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“ART GAVE LIFELESS LIFE”: LIVING ART AND THE NATURE OF FICTION IN
EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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What can representations of intense experiences of the imagination—the feeling that poems, books, paintings, and statues are alive—tell us about the status of fictional entities in the early modern period? How does the dominant narrative of poetry as mimesis change when we take into consideration the era’s fixation with animated art? My dissertation claims that the early modern fascination with what I call “living art” made it possible to articulate a nascent form of aesthetic experience and a theory of fiction. Early modern literary texts offer complex meditations on how readers emotionally identify with imaginative worlds even though they lacked a name or aesthetic category to describe these feelings. Because the early modern period lacks the art criticism that was common in the eighteenth century, I read the ways that literature theorizes its own practice and effects, arguing that literature produces some of the most complex portraits of aesthetic experiences and should be considered on par with philosophical treatises. I take seriously the early modern claim that living art feels actual in order to explore whether the intensity of aesthetic experience leads to a level of instantiation or actuality that goes beyond representation or fictional reference. Each chapter considers whether literature or art

requires actualization in order to materially transform issues from gender to politics. This dissertation, then, looks forward to theories of performativity and to theories of aesthetics that are amenable to a performative perspective. While the texts I examine here anticipate theories of linguistic performativity, this dissertation suggests that early modern writers were not restricted to language as a conduit for action. Instead, I argue that a character's aesthetic experience with the art form activates and reinforces performativity and can be constituted through the process of aesthetic experience. For early modernists, art and literature seem alive not because they represent reality but because they are active forces in the world.

Dedication

For my parents

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Introduction

What would it mean to say that art gives things that are lifeless life? Consider these examples of characters' encounters with lively art from early modern literary texts: A woman, after having been raped, scratches at a painting in order to make it feel pain. A statue of a woman comes to life, leaving its viewers in awe. A sonnet acts like a person and harasses its reader. An author believes she can live in her plays and will die when they are destroyed.

These moments embody a central issue for this dissertation, specifically, the complex relationship between aesthetic experience and the viewer or reader's reflexive and performative relationship with lifelike art forms. Even though the early modern period is often celebrated as the era in which mimesis as a paradigm flourished, early modern literary texts do not delineate a clearly demarcated world of fiction. The golden world of poetry, as Phillip Sidney puts it, involves not a division but a blurring of the boundary between art and what it represents (life, nature, or reality). This dissertation analyzes late sixteenth and seventeenth century literary works' efforts to delineate these boundaries, by focusing on how characters respond to lifelike art forms. Because the early modern period lacks the art criticism that was common in the eighteenth century, I read the ways that literature theorizes its own practice and effects, arguing that literature produces some of the most complex portraits of aesthetic experience and should be considered on par with philosophical treatises.

This dissertation takes seriously the early modern claim that art and literature feel actual. The argument of this dissertation is in the seeming contradiction proposed by its

title: the intensity of aesthetic experience with a lifelike form of art leads to a level of instantiation or actuality that goes beyond representation or fictional reference. In other words, a particular kind of engagement with art or literature—the belief that art is alive or real—can lead to social and political changes. Each chapter considers whether a character’s encounter with a living art form requires actualization in order to materially transform issues from gender to politics within the story world. Thus, my dissertation invites us to not only examine the boundaries of fiction but also to ask what place fiction has in the world.

My exploration of these issues focuses on the era’s fixation with what I call living art, which I understand, as intense experiences of the imagination—scenes in which characters feel that poems, books, paintings, and statues are alive. This dissertation focuses on texts that employ ekphrases (a verbal description of a visual object) or narrative metalepses (the act of characters disrupting different narrative levels) because these moments allow characters to comment on their own aesthetic experience. I trace the idea of living art to Quintilian’s theory of *enargeia*, involving the ability of rhetoric to make present a scene or image for a listener who is absent and cannot see. By exposing the tension between presence and absence, the concept of *enargeia* helps to illuminate the paradox of fiction—the fact that fictional entities feel real and elicit real feelings even if they do not exist.

I select this motif for attention because living art is often considered the most successful kind of mimesis. Critics often view a character’s reaction to living art as an inability to see through the illusion because of the mimetic success of the artwork. Take, for instance, a critic’s response to Lucrece’s belief that the lifelike painting of Troy can

feel pain: “Lucrece momentarily mistakes the artwork for reality, and even attempts to interact with it.”¹ Rather than appealing to preestablished binaries of reality and fiction, the project argues that the incorporation of scenes in which characters interact with living art allows authors to articulate a nascent form of aesthetic experience. I show how early modern writers use living art to investigate how readers and viewers emotionally identify with imaginative worlds even though they lacked a name or aesthetic category to describe these feelings. I argue that the early modern fascination with this motif suggests a complex understanding of the ontological status of fictional entities.

Aesthetic experience may seem an imprecise and anachronistic term if we compare a character’s reaction to living art to the concept of aesthetic experience that developed in the eighteenth century. The term “aesthetica” was introduced by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, a German philosopher, in the mid-eighteenth century. Through translations of Kant, the word aesthetic became part of the English language. Central to eighteenth century aesthetic theories is the concept of disinterestedness, which becomes a primary category of judging a work of art. The concept of disinterestedness developed from an anxiety over subjective experiences of art; a belief that subjective experience and its attendant feelings would make it hard to judge the work of art’s value.² When we think of the development of aesthetic theory, we often think of this narrative. In fact, I would argue that the complexity of early modern ideas about the experiential dimension of art and literature gets lost because early modern affective responses do not anticipate

¹ Richard Meek, “‘To see sad sights’: Reading and Ekphrasis in *The Rape of Lucrece*,” in *The Rape of Lucrece*, in *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 78.

² See, for instance, Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

categories of disinterestedness. My dissertation is not concerned with this dominant narrative of aesthetics. Instead, my focus on aesthetic experience is more aligned with eighteenth century theories of sensibility, sympathy, and sentiment³ because they take into consideration subjective perspective and the interaction between viewer/reader and the work of art/literature.

Because this dissertation focuses on the subjective nature of aesthetic experience, my argument does not advance one kind of aesthetic mode. In other words, aesthetic experience can occur from different encounters with art or literature. For instance, my examples will detail intense emotions caused by trauma and emotional identification, from love and beauty, and from creating literature itself. In this regard, every aesthetic experience is different because its origins are distinctive. The aim of this dissertation, then, is not to single out one form of affective response or to come up with a general theory of aesthetic experience for all early modern texts. Instead, I highlight an important aspect of responses to living art: A character's intense affective fascination and entanglement with lifelike art is often directly correlated to the fictional entity's ability to produce events within the story world. Thus, my dissertation examines the relationship between aesthetic experience and the ontology of fictional entities.

While mimesis as a paradigm of representation does not encompass this relationship, I would like to begin by thinking about how scholars have begun to revitalize the critical conversation surrounding mimesis in recent years. In response to

³ For an argument about the counternarrative of sentimentalists in the eighteenth century, see Michael L. Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Frazer examines the importance of sympathy and sentiment to not only aesthetics but also moral and political reflections.

entrenched ideas that mimesis is a simple reflection of reality or an imitation of nature⁴—critical commonplaces that keeps mimesis from a rigorous reexamination—Stephen Halliwell’s seminal study *The Aesthetics of Mimesis* (2002) argues against understanding mimesis as a form of copying reality or as a parallel to realism. Halliwell argues that one should understand mimesis as a balance between art’s world-reflecting and art’s world-creating impulses. The two sides are: “the idea of mimesis as committed to depicting and illuminating a world that is (partly) accessible and knowable outside art, and by whose norms art can therefore, within limits, be tested and judged” and “the idea of mimesis as the creator of an independent artistic heterocosm, a world of its own.”⁵

While his study reinvigorates discussions of antiquity’s relationship to mimesis extensively, Halliwell deals only in passing with the early modern period’s most significant declaration of poetics, Philip Sidney’s *The Defense of Poesy* (1595). For Halliwell, Renaissance writers like Sidney inherited faulty translations of mimesis that often amounted to equating imitation with representation.⁶ Because Halliwell, focuses on only half of the definition Sidney provides, much of the intricacies of the rest of *The Defense* are lost. For Sidney’s definition does not simply equate imitation with mimesis.

⁴ This concept is most commonly associated with Auerbach’s *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. William R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953 and 2013).

⁵ Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 5.

⁶ Halliwell, 346

While Halliwell finds imitation a reductive term for mimesis, it is important to remember that imitation is central to both Sidney’s poetics and the era as a whole. Thomas M. Greene, in *Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) argues that imitation was a “central and pervasive” circumstance during the Renaissance and that “the period might be described as the era of imitation” (1).

In fact, Sidney espouses a similar view of poetry to that of Halliwell's definition of mimesis throughout *The Defense*. Sidney understands the poet as:

disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow, in effect, into another nature, in making things either better than nature brings forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies, and such like; so as he goes hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit...her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden.⁷

In other words, the golden world of poetry develops from the brazen world of nature.

Poetry is not completely fancy, but it is also not completely unrealistic either. Sidney gestures to the kind of balance between world-reflecting and world-creating impulses

Halliwell regards as the cornerstone of a theory of mimesis. As Alan Hager argues,

Sidney is "neither pure imitator of nature nor pure prophet, but both, an inspired maker of likenesses or a mimetic inventor of fictions."⁸ In this way, Sidney understands poetry as a bridge between reality and the creative imagination.

Nonetheless, Sidney's definition of mimesis, arguably the treatise's most important concept, is incredibly brief and imprecise: "Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring-forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture—with this end, to teach and delight."⁹ This kind of evasiveness is one of the many conceptual pitfalls of *The Defense*.¹⁰ Early modern critics inadvertently reinforce a simplistic view of

⁷ Sir. Philip Sidney, "The Defence of Poesy," in Sidney's "The Defence of Poesy" and *Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Gavin Alexander (London: Penguin, 2004), 78.

⁸ Alan Hager, *Dazzling Images: The Masks of Sir Philip Sidney* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 128.

⁹ Sidney, 138

¹⁰ Criticism of *The Defense* revolves around an attempt to define the sources of influence on Sidney's work, including ethics, politics, religion, epistemology, ancient rhetorical

early modern mimesis by attempting to pin down *The Defense* as a theory of poesis—a theory of craft and making—rather than as a theory of representation. One virtue of such readings lies in the assertion that, through poesis, Sidney does something truly creative in *The Defense* by focusing on the act of imaginative creation rather than the creation itself, the poem.¹¹ By failing to integrate the idea of creation with questions of representation more generally, however, this account highlights particular aspects of Sidney's *Defense* at the expense of others and blinds us, I will argue, to poetry's dynamic and interactional properties. As a result, we do not appreciate the full dimensions of both mimesis and poesis as it was employed by Sidney and other seventeenth-century writers.¹²

theory, contemporaries in the Italian Renaissance, etc. Sidney borrowed many of his theories in *The Defense*. One strand of criticism focuses on whether the Platonic elements undo its coherence, especially considering it seems like a fundamentally Aristotelian work. See M.H. Partee's "Sir Philip Sidney and the Renaissance Knowledge of Plato," *English Studies* 51.5 (1970): 411-424 for an argument about Sidney's relationship to Plato more generally. See also S.K. Heninger's discussion of Sidney's relationship to Platonism and Neoplatonism in *Sidney and Spenser: Poet as Maker* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 223-306. Kathy Eden suggests that there are "many explicit references in *An Apology for Poetry* to Aristotle's newly recovered *Poetics*" in *Poetic and Legal Fiction in the Aristotelian Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) 157-75, 112. O.B. Hardison, Jr. argues that *The Defense* is part of a "pre-Aristotelian phase of Renaissance criticism" in "The Two Voices of Sidney's Apology for Poetry," *English Literary Renaissance* 2 (1972): 83-99. See John Ulreich, Jr., "The Poets Only Deliver': Sidney's Conception of *Mimesis*," *Studies in Literary Imagination* 15 (1982): 67-84. Ulreich attempts to show how Sidney brings together opposite ideas of literary form in a consistent manner.

¹¹ See, for instance, Jacqueline Werimont, "Re-Reading for Forms in Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy*," in *New Formalisms and Literary Theory*, eds. Verena Theile and Linda Tredennick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 120-123.

¹² See Barbara K. Lewalski's argument that Sidney's prose narratives (along with that of other writers) advance a more complex poetics than *The Defense* in "How Poetry Moves Readers: Sidney, Spenser, and Milton," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 80.3 (Summer 2011): 756-768. Lewalski, however, still focuses on a process of emulation that is outlined in *The Defense*.

It is perhaps most useful to begin by examining Sidney's definition of poetry closely: Sidney finds the term capacious enough to include "representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth." Sidney's catalog of gerunds suggests that mimesis is better understood as a process that is constantly ongoing, a conflation of the thing with the action that creates it. But can we perceive a process when dealing with seemingly self-contained and already created poems? We might begin to locate this process as part of the essential element Sidney declares is often ignored: "we miss the right use of the material point of poesy."¹³ The material point of poesy is apparent in his discussion of poets that do not use vivid language to their advantage to effect change in the reader. Sidney focuses on the dynamic relationship between author, reader, and poem, declaring that one of the poet's primary tasks is to make the poem convincing¹⁴:

But truly many of such writings has come under the banner of unresistible love, if I were a mistress, [they] would never persuade me they were in love: so coldly they apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather read lovers' writings (and so caught up certain swelling phrases which hang together like a man which once told me the wind was at north-west and by south, because he would be sure to name winds enough) than that in truth they feel those passions, which easily (as I think) may be bewrayed by that same forcibleness or energia (as the Greeks call it) of the writer.¹⁵

Signs of the tension between imitation and authentic experience emerge in this passage, where Sidney distinguishes the difference between successful sonneteers as men who "in truth... feel those passions" as opposed to men who "read lovers' writings" and are caught up in imitating ornate phrases. Writing good poetry arises from direct experience;

¹³ Sidney, 113

¹⁴ Gavin Alexander identifies this kind of "dynamic" as an important Sidneian idea: The Defense allows an "author even dead" to "have designs on a living reader... The reader must open the book and wish a dialogue to commence" in *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 29.

¹⁵ Sidney, 73

genuine feelings engender mutual, genuine feelings. This formulation, however, is certainly odd because it seems to reject the possibility of good imitators.¹⁶ Sidney's definition of poetry revolves around imitation, but he is likely not referring to the practice of imitation—the process of learning to write by using models of good writing. While mimesis and imitatio might be intertwined in this period, Sidney is more concerned with what place experience plays in producing successful verse. Mimesis, then, has less to do with “the art of imitation” and more to do with the “art of experience.”

This passage from *The Defense* anticipates a central representational challenge—how to show true feeling in verse—for Sidney's oeuvre, particularly apparent in *Astrophil and Stella*. Sidney registers this challenge immediately in the sonnet sequence, detailing Astrophil's writerly frustrations in the oft-quoted first sonnet “Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show.” Overusing cliché rhetoric (“Studying inventions” and “turning others' leaves”), Astrophil, like the false poets who “so coldly apply fiery speeches,” frets over his inability to capture his true feelings (“‘look in thy heart, and write’”) in poetry. To many critics, Astrophil's frustration represents the larger issue of rhetorical competence—to express passions persuasively—rather than the relationship between art and true feeling.¹⁷ But acknowledging Astrophil's participation in a culture of persuasion does not detract from Sidney's other preoccupations. As Ann Ferry argues, *Astrophil and Stella* is “the earliest poem in English to make its central concern the

¹⁶ On the topic of imitation of literary models in schools, see Brian Vickers, *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 1-55.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass, “The Politics of *Astrophil and Stella*,” *Studies in English Literature* 24 (1984): 53-68 on the relationship between courtliness and love; see also Tom Parker's *Proportional Form in the Sonnets of the Sidney Circle: Loving in Truth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

relation between what may be felt ‘in truth’ and what may show ‘in verse,’ ... in ways which create new uses of language for portraying inward experience in a new kind of poetry.”¹⁸ The fact that Sidney includes authentic feeling as an element of truly persuasive poetry opens up the possibility to explore the role of experience more generally, as it relates to both the production of poetry and the ontological nature of the poem.¹⁹

In this passage from *The Defense*, Sidney argues that a poet’s authentic passions “may be bewrayed by that same forcibleness or energia... of the writer.” “Energia”, or “forcibleness,” as Sidney calls it, was a central concept for Quintilian, whose theories were a model for Sidney and other Renaissance writers.²⁰ Quintilian wrestles with similar representational issues in his discussion of “enargeia.” Much like Sidney discusses the relationship between authentic feeling and verse, Quintilian is concerned with the relationship between language and actuality. For Quintilian, enargeia is a kind of animating force: “enargeia makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the

¹⁸ See Ann Ferry, *The Inward Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983), 128. Ferry ultimately finds that language is inadequate to properly represent an inward state and cannot express the intricacies of subjectivity, 149-169.

¹⁹ See Katherine Craik’s argument in *Reading Sensations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) for an exploration of the sensations and emotions literature raise and the reciprocal dynamic between body and text. Craik’s argument, however, does not explore what these emotions mean more generally in terms of ontology or representation.

²⁰ In the early modern period, several different synonyms appeared in place of enargeia. In *Enargeia in Classical Antiquity and the Early Modern Age: The Aesthetics of Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 2012) Heinrich F. Plett discusses the different words that appear (one of which is energia) in place of enargeia. In ““Secret” Arts: Elizabethan Miniatures and Sonnets,” *Representations* 15 (1986): 57-97, Patricia Fumerton explains that Sidney’s energia combines the concepts of energia and enargeia.

actual occurrence.”²¹ Here, Quintilian seems to be entertaining the difference between a vivid description of an actual scene and its actual occurrence. Eclipsing the division between the original and the copy, Quintilian finds it near impossible to tell them apart. Verbal articulation of the scene gives way to actual occurrence; indirect emotions arising from listening to someone describe the scene are no different from the genuine emotions that would arise if the person were present. Thus, the person listening to the description is “present” instead of experiencing the scene secondhand or as a representation. Elsewhere, Quintilian describes language’s lifelike abilities in terms of the orator’s psychological process:

When I am lamenting a murdered man will I not have before my eyes all the things which might believably have happened in the case under consideration? Will the assailant not suddenly spring out, will the victim not be terrified when he finds himself surrounded and cry out or plead and run away? Will I not see the blow and the victim falling to the ground? Will his blood, his pallor, his dying groans not be impressed on my mind? This gives rise to *enargeia*, which Cicero called *illustrare* and *evidentia*, by which we seem to show what happened rather than tell it; and this gives rise to the same emotions as if we were present.²²

Here, the orator is imagining himself giving a speech and “seeing” what he describes. He, too, is transported to the scene of the crime as if he relives the murder. The succession of questions detailing the vividness with which he sees the scene suggests once again the conflation between actual occurrence and vivid description. But Quintilian also makes the scene present for the reader through a series of negative questions. By postulating an answer, and, in turn, picturing the image, each question makes present another item that is absent from the reader’s imagination. In other words, Quintilian suggests that

²¹ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education, Volume III: Books 6-8*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell. Loeb Classical Library 126 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 6.2.32.

²² Ibid., 6.2.31

language can animate to the point of actuality by transporting the reader to the scene of the murder.

In her expansive study of ekphrasis in ancient rhetorical theory, Ruth Webb has also attended to this phenomenon in Quintilian, arguing that enargeia was primarily used to assist audiences in imagining a scene. For Quintilian's audience, however, the act of "imagining" was more of a material and involved engagement with an absent thing than we think of it today. Webb argues that, for ancient readers, words "were alive with rich, visual, and emotional effects."²³ Theories of enargeia were originally developed in ancient Greece to provide evidence in legal situations. The narrator "set out to reproduce the vividness of ocular proof through language in the absence of physical evidence... [turning] the audience into virtual witness by making them 'seem to see' the events described by the speaker."²⁴ These ideas only later became integral to discussions of poetry and rhetoric. Webb argues that Quintilian understood language as an "active force" in a "live performance situation in which the transmission of mental images and their concomitant emotions between a speaker and his audience is a vital part of rhetorical interaction in the forum or school."²⁵

Yet enargeia, for Webb, "is always a matter of illusion..., exist[ing] in a constant tension between presence and absence."²⁶ Webb connects enargeia to fiction, arguing that "enargeia thus invokes the fundamental duality of fiction, which demands that...[the]

²³ Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 89

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 96

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 103. Webb argues that Quintilian and other ancient writers used terms of approximation "like a spectator," which suggests semblance, 168.

audience combine a state of imaginative and emotional involvement in the worlds represented with an awareness that these worlds are not real.”²⁷ Of course, calling enargeia “a matter of illusion” is part of the larger poststructuralist trend that understands language as empty signs. Jacques Derrida argues that “the sign represents the present in its absence.” It “defers presence” but “is conceivable only on the basis of the presence that it defers.”²⁸ While the interaction of presence and absence is a feature of enargeia, this dissertation proceeds, instead, from a literal interpretation of enargeia. The early modern literary texts that I examine are motivated by a desire to connect the presence engendered by art or literature to transformative change within the story world. In this regard, early modern authors did not find the representations created from enargeia illusory. Thus, animating language should be integral to a discussion of mimesis and poesis because it takes into consideration the sensations a poem engenders and helps us to ask what presence represents ontologically, especially when presence isn’t actual but feels actual. Animating language that creates presence allows us to question whether or not a poem should be considered a representation at all.

In some ways, Sidney does pick up on the provocative portions of Quintilian’s theory of enargeia. We might consider Sidney’s account of poetic seduction in *The Defense* as a reference to a kind of animacy inherent to language because poetic seduction relies on language’s forcibleness. But *The Defense* is prescriptive in nature and this kind of progressiveness remains latent.²⁹ Sidney’s aim in the *The Defense* is to

²⁷ Ibid., 168-9

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 9.

²⁹ See Brian Vicker’s argument that Renaissance literary criticism as a whole is more prescriptive than descriptive in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, 1-2

uphold the poet's creative imagination while also proposing that poetry has a clear didactic function. Sidney's does not thoroughly explore *enargeia* and, as a result, specialists in other fields, like Halliwell, often find his definition of *mimesis* too simplistic. We can begin to think through some of these issues more productively by turning to moments of poetic appropriation and composition in Sidney's *Old and New Arcadias*. While *The Defense* explains a process in which readers emulate Cyrus, leading to many replicated Cyruses, the characters' reactions in the *Arcadias* differ greatly from Sidney's model of emulation.

Characters in *The Arcadias* often respond with profuse emotional reactions when they are moved by the poems they read. Sidney suggests that a poem's agency and presence causes this kind of reaction. Let us turn to the moment when Pyrocles (who assumes the Amazonian disguise Zelmane) serves as a medium for a poem—"What tongue"—that exists prior to his appropriation of it. While he does not compose the poem, both versions figure Pyrocles as the poet. However, the differences between the scenes in the *Old* and *New Arcadia* are telling:

Old Arcadia's version:

So that, coming again to the use of his feet, and lifting the sweet burden of Philoclea in his arms, he laid her on her bed again, having so free scope of his serviceable sight that there came into his mind a song the shepherd Philisides had in his hearing sung of the beauties of his unkind mistress, which in Pyrocles' judgment was fully accomplished in Philoclea. The song was this...³⁰

New Arcadia's version:

But Zelmane... had the coales of her affection so kindled with wonder, and blowne with delight, that now all her parts grudged, that her eyes should doo more homage, then they, to the Princesse of them. In so much that taking vp the Lute, her wit began to be with a divine curie inspired; her voice would in so beloved an occasion second her wit; her hands accorded the Lutes music to the voice; her

³⁰ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 207.

panting hart danced to the music; while I think her feet did beate the time; while her bodie was the room where it should be celebrated; her soule the Queene which should be delighted. And so together went the utterance and the invention, that one might judge, it was Philoclea's beautie which did speedily write it in her eyes; or the sense thereof, which did word by word endite it in her mind, whereto she (but as an organ) did only lend utterance. The song was to this purpose...³¹

In the *Old Arcadia*, Pyrocles lifts Philoclea and lays her on the bed, recalling a song by the shepherd Philisides that describes Philoclea's beauty. In fact, the song so accurately describes Philoclea that Pyrocles feels that "it is fully accomplished in Philoclea." The *New Arcadia* offers an entirely different explanation for the poem's composition. The poem exists as a living form, as Zelmane's body—"her bodie was the room where it should be celebrated"—becomes the medium of the poem. Philisides no longer is the original composer of the poem; instead, Philoclea's beauty compels poetic production.³²

Her beauty excites Zelmane, as her whole body begins to move, and she composes the poem. The poem exists in the intersection between Philoclea's beauty, Zelmane's mind/body, and through poetic utterance. In this regard, the narrative suggests that the poem's presence extends far beyond vivid language. Although we are able to read the poem ("The song was to this purpose"), the poem for Zelmane is an actual event, occurring as he both imagines and utters it. Becoming a living medium for the poem, Zelmane completely appropriates the creative product to the extent that she become one with the poem by performing and uttering what her mind has constructed.

³¹ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (New York: Penguin Classics, 1997), 287.

³² See Catherine Bates' argument about the gender ambiguity that occurs when Zelmane and Philoclea become intertwined through poetic production in *Masculinity, Gender, and Identity in the English Renaissance Lyric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 115.

Why does Sidney rewrite this moment of poetic composition in the *New Arcadia*?

While there is no definitive answer³³, the two scenes side by side show that Sidney develops his understanding of the process of poetic experience from the original to the revised version. The version in the *Old Arcadia* suggests that Pyrocles' poem is a representation because it reflects the situation at hand—the poem is a verbal imitation of Philoclea's beauty. She reminds Pyrocles of a poem that represents her beauty exactly. The *Old Arcadia* presents a static version of representation, making it hard to tell if Pyrocles feels anything as he contemplates the poem or if the poem is simply an appropriate reflection of Philoclea. In the *New Arcadia*'s version, the poetic process is incredibly drawn out, showing a dynamic process from aesthetic enthrallment to performance. Zelmane experiences wonder and delight—both categories of aesthetic feelings—compelling him to pick up a lute and perform. This scene suggests that aesthetic fascination with a particular object not only leads to the creation of a poem but also activates some kind of action alongside the composition of the poem. The creation and the utterance of the poem become intertwined with the performing body—the heart dances and the feet beat to the music. Thus, the scene puts aesthetic experience on a continuum with action. The intensity of aesthetic experience can ultimately lead to a process of doing, making aesthetic experience a generative force.

This dissertation, then, looks forward to theories of performativity—the act-like quality of language—and to theories of aesthetics that are amenable to a performative perspective. J.L. Austin's theory of performativity informs some of my thinking about

³³ On these episodes as a model of reproduction and the afterlife of poetry, see Matthew Zarnowiecki, *Fair Copies: Reproducing the English Lyric from Tottel to Shakespeare* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014), 108-129.

how art and literature can transform and produce reality. In *How to Do Things with Words* (1975), Austin proposes that language does not simply reflect, but it can create. By speaking, one can do things with words, producing an effect beyond the language itself. However, Austin's theory of linguistic performativity has its limits. He focuses on ordinary language, considering literary language nonserious, and, as a result, not performative: "a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem...Language in such circumstances is...used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use—ways that fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language."³⁴

Subsequent theorists have adapted his speech act theory for the literary use of language, especially poetic utterance, but this dissertation does not focus solely on verbal forms of living art. Although his theories (and those of Judith Butler) are useful for my chapter on Mary Wroth's living poems, they are not as helpful when we consider non-oral forms of art and literature like Lucrece's painting of Troy, Hermione's statue, or prose narratives. How do other forms of non-oral art and literature produce action rather than re-produce? While the texts I examine here anticipate theories of linguistic performativity, this dissertation suggests that early modern writers were not restricted to language as a conduit for action. Instead, I argue that a character's aesthetic experience with the art form activates and reinforces performativity. In other words, early modern writers suggest that art and literature is performative because of the interaction that occurs between the poem, painting, or statue and the viewer/reader. Thus, performativity

³⁴ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 22.

can be constituted through the process of aesthetic experience. The scenes in which art and literature are most performative are also the scenes in which they are animated to the point of being alive. For early modernists, art and literature seem alive not because they represent reality but because they are active forces in the world.

This dissertation takes into consideration a variety of literary genres (prose, poetry, and drama) and descriptions of visual art forms (sculpture and painting) for two reasons: It shows that pitting the literary, the visual, and the theatrical arts against each other limits theories about the ontology of fiction. I collapse the distinction between the literary, theatrical, and visual arts to show how different forms of fiction engender similar receptions and consequences. In addition, any theory that shifts attention from mimesis as the primary paradigm in the early modern period needs to encompass a wide range of genres and media; otherwise, it is not capacious enough for a theory of representation or ontology.

Each chapter takes up a different form of living art—the living image, the living statue, the living poem, and the living character. I begin with Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece*. This chapter traces the relationship between Lucrece’s traumatic experience of rape and her belief that a painting of the Fall of Troy can feel pain after she turns to the image as a coping mechanism. Instead of focusing on Lucrece’s inability to understand the illusion of the painting, I argue the poem probes what happens when a painting is used as a fellow sympathetic sufferer and becomes intertwined with the person using it. After human interaction fails, Lucrece creates a community with the painted images and extends her own life if only for a short time. In this way, the poem plays with different categories of living, exploring to what extent a painting might be considered on par with

its own viewer. Ultimately, the chapter asks whether Lucrece's relationship to the painting allows Lucrece to make a political statement about her rape and her place in society.

Chapter 2 turns to drama and takes up the statue of Hermione that comes to life in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, focusing on the relationship between Paulina and the statue. I argue that Paulina acts as a mediator for Hermione's interests throughout the play and becomes an extension of the statue during the final scene. Building on Miguel Tamen's theory that inanimate objects like statues become interpretable through a network of "formal and informal friends" known as representatives, I argue that Paulina is a representative of the statue because she carries her investment in Hermione from life to death, allowing Hermione to assert the rights she did not have while alive. The second half of the chapter considers a major ontological problem that is often overlooked by critics: the fact that an actor stands in place of the stone statue when she supposedly dies. I explore whether Paulina's status as a representative should extend to the actor. While the early modern period is known for a mimetic model of acting, I argue that the performance choice specific to *The Winter's Tale* helps to theorize a model of acting based not on mimetic identification but on emotional contiguity. Ultimately, this chapter will explore the actor as representative in relation to theater's singular ability—the fact that the action occurring on stage is part of the real and fictional world at the same time. By highlighting the emotional contiguous relationship between actor and character, I show how actors act on behalf of the character after the performance ends, bringing their characters into the real world with them.

Chapter 3 focuses on the motif of living poems in Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. While early modern authors imagined the effects of poetry on minds and bodies of readers, Wroth's poems behave as if they are alive and are persons in their own right. The chapter traces how Wroth's living poems resist representation. Instead, the poems act as events, while the characters and plotlines mimetically proliferate. Wroth's living poems raise a set of questions about the potential of poetic language to act and create rather than to describe and represent a state of affairs; her narrative suggests that poetry's power lies in its performative potential to call events into existence. Using the theories of J.L. Austin and Judith Butler, I argue that Wroth anticipates a theory of poetry that relies on performative utterance; the repetition of poetry in the *Urania* propels the characters to develop and transform. Thus, this chapter considers how Wroth's living poems refine and resist Sidney's definition of poetry.

In my last chapter, I turn to Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* and how she uses the idea of a corporeal imagination to theorize a model of "real" fictional being. Drawing on Cavendish's natural philosophy and her theories regarding "living" in her works of fiction from *Sociable Letters*, I argue that the cameo appearance of Margaret Cavendish in her own narrative should be read as a model of authorship, one that doesn't place the author completely inside or outside the text. In this way, the idea of a real as opposed to a fictional being is taken to the extreme. By including an episode that reflects on the ways in which the process of writing can impel an author to insert herself into her work (as a character) in order to foreground living in a fictional world, Cavendish opens up the possibility for an experience of writing that is analogous to an aesthetic experience. Thus, through her own example, Cavendish seems to provide the reader with

a “representation” of herself partaking in her own imaginative creation and then insists it is quite possible for the reader to do the same. Her own sympathy for her female readers, who are often barred from creating an imaginary world of their own, prompts her to frame the text as a sort of guide to imaginative world-making.

The Living Image: Aesthetic Action in Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*

Lucrece commits suicide at the end of *The Rape of Lucrece*, but she might as well have been dead from the very beginning. The poem figures her death even before she is raped. As Tarquin enters her bedchamber and she awakes, the narrator likens her “to a new-kill’d bird she trembling lies” (457).¹ The narrator will later compare her to Philomel, a woman who the gods save by turning her into a bird. While the gods save Philomel, she ultimately loses her human form, a kind of death. The poem constantly points out Lucrece’s deathlike stillness. She is a “virtuous monument” (391) to be looked at or a static “picture of pure piety” (542). Lucrece ultimately condemns herself to death by claiming the rape causes her to lose her reputation, “a dearer thing than life” (687). Life is now “living death and pain perpetual” (726). To meditate on these moments from *The Rape* is to find oneself probing the ontological nature of Lucrece’s character. Is Lucrece, destined to die, more dead than other textually constructed characters? While it might be obvious to say that all textual characters are dead—mere representations or verbal signifiers—the poem points again and again to the fact that Lucrece is not alive.

That both the narrator and Lucrece represent the rape as a kind of murder and “living death” should not be surprising, considering that Lucrece’s suicide follows the laws of the ancient world. Because women were considered property, a raped woman was damaged property. Instead of women seeking reparations, husbands usually received compensation. Thus, in biblical and literary accounts, a woman is either killed or isolated

¹ William Shakespeare, “The Rape of Lucrece” in *The Norton Shakespeare: Romances and Poems*, Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008). All citations are from this edition.

from the community due to shame in order to cleanse the family's reputation.² Along with following Roman law, *The Rape of Lucrece* is drawn from both Ovid's *Fasti* and Livy's *The History of Rome*. In Ovid's account, Tarquin catches a glimpse of Lucrece and falls madly in love. When he returns to the camp, he attempts to seduce Lucrece, but she refuses him. The rape occurs in a single line. On the next day, Lucrece tells her husband and father what happened. She receives her husband's forgiveness, but she stabs herself nonetheless. Lucrece's bleeding body is given a public viewing, and the men vow revenge against Tarquin. Ovid moves rapidly from Lucrece's rape to her suicide, without documenting Lucrece's state during the period between these two events. Her suicide is the focal point of the myth, a necessary act to cleanse her family's reputation.

While Shakespeare follows the plot's details, he innovatively departs from his source texts by exploring both Lucrece and the rapist's psychology and lingering on the in-between period before Lucrece's suicide, detailing what a grieving Lucrece's does as she waits. Lucrece seeks women—the mythological figures Philomel and Hecuba—who have similar stories of trauma as she contemplates suicide and waits for her husband's return. Because the poem does not immediately end with her suicide as the source texts do, it is Lucrece's recourse to these mythical figures—in the form of Philomel's lyric voice and the painted Hecuba—that elongates her life by extending the plot and delaying her suicide, potentially reanimating a lifeless Lucrece. These moments should be read as an alternative to her suicide because they make her present in a way that the rape brutally takes from her. In other words, the move to aesthetic mediums delays her death in three

² See E. Jane Burns, "The Philomel Legacy," in *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, eds. Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 125-132.

different ways: by extending the plot, by giving her something to do while she grieves, and by creating the potential for an alternative to suicide. My chapter will provide an alternative view of Lucrece's liveliness, or lack thereof, by tracing how Lucrece acts with an object that is in a similar position as her, an inanimate painting brimming with life.

Critics find that "the subjectivity effect [the poem] generates is relatively feeble,"³ but focusing solely on Lucrece's subjectivity is too narrow. Instead, the chapter will pursue the idea that Lucrece is a unique character; her prefigured death and a repetitive determination to figure Lucrece as painfully unalive makes her ontologically unstable. What I want to suggest is that, in this redundancy, Shakespeare explores whether art in several different forms can bring Lucrece back to life and whether it offers a viable alternative to suicide.

To make these arguments, I will focus on the period between Lucrece's rape and her suicide when Lucrece seeks a community of fellow sufferers. In what follows, I analyze Lucrece's reaction to three forms of solace designated as imitations by the poem's narrator: a sympathetic maid, the melodious Philomel, and the lifelike painting of Troy. In each interaction, Lucrece rejects imitating grief as an adequate response to her rape. She forecloses the possibility that one can authentically sympathize if they have not experienced rape. Instead of forming a community, Lucrece finds solace by instrumentalizing art. By showing the relationship between Lucrece and the painting, the poem asks how the aesthetic can enliven its viewers. Lucrece becomes part of the medium (when she borrows looks from Hecuba), and, in turn, animates the painting,

³ Joel Fineman, "Shakespeare's Will: The Temporality of Rape," *Representations* 20 (Autumn 1987): 25-76, 28.

forming a transactional relationship. This chapter explores what happens when a medium (the painting) is used as a kind of person and becomes intertwined with the person using it.

This chapter will also explore the painting's relationship to mimesis, arguing that, even though the "living" painting in *The Rape* follows the tradition of mimetic, realistic Renaissance paintings, the painting is not a simple representation or imitation because it becomes tangled up with Lucrece's own being. Instead, I argue that the transactional relationship between Lucrece and the painting is a nascent form of aesthetic experience, showing how she develops sympathetic feelings for the painting rather than using it as a model and imitation of her own grief. In doing so, I explore how to position the concept of "living" art forms beyond a binary division of truth versus fiction. Critics writing about "living" art forms fail to get around this binary, often claiming characters like Lucrece who believe art to be alive or lifelike are deceived. As a result, living art forms inevitably fail because we understand them only through oppositions such as truth/fiction and authenticity/deception. The notion of living art, however, does not have to be automatically consigned to these binaries. Ultimately, the chapter asks if a "living" relationship with an aesthetic medium, a particular kind of engagement, is the way in which art can impact the political realm. I explore this question by turning to the painting's relationship to change of government that occurs in the poem.

Before Tarquin rapes Lucrece, the poem sheds light on the origins of Tarquin's sexual deviancy. Critics persistently read Collatine's extravagant description of Lucrece's beauty and virtue as the reason behind Tarquin's sexual assault. In her influential essay, Nancy Vickers finds that that "the rapist returns obsessively to the narrator's five-line

synopsis of Collatine's winning blazon; he locates motive in that initial fragmentary portrait."⁴ Despite Lucrece's absence, Collatine produces an image of Lucrece for Tarquin through enargia or vivid description. To many critics, this gesture produces Lucrece as a function of the male gaze and Collatine's profuse rhetoric. Recent critics of *Lucrece* frame the poem's exploration of enargia as a destructive force, even going so far as to blame rhetoric entirely for the rape.⁵ Margaret Rice Vasileiou, for instance, argues that rhetorical devices related to space compel Tarquin to do violence against Lucrece.⁶ To be sure, Collatine's boastings play a role in the rape. But such critical readings frame enargia in terms of the Petrarchan subject-object binary; Lucrece becomes nothing more than a voiceless ideal for male appropriation and self-aggrandizement.

Here, I read Lucrece as not only absent from the poem in the Petrarchan sense but also in a more fundamentally radical sense.⁷ To be sure, the examples with which I began

⁴ Nancy Vickers, "This Heraldry in Lucrece's Face," *Poetics Today* 6.1-2 (1985):171-184, 179.

⁵ Historically, critics devalued *The Rape* for its rhetorical excess. Some critics are particularly scathing in their assessment of Lucrece's rhetoric. Lucrece is "seizing the occasion to enjoy a good rant" or describe her as having an "elephantine ego." See Richard A. Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1976), 103 and 107. In the 1980s, Vickers, Dubrow, Maus and Fineman challenged this critical commonplace by showing the relationship between rhetoric (especially the poem's metaphors) and the plot. Instead of dismissing rhetoric, they took tropes seriously, highlighting how rhetorical tropes influence the character's decisions and effected the plot. See Nancy J. Vickers, "This Heraldry in Lucrece's Face," 171-84; Heather Dubrow, "'Full of forged lies': The Rape of Lucrece," in *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 80-168; Katharine Eisaman Maus, "Taking Tropes Seriously: Language and Violence in Shakespeare's Rape of Lucrece," *SQ* 37.1(Spring 1987): 66-82; Joel Fineman, "Shakespeare's Will: The Temporality of Rape," 25-76.

⁶ Margaret Rice Vasileiou, "Violence, Visual Metaphor, and the 'True' Lucrece," *SEL* 51.1 (Winter 2011): 47-63.

⁷ Critics often reproduce the verdict that Lucrece is nearly absent from the text in some way or another. Considering the patriarchal ideology of the poem, Coppélia Kahn asks "who or what speaks in the character we call Lucrece?" mirroring the question Mary

this chapter highlight Lucrece's absence not only in relation to Tarquin's objectification of her but also his sexual assault. However, the state of "living death" that Lucrece experiences goes beyond absence engendered by misogyny. As a mythological figure, Lucrece is already predetermined to commit suicide. Lucrece follows this predetermined narrative by contemplating suicide not long after the rape when she looks for a knife—"some desperate instrument of death" (1038)—even though she ultimately stops herself before committing the act too early. Whether or not Lucrece is certain about committing suicide is unclear. The poem frames a concern that the source texts leave out entirely: are the moments leading up Lucrece's suicide significant even though she is destined to commit suicide?

But along with this concern, the poem asks us to question the status of Lucrece as a character, as the "living dead." We might recall the enduring debate about the ontological nature of literary characters—whether to treat characters as verbal signifiers or as people we might meet in the world. Shakespeare's Lucrece represents a kind of paradox: on the one hand, Lucrece seems more dead than other verbally constructed characters, as she carries the burden of death from the outset of her story. On the other hand, Lucrece seems to fight to stay alive by prolonging her own suicide, using the addition of art forms to her

Jacobus asks, "Is there a woman in this text?" Some critics read a feminist thread throughout the poem. Her suicide, the very act that makes her actually absent, comes to signify an act of agency. See, for instance, Coppélia Kahn's "Lucrece: The Sexual Politics of Subjectivity," in *Rape and Representation*, Eds. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R Silver (New York: Columbia UP, 1991), 141-59. Some critics find the poem antifeminist, arguing a feminist Lucrece would have killed Tarquin. See, for instance, Jane O. Newman, " "And Let Mild Women to Him Lose Their Mildness": Philomela, Female Violence, and Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*," *SQ* 45.3 (Autumn, 1994): 304-26. Regardless of the side critics fall on, they force the poem into neatly separate categories where Lucrece is either present or not based on how one reads her act of suicide.

advantage. Shakespeare explores a liminal figure; a character meant to die but whose life is elongated through recourse to the songs of Philomel and the painted images of Troy. By underscoring Lucrece's liminality, the poem asks us to question the category of "living" more generally: What is Lucrece's relationship to other characters and to her living readers? What is her relationship to the painting of Troy, a lifelike painting that interacts with Lucrece as if it were another character? What kind of impact can a "living" art form have?

Perhaps the most innovative addition Shakespeare made to the story of Lucrece is the relationship between Lucrece and the lifelike painting depicting the events of the fall of Troy.⁸ While the narrator of *The Rape of Lucrece* conjures the absent painting for the reader by describing its lifelike qualities, Lucrece finds the painting lacking and articulates the silent images' grief by "lending them words" (1498). In this moment, it would seem that Lucrece upholds the superiority of verbal representation by applying words directly to what she views. Most recent criticism on ekphrasis—the verbal description of a visual object—acknowledges the rivalry between verbal representation

⁸ Some critics do not find the painting to be innovative due in part to a preoccupation with Renaissance debates about the virtues of poetry over painting. For instance, Alison Thorne claims that Shakespeare's references to the visual arts "exist only as textual effect...these artefacts tend to function reflexively as a trope for Shakespeare's own rhetorical virtuosity, thereby instigating a running *paragone* between poet and painter. As comments on the mimetic process, his pictorial allusions are mostly unremarkable additions to the stock of Renaissance commonplaces on the theme" in *Vision and Rhetoric in Shakespeare: Looking Through Language* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 73. See also Richard Meek's "To see sad sights": Reading and Ekphrasis in *The Rape of Lucrece*, in *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 55-80. Meek argues that "the ekphrasis serves as an opportunity for Shakespeare to explore further the *paragone* between poetry and painting...it offers...a searching reflection on both the visibility of literary language and the problems and limitations of interpreting the visual" (56).

and visual representation.⁹ The poem's treatment of the painting, however, goes beyond the rivalry between poetry and painting.¹⁰ In order for her to voice their grief, she must conjure what she feels is lacking by "lending" more than words; she "borrows their looks" (1498) because she finds something lacking in her own expression of grief.

For some critics, ekphrasis occurs as a response to an absence in the verbal structure.¹¹ In other words, one must read the verbal representation in order to bring into existence the visual object. Mitchell argues that for ekphrasis to succeed "the textual other must remain completely alien; it can never be present, but must be conjured up as a potent absence or a fictive, figural present...The ekphrastic image acts, in other words, like a sort of unapproachable and unrepresentable "black hole" in the verbal structure."¹²

⁹ Most modern definitions define ekphrasis as the verbal description of a visual object. See Grant F. Scott's "The Rhetoric of Dilation: Ekphrasis and Ideology," in *Word&Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 7.4 (1991): 301-310.

¹⁰ Catherine Belsey argues that there is a need to rethink the place of ekphrasis in *Lucrece*: "Thinking too precisely on outside influence has, I believe, muddled our understanding of the place of ekphrasis here, as well as in the plays, by identifying it as a site of struggle between the visual and the verbal. On the one hand, Reformation iconophobia is brought in to generate suspicion of the painting *Lucrece* constructs at such length; on the other hand, the contest between words and images, and its specific inflection in the Renaissance *paragone*, drives the belief that the poem sets out to establish its superiority over the art work" in "Invocation of the Visual Image: Ekphrasis in "Lucrece" and Beyond," *SQ* 63.2 (Summer 2012): 175-198, 177. While my argument does not revolve around ekphrasis per se, my chapter rethinks the place of ekphrasis in its discussion of the experience of the painting.

¹¹ Others find the painting a symptom of the rhetorical excess of the poem. See Leonard Barkan, *Mute Poetry, Speaking Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). Barkan argues that "the poem is a monument to the dangers and frustration of rhetoric—the rapist's elaborate arguments with himself and Lucrece, her equally intricate counter-speeches (which only turn him on more), and the longest rhetorical tirade of all, as Lucrece apostrophizes opportunity, time, Tarquin, night, and the futility of making speeches...What words have failed to do by themselves, the picture achieves, once the heroine puts it into words" (22).

¹² W.J.T Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 158.

The narrator's ekphrastic description of the painting becomes entangled in describing both the painting and Lucrece, not only as her body registers their looks but also as the description of the painting becomes focalized through her eyes. By bringing into existence the painting through her own body, both Lucrece and the painting occupy the same role. As a unique character suspended between life and death, she operates much like a missing visual referent, like a painting that must be "conjured up as a potent absence or a fictive, figural present."

Because she stalls her suicide and extends her life through recourse to art forms¹³, Lucrece becomes available to the reader in the same way the painting does. The poem draws upon ekphrastic description as a kind of mode in order to make Lucrece alive, or present, again; it achieves this by equating Lucrece with an aesthetic medium, but also by probing to what extent Lucrece's engagement with the painting can reinstate a debilitated Lucrece. The entanglement between Lucrece and the painting recalls Mitchell's notions concerning ekphrasis, specifically that "ekphrastic poems speak to, for, or about works of visual art in the way that texts in general speak about anything else. There is nothing to distinguish grammatically a description of a painting from a description of a kumquat or a baseball game."¹⁴ As Ruth Webb argues, in classical rhetoric, ekphrasis referred to extended descriptions and that modern definitions tend to limit ekphrasis to descriptions

¹³ For the relationship between rape and how Lucrece experiences time, see Alice A. Chapman "Lucrece's Time," *SQ* 64.2 (Summer 2013): 165-187. Chapman argues that the scene of Troy allows Lucrece to move between different figures and experience timelessness. While Chapman is interested in how the poem's characters' experience time in relationship to each other, I am specifically interested in how an experience with the painting leads to delay and deferral.

¹⁴ W.J.T Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 159.

of visual works of art in literary works.¹⁵ In a similar vein, Murray Krieger argues, “The early meaning given to ekphrasis in Hellenistic rhetoric...was totally unrestricted: it referred, most broadly, to a verbal description of something, almost anything, in life or art.”¹⁶ Although I am not suggesting that ekphrasis is not a distinct kind of description, the lack of grammatical difference between an ekphrastic description and a description of any other object lends itself to the way in which the narrator slips between describing the painting, what Lucrece sees as she views the painting, and the reciprocal dynamic between Lucrece and the painting. But the poem goes beyond this slippage by making Lucrece’s life attendant on her engagement with these mediums. The poem’s strategy is to present an experience of engaging with art as an analogue for the experience of living.

In response to her own lifeless state, Lucrece’s last moments are dedicated to seeking out the living.¹⁷ After the rape, even before she devises her suicide, Lucrece’s task is largely one of finding a community who might share in her grief; of finding out whether sympathetic identification with another softens her pain. Michael Schoenfeldt

¹⁵ Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 1-13.

¹⁶ Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 7.

¹⁷ Critics often consider the major characters’ lack of action as a flaw. For instance, Ian Donaldson argues, “No other version of the Lucretia story explores more minutely or with greater psychological insight the mental processes of the two major characters, their inconsistent waverings to and fro, before they bring themselves finally and reluctantly to action” (44) in *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and its Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). In her study of the relationship between decision-making and the use of tropes, Katharine Eisaman Maus argues that “Neither character’s choices seem to reflect his or her best interests, and Tarquin and Lucrece must constantly resist the temptation to behave logically. So their decision-making becomes not the activity of a moment but a continuously repeated process...Lucrece likewise resolves on suicide shortly after Tarquin’s departure but must continue to debate the wisdom of this course even after her mind is supposedly made up” (67) in “Taking Tropes Seriously: Language and Violence in Shakespeare’s *Rape of Lucrece*,” *SQ* 37.1(Spring 1987): 66-82.

argues that “Shakespeare indicates through the actions of Lucrece that dealing with pain entails a fundamental social practice. Rather than the self in pain retreating into whatever “shelly cave” is available, Shakespeare suggests that both the aesthetic encounter with the suffering of others, and the sharing of one’s own pain in language, can produce a minor analgesic effect.”¹⁸ Lucrece yearns for “co-partners in...pain” (789), imagining a hypothetical situation in which Tarquin as Night rapes the Moon and her handmaids, the stars: “Were Tarquin Night...The silver-shining queen he would distain;/Her twinkling handmaids too, by him defiled,/Through Night’s black bosom should not peep again” (785-8). Just as Tarquin rapes Lucrece, Tarquin as Night obliterates the moon and stars’ light. The moon has the stars to share in her grief, but Lucrece does not have the same comfort. Lucrece frames this imagined community of rape survivors as an absent group:

‘Where now I have no one to blush with me,
To cross their arms and hang their heads with mine,
To mask their brows and hide their infamy;
But I alone, alone must sit and pine,
Seasoning the earth with showers of silver brine,
Mingling my talk with tears, my grief with groans,
Poor wasting monuments of lasting moans (792-8)

The imagined group “hang their heads” because they need to hide “their infamy”—their own rapes. If they existed, these co-partners would have to suffer greatly. They would also need to experience rape like the moon’s stars, transforming the group into a grotesque comfort and a means to an end. On its face, this answer might seem doubtful because of its ethical ramifications. And yet Lucrece implies this idea in the comparison she makes between Tarquin and Night. Just as the moon’s handmaids are embroiled in

¹⁸ Michael Schoenfeldt, “Shakespearean Pain,” in *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England*, eds. Katharine A. Craik and Tonya Pollard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 191-207, 195.

the defilement, so too does Lucrece believe she “should...have co-partners” (789). The seriousness of this statement is nearly reversed when Lucrece goes on to call the group she yearns for a kind of “fellowship,” much like the “palmer’s” chat makes short their pilgrimage” (790-1). But Lucrece realizes she cannot find these partners, acknowledging that she is solely responsible to carry the burden of rape; she is denied “fellowship in woe doth assuage” (790). This moment raises questions about the extent to which one must go through the same experience in order to properly understand or sympathize with someone’s grief. Lucrece’s answer is that the imagination fails when one tries to understand the experience of another. One cannot experience and understand pain vicariously. On the basis of this belief, it is possible for Lucrece to imagine that only the shared experience of rape could yield an intensified experience of friendship and relief.

My reading, which understands Lucrece to imagine that emotional identification is based on shared experience, finds support in her eventual dismissal of her own handmaid. When Lucrece calls out to her maid, the maid appears with “swift obedience” (1215); her eyes “enforced by sympathy” (1229) “weep like the dewy night” (1232). While this seems like a suitable response from a potential “co-partner in pain,” they do not reach an idealized form of fellowship:

One justly weeps, the other takes in hand,
 No cause but company of her drops’ spilling.
 Their gentle sex to weep are often willing,
 Grieving themselves to guess at other’s smarts,
 And then they drown their eyes or break their hearts (1235-9)

Here, the maid truly pities Lucrece; the narrator presents an image of the kind of fellowship Lucrece yearns for as they both weep in unison and hold each other’s hands. But Lucrece cuts the fellowship short, as she begins to question the maid for her tears: “My girl...on what occasion break/Those tears from thee, that down thy cheek are

raining?” (1270-1). Despite the maid’s seemingly genuine response to her anguish, Lucrece claims that “If tears could help, mine own would do me good” (1274). As Samuel Arkin argues, “the maid is “enforced by sympathy”; she has no choice but to weep in concert with pain presented before her.”¹⁹ Even though the poem does not acknowledge whether Lucrece is aware that her maid involuntarily cries with her, sympathetic identification between people becomes an impossibility, making Lucrece’s connection to her maid an unviable option for fellowship or true relief.

The poem invites us to imagine this failure between the women in terms of degrees of authenticity. The narrator calls the maid a “poor counterfeit of [Lucrece’s] complaining” (1269), using the language of deceptive artistry to delineate the difference between the two women. Designating the maid a “counterfeit” calls to mind Philip Sidney’s definition of poetry: “Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring-forth...”.²⁰ While Sidney considers “counterfeiting” central to the art of poetry, Shakespeare used the term in a more capacious way, exploring all of the term’s connotations from forgery to acting. In this regard, the maid is not an equivalent reproduction of Lucrece because she imitates Lucrece’s tears without truly feeling her pain. In this sense, the poem plays with the double meaning of counterfeit: that her tears

¹⁹ Samuel Arkin explores the different forms of sympathy Lucrece receives from her audience in “That map which deep impression bears”: Lucrece and the Anatomy of Shakespeare’s Sympathy,” *SQ* 64.3 (Fall 2013): 349-71, 366.

²⁰ Philip Sidney, “*The Defence of Poesy*” and *Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Gavin Alexander (New York: Penguin, 2004), 10.

are not truly authentic and that she is a fictive imitation or a bad work of art. The maid will always be an imitation and cannot partake completely in Lucrece's feelings.

While the narrator designates the maid a "counterfeit," the poem turns to fantasies of simulated grief, often exploring the relationship between authentic emotion and both imitation and representation. While the poem insists on the fundamental value of authentic emotion, the narrator does not forgo descriptions of imitation entirely:

The little birds that tune their morning's joy
Make her moans mad with their sweet melody;
For mirth doth search the bottom of annoy;
Sad souls are slain in merry company;
Grief best is pleased with grief's society:
True sorrow then is feelingly sufficed

When with like semblance it is sympathized (1107-13)

Even as the narrator rejects the bird's merriment as an antidote to Lucrece's sadness in favor of a "society" of grieving souls, these lines betray an unwillingness to completely dismiss grieving imitators—"like semblance[s]" – altogether. The poem suggests that sympathetic identification requires some level of imitation. It would not be hard to imagine that feelings of pity begin with imitating the facial features of someone in distress, making the person a "like semblance" of the griever. The question, then, becomes not just whether sympathetic feeling can move from imitation to imagining someone's mental state, but whether these "like semblances" can allay grief.

The poem becomes an exploration of two different kinds of "like semblances"—Philomel in the form of lyric voice and Hecuba in the form of a painting; Lucrece turns to these simulations of grief to find a community. Although the "like semblances" are actually imaginary within the diegetic world of the poem, Philomel and Hecuba are more real to Lucrece than her counterparts because she identifies with their stories. These mediums, then, are useful because the characters give her the feeling of a group dynamic

based on shared experience. If Lucrece finds sympathetic identification lacking, then the alternative—a group based on shared experience—is also an untenable option, as Lucrece cannot use her maid as an instrument for her own suffering. Art solves this problem because Lucrece can use the painting as a kind of person as opposed to hurting her maid in the process of her grief. These aesthetic mediums become a way to instrumentalize something without the ethical dilemma she faces those around her.

The myths also make her mourning less of a passive activity, considering that engaging with these mediums require her to both perform and to communicate her sorrow. This activity is partly how Lucrece retains some form of agency throughout the poem. She stalls the suicide plot by looking for an “instrument” that might relieve her. One kind of instrument leads to her death; the knife is a “desp’rate instrument of death” or “tool” (1038-9). But the other kind of instruments are aesthetic mediums; Lucrece, for instance, calls Hecuba a “poor instrument” (1464). The painting is equated with the knife, but the painting does not take life away. Instead, by making use of this other instrument, Lucrece extends her life by choosing an alternative to suicide (if only for a short time).

Fittingly, the rape aligns Lucrece with a suffering mythological creature, Philomel. Raped and mutilated by her brother-in-law, Philomel, who can no longer speak, weaves a tapestry to reveal the crime committed against her. To escape from Tereus after enacting revenge, she is turned into a nightingale who sings a mournful song. But in *The Rape of Lucrece*, the story of Philomel is distorted from the start. When Tarquin contemplates rape, he believes that the birds that Lucrece later addresses as superior melodists are on his side, singing in unison for his crime against Lucrece:

‘So, so,’ quoth he, ‘these lets attend the time,
Like little frosts that sometime threat the spring,

To add a more rejoicing to the prime,
 And give the sneaped birds more cause to sing.
 Pain pays the income of each precious thing;
 Huge rocks, high winds, strong pirates, shelves and sands,
 The merchant fears, ere rich at home he lands.' (330-336)

For Joseph Ortiz, this moment affirms that Tarquin can inscribe Lucrece's voice and music with male desire.²¹ But recourse to the myth of Philomel in *The Rape* should prove more useful than it does. After all, birdsong in the myth allows Philomel to "speak" again, especially after the rape. Tarquin might inscribe Lucrece's voice at first, but it should not remain in his possession. Thus, the perversion of birdsong points to something else in *The Rape*. What happens when voice, particularly a poetic voice, does not empower its subject? What is voice's purpose to begin with and why does it fail Lucrece?

Lucrece does not refer to herself as Philomel after the rape. Instead, the narrator identifies her as Philomel. This is the first indication that Lucrece doesn't see herself as Philomel at all. When Lucrece first mentions Philomel herself, the merriment of the birds outside her window makes her recall the tale of a truly sad bird. But it is no surprise that the myth fails immediately. Her characterization of the birds "entomb[ed]" voice makes one call into question the success of bird song, and by extension, poetic voice:

'You mocking-birds,' quoth she, 'your tunes entomb
 Within your hollow-swelling feather'd breasts,
 And in my hearing be you mute and dumb:
 My restless discord loves no stops nor rests;
 A woeful hostess brooks not merry guests:
 Relish your nimble notes to pleasing ears;
 Distress likes dumps when time is kept with tears (1121-1127)

Here, Lucrece registers a paradox; she acknowledges that the birds are too merry for a such a sad listener but also that they are "mute and dumb." Their own tunes are

²¹ Joseph Ortiz, *Broken Harmony: Shakespeare and the Politics of Music* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2011), 45-50.

“entomb[ed] within [their] hollow breast.” Her immediate turn to Philomel allows her to find a companion whose own “restless discord loves no stops nor rests,” but Philomel doesn’t sing in the day. Even Philomel must “stop” or “rest.”

While the narrator gives us access to Lucrece’s activities, thoughts, and feelings, it is important to recognize when the narrator does not align with Lucrece’s wishes. The narrator pushes a model of imitation that Lucrece does not follow. And when Lucrece invokes Philomel, she fails to imitate the bird.²² Even critics, who base their arguments on Lucrece’s imitation of Philomel, admit Lucrece does not quite imitate Philomel. Lynn Enterline, for instance, claims, “To discover words adequate to address a situation beyond speech, Lucrece undertakes a crash course in rhetorical imitation... she looks for an ancient exemplar of rhetorical eloquence who will enable her to represent, and thus understand, her woe.” But Enterline admits that even though Lucrece seeks “to become the ‘author’ of her own ‘will’ by trying on the voices of others,” she “does not sing the same song as Philomela, but rather imagines herself singing a ‘duet’ with her.” Lucrece “does not strive to imitate perfectly” but rather charts “a path of eclectic, wide-ranging imitation.”²³ In a similar vein, Jane O. Newman also sees the similarity between Lucrece and Philomel, but ultimately finds that the two are different: “The musical harmony suggested by Lucrece’s “diapason” and the bird’s “descant” instead signals difference, in

²² In her seminal study *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Lynn Enterline argues that Lucrece uses Philomel largely as a practice of imitation: “Lucrece reenacts the behavior usually reserved for early modern schoolboys... Like any grammar school students of classical texts, she attempts a series of exercises in declamation—rhetorical set pieces against Night, Opportunity, and Time—and looks to various classical *exempla* as models of her plight,” (167).

²³ *Ibid.*, 167

that the songs are in different registers and in dramatically different musical form. The reference to Philomela ultimately makes visible precisely what distinguishes Philomela's "sad strain[s]" from Lucrece's "deep groans," makes us aware, that is, that the two women represent the story of rape in different keys.²⁴ She does not become Philomel as the narrator calls her. Instead, she calls Philomel to sit in her "disheveled hair," maintaining a distance as they each sing about their own woes: "[Lucrece] will hum on Tarquin still/While thou on Tereus descants better skill" (1133-4). Lucrece's assessment of her own skill as inadequate further separates her from the mythical bird.

It should not be surprising, however, that her lyrical voice suffers. The narrator explains that the knife cannot "make more vent for passage of her breath, which thronging through her lips so vanisheth." (1040-1). In this image of imagined self-mutilation, we learn that Lucrece doesn't have the ability to speak. Lucrece has a voice, but, once it reaches past the tongue, it disintegrates. The narrator characterizes her speech as a continuum of inarticulateness: "Sometime her speech is dumb and hath no words/Sometimes tis mad and too much talk affords" (1105-6). The myth that should propel her to reinstate her agency helps Lucrece contemplate counterintuitive measures, leading her to create a suicide plan. It draws her attention once again to the knife, as one tool reasserts itself over another.

The instability of Lucrece's voice after rape, then, is an entirely realistic outcome; an outcome that should not be overly tied to Lucrece's subjectivity. Much work has been done on the inexpressibility of pain. Elaine Scarry, for instance, argues that pain undoes

²⁴ Jane O. Newman, "Philomela, Female Violence, and Shakespeare's *Lucrece*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45.3 (Autumn, 1994): 304-26, 309.

language: “Hearing and touch are of objects outside the boundaries of the body as desire is desire for x, fear is fear of y, hunger is hunger for z; but pain is not “of” or “for” anything—it is itself alone. The objectlessness, the complete absence of referential content, almost prevents it from being rendered in language.”²⁵ The rape, then, impedes language itself, and, by extension, her own voice. The narrator gestures to Lucrece’s constant screams by calling her voice an “untuned tongue [that] hoarsely calls” (1214). Lucrece cannot model Philomel’s song because she no longer has the capacity to do so. While Lucrece spends most of her time wailing, the poem translates these screams into something comprehensible, giving the reader Lucrece’s speeches.

Because she wearies herself by moaning— “tis stale to sigh, to weep, and groan” (1362)—Lucrece’s goal, then, is to find another “like semblance” that might suit her better. She “pause[s] for a means to mourn some newer way” (1365) and “calls to mind where hangs a piece/Of skillful painting made for Priam’s Troy” (1367). The narrator describes the painting as being incredibly lifelike: “A thousand lamentable objects there,/In scorn of nature, art gave lifeless life/Many a dry drop seemed a weeping tear” (1373-5). The Fall of Troy is in the same tradition of Vasari’s living paintings; the narrator spends time, like Vasari, detailing the painting’s living qualities. What is most striking about the painting is its ability to create motion. It seems as if the “objects” are really in battle. The painter “interlaces/Pale cowards marching on with trembling paces, that one would swear he saw them quake and tremble” (1391-3) While the narrator

²⁵ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 162.

praises the painting's visual aspects as the reason for its superior capacity to move people, the painting allows Lucrece to remain quiet while still allowing her to express her grief. The painting also becomes the superior medium for Lucrece, privileging Lucrece's gaze over her voice.

While this kind of realistic style was standard for Renaissance painting, the concept that art gives the "lifeless life" takes on a new meaning in *The Rape* and operates on several different levels. First, the painting is "living" because it provides Lucrece with actual companions to look at. We are told she first comes to the painting to "find a face where all distress is stelled" (1444). She rejects real human interaction for painted images, creating the community she lacks. She finds that "all [the] time" she has spent with the "painted images"—contemplating their woes—only "easeth some, though none it never cured,/To think their dolour others have endured" (1581-2). And while it does not help entirely, the painting becomes nearly as real as the maid who tries to sympathize with her earlier in the poem. By presenting both a catalog of the painting's lifelike qualities and Lucrece's response to the painting, the poem explores whether these painted images can exist at the same ontological level as Lucrece and interact in the same way that Lucrece does.

While calling a painting "living" might register as a form of animism to modern readers, paintings were often described as "living" entities in the Renaissance. The concept of the living image ranges from descriptions of paintings' lifelike qualities to the reactions of viewers. During the sixteenth century, a list of words to describe painting centered around phrases that demonstrated life such as *vivo* (alive), *un cosa viva* (a living thing), *veramente vivissimo* (to truly be very much alive), and *la tovola viva* (a living

picture). The ability to produce lifelikeness served as one of the standards of Renaissance painting.²⁶ A valuable painting is one that imitates nature to such a degree that the subject is thought to be alive. Vasari's *The Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*²⁷, one of the most famous Renaissance art treatises, is well-known for its insistence of the liveliness of paintings and statues. Nowhere is this more apparent than Vasari's discussion of the *Mona Lisa*. Vasari, relying on second-hand sources, praises Leonardo Da Vinci's skill—her eyes have “the luster and moisture that is always seen in the living,” her hair and eyebrows are painted as if “born from the skin,” and her nostrils “appear to be alive.”²⁸ Her “beating pulse” makes her “real flesh rather than paint.”²⁹

Yet this well-known description of the *Mona Lisa* is usually read as the period's commitment to mimetic likeness—a commitment to replicating nature that has the potential to deceive the viewer into believing the painting is living, and, by extension, real. We might recall the anecdote of birds pecking at the painted grapes in Zeuxis' painting, often considered an example of mistaking illusion for reality. While Vasari's description of the *Mona Lisa* is well-regarded as an accurate description of the effect of the *Mona Lisa*, it is reasonable to question whether Vasari is just duped in the same way the birds are. After all, in the history of art, the vivid lifelikeness of both painting and

²⁶ See Fredrika H Jacobs, *The Living Image in Renaissance Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-10 for an exploration of the full list of phrases regarding lifelike art.

²⁷ While there is no consensus whether Shakespeare actually read Vasari (because it was translated into English after Shakespeare's time), there is a reference to one of the painters/sculptors Vasari studies in *The Winter's Tale*, suggesting that Shakespeare may have been familiar with Vasari even if he did not read him.

²⁸ Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 294.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 294

statues is such a frequent concern that the description has become a cliché. It becomes a tidy description to describe good paintings, ones that make us feel as if we are in the presence of the actual subject. But as David Freedberg has argued, it is wrong “to assume that constant talk about living images has no resonance beyond providing a convenient handle for saying something purely descriptive about the image.”³⁰ While art historians have studied this trope in terms of the greater understanding of anatomy during the period³¹, I argue that responses to living painting, like the one that Lucrece has to the Fall of Troy, tells us how we are to understand fictions more generally. As Leon Battista Alberti argues, painting can make the absent present to such an extent that they can bring back the dead—“the faces of the dead are brought to life again.”³² If we suspend the binary between truth and art, between reality and illusion, and take seriously the claims that these are “living” images in one way or another, we can begin to ask a new set of questions. What does it mean for these paintings to be alive? What can they do as living entities? Do these images require us to understand them to be alive in order to partake in

³⁰ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 1-2. Freedberg challenges how images have been theorized in the past by focusing on people’s actual responses to images. Focusing on people from Western societies, he finds that they respond in a similar manner to those in non-Western societies, treating the images as if it they have a magical or supernatural hold over them.

³¹ See Fredrika H Jacobs, *The Living Image in Renaissance Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Jacobs argues that “Lifelikeness is the most enduring themes in the history of art...Because the textual passages are so numerous, there is a temptation to dismiss the *topos* of lifelikeness as little more than a cliché, a tired trope, as mere hyperbole. However, this should not lead us to disregard the *topos* or ignore the period’s distinction between that which is lifelike and that which is alive, or in the parlance of aesthetic discourse, the designation of a painting or statue as something, “more lively than alive” it is a mistake to think that nothing can be learned from the conveyance of convention” (1-3).

³² Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John R. Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 38.

the illusion at all?

The description of the *Mona Lisa* as living is not the only account of the power of images. In a similar vein, there is quite a body of literature regarding the responses to these lifelike paintings. In 1584, Paolo Lomazzo, an artist who gave up painting after becoming blind, began writing art theory and poetry. Richard Haydock's translation of Lomazzo's *Trattato della pittura* (1598) was one of the first books on visual arts to be translated in English. Lomazzo's poetry praised his blindness for giving him a brighter light or clearer vision of the world. This clearer vision seemed to infuse much of his art theory, which does not rely solely on visual descriptions of paintings.³³ In the following account, Lomazzo praises paintings not for their mimetic likeness but for the feelings they provoke in a viewer:

Will cause the beholder to wonder when it wondreth, to desire a beautifull young woman for his wife when he seeth her painted naked; to have fellow-feeling when it is affected; to have an appetite when he seeth it eating of dainties; to fall asleepe at the sight of a sweete sleeping picture; to be moovd and waxe furious when he beholdeth a battel most lively described; and to be stirred with disdaine and wrath, at the sight of shameful and dishonest actions.³⁴

I want to foreground several aspects of this account, which will eventually prepare us to explore relationship between Lucrece and the painting. We can begin by noting the extreme reactions the spectator has to the lifelike painting(s). The painting causes him desire, hunger, tiredness, anger, but the passage also suggests that painting is performing the actions that cause the spectator's reaction. In other words, this could mean that the subject of the painting is depicted in slumber; however, the sentence construction suggests that the painting is, in fact, sleeping—it is able to do things. The fact that the

³³ See Yannis Hadjinicolaou, *Thinking Bodies –Shaping Hands: Handling in Art and Theory of the Late Rembrandtists* (Boston: Brill, 2019), 72-76.

³⁴ Paolo Lomazzo's *Trattato della pittura* in B. Haydock's translation (1598).

pronoun “it” is used highlights that the painting performs the action and not the subject of the painting (perhaps the pronoun would change to she). The painting takes on the agential qualities that one might use to describe a person performing an action. Not only does the painting fill in as an actual person but the painting and spectator’s feelings synchronize—they form a community of “fellow-feeling.” Thus, the painting is not just descriptively lifelike, but forms some kind of dialogic relationship to the spectator even though it does not define how this relationship occurs.

While the narrator’s descriptions suggest the painting is alive with motion and action, Lucrece’s response—like Lomazzo’s—goes beyond the rigid, binary opposition between lifelikeness and mimetic deception, highlighting what makes the painting “living”—filling in what occurs when the spectator has “fellow-feeling” for the affected painting. The gap that is missing from the narrator’s descriptions of lifelikeness is the relationship between the painting and the feelings of the spectator. Just as Vasari suggests that the subject sitting for da Vinci’s painting and the painting nearly collapse ontologically, *The Rape* collapses different ontological levels by focusing on what the painting does to Lucrece’s own body, and, by extension, her own image.

This fluidity is due in part to Lucrece’s choice to focus on the figure of Hecuba. Hecuba is an interesting departure from the other figures who actually look lifelike. Her grief is so palpable—the painter has “anatomized Time’s ruin, beauty’s wreck, and grim care’s reign”—that “no semblance did remain” (1451-3). Lucrece chooses to spend time on the figure that is most malleable precisely because she is not lifelike in the way that the other figures are. Hecuba is actually near death: “Her blue blood changed to black in every vein,/Wanting the spring that those shrunk pipes had fed,/Showed life imprisoned

in a body dead” (1454-1456). Lucrece focuses on Hecuba because she has the most in common with her. We might recall Lucrece’s own description of her condition as a “living death.” In this way, both women are “life imprisoned in a body dead.” While Hecuba is not alive at all because she is a representation, the poem suggests that these women might be dead in the same way by connecting them through the paradox of “living death,” highlighting both their absence and their presence at once.

Because both women are partially absent, Lucrece and Hecuba (the painting) form a mutually enabling relationship. Lucrece “shapes her sorrows to the beldame’s woes” (1458); she “lends them words, and she their looks doth borrow” (1498). The painting has an agential quality through its relationship to Lucrece. When Lucrece views the painting, the painting and Lucrece become inseparable. In fact, the painting is already a part of Lucrece because she conjures the painting from memory even before she views it: “At last she calls to mind where hangs a piece/Of skilful painting, made for Priam's Troy” (1365-7). W.J.T. Mitchell argues that this kind of relationship stems from the fact that images’ are animated and driven by desire: “Perhaps, then, there is a way in which we can speak of the value of images as evolutionary or at least co-evolutionary entities, quasi-life forms (like viruses) that depend on a host mechanism (ourselves), and cannot reproduce without human participation.”³⁵ Understanding images as “quasi-life forms” allows Mitchell to ask “not just what [pictures] mean or do but what they *want*—what claim they make upon us, and how we are to respond. Obviously, this question also requires us to ask what it is that we want from pictures.”³⁶ Given the painting’s

³⁵ W.J.T. Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want?* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005), 87.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, xv

lifelikeness, it should be no surprise that the painting seems to want Lucrece to speak for it. But it is difficult to extricate what the painting wants from what Lucrece would like the painting to desire. For instance, Lucrece “swears [the painter] did her wrong,/To give her so much grief and not a tongue.” As an image, Hecuba lacks a tongue because the painter simply cannot give the image a voice. But the lack of a tongue is a metaphor for Lucrece’s own state; even if Lucrece can communicate, her words cannot change her situation for the better.

What makes the painting living, for Lucrece, is not simply the narrator’s grandiose claims regarding its liveliness, but the ease with which the material medium of the painting falls away, privileging, instead, her memory and her own face. Thus, in order to believe the painting, the image of the Fall of Troy must materialize in other ways—it must become visible on Lucrece’s body. She becomes the image because, in borrowing “their looks,” she is able to “lend them” her own words. The image does not necessarily need the material medium to exist; if we recall Mitchell’s claim, the viewer generates the image, and, as a result, the fiction through dynamic exchange and participation. Thus, the liveliness of the painting becomes less of hackneyed expression when we consider its relation to the spectator’s body rather than the artificiality of the painting’s medium.

While the painting has its own presence—bringing into existence the inhabitants of the scene of Troy—it nevertheless registers a lack because the actual, physical scene of Troy is not there. Lucrece’s body fills in this lack by taking on the figure’s “looks” and by giving them “words.” In the hopes of reinstating her own presence, Lucrece gives the painted images a heightened form of presence because she lends her own presence. She is able to reanimate the figure near death just as the recourse to artistic mediums prolongs

her own life. The image becomes re-embodied in Lucrece and she becomes the medium. Thus, the painting becomes a “living medium” through its relationship to Lucrece’s body. Lucrece is able to not only express her own feelings of grief through words and looks, but also makes present or reenacts the circumstances within the painting, making two different events possible at once. The painting and Lucrece create a kind of double presence, nearly negating the absence that plagues all forms of representation.

The poem, however, is ambiguous in its description of what exactly occurs when Lucrece and the painting exchange looks and words. What does it mean to borrow a painting’s looks? Does Lucrece’s face become an amalgamation of two different images of grief, or does one image take control over the other? Does Lucrece lose some of herself when she takes on the figure of another? While the poem does not provide definitive answers, the fluidity between Lucrece and Hecuba prompts Lucrece to attempt to change other parts of the painting:

‘Poor instrument,’ quoth she, ‘without a sound,
I’ll tune thy woes with my lamenting tongue;
And drop sweet balm in Priam’s painted wound,
And rail on Pyrrhus that hath done him wrong;
And with my tears quench Troy that burns so long;
And with my knife scratch out the angry eyes
Of all the Greeks that are thine enemies. (1464-1470)

Lucrece laments not only Hecuba, but also uses her tears to soothe Priam’s injury and quench the fires that burn Troy. She will even help fight the enemy by physically altering the painting with a knife. Because its story is in constant flux, the painting takes on a final “living” quality through Lucrece’s alterations. The poem focuses particularly on revealing the possibility of an alternate fictional world in which Lucrece can not only soothe the images but also change the outcome of the war. In this way, *The Rape* negotiates a crisis in imagining an already created art object, attempting to represent it in

language while also acknowledging that the painting is in flux because of intense emotional engagement. The poem's goal is not to present the painting in a fixed way. If the painting is not fixed, then, perhaps Lucrece's reality is not fixed either.

Despite the living qualities of the painting, the poem ends with a decidedly lifeless art form. Lucrece's corpse carries the same symbolic meaning that her body did in life. The Romans view Lucrece's corpse much like a monument to her family. Just as her body stood in for her unsullied family's reputation before the rape, her dead body now incites her family's revenge, "Tarquin's everlasting banishment" (1855). For the men, Lucrece's violent demise does not warrant a change to how her body is used: "they did conclude to bear dead Lucrece thence;/To show her bleeding body thorough Rome,/And so to publish Tarquin's foul offence" (1850-3). The medium for the articulation of her family's views and values is a female body, either alive or dead.

Lucrece's corpse, however, is not simply an object of grief and vengeance; instead, the corpse shares the same conflict between presence and absence that the painting does.

Resembling her once living body with the onset of disintegration, Lucrece's corpse—"a virtuous monument"—becomes an image in and of itself. Lucrece is present to the extent that she still looks like Lucrece. Her wailing father, Lucretius, questions her dead corpse as if she can still answer in some way: "Where shall I live now Lucrece is unlived?" (1754). But her corpse also registers her unbearable absence as the men stand in disbelief around it. Through these responses, the poem invites us to ask whether Lucrece's corpse is still her body and whether something of Lucrece's once living state remains attached to her remains. By presenting her as a monument to her family's values in both a living and

a dead state, the poem suggests that the living and the dead are not opposing categories, considering that, from the beginning, Lucrece's occupies both states at once—in "living death."

Maurice Blanchot once posed the question about the relationship between literature and death. In "Literature and the Right to Death," Blanchot connects literature to a negating force. Once the thing is named (such as a tree), the word tree replaces the reality of the tree with the idea of the tree. When the tree is represented in language, the thing itself suffers a kind of absence because the word and the thing do not correlate completely. For Blanchot, literature makes possible the idea of the tree at the same time it exposes that the reality of the object is nonexistent. Thus, at the center of literature is absence—signs, references—but not life itself.³⁷ *The Rape*, then, explores a double kind of negation. Lucrece becomes materially absent through her suicide and her absence is represented through her corpse while the poem represents an idea of Lucrece but not the actual thing itself. In this regard, all literary characters suffer a "living death" because language can only communicate an idea of a character.

However, in the early modern period, poesy was thought to preserve life. In a perceptive essay, Aaron Kunin follows this line of thought, asking "What if poems could do what they say they can do?"³⁸ Kunin argues that Shakespeare, in particular, develops a theory of poetic preservation: "The fantasy of surviving through culture—in particular, the fantasy that poems, although not living things, preserve human life derives

³⁷ Maurice Blanchot, "Literature and the Right to Death," in *The Work of Fire*, trans. Lydia Davis and Ruth Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University, 1995), 300-320.

³⁸ Aaron Kunin, "Shakespeare's Preservation Fantasy," *PMLA* 124.1 (Jan 2009): 92-106, 93.

significantly from Shakespeare and receives its definitive statement in his 1609 sequence of sonnets.”³⁹ In Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*, the speaker suggests several reproductive theories to preserve the young man until a poetic fix is proposed in Sonnet 18: “When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st/As long as men can breathe and eyes can see/So long lives this, and this gives life to thee” (12-14).⁴⁰ For Kunin, these lines suggest that “poetry preserves human life as a project for this poem that will be initiated by the act of writing fulfilled by the act of reading.”⁴¹ While Kunin traces his theory through a number of early modern sonnets and not the poem that concerns us here, Kunin’s account is nevertheless useful in establishing a pattern in Shakespeare’s work in which people can live on through poetry

But the preservation of life—the ability to memorialize a person, name, or thing—is different from thinking truly about what kind of “life” aesthetic mediums provide the characters who inhabit them. That the poem presents life and death as an ambiguous state rather than death leading to an act of preservation is apparent in the responses of her father, who cannot seem to definitively call Lucrece dead. Take, for instance, the following excerpts from his lament:

Daughter, dear daughter, 'old Lucretius cries,
'That life was mine which thou hast here deprived.
If in the child the father's image lies,
Where shall I live now Lucrece is unlived?
Thou wast not to this end from me derived.
If children predecease progenitors,
We are their offspring, and they none of ours.

.....

³⁹ Ibid., 93

⁴⁰ William Shakespeare, *The Complete Sonnets and Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁴¹ Kunin, 97

'O,' quoth Lucretius, 'I did give that life
Which she too early and too late hath spill'd.'
'Woe, woe,' quoth Collatine, 'she was my wife,
I owed her, and 'tis mine that she hath kill'd.'
'My daughter' and 'my wife' with clamours fill'd
The dispersed air, who, holding Lucrece' life,
Answer'd their cries, 'my daughter' and 'my wife.'

.....

Then live, sweet Lucrece, live again and see
Thy father die, and not thy father thee! (1751-1772)

These excerpts describe death as a state of impermanence, a state where death does not necessarily mean that life no longer exists. Lucretius cycles between believing that Lucrece is not dead but “unlived” to the possibility that she might be resurrected—she might “live again.” In the first excerpt, Lucretius condemns Lucrece for her actions because she makes her father watch her die, depriving him of offspring and eternal survival through her image. Instead of coming to terms with her death, Lucretius calls her “unlived.” In other words, she is no longer alive, but he does not go so far as to call her dead either. As the “unliving,” the men continue to address Lucrece as if she can answer back and her life begins to spread into the scene around them. The air, we are told, not only echoes the mourners but also “hold[s]” Lucrece’s life. In this moment, Lucrece’s life force can coexist with other entities. Considering Lucretius’ lament alongside Lucrece’s relation to the painting, the poem opens up a conception of life that is quite capacious. Death exists as a state of constant modification, and life remains within death.

By viewing death and life on a continuum, the poem asks us to consider whether Lucrece’s life imbues the very medium in which we encounter her just as she infiltrates the air around her father, husband, and subjects. Rather than consider literature exposing the absence of its subjects, we might consider whether literature itself is an “unliving” state, a state that does not conform to the binary pair absence/presence. Instead, life

occurs in the interaction between reader and poem or Lucrece and the painting. Because the poem takes as its subject a painting that has both a relationship to Lucrece and to the political, governing structure, we might consider whether art and literature requires a dynamic, “living” relationship with its beholders and readers in order to have an impact at all. Considering that Lucrece’s interaction with the painting is one of her most prominent and final activities, the poem raises the question whether the painting’s living relationship with Lucrece can rival her suicide in its effect on the political changes within the poem.

Despite Lucrece’s turn to the aesthetic before her death, her suicide becomes the focal point for a set of related concerns about agency, oppression, and women’s place in society. While critics are often divided on whether to read Lucrece’s suicide as an act of agency, its pervasiveness as a question in the critical discourse on *The Rape* suggests that feminine agency can, in fact, stem from complete obliteration and self-negation. Jean E. Howard argues that “the popularity of the Lucrece story stems from its focus on a wronged woman killing herself from shame rather than being killed by her father. Her virtue, epitomized in her suicide, makes her an exemplum, a pattern for other women to follow, while her sacrifice is made to serve the cause of liberation from tyranny.”⁴² In an attempt to recuperate Lucrece’s act, the suicide becomes more of an individual choice

⁴² See Jean E. Howard, “Interrupting the Lucrece Effect?: The Performance of Rape on the Early Modern Stage,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, ed. Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 667. For those who condemn Lucrece’s suicide, see Ian Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and its Transformations*; Nancy J. Vickers “The Blazon of Sweet Beauty’s Best”: Shakespeare’s *Lucrece*. For an argument that is sympathetic to Lucrece, see Coppélia Khan, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women*; Lynn Enterline’s *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare*.

and less of a relational act, but Lucrece's death cannot be understood without considering how Lucrece's dead body is ultimately used: as an object and a symbol that is paraded through the streets of Rome. The suicide raises some important question: How do we understand Lucrece's intentions? Does she lose this ability after her rape—the ability to intend? Can suicide ever truly be an individual act and therefore an act of agency? What kind of freedom does Lucrece gain from suicide when her dead body is still used in service of other things?

To begin to answer these questions, I would like to point out that an underlying premise of this chapter is to understand Lucrece as more than a function of her family and the political order. Critics, however, tend to read everything leading up to Lucrece's demise as part of the larger narrative to cleanse her family's reputation and usher in the new republic; the act of suicide becomes overdetermined. Andrew Hadfield claims that "The sexual act forced upon her will lead to the transformation of the Roman monarchy into the republic, a succession triggered by an act of copulation. But, whereas such acts were generally expected to lead to the production of an heir, Tarquin's rape leads to the birth of a new political system. Lucrece's complaint articulates and defines this political change, demonstrating that her violation is the key act, not the subsequent rebellion of Brutus."⁴³ And even though Lucrece helps to introduce the new republic, Philippa Berry notes that "Lucrece never fully grasps the implications of the historical change which she initiates."⁴⁴ When critics give the painting attention, it becomes a symbol for this political

⁴³ Andrew Hadfield, "Tarquin's Everlasting Banishment: Republicanism and Constitutionalism in *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Titus Andronicus*," *Parergon* 19 (2002): 77-104, 85.

⁴⁴ Philippa Berry, "Woman, Language, and History in *The Rape of Lucrece*," *Shakespeare Survey* 44 (1992): 33-9, 34.

change. Michael Platt, for instance, argues that Lucrece's body stands in place for the city of Troy. The new republic stands on the remains of Troy: she realizes that "she is the city and the rape a tyranny."⁴⁵ These analyses reproduce a set of assumptions about the value of Lucrece's activity before her suicide that deserve further examination. They stress that the painting of Troy foreshadows the reestablishment of the patriarchy and provides Lucrece with a model to follow, or they leave out the painting completely. They assume that the pertinent question to ask is how she serves to enact political change, rather than focusing on her activity as a response in its own right. By reading the painting as an ideological echo of the poem's ending, the painting becomes propaganda, simply communicating a message or model to Lucrece instead of exploring how she uses it herself.

Although there are clearly similarities between the content of the painting and the events that occur after her suicide, Lucrece does not identify with the place of Troy, but rather its inhabitants. When Lucrece borrows "looks from Hecuba" and "lends" the inhabitants of the painting "words," she is not concerned with the setting or place of the painting. The exchange between her and the painting centers on emotions that cannot be expressed. Nevertheless, I am not suggesting that, because Lucrece focuses on the feelings of woe, the painting is completely apolitical. I am suggesting that, rather than read her suicide as the primary example of Lucrece's agency, we might read Lucrece's interaction with the painting as a political statement, specifically as Lucrece's statement concerning her rape and what should happen to her abuser. The poem dilates and lingers

⁴⁵ Michael Platt, " 'The Rape of Lucrece' and the Republic for which it Stands," *Centennial Review* 19 (1975): 57-79.

on the events before her suicide, enriching the character of Lucrece in a way that the source texts do not. We are given access to a liminal point between life and death; the possibility that suicide might not be the only option for Lucrece. In this way, the poem upholds Lucrece's aesthetic responses as a viable form of action.

The poem opens up the possibility that the political realm is inherently aesthetic because the poem focuses on aesthetic mediums and their success rather than on actual military conquest immediately after the rape. In fact, the reader is not given access to the rebellion; the narrator hints at the presence of rebellion at the end by gesturing to "Tarquin's everlasting banishment" (1855). Instead, the painting itself depicts scenes from Troy, glimpses of a battle that might actually occur during a rebellion. In this regard, the painting is implicated in the political realm because it depicts a scene of war during a transition between ruling parties—the narrator finds the painting lively because the soldiers in battle produce its lifelike motions. But the poem extends the realm of the political not just to the large-scale war but also to the personal happenings of Lucrece. Lucrece focuses not only on the warring individuals but also on the women in the poem, moving between Hecuba to Helen, and their relationship with the men. As she looks at the painting, Lucrece questions, "Why should the private pleasure of some one/Become the public plague of many moe?" (1478-9). Andrew Hadfield claims that this is "an unanswerable question that can only lead to a radical political transformation if acted upon."⁴⁶ But it is important to remember that it is her interaction with the painting that prompts her to ask the question at all.

⁴⁶ Andrew Hadfield, 86.

What, then, is the relationship between the political scene of the poem and the painting? What role can art play in politics? First, I turn to Jacques Rancière's characterizations of the relationship between politics and aesthetics because he understands aesthetics as not supplementary to politics but fundamental to how it works. For Rancière, art creates "a suspension [of] the ordinary forms of sensory experience."⁴⁷ Art's political effects develop not from commentary on social wrongs but from its ability to create a space in which "the relations of domination" are "suspended."⁴⁸ Rancière calls this disruption a dissensus; this disruption is a rearrangement of, what Rancière calls, a "distribution of the sensible." Rancière defines the distribution of the sensible as "the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it."⁴⁹ The difference between politics and aesthetics revolves around how they challenge the distribution. Politics "consists above all in the framing of a *we*, a subject of collective demonstration whose emergence is the element that disrupts the distribution of social parts."⁵⁰ The aesthetic challenges the distribution of the sensible in a different way:

What it produces is not rhetorical persuasion about what must be done. Nor is it framing of a collective body. It is a multiplication of connections and disconnections that reframe the relation between bodies, the world they live in and the way in which they are 'equipped' to adapt to it. It is a multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible. As such, it allows for new modes of

⁴⁷ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge and Malden: Polity, 2009), 23.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 36

⁴⁹ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 12.

⁵⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. & tans. Steve Corcoran (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 141.

political construction of common objects and new possibilities of collective enunciation.⁵¹

Here, identification occurs when politics is exercised through aesthetics; existing subject positions are unsettled but new collectives are not necessarily formed. Instead, the subject is unable to recognize itself in a familiar way and carries this unfamiliarity outside the aesthetic moment. The effect of “being together apart”⁵² after the aesthetic moment occurs contributes to “new possibilities of collective enunciation.”⁵³

The poem asks us to consider what type of political collective Lucrece creates through her engagement with the painting. While it is important to note that Rancière would not find this relationship an example of politics, specifically because the aesthetic does not produce political effect per se, it is still worthwhile to ask whether the aesthetic can create collectives in the same way political dissensus does. The painting allows for “new modes of political construction,” but it also goes beyond opening new modes by propelling the formation of a collective. Because she treats her painted companions as if they are alive, Lucrece forms a collective “we” with Hecuba to some extent; they work in tandem for a common cause and reframe relations between different kinds of bodies. When Hecuba and Lucrece meld together, they disrupt their subordinate position. Unlike Rancière’s formulation, *The Rape* explore the efficacy of the aesthetic to intervene directly because it averts Lucrece’s suicidal response, the usual state of affairs, by deterring the known ending and creating the possibility of a different ending.

While Rancière’s account of the entwined nature of aesthetics and politics becomes a useful way to understand Lucrece’s engagement with the painting, it is also

⁵¹ Ibid., 141-2

⁵² Ibid., 142

⁵³ Ibid., 142

important to point out that Rancière does not tackle shifts within communities, especially when the individual rather than a collective becomes central to political change. Even though Hecuba and Lucrece form a “we” through Lucrece’s identification with Hecuba, this is not the same kind of collective Lucrece could have formed with her maid. In this regard, the poem rejiggers the idea of community by largely relying on an individual and her instrumentalization of art. By denying her maid access to her group of “co-partners in pain” (789), Lucrece’s selectivity allows for ethical identification, putting the burden on the inanimate painting instead of the maid.

The interaction between Lucrece and the painting forms a collective based on shared emotion. The political realm, in particular, can be felt because the painting gives her “a new means to mourn” (1365)—another way to feel and express her grief. It makes emotions a political tool because Lucrece can only participate in what happens through her own expressions of grief, produced by interacting with the painting. From the outset of the poem, Lucrece’s voice is, unsurprisingly, silenced. When Tarquin rapes Lucrece, he becomes the author of her voice—“pen[ning] her piteous clamors in her head” (681)—by suffocating her with her night dress. Her “outcry” becomes “controlled” and “entombed in her lips sweet fold” (679). Because her loss of voice, reputation, and eventual suicide make her nearly absent, emotions take on a new resonance, emotions that can only be expressed through the aesthetic (either through the sad, melodious tunes of Philomel or through the painting). This displacement gives Lucrece a new means to exercise autonomy as she waits for her husband to arrive. While Lucrece might not be able to participate in the revenge plot against Tarquin as her husband does, Lucrece

cannot be displaced from the center of the poem—the aesthetic becomes a practical and powerful way to exercise some form of autonomy.

Lucrece's judgement of the painting moves from active interpretation of the painting to active modification. When she first comes to the painting and "spends her eyes,/And shapes her sorrow" (1457-8), she finds fault with the painter's skill: "The painter was no god" and "did [Hecuba] wrong/To giver so much grief and not a tongue" (1461-2). As we have seen, Lucrece rectifies the painter's wrong by joining in a transactional relationship with the painted images, through lament and through violent alteration of the painting. The violent response to the painting, however, takes on a new meaning when we question whether the painting can directly intervene in the political realm of the poem. As her emotion intensifies, Lucrece believes even before she decides to rip apart Sinon that she can "scratch out the angry eyes/of all the Greeks" (1469-70) and tear the beautiful Helen from the painting. In these moments, Lucrece's assessment of the artwork changes as she moves from a spectator viewing the painting to both an interpreter and artist as she melds with the images and changes them.

Lucrece's activity resembles a specific kind of audience member, what Jacques Rancière calls, the emancipated spectator. Rancière argues for a disruption in the dialectical view of spectator and action. The experience of an audience in a theater illustrates his political argument about emancipation because theatergoers are often considered passive spectators rather than active participants. Instead, Rancière challenges the idea that viewing is the opposite of the acting and action on stage:⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2010), 2.

Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting; when we understand the self-evident fact that structure the relations between saying, seeing, and acting themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection. It begins when we understand that viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions...she (the spectator) observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of places. She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her. She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way..."⁵⁵

Rancière, however, does not understand emancipation as a strictly political end or a form of social justice. Instead, he is interested in putting the actor and the spectator on the same plane so as to show how the spectator can come away from the performance with a new constitution of ideas and elements. While Rancière, here, is interested in the theater, his observations apply to viewers more generally. Much like the emancipated spectator in Rancière's formulation, Lucrece's viewing turns into acting through the relationship between her own body and that of Hecuba's. Lucrece transforms her position by momentarily occupying Hecuba's position, refashioning her own body to express both Hecuba and her own grief. But Lucrece goes beyond being a spectator by violently ripping at and refashioning the painting. Her aggression makes the painting a different artwork entirely because it no longer looks as it originally did. In this regard, Lucrece tries different positions of action, from active interpretation, to bodily performance, to co-artist.

Perhaps theater-going is an apt metaphor for the emancipated spectator theory because theater by its very nature revolves around living bodies that are able to act on stage. As a live medium, theater blends both the fictional space of the theater with the reality of the actors, making the action produced by a performance a viable form of action

⁵⁵ Ibid., 13

in the political sphere. The poem, however, presents a slightly different idea of action. In the poem's case, an active spectator becomes a true possibility because Lucrece does not simply "observe, select, compare, [and] interpret" but she develops a specific relationship to the painting that enables her action. Just as the actors on stage constitute a form of action because they are, in fact, acting, Lucrece's own action stems from the transactional relationship between her and the painting, by treating it as a living entity. This form of engagement leads to actual action because the painting is altered forever and no longer exists in its original state. Thus, the dialectical view between spectatorship and action changes only when a specific kind of relationship to the artwork, poem, or performance exists.

Thus, the act of ripping Sinon from the painting is the moment in which Lucrece permanently changes not only the way the new collective looks but also takes action against her rapist. Lucrece's reaction to the painting becomes more extreme once her eyes fall upon the image of Sinon. The painter has bestowed upon Sinon too much truth and honesty: "And still on him she gazed, and gazing still,/Such signs of truth in his plain face she spied/That she concludes the pictures was belied" (1531-3). Lucrece begins to associate Sinon with Tarquin: "But Tarquin's shape came in her mind" (1536). Critics often consider Lucrece gullible for ripping at the painting—she is unable to tell the difference between illusion and reality.⁵⁶ Richard Meek argues that "Lucrece

⁵⁶ See Catherine Belsely who argues that Lucrece: "for a moment, until she realizes the absurdity of her action, she takes the image for reality. Even while the sadness they evoke depends at least in part on the distance from us of the worlds they portray, the power of pictures to excite such identification, we are to understand, depends on their realism" (191) in "Invocation of the Visual Image: Ekphrasis in "Lucrece" and Beyond."

momentarily mistakes the artwork for reality, and even attempts to interact with it.”⁵⁷

Grant Scott argues “Even though moments later [Lucrece] reminds herself that “his wound will not be sore...the painting has already worked its magic by deceiving the heroine and temporarily suspending her ability to differentiate reality from representation.”⁵⁸ In a similar vein, critics often read her admission—“Fool, fool...his wounds will not be sore” (1568)—as Lucrece coming to the realization that the painting is not real, chiding herself for her own foolishness. As Lucrece further admits, once she rips Sinon from the painting, she finds that “all [the] time” she has spent with the “painted images”—contemplating their woes—only “easeth some, though none it never cured,/To think their dolour others have endured” (1581-2). These readings, however, betray a disregard for not only Lucrece’s coping strategies but also for the painting’s potential to effect change. When critics dismiss her response as foolish, they make Lucrece a complete function of plot.

Instead, her admissions need to be considered in terms of Sinon’s dual status and her own feelings about her activities. Lucrece is right to point out that Sinon will not feel pain because Tarquin will not feel pain either, at least not directly through Lucrece’s actions. These lines show that Lucrece, in a moment of hyperawareness, recognizes the structures that protect her rapist. I would now like to turn to the moment before Lucrece remembers the painting and goes to mourn in front of it. Lucrece writes a letter to her

⁵⁷ Richard Meek, “‘To see sad sights’: Reading and Ekphrasis in *The Rape of Lucrece*,” 78.

⁵⁸ Grant F. Scott, “Shelly, Medusa, and the Perils of Ekphrasis,” *The Romantic Imagination: Literature and Art in England and Germany*, eds. Frederick Burwick and Jurgen Klein (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 326.

husband but fails to tell him the name of her rapist or what has happened. She doesn't choose to name the rapist in her letter because she "would not blot the letter with words, till action might become them better" (1322-3). While the action she refers to might be her upcoming suicide, her next action is spending time with the painting. It is important to remember that Lucrece considers her own actions at the painting an important step before her suicide, as if they need to exist together. Thus, the poem explores not only whether representations can wield power in the political sphere but also probes the extent of their limitations.

Considering Lucrece's search for authentic sympathizers earlier in the poem, it is not surprising that she chooses to mutilate the painting after finding deception in her new formed group. Angry with the painting, she becomes impatient:

Here, all enraged, such passion her assails
That patience is quite beaten from her breast.
She tears the senseless Sinon with her nails,
Comparing him to that unhappy guest
Whose deed hath made herself herself detest.

At last she smilingly with this gives o'er:

'Fool, fool' quoth she, 'his wounds will not be sore' (1562-8)

What propels her to tear at the painting? First, the extreme response is a directly related to the painting's living qualities. Because the painting is living through Lucrece's ability to give voice to its characters, it is only fitting that she tries to kill Sinon when she learns that the painting participates in untruthfulness. If the painting is not moral, then the subject position Lucrece gains from the painting might also be tenuous. This puts the newly formed group in jeopardy. Just as she reanimates Hecuba, it is not surprising that she believes Sinon might stand in for her rapist, the unhappy guest, Tarquin. If her body becomes the image, then the reverse seems to be happening here: Sinon becomes the body of Tarquin. In this regard, Lucrece does, in fact, retaliate against her rapist. By

ripping Sinon from the painting, however, Lucrece performs what her husband, father, and kinsmen will later do to Tarquin at the end of the poem, which will cause him both his life and his rule.

Lucrece's aggression against the painting also opens up the concept of violence more broadly. Because the poem is filled with violent acts from the rape to the suicide to the mobilization of military forces, the act against Sinon seems inconsequential in the face of greater acts. However, this kind of reading is inherently disempowering, especially considering the counterintuitive move to make Lucrece's violence against herself a moment of agency. Even if ripping at the painting is a micro-act of violence, the painting's status as both representation and living entity makes the act of violence all the more real. It is not surprising that critics often put Lucrece's aggression towards the painting in conversation with an iconoclastic impulse.⁵⁹ Calling Lucrece an iconoclast only makes the scene more rousing, considering that it reaffirms the inherent power of the painting and its direct effect on the viewer's actions. In this way, Lucrece's violence against Sinon is a significant act given the implications of leaving Sinon in the painting.

Because the poem ends with Lucrece's suicide, it seems as if the painting fails not only to form a successful collective but also to provide new ways of thinking about her changed status. In this regard, the painting does equalize Lucrece and Hecuba, but the experience does not change the course of Lucrece's narrative. While the poem ends by following the source texts and upholding Lucrece's demise, this does not necessarily

⁵⁹ See Marguerite A. Tassi, *The Scandal of Images: Iconoclasm, Eroticism, and Painting in Early Modern English Drama* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2005), 178-215.

make the painting defunct. Instead, the value in Lucrece's engagement with the painting lies in the possibilities it makes available. While the aesthetic might not ultimately change what Lucrece chooses to do, as Lucrece herself acknowledges, in order for the potential to exist, some kind of relationship to the aesthetic must exist. The painting opens up the potential to participate in the realm of government because of its dual status as both representation and living entity. Because the painting straddles the divide, it becomes possible for Lucrece to participate in revenge. The living status of the painting, then, has less to do with the binary between fiction and reality. Instead, the painting needs to be "living" in order for Lucrece to not only participate but also have any hope to resist. A static painting would only reaffirm what has already happened to Lucrece. Because the painting is malleable, the events (of both the poem and the painting) also have the potential to be malleable, even if the poem ends up following the source texts in the end. Thus, the painting needs to be "living" in some sense in order to effect events in the poem.

The Living Statue: A Theory of Aesthetic Representatives in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*

During the revelation of the statue in *The Winter's Tale* (1623), Paulina makes a curious admission while responding to Leontes' reaction to the statue: "Indeed, my lord,/If I had thought the sight of my image/Would thus have wrought you—for the stone is/mine—/ I'd not have showed it" (5.3.56-9).¹ In this moment, Paulina stakes out her claim to Hermione's statue, calling the statue her possession. Earlier in the play, the audience learns the degree to which Paulina engages with the statue. The second and third gentleman explain that Paulina has been keeping a statue of Hermione that has been many years in the making and that she "privately twice or thrice a day ever since the death of Hermione visited that removed house" (5.3.103-5). These habitual visitations make Paulina the statue's primary caregiver; she indeed owns the statue. To meditate on these moments is to find oneself probing the ontological nature of the statue. What kind of power does Paulina have over the statue? How can Paulina possess a statue that might actually be a living Hermione? What can we learn about acting in the early modern period from Paulina's relationship to Hermione, especially considering an actor stands in for the statue?

In this chapter, I explore the way that Paulina acts as a mediator for Hermione's interests throughout the play and becomes an extension of the statue during the scene. Her promptings compel Leontes to reconsider his previous behavior towards Hermione.

¹ William Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale*, Ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). All citations are from this edition.

If in Chapter 1, Lucrece's living relationship to the painting, a particular form of aesthetic engagement, allows Lucrece to make a political statement and effect change within her world, here Leontes' aesthetic experience does not occur instantaneously as it does for Lucrece. The statue scene is an example of an aesthetic experience that needs to be managed in order for the spectators to feel emotion and transform. In other words, Hermione's statue is not enough to activate an aesthetic experience. The statue requires an auxiliary mediator—in the form of Paulina—to make aesthetic experience possible.

That Hermione's lifelike statue needs a mediator should not be surprising, considering that the living Hermione lacks rights after the tyrannical Leontes accuses her of adultery without evidence. In his study of how inanimate objects take on a life of their own, Miguel Tamen argues that inanimate objects like statues become interpretable through a network of "formal and informal friends" known as representatives. Building on Tamen's theory of representatives, I argue that Paulina should be regarded as another level of mediation that extends the statue in a way that the art form itself cannot achieve. I argue that Paulina is a representative of the statue because she carries her investment in Hermione from life to death, allowing Hermione to assert the rights she did not have while alive. As an auxiliary form of meditation, Paulina becomes a "living medium" of Hermione's image, acting for Hermione in her absence.

The relationship between Paulina and Hermione propels Leontes to reassess his behavior. The statue brings about a mode of self-recognition that Leontes lacks throughout the play. As Paulina prompts Leontes to consider what is beyond his own sensory perception, she undercuts the mimetic likeness of Hermione's statue. In doing so, Leontes reverses his own subject position by modelling what Hannah Arendt calls

“representative thinking.” By accessing other viewpoints, Leontes is able to contemplate his unity with the statue. In this regard, Paulina manages an aesthetic response from Leontes that will anticipate later notions of aesthetic experience.

The second half of the chapter toggles between diegetic levels and considers the statue scene from the audience’s perspective rather than Leontes. In the theater, an actor mediates Hermione’s character while she is alive and stands in place of a stone when she supposedly dies. In this regard, a living actor was chosen as a better representation of a stone statue and a medium of stoniness than stone itself. Just as Paulina acts as a representative for Hermione’s statue, the actor should be considered a representative for Hermione’s character.

To make these arguments, I highlight the oratorical link between legal representatives and actors. By looking at several early modern accounts and studies of early modern acting, I show that, while actors were emotionally invested in their character, they still retained a sense of their identity, realizing that genuine feeling and fictitious speech could go hand in hand. Thinking of actors as representatives allows us to hold both the actor and character’s identity in tension without eliding one identity in favor of the other. While the early modern period is known for a mimetic model of acting, I argue that the performance choice specific to *The Winter’s Tale* helps to theorize a model of acting based not on mimetic identification but on emotional contiguity.

Ultimately, this chapter will explore the actor as representative in relation to theater’s singular ability—the fact that the action occurring on stage is part of the real and fictional world at the same time. While scholars understand the statue scene as an important reflection on the nature of fiction and reality, criticism of *The Winter’s Tale* is

plagued by an impasse. The binary opposition between fiction and reality makes it difficult to theorize the statue scene beyond the fact that Shakespeare uses the scene to bring fiction to life. Like criticism of *The Winter's Tale*, general performance criticism finds the theater to be the superior medium for representing fictional things as real, but critics also do not circumvent the real-fictional binary. Instead, I argue that a theory of actor as representative overcomes the binary because its privileges what makes the theater “real”—living bodies on the stage. By highlighting the emotional contiguous relationship between actor and character, I show how representatives act on behalf of the character after the performance ends, bringing their characters into the real world with them.

While the addition of a character like Paulina is one of Shakespeare's most innovative revisions of the Ovidian tale, critics overemphasize Leontes' role when discussing the statue's creation.² Many critics consider the story of Pygmalion and the life-like girl he carves from ivory the origin text of the statue scene. For instance, Kenneth Gross, identifying two Ovidian strands, argues that “...it is Leontes who is responsible [and] who acts as both her Pygmalion and her Medusa. [As] an ironic relic of his violent misconstrual of her subjectivity...The statue represents the “nothing”...it stands as a funeral reminder of the corpse he made of her.”³ The idea that the statue either

² Leonard Barkan argues that Hermione's transformation creates “a kind of marriage between Pygmalion and Petrarchism” in ““Living Sculptures”: Ovid, Michelangelo, and the Winter's Tale,” *ELH* 48.4 (Winter, 1981): 639-667, 660. For a thorough discussion of the connections between Ovid and the final scene, see Lynn Enterline's ““You speak a language that I understand not”: The Rhetoric of Animation in *The Winter's Tale*,” *SQ* 48.1 (Spring 1997): 17-44.

³ Kenneth Gross, *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 100.

stands as a memorial or a symbol of Leontes crimes delimits the boundaries within which we appraise the statue's power.⁴ If the spectacle of the statue is simply another manifestation of Leontes' power, and, paradoxically, "nothing" at all, then we are still left wondering how to reconcile not only the statue's role but also Paulina's immense control over the scene.

While there are resonances between Pygmalion and the statue scene in *The Winter's Tale*, there are several illuminating differences.⁵ To be sure, Leontes is certainly responsible for the disaster that befalls Hermione, but understanding him as a Pygmalion figure is overly literal and does not take into consideration the fact that he has nothing to do with the statue—how it comes to be, how it is stored, or how it is revealed. Leontes does not know of the statue's existence until the moment that Paulina reveals it. Further, the impetus for the creation of Galatea revolves around Pygmalion's feelings about promiscuous females. The story begins with his inability to find suitable women who he deems to be virtuous. Because of their lack of virtue, Pygmalion sets out to make a

⁴ See Victor I. Stoichita, *The Pygmalion Effect: From Ovid to Hitchcock* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 101-7 for an argument about how to classify the statue: "Even if the word *chapel* appears on numerous occasions, the dialogue between Leontes and Paulina make it clear that the sculpture which was in the chapel was not exactly a medieval recumbent statue, however similar its purpose as a memorial might be. The text suggests, rather, that it was upright and life-size, as was customary in English mausoleums circa 1600" (101).

⁵ Victor I. Stoichita argues that overemphasizing Pygmalion as a source text is the wrong literary genealogy: "Allusions to Pygmalion are less obvious. One can detect them, but only on a very generic level, in the motif of the simulacrum which comes to life. Unlike Ovid, Shakespeare does not insist on the link between creation and animation. The artist (the hypothetical Giulio Romano) is not a lover, and the lover (Leontes) is not an artist. If allusions to the myth of Pygmalion are nevertheless present in certain details of the story, this is due in my opinion, not so much to direct references to Ovid, but rather to the legacy of *The Romance of the Rose*" (104). See *The Pygmalion Effect: From Ovid to Hitchcock*.

virtuous woman. Once the statue is made, he reveres it by bringing gifts to it daily and by interacting with it through intense touch.⁶ In contrast, the statue scene in *The Winter's Tale* is devoid of touch, especially of sexual touch. Instead, the statue scene centers on descriptions of the statue's mimetic qualities and what Leontes has done in relation to the statue. Aligning Pygmalion or Medusa with Leontes robs the scene of the potential female agency by underestimating Paulina and Hermione's roles.

It is instead useful to recall the tale of Medusa because it restores a sense of feminine agency that is entirely lacking from the Pygmalion story. In addition, Medusa's ability to turn any onlooker to stone parallels similar descriptions of stone-like spectators in *The Winter's Tale*. In *Metamorphoses*, Perseus retells the story of how he rescued Andromeda and killed Phineus by decapitating and using the head of Medusa to turn him to stone. The area surrounding Medusa's dwelling is described as a garden full of petrified victims or stone statues. Ovid describes their petrification in the same way one might describe statues: "[Thescelus] became a statue, poised for a javelin throw"; "there he stood; a flinty man, unmoving, a monument in marble"; "Astyages, in wonder, was a wondering marble."⁷ The response to Hermione's statue mirrors what occurs when Phineus's comrades look at Medusa. The play describes Leontes, his daughter, and the

⁶ George L. Hersey argues "The new sort of livingness, the extra dose of artificial life that Ovid's statues achieve, ties in with another aspect of the poet's originality—his exploitation of what have come to be called tactile values... They imply that when someone looks at a work of figure art, at a true masterpiece, it is simply not present visually but awakens keen physiological sensations in the viewer's body" (90). For a discussion of the role of touch in the Pygmalion story, see *Falling in Love with Statues: Artificial Humans from Pygmalion to Present* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁷ Ovid, "The Fighting of Perseus" from *The Metamorphoses* in *The Medusa Reader*, eds. Marjorie Garber and Nancy Vickers (New York and London: Routledge, 2003). All citations are from this edition. See 5.176-7; 193-194; 203-4

rest of the spectators as marble viewers who stand as stone in awe. The difference between the tale of Medusa and the statue scene in *The Winter's Tale* is the fact that Paulina and Hermione work in tandem to make sculpture-like spectators. Hermione, unlike Medusa, needs help to turn her audience into shocked, sculpture-like onlookers.

While not many studies deal with the importance of Paulina's role, most critics acknowledge her power even though they disagree on what Paulina represents. Marguerite A. Tassi argues that "Romano, of course, is a mask for Paulina, the true artist and white magician of Sicilia, whose artistry lies not in literal sculpting and painting, but in animating the spirits of spectators and making wonders seem familiar." Victor I. Stoichita argues that "Shakespeare's truly innovative contribution is the way in which he accentuated the representation within a representation. Paulina's role in this respect is fundamental. More than a mere witch, she is a skillful stage director." And the list of terms proliferate: Stanley Cavell calls her a "stage director;" Marion O'Connor sees her as a "priestess-like promoter of Hermione's cult;" Renuka Gusain argues that she is a "playwright-artist-courtier figure;" Lowell Gallagher sees her as an "owner" and "covert, collaborative author" along with Romano; Julia Reinhard Lupton considers her a "coroner turned curator;" Chloe Porter sees her as "patron of the visual arts."⁸ While

⁸ See Marguerite A. Tassi, *The Scandal of Images: Iconoclasm, Eroticism, and Painting in Early Modern English Drama* (Cranbury: Susquehanna University Press, 2005), 212; Victor I. Stoichita, *The Pygmalion Effect: From Ovid to Hitchcock*, 105; Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 219; Marion O'Connor, " "Imagine Me, Gentle Spectators": Iconomachy and *The Winter's Tale*," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers), 375-6; Lowell Gallagher, " "This Seal'd up Oracle": Ambivalent Nostalgia in *The Winter's Tale*," *Exemplaria*, 7.2 (1995), 485; Renuka Gusain " "With what's unreal thou coactive art": The Problem of Beauty and Possibilities of Beauty in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare* 9 (2012), 53-75. Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Thinking with Shakespeare: Essays*

these studies certainly get at aspects of Paulina's character, she is not actually any of these terms as a character in the play. In other words, my chapter attempts to come up with a better descriptor for Paulina while also exploring her role in the experience of Hermione's statue more generally.

In order to understand Paulina's relationship to the statue and why she is an integral part of the statue's revelation, it is necessary to understand what relationship Paulina has to Hermione. There is a distinction in the way that Paulina deals with the statue versus a living Hermione. While Hermione is alive, Paulina works to expose Leontes' crimes and logically explains what freedoms should be reinstated to both Hermione and her newborn. But Hermione's transformation to a statue compels Paulina to use a different strategy. Paulina's language is now characterized by commands to the statue. Along with visiting, storing, and managing the revelation of the statue, Paulina controls its actions, prompting the statue to "awake," to "descend," and to "approach" (5.3.98-100) in order to speak to the viewers (who Paulina also directs throughout the scene). Surprisingly, the statue does not exhibit any power on its own. By depicting Paulina's control over the statue, Shakespeare sketches a model of aesthetic experience that will run the entirety of the scene: that the power of the statue comes largely from Paulina's ability to act on its behalf.

Paulina's directives draw Hermione's very agency into question, considering that the scene is compounded by the fact that an actual statue never stands in for Hermione. Why would a previously communicating subject masquerade as an object in order to

on Politics and Life (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), 178; Chloe Porter, *Making and Unmaking in Early Modern English Drama: Spectators, Aesthetics, and Incompletion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 64.

reassert her own limited rights? And how do we approach the fact that Paulina is actually directing a still living character with rudimentary commands? That her transformation to a statue does not afford any more agency to Hermione than when she was alive is a reminder of Hermione's uncertain condition despite her miraculous resurrection.⁹ In this regard, it seems as if Paulina further disables Hermione's rights, even if, as a statue, she is in a truly objectified state. The play, however, takes up what seems like a counterintuitive scenario in order to highlight the objectification Hermione suffered while alive. There is no real difference between the Hermione that collapsed during the public trial and the statue that looks like her; both women are presented as objects that either lack or need a representative to communicate their interests.

Whether the statue can communicate interests is a question worth raising. It is vital to consider how close the statue of Hermione is to the character of Hermione—her beliefs, interests, and rights—considering that Hermione is never replaced by an actual stone statue but remains the actor throughout the play. To speak of the statue as having a motive presupposes that the stone likeness goes beyond mimetic exactitude, mirroring the

⁹ Valerie Traub argues that turning Hermione to stone gets rid of the sexual threat she poses in *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 45. Katherine Eggert understands the scene as a “de-eroticizing of Hermione's body” that is reminiscent of “Elizabethan portrayals of queenship” in *Showing Like A Queen: Female Authority and Literary Experiment in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 165. Justin Kolb argues that “an analysis of the agency of inhuman actors in *The Winter's Tale*, particularly the inhuman forms taken by the play's transformed women, suggests a new understanding of the hybrid nature of dramatic character on the early modern stage...The figure of the automaton is useful here, less as a robotic artificial human being and more for the way in which it highlights the agency, the “self-moving” qualities, of objects and other nonhuman actors” (46-7). See “‘To me comes a creature’: Recognition, Agency, and the Properties of Character in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*,” in *The Automaton in English Renaissance Literature*, ed. Wendy Hyman (New York: Routledge, 2016).

living Hermione's desires and needs. In order to identify the statue's motive, the scene must be approached by toggling between different narrative levels. If we consider Hermione's statue as a stone object (as the spectators within the scene do) that transforms into a living being, then it makes sense that the object has limited agency and that it needs to be interpreted for the spectators. In this regard, Paulina's role revolves around clarifying the statue for its viewers.

Miguel Tamen has described the kind of relationship Paulina has to the statue as the "formal and informal friends of interpretable objects."¹⁰ An interpretable object—in this case, the statue—requires representation from those who care about the object because it cannot voice its own interests. Tamen shows that the personification of such objects—specifically the attribution of agency, responsibility, and liability to them—can be traced to an ancient Greek court, where judges ruled in cases against inanimate objects, such as statues, which were large enough to kill people. For Tamen, personification is a method that enables the law to function because the personified object is treated as a liable wrongdoer: "being liable is a matter not of possessing certain features such as soul, the ability to move, or a language, but of being dealt with in a certain way."¹¹ Tamen explains that inanimate objects can "assert" their rights by communicating their interests through the "friends" who act as their representatives.¹²

¹⁰ Miguel Tamen, *Friends of Interpretable Objects* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 137.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 85

¹² While Miguel Tamen's argument is the most thorough consideration of the consequences of personifying objects, aesthetic theory as a whole acknowledges that aesthetic objects are often treated and experienced as if they have rights. Alan Tormey, for instance, argues that "certain aspects of our aesthetic experience, under one possible set of descriptions, suggest that we do in fact regard art works as invested with rights of a

Tamen's argument is a useful one because it takes into consideration not only the object's power but also its limitations. It is not that Paulina further undermines Hermione by being a necessary intermediary between Leontes and the statue; it is that the aesthetic experience occasioned by the statue's revelation requires an auxiliary interpreter for maximum effect. In this regard, Paulina functions not only as a representative who asserts Hermione's rights, but also helps the spectators interpret and experience Hermione's new life form.

This reading becomes plausible in light of the way in which Paulina shares in the mediation of Hermione's image. Part of Paulina's image-making is to produce a memorial image of Hermione through her memory; Leontes commends Paulina on these abilities, saying, "Good Paulina,/Who hast the memory of Hermione,...I might have look'd upon my queen's full eyes,/Have taken treasure from her lips" (5.1. 49-54). In this moment, Paulina's robust memory of Hermione causes Leontes to make his own image of her as he remembers her facial features. Paulina's superb image-making skills even compels Leontes to forego another marriage by conjuring an image of Hermione as a ghost and acting out what the ghost might say: "then I'd shriek, that even your ears/Should rift to hear me; and the words that follow'd/Should be 'Remember mine' " (5.1.65-7). In this regard, we see two forms of image-making at play; memory is a kind of image archive while remembrance of Hermione generates an experience of her acting and speaking once again. Paulina's image-making skills become more complex as she begins to reveal the statue to the spectators, creating the spectacle of the statue as she orders it to

kind analogous to those that we normally concede to persons" in "Aesthetic Rights," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 32.2 (Winter 1973): 163-70, 163.

move around. Paulina's claim of ownership—"If I had thought the sight of my poor image/Would thus have wrought you,--for the stone is mine--/I'd not have show'd it" (5.3.58-61)—takes on a new meaning when we consider her role in mediating Hermione's image. Paulina, then, becomes the owner of Hermione's image, strategically mediating and wielding the image in order to bring about a change in Leontes' perspective.

While an image needs material embodiment to be perceptible or observable, it is also created through the viewer's mental imagining, especially when the image is recalled through memory. Furthermore, an image will always have a mental quality because it can be called to mind while the material medium can disintegrate over time. Elaine Scarry goes so far as to define the mental work of imagining images a form of mimesis: "Imagining is an act of perceptual mimesis, whether undertaken in our own daydreams or under the instruction of great writers."¹³ Scarry's description redefines the imagination as a mode of artistic production, locating mimesis within the mind. By calling the work of the imagination a mimetic process, Scarry evokes more fully formed works of art. Thus, art can not only be produced through external means and located in physical objects, such as statuary, paintings, and prose, but it also can be produced within the living body, depending on the perceptual acuity of the imagination. For our purposes, Scarry's definition of the imagination is significant because it upends the common way we identify and demarcate media. If, as Scarry argues, artistic production can be located within the human mind, then the mediation of an image can occur beyond its physical embodiment.

¹³ Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 6.

It should not be surprising, then, to describe Paulina as a living medium of Hermione's image, considering that the play explores the living body as an image producer by using an actual actor in place of a statue. While the play certainly draws from the trope of the living statue, embedded in stories from antiquity, the play uniquely removes an actual, transforming marble object by replacing it with a living actor. In this regard, the play overturns any strict categories about what constitutes a medium or a form of mediation. Paulina's atypical relationship to the statue makes the image of Hermione less a consequence of statuary and more a product of the successful relationship between the two women. Hermione's image does not coincide solely with the statue of her; instead, her image exists in the interaction between the actor who stands in as Hermione's statue and Paulina. Shakespeare suggests that the living can guide, interpret, and assist aesthetic experience, becoming ancillary media themselves.

The final scene of *The Winter's Tale* explores a particular vision of Paulina as an integral and secondary form of mediation necessary to the spectator's aesthetic experience of the statue. In the final scene, Paulina becomes a nexus of relations for the statue and the spectator. In other words, aesthetic experience occurs not between the object and the spectator but through another living body altogether. Through Paulina, Shakespeare theorizes not only what makes the statue's revelation most effective but also the possibility that an aesthetic response may not occur on its own and that it must be facilitated by individuals other than the art's viewer. Because Paulina is necessary to the spectators' aesthetic experience of the statute, her character occupies a liminal position; she is neither like Perdita nor the living art object because she acts as a mediator for all parties involved. She becomes an extension of the statue by directing its movements and

its speech while remaining part of the spectators' retinue, confirming and encouraging their responses to the statue.

Paulina's promptings impact not only Leontes' development as a character but also the structure of aesthetic experience in general. Through Paulina's cues, Leontes progresses through several aesthetic phases while observing the statue of Hermione.¹⁴

Leontes begins with aesthetic fascination and extreme attention to the object by focusing in particular on how the statue looks.¹⁵ He then shifts to considering the symbolic

¹⁴ Critics agree that the characters' experience of the living statue at the end of the play has religious overtones, but they do not agree on whether the scene draws on Catholic or Protestant traditions. Considering the Catholic iconography of the scene, Michael O'Connell argues that the play "presses an audience into idolatry as it assents with Leontes to whatever reality the apparent statue may mysteriously possess" in *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early-Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 141. Marion O'Connor argues that the play undermines Catholicism when "the figure of Hermione is no longer perceived as an image but recognised as a human being" in "Imagine Me, Gentle Spectators": Iconomachy and *The Winter's Tale*," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers), 380. Other critics find the treatment of religion to be less certain, finding that iconographic and iconoclastic impulses exist together. Phebe Jensen, for instance, argues that the final scene "allows for different responses from a devotionally diverse audience that held varied opinions about whether praying to painted statues was idolatrous" in *Religion and Revelry in Shakespeare's Festive World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 228. What these readings have in common is a preoccupation with the uncertainty that the statue's transformation creates. While I do not identify which religious traditions contribute to the statue scene, an emphasis on ontological incertitude is central to my readings, which attempt to trace what the statue's ambiguity can tell us about aesthetic experience more generally.

¹⁵ Many critics explore the transformation Leontes goes as an inherently aesthetic one and the way in which the statue occasions the change. Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski "propose[s] an interpretation of Act V, Scene 3, of *The Winter's Tale* that applies insights from the fields of psychology and cognitive neuroscience to aesthetic experience...[by exploring] Shakespeare as a visual and sensory-motor artist, as much as a verbal one, in order to theorise a category of viewer response." See "Statues that Move: The Vitality Effects in *The Winter's Tale*," *Literature & Theology* 28.3 (September 2014): 299-315, 300. James A. Knapp argues that the final scene "is paradigmatic of a Shakespearean aesthetic in which characters and the audience alike are confronted with the impossibility that somehow gestures towards a deeper truth," in *Image Ethics in Spenser and Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 165. John J. Joughin argues that

potential of the statue as a manifestation of his crimes against Hermione. Finally, Leontes reverses his own subject position by contemplating his unity with the statue. Paulina prompts these changes by attending to and then undercutting the mimetic likeness of the statue. By encouraging Leontes to consider what is beyond his own sensory perception, she casts doubt on whether the mimetic likeness is the ultimate point of the statue's existence. In doing so, the statue becomes an agent of change for Leontes, a vehicle for him to question his own assumptions.

Leontes and the other spectators' experience wonder because the statue, who looks just like Hermione, comes to life. The Third Gentleman, who witnesses the scene, describes the extreme response they have to the statue:

I make a broken delivery of the business; but the changes I perceived in the king and Camillo were very notes of admiration: they seemed almost, with staring on one another, to tear the cases of their eyes; there was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture; they looked as they had heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed: a notable passion of wonder appeared in them; but the wisest beholder, that knew no more but seeing, could not say if the importance were joy or sorrow; but in the extremity of the one, it must needs be. (5.2.9-19)

Leontes "undergoes an abrupt and remarkable transformation. Suddenly his capacity for judgment confirms itself as a newly dynamic and creative process, which involves an open-ended awareness of participating in the sensuous particularity of the truths that are unfolding before him" in "Shakespeare, Modernity, and the Aesthetic: Art, Truth, and Judgement in *The Winter's Tale*," in *Shakespeare and Modernity: From Modern to Millennium*, ed. Hugh Grady (London: Routledge, 2000), 61-84, 71. See also Walter S. H. Lim, "Knowledge and Belief in *The Winter's Tale*," *SEL* 41 (2001): 317-34 for a discussion of the "boundaries of the unknowable" in relation to the statue scene. David A. Katz argues that "Paulina and Ariel's use of theater as persuasion works, then, because it transforms Leontes and Prospero into better actors and better readers of their own behavior" in "Theatrum Mundi: Rhetoric, Romance, and Legitimation in *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*," *Studies in Philology*, 115.4 (Fall 2018): 719-741, 722.

In this description, the gentleman explains that the spectators do not verbalize their experience; instead, their bodies articulate their feelings in a more efficient way than speech does. In other words, the statue creates a corporeal reaction that verbal language does not quite capture: “there was speech in their dumbness, language/in their very gesture.” And though their wonder borders on shock—“they seemed almost...to tear the cases of their/eyes”—their admiration for the piece suggests a complex form of engagement. The scene highlights their perplexity, attention, and reverence.

While the gentleman describes the scene in retrospection, giving an overall impression of the spectators’ reactions, the second depiction of the event in which the audience becomes privy to the actual revelation of the statue tells a different story. The second account details more thoroughly the changes Leontes experiences as he looks at the statue. Even though Leontes realizes the wrongdoings he committed against Hermione, his realizations are often punctuated by descriptions of what the statue looks like. As he gazes on the statue, Leontes’ intense fascination becomes entangled in a discussion of the mimetic qualities of the statue and the extent to which it looks like Hermione: “Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed/Thou art Hermione” (5.3.24-5). And despite the similarities between the living Hermione and the statue, Leontes cannot help but notice some of the statue’s mimetic limitations: “But yet, Paulina, Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing/so aged this seems” (5.3.27-29). Paulina replies by explaining, “So much more the carver’s excellence/ Which lets go by some sixteen, and makes her as she lived now” (5.3.31-3).¹⁶ The explanation of the statue’s age is crucial to

¹⁶ Marguerite A. Tassi argues that “the trope of liveliness competes with that of mocking, for in this scene these two ways of framing one’s response to art are held in tension. This scene ritually stages the mysterious and fearful process of art metamorphosing to life,

the fact that it is not a true mimetic reproduction of Hermione. While the statue resembles Hermione, a true mimetic likeness would have reproduced what she looked like sixteen years ago. There is no reason to make the statue aged if the stone acts as a memorial to a once living queen. An aged Hermione does not exist in the world because she died before she had a chance to wrinkle. Therefore, the statue of Hermione is a combination of what she actually looked like and what she might look like in the present. This combination relies on real world reference and the carver's imagination. The fact that this is the actual Hermione, who has aged over the last sixteen years, shifts the scene from a discussion of mimesis to how the statue makes the spectators feel.¹⁷

Paulina rejects an aesthetizing gaze that turns the statue into a simple mimetic reproduction of Hermione; she instead highlights what makes the statue unique. Paulina explains that Hermione is not like the other art pieces and stores her alone in her gallery: "As she lived peerless, /So her dead likeness I do well believe/Excels whatever yet you looked upon, /Or hand of man hath done; therefore I keep it/Lonely, apart" (5.3.14-18). While her isolation is partly due to the fact that Hermione may have been kept for sixteen years alive and hidden, Paulina suggests that the segregation of the statue is because it "excels" in comparison to any other art object. It is not that the statue does not look like Hermione, but rather that its most striking feature is the liveliness it achieves. In this regard, Paulina encourages responses to the statue that express awe over the statue's living qualities ("Would you not deem it breathed, and that those veins/Did verily bear

which seems to make a mockery of our reason" (212) in *The Scandal of Images*.

¹⁷ Lynn Enterline argues that "the statue is *not* mimetic; its beauty supersedes that of any living woman;" therefore, "Shakespeare aspires to a mode of representation that can move beyond the impasse" in *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 206.

blood?” (5.3.63-4)). Moreover, she wards off any attempt that might curtail the statue’s spell, telling the spectators to refrain from touching the wet and “newly fixed” (5.3.47) statue.

By introducing the difference between Hermione and the statue through a discussion of the shortcomings of mimetic likeness (aging), the play positions them in relation to each other rather than making one an exact replica of the other. In doing so, the spectators are made complicit in considering Hermione as an actual object, opening up the possibility for contemplation about the difference between liveliness and its opposite quality, stoniness, more generally. As the spectators observe the statue, they are overcome by a sense of wonder to such a degree that they “stan[d] like stone” (5.3.43). The phrase “like stone” suggests that a reciprocal interaction occurs between the spectators and the statue. The simile converts wonder from an abstract aesthetic feeling into a material quality apparent on the spectators’ bodies. Much like the Medusa effect, Hermione’s statue can turn the spectators to stone, turning their lively humanity into a subdued stiffness. In other words, the play depicts a transition between feeling subjects and objects that compel feeling.

The statue’s aesthetic power comes from its ability to propel change in terms of both the characters’ subjectivity and narrative dynamism. Just as the work of art inspires wonder, so too does it arouse in Leontes a deeper perception of the woman who has been under his control for most of the play. There could be no better medium than marble sculpture for symbolizing Leontes’ inflexibility. He begins to contemplate his own subjecthood in relation to it:

As now she might have done,
So much to my good comfort, as it is

Now piercing to my soul. O, thus she stood,
 Even with such life of majesty, warm life,
 As now it coldly stands, when first I woo'd her!
 I am ashamed: does not the stone rebuke me
 For being more stone than it? O royal piece,
 There's magic in thy majesty, which has
 My evils conjured to remembrance and
 From thy admiring daughter took the spirits,
 Standing like stone with thee. (5.3.33-43)

Significantly, this moment shows Leontes moving beyond awe over mimetic likeness to considering his own subject position, and the ways in which the statue transforms his own state of being. While both Leontes and his daughter are compared to stone, Perdita does not transform to the degree he does, considering that she is “like stone” rather than “more than stone.” The lack of the figurative construction “like stone” to describe Leontes’ change suggests that he transforms in a more fundamental way than Perdita does. In making the distinction, Leontes becomes more like Hermione as an object and less like the other viewers around him. Thus, Paulina’s role is to encourage the spectators’ wonder over the statue—making them stand as stones—in the hopes that Leontes begins to question his own relationship to his crimes.

Leontes’s transformation at the end of the play is part of a larger behavioral pattern. Most notable of Leontes’s tyrannical personality traits is his quickly changing moods. He bizarrely changes his mind after learning his wife and child are dead, vowing to visit their grave every day and condemning his own behavior: “Once a day I’ll visit/The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there/Shall be my recreation” (3.2.236-8). Up until their death, he had every intention of throwing Hermione in jail and abandoning his infant. Even if the grim news of death shocks his system, there is no indication of his thought process or how he comes around to view himself as the one in the wrong. If he is so easily able to change his view, one wonders why he didn’t come around to a more

reasonable reaction sooner. How do we approach a character who seems unfit to engage in such an experience? Does Leontes's transformation in front of the statue represent a true change of perspective?

While the spectator might never know for certain since the play wraps up quickly after the statue's reveal, the statue scene raises the question of whether proximity to suffering leads to sympathy or whether the experience of art can transform feelings to a greater degree than seeing actual suffering. The statue scene paradoxically suggests that the relationality between Hermione and Leontes must be minimized in order for him to take on the position of the perpetrator. In other words, the efficacy of the stone statue revolves around bestowing an uncanny humanity to Hermione, allowing Leontes to recognize Hermione's humanity for the first time. What seems to emerge from Leontes' interaction with the statue as opposed to seeing Hermione's suffering is an ability to manage a different viewpoint, specifically Hermione's viewpoint. By questioning whether "the stone rebuke[s him]/For being more stone than it" (5.3.37-8), Leontes sees himself as Hermione sees him, causing him to admit feeling shame. In this regard, the statue's greatest achievement is forcing Leontes to consider Hermione's perspective, allowing him to not only occupy her position but also trigger a reassessment.

In her *Lectures on Kant*, Hannah Arendt relies on the concept of perspective to explain the exceptional power of literature to produce "representative thinking" rather than sympathetic or empathetic feelings that lead to change. In her model, derived from Kant's concept of disinterestedness, Arendt explains:

I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, I represent them. This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a

different perspective; this is a question neither of empathy, as though I tried to be or to feel like somebody else, nor of counting noses and joining a majority but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not. The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions.¹⁸

Here, Arendt argues that one can achieve different understandings of an issue by holding different viewpoints in mind. While this might sound like empathy, Arendt is adamant that it is, in fact, not. Instead of becoming another, Arendt suggests that one use their mind to imagine and access other positions. Arendt's argument is particularly useful, here, because it relies on a key term—"representative"—that is central to how this chapter understands aesthetic experience. It is also useful because it shows how Paulina's work as a representative for Hermione can be seen from Leonte's perspective—his mental work of considering Hermione's perspective rather than his own.

The statue, then, becomes an essential component of Leontes' transformation. Because Hermione becomes completely inhuman, Leontes is able to consider her as something other than his seemingly disobedient wife or as the memory of his dead wife. Her present stoniness, instead, emphasizes her past humanity. In this moment, Leontes is able to consider himself as something other, as something else. The change wrought in Leontes drives forward the play's denouement. His feelings of shame prompt Paulina to complete the spectacle, ordering Hermione to "descend; be stone no more" (5.3.98). It is important that the play ends after Leontes' experience with the statue rather than at some other point, like after his feelings of grief or his reunion with his daughter. The restoration of the statue provides something unique, serving to mediate the spectators'

¹⁸ Hanna Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin, 1961; 2006), 237.

feelings for each other.¹⁹ Most importantly, the statue allows Leontes to leave behind his daily environment and enter into an unexpected and unusual state during which an extraordinary experience occurs. His ultimate transformation compels him to represent Hermione's interests just as Paulina does throughout the play.

Even though the transformation from stone to living human occurs within the play world, an actor stood in for the statue during the entirety of the performance.²⁰ Throughout the play, Hermione toggles between an actor playing a living character, an actor playing a dead character, an actor playing an inanimate yet aged object shaped like a once living character, and an actor playing a now resurrected, living character again. In other words, the actor must progress through different yet overlapping life cycles. The statue scene is often read as the reversal of the disagreement Perdita and Polixenes have earlier in the play about the opposition between art and nature. The statue scene dissolves this opposition through Hermione's transformation.²¹ Yet these readings rarely take into

¹⁹ See Julia Reinhard Lupton for an exploration of whether Hermione forgives Leontes. She "argue[s] that Hermione can be imagined to withhold or delay forgiveness, a demurral that calls attention to the public rather than private character of forgiving in a play whose ardent courtship of theological themes remains firmly grounded in this world" in "Judging Forgiveness: Hannah Arendt, W. H. Auden, and *The Winter's Tale*," *New Literary History*, 45.4 (Autumn 2014): 641-663, 642.

²⁰ There is not much information about how *The Winter's Tale* was staged. Dennis Bartholomeuz explains the difficulty of describing the performance in any detail: "No description survives of the first performance at Whitehall, though there is the curious and well-known account by Simon Forman of a performance on the open stage at the Globe in 1611, which fails to mention either the statue scene or the exit of Antigonus pursued by the bear" in *The Winter's Tale in Performance in England and America, 1611-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 12. See also Susan Snyder, *Shakespeare: A Wayward Journey* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002) for a discussion of the possibility that the statue scene may not have been part of Shakespeare's original plan, 221-245.

²¹ Philip Weinstein argues "Art, then, in *The Winter's Tale* is simultaneously natural (Polixenes's theory) and artificial (Perdita's theory). There is both idealism and realism, art and the mockery (which marks the limitations) of art. The more comprehensive

account the transformation that occurs within the play alongside the fact that the actor does not need to materially transform. Instead, critics tend to overlook the issue or consider it a spectacle of the powers of theater. For Richard Meek, attending to the actor “creates enough confusion to make some critics write about Hermione as if she were a real person. As we try to distinguish between the statue, Hermione, and the actor playing Hermione, and attempt to work out at any particular moment which one is which, the more complex the scene becomes. The fact that Hermione would have been played by a male actor on the Renaissance stage would have created a further level of representation for the audience to contemplate.”²² While I do not agree with Richard Meek that the scene creates too much confusion to explore, I do agree that isolating the actor as a conundrum opens up Hermione’s ontological incertitude further and allows us to consider an actor’s relationship to his character more generally.

While studies on *The Winter’s Tale* cover a wide range of topics, many critics are drawn to the statue scene as the site of Shakespeare’s most important reflection on the nature of art and reality. Howard Felperin claims that “the peculiarly Shakespearean ability to create in a mere three thousand lines an imaginative environment so fully realized that we take it, like Hermione’s “statue,” for life itself and its creatures for fellow

realism effected by this combination is the governing principle of the Pastoral Scene” in “An Interpretation of Pastoral in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *SQ* 22.2 (Spring, 1971): 97-109, 109. See also Peter Lindenbaum, “Time, Sexual Love, and the Uses of the Pastoral in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *MLQ* 33 (1972), 3–22. Andrew Gurr argues that the bear and the statue should be read as “matching counterparts” that “set up enough teasing interactions between art and nature to complicate intriguingly the ostensible opposition between the two contraries laid out so emphatically by Perdita and Polixenes in their debate” in “The Bear, the Statue, and Hysteria,” *SQ* 34.4 (Winter 1983), 420-5, 420.

²² Richard Meek, *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* (New York: Ashgate, 2009), 175.

human beings.”²³ In a similar vein, Patricia Southard Gourlay argues, “As the play’s title reminds us, its truths are fiction. Yet it moves and convinces: it brings itself to life.”²⁴ Likewise, Leonard Barkan argues that “It is at that moment that the central dream of all ekphrasis can finally be realized, that is, that the work of art is so real it could *almost* come to life. Theater removes the *almost*.”²⁵ What these readings have in common is a belief in theater as the singular art form that can bring fictions to life coupled with a reluctant awareness that theater cannot actually bring fictions to life.

For Richard Meek, the belief that theater can bring fictions to life is absurd. Meek argues that these “critics seem to have been seduced into accepting the play for “reality,” in spite of – or perhaps even because of—the disengagement that it has encouraged, and have even used the “resurrection” of Hermione as a metaphor for the life-likeness of the play itself.”²⁶ While calling the play “reality” takes the statue scene to a literal extreme, these critics are right to hone in on the statue coming to life as an important reflection on the nature of fictionality, especially considering the statue is not a stone statue but an actor for the entirety of the scene. However, the problem that arises, as Meek points out,

²³ Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 212-3.

²⁴ Patricia Southard Gourlay, ““O My Most Sacred Lady”: Female Metaphor in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *ELR* 5.3 (Autumn 1975): 375-95, 395.

²⁵ Leonard Barkan, “Making Pictures Speak: Renaissance Art, Elizabethan Literature, Modern Scholarship,” *RQ* 48.2 (Summer 1995): 326-51, 343. While Felperin, Gourlay, and Barkan understand the play as a meditation on art triumphing over nature Jean H. Hagstrum writes “Hermione is not a statue. She only seems to be one. A living being, she steps down from her niche in the gallery... Art has not defeated nature; nature has defeated art... The Shakespeare of this play... finds only temporary and limited value in art.” See *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism from Dryden to Grey* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), 87-8.

²⁶ Richard Meek, “Ekphrasis in “The Rape of Lucrece” and “The Winter’s Tale,” *SEL* 46.2 (Spring 2006): 389-414, 401.

is an impasse. Because these critics operate from a binary opposition between reality and fiction, the play will either be “fiction” or “reality” depending on whether one reads the statue scene as a triumph of art over reality or vice versa.

It might seem obvious to say that the theater brings characters to life or that theater is the singular medium that blurs art and life because it requires living bodies on the stage. The early modern period is known for the *theatrum mundi* trope, the metaphorical explanation that the world is a stage and people play as characters. Shakespeare’s oeuvre deals with this concept in different ways, for instance, Jacques from *As You Like It*, claims that “All the world’s a stage,/And all the men and women merely players” (2.7.138-9).²⁷ Early modern critics tend to read this as the performative nature of everyday life, the use of theatricality to fashion a self.²⁸ But, as Meredith Skura points out, “No matter how many Elizabethans may have figuratively “acted,” Shakespeare was one of the very few who wound up a common player on the public stage, “playing” in ways very different from the courtier’s self-fashioning behind the scenes.”²⁹ And while it might be true that a level of performance is necessary to understanding social construction, this explanation fails to consider seriously what the metaphor means in terms of aesthetic response and a theory of fictionality. In other words, these formulations do not help to theorize the precise relationship between actor

²⁷ William Shakespeare, “As You Like It,” in *The Norton Shakespeare*, Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al 2nd ed. (New York: W.W.Norton, 2008), 621-689. All citations are from this edition.

²⁸ See Meredith Anne Skura’s *Shakespeare, the Actor, and the Purposes of Playing* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1993) for a discussion of the *theatrum mundi* trope in relation to acting, 1-2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1

and character in *The Winter's Tale*, especially why a living actor might do a better job than stone itself.

If we want to understand how the statue can illuminate a theory of early modern fictionality, we have to explore another thread in *The Winter's Tale*: Hermione's lack of agency. The play's impetus to figure Paulina as a representative of Hermione's statue derives from the relationship Paulina has to the living Hermione, considering she has little to no rights as the wife of tyrannical Leontes. The rights or lack thereof of married women in the early modern period has its own complex history, especially the legal concept of coverture.³⁰ But Shakespeare's presentation of Hermione's rights in *The Winter's Tale* does not just repeat the period's typical legal principles. Instead, Paulina acts as a representative for the living Hermione—not just her statue—when she cannot act for herself. This chapter uses Hermione and Paulina's relationship—the necessity that

³⁰ See Barbara Kreps, "The Paradox of Women: The Legal Position of Early Modern Wives and Thomas Dekker's 'The Honest Whore,'" *ELH* 69.1 (Spring 2002): 83-102 for a thorough discussion of married women's rights: "Under common law...All women of all classes therefore took their husband's surname and consigned into his keeping all their property and chattels, over which they could no longer exert any decisional or administrative powers. No married woman could in her own right contract debts, enter into covenant, alienate her own property, or make a will without her husband's permission. Unlike the femme sole, who could act as her own agent, the femme covert had no legal identity independent of her husband's, which meant that in all financial matters she was subject to her husband, in whose identity she was subsumed. In an age that only in the rarest cases granted divorce and was strict in its provisions for legal separation, the only sure relief the woman unhappy with her disenfranchisement could look to was the death of her husband" (86). William Monter notes that Geneva's 1566 edicts necessitated "equal punishments for men and women for sexual misconduct: prison terms with a diet of bread and water for fornication; banishment for adultery with an unmarried person; and death for adultery between two married people. Only women, however, were ever executed for adultery. Male citizens managed to avoid banishment for adulteries committed with their servants" (206). See *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. by R. Bridenthal C. Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977). See also Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

Paulina act as Hermione's mediator in life and in death—to think through the actor's relationship to his character.

We can begin to explore Paulina's relationship to a living Hermione by delineating the way in which Leontes strips Hermione of her voice. Leontes creates a facade of justice by giving the accused Hermione a public trial. Even though he claims the trial will be "just an open" (3.1.204), but he later contradicts himself by disregarding the oracle's pronouncements that Hermione did not commit adultery.³¹ As Richard Meek argues, Leontes lacks evidentiary support to make his case: "Leontes begins to construct a narrative of Hermione's infidelity in his own mind, but does not seem to require any conclusive evidence for it."³² While a wife in the early modern period would have been subordinate to her husband Leontes' responses are like that of a tyrant.³³ From the beginning of the trial, Hermione knows that, despite a lack of evidence, the extent of her rights is limited:

Since what I am to say must be but that
Which contradicts my accusation and
The testimony on my part no other

³¹ Virginia Lee Strain argues that the oracle represents English common law judges' model of "suppressing, and thus mystifying deliberative practices" that lead to decisions. In this regard, "the play thereby resonates with the explosive tension between the judiciary and the sovereign in early seventeenth-century England," in "*The Winter's Tale* and the Oracle of Law," *ELH* 78.3 (Fall 2011): 557-584, 557-8.

³² Richard Meek, *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* (New York: Ashgate, 2009), 149.

³³ Most critics agree that Leontes is a deluded, jealous, and unstable tyrant. For instance, Brandin Cormack argues that *The Winter's Tale* is "a play that tests the nature of Leontes' tyranny by subjecting to analysis the idea of singularity that underwrites the misguided king's conception of his power" in "Shakespeare's Other Sovereignty: On Particularity and Violence in *The Winter's Tale* and the Sonnets," *SQ* 62.4 (Winter 2011): 485-513, 485. For an argument about the possibility that Hermione might have done the things she has been accused of, see Howard Felperin, "'Tongue-tied, our Queen?': The Deconstruction of Presence in *The Winter's Tale*," in *The Use of Canon: Elizabethan Literature and Contemporary Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 35-55. Felperin asks "How can we know that what has not been shown has not happened?" (37).

But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me
 To say 'not guilty'; mine integrity
 Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it,
 Be so received. (3.2.21-7)

Hermione proves to be correct in the scene; her words do not stand against his accusations and there is little point in announcing she is “not guilty” (25).³⁴ Hermione is in a peculiar position in which the entirety of her evidence “comes from [her]self” (24). Because the legal proceeding revolves around Leontes’ feelings, and her testimony is in direct opposition to her accusation, there is no possibility for corroborating evidence for either side to make a legitimate case.³⁵ These lines demonstrate the degree to which her voice carries no weight; she is already considered guilty despite her own testimony.

It is significant that, while Hermione seems entirely alone in this situation, the women around Hermione play a crucial role in taking some of the burden from her and

³⁴ Quentin Skinner argues that “Hermione’s predicament is thus that she finds herself falsely accused before a hostile judge. The classical rhetoricians have a great deal to say about how best to conduct oneself in such dangerous circumstances, but Hermione appears entirely ignorant of their advice. She mounts three speeches in her own defense, but she largely contents herself with making an appeal to heaven while adding swelling protestations about her loyalty and willingness to die. The only effect her intense but vague magniloquence is to illustrate its incapacity to overcome the tyranny to which she is exposed” in *Forensic Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014), 64-5. Stephen Orgel explores the incomprehensible diction in *The Winter’s Tale*, especially Hermione’s lines at her trial, and challenges the idea that we are meant to understand all of Shakespeare’s text through interpretation: “What is concealed in the process of interpretation...is the effort of will, or even willfulness, involved. This method of elucidation assumes that behind the obscurity and confusion of the text is a clear, meaning, and that the obscurity, moreover, is not part of the meaning.” See Stephen Orgel, “The Poetics of Incomprehensibility,” *SQ* 42.4 (Winter 1991): 431-437, 433.

³⁵ Lynn Enterline explores how the play presents gendered speech: “*The Winter’s Tale* defies an intuitive understanding of the difference between speech and silence—or, for that matter, the difference between agency and impotence, male and female, often allied with it,” 18. In the trial scene, “Hermione’s voice...put performative language on trial by its failure and, at the same time, connecting that failure to the central problem of the play” (17). See ““You speak a language that I understand not”: The Rhetoric of Animation in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *SQ* 48.1 (Spring 1997): 17-44.

making her troubles a group rather than individual effort. The stage directions often acknowledge the presence of other women who obediently remain with their queen even though they stay silent. Hermione even requests that her women remain with her as she makes her way to prison: “Who is’t that goes with me? Beseech your highness/My women may be with me, for you see/My plight requires it.” (2.1.116-8). The women who surround Hermione do so at their own risk because Leontes’ threatens anyone who might stand up for his wife: “Away with her to prison./He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty--/But that he speaks!” (2.1.102-4). In this regard, Leontes attempts to keep Hermione cordoned off, not only making her own testimony duplicitous but also tainting the words of anyone who might try to represent her interests.

The Winter’s Tale registers the idea that Hermione needs representation in a more significant sense by creating a character who will actually “speak for her” (2.1.103). And while one might rightly point out that early modern women cannot act as representatives, Shakespeare boldly creates an “audacious lady” (2.3.42) who, while not a lawyer, certainly uses her tongue in service of Hermione. And while other male courtiers attempt to persuade Leontes to stop his madness, Paulina is the only one who holds any sway. When Hermione is in prison giving birth, Paulina tells Emilia, the midwife, to tell Hermione that she will “use that tongue I have; if wit flow from’t/As boldness from my bosom, let’t not be doubted /I shall do good” (2.2.50-3). In place of Hermione’s tongue, Paulina will use hers in order to “do good” and make a case for Hermione. In this moment, Paulina makes clear what Hermione lacks by drawing attention to her own robust instrument, her tongue. The play intimates what is at stake if Paulina fails to use

her tongue: Hermione will remain an unrepresented character despite the fact that she is the impetus for the play's action.

But using her tongue is only one component of Paulina's responsibility to Hermione; as Hermione's surrogate, she uses the language of rights and logical argument to make a case for Hermione. Approaching the guard on behalf of her queen—"I say I come from your good Queen" (2.3.58)—she explains the rights of the newborn child who Leontes believes has been tainted by Hermione's wrongdoings: "You need not fear it, sir;/This child was prisoner to the womb, and is/By law and process of great nature thence/Freed and enfranchised, not a party to/The anger of the King, nor guilty of—/If any be—the trespass of the queen." (2.2.58-62). Paulina cogently defines a process in which the baby moves from the metaphorical prison of the womb to the freedom of birth. In doing so, she explains that the baby is not subject to Leontes' anger or tainted by the Queen not only because of "great nature" but also "by law." She supports her theory of rights with the material evidence of the baby's features; she looks just like Leontes. Always the outspoken supporter of Hermione, Paulina becomes a necessity, acting as her representative in both life, imprisonment, and death. The play radically undermines Leontes by making Hermione present to him through Paulina's representation of her.

While Paulina controls the statue's revelation within the play and must act as Hermione's voice at different turns, the actor also controls the aesthetic experience of the audience depending on the way he chooses to act. We might see a parallel between the actor playing Hermione and the character of Paulina, who both act in service of Hermione by mediating her voice. Just as Paulina must act as Hermione's representative, so too does the actor act as her representative by bringing forth Hermione onstage. How

does Paulina's claim that she owns the statue translate to the actor/character binary? Does considering the actor a representative change how we understand characters to emotionally identify or mimic the characters they represent? How might considering the actor a representative disrupt the binary between reality and fiction?

To begin to answer these questions, I would like to point out the connection between acting and the law underpins the theoretical term the chapter uses to elucidate the relationship between Hermione and Paulina. We should recall that Miguel Tamen's definition of representative is derived from the treatment of personified objects in ancient Greek courts, where judges ruled in cases against inanimate objects while lawyers acted as "friends" of these objects. The tradition of the lawyer as actor stems from descriptions of oration in ancient Rome: "When the speaker rises the whole throng will give a sign for silence, then expressions of assent, frequent applause...so that a mere passer-by observing from a distance, though quite ignorant of the case in question, will recognize that he is succeeding and that a Roscius is on the stage."³⁶ The parallels between law and the theater continued to be prominent in the early modern period. Rhetorical manuals such as Sir Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* claimed that the skill of eloquence was universally useful. Shakespeare, for instance, composed his plays using the conventions of classical rhetoric.³⁷

Quintilian's comparisons between the actor and the orator underpin his theory of rhetoric. He explains that readers should "draw a parallel from the stage, where the

³⁶ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Brutus*, trans. GL Hendrickson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), 84.290.

³⁷ See, for instance, Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language* (London: Penguin, 2000) and Paul Raffield, *Shakespeare Imaginary Constitution: Late Elizabethan Politics and the Theater of Law* (Oxford: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010).

actor's voice and delivery produce greater emotional effects when he is speaking in an assumed role than when he speaks in his own character."³⁸ The orator should "assimilate to....the emotions of those who are so genuinely affected."³⁹ While the orator should feel emotion, they still become impersonations and are fictitious. Quintilian bases these theories on his own experience as an orator: "I have frequently been so moved while speaking, that I have not merely been wrought upon to tears, but have turned pale and shown all the symptoms of genuine grief."⁴⁰ In this formulation, Quintilian is able to hold two opposite ideas in tension at the same time—a successful actor should be able to genuinely feel emotion while recognizing the fiction of his character.

Yet this fused identity often does not factor into a theory of acting in a complex way beyond acknowledging that an early modern actor's rhetoric had a profound impact on his body and mental state. Perhaps this omission is due in part to the fact that acting as an art form in its own right did not gain traction until the eighteenth century. Eighteenth century actors were committed to a mimetic process of acting; the best actors were detached, observing and imitating reality. The most celebrated articulation of a theory of acting is Denis Diderot's *Paradox on the Actor* (written 1773). For Diderot, the successful actor did not experience emotion as he acted because fierce passion did not lead to superb technique. Instead, the actor should approach the role with reason rather

³⁸ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education, Volume III: Books 6-8*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell. Loeb Classical Library 126. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 6.1.26-7.

³⁹ Ibid., 6.2.27

⁴⁰ Ibid., 6.2.35-36

than trying to emotional identify with his character.⁴¹ David Garrick, in his discussion of the 1740's production of *King Lear*, explains that he represented King Lear's madness by imitating his friend who had gone to an asylum after accidentally dropping his baby to their death: "I learned to imitate madness; I copied nature, and to that owed my success in *King Lear*."⁴²

And while theories of acting and its relationship to mimesis developed during the eighteenth century, the mimetic model of acting becomes overly emphasized as the predominant method in the early modern period. Because there are no theoretical accounts of acting in the early modern period like Diderot's *Paradox*, it is easy to neglect the complexity of the early modern actor. As William B. Worthen argues, "In the absence of an Elizabethan Stanislavsky, the meaning of acting must be gleaned from more remote materials, from conduct books, from remarks on acting in popular antitheatrical press, from the few apologies for the stage and for literature in general, and more distantly from the literary use of the actor and theater as metaphors."⁴³ Like Worthen suggests, the rest of the chapter will explore how thinking through the term representative alongside an assortment of accounts regarding early modern acting can move us beyond the impasse—the binary between fiction and reality—that so often plagues criticism of *The Winter's Tale*.

⁴¹ See Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985) for a thorough discussion of Diderot's views on acting, 116-160.

⁴² Cited in Allan Ingram with Michelle Faubert's *Cultural Constructions of Madness in Eighteenth-Century Writing: Representing the Insane* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 124.

⁴³ William B. Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor: Drama and the Ethics of Performance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 13.

Joseph Roach's seminal study *The Player's Passions* shows how Quintilian's theories greatly influenced early modern conceptions of acting. He explains how the process of acting revolved around early modern conceptions of rhetoric and its effects on physiology, detailing how strong the "force of the imagination" could be on the actors' bodies. Roach argues that early modern actors were most effective when they encouraged their passions while also exerting control over them.⁴⁴ Hamlet, for instance, instructs the players to "acquire and beget a temperance" that will "give smoothness" (3.2.7) to the "whirlwind...of his passion" (3.2.6).⁴⁵ In a similar vein, Thomas Wright's *The Passion of the Minde in Generall* (1604) explains that orators should experience the passions at the moment of their delivery in order to make the audience feel the same way. He modifies this by saying that orators should also "endeavour [to] imitate as lively as may be the nature of the passion [by]...Look[ing] upon other men appasionat and leave the excess and exorbitant levitie or other defects."⁴⁶ Both these accounts offer a model of feeling emotion that is moderated by either imitating or controlling emotion. The combination allays the fear that the actor will be swept away by an oversaturation of emotion. Acknowledging imitation as a stopgap for an excess of emotion suggests that imitation is not the primary means by which the actor creates his character.

Alongside truly feeling emotion, Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern discovered that understanding acting as ownership of a role better fits the way actors trained for the roles

⁴⁴ Joseph R. Roach, 52.

⁴⁵ William Shakespeare, "Hamlet," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 323-425. All citations are from this edition.

⁴⁶ Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*, ed. William Wester Newbold (New York: Garland, 1986).

they were given in the early modern period. In their groundbreaking study, Palfrey and Stern argue that, when actors trained for their roles, they were given not the entire text but parts of the text, containing only their characters' parts: a part "was the text an actor received, learned from, and in a very real sense *owned*. And that text contained on it all the words the actor was going to speak, but nothing that would be said to or about him." Along with the ownership of their part, they owned the character in another sense, considering that Shakespeare wrote characters for specific players. Palfrey and Stern argue that although "We are accustomed to thinking of actors being 'made' for parts; in the early modern theatre it was more common for parts to be made for actors." In fact, Shakespeare "wrote a play with actors already in mind, shaping each written part to a specific player, creating lines that explicitly matched an actor's size, vocal range, and mannerisms...In all kinds of ways, the parts Shakespeare wrote must have been contiguous to the lives enacting them: imitating them, commenting upon them, teaching them, laughing at them, compensating for them, even predicting them."⁴⁷ This argument raises the question whether the actor and character are actually the same person. We might be forgiven for wondering how much acting technique or imitation is required for a role that already fits your "size, vocal range, and mannerisms." Further, Palfrey and Stern suggest that these roles become a kind of critique of the actor's own life. Palfrey and Stern's study is important for our purposes because it blurs not only the distinction between actor and character but also deemphasizes the role of mimetic identification to acting technique.

⁴⁷ Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1; 40-1.

This intertwining of actor and character central to Palfrey and Stern's study is also apparent in audience responses to performances from the period. In *Pierce Penilesse*, Thomas Nashe explores the audience response, focusing on the character Talbot in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 1*:

How would it have joyed brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to think that after he had lyne two hundred years in his Tombe, hee should triumphe againe on the Stage, and have his bones new embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least, (at several times) who in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding.⁴⁸

For Nashe, "there is no immortalitie, can be given a man on Earth like unto Plays," especially considering how enraptured the audience is by the "Tragedian that represents [Talbot's] person." Nashe describes an actor so effective that the audience's tears further enliven a dead man. In fact, the actor becomes so aligned with his character that the audience believes "they behold him fresh bleeding." In other words, the actor "owns" his part so well that the audience overlooks the fact that he has "lyne two hundred years in his Tombe." Here, the audience becomes lulled into believing the actor has experienced real rather than figurative bodily harm.

What kind of interaction between actor and character is modeled in these studies and accounts of early modern acting? Two different yet related models of acting surface in these readings. On the one hand, we have the inability to distinguish where the actor ends and the character begins. The actor is in direct contact with the character at all times and the relationship is reciprocal. On the other hand, actors often could not extricate themselves from their roles, carrying on their performance after the play ends. The relationship between actor and character stems from neither emotional identification nor

⁴⁸ Thomas Nashe, "Pierce Peniless, His Supplication to the Devil," in *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, ed. J.B. Steane (New York: Penguin, 1985), 113.

imitation. These terms risk leading us to a model of acting that eliminates the change the actor undergoes by taking on the role. In fact, it is inaccurate to describe the process of acting and the performance of character in these terms. Emotional identification or imitation suggests a level of distance that is not evident in these examples because the actor slips right into the role and finds it hard to reemerge. These accounts emphasize emotional contiguity between actor and character, creating an alternative model of acting.

While the current way we understand the division between actor and character does not allow for an emotional contiguous relationship, understanding early modern acting in these terms allows us to consider how an actor's ownership of a role and intense emotional investment in his character upends the binary between reality and fiction. Thus, the theater's magic—the blurring of life and art—is only possible to the extent that the actor can enter into a relationship with his character. The strength of this kind of emotional contiguity does not make the character real, but it is also too rudimentary to say that the character is fictional. Calling the actor-character a representative opens up the possibility to explore the ontology of the actor-character in relation to one of the theater's most singular abilities—to make present the fictional. Before beginning a more detailed analysis of how performance criticism would benefit from using the term representative, I would like to recall a key scene from *Hamlet* in which similar ideas converge.

Shakespeare's most self-conscious exploration of theater and the process of acting is Hamlet's speech about the actor's tears for Hecuba and his own inability to take action as the player does. While critics consider Hamlet's speech an affirmation of mimesis, a model of emotional contiguity between the player and Hecuba would better explain

Hamlet's confusion in the scene—his inability to pin down how the player creates and cares for Hecuba and why he cannot produce the same passion:

Now I am alone.
 O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
 Is it not monstrous that this player here,
 But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
 Could force his soul so to his own conceit
 That from her working all his visage wann'd,
 Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
 A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
 With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!
 For Hecuba!
 What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
 That he should weep for her?
 What would he do,
 Had he the motive and the cue for passion
 That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
 And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
 Make mad the guilty and appal the free... (2.2.520-35)

I want to foreground several aspects of this soliloquy of the player's emotion, which will eventually prepare us to discuss how multiple levels of reality are at play. We can begin by noting that Hamlet is attracted to the player's effectiveness even though he explains that the player's inauthentic emotions are "monstrous." The character of Hecuba is "nothing" because the player is "in a fiction" or "a dream of passion." In Hamlet's opinion, the player must be imitating the motions of grief ("visage wann'd/Tears in his eye") to appear as Hecuba might.

Nevertheless, Hamlet acknowledges that the player's ability to produce these tears is somewhat of a violent process. In other words, the player does not simply study grief and attempt what he would have learned in Latin grammar school, specifically *actio* and

imitatio.⁴⁹ Hamlet considers the ability to act effectively a “monstrous” practice. The player must be moved to the point that he can accurately portray grief, but this requires him to “force” his soul in the process. The ability to bring a character to life requires an almost continuous form of intensity against the actor’s own soul. The violence is not about emotional imitation and delivery but suggests something deeper: the actor’s soul itself produces the actor’s gestures, voice, and expression. For this to occur, the actor would have to come quite close to the character; the emotional contiguity creates the violence.

While Hamlet begins his speech by scolding the players, he eventually begins to complain about his own inadequacies. He says “nothing” (2.2.561) despite his own authentic passion and criticizes the fact that he will never measure up to the player’s emotion and action. In contrast to the player, he is a “whore,” “a very drab,” and “a stallion” (5.83-7). His effort to denigrate the player while acknowledging the player’s success suggests an ambivalence that it’s “all for nothing.” As Robert Weimann points out, Hamlet’s “focus is neither exclusively that of Renaissance rhetoric... nor that of Elizabethan theatrical practice... What we have at the center of the utterance is the tension... between the wholesome mirror of representation and the distracting requirements of performance practice.”⁵⁰ Considering that Hamlet feels he should have the capacity to surpass the player given his “cue for passion” (2.2.569), it becomes even

⁴⁹See Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 120-53 for a discussion of the use of Hecuba in both Latin grammar schools and Shakespeare’s texts.

⁵⁰ Robert Weimann, *Author’s Pen and Actor’s Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare’s Theatre*, eds. Helen Higbee and William West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 159.

more extraordinary that the player succeeds where Hamlet fails. Thus, the question—“What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,/That he should weep for her?”—that Hamlet raises should be considered alongside the player’s success and Hamlet’s failure. Rather than ask the question to probe the ethical ramifications of training someone to embody a fictional character and emote insincerely,⁵¹ the question should be taken as a serious inquiry into the nature of fictional characters. What precisely is the relationship between the player and Hecuba, especially in light of Stern and Palfrey’s study?

The question thus brings us back to the strength of force an actor must use to represent the character. The phrase “forcing the soul” demands a relational space between actor and character that does justice to the intensity of the player’s practice. For instance, when Hamlet asks the player to recite a speech from memory, he describes the speech as something that “live[s in the player’s] memory” (2.2.372), suggesting that the player’s memory of the part is not static or learned through repetition. The phrase “lives in” better describes the memory of a character rather than the character’s speech. In this regard, the relationship between an actor and character is one in which the character lives on in the actor, who acts as a kind of host for the fictional being. As Stern and Palfrey’s study suggests, the relational space between actor and character is mysterious because it seems as if both the actor and Hecuba selected each other, as if the audience will never quite comprehend what they mean to each other, and that the relationship exists on a personal level, resulting in ownership of the part.

It has become a critical commonplace to invoke the issue of presence when discussing the relationship between reality and fiction or mimesis and theater. In the

⁵¹ See Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom*, 120-53

seminal *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms*, Bert O. States explains that, in contrast to the semioticians, approaching the theater phenomenologically opens a new angle on presence: “We tend to generally undervalue the elementary fact that theater—unlike fiction, painting, sculpture, and film—is really a language whose words consist to an unusual degree of things that *are* what they seem to be.”⁵² And while States sees his work in opposition to the semioticians, John Searle’s argument about presence and theater is conceptually similar to that of States. Searle argues that presence occurs in theater because of the difference between how theater and narrative represent action: “A fictional story is a pretended representation of a state of affairs; but a play, that is a play as performed, is not a pretended representation of a state of affairs but the pretended state of affairs itself.”⁵³

While States and Searle find the theater’s ability to take “a bite” out of “actuality” as the defining characteristic of theater’s superiority,⁵⁴ critics find it difficult to avoid discussing theater as a set binary between the actual and the represented. As a result, questions of how the action on stage is both real—happening in the “now”—and fictional plague performance criticism. For instance, Keir Elam argues that “With respect to the ‘real’ world of performers and spectators, and in particular the immediate theatrical context, it [the dramatic world] is a spatio-temporal *elsewhere* represented as though

⁵² Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1985), 20.

⁵³ While States advances a concept of theater based upon a binary relationship between the mimetic and the real, deconstructionist thinkers like Jacques Derrida began to challenge these assumptions. Derrida, for instance, argued that “pure presence” is not real or could not be accessed.

⁵⁴ Bert O. States, 36

actually present for the audience.”⁵⁵ In a similar vein, Anne Ubersfeld argues that “What appears on the stage is a concrete reality—objects and people whose concrete existence is never questioned. Although they indisputably exist...they are at the same time denied, marked with a minus sign. A chair on the stage is not a chair in the real world...Everything that happens on stage...is marked by unreality.”⁵⁶ A question that arises from these readings of presence is whether the theater can ever be discussed without acknowledging its “unreality” despite being composed of real things such as people and chairs. In other words, while it might be the superior medium for representing fictional things as real, theater is still like other forms of media in the end, providing only the illusion that it can circumvent the real-fictional binary.

It might seem like a pedestrian point, but it is important to emphasize that the action occurring on stage is, in fact, part of the real and fictional world at the same time. This fact is even more pronounced in the early modern period, given how intertwined the representational and presentational modes are. In his seminal work on stage geography, Robert Weimann maps these modes onto the *locus*, a “self-contained space in the world of the play,”⁵⁷ which is at some distance from the audience; and the *platea*, a platform-like area close to the audience, where actors represented characters and “(re)presented themselves.”⁵⁸ And though Weimann focuses on stage geography, these modes are even more apparent when analyzing the early modern actor. Weimann and Bruster understand

⁵⁵ Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (New York and London: Routledge, 1980), 99.

⁵⁶ Anne Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, Trans. by Frank Collins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 24.

⁵⁷ Robert Weimann, 181.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 196

acting as an act of disappearance: “Let us glance, then, at the state of things whereby an “excellent actor” appears to be *lost* in the image of his or her role...the living personator seems to disappear in the image of an imaginary personated.”⁵⁹ Erika T. Lin points out that “early modern theatre traded on its ability to erase the actor’s body: in order for plays to become intelligible in repertory theatre... [the] actor’s body had to become unimportant.”⁶⁰ Madhavi Menon argues that “theatre is the only literary arena that calls for physical bodies to enact its tales....characters do not exist on stage in bodily form—the actor’s body simply takes on the character.”⁶¹ While these readings have an awareness of the fluidity of binary oppositions, they still reproduce some of the problems inherent to performance criticism because they either emphasize the actor over the character or vice versa.

Instead, the term representative is a useful, theoretical concept for several reasons. It encompasses both the actor—the living element—and the fiction of the character rather than emphasizing a binary. Considering the actor-character as a representative in the moment of acting combines the two identities without emphasizing or erasing one in favor of the other. Moreover, the term representative is inherently agential because it refers to the agent producing the representation. And while the term is linked to representation, the difference between them is crucial: representatives “act for” someone

⁵⁹ Robert Weimann and Douglas Bruster, *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance: Stage and Page in the Elizabethan Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2008), 19.

⁶⁰ Erika T. Lin, *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 143.

⁶¹ Madhavi Menon, “Desire,” in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 330.

else while representations “stand for” someone else.⁶² In this regard, the term “representative” privileges what makes the theater most real. In other words, the character interacts with reality because the actor not only creates the character outside the confines of the theater but also can carry on and act on behalf of the character after the performance.

The term allows us to consider how the actor-character might be considered “living art” beyond thinking of theater just as a blurring of art and life or as a simplistic example of the *theatrum mundi* trope. For instance, Shakespeare wrote many of his best parts with Richard Burbage in mind. An anecdote from John Manningham in 1602 demonstrates the extent to which Burbage carried his part of Richard III past the performance:

Upon a time, when Burbage played Richard III, there was a citizen grew so far in liking with him that before she went from the play she appointed him to come that night unto her by the name of Richard the Third. Shakespeare overhearing their conclusion, went before, was entertained, and at his game ere Burbage came. Then, message being brought that Richard the Third was at the door, Shakespeare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third.⁶³

While the story is meant to be humorous—the spectator enjoyed Burbage’s role so much so she asked him to come as Richard III to a gathering—it demonstrates the extent to

⁶² See Helen F. Pitkin’s seminal work on a political theory of representation in *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1967). In chapter 6, Pitkin discusses the difference between representation and representatives. Representatives are authorized by those they represent and must advance their constituents’ interests. While this is about political representation, the language is similar to the way Tamen describes representatives of inanimate objects. Thus, the distinction between representatives and representation could also apply to actor-character relationships and the performance as a whole because the actors generate change and advance the interests of their characters.

⁶³ John Manningham, *The Diary of John Manningham of Middle Temple, 1602-1603*, ed. Robert Parker Sorlien (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1976), 75.

which early modern characters could travel outside the immediate world of the theater and interact with their “real” audience members. This anecdote shows that Burbage went to the gathering as both himself and his character, suggesting the ease with which audience members interacted with fictional entities and their ability to understand the actor-character as both real and fictional. Additionally, the relationship between Burbage and his audience literalizes the *theatrum mundi* trope. Here, we see Jacques’ famous formulation—“All the world’s a stage,/And all the men and women merely players” (2.7.138-9)⁶⁴—occurring in real time, compelling Shakespeare himself to join in role-playing.⁶⁵

Considering the actor as a representative, especially in light of these accounts, helps us to rethink the impetus for this section—the living actor who stands in place of a stone statue of Hermione. While Meek finds that the scene “creates enough confusion to make some critics write about Hermione as if she were a real person,”⁶⁶ I have found the confusion generative. In what ways is the character of Hermione a real person? Even though this chapter does not claim that Hermione *is* a real person, it does suggest that the real-fictional binary set up by many theater critics creates an impasse that never fully addresses why an actor might stand for a stone instead of an actual stone. If we understand acting as emotional investment rather than imitation, it should not be surprising that an actor might “act more stone” than stone—as Leontes claims of his own

⁶⁴ William Shakespeare, “As You Like It,” in *The Norton Shakespeare*

⁶⁵ See Meredith Anne Skura’s *Shakespeare, the Actor, and the Purposes of Playing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) for a discussion of Shakespeare as an actor.

⁶⁶ Richard Meek, *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, 175.

hardened attitude—in an effort to advance the interests of Hermione, an entity that has interests just like the actor himself.

The Living Poem: Poetry beyond Mimesis in Mary Wroth's *Urania*

Poems do not usually act as if they are alive in early modern narratives. In Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621), however, there are particularly striking descriptions of animated poems. Consider these examples. In the opening sequence, the narrative's titular character, Urania, discovers a paper that "present[s] a Sonnet" after having "suffered it selfe patiently,"¹ waiting to be found. Elsewhere, Pamphilia, after finding her poems dissatisfactory, gives them a "burial" in order to destroy them. In a similar fashion, Antissa commits her verses to a figurative death. The narrator explains that "some thing there was that so much molested her as she leap'd from her stoole, ranne to the fire, [and] threw in the paper" (327). The lifelike and mimetic descriptors usually reserved for forms of visual art—like a painting or a statue—are transferred to words, usually considered rather inert.

The motif of living poems is not only unique to but thematically and structurally significant in Mary Wroth's narrative. While early modern authors imagined the effects of poetry on minds and bodies of readers, Wroth's poems behave as if they are alive and are persons in their own right. This chapter examines how Wroth bestows agency and intent on poetry; the fact that poems enter into mutually enabling relationships with their authors and readers suggest that Wroth's poems do not fit into Philip Sidney's prescriptive definition of mimesis.

¹ Mary Wroth, *The First Part of Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, in *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies*, ed. Josephine Roberts (Binghamton: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1995), 3. All citations are from this edition.

This chapter raises two main questions: How do we understand these living poems ontologically, and how do the presentation and experience of these poems revise a mimetic model of early modern poetry? If the purpose of poetry is to “teach and delight” readers, as Philip Sidney explains in *The Defense of Poesy*, why does Wroth pursue this goal by figuring poems as alive? What version of representation issues from poems that cause events and modify storylines within the fictional world of *Urania*? Wroth’s living poems raise a set of questions about the potential of poetic language to act and create rather than to describe and represent a state of affairs; her narrative suggests that poetry’s power lies in its performative potential to call events into existence.

The narrative of the *Urania* features hundreds of characters and countless plotlines, making the text exceptionally unruly. Likewise, my readings will also prove unruly as I look at a range of poetry’s “living” qualities. The chapter traces how Wroth’s living poems resist representation. There are three consequences to depicting poems that resist representation. Although written down for the reader of the *Urania*, the poems are living because they often remain as mental constructions that register on the author’s body. When they are represented, they often do not record events or feelings but provide their reader with access to an immediate experience. The poems diffuse rapidly, moving between characters who feel the poem speaks to their experiences even if they have not written them. This last point is crucial: Because the characters find similarities between each other, the poems are not the central act of imitation. Instead, the poems act as events, changing the narrative, while the characters and plotlines mimetically proliferate.

Wroth is celebrated as the first woman to write both a prose romance and a sonnet sequence. This chapter argues that she is also the first early modern author to merge a

mimetic theory of behavior with a performative theory of poetry. Using the theories of J.L. Austin and Judith Butler, I argue that Wroth anticipates a theory of poetry that relies on performative utterance; the repetition of poetry in the *Urania* propels the characters to develop and transform. While she recognizes that poetry's immersive qualities make present virtual worlds, Wroth's narrative suggests that performative utterance is the mechanism behind poetry's power to change the world. Thus, this chapter considers how Wroth's living poems can reflect on the relationship between reader, poem, and world, and how they refine and resist Sidney's definition of poetry.

While scholars point out that the *Urania*'s title page promotes her distinguished literary genealogy², recognizing her as the "Neece to the ever famous, and renowned Sr Philips Sidney knight" and "Lady Mary Countesse of Pembroke," Wroth goes beyond many of the theories set forth by *The Defense*. If we were to consult *The Defense* for an explanation regarding the process that Wroth's characters undergo, we would come up short. Sidney recognizes poetry's foremost ability to move the reader to do virtuous action ("that moving is of a higher degree than teaching"),³ but he does not explain a precise process other than that poetry presents virtuous models that move the reader to emulate. In a similar vein, instances of poetry in Sidney's *Old and New Arcadias* often have a moral function. As Barbara Lewalski argues, the *Old Arcadia*, for instance, "devised a mixed genre work – heroic–pastoral–comedic – that might move princes and

² Margaret Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth* (New York: Ashgate, 2010), 233.

³ Sr. Phillip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*, in *Sidney's "The Defence of Poesy" and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Gavin Alexander (London: Penguin, 2004), 22.

their counsellors to wise political action in complex ways that are specific to poetry.”⁴

For Lewalski, Sidney moves the reader “not by eliciting powerful emotional responses to models of virtue and vice as the Defence proposes... Instead, this work develops a more complex strategy that engages the reader to follow the principal characters – kings, princes, and princesses – along a tortuous path to greater self-knowledge.”⁵ However, the reading strategy that Lewalski proposes for the *Old Arcadia* sounds particularly similar to the strategy Sidney proposes in the *The Defense*. Lewalski seems to suggest that the reader will observe and reflect on the “principal characters” by following “along a tortuous path.” This sounds like a process of emulation despite the fact that the reading process—or path—might take longer to get through. Further, Lewalski does not explain exactly how Sidney’s readers are “moved” to virtuous political action. What occurs during the process of emulation? Is it the same for every reader? What kind of imaginative processing ensues? Thus, Wroth’s strategy of describing pieces of paper as having specific agential and person-like attributes is actually a more plausible way of describing poetic experience than stating that a virtuous model should lead to emulation. Wroth’s imagery of the animated poem matches the intensity a reader undergoes as they change their behavior from reading a poem. By figuring poems as living, Wroth suggests that poetry is a force to be reckoned with.

The distinctiveness of Wroth’s experiment emerges when we compare her treatment of lyric in the *Urania* to that of Sidney’s theory of poetry. I turn to Wroth’s *Urania*, in particular, because she does not have the same goals—to prove poetry’s moral

⁴ Barbara K. Lewalski, “How Poetry Moves Readers: Sidney, Spenser, and Milton,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 80.3 (Summer 2011): 756-768, 758.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 759-760

role—as Sidney. This allows her to “freely range in the zodiac of one’s wit,”⁶ as Sidney puts it in *The Defense*. Instead, Wroth reveals a multiplicity of dynamics between author, reader, and poem as sprawling as the *Urania* itself.⁷ However, authorship in the *Urania* has commonly been theorized in terms of questions about gender, biography, and the way in which women are treated within the patriarchal social structure.⁸ My chapter

⁶ Sidney, 9

⁷ Most critical studies of Wroth’s *Urania* propose a way to read the text by focusing on themes or patterns because the *Urania* is an overwhelming reading experience. Mary Ellen Lamb explains what writing about the *Urania* entails: “To write about the *Urania* at all requires a form of rewriting: a section of events according to the reader’s own critical agenda to create a coherent pattern. Of necessity, this artificial coherence distorts a central feature of the *Urania*: a refusal to cohere.” See “The Biopolitics of Romance in Mary Wroth’s *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*,” *ELR* 31.1 (2001): 107-30, 107. While I do not agree that the *Urania* does not have any coherent pattern, picking out certain episodes over others contributes to particular critical agendas.

⁸ Barbara K. Lewalski argues that Wroth deviates from Sidney’s model of romance by focusing on issues of gender and women’s writing. See “Authorship and Author-Characters created by Philip Sidney and Mary Wroth,” in *Rereading Mary Wroth*, ed. Katherine R. Larson and Naomi J. Miller with Andrew Strycharski (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 35-51. Paul Salzman suggests that the multiple voices, narratives, and characters “unfix the univocal nature of patriarchal discourse, and certainly as the questioning of any essentialized position on political or gender issues” (117). See “The Strang[e] Constructions of Mary Wroth’s *Urania*: Arcadian Romance and the Public Realm,” in *English Renaissance Prose: History, Language and Politics*, ed. Neil Rhodes (Tempe, Arizona: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), 109-24. Daniel Juan Gil argues that Wroth’s poetic authorship suggests “a desire to become the object of public reading and consumption; far from seeking to escape the position of the spoken-for and spoken-of token of other desires, Wroth seeks to constitute herself as the poetic, literary and public currency from which the eyes of a contemporary readership cannot turn away” (76). See “The Currency of the Beloved and the Authority of Lady Mary Wroth,” *Modern Language Studies* 29.2 (1999): 73–92. In *Changing the Subject: Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 182-233, Naomi Miller argues that Wroth’s focus on the depiction of intimacy among women and the rise of a *Écriture* feminine. Nona Fienberg argues that Wroth creates a female subject through the act of writing and authorship. See “Mary Wroth’s Poetics of the Self,” *SEL, 1500-1900* 42 (2002): 121-36. Caroline Ruth Swift argues that the *Urania* “reveals the loss of identity that women experience in a society that victimizes them” (329). See “Feminine Identity in Lady Mary Wroth’s Romance *Urania*,” *ELR* 14.3 (1984): 328-46. Various studies claim that the *Urania* show instances of female authority and expression despite

attempts to follow a pattern of poetic composition and appropriation that cuts across both genders. Studies that take into account questions of gender have been particularly illuminating, but they have obscured other approaches to authorship and reading in the *Urania*. By attending to a gendered version of poetics, critics remove Wroth from a more general discussion of poetics, considering that Sidney's *Arcadias* are often discussed in connection with his *Defense*. In this way, we might read Wroth's *Urania* as a kind of theory of poetics.

Wroth goes beyond the terms Sidney sets up in *The Defense* by foregrounding the energy of the written artifact, creating different models of poetic liveliness.⁹ Throughout the *Urania*, Pamphilia conflates her poems with a living being, a tree, figuring instances of poetry as a literal living thing.¹⁰ This is clearest in the passage when Pamphilia "ingraves in the barke of one of those fayre and straight Ashes" in her distress over her absent love, Amphilanthus: " "Nay," said shee, "since I find no redresse, I will make others in part taste my paine, and make them dumbe partakers of my grieve." Then taking a knife, she finished a Sonnet, causing the sapp to accompany her teares for love, that for

patriarchal restrictions. See, for instance, Maureen Quilligan, "*The Constant Subject: Instability and Female Authority in Wroth's Urania Poems*," in *Soliciting Interpretation*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), 273-306.

⁹ In "'I Can neither Write nor Be Silent': The Circulation of Women's Texts in Sidney's *Old Arcadia*," *Literature Compass* 3.2 (2006): 95-106, Lucian Ghita argues that *The Old Arcadia* is filled with "women's scenes of writing," and these scenes "challenge the exclusion of women from the production and dissemination of texts . . . [and] draws attention to the importance of reading these acts of writing situationally" (96). His emphasis on "reading acts of writing situationally" is central to my method of reading.

¹⁰ See Leah Knight's *Reading Green in Early Modern England* (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2014) for an ecocritical reading of Pamphilia's tree. In her reading, the tree does not sympathize with Pamphilia because it is violently inscribed; instead, the tree makes her *feel* like a superior author. Pamphilia believes that the tree empathizes with her when its sap runs (102).

unkindness” (92). In this moment, the tree fulfills the language that has been written on it, making the tree and the poem one and the same. After having written on the bark, Pamphilia moves down to the roots, inscribing the tree with more verse: “My thoughts thou hast supported without rest,/My tyred body here hath laine opprest” (93). The scene emphasizes the reciprocal nature between poem, its content, and the author. The verse resists becoming a representation of Pamphilia’s state because it anticipates her actions, considering that she then “lay[s] her sad perfections on the grass” (93). Through apostrophic address, the tree, and the poem both become an extension of Pamphilia’s “tyred body.”

An apostrophe transforms an inanimate, absent, or mute object into a speaking subject.¹¹ Unlike a singular lyric that requires its reader to imagine that an absent object gains voice from an apostrophic address, a lyric embedded within a narrative provides the reader with the effects of the apostrophic address over an extended period of time. In the *Urania*, the narrative frame surrounding the poem attests to the power of apostrophe by showing not only the tree’s response to Pamphilia’s grief but also how Pamphilia’s attention moves to and from different natural elements to quell her grief. The *Urania*, then, makes use of the device in the same way that Renaissance rhetoricians described the term. As J. Douglas Kneale argues, “apostrophe, or its Latin equivalent *aversion*, differs from simple direct address in that apostrophe is, as Quintilian puts it, a “diversion” of

¹¹ See Paul de Man, “Autobiography as Defacement,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). De Man connects apostrophe and personification when he argues that “the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity...posits the possibility of the latter’s reply and confers upon it the power of speech” (75).

speech from an original audience.”¹² In other words, Pamphilia diverts her attention to a tree when she “finde[s] no redresse” from her “low greene bed” and “Sweet Land” (92). But the poem’s potential to endow the tree with a kind of subjectivity works differently than expected: it collapses the object with the words of the poem or, put otherwise, the poem and object exist in a symbiotic connection. Spoken address is not enough to cause a response from the tree; the tree can speak—its sap runs—because it has been written on. In doing so, the poem as tree literalizes the poem’s living qualities, gesturing to a kind of “liveliness” inherent to poetic language. The address to the tree, then, raises anew the question of how a poem grants liveliness to both its subject and itself.

Theoretical considerations of lyric differ in their explanations of how poetry animates the objects they address. In his seminal study of apostrophe in Romantic lyric, Jonathan Culler argues that “to apostrophize...is to will a state of affairs into being by asking inanimate objects to bend themselves to your desire. In these terms the function of apostrophe would be to make the objects of the universe potentially responsive forces...The apostrophizing poet identifies his universe as a world of sentient forces.”¹³ But, as Paul Alpers counters, in Renaissance lyric, “apostrophe does not have a unique or even unusual importance in Renaissance *prosopopeia*” and that “personification

¹² J. Douglas Kneale, “Wordsworth, Milton, and a Question of Genre,” *Modern Philology* 109.2 (November 2011):197-220, 207-8.

¹³ Jonathan D. Culler, “Apostrophe,” in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1981). See also Barbara Johnson’s definition of apostrophe: “apostrophe is a form of ventriloquism through which the speaker throws voice, life, and human form into the addressee, turning its silence into mute responsiveness” in “Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion,” *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 28-47, 30. While her definition is useful, she also argues that the speaker loses life in the process. Instead, this chapter looks at how the speaker and the addressee are mutually enabling.

precedes, rather than is the consequence of, an address to what is inanimate.”¹⁴ Alpers argues that Renaissance lyrics frequently use social modes of address because they show first-person speakers writing to “empirical listeners.”¹⁵

While Alpers is right to point out that theories of the lyric should be more historically driven, I am not interested in positing whether apostrophe or personification animates Pamphilia’s tree to the point of response. The narrative suggests that inscribing the tree frustrates causality, making it difficult to disentangle whether address or personification occurs first. I am instead concerned with apostrophe for two reasons: First, resorting to personification as the principal explanation of the tree’s liveliness makes the concept of a “living poem” figurative and easier to digest, obscuring how and to what degree a poem might be considered “living.” Second, as Culler explains, “apostrophe is different in that it makes its point by troping not on the meaning of a word but on the circuit or situation of communication itself.”¹⁶ The poems within Wroth’s *Urania* are part of a complex communication circuit due to the narrator’s framing of poetic experience and the way in which poems move between authors and readers. While apostrophic address animates, the narrator substantiates how authors and readers experience these poems. As a narrative, the *Urania* underscores the idea of poetry in real time by providing a sequence that frames scenes of poetic composition, reading, and listening. Consider, for instance, that we learn Perissus’ sonnet in the opening of the *Urania* “seemed newly written” (2), a fact that only a narrative frame can provide. What

¹⁴ Paul Alpers, “Apostrophe and the Rhetoric of Renaissance Lyric,” *Representations* 122.1 (Spring 2013): 1-22, 11 and 18.

¹⁵ Ibid., 8

¹⁶ Jonathan Culler, 135

might be left unspoken when we read poetry is expressed by the narrator in Wroth's narrative. Thus, the narrator helps to explain how we are to understand the complexity with which authors and readers respond to poems. For instance, the narrator asks us to conceive of poems as life forces or as persons: when Pamphilia leaves the grove, she gives the tree, and, by extension her poem, a "farewell-looke...as one would doe to a trusty friend" (93).

While the poem-tree provides one model of a living poem, the *Urania* often equates poetry with the author's mind and body, giving the term living poem a new dimension. We might recall the moment when, unknown to him, Leandrus finds Pamphilia making poetry. While the narrator has privileged knowledge about what occurs in Pamphilia's mind when she writes poetry, and Wroth reproduces Pamphilia's sonnet for the reader of the *Urania*, the other characters are left to wonder. Leandrus is unaware that Pamphilia is in the middle of producing poetry when he sees her in a trance-like state in the garden. Delineating the process of poetic production leaves out many of the layers that Wroth's narrator provides:

Leandrus remaining in the Court, and his passions more violently increasing to the height of discovering, looking out the window, saw Pamphilia alone in a faire garden, walking in such a manner, as he could hardly give it that title; for so stilly did she move, as if the motion had not been in her, but that the earth did go her course, and stirre, or as trees grow without sence of increase. But while this quietly outward apprear'd, her inward thought more busie were, and wrought, while this Song came into her mind. 212

In this moment, the narrator makes the reader privy to Pamphilia creating poetry, but Leandrus is left mystified. From the narrator's perspective, Pamphilia seems to be in control—her "inward thought [is] more busie" as she creates. Much like the narrator's other descriptions, Pamphila's process is an active one, one that relies on Pamphilia's agency—she "*brings*...verses to her mind" and "*casts* some Verses" (146, 458; emphasis

added). The narrator's observation of Pamphilia through Leandrus' eyes, however, suggests that Pamphilia is dazed and nearly immobile. The difference in the narrator and Leandrus' perspectives are illuminating because they dramatize the gap between what happens when one writes or reads poetry and what others can discern or put into words about the experience. Moving between different perspectives also reformulates the gap as a problem of mind-body connection; aesthetic experience manifests differently in the mind and on the body. Despite the differences in focalization, the narrative suggests that Pamphilia becomes the medium of the poem. Just as the tree and the poem are conflated, so too does the poem and the author become one and the same. Wroth reproduces Pamphilia's poem for the reader of the *Urania*—a non-diegetic element—but the poem is left unspoken and unwritten within the story world. In other words, the poem remains within Pamphilia's mind even though Leandrus unknowingly detects poetic creation as part of her body. Even though the reader of the *Urania* is able to read the poem, Wroth frustrates defining Pamphilia's poem as a representation because the poem never actually leaves the boundary of the author's person.¹⁷

On more than one occasion, Wroth grapples with this kind of poetic model by detailing the moment before poems become representations. The thinking faculty is nowhere more apparent than in the descriptions of Pamphilia's poetry. Consider, for instance, these examples: when Pamphilia is in the Garden Woods with Antissa, she

¹⁷ See Bernadette Diane Andrea, "Pamphilia's Cabinet: Gendered Authorship and Empire in Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*," *ELH* 68.2 (Summer 2001): 335-358 for an alternative reading of the poems that do not leave Pamphilia's mind. For Andrea, this moment "reinscribes the contained position of the woman writer in the romance (and, by extension, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English culture). She may write, but only from the limits of her own room; she may preserve her writing, but only within the confines of her own mind" (335).

“br[ings]...Verses to her mind, wherein she then imprinted them” (146). Elsewhere, Pamphilia “cast[s] some Verses Sonnet-waies in her thoughts” (458). For Pamphilia, poetry exists not in the already created product but in the act of “casting” and “bringing” verse to her mind. After doing so, Pamphilia will “imprint” or “utter” the verses but not always. In fact, the poems appear fully formed in the mind and curiously feature proper poetic form known as “Sonnet-waies” as if the poem’s artifice appears immediately upon creation. To be sure, the narrator acknowledges that many of Pamphilia’s poems are written down and have the potential to be shared. But by highlighting the mind’s role and then the representation of the poem, the narrative clearly indicates the initial lack of a tangible medium of Pamphilia’s poetry. For Wroth, poetry can exist without a legible language; in other words, the narrative often does not record every poem for a character or reader’s consumption.

Wroth will continue to gesture to a poem’s intangibility by using the common early modern trope of the eye-mirror. On her journey to find Silviana, for instance, she stops to make a sonnet: “her thoughts more perfectly setting themselves before her eye, which as the streme she made her glasse, she with many sorrowfull sighs, and deepe groanes uttered this Sonnet” (481). Here, Pamphilia’s eyes become the reflection of her poem as her “thoughts more perfectly set themselves before her eye.” Although the narrator uses some of the common terminology for poem as reflection, the reflection resides within the author and appears in the middle of creation. Once Pamphilia utters the sonnet, she responds—“Yes I doe live” (481)—to the question with which her sonnet ends—“My Paradice of joy gone, doe I live?” (481). Once uttered, the poem spills past its own borders as it becomes a dialogue with the author. Poems, then, are fluid entities,

occurring to characters as they experience different trials. In this way, Wroth challenges the view that the act of creating poetry and the representation of poetry are easily disentangled. It is difficult to discern when the creation of poetry begins and ends in the *Urania* because the created product remains tethered to the act of creation. Taken together, these moments suggest that creation and representation are too closely aligned to discuss as opposing conditions. In other words, the poems represent the characters' experiences and emotions only if we ignore the way they are produced and the way they are preserved.

When poetry is mediated by language, poems do not represent feelings and events; instead, they give the reader access to immediate experience. The relationship between poetry and immediate experience is apparent in the opening sequence of the romance when Urania, lacking knowledge about her parentage, bemoans her miserable condition. Urania chooses to leave the meadow to avoid other shepherds and composes the first poem about finding solace in the natural world. Desiring to be alone, Urania's poetic voice—Echo's mirroring "answere"—becomes Urania's "friend of [her] own choice" (2). Existing in a completely solitary state, however, becomes an impossible condition when she stumbles upon Perissus's sonnet. Urania and Perissus are figured as mournful poets though they are depressed for different reasons: Urania is upset over her unknown origins while Perissus pines for Limena. Echo's mirroring response finds a new vehicle in Perissus' sonnet. The opening stanza of Perissus' sonnet echoes Urania's and creates a link between the poets: "Here all alone in silence might I mourne/But how can silence be where sorrowes flow?" (2). Yet the narrative goes beyond figuring melancholic partners in its curious framing of Urania's recognition of Perissus's sonnet.

Passing through a rock into a little room, Urania finds:

in the midst there was a square stone, like to a prettie table, and on it a wax-candle burning; and by that a paper, which had suffered it selfe patiently to receive the discovering of so much of it, as presented this Sonnet (as it seemed newly written) to her sight... “Alas Urania!” sigh’d she. “How well doe these words, this place, and all agree with thy fortune? sure poore soule thou wert here appointed to spend thy daies, and these rooms ordain’d to keepe thy tortures in; none being assuredly so matchlessly unfortunate.” 3

I want to foreground several aspects of this account, which will eventually prepare us to explore how *Urania* approaches poetry as immediate experience. We can begin by noting the poem’s power. Just as Antissa’s poem assaults her, so too does the paper, animated by the desire to be read, possess a force. Much like a person, the paper “suffers” and “patiently” waits to be found. As if weary of waiting, the paper “presents” itself to Urania. We do not learn who wrote the poem until after Urania reads it. The lack of an explicit author suggests that the paper exists solely for the reader because the original author of the poem remains unknown at this time. In its living form, the sonnet completely describes Urania’s state, as if she wrote the poem. She does not simply identify with the poem’s affective content because she cannot conceive of someone who “matches” her misfortune. She believes the poem must be hers, failing to consider that someone else might have wrote it. In other words, the only author of the poem she can envision is herself.

In Wroth’s formulation, the sonnet belongs to neither author nor reader because the poem can speak authentically to a range of experiences. Certainly, one could interpret Urania’s consumption of Perissus’ sonnet as an exemplary case of rhetorical persuasion. Perissus’ sonnet moves Urania to such a degree she believes the poem describes her own feelings accurately. This is similar to Cleophila and Philoclea’s poem in Sidney’s *Old*

Arcadia.¹⁸ But this reading ignores the fact that the narrative turns to the actual author after Urania claims the sonnet speaks to her experience completely, a prior experience that does not match the particulars of Perissus' state entirely. Moreover, the poem contains details that make it difficult for Urania to completely appropriate the poem, a fact that was not present in the Cleophila's poem. Urania envisions herself the author of a poem that explicitly references Perissus' lost love, Limena: "Such teares for her I shed" (3). These details cause a degree of tension within an otherwise seamless switch between author and reader. Nonetheless, as the narrative's superior author, it is important to take Urania's feelings that the poem "matches" her seriously. Wroth seems to suggest that, despite particulars, a poem is recreated in each composition/reading rather than existing as a static representation of a feeling or an event. As a succession of experiences, the poem exists in a fluid or living state, belonging to neither poet nor reader.

The conventions of lyric poetry do not allow such fluid identifications to occur. Petrarchan love poetry in particular limits the relationship between the male lyric subject and the beloved. Despite the fact that the beloved drives the motivation for the poem, the male subject objectifies the female beloved, making her absent and mute.¹⁹ As a result, the lyric upholds the speaking subject at the expense of the female's voice, highlighting

¹⁸ In *The Old Arcadia*, Philoclea overhears Cleophila's poem, responding that the poem "might with more cause have been spoken by her own mouth." However, "Over these brookes" does not contain the particulars that Perissus' sonnet does. This is one of the only scenes in *The Old Arcadia* that features a similar description of poetic appropriation to that of Wroth's descriptions. See Philip Sidney's *The Old Arcadia*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 113. Wroth revisits and revises this concept of appropriation throughout the *Urania*.

¹⁹ Stella, however, does speak briefly in Sidney's sonnet sequence.

the lack of reciprocity between them.²⁰ Wroth's opening, however, revises this lack by severing the I-authorial subject from the speaking voice. By exploring the separation between author and voice, the narrative defines the I as flexible—one that is neither reflective of an actual author nor entirely invented. Wroth allows not only the author to write from a number of subject positions but also allows the reader or listener to usurp the author's position.

Theorists of the lyric, who recognize the power of the lyric reader, often emphasize the the reader's identity in his or her reading of the lyric.²¹ Helen Vendler, in her influential account of Shakespeare's sonnets, has suggested that reading a lyric is like reading a "script": "One is to utter them as one's own words, not as the words of another...It is indispensable, then, if we are to be made to want to enter the lyric script, that the voice offered for our use be "believable" to us, resembling a "real voice" coming from a "real mind" like our own."²² For Vendler, the stipulation that a lyric must seem "believable" suggests that an element of the unbelievable is already at play. While the reader must utter the words as his own, Vendler's understanding of the lyric as a script

²⁰ Wroth's sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* reverses these gender norms by figuring a woman speaker addressing her absent beloved. See Naomi J. Miller, "Rewriting Lyric Fictions: The Role of the Lady in Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*," in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, eds. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 295-310 for an argument about how Wroth revises Petrarchan norms between the beloved and the object of desire.

²¹ "Lyric Reading" is a term coined by Virginia Jackson, who derives the term from Paul de Man. Jackson argues that lyric is not a transhistorical genre but a method of reading. This chapter attempts to come up with Wroth's own reading strategy for poetry. See Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

²² Helen Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 18.

calls attention to an inherent degree of separation between reader and poem. Whereas Vendler's account of the lyric is dramatic in nature, Kendall Walton has more recently argued that poets function as "thoughtwriters," meaning they "compose texts for others to use in expressing their thoughts (feelings, attitudes)."²³ In this way, Walton finds that a reader will react to a poem in one of two ways: They will feel that the poem fits their particular situation and the "words might strike [the reader] as just the right way of expressing a thought [he] thought [he] had."²⁴ Or, when a poem contains particulars, like the experience of death, that do not fit a reader, then the reader might decide to "imagine uttering the words 'seriously' " to see how it feels.²⁵ Walton's model completely forecloses the possibility that the author experiences any of the emotions the poems present because "thoughtwriters" are looking for the best way to express a sentiment. Further, Walton suggests that only empathetic identification with a poem's content activates the reader's imagination; otherwise, the reader does not use his or her imagination when he feels that the words express his own thoughts. Both of these models of lyric reading explore how the reader takes on the role engendered by the poem; neither model suggests the reader could utter seriously words that do not belong to them or reflect their current situation.

Wroth presents an interesting case in that she refuses to privilege either the reader or the author in her theory of poetry. As a result, Wroth seems to do away with the element of fictionality inherent to lyric reading, considering that many modern theories

²³ Kendall Walton, "Thoughtwriting—in Poetry and Music," *New Literary History* 42.3 (Summer 2011): 455-476, 455.

²⁴ Ibid., 462

²⁵ Ibid., 464

ask the reader to “take on” the author or speaker in some form. Because the characters’ often find similarity between each other, Wroth dissolves identity in the moment these characters read or listen to poetry, making the distinction between them minimal. In other words, a poem’s reader usually appropriates the poem to such a degree that he or she is both the reader and the author at once. Emotional identification with a poem’s content does not require play acting or conscious or imaginative sympathizing. When this process ends, the reader still feels as if they retain their own identity, feeling that the poem was made for them.

A more useful model for an exploration of Wroth’s poetry is the theory proposed by Käte Hamburger. For Hamburger, lyric’s language belongs to the category of real utterance rather than mimetic discourse. In other words, the experience of a poem is different than the experience of a novel because a poem is the statement of a subject while a novel is the representation of fictional utterance. Further, “what distinguishes the experience of lyric poetry from that of a novel or drama is that we do *not* experience a poem’s statements as semblance, as fiction or illusion...Whereas in the lyric it has an immediate function, the same as in every statement outside of literature, its function in fiction, on the other hand, is one of mediation....What we encounter in the lyric poems is the immediate lyric I.”²⁶ Roland Greene characterizes Hamburger’s theory that lyric is not a fictional mode, and, as a result, does not require the speaker to act out a role, in this way: “Certainly most of us know the sensation of enacting a lyric utterance as if it were our own speech: such an imaginative operation precedes any interpretation, in fact creates

²⁶ Käte Hamburger, *The Logic of Literature*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 271-2.

the conditions for interpretation, and presumably allows us to expand the experiential dimensions of our selves by adding to a store of domesticated memories...Readers of fictions will recognize right away that this apprehension of lyric—which prompts lovers to quote each other poems not written by them-selves, adopting the poems as their own utterances in the real world—must clash with the notion of fictions as discrete, virtual worlds...²⁷

The many instances of author-reader flexibility in *Urania*, though recalibrated through each iteration, suggest that such a relationship is a product of an intentional narrative strategy to explore how one adopts poetry and how identification with a poem changes the poem in its original state. One such instance occurs when Urania appropriates a song as she tells the tale of Liana to Amphilanthus and Pamphillia. The portion below is Urania's recounting of the lament she overheard Alanius recite for his love Liana:

“That promise most religiously was kept betweene us, every day visit-ing my Shepherdess. But one day as we were together discoursing and walking in tthe wood, we heard one not farre from us, sadly to sing an od kind of song, which I remember getting afterwards the cobby of it; and if I be not deceiv'd sweet Cosin,” she said, “you will like it also; the song was this, speaking as if shee had been by him, and the words directed to her, as his thoughts were.”

...

Pamphila much commended it, which pleased Urania infinitely, touch-ing (as she thought) her one estate, while a proper song, and well composed. 254

Instead of recreating the poem to speak to her own experience, as she does with Perissus' sonnet, Urania helps to create an aesthetic experience for Pamphillia. But why is Urania so “infinitely pleased” when she recites a poem written by and intended for someone else? She feels her own writing craft merits praise even though she had no hand in

²⁷ Roland Green, *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991), 9.

writing the song. Her excessive pleasure over Pamphillia's praise is an appropriate response for an author rather than for a reciter. Just as Urania feels the sonnet matches her own condition, so too is Alanius' poem meant for constant consumption, existing as a "copy" for other authors to take up and create in the moment. As much as she is the author, the narrative never quite abandons the presence of the original composer. The gloss, however, speaks to the many layers involved in poetic experience: "the song was this, speaking as if shee had been by him, and the words directed to her." Here, Wroth goes beyond authorial usurpation by suggesting that Urania both returns to the past — "speaking as if shee had been by him"—while also bringing the poem into the present moment through performance. In this iteration, the poem is not a past event because Urania's recitation makes the narrative time disjointed. This moment indicates that the reading or reciting of a poem reenacts rather than represents the original event.

Why, then, does *Urania* point, again and again, to its displaced authors and to its readers' ability to fulfill the role? Part of the reason is to underscore the central attribute—diffusiveness—of living poetry. By suggesting a poem doesn't quite have an author or reader from the beginning of production, it is hard to locate exactly where the poem actually exists. Poetry is ubiquitous in the *Urania* because it infuses most interactions; it frustrates nearly all boundaries—author/reader, past/present, body/environment, and vital/dead. The scenes in which Steriamus produces poetry illustrate the difficulty of pinning down the exact nature of a living poem. When he is out at sea with Dolorindus, Steriamus composes a poem in his mind as he looks at the moon:

for favours are never not ever so free, as though lent, to be possess'd for ever, "And thus greedy I was", said he, "but she as chastely refused me," yet did their sight bring some Verses into his mind, which ere these

...

Having done them, he said them to Dolorindus, whose thoughts were as busily employed in the same kinde. 180-1

While the narrative records the poem for the reader of the *Urania*, neither Dolorindus nor Steriamus record the poem on paper for each other. Instead, Steriamus speaks his verses to Dolorindus after bringing them to his mind, finding Dolorindus "employed in the same kinde." The temporal development of the last sentence is curious. Dolorindus seems employed in composing "thoughts" or verses when Steriamus recites his verses to him, but Dolorindus could have easily "listened" to them and then began his own task. Steriamus finishes his verses only to find that Dolorindus is currently creating the "same kinde." The poem, then, exists in the intersection between these composers. This moment opens the possibility that the chronology of composing/writing and listening/reading is not essential to understanding poetic experience. The narrative's failure to clearly delineate a chain of events—finding a poem or person writing a poem, then reading or listening to a poem, and, finally, finding the author's emotions similar to your own feelings—suggests that the poem is immediate experience and exists nearly like an emotional state.

Instances of poetry becomes more diffuse as poems and the mind are made coterminous. The scene between Steriamus and Dolorindus echoes an earlier scene between Aphilanthus and Steriamus. As he contemplates his own miseries, Amphilanthus overhears Steriamus and suspends his own meditations:

More he was saying, and surely had discovered his passions in a greater, and more exact manner, but that hee was call'd to attention by a delicate (yet dolefull voice), a Lute finely plaid upon, giving musike to his song

...

These words were to the brave Italian, so just the image of his owne thoughts, as they were as if his, or like two Lutes tun'd alike, and placed, the one struck, the other likewise sounds: so did these speeches agree to his incumbred thoughts. 66 Steriamus' song and lamentations are "so just the image of his own thoughts" that it

invokes the image of two lutes facing each other. In figuring their poetic faculties in the same tune, the lutes are strikingly similar, producing identical sounds. Yet again the text frustrates any clear distinction between the composer and the listener. While Steriamus' lamentations "agree" with his Amphilanthus' thoughts, the suggestion, here, is that Amphilanthus could produce Steriamus' verses. That the song could so accurately speak to Amphilanthus so as to become his experience calls into question the poem as copy. Amphilanthus doesn't simply take on Steriamus persona or his feelings because poetic production is already an extension of his own life, occurring in a continuous fashion. In other words, poetry is always occurring or in the process of being created, making poetic identification natural. While Wroth does not do away with mediation entirely as the narrator gestures to an entanglement of mediums (voice, music, thoughts, images), the immediacy with which the men communicate their verses, suggests that poetry aims to be the experience rather than a record of the experience. What it means to experience poetry on a sensuous level rather than an interpretive level or whether these levels must occur together is left unknown because the narrative moves on to something else with the same kind of concision used to describe their experience.

The narrative's tendency to toggle between author and reader raises the question of how to approach these poems ontologically. If, as I have been arguing, Wroth's poems act as "living" entities, then how do we reconcile these characters' obsession with imitation and identicalness? Do the scenes with Steriamus, for instance, lead us back to Sidney's definition of mimesis—poetry is an art of imitation? It is important to note that

the narrative frustrates cause and effect by gesturing to prior experience. In Steriamus and Amphilanthus' case, Amphilanthus finds that Steriamus' words agree with the thoughts he has prior to overhearing him. In this sense, his "thoughts" are not a direct imitation of Steriamus' song. And yet rejecting imitation entirely would be at odds with the logic of narrative proliferation in the *Urania*. Even though he intends to compose a poem before hearing Steriamus, Amphilanthus does not bother because he feels that Steriamus' poem mirrors his own situation. Their situations, however, cannot be entirely identical. The implication, then, is that Amphilanthus is imitating Steriamus as well—"like two Lutes tun'd alike." The narrative frame challenges us to read the entire interaction between Amphilanthus and Steriamus as an act of imitation rather than identify the poem as the imitation.

In her perceptive reading of the construction of the self and its relationship to the contagious nature of the passions, Jacqueline Miller traces the characters' concerns with imitation through a number of key scenes. While this chapter is not concerned with the self, her account is nevertheless useful in establishing a pattern in Wroth's work.

Drawing attention to the story of Rossalea and Celina, for instance, Miller argues "the women are introduced as figures whose equal affection for each other makes them mirror images...Their bond—in accordance with how Renaissance friendships were customarily construed—is based on a kind of mimetic likeness which each woman seeks to reestablish."²⁸ Using Renaissance rhetorical theory, Miller shows that "Rossalea's hope that Celina will feel the same passion she feels...is not unlike that of the rhetor who

²⁸ Jacqueline Miller, "The Passion Signified: Imitation and the Construction of Emotions in Sidney and Wroth," *Criticism* 43.4 (Fall 2001): 407-421, 416.

wants to instill in his audience his own feelingly expressed passion.”²⁹ The story of Rossalea and Celina continues with Celina carrying out, what Miller calls a “variant process of imitation,”³⁰ by falling in love with Rossalea’s nearly drowned beloved after watching Rossalea’s interactions with him.

Rossalea and Celina’s story, in particular, provides details about how the process of imitation occurs, showing how bodily and artistic imitation coincide. Upon seeing her beloved, Rossalea rushes to him and “rub[s] his pale face, w[ee]ps, and cries” (642). Celina’s response to the situation revolves around her close observation of Rossalea’s actions:

Celina saw the care her friend had of him, and with what affection she sought his saving, she thought it charytie, she liked the vertue, she seemed to lament with her as her friend, she counterfeited not, but in truth sorry, yet at first she immitated Rossalea, first knew not alasse how to greive, but so she played till it was so perfectly counterfeited, as she acted beyond that part, and in earnest grieved. 642 Because Celina does not know how to grieve, she imitates Rossalea by “playing,”

moving from counterfeiting her grief to grieving genuinely. But the narrator labels this process retrospectively. It seems that Celina does not make a conscious effort to imitate Rossalea; instead, her actions begin to naturally coincide with Rossalea’s gestures as she watches her. Celina hears the sounds of her cries and watches her touch the body of her beloved. In Rossalea’s actions, she sees affection, charity, and virtue, causing her to grieve with her friend. This kind of bodily imitation gives way to a form of theatrical imitation; Celina “plays” and “acts beyond that part” like a character might, leading to “earnest” grief and love. As inextricably linked processes, bodily imitation and

²⁹ Miller, 416

³⁰ Miller, 416

imaginative imitation can produce “earnestness” or truth even within a scene that acknowledges a level of counterfeiting or fictionality.

Twenty-first century accounts of mimesis stress the importance of imitation to human development and artistic representation. Anna Gibbs defines mimesis or ‘mimetic communication’ as “the corporeally based forms of imitation, both voluntary and involuntary (and on which literary representation ultimately depends)³¹, explaining that “at their most primitive, these involve the visceral level of affect contagion, the ‘synchrony of facial expressions, vocalizations, postures and movement with those of another person.’ ”³² Individuals who are involved in mimetic communication begin to “converge emotionally.”³³ In a similar vein, Walter Benjamin finds that mimesis is the oldest human faculty and basis of art and language. Benjamin finds it declining in the modern world, except in children: “Children’s play is everywhere permeated by mimetic modes of behaviour, and its realm is by no means limited to what one person can imitate in another. The child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher but also a windmill and a train.”³⁴ Building on Walter Benjamin, Michael Taussig defines the mimetic faculty as “the nature that culture uses to create second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other.”³⁵ Taussig claims that mimesis

³¹ Anna Gibbs, “After Affect: Sympathy, Synchrony and Mimetic Communication,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 186.

³² Ibid., 186

³³ Ibid., 186

³⁴ Walter Benjamin, “Doctrine of the Similar,” trans. Michael Jennings, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 2:1927-1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings et al. (Cambridge: Belknap, 1999), 694.

³⁵ See Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* (New York: Routledge, 1993), xiii. While twenty-first century accounts tend to focus on the natural human inclination to imitate, Aristotle also acknowledges imitation as a natural human behavior: “It is clear that the

is an adaptive behavior that allows children to imitate those around them and their environment through play. Through bodily acts of mimesis, the self and other becomes permeable to each other.

These accounts of mimesis become useful, if anachronistic, ways to understand the imitation at work in Wroth's narrative.³⁶ In the scene between Celina and Rossalea, Celina engages in both types of mimesis, moving from the imitation of Rossalea to imaginative play. What makes Wroth's view of mimesis in the *Urania* distinctive, however, is the way she fails to show this kind of distinct movement from bodily imitation to imaginative imitation when poetry is involved. On the one hand, author-reader flexibility frustrates locating imitation at all because of how readers are able to seize poems as their own experiences. On the other hand, what underlies many of these interactions is the implication that readers are able to appropriate poetry because of the kind of mimetic communication that happens between individuals. In other words, the *Urania* intimates that mimetic communication leads to emotional identification, allowing a reader to successfully take part in imaginative worlds. In this regard, the poem's mimetic component is found in the interaction between individuals. By stressing imitation between individuals, Wroth gives the poem or imaginative world a degree of freedom in the *Urania*.

general origin of poetry was due to two causes, each of them part of human nature. Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation." See Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1448b3-8.

³⁶ Theories of mimetic communication, like Gibbs', are similar to early modern theories of rhetoric because they both understand emotion/affect as a process of contagion. However, Gibbs' argument takes into account how bodily imitation develops into artistic imitation beyond rhetorical persuasion.

Because Wroth emphasizes mimetic communication between individuals, imitation embedded in the plot overshadows poetry as the imitative act. In this regard, the narrative favors a plot based on characters' similarities. We might return to the exact moment when Amphilanthus hears the sounds of Steriamus' lute and finds that the sounds match his own thoughts. While the mention of Pamphillia's name finally prompts Amphilanthus to approach Steriamus, it is the similarity between them that keeps Amphilanthus interested in him. In this next scene, he ponders how to approach him:

Willing he was to comfort him, but loth to disquiet him, knowing in this estate loneliness, and disburdning of some part of the like grieffe doth ease one: wherefore he remain'd in a doubt what to doe, when as a young man (for so he perceiv'd from such a one the voyce did come) not caring which way he did take, or seeing any direct path, but that his phantasies led him in, came hard by the place where Amphilanthus lay, who viewing his youth and delicate beautie, admired and pittied him. He passed on towards the River, his eyes, as it were imitating the swift running of the streme, his Lute he held in his hand, till again having some more Verses fram'd in his minde. 66

Here, the narrator further expands the figure of "two Lutes tun'd alike." Signs of mimetic likeness emerge in these lines, where the narrator distinguishes the difference between Amphilanthus and someone who sympathizes without feeling "like grieffe," pointing out that, in order to comfort someone, one must "disburden of some part of the like grieffe." These lines suggest that sympathy and the alleviation of grief relies on the acknowledgement of similarity. Likewise, Steriamus sees Amphilanthus and "pities" him, suggesting that he also detects the similarity between them. The account moves from this acknowledgement to another form of imitation: Steriamus eyes begin to "imitate[e] the swift running of the streme." Steriamus is thus in the process of imitation when he "again [has] some verses in his mind." Here, imitation and making verses are closely linked, but the verses are not the actual act of imitation. Steriamus imitates as he engages in a monotonous activity—walking—suggesting that mimetic activity is a natural capacity

and part of living. But it also suggests that his mind is busy in the production of poetry and that the imitation of the water aids this activity as “more Verses [are] fram’d in his minde.” The lute, then, is never entirely removed from mimetic activity. This scene affirms the presence of a practical form of mimesis and displaces imitation from poem, to character, to plot, so that poems remain partially tethered to the mimetic process while characters and plots proliferate because of a propensity for mimetic communication between characters.

To many critics, the dizzying number of characters and story lines in the *Urania* is a symptom of the genre of romance, what Patricia Parker’s defines as a “form that simultaneously seeks and postpones a particular end, revelation, or object.”³⁷ The *Urania* resists coming to an end because the narrative is structured to mimetically proliferate. These characters look for similarities and describe likeness even when it is not apparent. When Sandrigal captures Urania, for instance, he mistakes her for Antissa:

And this is the reason I took you, for having landed here, and by chance
seene you, I straight remembered your face, wherefore I determin’d by some way
or other to compasse the meanes to get you... “Truly” said Urania, “you have told
so ill a tale, as if I were the lost Princesse, I would scarce forget so great an injury:
but satisfie your selfe with this, and the hope of finding her, while you have in
your power one, who (alas) is lost too” 31

In this moment, Urania and Antissa reassemble each other to the point that they nearly become interchangeable. This might seem a superficial similarity and not worth designating as mimetic likeness. But Urania creates a sounder link that goes beyond facial resemblance. Even in drawing attention to their differences, she reasserts their likeness; both women are lost and might as well be in the same position. This instance of

³⁷ Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 4.

mimetic likeness masked as mistaken identity propels the plot forward. We would not have encountered Antissa's story, at this point in the narrative, without it, and, perhaps we would not have met Antissa at all. Mimetic proliferation as a form extends to the larger structure of the narrative, considering that the reoccurrence of inset tales imitate Pamphilia's story. Though Pamphilia remains constant to her love Amphilanthus throughout the *Urania*, Amphilanthus fails to return this love, causing her great suffering. This common narrative thread, what Jennifer Carrell describes as Wroth's "ghostly ur-tale,"³⁸ permeates a number of the women's stories, including, but not limited to, Antissa, Neareana, Alarina, the Forest Lady, Lindamira, and Bellamira. It should not be surprising, then, that the narrator, in a moment of self-conscious narration, calls part of Musalina's story "like telling a tale so often till all eares were tyred with it" (498). Imitation becomes the medium even though it also becomes an object of reflexive critique.

By displacing imitation from poem to plot, Wroth opens the possibility of understanding poems as events. Just as the material poem in the earlier scenes takes on a force that affects the reader, so too does the poem enact change within the narrative. In this way, the poem exhibits "presence" because a character's encounter with it changes

³⁸ Jennifer L. Carrell, "A Pack of Lies: Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* and the Magic of Mirror of Romance," *SEL* 34.1 (Winter, 1994): 79-107, 94; See also Rachel Orgis, *Narrative Structure and Reader Formation in Lady Mary Wroth's Urania* (New York: Routledge, 2016). Orgis argues there are two basic marriage plots that the stories in *Urania* follow (187). See also Nandini Das' *Renaissance Romance: The Transformation of English Prose Fiction, 1570-1620* (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2011). Das understands this mimetic impulse through a Girardian mimetic paradigm, arguing that the desire and competition for a man leads to these impulses by looking at the Rossalea and Celina episode in particular. However, this kind of reading does not take into account the imitation that occurs between men.

the character's reality or mental processes. It is clear, for instance, that Urania owes her ability to love again not to magical waters but to lyric performance. Before she performs a sonnet, Urania lacks clarity and her memory of her first love plagues her: "for though I were freed from my first love, and had a power to choose againe, yet was I not so amply cured from memorie, but that I did resemble one newly come out of a vision, distracted, scarce able to tell, whether it ere a fixion, or the truth" (331). In her discussion with Philistella, Urania admits that, even after her immersion into water, "feare accompan[ied] her change, lest Steriamus should despise my second love," (332) prompting Steriamus to:

presen[t] me with a little booke of Verses, among which were many to excuse himselfe, and to commend a second love, I remember one Sonnet, being this... These I did learne, for these did fit me best, and from that time contented was to let him see, I entertained his suit. (332)

Urania moves from picking the sonnet to learning the sonnet and finally committing it to memory, allowing her to recite it at will. The detail with which she explains the process suggests that the sonnet is not simply a representation of a desired event. By speaking the lines, "Pureness is not alone in one fix'd place,/Who dies to live, finds change a happy place" (332). Urania produces the desired event; she no longer fears and "entertain[s] his suit." In this manner, Urania authors her transformation by taking advantage of the fluidity of roles the sonnet makes possible. This scene brings to mind part of Sidney's definition of mimesis—the ability to "figure forth." But Wroth goes beyond "figuring forth" a world by highlighting the poem's potential to affect the narrative's reality. The sonnet propels events to convert from "fixion" to "truth" within the narrative by bringing a new state of affairs into existence.

Urania reveals a performativity inherent to lyric performance not unlike J.L. Austin's discussion of performative utterances. In *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin introduced his speech act theory; a "performative" utterance is an act rather than a description or representation of an act. It does what it says and initiates an event. Performative utterances can be successful (felicitous) or unsuccessful (infelicitous) depending on the context surrounding the utterance. However, Austin does not include literary discourse in his speech act theory because literary performatives are not spoken seriously. In this regard, literary performatives are infelicitous and literary discourse—plays, novels, and poems—is considered a nonserious use of language.³⁹

Despite Austin's arguments against literary performatives, many theorists have applied his theories to literary utterances. Derrida, for instance, stresses the importance of the citational nature of the performative. The power of the performative comes from the fact that it can be repeated and conventionalized. Building on Derrida, Judith Butler argues that performatives produce events because they are repeated in certain social contexts:

If a performative provisionally succeeds (and I will suggest that 'success' is always and only provisional), then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior,

³⁹ In *How to do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), J.L. Austin distinguishes between two different classes of utterance: the constative and the performative. The constative utterance makes a statement, describes a state of affairs, and is either true or false. A performative utterance performs the action to which it refers and are not true or false. Because it is hard to maintain the distinction between these two utterances, Austin further breaks down speech acts into three categories: The locutionary act (the act of producing a sentence); the illocutionary act (the act performed by speaking the locution); and the perlocutionary act (the act accomplished by performing the illocutionary utterance).

authoritative act of practices....In this sense, no term or statement can function performatively without accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force.⁴⁰ Because they are repeated, these performatives seem authoritative. However, when performatives include slight alterations, these alterations expose the constructedness of language. Thus, the performative's success comes not from the seriousness with which it's spoken but from its iterability.

Wroth's narrative explores poetry's potential of having real, material effect on the narrative's social relations through the repetition of poetic utterance. Urania's sonnet persuades her to love again and changes the way she will encounter other experiences, bringing into existence the condition it describes.⁴¹ But this potential for change is always present; the sonnet that Urania commits to memory lives in a book, suggesting that someone else could change the course of events through performance. In addition, the interchangeability of authors and readers that we have been tracing lends itself to the idea of repetition. Because readers can easily usurp the author's position, they can easily recite poems as if they are their own. The scene prompts us to understand repetition as responsible for the power of poetry within Urania's world.

The tale of Urania's performance of the sonnet is just one of several instances in the *Urania* that explore the relationship between repetition of poetic utterance, memory, and the production of events. Wroth also suggests that repetition can provide access to past events. We might turn now to an episode in which an author renounces her gift of poetry because it too accurately reflects her feelings. When Bellamira recounts her tale to

⁴⁰ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 226-7.

⁴¹ See David Schalkwyk, *Speech and Performance in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002) for an argument about how performative utterance works in Shakespeare's sonnets.

Amphilanthus, he has trouble following her story. He implores her to instead recite some verses. She objects to his request, giving this answer: “so long it is since I made any, and the subject growne so strange, as I can hardly cal them to memory which I made, having desired to forget all things but my love, fearing that the sight, or thought of them, would bring on the joys then felt, the sorrowes soone succeeding” (390). Here, Bellamira makes a peculiar distinction between her “love” and her verses, which are presumably about her love. She desires to forget the feelings the verses will reintroduce but refuses to forget the precise cause of her misery. While Bellamira suggests that the poem hardly lives as a trace in her memory, the suggestion is that the act of repeating the poem compels its author to “relive” her feelings. Reciting the poem has the potential to distort temporality, making past experiences present. In this sense, the poem seems to provide access to the actual event—the feelings of love—as opposed to the object of desire. Tellingly, the King’s response to her poem once she finally recites it speaks to another dimension of poetic performance: “And perfect are you sweet Bellamira,” said the King, “in this Art; pittie it is, that you should hide, or darken so rare a gift” (391). While he couldn’t understand her retelling of the tale, her poetry—“this Art”—makes her experience intelligible. And perhaps “darkening so rare a gift” impedes others from experiencing it as well. In this regard, poetry allows the mind to make leaps to new ways of thinking and living, liberating the characters from the positions they might find themselves in at the time.

While these performances change the narrative in a more localized way, Wroth also explores the political ramifications of poetry’s status as an event. If, as Sidney argues, poetry should move the reader to act morally virtuous, then Antissa is quite a bad

model. Critics often consider Antissa, the narrative's most poorly skilled reader and writer, a particularly angry woman.⁴² Antissa's anger and irrationality worsens when she realizes that Amphilanthus does not reciprocate the love she feels for him, leading her to concoct a plan to kill Amphilanthus with the help of her cousin, Antissus, and her lover, Dolorindus. Even though she eventually comes to her senses and renounces revenge, the assassination of a King could have had serious political consequences. While Antissa has emotional outbursts throughout the narrative, the plot against Amphilanthus is the most extreme. Antissa's compulsive rereading of Amphilanthus' verses fosters this kind of reaction. Rather than focus on Antissa's outrage as partially due to poetry's potential deleterious effects or her constant misreading, I read this sequence as an exploration of how the imaginative world created by poetry supplants the narrative's reality. Even after Antissa realizes Amphilanthus's verses have had several audiences and "not all [written] for her" (328), she continues to read his verses and kiss his picture, extending the fantasy she hoped would come true:

Oft would shee read the paper she had gaine from him in his owne hand, and of his making, though not all to her, yet being in that time she did not feare, shee tooke them so, and so was satisfied. Read them she did even many millions of times, then lay them up againe, and (as her greatest priz'd and only blessing left) kept them still neere, apt many times to flatter her poore self with hope he had not cleane left her, who did so kindly her keepe those things...328

⁴² Mary Ellen Lamb describes Antissa as "a container, a disposal site, into which rage over inconstant lovers and anxiety over authorship can be placed to prevent contamination from spreading further into the romance" in *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 168. Antissa symbolizes many of the concerns early moderns had about female speech. See Clare R. Kinney, "'Beleeve this butt a Fiction': Female Authorship, Narrative Undoing, and the Limits of Romance in *The Second Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*," *Spenser Studies* 17 (2003): 239-50. See also Gwynne Kennedy's *Just Anger: Representing Women's Anger in Early Modern England* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000) for an argument linking Antissa's anger to class distinctions.

Here, the narrator underscores the amount of times (“many millions”) that Antissa rereads Amphilanthus’ verses. It is clear that Antissa wants Amphilanthus to reciprocate her love and that her initial readings—“oft would she read the paper”—reinforces her desires. In these initial readings, Antissa does not fear even though the narrator admits that they were not all written to her. This sequence seems to exhibit a kind of revision of the author/reader flexibility we have seen in other scenes. Antissa imagines herself in the object position of a verse that is not written for her. The narrator then reveals that her frequent readings turns into “many millions of times.” While this fact seems hyperbolic, the increased number of times Antissa must read the verses corresponds with her realization that “he had cleane left her” even though she still remains hopeful. Therefore, the *Urania* suggests that poetry makes things possible—in this case, Amphilanthus’s desire for Antissa—by validating Antissa’s feelings and loosening the relations between the subject/object position.

Antissa’s repetitions also suggest the kind of labor that is required to maintain a world that is completely fictional. Antissa must constantly reread the verses in order to uphold the reality she has concocted. Despite this kind of labor, the constant reinforcement causes Antissa to plot Amphilanthus’ assassination when the gap between the truth and her imagination becomes too large. By getting rid of Amphilanthus, the imaginative world becomes more of a possibility, even if he is dead, and the truth becomes less of a threat. This is not simply a product of Antissa’s irrationality, considering that Pamphilia, the narrative’s superior writer and even-tempered lover, refuses to identify with her own verses often. While the narrator tells us Pamphilia is dissatisfied with her writing, it also might be the case that Pamphilia is wary of what

happens when one emotionally identifies with a poem—the poem can supplant reality and change the course of events.⁴³ This kind of radical change occurs because poems become embedded in the character’s memories through continuous rereading or performance.

It should not be surprising, then, that poems are often figured as agents in their own right; they act upon their authors and their readers in violent ways.⁴⁴ For instance, the narrator refuses to give a straightforward answer about Antissa’s reasoning for throwing her verses into the fire--“But then whether judgment of seeing them but poor ones, or humble love telling her she had committed treason to that throne, moved her, I cannot justly tell”—suggesting that the poem turns on Antissa and takes on a kind of force by “molest[ing]” her (327). Pamphilia also gives her poems “burial” after feeling that they “bring [her] own hands to witness against” her, refusing to identify with what she has written. These poems are either slightly too accurate or too revealing, and, in turn, the poems act against and rival their own authors, taking on a forceful life of their own.

In *The Defense*, Sidney acknowledges the “forcibleness” of vivid language,

⁴³ Barbara K. Lewalski argues that Antissa symbolizes “in Part II...a more obvious foil for Pamphilia (and Wroth), a scapegoat created to deflect from those good poet society’s cautionary tale of the psychic dangers that threaten female authors.” See *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 294.

⁴⁴ In calling poems agents, I realize this might sound like I am borrowing from new materialism. In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2019), Jane Bennett argues, things are “vivid entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them”; things are “never entirely exhausted by their semiotics,” 15. Bennett’s thing-power is a “call” issued by a thing, highlighting its existence for itself and apart from a human’s existence. While I certainly find affinities between these theories and the way I describe poems, I argue that poems derive their power from animated language and from a mutual enabling relationship between author and reader.

figuring poetry as a “sweet charming force, [that] can do more hurt than any other army of words.”⁴⁵ Poetry should “inflameth the mind with desire to be worthy”⁴⁶ in order to be moved to become another Cyrus. Philosophy cannot move a reader because it does not have poetry’s capacity to “strike, pierce, [or] possess the sight of the soul.”⁴⁷ Sidney certainly recognizes the martial nature of words, but he maintains that poetry has the potential to be more violent because of its “sweet charming force.” In this regard, Sidney acknowledges the anxieties many of his contemporaries such as Gosson had about poetry captivating the senses and overpowering reason. But Sidney’s aims in *The Defense* do not allow for a more thorough exploration of “forcibleness.” Attending to the forcibleness inherent to language is a rich approach because it takes into account the poem’s effects on the reader, the poem as an agent in its own right, and how the poem alters the world (or narrative) through its performance.

To a reader, describing poems as harassers might seem an apt—perhaps an overdone—metaphor to explain how moving these poems are. In other words, it would be just as accurate to say that Antissa is moved to such a degree by her verses that she throws them into the fire. But when we consider these aggressive poems alongside the performative nature of poetry and the plotline that poetry propels an assassination plot, Wroth’s imagery raises the questions: to what extent are words violent? Is forcibleness the same as performativity? Modern theories of power acknowledge the link between words and violence. According to Judith Butler, violence produced by words is different from violence produced by actions, but both words and actions are harmful. Words can

⁴⁵ Sidney, 104.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 99

⁴⁷ Ibid., 90

cause “an actual though distinctive form of injury.”⁴⁸ While one should not conflate words and actions, the connection between them is strong. Words can cause different forms of bodily injury, including anguish and depression. Butler’s derives her theory of hate speech from her understanding of Austin’s speech act theory. Like performatives in general, the power of violent words comes from their repetition in certain social contexts rather than from the intention behind them.

Antissa encounters the kind of poetic language Sidney claims can “do... hurt,” but Wroth takes “forcibleness” a step further by animating the poem to the point that the paper needs to be discarded. While Sidney is more hesitant to overemphasize the potentially destructive nature of poetry, Wroth embraces both a constructive and destructive model of poetic utterance. She articulates a vision of the violent effects of words to a greater degree than Sidney does, but she also upholds the world creating power of poetry to change, shift, and remake reality. To understand poetry’s performativity, the narrative suggests that the constructive and destructive potential of poetry can occur concurrently.

Wroth’s development of the inherent performativity of poetry is quite significant if she is discussed in terms of a lineage of rhetoricians that contend with the forcibleness of language. We might recall here our discussion from the introduction to this dissertation that Wroth picks up on the provocative portions of Quintilian’s theory of *enargeia*. In Book IX, Quintilian explains that “great effect may be produced by dwelling on a single point, and by setting forth our facts in such a striking manner that they seem to be placed

⁴⁸ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 18.

before the eyes as vividly as if they were taking place in our actual presence.”⁴⁹

Quintilian believes that *enargeia* (vivid illustration) makes the listener feel as if they actually see and hear what is being described: a vivid illustration “thrusts itself upon us”:

Vivid illustration, or as some prefer to call it, representation, is something more than mere clearness since the latter merely lets itself be seen, whereas the former thrusts itself upon our notice. For oratory fails of its full effect, and does not assert itself as it should, if its appeal is merely to the hearing...and not displayed in their living truth to the eyes of the mind.⁵⁰

For Quintilian, words possess an energy that exceed their inert qualities and become an experience for listeners. The vivid illustration creates an emotional impact on the listener as if it’s actually happening, what he refers to as “living truth.” Quintilian’s account of imagined actuality echoes Longinus’ account of vivid imagery: “passages in which, carried away by your feelings, you imagine you are actually seeing the subject of your description, and enable your audience as well to see it.”⁵¹ These definitions of *enargeia* are derived from Aristotle’s definition of *energeia*; the two terms become entangled in the early modern period. For Aristotle, words should have a kind of potency; an orator should use words that “represent things as in a state of activity” or movement.⁵² In *The Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle explains that an audience desires “words that set an event before their eyes; for they must see the thing occurring now, not hear it as in the future.”⁵³ What all these accounts have in common is the conviction that *enargeia* leads to immersion—the

⁴⁹ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education, Volume III: Books 6-8*, Ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell. Loeb Classical Library 126. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 9.1.27-8.

⁵⁰ Quintilian, 7.3.61-2

⁵¹ Longinus, *On the Sublime in Classical Literary Criticism*, trans. T.S. Dorsch (London: Penguin, 1965), 121.

⁵² Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. H.C. Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 1991), 3.3.10.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3.3.10

experience that a listener mistakes the virtual world for the actual world. Because the orator's skill makes the listener see and hear the events, the virtual world and actual world nearly collapse into each other; the listener can visualize the event so distinctly that they experience being present even if it is ultimately an illusion.

While rhetorical accounts assert that certain words can make the listener a witness to the imagined event, the actual and the virtual world can never collapse completely. There still remains a degree of separation between the worlds; even these accounts gesture to this separation. Facts are "placed before the eyes as vividly as if they were taking place in our actual presence." The "as if" caveat highlights the fact that the representation will never become completely present to the listener. Wroth's narrative provides an innovative strategy to correct the problem of separation between the actual and the virtual. For Wroth, immersion and performativity must occur together. While the poem's "forcibleness" might create an experience in which the poem's world exhibits presence, the poem's performativity—the repetitiveness of poetic utterance—is what brings the actual and the virtual worlds together. Thus, Wroth's narrative suggests that a poem's immersive qualities can make possible new worlds, but the poem's reader provides the labor to bring the world to fruition

The Living Character: The Experience of Authorship and the Agency of the Imagination in Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*

In *The Description of a New World, Called The Blazing World* (1666), an avatar of Margaret Cavendish called the Duchess of Newcastle arrives in the Blazing World to assist the Empress as a scribe and world maker. Through the narrative, Margaret Cavendish actualizes her desire to be “Margaret the First,” creating “a World of her own Invention.”¹ The two women spend most of the narrative travelling between the different worlds Cavendish creates, making more worlds in their minds, and instructing each other and the reader how to create and control the most superior kind of world, the imaginative world. Though the character of the Duchess is often considered a symptom of an eccentric authorial persona², this chapter focuses on the Duchess as a significant narrative strategy that Cavendish uses to explore the experience of authoring a world.

It may seem counterintuitive to end a dissertation about living art with a chapter on Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, a narrative that is seemingly missing a living art form. In closing with this chapter, I explore how a theory of living art—how a character's interactions with lifelike art create performative effects originating from the

¹ Margaret Cavendish, *The Description of a New World, Called The Blazing World*, in *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*, eds. Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson (Ontario: Broadview, 2000), 251 and 215. All citations are from this edition.

² Early critics of Margaret Cavendish's oeuvre were particularly derisive. In an often-cited passage from *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf, for instance, called Cavendish's style of writing “higgledy-piggledy,” which “poured itself out” in “torrents of rhyme and prose, poetry and philosophy which stand congealed in quartos and folios that nobody ever reads” (61). See Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005). While critics have recuperated Cavendish, exploring her as a significant figure for a range of subjects, critics still refer to her eccentric behavior and writing, especially the figure of the Duchess.

art form itself—can illuminate Margaret Cavendish’s preoccupation with “living” in her creations, an idea that arises throughout her oeuvre. What happens when we consider an author’s avatar a new model of authorship—one that does not place the author completely inside or outside the text? Does considering the Duchess a living character open up the possibility for an experiential dimension of writing? How does this affect the ontology of *The Blazing World*, especially considering that the readers are often included in the process of creation?

The author’s role is usually missing from discussions of aesthetic experience. This is partly due to the poststructuralist account of the author in Roland Barthes’ seminal essay, “The Author is Dead.” For Barthes, an author is dead because their intentions are irrelevant to an interpretation of their texts: “[A] text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author...every text is eternally written *here and now*” through its readers.³ In a similar vein, Michel Foucault argues that the author is a construct, known as the author-function, which readers attach to texts in order to interpret them: “the author’s name manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicates the status of this discourse within a society and a culture.”⁴ Because Cavendish and her views of authorship are prominent throughout her writings, it is difficult to treat her as a construct. In fact, early Cavendish scholarship paradoxically

³ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142–148, 145.

⁴ Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 113–138.

overemphasizes the author's role in fault-finding ways. While I am not suggesting that a text should be understood as espousing a single meaning dictated by the author, this chapter does treat the author as an important point of departure for a theory of fictional being in the early modern period.

This chapter outlines a theory of "living" in one's imaginative creation by tracing the idea in one of Cavendish's most overlooked texts, *Sociable Letters* (1664). It argues that Cavendish explores the idea of "living" in her plays and ideas as opposed to the more common early modern idea that an author is preserved in their poetry. The concept that Cavendish could "live in an Idea" or leave her idea to "live in many Brains" becomes central to *The Blazing World*, where she tests out the idea by including an avatar of herself, the Duchess. In his study of the novel, Mikhail Bakhtin explores the way in which readers identify with a novel's characters by "entering the novel," experiencing the novel's events as if a character might. Though Cavendish's prose fiction predates the novel, Bakhtin's theory of reading is useful in understanding what "living" in a text might mean. By including an episode in which the composition of a narrative leads to the author's eventual arrival in the story world, *The Blazing World* suggests that authorship is an aesthetic experience in its own right and akin to readerly absorption.

The second half of the chapter explores the consequences of Cavendish entering her work. As a character, Cavendish puts herself on the same plane as her other character, the Empress, and the reader, a potential, future subject of the Blazing World. In this regard, I argue that Cavendish explores characterological autonomy for her current and future subjects. The sense of a character's independence from the author gives the work itself a level of agency, as if the narrative is not completely under the author's

control. Both the arrival of the Duchess and characterological autonomy blurs the divide between imaginary and real objects.

This blurring is also a product of Cavendish's commitment to vital materialism. Critics, who consider Cavendish as an important figure in early modern science, argue that Cavendish's theories regarding vital materialism extend to all forms of matter, including her imaginary works. For Cavendish, there is no distinction between an imaginary and a real being because all matter is animate, rational, and self-moving. While Cavendish's theory of vital materialism certainly contributes to her approach in *The Blazing World*, critics of Cavendish do not ask how vital materialism revises theories of mimesis in the period or upend binaries of fiction versus reality. My chapter ends by considering how *The Blazing World* is an animate being by creating social communities of characters and readers that Cavendish was often left out of during her lifetime.

The image of the world as multiple and abundant recurs throughout Margaret Cavendish's writing. The epigraph to *The Blazing World* is a poem by her husband, William Newcastle, praising her world-making abilities: "But your creating Fancy, thought it fit/To make your World of Nothing, but pure Wit." (151-2). "Nothing," one presumes, is parallel to the virtual, imagined, or fictional. The creation of these textual worlds—these "nothings"—has immense repercussions for a theory of early modern fictionality. In *The Blazing World*, characters, souls, and blazing stones circulate through different textual worlds by passing through the poles; the image of the poles is both a crucial structuring principle and the means Cavendish develops in order to be able to produce and engage with fictional worlds.

A salient image that appears in both the preface and the narrative proper of *The Blazing World* is the linking of the joined poles of different worlds. In her preface, Cavendish attempts to justify her fiction alongside her “philosophical observations,” and in order to do so, invokes the simile of “join[ing]” [her writing] as two worlds at the end of their poles” (153). *The Blazing World* was first published as an appendix to *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*. The image of the poles serves to connect the presumably incompatible subjects of fantastical and philosophical writing. The preface encapsulates Cavendish’s belief that her fiction or “fancy” “[is] agreeable to the subject [she] treated in the former parts” (153). Cavendish’s choice to join the writing together serves her greater purpose: her attempt to bond *Observations* to *The Blazing World* in order to contradict ideas that her “work of Fancy...is out of a disparagement to Philosophy” (152), suggesting that her fiction is a necessary exploration of her “serious Philosophical contemplations” (152). The preface establishes the ease with which the observable world, what she treats in her philosophical writings, blends with her fantastical imaginings, priming the reader for a muddling of diegetic levels within the narrative.

This muddling of levels occurs immediately after the preface when the imagery of joined poles arises once more during the abduction of the lady by the lowly merchant with which the narrative begins. Providence kills the men in the icy sea once the lady is kidnapped. The lady survives and is “forced into another world” because “the Pole of [the lady’s] world was “joined close” to the pole of another world (154). The movement of the lady through conjoined poles of different worlds is intended to parallel the imagery of the conjoined modes of philosophical and fantastical writing. The lady’s journey through the poles allows for Cavendish’s different texts to communicate with one

another, as her philosophical ideas permeate the realm of fantastical writing and vice versa. Alongside the relationship between different yet compatible subjects, the reader is introduced to the Blazing World, the world that exists conjoined to the lady's native world.

The poles appear in the narrative as essential to the project of imaginative movement, away from everyday life and into the realm of fiction. When the lady who becomes the Empress declares that she wishes to write a Cabbala to the immaterial spirits, she requests a "Spiritual Scribe" (208). The learned males she hopes to attain to act as scribe are not suitable for the Empress, as some are "wedded to their own opinions" or "self-conceited" (208), prompting the immaterial spirits to suggest the Duchess of Newcastle as the best option. The authorial figure, the Duchess, is a persona of Margaret Cavendish, the author of *The Blazing World*. From this moment onward, the Empress and the Duchess work in tandem to create fictional worlds from within the narrative. The scenes in which the Empress and the Duchess work together evoke the relation between the imagination and actuality. This relation is partly due to the fact that the Empress is a fictional creation made by Cavendish and the Duchess is a fictional creation made and based on Cavendish.

Feminist critics have recovered Cavendish as an important figure in a genealogy of writers who helped to form a concept of a modern and independent subjectivity.⁵ As

⁵ For a list of representative works, see James Fitzmaurice, "Fancy and Family: Self-Characterizations of Margaret Cavendish," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 53.3 (1990), 198-209; Sara H. Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women: Three Studies* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987); Lisa T. Sarasohn, "A Science Turned Upside Down: Feminism and the Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 47.4 (1984), 289-307; Hilda Smith, *Reasons Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982);

one of the first critics to recuperate Cavendish, Catherine Gallagher focused on the relationship between Cavendish's royalist politics and her affinity for privacy as the roots of her ideas about feminist subjectivity. The model of the self develops from the link between the principle of absolute monarchism and the absolute self: "the paradoxical connection between the *roi absolu* and the *moi absolu*."⁶ For Gallagher, this connection leads not to an independent female self but a loss of identity: it starts a process of "regressive self-pursuit" that concludes with "a classic *mise en abyme*."⁷ When Cavendish includes herself as a character, the narrative begins a "process of infinite transgression," leading to the formation of a subjectivity that is "an infinite, unfathomable regression of interiority."⁸ The Duchess's journey into the *Blazing World*, then, is not only an acknowledgement of the "restrictio[ns] on her worldly ambitions"⁹ but also becomes "vortex of solipsistic regression."¹⁰ The "multiplication of worlds belonging to the self, each of which circumscribes yet another self," highlights the "self is a world, and the proof of this self-sufficiency is that it can make a world in fiction."¹¹

And while critics point out the complexity with which Cavendish explores her own subjectivity¹², they often reproduce a set of assumptions about the ultimate purpose

Linda R. Payne, "Dramatic Dreamscape: Women's Dreams and Utopian Vision in the Works of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle," in *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660-1820*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991), 18-33.

⁶ See Catherine Gallagher, "Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England," *Genders* 1 (1988): 24-39, 25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹² See Rachel Trubowitz, "The Reenchantment of Utopia and the Female Monarchical Self: Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 11.2

of the Duchess as a character. Take, for example, these readings that echo Gallagher's negative reading of the Duchess and are typical of Cavendish scholarship more generally. Sylvia Bowerbank argues that "Cavendish's response to her failure as a natural philosopher was to retreat into fantasy."¹³ In a similar vein, Anna Battigelli reads *The Blazing World* as the "most extended examination of her interest in retreating to the worlds of her texts, and by extension, into the worlds of the mind."¹⁴ What these readings have in common is a belief that the Duchess is an indication of Cavendish's retreat into her text. This paradigm has become so pervasive that Judith Kegan Gardiner labels Cavendish a "bashful exhibitionist," interpreting the Duchess as a sign of Cavendish's narcissism.¹⁵

The approaches that describe the Duchess' journey in these terms restrict the significance of Cavendish's narrative in developing ideas beyond subjectivity.¹⁶ This

(Autumn, 1992): 229-245. As an exception, Trubowitz argues that Cavendish explores both an independent and social female self by reviving the utopian genre. See also Frédérique Aït-Touati, "Margaret Cavendish: The Battle of Instruments" in *Fictions of the Cosmos: Science and Literature in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011). Aït-Touati argues that by "reading *Observations and The Blazing World* concurrently, it appears that this retreat is also an appropriation: far from abandoning their techniques and instruments to experimentalists, Cavendish appropriates them for the benefit of fiction—just when she is objecting to use of fiction in natural philosophy" (183).

¹³ Sylvia Bowerbank, "The Spider's Delight: Margaret Cavendish and the 'Female' Imagination," *English Literary Renaissance* 14.3 (1984): 392-408, 402.

¹⁴ Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1998), 102.

¹⁵ Judith Keegan Gardiner, "'Singularity of the Self': Cavendish's *True Relation*, Narcissism, and the Gendering of the Individual," *Studies in English Literary Culture* 21 (1997): 52-65, 55.

¹⁶ Along with the relation between the formation of subjectivity and feminist authority/authorship, Cavendish is also seen as a contributor to the intersection of science, philosophy, and politics. See Peter Dear, "A Philosophical Duchess: Understanding Margaret Cavendish and the Royal Society," in *Science, Literature, and Rhetoric in Early Modern England*, eds. Juliet Cummins and David Burchell (Aldershot:

chapter treats the Duchess as an indication of Cavendish's interest in the ontological difference between real and fictional beings. For Cavendish, the relation between the real world and the fictional realm goes beyond an interest in autobiographical persona. Cavendish blurs the divide between imaginary and real objects by considering the position of the authorial self in relation to the creation and the experience of the narrative. In *Sociable Letters*, a collection of letters addressed to a fictional female friend, the letter writer explores what it means to "live" in her creations. Despite the similarities, this connection between Cavendish's texts are rarely discussed. This chapter reads *The Blazing World* alongside *Sociable Letters* in order to highlight the complexity with which Cavendish establishes a theory of fictional lives—how an author and reader interact with fictional life, and vice versa.

A good place to begin a fuller consideration of Cavendish's theory of fictional lives is letter CXLIII of *Sociable Letters*. In CXLIII, the female sender expresses anxiety about the possibility that her plays may have been lost at sea. Her understanding of her plays is based on two common early modern tropes: the belief that she will gain fame through her writings after her death; and the description of her writings as children,

Ashgate 2007) for an argument about how Cavendish constructs a philosophical persona. See Susan James, "The Philosophical Innovations of Margaret Cavendish," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 7.2 (1999): 21-244 for a discussion of the connections between her views and that of Spinoza and Leibniz. See Jenny Mann, *Outlaw Rhetoric: Figuring Vernacular Eloquence in Shakespeare's England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 171-200 for an argument about Cavendish's "mingle-mangle" rhetorical style becomes a tool in opposition to the Royal Society's plain style. See also Lisa Anscomb, "'A Close, Naked, Natural Way of Speaking': Gendered Metaphor in the Texts of Margaret Cavendish and the Royal Society," *In-between: Essays and Studies in Literary Criticism* 9.1-2 (2000): 161-177 for an argument about how Cavendish uses gendered metaphors to object to the Royal Society's rhetoric.

suggesting a parental relationship to her plays.¹⁷ This passage offers one of the most striking portraits of the connection between textual creations and actuality anywhere in seventeenth century literary texts. The letter is worth quoting in full:

I Heard the Ship was Drown'd, wherein the man was that had the Charge and Care of my Playes, to carry them into *E.* to be Printed, I being then in *A.* which when I heard, I was extremely Troubled, and if I had not had the Original of them by me, truly I should have been much Afflicted, and accounted the Loss of my Twenty Playes, as the Loss of Twenty Lives, for in my Mind I should have Died Twenty Deaths, which would have been a great Torment, or I should have been near the Fate of those Playes, and almost Drown'd in Salt Tears, as they in the Salt Sea; but they are Destinated to Live, and I hope, I in them, when my Body is Dead, and Turned to Dust; But I am so Prudent, and Careful of my Poor Labours, which are my Writing Works, as I alwayes keep the Copies of them safely with me, until they are Printed, and then I Commit the Originals to the Fire, like Parents which are willing to Die, whenas they are sure of their Childrens Lives, knowing when they are Old, and past Breeding, they are but Useless in this World: But howsoever their Paper Bodies are Consumed, like as the *Roman* Emperours, in Funeral Flames, I cannot say, an Eagle Flies out of them, or that they Turn into a Blazing Star, although they make a great Blazing Light when they Burn; And so leaving them to your Approbation or Condemnation, I rest,¹⁸

We can begin by noting that the reciprocal relationship the letter writer has to her plays complicates early modern tropes of textual children. The woman emphasizes the living qualities of her plays by connecting them to her own life force, claiming that “the loss of [her] Twenty Playes” forces her to endure not only “the Loss of Twenty Lives” but also twenty of her own deaths. One might sense a paradoxical edge in her formulation of textual lives; she implies the possibility that her plays have lives while simultaneously suggesting they have lives because she lives or that she imbues them with her own life. In this regard, she is more than a parent to her plays, considering that she does not simply

¹⁷ See Matthew Zarnowiecki, *Fair Copies: Reproducing the English Lyric from Tottel to Shakespeare* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014) for an examination of the preoccupation with figuring writings as children in early modern England.

¹⁸ Margaret Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, ed. James Fitzmaurice (New York: Routledge, 2012), 153-4.

give her plays life through creation. Instead, her plays create a rebound effect: she “almost Drown[s] in Salt Tears, as they in the Salt Sea.” While the image of drowning in salt tears is a figurative construction of her sadness, the parallel between the method of death is nevertheless a powerful account of her bond to her plays.

As it emerges in Letter CXLIII, her plays are identified as the location of the woman as she lives and after she dies. Perhaps the most canonical articulation of this concept is John Milton’s “On Shakespeare” (1633). In “On Shakespeare,” Milton explores what methods will preserve Shakespeare after he dies: “What needs my *Shakespeare* for his honor’d Bones, / The labor of an age in piled Stones, / Or that his hallow’d relics should be hid / Under a Star-ypointing *Pyramid*?” (1-4)¹⁹ It is Shakespeare’s writings (“the leaves of thy unvalu’d Book”) that will preserve him better than human bones or gravestones. For Milton, Shakespeare’s sonnets are the primary vehicle to live on after death. What makes the letter’s formulation unique, however, is the connection the woman has to her plays while alive. The plays do not only preserve her after death; instead, they impact her as she lives, suggesting that the author’s self has a medium beyond the human body. Thus, the plays are the ideal medium, considering she likens them to “Paper Bodies.”

Other layers of complexity in this letter highlight the very fragility of the letter writer’s “Paper Bodies.” In addition to drowning, the plays are also subject to “Funeral Flames,” causing them to either “Turn into a Blazing Star” or “make a great Blazing Light when they Burn.” The image of a blazing star or light is clearly a reference to *The*

¹⁹ John Milton, *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, eds. John Rumrich, Stephen M. Fallon, and William Kerrigan (New York: Random House, 2007), 34.

Blazing World. To be sure, it is fitting to compare her plays to her other fictional narrative through their blazing qualities. Yet the letter has provided the reader with three different yet related modes of textual existence. The play as a vehicle for the author, as a paper body, and as a resurrected bird and blazing light: how do we reconcile these different modes, given the fact that they all represent fictional worlds?

Crucial to the challenges the letter poses is its refusal to clearly define what the description of a play's life means. Instead, the letter invites the reader to hold in tension the image of a living body (paper body), the author's life, and a self-contained fictional world (blazing light). What these images have in common is the potential for imaginative possibility concealed within a life-like or living medium. Each iteration of the play's life evokes a rich inner life that the reader can only imagine but never know for certain. In other words, the author's connection to her plays suggests that her plays live a version of her life or that she lives a version of her play's life. Alongside the author-text connection, the play is its own autonomous entity (as both a paper body and a blazing light). The image of multiple, independent bodies and its ability to blaze as it's read by an audience ("And so leaving them to your Approbation or Condemnation"), suggests that the fictional world continues on through its consumption. Given the fact that plays also encompass multiple characters, climaxes, denouements, settings, reversals, etc., we might be forgiven for wondering how chaotic fictional life might be.

To unpack this problem and to account for Cavendish's theory of fiction, I turn to another instance of fictional lives in her work: Letter XC of *Sociable Letters*. Letter XC achieves a complexly layered attitude that revolves around writerly ambition and the nature of death and the afterlife:

I Am sorry the Plague is much in the City you are in, as I hear, and fear your Stay will Indanger your Life, for the Plague is so Spreading and Penetrating a Disease, as it is a Malignant Contagion...wherefore, Madam, let me perswade you to Remove, for certainly Life is so Pretious, as it ought not to be Ventured, where there is no Honour to be Gain'd in the Hazard, for Death seems Terrible, I am sure it doth to Me, there is nothing I Dread more than Death, I do not mean the Strokes of Death, nor the Pains, but the Oblivion in Death, I fear not Death's Dart so much as Death's Dungeon, for I could willingly part with my Present Life, to have it Redoubled in after Memory, and would willingly Die in my Self, so I might Live in my Friends; Such a Life have I with you, and you with me, our Persons being at a Distance, we live to each other no otherwise than if we were Dead, for Absence is a Present Death, as Memory is a Future Life; and so many Friends as Remember me, so many Lives I have, indeed so many Brains as Remember me, so many Lives I have, whether they be Friends or Foes, onely in my Friends Brains I am Better Entertained;...I am industrious to Gain so much of Nature's Favour, as to enable me to do some Work, wherein I may leave my *Idea*, or Live in an *Idea*, or my *Idea* may Live in Many Brains, for then I shall Live as Nature Lives amongst her Creatures, which onely Lives in her Works, and is not otherwise Known but by her Works, we cannot say, she lives Personally amongst her Works, but Spiritually within her Works; and naturally I am so Ambitious, as I am restless to Live, as Nature doth, in all Ages, and in every Brain.²⁰

Here, the possibility of lost life compels the letter writer to contemplate how she plans to live despite impending death. Fearing “oblivion” and the lack of fame, she explains a process that prevents these outcomes. This process revolves largely around her friends’ abilities to honor her through their memories. Yet the letter writer does not merely suggest that she will be remembered by her friends; instead, she believes she can go on living as she has always done to the extent that she is willing to part with her “Present Life,” knowing that it will be amplified or “Redoubled” in their brains. In this regard, the letter writer implies that not much will change after she dies because she will continue living fully with the added benefit of having several different lives to live. Thus, the episode shows that losing a present life can lead to the creation of a second life even though death will destroy her present self.

²⁰ Margaret Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, 98-9

The letter writer transitions from exploring her afterlife to explaining the afterlife of her ideas, as these two concepts are related. Just as she will live in many brains, she hopes she can “leave [her] *Idea*” in the world. Given how Cavendish often associates her philosophical ideas with her fictional works, and how she connects her philosophical writing to her works of fancy, it is likely these “ideas” are synonymous with the plays of Letter CXLIII or her longer prose narrative, *The Blazing World*. Readers of *The Blazing World* will recognize a similarity between how Cavendish calls attention to her writerly ambitions in both the epistle and epilogue to the reader and how the letter writer ends with an admission that she is “Ambitious.” She gives three interconnected outcomes for her ideas, including the possibility she can “Live in an *Idea*” or her “*Idea* may Live in Many Brains.” Here, the letter writer is clear that the physical limitations of the body do not pose a problem. She can live in an abstraction and that abstraction can live in many brains. The concept of “living in an idea” goes beyond the remembrance of a dead self as a metaphor. An avatar of Margaret Cavendish does, in fact, exist and live in an idea; *The Blazing World* shows us the complexity with which someone can both live in and interact with an idea.

Cavendish, however, omits a description of the exact relation between the letter writer and the boundary of her ideas. On the one hand, the letter writer, as a self-contained entity, is clearly defined in opposition to other self-contained entities, like her ideas. On the other hand, the interaction between the letter writer and her ideas gives rise to an experience that blurs the boundaries between them. Although Cavendish’s prose

writing predates the origins of the novel²¹, the letter writer's relationship to her Idea is reminiscent of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the reader's relationship to the novel. In "Epic and Novel" (1941), Bakhtin describes the novel as creating "a zone [of] proximity and contact" that allows the reader to "actually enter the novel"²² and experience it from the perspective of a character within the novel. While Bakhtin does not explain what it means for a reader to "actually enter" a novel, this concept is important to understanding how sympathetic identification occurs between readers and characters. Returning to the letter writer's description of living in her plays, we see the challenge that arises when attempting to accurately describe what living in her work means.

Elsewhere, Bakhtin further defines the relationship between the real world and the novel in terms of the reader's participation in the work: the novel "and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of its creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers."²³ While Bakhtin acknowledges that "we must never confuse...the *represented*

²¹ While *The Blazing World* is not considered a novel, it is often considered a proto-novel and discussed in studies concerned with the rise of the novel. Cavendish's prose is significantly different in comparison to other early modern prose fiction (such as Nashe, Sidney, and Wroth). See Josephine Donovan, *Women and the Rise of the Novel, 1405-1726* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 157-178. See also Constance C. Relihan, *Fashioning Authority: The Development of Elizabethan Novelistic Discourse* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1994). While this chapter does not address whether or not *The Blazing World* should be considered a novel or prose fiction, aspects of novel theory are useful in opening other areas of inquiry given its status as a text that contributed to the rise of the novel.

²² M.M. Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist and trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 32.

²³ *Ibid.*, 253

world with the world outside the text,”²⁴ he also argues that “it is impermissible to take this categorical boundary line as something absolute and impermeable.”²⁵ Here, Bakhtin describes how the reader actively creates and participates in the process of the novel’s creation. Through the act of reading, the reader conveys the representational content of the novel into the material reality of the real world. In this regard, the novel is no longer representational because it becomes a performative force enabled through the reader’s participation.

Cavendish’s response to these challenges is compelling; she partly centers *The Blazing World* around an exploration of what it means for an author to “actually enter” her work. Cavendish rejects the idea that the work of art has clearly demarcated boundaries by calling into question her authorial control. By foregrounding this lack of control, Cavendish positions herself as reader of her own work because she experiences it through multiple perspectives—as author, as reader, and as character. In the epilogue to *The Blazing World*, she disavows full responsibility for the events that take place in the narrative:

Neither have I made such disturbances, and caused so many dissolutions of particulars, otherwise named deaths, as they did; for I have destroyed but some few men in a little Boat, which dyed through the extremity of cold, and that by the hand of Justice, which was necessitated to punish their crime of stealing away a young and beauteous Lady. 251

Here, Cavendish acknowledges that she is somewhat responsible for the deaths of the characters with which the narrative begins. Instead of taking full ownership of what occurs to the men, she explains that the deaths are not as numerous as those orchestrated by kings. She further disavows her role by blaming the murders on “the extremity of the

²⁴ Ibid., 254

²⁵ Ibid., 253

cold” and “the hand of Justice” as if the deaths are both inevitable and necessary.

Paradoxically, Cavendish suggests that she has both control over what happens while acknowledging that other forces shape the narrative just as much as she does. Her position as a hybrid author-character emerges as an extension of Cavendish’s disavowal of responsibility. Because Cavendish claims the narrative is both self-creating and self-maintaining, the form of *The Blazing World* allows the avatar of the author called The Duchess of Newcastle to participate in the narrative. In this regard, *The Blazing World* becomes an experiment of the claims laid out in *Sociable Letters*.

Cavendish’s curious insertion of an embodiment of herself, the Duchess, serves to illustrate the way in which the dialogue between the Empress and her subjects has a profound effect on the author of the work itself. This effect becomes evident in the lengthy conversations between the Empress and her subjects. After the Empress and animal-men spend time discussing the workings of the Blazing World, the uses of scientific instruments, and the nature of physical elements, the Empress turns to the immaterial spirits in order to acquire knowledge about the nature of soul and their vehicles. The immaterial spirits authorize the transport of souls, stating “there may be numerous material souls in one body” (203). It is no coincidence that the Duchess’ soul arrives soon after this conversation, as if Cavendish is being convinced of her own characters’ beliefs while writing this dialogue, compelling her to insert herself as a character. Although the pretext for the Duchess’s arrival is to act as a scribe in order to help the Empress write a Cabbala, the Duchess becomes melancholy “from her extreme ambition” to be “Empress of a world” (211), and begins to take advice from the immaterial spirits:

But we wonder, proceeded the Spirits, that you desire to be Empress of a Terrestrial World, when as you can create your self a Cœlestial World if you please. What, said the Empress, can any Mortal be a Creator? Yes, answered the Spirits; for every human Creature can create an Immaterial World fully inhabited by Immaterial Creatures, and populous of Immaterial subjects, such as we are, and all this within the compass of the head or scull... You have converted me, said the Duchess to the Spirits, from my ambitious desire; wherefore, I'll take your advice, reject and despise all the Worlds without me, and create a World of my own. The Empress said, If I do make such a world, then I shall be Mistress of two Worlds, one within, and the other without me. That your Majesty may, said the Spirits; and so left these two Ladies to create two Worlds within themselves: who did also part from each other, until such time as they had brought their Worlds to perfection. The Duchess of Newcastle was most earnest and industrious to make her World, because she had none at present. 212

Living in one's own work is possible if a conversion by the work occurs. The Spirits convert the Duchess from attempting to be an Empress of a physical world because she can easily create a world in the "compass of the head or scull." Here, the representation of the author's agency dissipates as she becomes a fully-fledged character. Her ambitious authorial persona fades as the narrative provides her with an immersive imaginative experience. Both characters operate on the same diegetic level as they "part from each other" and "br[ing] their Worlds to perfection" (213). The Duchess does not act as a controlling figure within the narrative; instead, she works in tandem with the Empress to create an imaginative world within her mind.

That one could be under the power of their imaginative world should not be surprising, considering that Cavendish believes she lives in her works. This is a phenomenon that Theodor Adorno describes in "Parataxis: Notes on Literature." Compare, for example, Cavendish's persona, the Duchess, who is "converted" (213) by advice from the immaterial spirits to Adorno's claim that the author is "under the

compulsion of the work itself.²⁶ Bearing in the mind that she is both a persona for the author and a scribe, the Duchess should already be well-equipped to handle imaginative worldmaking and shouldn't need the immaterial spirits' help. But Cavendish suggests that the author transforms as they interact with the work by depicting a process in which the Duchess is "converted" (213). In turn, Adorno explains that the artistic process changes the author in ways they might not understand:

is by no means exhausted in the subjective intention, as the axiom implicitly assumes. Intention is one moment in it; intention is transformed into a work only in exhaustive interaction with other moments: the subject matter, the immanent law of the work...the objective linguistic form. Part of what estranges refined taste from art is that it credits that artist with everything, while artists' experience teaches them how little what is most their own belongs to them, how much they are under the compulsion of the work itself.²⁷

Adorno's description of the artistic process is useful for a reading of Cavendish's *The Blazing World* because it helps to show that an author's interaction with a work can be an aesthetic experience in its own right.²⁸ Paradoxically, Adorno proposes that the work belongs to the author while also existing as its own independent entity. For Adorno, as for Cavendish, the work of art takes over in the process of its own making even if the author comes to process with a specific intention in mind. By including an episode that

²⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, "Parataxis: On Hölderlin's Late Poetry," in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 377.

²⁷ Ibid., 377.

²⁸ Barthes' "The Death of an Author" influenced many early modern studies of authorship. As a result, many seminal texts do not take the author's experience of creating the work into account. For instance, Richard Helgerson analyzes poets' approaches to self-construction, finding that self-construction consisted of an amalgam of religious reform issues, patronage issues, etc. See Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton, and the Literary System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). See also Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995). Marotti examines the relationship between an author's authority and the method of publication.

reflects on the ways in which the process of creating can impel an author to insert herself into her work (as a character) in order to foreground living in a fictional world,

Cavendish seems to open up the possibility for an experiential dimension of authorship.

While the paratexts echo some of the gender politics characteristic of early modern England,²⁹ the epistle and epilogue to *The Blazing World* recasts the struggle as a concern over ownership of her imaginative world. In the epilogue, Cavendish compares herself to other rulers:

That though I cannot be Henry the Fifth, or Charles the Second; yet, I will endeavour to be, Margaret the First: and, though I have neither Power, Time nor Occasion, to be a great Conqueror, like Alexander, or Cesar; yet, rather than not be Mistress of a World, since Fortune and the Fates would give me none, I have

²⁹ Much work has been done on the significance of early modern paratextual material. For an argument regarding the economic significance of paratexts, see Stephen Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Dobranski argues that “the immediate rhetorical purpose of including an address to the reader was presumably to help sell books” (36). See also Michael Saenger, *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006). For a discussion of the humility topos and women authors, see Julie A. Eckerle, “Prefacing Texts, Authorizing Authors, and Constructing Selves: The Preface as Autobiographical Space,” in *Genre and Women’s Life Writing in Early Modern England*, eds. Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 97–114. Patricia Pender argues that “early modern women often circumvented the charges of impropriety or indecency entailed in assuming the mantle of authorship by denying that they were authors at all” (3) in their paratexts. See Patricia Pender, *Early Modern Women’s Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). For a theoretical understanding of paratextual material, see Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Cavendish’s many paratexts are often considered “boisterous, infinite, and rambling” (28). Scott-Douglas argues that Cavendish’s prefaces are usually read as autobiographical and overly relied upon to discern Cavendish’s feminist views. See Amy Scott-Douglas, “Self-Crowned Laureatess: Towards a Critical Revaluation of Margaret Cavendish’s Prefaces,” *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies* 9.1 (2000): 27–49. Kate Lilley finds them insincere: “although she sometimes claims to write chiefly for her own pleasure, she is far more tenacious and convincing in her desire to be remembered in perpetuity by and for her writing” (32). See Kate Lilley, “Contracting Readers: Margaret Newcastle and the Rhetoric of Conjugality,” in *A Princely Brave Woman: Essays on Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle*, ed. Stephen Clucas (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 19–39.

made One of my own. And thus, believing, or, at least, hoping, that no Creature can, or will, Envy me for this World of mine, I remain. 251

Here, Cavendish recognizes her limitations. She is not a king or conqueror, but she still has created a world on par with any physical world she will never have the opportunity to seize. But note the telling shift in the last line regarding the possibility of losing her world due to the envy of others, suggesting that her persona as Mistress of a World has little to do with a regression of interiority. In other words, regressing into her imagined world does not keep someone from possibly usurping it. It is truer to say that Cavendish's exploration of gender politics in the epistle is intimately connected to her awareness that one could lose control of their imaginative world.

To point out the reappearance of this theme throughout the narrative proper and paratextual material is to read *The Blazing World* as a meta-reflection upon the power of the work and the author's limits. In particular, Cavendish's anxiety over controlling her own imaginative world is reproduced as an anxiety that a reader might overthrow another character, the Empress of the Blazing World:

But yet let them have a care, not to prove unjust Usurpers, and to rob me of mine: for, concerning the Philosophical-world, I am Empress of it my self; and as for the Blazing-world, it having an Empress already, who rules it with great Wisdom and Conduct, which Empress is my dear Platonick Friend; I shall never prove so unjust, treacherous and unworthy to her, as to disturb her Government, much less to depose her from her Imperial Throne, for the sake of any other, but rather chuse to create another World for another Friend. 251

This passage lays out Cavendish's understanding of the Empress's power within the Blazing World. Like her disavowal of responsibility in the epistle, the tension of the scene revolves around a question about the nature of ownership, about who possesses the fictional world and how "another Friend" can participate. The resolution lies in the acknowledgement that both the Empress and the Duchess should be left to rule their worlds as the rightful owners while identifying a way that other women can model their

world-making skills. Cavendish bestows a certain kind of autonomy on the Empress in two ways: First, she considers the Empress a “dear Platonick Friend,” making the two women equal through friendship. Second, Cavendish envisions that the Blazing World operates even when her avatar is not with the Empress, as she refuses “to disturb her Government.” In other words, Cavendish will not rewrite or amend the narrative as the Empress “rules [the world] with great Wisdom and Conduct.” The Empress, then, is not a flattened literary signifier or free from intention; she represents a category of character that produces the world she inhabits without the help of the author who created her.

Central to *The Blazing World*, then, is a difficulty that often arises in characterological studies of the novel: creating a credible character who seems to have independence from the structure of the plot. While critics often read the Empress as a feminist adaptation of Cavendish’s commitment to royalism³⁰, the Empress produces narrative complexity in comparison to the functions of other characters in early modern

³⁰ See Lisa Walters, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). See also Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green, *A History of Women’s Political Thought in Europe, 1400-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

prose.³¹ Cavendish achieves this complexity by maintaining the existence of the Empress' autonomy, depicting an egalitarian relationship between the Empress and the Duchess³²:

after the Duchess's Soul had stayed some time with the Empress...she begg'd leave of her to return to her Lord and Husband; which the Empress granted her, upon condition she should come and visit her as often as conveniently she could, promising that she would do the same to the Duchess. 228

.....

Upon which Advice, the Empress's Soul embrac'd and kiss'd the Duchess's Soul with an Immaterial Kiss, and shed Immaterial Tears, that she was forced to part from her, finding her not a flattering Parasite, but a true Friend; and in truth, such was their Platonick Friendship, as these two loving Souls did often meet and rejoice in each others Conversation. 230

³¹ *The Blazing World* is often considered a utopian narrative even though it has other strands such as romance. For studies of utopian writing, see J.C. Davis, *Utopian and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing, 1516-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Amy Boesky, *Founding Fictions in Early Modern England* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996). For an argument about women's contributions to the genre, see Kate Lilley, "Blazing Worlds: Seventeenth Century Women's Utopian Writing," in *Women, Texts, and Histories, 1575-1760*, eds. Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (London: Routledge, 1992), 102-33. Lilley argues that a "lack of intellectual contact so far between (masculine) genre studies of (male) utopias (which would include the gender-blind work of women) and (feminist) studies of women's utopian writing, emerging under the (inter)disciplinary rubric of 'women's studies'—a lack of contact which institutionalizes the notion of 'separate spheres' and parallel genealogies" (104). Rachel Trubowitz understands *The Blazing World's* "generic transgressiveness" as the way in which Cavendish "dissociates the utopia from the repressive force of discipline and newly associates it with a suspension of rationally conceived laws and institutionally opposed order" (231). See Rachel Trubowitz, "The Reenchantment of Utopia and the Female Monarchical Self: Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*." Marina Leslie argues that "Cavendish's manipulations of genre in *The Blazing World* speak directly to the vicissitudes in the history of her reception and the assumptions of her legibility or illegibility" (120). See Marina Leslie, *Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

³² See Bronwen Price, "Worlds within Worlds: Community, Companionship and Autonomy in Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 22 (2014): 1-19 for a discussion on the integral friendship between the Duchess and the Empress. Price argues that "the Empress's intimacy with the Duchess helps to secure her sovereign status by generating amicability within the society of the Blazing World more broadly" (5).

See also Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002) for a more general discussion of the role of friendship in the early modern period.

Here, the author's avatar does not act as "a flattering Parasite" to the Empress by imposing the author's will. Instead, the narrative presents a relationship in which the women spend a great deal of time together, a relationship based on counsel and love. Because the Duchess (and Cavendish) refuse to be nothing but a friend to the Empress, her independent rule of the Blazing World and her autonomy as a character remains intact.³³

The relationship Cavendish details between the Empress and the Duchess echoes Bakhtin's theory regarding the seeming independence of a character. For Bakhtin, even if an author defers to their character, it is actually part of the author's design:

It might seem that the independence of a character contradicts the fact that he exists, entirely and solely, as an aspect of a work of art, and consequently is wholly created from beginning to end by the author. In fact there is no such contradiction. The characters' freedom we speak of here exists within the limits of the artistic design, and in that sense is just as much a created thing as is the

³³ Critics who study *The Blazing World* in regard to the history of sexuality often point out that the friendship between the Empress and the Duchess borders on heteronormative transgression. While this chapter does not take a stance on whether the relationship between the Duchess and the Empress is truly platonic, the moments that critics point out as sensual and erotic are useful to more thoroughly explore how Cavendish's authorial experience might be considered an aesthetic experience, given that aesthetic experience revolves around the sensuous experience created by art. Marina Leslie, for instance, argues that "there is a patently erotic stamp to this immaterial conjoining of souls," and "that this homoerotic bond is licensed rather than constrained by its 'spirituality' as it places the relationship outside the traditional arguments about the biological mandate of male-female relations" (20). In a similar vein, Rosemary Kegl argues that "the repeatedly emphasized physical barrier between the Blazing World and that of Cavendish precludes the possibility of physical contact between women and thus allows for the continued representation of the mobility of their desire—including their desire for one another" (134). See Marina Leslie, *Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1998); Rosemary Kegl, 'The World I Have Made': Margaret Cavendish, Feminism, and the *Blazing-World*," in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 119-41. See David Michael Robinson, "Pleasant Conversation in the Seraglio: Lesbianism, Platonic Love, and Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*," *The Eighteenth Century* 44.2 (2003): 133-166 for a thorough discussion of the concept of lesbianism in *The Blazing World*.

unfreedom of the objectivized hero. But to create does not mean to invent... Thus the freedom of a character is an aspect of the author's design. A character's discourse is created by the author, but created in such a way that it can develop to the full its inner logic and independence as *someone else's discourse*, the word of the character himself. As a result, it does not fall out of the author's design, but only out of a monologic authorial field of vision.³⁴

Cavendish anticipates the category of polyphonic character that Bakhtin develops in his writings on the novels of Dostoevsky. Although the Empress appears autonomous, Cavendish has developed her discourse to appear this way. As Bakhtin explains, the Empress' discourse is "created in such a way that it can develop to the full its inner logic and independence as *someone else's discourse*, the word of the character himself." Because of this design, the Empress appears on the same plane or more powerful than the Duchess, Cavendish's avatar, and the epistle and epilogue become a testimony to her power. Cavendish constructs the Empress to seem unmanipulated by her, but rather to appear as if she has her own voice within the narrative. Given the power to rule the Blazing World, the Empress seems as if she is "not the object of authorial discourse, but rather a fully valid, autonomous carrier"³⁵ of her own vision.

The Empress, however, is not simply a successful rendering of a character who has autonomy within the author's larger design. The ontological and material stakes of representing an autonomous character are significant, considering that Cavendish places the Empress and the readers of *The Blazing World* on the same plane. The paratextual materials suggest that readers have a parallel form of autonomy to that of the Empress. Cavendish claims that readers should either "be willing to be [Cavendish's] Subjects" by "imagin[ing] themselves" or "if they cannot endure to be Subjects, they may create

³⁴ M.M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 64-65; emphasis in the original.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5

Worlds of their own, and Govern themselves as they please” (251). Cavendish does not perceive any real difference between the reader and her characters. While this chapter does not argue that the Empress acts on her own accord, it is important to recognize that Cavendish does blur the distinction between her readers and the Empress. We might recall the letter writer’s boundary challenging relation to her plays and ideas in Cavendish’s *Sociable Letters*. In this regard, character independence is in line with ideas she explores throughout her writings.

The epistle and epilogue, then, become an invitation to the reader to join the Duchess and the Empress in their world-making efforts. Yet this invitation raises more questions than it answers: How does the reader imagine herself the subject of an already constructed fictional world? How would a new world the reader imagines intersect with the Blazing World? While *The Blazing World* does not provide specific details about how the reader might participate, Cavendish urges the reader that the Blazing World can live within them by using “their Minds, Fancies or Imaginations” (251). In fact, Cavendish acknowledges the role the imagination plays in creating fictions in the epistle: “Fictions are an issue of mans Fancy, framed in his own Mind, according as he pleases without regard, whether the thing, he fancies be really existent without his mind or not” (152). Thus, Cavendish suggests that *The Blazing World* is just as much a malleable mental construct as it is a static written narrative for the reader to produce themselves, as “it is in every ones power to do the like” (154).

What emerges from Cavendish’s narrative strategy—limited authorial agency, amplified characterological autonomy, and the blurring of the line between readers and the product of the imagination—is that *The Blazing World* has the ability to mediate

different forms of community. In the paratexts, Cavendish hopes the narrative is effective in arranging a community of readers by not only reproducing the Blazing World in their minds but also spawning new worlds. The reader becomes inseparable from *The Blazing World* through the imagination, becoming a kind of living medium for the work (as we've seen several times throughout this dissertation). The final part of this chapter will explore how *The Blazing World* produces effects by becoming an extension of the reader through Cavendish's understanding of the imagination.

While seventeenth-century philosophers like Descartes and Hobbes approached the imagination as a faulty means to understand reality,³⁶ the imagination figures prominently as a productive and active force throughout Cavendish's oeuvre. Cavendish derives her concept of the imagination from her materialist philosophy. To understand the imagination's potential to produce effects, one must understand how Cavendish approaches the material world. Although her ideas changed over time, Cavendish is usually considered a vital materialist.³⁷ Several of her major ideas regarding matter intersect with how she comprehends the imagination in *The Blazing World*.

³⁶ For Cavendish's treatment of natural science and philosophy, see Susan James, "The Philosophical Innovations of Margaret Cavendish," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 7. 2 (June 1999): 219–44; Stewart Duncan, "Debating Materialism: Cavendish, Hobbes, and More," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 29.4 (October 2012): 391–409;

John Rogers, "Margaret Cavendish and the Gendering of the Vitalist Utopia," in *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1996) for the ways in which Cavendish differs from Hobbes; Sarah Hutton "In Dialogue with Thomas Hobbes: Margaret Cavendish's Natural Philosophy," *Women's Writing* 4.3 (1997): 421–432 for connections between Cavendish's vitalism and Hobbes' mechanism.

³⁷ Lisa Sarasohn, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish: Reason and Fancy During the Scientific Revolution* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 55.

Cavendish's theories on matter contain many intricacies, but the major tenets of her vital materialism are most useful for an exploration of the imagination. For Cavendish, all things and creatures are alive and intelligent: "there is life and knowledge in all parts of nature,...and this life and knowledge is sense and reason."³⁸ She argues that there are two kinds of matter, the animate and the inanimate, which are mixed together in all kinds of material: "my opinion is that all matter is partly animate, and partly inanimate,...and that there is no part of nature that hath not life and knowledge, for there is no part that has not a commixture of animate and inanimate matter."³⁹ In addition, motion is central to her understanding of matter. Cavendish claims that animate matter is different from inanimate matter because of its inherent capacity for self-motion: "the animate moves by itself, and the inanimate moves by the help of the animate."⁴⁰

Cavendish's belief that all matter is vital leads critics to extend her theory of vitalism to the ontological status of her fictional works. In her extensive work on Cavendish's philosophy, Lisa Sarasohn argues that "Cavendish assumed that minute parts of matter constituted both the real and the imaginary, the seen and the unseen, and every kind of so-called spirit. Her vision of the material world was broader than that of her contemporaries. She saw and imagined matter in everything, and in her thought, even the imaginary became concrete."⁴¹ In a similar vein, Lisa Walters argues that fairies "are not just fictional characters in Cavendish's writings" but are "also a significant facet of

³⁸ Margaret Cavendish, "Philosophical Letters," in *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*, ed. M. Atherton (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994), Letter 30.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 25

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter 30

⁴¹ Lisa Sarasohn, 55.

her scientific thought.”⁴² Sarasohn echoes this point: “Fairies are the functional equivalent of the dancing atoms described in the first section of Cavendish’s text; essentially atoms and fairies are the same—their motion causes thought and feeling.”⁴³ These readings embrace a theory of fiction that does not derive from a model of mimesis, a model that clearly demarcates the imaginary and the real. Critics, like Sarasohn and Walters, entertain the possibility of “real” fictional being because of Cavendish’s commitment to vital materialism.

While Cavendish’s vital materialism amplifies this idea, her philosophical theories cannot explain how to approach fictional works—like plays and narratives—as alive. To be sure Cavendish’s vital materialism certainly explains some of Cavendish’s preoccupation with “living” in her fictional works. We might recall here the letter writer who believes she can live in her Idea or die if her plays drown in *Sociable Letters*. But the aesthetic object mediates a nexus of other living beings—the creator and the reader or viewer—with their own agential forces. In this way, the aesthetic object represents a different category of animate being. What does it mean for *The Blazing World* to be a sentient or animate being? How is *The Blazing World* different from other things as an aesthetic encounter or a mediator of imaginary worlds? Before beginning to answer these questions, I would like to recall a key poem from Cavendish’s *Atomic Poems*⁴⁴ in which her theory of vital materialism and the imagination converge.

⁴² Lisa Walters, “‘[N]ot Subject to Our Sense’: Margaret Cavendish’s Fusion of Renaissance Science, Magic and Fairy Lore,” *Women’s Writing* 17.3 (December 2010): 413-31, 421.

⁴³ Lisa Sarasohn, 50.

⁴⁴ Although these poems are from her *Atomic Poems*, critics have shown that, even when Cavendish was a proponent of atomism, she was not strictly an atomist; instead, her theories of vital materialism were apparent early in her career. While she was concerned

In her poetry, Cavendish's exploration of imaginary beings is often connected to the motion of thoughts. For instance, her poem "The Claspe"⁴⁵ demonstrates how her thoughts escape her brain and have the ability to breed more fancies.⁴⁶ Thoughts are synonymous with the imagination because the speaker is writing a book of poetry on her walk.:

WHEN I did write this *Booke*, I took great paines,
For I did walke, and thinke, and breake my Braines.
My *Thoughts* run out of *Breath*, then downe would lye,
And panting with short wind, like those that dye.
When Time had given *Ease*, and lent them *strength*,
Then up would get, and run another *length*.
Sometimes I kept my *Thoughts* with a *strict dyet*,
And made them *Faste* with *Ease*, and *Rest*, and *Quiet*;
That *they* might run agen with swifter speed,
And by this course *new Fancies* they could breed.
But I doe feare *they're* not so *Good* to please,
But now *they're* out, my *Braine* is more at ease. (1-12)

The poem invites us to imagine that the act of creation mirrors a laborious and physical journey, causing the thoughts to "breake [her] Braines." While the tired, travelling thought is meant to be a metaphor for the difficulties the creative process produces, the metaphor also provides a particular take on the ontology of the imagination. As animate matter, her thoughts take off on their own journey, becoming tired from their walk as a person might feel: "My *Thoughts* run out of *Breath*, then downe would lye,/...like those that dye." When they are nurtured properly—with the correct diet and rest—they "might

with atomism before 1655, Cavendish was "finally less interested in [it] as a theory of matter than as an explanatory discourse for the political and emotional turmoil that surrounded her." See Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind*, 39

⁴⁵ Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (London: printed for J. Martin and J. Allestrye, 1653). Accessed January 20, 2020. [http:// eebo.chadwyck.com](http://eebo.chadwyck.com). 47

⁴⁶ See Jay Stevenson, "Imagining the Mind: Cavendish's Hobbesian Allegories," in *A Princely Brave Woman: Essays on Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle*, ed. Stephen Clucas (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 143-155 for an argument about the mind as a trope in Cavendish's writings.

run again with swifter speed,” producing more motion. Even without the speaker’s brain, thoughts in swift motion can produce “*new Fancies*,” causing the speaker to be “at ease” because they are no longer in her brain but are out in the world. The imagination, then, is not restrained by a physical book, but rather is alive, moving past its creator and presumably finding new brains to enter. As the letter writer of *Sociable Letters* proclaims, she would like her “*Idea* [to] Live in Many Brains.”⁴⁷ Thus, the poem sketches a theory of the imagination that is not tied to a physical object; it moves past the boundaries of the mind on its own accord.

Cavendish’s theory of an unbounded imagination recurs throughout her poetry, but it is most consequential in *The Blazing World*. After the Empress and Duchess begin creating their worlds, they travel as two thoughts: “two female souls [who] travelled together as lightly as two thoughts into the Duchess her native world; and which is remarkable, in a moment viewed all the parts of it, and all the actions of all the Creatures therein” (217). What this moment demonstrates is an equivalence between the immediate product of the imagination—thoughts—and the verbal signifiers—the Empress and the Duchess—that readers will consume. These thoughts travel so quickly they can take in the entire world, as if they are not bound by the letters on the page. Cavendish invites the reader to consider the possibility that these characters are like the thoughts in “The Claspe;” the Empress and the Duchess break from Cavendish’s brain and are in motion, inhabiting the mind, the air, a book, a reader’s mind.

In order to entertain this possibility, the reader must overcome the language of the narrative, a barrier to an unmediated form of imagination. The narrator, anticipating this

⁴⁷ Margaret Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, 99

problem, interrupts the story about the travelling souls to better inform the reader about how souls travel:

But one thing I forgot all this while, which is, That although thoughts are the natural language of Souls; yet by reason Souls cannot travel without Vehicles, they use such language as the nature and propriety of their Vehicles require, and the Vehicles of those two souls being made of the purest and finest sort of air, and of a human shape: This purity and fineness was the cause that they could neither be seen nor heard by any human Creature; when as, had they been of some grosser sort of Air, the sound of the Air's language would have been as perceptible as the blowing of *Zephyrus*. 219-20

Here, Cavendish refines her position slightly: Souls are not technically thoughts, but

rather they use thoughts as a language to communicate. When souls travel, they require vehicles “made of the purest and finest sort of air.” Because they are made of the “purity and fineness” of air, the souls are “neither...seen nor heard by any human Creature.”

While Cavendish does not quite provide a model of pure imagination that does away with the necessity of mediation, critics, like Anne M. Thell, understand this passage as a kind of thought experiment: ““These ephemeral, feather-light creatures who speak via dialects of ether again demonstrate the power of the imagination and again raise the question of whether the imagination allows or is itself an escape from the material...What emerges in this spectacular soul-to-soul transit is a fantasy of pure thought—and of panoptic, cosmographical vision—that is only attainable by exceeding the maximum velocity of physical bodies.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Anne M. Thell, *Minds in Motion: Imagining Empiricism in Eighteenth Century British Travel Literature* (Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 2017), 61. Thell also argues that “In Cavendish’s ontology, there is no fundamental distinction between thoughts and material bodies...On the other hand, Cavendish tends to describe thoughts as *nearly* immaterial...This equivocality when it comes to embodied knowledge and embodied thoughts—where Cavendish pledges materialism but constantly probes the potential limits of material bodies—recurs in Cavendish’s philosophy and her fiction, while her nominally material views on fancy also allow Cavendish to have it both ways when it comes to the reality of imagined entities and points of view” (52).

The transit of the souls effaces ontological distinctions in the Blazing World; the narrative consistently collapses the boundaries between worlds. While the poles assist this collapse, the women “who travel together as lightly as two thoughts” make the boundary blurring commonplace. The Duchess’ soul, for instance, spends a substantial amount of time in the Blazing World that she “begg’d their Majesties to give her leave to go into her Native World; for she long’d to be with her dear Lord and Husband” (247-8). The “Native World” is a reference to Cavendish’s world, established as a model of the reader’s reality. The detail about the Duchess asking to have her “Playes...acted in [the] Blazing World, when they cannot be acted in the Blinking-World of Wit” (247) is further evidence of the convergence between worlds.⁴⁹ Yet the ontological collapse between the extra-fictional world—the Blazing World—and the fictional referent based on Cavendish’s world—the Blinking World—goes beyond fantasy when Cavendish reaches out to the reader in the epilogue to *The Blazing World*. While Cavendish refuses to allow a reader to usurp either the Empress or Cavendish’s position, she hopes to assist the reader by “chus[ing] to create another world for another Friend” (247). The epilogue to the reader constitutes a distinct form of mediation, a conduit for the reader to consider imagining herself a subject of the Blazing World or making a world of her own.

The Blazing World, then, acts as a guide for the reader but it does not provide a model to imitate. If the reader chooses to create their own imaginary world, the narrative makes them aware they have the capacity to do so. It stops short, however, of providing

⁴⁹ See Sara Mendelson, “Playing Games with Gender and Genre: The Dramatic Self-Fashioning of Margaret Cavendish,” in *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writings of Margaret Cavendish* (Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 195-212 for an argument about why Cavendish’s plays were considered incompatible for the stage.

an exact model to copy.⁵⁰ When the Duchess and the Empress create their worlds, they remain hidden from the reader:

At last, when the Duchess saw that no patterns would do her any good in the framing of her World; she was resolved to make a World of her own Invention, and this World was composed of sensitive and rational self-moving Matter...did move to the Creation of the Imaginary World; which World after it was made, appear'd so curious and full of variety, so well order'd and wisely govern'd, that it cannot possibly be expressed by words, nor the delight and pleasure which the Duchess took in making this World-of-her-own.

.....

In the mean time the Empress was also making and dissolving several Worlds in her own mind, and was so puzzled, that she could not settle in any of them; wherefore she sent for the Duchess, who being ready to wait on the Empress, carried her beloved World along with her, and invited the Empress's Soul to observe the Frame, Order and Government of it. Her Majesty was so ravished with the perception of it, that her Soul desired to live in the Duchess's World: But the Duchess advised her to make such another World in her own mind; for, said she, your Majesty's mind is full of rational corporeal motions; and the rational motions of my mind shall assist you by the help of sensitive expressions, with the best Instructions they are able to give you. 215

Considering these passages together, the Duchess and Empress' worlds do not achieve adequate rendition in the narrative. When the Duchess begins to imagine her world, she chooses not to imitate any preconceived version: "the Duchess saw that no patterns would do her any good in the framing of her World." In this regard, her world does not resemble a model the reader might have previously seen. This climactic moment is

⁵⁰ Cavendish consistently prioritizes invention over imitation: "He is more praise-worthy that invents something new, be it but rude and unpolished, then he that is learned, although he should do it more curious, and neater; an imitator can never be so perfect, as the inventor, if there can be nothing added to the thing invented; for an inventor is a kinde of a creatour; but most commonly the first invention is imperfect; ... an imitator adds nothing to the substance or invention, only strives to resemble it, yet surely invention is easier then imitation: because invention comes from nature, and imitation from painful, and troublesome inquirie; and if he goeth not just the path that hath been trod before him; he is out of the way, which is a double pain at first to know the path, and then to tread it out; but invention takes his own wayes, besides, invention is easie because it is born in the brain. Where imitation is wrought and put into the brain by force" (26). See "Of Invention" in *The World's Olio*, (London: printed for J. Martin and J. Allestrye, 1655). Accessed January 20, 2020. [http:// eebo.chadwyck.com](http://eebo.chadwyck.com).

withheld from the reader, as we are left to wonder what is remarkable about the world that it “cannot possibly be expressed by words.” The Duchess’ response to the Empress, who wishes to join her after being “so ravished with the perception” of the Duchess’ world, is to encourage her to come up with her own invention. The Empress’ mind is full of “full of rational corporeal motions,” and, with the help of the Duchess’ instructions, the Empress should be able to come up with her own world. Thus, while *The Blazing World* acts as an aid, the reader can only imagine these mentally constructed world. Despite the potential for unmediated thought that can easily transcend boundaries, Cavendish does not allow for that possibility. For Cavendish, the labor of the imagination cannot be superseded; the reader must invent the world herself.

Thus, for fictional beings to approach reality, a baseline of absorption in the art object is required, whether it is the author in the act of writing or the reader in the act of imagining. Throughout her writings, Cavendish expresses her fondness for the activity of contemplation: “I was from childhood given to contemplation, being more taken with thoughts than in conversation with a society, insomuch as I would walk two or three hours, and never rest, in a musing, considering, contemplating manner, reasoning with myself of everything my senses did present.”⁵¹ Cavendish has little awareness of what she is doing when she intensely absorbed in the act of imagining. As time slips away from her, the process becomes nearly automatic as she “taken with thoughts.” However, Cavendish is aware of the dangers of remaining in a state of imagination. *The Lady Contemplation* features a character, Lady Contemplation, who celebrates complete absorption: “The greatest pleasure is in the imagination not in fruition; for it is more

⁵¹ See “Epistle” in *The World’s Olio*

pleasure for any person to imagin themselves Emperour of the whole world, than to be so, for in imagination they reign & Rule, without troublesome and weighty care belonging thereto.”⁵² She spends most of the play in the act of imagining, becoming upset when she is frequently interrupted: “I should have govern’d all the World before I had left off Contemplating.”⁵³ Through *Lady Contemplation*, Cavendish emphasizes the deleterious effects of becoming overly absorbed; she suggests that the imagination can, in fact, come to “fruition” if one moves from the imaginative act to action.

While *The Blazing World* compels the reader to imagine their own world, the narrative does not support the reader becoming solipsistically absorbed in their own imagination. Despite the amount of critics who read Cavendish’s text as a retreat into the mind, Rachel Trubowitz argues that *The Blazing World* is inherently social: “Cavendish’s imperial model of female self inspires her depiction in *Blazing World* of perfect friendship as the “molecular” coupling of two independent female subjectivities, even while elsewhere in her Utopia and other writings it drives the Duchess’s efforts to distance herself from other women and to denounce her own sex. But like her reenchantment of the Utopian genre, Cavendish’s ideal of female self and community is finally destabilized by the competing interests of the royalist and feminist ideologies that jointly structure her world view.”⁵⁴ Trubowitz further explains that “Cavendish’s female subject is completely autonomous, yet capable of equitable female friendship and community; as such, it challenges the gendered relations between independence and

⁵² Margaret Cavendish, *The Lady Contemplation* (London: printed for J. Martin and J. Allestrye, 1662). Accessed January 20, 2020. [http:// eebo.chadwyck.com](http://eebo.chadwyck.com). 183

⁵³ Ibid., 183

⁵⁴ Rachel Trubowitz, 232.

dependence, power and weakness, public and private, which had been recently and strictly drawn in the Duchess's own historical moment.”⁵⁵ Because *The Blazing World* makes the relationship between the Empress and the Duchess possible, the narrative occupies an equivalent position in a network of social relations.

In this way, Cavendish avoids the problem she experienced when she attempted to participate in another social network, the Royal Society. In the often-cited anecdote, Cavendish visited the Royal Society after having criticized Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* and, to an extent, the group as a whole.⁵⁶ Cavendish—the first woman to make a visit—was already infamous for writings of all kinds, including natural philosophy. Samuel Pepys, who witnessed the event, wrote in his diary and described Cavendish as having a “dress so antic” and a “deportment so unordinary, that I do not like her at all.”⁵⁷ This disregard is paradigmatic of subsequent criticism of Cavendish and her scientific views. For instance, Samuel Mintz, who analyzed Cavendish's visit, called her “figure of fun” because of her seeming “disregard for the methods and utilitarian aims of science.”⁵⁸

Critics, who recuperate Cavendish as an important figure for early modern science, agree that her gender shaped the antagonistic approach that both the Royal Society and more recent criticism took towards her. However, this disrespect did not stop

⁵⁵ Trubowitz, 241

⁵⁶ Parts of *The Blazing World*, particularly when the Empress smashes the microscope and her discussions with the immaterial spirits, are often read as a satire of the Royal Society. See, for instance, Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind*, 85-113. See also Frédérique Aït-Touati, “Margaret Cavendish: The Battle of Instruments”

⁵⁷ Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys, A New and Complete Transcription*, Eds. Robert Latham and William Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970–83), vol. 8, 243–244.

⁵⁸ Samuel Mintz, “The Duchess of Newcastle's Visit to the Royal Society,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 51 (1952): 168-76, 168 and 176.

Cavendish from using her writings to take the Royal Society to task. Eve Keller, for instance, argues that “Cavendish boldly interrogates the epistemological assumptions and the social agenda that underlie the mechanical philosophy and the experimental method, and, in the process, offers a critique of the new science that is remarkably sensitive to its social and gendered construction.”⁵⁹ Thus, *The Blazing World* produces three distinct actions: it critiques the Royal Society’s epistemology and rules regarding the makeup of their social community; it offers a new epistemology and vision of a women’s community of scientists and creators; and it creates a new social network by proposing the imagination as a common bond. *The Blazing World*, then, offers an enticing view of what the reader’s network could look like if they choose to imagine a world. After the Empress and Duchess meet, the immaterial spirit instructs them: “Every humane Creature can create an Immaterial World fully inhabited by immaterial Creature, and populous of immaterial subjects, such as we are, and all this within the compass of the head or skull” (212). Cavendish creates a narrative to ask the reader to participate not only in her vision but also to come up with their own. Thus, the reader becomes the central medium for Cavendish’s theories, occasioned by an encounter with *The Blazing World*.

⁵⁹ Eve Keller, “Producing Petty Gods: Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Science,” *ELH* 64.2 (Summer 1997): 447-471, 448.

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