved as a way of cultivating a self-protective narcissism in the name of love for the other, Edward's sodomitical love for Gaveston calls for the obliteration of such self-sufficiency.[342] Their love mocks the hyperbolic language of Petrarchan conceits by accepting them literally. "There is nothing more quintessentially Petrarchan," Reed Way Dasenbrock observes, "than an attempt to go beyond Petrarchism."[343] Through an exaggeration of and overidentification with Petrarchism's own terms, particularly when it comes to surrendering

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[342] Braden emphasizes the way that Petrarchan solipsism is linked to a drive for "self-bestowed immortality" See Gordon Braden, "Love and Fame: The Petrarchan Career" in *Pragmatism's Freud: The Moral Disposition of Psychoanalysis*, ed. William Kerrigan and J. H. Smith (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986), esp. 145.
[343] See Reed Way Dasenbrock, *Imitating the Italians: Wyatt, Spenser, Synge, Pound, Joyce* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991), esp. 17.

oneself entirely, Edward and Gaveston's love subverts the idealizing commitment of

Petrarchism. Petrarch merely experiences his anguished undoing rhetorically:

> ben che 'l mio duro scempio
> sia scritto altrove, sì che mille penne
> ne son già stanche, et quasi in ogni valle
> rimbombi il suon de' miei gravi sospiri,
> ch' acquistan fede a la penosa vita. (23.10-15)[344]

> although my harsh undoing is written elsewhere so that a thousand pens are already tired
> by it, and almost every valley echoes to the sound of my heavy sighs which prove how
> painful my life is.

Here, we see a destructive destabilizing of the self, a "duro scempio" ("harsh undoing").

Characteristically preoccupied with the medium of transmission, Petrarch vies differing modes

against one another. While playing with conflicting interpretations of temporality, he first affirms

that his (distinctly passive, "sia scritto" ["is written"]) undoing is performed through the written

word. The following clause projects us back into the past which demonstrates how rhetorical

repetition can figure the many types of entrapment that Petrarchism involves, the "mille penne"

("thousand pens") that fail to produce new material, new movement. Alluding to a reduplicated

future—or in Thomas M. Greene's apt phrase, Petrarch's "iterative present"[345]— Petrarch's

anguish is expressed through speech or "gravi sospiri" ("heavy sighs") that reverberate in a kind

of disembodied echo. In the psyche of the speaker, the written and spoken word (as well as the

then and now) collide and elide. And yet, what is conspicuously absent from these modes of

transformation is the material, the corporeal—the actualization of enacting what one pledges.

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[344] This and all following quotations from the *Rime Sparse* are taken from *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The "Rime sparse" and Other Lyrics*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, Mass., 1976) with poem and line number in parenthesis followed by Durling's translation.
[345] See Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2016), esp. 118-20.

Instead, Petrarch tells the story of his undoing synecdochically, through pens and sighs and echoes in a series of destructive shifts that are really just protective repetitions.

By contrast, the love that precipitates reckless self-undoing between Edward and Gaveston is effectuated to its denouement. By risking their safety, their integrity, and eventually their lives to forge an intimate bond, these lovers undertake what sodomitical Petrarchism demands of them: an experience of destitution, of defection, of suffering unto death. For instance, returning to Gaveston's opening soliloquy, Gaveston proclaims that he loves England because "it harbours him I hold so dear,—/ The king, upon whose bosom let me die/ And with the world be still at enmity" (1.13-5). Gaveston wishes to experience the sexual consummation or "death" that will secure and announce his position as the king's favorite; but this position requires absolute loyalty, a willingness to perish on the bosom of his patron as if in the act of shielding him from harm. Through both the adjectival and adverbial double meaning of "still" as "unmoving" and "up to and even now" respectively, Gaveston expresses his resolution of love as unwavering through time until death. These are not the sentiments of a man motivated by cynical self-interest, but of a man whose self-interest ceases to exist. Despite Gaveston's intention to manipulate Edward—to "draw the pliant king which way I please" (1.53)—, the strong alliteration of this statement suggests harmony between the king's *pliancy* and the favorite's *pleasure*. Notably, in Holinshed's *Chronicles*—Marlowe's primary source material for this play—he discusses the influence of Gaveston by declaring it "a wonderfull matter that the king should be so inchanted with the said earle, and so addict himself, or rather fix his hart upon a man of such a corrupt humor."[346] Though Gaveston is accorded an abstract "corrupt humor," the king is assigned a more specific and indelible "fervent affection" which refuses to go away and

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[346] Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland.* 6 vols. (London, 1807), esp. 549.

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for which he is responsible. The passage underscores his agency, noting that he "addict[ed] himself" and "fix[ed] his hart," and was "inchanted with" rather than by his favorite. Unlike Petrarch who more often writes of his love for Laura in the passive voice, casting himself as resistant victim, howsoever Edward is being drawn, it is decidedly not against his will.

Edward reciprocates in turn, expressing desires to give up his country's treasury, relinquish his kingdom, and sacrifice his life for the company of his "sweet favourite" (13.8). After Gaveston's banishment, Edward professes his willingness to exchange a king's revenue for him: "could my crown's revenue bring him back,/ I would freely give it to his enemies/ And think I gained, having bought so dear a friend" (4.309-11). The notion that a friend was worth more than a kingdom was proverbial; Montaigne, for example, recounts the anecdote of a soldier who would not swap his horse for a kingdom but would "willingly forgoe him to gaine a true friend."[347] But for a private person to prefer a friend to a kingdom looks radically different from an anointed king's willingness to offer the kingdom to or on behalf of another. The fact that Edward sincerely means that he is willing to pay out more than he receives exposes the fact that others do not. *Edward II* lays bare that such aphorisms of idealized friendship are only meant to be proper as a subject's hypothetical declamation, not as an actuality. Edward and Gaveston's interrelation is so threatening to the barons and the realm precisely in its commitment to realization.

This is why when, in the same scene, Edward is discovered literally sharing his throne with Gaveston (peopling it with two bodies), the barons spark with rage. Negotiating with them, Edward proposes that they

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[347] See Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes of Montaigne: John Florio's* Translation, ed. J. I. M. Stewart (New York: Modern Library, 1933), esp. 152. The *Essais* were first published in 1580, with revised editions appearing in 1588 and, after Montaigne's death, in 1595. Florio's text follows the fullest 1595 edition.

Make several kingdoms of this monarchy

And share it equally amongst you all,

So I may have some nook or corner left

To frolic with my dearest Gaveston. (4.70-3)[348]

As Marjorie Garber has pointed out, Edward's hope to "frolic" with Gaveston in "some nook or corner" presents "a sexual metaphor, quite like Dido's cave." While recognizing their relation's sexual transgressiveness, I am more interested in the socio-sexual counterfactual potential "some nook or corner" represents. Marlowe's language borders on parody here, for such a proposition exposes a reprehensible disregard for commonweal, as does the oxymoronic image of a frolicking king. "Making several kingdoms" of a monarchy courts political ruin, as *Gorboduc* (1561) had emphasized, and Edward's willingness to do so evinces his desire to inhabit an alternative political world. Even the devastation of civil war fails to call the king back to his proper political role: "Do what they can, we'll live in Tynemouth here./ And, so I walk with him about the walls,/ What care I though the earls begirt us round?" (6.218-20). His taunt reveals this king's gesture of withdrawal and embrace of irresponsibility. The subtle extension of Ciceronian self-sufficiency into counterpolity takes on totally different implications voiced by Marlowe's Edward, whose all-enveloping love of Gaveston echoes precisely the kind of separate, all-sufficient world of which Petrarchism dreams. Edward imagines a world apart in which he and Gaveston form the gravitational center which the earls orbit or "begirt us round." But such a gesture of withdrawal is unthinkable on the king's part because he cannot recuse himself without exploding the sovereign law that he founds.

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[348] See Marjorie Garber, "'Infinite Riches in a Little Room': Closure and Enclosure in Marlowe," in *Two Renaissance Mythmakers*, Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1975-6, ed. Alvin Kernan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977), esp. 12.

As unity breaks apart, Mortimer describes England in its dissolution as "maim'd" (13.31). He decries "the open wrongs and injuries/ Edward hath done to us, his Queen, and land" (17.19-20). This "openness" not only has the sense of "apparent" or "obvious," but also hints at Edward's real transgression, the wrong kind of accessibility, and the ways in which it exposes the body politic, the "land." The result of such reckless access is a dismemberment of the body politic, which Edward's very language has invited: "Rather than thus be braved,/ Make England's civil tons huge heaps of stone" (12.29-30). A minion presiding in the treasury and a king completely absorbed in some "nook or corner" "whose looseness hath betrayed thy land to spoil/ And made the channels overflow with blood" (17.11-2): what more inflammatory images could better dramatize the neglect and betrayal of political commonweal, and yet, might also hint at a possibility of an alternative world order?

And yet, such a possibility is forcibly precluded by the violent deaths sodomitical Petrarchism prescribes. Recall Gaveston's opening lines in which Actaeon's desire for "a lovely boy in Dian's shape" leads Actaeon "running in the likeness of an hart,/ By yelping hounds pulled down, and seem to die" (1.60, 68-9) which echoes Petrarch's own metamorphosis into Actaeon:

> ch' i' senti'trarmi de la propria imago
> et in un cervo solitario et vago
> di selva in selva ratto mi trasformo,
> et ancor de' miei can fuggo lo stormo. (23.157-60)

> for I felt myself drawn from my own image and into a solitary wandering stag from wood to wood quickly I am transformed and still I flee the belling of my hounds.

While both accounts write towards death, they circumvent its fulfillment. Compressing time into the present, Petrarch manages to preserve a layer of mediation between the symbolic and the literal—alluding to the inevitability of death, but forever deferring its arrival. And yet, for these

two Petrarchan lovers in *Edward II*, there is no aesthetic distancing to mitigate the feelings of violation and terror that such a love which risks death precipitates. These two are inseparably bound to one another, sharing all both in life and in death.

Edward's and Gaveston's death scenes are akin to one another rhetorically, situationally, and affectively. Moments before Gaveston's unceremonious execution, he laments, "O, must this day be period of my life,/ Centre of all my bliss?" (10.3-4). When Edward is arrested, he nearly echoes Gaveston's earlier declaration: "O day! The last of all my bliss on earth,/ Centre of all misfortune" (19.61-2). The effect of their verbal repetitions is to suggest rhetorically the interwoven and inextricably imbricated nature of the lives they are both to lose. The location of their executions also bear an uncanny resemblance: Warwick's men "bare [Gaveston] to his death, and in a trench/ Struck off his head" (11.119-20). The image of the trench as a type of open sewer or conduit creates a physical site that parallels the locale of Edward's own torture and execution: "This dungeon where they keep me is the sink/ Wherein the filth of all the castle falls" (24.55-6). Yet remarkably, this dying—ignominious for Gaveston, prolonged and excruciating for Edward—is accepted on behalf of the other. When Mortimer Junior denies Gaveston's last request (as well as the king's order) to see Edward before execution, Gaveston cries, "Sweet sovereign, yet I come/ To see thee ere I die" (9.94-5). Constance Kuriyama offers a skeptical reading in her claim that Gaveston's "eagerness to see the King once more before his death is tainted by his obvious hope of saving himself."[349] Yet I would urge us towards a more reparative reading where a kind of self-destructive sacrifice motivates his last moments. Gaveston gives himself wholly, undeterred by any potential consequences in pursuing a

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[349] See Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Hammer or Anvil: Psychological Patterns in Christopher Marlowe's Plays* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1980), esp. 180.

transgressive form of love. Similarly, when Mortimer's men wash the king in ditch water, lowering him beneath even the lowborn friend he tried to elevate, Edward exclaims:

> O Gaveston, it is for thee that I am wronged;
>
> For me, both thou and both the Spencers died,
>
> And for your sakes, a thousand wrongs I'll take.
>
> The Spencers' ghosts, wherever they remain,
>
> Wish well to mine; then tush, for them I'll die. (22.41-5)

An attempt at a linear causality ("it is for thee that I am wronged") breaks down into a chiastic mutuality; the consummation of desire is articulated as a mutual exchange to at once take and give: first, it is Edward who is wronged by Gaveston (22.41); then Gaveston and both Spencers who died on behalf of Edward (22.42); then Edward accepting a thousand wrongs on behalf of Gaveston and the Spencers (22.43); and finally, Edward accepting death on all their behalf (22.45). It is in this moment that the rhetoric of Petrarchism with its acceptance of suffering and eventual death manifests most clearly that the ideal erotic economy is not one of heteroeroticism but of sodomitical male love. As Melissa Sanchez asserts, "The hagiographic and Petrarchan traditions both see suffering, not joy, as evidence of true love."[350] Edward's embrace of this love as infinite vulnerability and the complete accession to (corporeal) weakness on behalf of another precipitates a royal demise in its fullest sense, for he is stripped both of his estate and his life. Edward's vow that he will "either die or live with Gaveston" (1.137) reaches its final culmination with the cost of human life, as the ecstatic violation of the body constructs an affective vision of access between subjects. Sodomitical Petrarchism duplicates the intimacy of suffering as the intimacy of forbidden love. The predominance of somaticized imagery—

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[350] See Melissa Sanchez, *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), esp. 5.

wounds, blows, tears, and blood pervade the vocabulary of Petrarchism—works to establish a

sense of affective intimacy radiating from the spectacle of the suffering body, and so it is to the

king's suffering body that I now turn.

The King's Fleshly Body

Look, I suffer, therefore I am, I exist, I participate in the positive order of being.

—Slavoj Žižek[351]

       In *The Body in Pain*, one of the most brilliant and influential late twentieth-century

philosophical studies of the nature of pain, Elaine Scarry argues the impossibility of sharing in

other people's pain:

> when one speaks about "one's own physical pain" and about "another person's physical
>
> pain," one might almost appear to be speaking about two wholly distinct orders of
>
> events…[F]or the person in pain, so incontestably and unnegotiably present is it that
>
> "having pain" may come to be thought of as the most vibrant example of what it is "to
>
> have certainty," while for the other person it is so elusive that "hearing about pain" may
>
> exist as the primary model of what it is "to have doubt." Thus pain comes unsharably
>
> into our midst as at once that which cannot be denied and that which cannot be
>
> confirmed. (4)[352]

Her important work has influenced other major works on pain, such as the collection of

anthropological essays titled *Pain as Human Experience* whose authors contend that "perhaps

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[351] Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 2000), esp. 281.
[352] See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), esp. 4.

more than other somatic experiences, pain resists symbolization"[353] or Roselyne Rey's *The History of Pain* which also privileges a medicalized language of pain management.[354] By conceptualizing pain as an external force that pressures subjects in a transhistorical fashion, these scholars limn pain as a profoundly isolating, individualizing experience. It is fundamentally impossible to truly comprehend the pain of others—physically, emotionally, or psychically. Like René Descartes who wonders "what is more *intimate* or *inward* than *Pain*?,"[355] these thinkers perceive pain as an interior bodily sensation hidden from view.[356] In its refusal to open itself up to others, pain carries with it a troubling yet foundational loneliness.

Contemporary western society is preoccupied with the attempt to control pain, and has developed an unprecedented, if also still limited, ability to alleviate it. It has also increasingly relegated intense pain to the secluded world of the modern hospital ward and pain clinic, hidden from public awareness. Partly as a result of these developments, witnessing and responding affectively to the pain of others as an act in its own right (without necessarily being able to alleviate it) has not only lost much of its cultural centrality, but has also come to be seen by some as a philosophical impossibility. Yet I would argue that the extravagant representation and percolating eroticism of the early modern suffering subject becomes a site of communication and even community. Developing what Katharine Eisaman Maus calls a "materialist psychology"[357] and building on the works of Gail Kern Paster, Jonathan Sawday, and Michael Schoenfeldt that

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[353] See *Pain as Human Experience: An Anthropological Perspective*, ed. Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, Paul Brodwin, Byron J. Good, Arthur Kleinman (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994), esp. 9.

[354] See Roselyne Rey, *The History of Pain* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993). For another influential work that privileges finding appropriate remedies for pain, see David Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993).

[355] The word "intimate" in this passage refers to the fact that pain takes place *inside* the body (see "Inward," 1a: "Inmost, most inward, deep-seated; hence, Pertaining to or connected with the inmost nature or fundamental character of a thing; essential; intrinsic." *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford UP, April 2020).

[356] See René Descartes, *Six Metaphysical meditations wherein it is proved that there is a God and that mans mind is realy distinct from his body*, trans. William Molyneux (London, 1680), esp. 91.

[357] Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), esp. 26.

theorize the pneumatic cosmology of the Renaissance universe and the Galenic humoral body, I

aim to show that the site of the body-in-pain gains a particular power to galvanize an ethical

intersubjective meaning; the wounded and suffering body becomes an aperture for exchange

between selves.358 For early moderns, part of the essence of pain is precisely that it can be

shared, that it has the power to engender compassion and even create in others a desire to suffer

with those in pain.

Much scholarship on Edward's body attends to Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two*

Bodies, first legally postulated in the 1560s:359

> The King has in him two Bodies, viz. a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body
>
> natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come
>
> by Nature or Accident…But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled,
>
> consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and
>
> the Management of the publick-weal; and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and Old
>
> Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities which the Body natural is subject to.360

The notion of the king's two bodies, neatly summed up in the formulation "The king is dead.

Long live the king," animates one of the play's oft-quoted lines: "But Edward's name survives,

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358 The early modern humoral body—characterized by corporeal fluidity, openness, and porous boundaries—
becomes a particularly productive site to show how pain transposes an experience of self-shattering into something
profoundly communal. See Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early
Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993); Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human
Body in Renaissance Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1996); and Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early
Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge:
Cambridge UP, 1999).
359 See Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton
UP, 1957). For readings that put *Edward II* in conversation with Kantorowicz's "the king's two bodies"—one
natural, the other political—as held in tension and left unreconciled, see Meredith Skura, "Marlowe's *Edward II*:
Penetrating Language in Shakespeare's *Richard II*," *Shakespeare Survey* 50 (1997): 41-55; Mark Thornton Burnett
demonstrates how "the body/state analogy was a common one" in "*Edward II* and Elizabethan Politics" in *Marlowe,
History and Sexuality*, ed. Paul Whitfield White, esp. 96; and Curtis Perry, "The Politics of Access and
Representations of the Sodomite King in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53.4 (2000): 1054-83.
360 Edmund Plowden, *The Commentaries and Reports of Edmund Plowden, originally written in French, and now
faithfully translated into English* (London, 1797), esp. 213.

though Edward dies" (20.48). In a compelling reading of Kantorowicz's text, Victoria Kahn argues that the power of the concept for political theology is not that the king's corpse comes to embody sovereignty or the early modern body politic; instead, according to Kahn, "the body falls away to be replaced, ultimately, by fiction."[361] In her interpretation, the royal body's displacement is central. Moreover, Kahn makes the case that Kantorowicz's political theology has implications for an early modern form of sovereignty increasingly exploring the contours of republicanism.[362] She concludes by suggesting that Kantorowicz aligns his concept of the king's two bodies "in order to bring out the constitutionalist implications of royal charisma. Thus, while the corporation could take the form of 'corporate sole' of the king, in time it comes to be equated with the corporate body of the people."[363]

These readings tend to subordinate the "Body natural" to the "Body politic," privileging the transcendent sovereign body that stands as a symbol of the continuity of monarchy and, as Kahn alludes to, the promise of its future potential as a representative of the people. Yet, I aim to complicate this presumption by suggesting that it is Edward's "Body mortal" that actually galvanizes community; in its porosity, vulnerability, and expropriability, Edward's suffering body opens itself up to sight and touch, which becomes tantamount to opening up the realm itself, and is equally dangerous. By expressing a perilous accessibility both corporeally and

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[361] See Victoria Kahn, "Political Theology and Fiction in *The King's Two Bodies*," *Representations* 106 (2009): 77-101, esp. 95.

[362] Kahn's work reflects a growing body of scholarship that finds republican impulses animating what previously had been the effects of absolutist sovereign power. In conversation with Kahn, for example, Lorna Hutson concludes that by 1616, the public good or "commonwealth" came to be identified "less as vicariously embodied in the sacred figure of the monarch than as located in myriad acts of hypothesis, judgment, and interpretation demanded of the audience in response to the complex ethical and political dilemmas of quasi-forensic, yet popularly accessible, plots." See Hutson's, "Imagining Justice: Kantorowicz and Shakespeare," *Representations* 106 (2009): 118-42, esp. 129. Historian Alan Cromartie has identified the impression of emerging republicanism explored by Kahn and Hutson as "a subversive constitutionalism" in which the authority of the sovereign may be reduced to being an instrument of the law—a mere functionary. See Cromartie's, "The Constitutionalist Revolution: The Transformation of Political Culture in Early Stuart England," *Past and Present* 163 (1999): 31-58, esp. 76, 120.

[363] Kahn, "Political Theology and Fiction in *The King's Two Bodies,*" esp. 87-88.

symbolically, Edward exposes his body and the body politic to self-destructive undoing. What ensues is a rendering apart that is physical as well as political, personal as well as national.

Edward's corporeal vulnerability and passivity has traditionally led to charges (and condemnations) of his effeminization.[364] Yet conflating the king's leaky body with his emasculation obscures the potent affects such a body begets. Foreshadowing Shakespeare's Richard II, Edward depicts himself as a man of feeling when he signs the agreement to banish Gaveston by exclaiming, "Instead of ink, I'll write it with my tears" (4.86). And later, after abdicating the crown, he sends Queen Isabella a token—a handkerchief "wet with my tears and dried again with sighs" (20.118). The play insists on the leaky constitution of Edward's body, underscoring that for the humoral body, as Gail Kern Paster aptly puts, "*all* boundaries were threatened because they were—as a matter of physical definition and functional health—porous and permeable."[365] By metaphorically mixing bodily fluids with the act of communication (i.e. his tears as a form of ink used to encode a text), Edward broaches the participatory potential of tears. Whereas men have normatively been defined as the tearless ones (Jacques Ferrand, for instance, asserts that "because they are more humid than the rest of mankind…women and children and the elderly cry more easily" while Robert Burton is even harsher in his explication: "Tricks and counterfeit passions are more familiar with women…Nothing so common to this sex as…tears, which they have at command"), there is something to be said for the efficacy of tears

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[364] See Jennifer C. Vaught, *Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Simon Shepherd argues that "Edward's language is gendered female when he talks of mythology and role-play"; he is "inconsistently masculine" (204). See Shepherd's *Marlowe and the Politics of Elizabethan Theater* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986); Laura Levine, "Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization from 1579 to 1642," *Criticism* 28 (1986): 121-43; Phyllis Racking, "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage," *PMLA* 102 (1987): 29-41; and Sara Munson Deaths, "*Edward II:* A Study in Androgyny," *Ball State University Forum* 22 (1980): 30-41.
[365] See Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, esp. 13.

to speak.366 Instead of being weakened, Edward is empowered by this form of expression often associated with the "moist sex." The yoking of Edward's body with tears emphasizes the power of something which is normally taken to be a symbol of helplessness; or, put differently, this symbol of helplessness is transformed into a call for connection.

Moreover, Edward's suffering body exhibits an expansive sense of the power that words have to penetrate, expand, erode, and transform persons. Early in the play, Edward exclaims, "Rend not my heart with thy too-piercing words!" (4.117) and later, when the peers catalogue how Edward has neglected his realm for Gaveston, lamenting "thy court is naked" (6.171), Edward cries, "My swelling heart for very anger breaks!" (6.197). When taking refuge in the abbey after fleeing his barons' troops, Edward laments, "Who wounds me with the name of Mortimer,/ That bloody man?" (19.38-9) and in a desperate rage, tears up a letter from Mortimer Junior: "Well may I rend his name that rends my heart!/ This poor revenge hath something eased my mind./ So may his limbs be torn as is this paper!" (20.140-2). Mortimer Junior, too, acknowledges Edward's peculiar susceptibility to words as he directs Edward's captors to "amplify his grief with bitter words" (21.64) and Matrevis obliges: "Let us assail his mind another while" (24.11). In these and other instances, words play a direct, inevitable part in both the cognitive and bodily processes of Edward's subject formation. His "swelling heart" expands by anger, not just metaphorically but also in reality. As Francis Bacon asserts that the chief

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366 See Jacques Ferrand's *A treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1990), esp. 278 and Robert Burton's, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), 3.2.2.5, esp. 126. In his essay "De Clementia," Seneca describes the dangers of compassion: "there are women, senile or silly, so affected by the tears of the nastiest criminals that, if they could, they would break open the prison." See Seneca's "De Clementia" in *Moral and Political Essays,* ed. John M. Cooper and J. F. Procopé (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), esp. 2.5.1. For contemporary studies of the function of tears in early modern England, see Marjory E. Lange, *Telling Tears in the English Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Jennifer C. Vaught, *Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); and John Staines, "Compassion in the Public Sphere of Milton and King Charles," in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004), esp. 92.

benefit of friendship was "the ease and discharge of the fullness and swellings of the heart," with Gaveston banished and dead, Edward has no means of discharge.[367] In *Excitable Speech*, Judith Butler proceeds with an acute sense of how "having been called an injurious name is embodied, how the words enter the limbs, craft the gesture, bend the spine," of "how racial or gendered slurs live and thrive in the flesh of the addressee."[368] Butler is well aware of speech's injurious potential and here, we witness quite literally the shaping capacity of language. By "amplify[ing] his grief with bitter words" and "assail[ing] his mind," Edward's enemies break down his defenses in a way that is felt as directly physical; their speech acts violate Edward's personal boundaries in the same way that physical coercion can. Fear, anger, and grief take a physical form and with this somatization of emotion, the king's suffering body becomes a site for the exchange and effects of wounding words.

The king's suffering body—understood as something constantly changing, absorbing and excreting, flowing, sweating, bleeding, weeping—becomes most pronounced in the penultimate scene. From the moment that the jailers Matrevis and Gurney enter, a shift to concrete sensuous imagery and a moment-by-moment account of sensations—the stifling "savour" of the dungeon, the "mire and puddle," the beating drum, the loss of coherence and integrity, and the physical and psychical assault—occurs:

> This dungeon where they keep me is the sink
>
> Wherein the filth of all the castle falls.
>
> And there in mire and puddle have I stood.

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[367] See Francis Bacon, *The Essays*, ed. Jeremy Pitcher (London: Penguin Classics, 1985) esp. 138-46. See also David Wootton, "Friendship Portrayed: a New Account of Utopia," *History Workshop Journal* 45 (1998): 29-47.
[368] See Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), esp. 159. In this important work, Butler is interested in work that searches for the best ways to inhabit the necessary imperfection of all attempts at self-fortification, to embrace how we can be at once bounded, enclosed beings and open ones, exposed and altered by words. From within this experience, Butler believes that we might find the language that could help shape desirable forms of life.

This ten days' space, and, lest that I should sleep,

One plays continually upon a drum

They give me bread and water, being a king

So that for want of sleep and sustenance

My mind's distempered and my body's numbed,

And whether I have limbs or no I know not.

O, would my blood dropped out from every vein

As doth this water from my tattered robes! (25.57-67)

Edward's porous, penetrable, and penetrating body is no longer bound by its epidermis but becomes the cell of the dungeon itself. The "sink/ Wherein the filth of all the castle falls" is now the body which encompasses and embodies his pain.[369] Provoking and partaking in a fluid economy that illustrates the multi-directional nature of bodily exchange and composition, Edward doubts "whether I have limbs or no I know not"; he becomes undone and unjointed at once. His body is situated in the continually-changing context of a relationship to the world whose precise effect is never stable or predictable, so that he must simply submit to it—submit to the involuntary fear that makes him tremble: "Still fear I, and I know not what's the cause,/ But every joint shakes" (24.84-5), or the "grief [that] keeps me waking, I should sleep" (24.92). His fluid, humoral body emerges as frighteningly open to radical renegotiation, contestation, and possession. Moreover, his surroundings—all the excrement and miasma around him—are an integral part of the enclosure that creates, causes, and speaks his suffering. Renaissance physician Thomas Newton cautions his readers to avoid prolonged exposure to "standing Pooles, stinking Ditches, Fennes, Marshes, common Sinkes, Draughtes or Priuies" because the miasma

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[369] See Thomas Newton's *The Olde Mans Dietary* (London, 1586), D1r-D1v.

arising from these was believed to thicken and taint the blood.[370] This "superfluity of excrements" debase the quality of the vital spirits necessary to sustain natural heat, thereby causing Edward's mind "distempered" and body "numbed."[371] The bodily force of Edward's suffering forms an apt illustration of Michael Schoenfeldt's remark that in early modern culture, "flesh is not a realm completely separate from the soul, but is a name for the thickening and coagulation of emotion around the intense sensations of pain and grief."[372] This "filth," "mire," and "puddle" are not only analogous to, but literally *are*, the waste, excrement, and excess of the body. Edward becomes a fleshly manifestation of Mikhail Bakhtin's grotesque body with degradation as its chief characteristic and its associations with the lower stratum of the body (i.e. acts of defecation, copulation, eating).[373] What counts as the self is suddenly outside of self, what undoes any illusion of bounded integrity. Selves are vulnerable in constitution, incapable, on their own, of fully mastering either the passions threatening to undo them from within or the violence threatening from without.

Edward's suffering and gruesome death by poker (the scene that has spilled the most critical ink)[374] glimpses the destruction of the social as constituted. Discussing Shakespeare's similar treatment of Richard II, Eric Santner argues:

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[370] See Thomas Newton, *The Olde Mans Dietary* (London, 1586), Dlr-Dlv.

[371] Sixteenth century German medical writer Gualterus Bruele defines headache as caused by the "swelling humours ascending from the lower Parts, doe assault the head, partly because the braine is of a cold and moyst temperature, superfluity of excrements are therein generated, which if they increase and be not avoided by the expulsive faculty in their due season, are wont to disturb the head with aches. See Gualtherus Bruele, *Praxis medicinae, or, the physicians practice wherein are contained inward diseases from the head to the foote: explaining the nature of each disease, with the part affected*, (London, 1632), esp. 1-2.

[372] See Michael Schoenfeldt, "Aesthetics and Anesthetics: The Art of Pain Management in Early Modern England" in *The Sense of Suffering: Constructions of Physical Pain in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen and Karl A. E. Enenkel, esp. 30.

[373] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge: M.I.T. UP, 1968), esp. 26.

[374] See, for instance, Christopher Shirley, "Sodomy and Stage Directions in Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*," *SEL* 54.2 (2014): 279-96; William B. Kelly, "Mapping Subjects in Marlowe's *Edward II*," *South Atlantic Review* 63.1 (1998): 1-19; Jon Surgal, "The Rebel and the Red-Hot Spit: Marlowe's *Edward II* an Anal-Sadistic Prototype," *American Imago* 61.2 (2004): 165-200; Rebeca Gualberto Velverde, "'De-emplotting' History: Genre, Violence, and Subversion in Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*, *Complutense Journal of English Studies* 24 (2016): 43-59;

what appears with the emergence of the stateless is not simply the wretchedness of the

human animal stripped of his or her social insignia; what appears is rather a bit of the

flesh of the social bond itself, the stuff that the body of the sovereign was formerly

charged with figuratively—and often theatrically—incorporating. (58)[375]

That glimpse of "the flesh of the social bond itself," the ability of Edward's suffering to bring

about a sense of communal regeneration, is what continues to haunt us in the text and its

aftermath. By dramatizing the utter porousness and extreme vulnerability of the monarch's

suffering body that demands a response from others, *Edward II* shows us that openness to

exchange—the humoral body as "characterized by corporeal fluidity, openness, and porous

boundaries" in Gail Kern Paster's insightful phrase—was (and may still be) the inescapable

precondition of human life.[376]

Community of Com-passion

In *Edward II*, the meaning of suffering lies to a large extent in its ability to elicit a

compassionate response from those who witness it. If pain leads Edward to pose fundamental

questions about the nature of subjectivity, in other words, it also serves as a reminder that those

questions can only be explored by considering the relational nature of selfhood. The implication

of this is that responsiveness to the suffering of others helps to alleviate that suffering and

therefore becomes an all the more urgent ethical duty. (As a quick aside, I want to be clear that

the communal compassion I'm imagining is distinct from the spiritual significance of pain,

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Meg F. Pearson, "'Die with fame': Forgiving Infamy in Marlowe's *Edward II*, *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 42.2 (2009): 97-120; David Stymeist, "Status, Sodomy, and the Theater in Marlowe's *Edward II*," *SEL* 44.2 (2004): 233-54; and Andrew Hadfield, "Marlowe's Representation of the Death of *Edward II*," *Notes and Queries* 56.1 (2009): 40-1.

[375] See Eric Santner, *Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011), esp. 58, emphasis mine.

[376] See Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, esp. 8.

bound up with issues of salvation and the idea of compassionate *imitatio Christi* since the

beginnings of Christianity. Indeed, it is precisely Marlowe's disregard for the suffering Christ

that seems to open up a space for an inclusive empathy with the pain of others that exceeds the

conventional markers of community and is not circumscribed by religious denomination.)377 The

play's conception of communal suffering can be usefully contrasted with Descartes who, in his

sixth Meditation, suggests that pain pertains only to the self-sufficient and self-generated,

thinking subject.378 Instead, Marlowe's play stages com-passion (or violent interrelatedness) as

literally a form of co-suffering that can take on the intensity of physical experience, and become

indistinguishable from the pain to which it is a response. This notion of a broadly inclusive

compassion that enables openness to the pain of others recurs most with Montaigne who begins

"Of the Force of Imagination" by admitting that "The sight of others anguishes doth sensibly

drive me into anguish; and my sense hath often usurped the sense of a third man" (1.20.40).379

Pain has a contagious quality; seeing others suffer is itself a form of vicarious, even physical

suffering. Similarly, in the opening chapter of the first book—"By divers Meanes men come unto

a like End"—Montaigne confesses his general proneness to compassion:

> I am much inclined to mercie, and affected to mildnesse. So it is, that in mine opinion, I
>
> should more naturally stoope unto compassion, than bend to estimation. Yet is pitty held

377 For more on suffering and the idea of compassionate *imitatio Christi*, see, for instance, Judith Perks, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995); Carol Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987); and Lisa Silverman, *Tortured Subjects: Pain, Truth, and the Body in Early Modern France* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001).

378 See René Descartes, *Six metaphysical meditations wherein it is proved that there is a God and that mans mind is really distinct from his body,* trans. William Molyneux (London, 1680). For a useful discussion of Descartes' role as a scapegoat in modern medical pain discourse, see Grant Duncan, "Mind-Body Dualism and the Biopsychosocial Model of Pain: What Did Descartes Really Say?," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 25.4 (2000): 485-513.

379 See Michel de Montaigne, *The essayes or morall, politike and millitarie discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne,* trans. John Florio (London, 1603), Book I, Chapter 20, 40. The titles of individual chapters in the *Essais* are also taken from John Florio's translation. It should also be noted that Florio translates "compatisse" as "co-suffer" and since his is the only citation for this word in the *OED* (s.v. "co-," 1), it may have been one of his new coinages.

a vicious passion among the Stoicks. They would have us aid the afflicted, but not to faint

and co-suffer with them. (1.1.2)[380]

To be genuinely affected by the suffering of others is, in the words of Nathaniel Wanley's 1670

translation, "certainly a sickness."[381] John Stradling, whose translation was published in 1595,

goes even further in describing it as "a verie daungerous contagion," suggesting in this way that

pity has the kind of social infectiousness to which Montaigne claims he is especially susceptible

(and which alludes to my earlier discussion on corruption).[382] This notion of compassion as

dangerous because of its contagious nature is confirmed when Langius dismisses pity as a

"publick Feaver."[383] For the Stoic, compassion needs to be forcefully resisted precisely because

it is such a powerful, compelling, and uncontrollable emotion. This contagious compassion—

denigrated by Stoics and these Renaissance writers as a kind of uncritical, mass hysteria—

immediately stokes suspicion. And yet, it is this innate and spontaneous response, precisely *not*

the result of deliberation and reflection, that becomes an urgent duty in the presence of Edward's

suffering.

Edward's suffering becomes an unbidden, unexpected, and unplanned address for those

who encounter it. When Edward takes refuge in the abbey, he laments, "O hadst thou ever been a

king, thy heart,/ Pierced deeply with sense of my distress,/ Could not but take compassion of my

state" (19.9-11). In the Stoic definition, pain pertains only to the body, and reason has the

fundamental ability to refuse to "consent" to pain, in this way preventing it from penetrating into

the soul. Marlowe rejects such logic: armed with the ability to "pierce," Edward's suffering

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[380] See Michel de Montaigne, *The essayes,* trans. John Florio.
[381] See Justus Lipsius, *A discourse of constancy in two books*, trans. Nathaniel Wanley (London, 1670), esp. 67.
[382] See Justus Lipsius, *Two books of constancie. Written in Latine, by Iustus Lipsius*, trans. John Stradling (London, 1595), esp. 29.
[383] See Justus Lipsius, *A discourse of constancy in two books*, trans. Nathaniel Wanley, esp. 38.

becomes intrusive—it compels a response, compels compassion. And the Abbot responds in kind: "My heart with pity earns to see this sight;/ A king to bear these words and proud commands!" (19.70-1). "To earn" is to be "affected with poignant grief or compassion"[384]; it is the kind of affective identification and fellow-feeling the king had hoped to find in the abbey. Modern editions of the play regularly note this archaic term for grief and caution that the abbot's "earn" has nothing to do with something worked for or legitimately achieved. However, earn is amphibolic in another sense and also means "to do work for a reward or result."[385] I would argue that the "reward or result" is pity evoked by an image that captures the spectacle of human suffering and the proximity we might have to the vulnerability of life itself. The abbot (and the audience) are in a sense, captured, if not, in Emmanuel Levinas's terms, held hostage by the sight of suffering or the Levinasian "face" of what he calls the "Other":

> The approach to the face is the most basic mode of responsibility…The face is not in front of me (*en face de moi*) but above me; it is the other before death, looking through and exposing death. Secondly, the face is the other who asks me not to let him die alone, as if to do so were to become accomplice in his death… Accordingly, my duty to respond to the other suspends my natural right to self-survival, *le droit vitale*. My ethical relation of love for the other stems from the fact that the self cannot survive by itself alone, cannot find meaning within its own being-in-the-world…To expose myself to the vulnerability of the face is to put my ontological right to existence into question.[386]

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[384] See "earn, v.1," *OED Online* (Oxford, Oxford UP, March 2020).
[385] See "earn, v.1, 1.b," *OED Online* (Oxford, Oxford UP, March 2020).
[386] See Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas" in *Face to Face with Levinas* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), esp. 23-4. Levinas develops this conception first in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1969), esp. 187-203.

Judith Butler takes up the Levinasian face as her starting point in her chapter "Precarious Life" to think about the relationship between violence and ethics, modes of address and moral obligations to respond.[387] She urges the acknowledgement of a "primary vulnerability" and an "inevitable dependency" to become the basis for a global political community.[388] For these thinkers, there is a certain violence already in being addressed—in Edward's case, of being "pierced." Those he encounters are subject to a set of impositions, compelled to respond to this suffering alterity. It is our "most basic mode of responsibility," a "duty," another reminder that "before I am I carry the other" as Jacques Derrida implores.[389] To be addressed is to be, from the start, deprived of will and to have that deprivation exist as the basis of one's situation in interrelationality.

Edward's suffering compels such a response and as his vulnerability increases, so too does his hold on others.[390] As he relinquishes his crown, Edward asks, "What, are you moved? Pity you me?" (20.102) and, as in Ovid with the "piteous" sighing of the hart near death, Marlowe's suffering Edward in his death throes animates an all-encompassing compassion. Edward's final scream performs the sort of active border permeability that his suffering body worked to materialize. His scream penetrates the walls of the dungeon; Matrevis fears "that this cry will raise the town" (24.113) and Holinshed similarly describes the scene: "His cry did move many within the castle and town of Berkeley to compassion, plainly hearing him utter a wailful noise."[391] The Levinasian "face" seems to consist in a series of displacement and here, the face is figured as a scream, a scene of agonized utterance. Although Levinas writes, "the face of the

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[387] See Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London & New York: Verso, 2004), esp. 128-52.
[388] Ibid, esp. xiv, xiii.
[389] See Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005), esp. 162.
[390] As Charles Lamb noted in an early nineteenth-century consideration of the play, "the death scene of Marlowe's king moves pity and terror beyond which any scene ancient or modern with which I am acquainted." See Lamb's *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* (1808), esp. 25-6.
[391] Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland.* 6 vols. (London, 1807), esp. 587.

other in its precariousness and defenselessness, is for me at once the temptation to kill and the call to peace, the 'You shall not kill,'" Edward's scream bypasses the divine prohibition against killing and immediately provokes compassion through a prior substitution.[392] Edward's cry bespeaks an agony, an injurability—it is a wordless vocalization of suffering that marks the limits of linguistic translation. The cry evokes the irremediable loss associated with Actaeon's experience yet Edward is able to say what Actaeon fails to utter. Perhaps most provocatively, Edward's scream begs to be filled in. The scream is too open; the mouth is gaping, demanding to be filled by other mourning voices. The scene ends with a figure for what cannot be named, a final cry that functions as a sonic carry over into the play's final scene.

Edward's bodily pain continues to expand and infect even after his death. In his final speech, Edward III, encountering his father's hearse, inaugurates a body (and bodies) of suffering for an indeterminate future:

Here comes the hearse. Help me to mourn, my lords.

Sweet father, here unto thy murdered ghost

I offer up this wicked traitor's head;

And let these tears distilling from mine eyes

Be witness of my grief and innocency! (26.98-102)

Although the king's physical body-in-pain no longer is, the image of "thy murdered ghost" reincarnates his bodily pain in spectral form. Edward III's vocative expression, "Sweet father," directly addresses the dead king's presence in the scene—a theatrical or imaginative presence infused with the matter of history surrounding Edward's actual funeral some three hundred years earlier. The son's apostrophe "Sweet father" produces an impression of polychronicity, described

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392 See Emmanuel Levinas, "Peace and Proximity," in *Basic Philosophical Writings,* ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996), esp. 167.

by Jonathan Gil Harris as potentially "acquir[ing] an explosive power to tear apart the present,"

that creates the potential to instate a new political order.[393] In lieu of a peaceful resolution and

the restoration of an ordered monarchy, Edward's suffering has instated a communal body of

mourners, united by his haunting. Edward III's plea, "Help me to mourn, my lords," not only

marks the initiation of a tradition of mourning and suffering but is also an explicit reaching

outward rather than a closing in—an address and implication of other bodies rather than a

narcissistic turning in on oneself. Mourning, like suffering, is not an isolating, alienating

experience but one that is necessarily plural. The last lines of Marlowe's play allow past matter

to flash up in what Walter Benjamin might describe as a moment of danger to expose the

vulnerability of early modern sovereignty in the form of its artificial displacement—the

"hearse"—and thus the vulnerability of life itself.[394] The movement of the hearse across the stage

putatively enacts royal succession by reinforcing continuity between past and present, yet veers

toward the future as well by underlining the persistence of memories of collective suffering.[395]

Conclusion

Radical politics is not the art of the possible, but the art of making possible what is impossible in

the present.

—Lasse Thomassen, 114[396]

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[393] See Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2008), esp. 4.

[394] Walter Benjamin's most influential account of the volatility of history is "Thesis on the Philosophy of History" in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968): 253-64. See also his *The Arcades Project*, trans. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge: Belknap, 1999), esp. 462: "It is not what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation."

[395] My thinking recurs with Gregg Horowitz's powerful account of the relationship between art and loss. See his *Sustaining Loss: Art and Mournful Life* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001).

[396] Lasse Thomassen, *Radical Democracy: Politics between abundance and lack* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005).

With regards to Marlowe's major protagonists, it is surprising that, of a shepherd, a scholar, a merchant, and a king, the last should turn out to seem the weakest, and that the character whose field of concern should be the largest—that of governing a kingdom—reduces his interests to a bond with a favorite. And yet, Edward is the figure who, in the very exercise of his interpersonal prerogatives, violates the law that he is supposed to found. The site of legitimation and transgression at once, the king, from his opening words—announcing the death of his father and the refusal of the paternal law for the sake of friendship—institutes a regime of sodomitical Petrarchism. By pushing Petrarchism's conventions to their literal extremes—the requisite of multiple and simultaneous identification between lover/beloved and utter susceptibility to another that manifests as abject suffering—Edward plays the game to its bitter end to subvert the established order. By so doing, *Edward II* gestures towards intimate bonds forged outside the state of law and so outside the bounded, supposedly socially operative subject to embrace the open and imperiled body.

Pushing back against the understanding of pain as unrepresentable and profoundly isolating, I moved on to consider the king's suffering body as a site of exchange and corporeal vulnerability. Edward exposes his own self (and consequently the realm) to a dangerous accessibility which renders visible bodies-in-pain by reminding us of the reality and urgency which physical suffering had for early moderns. The Galenic, humoral body proves a particularly productive locus to witness the fluidity and interchange between the self and environment. The openness and fungibility of Edward's body dramatizes the instability of its boundaries as he becomes subject to surroundings that compel intersubjectivity without invitation. His vulnerable body becomes the site of the most intense sociability; the king's "Body natural" (as opposed to the "Body politic") unexpectedly becomes the site that galvanizes community. At that very point

where the individual suffers in his inmost flesh, there is no meaning which can be enunciated except through contact with the other; it is because Edward has offered himself to us from the outside that we have the feeling of participating in what he experiences within. In seeking to find a secular meaning in pain then, Marlowe reimagines the idea of communal compassion. By engaging Montaigne's tracts on suffering and compassion and the Levinasian "face," I endeavored to show how the physical immediacy of Edward's suffering body demands a communal response. The dissolution of the sovereign body makes way for a communal suffering of bodies who are willing to be haunted. *Edward II* celebrates an inclusive, secular compassion and underscores that responsiveness to bodily suffering is a basic human duty. The play stages an experience of community which would exceed the principle of identity or any figure of totality. Its final plea, "Help me to mourn," is not merely a call to its characters but to its audience and to us as well.

CODA

Aside from a few signatures, only one example of William Shakespeare's handwriting survives, a speech (ca. 1603) that imagines Sir Thomas More addressing the rage of an anti-migrant crowd in England:

You'll put down strangers,

Kill them, cut their throats, possess their houses,

And lead the majesty of law in lyam

To slip him like a hound; alas, alas, say now the King,

As he is clement if th'offender mourn,

Should so much come too short of your great trespass

As but to banish you: whither would you go?

What country, by the nature of your error,

Should give you harbor? Go you to France or Flanders,

To any German province, Spain or Portugal,

Nay, anywhere that not adheres to England,

Why, you must needs be strangers, would you pleas'd

To find a nation of such barbarous temper

That breaking out in hideous violence

Would not afford you an abode on earth.

Whet their detested knives against your throats,

Spurn you like dogs, and like as if that God

Owed not nor made not you, not that the elements

Were not all appropriate to your comforts,

But charter'd unto them? What would you think

To be us'd thus? This is the strangers' case

And this your mountanish inhumanity.[397]

More asks the aggressive English mob to imagine that they were, in fact, the strangers seeking refuge. Through repeating substitutions of one for another, for another of one, More uncovers a primary transitive mimesis of which we are all subject. Our psychic susceptibility to substitution implicates us in an involuntary set of responses that suggests interpersonal bonds prior to the emergence of the "I" that I am.

This earth is anything but a sharing of humanity. Instead it is an endless litany, a toll of pure sorrow and of pure loss, an enumeration of the bloody conflicts among identities as well as what is at stake in these conflicts. Today—amidst a global COVID-19 pandemic and disquieting local, national, and global trends toward political insularity and xenophobic tribalism—nothing seems more appropriate than thinking about community. Nothing more pressing, more necessary, more exigent than thinking about how to form ethical interpersonal relations, about what our obligations and responsibilities are to one another, about how to resist the accelerating rise of individualism and isolationism. We must strive for a different kind of future—one full of brimming potential—where we acknowledge that the links between us exceed anything that we may have consciously chosen, where we can acknowledge the violence done by reciprocal social relations themselves, and where we can embrace that my life and the life of another are never fully separable.

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[397] William Shakespeare, *The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore* (London, 1603).

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