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Introduction

In her posthumously published treatise, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (1692), seventeenth-century philosopher Anne Conway takes up the question of matter's penetrability, a question that also preoccupied many of her scientifically-engaged contemporaries.[1] She rejects the possibility of what she calls "penetration in a philosophical sence," by which she means not merely the close intermingling that might characterize, for instance, a water-soaked sponge, but an absolute and abstract coextension, a complete overlap. While the first kind of compenetration is easy to document, Conway believes the latter, which would demand co-location without an increase in "quantity," is altogether impossible. She first observes that impenetrability has been widely perceived to be an intuitive and axiomatic corollary of extension, and that both have been treated as definitional attributes of body, but then pursues the matter further, considering what a world of penetrable matter might look like:

> If they mean such a Penetration, which we call Intrinseck Presence, *viz.* that one Homogeneal Substance should enter into another, both being of equal Dimensions, and yet the bulk or quantity not increased, that seems wholly irrational: And it would be a mere impossibility and contradiction to grant such an intimate Presence in Creatures, which only agrees unto God and Christ as Creators, whose Prerogative it is to be intrinsecally present in Creatures; whereas no Creature can have that Intrinseck Presence in its Fellow Creature, because then it would cease to be a Creature and obtain one of the incommunicable Attributes of God and Christ, which is Intrinseck Presence. ... For to suppose one Creature intrinsecally present in another, so as to be mingled and most perfectly united with it, and yet its Quantity or Extension not increased, that confounds the Creatures, and maketh two or more to be but one: Yea, according to this Hypothesis, it may be said the whole Creation is reducible into the quantity of the least Grain or Dust,

[1] The original English text of Conway's writings has not been preserved. Conway's writings were translated into Latin and published two years after her death, likely by the physician and philosopher Francis Mercury Van Helmont. I quote here from the first published English translation of that Latin text. Sarah Hutton suggests that the material of the treatise likely dates from the final two years of Anne Conway's life, between 1677 and 1679 (220-228). For more on the writing of Conway's *Principles* as well as her intellectual milieu, see Sarah Hutton, *Anne Conway: A Woman Philosopher* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For a current edition of Conway's work, see Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

> because every part would be supposed to penetrate another, and no greater extension follow than of one Part.[2]

Conway imagines a presence that would be "intrinsic," using a sense of the word now obsolete—inner, within another being, rather than proximate to it. Theorizing the implications of intrinsic coextension, or "most perfect union" produces the claustrophobic image of the world collapsed into a speck of dust. This alteration of the laws of nature erases the boundaries between creatures which sustain being's extension through space.

While Conway here employs the natural philosophical genre of the thought experiment, her inquiry is not solely scientific; the physical consequences of the coextension of matter are inseparable from theological implications. For Conway, God is intimately present to his creatures in a mode which, despite the divine being's independence from space and time, can best be figured spatially; the co-presence of any other being with his creatures threatens the uniqueness of God's relationship to the world that proceeds from him. Conway's linking of questions of intimacy, selfhood, and the physics of bodies, was not an aberration for the period in which she wrote, nor was her interest in imagining the suspension of the regular laws of space and time. In finding the stakes of material penetrability to loom large, Conway shares in a long philosophical tradition, ranging from Lucretius to Descartes, and from Nicholas of Cusa to Kant, in which perceptions of time and space, and intuitions about the nature of body and self, retain a privileged position in epistemology, synecdochic with the ability to perceive and understand one's world.[3] These first intuitions comprise the raw material from which people are understood

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[2] Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy Concerning God, Christ and the Creatures*, trans. J.C. Medicinae Professor (London: 1692), VII.4, p. 106, 108-110.

[3] For a seminal analysis of Renaissance shifts in understanding the spatial nature of the universe and the philosophical changes that accompanied them, see Alexander Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968).

to generate a sense of the kind of the universe in which (and deity under whom) they live. Thus the question of whether space, and matter, were infinitely divisible not only had implications for the contest between atomism and other accounts of matter, but also could, for someone like Henry More, indicate the infinitude of the divine being, or, for Hume, call into question geometry's status as a privileged, undeniable, form of knowledge.[4] Perceptions of the nature of space were linked by early modern thinkers not only to specific ontologies of the universe but also ontologies of intimacy, although implications drawn from spatial ontologies were sometimes at odds with the knowledge gleaned from other scales of inquiry and experience.

Seventeenth-century England witnessed an efflorescence of attempts to imagine what it might be like to occupy the same space as another human being, fantasies that were shaped by a variety of philosophical and scientific problems: longstanding issues within Epicureanism, Aristotelianism, and Neo-Platonism, as well as new philosophical, scientific and theological understandings of matter and of the makeup of the individual human being. Philosophical and scientific controversies about the nature of bodies and spirits likely amplified the interest that thinkers like John Milton and Margaret Cavendish, both seriously engaged in materialist speculation, felt in imagining experiences which hovered at the edge of philosophical plausibility. In other texts I examine, including Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1643) and Renaissance kiss lyrics, the spatialized intimacies that my project tracks offer ways of reconceptualizing the relationship between sexuality and friendship. In each chapter of my dissertation, the writers I study turn to counterfactual fantasies of breaching bodily boundaries in

[4] Henry More, *An Antidote Against Atheism* (London: 1653), 336, Ch. VII; David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, II.4.

order to work out new possibilities for intimacy; in doing so, they present critiques of life in the body as it is usually experienced.

The texts I discuss span the late 16th century to the Restoration and range in genre from lyric to speculative fiction. I begin by tracing the motif of souls travelling to a lover's body through a kiss in English lyrics of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. English writers borrowed and revised the soul-kiss from Neo-Latin *basia*, or collections of kiss poetry, sensualizing this originally Neoplatonic trope and integrating the soul-kiss into sexuality rather than presenting it as a purer alternative to sex. Indeed, in the English context, the migration of a soul into the beloved's body becomes linked with sexual climax as well as the kiss, undermining, however temporarily, the contrast between the animality of lust and the distinctively spiritual pleasures of amicable conversation documented in work like James Grantham Turner's *One Flesh* (1994), Laurie Shannon's *Sovereign Amity* (2002), and Thomas Luxon's *Single Imperfection* (2005). English love lyric envisions a world in which the route to experience of another's soul lies through the body, through breath and effluvia rather than through the expression of the soul in writing or speech. The trope of soul-transfer resists the impulse to disconnect bodily acts of intimacy from a more stable and essential subjectivity, insisting on the potential of bodily acts to carry the soul along with them in a way that language can approximate but not replicate.

By contrast, my second chapter traces the complex use of images of bodily intermingling in an account where the body remains abject and male friendship is valorized. Thomas Browne's revulsion in *Religio Medici* from the quotidian forms of bodily production that structure human existence is expressed through hyperbolic comparison—eating is cannibalism, for Browne, and the man who has children sees himself buried in alive in his child. In both eating and

reproduction, Browne experiences a dreaded version of coextension—the self is visible in food, and in offspring, uncannily present alongside the bodies of others. Yet, paradoxically, Browne returns to the figure of bodily merging to characterize friendship, describing its intense affective pull in terms that rewrite Lucretius' description of sexual desire in *De Rerum Natura* and Neoplatonic descriptions of love-frenzy. The same experience that Lucretius presents in *De Rerum Natura* as damning proof of the folly of erotic attachment—unsatisfiable longing to dissolve the corporeal boundaries between oneself and that other—emerges in Browne as evidence of friendship's distinctive pleasures. Friendship is valued partly because it affirms the part of the self which is understood to be unchanging, and therefore more real, and yet Browne, in contrast to the Neoplatonist system he sometimes espouses, occasionally slips into locating reality in the body as opposed to the soul. Thus, when considering friendship, he remains haunted by the idea that the bodily division between friends leave them "really" divided in a way that their union of spirit cannot counterbalance. Browne's exaggerated sense of horror at the role of material reproduction in creating the self paradoxically reaffirms the power of a recombinant, atomistic account of the universe—one that presents the self as inextricably tied up with material change in ways that can be managed but not transcended.

My third chapter argues that *Paradise Lost's* (1667) depiction of angelic intermingling affirms materiality, even while disavowing specific features of human embodiment—organs, membranes, joints, limbs—and thus offers a distinctive explanation for why organs would need to be absent from the idealized body. Milton stands, I suggest, at a hinge point between two perspectives on the body's structures: his contemporaries' understanding of organs as vulnerable to outside influence and an account of organs as managing the impact of stimuli, also important to modern and contemporary figures such as Freud and Deleuze and Guattari. Milton turns away

from the organized body for strikingly different reasons than his contemporaries do: not out of dissatisfaction with the inherent mutability of embodiment (its vulnerability to impacts, the cyclic nature of hunger, aging, and so on) but out of impatience with the limitations of the organs' mediation both of sense-perception and of intimacy. Milton's embracing angels, lacking constituent parts, can experience being fully present within each other, co-extensive, in what might seem a vision of total receptivity. At the same time, the poem connects angelic independence from limbs to a superior capacity for agentive action, and insists on the temporary character of this dissolution of boundaries. In fusing this complex mixture of desires and privileges to the figure of a body without organs, Milton, I argue, diverges sharply from the psychoanalytic tradition; he refuses to choose between autonomous agency and ecstatic absorption. The pressure to work out the relation between individuality and coextension makes itself strongly felt in the poem, however, and I locate different answers to this problem in the erotic encounters of Milton's angels, of Eve with her reflection, and of Sin with Death. I further argue that Milton's distinctive rendering of angelic sexuality owed more to the pop Neo-Platonism present in the pro and anti-Platonic light verse of the seventeenth century than to the patristic and contemporary religious texts on angelic life that scholars hitherto have mostly turned to in their search for precedents.

My final chapter on Margaret Cavendish's prose fiction, *The Blazing World* (1666) considers the fantasy of bringing several souls within a single body, and ultimately aligns this moment with Cavendish's interest in the satisfactions of imaginative thought, a seemingly solitary and disembodied practice. Cavendish's earlier closet drama, *The Lady Contemplation* (1662) paints the portrait of a self-sufficient imagination. The play resists the suggestion that reality trumps the internal world, contending that the pleasures of fancy are as fully experienced

as the pleasures of a shared material world. And yet, contemplation leaves its disciple isolated from the possibility of loving relationships: devotion to contemplation in this play involves queer refusal of proffered social alternatives. *Blazing World,* by contrast, is committed to creating a robust mode of interpersonal encounter, though it continues to structure that encounter around a single individual's private contemplations. This difference in project allows *The Blazing World* to take up and fully develop the desire expressed in *The Lady Contemplation*: the wish to find a mate who presents no challenge to the pleasures of an imagined world and yet offers real companionship. While in *The Lady Contemplation*, conversation and publication are understood to be the only ways to bring contemplative experience into the realm of social relation, *Blazing World* imagines a further possibility: meeting within the body of one partner rather than in a shared external world.

I alternate in the chapters that follow between coextensions of spirit and of the body: my first and last chapter take up the former, while chapters two and three examine the latter. In all of my examples, however, coextension is spatialized; it takes place in and through the body and therefore is located in a material world, whether or not the intermingling substances are conceptualized as bodily. My first two chapters focus on the way that images of copresence are deployed to renegotiate the terrains assigned to sexuality and to friendship. The lyric chapter examines poems that represent sexual climax as involving the intermingling of souls, a description which projects onto sexuality the intimate knowledge of another's inner being usually reserved for friendship. My Browne chapter, in contrast, argues that *Religio Medici* maintains the period's standard devaluation of erotic love in relation to friendship, but paradoxically reverses course in its dismissal of the body, appropriating the futile desire to be united with the lover's body from descriptions of erotic love to serve as a sign of friendship's full

union of selves. Whereas the first two chapters revise the way that specific relational forms are oriented toward body or spirit, the last two present critiques of the limitations of life in the body per se, with effects that extend to intimacy but are not exclusive to it. Milton's poem presents an etherealized version of the body that is more open to encounter, while Cavendish imagines cordoning off the meeting of her material souls within the confines of a single body. In all of the chapters but the one focused on *Paradise Lost*, spatialized intimacies seem to exist in tension with the possibility of a self that is transparent to language, a subjectivity that exists primarily through its ability to articulate itself. Even where spatialized intimacy and the verbal self appear to work in tandem, as in Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, this utopian condition must be salvaged from an experience of the impasses of language.

While accounts of the vividness of early modern embodied experience, and of the power of materialist accounts during the period have proliferated in recent years, the case for anti-materiality in the Early Modern period is usually taken to revolve around two main concerns. The first is Neoplatonic and Christian critiques of the ephemerality of the physical world—the passibility of flesh reveals its incomplete participation in reality, and marks the material world's distance from divine perfection.[5] The second is the linking of the body with femininity and sexuality, both of which are taken to be abject in comparison to masculinity and anti-erotic self-possession, respectively.[6] While the accounts of the problems of embodiment I take up are

[5] See, among others, Piero Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh*, trans. Tania Croft-Murray (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); *Platonism and the English Imagination*, Ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

[6] Caroline Walker Bynum's accounts of the role of the body in late medieval religious experience stress the fluidity of female identification within the contours of this general pattern. See especially "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages," *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 181-238. See also the discussion of patristic views of sexuality in James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 10-36. In addition, though this discourse was less developed in seventeenth-century than subsequently, bodilyness is also often projected onto dark-skinned racially-othered bodies. See Kim F. Hall,

indeed influenced by these major currents of early modern thought, they reveal more complexity in the working-out of those anxieties and a broader diversity of dissatisfactions than has been acknowledged. While Browne seems to display a familiar revulsion from sexuality, he is unusual in extending that distaste to reproduction in a broader sense: both the continuous reproduction of the individual body through consumption of food, and the social reproduction that the family is tasked with carrying out. Milton, I argue, sometimes seems to find the human body not too open to sense experience, but too impervious to it, and Cavendish sees a life within the mind as preferable to a life in the body because it evades the scarcity that causes interpersonal strife. My project thus expands our understanding of what it meant to identify with the soul as opposed to the body in the early modern period. It adds ideological and affective complexity to our understanding of early modern negativity about the body, a phenomenon that has been primarily understood in relation to doctrinal commitments.

In doing so, I also challenge two related and influential assumptions that have shaped scholarship of important scientific and philosophical developments of the Renaissance in recent decades. The first is a disposition to view materialist philosophy as liberatory in its social affects and effects; its pleasurable direction of attention to freely-moving material flows undermines damaging binary category distinctions and/or religious dogmas. An explicitly theorized account of this phenomena is offered by Jane Bennet in her book, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*.[7] For Bennet, it is important to rework the associations attached to matter and to diminish human investment in accounts of subjectivity as distinctively transcendent because doing so may

Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

[7] Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

lead to a world in which humans behave less damagingly and domineeringly.[8] Two notable works on Lucretius in the early modern period present liberatory accounts of philosophical materialism: Jonathan Goldberg's *The Seeds of Things* and Stephen Greenblatt's *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern.*[9] As sweeping in its purview as Greenblatt's *The Swerve* is Jonathan Israel's *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* and its sequels.[10] In that work and in *A Revolution of the Mind*, Israel argues for the existence of a radical enlightenment, whose tenets include not only materialism, but rationalism, secularism and egalitarianism. In Israel's account, embracing intellectual freedom and the moral equality of all people went hand in hand with "conflating body and mind into one, reducing God and nature to the same thing… and invoking reason as the sole guide in human life."[11] His work shares with one strand of history of science scholarship a second trait to which I wish to draw attention—an interest, one shared by many early modern writers, in overarching symmetries or homologies that link disparate intellectual domains, particularly physics and politics. One important interlocutor for my project, John Rogers' *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry and Politics in the Age of Milton* similarly links vitalist monism with a proto-liberalism. Rogers opposes vitalist monism to Calvinist theology of the will and Hobbesian mechanism both of which, to his eye, provide support by analogy to the arbitrary exercise of monarchical power.[12] Though Israel and Rogers

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[8] Bennet, ix.

[9] Jonathan Goldberg, *The Seeds of Things: Theorizing Sexuality and Materiality in the Renaissance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009). Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2012).

[10] Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). *Radical Enlightenment* provides a somewhat more granular account of the formation Israel describes than does *A Revolution of the Mind*.

[11] Israel, *Revolution*, 12-26.

[12] John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution* (Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); see also, James R. Jacob and Margaret C. Jacob, "The Anglican Origins of Modern Science: The Metaphysical Foundations of the Whig Constitution," *Isis* 71.2 (1980), 251-267; Otto Mayr, *Authority, Liberty, and Automatic Machinery in Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

have different responses to mechanistic materialism, in both works monism is understood to be aligned with greater egalitarianism, dualism with an embrace of hierarchy.

As a normative statement, the vibrancy of a materialist world makes considerable sense; if we in fact live in a materialist universe, it seems reasonable to seek to rewrite the affective scripts that have linked matter with deadness or passivity, attending instead to the beauties and satisfactions of a materialist system. As a descriptive statement, however, it glosses over the diverse ways that people have persistently found identification with their bodies unsatisfying or disempowering. Without rejecting the value of a celebratory materialism, this project is interested in tracking its inverse, a melancholy imaginary of embodiment. By attending to the figure of copresence in the work of the writers I study, I've suggested, we obtain richer accounts of early modern alienation from the body. One premise of this project is that those dissatisfactions are worth taking seriously and that they don't depend on a coordinated structure of social and divine hierarchies to be legible; rather, the dilemmas they articulate continue to be felt by thinkers in our secular present. A second is that the effects of imagining the self as matter or spirit or both are irreducibly plural. A focus on personal imbrication in material circuits is destabilizing for Browne precisely because it leaves no room for the self's distinctness, putting it on the same plane as any other body. For Cavendish, by contrast, hierarchy exists most fundamentally in the shared material world where scarcity cannot be managed.

In contrast to the way that recent scholarship on the early modern period has sometimes focused on linking elements of subject's worldviews into a cohesive whole, early modern theorizations of intimacy offered subjects a discursive space to nurture unrealistic desires or harbor dissent from the principles understood to structure either politics or the natural realm. The counterfactuality of the texts examined in this study allows them to present a complex mixture of

responses to embodied life; the thinkers I study use the figure of copresence to register discontents about life in the human body, and yet this very fantasy allows the body to remain central to their vision of a better relationality. Rei Terada, writing about the descriptions of ephemeral perceptual phenomena in the writings of thinkers such as Coleridge, Kant and Nietzsche, argues that the epistemological modesty of noting down mere appearances offers a sphere in which it is possible to escape the demands of the real without provoking the intense condemnation that dissatisfaction with reality often elicits.[13] As Terada's work helps illustrate, experience of or desire for ways of being in the world that are not propositionally affirmed can still be deeply important affectively. And, as we will see in the work of Margaret Cavendish, one great pleasure of individual fantasy is the power to refuse tradeoffs that seem impossible to evade in real life. Here, seventeenth century thinkers reject the ways that life in the body seems to limit possibilities for intimacy, while maintaining the ideal of an intimacy that with the same spatial localizability that the body possesses. To put it another way, this dissertation attends to those features of the body that might cause it to appear abject, in Julia Kristeva's term—external to the self and discardable.[14] In Kristeva's usage, abjection is produced in response to perceived boundary violation, between subject and world, between living and dead. The texts studied in this dissertation are interested in experiencing the pleasures of boundary-crossing without producing the affect of disgust that such violations of boundaries tend to bring forth, and they remarkably choose to do so by offering new versions of matter that take on the affordances of the mind or soul.

[13] Rei Terada, *Looking Away* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
[14] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

While I've described the extent to which various chapters focus on interminglings of either body or soul, the viability of distinguishing between the two came under particular scrutiny in the seventeenth century. The influential dualism of substance that René Descartes lays out in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1642), though it presented a sharp break from scholasticism, retained, where humans were concerned, an immaterial intellect governing a corporeal body; many of his seventeenth-century contemporaries offer alternative accounts of the relation between body and mind.[15] Henry More differs from Descartes in understanding *both* spirit and body as spatially extended, with body characterized as impenetrable but divisible and spirit as penetrable but indivisible.[16] For More as for fellow Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth, an impersonal spiritual force is required to effect the orderly and purposeful-seeming processes of the natural world.[17] Critics including Stephon Fallon and John Rogers have argued Milton likely had a vitalist monist ontology, drawing on his literary works as well as the Latin treatise *De Doctrina Christiana* (1674), widely though not universally accepted as a text authored by Milton.[18] Margaret Cavendish's natural philosophy unequivocally argues that

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[15] René Descartes, "The Sixth Meditation," *Meditations on First Philosophy,* in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes,* Volume II, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[16] More, 11. Indeed, one of the earliest clear articulations of this view comes in his exchange of letters with Descartes. More counters Descartes's definitions of body as extended substance and mind as thinking substance with the suggestion that body is penetrable and indiscernible where matter is impenetrable and discerpible (Leech, 124-129). For a thorough account of the development of More's philosophical positions, and the atheistic arguments they were meant to pre-empt, see David Leech, *The Hammer of the Cartesians* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2013).

[17] More, 85-86. Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London: Printed for Richard Royston, 1678), I.III p.178-181.

[18] *De Doctrina Christiana* was not published until the 19th century, but is believed to have been found among Milton's papers after his death in 1674. For a thorough and nuanced look at the evidence on the provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana* and analysis of its stylometric similarity to Milton's known writings, see Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale, David I. Holmes and Fiona J. Tweedie, "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Quarterly* 31.3 (1997), 67-121. Stephen Fallon, *Milton among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); For a dissenting view on Milton's physics, see N. K. Sugimura, *Matter of Glorious Trial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009) and Phillip Donnelly, "'Matter' versus Body: The Character of Milton's Monism." *Milton Quarterly 33.3* (1999): 79-85. I discuss Milton's ontology in more detail in my third chapter.

nothing knowable or perceivable by human beings can lack matter, and that no matter exists that does not participate to some degree in life and mind.[19] While she maintains the possibility of a supernatural, immaterial soul that receives salvation and goes to heaven, likely to avoid skirting the limits of orthodoxy, she attributes all of the acts that the soul is usually believed to be responsible for, such as thought, perception and will, to a rarified but material soul.[20] Similarly for Anne Conway, no part of the created universe wholly lacks life and will.[21] Thomas Hobbes proposes in *Leviathan* (1651) and other writings a purely materialist universe, one whose mechanistic principles of causation extend to the sphere of human choice.[22] For Baruch Spinoza, matter and thought are independent modes of a single substance, of which individual beings are dependent modifications, and the two attributes of body and idea do not operate causally upon each other.[23]

If questions about the nature of body and spirit were the subject of considerable controversy in the seventeenth century, the impossibility of material coextension was regarded as all but settled. Those who, like Conway, adhered to a plenist picture of universe—a number which, in England, included thinkers such as Kenelm Digby, Hobbes, and Cavendish—tended to be particularly certain that compenetration was impossible: it would create a vacuum, which they believed could not exist. Indeed, Descartes in his correspondence with More is unusual in

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[19] Margaret Cavendish, *Philosophical Letters* (London: 1664), 69, 185-6; See also Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, ed. Eileen O'Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 78. For further discussion of Cavendish's vitalist materialism, see David Cunning, "Cavendish on the Intelligibility of the Prospect of Thinking Matter," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 23 (2006), 117-136.
[20] Cavendish, *Philosophical Letters*, 225.
[21] Conway, 84-87.
[22] See Helen Hattab, "The Mechanical Philosophy," *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Early Modern England,* ed. Desmond Clarke and Catherine Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 71-96; Douglass M. Jesseph, "Hobbesian Mechanics," *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy,* Volume. III, ed. Daniel Garber and Steven Nadler, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 119-152.
[23] Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, Trans. G. H. R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), I., 75-112, IIIp2, 166.

revering the more typical direction of the inference; he concludes that space is full rather than empty because no two pieces of space "can in any way be conceived as compenetrating each other at the same time in one and the same place, since it is contradictory for this to happen without some part of space being removed."[24] Since the "real property" of impenetrability, evident from intuition, "can exist only in a real body," Descartes concludes that there can be no completely empty space.[25] Those who accepted the idea of a vacuum by and large also agreed that compenetration was impossible. Indeed, Isaac Newton, in his *Principia*, gives the assumption of bodies' impenetrability as an example of the kind of induction that students of nature should readily make: impenetrability is appropriately regarded as a universal property of matter not because reason demands it, but because "we find [all] those bodies that we handle to be impenetrable."[26] When seventeenth-century writers lessened the gap between soul and body, then, they were in harmony with one important though still uncommon intellectual vector of their era. In imagining bodily copresence, by contrast, the authors I study, whatever their ontology, move beyond the limits of ordinary experience as surely as they move beyond a scientific consensus.

Critical analyses of spirit and matter in this period tend to categorize thinkers based on their doctrines as either dualist or monist, and within monism as either materialist or idealist. Without denying the importance of these philosophical divergences, my project tries to attend to the chaotic way images of body and mind enter into descriptive language. For seventeenth-century thinkers, whether dualist or monist, it proved impossible to maintain a clean separation

[24] René Descartes to Henry More, February 5, 1649, in *Philosophical Writings*, Vol III., p. 363.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Isaac Newton, *The Principia*, trans. I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 331-332.

between body and spirit while engaging in sustained imagination of bodily limit cases, whether by dualist or materialist thinkers. To understand each, these thinkers draw fluidly on the tropes of the other. This is especially the case when thinking of the self as engaged in interpersonal contact, rather than in a disembodied scene of reflection. By this I do not just mean that the full self—the union of body and soul—is understood to be intrinsically part of the human experience as we know it, but that even when imagining what might be, these counterfactual fantasies cannot split apart body and soul, instead depicting bodies that work like souls, or a soul modeled on the body.[27]

When seventeenth-century writers imagined union with the body of a loved one, they often drew from a small set of classical sources; I've focused in what follows on Ovid's story of Hermaphroditus, Lucretius' description of lovers' endless desire to be within one another, and the myth of the erotic other half from Plato's *Symposium*. Despite their radically different emotional resonances, philosophical systems, and generic contexts, these three classical depictions of lovers who join or seek to join bodies were in fact linked in the minds of early modern readers. Notably, George Sandys's widely popular translation of and commentary on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, reprinted at least sixteen times between 1620 and 1690, comments on the episode of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis in Book IV by citing at length Lucretius' description of desire as a wish to incorporate the other into oneself in Book IV of *De Rerum Natura*, and referring immediately afterward to the speech of Aristophanes.[28]

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[27] Thus, despite Cavendish's insistence on the materiality of the human soul and her assertion in *Blazing World* that it would be impossible for multiple immaterial souls to lodge in a single material body, her depiction of what theoretically should be a physical coextension seems to work on the model of supernatural possession. In this, her work resembles moments I've previously discussed in Milton and Browne; in the first case, I've suggested that Milton's turn to bodily intermingling as the fulfillment of human sexual impulses is only able to proceed by evoking the language of spiritual union, while in the second, Browne's deep revulsion from certain aspects of the body's materiality produces a valorization of friendship paradoxically expressed in the language of sexual union.

[28] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. George Sandys (London: 1620), 160-161.

The speech assigned to Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium* is perhaps the best known of the three I mention.[29] In his allotted discourse, the writer of comedies explains that human bodies once were doubled; each person's back was joined to another man's or woman's back, forming a masculine, feminine, or androgynous being that could cartwheel about on its eight limbs. When the early humans attempted to climb to Olympus and attack the gods, however, Zeus punished them by splitting them in half, reducing their physical power and leaving each man and woman bereft of his or her former partner. As a consolation, Zeus then moved their sexual organs to the front of the human body, replacing their previous asexual generation with partnered intercourse. Every person now, Aristophanes concludes, is like a one half of a *sumbolon,* (a split die used as friendship token), searching for their matching piece.[30] When a person finds their original partner, they feel, without understanding why, that they have been made whole, and both lovers wish nothing more than to have their bodies fused together.

Aristophanes' speech seems to present sex as a natural, and indeed divinely bestowed, element in the life of lovers who have found their missing half; sex is the closest approximation they have to their former integral body. By contrast, Socrates' own speech later in the *Symposium*, a retelling of a conversation he had with a mysterious woman named Diotima, suggests that good lovers will progress from sexual desire to progressively more abstract and disembodied appreciations of beauty, eventually contemplating the eternal form of beauty itself.[31] This account, similar to the account of love offered in the *Phaedrus,* proved far more central in the reception of Platonic ideas about love than any other perspectives expressed in the

[29] Plato, *Lysias. Symposium. Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1999), 132-147, 189a-193e.
[30] Plato, 141 n.1
[31] Plato, p. 200-209, 210a-212a.

Symposium. However, while Aristophanes' playful speech may not have been intended as a serious description of love, the figure of the androgyne persisted, taken up by later writers working in a Platonic tradition, and heavily linked with Platonizing Christian and Rabbinic traditions of interpreting Genesis.[32]

The second major source-text for the bodily intermingling of lovers comes from Book IV of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*. Lucretius' first-century B.C.E. philosophic poem was a widely diffused text in the seventeenth century; the period witnessed a surge both in scientific interest in materialist and atomist accounts of natural phenomena and in the availability of the carefully-reconstructed classical texts produced by a previous generation of philological labor. By the time the Puritan Lucy Hutchinson wrote a dedicatory letter prefacing her translation of *De Rerum Natura*, she could excuse her efforts in translating the controversial text as the result of "youthful curiosity, to understand things I heard so much discourse of at second hand."[33] Lucretius' popularity in the 1650s, when Hutchinson probably made her translation, was partly due to his importance for contemporary natural philosophers such as Pierre Gassendi.[34] In addition to his place as an Epicurean theorist of matter, however, Lucretius had long been valued, particularly by his earliest Renaissance readers, as Ada Palmer has shown, for other virtues—as a source of moral philosophy and a text that provided a window into an elusive classical world. Indeed, the

[32] James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 66-71.
[33] Titus Lucretius Carus, *Lucy Hutchinson's Translation of Lucretius: "De Rerum Natura"*, trans. Lucy Hutchinson, ed. Hugh De Quehen (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996), 288.
[34] Lucretius, *Lucy Hutchinson's Translation,* 288. Hutchinson is in fact the first person known to have translated all of *De Rerum Natura* into English, though the Bodleian has in its collection another anonymously-translated complete prose translation of *De Rerum Natura*, dating from the seventeenth century (Bodleian MS Rawl D314), which includes the passages Hutchinson censors.

conspicuously-most-annotated passage of Lucretius's text in extant manuscripts is the discussion of sexual desire in Book IV.[35]

De Rerum Natura satirizes romantic love as a form of frenzy, akin to dreaming and madness, but Lucretius' image of desiring lovers was often felt to be disconcertingly seductive by his early modern English readers. In fact, the seventeenth-century translators of *De Rerum Natura* largely declined to put it into English altogether, finding it either too coarse or too erotically charged. [36] Dryden's 1682 excerpted translation was the first to translate the controversial passage into English, and his apology for this choice in the preface encapsulates the tension between the work's warning against sexual passion and its powerful depiction of it:

> 'Tis true there is something and that of some moment to be objected against my Englishing the Nature of Love from the Fourth book of Lucretius: And I can less easily answer why I Translated it, than why I thus Translated it. The objection arises from the Obscenity of the Subject which is aggravated by the too lively, and alluring, delicacy of the Verses. In the first place, without the least Formality of an Excuse, I own it pleased me: and let my Enemies make the worst they can of this Confession; I am not yet so secure from that passion, but that I want my Author's Antidote against it.[37]

Venus is the presiding deity of De Rerum Natura, invoked in its opening lines as the power who "alone governs the course of affairs"—rerum naturam—and "without whom nothing joyful or

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[35] Ada Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 69-70.
[36]In Hutchinson's heavily censored version of book IV, one of the excised passages is summarized by a marginal note as describing "the cause and effects of Love which he makes a kind of dreame" (139, 1080-1210). "But," she goes on to add, "much here was left out for a midwife to translate whose obsceane art it would better become then a nicer pen" (139). According to Hugh De Quehen's editorial notes, gaps in Hutchinson's line numbers suggest that she made a draft translation of 1085-1199 which was, however, omitted from the later, corrected version (288-290). Though Hutchinson expressed more "dread" concerning the consequences of "a wanton dalliance with impious bookes" than the other identified seventeenth century translators of *De Rerum Natura*, she was not, in fact, more censorious (288-290). Thomas Creech's 1682 translation omitted not only the passages Hutchinson omits, but also some of the passages preserved in Hutchinson's rendering, and John Evelyn, who published a translation of Book I in 1656, and completed in manuscript the remainder of *De Rerum Natura* omitted the latter portion of Book IV altogether (Evelyn, xcvi). Titus Lucretius Carus, *John Evelyn's Translation of Titus Lucretius Carus, De Rerum Natura,* trans. John Evelyn, ed. Michael M. Repetzki (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).
[37] John Dryden, *Sylvae, or The Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1702), xix. See Robert Brown for a reading of Lucretius' Latin in this passage as coarse and deglamorizing, in tradition of Roman comedy, though Dryden describes his Englishing as "luscious" (xx); *Lucretius on Love and Sex* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1987), 81-82.

delightful comes into being." Though Venus is the genius of the poem, however, she is also one of the spirits it attempts to exorcise. Lucretius shares with later Neo-Platonism a belief in love as a structuring force that holds the universe together—and also a sharp distinction between that cosmic love and typical experiences of romantic love, about whose value both philosophies express considerable skepticism.

A key part of Lucretius' antidote for romantic love is his vivid description of lovers' desire to intermingle selves and bodies.[38] As in Plato's *Symposium*, the longing to overcome all boundaries separating the lover from the beloved's body lingers in excess of ordinary sexual desire, remaining unsatisfiable. In the couple's most passionate moments, "they gripe, they squeeze, their humid tongues they dart/ As each wou'd force their way to t'others heart" (in Dryden's rendering), and yet find themselves unable either to penetrate or pass with their whole body into the body of the other, *nec penetrare et abire in corpus corpore toto,* as they wish to.[39] For Lucretius, the impossibility of this desire is proof of its ridiculousness. If those who were in love were drawn to a true and beneficial good like food or water, their desires would be able to be satisfied. The fact that they can't be suggests that the lovers are mistaken about what generates their desires; they think they what they want is the substantial body of another being, but instead they are enraptured by the evanescent forms and colors that glint from a passing figure.[40] Solidity disappoints lovers, we are to understand, because their true desire is directed

[38] Titus Lucretius Carus, *On the Nature of Things,* trans. W. H. D. Rouse, rev. Martin F. Smith (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1925), IV.1075-1120.
[39] Lucretius, trans. Rouse, IV.1109-1111.
[40] Lucretius, trans. Rouse, IV.1064-1076

toward mere surface. The persistence of a counterfactual fantasy is not a reflection of the world's inadequacy but of the subject's ignorance.[41]

In Plato's *Symposium*, the desire for conjoined bodies points toward the past, marking a lost original wholeness that is the root of erotic lack and longing; for Lucretius, the desire for conjoined bodies is a category mistake, and has no referent in either the past or the future. Ovid's depiction of Hermaphroditus offers a third way to conceptualize physical coextension with a beloved: the ominous possibility of disfigurement. Here, it is not the desire for bodily union with the other that is felt, but the fear of being swallowed by them. This episode displays many features in common with the story of Narcissus a book prior: the nymph Salmacis sees and falls in love with young Hermaphroditus, the beautiful son of Hermes and Aphrodite, who rebuffs her. As he goes swimming, she clings to him and prays never to be parted from him, a prayer which the gods grant by joining their bodies together; he then prays for the spring to emasculate all who bathe there and his request is also granted.[42] While their limbs are at first simply mixta, "mingled," due to Salmacis' embrace, the gods permanently join them, to Hermaphroditus' disgust. Just as Aristophanes' tale offers an etiology of differences in sexual orientation, Ovid's creates a disparaging account of the origins of intersex bodies. In this model, the risks of being assimilated into a undesired union are a two-fold loss of identity: loss of the body's social legibility, but also disindividuation as the proper name becomes a common noun.

Each of these concerns—the desire to create the possibility of shared somatic experience, the need to direct desire to reliable objects, and anxiety about loss of identity—will resurface

[41] Cf. Spinoza's position that when a person imagines something and suspends judgement about its possibility, or more strongly imagines an impossible thing, their ideas of what they imagine are in fact simply clear enough to show them that what they desire is self-contradictory and cannot exist. Spinoza, IIp49, 147-151.
[42] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2014), IV.317-388.

multiple times in the chapters that follow. The writers my dissertation focuses on draw from each of these sources—Plato and later varieties of neo-Platonism, Lucretian Epicureanism and Ovidian myth—as they develop accounts of what it might mean to share another's body. In my reading of Browne, I'll argue that despite his explicit endorsement of Platonist ideas, Lucretian atomist recombination deeply and anxiously influences his writing, motivating his turn to Lucretian unfulfillable desire. Milton's *Paradise Lost* turns repeatedly to Ovid at key moments in the poem, so it should not be surprising that his version of coextension remains preoccupied with the warnings of Ovidian transformation, and the terrifying possibility of self-loss.[43] While early modern thinkers had a substantial investment in Plato and Platonism, my study suggests the wide range of forms that engagement took; it is useful, perhaps, to talk about Neo-Platonisms rather than Neo-Platonism in the early modern period. The syncretic and Aristotle-influenced Neo-Platonism of figures like Leone Ebreo remains an underacknowledged influence in seventeenth-century, and especially Cavalier, love poetry, which is often conceptualized as being either rarifiedly spiritual or cynically sensual. In addition, I'll argue that something we might call pop Neo-Platonism, much more indebted to casual contemporary adaptations of Platonic tropes than to the writings of central Neo-Platonic figures, substantially shapes the imaginary not only of Margaret Cavendish, attendant at Henrietta Maria's Neo-Platonism-influenced court, but also the Puritan classicist John Milton.

In the texts my dissertation examines, the fantasy of being in the body of a beloved offers a breaking-down or violation of the constitutive boundaries that demarcate between persons. This boundary-violation is benign, rather than destructive, and thus need not be dreaded.

[43] For more on Milton's use of Ovid, see Maggie Kilgour, *Milton and the Metamorphosis of Ovid* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Whereas in the work of twentieth and twenty-first century psychoanalytic theorists such as Leo Bersani, Sigmund Freud, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the dissolution of the boundaries between the subject and the world is both desired and unbearable, inexorably bound to risk, the Early Modern figures I study are interested in envisioning that permeability as a temporary and volitional process—one which thus has the potential to undermine the division between action and passivity, as well as that between body and soul.[44] These counterfactual versions of intimacy are offered in counterpoint to ordinary human experience, and seek to remedy its limitations; they do not present an alternative to the interpersonal, but rather an expansion of what interpersonal intimacy might mean. Across a range of genres, including epic, lyric, essays and prose fiction, attention to the figure of coextension exposes the plural ways that embodied experience, and specifically embodied intimacy, registered as inadequate to early modern thinkers.

[44] While Deleuze and Guattari and Bersani all have projects which challenge Freudian or Lacanian models of psychic health, their work remains deeply shaped by the psychoanalytic tradition.

Chapter 1. "Interinanimation": Soul Transfer in Early Modern English Lyric

"Sir, more than kisses, letters mingle souls," Donne informs Sir Henry Wotton, in the opening of a verse epistle. Donne refers to a trope common in love poetry of his time—kisses which bring the soul out of the body, either to mingle with the beloved's soul, or to leave its owner in a state near death—only to dismiss it, in a statement that exemplifies the higher status afforded to the metaphorical soul-mingling of masculine understanding over that engendered by embodied proximity.[1] Donne's insistence that the ecstasy of letter-writing surpassed the ecstasy of erotic love fits smoothly with the accounts of the place of elite friendship that have been articulated by scholars of the early modern period, presented with particular focus and clarity in Laurie Shannon's *Sovereign Amity* and Ulrich Langer's *The Perfect Friend*.[2] The Ciceronean trope of true friends as "one soul in two bodies" stressed the union that could take place between like-minded friends, juxtaposing their physical separation with a unity of soul. Kathy Eden's work has pointed to texts as a central scene of intimacy in the early modern period, arguing that the rediscovery of Cicero's letters prompted a Renaissance articulation of intimacy that revolved around practices of reading and writing.[3]

In an essay that scholars have taken as a paradigmatic articulation of the aspirations of early modern friendship, Montaigne offers an account of the blending of souls: "In the friendship I speak of, our souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam

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[1] John Donne, "To Sir Henry Wotton" in The Complete English Poems, ed. A. J. Smith (New York Penguin Books, 1986), 214.
[2] Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). Ulrich Langer, *Perfect Friendship (*Geneve: Droz, 1994). See also Wendy Olmsted's analysis of ideals of friendly counsel in *The Imperfect Friend* (Toronto, CA: University of Toronto Press, 2008).
[3] Kathy Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

that joined them, and cannot find it again."[4] The mingling of male friends is accompanied by invidious comparison not only to relationships with women, whom Montaigne believes incapable of the highest friendship, but also relationships between men (or more accurately, between men and adolescent boys) that include a sexual component.[5] A man's romantic love for women, according to Montaigne, is "a rash and wavering fire, waving and diverse" while true friendship (between men) is "a constant and settled heat, all pleasure and smoothness."[6] These contrasting descriptions, Shannon argues, "frame an eroticism not expressive of or central to identity construction, but representing its temporary collapse, a sharp contrast to the self-sovereignty that characterized male friendship."[7]

While Montaigne claims at one point a "free and voluntary" relationship that combined friendship and a sexual bond would be "fuller and more complete" than the friendship he describes since "the entire man would be engaged," overall the view presented of sexual attraction is quite dismissive.[8] Heterosexual desire is soon sated once the excitement of pursuit is over, and "licentious Greek love" between men is often "simply founded on external beauty, the false image of corporal generation."[9] The body's features are "accidental and secondary," while the soul is the true locus of personhood.[10] To come to know the soul requires observation of another's habits of mind and life, but the process can be speeded up in linguistic encounter; Montaigne comes to know Etienne La Boétie first from a distance, through the account of him

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[4] Michel de Montaigne, "Of Friendship," *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald Frame (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958), 139.
[5] Montaigne, 137-138. Of homoerotic attachments, Montaigne says subsequently "all that can be said in favor of the Academy is that this was a love ending in friendship" (139).
[6] Montaigne, 137.
[7] Shannon, 65.
[8] Montaigne, 138. Other factors limiting the closeness of heterosexual love are the restriction of freedom caused by marriage, and the fact that various prudential considerations largely govern both mate-selection and a couple's shared life.
[9] Montaigne, 138.
[10] Montaigne, 138.

given by others, and through reading his writings.[11]

Soul-mingling through kisses, then, presents a stark contrast to this tradition, in which speaking or writing friends thereby unite their souls. Many cases of lyric soul-mingling present a copresence of spirit that does not center on speech and is not reducible to (or, perhaps more accurately for early modern thinkers, exaltable into) it. Here, in contrast to the discourse of friendship, the mingling of a soul means something material, and is accomplished through the kiss. It is not used as a proxy for internal similitude, but is both recognizable and possible because the beloved is understood as other to the self. This trope resists attempts to separate bodily acts of intimacy from access to a more essential, permanent self; rather, it insists on the potential of bodily acts to carry the soul along with them in a way that language can approximate but not replicate. This chapter thus adds to a body of scholarship on early modern friendship that acknowledges the broad strokes of the picture of early modern culture outlined above, but also is attentive to the ways that idealized masculine Renaissance friendship remained continuous with erotic energies, or was appropriated to describe between women. Work by Alan Bray and Jeffrey Masten has documented the eroticism that was present in male friendships, carefully distinguished from the category of sodomy, while Valerie Traub, Harriet Andreadis, Elizabeth Wall and Denise Whalen among others have argued for the existence and importance of discourses of love between women in the early modern period.[12] My account supplements this scholarly bent by pointing to places in early modern literature where sexuality is not simply

[11] Montaigne, 136, 139.

[12] Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), *The Friend* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002). Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Harriet Andreadis, *Sappho in Early Modern England* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001). Elizabeth Wahl, *Invisible Relations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999). Denise Whalen, *Constructions of Female Homoeroticism in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

aligned with the union of souls, but, more radically, is taken to be the mechanism for it.

In this chapter, I examine the implications of the erotic intermingling of souls, in the poems of seventeenth-century lyricists including John Donne, Abraham Cowley, Robert Herrick and Jasper Mayne. I argue that, whereas poems in which kissing allowed lovers' souls to enter each other's bodies were a staple of Renaissance poetry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, over the course of the early seventeenth century, poets begin to portray soul-mingling as the result of sexual activity, not exclusively of the kiss. This shift provides a counter-discourse to the assessment of bodily desire as at odds with a more spiritual affection, suggesting that certain kinds of overflows of the spirit cannot be accomplished by language alone but are products of bodily motion. Recent work by Joe Moshenka and Pablo Maurette has turned our attention to the role touch played in early modern economies of the senses; their work suggests that invidious rankings of touch as the most bestial of the senses in the early modern period were challenged by acknowledgements of its suppleness, its connection to aesthetic perception, its metaphorical power, and its role in the affectionate sociability that gives rise to love, among other virtues.[13] My chapter presents an example of the complex maneuverings sometimes required to produce this revaluation, presenting a case-study in which poets indeed seem to assign higher status to tactile experiences but do so by projecting spirit and the spiritual onto bodily interactions. In the context of seventeenth-century love lyric, the revitalization of touch was dependent on the act of mapping the spatialization of the spirit across the body. Whereas vision, hearing and breath were sometimes identified as the most rarified, least corporeal actions of the body, thus elevating glances and kisses as signifiers of love, the writers who close this chapter imagine the soul

[13] Joe Moshenska, *Feeling Pleasures: the Sense of Touch in Renaissance England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Pablo Maurette, *The Forgotten Sense: Meditations on Touch* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

instead fully present and expressed in the full range of bodily intimacies.

One question that this line of argument naturally raises is methodological: what kind of evidence about lived experience can we expect poetry to provide? *As You Like It*'s Touchstone provides a pessimistic account of the reliability of verse: "The truest poetry is the most feigning. What [lovers] swear in poetry may be said as lovers they do feign." In what follows, I suggest that the appropriation of the trope of a single soul in two bodies, and the expansion of soul intermingling from the chaste kiss to sexual intercourse more broadly, undermines contemporaneous claims urged for the distinctive power of friendship to unify souls. And yet my evidence is rooted in a genre that often delights in paradox and counter-intuitive conceits, in wit's capacity to justify claims that cannot be right. Any answer to that objection must suggest that poems offer phenomenological documents rather than truth claims—that it matters that such a description felt plausible, even if it was not meant literally.

One long-standing tradition of thinking about poetry emphasizes its performativity. The poem has two situations: that which it depicts and the meta-situation of being read, or heard, by an audience. As Barbara Johnson observes, perceptions of poetic (or dramatic or novelistic) fictiveness grow out of the possible misalignments between the motives of or effects anticipated by the poem's intradiegetic speaker vs the poem's author or performer.[14] For Jonathan Culler, as for Touchstone, the address of love poems presents a special problem. Precisely because the fiction of their address to a beloved is so strong, Culler finds it important to recognize love poems as "compositions by poets for an audience other than a particular lover, where address is a rhetorical strategy of triangulated address."[15] Yet, Culler also cites approvingly C.S. Lewis's description of canonical love poetry as "an erotic liturgy," objects available for others to repeat

[14] Barbara Johnson, *The Critical Difference* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1980), 52-66.
[15] Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 206.

and perform.[16] In fact the two models emphasize slightly different points of attachment: the reader may be a listener, alert to a message distinct from the one received by the imagined addressee, or the reader may choose to enact the poem, inhabiting, however temporarily the position of its speakers. The former description orients our attention to poems in which a primary pleasure is that of decoding a complex message, the second toward poems whose attraction comes from their capacity to encode broadly-available experiences. Poems whose genre seems to belong primarily to the first category will provide a different kind of evidence about early modern structures of feeling than those belonging primarily to the latter.

And yet, the features that make poems tonally complex—voicings of irony, alienation, subversion, frivolity—are ones that literary analysis is well-equipped to identify and integrate into an account of a text as a whole. More destabilizing, perhaps, is the idea that poems which betray few signs of explicit self-undermining may still be engaged in a different project than that of prose, that a poem's ultimate allegiance may be to itself rather to a shareable account of the world. It is however, precisely this non-fidelity to the real that makes poems a useful source of information about experiences which exist tentatively, without rising to the level of strong or normative claims.[17]

In fact, the clearest example of this comes perhaps in the writing on friendship itself. As Laurie Shannon observes, "the texts of friendship carefully track Cicero's modifiers in the nuanced and suppositional phrase, 'The friend is, *as it were,* another the same.'"[18] Donne, in the passage quoted above says not that letters mingle souls, but that they do so more than kisses do. And yet, despite the fact that theorizations of friendship tend to say that it is *as though* friends

[16] Culler, 207.
[17] This observation borrows from the framework of Rei Terada's *Looking Away*, discussed in the Introduction.
[18] Shannon, 21.

share a soul, rather than affirming it as an empirical truth, this sentiment has widely been understood as revealing something fundamental about how friendship was conceptualized in the period, while similar experiential descriptions of erotic union of souls have not been understood to be important to how we understand early modern relationality or accounts of the self. And, in fact, this suspicion does not come from critics alone: the huge popularity in the seventeenth century of poems deriding ideals of Platonic love offers further evidence of the special skepticism that attaches to love lyric.

Nonetheless, we can find in at least one period voice the opposite claim: the idea that the descriptions of the boundary transcending power of friendship are no less a poetical fiction than the lover's soul kiss. In a bitter essay on the impossibility of finding true friendship, Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland suggests that ecstatic descriptions of friendship were merely written "to laye open the high reach of their [the philosophers'] Conceipts, and how by their fine wittes they could frame an heaven in an impossibility, and divine joys in earthly bodies," rather than from a true belief in the reality of what they described.[19] And these already strained claims, he alleges, were then "farther amplified by fantastical fancies of Poetts," and perpetuated by "sharkeing gallants well practiced in youths Condicions," for whom it was "the best way to cloake their devises from poore unexperienced Eyes."[20] Here indeed we find many of the reproaches leveled against love poetry used against the doctrine of friendship. Where writers such as Montaigne claim that true friendship is extremely rare, Percy regards it a myth altogether.[21] Percy suggests that friendship's image was knitted together from the fancies of

[19] Misha Teramura and Henry Percy, "Against Friendship: An Essay by the 'Wizard' Earl of Northumberland [with text]," *English Literary History 47.31*, 380-411.
[20] Percy, 406-407.
[21] Montaigne, 140. Montaigne of course, also cites an Aristotelian saying, now usually translated differently, that can be read to similar effect: "Oh my friends, there is no friend." For an analysis of the possible implications of this contradiction, with particular attention to issues of likeness, fraternity and reciprocity in political belonging, see Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (New York: Verso, 2005).

philosophers and poets, and that its primary use was in the exploitation of the naïve and in experienced by the cynical. Of course, the intensity of Percy's desire to expose the false promise of friendship comes from his own experience of having believed in it, an experience his essay poignantly narrates. If the image of perfect friendship was not the less weighty, or socially powerful, for being rarely experienced, I suggest that the conceits of love poetry have had real psychological power as well.

In what follows, I begin by tracing the origin of the trope of the soul kiss and some features of its early use in Neo-Latin and English verse. This is followed by analysis of various developments in seventeenth-century verse that continue to imagine the intermingling of lovers' souls, while providing more robust affirmations of the body as the means of that intermingling. Donne's "The Ecstasy" and Cowley's "Platonic Love," I argue, hold on to the image of joined souls sprinkled across Renaissance kiss poetry, while foregrounding the theorization of love that the *Basia* poems downplay, but their account of love differs strikingly from most commonly acknowledged Italian source-texts for the soul-kiss. While it still offers an ecstatic union, in this perspective, the body is not the first step of a staircase, which must be passed through but left behind, but rather an element that lovers must reintegrate into a shared life, once they have moved beyond it. A more challenging departure, though one less self-consciously narrated, comes in the poetry of Robert Herrick and Jasper Mayne. In these poems, I'll trace a version of soul exchange that takes on a more complete bodily timbre than the kiss poem, suggesting full sexual intercourse rather than the kiss as a plausible mechanism for the joining of souls. In doing so, these poems challenge the explicit linkage of the mouth, the source of both breath and of words, with the more spiritual parts of the self, suggesting that access to the soul might come through the body as much as through language.

I.

The most extended study of the historical development of the trope of the soul kiss is found in Nicolas Perella's monograph, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane,* while Alex Wong's *The Poetry of Kissing in Early Modern England* focuses particularly on the rise of the *basium*, or kiss poem, in Italian and Dutch Neo-Latin poetry, and its subsequent presence in English verse.[22] In what follows, I will extend their wide-ranging analyses by examining how English authors, writing toward the end of the Renaissance flourishing of the genre, removed the trope of lover's exchange of souls in a kiss from the ocular and oscular contexts in which it commonly was depicted. Where Perella sees the departure from orthodox neo-Platonism as an indication of writerly frivolity, and Wong's work focuses on the ambiguous masculinity of the lover in kiss poetry, my chapter argues that seventeenth-century lyric revisions of Renaissance tropes of the soul kiss offer an unusual and under-recognized model for thinking about both the body's relationship to the soul, and about both body and soul's role in intimacy. In order to establish the noteworthy character of these departures, however, the chapter will begin by briefly laying out the central features of the earlier tradition.

While Catullus's kiss poems—not at all spiritualized—were the most influential precursors to the Renaissance *basia* genre as a whole, the earliest depiction of the kiss as an occasion for the migration of the soul comes in an epigram attributed to Plato in *The Greek Anthology*: "When I kissed Agathon, I held my soul at my lips. Poor soul! She came hoping to

[22] Nicolas Perella, *The Kiss, Sacred and Profane* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969). Alex Wong, *The Poetry of Kissing in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017).

cross over to him.[23]" As Wong observes, the epigram was only in the Palatine text of the anthology and not in the Anthology of Planudes, the version available to most Renaissance readers.[24] The poem was also available in Diogenes Laertius's life of Plato, however, and in Latin translations and enlargements of the couplet by Aulus Gellius and Macrobius.[25] The trope also emerged in other classical texts: Petronius *Satyricon* contains the desire to exchange souls with a lover through kisses, and both Anna in the *Aeneid* and Venus in Bion's *Lament for Adonis* express a wish to breathe in the dying loved one's soul through a final kiss.[26]

Though a range of classical precedents existed, the impetus for widespread Renaissance experimentation with the genres of the kiss poem, broadly, and employment of the trope of soul exchange in particular, seems to have come through Florentine authors writing in the Neo-Platonist tradition. While the Neo-Platonic figurations of spiritual union in Ficino and della Mirandola pictured the soul's migration to the beloved or to celestial Venus, that remained distinct from any physical intimacy between lovers, and in fact presents a contrast to it. Castiglione's *The Courtier* (1528), by contrast, which depicts the adoption of Neo-Platonic love into a courtly milieu, via the speech of Cardinal Bembo's character, was a central and early text in linking the soul kiss of mystical union to the touch of an actual couple. The kiss is imagined in Castiglione's *The Courtier* to be the point where the bodily met the spiritual— "a knitting

[23] *The Greek Anthology*, trans. W. R. Paton, rev. Michael A. Tueller, (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) 1:254-255, Book V.78. Perella, 6. The most influential Catullan poems were Catullus 5 and Catullus 7, both of which take the project of numbering endless kisses as their subject.
[24] Wong, 136. Though poems from the collection began to circulate in manuscript after it was discovered in Heidelberg by Claudius Salmasius in 1606, it was not printed until the late 18th century and access would have remained limited for most of the seventeenth century.
[25] Perella, 6, 160. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R.D. Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) 1:304-305, Book III, "Plato," 32.
[26] Perella 7, 191, Wong 138. Petronius Arbiter, *Satyricon*, trans. Michael Heseltine, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 184-185, paragraph 79. Bion, "Lament for Adonis," in *Theocritus, Moschus, Bion*, ed., trans. Neil Hopkinson, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 510-511, ln.45-49. Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.634-85.

together both of body and soule."[27] I will outline some of the features of the kiss trope as presented in that text, both because Castiglione's work unites many of the strands that come to be important in understanding the scope of the soul-exchange figure, and because it went on to be a hugely influential text in England through Thomas Hoby's 1561 translation, the version I will cite below.

The discussion of the soul kiss arises in the work when Cardinal Pietro Bembo undertakes to explain to the assembled ladies and gentlemen that an older man, who lacks the excuse that he's carried along by the furor of youth, can still love with wisdom and dignity, if he loves in the right way. Kissing is permissible (though as the furthest degree of physical intimacy) for a love that is chaste, or "honest"; it remains morally noxious, however, for lovers desiring sexual intimacy, for whom it would merely constitute foreplay. The reason that it is allowable for honest, rather than sensual love, is that "reasonable lovers" recognize the mouth's liminal status: they identify the mouth with language since "it is an issue for the words, that be the enterpreters of the soul," and recognize it as the location of "the inward breth, whiche is also called the soule," glossing over the fact that the mouth is also "a percell," or part, "of the bodye."[28] The lover thus desires to kiss the beloved because of the mouth's proximity to the soul: " because he feeleth that, that bonde is the openynge of an entrey to the soules… Wherupon a kisse may be said to be rather a cooplinge together of the soule, then of the bodye."[29]

Castiglione's kiss allows the souls of lovers, powerfully desiring one another, to pour themselves into the other's body, intermingling, with the paradoxical result that each body has two souls, and that one soul "framed of both" rules ("in a manner," Bembo hedges) the two

[27] Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Courtyer*, trans. Thomas Hoby (London: Printed by Wyllyam Seres, 1561), 184. Early English Books Online.
[28] Castiglione, 184.
[29] Castiglione 184.

bodies.[30] In addition to the more familiar metaphor of single soul governing two bodies, then, the kiss generates another image— that of two souls at home in a single body. Where the first suggests perfected likeness, however—the souls cannot be told apart—the second suggests the capability to commune with a genuine other more intimately than human experience typically permits. And, in fact, it is the manufacture of one controlling soul out of the two that is judged to be a figure of speech—the claim for the presence of two souls requires no such disclaimer. The body with two souls could be a fearful figure, as in demonic possession, if both souls vied for control, but here it seems to evade such worries and align itself instead with inspiration. And yet, the more striking fact is that Castiglione's Bembo cannot decide which of the two descriptions is the more apt—it is impossible to tell two souls in one body (or is that four souls, in two bodies?) from one soul in two. It appears almost to be an accident of perspective—when the body is focalized, it is the difference in souls that becomes visible, when the soul, the extension of the soul over two bodies. Difference in soul is experienced via the framing device of the body, difference in body in relation to unity of soul.

While Castiglione provides an enthusiastic and mystical account of the soul kiss, the dialogic form of his work allows it also to provide a preview of the critiques or parodies that would accompany the phenomenon of the soul kiss in seventeenth-century English verse—some focused on the superiority of spiritual joys to carnal, some on the disappointments of sexual possession, some on the naivete of those who subscribed to Platonic love. These first two positions are voiced by Bembo himself, who emphasizes that the intermingling of the soul kiss is merely an early stage on the ladder toward divine love.

One might discern this simply from the fact that it employs the lowest of the senses—

[30] Castiglione 184.

sight, hearing and touch. Here, the power of the kiss to entangle souls does nothing to displace the basic hierarchy of the senses. Indeed, in Hoby's translation, the very word "sense" comes at moments to be identified specifically with the lowlier senses:

> Let him laye aside therefore the blinde judgemente of the sense, and injoye wyth his eyes the bryghtnesse, the comelynesse, the lovynge sparkles, laughters, gestures and all the other pleasant fournitours of beauty: especially with hearinge the sweetenesse of her voice, the tunablenesse of her woordes, the melodie of her singinge and playinge on instrumentes (in case the woman beloved be a musitien) and so shall he with most dintie foode feede the soule through the meanes of these two senses, which haue litle bodelye substance in them, and be the ministers of reason, without entringe farther towarde the bodye with covetinge unto anye longinge otherwise then honest.[31]

When Bembo speaks of the blind judgment of the "sense," he seems to primarily refer to touch, not the powers of sight and hearing by which humans in fact seem to do most of their judging: these by contrast have been raised to the special status of "ministers of reason." Like the kiss, these senses are assigned a position which is on the boundary of embodiment and disembodiment—they "have little bodelye substance in them." Just as the soul kiss, in Castiglione, leaves the valorization of sight over touch intact, it also leaves intact the overall denigration of romantic love in comparison to more lofty attachments. Going from a chaste love to a love directed toward universal good is like emerging from a very narrow room—an apt parallel to the bodily enclosure of soul-mingling. The fully mature follower of the good will replace the mingling of souls with the "meddlinge…together" in the mind of all beauties, and thus beholding, instead of individual charms, "an uniuersall, that decketh out all bodies." And yet even this soul, still attuned to goodness in its human instantiations, is only like a fledgling chick, that "dare… not stray farr from the neste, nor commytt theym selues to the wynde and open weather."[32]

[31] Castiglione 182-183.
[32] Castiglione 185.

The soul kiss is also contrasted from the first with the trope of sexual disappointment that would become a standard feature of love lyric, and, in English literature, would be associated particularly with Cavalier poetry.[33] Castiglione's account of desire's mistakenness, however, doesn't differentiate between post-coital rejection of the beloved and perpetual longing. Both responses are a contrast to the contentment that should be felt by one who pursues and obtains a true good, and which is felt by the one who pursues heavenly and not sensual love.[34] While in this seminal text the soul kiss is aligned primarily with an eros that is abstract and suspicious of the body, the poetry that borrowed the trope, in sixteenth and seventeenth century Neo-Latin, such as Janus Secundus' *Basia*, and in the French, English and Italian vernacular poetry of the same period, tended toward setting aside the Neo-Platonic roots of the image, focusing rather on the embodied and sexual pleasures of the kiss itself.[35] Thus Jonson's translation of a fragment from Petronius, for instance, takes a classical rather than later Neo-Platonist lineage, and contrasts the "repentance" that follows sexual enjoyment with the continually renewed appetite for kissing:

> Doing, a filthy pleasure is, and short;
> And done, we straight repent us of the sport:
> Let us not then rush blindly on unto it:
> Like lustful Beasts, that only know to do it:
> For Lust will languish, and that Heat decay,
> But thus, thus, keeping endless Holy-day,
> Let us together closely lie, and kiss,
> There is no labour, nor no shame in this;
> This hath pleas'd, doth please, and long will please; never

[33] See for example, William Shakespeare's Sonnet 129, "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame," Ben Jonson's translation of a fragment from Petronius, "Doing a filthy pleasure is, and short," which specifically recommends kissing as an alternative, Sir John Suckling's "Against Fruition" (I and II), and Abraham Cowley's "Against Fruition."

[34] Castiglione 178.

[35] Perella's account of this phenomenon tends to lament this as a coarsening of the trope, while Wong responds with skepticism about the ultimate significance of the trope's Platonic roots. Perella, 190; Wong, 140-153. While the earthiness of later love poems is sometimes characterized as anti-Petrarchan, see Richard Strier on the subtle treatment of sexuality in Petrarch, *The Unrepentant Renaissance* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011), 59-75.

Can this decay, but is beginning ever.[36]

In this line of development, the critique that Castiglione's Bembo directs to sensual enjoyment in any form is reformulated as an adjudication between two forms of erotic enjoyment—the kiss, soul-mingling or not, tends to be identified with the good eros of perpetual desire, and sexual climax with the more scorching eros that produces disenchantment and repulsion.[37]

One important reason that the soul-kiss trope suggested itself to both classical and Renaissance writers was the fact that in both Greek and Latin, and in some vernaculars, the terms used for soul also had the sense of breath. In Latin, *anima* and *spiritus* both had senses of life force and spirit, and a more mundane breath, and this was also the case for the Greek *pneuma*, though not for the word *psuche* [38]. Indeed, in Castiglione's Italian text, when he explains that rational lovers enjoy the kiss because the mouth is the sigh of the "the inward breth, whiche is also called the soule," it is the word *anima* that he employs.[39] In addition to vital breath, both the eyes and the kiss were sometimes thought to be sites of the exchange of vital spirits—not a disembodied life-force, but the thinnest fluids of the body, which nonetheless had an inspiriting power. Thus in a sixteenth-century treatise on the kiss, Francisco Patrizi explains that the reason that kiss on the mouth so surpasses other kisses is that lovers "inadvertently drink each other spirits," since the moist parts of the body contain a greater proportion of vital spirits than the dry.[40] Castiglione's Bembo similarly explains that this is why simply viewing the beloved can

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[36] Ben Jonson, "LXXXVIII Fragmentum Petron. Arbitr. The Same Translated," *The Complete Poems of Ben Jonson* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1975), 251.

[37] A deeper treatment of anti-fruition arguments as articulations of a hedonistic rather than an ethical mean and as documents of courtly self-presentation can be found in Joshua Scodel, "The Pleasures of Restraint: The Mean of Coyness in Cavalier Poetry," *Criticism* 38.2 1996, 239-279. For a reading of anti-fruition poetry and female coyness as products of a cultural tendency to devalue women after sex, see William Kerrigan's "A Theory of Female Coyness," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38.2 1996, 209-222.

[38] One proposed etymology for the other Greek word for soul, *psuche*, also derives from a verb meaning to blow, though it is not universally accepted. "anima," "spiritus," *Oxford Latin Dictionary*; "pneuma," "psuche," *Liddell, Scott and Jones*.

[39] Castiglione, 184.

[40] Francesco Patrizi, *Delfino ovvero del bacio*, in *Lettere ed opuscoli inediti,* ed. D. Aguzzi Barbagli (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1975), 142. Cited in Maurette, 87-88.

have the same inspiriting power as the kiss, since the eye also propels vital spirits. Indeed, some uses of the trope of the soul kiss may not seem to suggest any more transcendent intermingling than this of the vital spirits. Marvell seems to have this in mind in "To His Coy Mistress," when he observes that "now thy willing soul transpires/ at every pore with urgent fires"—the soul that darts out of the mistress's every pore may be her immortal one, but is more likely a diffuse life-force.

In the English context, however, "soul" by the seventeenth century did dominantly mean a disembodied and immortal part of the self, with the word "spirit" typically reserved for the rarified fluids of the body. Indeed, while the OED offers a few instances of "soul" used to mean life-force in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, every instance offered from 1500 on is found in the context of translation. Donne's "The Expiration," thus offers an account of the kiss in which both "vapours" and soul are exchanged, and Chapman's 1614 marriage poem for Lady Frances Howard and the Earl of Somerset offers an elaborate system of solvents, contrasting the mind's constant with the body's fluxes: "in each bodie, there is ebbe and flood/ Of blood in euery vaine, of spirits in blood;/Of Joyes in spirits, of the Soule in Joyes."[41] Here, though the soul's pleasure waxes and wanes with the body's well-being, the edifice of material flows is in fact able to reach to the soul, as distinct from spirit, because it is mediated by affect. Soul and spirit are distinguished, with spirit as the more rarified companion of blood, but joy mediated between spirit and soul, just as spirit connects back down, in a material hierarchy, to blood. In the earlier neo-Latin context as well, the pointed use of soul in its more spiritual sense is indicated by the frequent use of the trope of one soul in two bodies. This continued to be used, with some variations, in poems that envision souls intermingling, particularly in the poems of

[41] George Chapman, *Andromeda Liberata* (London, 1614), 25.

Janus Secundus himself, whose collection *Liber Basiorum* was published in 1541, and become one of the seminal texts for subsequent Renaissance kiss poetry.[42] In Basium 13, the lover's soul has almost left his body entirely for the underworld, but is recalled by the breath of the mistress—an especially common trope. After the life-restoring kiss, a single spirit sustains the two of them, but the poem leaves it ambiguous whether they live together or die together at the close. At any rate, "*unica de gemino corpore vita fluet*"—one life flows from their doubled bodies. But the choice of vocabulary here exceeds the observation that the two bodies share a life force. *Unica* often suggests uniqueness—their soul, we might conclude, is not only single, but singular. Similarly, the use of *gemina* suggests that the symmetry of the soul posited by the "one soul in two bodies" formula here might be extended to the body as well. These two lovers are body doubles.

In Basium 10, Secundus describes how enjoyable it is "*miscere duas juncta per ora animas/ Inque peregrinum diffundere corpus utranque*"—"to mix two souls through joined mouths, and to pour forth each into a strange body." Both lines contain adjectives—*juncta* and *peregrinum*—that seem as appropriate to the other noun in their clause as they do to the noun they agree with. The mouths of course are joined together, but, more pertinently, the souls have also been joined together, through the mouth's action: *juncta* could well apply to both in meaning, though not grammatically.[43] Similarly, while the souls do enter a new body, *peregrinum*'s lexical connection to *peregrinatio,* or travelling, seems to evoke the motion of the souls as much as it does the body's newness. The confusion of persons produced by the wandering souls of lovers is mirrored in the migrating application of the lines' adjectives.

[42] Janus Secundus, *Oevres Completes*, ed. Roland Guillot, vol. 1 (Paris: Champion, 2005), 140.
[43] Translations are my own unless otherwise marked. Wong does in fact translate *juncta* as modifying the souls and not the mouth; his rendering is "mix two united souls through the mouth," 172.

Janus Lernutius's 1614 *Basia* contained even more explicit reworkings of the single soul in two bodies trope. In one, he rejects the Catullan innumerable kisses, in favor of one by which "*geminae… animae conflentur in unam,"* their two souls may fuse into one.[44] In another poem, one which begins with the striking image of the lover as leech on his mistress's lips, Lernutius rejects the merging of souls as an incomplete bliss: while the lovers will mingle their souls by kissing, rather than producing one soul for two bodies, they will effect instead one spirit for one body.[45] The effect is coyly ambiguous—the single body perhaps refers to sexual intercourse, but the poem claims for itself a transcendence that surpasses the well-known joining of souls, not because a bodily intermingling is more real than the putative sharing of souls, but because these lovers can enjoy both.

At the very least, then, the tropes of the kiss poem appropriated the figure of august and intellectual love—whether shared between friends or Platonic lovers—to serve instead as the proof of the full capacity of embodied love to involve all parts of the self, a parallel move to Browne's deployment of the tropes of sexual union to characterize friendship analyzed in a later chapter. While some poetic reactions to the concepts of Platonic love specifically dismissed the sharing of souls, several English poems of the seventeenth century dismiss claims for a de-sexualized love, but retain the concept of a physical mingling of souls. *The Courtier* of course itself contains a perspective in which the soul kiss is a mirage, rather than a superior satisfaction to sex. M. Morello, the earthiest of the company, contends that "the possessing of this beawtye, whiche he prayseth so muche, without the body, is a dreame."[46] He further argues that procreation—the beloved's willingness to bear a lover's child—is both a better proof of love and

[44] Janus Lernutius, "Basium 19," *Iani Lernutii Initia, Basia, Ocelli, et Alia Poemata*, (Leiden: L. Elzevier, 1614), 321.
[45] Lernutius, "Basium 6," 309-310.
[46] Castiglione 179.

a more concrete way of engendering beauty.[47] This strand of argument—though with less emphasis on procreation—would go on to be a major genre of love lyric in the seventeenth century.[48] In these works, the soul kiss is often identified with the rejected account of love, taken synecdochally as a stand-in for the whole edifice of Platonic love, despite whatever distance its poetic instantiations may have had from Neo-Platonic doctrine. Thus William Cartwright's "No Platonique Love," inveighs against talk of intermingling spirits and kissing soul, concluding wryly, "I know they boast they souls to souls Convey, How e'r they meet, the Body is the Way." [49] Cartwright thus slyly tweaks the Neo-Platonic dictum cited by Milton's Raphael: that for those bent toward heavenly things, love "is both way and guide."[50]

A more unusual case is that of Thomas Stanley, who translated some of Janus Secundus' *Basia* poems into English in a 1651 volume of assorted translations. His poem, "Speaking and Kissing," envisions a lover who is brought to the edge of death by hearing his mistress speak and then recovered by her kiss:

> Lost in this pleasing ecstasy,
> I join my trembling lips to thine,
> And back receive that life from thee
> Which I so gladly did resign.
>
> Forbear, Platonic fools! T'inquire
> What numbers do the soul compose
> No harmony can life inspire,
> But that which from these accents flows.

The poem's title, "Speaking and Kissing," suggests that the voice, harmony and accents referred

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[47] Castiglione 182.
[48] See in addition to the poems discussed below, Richard Lovelace's "Love Made in the First Age," and Thomas Carew's "A Rapture."
[49] William Cartwright, *Comedies, Tragi-comedies, with Other Poems, by Mr William Cartwright, late student of Christ-Church in Oxford* (London: Humphrey Moseley, 1651), 246-247. Cartwright however uses the trope of the soul kiss more sympathetically in other poems: "Ariadne deserted by Theseus," "Aglaura looking upon her slain" and a poem for the wedding of the Princess Mary with William of Orange.
[50] John Milton, *Paradise Lost* in *John Milton: The Complete Poems* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1998), 301 VIII.613

to in the poem are employed in speech, but the consistent deployment of terms from a musical register—those mentioned above, but also "compose" and "numbers"—support the idea that the beloved's speech is as mellifluous as music, or at least verse. It is not kissing, here, but hearing his mistress' speech that sends his soul to the brink of death—her kiss, in the familiar use of the trope, is required to preserve and restore his life. And yet, even writing in the voice of a speaker whose intense susceptibility seems to evoke the often-mocked Platonic lover, the poem eagerly distinguishes its form of love from that of "foolish" Platonists. The key difference between him and them is conveyed through their different employment of musical paradigms. While the Platonists seek to bring the lovers in harmony with the meters and melodies of the universe, this lover stakes his life on the sustaining power of the mistress's accent. These lovers need not climb love's stair—they are content with the inspiration of fainting love and restoring kisses.

II.

I now turn to two English poems that take a more ambiguous attitude toward Neo-Platonic soul exchange: John Donne's "The Exstasie," published after his death in 1633, though likely written much earlier, and Abraham Cowley's "Platonic Love," from his 1647 collection, *The Mistress.* While both poems ultimately reject a narrowly Neo-Platonic model, these verses, in contrast to other seventeenth-century poems that offer a knowing and cynical rejection of Platonic love, offer a revised but still idealized version of it. Donne's "The Exstasie" has been the object of intense critical scrutiny, and this chapter will not attempt to provide a full account of the poem. Indeed, given the interpretive controversy the poem has attracted, doing so would be a monumental task. Twentieth-century arguments about the poem have primarily focused on questions of its sincerity: whether the poem was, as Ezra Pound notably claimed, an example of

"Platonism believed," or diverged from Neo-Platonic doctrine, and whether it describes the sublime height of romantic love, or presents a cynical attempt at seduction.[51] Indeed, for many critics, though not all, these two questions are identical: if the poem doesn't present a viable account of Neo-Platonic doctrine, it must be a rhetorical ploy rather than a genuine expression of feeling. More nuanced accounts of the poem's philosophical context, however, particularly Helen Gardner's influential essay, "The Argument about the Ecstasy" and AJ Smith's work in *The Metaphysics of Love,* draw out the influence of more syncretistic early-modern love treatises, especially Leone Ebreo's popular work *The Dialogues of Love* (1535)*,* on the poem.[52] I follow Gardner's reading in rejecting a reading of the poem as a cynical attempt at seduction, and, more importantly, in seeing the poem as part of a tradition of thinking of romantic love that sees spiritual and physical union as aligned, an affirmation of Neo-Aristotelian views of love rather than merely a pointed rejection of Platonism. I supplement her account as well as Smith's by drawing attention to the way that central moves of Donne's poem are mirrored in Cowley's "Platonic Love."[53]

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[51] Ezra Pound, *The ABC of Reading* (London: G. Routledge, 1934), 126, cited in Helen Gardner, "The Argument About 'The Ecstasy,'" *Essential Articles for the Study of John Donne's Poetry* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1975), 239. The seminal statement of the cynical position is found in Pierre Legouis's work; see *Donne the Craftsman* (Paris: H. Didier, 1928), 68-69. A good overview of the twentieth-century critical argument about "The Ecstasy" can be found in Rene Graziani's essay, "John Donne's 'The Extasie' and Ecstasy," *The Review of English Studies* 19.74 1968, 121-136. Graziani also points out the presence of an onlooker has precedent in some sixteenth-century French texts, Antoine Heroet's *La Parfaict Amye* (1542) and Jacques Gohorry's *Amadis de Gaula* (1544), describing love ecstasy—in those instances, made necessary because the lovers are themselves too removed from consciousness to narrate their ecstasy, 124-129.

[52] Helen Gardner, "The Argument About 'The Ecstasy,'" *Essential Articles for the Study of John Donne's Poetry* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1975), 239-258. AJ Smith, *The Metaphysics of Love* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 187-220.

[53] Leone Ebreo's text in particular draws heavily on both Platonic and Aristotelian texts, among other sources; to describe it as neo-Aristotelian isn't to deny its significant Platonic influences, but only to distinguish it from the writings of more doctrinaire Platonists such as Marsilio Ficino or Pico della Mirandola. Gardner suggests a handful of connections between *The Dialogues of Love* and "The Extasie." Donne's statement that that love "makes both one, each this and that" and especially the redoubling and multiplication of the violet she sees mirrored in Philo's explanation that two who love each other mutually are not two but either "only one or else four" (four since each is both lover and beloved) (148). Other elements that join the poem to the dialogue are the discussion of eyebeams, the compoundedness of the soul, the idea that intelligences love spheres they animate, with application to the relation of soul and body, and the metaphor of gold and alloy for the soul's relation to the body (149-150). I will focus below

Several of the distinctive features that critics have attended to in "The Exstasie" are also present in Cowley's poem. Both suggest that the body is part of love from the beginning not as an initiation, but as a foundation; both end on a disruptive image of an observing third party, and both are occupied by the question of how much sexual difference matters to the lovers. While Cowley, writing in the 1640s, may well have consciously imitated Donne, the poem is far from being a mechanical echo of "The Exstasie." The poem is less indebted to Donne's language or imagery than to the conceptual problem he sets out, and its answers to those problems take their own distinctive form. By reading these poems with one another, Donne's poem comes to seem less like a document of peculiar commitment to an entwined body and soul; it stands within a mingled Platonic and Aristotelian lineage that other writers of love-lyric also turned to.[54] While Donne and Cowley, presenting a version of soul transfer that doesn't require the facilitation of the kiss, both ultimately affirm the value of bodily connection as well as the union of souls in romantic love, the two elements of the self remain ultimately separable. This contrasts with the model of intimacy apparent in Renaissance kiss poem, and especially in the later developments of the trope examined subsequently, in the work of Robert Herrick and Jasper Mayne, in which the intermingling of souls is inextricable from bodily flows.

Donne's poem presents two lovers experiencing an ecstasy—a departure of the soul from their bodies. At the poem's outset, they seem to lie on a bank, motionless and "sepulchral."[55] Donne's poem pointedly avoids the possibility that a kiss joins these two lovers, and in fact there is no mechanism or explanation established for their union. In "The Extasie," we are told that the

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on what is the most substantial point of connection, both for my argument and for the poem's—Ebreo's account of the role of sexuality and physical desire in "honest" love.

[54] For a reading precisely of Donne's peculiar commitment to an entwined body soul throughout his work, see Ramie Targoff's *John Donne, Body and Soul* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[55] John Donne, "The Exstasie" in The Complete English Poems, ed. A. J. Smith (New York Penguin Books, 1986), 53-54, line 18.

lovers are linked by their hands and eyes, but also, and seemingly independently, that their souls have gone out of their bodies to meet hanging in the world:

> Our hands were firmly cemented
> With a fast balm, which thence did spring,
> Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread
> Our eyes upon one double string;
> So to' intergraft our hands, as yet
> Was all the means to make us one,
> And pictures in our eyes to get
> Was all our propagation.
> As 'twixt two equal armies, Fate
> Suspends uncertain victory,
> Our souls (which to advance their state
> Were gone out) hung 'twixt her, and me.
> And whilst our souls negotiate there,
> We like sepulchral statues lay;
> All day, the same our postures were,
> And we said nothing, all the day.[56]

While we've observed that soul transfer is also sometimes said to occur through the eyes, here that is left as, at most, a possibility. Indeed, the quatrain structure of the poem seems to distinguish the displaced souls from the "eye-babies" hovering between the lovers. The stanza describing the linked hands and eyes of the couple (5-8), is followed by a second, parallel quatrain—the second half of the sentence—which provides more detail about these joined hands and eyes, linking each to a vocabulary of procreation. Thus the hands are at first "cemented/ with a fast balm"—already a description that might evoke male semen or female seed—but this is followed by the language of grafting, a gardening intervention designed to allow a tree to bear the desired type of fruit, and thus strongly linked with concepts of reproduction, though not necessarily heteronormatively natural procreation.[57] Straightforward "propagation" however is

[56] Donne, "The Extasie," 9-20.
[57] For a discussion of the treatment of terms of grafting in Early Modern gardening manuals, and its association both with alternatives to procreation and with writing in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, see Vin Nardizzi's essay, "Shakespeare's Penknife: Grafting and Seedless Generation in the Procreation Sonnets," *Renaissance and Reformation* 32.1 (2009),

referred to immediately after, in relation to the eyes; the poem imagines the small images of each partner visible within the other's eye as the first children of the pair, their only offspring to date.[58] By contrast, the migrant souls are not linked to the joined eyes, but enter the poem following end-stopped lines, and connect syntactically to the subsequent idea, presented in lines 17-20: due to the absence of the souls, the lovers' bodies were left motionless like corpses. Thus the reader is told that the souls have gone out from the body like potentates in order to join together, but no further explanation is provided.

"The Extasie," is not the only text in which Donne describes souls temporarily leaving their proper bodies. In a 1607 letter to Henry Goodyer, Donne suggests that letter-writing accomplishes "a kind of ecstasy": "I make account that this writing of letters, when it is with any seriousness, is a kind of ecstasy and a departure and secession and suspension of the soul, which doth then communicate itself to two bodies."[59] Here, unlike in "The Extasie," the mechanism of the soul's departure is quite clear: the writer's sentiments, written on paper, convey her soul to her reader. Donne puns on the word "communicate": the soul makes its way to two bodies, or unites itself to two bodies, but also makes itself understood. The notion that the soul is conveyed in letters implies that, normatively though not inevitably, written language is transparent to thought, and thought to the soul, or, more simply, that language is a good proxy for what the soul is or does. Similarly, Elizabeth Harvey and Timothy Harrison observe the way that both body and soul of Elizabeth Drury become mediums for writing and reading in Donne's *Anniversaries* (1611, 1612).[60] Drury, the reader is told, did not have a body and soul, but rather two souls, an

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83-106. See also the Pauline discussion of Gentile Christians as supernaturally added, "grafted in," additions to Israel's olive tree in Romans 11:17-24.

[58] Donne, "The Exstasie," 9-12.

[59] John Donne, "Letter XXI. To Sir Henry Goodyer," October 9, 1607, *Selected Letters*, ed. P. M. Oliver (New York: Routledge, 2002). For more extensive analysis of this passage, see Targoff, 33-35.

[60] Elizabeth Harvey and Timothy Harrison, "Embodied Resonances: Early Modern Science and Tropologies of Connection in Donne's *Anniversaries," ELH* 80.4 (2013), 981-1008.

image which the poem then immediately corrects to that of a single parchment roll, written upon on both sides.[61] Here the difference between soul and body collapses in comparison to their shared legibility.[62]

The "Extasie," also endorses the idea that spiritual realities can be read in the body—"the body is [Love's] book"—but presents soul as the reality that the body expresses, rather than textualizing the soul alongside the body. The enigmatic intermingling of lovers' souls seems to generate particularly complex representations of the soul's nature. The souls already contain "mixtures of things they know not what," a surprising contrast to common definitions of the soul as a simple, uncompounded essence.[63] The idea that the soul already is a mixture appears driven by the need to make more plausible the souls' physical intermingling: we can imagine that souls might be able to join together since they already are composed of multiple alloyed components. The lover's soul, like the letter-writer's, expresses itself in language, but as Anita Gilman Sherman has observed, the privacy of the lovers' language is an essential feature of the silent communion presented in the ecstasy.[64] A bystander may be able to have access to "soul's language," in "The Exstasie," but only if he is properly initiated already into love's mysteries.

In Cowley's "Platonic Love," cited in full below, we are also presented with a couple whose souls are already mingled:

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[61] John Donne, "Of the Progress of The Soul: The Second Anniversary," in *John Donne: The Complete English Poems*, ed. A. J. Smith (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 300, lines 501-506.
[62] This phenomenon happens elsewhere in the poem as well—cf. the observation that "one might almost say her body thought," and the image of the soul as gold and body as electrum (an alloy of gold and silver), in lines 241-246, p 293-294.
[63] Accounts of the soul as a simple substance are presented in Plato's *Phaedo* in paragraphs 25-29 (272-283), in Augustine's *The Immortality of the Soul*'s third section (though Augustine refers to the soul's uniformity and unity in many other treatises as well). The Aristotelian tradition is more complex—the intellect is accompanied by the vegetable and animal souls, and *De Anima* itemizes the soul's "parts" meaning its varied capacities (III.3.1). The Scholastic Aristotelian tradition, nonetheless often retained an understanding of the soul as a simple and unchanging essence, as expressed in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologia*, I.75.i.
[64] Anita Gilman Sherman, "Fantasies of Private Language in "The Phoenix and Turtle" and "The Ecstasy," in *Shakespeare and Donne: Generic Hybrids and the Cultural Imaginary*, Ed. Judith Anderson and Jennifer Vaught (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 169-184.

Indeed I must confess,
When *Souls* mix, ‘tis an *Happiness*;
But not compleat till *Bodies* too do joyne,
And both our *Wholes* into one *Whole* combine;
But half of heaven the Souls in glory tast,
‘Till by love in Heaven at last,
Their *Bodies* too are plac't.

In thy immortal part
Man, as well as I, thou art.
But something ‘tis that differs *Thee* and Me;
And we must *one* even in that difference be.
I Thee, both as a *man*, and *woman* prize;
For a perfect *Love* implies
Love in *all Capacities*.

Can that for true love pass,
When a fair *woman* courts her glass?
Something *unlike* must in *Loves likeness* be,
His wonder is, *one*, and *Varietie*.
For he, whose *soul* nought but a *Soul* can move,
Does a new *Narcissus* prove,
And his own *Image* love.

That souls do beauty know,
‘Tis to the *Bodies* help they ow;
If when they know’t, they strait abuse that trust,
And shut the *Body* from’t, 'tis as injust,
As if I brought my dearest *Friend* to see
My *Mistris*, and at th' instant *Hee*
Should steal her quite from *Mee*. [65]

Rather than narrating how lovers are able to reach the soul through bodily means, Cowley, like Donne, begins instead with the observation that the joining of souls has already occurred, independent of the body. This condition seems to happen decisively and relatively quickly. In a reversal of Platonic ascent, the question is not how to move from the bodily to the spiritual, but rather, when joined spiritually already, whether to return to the body. This is manifest in both poems’ “in medias res” beginnings. Donne’s lovers are encountered poised on their bank in a

[65] Abraham Cowley, “Platonick Love,” in *The Collected Works of Abraham Cowley*, ed. Thomas Calhoun, Laurence Heyworth and J. Robert King, 2:31-32, lines 1-7.

deathlike stillness, and for Cowley too, these loves have already died: we begin in a metaphorical heaven, and the only question that remains is not reaching heaven per se, but bodily resurrection. In both poems, it eventually becomes clear that the souls were introduced to each other through the body: since the senses are attuned to material presences, they would have no knowledge of each other without embodiment. Donne says "We owe them thanks, because they thus/ Did us, to us, at first convey," while Cowley observes, "That souls do beauty know,/ 'Tis to the *Bodies* help they ow."[66] Cowley further remarkably suggests that the soul shutting out the body from participation in love would be like a man stealing a friend's mistress after the friend introduced him to her.[67] Both poems, however, refuse to see the transition from encounter with the body to union of soul as a problem that requires explanation. Indeed, in the comparison which concludes the poem, the soul or friend has the power to steal love "at th' instant," immediately. For lovers in these poems, the value of sex flows naturally from an understanding of the human person as irreducibly bodily. Soul intermingling, however, is not debunked by this account, but presented as an early stage in the lover's trajectory.

This striking feature also characterizes the treatment of love in Ebreo's dialogues. As Philo explains to Sophia, the higher form of love with which he loves her, begins with the desire for and experience of spiritual union and passes from there to a desire for physical union: "this [spiritual] affection and love have united me with you and generated a desire in me that you may be united with me, so that I, your lover, may form one sole person with you, my beloved, and equal love may make our two spirits one, which may vivify and govern our two bodies. The sensual element in this desire excites the appetite for physical union so that the union of bodies

[66] Donne, 53-54. Cowley, 22-23.
[67] Cowley, 24-28.

may correspond to the unity of the spirits wholly co-penetrating each other."[68] Here, as in Cowley's poem and Donne's, the spiritual union of the lovers appears to be fairly straightforward in its accomplishment. While the first sentence quoted is ambiguous—love seems to desire a union of persons and spirits simultaneously—in the second it becomes clear that the joining of bodies is a secondary step that attempts to mirror the already accomplished joining of souls. Indeed, Philo insists, in contrast to other love treatises, that it was his appreciation of what was noble in Sophia's soul that subsequently directed his attention to the beauty of her body; it was not the case that her physical beauty arrested his attention and made him aware of her inner beauty.[69] Ebreo's lovers, like those Lucretius describes, desire the complete intermingling of their bodies, not simply intercourse, and so they experience a degree of sadness that their desire for physical union can only be partially fulfilled.[70] This sense of "exemplary" love that begins with a seemingly effortless spiritual union and then distinctively presents the choice to extend this union to the body, rather than dismissing the body altogether or involving it from the first, is the distinctively Ebreonic element of these poems.

By contrast, another distinctive feature of both of these poems seems in conflict with Ebreo's account of love. Both poems insist that the lovers' bond troubles a simple account of gender difference as central to a couple's attraction. Donne's lovers have learned from their ecstatic union that "what they loved" was "not sex," i.e., not their sexual difference from one another; even though their return to their bodies may reinvoke that difference, they have learned that it is not at the center of their bond.[71] Cowley's poem insists, by contrast, that sexual

[68] Leone Ebreo, *Dialogues of Love,* trans. Cosmos Damian Bacich and Rossella Pescatori (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 69.
[69] Ebreo, 69.
[70] Ebreo, 47.
[71] Donne, "The Extasie," 30-31.

difference is central to the lovers' relationship, but maintains that it's irrelevant to their spiritual connection. Where for Donne, the spiritual combination takes priority, for Cowley's speaker, the attraction to the woman's masculine or sexless soul, and to her female body are equally central to his attachment: "I Thee, both as a man, and woman prize;/ For a perfect Love implies/ Love in all capacities."[72] Indeed, Cowley follows this assertion of the women's androgynous status as an object of love with a critique of same-sex love, or what Laurie Shannon has described as Renaissance "homonormativity." A woman in love with her own image may be a narcissist, but so is a man who claims to be drawn only to the mind:

> Can that for true love pass,
> When a fair woman courts her glass?
> Something unlike must in Loves likeness be,
> His wonder is, one, and Varietie.
> For he, whose soul nought but a Soul can move,
> Does a new Narcissus prove,
> And his own Image love.[73]

Cowley's criticism of the spiritually-oriented lover as fundamentally narcissistic is both a little puzzling—in this account all souls seem to be identical—and difficult to contain. What is the difference between the narcissism of a male lover who is attracted only to a women's "male" soul and therefore loves his own image, and the friend whose deep connection is to his friends' soul? Donne's description of a union that transcends sexual difference seems to align his loving couple with the kind of love that proverbially characterized male friends.[74] Cowley's rejection of same-sex desire, by contrast, begins with the most easily dismissed form of desire—a woman's vain, frivolous attraction to her own bodily image—but stretches to envelope the most idealized

[72] Ln. 12-14. Cowley explains in lines 8-10 that the "immortal part" of the woman, her soul, is by nature just as masculine as his own.
[73] Ln 15-21.
[74] Donne's interest in letter-writing as a form of ecstasy further connects the two forms of love.

forms as well—a man's spiritual union with the soul of another man or woman.[75] Since the bond between their souls cannot be properly described with the language of difference, a man's fully developed romantic attachment is to a figure he experiences as androgynous, and is partially an attraction to likeness and partially to difference.

In this, Cowley's poem remains more consistent with Ebreo's account of love than Donne's. Since Ebreo's Neo-Platonic account of love stresses the symmetry between erotic love and the love which draws the universe into being, sexual difference remains central to his account of what draws lovers together. Love is the striving of the material world toward its perfection, and the desire of the good to create its likeness in the world—it is fundamentally connected to the perception of a lack either in the self or the partner.[76] Cosmically, love exists for Ebreo between intelligences and their more material spheres—a metaphor Donne presents here for the relationship between the lovers' souls and their bodies, but which Donne employs in "Air and Angels" to describe men's superiority in love to women. Friendship, by contrast, is produced by affinity rather than a dynamic of plenitude and lack. Both erotic love and friendship involve a profound union for Ebreo. Citing Aristotle's description of the friend as another self, he explains that the highest friendship is based on the friends' parallel virtue or wisdom, and then explains the kind of shared soul that friendship produces:

> This wisdom, being spiritual, and thus alien to matter and free from corporeal limitations, removes the distinction of persons from bodily individuality. It generates in such friends a particular mental essence, preserved by their joint knowledge, love and will, devoid of difference and dissimilarities, exactly as if the subject of love were one single soul and essence conserved in two persons, and not multiplied in them.[77]

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[75] Cowley's question in lines 15-16 may refer to the lesbian attachment of Donne's "Sappho to Philaenis," in which the speaker suggests that her own mirroring of Philaenis' image makes her a more suitable lover. There are, of course, many other early modern texts which depict beautiful women as reflexively vain. One of the most notable examples, Milton's Eve, drawn to her reflection, will be discussed in a later chapter.

[76] Ebreo's argument about how this dynamic operates at a cosmic scale is laid out in the third dialogue of the treatise, "On the Origins of Love."

[77] Ebreo, 37.

Here, although the friends share features that we would expect be located in the soul—wisdom and virtue—it is "corporeal limitations" and "bodily individuality" that creates the distinction of persons. It's noteworthy that the body appears to be more stubbornly individual that the soul; it does not seem that two beings with equal bodily beauty or excellence would be equivalent in the way that two equally-noble souls become equivalent. Ebreo later describes the bond between lovers in terms that closely echo his description of friendship: they are fully invested in each other's well-being, as friends are. However, the mathematics of their union is more complex. While the souls of friends are consolidated into one, "conserved... and not multiplied," lovers' are harder to quantify: "only one, or rather four." "Each one," Ebreo's Philo explains, "being transformed into the other becomes two, at once both lover and beloved; and two multiplied by two makes four, so that each of them is a twin, and both together are one and four."[78] The reason that love involves a multiplication of souls as well as a combination seems to be the difference in role that structures erotic relationships. Friends play symmetric parts in a friendship, but erotic love, for Ebreo, features a lover and a beloved, with differentiated roles. Therefore, in making a transition to the most mutual, and unified love, each must learn to occupy the other's role as well as their own. The passionate love inspired for the desire for beauty, the dialogues tell us, does reveal a lack in the lover, unlike the love for the good, which even a perfect, divine being can feel. However, the contrast between love and friendship is not absolute; just as Cowley's love is directed to both feminine and masculine aspects of the beloved, Ebreo's "honest" love contains a bond of friendship and affinity, as well as the desire for generation. It should be said that while Ebreo's treatise often emphasizes the difference between lovers, other works in the same tradition take the position that Cowley espouses: that differences of sex end at the soul. Thus, in

[78] Ebreo, 131. Cf. the redoubling and multiplication of the soul's ability in "The Extasie," 40.

Tullia d'Aragona's *Dialogue on the Infinity of Love* (1547), which explicitly takes Ebreo's writings as a model, Tullia's character makes her interlocutor, Bennedetto Varchi concede that there's no reason to think men and women have different souls, and therefore they are equally capable of spiritual affection.[79]

Both Donne and Cowley's poems of soul-mingling diverge from the picture shown in *The Courtier* and preceding strictly Neo-Platonic texts by reversing the order of engagement with soul and with body. Rather than narrating the role of the body in leading the way to a spiritual love, they present a unity of souls that requires little explanation or effort, making contingent instead the body's role in their union. Unlike the kiss poems discussed above, they show little interest in the mechanisms that could link bodily intimacy to the sharing of souls. Paradoxically, however, both sets of poems seem to use the mingling of souls as a tool for indicating the exalted status of erotic attachment. For Donne and, to a lesser extent, for Cowley, the intermingling of souls, independent of bodies, erases the difference of sex that might mark the woman as the inferior partner. It allows the lovers to affirm their equivalence, dignifying their love with the equality of friendship. Moreover, the solidity of the lovers' spiritual unity in both cases seems to license their bodily union. While, on the one hand, these poems appear to offer cases for the role of the body in an idealized love, they paradoxically also shore up a sense of the separability of the two intimacies.

III.

Robert Herrick often used the trope of the soul kiss in its classic formulation, as in the poetic distich "Love Palpable," which simply reads, "I press'd my Julia's lips, and in the kiss,/ Her soul and love were palpable in this." In other poems from his *Hesperides* (1648), however,

[79] Tullia d'Aragona, *Dialogue on the Infinity of Love* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 86-87.

sexual pleasure per se seems to be imagined, rather than the nearly disembodied soul-exchange of the kiss, and Herrick departs from tradition even further by describing soul intermingling in terms that evoke sexual intercourse rather than the allegedly purer act of kissing.

For example, in one of the earlier manuscript drafts of Herrick's Clipseby Crewe Epithalamium, a canceled stanza reads as follows:

> Why then go forward, sweet Auspicious Bride,
> And come upon your Bridegroom like a Tide
> Bearing down Time before you; hye
> Swell, mix, and loose your souls; imply
> Like streams which flow
> Encurled together, and no difference show
> In their [most] silver waters; run
> Into your selves like wool together spun.
> Or blend so as the sight
> Of two makes one Hermaphrodite.[80]

This stanza would seem to point to the mingling of souls as the product of a specifically sexual act, neither accomplished by the marriage ceremony itself, nor in the time-suspending innocent proximity of poems like "The Ecstasy". While the language of kiss poetry is full of mingling, the other verbs of line 74—"swell" and "loose"—come not from the vocabulary of kissing but of intercourse.[81] And while the poems of kissing emphasize the possibility of exploration and return, or mutual exchange, Herrick's stanza closes on images of permanent joining. These two are not mysteriously dissolved into one another, but woven together, perhaps by the fates. And while their souls pour out of their bodies, they seem to remain plural while the bodies are joined in the figure of the Hermaphrodite. Nonetheless, as at the close of Spenser's Book III of *The*

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[80] Robert Herrick, *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. Tom T. Cain and Ruth Connolly (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2:78, stanza 8, lines 71-80, variant from Harley MS. 6917.

[81] For an example of bawdy use of "swell," see Donne's "The Flea." Looseness is also linked with sexual intercourse, sometimes continuous with a broader sense of "loose" as sexually promiscuous, but not always. In Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, "loose" is constantly linked with taboo sexuality, see particularly Book I,Canto VII, VII.2, where Duessa's knight lies "Pourd out in loosnesse on the grassy grownd." In Herrick's Southwell Epthalamion, "Venus knows best how to loose a virgin's zone."

Faerie Queene (1590), the image is probably of an embrace, rather than of intercourse per se.

The stanza comes early in the poem—it marks the bride's approach to the ceremony, as the first lines show, and is separate from the final set pieces imagining the wedding night, though it evokes them. Why then does the language of the stanza borrow from the lexicon of soul intermingling, without employing the localizations of eye or mouth that the period used to characterize lovers' more soulful exchanges? The answer must surely lie in the governing metaphor of the stanza: the bride approaches like a tide, and the two lovers will join as decisively as two rivers dissolve into a single stream. To share your soul with someone else, in this reading, is not to achieve a transcendence that defies the body's limits. Rather it is a way of conveying the permanence and power of the actions the body takes in time—the act of marriage can reroute both the body and soul of those who enter it, like a flood washing away previous constructions. However, the joining of marriage, in this poem, produces not just one legal person or one flesh, but also intermingled souls. The sexual evocativeness of the stanza's flows works to link all three unions—physical, legal and spiritual—into a single momentous change.

A more complex example of sex as mingling souls comes in Herrick's brief "The Night-Piece, To Julia," which I will quote in full:

> Her eyes the glow-worm lend thee,
> The shooting stars attend thee;
> And the elves also,
> Whose little eyes glow
> Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee.
>
> No Will-o'-th'-Wisp mislight thee,
> Nor snake or slow-worm bite thee;
> But on, on thy way,
> Not making a stay,
> Since ghost there's none to affright thee.
>
> Let not the dark thee cumber:
> What though the moon does slumber ?

The stars of the night
Will lend thee their light
Like tapers clear without number.

Then, Julia, let me woo thee,
Thus, thus to come unto me;
And when I shall meet
Thy silv'ry feet
My soul I'll pour into thee.[82]

Critics of this poem have typically stressed its power to charm.[83] The smooth surface of the poem presents however, covers over much of its strangeness. One peculiarity of the poem is the way that it evades neat generic categorization.[84] The poem is built upon repeated subjunctives: its primary mode is wish, prayer or exhortation, and critics have often observed that these wishes build to create the effect of charm or incantation. The poem remains quite different, however, from classical poems that feature love spells, such as Theocritus's second idyll and Virgil's "Eclogue 8," (and in a much more hostile and grotesque representation, Horace's fifth epode). For one, the poem reverses the gender of these possible classical exempla, in attempting to work its charms on a woman rather than a man. Theocritus, Virgil and Horace, by contrast, all show men as the targets of magical attempts at allurement (though in Virgil's eclogue, the speaker, Alphesiboeus, is male as well); it is perhaps greater male agency that makes the secret compulsion of magic necessary. Nor does it contain the most striking formal feature of Theocritus and Virgil's incantatory pastoral verse: the repeated refrain that calls for the unfaithful lover's return. In addition, "The Nightpiece" addresses the beloved directly, rather

[82] Herrick, 1:205.
[83] Though see H. R. Swardson's reading of "The Night-piece" and other Herrick poems as documents in which classical culture or faerie ways are used to evade the strictures of Christian doctrine. "Herrick and the Ceremony of Mirth," *Poetry and the Fountain of Light: Observations on the Conflict between Christian and Classical Traditions in Seventeenth-Century Poetry,* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1962), 40-63.
[84] In fact, as Cain and Connelly observe in their notes for the poem, the relevant genre may belong to the visual arts rather than literature. Cain and Connelly suggest that the poem's name is taken from a genre of painting set at night, though there's no apparent further connection between the action narrated in this poem and that commonly depicted in such paintings.

than offering wishes about him or her in the third person, and in fact directs most of its wishes to the conditions of Julia's journey, rather than seeking to ensure her desire to return.

The prolonged persuasion the poem directs toward Julia's arrival might also evoke poems like Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." As the title indicates, that poem itself is an adaptation of wooing poems within the classical pastoral tradition, such as Corydon's plea to Alexis, in Virgil's second eclogue, or Polyphemus's pursuit of Galatea in Theocritus's "Idyll XI." Herrick imitates "The Passionate Shepherd" quite directly in "To Phyllis, to Love and Live with Him"—even the title mirrors the invitation, "Come live with me and be my love," that opens the Marlowe's poem. However, several defining features of those poems remain absent from "The Nightpiece, To Julia." Both the classical poems and their most prominent English imitations, unlike "The Nightpiece," are positioned within pastoral, with the speakers explicitly defined as shepherds. Their addressees are then offered the fruits of pastoral existence—large flocks, appealing flora, berries, nuts and cream—and invited to choose this way of life for themselves, alongside their would-be lover. By contrast, "The Nightpiece" seems to woo Julia to a single night's assignation, rather proposing a shared life, and offers little detail about the attractions of the poet's offer. Indeed, in asking Julia to visit him, the speaker reverses the usual practices of amatory verse more broadly, just as he reverses the expected gender dynamics of the lover charm. Latin love elegy is full of the complaints of locked-out lovers—those whose beloveds have shut the door to their visits, and poems by Donne and Cowley show exchanges where making a visit to the women's house at evening is understood by both parties as a euphemism for sex.[85] Herrick's speaker, however, does not simply woo his mistress but woos her in the sense of making a specific request—that she "come to him,"— thus refusing the usual

[85] See Donne, "A Tale of a Citizen and his Wife," Cowley, "Dialogue after Enjoyment."

assiduous attentions of the lover. While the effect may be of rustic freedom, the assumption that the lady will make her way to him for a nocturnal visit is utterly foreign to some of the main paradigms for Renaissance amatory verse: not only classical love elegy, but also the courtly lover who waits on an idealized and unyielding mistress.

Moreover, Herrick's speaker emphasizes the darkness and loneliness of the walk even as he urges Julia's visit: the glowworm will be her lamp, she is told, but elves' eyes and the stars (though not the moon) will light her way as well. While the epigram of Plato we've already examined pictures a soul eager to cross over into the lover's body, a prior epigram attributed to Plato in Diogenes Laertius includes the wish to gaze at the beloved like the stars do: "Star-gazing Aster, would I were the skies,/ To gaze upon thee with a thousand eyes."[86] If Herrick's Julia is not quite told that the stars are eyes gazing upon her, she is likewise presented with a natural world that the poem imagines as fully attentive to her presence. Where the soul kiss offers a full internal joining, this poem, like the Platonic epigram, seems to delight by contrast in a vicarious full beholding of the beloved. This is achieved not through making oneself one with the beloved, but by making oneself many, so as to see the beloved more times. The ghosts that Julia need not fear present another ambiguity. Since the primary meaning of the word is still spirit in this period, including but not limited to deceased lingerers, these ghosts maybe the specters of those who have died or other threatening supernatural beings, as the nocturnal setting might suggest, but it's not impossible they could simply be spirits of the human variety. Is Julia "superstitious" with regard to the dead, or "superstitious" in the sense more commonly used in the period's love poems, fearful of censorious observers or of violating social norms?[87] This line, like the request

[86] Diogenes Laertius, 302-303.
[87] "superstitious, adj.I.3, adj. II.5," *OED Online,* March 2019 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019). Cf. Cowley's poem, "Women's Superstition."

to come to visit the speaker, seems to gesture back toward the common tropes of the seduction poem, even while re-writing them.

Whether or not Julia meets other spirits on her way, the final enigmatic line promises the encounter of both bodies and souls. Here, as in the epithalamion, Herrick seems to envision a pouring out of souls that refuses interpretation as the soul kiss, but also evading any other specific reading. The poem is quite close to being a soul-kiss poem—Herrick's speaker would only need to meet Julia's rosy lips rather than her silvery feet to evoke that trope. Here, however, Herrick meets Julia's feet, rather than her whole person or her face. *The Hesperides* regularly makes reference to feet, often in invocations of dancing virgins.[88] In a poem lamenting the separation of the king and queen, Herrick prophesies, "C. and M. shall meet,/ Treading on amber, with their silver-feet."[89] Here, as in "The Nightpiece," Herrick rhymes meet with feet, and the silveriness of Charles' and Henrietta Maria's feet seems to stress their whiteness and delicacy; like the dirt turned to rich amber by their presence, it affirms the nobility of their birth and bodies. Attention to the feet might also evoke the frank and reductive desire of Donne's "Love's Progress," however, in which lovers interested in sex are instructed to begin at the feet rather than getting distracted by the beauties of the face, though the cynicism of that poem seems at odds with the twinkling prettiness of this.

In fact, Herrick himself mimics "Love's Progress" in one of the poems he entitled "To Dianeme." The poem features a catalogue which begins at the feet and moves up the body,

[88] Herrick's "To Meadows" laments the absence of the "maids… whose silvery feet did tread… this smoother mead." "Upon Her Feet" contains "pretty feet," that "creep/ A little out" and "draw in again," like snails (2-3, 4-5). In "The Country Life," the land's best compost is "the wise master's feet and hands," but we also hear of "young men and maids," exercising "their dancing feet" (23-24, 48-49). Feet also feature as objects of disgust in Herrick's epigrams, however, as in "Upon Pimp."

[89] Herrick, 1:26, "To the King and Queen Upon Their Unhappy Distances," 7-8.

stopping at the waist; the poem then urges the woman to discard her "lawn" and expose her whole body.

> Shew me thy feet; show me thy legs, thy thighes;
> Shew me Those *Fleshie Principalities*;
> Shew me that Hill (where smiling Love doth sit)
> Having a living Fountain under it.
> Shew me thy waist; Then let me there withall,
> By the *Assention* of thy Lawn, see All.[90]

The poem is distinct from more typically Renaissance blazons in several ways: it begins at the foot rather than the head, it's structured by the demand that the addressee show the speaker her body, rather than observation of her public presence, and it curiously seems to regard clothing as a barrier at the exact point where it should be describing parts of the body that remain visible on a clothed person. While the poem does not offer the same overt satire on Petrarchan blazon and Petrarchan love that "Love's Progress" does, it is unusually sexually explicit. It enacts out the progression Donne's poem prescribes but ironically fails to carry out, centering the sexual organs and omitting the face and breasts, and ends with a disrobing that could be a precursor to intercourse.

While Herrick's use of silv'ry feet tends to emphasize daintiness or maiden pleasures, then, his poetry also affords at least one example of the linking of feet to a more overt sexuality. That said, Henry Lawes set the poem to music fairly soon after it was composed, which suggests that many of the poem's early readers saw it as diffusely rather than focusedly sexual.[91] At the very least, however, the attention to the feet emphasizes the beloved's full physicality, rooting her to the ground.[92] When the speaker pours out his soul into the beloved at the sight of her feet,

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[90] Herrick, 1:146, "403. *To* Dianeme."
[91] Herrick, 2:
[92] Cf. "I grant I never saw a goddess go/ My mistress when she walks treads on the ground," in Shakespeare's Sonnet 130.

Herrick pointedly revises the standard tropes of Renaissance love poetry, suggesting an account of encounter with the lover's inner being that is not placed in opposition to sexual congress but rather aligned with it. Indeed, these poems might prompt us to revisit William Kerrigan's claim that Herrick's depictions of the sexual tended toward a split between infantile innocence and adult shame, providing instead a valuable counter-instance where he revises a common trope of the period—souls intermingling in a kiss—in a direction which moves it further from innocence oral pleasures, toward a more encompassing, if only ambiguously intercourse-focused, sexuality. Herrick's choice of diction in the poem's final lines—pouring one's soul—even more dramatically offers a collapse of the distance between sexual encounter and more spiritual motions of the soul. While seventeenth century authors often use the language of soul pouring, the most dominant context by far for the phrase is religious. Of the 1009 texts in EEBO that contain forms of "pour" within a ten-word window of the word "soul," 903 are texts dealing with religious subjects.[93] These fall into two main categories; they usually either use pouring out one's soul before God as idiom for earnest prayer, or describe Jesus "pouring out his soul unto death," citing the book of Isaiah.[94] Hannah, in the main biblical precedent for the use of the term in prayer, explains, when interrogated mid-supplication by the suspicious high priest, "I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD."[95] Thus the predominant usage of pouring one's soul either foregrounded verbal communication—prayer—or reflects the linkage of the soul with life and breath I've discussed earlier. Herrick's prepositions depart from the idiom of biblical precedents for soul-pouring. In the latter, the soul

[93] Though the search would obviously also theoretically catch passages in which both words appeared without being directly connected, in the vast majority of the search do describe souls pouring or being poured!
[94] Isaiah 53:12, King James Version.
[95] 1 Samuel 1:15. In Job 30:16 and Psalm 42:4, the pouring out of the soul seems to be used as a synonym for experiencing anguish, but this sense of the phrase appears far less frequently in seventeenth-century religious writings.

is always poured *out;* its departure from the body expresses the extremity of passion or suffering of the person to whom it belongs. Herrick however, reverses the prepositions of the soul's transit—rather than emphasizing that the speaker's soul is poured *out*, perhaps in words, the poem stresses that it finds a home elsewhere, poured *into* Julia.

What is it, then, that the speaker means when he says he will pour his soul into Julia? The language of the poem is not explicitly sexual; it remains well within the limits of plausible deniability. However, a reading of this language as describing sexual union makes sense of several elements of the poem. The lack of a sexual prohibition seems compatible with the woman's freedom to wander where she pleases at night, and aligns with references to night visits as a euphemism for sexual availability in other poems of the period.[96] While "The Nightpiece" could be read as a soul-kiss poem, that reading of the line is somewhat disrupted by the fact the speaker encounters her feet, rather than her lips or face. Finally, a reading of the line as referring to discourse must reckon with the pointed way in which Herrick alters the idiom of soul pouring, employing the phrase "pour into" rather than the more regular "pour out to" which typically signified verbal expression. Finally, the symmetry between the soul's overflow and that of male orgasm makes the line's sexual significance at the very least powerful secondary sense. Indeed, theories of generation often contested how exactly the soul was transmitted to offspring, some arguing that soul was a component in male (and sometimes female) seminal fluids.[97] Perhaps the most prominent articulation of such views comes in Plato's *Timaeus,* where the soul is bound up with the body's seed matter, primarily contained in bone marrow and within the spine, but also the source of semen. By contrast, Aristotelian and Galenic accounts of generation that dominated

[96] See n. 77.
[97] For a thorough overview of both classical perspectives and Renaissance theories of generation, see Linda Deer Richardson, *Academic Theories of Generation in the Renaissance*, ed. Benjamin Goldberg (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2018).

Renaissance theories of procreation tended to suggest that the material of generation had the capacity to produce a soul but that sensitive and rational souls were not initially present in actuality.[98] While soul and semen were far from synonymous, the question of whether the soul was contained in semen continued to be an active one in the period.

It would be a mistake, of course, to read the soul pouring of the poems final lines as simply describing male orgasm: the soul remains important here as the center of subjectivity and seat of desire. The poem is striking however, in portraying a sexual encounter as the sharing of the male lover's soul, at least, or perhaps the souls of both. Whereas the poems of the soul-kiss and of ecstatic disembodied intermingling both offer a perspective in which bodily and spiritual intimacy are closely connected, these moments in the poetry of Robert Herrick quietly discard the polarity between more spiritual and corporeal elements of an erotic bond. Rather than suggesting that the presence of spiritual attunement can justify physical intimacy, or that physical attraction can bring about the intermingling of souls, "The Nightpiece" and the manuscript version of the "Clipseby Crewe Epithalamium" present spiritual joining as continuous with corporeal. The kiss-poems examined earlier present temporal transitions: they show the bodies' proximity facilitating the souls' joining, while Donne and Cowley choose to focus on the moment where spiritually united lovers choose to unite their bodies as well. In these Herrick poems, there is no need to adjudicate body or soul's priority: both interminglings happen simultaneously. In both cases, moreover, the vocabulary is one of liquidity and release: "swell, loose and mix your souls," the epithalamium urges, while in "The Nightpiece," I've focused on the significance of the verb "pour." The soul that Herrick leads us to imagine is one which flows, one which is not accessed only by intellect but has a spatial dimension. Love lets the soul expand

[98] Richardson, 41-75, 251-266.

past the body's bounds, not in the sense of transcending the body or spatial separation, but moving through matter and space.

Like the Herrick poems we've discussed, a poem by the clergyman Jasper Mayne presents soul-mingling as the product of a sexual encounter. The poem is sung in Mayne's 1648 play "The Amorous Warre," and while the words of the poem are not fully explicit, the dramatic context makes it clear that intercourse is described.[99] The dramatic context of this poem complicates our readings of it: it is sung as a prelude before the two young lords, secondary protagonists of the play, pair off adulterously with two Amazons who turn out to be their own wives in disguise. The poem's place accompanying this husbandly failure could be read, therefore, as a satire on the tendency of Platonic imagery to justify baser desires. When the men's actions turn out to not be illicit, or unfaithful, however, this raises the possibility that its erotic celebration might be justified or at least permissible. The song is not sung by would-be seducers, (the women in this play's narrative), but by their female attendants, and I here consider it as a discrete object—part of the play's narrative but also separable from it. The poem begins with a decontextualized aphorism on time—"Time is a feather'd thing"—and then proceeds to make a fairly standard carpe diem argument, presenting a string of images for the losses that will come. That night which symbolizes the end of life, the poem observes, can also be conceptualized as the friend of lovers. The beloved is urged, in Catullan style, to make the most of their time:

> Let 's number out the Houres by Blisses,
> And count the Minutes by our Kisses;
> Let the Heavens new Motions feele;
> And by our Imbraces wheele.
> And whil'st we try the Way
> By which Love doth convey
> Soule unto Soule;

[99] Jasper Mayne, *The Amorous Warre, a Tragicomedy* (London, 1648), p 56-57.

> And mingling so,
> Makes them such Raptures know,
> As makes them entranced lye
> In mutuall Extasy:
> Let the Harmonious Spheres in Musicke rowle.[100]

The complexity of the poem's narrative setting is mirrored in the multiple, and sometimes conflicting, tropes of amatory verse it weaves together. The poem moves from the temporal urgency of the *carpe diem* poem to a love which seems to defy time. The lovers begin with kisses, which seem to shake the heavens already. The first reference to the skies seems to offer a defiance to the order of things: the heavens will be thrown off balance, and be forced to learn "new motions." These paired commands, to the couple and the world, are followed by a second set, however. In the latter act, coyly left unnamed, the souls mingle together "in mutuall Extasy," but they are no longer asking that the world mirror back the unique power of their joys. Rather, the spheres may roll on exactly as they already do, and the celestial revolutions which once were dark and ominous are now experienced as harmonious music. While "harmonious" primarily describes the spheres' relation to one another, the spheres seem to also be experienced as harmonious by the lovers, in tune with their desires rather than dissonant to them.

While the harmony of the spheres is a Renaissance commonplace, it does in fact carry Platonic echoes.[101] Following Pythagorean understandings of the mathematical and musical structure of the universe, Plato's *Timaeus* explains that the one who is truly able to "partake of immortality," tending the divine part of themselves, must also conform to the motions of the universe:

> These ["the intellections and revolutions of the Universe"] each one of us should follow, rectifying the revolutions within our head, which were distorted at our birth, by learning the harmonies and revolutions of the Universe, and thereby making the part that thinks

[100] Mayne, lines 29-40
[101] For more on the complex place of music in Plato's thought, see Francesco Pelosi's *Plato on Music, Soul and Body*, Trans. Sophie Henderson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

> like unto the object of its thought, in accordance with its original nature, and having achieved this likeness attain finally to that goal of life which is set before men by the gods as the most good both for the present and for the time to come.[102]

The lovers' call to the rolling spheres, then, would suggest that they are not merely defying time any longer, but that, just as for Plato the soul can, by thinking, achieve attunement to the highest good, so their sexual love somehow mirrors the ultimate, unchanging, truths of the universe. What is radical here, however, is not the idea that love, including sexual love, might achieve something like unity with the ultimate reality. As we've seen in previous readings of Ebreo, and will discuss below in Lucretius, the idea that a single love structures the universe, creating likeness between the highest and lowest beings had a place both in materialist atomism and fervent Neo-Platonism. The smaller and greater marvel, for earlier modern readers, was that physical intimacy should reveal and mingle lovers' souls.

[102] Plato, *Timaeus; Critias; Cleitophon; Menexenus; Epistles,* Trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 2014), 246-247, 90d.

Appendix: “Song” from *The Amorous Warre*

“The first Song, sung by Two Amazons”

I.

Time is a feather'd thing,
And whilst I praise
The sparklings of thy looks and call them Rayes,
Takes Wing;
Leaving behind him as He flies
An unperceived Dimness in thine eyes,
His minutes whilst th’are told,
Doe make us old;
And every Sand of his fleet Glasse,
Increasing Age as it doth passe,
Insensibly sows wrinkles there,
Where Flowers and Roses do appeare.
Whilst we do speak our fire
Doth into Ice expire.
Flames turn to frost;
And ere we can
Know how our Crow turnes Swan,
Or how a Silver Snow
Springs there where Jet did grow,
Our fading Spring is in dull Winter lost.

II.

Since, then, the Night hath hurl'd
Darkness, Loves shade,
Over its Enemy the Day, and made
The world
Just such a blind and shapeless Thing
As 'twas before Light did from Darkness spring;
Let us imploy its treasure
And make shade pleasure;
Let 's number out the Houres by Blisses,
And count the Minutes by our Kisses;
Let the Heavens new Motions feele;
And by our Imbraces wheele.
And whil’st we try the Way
By which Love doth convey
Soule unto Soule;
And mingling so,
Makes them such Raptures know,
As makes them entranced lye
In mutuall Extasy:
Let the Harmonious Spheres in Musicke rowle.

Chapter 2. "I Would Still be Nearer": Embodied Friendship and the Critique of Familial Life in Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*

I.

In a statement famously mocked by his contemporaries, Thomas Browne maintains, "I could be content that we might procreate like trees, without conjunction, or that there were any way to perpetuate the world without this triviall and vulgar way of coition." He continues, "It is the foolishest act a wise man commits in all his life, nor is there any thing that will more deject his coold imagination, when hee shall consider what an odde and unworthy piece of folly he hath committed."[1] Sir Kenelm Digby's *Observations upon "Religio Medici"* (1643), a response to the 1642 unauthorized version of the work, noted dryly that Browne's readers were unlikely to join him in such a wish, or in his distaste for women, "that sweet and bewitching sex."[2] Another contemporary reader, the writer and historian James Howell, dismissed the thought as "unmanly," like Digby identifying it as revulsion toward women and sexuality, and thus an offense against normative masculinity.[3] Similarly, Alexander Ross, the most vituperative of Browne's contemporary readers, also took objection to Browne's statements about love and sexuality.[4] In his response to *Religio Medici*, entitled *Medicus Medicatus* (1645) or "The Doctor

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[1] Thomas Browne, *The Prose of Sir Thomas Browne,* ed. Norman J. Endicott (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1972), 80.

[2] Kenelm Digby, *Observations Upon Religio Medici,* (London: Daniel Frere, 1643), 110-111.Though Digby's criticisms of a pirated version of *Religio Medici* was a major factor in Browne's decision to publish an authorized and revised copy, Browne kept the wish for celibate reproduction nearly unchanged in the 1643 edition of *Religio Medici* quoted above, though, as Endicott's textual notes show, he revised "I could wish" to the more passive "I could be content" (514).

[3] James Howell, *Epistolae Ho-elianae: The Familiar Letters of James Howell,* vol. I, ed. Joseph Jacobs (London: David Nutt, 1892), 373.

[4] Alexander Ross, *Medicus Medicatus, or The Physician's Religion Cured by a Lenitive or Gentle Potion* (London: Printed by James Young and are to be sold by Charles Green, 1645). For more on Digby and Ross's responses to

Treated," Ross dedicates a paragraph to refuting Browne's suggestion that there is something undignified in the sexual act, protesting, "There is sometime foolishnesse in the circumstances, but not in the act it selfe, then the which nothing is more naturall. As it is not folly to eate, drinke and sleep, for the preservation of the individuum; neither is coition folly, by which we preserve the species, and immortalize our kind."[5] For Ross, even more evidently than for Howell and Digby, nature acts as a trump card in the charting of human relational possibilities, particularly when the "natural" takes the form of the imperative toward procreation of children. Both of these points— the naturalness of the heteronormative familial bond, and, relatedly, the status of self-preservation via children as a self-justifying good—are challenged in *Religio Medici*, and this devaluing of familial relationships creates a space for friendship to take on some of the qualities of erotic relationships, including the desire for an embodied co-penetration which is described as part of romantic love both in Neo-Platonic accounts and in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*.

Though he does not refer to this strain in Browne's reception, Alan Bray, in his seminal work on English Renaissance homosexuality, cites Browne as an example of the physically charged, emotionally expressive language the period used to describe friendship—and its susceptibility to misinterpretation by twenty-first century readers as an anachronistic expression of gay identity or sexuality. Browne himself, Bray suggests, "would be astonished at the suggestion that the rarified and Platonic friendship of which he was writing could have anything to do with homosexuality."[6] While Bray is surely right to dismiss the idea that what appears in *Religio Medici* is a formulation equivalent to modern homosexuality, and to point out the ways in which Browne was characteristic of a normative discourse of friendship in the period, this

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Religio Medici, see James Wise, *Sir Thomas Browne's "Religio Medici" and Two Seventeenth Century Critics* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1973).

[5] Ross, 27.

[6] Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England,* 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), 60.

(admittedly in-passing) account of friendship in Browne neutralizes the queerness, in multiple senses, that Browne's readers, from the very first, appear to have found in his comments on love. This queerness had almost nothing to do with the passionate physicality with which Browne invested friendship, which will be discussed below. Rather, they respond not only his wish to do away with sex as the means of procreation, but also Browne's extreme displacement, by the period's standards, of conjugal, romantic and familial bonds within his explicitly delineated hierarchy of relationships. Indeed, Browne's critique of the family at times evokes voices of contemporary queer theory: he shares Sarah Ahmed's and Lee Edelman's unwillingness to be coerced into social endorsement and reproduction of the family and the child.[7]

Browne's critics sometimes seem to mirror the discomfort that Browne's earliest readers felt at his dismissal of sexuality, and the "procreate like trees" passage, has often been read as a rhetorical flourish that Browne could not have seriously meant. Marjorie Swann is the exception in building an argument around this episode, and her essay provocatively argues that we find a desire for plant-like self-sufficiency in *Religio Medici*, combined with an anxiety about certain forms of spontaneous generation.[8] Her assessment of the ways that seeing oneself as the product of social and sexual reproduction operates as a threat to self-sufficiency in Browne offers a trenchant account of the work's values and anxieties. By contrast, the mid-twentieth century scholars Geoffrey Keynes and Joan Bennett separately assured readers that given details of Browne's biography—a marriage that was apparently harmonious and that produced at least ten children to whom the pair were solicitous parents—his revulsion from sexuality should not be

[7] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 45-49. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 1-31.
[8] Marjorie Swann, "'Procreate Like Trees': Generation and Society in Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*," in *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 137-154.

read as a real feature of his thought.[9] Similarly, Claire Preston sees in the passage quoted above evidence that *Religio Medici* was "a young man's work": brash, naive, and at times, aggressive, from an author whose future tone would be tempered by the distressing experience of his premature publication.[10] Stanley Fish, assessing Browne's moral seriousness in *Self-Consuming Artifacts*, tips his hand in the chapter-title: "The Bad Physician: The Case of Sir Thomas Browne."[11] Indeed, any reading must reckon with the elusive tone of *Religio Medici,* a topic which has been a major focus of scholarship on Browne in recent decades.[12]

My own reading of *Religio Medici* shares the widespread perception that Browne's authorial voice is playful, his claims often carefully modulated, and his style polished and complex.[13] However, Browne's negative responses to the processes of bodily reproduction—under which heading I include both sexual reproduction and the maintenance of the body by food—are too vividly and too consistently a feature of the work to be dismissed merely as rhetorical excrescence. These passages are in fact symptomatic of a tendency in *Religio Medici,*

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[9] Daniela Havenstein, *Democratizing Sir Thomas Browne: "Religio Medici" and Its Imitations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 62-63. Daniela Havenstein reads the passage as seriously meant, but attributes it to the early modern belief that sexual intercourse shortened men's lifespans, and strong limitation of women's role to child-bearing, in contrast to a male capacity for friendship (62-63). I will suggest that Browne's attitude here is less a reflection on his opinion of the capacities of women than the capacities of the familial form.

[10] Claire Preston, *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 42-81. Preston departs from other readings of *Religio Medici* in taking quite seriously Browne's claim to have been distressed at the work's appearance in print without his permission, a fairly common complaint from early modern authors—she argues that the incident informs his subsequent attitude toward the norms of civil life. Another recent evaluation of Browne's tone can be found in Ronald Huebert's "The Private Opinions of Sir Thomas Browne," who suggests that Browne's hostile critics are in general too unwilling to indulge its claim to be a personal document (117-134). Ronald Huebert, "The Private Opinions of Sir Thomas Browne," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 45.1 (2005): 117-134.

[11] Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972).

[12] Recently, Anne Drury Hall has argued that it contains a mixture of the familiar, anti-Ciceronean epistle, of the religious meditation, and of urbane and Latinate seventeenth-century wit. Browne's style is often identified with the rhetorical, for instance by Samuel Glen Wong who reads Browne and Sir Kenelm Digby as representing the claims of rhetoric and philosophy respectively in their literary skirmish. Anne Drury Hall, "Epistle, Meditation, and Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici,*" *PMLA* 94.2 (1979): 234-246; Samuel Glen Wong, "Constructing a Critical Subject in *Religio Medici*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 43.1 (2003): 117-136.

[13]For a study of playfulness in Browne, see Anna Nardo, *The Ludic Self in Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), 159-178.

and elsewhere in Browne's writings, to identify friendship and familial bonds with different aspects of the subject. Mary Zimmer has shown that we see in *The Garden of Cyrus* not only an account of the structuring patterns of nature, but also of the soul: both the Platonic "world soul" and individual human souls. The figure of the quincunx (the five-point figure seen on standard dice) contains, for Browne, both a linear and a circular motion:

> And this also with application unto the soul of man, which hath a double aspect, one right, whereby it beholdeth the body, and objects without; another circular and reciprocal, whereby it beholdeth it self. The circle declaring the motion of the indivisible soul, simple, according to the divinity of its nature, and returning into it self; the right lines respecting the motion pertaining unto sense, and vegetation, and the central decussation [intersection of the five points], the wondrous connexion of the severall faculties conjointly in one substance. And so conjoyned the unity and duality of the soul, and made out the three substances so much considered by him; That is, the indivisible or divine, the divisible or corporeal, and that third, which was the Systasis or harmony of those two, in the mystical decussation.[14]

In Zimmer's reading, "the 'indivisible, or divine' aspect of the soul refers to the soul's share in the transcendent realm of Being," while the "'divisible, or corporeal' aspect refers to the soul's participation in the realm of Becoming: its participation in the lives of individual, embodied creatures, dispersed as those lives are through time and space."[15] In harmony with this Platonic division, I will argue that Browne regularly links familiality to the self as embodied—in temporal flux, in constant need of replenishment—while friendship correlates instead to an abstract and therefore stable self.[16] Browne's treatment of generation and of nourishment shows an unwillingness to be resigned to the conditions of material life, particularly the ephemerality and vulnerability that the processes of reproduction and nutrition expose in the subject. This discomfort is consistent with Neoplatonic attitudes to the life and maintenance of the body: thus

[14] Browne, 337.
[15] Mary E Zimmer, "Seeking to Become All Things: The Neoplatonic Soul and the Next World in Sir Thomas Browne's *The Garden of Cyrus*," *The Modern Language Review* 112.1 (2017): 33-53, 45-46.
[16] Intellect and rationality are, of course, identified with the circular motion of the soul (Zimmer 46).

for Plotinus, whatever comes into being lives suspended between its beginning and end, and can be cut off from existence at any time.[17] Since it once did not exist, it is clear that its existence is not essential, whereas that which is eternal exists by the necessity of its own nature. While friendship affirms the part of the self which is understood to be unchanging and stable—and therefore in Platonic terms, more real— Browne, in contrast to the Neoplatonist system, occasionally slips into locating reality in the body as opposed to the soul. Therefore, the desire to integrate the friend to the self is not wholly spiritual—it leaves an embodied trace within the work, in the affective experience of friendship.

` In my discussion of Browne's treatment of friendship, I argue that Browne's *Religio Medici* adapts Lucretian and Neo-Platonic descriptions of love-frenzy to describe amicable devotion, which ranks with religious and national loyalty as one of the central organizing ethical principles of the young Browne's life. Friendship, just as much as erotic love, generates the fantasy of a completely interpenetrating union. The same experience that Lucretius presents in *De Rerum Natura* as damning proof of the folly of erotic attachment—unsatisfiable longing to dissolve the corporeal boundaries between oneself and that other—emerges in Browne as evidence of friendship's distinctive pleasures. In Browne's brisk dismissal of heterosexual love and sexuality, then, it is not the emotional disturbances resulting from a singular and eroticized attachment that are at issue, but sexuality's connection to material reproduction and genealogical self-perpetuation. Sex's role in the production and reproduction of the family leaves it enmeshed in what Browne describes as a disquietingly unstable cycle of imperfectly reciprocated attachments between parent and child and husband and wife. *Religio Medici's* discussions of

[17] Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 306-309, III.7.4. .

sexuality and bodily composition thus turns at crucial moments to images drawn from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* only to radically rework their affective timbre.

While Epicurean philosophy and Platonism were often opposed to one another, their treatments of love were in fact linked in the minds of Early Modern readers. As I discuss in the introduction, George Sandys's translation Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, links the episode in which Hermaphroditus and Salmacis are conjoined to Lucretius' description of lovers' seeking to occupy each other's bodies and the *Symposium's* story of lovers as halves of an former single being via marginal notes.[18] Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* also shares with the Platonic tradition an account of Venus as the power that binds the universe together, though without distinguishing between a terrestrial and a heavenly Love.[19] Indeed, Browne was notable among his contemporaries in rejecting a strong opposition between more virtuous Platonic or Stoic classical traditions and a supposedly depraved Epicureanism, repeatedly defending Epicurean theology from hostile misreadings. In *Religio Medici*, for example, he suggests that Epicurus' apparent denial of divine providence "was no Atheism, but a magnificent and high-strained conceipt of his Majesty, which hee deemed too sublime to minde the triviall actions of those inferior creatures," while the often-praised ethics of the Stoic are equally deemed no fit guide for the Christian.[20] As Charles Harrison has pointed out, he repeats this limited defense of Epicurean ethics in *Pseudodoxica Epidemica,* in *Christian Morals,* and in *Urn Burial*.[21]

As discussed in Chapter 1, Leone Ebreo's *Dialogues of Love* offers a similar description of erotic frustration to that of Lucretius; like Browne, he invests it with a positive valence. Ebreo

[18] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. George Sandys (London: 1620), 160-161.
[19] Titus Lucretius Carus, *On the Nature of Things,* trans. W. H. D. Rouse, rev. Martin F. Smith (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1925), I.1-15.
[20] Browne, 75, 236.
[21] Charles Trawick Harrison, "The Ancient Atomists and English Literature of the Seventeenth Century," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 45 (1934): 1-79, 12-13. Browne, 293-294, 463.

envisions a virtuous marriage as the context for the ongoing desire for incorporation into each other's body; his lovers suffer even more after their union, since their spirits are able to "unite and blend as one," leaving them with an "even more ardent desire" to fully complete their union by the interpenetration of their bodies, a goal which remains impossible.[22] However, in what follows, I turn to Lucretius rather than Ebreo to illuminate the dynamics of Browne's desire for the friend's body and aversion from other bodies. I will argue that Browne's interest in maintaining the place of embodied attachment in friendship, and his exaggerated sense of horror at the role of material reproduction in creating the self paradoxically reaffirm the power of a Lucretian account of the universe—a sense of the self as inextricably tied up with material change in a way that can be managed but not transcended.

Our most explicit evidence for Browne's possession of *De Rerum Natura* comes much later than the writing of *Religio Medici*, though Browne's erudition, as well as his interest in natural philosophy, make his acquaintance with the work a safe assumption. In a letter dating from the 1670s, Browne notes that he has sent his son Thomas "Lucretius his sex bookes de rerum natura, because you lately sent mee a quotation out of that Author, that you might have one by you to find out quotations wch shall considerably offer themselves at any time."[23] Browne apparently felt it had little to offer other than as a source of learned or witty sententia, however: "Otherwise," he continues, "I do not much recommend the reading or studying of it, there being divers impieties in it, and tis no credit to bee to[o] punctually versed in it[;] it containeth the epicurean naturall philosophie." As prophylactics, perhaps, Browne also sends his sons Cicero's *De Officiis* and a poem written by a Mr. Tenison, "contra hujus saeculi

[22] Leone Ebreo, *Dialogues of Love*, trans. Cosmos Damian Bacich and Rossella Pescatori (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 66, 69.
[23] Browne, 488.

Lucretianos," or "Against the Lucretians of his Age," and dedicated to Browne himself "in Latin after Lucretius his style."[24] As this passage indicates, Browne's attitude toward Lucretius seems to have been a complex mixture of imitation and alienation. Reid Barbour describes Browne, along with other seventeenth century writers such as Bacon and Burton, as alternately feeling disgusted, frightened, and excited by "the dispersed self," which Barbour links with the endlessly moving particles of Epicureanism and contrasts with the constancy heavily associated with the Stoic.[25] In addition to developing an account of the form Browne's anxiety about the dispersed self takes, I suggest that he found materials with which to imagine its immunity to dispersal from the very same source—Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura.* It is this desire for immunity to dispersal that marks Browne's historical difference from the critique of familial form offered in contemporary queer theory. As I argue in what follows, while Browne shares a skepticism that reproduction provides the individual subject with more life, he does so from the position of belief in the possibility of a more absolute persistence than is possible by means of reproduction, rather than a skepticism about the project of persistence altogether.

II.

Generic contrasts between friendship and heterosexual romantic love were an endemic feature of early modern thought, inherited from sources including Aristotle, Cicero, Lucretius, and Plato and his followers. As Laurie Shannon has argued, early modern friendship discourses, largely drawing on Cicero and Aristotle, tended to imagine friendship as the locus of a kind of sovereignty that was contrasted with kingly rule, where the equality of friendship allows it to

[24] Browne, 488,

[25] Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 117. In Barbour's reading, Browne ranks among those Royalists who "reconceived the perils of war, democracy, and sectarianism in atomic terms, sometimes defending atomic physics in spite of these associations" and who moreover, "cultivated gardens, pacific forms of discourse, indifference to death, and mental calm in the face of disaster, all with Epicurus as their chief precedent" (266).

function as a mode of freedom.[26] The sovereignty of friends is founded first on each party's self-sovereignty, (since "none but good men can be friends"), and then on their mutual, freely consenting, gift of themselves to each other. The Aristotelian tradition of friendship was a largely masculinized concept in the Renaissance, at least as conceptualized by its most influential (male) theorists, and bonds with women were largely excluded.[27] A man's romantic love for women, according to Montaigne, is "a rash and wavering fire, waving and diverse" while true friendship (between men) is "a constant and settled heat, all pleasure and smoothness."[28] These contrasting descriptions, Shannon argues, "frame an eroticism not expressive of or central to identity construction, but representing its temporary collapse, a sharp contrast to the self-sovereignty that characterized male friendship."[29] Friendship offered "the complete fusion of wills" and freedom from the form of compulsion lodged in words such as "benefit, obligation, gratitude, request, thanks, and the like."[30] The highest form of friendship abhors such words, since "their relationship being that of one soul in two bodies… they can neither lend nor give anything to each other."[31] The parallel figure of self-mastery that creates a space secured from the domination of the political hierarchy for women, Shannon suggests, is the virtue of chastity, since Renaissance marriage, by contrast, "offers little or no 'utopian' freedom even to the men who would be 'sovereigns' within it."[32] Rather, the hierarchical nature of the relation and the difference in kind that necessitate it have the potential to degrade men, while the indissolubility of the marriage contract further separates it from the volitional bond of friendship.

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[26] Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) 3-14.
[27] Shannon, 54-68.
[28] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, ed., trans. Donald Frame (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958), 137.
[29] Shannon, 65.
[30] Montaigne, 141.
[31] Montaigne, 141.
[32] Shannon, 54-55.

As my introduction has described, in Book IV of *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius provides an extended argument for the folly of erotic attachment. In the couple's most passionate moments, "They gripe, they squeeze, their humid tongues they dart/ As each wou'd force their way to t'others heart" (in Dryden's rendering), but remain frustrated, unable either to penetrate or pass with their whole body into the body of the other, *nec penetrare et abire in corpus corpore toto*.[33] The impossibility of this desire is proof of love's ridiculousness, and the advice he offers is that readers try to separate the sexual act from erotic passion, directing their sexual energies toward whatever object is available, rather than being misled by the lure of an unpossessable image to believe in the irreplaceability of their love-objects.[34] While Lucretius doesn't provide a description of the pleasure or pains of friendship, in *De Rerum Natura,* his description of erotic love as having the dangerous potential to impair men's judgments, to lead them into (feminized) luxurious habits and to misdirect their energies, is symptomatic of the perceived differences in kind that separated the discourse of friendship from that of erotic love.[35]

Despite the bleak picture of heterosexual attachment that emerges in the contrast with same-sex friendship, one of the major benefits of romantic sexual passion for many early moderns, and for Lucretius, is its role in the bringing forth (and bringing up) of children.[36] In fact, it is the very fact of reproduction that allows society to form for Lucretius: humans leave the war of all against all and seek society, in his account of the foundations of human society, when their affection for their children leads them to seek allies in protecting them and causes them to formulate taboos against the harming of those who are helpless.[37] Lucretius' sense of frustration

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[33]John Dryden, *Sylvae, or The Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1702), 47. Lucretius, Loeb, IV.1109-1111. Translation is my own.
[34] Lucretius, Loeb, IV. 1064-1076.
[35] Lucretius, Loeb, IV.1121-1132.
[36] For a more thorough picture of Renaissance, as well as patristic accounts of the benefits of marriage, see James Grantham Turner, especially Chapters 2-3.
[37] Lucretius, Loeb, V.1000-1200.

at the ultimate vanity of erotic love, therefore, leads him to prescribe the separation of the elements of passion that our modern conjugal mythos is heavily invested in tying together— the pleasure of sex, he suggests, is best experienced separately from erotic obsession, and the procreation of children can be disentangled from both of those ends, relying on custom and affection rather than intense romantic desire. Lucretius' project, then, is partly to rescue procreation and its place in the establishment of familial continuity from the madness of erotic love.

For Browne, however, the least redeemable aspect of heterosexual conjugal passion was exactly its connection to child-bearing, its bent toward genealogical establishment. In this, he picked up on a line of argument that had previously been deployed in the very limited context of the monastic order, and its corollaries in Protestant communities. John Guillory argues that the denizens of Bacon's house of philosophers in his *New Atlantis*, like the celibate fellows of Cambridge and Oxford, must abstain from sexual activity in order to fulfill their role as public beneficiaries.[38] Thus, Bacon advocates a secular order comparable to priesthood in its bachelordom, but replaces what Guillory claims is the ascetic motivation of religious celibacy with a proposition about chastity's relationship to charity. The problem with marriage, for the natural philosopher, is that it diverts his concerns to his own household, by binding his self-interest to his responsibilities of care toward his dependents, and thus inhibits his ability to exercise generosity both with his goods and with his attention, directing both toward mankind's endemic and general lacks.[39] Though his preference for a bachelor state is similarly oriented

[38] John Guillory, "The Bachelor State: Philosophy and Sovereignty in Bacon's *New Atlantis,*" in *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850,* ed. Daniela Coli, Neil Saccamano, and Victoria Kahn, 49-74 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[39] Though Guillory distinguishes sharply between the charitable rationale for celibacy in *The New Atlantis* and the ascetic motive of its Catholic precedent, Bacon in fact follows closely on the rationales used by at least Catholics for the celibacy of priests. Though Erasmus, for example, regards marriage as "coarsening," his discussion of clerical celibacy primarily focuses on the practical ways in which marriage would diverts the cleric's attention toward the

toward a critique of dynastic ambitions, Browne departs from discussions of scholarly and clerical singleness in focusing not on the public good, but on the instincts and private happiness of the individual.

"I confess I doe not observe the order that the Schooles ordaine our affections, to love our Parents, Wives, Children and then our friends," Browne discloses in the second part of *Religio Medici,* "for excepting the injunctions of Religion, I doe not finde in my selfe such a necessary and indissoluble Sympathy to all those of my bloud."[40] Browne here refers to a passage in Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* in which Aquinas lays out the *ordo caritatis*, or that order in which human obligations ought to be ranked if they come into conflict.[41] While Aquinas takes for granted the primacy of familial obligations over friendships, devoting attention instead to matters such as whether a person should feed their child or their parent if they do not have enough for both, Browne rejects this premise altogether. Though he does maintain a willingness to abide by commonly accepted social norms and the "injunctions of religion," he has no interest in developing the affective responses that would support sacrifice for the family. Rather, friendships take a relatively high place in Browne's hierarchy of loyalties— after his God and country, but before himself, and certainly before his family members. Here, as elsewhere in *Religio Medici*, it appears that Browne's revulsion is not just towards women but towards the structure of familiality itself: parents and children, as well as wife, make a bid for his loyalties that Browne is reluctant to admit. In denying the presence in himself of "a necessary and indissoluble sympathy" toward close kindred, Browne signals his resistance to the claims of the

needs of his own family unit and away from those whom he serves (Erasmus, 86-109). Desiderius Erasmus, *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 46 (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto, 1974).

[40] Browne, *Prose*, 75.

[41] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964-1981), 2a2x.

natural. Familial ties may be described by others as self-evident and irresistible bonds, but he is proof they need not be experienced that way.

Browne's resistance to locating familial life at the summit of human affections centers on the relationship between familial love and replaceability. This becomes most clear in the work's final section, where Browne assesses the inadequacy of the joys which constitute earthly happiness:

> Let us call to assize the love of our parents, the affection of our wives and children, and they are all dumbe showes and dreames without reality, truth, or constancy; for first there is a strong bond of affection betweene us and our parents, yet how easily dissolved? We betake ourselves to a woman, forgetting our mothers in a wife, and the wombe that bare us in that that shall bear our image. This woman blessing us with children, our affection leaves the level it held before, and sinkes from our bed unto our issue and picture of posterity, where affection holds no steady mansion. They, growing up in years, desire our ends, or applying themselves to a woman, take a lawfull way to love another better than our selves. Thus I perceive a man may bee buried alive, and behold his grave in his owne issue.[42]

Various loves, rather than individuals, are called to the bar to answer for themselves here, and each is found wanting. And though the love of others is found wanting to "us," as Browne continues it becomes clear that the failure of familial love is endemic—we ourselves are not immune from it. Though the passage appears to end with a moment of hesitancy, suggesting that a man "may bee" but need not be buried alive in his own offspring, the stark declaratives that precede it stack the deck. Browne's emphasis on possibility seems rather to attach to the paradoxes that follow, than to his depiction of familial life. It is indeed possible—one may indeed—to do the impossible, beholding one's own grave, or living while buried, once a person recognizes this is already their situation. While procreation offers a form of bodily co-presence,

[42] Browne, *Prose,* 89.

the version it provides is toxic; to see oneself also present in the body of one's child is to see oneself not made immortal, but "buried alive."[43]

In a reading of Behn and Milton, Eric Song claims that the political crises of the seventeenth century prompted the reading of both absolutist monarchy and marriage as hinging on the dilemma inherent in dynastic love; my argument borrows from his account of marriage's internal incoherence.[44] While romantic love produces a belief in the absolute singularity and irreplaceability of the object of love, marriage and monarchy, he writes, both serve as structures whose function is both to limit and to enable the replacement of the object.[45] Thus, Song argues that in texts as diverse as Behn's *Oroonoko* and Milton's tracts, written from opposite sides of the mid-seventeenth century political spectrum, the contracting and dissolution of marriages serves as a lens for examining the legitimate passing on of political power. Browne's analysis of the connection between the social formation of the nuclear family and the push for the subject's obsolescence appears to be far more conscious than either Behn's or Milton's, though his meditations on the future-oriented structure of familiality don't carry a specifically political weight. It is overtly the case in *Religio Medici* that reproduction, in its literal sense, is the problem with the family. The question for Browne, however, is not how various marital logics support or undercut a divinely ordained kingship; rather at stake is the question of what forms of relation can support a subject's aspirations to constancy. Where for Lucretius, the bonds of erotic and generative affection are the structure that holds together society and, metaphorically, even the physical universe, for Browne, the orientation of family life toward the production of future

[43] Cf. accounts of sexual reproduction as motivated by a desire to partake in a kind of immortality in Plato's *Symposium* 206e, 208b, and Aristotle's *De Anima*, 415a26-b8.
[44] Eric B. Song, "Love Against Substitution: Milton, Behn, and the Political Theology of Conjugal Narratives," *ELH* 80.3 (2013): 681-714, 681-683.
[45] Cf. Hobbes' definition in *Leviathan* of "the passion of love" as "love of one singularly, with the desire to be singularly beloved." Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan,* ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37.

objects, makes it a particularly trenchant emblem, as well as mechanism, of inconstancy. It prophesies the death or abandonment of the loving self and also enacts what it foretells.

While Browne shares with some strands of queer critique of the family a reluctance to acknowledge the naturalness of its claims, he differs in his refusal to abandon the desire for stability and persistence. I've argued above that the logic of deferral that motivates reproduction foregrounds the disposal of the subject who engages in the act of reproduction. In a similar vein, Edelman argues that the figure of the queer subject offers a dissent from the fantasmic promise of futurity that is vested in the figure of the child, the possibly unborn being on whose behalf society is called to sacrifice. Queer refusal to engage in reproduction illuminates the fact that the perpetually deferred future of the child is one that none of us will ourselves experience—that the child's interests are not ours. If the subject obtains immortality at all it is through an embrace of nothingness rather than through the child. The immortality of the death-drive, however is "a persistent negation that offers assurance of nothing at all: neither identity, nor survival, nor any promise of a future."[46] If the lure of the future which the child offers is a delusion, it is one that cannot be filled with a counter-fantasy. The voice of the death-drive speaks equally to the queer listener and to heterosexual society, though only the former align themselves with it. In a similar vein, Leo Bersani argues that the paradigm of self-shattering characteristic masochism is in fact a feature of sexuality more broadly: "I have been proposing that we think of the sexual—more specifically, of *jouissance* in sexuality—as a defeat of power, a giving up, on the part of an otherwise hyperbolically self-affirming and phallocentricly constituted ego, of its projects of mastery."[47] In the moment of *jouissance,* "the individuating boundaries that separate subjects,

[46] Edelman, *No Future*, 47.
[47] Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?", *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 109.

and that subjects for the most part fiercely defend, are erased," however temporarily.[48] Browne shares Bersani's sense that the boundaries between selves become fragile in the context of sexuality; for him, this happens at moment of orgasm in the self-estrangement that characterizes the sexual act, but still more in the event of conception. While for both Edelman and Bersani the shattered world and self—empty of futurity and of claims to mastery—are models that make a strong ethical claim on the reader, Browne by contrast maintains the possibility of self-preserving relational wholeness elsewhere. If familial love is a delusive dream, it can be contrasted to a waking life—though this waking life is positioned at the very edge of the body's perceptions.

Browne's emphasis on detecting the falsity of the claim family relationships make to reality and constancy—the love of relatives is a dream and dumb-show—mirrors the Lucretian critique of erotic love, even in the comparison between loving and dreaming.[49] In IV.1097-1104, Lucretius compares the frustrated lover to a thirsting man who believes himself to be drinking water while in a dream, and the poem's broader account of dreaming is the prelude and transition to Lucretius's analysis of sexuality. Robert Brown suggests that "the motif of simulacra and the analogy of love to dreaming bind the attack on love to the rest of Book Four and provide the key to its argument."[50] Where Lucretius only suggests that erotic obsession is as delusional as one's dreams, however, Browne equally condemns the love between parents and children. This melancholy portrait of familial affection follows a meditation on love directed toward invisible objects. It is not strange, Browne explains, "that wee should place affection on that which is invisible; all that wee truly love is thus; what we adore under the affection of our senses,

[48] Ibid.
[49] Cf. Lucy Hutchinson's summary, quoted in my introduction, of the censored passages as containing "the causes and effects of love, which he makes a kind of dream." Browne, *Prose,* 89.
[50] Robert D. Brown, *Lucretius on Love and Sex* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1987), 87.

deserves not the honor of so pure a title."[51] In true friendship, he goes on to explain, the friend is loved for the invisible virtues that reside within him; by contrast, the familial relations that are founded on material, biological connection are exposed in the passage above as being fleeting, unreliable substitutes.

Here, as in the passage cited above on "Parents, Wives, Children," Browne's argument responds to Thomas Aquinas's reflections on the *ordo caritatis*, or the appropriate priority given to various kinds of loves. He begins by suggesting his own response to a possible problem that Aquinas addresses in *Summa Theologiae*—the inherent difficulty present in loving an invisible being, such as God.[52] Aquinas' solution to this problem that love is triggered by several kinds of causes—gratitude, for instance, as well as proximity—and while some of these gain strength in proportion to the object's tangibility, others do not. Browne, however, goes one step farther. It is not only the case for Browne that one can love the invisible, but indeed the things that can truly deserve love are all invisible: not only God, but also virtue, and the souls of our friends— "not that part that we embrace, but that insensible part that our armes cannot embrace."[53] It is in contrast to these virtuous and idealized affections that Browne depreciates the value of blood and marital ties— where friendship is linked with the Platonic love of the invisible and inward good, love of relatives cannot be so dignified but is damningly linked to human materiality.

At this juncture, it becomes clear that the family's apparent naturalness, far from justifying it, is in fact only a symptom of its grounding in the coarse and unreliable matter of matter itself. To the spectral imagined reader who maintains that the deepest bonds are those of blood, based on the shared interests and the physical (and perhaps metaphysical) nearness of

[51] Browne, *Prose,* 88.
[52] Aquinas, *Summa*, 2a2ae.26.2.
[53] Browne, *Prose*, 88.

close kinship rather than the recognition of the good, Browne responds by denying that familial love could even be weighted equally with the previous types. "Next to those three [God, country, and friends]," Browne insists earlier in Religio Medici, "I do embrace myself": these are the only bonds that trump the basic force of self-love, and he insists that in comparison to these three, the claims of the self scarcely register.[54] The elevated affections—those ranking above the self—are bracketed off from all others. Family life is brought forward here as the ultimate illustration of the fact that earthly life is all "vanity and vexation of spirit," per the author of Ecclesiastes, and is dismissed even from Browne's picture of earthly happiness. Concluding with a characteristic performance of modesty of desire, Browne declares that he requires and asks only "the peace of my conscience, command of my affections," and the love of God and his friends; in these consist "all I dare call happinesse on earth."[55] While family-members may number among Browne's friends, their well-being as members of his family forms no part of his happiness.

Indeed, the luxuriance of Browne's expressions of friendly loyalty did not escape the baleful notice of Alexander Ross. In response to Browne's statement that he had loved his friend "as I do vertue, my soule, my God," Ross returned the following complaint:

> Your phrase is dangerous, as your love is preposterous, if it be as you say: ...an universall good is to be loved afore a particular: A man will venture the losse of his hand or arme, to save the body. A good Citizen will venture his life to save his country, because hee loves the whole better then a part; but God is the universall good, our friends are only particular. ... wee must love our friend as our selfe, because our selfe-love is the rule by which wee square our friends love; but we must love God better then our selves, because it is by him that we are our selves.[56]

However, it is precisely the friend's evasion of the "particular" that makes him the object of Browne's particular affection. Since friendship need not be constituted around the persons of the

[54] Browne, *Prose,* 75.
[55] Browne, *Prose,* 89.
[56] Ross, *Medicus*, 23.

friends, their locatedness in place and time, in the way that familial bonds necessarily must, they become recognizable as the "truly amiable." They are linked with virtue, God, and one's country as abstracted, and therefore reliable objects of love. "All that is truely amiable," Browne explains, "is God, or as it were a divided piece of him, that retaines a reflex or shadow of himselfe."[57] Though this statement might seem promising for the world of matter, Browne goes on to claim, as quoted above, that only the invisible is truly loved. It is in his capacity to serve as a representation of virtue, a "shadow" of divinity, that the friend becomes worthy of transcendent love.

In addition to overtly stating this hierarchy, Browne reassigns the tropes that make marriage a distinctive and transcendent bond to friendship. Friendship, for Browne, takes its place beside the most profound mysteries of divine being, the Incarnation and the Trinity: "two natures in one person; three persons in one nature; one soul in two bodies."[58] Moreover, it is by analogy to friendship that the love God bears toward man, and the bliss of communion with God can be best imagined. In locating friendship as the closest approximation of union with the divine, Browne is revising the treatment of marriage in Ephesians 6. It is marriage for the Pauline author of Ephesians that is the symbolic site of unions that baffle accounting—the incorporation of the husband and wife into one being, and the love of Christ toward the church who is similarly joined to him in a conjunction imagined to transcend physical and historical discontinuities, in which also multiple persons make up one body. Indeed, the writer of Ephesians toggles disorientingly between earthly and heavenly marriages in its meditation on "bodily" union, interlacing the motivations that underlie each in its explanation of the analogic relation between the two:

[57] Browne, *Prose*, 88.
[58] Browne, *Prose,* 75.

> He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.[59]

The love between husband and wife is explained by analogy to the relation between the self and the body, and this in turn by that between Christ and the church. The text goes on to quote Genesis 2: 24, saying that, "for this cause," a man is joined to and becomes one flesh with his wife. While the cause referenced in Genesis is the narrative of Eve as formed from Adam's body, thus giving an etiology of the husband-wife unit based on the first couple's shared bodily origin, within its new context, Paul's "for this cause" appears to reach back to its more immediate semantic precedents; he justifies the breaking of old ties in favor of the marital bond on the basis of its resemblance both to the natural self-care of the person who feeds and clothes his own body, and to the commitment modeled by Christ towards his ecclesiastic spouse. When Paul says, "this is a great mystery," a following clarifying statement is necessary to indicate which of the unions just discussed he has in mind. Imagining friends as one soul in two bodies is, as has been discussed above, one of the tropes of Aristotelian and Ciceronian friendship, and thus the idea the friendship involves a mystical unity has a certain grounding in friendship lore. Nonetheless, Browne here, as earlier in his discussion of the *ordo caritatis*, associates friendship with influential Christian articulations of the resemblances and relationships between human and divine loves, and thereby emphasizes his dislodging of marriage as the sacramental union par excellence.

Though I've argued that one of the problems with familial life, and with marriage, for Browne, is its investment in the production of substitute selves, his treatment of sacrifice and

[59] Ephesians 6:28-32, *King James Version*

substitution within the context of friendship help further distinguish between the kinds of substitution that threaten the self and those that leave its inner stability intact. Among the fundamental qualities of friendship for Browne are devotion and the willingness to undertake self-sacrifice on behalf of a friend. These are qualities that characterize famous friendship exemplars Damon and Pythias, and which Browne identifies as present in his friendships as well. "I now perceive nothing in them but possibilities," Browne explains, "nor any thing in the Heroic examples, of Damon and Pythias, Achilles and Patroclus, which mee thinkes upon some grounds I could not performe within the narrow compasse of my selfe."[60] The story of Damon and Pythias, of course, operates by a substitutionary logic of its own: Damon acts as a surety for Pythias, while he returns home to put his affairs in order, thus pledging to be put to death in his friend's place should he fail to return, while Pythias, for his part, returns at the appointed time and thus redeems Damon from the forfeit he would owe in his friend's absence.[61] Indeed, the action of the tale is made possible only because King Dionysius regards Damon as an acceptable equivalent to Pythias in the event of his non-return. Similarly, the most memorable events of Achilles and Patroclus' friendship, Browne's other exemplum, are attempts at substitution, though in this case unsuccessful ones— Achilles kills Hector in exchange for the death of Patroclus, whose untimely demise was itself the result of his attempt to stand in for Achilles on the battlefield.

If friendship can take the form of the production of a substitute self, as these examples, and indeed the early modern cliché of the friend as second self, suggest, it yet retains two essential differences from the form of substitute-production that taints familial affection for Browne. The first, of course, is in the specificity of the substitution: a friend is a second self by

[60] Browne, *Prose*, 74-75.
[61] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 3.45.

virtue of his union in will and resemblance in character to oneself—a kind of identity that by its specificity serves to underline the subject's singularity rather than erase it. Thus, Damon and Patroclus's substitutionary sacrifices are inscribed with the specific pasts and obligations of their friends. The second difference, however, is that, in these examples, substitution happens between the two sharers in the bond—there is no third party. Furthermore, the substitution occurs at the moment of the bond's dissolution via the death of one of the partners—as Damon risks being executed for Pythias, or Hector kills Patroclus believing him to be Achilles. Even though the friend may potentially become party to a sacrificial substitution required by an external force, the very costliness of the substitution limits the extent to which it can undermine the irreplaceability of the beloved friend. In contrast, the marital couple have as their goal, in Browne's account, the production of successors for themselves, both to their goods and lineage, and to their roles as primary love objects for their partners. The marital bond both produces and exposes the necessity of substitutionary affection. Bringing forth children and laying down one's life for a friend both are recognized in *Religio Medici* as paradigmatic acts for certain kinds of affections. Sacrificing one's life, as Browne points out, is an ultimate act rather than an expected act within the mode of friendship, the costliness of which is publicly acknowledged, and yet, the work argues, it is less fundamentally costly than the relatively quotidian act of having a child. The former demands a willingness to undergo bodily shattering, but the latter a willingness to cede the subject's claim to singularity.

Just as friendship and the version of erotic passion presented here, one largely co-opted by the family, are both undergirded by certain rituals of substitution, the bodily affects of Browne's friendship evokes the tropes of erotic love relating to the dismantling of boundaries between selves. Browne boasts of the intensity that characterizes his friendships as follows:

> When I am from [my friend], I am dead till I bee with him, when I am with him, I am not satisfied but would still be nearer him; united soules are not satisfied with embraces but desire to be truely each other, which being impossible, their desires are infinite, and must proceed without a possiblity of satisfaction. Another misery there is in affection, that whom we truely love like our owne selves, wee forget their lookes, nor can our memory retaine the Idea of their faces; and it is no wonder, for they are our selves, and our affection makes their lookes our owne.[62]

We are again confronted with a disturbing perception of incompletely shared identity immediately following the assertion that the two have "united souls," but in this case, unlike the marriage bond, the unreality of their unity seems to flow from the separateness of the partner's bodies, rather than from any failures of love. Though only the invisible is truly known and loved, here, those who are only united in spirit are not yet truly one. Friendship can rival romantic love in intimacy and devotion, Browne suggests, but, just as in Lucretian sexuality, the desire that it generates appears inherently unfulfillable: "united souls are not satisfied with embraces, but desire to be truely each other, which being impossible, their desires are infinite, and must proceed without a possibility of satisfaction." In listing the paradoxes and "miseries" that attach to his friendships, Browne plays self-consciously with the tropes of romantic fervor: loves which continually increase, making the previous day's affection seem always in retrospect inadequate, two becoming so much one that they then become two once more, a figure which we've observed Ebreo applies specifically to erotic love in contrast to sexuality.[63] His suggestive final complaint, however, reworks these tropes without having a clear source in them: "Whom we truely love like our owne selves, wee forget their lookes, nor can our memory retaine the Idea of their face; and it is no wonder, for they are our selves, and our affection makes their lookes our owne."[64]

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[62] Browne, *Prose*, 75.
[63] Browne, *Prose,* 75.
[64] Browne, *Prose*, 75-76.

Certain inconsistencies emerge in this rhapsody— one the one hand, it is impossible for friends to "truely be one another," and it is this impossibility that generates the pressure of the embrace, and perhaps the intensity of the affection. On the other hand, when absent from one another, the friends take on each other's identities, failing to remember the beloved's face since "they are our selves," and their features, therefore, the same as our own. Browne's startling claim is on the one hand a bodily literalization of the trope of the friend as the second self that dominates friendship discourse from the classical era onward. However, such an identification does little to illumine the opacities of Browne's statement. In what sense is the friend identical to the self? Why is bodily overlap both unattainable, and in other scenes, already achieved?

The emphasis here on a lingering and infinite desire which differs from the forward momentum of sexual procreation, for other thinkers is precisely the defining characteristic of eros. Sexual desire, for Lucretius differs from the other basic human needs in its tendency to resist satisfaction. Hunger and thirst can be assuaged by consuming food and drink respectively, and thus materially stopping up the body's gaps, and lovers expect at first that sexual desire operates according to the same principles. Lucretius explains, "This is one thing of which the more we have, the more the breast burns with terrible longing. For food and water are taken into our limbs, and since they occupy specific parts [of the body] the desire for bread and for drink easily can be satisfied."[65] This is because, the goods that sexual desire responds to cannot be consumed: as Dryden's translation puts it, "Form, Feature, Colour, whatsoe're Delight/ Provokes the Lover's endless Appetite,/ These fill no space, nor can we thence remove/ With lips, or hands, or all our instruments of love."[66] The things which love feels itself to be evoked by, according to Lucretius, are insubstantial and therefore unobtainable. In this, lovers are more like

[65] Lucretius, Loeb, IV.1088-1093.
[66] Dryden, *Sylvae,* 47.

the dreaming thirsty man who believes himself to be on the point of satisfaction but finds himself to be deceived than like a person actually satisfying his bodily cravings.[67]

For Lucretius the description of the lovers analogous to Browne's description of the friend is in the mode of satire rather than paradoxical celebration, and its critique is, in fact, that this brand of erotic obsession invests its objects with a wholly irrational value, and claims for them an unrealistic irreplaceability. Thus he complains in lines 1153-1170 that the lover sees only beauties even in his mistress' most obviously damning qualities: the unkempt woman is described as beautifully simple and unadorned, the dull woman as winningly modest in her conversation. And yet, let the beloved be possessed of all the charms of Venus, "even so, there are also others, even so, we have lived without her before," even so, she is equally heir to whatever miseries and indignities the flesh is prone to.[68] Given the critique in *Religio Medici* of a procreation-oriented sexuality (the only kind that boasts attractions, it would seem, since the wish to find asexual means of procreation indicates a desire to get rid of the need for sex), it makes sense to see in Browne's redeployment of the Lucretian idiom of desire a shift between different modes of investment, not simply a shift from relations with women to relations with men. Perhaps the very intangibility of the friend, the impossibility of getting close enough to him indicates the nobility of friendship, aligning the friend with the other things that are invisible and therefore proper objects of love: God and virtue. In contrast, the family claims the subject's love in their very material relation to him— thus exposing itself as less rational, not a form of virtue-love.

Lucretius' critique of romantic love, as we've seen, claims that erotic attachment confuses the lover about what kind of object it seeks, seeming to belong to the class of

[67] Lucretius, Loeb, IV.1097-1101.
[68] Lucretius, Loeb, IV.1171-1174.

consumable goods, such as food and water, while in fact its desire is not only mediated by representation, but ultimately directed toward an object that only exists in representation. It is directed toward qualities such as form and color, rather than material being that the body can take into itself. *Religio Medici* performs a similar devaluing of the sexually erotic, but replaces it with a friendship for which the embarrassments of love—its frustrations and impossible desires—are matters of pride rather than telling evidence. While sexual bonds remain a degraded mode of relationality for Browne, the assigning of its tropes to friendship indexes the difference in values that underlie each critique. Rather than being more real, which is to say materially tangible, than a fantasmic erotic attachment, friendship is valuable for Browne precisely in its virtuality. Indeed, Browne's discomfort with the kinds of self-expansion characteristic of family life, and his wish to substitute a friendship which is Platonic in its emphasis on the recognition of the Good, is still linked with risk. In this reading, the friend whose face can't be remembered because it is identical to one's own testifies to the concern with dissolution which Browne elsewhere so earnestly attempts to suppress.

This haunting fear is the more visible when considering *Religio Medici*'s comments on food. Eating, the act which Lucretius opposes to love as the paradigmatic instance of healthy, satiable desire, in Browne's treatment, by contrast, turns out to be disconcerting in basically the same way that sex is:

> All flesh is grasse, is not only metaphorically but literally true, for all those creature we behold, are but the hearbs of the field, digested into flesh in them, or more remotely carnified in our selves. Nay further, we are all what we all abhorre, Anthropophagi and Cannibals, devourers not only of men, but of ourselves; and that not in an allegory, but a positive truth; for all the masse of flesh which wee behold, came in at our mouths: this frame wee looke upon, hath beene upon our trenchers; In briefe, we have devoured ourselves.[69]

[69] Browne, *Prose*, 89.

Browne proleptically regards the food we eat as equivalent to the flesh it later becomes, a conceit far-fetched enough to necessitate Browne's insistence that this is literally, rather than allegorically, the case. Browne's insistence on its actuality invites readers to dwell imaginatively in the space of the intersection; despite the obvious dubiousness of the claim, Browne asks his readers to take it as more than a literary flourish.[70] Here, Browne gives the present reality of the embodied self ontological priority over the past history of the body's matter, and thus it is regarded as part of the body's matter. He challenges the causal privilege of external forces in shaping the body—after all the food is able to be integrated into the body precisely because it was once separate from it—preferring to rewrite that past in the image of the present. The horror expressed here at having consumed oneself evokes the similarly visceral language used to describe the alienation of the family: the man who has children is buried alive in them.[71] In fact, the problem with sex is that it is too much like eating— that it offers the lure of self-expansion, at the cost of destroying a myth of internal sufficiency, a sufficiency which is directed to the self's own needs in the case of eating, and to its permanent object-status for another in the case of love. Thus, sex is unsettling because it marks the self as mortal and highlights the unreliability of its objects' reciprocal affections, while eating is unsettling because it reveals the fact that the body is not a self-produced, independent entity, but has always been cobbled together from the remnants of other bodies. It is Browne's insistence on orienting the temporality of eating toward the would-be autonomous body that produces the vertiginous observation that our flesh has been eaten by our own selves. What the passage quoted above shares with Browne's remarks on food

[70] For C.A. Patrides, the passage is an instance of Browne's "strategy of indirection," his playful rhetorical pirouettes, just as the rejection of sexual reproduction is evidence for an ironized relation of the author to the narratorial persona, but the insistence on the "positive truth" of the passage is surely meant to attest to the phenomenologically reality and power of this perception for Browne. C. A. Patrides, ed., *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne: The Ann Arbor Tercentenary Lectures and Essays* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1982), 46.

[71] Browne, *Prose*, 89.

is claustrophobia—the idea that material connection forces the self into quasi-incestuous dependencies. We are twice buried in ourselves for Browne, once by eating, and again by procreation.

Indeed, the stark difference in the associations Browne attaches to friendship and to family relation is particularly glaring when each creeps into his discussion of literal burial practices, in *Hydriotaphia*. Discussing cremation, Browne remarks, "To burn the bones of the King of *Edom* for Lyme, seems no irrational ferity; But to drink of the ashes of dead relations, a passionate prodigality. He that hath the ashes of his friend, hath an everlasting treasure: where fire taketh leave, corruption slowly enters."[72] Imagining the friend and the family member in the same position—receiving the ashes of a beloved—Browne, true to form, links the friend with stability. His ashes are "an everlasting treasure," invulnerable to corruption. The excessive and acquisitive love that ends by devouring its beloved, by contrast, is a trait of the relative.

In reframing all eating as a kind of cannibalism, Browne once more seems to echo a Lucretian treatment, only to arrive at an affectively opposite stance. The biblical quotation "All flesh is grass" is, in Browne's treatment quoted above, only a specific case of a more general principle: that bodies in general are reconfigurations of various kinds of seeds, non-identical to the composite substance—flesh, bone or blood—that they create. In the closing passages of Book 1, Lucretius argues against Anaxagorean *homeomeria*, which he depicts as arguing that bones are composed of tiny particles of bones, and flesh of minute seeds of flesh, as are blood, ears of grain, etc., respectively.[73] The food we eat contains tiny particles of these various kinds which are then incorporated into the body after eating, though they are not visible in the meal itself. He argues, by contrast, that objects are made up of an array of seeds of various

[72] Browne, *Prose,* 269.
[73] Lucretius, Lambin, I.835-842.

fundamental kinds, organized diversely: "since food enters the body, we may know that veins and blood and bones [and sinews are made of parts not like themselves.]"[74] Thus bodies must be understood as composed of various kinds of things unlike them, must be contingent on acts of transformation, rather than being supplemented by something that shares their defining characteristics. For Lucretius, the imagery of cannibalism attaches itself not to his own model of bodily growth but to *homeomeria*: were Anaxagoras's account true, he suggests, we would find smears of blood when grinding corn, or tiny fragments of bone or bark in the earth and rocks. Here, the effect of uncanniness is located not in the possibility of building a human self from other kinds of matter, but rather in needing to posit an endless genealogy for the vital. Browne in the passage on cannibalism, then, both comes near to depicting a Lucretian universe and continues to insist on denaturalizing Lucretius' *natura*, refusing to accept as given forms of life that depend on recombination.

Browne discards the idea that the familial bond makes a strong claim on his allegiance due to the material sharing of natures that produces it: in the context of the family, the reality of matter leaves the affection untouched. He similarly insists on his own freedom to deny the material history of flesh as food—to eat his own flesh rather than see himself as the product of a material becoming. Nonetheless, when considering friendship he remains haunted by the idea that the bodily division between friends leave them "really" divided in a way that their union of spirit cannot counterbalance. The permanence of their desire for closer physical union—complete coextension, a shared bodily being—strives to create a mode of material joining that

[74] Here I quote Lambin's reconstruction of the text, which suffers from a lacuna at line 861. This textual conjecture would almost certainly have been present in the text used by Browne, given the overwhelming preference for Lambin's text of Lucretius among seventeenth-century publishers (Palmer 271). Titus Lucretius Carus, *De Rerum Natura Libri VI*, ed. Denys Lambin (Frankfurt: Apud Wecheli, 1583), I. 859-860. Ada Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

does not threaten the stability of the self. The friends do so by imagining the borders of the body perpetually maintained, and perpetually on the brink of union. When those boundaries are broken, as in the forgetting of the friend's face, it is the self, not the beloved other, whose body ultimately remains.

III.

A wistful sentence in one of Browne's unpublished notebooks reflects on the melancholy reality of the loss of friends: "I cannot fancy unto myself a more acceptable representation or state of things then if I could see all my best friends and worthy acquaintance of fortie yeares last past [i.e. of the last forty years], upon the stage of the world at one time."[75] The sentence stands on its own after a brief speculation on the etymology of the phrase, "world without end," and it is tempting to speculate that the awareness of the loss of friends is triggered by the specter of eternity. A "representation or state of things" Browne writes, seeming to elide the difference between having the friend present in the world and present to the mind. It is possible that Browne intends "represent" to mean present again, since some friends would need to be called back from the dead. This usage, however, is only recognized by the OED from 1805—Browne's contemporaries used the term to describe the world as filtered through symbols and imaginings. It is puzzling, therefore, that Browne here presents it as equivalent of the transparent "state of things." Browne's use of the dead metaphor "the stage of the world," moreover, continues the elision between reality and representation. While the force of the metaphor, as for Shakespeare, seems to be the temporary nature of earthly life, the presence of the imaginer as spectator seems to invite meditation on earthly actions as performance or re-performance of a reality present elsewhere.

[75] Thomas Browne, Common-place book, Sloane MS 1843. Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford University, 14.

Though the composition of bodies, the issue at the heart of the Lucretian discussion of eating, may have been the most obvious area for the application of Epicurean atoms in motion, the domain of representation was hardly immune to material permutation and flux. As Gerard Passannante has argued, the recovery of Lucretius in the Renaissance not only suggested a physics of colliding, unpredictable atoms, but also underlined the contingent status of textuality.[76] The text, one of the primary means by which representation can be stabilized and passed on intact, simultaneously, like the monuments of the great, can symbolize the doomed nature of the attempt to secure objects against the ravages of time. As Passannante observes, "...where the poem reflects upon its own material status... suddenly the text in one's hands begins to unsettle. If letters are like atoms and matter is always in the process of coming together and dispersing and coming together in different ways, then the text itself is vulnerable to the very physics the poet describes—we might even say is expressive of the poet's physics."[77]

Browne manages to resist this bleak account of representational instability, despite the presence of Lucretian overtones in his work, and this is largely because his idea of the correlation between words and things is not, at bottom, atomistic. Browne himself sometimes uses the metaphor of the letter to consider the composition of bodies: "he that shall consider how many thousand severall words have been carelesly and without study composed out of 24 Letters," Brown opines, shall easily understand "how among so many millions of faces, there should be none alike."[78] More often, however, the book of Nature, for Browne, is not composed of the jumbled letters of an ad hoc alphabet, but shows "some outward figures which hang as

[76] Gerard Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). In fact, given Ada Palmer's observation that the earliest marginal comments on the text were directed to matters of philological rather than scientific interest, it was the latter lesson that long dominated the mind of its readers (50).
[77] Passannante, 87.
[78] Browne, *Prose*, 69.

signes and bushes of their inward forms."[79] All things are marked with a divine inscription, "not graphicall or composed of Letters, but of their severall formes, constitutions, parts, and operations, which aptly joyned together doe make one word that doth expresse their natures," and it is by this alphabet that God names the stars and Adam the animals "by their true names."[80]

Though Browne's reference to the "inward forms" of the created world evokes the language of Plato, in the theory of an Adamic prelapsarian language that operates not by the laws of chance but by an inward fitness, Browne finds a resource capable of quelling the Platonic critique of representation, a model of the Word as intimately bound up with reality. Thus it is the delight Browne feels in regarding "a handsome Picture, though it be but of an Horse," that proves he is responsive to beauty, including the beauty of "that sweet sexe," and music can display "an Hieroglyphicall and shadowed lesson of the whole world, and the Creatures of God."[81] Sexual beauty is appreciated only when it can be distanced—an aesthetic object like a picture or music, and disconnected from any claims of a living body. In its capacity to reveal true and permanent forms, representation proves capable of stabilizing the atomic whirl. In *Religio Medici*, a Lucretian fascination with the permutations of matter is apparent—the same fascination clearly evident in *Hydriotaphia*, for example—in conjunction with a desire to seal off the boundaries between the self and the world, a boundedness somewhat softened in the porous interface between the self and the friend. For Browne, the spaces of representation and language, despite their role in the figuring of virtue and the divine, prove to be the space in which things become most recognizable as essentially themselves, called by names which rightfully belong to them.

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[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Browne, *Prose*, 80.

It's striking then, that Browne persists in imagining a friendship that is as structured around sight and proximity as it is around encounters in language and in conversation. "For though indeed they be really divided," Browne explains, "yet are they so united, as they seeme but one, and make rather a duality then two distinct soules."[82] The "real" division Browne speaks of here is not explicitly articulated, and yet given the radiance of the "mysticall union" Browne has extolled previously, it is hard to explain the actual division these souls experience except as the intractable result of their situation in separate bodies, a separation which, Browne has argued only a few paragraphs earlier, has epistemological consequences. In this preceding passage, Browne complains that no one can justly condemn another, since the truth about the second being is always inaccessible to his creaturely observers. Even Browne's closest friends behold him "but in a cloud," words that evoke the cloaking of divine theophany with perceivable matter.[83] It is only divine knowledge that is able to penetrate the concealing cloud of the self's material accidents: "hee [God] onely beholds me, and all the world, who lookes not on us through a derived ray, or a trajection of a sensible species, but beholds the substance without the helpes of accidents, and the formes of things as wee their operations."[84] To characterize human vision as inadequate, Browne in fact methodically rejects two contemporary accounts of vision's mechanism—that we see through the reflected rays of a light source or through the apprehension of the appearances of objects directly by the mind.[85] In either case, Browne argues, perception of the outside world is suspect, since it only allows the observer to see a collection of accidents, trivia which God separates altogether from Browne's substance, his intrinsic person.

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[82] Browne, *Prose,* 75.
[83] Ibid., 73. Cf. Exodus 13:21, "And the LORD went before them [the Israelites] by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night" (KJV).
[84] Browne, *Prose*, 73.
[85] Browne's "trajection" also evokes the films cast off by objects that Lucretius claims strike the eye and cause it to register their image.

As mentioned above, Browne describes forgetting the face of the friend when not present together; "they are our friends, and our affection makes their looks our own," he explains. Just as they are us internally, he suggests, our affection replaces the memory of their corporeal body with the image of our own body: thus, rather than one soul in two bodies, the friend perceives only one body, his own. It is only noble souls who are capable of this degree of rarified friendship, and this degree of affection is a step toward "look[ing] beyond the body and cast[ing] an eye on the soul." And yet, "looking past the body" seems only to be accomplished by swallowing the friend's body into one's own, and thus demolishing it as a barrier. Only by sharing the cloud of Browne's body, it seems, can the friend escape the condition of being deceived by it.

The friend who has been absorbed into Browne has not necessarily thereby escaped epistemological impasse, however. Though imperfect perception of another's essential being is a stark barrier to knowledge, so is entrapment within one's own moral subjectivity: judgment is exacerbated by the problem that "no man knows himselfe; for we censure others but as they disagree from that humour which wee fancy laudable in our selves, and commend others but for that wherein they seem to quadrate and consent with us."[86] Humans have no external Archimedean vantage point from which to assess our own experiences and values, and thus face uncertainty in assessment of the good, as well as in assessment of facts. In this context, the attempt at eliminating the distance—both spiritual and bodily—between the two friends, ends by dissolving any space outside the self that could mitigate this problem of excessive self-regard. The desire for bodily coextension with the friend, then, engages with the problem of being

[86] Browne, *Religio Medici*, 73.

distracted by bodily “accidents,” but is an imperfect solution to the epistemological dilemma Browne has presented—rather it reinscribes its very terms.

Chapter 3. The Body De-limbed/ Delimited in *Paradise Lost*

I.

In his lengthy discursive poem on the spiritual world, *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells* (1635), Thomas Heywood offers an exhaustive catalogue of authorities for and against angelic embodiment: Origen and Tertullian explicitly endorse it; ambiguous positions are taken by Augustine, John of Damascus, Ambrose, Lactantius, Basil, Rupert, Atlas, Athanasius, and Firmianus; and all corporeality is denied by Gregory of Nazianus, Pope Gregory I., Thomas Aquinas, John Chrysostom, Thomas Argentine, Alexander of Alexandria, Marselius, Bonaventure, Augustinus Niphus, Hugh of St. Victor, and Duns Scotus— "men Generally approv'd."[1] While Heywood arrays the testimony of the doctors of the church in all its impressive collective weight, he does not, in fact, need to consult them: the absurdities implied in attributing materiality to angelic beings are evident on even the briefest consideration. Heywood provides the equivalent of a flowchart, considering the various possibilities for angelic enfleshment, but in each path leads to the same conclusion: an angel would not have this kind of body.

If angels have bodies, they must either be "linkt of members, as Man's is; organs distinct/ And [of] like composure."[2] If they have limbs and organs, though, they must also be capable of sense impressions, if they have senses, then passions, if passions then perturbation, if perturbation then change and corruption.[3] If they don't have those differentiated, however, they

[1] Thomas Heywood, *The Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels* (London: 1635), 4703-4740.
[2] Heywood, 4753-4755.
[3] Heywood, 4757-4760. Cf. Descartes' discussion in *The Passions of the Soul* of the operation of stimuli on the body in order to generate and sustain the passions. René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, trans. Stephen Voss (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2009), 349-383.

must be "framed confused," clearly not a condition compatible with angelic dignity.[4] When the material of the body is considered, once again no satisfactory alternative can be found, since a body resembling air or liquid in softness and partibility would show itself imperfect by its inability to retain its form, while a solid body would be too evidently limited, and incapable of the feats of travel that angels characteristically perform.[5] Both internally, as regards organs, and externally, in its interface with the world, the differentiated, stable, bounded body is viewed as having superior integrity—it is orderly, rather than confused, and retains its own shape—but also by the very solidity of its material presence is disquietingly subject to the impact of the material world.

As is evident in the passage cited above, Heywood cannot make up his mind on how to value solidity, or impenetrability, one of the defining attributes of body in the early modern period.[6] To be impenetrable, and equipped with organs is to be subject to the buffeting of material forces rather than superior to them, an unacceptable condition. For Heywood, as for Descartes, the passions are immediately roused by sense experience; possession of sense organs thus means the doors to disturbing external forces are perpetually left open. And yet, for Heywood, a corporeality capable of transcending the physical world by passing through it, seems, on analogy to air, to risk in return the dispersal of the self as the exacted price. It is "subject to be divided" and cannot retain its own proper shape.[7] Neither an impenetrable solid

[4] Heywood, 4756.
[5] While Heywood believes angelic beings to be wholly spiritual, he seems to follow the Scholastics in believing that angels could not simply appear in a given place without moving through the space between its destinations, and so would be impaired in their mobility by not being able to pass through matter. John Salkeld identifies with a Scholastic consensus that angelic motion is continuous in his *A Treatise of Angels* (66), though Aquinas maintains that angels can move either continuously or discontinuously at their discretion (*Summa Theologica*, I.52). The exclusion of spirits' bodies from any other body, would be problematic, among other reasons, in its implications for the phenomenon of demonic possession.
[6] For more on the history of impenetrability as a property of matter, see Peter Damerow's essay "Space and Matter in Early Modern Science: The Impenetrability of Matter."
[7] Heywood, 4773.

body nor a penetrable body is acceptable as a model for the angelic being. The good body—or at any rate the good body belonging to a being more perfect in kind than man himself—would seem to be a contradiction in terms; it cannot be imagined.

The problem of how to understand the nature of angelic beings thus constantly reflected more generally on the perceived affordances and vulnerabilities of embodiment.[8] Since the pages of scripture gave little explicit information on the nature of angels, speculation on the subject tended to be guided by the principles of natural philosophy, but also, as we've seen above, considerations of angelic dignity. In imagining angels, then—creatures ontologically superior to man, but not ineffable, like the divine being—early modern thinkers drew on their sense of the privileges and frustrations of human experience in order to work out more exalted alternatives to the human situation. In this accounting the evils of embodiment loomed much larger than its virtues, and it is perhaps unsurprising that the vast majority of early modern theologians presumed angels' complete spirituality. Organs as a reason for dissatisfaction with embodiment, however, fit imperfectly in the dichotomized opposition between body and spirit, since the lack of organs signaled in more than one direction. After all, it is not only superior spirits who lack the individual members that characterize humans, but also various other forms of matter that have not attained to them. The only thing, perhaps, worse than being constituted of organs, is to be a material being which lacks them.

The same flaws that made human organs imperfect vehicles for angelic being were also sometimes judged to make them unsuitable for the future glorified bodies of believers at the final resurrection. Although the Calvinist legacy of exegesis and systematic theology typically

[8] Even among those who regarded angels as pure spirit, however, it was a commonplace that angels, while spirit in relation to man, were bodies in comparison to the purity of the divine being. See, for instance, Increase Mather's use of it in *Angelographia*. Increase Mather, *Angelographia* (Boston: Samuel Philips, 1696), 11.

minimized attention to speculative questions, including the details of heavenly life, one extensive treatment is found in the writings of prominent Huguenot theologian Moses Amyraut.[9] One of his treatises, posthumously translated as *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (1700), dwells at length on the gap between man's current state and his future glorified body.[10]

Amyraut complains that human bodies are marked by likeness to the bodies of other animals, and therefore must be remade, transcending that resemblance, though he does not know what form this new body will take:

> I know not at all, what will be then the constitution of our Organs, nor what will be the nature of the Operation of our Soul upon them, nor how the species of sensible things will be received by them. ... But so it is that I very well know, all will be otherwise than now it is, the constitution of such Organs as now we have, and the dispensation of Spirits whereupon depends all their Operations, being a certain consequence of the passible, and corruptible state of nature.[11]

The body's current state leaves it in perpetual flux, "subject to repletion and excretion," rather than in what he imagines as the heavenly condition, "a Constitution perpetually uniform."[12] Troublingly entwined with the temporal rhythms of change, the body would have been mortal and perishable even in Eden, had it not been sheltered by God's special preservation. In order to be free from these frailties, the body would need to shed its likeness to the other animals, a likeness apparent both in the resemblance of their faculties, arising from the presence of sensitive and vegetative soul, and the resemblance of their bodily constitutions. Indeed, the organs

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[9] For a discussion of the imperative to minimize speculation about such issues, see Robert West, *Milton and the Angels* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 13-14.
[10] Moses Amyraut, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (London: 1700), .While the treatise was not translated into English until 1700, it was originally written before Amyraut's death in 1664. Several other better known works of Amyraut's were available in England in the 1660s and 1670s: *A Discourse Concerning the Divine Dreams Mentioned in Scripture...* (London, 1676); *In Symbolum Apostolorum Exercitatio* (Saumur, 1663); and *A Treatise Concerning Religions* (London, 1660).
[11] Amyraut, 123, 129.
[12] Amyraut, 125.

currently appended to the human body are so compromised by the corruption and frailty of life on earth that one can be sure the heavenly body will not resemble the earthly one.

Similarly, in the opening stanza of Marvell's "A Dialogue Between the Soul and the Body," the discontented soul finds itself hampered by the very structure of the body:

> [The soul]... fetter'd stands
> In feet, and manacled in hands;
> Here blinded with an eye, and there
> Deaf with the drumming of an ear;
> A soul hung up, as 'twere, in chains
> Of nerves, and arteries, and veins.[13] (3-8)

Marvell's symmetric pairing of body parts and their appropriate verbs offers a playful variant on the rhetorical device of the cognate object. Fetters are etymologically related to the foot, and manacles derive from *manus*, hand; it is as though the soul were "footed in feet" or "handed in hands."[14] The soul is not kept captive by the body as a whole, then—rather each component part of the body works to bind the soul to it. The limbs and organs oppress the soul precisely in their capacity to do it service; it is the ear's faculty of hearing which deafens the soul, and the eye's penchant for vision which blinds it. Marvell's dialogue takes up a medieval poetic tradition which staged a debate over the body and the soul's relative guilt for sin, but it differs from its best-known predecessors in blaming some of its suffering not simply on the body's sinful appetites, but on its very forms of organization.[15]

Surveying these instances of seventeenth-century revulsion from bodily organization, it becomes apparent that more general impasses of embodiment sometimes found expression as

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[13] Andrew Marvell, "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body," *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Nigel Smith, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 61-64, lines 3-8.
[14] Marvell's poem was published in his 1681 *Poetic Miscellany*, and so its publication post-dates that of *Paradise Lost*.
[15] Similarly, Marvell's living body is resentful that due to the soul's strictures it is made to walk around "[its] own precipice," in line 14. Cf. the late thirteenth-century "Debate of the Body and Soul" from *A Worcestershire Miscellany. "*The Debate of the Body and Soul," *A Worcestershire Miscellany, compiled by John Northwood, c. 1400*, ed. Nita Scudder Baugh (Philadelphia: Bryn Mawr College, 1956), 42-29.

complaints specifically pertaining to the human organs. Indeed, the hand, just as much as the stomach, would have been recognized as an "organ" by early modern readers. While the term was used to refer to specific bodily systems, particularly those of the sense or procreation, the word still retained a primary sense of "tool," even when applied to parts of living things; Aristotle, in *De Anima*, had described the hand as the superlative tool, the "organ of organs."[16] As Susan James discusses in the broader context of early modern philosophy, the sense organs were understood to make the body vulnerable to the pressures of an outside world, interfering with the freedom of the will, though not crippling it altogether.[17] The processes of digestion and reproduction were marked with the corruption of mutability and mortality; their cyclic nature indexed the inability of human beings to attain the stability and autonomy that characterized God and the angels. At the same time, for both Heywood and Amyraut, it is difficult to imagine a version of the body that does not possess discrete organs—such a being would risk dissolving into chaos.

While the trope of embodiment as inherently humiliating might seem alien to our contemporary moment, I suggest that the identification of organs and organization as the site of human impasse has proved persistent.[18] It remains a feature of the psychoanalytic tradition, as well as the critique of that tradition offered by Deleuze and Guattari. For the early modern thinkers mentioned above, organs are problematic because they marry the capacity for action to the capacity for suffering action, tainting the self with the changeability of matter. For the later

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[16] "organ, n.2" 4.a, *OED;* Aristotle, *De Anima; Parva Naturalia; On Breath*, trans. W. S. Hett, (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1957), 180.

[17] Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1-25.

[18] For a later analogue to Heywood's critique of the organs, however, see Antonin Artaud's complaint in *To Have Done With the Judgement of God* that body possessing organs suffers involuntary responses to stimuli: "When you [God] will have made him a body without organs,/ then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions/ and restored him to his true freedom" (571).

tradition, the situation is in fact the reverse: organs and organization are understood to grant a capacity for action, but require in return the diminution and restriction of receptivity. This apparent difference of opinion about what organs do is in fact a disparity in how much immutability is valued. Since organs, mediating between the body and the world, simultaneously allow and limit the access of stimuli, the difference between the two accounts lies more in their disposition toward affectability, than their assessment of organic action. From the perspective of an early modern desire for perfect stability, even the gate-keeping function of the organs registers as a disconcerting porousness.

In this chapter, I argue that Milton stands at a hinge point between these two perspectives: organs as vulnerability to outside influence and organs as management of the experience of stimuli. Milton diverges from the early modern thinkers I cite by affirming materiality even as he rejects the presence of organs for his angelic subjects. Milton turns away from the organized body for strikingly different reasons than his contemporaries do: not out of dissatisfaction with the inherent mutability of embodiment (its vulnerability to impacts, the cyclic nature of hunger, aging, and so on) but out of impatience with the limitations of the organs' mediation both of sense-perception and of intimacy. The poem denies the presence of organs in its angels, and, as we will see, this allows us to imagine them as fully present within each other, co-extensive. Milton's angels evade the bonds of individual separation in a version of receptivity at once more total and more directed than that Deleuze and Guattari imagine. At the same time, the poem connects angelic independence from limbs to a superior capacity for agentive action, and insists on the temporary character of this dissolution of boundaries.

In fusing this complex mixture of desires and privileges attach to the figure of a body without organs, Milton, I will argue, diverges sharply from the psychoanalytic tradition's

emphasis on loss; he refuses a choice between autonomous agency and ecstatic absorption. There are several narrative factors that work to shore up the boundaries of individual identity. The first two have already been mentioned: his suggestion that the lack of limbs means angelic action is less constrained that human, and the possibility of mingling completely with another and yet being able to withdraw. The third, however, lies in the choice of love object. Throughout *Paradise Lost* (1667, 1674), love operates by likeness. Milton's angels, I will argue, like Adam and Eve, are drawn to lovers who seem to mirror themselves. By privileging encounters with another who continues to reflect the self, Milton creates a social space where porousness can be compatible with the maintenance of a bounded identity, balancing the poem's strong desire for union with its desire for individuality.

In the readings that follow, I will first argue that *Paradise Lost*'s depictions of angels affirm their materiality, while disavowing some of the specific features of human embodiment. I then trace the factors motivating Milton's turn away from organs. The need to work out the relation between individuality and coextension—parallel to the choice in Deleuze and Guattari between autonomy and receptivity—provides one of the poem's structuring tensions, and I locate different answers to this problem in the erotic encounters of Milton's angels, of Eve with her reflection, and of Sin with Death. In each of these cases, the negotiation of a union between the self and another is figured in spatial terms, either as the desire to be physically co-extensive with the other or the need to affirm the separateness of one's own body.

II.

Milton's account both of angelic experience and of man's lost Edenic state was one of the most influential of the English seventeenth century, in part due to his poem's powerfully distinctive vision. One of the most notorious of its idiosyncrasies is Milton's decision to attribute

erotic love to his heavenly spirits, a fact about angelic life that is revealed by Raphael, Adam and Eve's genial angelic visitor. Having just counseled Adam on the appropriate attitude he should have towards Eve—not too entranced by her, confident in his own virtues—the angel responds to Adam's query about his own love life:

> Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
> (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
> In eminence, and obstacle find none
> Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive bars:
> Easier than air with air, if Spirits embrace,
> Total they mix, union of pure with pure
> Desiring; not restrained conveyance need
> As flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul.[19]

The passage is notable partly for its sheer bravado: it has no clear precedent in Christian theology and devotion, though I will argue it has echoes in the poetry of Milton's contemporaries. It reverses the orthodox assumption of angelic asexuality that was founded in part on Christ's statement in Matthew that after death, human beings "neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven."[20] Milton's blissfully erotic angels also defied the widely-held Thomistic position that angels, as purely spiritual beings, could not partake in the needs and pleasures of the flesh.[21] Indeed, Milton's angels, participants in a form of digestion, as well as sexual love, are quite far from the fully-disembodied spirits of Aquinas.[22] Yet, while Milton stands apart from Neo-Platonist and Christian traditions which depict the body as compromised in dignity, he also insistently denies the angels' bodily differentiation into organs. As Raphael explains in a passage that will be discussed at length later, the angels are "all

[19] John Milton, *Paradise Lost* in *The Complete Poems of John Milton*, ed. John Leonard (London: Penguin, 1998), VIII.622-629.
[20] Matthew 22:30, *King James Version*.
[21] Joad Raymond, *Milton's Angels* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 284-291.
[22] Milton, V.469-500.

heart... all head, all eye, all ear," lacking the armature of specific sense organs.[23] Figures recur through the poem who are described as free from the bonds of limbs and joints: the angels, but also the allegorical character Death. I argue that Milton's resistance to the organs that define the human body takes on special significance in the broader context of his attitude toward embodiment. Milton's generally optimistic treatment of materiality makes it necessary to explain the moments when he turns away from it, to understand what specific desires or fantasies motivate Milton's rejection of the organs.

Since my argument suggests that Milton's attitude toward bodily organs differs from his attitude toward angelic materiality per se, I will begin by surveying some of the evidence for the latter. Claims for the materiality of Milton's spirits have come under renewed scrutiny in recent years. These re-evaluations often take as their target a prominent account of Milton's cosmology, influentially offered by Stephen Fallon in *Milton among the Philosophers*. Fallon sees the poet as gradually arriving at a position of monist materialism explicitly propounded in *De Doctrina Christiana* but also visible in *Paradise Lost*—a belief that the universe cannot be divided into matter and spirit but remains material in its variations of kind, and a corollary belief that matter can possess the characteristics attributed to spirit: will, thought, self-motion.[24] This schema rejects both the mind-body fissure that dogged Descartes and other dualists, and the materialism of Thomas Hobbes, finding its closest parallels, Fallon argues, in the then unpublished writings of Anne Conway.[25] John Rogers' *Matter of Revolution*, which links Milton still more strongly to

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[23] Milton, VI.350. Scholars of Milton have long noted the echo of Pliny's description in *Natural History* of God as a being that consists "wholly of sense, sight and hearing, wholly of soul, wholly of mind, wholly of himself." Pliny the Elder, *Natural History,* vol. 1*,* trans. Henry Rackham, Loeb Classical Editions 330, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 179, II.5.

[24] Stephen Fallon, *Milton among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1-18.

[25] Fallon 111-113. See also, William Hunter, "Milton's Materialistic Life-Principle," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 45 (1946), 68-76; Christopher Kendrick, *Milton: A Study in Ideology and Form* (New York:

a seventeenth-century flowering of vitalist energies, sees in *Paradise Lost* a partial retreat from the more radical redistributions of dignity and agency that the metaphysical union of matter and spirit produced in political radicals such as Gerard Winstanley.[26]

By contrast, N. K. Sugimura and Phillip Donnelly both take the position that Milton recognized a "first matter" differentiable into spiritual or earthly substance, and suggest that it is in this limited sense that a spirit might be said to be composed of matter.[27] Sugimura argues for the centrality of an Aristotelian framework of form and matter in Milton, in which angels continue to be characterized as not material, but rather pure form.[28] They possess spiritual substance that perceives in the instinctive mode natural to spirit rather than embodied matter—passive intellect, which immediately comprehends divinely revealed truths, rather than active intellect, which must strive to generate knowledge from sensory experience. To maintain this position fully, she is forced to minimize Raphael's references to angelic embraces and digestion: these are to be interpreted as "the perfect union of minds" and the conversion of material food into "food for thought" respectively.[29]

Such an explanation, however, completely neutralizes the glaring unconventionality of these moments. While Robert West has argued that Milton is inconsistent in his treatment of spirits, in some moments thinking carefully about the kind of embodiment that pertains to

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Methuen, 1986); John Rumrich, *Matter of Glory: A New Preface to Paradise Lost* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987). William Kerrigan's *The Sacred Complex* links Milton's vitalist materialism to the ethical significance of nourishment and digestion in his thought, and Christopher Hill has argued that this phenomenon in Milton bears resemblance to the thought of other mid-century religious radicals, an argument discussed further below. William Kerrigan, *The Sacred Complex: On the Psychogenesis of Paradise Lost* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London: Faber, 1977).

[26] John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 103-177.

[27] Phillip Donnelly, "'Matter' versus Body: The Character of Milton's Monism," *Milton Quarterly* 33.3 (1999), 79-85.

[28] N. K. Sugimura, *Matter of Glorious Trial: Spiritual and Material Substance in Paradise Lost* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 180.

[29] Sugimura, 175, 182.

angelic beings, and in others making use of poetic license, he, like most Milton scholars, identifies Raphael's discussions of angelic nourishment and angelic sex as moments where Milton's narrative flows from his intellectual commitments, rather than his imaginative freedom.[30] These passages seem to direct our attention to radical images that, unlike the description of the War in Heaven, are hard to read as having any other purpose than to put forth their unorthodox portrayals of angelic life. The theological messages they are taken to communicate—the goodness of material life (including eating and sexuality), the dignity of erotic love, the continuity of matter through creation, or the harmonies between human and angelic experiences—are entwined with the unorthodox scenes that convey them, and Milton's angelic conceits seem to flow smoothly from their ideological premises. Moreover, in the case of the meal shared by Adam, Eve and Raphael, a reading positing metaphorical nutrition ignores the theological subtext that underlies the passage:

> So down they sat,
> And to their viands fell, nor seemingly
> The Angel, nor in mist, the common gloss
> Of Theologians, but with keen dispatch
> Of real hunger, and concoctive heate.[31]

Milton's contemptuous reference to the "common gloss of theologians" connects this passage to theological debates about how to understand episodes of shared human and angelical meals, including Abraham's hospitality to angels in Genesis 18.[32] The traditional understanding referred to suggested that angels, as immaterial beings, were not nourished by what they ate but only appeared to consume it. This Edenic dinner, then, pointedly rewrites Raphael's own biblical

[30] West, 109, 162.
[31] Milton, V.433-437
[32] West, 164-168.

history: in the apocryphal book of Tobit, he explains to Tobias and Tobit that he has only appeared to eat the food of humans, but has not actually done so.[33]

I've suggested that Milton's wholistic portrait of angelic being is highly unusual—and indeed scholars of *Paradise Lost* have searched for clear precursors to Milton's depiction of angelic bodies. Milton's depiction of angelic sexuality is even more anomalous, among theological and philosophical speculations on angelic life, than his already unusual angelic ontology; the links that scholars have established between Milton and hermetic thinkers in an attempt to understand the sources of his depiction do not involve angelic intermingling. Robert West's study of Milton's angels emphasizes connections between *Paradise Lost* and the depiction of good and evil spirits in eleventh-century Byzantine author Michael Psellus's treatise on demons, published in Paris in a Latin translation in 1577 and again in 1615. West describes Psellus as a surprising source for Milton to have drawn from significantly, viewed dismissively by commentators like Willet and Zanchius whom Milton sometimes consulted and having "little of tone, association or doctrine, we would think, to catch Milton's sympathy and much to alienate it."[34] Nonetheless, Milton seem to have drawn from Psellus a significant cluster of traits used to characterize his angels, as eighteenth-century commentator Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol first pointed out.[35] Milton, in I.423-431 states that demons can "either sex assume, or both," since they have an uncompounded substance whose shape they can alter, contracting or expanding it, or changing its hue—ideas presented together and in exactly the same order, as

[33] Tobit 12:19. In the Vulgate, Raphael explains that he had "invisible food and drink" unknown to them, parallel perhaps to Sugimura's "food for thought". This is a variant reading from the Junius-Tremellius Latin edition that Harris Fletcher argued Milton most typically used and the Authorized Version. Harris Fletcher, *The Use of the Bible in Milton's Prose* (New York: Haskell, 1929), 23.
[34] West, 179.
[35] West, 178.

West observes, in Psellus' *De Daemonibus.*[36] Psellus claims that demons can repair their substance more quickly than human beings because of their ethereal nature, a plot point in *Paradise Lost*, and like Milton, suggests that demons sense all through their body.[37] While Psellus was clearly an important source for Milton, several distinctive elements of Milton's angelic life are absent from his account. His angels and demons do not eat, like Milton's, nor do they have sexual relations with one another, though demons can create vermiculate life by pouring their seed upon the ground.[38]

Following Christopher Hill's dictum in *Milton and the English Revolution* that scholars should pay more heed to the immediate historical context of Milton's work, and specifically the influence of "plebian radical thinkers of the English revolution," instead of the classical and patristic canons they're more accustomed to consulting, recent scholarship has also looked to seventeenth-century dissenters for parallels to Milton's angels.[39] Hill himself convincingly tracks the way that Milton's materialism was echoed by others of his radical contemporaries, many of them drawing on hermetic texts.[40] Two in particular have been the focus of scholarly attention: the writings of Paracelsian physician Robert Fludd, and those coming from the Pordage circle, led by John Pordage, a priest and mystic, a group was known for conversations with visible angels.[41] Fludd, and to a lesser degree Pordage believed that angels had material, though airy, bodies, and Fludd indeed believed that angelic spirits required their own nutrition. [42] However,

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[36] West, 180-181. Michael Psellus, *De Daemonibus*, in *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum, Chalaeorum, Asyriorum*, trans. Marsilio Ficino (Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1607), 334-335.
[37] West, 182; Psellus, 353-355.
[38] West, 188; Psellus, 353-355.
[39] Hill, 6-8.
[40] Hill, 325-338.
[41] Hill, 328-336; Joad, 147-153. Fludd's views on angels are found in his *Mosaicall Philosophy*, published in 1638 in Latin, but subsequently published in English in 1638. Robert Fludd, *Mosaical Philosophy* (London, 1659). The Pordages' angelic writings include the following: John Pordage, *Innocence Appearing through the Dark Mists of Pretended Guilt* (London: 1655); Samuel Pordage, *Mundorum Explicatio* (London: 1661).
[42] Hill, 328-336; Joad 147-153.

neither pictured sexual love as an element of angelic life. Cambridge Platonist Henry More's treatise *The Immortality of the Soul* (1659) posits love between angels, though their encounters are not pictured as bodily embraces: "These sing, and play, and dance together… They cannot but enravish one anothers souls, while they are mutual spectators of the perfect pulchritude of one anothers person and comely carriage, of their graceful dancing, their melodious singing and playing."[43] While other contemporaries of Milton share aspects of his angelology, the extended and vivid depiction of spiritual love continues to have no clear source in the theological writings of his age, whether conforming or dissenting.

A clearer indication of likely sources for Milton's angelic intermingling comes, I'll suggest, in the poetry of Milton's Royalist contemporaries. Hill speculates in passing that Milton could have taken a hint from a William Cartwright poem on Ariadne's desertion by Theseus in which she remembers a past before she knew that "souls might kiss/ and spirits join."[44] This, as we've seen is likely an evocation of the broader soul-kiss trope, though it could evoke angelic love as well. A far clearer parallel can be found in another William Cartwright poem discussed in my first chapter, "No Platonique Love," which opens with the following dismissal of an spiritualized love:

> Tell me no more of Minds embracing Minds,
> And hearts exchang'd for hearts;
> That Spirits Spirits meet, as Winds do winds,
> And mix their subt'lest parts;
> That two unbodi'd Essences may kiss,
> And then like Angels, twist and feel one Bliss.[45]

[43] Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul* (London: Printed by J. Flesher, for William Morden, 1659), 200. More's accounts of spiritual beings also seem to have been influenced by Psellus.
[44] William Cartwright, *Comedies, Tragi-comedies, with other Poems* (London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley, 1651), p. 239, lines 31-34.
[45] Cartwright, p.246, lines 1-6.

The description of spirits meeting provides a close parallel to what we find in *Paradise Lost*: the idea that spirits mix like winds with winds comes very close to Raphael's statement that they mix "easier than air with air." There's an interest as well in the idea that every part of an airy body would be able to intermingle with a partner's—Cartwright's spirits "mix their subt'lest parts." In the stanza's final lines, Cartwright explicitly attributes this experience to angels, and explain that it involves moving beyond a kiss to some further state of union and consummation; the spirits he imagines first kiss, but then, "like angels, twist and feel one Bliss."[46] Moreover, Cartwright's title provides a philosophical attribution for this fantasia: he suggests these concepts are what Neo-Platonists imagine a spiritual love would entail.

While Cartwright's poem is particularly akin to Milton's depiction of the angels, two important elements found there also appear in the verse of several of his contemporaries: first, a characterization of Platonic love as an attempt to adopt the practices that characterize love between angels, and, second, the idea that angels might join bodily with one another. Abraham Cowley's "Answer to the Platonics," in *The Mistress* (1647), a poem which portrays Platonic love as more unnatural, and therefore more lustful in humans, than love involving the body, opens with the lines, "So Angels love; so let them love for me;/ When I'am *all soul*, such shall *my Love* too be:".[47] While Cowley does not explicitly describe a physical copresence as Cartwright does, he does indicate that Platonic love was attributed to angelic beings. Thomas Randolph's "An Elegie," describes the ennobling influence his mistress has had upon his love, and then compares their love to that of angels: "Thus they whose reasons love, and not their sence,/ The spirits love: thus one Intelligence/ Reflects upon his like, and by chast loves/ In the

[46] His use of the verb "twist" is probably used with the sense of "unite," based on the production of yarn, rather than usage of twisting as interlacing that may come to mind for modern readers. "twist," II.3.a, II.4, *OED.*
[47] Abraham Cowley, *The Collected Works of Abraham Cowley,* ed. Thomas Calhoun, Laurence Heyworth and J. Robert King (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989-1993), 37.

same spheare this and that Angell moves."[48] The love Randolph describes begins with disembodied reflection but proceeds to both angels having recourse to the *same* sphere. In the image of the sphere, Randolph seems to draw both on the idea that angels appeared to men by condensing air, as Aquinas suggests, and descriptions of heavenly bodies as spheres controlled by an indwelling intelligence.[49] One would usually expect two angels then, to have independent spheres of action; while Randolph doesn't explicitly describe the kind of intermingling Milton and Cartwright evoke, the spirits' two spheres do seem to be collapsed into one. Randolph's poem also indicates a context of Platonic love: the mistress's influence keeps the lover's mind "from rude attempts," and these lovers "wear no flesh, but one another greet/ As blessed souls in separation meet."[50] In Edward Herbert's poem entitled, "Platonick Love," by contrast, the angels stay firmly in their separate spheres, loving only by thought: "Thus Angels in the starry Orbs proceed/ Unto affection, without other need/ Then that they still on contemplation feed."[51]

William Habington's "To Castara. Upon an Embrace," uses a string of metaphors to describe the experience of embracing, before pointing out the ways that human lovers surpass each described.[52] The lovers are compared to the oak and vine, to streams that "joyne, and lose themselves in the embrace," to billing turtledoves, and to flames that "burne in one,/ when their

[48] Thomas Randolph, *Poems with the Muses Looking-glasse: and Amyntas*, (Oxford: Printed by Leonard Lichfield, printer to the University, for Francis Bowman, 1638), 52-53, lines 31-34.
[49] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964-1981), I.51.2.
[50] Randolph, "An Elegy," lines 29, 21-22. In this poem, like Cowley's "Platonic Love," the question of love as directed to the person is opposed to a love directed to the beloved as an instance of her sex, though with a different resolution. Randolph's poem concludes with the claim that any desire to join bodies, in addition to souls, would indicate a love directed toward the mistress's sex, not her herself.
[51] Edward Herbert, *Occasional Verses of Edward Lord Herbert, Baron of Cherbery and Castle-Island deceased in August, 1648* (London: Printed by T.R. for Thomas Dring, at the George in Fleet-Street, near Cliffords Inn, 1665), 71, lines 19-21.
[52] William Habington, *Castara*, 3rd edition, (London: Printed for Will Cooke, 1640), 71-72.

curl'd heads to heave they reare."[53] Trees, however, lack sense and birds lacks soul; waters are cold and flames "soon expire."[54] The only adequate comparison, we find, is to angelic love:

> If not prophane, we'll say
> When Angels close, their joys are such.
> For we no love obey
> That's bastard to a fleshly touch.
> Let's close *Castara* then, since thus
> We patterne Angels, and they us.[55]

This poem does not explicitly position itself in relation to Neo-Platonism, though the unwillingness to have their embraces be illegitimately produced by "fleshly touch," might evoke it.[56] And, in contrast to some of the examples above, Habington pauses for a moment over the simile, worrying that attributing physical union to angels might be "prophane," or impious. Attributing embraces—and possibly intermingling, on analogy to waters and flames—to angels, provides a justification for the lovers to embrace as well.

The following picture emerges, then from a survey of the lyrical verse of Milton's contemporaries: it was taken as a commonplace that Platonic love was the love of the angels, and some writers tried to imagine angelic equivalent for human sexuality that involved interpenetration. The poems surveyed above all likely date from the 1630s and 1640s. Cartwright and Herbert and Randolph's verses were published posthumously, after their deaths in 1643, 1648, and 1635, respectively. Cowley's *The Mistress* was first published in 1647, and Habington's *Castara* first appeared in 1634. The latest of these collections by far to appear in print was Edward Herbert's, in 1665; the latest prior to that was Cartwright's posthumous 1651

[53] Habington, lines 3-4, 9-10.
[54] Habington, lines 5-6, 11-12.
[55] Habington, lines 13-18.
[56] The poem comes in the second part of the collection, which are all set after Habington's wedding to Lucy Herbert, the Castara of the poems. It therefore doesn't fit neatly into a strict schema opposing Platonic or angelic love to human marriage.

collection. Though Milton may perhaps have been influenced by reading one or more of the above, my argument is not for direct influence. Indeed, one important question that remains to be answered is whether these writers were drawing from one or several central Neo-Platonic sources. I have not been able to find one, nor does the scholarship on Milton's angels point to a clear Neo-Platonic precedent. Continental Neo-Platonism was clearly received with great interest by the English aristocrats and university students, producing a vogue both for Platonic poems and for critical or satirical treatments of Platonic ideas. It may simply have been intuitive to many to describe a love that seemed more spiritual than normal human love as angelic, and that first step may prompted speculation on the nature of angelic love.

Indeed, almost all of the writers I've mentioned were associated with the Royalist cause. Randolph died before the events of the war, of course, though he did leave a poem thanking Ben Jonson for admitting him to the company of the "Sons of Ben," a group that included many cavalier poets.[57] Habington was associated with Henrietta Maria's Catholic circle in the 1630s and both he and Cartwright bore arms on the Royalist side in the civil war.[58] Herbert served as ambassador to France from 1619 and 1622, and was committed to the Tower of London by the House of Commons in 1642 for resistance to Parliamentary proceedings, though he subsequently avoided direct involvement in the civil war.[59] Cowley, expelled from Oxford along with other students who had Royalist sympathies, followed Henrietta Maria to France and was engaged in intelligence work during the war.[60] It's difficult to say definitively whether reference to tropes of angelic love were dominantly linked to a courtly milieu, since much of the mid-seventeenth

[57] "Thomas Randolph (b. 1605, d. 1635)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Randolph also came from a notorious Catholic family.
[58] "William Habington (1605-1654)", "William Cartwright (1611-1643), *ODNB*.
[59] "Edward Herbert, first Baron Herbert of Cherbury and first Baron Herbert of Castle Island, (1582?-1648)," *ODNB*.
[60] "Abraham Cowley (1618-1667)," *ODNB*.

century verse that remains and has received scholarly attention comes from that milieu. It may well have been common elsewhere as well. However, it seems likely that these references of angelic Platonic love were prompted by ideas or conventional compliments in circulation within the Neo-Platonic court culture of the court of Charles I and Henrietta Maria.[61] In contrast, then, to the assumption in Hill and other scholars of Milton that influences behind unusual features in Milton's work likely come from radical English thought, I suggest that one of the most important influences on Milton's materialist angels was the court culture nurtured by Henrietta Maria, and the diffuse and sometimes unorthodox popularization of Neo-Platonic ideas it gave rise to.

The frequent presence of depictions of angelic love in the verse of Milton's contemporaries suggests, I believe, that scholars should put less intellectual pressure on the need to establish the internal consistency of Milton's ontology of matter. While vital and material continuities remain an important element of Milton's thought, some of their most seemingly-unusual expressions in the poem need not be understood as essential corollaries to Milton's physics. Rather, the idea of angelic intermingling was likely both independently attractive to Milton, and consistent with his intuitions about what kinds of creatures angels were likely to be. My examination of Milton's coextensive angels does not posit complete materialist-monist consistency on Milton's part, therefore, and I see a meaningful distinction to be made between corporeality and formation from a first matter, and in addition, between corporeal and aery or ethereal bodies.[62] My grounding assumptions regarding the poem's materiality are limited to the following: that Milton pictures mankind as inseparably mind and matter, and that Milton's angels

[61] See Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
[62] The category of the airy or liquid body troubles too hasty a dichotomy into corporeal body or *prima materia*. While air seems certainly more clearly material than a spatially extended spirit, it would not quite have counted as corporeal.

are also both material and spiritual in essence.[63] While matter and spirit may be conceptually separable, they cannot be conceivably encountered separately, in humans or angels, and Milton consistently imagines his angelic beings as possessing matter analogous to the forms of matter available to human knowledge.[64]

In fact, the moments in the poem where the nature of angelic beings is explicitly addressed give quite a stable picture of angelic ontology. In *Paradise Lost*, they are consistently described as possessing an airy or ethereal substance capable of being condensed into visible form or shape. The war in heaven has regularly been dismissed as a source of information about Milton's angels in the years succeeding Samuel Johnson's complaint that "The confusion of spirit and matter which pervades the whole narration of the war of heaven fills it with incongruity."[65] Indeed, as Joad Raymond observes in his study of the connection between angelic beings and the doctrine of accommodation, Raphael prefaces the episode with a general disclaimer clarifying the limits of his narration.[66] Yet when Milton takes up the question of what being wounded might mean for spirits, he does so self-consciously, drawing attention to the ways his depiction of angelic being might strain the bounds of a reader's preconceptions.

> ... but th' Ethereal substance clos'd
> Not long divisible, and from the gash
> A stream of Nectarous humor issuing flow'd
> Sanguin, such as Celestial Spirits may bleed.[67]

The poem insists on a palpable materiality in angelic substance, while continuing to describe it as far more ethereal than its human equivalent. Indeed, the passage is remarkable precisely in its

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[63] Cf. Milton's often-cited statement in *De Doctrina Christiana* that man's body and soul are inseparably united. John Milton, *Complete Prose Works*, ed. Don Wolfe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 78.
[64] In fact, Milton's use of soul to apply to living beings more broadly (similar to the usage of Hebrew *nephesh*) including animals in *Paradise Lost* is consistent with his account of his practice in *De Doctrina Christiana* (112).
[65] Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Poets: A Selection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 109.
[66] Raymond, 7.
[67] Milton, *Complete Poems*, VI.330-333.

awareness that it strains the bounds of credibility. Milton's narration insists on the idea that angelic substance is parallel to our own, even to the extent of having an equivalent to our "sanguine" blood. The disclaimer, "such as Celestial Spirits may bleed," simultaneously delimits the extent of the resemblance, and maintains that celestial spirits may, in fact, bleed.

Though Milton's angels are depicted, for narrative purposes, as corporeal enough to have a heavenly equivalent to blood, the explicit clarification that follows on the heels of this narrative moment denies angelic spirits a heart to pump their "nectarous humor":

> Vital in every part, not as frail man
> In Entrailes, Heart or Head, Liver or Reines;
> Cannot but by annihilating die;
> Nor in their liquid texture mortal wound
> Receive, no more then can the fluid Aire:
> All Heart they live, all Head, all Eye, all Eare,
> All Intellect, all Sense, and as they please,
> They Limb themselves, and colour, shape or size
> Assume, as likes them best, condense or rare.[68]

The ensuing description of angelic being rejects formations such as the liver or kidneys—they are limitations of the body's capacity for vitality. Likewise, it rejects the idea that the apparatus of perception, feeling, and knowledge need be structured through localized routes. Instead, his angels feature a profound openness to sensory impact and a distributed liquidity of thought that matches the liquidity of their matter: "All Heart they live, all Head, all Eye, all Eare, / All Intellect, all Sense."[69] At the same time, the softness of texture that allows them to be superlatively receptive also allows them autonomous power over every aspect of their own

[68] Milton, VI.345-353.
[69] Milton, VI.350-352.

bodily presence: their free-flowing intelligence takes in the impact of sense-data while their material forms remain invulnerable to wounds.[70]

A similar picture arises in Book I's description of angelic substance:

> For Spirits when they please
> Can either Sex assume, or both; so soft
> And uncompounded is thir Essence pure,
> Not ti'd or manacl'd with joynt or limb,
> Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,
> Like cumbrous flesh; but in what shape they choose
> Dilated or condens't, bright or obscure,
> Can execute their aerie purposes,
> And works of love or enmity fulfill.[71]

Scholars have occasionally been hesitant to apply Milton's statement here to the good angels as well as the fallen, since it arises out of a discussion of pagan fertility deities.[72] This passage seems to explain a specific practice of gendered forms, which may be only performed by the demons; however, the broader claim to describe "spirits" is unmodified, and "essence pure" seems to evoke the fallen angels' original dignity, still partially retained.[73] The human body appears at its least attractive in this passage, at its best indebted to "cumbrous flesh" and "brittle strength of bones." It is telling that of the three times the trope of the body unbound by limbs appears— here, in Book II, and in Book IX— this passage, describing the fallen angels, employs by far the most disdainful comparisons to human embodiment.[74]

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[70] The broad scope of the term "spirit" for Milton is somewhat evident in Johnson's further complaint that the capacity for swift dodges which the good spirits, precisely *as* spirits, retain is too material: "Even as spirits they are hardly spiritual, for "contraction" and "remove" are images of matter" (109).
[71] Milton, I.423-431
[72] For examples of this argument, see Noam Flinker, "Father-Daughter Incest in *Paradise Lost,*" *Milton Quarterly* 14. 4 (1980), 116-122, and Gregory Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1991), 227.
[73] When focusing on the change to their fallen state, Milton tends elsewhere to turn to the language of animality, rather than pure essences—as seen in the reference to "bestial gods" immediately following this passage, as well as other moments of falling off into bestiality or bodily disfiguration (I.435, I.84, IX.504-521).
[74] This view of enfleshment as prison is shared by Satan before his possession of the serpent (IX.164-166).

Though Milton's angels are material, the poem repeatedly pauses to note their difference from humans in material organization: the only limbs they possess are those they can form and reform. Yet Milton's interest in rejecting the model of human organs has little to do with the suggestion that organs are tainted by their mutability and vulnerability to the impetus of stimuli; rather, Milton's angels seem to gain vitality by their loss of organs, as well as a greater openness to encounter, both with objects of love and with objects of knowledge. Indeed, Milton's motivations in doing away the organs of his angels surprisingly resemble the terms of Deleuze and Guattari's reaction against the organism in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in their formulation of the "body without organs":

> The organs distribute themselves on the BwO [body without organs], but they distribute themselves independently of the form of the organism; forms become contingent, organs are no longer anything more than intensities that are produced, flows, thresholds, and gradients. ... The BwO is desire; it is that which one desires and by which one desires.[75]

The BwO is the body that erases its own organization in order to make itself capable of a higher intensity of experience—to create an unrestricted availability to the flows that impact it, and to the experience of its own desire, experienced not as lack but as the flooding of perception.[76] For Milton as well, the refusal of the organs creates a superior capacity not only to receive the inflow of sensory stimuli but to experience fully a desire which is not a lack—in Milton's terms, "union of pure with pure/ desiring."[77]

For Deleuze and Guattari, however, the body without organs cannot be limited to purely positive valences. It also includes "the hypochondriac body," which finds itself empty, rather than full, of the organs it has deconstructed—no heart, no liver, no kidney—a disorganization

[75] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 164-165.
[76] Deleuze and Guattari, 147-160.
[77] Milton, VIII.627-628.

rather than a de-organization.[78] Moreover, extreme routes of approach to the body without organs, among which they count forms of masochism, carry the risk of death. While the body without organs provides one language of refusal for the Freudian model of organization as maturation, Freud similarly sees the task of the organs to be providing a dampening of stimuli, with the key difference that this protection is to be desired rather than evaded:

> This little fragment of living substance is suspended in the middle of an external world charged with the most powerful energies; and it would be killed by stimulation emanating from these if it were not provided with a protective shield against stimuli. ... *Protection against* stimuli is almost a more important function for the living organism than *reception* of stimuli; ... The main purpose of the reception of stimuli is to discover the direction and nature of the external stimuli; and for that it is enough to take the small specimens of the external world, to sample it in small quantities.[79]

The beginning of life consists of simple prokaryotic organisms with no internal structure, and it is the need to defend the integrity of the cell against the forces of the outside world that initially causes the partial hardening of parts that will eventually become the organs. Indeed, Freud turns to embryological evidence to suggest that the central nervous system evolved from this superficial barrier.[80] For Freud, as for Deleuze and Guattari, to reject the organs and organization is to fulfill the imperatives of a certain desire, but at the risk of returning either to infancy, or more starkly, to the period before organic life—satisfying desire at the expense either of losing the capacity for action, or the possibility of desire at all. Here, once again, we find the orientation toward organs and organization used to describe a structuring impasse of human experience. While the early modern discussions of the organs that we've surveyed expressed resentment that humans are bound to the material world by virtue of being equipped to act in it, here availability

[78] Deleuze and Guattari, 147.
[79] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton & Co., 1961), 21.
[80] Freud, 20.

to experience and to the other is pitted against the preservation of the boundaries of the self, and its capacities for action.

What Milton has to say to Freud, and to Deleuze and Guattari, is, I argue, precisely a rejection of the choices they pose. He posits in his angels both individuated action and identity, but also receptivity and union with its love object. Freud and Deleuze, by contrast, both acknowledge a tension between the self as acting and its desires for receptivity or absorption, while disagreeing as to which capacity should be privileged. In the readings that follow, I will address how Milton's figuration of erotic dissolution and the refusal of limbs strives to articulate the possibility of a dissolvable and yet retrievable individual.

III.

Milton's description of angelic relation, the passage that most central to my account of the significance of bodily organization in *Paradise Lost*, comes at the conclusion of the long colloquy with Adam that occupies the four central books of the poem. In response to Adam's curiosity, Raphael explains that the angelic beings, like men and women, experience a bodily and spiritual intimacy with specific beloveds:

> Love not the Heav'nly Spirits, and how their love
> Express they, by looks only, or do they mix
> Irradiance, virtual or immediate touch?
> To whom the angel with a smile that glowed
> Celestial rosy red, love's proper hue,
> Answered. Let it suffice thee that thou know'st
> Us happy, and without love no happiness.
> Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
> (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
> In eminence, and obstacle find none
> Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive bars:
> Easier than air with air, if Spirits embrace,
> Total they mix, union of pure with pure
> Desiring; not restrained conveyance need
> As flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul. (VIII.615-629)

Adam's dialogue with Raphael begins in Book V, and continues through the end of Book VIII, forming the middle third of Milton's epic. Raphael's intimate excursus is positioned at the close of the conversation, and draws the themes of the preceding discussion to a head. The differences, then, between angelic and human love resound against the immediate backdrop of the discussion of the first human pair's relationship, which Raphael and Adam have just been discussing. The complete intermingling of "pure" angelic beings contrasts with Adam's struggle to remain differentiated from Eve, and indeed, gently satirizes the language with which Adam defends his own erotic suspension. It is not an "outside" merely that captivates him, Adam maintains, and yet, by angelic standards, the human erotic encounter is fundamentally one that must be routed through outsides, unlike the total mixture of the angelic embrace.[81] Though Adam maintains they have "union of mind, or in both of us one soul," Raphael once again one-ups him: for soul to only mix with soul is a restrained (or restraining) conveyance— a mediation that limits the intermingling of the full self with the other who shares your likeness. The latter may someday become Adam and Eve's mode of relation as well: Raphael tells Adam earlier in their dialogue, "Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit / ... and wing'd ascend / ethereal as we."[82] At present, however, they are not capable of such a union. Indeed, in advising Adam to retain a proper self-esteem, and sense of his own difference from Eve, Raphael appears to be urging Adam to not to seek a premature, and therefore illusionary, dissolution of the boundaries between himself and Eve.[83]

The union Milton proposes seems even more remarkable as it arises in his dialogue with Adam, to whom it seems a deeply unintuitive form for angelic love to take. Adam enquires into

[81] Milton, VIII.568.
[82] Milton, V.497-499.
[83] Adam's later claim that the "link of nature" draws him to fall together with Eve has been taken by critics to indicate a misunderstanding of their genuine separateness, and individual moral responsibility.

the nature of heavenly love by proposing a series of possible alternatives, in terms which will require some attention: he opposes gazing and "mixing irradiance," the virtual and the immediate touch.[84] A reader wishing to align Adam's intuition closely with what Raphael goes on to disclose might wish to read "mix[ing] irradiance" as the co-presence of the angelic beings themselves, conceived as beings of light: that is, mixing the radiance of which they consist. However, Milton's choice of the term "irradiance," with its strong overtones of light acting on or illuminating something other than its source, rather than the older "radiance," makes such a reading implausible.[85]

Indeed, Milton's own use of that verbal root elsewhere in *Paradise Lost* reinforces its link with external operation of power: the only other place it is used is in the invocation that opens Book III, where the poet prays that heavenly light may irradiate his mind.[86] The mingling of irradiances would then seem to suggest two angels in such proximity to each other that their emitted glow would intersect. Milton comes close to letting Adam suggest an image that would provide a discernable (and only dubiously corporeal) equivalent to ecstatic angelic union, but holds back: in fact, Adam's guesses about angelic love are clear versions, superficially altered, of the "sweet intercourse / of looks and smiles" and the physical caresses that make up his own erotic experience.[87]

The symmetric oppositions between looks and irradiance, and the virtual and immediate— parallelisms which would suggest that looks correspond to the virtual expressions

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[84] Milton, VIII.615-616.
[85] "irradiance" 1a, *OED.* Metrical considerations would not have mandated the use of irradiance over radiance, given the number of lines in the passage that open with a strong stress (620, 626, 627). Indeed, shifting the final syllable of line 616 to the beginning of line 617, as the change in wording would have allowed (...do they/ Mix radiance) even resolves some of the metrical irregularity of 616.
[86] Milton, III.52-53. Indeed, Milton seems to have coined the nominal form in this passage; the usage here is the earliest listed in the OED, though irradiant is attested from the 1590s.
[87] Milton, IX.238-239.

of love and the touch of irradiating light to immediate contact— suggest that for Adam in Paradise, the embodiment of the beloved is not experienced as a form of mediation.[88] It is Raphael's response which introduces the position that "flesh" is a conveyance for a self that cannot be identified with the body. And yet, neither can an unmediated touch be attributed to the union of mind, per se. If Raphael is the prophet of masculine self-possession in the poem, he also exalts a version of intimacy oriented around copresence within space, rather than the exchanges of language proceeding out from the differentiated subject.

In the major early modern theories of vision—whether the Galenic extramission theory, or the intramission held by Platonists and atomists—the passage of light is the central mechanism permitting vision. Both in the touch of irradiating beams and the exchange of glances, Adam's scenarios use light to mediate and symbolize intimacy. Light is what mediates angelic contact in Adam's imagination. It either passes between the eyes of amorous angels—the model akin to virtuality and, I would suggest, conversation—or it fills a shared space proceeding from their bodies, in what Adam posits as an unmediated touch. Willam Kerrigan suggests that the bond between light and mind was a commonplace even within the scientific tradition of optical study.[89] And in *Samson Agonistes*, Milton briefly indulges the speculation "That light is in the Soul, she all in every part."[90] In presenting the better, though incomplete, analogies for the angelic encounter in encounters of substance—either total mixture, or the mingling of various components: the mixture of air with air, of flesh with flesh, or of soul with soul—Raphael turns from Adam's mediating light toward coextensive matter. In doing so, he metaphorically exchanges the proximity of knowledge or intellect for a spatialized proximity of being. In place

[88] I take "immediate" here to have the sense "unmediated" (OED A.1)
[89] Kerrigan, 144-148.
[90] Milton, *Samson Agonistes,* II.91-93

of lovers who exchange images of the self, angelic love is revealed to consist of the disruption of boundaries.

And yet, Raphael's speech betrays the careful restrictions within which this possibility is indulged—the boundaries that Raphael insists do not obtain for angels remain powerful at the level of the verse. In the lines quoted above, Raphael compulsively pairs off like with like. While he endorses a total mixture that eludes classifying categories, the verse leads him to narrate iteratively the encounter of air with air, of pure with pure, of flesh with flesh and of soul with soul. The union of the self with another is surrounded and set off by gestures of mirroring—suggesting that union is only possible with the other who mirrors back the self. Similarly, as the poem rings changes on the word "pure," the term moves from a disclaimer urging the holiness of Adam and Eve's prelapsarian sexuality to an exclusive ontological category. When Raphael says, "Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st / (And pure thou wert created)," the adverbial pure(ly) that modifies the manner of their enjoyment echoes in the following line as an assertion of the goodness of created matter; a few lines later, as pure with pure is mirrored by flesh to mix with flesh or soul with soul, "pure" seems to distinguish angels from other creatures not capable of their mode of union.[91] It is now a marker of species discontinuity. Even the mirrored pairs tend to be set off from the rest of the line by medial caesuras; "flesh" and "spirit" receive neat holding-pens in their own halves of the line, while "total mixture" is similarly cut off by a caesura from the "union of pure with pure." David Quint has discussed Milton's reluctance about the full mixing of soul with soul, even within the bonds of charity—his preference for retaining a

[91] Milton, VIII. (622-623)

gap for the self's difference despite its harmonious integration—and it is this mixture of desires that defines the conditions for angelic love.[92]

This moment differs from scenes that invoke the figure of copresence elsewhere in the poem in the specific fantasy it outlines: elsewhere, the impulse to erotic dissolution is not reversible. For instance, the vision of bodily boundaries—joints and limbs—as imprisoning rather than integral is familiar from an earlier moment in the poem. I've discussed Milton's description of the angelic body in Book I above, but here I'll trace the resonances of the hermaphrodite in the same passage. As he lists the deities of the ancient world, Milton pauses his itemization of the evil spirits who were worshipped to explain their apparent gender flexibility:

> For Spirits when they please
> Can either Sex assume, or both; so soft
> And uncompounded is thir Essence pure,
> Not ti'd or manacl'd with joynt or limb,
> Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,
> Like cumbrous flesh; but in what shape they choose
> Dilated or condens't, bright or obscure,
> Can execute their aerie purposes,
> And works of love or enmity fulfill.[93]

Once again, Milton turns to "joynt" and "limb" metonymically for the general condition of human embodiment, closely mirroring Raphael's description of the "exclusive bars" of "membrane, or joynt, or limb." In showing us beings able to not only take on the shape of "either sex," but "of both," Milton's first depiction of angelic sexuality evokes one version of a supra-sexual bodily union—that of Plato's *Symposium*. As James Grantham Turner's survey of Renaissance attitudes towards sexual love and its origins suggests, the figure of the androgyne was heavily linked with Platonizing Christian and Rabbinic traditions of interpreting Genesis,

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[92] David Quint, *Inside Paradise Lost: Reading the Designs of Milton's Great Epic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 185-188.
[93] Milton, *Paradise Lost,* I.423-431

notably in the reading of Genesis 1 and 2 proposed by Leone Ebreo.[94] These readings, taking the fable which the *Symposium* ascribes to Aristophanes with a seriousness to which the dialogue doesn't explicitly commit, saw in the description of man created "male and female" a reference to Plato's "Androgyne" or hermaphrodite.

Indeed, Milton himself refers tangentially both to Plato's story, as well as the Jewish tradition of Neo-Platonist commentary that linked it to Genesis 1:27, in "Tetrachordon," discarding both to reinforce his reading of the passage as an assertion of masculine priority and superiority.

> It might be doubted why he saith, *In the Image of God created he him*, not them, as well as *male and female* them; especially since that Image might be common to them both, but *male and female* could not, however the Jewes fable, and please themselvs with the accidentall concurrence of *Plato's* wit, as if Man at first had bin created *Hermaphrodite*: but then it must have bin male and female created he him. So had the Image of God bin equally common to them both, it had no doubt bin said, In the Image of God created he them.[95]

For humankind, unlike fallen angels, it is impossible that male and female might cohere in one being: "image might be common to them both but 'male and female' could not," though it's unclear whence the impossibility of the hermaphrodite stems. And indeed, for the reader unconvinced of its prima facie impossibility, Milton appeals to pronoun agreement in the passage—Genesis does not present a male and female "he" but a male and female "they." The appeal to the figure of the hermaphrodite in Book I is notable for its very superfluity—it adds no more to the explanation of the spirits' bodily malleability than is evident in their ability to assume the form of either sex. One plausible explanation, given the context of the passage, would be that Milton specifies androgyny in order to cover specific androgynous pagan deities.

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[94] James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 66-71.
[95] Milton, "Tetrachordon" in *Complete Prose*, 71.

The shadowy deity alluded to then might well be Aphroditus or Hermaphroditus, a deity with origins in Cyprus who Macrobius describes as a version of Venus "both male and female."[96]

Plato's *Symposium* offers one account of the relation of the hermaphrodite to loss—a division of the original wholeness that is the root of erotic lack and longing—I've suggested, but Ovid's depiction of Hermaphroditus portrays the opposite anxiety, not the desire for bodily union with the other, but the fear of being swallowed by them. The episode retains many features in common with the story of Narcissus a book prior: the nymph Salmacis sees and falls in love with young Hermaphroditus, the beautiful son of Hermes and Aphrodite, who rebuffs her. As he goes swimming, she clings to him and prays never to be parted from him, a prayer which the gods grant by joining their bodies together; he then prays for the spring to emasculate all who bathe there and his request is also granted.[97] While their limbs are at first simply *mixta*, "mingled," due to her embrace, the gods permanently join them, to Hermaphroditus' disgust. In short, the evocation of the hermaphrodite in this first reference to angelic love encodes two countervailing dangers: the first that of retaining what Adam describes as his "single imperfection," permanently external to the beloved, the second that of losing one's (masculine) integrity in claustrophobic union with the beloved, as Adam feels he does in the fall.[98]

While Milton imagines in Raphael's account of angelic love a form of relation in which lovers share a total intermingling without putting into threat their individual, bounded, identities, the possibility of such a relationship seems to be dependent, as even the syntax of the passage shows us, on each partner's ability to mirror back the identity of the other. Earlier in the poem,

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[96] Yves Bonnefoy, ed., *Greek and Egyptian Mythologies*, trans. Wendy Doniger et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 171; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, ed. Robert A. Kaster (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 3.8.2.
[97] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2014), IV.317-388.
[98] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 10.880-887.

when describing the fallen angels, Milton alludes through the figure of the hermaphrodite to less successful versions of such joining. In the following section, I will argue that Eve's Ovidian encounter with her image constitutes a failed attempt to create the total union with one's likeness that Raphael enjoys. Indeed, I'll suggest, Adam and Eve's bounded relation—their limbed-ness and therefore their externality to each other—is one of the conditions of their human embrace; thus, Eve has to be compensated for her loss in a displaced fashion—by receiving her own image back in her children.

IV.

In Eve's account of her own entrance into consciousness and marriage to Adam, she is at first distracted by her own reflection, until a voice urges her to leave her shadow for a more substantial partner. While critics have read this episode as either a moment of "trial" and successful maturation, or of patriarchal force overriding an interest in the female self, I suggest that Eve's call away from herself is in fact a pull away from an auto-erotic boundary-dissolving mutuality toward the boundary-establishing intimacy with Adam. [99] In this moment, as will be the case at the fall, Eve desires a mode of being that resembles angelic life, and has to be tutored as to the inappropriateness of her desires. In turning from her reflection toward Adam, she has to abandon the wish for co-presence with her airy image for a partner whose suitability for her consists in his limbed solidity, a physical inability to mingle with her that mirrors the ontological difference the poem raises between them.

Linda Gregerson suggests that in moving from the reflection to Adam, Eve turns from the barren replication of her own image to a genuine other, one to whom she's drawn (or perhaps

[99] For an example of the former, see Diane Colley, *Milton's Eve* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 74-83. For the latter view, see Christine Froula, "When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy," *Critical Inquiry* 10.2 (1983), 321-347.

bound) by ties of both similitude and difference. By contrast, Adam, as Eve herself points out, lacks a partner who can be his superior image and mirror.[100] What Eve learns, in this reading, is superiority of resemblance within difference to a pure replication; like the icons which zealous reformers opposed, Eve's reflection is a mechanical, rather than living, reproduction.

It is telling, however, that the strongest assessments of the likeness between the two belongs more to Adam's admiring love than to Eve's self-knowledge:

> ... Eve repli'd. O thou for whom
> And from whom I was formd flesh of thy flesh,
> And without whom am to no end, my Guide
> And Head, what thou hast said is just and right.
> For wee to him indeed all praises owe,
> And daily thanks, I chiefly who enjoy
> So farr the happier Lot, enjoying thee
> Præeminent by so much odds, while thou
> Like consort to thy self canst no where find.[101]

For Eve, the emphasis on similitude between herself and Adam can only be voiced in the reported speeches of others; within her own words, the extent of such a resemblance is carefully limited. Thus, the divine voice describes Adam to her as the one "whose image thou art" and Adam himself re-iterates the claim that Eve is "of him," with additional itemizations of her symmetry to him: she is "neerest [his] heart" "part of [his] soul", "[his] other half."[102] Although Eve's speech to Adam begins with a similar avowal of likeness—she is "flesh of [his] flesh"—this statement only appears dependent, both logically and grammatically, on an acknowledgement of his absolute ontological priority. Adam is the one "for whom/ And from whom [Eve] was formed flesh of [his] flesh."[103] And indeed Eve moves immediately from that statement to express her sense of their deep unlikeness. Adam is "pre-eminent by so much odds"

[100] Linda Gregerson, *The Reformation of the Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 148-175.
[101] Milton, IV.440-448.
[102] Milton, IV.472, 484, 487-488.
[103] Milton, IV.440-441.

to her, and can nowhere find a consort like to himself.[104] Her speech famously concludes with a second hierarchical disjunction of their qualities: Adam is characterized by manly grace (a word with spiritual as well as physical resonances) and wisdom, Eve by beauty.[105] Thus, though Eve's speech narrates her gradual recognition of a fitting partner for herself in Adam, coached by God and by Adam himself, it is carefully bracketed on both sides by statements clarifying that Adam is of a different kind to herself and that she fails to resemble him in the ways that matter most. Adam cannot easily be reconstructed as Eve's better mirror. Indeed, her "submissive charms" seem to require an inability to recognize him as a mirror of herself, as well as repeated disowning of their essential likeness and equal dignity.

This discrepancy is so glaring as to give rise to critical speculation that Eve's sense of her own and Adam's relative merits constitutes a failure to credit the adequacy of God's divine provision in her: Eve has been made specifically to remedy Adam's early recognition that he had no consort "like" to him. Yet, although Adam's sense of his wife's "absolute" or self-sufficient, beauty and goodness must be adjusted downward by angelic admonition, Eve's assessment in Book IV, in addition to her "conjugal attraction," is allowed to stand "unreproved."[106] It is Adam's incomplete recognition of her subordination which is corrected, not Eve's belief in her incomplete likeness to Adam.[107] Thus, it is in her interactions with her reflection that Eve most seems to find the communion with like that she, as much as Adam, clearly seeks.

Eve's recollection of her self-encounter, followed by her introduction to Adam, is told in order to underline her superior lot, as she would have it: that was when, she explains, she first

[104] Milton, IV. 447-8.
[105] Milton, IV.490-491.
[106] Milton, IV.493
[107] Similarly, while Raphael suggests to Adam that he may someday attain to angelic stature, it is never suggested that Eve could grow to become Adam's equal in wisdom or in reflection of the divine image.

appreciated how far Adam is her true superior. This is the moral, at any rate, that Eve draws at the end of her recollection. In the unfolding of the verse, however, her story is placed in immediate juxtaposition with her consideration of what the experience for Adam of encountering "like consort to [himself]" would be. It is her statement that he cannot have that experience that evokes the memory of her own temporary illusion of its equivalent.[108] While it may be, as Christine Froula has argued, that Eve turns from Adam for the pleasures of discovering herself, she is initially attracted, not to her own image, but to the promise of mutuality, an other whose interest matches her own. And yet, while Eve's interest is directed to the reciprocity of its response, rather than its resemblance to her, the poem gradually makes clear that symmetry of response can only occur between those who mirror each other's likeness.

The spectacle of Eve captivated by her own reflection replays, or perhaps prefigures, Ovid's account of Narcissus in *The Metamorphoses*; thus Eve's turn to the reflection has most typically been read to signal her immaturity, vanity and excess of bodiliness—in sum, her lack of rationality.[109] While critics have largely assumed that Eve is attracted by the beauty of her own "fair outside," the text provides conflicting answers at different moments of her narrative to the question of what draws her to her image. Indeed, a close comparison with the Ovidian source text, shows that the trajectory of Eve's attention pointedly reverses that of Narcissus, as Mandy Green points out.[110] While Narcissus begins by being attracted to the appearance of his own body, and then comes to ascribe affect and intention to the being he sees, Eve reverses the direction of attention, first touched by the kindness of the being she sees, and only subsequently

[108] Milton, IV.448.
[109] See, for instance, William Kerrigan's treatment of the scene in *The Sacred Complex* (70), as well as the analysis in John Guillory, "Milton, Narcissism and Gender: On the Genealogy of Male Self-Esteem," *Critical Essays on John Milton*, ed. Christopher Kendrick (New York: G. K. Hall, 1995), 194-233.
[110] Mandy Green, *Milton's Ovidian Eve* (London: Routledge, 2009), 32.

noting its specific bodily characteristics.[111] She begins by narrating an initial fear at the mysterious and unarticulated "shape" which startles her in the water, which is soon followed by an unexplained pleasure—pleasure that could indeed be attributed to her sense of her own beauty.[112] What Eve describes being moved by, however, is not the figure's beauty, but the symmetry of its responses with her own; she is drawn to her reflection by the "answering looks of sympathy and love" which it offers her.[113]

Milton's use of the term "sympathy" is relatively rare.[114] In *Paradise Lost*, sympathy in the sense of action from a distance—the simultaneous advent of bodily change or of intellectual knowledge across space—binds Satan to Sin and Death, and to the other devils in shared punishment after the fall. By contrast, the sympathy that Eve feels seems to be one of inclination, or "fellow-feeling", resembling more the sympathy of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*.[115] In that tract, sympathy is an essential component of the bond between the couple—indeed, the most intransigent component, since "to command love and sympathy, to forbid dislike against the guiltles instinct of nature, is not within the Province of any Law to reach."[116] Sympathy, "the inward and irremediable disposition of man," is a natural index of likeness and, like genuine faith, cannot be commanded.[117] Eve's sympathy works first as a marker of individuation, as in the tracts, and resembles the natural likeness between appropriately paired lovers. Thus, Eve's

[111] Ovid, III.420-423, 457-462.
[112] Milton, IV.461.
[113] In Guillory's reading, in fact, Eve has to be socialized into the knowledge of her physical appearance (198-210).
[114] Seth Lobis argues for sympathy's importance in *Paradise Lost*, and indeed for Milton's importance in the shift from the Paracelsian sympathy that held together the physical universe to the imaginative and emotional sympathy that was central to eighteenth century accounts of social bonds. Lobis argues that sympathy, for Milton, as for Foucault, "in its power to assimilate, ... threatens to undo and to do away with all individuality," and therefore must be brought into dialogue with reason. Seth Lobis, *The Virtue of Sympathy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 134.
[115] "sympathy," 3b, *OED*.
[116] Milton, *Complete Prose*, Vol. 2, 272.
[117] Ibid.

desire for her image is a desire for a kind of mutuality—another whose being and whose affection are mirror back her own. This mutuality is impossible, because it is an image, and cannot encounter her embrace.[118] The desire to merge with the beloved is doomed from the start, for humans, and for Eve, regardless of the specific nature of the reflection.

Indeed, Ovid's Narcissus self-consciously begs the reverse of the Lucretian lovers' wish. "Would that I might separate from *our* body," he wails to his reflection, though he wishes so only in order to receive the beloved body back in turn.[119] As we will see, the dynamic of separation from the beloved in order to re-experience union with them also marks Eve's initial turn from the reflection to Adam. God's voice breaks in to lead her away from the pond:

> ...And I will bring thee where no shadow staies
> Thy coming, and thy soft imbraces, hee
> Whose image thou art, him thou shalt enjoy
> Inseparablie thine, to him shalt beare
> Multitudes like thy self, and thence be call'd
> Mother of human Race.[120]

Milton's God is not above witticisms as he guides Eve to her mate, and his double entendre tells her both that not even a shadow bars her coming, and that she is awaited by one who is "no shadow." But Adam occasions a second doubling of meaning: in staying her coming and her embrace, he both awaits them and arrests their progress.[121] If previously her shadow's insubstantiality has resisted her embrace, Adam's contrasting solidity will do the same. Eve is asked to leave "herself," a version of herself, moreover, that like angelic love required no permanent bond—coming and going with impulses that match her own desires—for a husband

[118] In the Lucretian theory of love, of course, it is not Eve alone, but all romantic lovers who are seduced by a shadow, while believing they desire a substantial good, and therefore are not capable of achieving their desire (IV.1073-1100).
[119] Ovid, IV.467.
[120] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV.467-475.
[121] "stay," 19a, 21a, *OED.*

who, like the nymph Salmacis, proposes an indissoluble bond, but is too solid to be integrated into herself, however temporarily. Eve's image of course is insubstantial not in its rarified quality but in its flatness; it does not rise above matter, but falls below it. And yet, it appears, that lure of co-presence with one's own likeness is potent enough, and benign enough, that Eve can be offered a displaced form of this intermingling as a compensatory bribe for her abandonment of her own image. In return for leaving her reflection now, she will be given "multitudes" of her own likeness in pregnancy and maternity, though she will once again be asked to relinquish her identification and union with them to place them in relation to Adam.[122]

Eve and Adam, I've suggested, are viewed, at least by Raphael, as not yet ready for intermingling—they pair not by a co-presence of rarified bodies but by mirroring each other's organs. In *Paradise Lost*, as in Genesis, Eve is bone of Adam's bone, and flesh of Adam's flesh.[123] Sin and Death by contrast, present the spectacle of intermingling unanchored by a bounded self. In Sin, the problems of boundary maintenance are taken to a horrific extreme: she lacks discernable shape, not because her body is too vital for organs, but because it has been mortified and "distorted."[124] While Eve is forced to abandon her shadow, in order to serve as Adam's mirror and image, the figure of Sin is able to both bear the image of her author-lover, Satan, and to retain an externalization of her own image in the person of Death, her "shade inseparable."[125] Like Eve, Sin bears multitudes, though less as compensation than as painful punishment. And though Sin's children move freely (and grotesquely) in and out of her body in a parody of loving intermingling, they do so not in auto-erotic attraction to likeness, but in order to

[122] Even Adam's premonition of his reproductive future, narrated in Book VIII, balances the multiplication of his own image with the multiplication of Eve's: he hopes to produce "Like of his like, his Image multipli'd" (424).
[123] Milton, VIII.495.
[124] Milton, II.784.
[125] Milton, X.249-250.

consume her.[126] The brutality of their attacks on her makes their violation of her bodily boundaries a nightmarish and debased version of a desired copresence or bodily porousness.

Sin offers a grotesque version of the body that cannot maintain its boundaries, but it is the body of Death that bears the sharpest resemblance to angelic insubstantiality:

> The other shape,
> If shape it might be call'd that shape had none
> Distinguishable in member, joynt, or limb,
> Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,
> For each seem'd either; black it stood as Night,[127]

The language here comes extraordinarily close to that which describes the heavenly spirits: just as they "obstacle find none/ of membrane, joynt or limb," Death also lacks the bodily structure of "member, joynt, or limb." Like Milton's angels, Death appears to operate in the world without the corporeal apparatus of agency—the differentiated organ or limb. The differences are telling, however. Death escapes the solidity of limbs simply by presenting no distinguishable shape; where the angels retain mastery over their shape, he abandons form altogether. Death's darkness and the fluidity of his body evoke the decomposition of the body in the grave—where, as Marvell observes in "To His Coy Mistress," the interpenetration of bodies is inevitable.[128]

As is the case for Milton's angels, who are described as acting with the limbs they do not possess, Death's characterization is not altogether consistent. Despite his declared lack of form, the poem repeatedly finds him capable of swinging a "dart" or flaring a nostril.[129] Since the poem's explicit statements thus contrast with its narrative descriptions, it is worth asking here, as we have with Milton's direct statements on angelic substance, what drives the poem to offer

[126] Milton, II.795-800.
[127] Milton, II.666-670

[128] Marvell, p.75-84, lines 27-28.
[129] Milton, II.672, X.280.

these clarifications. In this case, Death's insubstantiality is poetically apt. Death is the absence of being; it does not have any being itself. And so Death constantly threatens to slip away under perceptual or intellectual scrutiny, despite the brutal force he visibly exerts in the world. The poetic appropriateness of Death's formlessness does not explain, however, why his description should so closely echo the description of angelic bodies in Book I and their later characterization in Book VIII.

There is, I suggest, a didactic narrative logic at work which explains this feature. In this chapter, I began with my paradigmatic instance—the erotic encounter of the angels—and then tracked its proximate others back through the poem. In reading *Paradise Lost,* however, a reader has the opposite experience. She begins with the evocation of the hermaphrodite in Book I, and then, as Satan travels through Book II, grapples with the terrors of bodily chaos, and the disfiguring incontinence of Sin and Death. The echoes of Milton's intermingling angels that such a reader would next encounter come in Eve's narration of Book IV—if Eve cannot attain the co-mingling that the angels experience, she at least rejects its debased double, the body that (like Death) is unlimbed because it is empty rather than because it is full. When we reach the crowning revelation of erotic and material potential with Raphael in Book VIII, the reader has been cued to recognize both the importance of protecting the subject's integrity and the strength of the desire for union. Milton recognizes the terrors of intermingling, and the possibility of confusing the freedom of the spiritual being with the emptiness of the dead. Yet the poem's repetitions of intermingling, its several explorations of an intimacy mediated neither by language nor by limbs, seem aimed not at subversion of angelic intimacy but at clearing a space for it by disposing of the formations that fall short of it. Milton's repetitions raise the stakes, asking the reader to rearticulate past experience in a higher key.

V.

Critics have often observed the evocative resonance between Eve's desire for her reflection and Lacan's mirror-stage account of entrance into subjectivity. The latter pits a hallucinated state of wholeness induced by the vision of one's own image against the preceding period of infancy, one characterized by porous distinctions between the internal and the external.[130] Indeed, as Claudia Champagne has argued, a closer parallel might be Adam's discovery of his own limbs in his psychic, though not bodily, infancy:

> My self I then perus'd, and Limb by Limb
> Survey'd, and sometimes went, and sometimes ran
> With supple joints, as lively vigour led:
> But who I was, or where, or from what cause,
> Knew not; to speak I tri'd, and forthwith spake,
> My Tongue obey'd and readily could name
> What e're I saw.[131]

Limb and joint are again present together and are central to Adam's first encounters with the world. Upon awaking in Eden, Adam experiences himself as bewildered possessor of the organs of his body. The scene is one where Adam enjoys the kind of voluntary motion shared by human beings with other animals.[132] In the lines that follow, Adam finds himself addressing the inanimate fellow-partakers of this scene, such as the sun, light, the earth, hills, woods, etc., but also the living creatures whom he recognizes to resemble him in their organization and power of motion. Timothy Harrison's account of this passage stresses the presence of an overarching awareness of one's own liveness that aligns Adam with all else that lives.[133] Though Harrison's

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[130] For a discussion of the limitations as well as usefulness of Lacanian theory in reading this scene, see Susanna Mintz, *Threshold Poetics* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 33-53.
[131] Milton, VIII.267-272. Champagne, Claudia, "Adam and his 'Other Self' in *Paradise Lost*: A Lacanian Study in Psychic Development," *Milton Quarterly* 25.2 (1991), 48-59.
[132] See Joshua Scodel's account of Adam's gradually unfolding sense of freedom in this scene, as well as the punning resonances of joint, in the fall and the gardening discussion (156). Joshua Scodel,"Edenic Freedoms," *Milton Studies* 56 (2015): 153-200.
[133] Timothy Harrison, "Adamic Awakening and the Feeling of Being Alive in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 54 (2013): 29-57.

suggestion that "Adamic awakening is an attempt to think life without death, to describe a mode of affectivity where life is felt in its purity, without the threat of annihilation" offers another way to track the interest in an uncompromised bodily flourishing I examine, I'll focus here on the way that Adam experiences, alongside the thrum of being alive, disconnection from his limbs. Unlike the Lacanian infant, Adam gazing on himself seems to experience from the first a lack in what he regards—the image that he surveys in partial doses, limb by limb, (without a mirror), is not absolute in itself.[134] Adam thus requires the source of his being to be revealed. In addition Adam seems to experience the cooperation of his organs as something coming partially from outside his will. While he is able to run and walk without a temporal gap between desire and execution, in other actions he is conscious of a fissure between thought and action. He experiences, rather than understands, how his tongue comes to cooperate with his desire to speak, and how his understanding cooperates with his desire to name.

In *Paradise Lost,* to be limbed is be able to experience yourself as composed of discrete parts rather than a singular unit—as Adam does here. And yet this array of parts is exactly what allows the body and its capacities to be delightedly "survey'd" and felt as abundance. The connection of limbs with the experience of wholeness and abundance is equally prominent in Book V's description of Adam and Eve's nocturnal slumbers. There, once again, the evocation of the limbs seems to be accompanied by the impulse to take stock of the richness of an embodied experience, and indeed prompts a warning from the narrative voice against seeking any further happiness than Adam and Eve then possess, apparently at the height of their joys.[135]

Paradise Lost posits a view of matter, articulated most explicitly in Raphael's speech on the scale of nature, which proceeds upward from the gross to the most rarified beings. It also,

[134] Champagne, 50.
[135] Milton, V.775.

however, contains a vision of the final union of all beings, where God will be "all in all."[136] Raphael's articulation of angelic intimacy attempts to mediate between our (or, rather, our first parents') condition and that final arrangement, to imagine a form of sociality that would mediate between human love and divine love in the way that angelic embodiment and angelic knowledge were understood to be intermediate between the human and the divine. In conceptualizing this utopian relational form, Milton turns from the exchange of the self through signs, whether verbal or gestural, that characterizes the intimacy of Adam and Eve, toward a direct encounter of co-presence in space. Such an encounter is only possible, however, between beings who share a deep resemblance, who can recognize each other as the other's mirror. And in Milton's poem when the self is mirrored back, whether to Raphael or to Eve, the desire such mirroring provokes seems to be not to look at one's reflection, but to mingle with it.

[136] Milton, III.341.

Chapter 4. Intimacy and Contemplation in Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*

I.

Margaret Cavendish's unconventionality met with both social ridicule and censure, and her contemporary critics often reacted to her as simply mad. Dorothy Osborne remarked, having read her works, that she believed there were many soberer people in Bedlam, while Samuel Pepys focused on the unconventionality of her dress and manners, calling her a "mad, conceited ridiculous woman," but also noting the detail of her attire and the decoration of her coach.[1] Criticism focused as well on the presumptuousness of her aspirations to learning—"a mighty pretender" to scientific knowledge—and her visit to the Royal Society was mocked with a ballad.[2] The sampling of Early Modern gossip about Cavendish that filtered through to Walter Scott's *Peveril of the Peak* covers well-trodden ground: the Duchess of Newcastle's writings are understood to be hopelessly disordered and illegible, the woman herself mad, vain, and sexually forward.[3]

Other critics responded to Cavendish with a more specific sense of irritation—that found, for example, in Mary Evelyn's letter on a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle. She complains that she soon found "My part was not yet to speak, but admire; especially hearing her go on magnifying her own generous actions, stately buildings, noble fortune, her lord's prodigious losses in the war, his power, valor, wit, learning, and industry—what did she not

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[1] Dorothy Osborne, *Letters of Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple*, ed. Kenneth Parker (London, 1987), 79 (letter of 7 or 8 May 1653).
[2] Ed. Sylvia Bowerbank, Sara Mendelson, *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader* (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2000), 9-33.
[3] Walter Scott, *Peveril of the Peak* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 153, 455.

mention to his or her own advantage?".[4] Where the contemporary reactions mentioned above emphasize the Duchess's defiance of convention or illegibility, Evelyn believes Cavendish and her impulses to be all too transparent. For Evelyn, Cavendish's incapacity for dialogue is rooted not in her illegibility for others but in her indifference to them; her interest does not extend itself toward her guests but remains concentrated on herself and her husband, irritatingly focused on their own glorification. For Evelyn, this self-indulgence cuts off the possibility of conversation—Cavendish has left no room for the self-assertion of others, she gives us to understand, but the absence of the interlocutor means that the Cavendish's self-presentation exists in a bubble of her own speech, neither ratified by social agreement or challenged by another's contradiction.

Virginia Woolf similarly sees Cavendish as a figure whose refusal of boundaries makes her difficult to digest, though for Woolf this is a symptom of her situation, excluded from the systems of male pedagogy, and dogged by the prospect of readers' disapproval: "What a vision of loneliness and riot the thought of Margaret Cavendish brings to mind! as if some giant cucumber had spread itself over all the roses and carnations in the garden and choked them to death." [5] Here, as for Evelyn, Cavendish's incapacity for self-restraint results in the defacement of all the features of her work that could appeal to her interlocutors.

The central feature I would isolate from both Woolf and Evelyn's responses to Cavendish is the way that they seem to perceive a certain aggressiveness in her—an unwillingness to leave room for others. And while this response doubtless stems largely from gendered expectations of female likeability, it also indexes one of the genuinely radical areas of Cavendish's thought.

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[4] Mary Evelyn to Ralph Bohun, c.1667, in *Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn*, ed. William Bray (London: H. Colburn, 1857), 4:8-9. Qtd. in *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*, ed. Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 2000), 91-92.

[5] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas,* ed. Morag Shiach (New York: Oxford World Classics, 1998, 2008), 79-80.

From the first, Cavendish offers a distinctive and self-aware account of writerly estrangement from a collective narrative. For Cavendish, the perfect scene of happiness is in individual meditation, and the quixotic task of intimacy is to find a way of bringing another person into that space. Like Freud, she does not deny the role of narcissistic wish-fulfillment in literary creation, but rather de-pathologizes it by assuming that it is a widely held and valuable practice, and a reliable source of satisfaction.[6] Cavendish's ethical commitment to fantasy—her willingness to give the life of the imagination the full weight afforded to everyday reality—remains the most obdurately subversive aspect of her work, because of the challenge it presents to the value of other subjects.

While mid-twentieth critics of Cavendish after Woolf often dismissed her work for being too nakedly oriented toward wish-fulfillment, recent treatments of her often focus instead on providing explanations for Cavendish's moments of grandiosity.[7] Judith Kegan Gardiner understands the recurring structure of ambitious desire for glory and anxious self-deflation in Cavendish's *A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding, and Life* through Freud's articulation of narcissism in relation to gender.[8] Catherine Gallagher's analysis by contrast turns to political context more than individual psychology as an explanatory framework, reading Cavendish's fantasies of absolute power as the expression of restrictions on female involvement in political

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[6] In fact, Freud does acknowledge that critics frown on such work, even as he argues that it subtends all literature; it is most detectable in "the less pretentious authors of novels, romances, and short stories, who nevertheless have the widest and most eager circle of readers of both sexes." Freud suggests that this form of writing—what he calls the "naïve daydream"—is disdained by other more judicious readers and is more concealed in work of higher canonical status. Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Daydreaming," in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74).

[7] Biographer Douglas Bush's discomfort with her frank presentation of her own ambitions is evident in his alternating descriptions of Cavendish as wildly ambitious and fundamentally modest; Douglas Bush, *Margaret the First: a Biography of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Cavendish* (London: Hart-Davis, 1957), 122, 190.

[8] Judith Kegan Gardiner, "'Singularity of Self': Cavendish's 'True Relation', Narcissism and the Gendering of Individualism," *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture* 21, no. 2 (1997): 52-65. While the essay does not address Cavendish's depiction and theorization of fantasy, Gardiner describes the distinctiveness of Cavendish's feminine mode of self-assertion as follows: "Cavendish proclaims herself an egalitarian solipsist, staking her and every person's right to a world created by "self-love," the original principle in her universe," 53.

life.[9] Karen Raber similarly argues that the both the narrative content and the interplay of paratextual material enclosing Cavendish's plays provides a way of reworking the losses suffered by herself and her husband in the English Civil War and negotiating her bid for authority in relation to her husband.[10]

While I largely accept current critical accounts as to how the characteristic recurring narratives of Cavendish's drama and fiction intersected with her personal history and social position, in what follows, my chapter departs from this approach to understanding Cavendish's interest in imagined pleasure. Rather than seeking to locate the roots of Cavendish's idiosyncratic retreat into fantasy, I ask what follows when we assume the viability of her brief for inward satisfaction. Cavendish is hardly alone in suggesting that happiness might be better attained by withdrawal from striving to procure worldly goods, and yet Stoicism, Buddhism or contemplative asceticism don't seem to demand biographical explanation. I start by presenting her own most explicit defense of imagined pleasure in *The Lady Contemplation* and contextualize Cavendish's autonomy of the imagination against seventeenth-century English accounts of literary and philosophical autonomy. In examining Cavendish's fiction, it becomes apparent that her insistence on the rewards of imagined goods conflicts with an equally-present impulse toward social validation—the conjunction that prompts so many of Cavendish's critics to treat Cavendish's turn inward as compensatory for external frustrations. Though the persistent power of social recognition in Cavendish's work is inconsistent with Cavendish's strongest bids

[9] Gallagher connects Cavendish's depictions of women who become rulers to her political situation, suggesting that Cavendish's place as a noblewoman left her only able to occupy the position of monarch, since the active life of service undertaken by the good royal subject, embodied by the Duke of Newcastle, is not open to women. The exemption of women from subjection, Gallagher argues, facilitates Cavendish's image of herself as autonomous, enclosed by spheres that are absolutely subject to the will of the central figure. Catherine Gallagher, "Embracing the Absolute: Margaret Cavendish and the Politics of the Female Subject in 17th Century England," *Genders* 1 (Spring 1988): 24-39.

[10] Karen Raber, *Dramatic Difference: Gender, Genre and Class in the Early Modern Closet Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), 218-236.

for self-sufficiency, I argue that Cavendish's willingness to affirm the goodness of individuals' desires, and the possibility of having those wishes satisfied within still leaves a profound mark on her account of social life, producing an account of intimacy that revolves around the display of one's internal world to a beloved. Despite Cavendish's frequent literary collaboration with her husband, most notably in her plays to which the Duke sometimes contributed scenes, *Blazing World* proposes an account of the couple as witnessing each another's productions, rather than jointly creating or procreating in a shared world.

The Lady Contemplation presents a dichotomy between a self-sufficient solitude and the glimpsed presence of an audience which receives Contemplation's artistic productions without engaging in dialogue with her.[11] Cavendish's *Blazing World,* in contrast, is committed to creating a mode of encounter between the two, while still centering that encounter around individual's private contemplations. This difference in project allows *The Blazing World* to take up and fully develop the desire expressed in *The Lady Contemplation*: the wish to find a mate who presents no challenge to the primacy of the imagined world.

II.

"Lady *Visitant*, I would you had been ten miles off rather than to have broken my Contemplation": thus, the title character of Margaret Cavendish's closet drama *Lady Contemplation* greets her first guest.[12] The play, divided into two parts, features pairs of lovers (and would-be lovers) conducting their wooings in a series of loosely-connected vignettes. One familiar pairing contrasts the chastity of a well-born lady who has fallen into poverty with the

[11] Renato Poggioli has argued that there is a seminal instance of a strain of pastoral literature that links the pleasures of aesthetic production to the pleasures of solitude, a mode that subsequently became more prominent in continental treatments of pastoral. Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 174-180.

[12] Margaret Cavendish, *Playes Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious and Excellent Princess* (London: Printed by A. Warren, 1662), 182.

public disgrace of her promiscuous foster-sister "Mall Mean-bred." The more surprising contrast, one which resists dichotomization into the exemplary and the monitory, is that between two couples: Lady Conversation and her partner Sir Experienc'd Traveller, a pair who delight in witty and experienced discourse, and their counterparts, the more retired Lady Contemplation and her mate, Sir Poetical Fancy.

Twice in the play, the Lady Contemplation receives the Lady Visitant with some chagrin: she complains that her visitor's addresses have broken the chain of her own fantasies which were far more capable of pleasing her than their conversation will be. The Lady Contemplation in the first episode dreams that she possesses such overwhelming beauty that the *Caesar* or *Alexander* "(sole emperor)" of another realm is won by the sight of her picture to appeal for her hand. In the second, she imagines that the general, her husband, has led his men into battle only to be injured, and that she takes his place on the field, receiving the soldiers' acclaim for her courage and with every likelihood of leading them to success. [13] Though such dreams might rank as fevered ones indeed for an early modern heroine, Cavendish's Lady receives no social censure. By contrast, "Mall Meanbred" is threatened with a whipping for daring to believe herself engaged to one of her gentlemen seducers; her credulousness is understood to express a presumption that the Lady Contemplation's far more baroque fantasies do not.[14] Rather, exchanges early in the play anticipate and neutralize the censures such fantasizing might provoke, staging the critique of seemingly self-indulgent fantasy in the very first scene of the drama—the most extended of Lady Contemplation's interruptions.

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[13] For speculation that the battle scenes in Cavendish's work are inspired by Henrietta Maria's self-styling during the English Civil War, see Kamille Stanton, "'An Amazonian Heroickess': The Military Leadership of Queen Henrietta Maria in Margaret Cavendish's 'Bell in Campo'," *Early Theatre* 10.2 (2007), 71-86.

[14] The Mall-Meanbred subplot is written by the Duke of Newcastle. In the play's conclusion, written by the Duchess, Mall Meanbred is pardoned from Bridewell and married off to a servant, but remains the object of mockery.

Lady Visitant, whose entrance shatters Lady Contemplation's meditations, makes several objections against too much investment in fantasy. Fantasy may be too absorbing, and lead the Lady to "cast away precious time," she argues—a point to which the Lady replies by urging that "they manage time best, that please life most."[15] The Lady then unapologetically distinguishes her own contemplations from religious meditations, saying they pleased her "better than Devotion could have done; for those that contemplate of Heaven, must have death in their mind."[16] Meditation on death was not only a part of religious devotion, however, but also of many philosophical traditions. Peter Sloterdijk argues that one central paradigm of philosophizing or contemplative life has been characterized by an impulse away from life, an attempt to become dead while yet alive.[17] A Christian Platonism such as Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, encourages meditation on death to connect people to the ultimate (which is to say divine) realities of their own fleeting situations. Stoicism and Epicureanism, both of which had significant seventeenth-century influence, both also sought to give their followers comfort and familiarity with the prospect of death, encouraging it as a subject of meditation.[18]

Thus, within that school of philosophy most identified with the pleasures of embodied life in the early modern period, Epicureanism, we find an articulation of the pleasures of philosophy that separate it sharply from the struggles of continuing existence. Lucretius describes in his *De Rerum Natura* the enjoyment the convinced Epicurean feels in watching others storm-tossed, while knowing he is safe. The wise "stand aloof in a quiet citadel… and gaze down from that elevation on others wandering aimlessly in a vain search for the way of

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[15] Cavendish, *Playes,* 183.
[16] Cavendish, 184.
[17] Peter Sloterdijk, *The Art of Philosophy*, Trans. Karen Margolis, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 29.
[18] Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics* (Amhurst, MA: University of Massachussetts Press, 1998), 67. Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). Walter Charleton, one of the foremost seventeenth-century advocates of Epicureanism was especially close to Cavendish and her family.

life," pitying those who experience competitiveness, disputes and struggle in their search for wealth and power.[19] By contrast, they know that the only desirable things are "a body free from pain, and a mind released from worry and fear," qualities that describe the dead more aptly than any of the living.[20] This trope of the *schadenfreude* of looking serenely on the struggles of others was not confined to Epicureans—rather it circulated widely in the early modern period as description of the satisfactions of philosophical wisdom and political prudence.[21]

This broader sense of philosophical devotion as estrangement from the condition of living aligns with the withdrawal practiced in Cavendish's contemplation. For though the Lady Contemplation rejects the urge to meditate on death, Cavendish, like her Lady, found the pull of contemplation to be at odds with the actions required to maintain the body, as she explains in her *True Relation:* "being addicted from my childhood, to contemplation rather than conversation… I neglect my health, for it is … [a great grief] to leave their [her fancies'] society."[22] When Cavendish distinguishes herself from the traditions of contemplation that have death in mind, then, she also continues to idealize contemplative death to the world. Sloterdijk's observation of a "mass emigration from the real into the possible" is close to what, as we will see, Cavendish advocates, though she shakes off the constraint of possibility as well. This emigration, however, does not require estrangement from the self: oriented toward the imagination, rather than more abstracted, non-visual mode of cognition, Cavendish's Lady is free to maintain attachments to herself and to her own happiness. She does not attempt to become distanced from her own

[19] Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe,* trans. Ronald Latham, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1958), 60.
[20] Lucretius, 60.
[21] Barbour, 54-58
[22] Margaret Cavendish, *Nature's Picture* (London: Printed for J. Martin and J. Allestrye, 1656), 385.

preferences and desires as the figure of the philosopher aims to, but continues to, in Husserl's term, take a position.[23]

And yet, as Sloterdijk's description of movement away from the real indicates, philosophy's refusal to live is vulnerable to the same reading often applied to Cavendish's fantasy life—that it is the product of disappointment, and therefore suspect. He describes this dynamic as "loser romanticism"—an idealization of what is, at bottom, a coping mechanism. Rei Terada's account of what she calls phenomenophilia in the 19th and 20th century testifies to the strong claims to affirmation reality makes on subjects.[24] She argues that the rarity and diffidence of moments where the figures she studies attempt to evade the given illuminate the intense pressure to assent to reality. Where the paradigmatic philosopher deflects this pressure of the given by claiming to be in touch with at a more fundamental level of reality, Cavendish, unusually, confronts this pressure head-on. Though Cavendish's embrace of a frankly hedonic calculus for the value of contemplation is unusual, equally more remarkable is her apparent refusal to feel (or at least perform) shame for preferring imagination to reality. Rather than being detected in fantasies, her protagonists voluntarily disclose them.

Cavendish's *Lady Contemplation* makes a case for the evasion of the power of the real to command consent by asserting that it is possible to live fully in the world of fantasy, and experience satisfactions as genuine as those which come from life in the world. In place of the poet's claim to effect change on the real world by means of her song, Cavendish suggests that it

[23] Sloterdijk, *Philosophy*, 19.
[24] Rei Terada, *Looking Away* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). Terada presents thinkers who allow themselves to indulge in flickering apprehensions, which they are able to perceive without being responsible for evaluating their truth content. While, as she shows, they do offer a challenge to the overpowering normative force of the real, they do so while seeming to make no claim for the superior value of their experience—they simply ask to be allowed to exist.

is enough to effect change in the imagined world. Lady Contemplation explains the worth of imaginative pleasure in the following terms:

> There is none that truly lives, but those that live in pleasure, & the greatest pleasures is in the imagination not in fruition; for it is more pleasure for any person to imagin [sic] themselves Emperour of the whole world, than to be so; for in imagination they reign & Rule, without the troublesome and weighty cares belonging thereto; neither have they those fears of being betrayed or usurped as real Emperours have; Besides, the whole general Race of Man-kind, may this way be the particular Emperour of the whole World, if they will; but those that desire to be Emperours any other wayes, have but sick judgements, for the mind is all, for if that be pleased, man is happy.[25]

The superiority of mental satisfaction rests in its adaptability both to the needs of the thinker and of their companions. A dreamer can not only experience the pleasure of rule without its pains but will also find their social relationships in the external world eased, since each person can enjoy the pleasures of domination without actually imposing on the freedoms of their fellows. Indeed, each of their friends is also free to imagine themselves an absolute monarch. And, though Lady Visitant will suggest that "airy fictions" are inferior to "the material world" because they less real, Lady Contemplation contends that in fact it is the pleasure of the imagination that are more secure—the imaginary empress, unlike a real one, cannot be dispossessed of her realm; she has the more stable happiness.[26] For Cavendish, it is not the excessiveness of desire that marks a sickness of the mind, but the choice to seek satisfaction in the realm of life rather than directly providing it via the mind's fancies.

In fact, the threat of dispossession often generates the trope of the mind as kingdom in early modern texts. A robust version is found in the immensely popular Elizabeth lyric, "My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is," almost continuously in print from its 1588 publication through the seventeenth century.[27] Similarly, representations of past and present dethroned monarchs,

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[25] Cavendish, *Playes*, 183-184.
[26] Cavendish, 184
[27] Steven W. May, "The Authorship of 'My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is,'" *The Review of English Studies* 26.104 1975, 385-394.

Shakespeare's Richard II, and Charles I, protest that they may maintain a sovereignty within themselves. For Charles I's depiction in *Eikon Basilike*, the hope is that through religious subjection, "though I have but troublesome Kingdoms here, yet I may attaine to that Kingdome of Peace in My Heart," that God is able to grant, while Richard II attempts to create a secular kingdom within his thoughts.[28] These precursors, however, fall short of the radical commitment Cavendish's text expresses toward the trope of the mind's kingdom. Each of the texts mentioned above maintains a different strategy toward repairing loss. "My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is" responds to the possibility of loss by devaluing the lost object and constricting the sphere of permissible desires— "Some have too much, yet still do crave;/ I little have, and seek no more"—while Charles I's depiction in *Eikon Basilike* rejects the power of earthly kingdom by turning to the superior heavenly one from which he cannot be displaced.

The carving out of a place of retreat from conflict in the world also forms a distinctive feature of mid-seventeenth-century Cavalier literature (and later Puritan retirement post the 1660s). Joshua Scodel's work on Cavalier diversion argues that midcentury Pindaric odes by Cowley, Oldham, and Cotton staged the rerouting of competitive and warlike impulses to the field of aesthetic competition, while Leah Marcus argues in *The Politics of Mirth* that Stuart recreations were refigured from being symbols of country virtue to harbors for courtly experience—diversions for noble discontents rather than country high spirits.[29] The poems of Richard Lovelace, as Marcus observes treat this theme with particular intensity—perhaps his two best-known poems, "The Grasshopper" and "To Althea, from Prison" present the loyalty of

[28] Charles I., *Eikon Basilike*, (London: Printed for R. Royston, 1649), 6. William Shakespeare, "Richard II." *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, Ed. Stephen Orgel (New York: Penguin Classics, 2002), V.5.1-41

[29] Joshua Scodel, "The Cowleyan Pindaric Ode and Sublime Diversions," *A Nation Transformed: England after the Restoration*, ed. Alan Houston and Steven Pincus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 180-210. Leah Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 213-264.

friends and a quiet conscience respectively as antidotes to punishing times.[30] These, like the previous instances I've recounted, attempt to find a more genuine source of happiness in the world—friendship and aesthetic admiration—rather than the attempting to move the sphere of satisfaction out of the world altogether. Indeed, a counterbalancing Royalist trope was the idea that political misfortune had even hampered the imagination and literary power. Thus Robert Herrick complains in "The Bad Season Makes the Poet Sad," that he is "lost to all music," and will only, like Horace, knock his head against the stars if the Tudors are reinstated.[31] Similarly, Katherine Philips' elegy for Thomas Cartwright looks forward to a future moment of renewed poetic inspiration, and Abraham Cowley complains in the preface to his 1656 *Poems*, that both the times and his own mind lack the "serenity and chearfulness of *Spirit*," needful for writing poems.[32]

The tropes of self-sufficiency and of self-enclosure that mark Cavendish's poetry were thus shared by her many of her royalist contemporaries. However, Cavendish differs from both those who argued it was impossible to find an area untainted by political disappointment, and those who defiantly claimed to find one in circles of friendship, in rural retreats or in literary production. Unlike some of her contemporaries, Cavendish refuses to devalue the lost goods of social power and prestige she and her husband forfeited during the English Civil Wars and turn to a substitute. Rather she affirms that she already has recaptured those very goods and more.

The belief that happiness could be fully experienced in imagined goods is, of course, dependent on certain material supports, supports that Cavendish, despite her family's financial

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[30] A precursor to these depictions of aristocratic withdrawal is found in Wyatt's "Mine Own John Poynz." Here, in the face of courtly treachery, Wyatt suggests that he may be truly better off in the enforced security of private life, though here what he possesses is an estate, rather than compensatory kingdom of thoughts.

[31] Robert Herrick, "The Bad Season Makes the Poet Sad," *The Hesperides and Noble Numbers* (London, 1648), ll. 3, 14.

[32] Katherine Philips, *Poems by the Most Deservedly Admired Mrs. Katherine Philips* (London: Printed for H. Heringman, 1667. Abraham Cowley, *Poems* (London, 1656), a2v.

concerns, clearly had—the characters in her fiction who take up this position share the position of being independently wealthy. Cavendish's account of the imagination assumes a certain level of prosperity in the contemplator—a modest amount perhaps, but evidently enough that acquiring the necessities of life is not an urgent concern which continually occupies the mind. One response, then, to Cavendish's radical defense of life in the imagination would be that what she proposes is simply unfeasible—it offers the satisfactions of a world without scarcity without taking into account what is actually required to sustain the body in world marked by scarcity. In this model, the needs of the body break in onto what might otherwise be a credible path toward personal happiness. However, as Lady Visitant's responses indicates, the defense of imagination in *Blazing World* is not only distinctive in its assessment of how plausible it is that many people would be able to attain such a life—a factual question—but also in its assessment of how desirable such a life would be—a question of values.

Contemplation's interlocutor focuses immediately on the question of social recognition and connection, bypassing what it would mean to only possess shelter and sustenance in the imagination. She warns the lady of the prospect not of destitution but of social isolation: "But confess really to me, if you should not think your self accurst if you were to have no other Lovers, but what your Fancy creates?" Someone in that situation would not be simply disappointed but accursed, she suggests; it's unclear whether the lady is expected to feel regret, shame, frustration, jealousy or some other emotion. In any case, the contrast between real and imagined social affirmation is expected to be devastating. Lady Contemplation responds to this censure by affirming the superiority of imagined lovers: like Stepford wives, they come and go when she pleases, never offend her, can never abandon her, etc. She responds from within her own paradigm of the equality of internal and external experience, comparing them on the basis of

behaviors, rather than justifying or explaining her own ability to be satisfied by imagined experience. For Lady Visitant, the gulf between the love and approval or real lovers and that of imagined ones is vast, and the idea of accepting the second as a substitute for the first is untenable. In addition to the worry that excessive absorption in certain kinds of contemplation put one at risk of not taking the actions necessary to be able to flourish in the real world (whether this one or the next), she also projects a sense of shame or at least disappointment onto someone caught in the scene of their satisfaction while lacking external validation for their desires.

Cavendish thus foregrounds the possibility of a skeptical reader—one who cannot accept the value of an imagined life, whether, because they don't believe the imagined experience would be vivid enough to count equally, or because they believe even a vividly-experienced event would be nonetheless inferior. While Cavendish is a historical outlier in posing such issues in the early modern period, our own moment is fascinated and haunted by the idea of living within a simulated experience. [33] The question is posed in libertarian philosopher Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* through the thought experiment of an "experience machine" able to completely simulate a completely pleasurable experience of human life.[34] Nozick asks whether such a life would be preferable to life in the world, and his intuition that most people would answer that question in the negative for him indicates the incompleteness of a utilitarian account of happiness. Cavendish, by contrast, seems to offer a straightforward affirmation in *The Lady Contemplation* to the question, though her commitment to an autonomous world is complicated by how writing functions in the plays. In *The Blazing World*, Lady Visitant's

[33] These include among others, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt" and "The Happiness Machine," the *Matrix* series; cf. Jane McGonigal's relatively techno-positive *Reality is Broken*. On the whole, representations of a life lived wholly in VR still remain far more negative than Cavendish's.
[34] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, 2nd Ed, (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 42-43.

question lingers even more strongly—in the later work, other humans exert a reality force that cannot be ignored.

For Lady Contemplation, unlike her novelistic descendants, the mystery is not how she will come to be weaned from her fantasy life, but rather what could tempt her into the embrace of a partner at all. She finds her own meditations preferable to company in the first two scenes, while in those that follow her would-be lover repeatedly suggests that poetry—the speaking of contemplation's thoughts into the world—might have something to offer her, but the lady never concedes the point. When they approach the altar together, they do so without our ever having seen them negotiate the terms of this union—Poetical Fancy's attraction to Contemplation has been established, but she expresses no reciprocal attachment to him. When he claims, in their courtship scenes, that poetic expression has something to offer the life of the imagination, she rejects his claim that fancies denied utterance will breed distemper. It is speech, she claims, that has that effect. "Rather than I will have my mind dragg'd and hurried about by my unruly tongue… I will tie up my tongue with the cords of silence… and pull down the portcullis of the teeth before it, and shut the doors of my lips upon it," she maintains.[35] Speech is locked up and "kept with the Key of Judgment and the Authority of Prudence."[36] Unlike speech, which threatens to subject her to public disgrace, Contemplation's thoughts can remain the primary object of her attachment, and yet it seems that maintaining silence requires immense force—the tongue is tied up with cords, further supplemented by the barriers of the tongue and lips, and final locked with multiple keys.

The desire to be heard is characterized as radically disruptive; it prevents her from following more pleasurable meditations, and therefore reduces her happiness, but it also has

[35] Cavendish, *Playes*, 231.
[36] Cavendish, 231.

power to distort Contemplation's behavior and shame her publicly. The desire to be heard is both localized and projected outward, however: first it is isolated to one body part, the tongue, and then personified in the muses. While the lady never concedes a point to Sir Poetical Fancy, the self-declared representative of the Muses, the Muses themselves do have the power to break in on her solitude. In her final session of contemplation before the wedding scene, Contemplation is visited by a particularly raucous group of muses, who drive away the sober representatives of Science also paying her a visit. They then douse her in the well of Helicon and carry her in their arms to lay her upon the warmth of Mount Parnassus. The incursion of the Muses into her life and the mingled pleasure and alarm she experiences are described in sexually-suffused language, evoking the specter of female tribadism—they "toss and tumble" her, douse her in Helicon and then carry her in their arms to be warmed by a poetic flame, oiling her tongue, pouring spirits in her mouth, and kissing and pinching her.[37] Since Contemplation refuses to speak her fancies, this episode uses the tropes of poetic inspiration and rapture to attribute responsibility for the speech to the warm but disruptive and overwhelming force of the Muses.

At a meta-narrative level, the very fact of the published text is at odds with Contemplation's hostility to publicly expressed "discourse," i.e. spoken or written language. Within the narrative, however, it's ambiguous whether Contemplation finds the experience of composition desirable in itself or simply indifferent. In keeping with the established pattern of their scenes, she complains when Lady Visitor enters that she has spoiled her song, and wishes to finish it to refine her judgment and feed her (singular) muse, suggesting that she has taken on the

[37] David Robinson, "Pleasant Conversation in the Seraglio: Lesbianism, Platonic Love and Cavendish's *Blazing World,*" *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 44.2-3 2003, 133-166. Cavendish, *Playes*, 239. Robinson suggests reading this scene as well as the "seraglio in the Duke's brain" passage of *Blazing World* as expressing a lesbian sexuality and argues that not doing so requires ignoring the action of the text. While I agree that they have a striking homoerotic charge, I read the female presences as ways of managing the display of the self.

project of artistic production. Her description of the moment of inspiration however, frames it as an experience that proves survivable rather than is enjoyable—like a hot bath, poetic inspiration at first feels "insufferable and scalding hot, yet with a little use will finde it cool enough."[38] In the final scene where all the couples come together, Contemplation is married to Poetical Fancy, which would seem to indicate her acceptance of fancy's expression in the world, though the two have nothing to say to one another, and we never see Contemplation verbalize desire for or consent to the marriage. She does explicitly state, however, that private contemplation retains a capacity to please her over and above communication: "If I thought Marriage would destroy or disturb my Contemplations," she maintains, "I would not marry, although my Wedding-guests were come, and my Wedding-dinner ready drest, and my Wedding cloaths on; nay, were I at the holy Altar, I would return back."[39] The shame of having called off a wedding and the loss of a partner can't compare to the painfulness of giving up a more secure and primary source of pleasure.

Cavendish's *The Lady Contemplation* offers us a particularly sustained treatment of the imaginative pleasures. The play resists the suggestion that reality trumps the internal world; rather the pleasures of fancy are as fully experienced as the pleasures of a shared material world. At the same time, it leaves its devotee disturbingly isolated from the possibility of loving relationships. Lady Contemplation repeatedly insists on the superiority of imagined sociality to lived sociality and rejects even Poetical Fancy's claims to facilitate or intensify the life of the imagination. While the Lady Contemplation condescends to marry her lover at the end of the work, and composes verse when overcome by the Muses' influence, these acts are not articulated within the framework of individual pleasure she so persistently turns to otherwise. No reason is,

[38] Cavendish, *Playes*, 231.
[39] Cavendish, *Playes,* 244.

or seemingly can be given as to what Poetical Fancy provides over and above the world of meditation. Their discussions of the value of poetry suggest that her union with him involves an openness to publishing her inward thoughts, rather than engaging in a true dialogue. Indeed, his primary qualification seems to be his close identification with her continued pursuit of the life of imagination.

The specific formulation of Lady Contemplation's opening fantasy constitutes much of the plot of *Blazing World*: a beautiful young women wins the love of an Emperor, by means of her beauty, and then occupies herself in statecraft, "ordering so, as the whole world should be as one united Family; and when I had shewed my wisdom in Peace, then my thoughts should have raised Warres, wherein I would have shewed my valor and conduct."[40] The fantasies of *The Lady Contemplation* return in *The Blazing World* in the indicative rather than the subjunctive mood; the daydreams of the earlier work are rewritten as fact in *Blazing World*. The exception to this pattern, however, is the presence of Margaret Cavendish as a character and the episodes of mutual visiting that result from her presence. In these episodes, practices of world and narrative creation come to be re-theorized in the latter work. While in *The Lady Contemplation*, conversation and publication are understood to be the only ways to bring contemplative experience into the realm of social relation, *Blazing World* imagines the possibility being able to meet within the body of one partner rather than meeting in a shared world. It thus brings the scene of social communion and the individually imagined universe together, rather than locating social intercourse in an external and hostile world.

[40] Cavendish, *Playes*, 183.

III.

When the Empress of the Blazing World desires to visit Cavendish's world with her, they begin by seeing London, and then go to the Duke and Duchess's home at Bolsover. Their encounter with the Duke, however, does not take the form of a conversation in the world, but takes place within the Duke's brain, as the two women enter his body:

> The Duchess's soul being troubled, that her dear lord and husband used such a violent exercise before meat, for fear of overheating himself, without any consideration of the Empress's soul, left her airy vehicle, and entered into her lord. The Empress's soul perceiving this, did the like: and then the Duke had three souls in one body; and had there been but some such souls more, the Duke would have been like the Grand Signior in his seraglio, only it would have been a platonic seraglio. But the Duke's soul being wise, honest, witty, complaisant and noble, afforded such delight and pleasure to the Empress's soul by her conversation, that these two souls became enamoured of each other; which the Duchess's soul perceiving, grew jealous at first, but then considering that no adultery could be committed amongst Platonic lovers, and that Platonism was divine, as being derived from divine Plato, cast forth of her mind that Idea of jealousy. Then the conversation of these three souls was so pleasant, that it cannot be expressed; for the Duke's soul entertained the Empress's soul with scenes, songs, music, witty discourses, pleasant recreations, and all kinds of harmless sports; so that the time passed away faster than they expected. [41]

Since the women have come over "as spirits" the Duke cannot perceive them, and whatever encounters they can must be staged "in his head," as it were. But rather than downplaying the *frisson* of this episode—imagining a disembodied conversation rather than a communion within the Duke's body—Cavendish twice draws attention to its transgressiveness. She suggests that an observer would be reminded of a seraglio, and then makes it clear that the possibility of sexual threat is not just projected by a dirty-minded observer but is felt by the Duchess herself. Cavendish's character first grows jealous of the love between the Empress and the Duke, and then makes the conscious decision to not find this intimacy troubling or depraved. She does so by reframing what might be read as a scene of Eastern sexual excess into morally-licensed

[41] Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 194.

Platonic love. The intercourse between the Duke and Empress, because it takes place in disembodied form, cannot, definitionally, be adultery—what takes place in a world of spiritual entertainment, we are told, cannot result in dispossession in the "real world."

Cavendish refers to the writings of Plato at earlier moments in the work, claiming that Plato believed lover's souls dwelt in the body of the beloved.[42] This is not an idea found in the Platonic writings, however, but an element of later Platonically influenced writings, and indeed Cavendish's account of Platonic love was likely shaped by court culture from her time as a maid of honor in Henrietta Maria's court, a setting oriented toward French-influenced *preciositè*, stylized interactions between men and women that drew from Neo-Platonist theories of access to the divine, though it also fostered anti-Platonic satire.[43] Cavendish's scene turns out to be a display of courtly good manners on each side; the Duke's good qualities—"wise, honest, witty, complaisant and noble"—could come directly from Castiglione's *The Courtier,* or, more relevantly, the celebrations of virtuous cross-gender aristocratic friendship that characterized contemporary French aristocratic culture.[44] The quality of honesty, or *honnêteté* in the French contest, specifically addressed concerns about sexual morality, addressing sincere self-presentation broadly, but also having a specific sense of chastity.[45] It counter-balanced the qualities that would seem to facilitate licentiousness or adulterous attachment—wit, liveliness, courtesy, beauty. The articulation of a virtuous ideal was necessary defense against a cynical account that dismissed the possibility of Platonic attachments and suggested that the unvarnished

[42] Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 15x.
[43] See Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
[44] Veevers downplays the influence of the Hotel de Rambouillet circle in favor of the court culture cultivated by Marie de Medici, which was shaped by "the Devout Humanism of St. Francois de Sales," as well as by the *salon* culture. An important English text for this strain of Neo-Platonic court culture was Walter Montague's 1632 translation of Jacques Du Bosc's *L'Honneste Femme* (1632), published as *The Accomplish'd Woman*. Veevers, *Images*, 2-3.
[45] Veevers, 3.

reality was bare sexuality. Paradoxically, this attitude was equally identified with courtliness. Cavalier anti-Platonic verse presented a cynical authenticity in the face of Platonic pretensions to otherworldly virtue while anti-fruition verse offered a caustic dismissal of the ultimate meaningfulness of sexual love with women.[46] Cavendish herself gave voice to anti-Platonic cynicism, writing among the short proverbs of *The World's Olio,* "Platonic Love is a Bawd to Adultery; so Romancy and the like."[47]. Given the tendency of court libertinism and sexual conservatism to satirize the conventions of Platonic love lyric, Cavendish's assurance that no adultery could be committed by Platonic lovers does not offer straight-forward reassurance, but implies instead a sly playfulness, enjoying rather than dampening the titillation of the scene.

Why is it that the moment occurs at all? The visit to earth happens against the Duchess's better judgement, because the Empress desires to become acquainted with the world her friends comes from. The earlier portions of the visit resemble the satirical critiques of earth found in contemporary space-travel fiction such as De Bergerac's *Voyages to the Moon and the Sun*,[48] where a travel or returner from another world is distant enough to see the folly of human behavior, but the domestic scene that follows is one of mutual delight—the Empress's enchantment with the Duke and vice versa. Just as the Duke's body is porous, the scene of entertainment lets the boundary between the fantasy universe and our earth become porous as well, without compromising the integrity of the former—it is contained within him, in the person

[46] See for example, William Cartwright, "No Platonic Love," and Sir John Suckling, "Against Fruition" (I and II), Richard Lovelace, "Love Made in the First Age," Abraham Cowley, "Platonic Love" and "Against Fruition," Thomas Carew, "A Rapture." The more pronounced phenomenon of restoration libertinism associated with the Earl of Rochester had precedents not only in continental libertinism, but also in the milder manifestations of the forties and fifties, which circulated extensively in manuscript, as witty obscene verse became linked with royalist politics and rank. See Christopher Tilmouth, *Passion's Triumph Over Reason: A History of the Moral Imagination from Spenser to Rochester* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 257-314; Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 79-81.
[47] Cavendish, *The World's Olio*, 109.
[48] Cavendish specifically compares her work to De Bergerac's and Lucian's in *The Blazing World's* prologue. Cavendish, 124.

of the Empress, and thus still safely enclosed. This single moment of the journey where the Empress and Duchess become perceptible is also a fantasy of the Duke fully perceiving and affirming his wife's fantasized alter-ego, rather than hearing her descriptions. The Duke likewise can have his fitness as a partner affirmed even from the superior vantage point of the Blazing World. As the Duchess and Empress slip into the Duke's body, the other self who is the ruler of a new and miraculous world is witnessed within him as well as her.

Cavendish's evocation of the seraglio, and her playful assurance that a Platonic seraglio remains within the bounds of honest conduct remains distant from the logic of Cavalier license. Cavalier mock endorsements of Platonic, unconsummated, attachment offer a take-down of a specific over-valued good—sexual attachment—and in doing so present their authors as particularly sophisticated; the point is not that a form of relationship projected into imagination is affirmatively satisfying, but rather that it appears preferable to the disappointment of actual intercourse.[49] By contrast, for Cavendish, the virtuality of this love affair is sought because it offers a way out of a different impasse—not sexual devaluation, but imaginative isolation. What happens between the Duke and the Empress would not be categorized as adultery whether or not the seraglio remained in the Duke's brain. The Empress, after all is not another woman—she is the fantasized self through whom Cavendish satisfies her own desire to become *Margaret* the *First,* a desire for rule which has generated *The Blazing World*, as she explains in the Prologue.[50] What is at stake here is not primarily an exploration of possibility of non-dyadic attachment or lesbian attraction within the context of Cavendish's marriage, though critics have read the

[49] For a reading of anti-fruition poetry and female coyness as products of a cultural tendency to devalue women after sex, see William Kerrigan's "A Theory of Female Coyness," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38.2 1996, 209-222. For an analysis of the poems as documents of courtly self-presentation, and articulations of a hedonistic rather than an ethical mean, see Joshua Scodel, "The Pleasures of Restraint: The Mean of Coyness in Cavalier Poetry," *Criticism* 38.2 1996, 239-279.
[50] Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 124

moment thus.[51] Rather, the Duke's ability to perceive and entertain the Empress testifies to his capacity to recognize the versions of his wife that Cavendish has generated in her imagined worlds.

The reader comes to the seraglio, fresh from a recent assessment of the stability of various forms of power, including a comparison of the British king and the Ottoman Grand Signior. The two women have toured the nations and manners of earth, leading the Empress to marvel "that for all there were so many several nations, governments, laws, religions, opinions, etc. they should all yet so generally agree in being ambitious, proud, self-conceited, vain, prodigal, deceitful, envious, malicious, unjust, revengeful, irreligious, factious, etc."[52] Cavendish ironically emphasizes the virulent selfishness and evil of human society by preparing us for a more positive antithesis and then retracting this possibility. Even though human beings have so many divisions among them, the Empress declares, she is amazed to find that they generally agree. That they agree should presumably mean that they live harmoniously despite their varied customs, but this is hardly the case: they agree, it turns out, not in obedience or charity, but in their very lawlessness and estrangement. Human society is almost uniformly rapacious. This behavior does not simply occur at the level of the individual—it is also reproduced at the level of the state. There is no nation, we are told, that is contented with its own territory, but all seek to enlarge themselves at the expense of their neighbors.[53] This is the more remarkable since the risks of such behavior far exceeds the dubious rewards: "The Emperor of a world, said she [the Empress], enjoys but a part, not the whole; so that his pleasure consists in the opinions of others."[54]

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[51] See Robinson, 122.
[52] Cavendish, 190.
[53] Cavendish, 190.
[54] Cavendish, 190.

This would seem to make the rewards of empire thin indeed, and the two heroines seem to very wisely and modestly concur in their rejection of dreams of power—after all, the monarch has a limited rather than an absolute capacity to enjoy, and is the more vulnerable as he or she attains the summit of power: "Then by your Majesty's discourse, said the Duchess, I perceive that the greatest happiness in all worlds consist in moderation: no doubt of it, replied the Empress."[55] And yet, throughout the work, we do not find the imperative to reject or extirpate the desire for rule but rather at finding a means to fulfill that desire while doing less damage in the world. When the Empress reflects on the insufficient pleasure obtained by the monarch, she reiterates an argument offered by the spirits, earlier in the work, who successfully persuade the Duchess of Newcastle to content herself with ruling a world of her own imagination instead of conquering a world herself.

It is not surprising then, that the women are in fact preoccupied with the question of what it would mean to be an absolute monarch—or a despot, since it is only the precariousness of the ruler's power and not the ethical status of his desires that is deplored. As Alain Grosrichard suggests in *The Sultan's Court*, the early modern Western imagination strongly associated two features with Eastern despotic power—the first was the monarch's absolute power over life and death, and the perception that subjects were passive in their own defense, and the second was the unrestricted rein given to the monarch's appetites, most prominently figured by the seraglio.[56] The Empress—consistent with this characterization—supposes that the Grand Signior must be the most powerful monarch of our world.[57] This is an unsatisfactory conclusion, however—it is England's own monarch, Charles II, who must receive that title. Several grounds, therefore, are

[55] Cavendish, 190-191.
[56] Alain Grosrichard, *The Sultan's Court*, trans. Liz Heron (New York: Verso, 1998), 3-52.
[57] Cavendish, *Blazing World,* 191.

given as to why the sultan's power is only apparent, none of which seem quite satisfactory: the Duchess first objects that the king is bound because "he cannot alter Mahomet's laws and religion; so that the law and church do govern the Emperor, and not the Emperor them."[58] This of course, is the position as well of the proper monarch—as Aristotle wrote in *The Politics*, rulers should be "only the guardians and servants of the laws," and this power of the law over the monarch would be a recurring feature of seventeenth-century republican discourse.[59] This "Grand Signior" of course differs from the English monarch in not having an ongoing source of change in the laws—he is held simply, Cavendish believes, to the law of Mohammed (just as a theocratic Christian polity might be inclined to take its laws from the Old Testament).[60]

The response of the Empress however, once again evokes discussion of English, rather than Ottoman, government—she suggests that even here, the ruler's power prevails, since "he has power in some particulars; as for example, to place and displace subjects in their particular governments of church and state, and having that, he has the command over church and state." Similarly, of course, the issue of who appointed the ecclesiastical hierarchy and whether the presbytery could be replaced by an episcopacy at the royal command had been one of the primary matters of contention motivating the Scottish portion of the English Civil Wars.[61] Thus the exotic powers of the Grand Signior have a great deal in common with the everyday practice of the British monarch; they are distinguished more by their titles than by their practices. Both in the "seraglio in the Duke's brain" moment, and in the survey of monarchs we see a desire to distinguish approved modes of rule and sexual pleasure from a debased and orientalized version

[58] Cavendish, 191
[59] Aristotle, *Politics*, ed. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). III.
[60] Cavendish, 191.
[61] See Mark Charles Fissel, *The Bishops' Wars: Charles I's Campaigns against Scotland, 1638-1649,* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994).

of the same, though Cavendish's desire to preserve modes of superlative power and pleasure as an option means that this distinction is all but erased in practice. This mode of framing allows this "Platonic," disembodied expanded marital form to be the mean between a too-shrill protectiveness of marital intimacy, and the excess of breaking down sexual norms.

It's noteworthy that the contrast between the oriental other and the English form in each case has to do with concerns about security—about what can be lost or protected from loss. In *Blazing World,* the marriage of the Empress takes on a far more subordinate interest than in Cavendish's previous marriage-plot fiction. Just as the work foregrounds the possibility of ruling over imagined worlds as presenting additional utility over and above—and past the scope of—ruling a real word, the Platonic interminglings of the two women, and of the Empress and Duchess with the Duke, present a scene where each partner can quite literally come within another's subjective world—look out from within a partner's brain at what the other imagines or intellectually conceives. The Platonic ideal of marriage, like the Platonic ideal of rule, can only exist in this disembodied form.

By contrast, even the benign power of England's monarch is covertly inscribed with the possibility of loss—with the civil dissension to which the narrative attempts to deny any place. The Duchess's describes the situation of Charles II as follows: "There you shall see as powerful a monarch as the Grand-Signior; for though his dominions are not of so large extent, yet they are much stronger, his laws are easy and safe, and he governs so justly and wisely, that his subjects are the happiest people of all the nations or parts of that world."[62] On the one hand the English monarch is especially good; this is one account of the difference between this kingdom and the other. However, he is also more powerful and this seems to be for three reasons: one that his

[62] Cavendish, 191.

dominions are safe from external invasion, second that his laws are "easy and safe"—they do not rankle but are obeyed—and third that his people are contented.

In view the recent history of the British Isles, all three of these assumptions would seem to be quite precarious ones, and Cavendish seems at first to be comfortable simply ignoring that fact. However, the concern about revolt against a monarch—though here it's simply unthinkable—recurs in the second portion of *Blazing World*, which is given over to military adventures. The Empress is called upon, like another Henrietta Maria, perhaps, to come to the aid of the monarch of her original country, the king of ESFI, whose rule is under attack. Unlike the wars Cavendish actually lived through, however, this confrontation is not the product of internal dissension but of the concerted pressure of external forces, and the Empress dispels these forces through a combination of force and trickery, ending by subjecting all of that world to her own country. Though the English king seems to provide an example of an idealized society and idealized rule, in fact he must be rescued, and can only be perfectly rescued in the world of fantasy. Both an idealized absolutism, and an idealized intimacy can only exist in the world of imagination.

This point is crucial to understanding the political implications of Cavendish's thinking. Much of the literature on Cavendish perceives her commitment to absolutism to be in tension with other more egalitarian features of her thought, reflecting the tensions of her own biography as woman rebellious against gendered strictures, but also an aristocratic royalist.[63] These accounts do not give enough weight to the role fantasy plays in allowing a wider number of people to give rein to their own desire to rule and mitigate ego conflicts—as Cavendish says in

[63] See Gallagher, cited above. Rachel Trubowitz, "The Reenchantment of Utopia and the Female Monarchical Self," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 11.5 1995, 229-245. Susan Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 110-144.

The Lady Contemplation, those who desire to rule in the world rather than in their heads have "sick judgments."[64] As regards the real world, her political tendencies offer a fairly radical endorsement of individual ambitions, but in the end seem more quietist than they do monarchical—why reform the state when you can just rule an imagined kingdom as you please?

Cavendish's account of the good life thus rejects the constraints on desire that an Aristotelian framework would prescribe. For Aristotle, magnanimity is a virtue of those who meet two conditions: they are both deserving and ambitious, and thus occupy a mean between the foolish and vain, who claim more than they deserve, and the mean, who claim less than they deserve.[65] They have more in common with the lowly but contented, those who do not deserve a position of honor but whose desires are in line with their capacities or social standing. Among Cavendish's contemporaries, Descartes substitutes a new concept for the Aristotelian virtue of magnanimity.[66] In his explicit theorization of self-regard, however, if not his practice, Descartes revises Aristotelian magnanimity to make it a virtue available to any person, not just the great man. In place of magnanimity, he substitutes the virtue of generosity, which consists of an appropriate regard for the virtuous will as the only quality that is truly of value.[67] This regard prevents one from having contempt for those one would consider inferiors, since they equally are capable of virtue and may reform if they are not acting in harmony with it at present.[68] It brings

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[64] In this, I follow Lisa Walters's reading of Cavendish politics, laid out at length in her *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[65] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Revised Edition, Trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 212-215, IV.3.
[66] As Richard Strier has observed, Descartes is quite willing to portray his own intellectual gifts as exceptional, and therefore worthy of narration and special attention, while simultaneously and unconvincingly presenting them as theoretically available to any person. Richard Strier, *The Unrepentant Renaissance*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2011), 229-246.
[67] Rene Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, Trans. Stephen Voss, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2009), 104-109, III.150-161.
[68] Though see also the discussion of weakness of will and how it affects Descartes's claims about equal capability of virtue in Deborah Brown's *Descartes and the Passionate Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 188-208.

an appropriate humility, but prevents excessive servile regard toward social superiors, since the gifts of rank or fortune, or even intelligence and beauty, have no connection to virtue.[69]

While, like Aristotle, Descartes is careful to describe generous conduct as a avoiding extremes of pride or servility, its effect is to flatten social hierarchies and to place the subject on an equal footing with other men, and thus offers a striking departure from the interest in correctly assessing one's place in a social hierarchy—and trying to attain the highest place one might be capable of—that we see in Aristotelian magnanimity. Cavendish retains the Aristotelian sense that greatness of soul brings along with it a desire for glory—she testifies about herself in the preface to *The Blazing World* that she is not coveteous, but is as ambitious "as ever any of my Sex was, is, or can be": she lacks cupidity for money, a lesser good, but makes up for it by the intensity of her desire for the highest good, fame.[70] While she valorizes the desire for glory, valuing outcomes in addition to virtue, she does not quite part ways with the Stoic contention, shared by Descartes in the passage I refer to above, that it is folly to let one's happiness be dependent on anything outside one's control. Rather, she makes the glory and political sway that Aristotle assigns to his great man reasonable objects of desire for every person, by avowing that those desires can be fulfilled in the imagination as fully as they can in the material world.

In Cavendish's *Blazing World*, this is primarily figured by the proliferation of new imaginary worlds to rule. In addition to the creation of new worlds however, *The Blazing World* witnesses the constant reconfiguration and slippage of identity between worlds over the course of its plot, a fact which has yet to receive due critical attention. In lines from the prologue, Cavendish explains that she has made a world for herself, the Blazing World, and thus satisfied

[69] Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, 104.
[70] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 124.

her own desire to be "*Margaret* the *First"*—mistress of a world.[71] The eponymous work instantiates this world, allowing her to become an absolute monarch. By the work's epilogue, however, the figure of the author supplants the figure of the ruler at the summit of the social pyramid, and Cavendish now explains that her ambition "is not only to be Empress, but Authoress of a whole world," positioning the latter as a superior role to the former.[72] Moreover, that world has gained a limited independence from her control—it is the Empress who is mistress of it, not Cavendish herself. Having made "both the Blazing World and the other Philosophical World," she now rules the second herself, leaving the first to the her "dear Platonic friend," the Empress.[73] Cavendish the author and Cavendish the character have become elided, so that Cavendish the author is now mistress of the philosophical world that her character creates within the narrative frame, and is no longer mistress of the Blazing World. As worlds multiply and nest within one another, the Blazing World goes from being the example of world-creation to the setting for further world-creation.

Critical attention to Cavendish has often noted the tendency toward proliferation of worlds, and of self-representations within her work. In an incisive essay on self-enclosure and the nesting of worlds in Cavendish's work, Sandra Sherman argues that Cavendish was drawn toward processes of infinite regress.[74] Indeed, Cavendish's writings on the nature of matter sometimes imagine the same abyss of replication that her fiction performs. In a poem from *Poems and Fancies* entitled, "On an Earring," she imagines endless microscopic worlds nesting within the piece of jewelry. What happens in *Blazing World*, however, is not simply that worlds

[71] Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 191.
[72] Cavendish, 224.
[73] Cavendish, 224.
[74] Sandra Sherman, "Trembling Texts: Margaret Cavendish and the Dialectic of Authorship," *English Literary Renaissance* 24.1 1994, 184-210.

within worlds continue to be created, with infinite recursion, but that worlds are identified with one another and then slip out of alignment—they begin with a recognizable identity and then become proprietary, estranged from that first identification. The coherence and the integrity of the worlds break down as they are brought into contact with each other—like the images of the two planetary globes that can coexist because they touch merely at one point.

Thus, in the work's early portions, the Empress seems to come unambiguously from our own world. When Cavendish explains how the ship bearing the lady and her kidnappers is able to pass into another, she tell us, "…we in this world cannot so well perceive them [the meeting of the pole of our own world with the that of Blazing World], by reason of the brightness of our sun, which being nearer to us, obstructs the splendor of the suns of the other worlds, they being too far off to be discerned by our optic perception…".[75] This indication that the Empress comes from our world is further reinforced in the expository conversations between the Empress and the immaterial spirits. In these she learns that she is now in the Paradise from which Adam was banished after the fall—and that after the fall, he fled into the world she came from.[76] While this would seem to require its identity with our own on theological grounds, it is perhaps the Empress's knowledge of the cultural landscape of seventeenth-century England that provides the most conclusive evidence. Not only has the Empress heard of Galileo, Hobbes, Descartes, and Gassendi, she recalls with pleasure having seen Jonson's *The Alchemist*, and knows the early seventeenth-century gossip its topical allusions referred to. Once the Duchess appears in the narrative, however, the Empress's first world must be disjoined from our own, and it appears that the Empress has always come from another world.

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[75] Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 126.

[76] Note about how the heterodoxy of Blazing World goes under-observed? Also the passage on the fire-stone and moon-stone and her attempts to secure perpetual religious devotion in her subjects, though c.f. Greenblatt's "Invisible Arrows" essay.

The Empress now feels an intense curiosity to witness Cavendish's world, and her tour of the globe is in the genre of satirical observation. They thus visit earth, marveling at the local customs, and then the Empress takes the Duchess to her own world which is equally foreign, though the king who ruled her country is also the king of ESFI—English, Scotland, France and Ireland. Though this slippage again may not be conscious, it is telling that the narrative seems to require the multiplication of worlds in order to maintain each protagonist's centrality within their own world. What is desired is not the experience of living in a shared world, but visiting and admiring another's world from within them. Thus the Empress says to the Duchess, when returning to her first world, "Your soul shall live with my soul in my body, for I shall only desire your counsel and advice."[77] Though the Duchess's material spirit was rarified enough to pass from her own earth to the Blazing World, she cannot pass into the Empress's former world with her. This complication is not scientific but rather narratological—the Duchess is needed as a witness, not as a participant, and so she can only enter the world that is a setting for military prowess from within the Empress, a voice of counsel but not an actor who could threaten the Empress's own primacy.

In each case a world that was once shared becomes proprietary in order to support the absolute narratives of its protagonist. Cavendish and the Empress are both identified as having dominion over the Blazing World, but in fact the world is spun off, as it were, to become the scene of the Empress's absolute rule, and Cavendish takes the philosophical world as her own. Similarly, while at first the Duchess and Empress share a home world—they both come from our earth—the narrative demands that this single world be split into two, in order for it to adequately

[77] Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 206

become the scene of each of their fantasies. While worlds proliferate down the scale, the same world can also be split into several worlds corresponding to several subjectivities.

I've suggested that Cavendish's earlier work *The Lady Contemplation* raises, without explicitly addressing, the challenge its theory of fantasy presents to social life, and that the integration of fantasy and social relations then is explicitly thematized in *The Blazing World.* In addition to imagining how it might be possible to undo the divorce between social pleasures and solitary contemplation—most vividly, as I have argued, in the work's trope of Platonic bodily union—*Blazing World* also offers a distinctive account of how the pleasure of fantasy for an author might produce pleasure for her readers. I've discussed above how Cavendish provides a defense of individual contemplation which is nearly unique in regarding imagined happiness and flourishing in the world as instances of the same thing, rejecting accounts which privilege the latter above the former as a more genuine form of happiness. Here, I turn from the question of the value of contemplation per se, and its desirability for the thinker or writer herself, to the question of how that activity might be understood to offer something to others as well—to the interlocutor or reader.

Cavendish often suggests that her works will entertain their readers on grounds which will seem quite familiar: by their wit for instance, their ethical import, or their faithful representation of nature. In her preface to *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity,* for example, Cavendish claims to be writing a didactic fiction aimed at young peoples: her aim "was to show young women the danger of travelling without their parents, husbands, or particular friends to guard them"; the letter to the reader which introduces the 1662 *Plays* says they aim to please readers by their wit and variety, and suggests that acting ought to be part of the education of

children because it will help them to choose virtue.[78] Similarly, a defense of fiction like that presented in Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* presents a far less radical challenge to the claims of reality than Cavendish's perspective, since for Sidney, the goal is always to facilitate virtuous action in the world—a task which fancy serves by offering models for virtuous patterning, a Cyrus by which to make many Cyruses.[79]

In *The Blazing World*, however, she presents an additional model of the value of fiction, one which addresses the same criticisms of excessive indulgence of fancy that Cavendish anticipates and interpolates in *The Lady Contemplation*. In the prologue that precedes the work and the afterword that follows it, Cavendish suggests that readers follow her example by making for themselves whatever world they prefer. Sylvia Bowerbank argues that, against the Baconian and Swiftian models of productive intellectual labor, Cavendish embraces the proliferating airiness of the spider, embracing the disconnection of fancy from social productivity.[80] Bacon however, also shares this account of the function of poetry, separating poetry from other intellectual arts in *The Advancement of Learning* as a discipline whose function is "to give some shadowe of satisfaction to the minde of Man in those points wherein the Nature of things doth denie it, the world being in proportion inferiour to the soule."[81]

Cavendish does not explicitly claim that the purpose of fiction is to make it easier for others to engage in the kind of imaginative activity that will enable their happiness, or that her work is good because it, more than other texts, has the ability to catalyze individual world-making. Instead, references to the power of the reader to replicate, personalize or amend her

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[78] Cavendish, *Blazing World,* 47; Cavendish, *Plays*, A3-A6.
[79] Philip Sidney, "The Defence of Poesy," *The Defence of Poesy and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 9.
[80] Sylvia Bowerbank, "The Spider's Delight: Margaret Cavendish and the 'Female' Imagination," *English Literary Renaissance* 14, no. 3 (1984), 392-408.
[81] Francis Bacon, "From *The Advancement of Learning*," Vol I. of *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, Ed. J. E. Spingarn (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1957), 6.

work arise in response to concerns about readerly disapproval. Cavendish's prologue offers an apologia for her own ambition in providing herself with a world by pointing out that her doing so does not interfere at all with others' ability to do the like, and she suggests that those who dislike her work would better spend their energy remedying it. Within the work, however, the normative operation of world-building seems to be that it evokes emulation. When the Empress hears that the Duchess will make herself a world, she conceives the desire to make one herself rule two worlds—one without and one within her. The Empress is less precocious in world-creation however, and then when she is shown the Duchess's world she becomes "so ravished with the perception of it, that her soul desired to live in the Duchess's world, until the Duchess offers to tutor her in making her own.[82]

This is exactly the response Cavendish desires from her readers: in her prologue she explains that readers are welcome to consider themselves her subjects and emigrate imaginatively to the Blazing World, or if this do not satisfy them, to follow her example and create their own. Cavendish proposes, the work of fiction can provide a tutoring for imaginative solace—it can teach the reader how to go about creating the kind of world in which he or she might be happy. The goal of this act is not utopia, however—it is not to carry out a thought experiment or to gain an experience of affective attunement that will give one guidance in how to remedy the world. Rather, the goal is to receive immediate satisfaction through the mind's power to create what pleases it. "I have made a world of my own: for which no body, I hope, will blame me, since it is in every one's power to do the like."[83] The effect of this for her account of intimacy is to make the primary quality of friendship or love the ability to bear witness to another's idiosyncratic world, giving the beloved the freedom to appropriate the world in which

[82] Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 188-189.
[83] Cavendish, *Blazing World,* 124.

they are the primary protagonist within from one that the listener might have shared with them. If coextension once again is used to figure a superlative and counter-factual intimacy, it is because presence within another body operates as a synecdoche for inhabiting their world.

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