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Early Modern Evil Genius: Hyperconformity and Objectivity in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century English Literature

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies the response among early modern and postmodern audiences to the experience of information overload, and suggests that the most appealing response to living in a communications network that appears both systematic and random is to use a rhetoric of struggle that is ambiguous in the same way.

The reasons for this appeal are twofold: firstly, the rhetoric of struggle is a way to cope with the difficulty of situating oneself within a system of circulating information that operates according to its own arbitrary rules. Mimicking that arbitrariness is a way of finding aesthetic synchronicity between how one's environment articulates itself and how one articulates within it.

Secondly, this rhetoric stores the potential for an activism of the object: a method of resistance against any impulse toward order, homogony, totality in a fallen world that, from the early modern perspective, is not worthy of seeing its contradictions resolved. While this resistance is not always positive, it is always clarifying, and while postmoderns may not see the world through a theological prism to the extent that did the early moderns, we share the same desire for resolution, and the same evil genius to counter it.

This dissertation is approved for
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My very sincere thanks to Dorothy Stephens for her continual encouragement, her enthusiasm, and her determination to stop me splitting my infinitives.

To boldly go? No, thank you.

To go boldly? Yes, ma'am!

Thanks also to Joseph Candido, David Jolliffe and Robert Cochran for their advice and attentiveness. And to Emily Bernhard-Jackson for inviting me to that party where she persuaded me not to be a medievalist, after it was already clear to everyone, except myself, that I should not be a medievalist. Why did I think I wanted to be a medievalist?

And finally, to my friends at UA (one of whom is a medievalist, and a fine one), I can only say again: Wiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!

DEDICATION

To Craig, my ever-fixed mark.

As brave as true, is that profession than
Which you do use to make; that you know man.
This makes it credible, you have dwelt upon
All worthy books; and now are such an one.
Actions are Authors, and of those in you
Your friends find every day a mart of new.

-John Donne

When you give everyone a voice and give people power, the system usually ends up in a really good place. So, what we view our role as, is giving people that power.

-Mark Zuckerberg

we cannot think the world, because somewhere it is thinking us.

-Jean Baudrillard

Towards a Deconstruction of Early and Post Modern Rhetorical Strategies (or, When Social Networking is Neither)

Olivia: Where lies your text?
Viola: In Orsino's bosom.
Olivia: In his bosom! In what chapter of his bosom?
Viola: To answer by the method, in the first of his heart.
Olivia: O! I have read it: it is heresy.

(*Twelfth Night*, I.v.105-109)

1. Where Lies our Text?

Shakespeare's dialogue tweaks the familiar correspondence in the early modern period between body and book. Viola introduces Orsino as a "hybridization between the human organism and technology" (Marcus 23), a clever but already entirely familiar image, and one that derives from "two core metaphors: the book of nature and the body as a network which replicates the order of the world beyond it" (Rhodes 187). Nature is a book, the human body a microcosm of created Nature, thus body, book and world correspond. "[P]eople in early print culture often thought of themselves … as writing, or as half-human, half-book," says Leah Marcus (23).[1] Neil Rhodes agrees, and points to John Donne as a particularly avid user of book metaphors to show how the relationship between self and world "is textually mediated" (192):

> all mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated; God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another. (*Meditation XVII* 445)

[1] See also Adam Max Cohen, who identifies this hybridization as "Turning Tech, by which I mean the description of the individual as a machine" (17), paying "special attention to the ambivalence generated in response to this changed subjectivity" (18).

Shakespeare's dialogue imposes an impediment to Donne's systematic process of translation. Orsino's body/book is heretical. God's hand, Olivia suggests, is not in every translation, for not every body is, as Donne says elsewhere, "an Illustration of all Nature; God's recapitulation of all that he had said before…" ("Preached at the Funeral of Sir William Cokayne" 526). Orsino's words are not God's, and not worth recapitulating—for Olivia they are hardly worth hearing once. Her banter with Viola may not be designed to comment seriously on the state of Orsino's soul, of course, but it can serve as a reminder that textual metaphors can be the most unstable, unpredictable and unsystematic figures of speech imaginable—as singularly appropriate, in other words, for representing disconnection and dispersal as they are for representing correlation.

Though much has been made of the appearance of the book as a fixed product[2] that likewise "organizes and fixes knowledge, closing it up between its covers" (Rhodes 191), and though this "new technology seemed to promise the realization of that ancient dream of the scholastics of amassing universal knowledge," gathering from the book of Nature, that "giant intertext of multiple connections and allusions," an organized and encyclopedic knowledge (Rhodes & Sawday 9, 13), such optimism was steadily tempered throughout the early modern period by the perceived glut of unregulated, unorganized—and perhaps unregulatable, unorganizable—information circulating among an early modern public. "[O]nce books had begun to multiply," says Jonathan Sawday, the "world began to appear more uncertain, more unknowable, than ever" (29). It is important to note, as does Paul Starr, that new perspectives on the world, along with other

[2] See Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*; Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*.

social changes deriving from technological innovations, are "related less to a medium's intrinsic properties than to constitutive choices about its design and development" (4). Books, sermons, ballads and pamphlets may have appeared in print and physically bound, but "the trajectory utterances follow in their separation from the author" becomes impossible to follow as authorship coincides with "the development of an open economy," one which "requires a dispersal of agency" (Halasz 52, 65). The controlled dissemination of pamphlets and ballads seems particularly unfeasible, for "what is to be controlled is not clear: the text? The singing? The printer? The publisher? The seller?" (Halasz 55). Tension builds "between a system in which bite-sized pieces of information could be manipulated and rearranged, and that sense of 'the order of things' … which underpinned the world views given a new lease of life by the medium of print" (Rhodes & Sawday 13).[3]

What early modern authors and audiences faced was the development of a new social network, and indeed the image of a network is well-suited to encapsulate—to the extent that it is possible—the period's impressions of the relationship between texts, communities and identities.[4] The social network is a concept recognizable to postmodern subjects, if difficult to define, or even imagine, with precision.[5] The OED defines a *social*

[3] Rhodes and Sawday go on to suggest "a strange resemblance to modern conditions, in which certain aspects of the computer create a bewildering sense of fragmentation and disorder, while others, working in conjunction with political, economic and environmental processes, reinstate an awareness of a global network, a sense of universal interconnectedness …" (13). It is not unlike what Manuel Castells describes as the power of television, in the modern era, to set the stage for all societal communication despite doubts about what direct impact, if any, television has on its audience (364). Indirectly, the media inside a system organized around media "tend to work on consciousness and behavior as real experience works on dreams, providing the raw material out of which our brain works…. It is a system of feedbacks between distorting mirrors: the media are the expression of our culture, and our culture works primarily through the materials provided by the media" (Castells 365).

[4] See Michael Bristol and Arthur Marotti; Alexandra Halasz.

[5] This lack of precision explains in part my preference for illustrating the interactions between media and audience with the image of a social network, as opposed to a public sphere. The latter's connotations are

network as "a system of social interactions and relationships;" what this system looks like we may perhaps gather from the definition for *network* alone: "any netlike or complex system or collection of interrelated things." Sawday points out that the concept of a network was familiar enough to Renaissance writers, "though such structures were not considered to be mutual pacts of obligation. Networks might be physical structures, or they might be webs of words or ideas" (35). As communicational networks develop and fresh information is exchanged, publications begin to "weave invisible threads of connection among their readers" (Starr 24). Sarah Anne Brown writes of the period's "hypertextual reading environment," "the way each Renaissance text can be seen as a single node within an intertextual web, inviting the reader to branch off to any number of different 'sites'—commentaries, engravings, emblems, songs and poems—but without the need to click on a mouse button" (128). We can compare N. Katherine Hayles' understanding of the "field concept" and her central image for it, the "cosmic web;" the most essential feature for both "is the notion that things are *interconnected*," even and especially language, so that "every statement potentially refers to every other statement, including itself" (9-10). Networks were and are understood as netlike, complex systems, but theirs is a complexity—and here is the crucial point—that approaches and then surpasses the level of comprehension. What is systematic about a social network, in other words, is always threatening to give way to what is unsystematic, for in tracing its interrelations, losing the thread is inevitable.[6]

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too conventional, and have too much integrity, to reflect the complexity and volatility of the early modern media environment.

[6] Here I come quite close to equating the network with the labyrinth, something I am comfortable doing, even though, as Sawday points out, Renaissance writers were aware of a distinction between the two structures (37). He points to the *rete mirabile* as a "net" that finally took on features of the mysterious, unrepresentable, unmappable labyrinth. My argument is that even if early modern writers did not use the

Fredric Jameson has identified such incomprehension as a particularly postmodern problem. He remarks on "the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational *network* in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects" (44, my emphasis). He sees in the postmodern era an "alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment," a disjunction that makes it impossible for "the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world" (44).[7] The "once-existing centered subject," Jameson suggests, "has today in the world of organizational bureaucracy dissolved" (15). In its place is a "high-tech paranoia" that tries and fails to "think the impossible totality of the contemporary world system" (38).

According to Jameson, it is primarily capitalism, in all its complexity, that has decentered and fragmented the modern subject. The sixteenth and seventeenth-century writers that will be discussed in the following chapters did not, of course, have modern selves to lose. Yet their works reflect a similar incapacity to map the communicational networks that surround them. Such incapacity leads to major difficulties in communicating across networks, for the navigation required to communicate efficiently and unambiguously is obscured by the networks' rhizomatic organization. Other than the

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words "net" or (social) "network" to describe post-Gutenberg culture, being enveloped in or encased by an obscurely complex system of competing discourses is a concept that took hold—an ever-tightening hold—of the Renaissance imagination. See Rita Raley's "eEmpires" for a description of what she calls the nonorganic (as opposed to inorganic) structure of the network, "a complex system that has energy, movement, and dynamism. It is not biologically alive, but neither is it an inert, inanimate, material structure: it functions like an organic entity, yet it is not" (120).

[7] Jonathan Sawday similarly points to the internet as a producer of "that dizzying feeling of infinite interconnectedness, and with it the uncomfortable sense of a vortex which it generates…. Even if the actual 'net' or 'web' … often promises much more than it can deliver, the dream is one of instant, infinite, connection between shifting, transitory, web personalities" (32).

logic of connection and collection, networks follow no territorial logic. What they do follow, Deleuze and Guattari explain in their discussion of the rhizome, are principles of multiplicity: "[t]here is no unity to serve as a pivot…. Puppet strings, as a rhizome or multiplicity, are tied not to the supposed will of an artist or puppeteer but to a multiplicity of nerve fibers, which form another puppet in other dimensions connected to the first" (*Thousand Plateaus* 8). The image of the absent puppeteer is useful for a discussion of early modern networks because, as Sawday suggests, the uncertainty over knowledge building in the Renaissance period "is to do with origin: where is the starting point of the spoken or written text, what was its first point of utterance?" (34). In short, information inside a social network may be easier to come by, but it is harder to trust. Thus Shakespeare's Viola can map with pointed accuracy the location of her master's text—a text Olivia immediately unfixes as a scattering and faithless heresy. Fixed points fail to remain fixed inside social networks; nodes become threads. Certainly cognitive mapping is complicated when the environment in which positions are mapped turns out to be itself unmappable.

Here we ought to call to mind Philip Wegner's reminder that cognitive mapping "needs to be understood as a way of producing *narratives*, unfolding through time, rather than static images, or maps …" (267).[8] Cognitive mapping seems less doomed to illegible failure when we remember that *place* in this context "is not merely a name but something like a mode of discursive production and also a psychic content … for which exclusion may be more crucial than presence …" (Stallybrass & White 196). D.K. Smith similarly

[8] Robert Shields agrees that "a social theory of the spatial is needed," one that "would exceed the usual scope of geography to take in the tendency to use 'space' as a metaphoric device by which social distinctions are defined" (43).

reminds that "a map's most important function is to show what cannot actually be seen," and that it "means both less and more than it reveals" as a static image (1).[9] Cognitive maps, it turns out, defy stasis as much as do social networks, because, as psychic content, they are discursively unstable; so often the attempts, among groups and individuals, to reassuringly place themselves as individuals with coherent identities means simultaneously displacing those judged incoherent. And these narratives of placement/displacement are constant. As Bakhtin reminds us in *The Dialogic Imagination*, "[c]onsciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of having to choose a language," and the process is always ongoing: "Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward" (295, 272). These exchanges are inevitable, according to Bakhtin, because "[o]ur speech … is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of 'our-own-ness,' varying degrees of awareness and detachment" (*Speech Genres* 89). Hence the discursive instability: choosing a language is not a choice one can make only once. Alan Sinfield adds to this explanation of inevitable exchange the "inter-involvement of resistance and control …. Any utterance is bounded by the other utterances that the language makes possible …. Any position supposes its intrinsic op-position. All stories comprise within themselves the ghosts of the alternative stories they are trying to exclude" (47). Inside a social network of circulating narratives, Bakhtin's "varying degrees of otherness," whether in the production, dissemination, or

[9] Compare Cohen's discussion of the globe as an overdetermined symbol in this era: "It was routinely invoked to represent travel, exploration, discovery, the classical past, the potential for empire, learning, the individual, the stage, the nation, the earth, and the cosmos" (59).

reception of texts, *will* inevitably expose themselves, though not in any systematic way. It is only the belief in an "impossible totality" that makes these variations appear organized and/or organizable, disguising the fact that the network is "inherently paradoxical, deriving its deepest meaning from a whole that it can neither contain nor express" (Hayles 21).

The remainder of this introduction will discuss two rhetorically strategic responses to the irregular regularity of the social network. The first, resting on the assumption of a totality, a center point inside the network around which all material circulates (a precursor to Jameson's "high-tech paranoia"), involves a combination of denial of and hostility towards the chaos that obscures the path to this center. In practice, this response involves the concentrated and continuous effort, usually among official or legitimate cultural groups, to mark clear boundaries of separation between themselves and those judged to be "Other"—no matter how often those boundaries fail to hold. The rhetorical strategy associated with this option is the "rhetoric of assertion," a rhetoric that privileges clarity, authority and resolution.[10] It is a rhetoric based on what Bakhtin often refers to as monologism or unitary language: a form of discourse conditioned by the ideological desire "to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world" (*Dialogic* 270). Bakhtin explains further:

> A common unitary language is a system of linguistic norms. But these norms do not constitute an abstract imperative; they are rather the generative forces of linguistic life, forces that struggle to overcome the

[10] The phrase "rhetoric of assertion" I take from Gary Olson's "Toward a Post-Process Composition: Abandoning the Rhetoric of Assertion." In composition studies, Olson says, "[t]he technology of assertion seems ubiquitous," and "despite our attempts to introduce alternative genres, to help students become more dialogic and less monologic, more sophistic and less Aristotelian, more exploratory and less argumentative, more personal and less academic, the Western, rationalist tradition of assertion and support is so entrenched in our epistemology and ways of understanding what 'good' writing and 'thinking' are that this tradition, along with its concomitant assumptions, defies even our most concerted efforts to subvert it" (235).

> heteroglossia of language, forces that unite and centralize verbal-ideological thought, creating within a heteroglot national language the firm, stable linguistic nucleus of an officially recognized literary language, or else defending an already formed language from the pressure of growing heteroglossia. (*Dialogic* 270-71).

The alternative response is not quite the reverse of the first, but it does involve an entirely conflicting rhetorical strategy, of struggle as opposed to assertion, and it ultimately rests on the skepticism of a belief in the network's totality or center point. A rhetoric of struggle embraces multiplicity, illegibility, indifference and contradiction—everything the rhetoric of assertion attempts to avoid.[11] However, though the latter is doomed to repeatedly fail, the former is by no means guaranteed to succeed. Practitioners of the rhetoric of struggle may be just as suspicious of the various noises and narratives of the new social network as the first group, but where the latter—eager in the work of homogeny—works to directly undermine the multiplicity of the social network by censuring suspicious minorities, the former is more likely to entertain what Adam Cohen calls "a certain *perspectival lightness* … a certain tolerance for contradiction or at least a tendency to accept as valid distinct viewpoints that might have seemed mutually exclusive before" (87). This tolerance, often hesitant rather than enthusiastic, is reflected in the indirect, ambiguous, illegible language of the rhetoric of struggle. In other words, if print culture helps to install an irreconcilable variety of points of view into early modern society, the response of this second group to that installation is to privilege (warily, suspiciously, often more than half-unwillingly) a rhetoric that is itself irreconcilable—

[11] The phrase rhetoric of struggle I derive from Diane Davis' *Breaking Up [at] Totality: a Rhetoric of Laughter*. Davis agrees with Olson that "[w]riting gets codified, disciplined, domesticated in the typical composition course; indeed, writing is often sacrificed *in the name of 'composition*,' in the name of this 'discipline's' service-oriented and pre-established requirements" (6). In opposition to "a *style* of writing that is allowed (or, really, *required*) to efface what it exscribes" (13-14), Davis proposes a nondisciplinary rhetoric that creates "pattern[s] of connection based on coordination rather than subordination" (108).

that is, marked by contradiction, unreliability, obscurity, even silence. To the rhetoric of struggle, then, we must add another phrase: the evil genius of hyperconformity.

In general, hyperconformity can be defined as the exaggerated adherence to the expectations or operations of a system in order to undermine it. It is an indirect form of resistance, according to Baudrillard—who has written extensively on the practice—"an offensive resistance" of the masses to their own investigation by a media network that continues to expect sincere engagement with the information it circulates despite being so saturated with material that the possibility of verifying any of it has already disappeared (*Selected Writings* 212). Here is a system that invites participation and that "encourages critique while neutralizing it by transforming it into sign" (Pawlett 85). "[A]re we really communicating," Baudrillard asks, "or isn't it rather the problem of our whole society expanding, transcending, exhausting itself in the fiction of communication?... What was an act has become an operation…. Language is a form, but communication is a performance" ("Vanishing" 15, 17). What Baudrillard calls the evil genius of the masses is the strategic method of "producing failure in the truth of the social and in its analysis" (*Selected Writings* 213) by recognizing this performance of communication and participating in it *as* performance, *as* fiction.[12] He suggests that the relationship of the masses to the media network "is an insoluble 'double bind' …. They are at the same time told to constitute themselves as autonomous subjects, responsible, free, and conscious, and to constitute themselves as submissive objects, inert, obedient, and conformist"

[12] This brings to mind Richard Lanham's description of *homo rhetoricus*, or rhetorical man: a stylist and a rhetorical dramatist who "has no central self to be true to" and who, "[w]hen he poses, he *is* being himself. The more artistic his performance, the more authentically representative it is" (*Motives* 27). Similar to practitioners of the rhetoric of struggle, Lanham questions the assumption that "[m]otive, purposive behavior, is the causality of history" (*Motives* 20). "What if we posit as referential the rhetorical, playful range of motive?" he asks. "It is not simply the history of literature which must be rewritten but the literature of history" (*Motives* 20).

(*Selected Writings* 218-219). "Neither of the two strategies has more objective value than the other," Baudrillard asserts, though "subject resistance" is almost always considered the more effective strategy (*Selected Writings* 218-219). However,

> this takes no account of the equal and probably superior impact of all the practices of the object…. [T]he present argument of the system is to maximize speech, to maximize the production of meaning, of participation. And so the strategic resistance is that of refusal of meaning and the refusal of speech; or of the hyperconformist simulation of the very mechanisms of the system, which is another form of refusal by overacceptance…. This strategy does not exclude the other, but it is the winning one today, because it is the most adapted to the present phase of the system. (*Selected Writings* 218-219)

The chapters that follow will suggest that the strategy of refusal by overacceptance may have been the "winning one" in the early modern period as well, in the sense that extreme conformity makes a greater impression and calls for more pronounced and careful attention to rhetorical and communicational networks themselves. The rhetoric of struggle appears to approve and accept the network's charade—that its threads can be traced to a center—but this very approval exposes the charade for what it is, and exposes the network itself as a technology not for the production or the organization of a centralized truth but for the juggling of countless appearances.[13] Hyperconformists may thus render a system "hostage to its own tautologies" (Gain 52), for hyperconformity heightens perception of the fictive and entirely un-transcendent qualities of

[13] William Merrin lists several examples of strategic exposure inside the modern system of consumerism in the U.K., discussing at length the spectacular period of public mourning after the death of Princess Diana. In response to declarations by the media that Princess Diana's funeral would be "the biggest event in history" (qtd. in Merrin 65), mourners showed up en masse to participate in a "made-for-TV model" of grief. Merrin suggests "[i]t was this media-derived simulacral grief fed back through the echo-chamber of the media and reproduced again in response that rapidly began to push the system's logic into crisis" (65). Temporarily, it seemed possible that the funeral *would* turn into the biggest event in history, that mourners would throw themselves so eagerly into their performance of grief that their behavior would become unpredictable and overwhelming. For Merrin this is one example of "the radical potential of *joining in*: of deliriously immersing oneself in the system's own logic until the point of breakdown" (Merrin 64).

communication inside a social network. This is the strategy of dissidence interpreted by Alan Sinfield as "refusal of an aspect of the dominant, without prejudging an outcome. This may sound like a weaker claim [than subversion], but I believe it is actually stronger insofar as it posits a field necessarily open to continuing contest …" (49). Dissidence in the form of the rhetoric of struggle may not be designed to lead to any particular subversive quest; instead it may initiate, in general, the energetic (re)embrace of rhetoric not (only) as a style or a defense-mechanism but as a worldview—that is, "a belief in the power of language and discourse to fundamentally structure our thinking, our systems of representation, and even our perception of the natural world" (Leach 208).[14] Evil genius is not, in fact, evil in the moral or theological sense of the word. Baudrillard calls it the principle of irreconciliation, "the way the Good is the principle of reconciliation" ("Interview 10" 112). It is "the energy that comes from the non-unification of things—good being defined as the unification of things in a totalized world" (Baudrillard *Passwords* 33). Thus evil genius, hyperconformity and the rhetoric of struggle work against the totalizing impulses of the rhetoric of assertion, but both rhetorics are apprehensive responses to the same experience of navigating the contradictory terrain of a social network which presents itself as ordered and disordered at the same time.

[14] This is precisely what is seductive about Baudrillard's "fatal strategies," for which seduction means producing meaning even after coming face to face with pure appearance. Baudrillard suggests we find the truth of appearances rather than the truth behind appearances. As Michael Smith suggests, "If fatal theory has created a totally artificial and simulated space for existence, no longer containing reference points to an outside reality, we should enter the implosion" (39).

2. Rhetoric of Assertion: You go Your Way and I'll Talk Mine

Let us first devote our attentions to the more traditional response to the unsystematic features of the early modern social network: denial, resistance, separation, assertion. Examples abound in the areas of learning, religion and social stratification. In the modifications of Humanism, for instance, we can follow a trajectory toward categorization, compartmentalization and division as a means of reconciling and regulating an unmethodical flow of information. Humanist educators of the early years of the Renaissance had inherited methods for organizing the vast *copia* of knowledge passed down from the ancients: commonplace books, memory and imitation exercises were designed to advance students' rhetorical skills and develop their characters at the same time. The two outcomes were linked enthusiastically though imprecisely. Rebecca Bushnell marks the fluctuations in early humanist pedagogy "between the extremes of liberation and control, variety and limits, play and discipline…. [Humanism]'s own ambivalence was a symptom of a world of uncertain hierarchies, shifting relations, conflicting authorities, and contradictory values" (19-20). Even the availability of books could be seen "as an unmanageable and even harmful excess when one pitted the importance of control, closure, and profit against the value placed on copiousness" (Bushnell 126-27).[15] As vague connections between education and morality became harder to tolerate for some writers and rhetoricians, humanism gradually shifted from "the practice of an exemplary individual, to … an institutionalized curriculum subject—a distinctive discipline in the arts" (Grafton & Jardine 124). Peter Ramus is the writer often

[15]See also the work of Mary Crane, who similarly remarks on "Humanist educators' concerns with, on the one hand, growth and accumulation, and, on the other, limitation and control …" (55).

credited with "discard[ing] the difficulty and rigour of high scholastic schooling and thereby attract[ing] those who regarded education as a means to social position rather than as a preparation for a life of scholarship," thus achieving "the final secularization of humanist teaching—the transition from 'humanism' to 'the humanities' (Grafton & Jardine168). Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine go on to discuss how Ramus's approach "offers [the] possibility of separating oratorical practice from any moral underpinning …. A committed Ramist finds himself free to pursue the *ars disserendi* simply as a route to high government office, without worrying about being *vir bonus* (a good man)" (189). In his seminal work on Ramism, Walter Ong expands on this transition. He discusses humanists' use of commonplaces, which, before Ramus, "had been associated with the process of stocking the imagination with 'matter' …. A mass of abstract truths, hair-raising expressions, detached phrases, comparisons, whole sentences, syllogisms, collections of adjectives—this 'copie' could be exploited at all cognitive levels, sensory and intellectual simultaneously" (*Ramus* 211). Ramus, however, "decided that all commonplaces belonged to dialectic, and that the items in them were always dialectical or logical 'arguments'" (*Ramus* 212). "There are two universal, general gifts bestowed by nature upon man, Reason and Speech," writes Ramus:

> dialectic is the theory of the former, grammar and rhetoric of the latter. Dialectic therefore should draw on the general strengths of human reason in the consideration and the arrangement of the subject matter, while grammar should analyze purity of speech … for the purpose of writing correctly. Rhetoric should demonstrate the embellishment of speech first in tropes and figures, second in dignified delivery" (684).

In short, style and delivery are the concerns of rhetoric, while memory, invention and arrangement belong to Dialectic. Clear separation—of rhetoric from dialectic—is paramount, and Ong is unforgiving of the change this effected: "the pre-Ramist

commonplace tradition could be richly sonorous rather than merely 'clear,' for it was the echo of a cognitive world experienced as if filled with sound and voices and speaking persons …. With Ramus, the voice goes out of the world" (*Ramus* 212).[16]

Whatever merit there might be in Ong's reservations, the "merely clear" appealed to many, in particular Puritans of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Perhaps no group better encapsulates the rhetoric of assertion than Protestant reformers eager to discredit Catholic minorities, for their justifications often centered on language. Alexandra Walsham notes, for example, Protestant polemicists' intimations "that textuality was intrinsic to the sanctity of holy writ, that God's meaning resided in the actual letters arranged on the page"—perfect justification for denigrating Catholocism's "dependence on a set of tenets enshrined in the unstable spoken word" ("Reformed" 175). Carla Mazzio has also documented Protestant reformers attempts not only to reject but also to invalidate what they deemed a mumbling, incomprehensible ecclesiastical speech, to erase any links between the new faith and the old, despite the increasing unfeasibility of such efforts to raze and erase. Reform based on invalidation, separation and erasure is doomed to failure, as the Protestants demonstrated. They might claim a plain, purified language while denouncing Catholic abuse of it, but doing so meant playing down the indisputable fact that "[w]hat could seem utterly 'plain' and 'common' in English … was

[16] Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday are less severe, suggesting that "the Ramist method of simplifying the arts, dealing with each division of knowledge as a discrete entity operating according to its own set of rules, was developed precisely to cope with the kind of information overload, familiar to all users of the modern computer, created by the energies of the Gutenberg revolution" (10). See also Juliet Fleming, "Graffiti, Grammatology, and the Age of Shakespeare," for a broader discussion of early modern writing and its "tending toward non-subjectivity—that is, toward a writing that requires no subjective position of enunciation" (324)—no voice—and that "everywhere embraces its own materiality" (327). But Fleming's fascinating insight on Elizabethan 'graffiti' ultimately leads her "to imagine, in an age to which is ascribed the inauguration of 'proper' writing, a widespread, and in contemporary terms multiply 'undisciplined' writing practice" which in fact "cannot be taught, reproduced, or sold as a commodity" (329).

often drawn from other languages—as in the case of these two Protestant keywords themselves, derived from Latin" (Mazzio *Inarticulate* 107).

The Catholic minority could not be easily silenced; nor, as Bryan Reynolds has written extensively, could the criminal, another group subject to stubborn but inconsistent attempts to isolate them from official culture.[17] A series of legislative acts required the itinerant to acquire passports and licenses to wander or beg, and imposed strict punishments for those who failed to comply.[18] Reynolds traces the successful efforts among members of England's lower social strata, despite such measures, to transgress the social, linguistic and aesthetic boundaries insecurely enforced by judicial agents (64). The "dialectic of antagonism" between dominant and subordinate classes makes inevitable such transgressions, for it is merely a ruse "of the dominant to pretend that critique can only exist in the language of 'reason,' 'pure knowledge' and 'seriousness' (Stallybrass & White 16, 43). Chroniclers of criminal culture, for example, though they might initially take on personas as cautionary observers of defiling behavior, seem often enough in their writings to "treat the criminals as peers. They revere them for their expertise in rhetorical activities … (Reynolds 124); their "criminal praxis emerges in this discourse as artistically creative and worthy of recognition" (Reynolds 120). In addition, and in defiance of laws designed to regulate travel among the populace, "criminal culture's chroniclers repeatedly stress the *everywhereness* of criminal culture" (Reynolds 103). But such insinuations had implications for popular writers, whose occupation was already "commonly regarded as a base pursuit, in many cases tantamount to a criminal

[17] For a discussion of efforts among sixteenth-century conservatives to impose "a congruence between a person's language and his social status" (75), see Joseph Williams.
[18] See Michael Long; A.L. Beier.

life itself" (Long 239). Pamphleteers themselves showed ambivalence toward their own medium, for "the term pamphlet hints at ambivalence;" pamphlets were "small, insignificant, ephemeral, disposable, untrustworthy, unruly, noisy, deceitful, poorly printed, addictive, a waste of time …. *Other people* write pamphlets" (Raymond 11, 10). But what could not be avoided was the indisputable fact that more often than not, as the sixteenth-century progressed, the most efficient way to respond to a scurrilous pamphlet meant writing another pamphlet.

Early Modern writers like Robert Greene repeatedly demonstrate the ambiguous relationship between the pamphleteer and his subject matter. In his rogue pamphlets, Greene describes his cony-catchers variously as "base minded caterpillars … damnable rakehells, a plague as ill as hell" and laments that "such vipers are suffred to breed and are not cut off with the sword of justice" (*Notable Discovery* 30-31). He calls for justice again in *The Second Part of Conny-Catching*, but he also writes that these criminals are "hated of God," and that justice may indeed be useless, for "as the Gangrena is a disease incurable by the censure of the Chirugians, unlesse the member where it is fixt be cut off: so this untoward generation of looser Libertines, can by no wholesome counsailes, nor advised perswasions be disswaded from their lothsom kind of life, till by death they be fatally, and finally cut off from the common-wealth" (8-9). By *The Third and Last Part of Conny-Catching*, Greene turns from disease imagery and once again hopes for some authority strong enough to "bridle the headstrong course of this hellish crew" (7). Greene cannot settle on a fixed description for the criminals whose arts he documents or for the appropriate official response to them. His condemnatory language is also tempered by the extreme care he takes to detail the "varietie of villany" these "great logicians" use to

cheat their victims (*Notable Discovery* 22). In his first book he includes an impressive list of vocabulary terms, which he dubs "words of art, used in the effecting these base villanies" (37). Greene registers time and again a respect for the cony-catchers' expertise. Even as he advertises his cony-catching pamphlets as defenses against the schemes of the criminal element, he offers within them the unavoidable 'moral' that "fewe men can live uprightly, unlesse hee have some pretty way more then the world is witness to, to helpe him withal" (35). Greene thus mystifies the notion of what it is to live uprightly, for he introduces the possibility that the process by which an honest citizen (or an honest reader) lives honestly may require certain strategies of dishonesty.[19] Alexandra Halasz touches on this in remarking on the unique nature of a cony-catching story, in which

> not only is the cony caught by the cony-catcher, but the cony-catcher is caught by the writer of the cony-catching pamphlet, that is to say, the cony-catcher in turn becomes a cony caught. Not only does the displacement precipitate a potentially endless series, but, catching a cony-catcher is a means of exposure, laying open what would otherwise remain hidden, promoting a common knowledge. (76)

Readers are made part of this "endless series," implicated in what Greene identifies at once as a reprehensible lifestyle, and yet, perhaps, an unavoidable one. Criminal culture really was everywhere in Early Modern England, as "everywhere," perhaps, as any other cultural classification (Protestant or Catholic, Puritan or Anglican, Humanist or Courtier, Royalist or Parliamentarian, etc.). "Differentiation," Stallybrass and White argue, "is

[19] See *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, eds. Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt; see also Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, who examine what they call a "recurrent pattern" whereby "the 'top' attempts to reject and eliminate the 'bottom' for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that is it in some way frequently dependent upon that low-Other …, but also that the top *includes* that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life" (5). See also Tessa Watt, who, though not specifically concerned with criminal culture or the grotesque, does argue that, while the increase in available printed materials and in specialized publishers "could be seen as an agent of 'polarization' …, [c]heap print in this period was just as likely to be an instrument of social cohesion, as more people were brought into the reading public, and as stories, images and values permeated the multiple tiers of English society" (5).

dependent upon disgust …. But disgust always bears the imprint of desire;" so Catholics, criminals and other groups "expelled as 'Other,' return as the object[s] of nostalgia, longing and fascination" (191).[20] In building sanctuaries out of speech, in other words, there can be only one outcome, one realization: Words are liminal. They make better doorways than walls, better threads than nodes.

4. Rhetorics of Struggle: On the Road, Off the Map

Figure 1: "The Expulsion" by Hans Holbein (1538)

Figure 2: "Expulsion from the Garden of Eden" by Masaccio (1427)

Rhetorics of struggle may be said to accommodate this liminality of language, but as a strategy the rhetoric of struggle can take us even farther afield, to a place without walls *and* doors, where particular sites of liminality can no longer be fixed. This is *place*,

[20] Sinfield suggests that "[m]any uneducated people must have retained a perhaps confused attachment to Catholic practices, chance, and magic" (152).

once again, as narrative rather than location. We might use Alastair Fowler's exploration of Edenic architecture to elucidate the experience of deterritorialization that a rhetoric of struggle impels. Most illustrations of the Biblical Paradise in the Medieval period included literal walls surrounding Eden, Fowler explains, but because Protestants "reject[ed] allegorization of the Bible … illustration of the Expulsion could present a problem. The Expulsion had traditionally been pictured as taking place at an architectural gateway …. Now the gateway must somehow be played down or explained away" (58). In Hans Holbein's representation (Figure 1), the gateway is certainly played down, and Adam and Eve's expulsion is not depicted as a moment of crossing a threshold. Holbein's work promises that Adam and Eve, exiting no gateway, will be chased continually, until they turn to bones. The existence of the sanctuary of Eden is confirmed by the presence of the imposing angel, but Eden itself is wholly unmarked as Adam and Eve rush through a decaying landscape. Any hope for re-invitation into a safe space is missing in Holbein's *Expulsion*. Not so for earlier works which include a representation of Eden as a walled garden marked by a distinct threshold (Figure 2). Unambiguous as humankind's expulsion from Paradise is meant to be in these paintings of the Fall, the presence of a doorway depicts expulsion as a liminal experience—Adam and Eve are as close to Paradise in, for example, Masaccio's work as it is possible to be, without being inside. The link to Eden is visibly present in the form of an archway. Holbein's couple enjoys no such link. There is no telling how long they have been running. They could be anywhere, and more to the point, so could Eden.

In their persistent hope to ignore or undermine the links between languages, Protestant reformers, Puritan Ramists, and even criminal chroniclers could mark out

temporarily distinct territories for themselves, disconnected from the defiling influence of their targets. But distinction in this regard is no sanctuary, and in the end it is no better, and perhaps no different, than the shriveled wasteland of Holbein's portrait. *The Expulsion* implies that Eden is the only real sanctuary, and that the only truly coherent narrative is the lost, pre-lapsarian one, out of bounds as a static, invisible image rather than a developing discourse in a discursively unstable network. Attached to Protestant, Ramist and social reforms was the anxiety over any theological, philosophical, political or educational strategy's capacity to maintain its coherence: how long can building boundaries make sense in a culture that seems bent on transgressing and dismantling them? At what point do the boundaries disappear entirely, and the reforms envisioned as controlled processes find themselves, and all their objectives, quite off the map?

Indeed, in Holbein's *Expulsion*, we cannot in good faith say that it is Eden that is off the map; Adam and Eve, after all, are the ones who have strayed, and their punishment includes fleeing through an alien landscape, unrecognizable in that even landmarks that seem familiar are not entirely trustworthy. It is Adam and Eve, not the offended angels, who live *off* the map, and they must find a way to live *on* whatever this new space is.[21] In the early modern period, a Baudrillarian understanding of this space as hyperreal—as more real than real, more false than false (*Selected Writings* 185)—as one that moves according to "the logic of simulacra"—which "involves an increased reliance on systems of functionality that bear no relation to any real other than that connoted by

[21] "Then the Lord God said: 'See! The man has become like one of us, knowing what is good and what is bad! Therefore, he must not be allowed to put out his hand to take fruit from the tree of life also, and thus eat of it and live forever.' The Lord God therefore banished him from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he had been taken" (*New American Bible*, Gen. 3.22-23).

them" (Bishop & Phillips 136)—begins to gain ground.[22] The fall is conceived as a disappearance of the real into abstraction (Bishop & Phillips 136), making the effort to map, cognitively or otherwise, such a space an exercise, not in futility, but certainly in a kind of contradiction. Characters from the texts discussed in the following chapters, as practitioners of the rhetoric of struggle, acknowledge this contradiction and attempt to articulate what it means. Each chapter celebrates their abstrusely successful efforts to map spaces where, on reflection, they find they do not, will not, and/or never did want to be.

If celebration of such ambiguous outcomes seems inappropriate, we must remember the ambiguous elements of the rhetoric of struggle: hyperconformity, refusal by overacceptance, the production of failure. Characters who practice rhetorics of struggle perform double duty, participating, on the one hand, in the transgressing and redefining of the boundaries between plain and foreign speech, between literacy and non-literacy, between public and private identity, between official and criminal behavior, and thus revealing how inevitable is the practice of transgression, how conscious is the process of choosing language,[23] and how caught up is the high with the low. On the other they are Baudrillard's evil geniuses, revealing that all these efforts to transgress and to choose, and to map one's place in the real world as a result of these choices and

[22] See Donald Kimball Smith, who asserts that the early modern "geographic context … is one that no longer orders itself around the still center of Jerusalem, and without God as the center point, the world makes sense only in relation to itself" (170).

[23] In opposition to Freud, Bakhtin argued for "a richer, more varied, and more diverse picture of *consciousness*," rather than unconsciousness (Morson & Emerson 175). "The proper way to understand others is not 'psychologically' but dialogically," which consists of "the ability to sense the inner dialogues of others *in all their unfinalizability* and then participate in that dialogue while respecting its openness," and which requires "renounce[ing] the desire for 'essential surplus and seek[ing] instead addressive surplus. According to Bakhtin, this approach is not only more accurate with respect to human nature, but is also the only truly ethical one" (Morson & Emerson 267).

transgressions, do not succeed in eliminating any of the uncertainty bred by the atmosphere of the social network. They pretend, in other words, that it is possible to map the unmappable, that the system which presents itself to them is in fact systematic, that living off the map is no different than living on it. But in their overacceptance, they expose what the system of communication itself is most eager to conceal: that it is not a system, that there is no getting to the center of it, and that the eagerness "to get at the naked truth, the one which haunts all discourse of interpretation, the obscene rage to uncover the secret, is proportionate to the impossibility of ever achieving this" (Baudrillard *Ecstasy of Communication* 73). The rhetoric of assertion fails to provide sanctuary for this very reason: because "[a]n intensification of the drive to render all objects and events transparent and integrated inevitably produces an intensification of the barriers against this drive …" (Bishop & Phillips 136), and because it is the very idea of the post-lapsarian world as a not-at-all sacred space, sheltering the fallen and the guilty, that undermines the very concept of sanctuary and forces early modern audiences "to come to terms with a contradictory situation in that [they] both have the system [they] deserve and—and equally non-negligibly—[they] cannot bear it" (Baudrillard, qtd. in Bishop & Phillips 142).[24]

Thomas More, William Shakespeare, Edmund Spencer, Elizabeth Cary, Andrew Marvell, and Margaret Cavendish demonstrate such a coming to terms through characters who may be identified as navigators of both "a system of meaning," which they (over)accept as inherently meaningful, and "a system of simulation" (Baudrillard *Selected Writings* 209), which they expose as artificial and hyperreal. These double

[24] This is similar again to Castells' conclusions about postmodern media, which induce not virtual reality "but the construction of real virtuality" (403).

identities are at once empowering and humbling, for though there is no escape from the unsanctified spaces which are gradually uncovered, there are vast opportunities for energetic and interactive communications inside. Chapter one, for example, presents Thomas More as a writer who understands the possibility of total investment inside hyperreal communities. In his *History of Richard III*, he depicts a social body that remains derisively incredulous of Richard III even as it fails to deny critically his fraudulent rise to power. More outlines an ultimately tragic choice between faith in the obscure and indiscernible and faith in the material. Richard's rhetoric defies credibility, and yet he seduces his audience with the opportunity to substitute his visible and obviously corrupted form for the inscrutability of the divine. His disbelieving subjects invest themselves in his kingship even as he repulses them with a struggling rhetoric that proves truly grotesque.

Chapter two explores Edmund Spenser's similar habit in the later books of *The Faerie Queene* of inviting a collective investigation into his protagonists' most extreme and often dubious rhetoric—investigation that yields not the rejection of obviously unreliable statements but an eager and even grateful participation in the establishment of questionably operational ideologies. Spenser's audience, like More's English citizenry, are paradoxically seduced and repulsed by the incredible discourse produced in the world of *The Faerie Queene*, a realm that should be understood as its own (counter)network, a seductive system that invites exploration, encourages a fantasy of connectivity, but inevitably inspires dispute, dissension, and uncertainty. It is in these later books that Spenser most deeply invests himself in exploring the seductive appeal of accepting the

network as the proper representation of how language and culture get articulated, as well as the specific rhetorical activities that this embrace of a network requires.

Baudrillard's theories of hyperconformity and refusal by overacceptance come into play most overly in Chapter three, which zeroes in on Shakespeare's Beatrice and Benedick of *Much Ado About Nothing*, who unite only after surrendering to Don Pedro's condescending ploy to bring them together, yet who also participate in shrewdly locating the deficiencies in their superior's position of lonely sovereignty. Don Pedro's deafness to the interactive potential of other voices, his strict rhetoric of assertion, represents a reductive, lopsided impression of social networking, which other characters—notably Benedick, Hero, and Dogberry—work to amend. Ultimately Don Pedro is led to abandon his old-fashioned belief that being alienated in sovereignty is the sole efficient or operative strategy inside a community that thrives on unrestricted interaction. He must become part of the masses.

Like Don Pedro, Elizabeth Cary's Mariam of *The Tragedy of Mariam* makes the mistake of placing her faith in the rhetoric of assertion, but with no one to save her, her decision dooms her to public execution. Chapter four traces the ways in which the masterful "I" is marked as the losing strategy in Cary's text, easily, albeit tragically, spurned as other and more ambiguous rhetorics work their wrack upon this closet drama's "stage." It is Salome, Cary's most inscrutable figure, whose fortunes are made by the play's conclusion. Wholly lacking in credibility, Salome demonstrates a wandering, unsettled rhetoric that proves more effective, and affecting, than a discourse that is legible, supportable, and clear. Salome appears as a prototype for the scattered

subject whose discourse appears correspondingly scattered and itinerant, yet incalculably productive.

Chapter five follows the likewise itinerant speaker of Marvell's "Upon Appleton House" as he guides readers on a tour of a complex post-civil war oblivion designed to provide sanctuary from the annihilative potential of the public utterance. The grounds of Appleton House are hyperreal to an extreme not encountered in previous chapters, and Marvell presents retreat to such a space as a seductively exhausting opportunity to explore virtuality, indifference and insensibility as acts of concentrated creation. Oblivion has a content in Marvell's poetry that proves as devastatingly complex as any hyper-vigilant immersion in the reality of the Interregnum.

Finally, Chapter six continues this trend of extreme virtuality in its examination of Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*. An outspoken narrator, Cavendish initially situates herself, and her work, in opposition to the Royal Society's formulaic procedures for establishing consensus in philosophical discussion—procedures that consecrate a self-infolded etiquette among gentlemen as the best path to discovery. Ultimately, however, Cavendish's heroines in *The Blazing World* hyperconform to these very procedures, and their commitment results in alarmingly capricious acts of destruction, self-deception and isolation. Cavendish rewrites the discovery of the workings of Nature as the betrayal of it, so that what begins as rhizomatic world-making ends as compulsive, fetishistic annihilation. As in Marvell's poetry, we are introduced to a complex oblivion, exile that poses as engagement—poses so hyper-effectively that we must see it for what it isn't in addition to what it is.

Each chapter explores how such ambiguous complicity in the favorable reception of what is observably untrustworthy comes about in an increasingly informed and participative social body. What precisely is so seductive about the artificial, the liminal, the hyperreal, and what lessons might these answers provide for a postmodern culture as enveloped by new and ambiguous forms of communication as were the early moderns, at sea in what Baudrillard calls "a completely new species of uncertainty, which results not from the lack of information but from information itself and even from an excess of information" (*Selected Writings* 209-210)? The early modern writers introduced above prove that this "species of uncertainty" is not, in fact, completely new. They felt it too, and they intimate in their works the existence of a specific aesthetic, even an activism, for uncertainty.

4. Assertion, Struggle and Pedagogy: Meeting in the Middle in the Postmodern Classroom

It is the liminality of language that provokes such uncertainty, and triggers additional questions about access, about ownership and expertise. In *The Schoolmaster* Roger Ascham complains of the presumption of his age, in which "the ripest of tongue be readiest to write, and many daily in setting out books and ballads make great show of blossoms and buds, in whom is neither root of learning nor fruit of wisdom at all" (147). What he comes close to recognizing is Bakhtin's understanding of language not as "an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world" (*Dialogic* 293). If the latter is true, and if "[a]ll words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a

generation, an age group, the day and hour," if "[e]ach word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" (*Dialogic* 293), then to choose how or what to speak is to choose who or what to be: a presumption that may be as rash and rude as Ascham accuses, but also necessary for navigating an environment more and more "socially charged."

We in the twenty-first century may feel the occasional urge, like Ascham, to vent our frustrations with the increasingly challenging heteroglossia promoted by the multiplying methods of communication available in the modern world. Presented with more and more ways to communicate, there is hardly consensus about what using these various forms of communication means for, or says about, the user: the internet, after all, may democratize learning, activism, art, music and publishing, but it does so alongside cyberbullying, identity theft and piracy.[25] In between those aspects of e-communication easier to either condemn or praise are even less unambiguous activities—sexting,[26]

[25] The latter, it should be noted, is a more complex issue than simple theft. At a TED conference in 2007, Lawrence Lessig delivered a presentation on user-generated content published on the web: "these tools of creativity have become tools of speech. It is a literacy for this generation. This is how our kids speak. It is how our kids think. It is what your kids are …" Lessig identifies so well the potential crisis in communication between generations that his remarks are worth quoting at length:

> We have to recognize [our kids] are different from us. We made mixed tapes; they remix music. We watched TV; they make TV. It is technology that has made them different, and as we see what this technology can do we need to recognize you can't kill the instinct the technology produces; we can only criminalize it. We can't stop our kids from using it; we can only drive it underground. We can't make our kids passive again; we can only make them … "pirates." And is that good? We live in this weird time, it's [a] kind of age of prohibitions, where in many areas of our life, we live life constantly against the law. Ordinary people live life against the law, and that's what we are doing to our kids. They live life knowing they live it against the law.

[26] In recent months, many states have been forced to revisit child pornography laws as they find themselves facing the awkward decision of whether to prosecute as sex offenders teens caught posting or distributing nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves. As a form of communication that is subversively private and personal at the same time as it is linked to a technology that is organized and extensive, sexting is for some interpreters so inexplicable that it can only be marked as criminal and aberrant. But if it seems counterintuitive to punish children for violating a law created to protect children, it seems equally untenable to celebrate sexting as a viable form of cultural or self-expression—and risk condoning child pornography. The problem is that sexting *is* child pornography at the same time as it *is*, quite often, a voluntary communicative act, and it is as difficult as it is necessary to examine both definitions. In any case, it is naïve to presume that registering as sex offenders the 20% of teens who admit to sexting will

texting, twittering, you-tubing, plagiarizing[27]—in which it seems possible to locate the defiant mobility identified earlier by Reynolds and Greene. And it may be possible to locate a creative praxis in these forms that is equally worthy of recognition. Instead of being wholly rash or rude, or even criminal, acts, such forms of "communication" exemplify the inevitable process Bakhtin identifies of "having to choose a language." Equally inevitable is the likelihood that in such a complicated and shifting process, uncomfortable choices will be made. Undoubtedly, newer methods of rhetorical interaction bump uncomfortably against the older and less informal, and the chance for miscommunications is high. If we are to avoid them, we must ask if inviting new forms of communication and new communicators into more rigorously organized spaces, such as the classroom or the newsroom, actually helps us to communicate better,[28] or if it simply gives us something to do.[29] In addition, we must prepare a greater variety of responses to those subjects perceived to communicate poorly, irresponsibly and even dangerously. Rather than excise them from whatever community (or watch as they excise themselves), it makes more sense to allow such discomforting scenarios to provide the

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inspire the remaining, "innocent" 80% to learn from the example of these bad boys and girls (Percentages taken from a 2008 survey conducted by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy). Instead, the impulse to generate, share and spread this kind of material needs to be identified and analyzed before it is condemned absolutely.

[27] It is important to acknowledge that plagiarism, for some members of academia, is perfectly unambiguous. Certainly buying an essay online is one thing, but as Susan Debra Blum, in her recent work *My Word! Plagiarism and College Culture*, finds, student plagiarism is often less an issue of personal ethics and morals than it is a crisis of communication as well as, for some students, a not wholly conscious act of defiance. Though she includes no faculty interviews, Blum's research goes a long way to demonstrate the extent to which students and members of the academy do not speak the same language or share the same goals; their definitions of and strategies for success, though scarcely illegible, are widely "mismatched" (179).

[28] See Henry Jenkins, who sees participatory culture as an opportunity for consumers to embrace "grassroots creativity" and to invest themselves more deeply in their own political, moral and cultural environments (136).

[29] Skeptical critics of technological innovation such as Baudrillard worry, for instance, that our world "has become dominated by systems that signify, in all their objects and events, the abstractions that serve the idea of their rapid expansion: speed, technology, efficiency, autonomy. Everything that appears to serve a function becomes a sign of the abstraction functionality" (Bishop & Phillips 135).

opportunity for examining how and by whom certain language acts are designated as tenable or untenable, transparent or impenetrable, prudent or dangerous, brilliant or foolish—"good" or "evil."

To test certain of these possibilities, in 2009 I began a survey of several World Literature classes at the University of Arkansas. Specifically, I asked the question, *Do you believe that electronic communication improves or weakens the average person's writing abilities?*[30] Over 70% of the 231 students surveyed claimed that electronic communication weakens writing abilities. Moreover, within their answers, many of them articulated their understanding of what writing is and how writing happens:

- Weakens, the vocabulary you use in electronic communication is mostly slang and by using it so much you get used to it and forget *proper grammar* and *educated vocabulary*.
- Weakens, because most online communication is meant to be brief, leaving little room for *exacting diction*.
- I believe it weakens our abilities. In electronic communication people use abbreviations, myself included … It's hard to switch back to *proper writing techniques* after you've been on Facebook for awhile.
- I think it weakens it. I can personally say that I become much more lax with *grammar* and I use things like lol.
- People get lazy and use "chat lingo."

As this sample of responses illustrate, most students surveyed define writing as a purely technical exercise, an experience bound by rules of grammar, diction, vocabulary and other "proper techniques." Here is the rhetoric of assertion reduced to its most basic features. The complicated relationship of writing to classical rhetoric—the act or art of persuasion—may be implied in these descriptions of writing as *educated, exacting,* and

[30] Worried that this question might have been too leading, in 2010 I repeated the survey with the modified question, *Do you believe that electronic communication affects your writing abilities? How so?* This modification did not appear to change students' responses in any significant way; the data that follow reflect responses from both years.

proper, but what is missing is any significant exploration of writing as an imaginative process or of language—especially inside the classroom—as anything but a static, manipulable tool, or a method to memorize. Joan Leach's explanation of rhetoric as fundamentally contingent, deriving its power from "its immediacy, its ability to talk about the particular and the possible, not the universal and the probable" (211), seems reversed in these responses which come so close to reducing writing to proper grammar and an approved vocabulary. Other survey responses are more telling, for some students went a step further and overtly dissociated electronic communication from writing:

- I don't believe it has any effect. Communication online is completely different from writing for school.
- Neither, it makes them different … Online writing might help a person's *impromptu skills* but does not necessarily help extended writing abilities.
- Neither, they are apples and oranges, at least for me. I believe even the average person writes one way online (extremely *improper*) and very academically sound when necessary.
- Personally, I separate my electronic writing from my academic writing. But I feel that online talking opens up a *more personal* feel of communication because you don't get caught up in the grammar of the Queen's English.
- If one is not in school and is not made to write papers or paragraphs summarizing things or stating their opinion, then it could weaken a person's writing abilities. But, I think it is more a way of being *creative* with your language …

According to these students, electronic writing offers the opportunity to be creative, impromptu, personal, even improper—unstructured, in other words—while academic writing traps them, *catches them up in*, an impersonal, uncreative, unimaginative, too structured, mechanical—and perhaps even ultimately incommunicative—experience.

The majority of negative responses suggest that many students are quick to suppose that education, and educators, seek control more than transformation, and that it is up to students to find a separate language that they themselves can control. To the

rhetoric of assertion of academia, in other words, students respond with the tentative sketch of a rhetoric of struggle, but they are trapped in a hazy middle ground in which they define language, on the one hand, as a socially imposed implement, crafted by perhaps well-meaning but unreliable and out-of-touch educators, the elements of which must be learned and used in the classroom environment, though not necessarily anywhere else, and on the other as a fluid, shifting vernacular, not altogether formless, but whose stylistic "rules" are temporary and voluntary, allowing the user a freedom of expression unlikely to be discovered or welcomed in the classroom. The public space of the writing classroom becomes a place where students communicate in a publicly acceptable but ultimately remote language, while the equally public spaces conducive to electronic communication unexpectedly offer a venue for private, personal, creative, immediate, and somehow more genuine articulation.[31] This split may be explained, at least in part, by a 2008 Pew Internet report, "Writing, Technology and Teens," which finds that teens routinely "disassociate e-communication with 'writing,'" and that "[e]ven though teens are heavily embedded in a tech-rich world, they do not believe that communication over the internet … is writing" (i-ii). Here is that hazy middle ground again: even though the surveys hint at receptivity to the rhetoric of struggle, students more overtly exhibit the rhetoric of assertion in their insistence on separating academic writing from the discourse they use elsewhere.

Student responses to another survey question, centering on the use of the social networking site Facebook, may clarify this curious marking of territory by students

[31] Such an optimistic assessment of technological innovation finds the most support in the works of Marshall McLuhan. See *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man,* U of Toronto P, 1962; *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New York: McGraw, 1964; *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects, NY: Bantam, 1967; The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century.* New York: Oxford UP, 1989.

suspicious of or uninterested in certain public spaces while "personally" invested in others. When asked to consider the purpose of or reasoning behind collecting large numbers of friends on Facebook, the most common response was that Facebook helps the user keep in touch with friends and family. A respectable number of students attributed no significance to the amount of friends. Others elaborated in various ways:

- (1200) It's just nice to have such a large database of friends to associate with and know what is going on outside the circle of my own friends.
- (like, hundreds) It does not really matter how many friends you have, but who you have. It is networking; you can find people you need get notes from, directions, phone numbers, etc.
- (500) I want to keep contact with people. You never know when you might need them.
- (over 1000) Facebook is a big part of networking. Having more friends allows you to meet other people. This can create benefits later on, especially when applying for a job.
- (400) If you have the ability to always have a link to the people that you know and used to know, why wouldn't you use it?
- (500ish) No reason to say no.
- (800ish) I just like to see what people I know and have met in the past have been up to, and can use [them] as connections for different opportunities.
- (530) You never know when you need a friend in the area or when a friend needs you.
- (280) I recently deleted over 70 friends …. The friends which I did keep are people I either find interesting, are friends with, related to, or might provide me with a good resource or be a good resource in the future.

Student responders most eager to justify a large number of friends were quick to identify Facebook's dual purpose: it is both a convenient site for maintaining traditionally private, personal relationships and a space for the potential construction of traditionally less intimate and worldlier associations.[32] There exists a significant interest in the vaguely

32 Here Walter Ong's theories on secondary orality come to mind. Ong argues that electronic technology has inspired a revived interest in a communication based upon the principles of orality, but "it is essentially a more deliberate and self-conscious orality, based permanently on the use of writing and print." Ong

pragmatic process of using Facebook to *network* with people who might be able to provide *benefits, resources, opportunities,* or simply satisfy some immediate but undefined *need*.[33] Facebook is allowed the potential for shifts in purpose or perspective, for different categories of utility, for the presence of "specific audiences at specific times" (Leach 218). The classroom, however, is not allowed the same potential; the possibilities of connection and rhetorical communication are excised from the writing classroom when writing is there defined as a series of universal rules to memorize, of signs to exchange. "The voice," to quote Ong again, "goes out of the world."

Or at least out of the classroom. We can temper our pessimism when we remember what the survey responses disclose—that many students clearly are invested in *choosing* a language, invested enough to want to attach themselves to certain rhetorical activities, mostly online, and detach themselves from others. This tug-of-war between the rhetoric of assertion and an emergent rhetoric of struggle certainly deserves our attention, because in it are the seeds of a critical aesthetic in addition to a rhetoric. In it is resistance to "a world where it is signs and objects … that communicate, rather than people…" (Merrin 17), and to a country that, as Baudrillard austerely suggests, "speaks in a language … it does not fully understand, like a phonetic language. Or, perhaps more accurately, it speaks a language that has been learned through reading and watching

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explains that "we are group-minded self-consciously and programmatically. The individual feels that he or she, as an individual, must be socially sensitive …. [S]econdary orality promotes spontaneity because through analytic reflection we have decided that spontaneity is a good thing. We plan our happenings carefully to be sure that they are thoroughly spontaneous" (*Orality and Literacy* 136-137). Student responses to the Facebook inquiry—particularly their confidence in the mystifying process of networking—suggest a similarly perplexing attraction to a predetermined spontaneity.

33 Consider the two young Australian girls who, in September 2009, got lost in a storm drain and, instead of calling Emergency Services directly, updated a Facebook status to alert their friends that they needed help. Hours later, the girls were rescued. See "Trapped Girls Call for Help on Facebook," ABC.com, Sept. 7, 2009.

rather than through conversation" (qtd. in Bishop 5). What the surveyed students register is the painful possibility that writing is too often taught as something that happens not as an event but as a kind of regularly scheduled programming, so that learning it becomes more and more an exercise in purely reactionary imitation. Here is a recipe for disengagement, and it insists on a response among educators to consider a place for rhetorics of struggle in the classroom. A writing pedagogy that accommodates the rhetoric of struggle could promise greater challengers and a greater relevance for students who, though they live in constant contact with the many and questionable discursive strategies at play in the media circulating across the social network, lack the means both to identify and to articulate how rhetorics that have no place in the classroom have found such a home in the world.

It is the discovery of the influence of the rhetoric of struggle that the works discussed in the following chapters will attempt to trace, marking encounters with the inarticulate, the contradictory, the illegible, etc. as primarily deterritorializing experiences. These early modern authors, in other words, experiment with a critical aesthetic that threatens, legitimately, to disrupt their primary narratives at the same time as these threats clearly play major parts in the primary narratives—making these writers perfect teachers of the possible methods by which one might participate in a discursive mode one also wishes to study. As Deleuze and Guattari remind us, deterritorialization, "as a process, is inseparable from the stases that interrupt it, or aggravate it, or make it turn in circles, and reterritorialize it …" (*Anti-Oedipus* 349-50). To discover new land, they explain, "in each case we must go back by way of old lands" (350), for that is "what the completion of the process is: not a promised and a pre-existing land, but a world

created in the process of its tendency, its coming undone, its deterritorialization" (354). Characters, and as a consequence readers, are delivered in the works that follow into these deterritorialized landscapes, and they are brought there through investment in language. It is in this unfamiliar space, wherever it is, that the renewed conversations must occur, conversations that register an equally renewed investment in choosing a language—as a matter of conscience (chapter one), as a matter of control (chapter two), of identity (chapter three), of fate (chapter four), of memory (chapter five), of philosophy (chapter six)—of anything, in short, that contributes to the content of culture.

Chapter One

Cheaters, Saints, and Simultaneous Narrative:

Early- and Postmodern Lessons from Thomas More's *The History of Richard III*

Figure 2: Lucas Cranach. *Diana and Actaeon*, 1540. Hartford, Wadsworth Athenaeum.

1. Honor Codes and Public Conscience

A growing number of colleges and universities have implemented honor codes as a means of reducing cheating among students and of emphasizing the importance of honesty and integrity in an academic community. Though academic professionals and students continue to debate the effectiveness of honor codes, surveys suggest that schools with codes in place record lower levels of cheating than campuses without such codes.[1] Donald McCabe and Linda Trevino laud the honor system as one of the best means of making ethical appeals to students, involving them in an ongoing commitment to creating a culture of integrity on their campuses.[2] But others wonder "whether an honor code is

[1] See Kate Zernike; see also *The Center for Academic Integrity*.
[2] See "Honesty and Honor Codes," 37-41; see also Donald McCabe & Gary Pavela.

not just a primitive tool but a naive one" (Zernike 10). Just how meaningful, for the average college student, *is* the ritual of signing an academic honesty pledge? Susan Debra Blum takes on this and other questions in her recent study of plagiarism and college culture; she suggests that because "[t]he connection between *integrity* in general and *academic integrity* is not obvious to most students," they struggle to define what academic integrity actually entails: "[i]n the sense that it requires ethical behavior, it is related to other forms of integrity; but insofar as students understand that it means using only permitted sources in their academic work, it stands alone, like a stone mountain in a Chinese landscape painting: students have nothing to relate it to" (153). After conducting several student interviews, Blum concludes that in practice honor codes are much less straightforward than they are on paper: "[a] code of behavior may be a rough guide for a new situation, but in practice we frequently invent more rules as we go along" (155). While McCabe and Trevino are by no means incorrect to assert that honor codes may significantly, and positively, impact student behavior, Blum's research suggests that within the oath-taking procedure itself exists some difficult to articulate obscurity that likewise obscures the impact honor code defenders wish to ascertain.

It is to the oath itself that we must go to look for clarity, acknowledging first and foremost the possibility that there are rhetorical hurdles embedded in oath-taking, especially when that oath is linked to personal integrity and to the construction of a social conscience. What oaths assume is that it is always possible to take them—that the act of taking an oath is as clear as the effect of doing so. But this is not always the case. To explain this unintelligibility, we can consider one of the most famous oaths in British history: the Oath of Succession of 1534, required of all Henry VIII's councilors as a

gesture of loyalty in general and support in particular of the Act of Succession, which had disinherited Princess Mary Tudor and conferred the crown to the future children of Henry and Anne Boleyn instead. In addition, taking the oath meant repudiating the authority of the Pope and acknowledging the annulment of King Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Thomas More, Henry's former Lord Chancellor, refused to take the oath and was arrested and eventually executed for treason. In his letters to family members and in his trial defense, More exposes the complicated—for him agonizing—rhetorical maneuvering required by the Oath of Succession. From his perspective, to take the oath meant acknowledging conscience to be a choice—but a choice that had not existed until the oath appeared. Conscience, in other words, was something the oath made possible. This article will attempt to explain why such an acknowledgment was so unacceptable to More, for whom conscience could never be generated by a secular contrivance—or more precisely, could never be *only* generated by such means. The Catholic More imagines conscience as a universal phenomenon, both already made and always in the process of being made. Simultaneously then, conscience is both already possible and made possible, over and over again—through pledges, through prayers, through service to higher powers, both secular and spiritual. Oaths are and must be taken every day, as consciences are (re)made every day; their relationship is simultaneous and reciprocal. More's resistance to the Oath of Succession is designed to expose this simultaneity for the benefit of the Oath-enforces. His words attempt treatment for their shortsightedness, and for the king's.

Consider first a letter written from the Tower of London, in which More reminds his daughter Margaret "that the matters which move my conscience (without declaration

whereof I can nothing touch the points) I have sundry times showed you that I will disclose them to no man" (Roper 153-54). It is neither the first nor the last time that More demonstrates his trust in secrecy and silence as a provisional shelter, if not from suspicion, then at least from any certain condemnation. He explains in the same letter,

> For surely if his Highness might inwardly see my true mind such as God knoweth it is, it would, I trust, soon assuage his high displeasure. Which while I can in this world never in such wise shew but that his Grace may be persuaded to believe the contrary of me, I can no further go, but put all in the hands of Him, for fear of whose displeasure for the safeguard of my soul stirred by mine own conscience (without insectation or reproach laying to any other man's) I suffer and endure this trouble. (Roper 154-155)

"For to the world," More adds in a later letter, "wrong may seem right sometime by false conjecturing, sometimes by false witnesses …" (De Silva 100). More's right actions, likewise, may seem wrong for the same reasons. Without a consideration of the difficulty of his position—he is in the rather impossible situation of being unable to defend his offence against his king without further offending his king—More's conscience may seem nervously distrustful in its secrecy, veering too far from the indispensable Catholic tenets he defended in writings such as *A Dialogue Concerning Heresy* (1529). There More emphasizes the importance of joining the common faith "of all Crystes chyrche / whiche can neuer arre in any substancyall poynt [that] god wolde haue vs bounden to byleue," rather than take the risk of pridefully following one's own, individual wits (153). But to join the common faith while awaiting trial, More *must* temporarily withdraw access to his own conscience. Peter Ackroyd explains the paradox when he reminds us that "[c]onscience was not for More simply or necessarily an individual matter" (400); rather, "the derivation of 'conscience' suggests knowledge-with-others, which for More

included the communion of the dead as well as the living" (363).[3] Here we can begin to gain a better understanding of More's particular perception of conscience as "knowledge-with-others"—a bond that, by the grace of God, pre-exists those it bonds, but that, by the added grace of human beings, is maintained by them. To speak his mind freely while imprisoned, More requires the unpolluted authority of a Christian, confessional community, something he believes already exists. But knowing at the same time that he will get no hearing from Cromwell, Audley, Norfolk, or any of the other interrogators who question him over his fifteen months spent in the Tower, his steadfast defense is to follow his own wits, his own conscience, which remains necessarily closed to all "in this world" who would pry it open. While his interrogators accuse him of stubbornness, Ackroyd suggests that for More this "was the most carefully planned consistency" (387), for More's continuing sense of conscience as something shared and communal suggests that its single, solitary exposure would reveal nothing surprising, nothing not already known.[4] He only keeps secrets, in other words, to expose that he has none. Consequently, the picture More presents to King Henry is rather elaborately layered: he promises that he has nothing to hide even as he continues to hide everything. He promises ultimate satisfaction after what he admits the king will initially find to be decidedly unsatisfactory.

[3] Stephen Smith and Gerard Wegemer further explain the "role of conscience" as More saw it—"to make practical judgments in light of principles and laws recognized as true and just. Conscience does not make those principles or laws; it only applies them in particular cases …. [E]ven the best conscience … can be mistaken … since human freedom always makes it possible to reject the indications of conscience" (xxiii).
[4] Known before the polluting effects of Luther's heresy found roots in More's home country, that is. Such is More's "radical reform." Martin Fleisher explains More's dual concentration on transformation and recovery—indeed, the transformation of society as More envisioned it would require the recovery of its sense of itself as a Christian community. More's emphasis is on revitalization and recuperation more than any absolute or unfamiliar alteration. So Fleisher contends when he suggests that "More's ideas of rebirth and community possess a mundane and social dimension which is essential to them …. Reform, then, is a spiritual phenomenon that has the utmost bearing on practical life" (3).

He would ask that King Henry see him as the innocent man he will prove to be even as he appears guilty.

Ackroyd and other biographers/scholars emphasize the dexterity of More's legal mind in the months leading up to his trial,[5] but More's efforts to *display*, rather than fully *explain*, the difficulty of his position can be viewed not just as legal maneuvers but as experiments in a particular illustrative technique common to the Medieval and the Renaissance period—simultaneous narrative. Alastair Fowler defines simultaneous narrative as "the combination of different moments in a single picture" (36), using Lucas Cranach's *Diana and Actaeon* (1560)[6] as a prime example. The painting represents a narrative construction of the familiar myth—Acteaon, caught in the act of spying on a naked Diana, bathing with her nymphs, is punished when the angry goddess transforms him into a deer; Acteaon is then pursued and torn apart by his own hunting dogs. Cranach's work captures all the significant moments of the narrative simultaneously: Actaeon, partially transformed and already set upon by his hounds, still watches the bathing women, some of whom are captured in their moment of initial surprise at being seen. Diana herself is pictured in the act of splashing and cursing the already cursed Actaeon—the drops of water arc into his malformed, antlered head while his still human legs kick feebly.

Fowler explains how, in the early Renaissance, "illustrations were to be 'read' as notations alluding to the morally significant stages of a story …. Not that a continuous sequence would have been inconceivable. But artists and patrons shared an interest in

[5] See Derek Wilson; J.A. Guy; Richard Marius also emphasizes More's clever ambition, but pays more and closer attention to the complex and distracting contradictions of More's personality.
[6] See Figure 1 above.

didactic contents, which were likely to entail discontinuous moral stages or aspects …" (20). In the case of More, his precarious position provides a didactic opportunity to illustrate himself as the king's good servant and, simultaneously, God's, and to illustrate conscience as well as simultaneously secular and sacred. More's story cannot be unraveled quite as cleanly as can the myth of Diana and Actaeon, and yet he sketches carefully the morally significant stages of his narrative—already condemned by his king, he is already saved by his God, yet he maintains his loyalty, always and ultimately, to both, dying the king's good servant, *and* God's first.[7] These stages are discontinuous—on the day of his death, More thanks the King for imprisoning him, thus granting him the time and space to contemplate his own death and his removal from the world.[8] Yet he has spent much of that time praying that King Henry find better council, the kind that would have prevented him from arresting a dutiful servant like More in the first place. More shows himself prepared for death, for martyrdom, for heaven, and equally prepared to serve his King on earth. He rejects nothing, and consequently he insists to be seen as the faithful servant of both powers, despite their increasing divergence in the years leading up to his execution. In the picture he presents of himself, More is able to stretch himself, even split himself, to serve both Pope and King, yet his integrity is sustained;[9] the King's "great matter" need not be so great after all. Through his particular illustrative

[7] "I die the King's good servant, and God's first"—More's last words, as quoted in the August 4, 1535 edition of *The Paris Newsletter*. He is often misquoted as dying "the King's good servant, *but* God's first." Wegemer and Smith suggest that the *and* "underscores More's conviction that integrity is possible in political and personal life" (xv). Wegemer and Smith also point out that More was the first writer to use the word *integrity*.

[8] See Ackroyd, 403.

[9] More's polyphonic, integrable identity here is reminiscent of another illustrative technique—entrelacement—in which a single figure, usually noble or religious, appears multiple times in a single painting. See Fowler, 53.

performance, More offers Henry a careful method of interpretation and a freshly vigilant, if discontinuous, way of seeing.

It is possible to imagine More returning to a Medieval but still familiar method of discourse in a last ditch effort to reawaken the King to his own moral integrity. This method, "rhetorical rather than mimetic" (Fowler 45), devised to illustrate a moral without recourse to any necessarily realistic design, is one More was already well-practiced in using. In addition to his consistent defenses of his conscience in the final months of his life, there are other and earlier opportunities whereby his rhetorical strategy may be connected with the illustrative technique of simultaneous narrative. The approach dominates key portions of More's *History of Richard III*, another arguably didactic discourse concerned more with spiritual lessons than historical accuracy, written at a time when a young King Henry first displayed the wayward impulses that prioritized individual glory over moral leadership.[10]

Early in the text, the author blames Richard's ambition and extreme desire to elevate himself for all his most despicable crimes and deceits, yet it becomes clear that ambition cannot be the scapegoat for the much more convoluted rhetorical intricacies that accompany, perhaps even produce, Richard's rise to power. More's *History* certainly develops the theme of a personal ambition in awkward and ultimately violent conflict with social responsibility, yet it is a conflict the boundaries of which More blurs throughout the work, for Richard's ambition is never described as a continuous, uninterrupted line of attack, and the *History* itself seems less concerned with Richard's villainy and more concerned with a fallibility already ingrained in society—in full view.

[10] It is likely More began the *History* in 1513. Henry VIII went to war with France in the same year.

The *History* may begin as a mirror for magistrates, but it converts into a mirror for all of society, for More increasingly commits himself to examining the flinching complicity that first sanctions Richard's journey to the Crown and then expels him from society without admitting any collusion with his guilt. While a continuous narrative is conceivable, the ultimate impression More leaves is of a series of didactic notations alluding to both rhetorical and moral positions rather than concrete, historically verifiable events.

2. Textual Examples of Simultaneous Narrative

To begin, More paints a half complimentary, half damning portrait of Richard's and his allies' various audiences. Stephen Greenblatt has already argued that, throughout the *History of Richard III*, "the point is not that anyone is deceived by the charade, but that everyone is forced either to participate in it or to watch it silently" (*Renaissance* 13). Commoners and nobles alike are for the most part quite capable of seeing through Richard's rhetorical strategies, and this speaks to the powers of perception and interpretation More is willing to ascribe both to the nobility and to the commons. More tells us that "no mans eares could abide" the flattery-suffused speeches about the Lord Protector given first by Dr. Shaa and Friar Penker (*History* 59).[11] Part of this rejection stems from Shaa's rather awkward delivery—mistiming Richard's entrance with a certain portion of the speech, Shaa simply delivers the same portion again when Richard finally shows up. A later and less obviously awkward speech to the people given by the Duke of Buckingham likewise fails to elicit the resounding support expected; instead of crying

[11] All quotations taken from *The History of King Richard III, The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Vol. 2,* 1963.

"king Richarde, king Richard: all was husht and mute, and not one word aunswered thereunto" (*History* 75). Suggesting that "parcase they perceyue you not well," Mayor Cooke steps in and

> somewhat louder, he rehersed them the same matter againe in other order and other wordes, so wel and ornately, & natheles so euidently and plaine, with voice gesture and countenance so cumly and so conuenient, that eueryman much meruailed that heard him, and thought that they neuer had in their liues heard so euill a tale so well tolde. (*History* 75)

Buckingham is finally forced to ask point blank if his audience desires Richard for its king:

> At these wodes the people began to whisper among themselfe secretly, [t]hat the voyce was neyther loude nor distincke, but as it were the sounde of a swarm of bees, tyl at the last in [the nether] ende of the hal, a bushement of the dukes seruantes and Nashefeldes and other longing to the protectour … began sodainlye at mennes backes to crye owte as lowde as their throtes would gyue: king Rycharde kinge Rycharde, and threwe vp their cappes in token of ioye. And they that stode before, cast back theyr heddes meruailing thereof, but nothing they sayd. And when the duke and the Maier saw thys maner, they wysely turned it to theyr purpose. And said it was a goodly cry and a ioyfull to here, euery man with one voice no manne sayeng nay. (*History* 76)

Perspicacious as they are in stubbornly rejecting Richard's theatrical self-aggrandizement, the public here rebel against this theater with merely inarticulate whispers, a defiance slightly menacing in its synchronicity but ultimately unthreatening. Critics like Greenblatt might argue their insight only makes them hostages to Richard's crime spree; they react to his allies' words as if they were loaded weapons aimed at their heads. Alive to Richard's deceit, they are still constrained and contained by the threat of his authority. But the containment here is not so much an effect of persecution as it is an already-agreed-upon defense. As Richard's propaganda team attempt to sell their preconceived narrative, the audience synchronizes their non-cooperation to a low hum.

The bee analogy suggests a hive mind, thinking and working and humming apart from the bad theater taking place onstage. If the swarm of bees fails here actually to swarm, the explanation may not be full paralysis but a temporary and softly buzzing suspension—even, perhaps, an anticipation that awaits its cue from an entirely different stage. The current consensus, after all, is that these are "Kynges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaied vpon scafoldes. In which pore men be but the lokers on. And thei that wise be, wil medle no farther. For they that sometyme step vp and playe with them, when they cannot play their partes, they disorder the play & do themself no good" (*History* 81). But Richard's public already have their own, separate parts somewhat in mind, formed/forming in response to Richard's entirely legible motives. These are *not*, in fact, *only* King's games played upon *only* one stage; to believe so, More already knew twenty years before his death, was perilous. The didactic contents of this particular scene—Buckingham's speech to the people—include the propagandistic rhetoric *and* its reception, and an equivalent, though not necessarily identical, moral significance may be attached to both narrative scenes. More's audience is given the opportunity to spotlight the moral failings of both the manipulative Buckingham and the listeners he attempts to manipulate. It is "the potential fallibility of human reasoning" that is on trial here (Day par. 5), not just the fallibility of Richard, who appears as the Actaeon in More's portrait, simultaneously positioned in sight of his forbidden desire, discovered in the act of seeing it, and about to be swarmed as a result. We give our attention to the full backdrop surrounding Richard's treachery, as would More's audience. Richard's most villainous

moments are always combined with equally noteworthy incidents involving his ensemble cast—in this case, a swarming public who fail to swarm.[12]

This failure still needs explanation, for why would More insert such a strange and stubborn suspense in his narrative—active minds inside resolutely passive bodies with mumbling tongues? From whence does this moral failing derive? That Richard, transparent as he is, is still an imposing and threatening authority provides one explanation for the passivity of the commons, constrained out of fear into mutinous silence. But another possibility is that Richard's very transparency, his Actaeon-identity, confuses his viewers as much as it enlightens them. Here we are close to Jean Baudrillard's theories about modern news coverage, which takes us hostage, he claims, but "[a] latent incredulity and derision prevent us from being totally in [its] grip …. It isn't critical consciousness that causes us to distance ourselves from it in this way, but the reflex of no longer wanting to play the game" (*Intelligence of Evil* 84). Similarly, the incredulity and derision of More's textual audience is distinct from any critical consciousness. Confronted with all the morally significant stages of Richard's story at once, viewers balk at their own place in the portrait not out of fear, but out of a necessarily deficient comprehension—not knowing *how* to play the game, not wanting to, either. For if Richard is Actaeon and the English people are the beasts who must turn on

[12] Gillian Day similarly argues that "the first half of the [*History*] makes us increasingly aware that Richard and Buckingham rise on the hypocrisy of otherwise rational and honourable individuals, of establishment representatives and, finally, of the people themselves. It is hypocrisy which manifests itself either in the conscious acceptance of fallacious reasoning or in the willing suspension of disbelief. And it is this hypocrisy which we come to focus on as much as we do Richard's" (par. 13). This focus is intentional, part of More's interest in creating a mirror for society. "The inclusion of a knowing citizen audience," Day points out, "creates a sense of instability about the public perception of, and involvement in, history's events" (par. 18). We can perhaps surmise an anxiety on More's part about his own knowing society, too complacent, perhaps, about their own knowledge and what it could lead them to do or, just as worrisomely, fail to do.

him as his deforming intent is revealed, where is the god whose curse must catalyze both transformations? The coherence of the morally significant stages requires the presence of a moral touchstone—but More leaves it out.

The reader's moral focus continues to shift back and forth in order to accommodate both the justifiable (and predictable) denunciation of Richard and the less consistent moral appraisal of his supporting cast, those clear-eyed witnesses to the Protector's tyranny, who inexplicably continue to tolerate him. The public More creates in the *History of Richard III* are connected by their discerning senses; they are uniformly capable of sniffing out a bad argument, of spotting a fake. Yet as their sensitivity is emphasized, their moral acumen is actually weakened, until one can attach to them no better than an amoral bestiality, instinct without law, and without conscience.

It is none other than Edward IV who first openly exposes these contradictions in society, in his last speech to his friends and family. Urging peace between his kinsmen, Edward prays, "Oure Lorde forbydde, that you loue together the worse, for the selfe cause that you ought to loue the better. And yet that happeneth. And no where fynde wee so deadlye debate, as amonge them, whyche by nature and lawe moste oughte to agree together" (*History* 12). Edward assumes here a similitude between "nature and law" that is just not borne out by the phenomenon he has just uncovered—the people for whom it is most crucial that they get along are the very people who hate and distrust each other the most. More's historical personages continue to equate the god-given or instinctive with the human-made or provisional, and they lock themselves in a difficult and inescapable bind, moving further from God the more they lay claim to God's intimacy. More would sympathize and even identify with this impulse. He never relinquished the possibility that

one could serve in both the world of men and the world of God, "whose governments were necessarily separate and distinct but, ideally, complementary and mutually supportive" (Wegemer & Smith xxviii). But the difficulty of that proposition is emphasized here and throughout the *History*. Nature and Law have become more than estranged, and the result is a general muddling of ethical behavior and a reduction of a public body's capacity to act meaningfully on its own consensus—in other words, its own conscience.

An example of this muddled and muddling effort can be found in the middle of the *History*, when Richard and the Duke of Buckingham each speak to the council at length regarding the Queen's attempt to safeguard her younger son in the sanctuary of the church. Their efforts both to exclude the Queen from any respectable company and mystify the very concept of sanctuary are worth examining for what they reveal about the widening gap between Nature and Law, the sacred and the secular. Both men begin by artfully discrediting the queen's motives. Richard asserts that her "haynous deede … procedinge of great malyce towarde the Kynges counsayllers," was "by her done to none other entente, but to brynge all the Lordes in obloquie and murmure of the people" (*History* 25). According to Richard, she is all at once "obstynate, and so preciselye sette vppon her owne wyl, that neyther his wise and faithful aduertysemente canne moue her, nor any mannes reason content her" (27). Obstinate and willful, it may also be "malyce, frowardenesse, or foly" that drives her (27). The Duke of Buckingham, even more shiftily, argues that it is "womannishe feare, naye womannishe frowardnesse" that is responsible for the Queen's decision, "for I dare take it vppon my soule, she well knoweth she needeth no such thyng to feare, either for her sonne or for her selfe" (28).

Shortly, however, Buckingham allows for the possibility that the Queen does fear, and that "the more she feareth to delyuer hym, the more oughte wee feare to leaue him in her handes" (29). The Duke goes even further in his disparagement of the Queen, putting her in the company of the "rabble of theues, murtherers, and maliciuos heyghnous Traitours" that notoriously use the statute of sanctuary to escape the punishments they deserve (30). Froward and fearful, obstinate and hysterical, scheming one moment and panicking the next, the Queen's motives and ultimately the Queen herself are made monstrously perplexing.

Here More once again inserts the illustrative technique of simultaneous narrative into the text, this time into the hands of Richard and Buckingham. Specifically, the two men use entrelacement, providing several discontinuous identities for the Queen inside what they also attempt to present as a single narrative, and thereby deceptively exposing and displaying her every possible motive. She is not first panicked, and then obstinate, and then fearful, and then froward, in other words: she is all this and more, and all at once. Entrelacement itself is not inherently deceptive, of course; Fowler reminds us that "centuries of entrelacement had habituated readers" to broken narrative sequences. However, "among the new ideas of classical humanism, formal unity enjoyed a high standing" (53). More pits the older technique against the new campaign for an "unbroken narrative that would carry in itself the entire moral and emotional content" (Fowler 29). Richard and Buckingham's failure to settle on a single or continuous interpretation of the Queen's motives works in their favor, for in asking the council to imagine the Queen as a willful conniver and as a woman out of her mind with fear *and* as a thief hoarding stolen property, they essentially ask too much, and the result of such a muddled imaginative

effort is a wholesale rejection of the person perplexing enough to require it. By complicating her identity and multiplying her motivations, refusing a simple or single unified explanation for her decision, Richard and Buckingham ensure that the Queen is excised from the collective body that, at this point in the *History*, still safely enshrines themselves. It is not any special or exceptional authority of Richard and Buckingham that works most heinously against the Queen here; rather, the multiple and discontinuous pictures of her take on their own garbled and surplus authorities—rather than tease them out, examine each one distinctly, or, better yet, combine them meaningfully, it becomes much easier to point and say, *Guilty*, despite the inability to answer the question, *Guilty of what?* The Queen is dis-unified, and in the end it hardly matters whether any of the various motives attached to her are or were ever true; she is little better than a criminal, for only the guilty take advantage of sanctuary, and there is hardly need to fixate on any one particular guilt.[13]

It is not only the Queen, then, that is treacherously amplified in the Duke of Buckingham's discourse. He and Richard both are initially eager to preserve the practice of sanctuary and express horror at the idea of violating the safe space sanctuary provides. Buckingham lists the scenarios in which sanctuary is necessary, but he quickly moves on to the much longer list of scenarios in which it is abused. "Then looke me nowe how few saintuarye menne there bee, whome any fauourable necessitie compelled to gooe thither," Buckingham reasons. "And then see on the tother syde what a sorte there be commonly

[13] For a different interpretation of Buckingham's strategy, see Day's brief discussion of the Duke's cunning establishment of "the inferiority of the Queen's female logic to that of the all-male Coronation Council" (par. 6). Ultimately Day concludes that "it is the fact of the Queen's claim to sanctuary which challenges the honour of all noblemen present, not her reason for such a claim" (par. 6). But it seems likely that the councilmen's intellects or, more specifically, their perceptions and perspectives of unified identity are being challenged here as much as, or more than, their honor.

therein, of them whome wylfull vnthriftynesse hathe broughte to nought … as thoughe Godde and Saincte Peter were the Patrons of vngracious lyuinge" (*History* 30-31). Buckingham resolves that the only way to rescue sanctuary from the taint of criminality is to ensure that only the innocent be allowed to use it, but even these people, he soon concludes, do not really need it. The crux of his argument is that

> a Sainctuarye serueth alway to defende the bodie of that manne that standeth in daunger abrode, not of greate hurte onelye, but also of lawful hurte. For agaynste vnlawfull harmes, neuer Pope nor Kynge entended to priueledge anye one place. For that priueledge hath euery place. Knoweth anye manne anye place wherein it is lawefull one manne to dooe another wrong? That no manne vnlawfully take hurt, that libertie, the Kynge, the lawe, and verye nature forbiddeth in euery place, and maketh to that regarde for euerye manne euerye place a Saintuarye. (31-32)

Buckingham assumes total transparency in separating lawful from unlawful hurts; bolstered by a judicial system so precise and clear, he can confidently assert that every place in his well-run England is a Sanctuary—the pope, the king, the law, and very nature forbid otherwise. Like Edward, Buckingham makes equally sacred the word of God and the word of man, forgetting that "laws, like medicines, can be applied only by individuals," and that "the justice that results will be proportionate to the prudence, courage, and temperance of those who apply them" (Wegemer & Smith 254). Somehow Buckingham manages to deliver his conclusions sounding more or less reasonable, rather than blasphemous, for he has seized on the still unintelligible relationship between "nature and law" such that his listeners may dissect his arguments only at the risk of openly avowing what they already know—that God-given nature and human-made law do not overlap the way Edward implied in his final speech, that law has instead gotten ahead of itself, (re)making nature as much as, even more than, nature (re)makes law.

Buckingham exemplifies this process throughout his speech, remaking official sanctuaries, like the one that currently shelters the Queen, into desacralized spaces, already corrupted because too likely corruptible, and at the same time substituting his new version of sanctuary, made sacred by little more than his word. "And he that taketh one oute of saintuary to dooe hym good," the duke argues, "I saye plainely that he breaketh no saintuary" (*History* 33)—sanctuary, remade by Buckingham, breaks itself. Although his listeners agree with the Duke, they also suggest "in the auoydyng of all maner of rumour, that the Lorde Cardinall shoulde fyrst assaye to geat him [the Prince] with her [the Queen's] good will" (33). It is a subtle acknowledgment of the slippery ground on which the duke has placed them; they might agree in committee that his argument—that every place is a true sanctuary, except the Queen's sanctuary, which is false—is somehow sound, but that hardly makes it indestructible. The Queen herself dismantles it aptly in her conversation with the Cardinal: "[I]n what place could I reckon him [the Prince] sure," she asks, "if he be not sure in this the sentuarye .... But my sonne can deserue no sentuary, and therefore he cannot haue it. Forsooth he hath founden a goodly glose, by whiche that place that may defend a thefe, may not saue an innocent" (37-38).[14] Elizabeth draws what appears to be needed attention to Buckinham's "goodly glose"—he and Richard unmake a sure statute all too conveniently, to satisfy their own will and, according to the Queen, their malice. Elizabeth resists the gloss, initially; she defers to laws she deems unbreakable: by "the law of nature wyll the mother kepe her childe. Gods law pryuelegeth the sanctuary, & the sanctuary my sonne …" (39). The

[14] More later asserts his own opinion of such "goodly gloses" in his *Treatise on the Passion* (1534), where he warns against the idea that "euery manne maye boldely frame him self a conscience, with a glose of his owne making, after his owne fantasye putte vnto goddess worde" (112).

Queen's sturdy faith sets up a worthy obstacle to Buckingham's shaky rhetoric, but her vigor is, unfortunately, short-lived. Immediately after Elizabeth announces the divine privilege of sanctuary and the security of her son inside it, we are told that "she verely thought she coulde not kepe him there …" (40), and so "she dempte it beste to deliuer him," hoping "it should yet make them the more warely to loke to him, & the more sircumspectly to se to his surety, if she with her owne handes betoke him to them of trust" (41). Losing her faith in God's privilege, Elizabeth hands over her trust, along with her son, to men of whom the best she can say is that while they "might bee deceiuid" by Richard, "so was she well assured they would not be corrupted" (41). The Queen replaces sure and confident faith with the frailest hope. Why do this, especially since she has already determined that Buckingham's attack on sanctuary is nothing more than a "goodly glose?" She spotlights the transparent weaknesses of his argument, weaknesses already alluded to by the councilors eager to avoid rumor, and yet it works on her—another indication that transparency may foster consensus but no effective defiance.

Does the Queen abandon her faith here, or is it she who has been abandoned? In this exploration of simultaneous narrative—compressing time so as to allow for multiple, concurrent classifications of both the Queen and sanctuary—divinity is once more the missing element. More's historical characters have lost the faith in their own connection to the divine. As a result, the constancy of faith is replaced by the reluctant legitimizing of a discontinuous and illegible authority. Richard is the *History*'s golden idol, honored through a collective disgust that proves to be scarily accommodating, as much as any true reverence. Consider Richard's bizarre attempt to blame his birth deformity on Queen Elizabeth and Jane Shore:

> ye shal al se in what wise that sorceres and that other witch of her counsel shoris wife with their affynite, haue by their sorcery & witchcraft wasted my body. And therwith he plucked vp hys doublet sleue to his elbow vpon hist left arme, where he shewed a werish withered arme and small, as it was neuer other. And thereupon euery mannes mind sore migaue them, well perceiuing that this matter was but a quarel. For wel thei wist, that the quene was to wise to go aboute any such folye. And also if she would, yet wold she of all folke leste make Shoris wife of counsaile, whom of al women she most hated, as that concubine whom the king her husband had most loued. And also no man was ther present, but wel knew that his harme was euer such since his birth. (*History* 48)

Once again it is Richard's turn to experiment with simultaneous narrative. Deformed from birth, he presents his withered arm as the tragic result of a recent witches' curse. We must imagine him, Actaeon-like again, simultaneously deformed and deforming. The confused time-scheme of Richard's deformations presents a picture of perverted timelessness; it audaciously demands that witnesses entertain the possibility of the Protector's immortality, for according to his claims, his body operates not by the rules of any mortal logic. By this most outrageous speech, Richard assumes more than any earthly authority; he assumes a mystical, supernatural identity that he can make and remake at will. He is practically his Word made flesh.[15] In More's writings on conscience and on faith, he reiterates the Christian necessity of believing in what cannot always be clearly seen or proved;[16] Richard's perverse parody asks for faith despite what *can* be seen and disproved, easily. He leads the construction of a new social conscience, a perverted translation of knowledge-with-others—More's worst nightmare.

The only sane response to such a brutal illumination, in the *History*, is the attempt to un-see, to hum along in a self-imposed obscurity, while the kings play their games.

[15] Here we see an example of the "linguistic fluidity" that Anne Lake Prescott argues More exploited in his own writings but "feared in despots such as Henry VIII" and Richard III (229).
[16] In *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, for example, More writes, "And so let hym reuerently knowlege his ignoraunce / lene and cleue to the faith of the chyrche as to an vndoutyd trouthe / leuynge that texte to be better perceyuyd whan it shall please our lorde with hys light to reuele and disclose it" (127-28).

Such is certainly one of the lessons of the animal fable that abruptly concludes the *History*. Bishop Morton, pressed by the Duke of Buckingham to reveal his thoughts on King Richard, responds with a story about a lion who

> had proclaimed that on pain of deth there should none horned beast abide in that wood, [whereupon] one that had in his forehed a bonch of flesh, fled awaye a great pace. The fox that saw him run so faste, asked him whither he made al that hast. And he aunswered, in faith I neither wote nor reck, so I wer once hence because of this proclamacion made of horned beastes. What fole quod the fox thou maist abide wel inough, the lyon ment not by thee, for it is none horn that is in thine head. No mary quod he that wote I wel ynough. But what & he cal it an horn, wher am I then? (*History* 93)

Richard's perversions have reduced his subjects to such desperate logic; ruined by their confrontation with the gross distortions, the horror, of their new political *and* spiritual model, nothing is left but the raw, animal instinct for self-preservation, achieved in the fable by flight, in the rest of the *History* by a humming aversion. Richard has revealed himself: he is known now, by all, in the sense that More would say Christians know God. But such knowledge is bestial, debasing, as the final fable emphasizes.[17] Here, truly, is instinct without law, conscience without bond, though the History has prepared us for this final reductive moment—in the hive mind of the commons, in the Queen's capitulation, even in Lord Standley's prophetic dream on the night before his arrest and execution.[18]

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[17] More would later warn Thomas Cromwell, "in counsel given to his Grace, ever tell him what he ought to do, but never tell him what he is able to do …. For if the lion knew his own strength, hard were it for any man to rule him" (qtd. in Wegemer & Smith 43). In a Latin poem "To a Courtier," More compares "hav[ing] the king's ear" with "having fun with tamed lions—often it is harmless, but just as often there is fear of harm. Often he roars in rage for no known reason, and suddenly the fun becomes fatal" (qtd. in Wegemer & Smith 231). "What is a good king?" More asks in another poem. "He is a watchdog, guardian of the flock, who by barking keeps the wolves from the sheep. What is the bad king? He is the wolf" (qtd. in Wegemer & Smith 236).

[18] "[H]e had so fereful a dreme, in which him thoughte that a bore with his tuskes so raced them both bi the heddes, that the blood ranne aboute both their shoulders. And forasmuch as the protector gaue the bore for his cognisaunce, this dreme made so fereful an impression in his hart, that he was throughly determined no lenger to tary, but had his horse redy, if the lord Hastinges wold go with him to ride so far yet the same night, that thei shold be out of danger ere dai" (*History* 50).

Knowledge of the truth has been steadily replaced by an instinct for it. Knowledge no longer exists as the result of accumulation or as evidence of a sacred bond; as instinct, it exists only in bare and lonely moments. Finally nature and law overlap, but the result is not a harmony but a deformity, one that bears only a monstrous, morally expunged relation to God and human beings. Richard is the new Church; he is both Actaeon and Diana, deforming himself; he is the sanctuary that shelters the similarly malformed. But his shelter is simultaneously exposure, for the only sanctuary the *History* offers is wilderness, and its sanctuary men are beasts.

3. Warnings for a Sixteenth Century Audience

If we assume for the *History* a primarily didactic function as a mirror for the nobility and the rest of society alike, then the lesson clearly includes a warning against the perversion that may so easily enter into consciousness.[19] Yet More does not provide coherent instructions for either recognizing or conquering that perversion. What he presents are simultaneous portraits of various historical figures engaged in tragically insistent enactments of their own dehumanization and desacralization. More prevents any easy interpretation; he makes it particularly difficult to use the *History* as one more piece of evidence in the condemnation of Richard III as a deformed and aberrant personality, excised from the sanctuary of a community that remains safely intact despite the evil machinations of this evil king. More cannot allow us to blame Richard alone, for it is only with the complicity of his various audiences that Richard is able to proceed with his (not at all) secret grab for power. By the repeated utilization of simultaneous narrative,

[19] Marius agrees that More "wrote to teach moral lesson—here, the nature of tyranny, the wicked conduct and self-seeking that kings should avoid if they are to be good" (99).

More broadens his perspective to accommodate much more than Richard's malicious ambition, which in the context of the entire *History* is hardly as destructive as the careless obliteration of sanctuary, torn apart as viciously as Actaeon is by his dogs. Sanctuary is the last defense against Richard's plotting—it is all that stands between him and Elizabeth's youngest son—but sanctuary is also the last link to the divinity that is, by the end of the *History*, wholly disabled. More's *History* draws the destruction of the very concept of safe, stable spaces where one can live, not as any confusingly motivated or monstrous individual, but as a "Saynctuary manne" (*History* 31). Indeed, there *are* no men in More's *History*, none who are not already deformed/deforming into something else. These tragic transformations have happened, and everyone is at fault, for in protecting the semblance of a safe, separate, incorruptibly unified social identity, More's historical figures acquiesce in the maneuverings of Richard, and in their own hostage-taking, as if they could wait out the misfortune of Richard, as if they could come away from his rule unscathed.[20] It is this perversion of social identity that More's work condemns, a perversion that arises in part from what Jean Baudrillard explains as a confusion between evil and misfortune. While misfortune presumes what Baudrillard views as a humiliating innocence, the intelligence of evil

> rests on the rejection of the presumption of innocence …. [W]e are all presumptive wrongdoers …. For the act we commit, it is right we should

[20] More targets everyone, which may explain why he neither completed nor published his *History*. Scholars have entertained various other explanations. Marius says that "too many important people were still around who had been compromised by their relations with Richard" (118). Wilson suggests More became "increasingly vulnerable as he ascended the ladder of royal favour," and a more pronounced circumspection inspired him to abandon his work on the manuscript (159). Wilson discusses the "sensitive issue" of Henry VIII's coronation ode, which More had written in 1509, and which contained unambiguous criticism of Henry VII (160). The ode was published, along with others of More's earlier poems, in 1518, and drew some unwanted attention to the rising councilor. Wilson provides convincing evidence that political pressure was responsible for the abrupt ending of the *History*, but it is also possible that More arrived at his ending organically—if the *History* is a portrait of the process of dehumanization, a beast fable seems an entirely appropriate conclusion.

> be dealt with—and indeed punished—accordingly. We are never innocent of that act in the sense of having nothing to do with it or being victims of it. But this does not mean we are answerable for it either, as that would suppose we were answerable for ourselves, that we were invested with total power over ourselves, which is a subjective illusion …. [W]e are forever complicit in what we do, even if we are not answerable to anyone. So we are both irresponsible and without excuses. (*Intelligence of Evil* 152-54)

More's *History* is an exercise in irresponsibility without excuse, a lesson in the necessary rejection of the presumption of innocence. It is a nightmare world, where God has been replaced by a monster/man, but this nightmare has been dreamed by everyone inside it. Richard is no random misfortune—he cannot be explained away as an aberration that simply arrived, like a plague or a storm, and More makes it abundantly clear that the horrors of his reign are the "result of the successes and failures of human will and wit and not the inexorable workings of fate" (Fleisher 163). But in targeting human will, there are still no intelligible answers for the problem of Richard III—why he arrived, why he was allowed to stay, what we can learn from his short reign of terror. This is More's irresolvable problem: people are not answerable for what they do, because people have no answers. Answers are "the business of destiny or of the divinity" (Baudrillard *Intelligence of Evil*153), but when people act anyway, as they must, they invent the missing answers.[21] More's figures take responsibility irresponsibly, encroaching inexcusably onto unfamiliar domains, searching for answers to which they have no access; there is no discovery inside such domains, only inventions: animal fables, stories of curses and witchcraft, dreams of escape, king's games played on scaffolds—all manner of methods of illustration for these Great Matters, but no answers. Without

[21] Here we are close to an insightful assertion by Prescott: "More denied that God's truth changes with time, but he did insist that it unfolds over time" (239). More's figures perhaps rush the process.

resolving this problem of lack, More does call for exactly what Baudrillard calls for in the *Intelligence of Evil* when he urges us to "be worthy of our 'perversity,' of our evil genius, let us measure up to our tragic involvement in what happens to us …" (153). More's figures fail to measure up when they fail to recognize the parts they play in the presumptuous inventiveness that, despite universal incredulity and derision, still succeeds in substituting Richard's presence for the presence of the divine.[22] We can appreciate their failure as a warning against the wrong kind of presumption—of innocence rather than accountability.

Richard Marius' interpretation of the *History* implies that such a warning would hardly have been incomprehensible to More's contemporaries. Marius discusses "the well-known melancholia of the age," inspired by "the uncertainty of things and the way appearances gave the lie to reality" (120). More's Richard III, though transparently tyrannous, is still an obscure and uncertain figure. More's *History* "questions, by its blunt demanding factuality[,] the supposition that human events cohere and that the wise may discover merely by observing a divine purpose and rationality in the world. God has his purposes …, [b]ut no one can tell merely by looking what those purposes are" (122). Marius' summary gets close to the heart of More's antagonism towards not only the Oath of Succession but also towards Luther and the entire Protestant reform movement. Traditional interpretations of Protestantism emphasize "the massive devolution of religious authority from institutions to persons" (Rosendale 1154), and Luther's concomitant effort to separate the carnal and the spiritual realms, which "have been so

[22] This is similar to Day's argument that More uses his *History* to "reshap[e] Richard, not as the evil monster of popular repute but as rationalist man's monstrous self-deception, the *unacknowledged unknown*" (par. 2, my emphasis).

confused by humankind, Luther says, that bishops rule over cities while lords rule over the human souls" (Mitchell 691). More rejects this advocacy of the complete separation between realms, though he certainly agrees that a tension exists between worldly and spiritual work. Inevitably nature mixes with law, but the mixture itself can be sweet, as it is in More's vision of conscience-with-others, or toxic, as it is in the *History*. The solution is not to escape the tension through separation, but to accept, and thus live up to, its inevitability. Such acceptance must be collective, not individual, and here is where More appears most incompatible with Luther. Mitchell summarizes Luther's position that "[o]nly through a 'marriage between a single Christian and Christ where no others are involved does the basis for community come to view;'" he goes on to assert the necessity of "seeing how the pattern of the singular relationship, the marriage, turns back onto the world, so to speak, and offers a pattern for the right relationship between human beings" (693). But for More this version of the construction of conscience is plainly backwards, even naïve, for knowledge of God is "something institutionally possessed, [not] individually pursued" (Rosendale 1157). More's approach to worship is aesthetic rather than intellectual,

> founded upon the gulf between God and humanity which finds its primary expression in the ineffability of the aesthetic; its natural medium is in the elevated strains of high liturgy, and its corollary effect is the elevation of the mediating institution which renders the gulf crossable. The traditional Roman Catholic Mass, in which the divine is screened not only by the aesthetic but by the limited participation of the congregation … and above all by the mystical opacity of hieratic Latin, epitomizes this position…. Paradoxically, this linguistic wall was the self-authenticating guarantee of access (albeit indirect) to the divine: the inability of the average medieval worshiper to fully understand what was being said in church was presumably an important part of his or her assurance that something important and otherworldly was in fact happening. (Rosendale 1152-5)

There is a humility in More's understanding of conscience, which derives from just this belief that contact with God must arrive through obscurity. This is essentially the intelligence of evil, when evil is understood, as Baudrillard understands it, as an acknowledgment of inevitable mystification, as "the energy that comes from the non-unification of things—good being defined as the unification of things in a totalized world" (*Passwords* 33).

Twenty years later, in his refusal to take the Oath of Succession, More once again calls attention to the intelligence of evil, once again delivers a warning about assuming innocence in a non-unified (but necessarily un-separable) sacred/secular world, and once again employs simultaneous narrative as his method of choice for displaying his own measuring up to his tragic involvement in the events of the 1530s. To Margaret he writes, "I had always from the beginning truly used myself to looking first upon God and next upon the King, according to the lesson his Highness taught me at my first coming to his noble service …" (qtd. in Wegemer & Smith 348-49). To Secretary Cromwell he argues "that the faithful subject is more bound to his conscience and his soul than to anything else in the world," adding, "provided his conscience, like mine, does not raise a scandal or sedition, and I assure you that I have never discovered what is in my conscience to any person living" (qtd. in Wegemer & Smith 353). More looks upon God first, but not instead of, the King, and while he privileges his spiritual connection to his conscience, he takes care to consider the effects of his conscience on the material world. More's defense is an effort to explain the essential difference between choosing a simultaneous or integrated identity as the King's good servant *and* God's, versus choosing a double or split identity as the public servant of the King and the private servant of the Catholic

Church. In a letter from Margaret to Alice Alington, which More may have written himself, he explains that

> if in this matter it were possible for me to do the thing that might content the King's Grace without God thereby being offended, there is no man who has taken this oath already who has done so more gladly than I would …. But since, my conscience remaining unchanged, I can in no way do it …. I have no way out of the bind that God has me in. (qtd. in Wegemer & Smith 320)

For More, the idea of taking the oath while crossing his fingers is impossible, reprehensible, because, quite simply, it is dishonest. More may admit to two integrable identities, but he is not a cheater. Here we see the familiar moral stringency of More existing alongside a more realistic, worldly acknowledgment of combination and compromise. He refuses to capitulate to heresy, but his denial is not marked by outright defiance, for in his refusal to serve the King, he continues to serve the King. What separates More from his characters in the *History* is his recognition that he is doing both, mixing incredulity with reverence, exposing his conscience as made up of sacred and secular components, obscurely mixed, and he begs that others, especially King Henry, recognize this as well.

4. Lessons for a Twenty-first Century Audience

More's integral identities, his simultaneous loyalties, are the result of his very particular honor code. His understanding of oath-taking as a matter of conscience may provide insight on the ambiguous relationship between academic integrity and integrity in general alluded to in the first paragraphs of this chapter. Also relevant are Baudrillard's theories of the intelligence of evil, for as Tricia Gallant points out, there is a "tendency to view student academic misconduct as another form of students behaving badly [along

with, for example, binge drinking]" (76). Plagiarism is often reduced to misfortune, in that it requires an initial presumption of innocence; we are not *all* presumptive wrongdoers—only the current generation of students, their innocence, and their morals, ruined by the convenient seduction of the Internet.[23] Certainly stealing an essay from an online paper-mill is one thing, but many activities that "count" as plagiarism, according to the various university handbooks, are much less cut and dry, and it is not always easy to recognize when an oath has been violated. More's perspective on identity may provide us with a more useful perspective on plagiarism. His argument, boiled down to its basics, is that a person cannot—or, perhaps more precisely, should not—believe in something but not believe in it. She cannot substitute her own answer to an issue but still make separate room for a separate, inaccessible answer. She cannot take an oath without taking it. But the interviews in Blum's study of plagiarism suggest nothing less than that students *are* taking oaths without taking them; Blum's students "echoed the official line about universities being built on trust and about the importance of originality, but few seemed to go beyond the superficial justification offered by faculty" (154). The problem may very well be that students who sign Academic Dishonesty contracts are asked to take an oath in deference to a standard they are told is determinedly black and white: they comply, but they know better. "[P]lagiarism assumes the concreteness of texts," Alice Roy explains; it assumes "the reality of authorship, of both words and ideas, and a well-defined role of the reader as receiver of the message. No disappearing subject here, no creative transaction between reader and writer, or reader and text, no negotiation of

[23] Some critics argue that, thanks to the Internet, instances of plagiarism have drastically increased because students "refuse to admit that copying from the Web is wrong" (Hansen 778). Citing a number of recent studies, Susan Debra Blum cites the percentage of students who admit to cheating as >75%, though she also points out that the topic of plagiarism has been "sensationalized in popular media" (1).

meaning, no indeterminacy of text" (56).[24] No generation is more familiar with the indeterminacy of text than the current "e-generation." It is thus not inconceivable to imagine that to the oaths of the strictest university honor codes they bring their incredulity and derision even while allowing themselves to be taken hostage by them,[25] pretending along with some instructors that plagiarism is always a clear moral or ethical issue despite evidence of just "how radically rhetorical the atmosphere of professional self-consciousness has become" (Lanham *Electronic* 63), and despite indications that digital culture has created "new media being[s]" with new "digital identit[ies]," who have become, in fact, "as mixed and appropriated as the compositions [they] write" (Rice 69).[26]

Like sanctuary in the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII, Academic Honesty has been desacralized, its "originality sanctuaries" dismantled, no longer available (if they ever were) to shelter those model students who are morally secure enough to distinguish their own "original" ideas from someone else's. Indeed, as Gallant argues, "[t]he complexity of academic integrity arises because there is no 'unified front' regarding conceptions of knowledge, information, and academic work" (66-7), and thus no unified front regarding integrity itself. With more and more students gaining access to information-sharing technology, "conflicting notions of information (personal versus communal property) and knowledge (independently versus collaboratively constructed)

[24] See also Gilbert Larochelle, 121-130.
[25] Larry Lessig makes a similar point when he argues that we "can't kill the instinct the technology produces; we can only criminalize it. We can't stop our kids from using it; we can only drive it underground. We can't make our kids passive again; we can only make them … 'pirates' […]. They live life knowing they live it against the law."
[26] Even before the digital revolution, however, it is important to note that Bakhtin was already arguing that "thought itself … is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others' thought, and this cannot but be reflected in the forms that verbally express our thought as well" (*Speech Genres* 92).

hint that academic integrity is less an individual character trait than it is a social phenomenon located at the nexus of teaching and learning" (Gallant 68-9). Rebecca Moore Howard agrees that "[a]ll writers appropriate language from other sources and reshape it as their own, but inexperienced writers don't do that very well" (qtd. in Hansen 777); focusing on "capture-and-punishment" might deter individual instances of plagiarism, but it doesn't accomplish much in the way of teaching, and, according to Howard, may in fact "encourage a reductive, automated vision of the educational experience" (qtd. in Hansen 789).[27] Gallant agrees that "[t]his blanket response … neglects the complexity of the issue precipitated by the ways in which technological inventions may be redefining concepts of information, authorship, and knowledge; challenging the expertise of educational institutions; and reshaping the nature of academic work" (66).[28] If honor codes ignore these complications, they are guilty, at best, of oversimplifying the complexity of students' experience with postmodernism, at worst, of begging the question, assuming that the honor of the code already exists as an entirely unambiguous, unchanging concept. Unlike the Oath of Succession, which aimed to create conscience out of nothing, honor codes assume a consciousness about integrity already exists, and students must simply sign on. Thomas More, of course, would say that both methods fail to recognize the true, double-sided nature of Integrity. What he displays in his writings, his letters, and his famous last words, is an integrity based on conscience-with-others, constantly regenerated, reformed, and remodeled, but out of material that, at

[27] See Howard's thoughts on heroic plagiarism and positive plagiarism in "The New Abolition Comes to Plagiarism," 87-96.

[28] Gallant finally suggests that "academic misconduct should be examined less as the disease and more as the symptom of a disease" that privileges an intellectually constraining independence and a morally ambiguous academic capitalism (77).

least in part, derives from the highest and purest ideal. Indeed, integrity is both ideal and material. It is still, timeless even, and yet—to borrow Galileo's alleged aside—*it moves*.

In considering a new approach to the problem of plagiarism, it may indeed be helpful to consider the writing of Thomas More and the speculations of postmodernists like Baudrilliard, along with the theories of established professionals in the field of composition. More's use of simultaneous narrative hints at a rhetorical strategy detailed by Jeff Rice, for example, who suggests using "discrepancies in meaning to motivate further exploration" in writing; "[w]hat do I do when I encounter opposing meanings of the same term? How can these meanings be combined in order to generate a new idea? … In other words, I am choosing a lack of control (discrepancy) over control (method comparison) …" (42). Several of the rhetorical practices Rice outlines (such as chorography and appropriation) seem reminiscent of simultaneous narrative. Similarly, Richard Lanham suggests paying more attention to the "volatile nature" of electronic texts in the composition classroom (75). Studying and imitating interactive texts could inspire "a pervasive reversal of use and ornament, a turning of purpose to play and game, a continual effort not … to purify our motives, but to keep them in a roiling, rich mixture of play, game, and purpose. All of this yields a body of work active not passive, a canon not frozen in perfection but volatile with contending human motive" (51).[29] More's perspective on consciousness very much brings to mind Richard Lanham's theories on *homo rhetoricus* (rhetorical man), particularly his assertion that "[p]rivate selves are created by public ones" (220). "In America," Lanham argues, "every time we create a means of communication that allows us to create a separate public self, we spoil it by

[29] See also N. Katherine Hayles' recent work, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*.

making it more intimate" (*Electronic* 220). Such an eagerness stems from what Lanham calls the "American delusion" that "the computer classroom, or network, will abolish the central self and create a genuine collective enterprise … that the oscillation of the self can be shut down, that the private self can exist without a public doppelganger" (*Electronic* 220). Lanham suggests that "if we seek to protect the central self, its rich interiority … we shouldn't do it by singling it out, but by focusing on the rich, tense interaction between central and social self which creates that interiority in the first place" (*Electronic* 220).

More exemplifies the richness of this interaction in his musings on conscience as knowledge-with-others; the tension comes through in his perplexing portrayal of ineffectual consensus, which appears over and over in the *History of Richard III*. More perhaps inherited much of this tension from his background in humanism, a philosophy that certainly made room for debate about interaction between central and social selves. As Mary Crane explains, "English humanists imagine[d] a subject formed not by a narrative history of personal experience but by an assimilated store of texts that seek to forestall and replace such experience" (162-63). Individualism and individual expression is episodically subsumed by a socially constituted identity, for humanism fostered a legacy of enthusiasm for individual progress and social mobility along with a sustained sense of discomfort and alarm at the prospect of too much of it. The "store of texts" Crane describes could only advance such an oscillation between central and social self. She explains:

> In theory at least, all texts formed a common storehouse of matter, validated by existing cultural codes, from which all educated people could gather and through which all educated subjects were framed. This common textual matter provided a form of symbolic capital that could be

> accumulated without threat to the existing hierarchy, and the social mobility that it enabled could be imagined as a collective project which did not involve dangerous singularity or personal aggregation of power. (6)

In *theory*, the texts as houses for cultural codes did not involve such danger, but in practice the collective project could be so interrupted. Elizabeth Eisenstein's ambitious examination of the effects of the printing press on the early modern era can shed light on this possibility. "Sixteenth-century publications not only spread identical fashions but also encouraged the collection of diverse ones," Eisenstein remarks, and this duality can help explain how "[c]oncepts pertaining to uniformity and to diversity—to the typical and to the unique—are interdependent, they represent two sides of the same coin" (84). While some authors were interested in "laying bare all the quirks and peculiarities that define the individual 'me, myself,' as against the type, other genres of literature were defining ideal types—setting forth the requirements of service to king or country and delineating the role played by priest, merchant, and peasant; by nobleman and lady, husbandman and wife, well-bred boy and girl" (84). Through More's use of simultaneous narrative, we have seen him experimenting with different combinations of individuals and types: in the *History of Richard III* we watch as loyal courtiers become singular, treasonous enemies, obstinate queens become scheming witches, shyly resistant audiences become acquiescent prisoners, and, of course, the Lord Protector becomes the King of England becomes the perverted Divine. Renaissance subjects lived with dual illustrations of singular personalities and general types, were confronted with them more and more as printing caught on in England, and Thomas More was in the unique position to see just how this might complicate his fellow citizens' definitions of subjecthood, social consciousness (knowledge-with-others), social responsibility, and 'self'-expression. King

Henry, himself educated inside a humanist framework, was likewise confronted with the dual representations Eisenstein describes, and it is fair to say he struggled with his own subjectivity—as humanist king, constructed out of the careful tenets of the humanist educational process,[30] or as individual, untouchable warrior and head of state, owing allegiance to no one.

Henry VIII appears to suspend this struggle in favor of one extreme—full identification as a singularity—in his pursuit and punishment of Thomas More. In his defense of himself, More also defends Lanham's idea of rhetorical man[31]—one created through the constant oscillation of a central (sacred) and a social (secular) self, an oscillation that, when viewed with the same attention used to view simultaneous narratives, may reveal the morally significant but tangled stages of an identity in construction. More offers himself as the model on which to practice this viewing method, as he had earlier offered Richard III and his *History*'s ensemble cast. His unwillingness to divulge his own conscience becomes an invitation for his interrogators to re-familiarize themselves with what consciousness is, with the awkward, disordered, often guilty and always interactive process by which it is constructed.

It would seem that interrogators of student plagiarists could also benefit from re-familiarizing themselves, and their students, with the same process. Lanham warns that once education "has become simply instrumental, the clear, brief, and sincere transmission of neutral fact from one neutral entity to another, it loses its numinosity and then its power …. If you pursue only clarity, you guarantee obscurity. And people lose

[30] Humanists like More and Erasmus hoped that Henry VIII "would inaugurate a golden age" (Fleisher 63). Such hopes were quickly dashed.

[31] Though it should perhaps be noted that Lanham himself aligns More with Plato, Peter Ramus and others who "despised" rhetoric as "a series of ad hoc fixes" divorced from human reason (57). The bulk of the *History of Richard III* appears to refute this claim.

their vital interest in language …" (*Electronic* 83). Bakhtin makes a similar point when he reminds us that "[d]iscourse lives, as it were, beyond itself, in a living impulse toward the object; if we detach ourselves completely from this impulse all we have left is the naked corpse of the word, from which we can learn nothing at all about the social situation or the fate of a given word in life" (*Dialogic* 292). In a world where more and more people have access to information-sharing technology, to literacy tools and to language itself, it seems absurd that people would lose their interest in language and its impact in life, as absurd as the informed but ineffectual consensus of the masses in More's *History*, who are exposed to discourse after revelatory discourse, but who have lost the link between information and interest, transparency and action, instinct and critical consciousness. More sends the message that the availability of the means for connection (for his audience, through printing, schooling, nationalism, and/or shared religious beliefs) by no means guarantees the ability to communicate at the same time as he keeps alive "the possibility that multiple invisible interactions *were* introduced by a silent communications system" as well as "the possibility of social 'action at a distance'" (Eisenstein 150).[32] E-communication suggests similar if not identical possibilities, but More can help us recognize that this action must be catalyzed by an appropriate attitude toward social identity and responsibility along with the necessary readiness to confront the real life obscurity of any discourse. The concepts of sacred/secular selves, simultaneous identities, and social action at a distance certainly complicate any definition of Academic Honesty, but they could also reinvigorate the Composition classroom, as

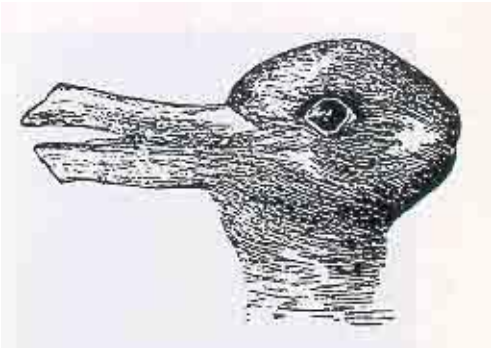
[32] Eisenstein does not fully define this phrase or explain what this action might look like. Her main point is that even "a singularly impersonal medium" (148) such as print nevertheless "did create a new kind of … reading public … composed of silent and solitary individuals who were often unknown to each other" but who nevertheless proved capable of interaction (149).

More's final speeches about conscience and his *History of Richard III* are reinvigorated by more pronounced attention to his experiments with simultaneous narrative. If More's efforts are disorienting, they are also valuable in delivering a more accurate illustration of the collectivity involved in any 'self'-expression and the accountability affixed to any inventive intelligence.[33] This is an important lesson for students and teachers today, as the debate continues about what kinds of expressions are valuable and/or useful, what kinds of selves—public or private, split or simultaneous, irresponsible or without excuse—are in play, inside the classroom and out.

[33] Prescott seems to agree when she suggests that More's work "anticipates many postmodern concerns and he shared with many of us at the start of a new century the sense that if we are to find our way in this world, and make it more humane, we will need collaboration more than self-esteem or pride of authorship; a multiplicity of voices more than closed ears; paradox more than single-minded smugness; attention to the margins, not just to the centers of wealth or power; and wariness of the words by which we can slither into lies and self-delusion" (239).

Chapter Two

Duck, Rabbit, or Other "Wyld Beast?" The Interinvolvement of Audience Perception and Rhetorical Seduction in the Works of Edmund Spenser




"but *bon* that once had written bin, / Was raced out, and *Mal* was now put in" (V.ix.26).[1]

1. Seduction and Repulsion: Spenser and 24-hour News

Chapter one has explored Thomas More's work as an illustration of, and perhaps a warning against, the manner in which an audience may be paradoxically seduced and repulsed by a rhetorical argument. Spenser examines the same kind of paradox in *The Faerie Queene*, and he provides perhaps a fuller explanation of how this process of seduction and repulsion works. Though Spenser has traditionally been labeled a conservative poet, critics have alluded to the presence in his work of a skeptical or "contradictory sense of authority" (Highley 15) as well as "serious criticisms of the very notions of Britain and Britishness" (Hadfield 585).[2] Andrew Hadfield goes as far as to

[1] All quotations from *The Faerie Queene*. Ed. A.C. Hamilton, London: Pearson Education, 2001.
[2] See also David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*; Mary Ellen Lamb; Richard Chamberlain.

say that "*The Faerie Queene* is a poem which appears to make an explicit rejection of the sovereignty and independence of England" (Hadfield 585). Such a claim radicalizes Spenser's design and his very ambition to "fashion a gentlemen" to serve a court that appears increasingly unable to maintain the coherence of its authority. Of course, in a poem in which Elizabeth is represented by several inconsistently admirable figures, it is hardly inconceivable that the poem might as well include the indisputable acknowledgement and endorsement of British sovereignty on top of its "explicit rejection."[3] And Spenser is by no means alone in such ambiguity. Alan Sinfield explains how

> [t]he inter-involvement of resistance and control is systemic: it derives from the way language and culture get articulated. Any utterance is bounded by the other utterances that the language makes possible. Its shape is the correlative of theirs: as with the duck/rabbit drawing, when you see the duck the rabbit lurks round its edges, constituting an alternative that may spring into visibility. Any position supposes its intrinsic op-position. All stories comprise within themselves the ghosts of the alternative stories they are trying to exclude. It does not follow therefore, that the outcome of the interinvolvment of resistance and control must be the incorporation of the subordinate. (47)

The last point is especially important for a discussion of the later books of the *Faerie Queene*; book V in particular is composed almost entirely of instances of brutal subordination, yet Artegall can hardly be said to contain fully or effectively the forms of resistance he encounters. Artegall too is subject to "the way language and culture get articulated," and his greatest challenges are not physical, but rhetorical. This seems true

[3] See David Baker, who suggests that "Britishness, for Spenser, was not so much a coherent identity as an ongoing predicament …" ("Uses" 196). Judith Anderson also remarks on Spenser's ambiguity and the ways in which "*The Faerie Queene* contains perceived threats to its own assumptions and conditions of meaning; that is, it includes and ambivalently attempts to control them" (*Words* 167). See also *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. Julia Walker.

as well for Scudamore, for Triamond and Cambell, and for the poet himself, who must encounter, by the end of the last completed book, his most crafty foe, the Blatant Beast.

In these later books, and in *The View of the State of Ireland*, Spenser provides a model for unapologetically delivering an extreme ideological position that nevertheless invites the consideration of perspectives that may indirectly undermine that position—indirectly, because these perspectives are not necessarily contradictory in the sense of being the reverse extreme. (A duck is not the opposite of the rabbit, nor is a rabbit the opposite of the duck.[4]) Rather, they are oppositional in the sense Sinfield describes as lurking alternatives that may "spring into visibility." Inevitably, something else must wander into the boundaries of any "original" or initial view, something that may increase or even generate the seductive influence of that view. This particular strategy of seduction is explicated by Baudrillard: "To be seduced is to be diverted from one's truth. To seduce is to divert the other from his truth. This truth then becomes the secret that escapes him" (*Selected Writings* 160). Seduction is essentially defined as the process by which we find, as the seduced, or expose, as the seducers, truths/secrets to lose.

Arguably it was Spenser's experiences in Ireland that positioned him to emphasize in his poetry the harder-to-follow rhetorical conflicts, the disorientingly seductive processes by which language and culture get articulated. Living outside the immediate vicinity of the crown, Spenser's "feelings of displacement in Ireland were also interwoven … with ones of opportunity" (Highley 14), for he was better placed to reflect on the efforts of the monarchy to spread Englishness abroad. Registered in 1598,

[4] See the image above, originally published by Joseph Jastrow in "The Mind's Eye," *Popular Science Monthly* 54 (1899): 299-312. Accessed 23 February 2010 at http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~kihlstrm/JastrowDuck.htm.

Spenser's *View of the State of Ireland* directly participates in the question of English colonialism, and while it has been read as an apology for the brutal subjugation of Irish culture, the dialogue also registers a profound ambivalence about England's capacity to impose its own law effectively and to resist the influence of the customs and rituals it condemned as savage. This is close to what David Baker means when he says that the *View*'s "potential for disruption … must lie elsewhere" than in its exposure of English violence against Ireland ("Border Crossings" 69). Baker argues that, as brutally straightforward as some of Irenius' statements seem to be, the *View* "could not look like the self-consistent statement of English right to rule that the Privy Council would demand" ("Border Crossings" 73); Spenser, "fully conscious of the 'secret' implications of his own text," established that he "at once believed, and denied that he believed, and allowed himself to intimate, that [English] law had reached a point of almost total collapse …" ("Border Crossings" 72).

This is hardly straightforward conservatism, this experimentation with the exposure of ideology closely followed by the reinforcement of the same ideological points.[5] The *View* instead performs as a warning about how awareness can function "as the most seductive tool in ideology's arsenal" (Huehls 66), and how "knowledge can too easily become complicity, not power" (Huehls 78). According to Baker, it is when Spenser attacks native Irish law most vociferously that English common law appears most "self-canceling and incoherent" and even "suspiciously akin to the native law it

[5] Mitchum Huehls covers a similar experimentation in postmodern texts. He provides the example of a contemporary film whose plot revolves around corporatism, painting advertisers as scandalously greedy, though rather remarkably easy to outwit, while including "real" advertisements from "real" companies throughout the film. Huehls explains how each real-life ad "consciously uses our recognition of its hypocrisy against us, convincing us that we know enough of the game to feel comfortable participating in it—convincing us that our recognition of its illusions is tantamount to our knowledge of them" (61-2).

claimed to displace" ("Border Crossings" 72). The ideology of English colonialism appears so transparently, via Irenius, that it thereby announces its violently manipulative strategy outright. But the *View* only purports to be about justifying English colonialism, for it suggests at the same time that colonization is a doomed enterprise, leaving audiences in a kind of no man's land, asked both to support and oppose an ideological exertion that has been exposed as insecure and unstable.[6]

The effect is that audiences are asked to focus less on the question of English violence and more on their own complicity in the articulation of a questionably operational ideology. The way language and culture get articulated is a mixed up, ambiguous process even when it seems most blatantly straightforward—e.g. when a dialogue about the subjugation of Irish cultural traditions by a superior system of English force and resolve turns into the sly presentation of that system's faults and flaws, yet manages to invite persuasively and even flatteringly (while more than a little distastefully) audience complicity anyway.

Spenser seems very interested in this process of articulation as well as in the idea of himself as the articulator. Baker's thesis of the *View* in particular implies a masterful, if disorienting, rhetorical skill on Spenser's part.[7] Like Thomas More sixty years earlier, Spenser finds himself in possession of truths difficult to translate unambiguously. The *View* can hardly be read as the news of the day; there is too much of the spectacle about

[6] This is close to what Norbrook means when he says that "Spenser problematises the act of reading, discouraging his audience from taking the interpretations they are offered immediately on trust …. The enormous self-consciousness of the poem is designed to reinforce the didactic aim of fashioning a gentleman, not to undermine it," but this reinforcement may only arrive after "deep suspicion of false resolutions, of deceptive claims to transcendence …" (*Poetry* 111).

[7] Writing on *The Faerie Queene*, Lamb remarks on the "strenuous labor required from the readers as well as the writer …. To an extent not possible for a play, a primary subject of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is the process by which it is read" (163).

it, most evidenced in the oft-quoted passages that detail the Munster rebellion, the aftermath of which brought such "extremitie of famine" to the Irish, which, Irenius is quick to point out, "they themselves had wrought" (Spenser 102). Elsewhere, Irenius describes a scene "at the execution of a notable traytor at Limericke … [where] I saw an old woman, which was his foster-mother, take up his head, whilst he was quartered, and sucked up all the blood that runne thereout, saying, that the earth was not worthy to drinke it, and therewith also steeped her face and breast, and tore her haire, crying out and shrieking most terribly" (66). But Baker points out that even the most spectacularly ghastly scenes in the *View* "emerg[e] as the conclusion of a distinct historiographical argument" ("Uses" 200):

> This shrieking mother implies a widespread disruption; what she demonstrates for Spenser is the "Britishness" of her protest. Her howls resonate with other voices that can be heard across the Irish Sea, in Wales, in Gaul, in Scotland, all linked by a history of crisscrossing traditions that disperse challenges to English authority around the British Isles and beyond. ("Uses" 200)

Excerpted, Irenius' language may be excruciatingly monologic, but put alongside his discussions of the unsuccessful imposition of English law, plus the degenerative tendency of the old English to take on Irish customs, like a contagion "which could never since be cleane wyped away" (69-70), along with what Baker calls Spenser's "historiographical and retrospective" project to recover a British past ("Uses" 200), Irenius' language takes on a dialogism almost despite itself. No matter what the *View* implies is Spenser's ultimate position on the necessary treatment of the stubborn Irish, it undeniably extends an invitation to examine the English/Irish problem with a critical and careful attention that is not dismissed effectively even in those moments when the *View*'s brutal indifference seems most transparent.

Spenser's pattern of vaguely-concealed subversion must feel uncomfortably familiar in the present era of 24-hour "news" programs, which exist perpetually in the unreliable no-man's-land of *infotainment*, but which also manage to take on a dialogism despite familiar complaints that "[t]hose who dominate the mainstream media channels do not engage the public in meaningful conversation" and that "[e]mpty communication … is now a routine part of the political landscape" (Whillock 6). "The overwhelming conclusion," some contend, "is that the media generally operate in ways that promote apathy, cynicism, and quiescence, rather than active citizenship and participation" (Gamsen et al. 373). Recent studies of specific news programs such as Bill O'Reilly's *No-Spin Zone* find instances of propaganda, purposefully unresolved tensions, the promotion of "undercurrent[s] of fear" and the general use of rhetorical strategies that "pla[y] on a primal human emotion to attract and maintain viewers" (Conway et al. 214-15), rather than educate and inform them. And yet, few of even the most ideologically motivated newscasters or pundits would deny that their essential purpose is to communicate the "truth," even as skeptical critics question their ability to communicate anything at all.[8]

O'Reilly in particular provides a good example of the careful use of what Bakhtin calls monologic or unitary language, which he describes as "an expression of the centripetal forces of language" that "at every moment of its linguistic life … is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia" (*Dialogic* 270). O'Reilly's rhetoric is often synonymous

[8] An equally critical motivation, of course, is to increase ratings and make money. Diana Mutz and Byron Reeves quote O'Reilly's acknowledgement that "[i]f a producer can find someone who eggs on conservative listeners to spout off and prods liberals into shouting back, he's got a hit show. The best host is the guy or gal who can get the most listeners extremely annoyed over and over and over again'" (13).

with his rather narrow world view, but his language is nevertheless not immune from "the realities of heteroglossia," however stridently opposed to them. Bakhtin reminds us that

> [e]very utterance participates in the "unitary language" (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces). Such is the fleeting language of a day, of an epoch, a social group, a genre, a school and so forth. It is possible to give a concrete and detailed analysis of any utterance, once having exposed it as a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language. (*Dialogic* 272)

We might add Fox News and English common law to Bakhtin's list of fleeting languages, the tensions and contradictions of the latter exposed by Spenser's artistic labors, those of the former exposed by any vigilant watcher/reader of almost any of its most well-known programs. Jon Stewart, host of *The Daily Show* on Comedy Central, has made such vigilance a staple of his broadcast, but he provides an imitable model available to anyone with a DVR, or even just a good memory. On August 19th, 2009, for example, Stewart showed a clip of a self-congratulatory O'Reilly reminding his viewers on August 10th that, in covering health care protests at town hall meetings, "we don't describe the protestors as loons." Stewart then cut to a past clip from September 2004 in which O'Reilly alludes to "surveys" which show that "most protestors are simply loons." Before showing more excerpts in which O'Reilly refers to protestors as "sore losers" who "can't control their emotions," Stewart remarks on the irony that "the entire Fox network seemed to have a somewhat less charitable view of protestors … every time in history except for now" ("Fox News: the New Liberals"). One of Stewart's more recent catches came after Fox News host Sean Hannity used old file footage from a crowded conservative political rally on September 12th, 2009, to document the live event of a more sparsely attended GOP-endorsed health care rally on November 9th ("Sean Hannity").

Both examples support the possibility that even the most ideologically extreme rhetoric of assertion, the kind of unitary language that appears to suppress any oppositional response, may inevitably invite just such a response.[9] Nor must these responses consist of clean reversals from one extreme viewpoint to its opposite. Derek Attridge discusses in detail the experience of re-encountering older texts,

> however familiar to me, [that] can always strike me with the force of novelty if, by means of a creative reading that strives to respond fully to the singularity of the work in a new time and place, I open myself to its potential challenge. Rather than the familiar model of the literary work as friend and companion, sharing with the reader its secrets, I propose the work as stranger, even and perhaps especially when the reader knows it intimately. (26)

A faithful viewer who watches Fox News devote its coverage to praising the moral courage of government protestors but who remembers or reencounters earlier coverage lambasting or dismissing government protestors is not faced with an easy judgment between cleanly contrasting perspectives. The "potential challenge" is greater than that. Stewart implies that Fox News has simply reversed its position with the installation of a new U.S. president, embracing everything it used to attack. But the examples above result from nothing so simple as a conversion process, and Fox News is representative of much more than just a transparent hypocrisy. Stewart's straight-man jibes notwithstanding, Fox News is engaged in the construction of a delicate and entirely nonlinear narrative sequence that must shore up an increasingly fragile and less internally or logically persuasive ideology. The work involved in discovering the channel's hypocrisy, if one is

[9] See William A. Gamson, David Croteau, William Hoynes, & Theodore Sasson. The authors agree that this kind of language may be revisited as a "many-voiced, open text that can and often is read oppositionally, at least in part" (373). "Even an uneven contest on a tilted playing field is a contest," they explain. "Moreover, great success in getting one's preferred meanings featured prominently in media discourse does not ensure dominance in the meaning constructed by readers" (382-83).

inclined to cast any kind of backward glance, is hardly work at all, as Stewart ably demonstrates on at least a weekly basis. The question becomes, in combination with the invitation to recognize blatant hypocrisy and bias, what additional labor such a channel encourages its viewers to perform. It probably also makes sense to ask, given Fox News' increasingly impressive ratings, how it manages to make such labor so attractive.

In their study of O'Reilly, Conway et. al. found that "fear was a dominant frame in O'Reilly's discussion of issues … in over half (52.4 percent) of the commentaries," and that "[w]hen O'Reilly invoked the fear frame, he offered resolution to the threat in only 1 percent of cases" (207). O'Reilly leaves out what the authors of the study identify as a traditional journalistic value: the restoration of order principle, designed to soothe fears after initially magnifying them (201); they conclude that O'Reilly's "rhetoric has potential to instill concern—perhaps even panic and fear—in the audience," with little hope left over for the possibility of working solutions to answer this concern (207). O'Reilly is just one of Fox's most recognizable hosts who routinely link President Obama to a dangerous progressivism that will do nothing less than destroy American values, while continuing to insist that America is the greatest country in the world.[10] But how can the United States be the greatest country in the world and in danger of annihilation by its own democratically elected leader? How can American citizens be the strongest in the world, and also "loons"? How can Glenn Beck love his country so much while distrusting so many of the people who actually work inside its government? When

[10] Sean Hannity's program, *Hannity's America*, which ran throughout the 2008 presidential campaign before being replaced in 2009 with *Hannity*, provides perhaps the best example of fear-mongering in combination with a sometimes oddly belligerent patriotism. Michael Massing writes of Hannity's "nightly campaign to depict [Obama] as a treacherous enemy of the people, who, if allowed to take office, would subvert every value and tradition Americans hold dear" (15). Hannity's colleague Glenn Beck sets a similar tone, and though his populist position requires a broader target, his criticisms of Obama are equally aggressive.

media figures consistently repeat such tense contradictions, they are engaged in the same kind of seductive secret-revealing process as Spenser engages in his *View*. We do not watch Fox News because we are convinced by the "fair and balanced" reporting—indeed, how could we be? Instead, we respond to the secret(s) (not) revealed about the unreliability of political power, the inconsistency of patriotism, the vulnerability of the economy and the general insecurity of democracy as a world-stabilizing practice. These are the "truths" that even the most loyally conservative viewers must find to lose.

2. Seduction and Ideology: the Fantasy of the Network

Rather than dismissively call out the blatant hypocrisy of Fox News, a better approach requires that we look past its obvious duplicity to its less transparent rhetorical strategies, those that allow O'Reilly to change his tune about protestors and Hannity to substitute past footage for a live event, neither suffering any damaging consequences. Fox News takes full advantage of what Rita Raley identifies as the Electronic Empire, the inner workings of which, Raley suggests, can best be understood by "the figure of the network, that which subtends the organic and the nonorganic. The inchoate, indeterminate abyss beyond the long twentieth century may … best be articulated in terms of the electronic network, that which writes, coordinates, and implements its own rules of operation" (120-21). Raley explains further how a network "is by nature a counternetwork and thereby embodies contradiction, internal contest, and multiplicity" (126). It is "not only neither organic nor whole, but arguably not even a system at all. Rather, it is a loose assemblage of relations characterized by another set of terms: flexibility, functionality, mobility, programmability, and automation" (132). Finally, and

perhaps most importantly, networks "are by nature connective, suggestive of traceable and identifiable affiliations, alliances, and group politics, and their connective tissues provide a fantasy of community, of sociality, of collectives, of utopias" (132). It is this last feature that Fox News most exploits, and it happens to provide a reasonable explanation for why Hannity's use of false footage might actually enhance his credibility rather than undermine it. In his apology to viewers, Hannity claimed the use of the footage was inadvertent; in an Electronic Empire such an excuse may be not only credible but also reassuring, for it reinforces the fantasy of community and connectivity that a (counter)network provides. *So what if the footage was wrong?* Hannity might have said. Such a mistake is simply an indication of how close-knit and committed is Fox News to its constituents, that a piece of footage is not simply lost in the abyss of our fast-paced Electronic Empire, too quickly displaced by the new news of the day; rather, it comes around again to remind hosts and viewers alike of its presence and continuing significance, not just as a story, but as proof of the hyper-functionality of a news station so appreciative of, in-touch with, and only occasionally disoriented by, the way information *really and truly* circulates in this postmodern world.

Fox News is exemplary of a postmodern imagination which makes every effort to conceive of the world, along with the news about the world, as a powerfully intimidating but ultimately inclusive network. Occasionally and perhaps inevitably, news anchors register their dispiriting bewilderment with a "system" which is really no system at all, whose connections are never concrete but only suggestive. The real work inflicted on the Fox News audience involves nothing less than concretizing those seductive suggestions put to them by their favorite hosts, and it is fair to say they have risen to the challenge,

answering O'Reilly's cranky doom-and-gloom and Beck's teary distress with the high-spirited exuberance of Tea Party protests and the alarming passion of Town Hall meetings. Suggestive connections between Obama and Hitler, and between individuals who allege a connection between Obama and Hitler, are made to appear all the more concrete when hundreds of protestors are holding photoshopped signs of the president in Nazi paraphernalia.[11]

Rising to a challenge is not necessarily equivalent to meeting that challenge, however, and it is with this point that we may finally return to Spenser and the sixteenth century.

3. Seduction and Advancement: the Network in the Sixteenth Century

Similarly to Raley, Jonathan Sawday and Neil Rhodes argue that "certain aspects of the [modern] computer create a bewildering sense of fragmentation and disorder, while others, working in conjunction with political, economic and environmental processes, reinstate an awareness of a global network, a sense of universal interconnectedness …" (13). Sawday and Rhodes go on to make the connection between the modern electronic age and the "new social structure emerging" in the sixteenth-century: "a public arena, a place of uncontrollable and noisy debate, dispute, and exchange" (6), tempered in part by

[11] See the image above, attributed to the Lyndon LaRouche Political Action Committee, accessed 23 February 2010 from http://www.larouchepac.com/node/11422. It is worth noting that the comparisons LaRouche draws between Obama and Hitler are not at all suggestive; they are explicit. Conservative bloggers took issue with what they saw as attempts by the mainstream media to blame Right-wing commentator Rush Limbaugh for inventing the Obama/Nazi image, when all the evidence pointed to LaRouche's website. But Rachel Sklar points out that "there is a clear link" between obvious supporters of LaRouche, carrying their pre-made posters, and Rush Limbaugh referring to Obama's "Brownshirts," between Sarah Palin facebooking about "death panels" and "Chuck Grassley talking about 'pulling the plug on Grandma.' They may not pass out the same posters, but make no mistake of it, those messages are linked."

technological advances that fostered the "concept of the book of nature as a giant intertext of multiple connections and allusions" aided by a "rhetorical programme of sixteenth-century pedagogy [that] involved the dismemberment and dislocation of texts" while also "encourag[ing] their relocation and re-membering—or, to be explicitly rhetorical, their reconfiguration" (13). Sawday and Rhodes suggest that the Renaissance too experimented with the idea of the world as a (counter)network, a seductive system that invited exploration, encouraged the fantasy of connectivity, but inevitably inspired dispute, dissension, and uncertainty.

Along with print-based technological advances, the Renaissance saw groundbreaking progress in the area of cartography.[12] Donald Kimball Smith argues that "[t]he consumption of maps, their viewing and comprehension, made available to their audience new possibilities of imaginative control" (42). This new "cartographic imagination" allowed for "the possibility of imagining the entire country as a knowable, even intimate, space …, and it allowed the whole nation to be organized and spatially imagined" (Smith 62). These advances in mapmaking trickled down, according to Smith, so that for any average citizen his "country became not simply an abstract social and political entity of which he was a part but a physical whole which he could imaginatively encompass and manipulate" (68). However, Smith cautions that "by turning the world into a text that can be read, these maps also enable it to be *re*-read, re-interpreted, and re-written" (69). The cartographic imagination worked in conjunction with other changes in

[12] The correlation of information circulation and geography continues today. Debbie Lee and Tim Fulford point out that "the Internet is referred to in the same geo-political terms that the British empire was" (9). It "has become a geographical construction … characterized with terms like 'domain,' 'site,' 'worldwide,' 'cyberspace,' and 'dead zone,' while [Bill] Gates and Microsoft are increasingly referred to with terms like 'expansion,' 'conquer,' and 'domination'" (4).

information gathering, processing, and especially manipulating, such that the promise of "universal interconnectedness" became less of a given and more of an expressed call to action, a mass effort, among the increasing number of participants enveloped by sixteenth-century developments in technology, to *make it so*; but individual efforts to prove the existence of a network of connections through re-readings and re-interpretations say more about the individual readings themselves—their flexibility, mobility, automation, etc.—than they do about the "system" that supposedly organizes them.

In recent years, Fredric Jameson has described such efforts as "degraded attempt[s] … to think the impossible totality of the contemporary world system" (38). In his explanation of the "postmodern hyperspace" that "has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world" (44), he comments on the "'high-tech paranoia'" that imagines "some immense communicational and computer network" that operates by "a complexity often beyond the capacity of the normal reading mind" (38). The concept of a powerful yet broadly conceivable network becomes a kind of shorthand for "that enormous and threatening, yet only dimly perceivable, other reality of economic and social institutions" that has arrived with global capitalism (38). Some of even the most intimidating conspiracy theories promise the existence of a centrally located power source, a place to which all of the network's connections may be traced. The threat of the network that is by nature the counternetwork may be downplayed by reinforcing the fantasy that all of its dots do connect, that they all trace back to a single, and therefore vulnerable, source.

If Renaissance audiences were not yet in the position to ponder such concepts as postmodern hyperspace and global capitalism, their own experiences with technological, informational and imperialistic developments did inspire similar efforts to "think the impossible totality" of their own world system; the concept of the (counter)network arrives as one of the results of this effort. What Postmodern *and* Renaissance participants face are seductive opportunities to support and oppose, simultaneously, specific ideological perspectives that the necessarily tenuous conception of networking endorses. In his *View of the State of Ireland*, Spenser roots out the fundamental naivety of the plan for the establishment of universal interconnectedness between Ireland and England at the same time as he hand-picks a precise strategy to accomplish it (albeit by the most ruthless means possible). But it is in the later books of *The Faerie Queene* that he most deeply invests himself in exploring the seductive appeal of accepting the network as the proper representation of how language and culture get articulated, as well as the specific rhetorical activities that this embrace of a network requires.

4. Seduction and Absence: the Network Versus the Abyss

We can see in the works of Spenser an attempt to represent both the fantasy of the network as a system and the reality of the network as a counternetwork, a non-system. To mask the essential disconnection of the counternetwork, the longed-for connectivity and collectivity of the network—that truth we have found to lose—must be skillfully simulated. In book IV of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser attempts to manifest this connective effort through the character of Scudamore, who, in canto x, relates the story of his journey through the Temple of Venus. Scudamore successfully passes through to the

center of Venus' network of authority, but his own labors, though they are initially presented as natural and intuitive, appear increasingly manufactured and artificial as his narrative proceeds. The threat of the counternetwork returns even as Scudamore most directly and successfully approaches his goal—the abduction of Amoret.

As he seizes Amoret, Scudamore draws his listeners' attentions to Venus herself, who appears at the center of the Temple's network of power and authority, but who remains conspicuously silent and impassive, apart from the mysterious smile she directs toward Scudamore as he leads Amoret away:

> Whom when I saw with amiable grace
> To laugh at me, and favour my pretence,
> I was emboldned with more confidence,
> And nought for niceness nor for envy sparing,
> In presence of them all forth led her thence,
> All looking on, and like astonisht staring,
> Yet to lay hand on her, not one of all them daring. (IV.x.56)

Earlier, Scudamore describes the appearance of Venus in detail; her most distinguishing feature is, of course, that she is a hermaphrodite, one who "hath both kinds in one, / Both male and female, both under one name: / She syre and mother is her selfe alone, / Begets and eke conceives, ne needeth other none (iv.x.41).[13] Surrounded by worshippers, one of the lovers at Venus' feet goes so far as to credit her with creating the world (47). It is this world-making Venus who appears to favor Scudamore's endeavors. He fancies himself a superior reader of the hermaphrodite's silent gestures. In doing what no one else dares to do, Scudamore draws himself as the one exception to a rule that every other figure in the Temple must follow. And we might be willing to believe him exceptional, if we did not

[13] See the image above, accessed through commons.wikipedia.org, 23 February 2010. This statue of Hermaphroditus is located in the Istanbul Museum of Archaeology, dated from the third century B.C.E, Pergamon. The photograph is attributed to Giovanni Dall'Orto, 28 May 2006.

know what we already do about Amoret and Scudamore's future separation and the latter's inability to rescue his new bride from Busirane. Here Scudamore manages to build up Venus as an impenetrable figure, untouchable in her complexity and self-sufficiency, right before he proceeds to do nothing less than penetrate her circle, grab her adopted daughter, and assume his own self-sufficiency in interpreting her favoring laugh.

The hermaphrodite is a perfect emblem for the fantasy-enabling network; it provides an impressively intimate model of the natural connective tissues imagined to constitute the network's "body." And the fact that the hermaphrodite has "both kinds in one," that it is not just *any* body, makes its positioning in Scudamore's narrative more strategically seductive. It is a body that announces its organically systematized materiality simultaneously with its indeterminably unpredictable flexibility. Undeniably, Scudamore's hermaphrodite Venus is a manufactured image, a posited suggestion that Scudamore simulates in material form. That this Venus is virtually silent increases our suspicion that she is not the true power center to whom all things trace back. By denying her any language or gesture that favors anything but his own endeavors, Scudamore exposes his entire narrative as a form of monologic, unitary language, the kind that presumes to be absolute, perfectly unified, and uniquely capable of serving as *the* "language of truth" (Morson & Emerson 315). Like O'Reilly with his Talking Points, Scudamore has been following the same rhetorical strategy from the beginning of his monologue, ignoring any and all opportunities for dialogism. Bakhtin explains how "[t]he event of the life of the text always develops *on the boundary between two consciousnesses, two subjects*" (*Speech Genres* 106). Furthermore, "any word exists for the speaker in three aspects: as a neutral word of a language, belonging to nobody; as an

other's word, which belongs to another person and is filled with echoes of the other's utterance; and, finally, as *my* word, for, since I am dealing with it in a particular situation … it is already imbued with my expression" (*Speech Genres* 88). Scudamore certainly speaks for himself, promising to deliver a complete narrative of his "travel and long toil" for the benefit of his listeners, "[m]y hard mishaps, that ye may learne to shonne" (IV.x.3). But Scudamore goes out of his way to silence any echoes of any "other's word." He cannot be entirely successful, for any utterance "is a link in the chain of speech communication, and it cannot be broken off from the preceding links that determine it …, giving rise within it to unmediated responsive reactions and dialogic reverberations" (Bakhtin *Speech Genres* 94). Still, these reverberations are muffled. Scudamore's story, populated as it is, flaunts its single-voicedness whenever possible. His success in muting anyone he comes across in part serves to amplify himself and his own merit, but the result of his effort, initially, is a kind of deafness to this merit on the part of his listeners. This is Scudamore's story, and by the end of the canto—in which no one but Scudamore has been give the chance to speak—he is talking to no one but himself.[14]

It is Cupid, whose shield Scudamore finds outside of the Temple, who could potentially add some dialogism to Scudamore's narrative; he is the *other*—the link in the chain—whose words ought to echo continuously behind the knight who carries his shield. But Cupid, in fact, is the first voice Scudamore attempts to stifle. Scudamore begins his narrative by boasting to his listeners of the trials he endured to abduct Amoret from her

[14] Andrea Walkden's interpretation of Scudamore, while not complementary, is certainly comparable; she argues that "Scudamore's heroic pretensions are those of a minor character aspiring to the place of a major one," and that "[b]y granting him a voice, Spenser … suggests that Scudamore may be at least partially responsible for diminishing his own possibilities, that his marginalization represents a failure not of the poem's design, but of his own imagination" (98). See also Jan Kouwenhoven, who suggests that Scudamore's "prominence [within his narrative] is almost vacuous," and in the end "the sheer objectivity of his tale nearly extinguishes him as a 'consciousness'" (122).

childhood home, but it is soon made clear that Scudamore was essentially a welcome intruder into Venus' castle, despite his insistence that he engaged in activities that were extraordinarily difficult at the same time as they led inevitably to success. Upon arriving at what he calls "the place of perill" (IV.x.5), Scudamore "discovers," in the middle of an open field, the "shield of Love" bearing what he considers an entirely transparent inscription: "Blessed the man that well can use his blis: / Whose ever be the shield, faire Amoret be his" (IV.x.8). In picking up the shield, Scudamore believes that Amoret is as good as his already. He has only to follow the route designed to lead him to her. But this interpretation disguises Scudamore's own interpretive effort and his own role in designing the route and the rules. If this is Love's shield, then the words belong to Cupid; but in interpreting these words in the most simplistic and convenient way possible, Scudamore seizes them for his own. And indeed, the remainder of Scudamore's "perilous" journey *is* conveniently simple, so that the double-voicedness that initially adheres to the shield is suspended as Scudamore's suspicious story continues. Through obstacles that are hardly obstacles,[15] he easily finds his way to Amoret, and it is only Womanhood who speaks up when he lays a hand on the girl, rebuking him "for being over bold" (IV.x.54), before she is quickly and predictably silenced by Scudamore's shield of Love.[16]

[15] These include *Doubt*, who opens the door to him wide after seeing the shield; *Delay*, who threatens Scudamore with, of all things, conversation; *Daunger*, who like *Doubt* stands aside as soon as Scudamore reveals the familiar shield; *Concord*, who guides him gently "twixt her selfe and *Love*," mollifying *Hate*, on her other side, so that Scudamore can pass through to the inner temple unharmed (IV.x.36).

[16] Our focus continuously shifts so that Scudamore is scrutinized as a narrator, and we are encouraged "to toggle back and forth between AT and THROUGH vision, alternately to realize how the illusion is created and then to fool [ourselves] with it again" (Lanham *Electronic* 81). Scudamore, however, makes it virtually impossible for us to fool ourselves, so transparent is his denial of dialogism and his insistence on using language that refers only to itself, that tries to serve as its own justification.

Scudamore's annoyingly transparent efforts at self-aggrandizement encourage us to dismiss him and his Temple as a fantasy-land inside which the lovelorn knight may engage in increasingly preposterous miracles of wish-fulfillment. Canto x is Scudamore's own Magical Kingdom, inside which his single-voiced self-promotions, his dreams, come true; outside it, he seems to meet with nothing but failure.[17] Scudamore's use of unitary language is so persistent, his rhetoric so rehearsed, his images so superficial, they cohere in the construction of a hyperreal reality. As Baudrillard explains it, "the very definition of the real is that of which it is possible to provide an equivalent reproduction" (*Symbolic Exchange* 73), but in an age of simulation, "the real is not only that which can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced: the hyperreal" (*Symbolic Exchange* 73). Venus the smiling, approving hermaphrodite provides the best evidence of the hyperrealism of Scudamore's account, especially when we recall that the seduction of the network as a system includes the promise of connection and collectivity while necessitating the inevitable effort to simulate the network's connections in a manner that exposes them as unnatural, disconnected, and artificial (the truth is lost as it is found). Connections appear, simultaneously, as exposed (true) and manufactured (false). So when Venus is exposed as a world-making hermaphrodite, the truth of the world as a diverse and variously structured system linked to an accessible center is likewise

[17] This puts Spenser the storyteller out on his own limb, and though he invites his listeners to accompany him, we resist. But nor do we rest on the firmer ground promised by a confident skepticism. We find ourselves instead in a kind of no-man's land, understanding, on the one hand, that the Temple provides an escape from a hostile reality—so effective an escape that the poet must wait for a new canto to reintroduce himself and this same reality, full as it is of "pittie" and "payne" and hopeless ladies in "thraldomes chayne," and sadly void of sufficient miracles to relieve them immediately (IV.xi.1). But on the other hand, we can see that the Temple is not so disconnected from the more real spaces and places of the *Faerie Queene* after all. In other words, what goes on in the Temple—Scudamore's effort to stabilize his own identity, his own voice, by destabilizing every other voice—goes on outside of it, too.

exposed, but this very exposure can function just as convincingly, if disappointingly, as a denial of the truth of an accessible center, which could never be accessed so suspiciously and straightforwardly. For Scudamore, Venus is already reproduced; he knows what he will find before he finds it.

To return to our contemporary connection, the Fox News crowd's images of Obama/Hitler are also always already reproduced. In other words, the unaccompanied and clearly photoshopped (false) image displaces any obvious efforts to argue the connection. Arguments are unnecessary, as is any additional language beyond a soundbite (*What would the founding fathers do?*) or an expletive (*Liar!*). Obama/Hitler simply *is* Obama and Hitler, "both kinds in one," as Venus is. For many readers, the understanding that these images have been obviously and even crassly manipulated results in their immediate and inevitable rejection. But what does such rejection entail? To what extent is it even possible? Considering again the duck/rabbit drawing, it is easy enough to accept that this image includes both duck and rabbit, because at no point is the viewer being asked to consider the possibility that actual, living ducks may morph into rabbits, and vice versa. Yet many perceive that the implication carried by the Obama/Hitler crowds is that Obama very well *could* morph into a fascist dictator, if he hasn't already. But Obama/Hitler, it turns out, has nothing to do with either Obama or Hitler, as hermaphrodite Venus has nothing to do with any Venus who appears elsewhere in Spenser's poem or with any identifiable authority figure outside the poem, and as the duck/rabbit has nothing to do with any living rabbit or duck. Each of these images

substantiates Baudrillard's assertion that, ultimately, "there is no relationship between a system of meaning and a system of simulation" (*Selected Writings* 212).[18]

But how much can this reinforcement of the division between the real and the hyperreal help us, as readers both of Spenser's poem and of our own political environments? Are we to dismiss the entirety of canto x as a lie, and dismiss Scudamore as a liar? Are we to dismiss the hundreds of protestors who have carried Obama/Hitler signs for the same reasons? Baudrillard would advise against this, as, I believe, would Spenser. In his discussions on simulations and simulacra, Baudrillard suggests that our more familiar magical kingdom, Disneyland, was in fact built "to conceal the fact that it is the 'real' country," and that it is consistently "presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real … to conceal the fact that real childishness is everywhere" (*Selected Writings* 172). "The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false" (*Selected Writings* 172), Baudrillard argues, and neither is the Temple of Venus or anyone inside of it. Taken into consideration with the entirety of Book IV, Scudamore's hyperreal reality is hardly exceptional; indeed, his simulated environment casts a shadow of suspicion over many of the spaces of Book IV and over many of the characters that occupy them, bringing to mind Baudrillard's assertion that "simulation is infinitely more dangerous since it always suggests, over and above its object, that law and order themselves might really be nothing more than a simulation" (*Selected Writings* 177).[19]

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[18] The images are similar to the opinion poll, which Baudrillard claims "does not represent opinion, but does the work of obscuring the lack of opinion in the nostalgic wish that opinion did still exist, that is, that it pre-existed the representational regime that *makes* it. What is left is only the incessant and frantic generation of a surface of signs, with no depth or perspective between the real and its representation" (Cormack 102).

[19] So much is suggested in Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland*, which, as was stated above, was not suppressed from publication because it revealed the disturbing secret of English brutality in Ireland and then too-strenuously attempted to justify such force; rather, Spenser's *View* "never encompassed the brutal

Book IV, Spenser promises, is the book of friendship, but the model friendship the poet delivers is so ambiguously constructed as to be impossible to imitate or articulate, to reject or accept. The process whereby Cambell and Triamond become companions seems as suspiciously rehearsed and badly staged as Amoret's abduction. Before Cambina arrives with her magic wand to stop the long battle, Cambell and Triamond fight to the point where "life it selfe seemd loathsome" (III.36). Triamond in fact has already "died" twice, losing the souls of his two brothers. He and Cambell battle in despair, past caring who wins or loses, lives or dies. Such a situation of equally-matched fighters doomed to a ceaseless conflict might be understandable, but the knights are not in fact equally matched. Cambell is hardly fighting fair—the ring he wears "did not from him let one drop of blood to fall, but did restore his weakned powers, and dulled spirits whet, through working of the stone therein yset" (24). To a lesser extent Triamond also fights unfairly, fortified as he is by the souls of his defeated brothers. Even considering a less literal and more allegorical reading of the knights' magical reinforcements, they are nevertheless complicit in whatever despair they suffer. Cambell's ring may restore his weakened powers, but it has no effect on his self-loathing, which continues to increase. What we have is another suspiciously constructed situation of peril that is presented to us in all seriousness, as Scudamore presents his narrative of the Temple; it is a perilous ordeal that is entirely artificial at the same time as it is entirely "real." Cambell and Triamond have been seduced, and/or seduce themselves, into an

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realities of English administration because for him they were neither brutal nor real" (Baker "Border Crossings" 68). Baker asks "if what the *View* 'revealed' was 'not so much secrets, but secrecy itself' …. Does the secret … always conceal—and thus potentially reveal—some 'fact,' or is it sometimes that 'secreting' itself creates the illusion that there 'is' a 'fact' 'there' … to be concealed? And, if some 'fact' is concealed, is it truly hidden, or is it hidden precisely in order to elicit its own uncovering?" ("Border Crossings" 69).

unnecessarily complicated scenario; they are in large part responsible for inventing the complications they are now despairing over, and the result is that the audience to their conflict, like Scudamore's audience, is estranged from this process of seduction. We cannot be fooled by it, for we have no place in it. Spenser makes this irrevocably clear at the end of canto iii, when Cambina finally arrives in her lion-drawn chariot:

> And as she passed through th'unruly preace
> Of people, thronging thicke her to behold,
> Her angrie teame breaking their bonds of peace,
> Great heapes of them, like sheepe in narrow fold,
> For hast did over-runne, in dust enrould … (41)

Clearly the people who have been so far interested in the tournament have no place in the reconciliation soon to be magically enforced by Cambina. Spenser sees to it that they do not simply lose interest; rather they are violently excluded, literally trampled. Difficulties are not resolved; they are merely run over, and enemies are just as abruptly and uncomfortably transformed into friends, hate into love (45), as Cambina delivers her drink, Nepenthe, "devised by the Gods, for to asswage harts grief, and bitter gall away to chace" (43). "Who would not to this verture rather yield his voice?" (45), the poet asks after describing the transformative powers of the miraculous drink. The answer is simple, but the question itself is entirely out of place given what has just been described in the canto. Yielding to the virtue described is not at all a matter of choice available to anyone, as the question implies; it is available only to Triamond and Cambell. Everyone else has been driven to "rude confusion" (41). Almost at the same time as Spenser offers the people a common voice, he silences the potential for this voice to speak. Readers, meanwhile, must understand the kind of love Cambina introduces as impossibly difficult

to come by, even as it is described as a natural virtue to which anyone and everyone would yield.

Spenser's model friendship thus collapses as a model, as does any hope of an unequivocal directive as to how to accomplish such a friendship. Instead, we leave the four friends enclosed, and closed off, in a "perfect love" (52) that is as dubious as Venus' ingratiating smile. And like the hermaphrodite, they are exposed as simultaneously accessible and inaccessible. Spenser's attempts to qualify this unsatisfactory conclusion in the next canto are equally unsatisfying:

> It often fals, (as here it earst befell)
> That mortall foes doe turne to faithful frends,
> And friends profest are chaungd to foemen fell:
> The cause of both, of both their minds depends,
> And th'end of both likewise of both their ends.
> For enmitie, that of no ill proceeds,
> But of occasion, with th'occasion ends;
> And friendship, which a faint affection breeds
> Without regard of good, dyes like ill grounded seeds. (IV.iv.1)

Spenser argues that Triamond and Cambell's capacity for friendship was inside the friends all along, and that the change in attitude toward each other occurred as a result of their own minds. Spenser cannot articulate what exactly it is that sparked such a change, and he in fact absolves himself of the responsibility to try, suggesting only that the specific occasion of the tournament required that Triamond and Cambell be enemies, and that when that occasion ended, their natural feelings for each other were allowed to manifest. The problem with this explanation is that it fails to coincide with what actually occurred in the previous canto, for Triamond and Cambell's reconciliation was not there described as wholly instinctive. Their minds, dubbed the controlling parties in the first stanza of canto iv, are in the last stanzas of canto iii described as "doubtfully distraught,"

and the men themselves stand "astonisht" (48) as Cambina works her magic. More than anyone, she and her very particular power deserve credit for the "sudden change" between the two knights (49), so that Spenser's attempt to either generalize or properly allegorize the situation falls flat.

What Spenser imposes on his audience here is a kind of false footage—his entire explanation is a doomed attempt to fool himself into accepting as universal and inevitable what he has only just illustrated as particular and contingent. His audience is invited to fool themselves likewise, but how could they? Like Scudamore's audience, the poet's readers are estranged from the process of seduction. Can we do anything more than look in from the outside as the poet rewrites, right in front of us, what he has only just written? We can, if we recall Baudrillard's theories on the strategy of seduction. In spite of his failed narrative, we are uneasy about abandoning Scudamore so abruptly; we want to witness the reunion (with Amoret) we are denied, as we want to believe in the perfect love of the four friends at the end of canto iii. Neither Scudamore nor the poet are failures under Baudrillard's definition of seduction. They are actually successes, for Baudrillard's strategy of seduction "consists in drawing the other within your area of weakness, which will also be his or hers …. To seduce is to weaken. To seduce is to falter. We seduce with weakness, never with strong powers and strong signs. In seduction we enact this weakness, and through it seduction derives its power" (*Selected Writings* 162). Unlike interpretation, seduction does not want "to get beyond appearances … [G]etting beyond appearances is an impossible task: inevitably every discourse is revealed in its own appearance, and is hence subject to the stakes imposed by seduction, and consequently to its own failure as discourse" (*Selected Writings* 150). Certainly we witness a failure of

discourse in Scudamore's narrative. Our impulse may be to reject and expose it to uncover the truth underneath its weakness. But what Spenser introduces is the prospect that there is nothing underneath. Baudrillard at his most fatalistic warns us: "We must not wish to destroy appearances (the seduction of images). This project must fail if we are to prevent the absence of truth from exploding in our faces …" (*Selected Writings* 154).[20]

Spenser risks such an explosion; he introduces the "abyss of language" (Baudrillard *Selected Writings* 152), which readers must stand above in the silent gap between cantos x and xi, knowing what should be there—the reunion of Scudamore and Amoret—finding nothing in its place. "The secret is to know how to make use of … the absence of meaning" (Baudrillard *Selected Writings* 162). Such is the lesson Spenser provides by denying a satisfactory love story for his knight of love. Explanations and interpretations are less important than the appearances (and disappearances) we are invited to examine. What occurs for the willing reader is a shift from her external judgment as an interpreter unsatisfied with a too-self-conscious simulation to the internal participation in a real abyss of language. "In the reading of literature," Attridge suggests, "meaning is simultaneously formed and performed" once the text is understood to occur, "in being read, as an intellectual-emotional event" (27). We find ourselves inside Scudamore's magical kingdom, which we must accept, weakly drawn as it is.[21] The

[20] Similarly, but less gloomily, Bakhtin reminds us: "When we seek to understand a word, what matters is not the direct meaning the word gives to objects and emotions—this is the false front of the word; what matters is rather the actual and always self-interested use to which this meaning is put and the way it is expressed by the speaker, a use determined by the speaker's position … and by the concrete situation. *Who* speaks and under what conditions he speaks: this is what determines the word's actual meaning. All direct meanings and direct expressions are false …" (*Dialogic* 401).

[21] Cormack has much to say about what is "unsettling about a theorist who can sanguinely formulate mass compliance as a type of back-handed resistance …. The idea of a modern, suggestible mass is usually conceptually tied in with more concrete images of the irrational and violent crowd or mob …. But these are for Baudrillard early and crude manifestations of modern culture, in which the mass is passionately aroused

alternative is the void, to which Spenser does abandon us, but not before exercising his own attempt at seduction—namely, leaving out the reunion of Amoret and Scudamore. Absent, existing only as an excised scene from Book III, the missing reunion is all the more seductive, and as readers we desire it all the more, missing it in its absence.[22] Our desire for it is in fact emphasized when we recall Spenser's original conception of the lovers' reunion: "Had ye them seene, ye would have surely thought, / That they had beene that faire Hermaphrodite, / … So seemd those two, as growne together quite …" (III.xii.46). Readers are encouraged to recall Spenser's specific language in the void between cantos x and xi. The reunion of the lovers "performs here as authoritative discourse, and as internally persuasive discourse" (Bakhtin *Dialogic* 342). The discourses of audience and poet, in other words, cohere. But Spenser anticipates what Bakhtin describes as the inevitable process whereby authoritative discourse is no longer internally persuasive—"[o]ne's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse" (*Dialogic* 348). This process of liberation occurs because "the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else's. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words …; this discourse is able to reveal ever newer ways to mean" (*Dialogic* 345-46). The image of the hermaphrodite, that intimidating and complexly layered image that only the most exceptional may penetrate, returns as the perfect representative of the interanimating relationships between words; what was a suspicious

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and directed towards particular beliefs and actions in a world of charisma, propaganda and identification" (106).

[22] "The secret of seduction," Baudrillard says, is "in movements whose slowness and suspense are poetic, like a slow motion film of a fall or an explosion, because something has had, before fulfilling itself, the time to be missed and this is, if there is such a thing, the perfection of 'desire'" (*Selected Writings* 163).

image in Scudamore's self-aggrandizing narrative is re-accentuated as a profound symbol of both the centrifugal and the centripetal forces of language—new and newer ways to mean. Such is the task we are invited to set for ourselves. Recalling the absent image is our way back into a text that has worked hard to exclude us, if only to make us aware of the peril of that exclusion, which we could only confront in the void to which Spenser abandons us, suspends us, then invites us to fill.

5. Seduction and Dialogism: Saving the Reality Principle

At stake in Spenser's invitation is what Baudrillard describes as the postmodern problem of "concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus saving the reality principle" (*Selected Writings* 172). By the end of Book IV Spenser is comfortable with this communal effort, inviting his readers to oversee, with a veritable god-sight, the marriage of the Thames and the Medway, which Richard Helgerson describes as an exercise of "sovereign will" (354), bringing together bodies of water that, in nature, do not touch. The fantasy-connectivity of the (counter)network is simulated once more, and most impressively.

The key to saving the reality principle so far has been language—the use of particular rhetorical strategies that reinforce the existence of the (counter)network. In Book V Spenser is still concerned with unitary language that makes itself suspicious, exclusive, or incoherent, and if he seems to be more in favor of exclusion and unintelligibility than he was in book IV, it perhaps shows how confident he has become in exercising Baudrillard's strategy of seduction-by-weakness. For as intimidating, forceful and violent as Artegall and his henchman Talus are, the immediate lessons

supplied by Spenser's Knight of Justice are pedagogically and morally enfeebled.[23] Spenser uses weakness as a strategy to reactivate the communicative power of his work, seeking an even more monologically authoritative exercise of influence to provoke potentially more seductive opportunities for such authority to be interanimated by a willing, if sometimes offended, collective participation.

Artegall's brand of Justice is derived from one of the oldest virtues, "most sacred" and even "[r]esembling God" (V.proem.10). It is introduced to Artegall through the immortal figure Astraea, but the poet is quick to point out that "[w]hilest here on earth" this daughter of a god "lived mortallie" (V.i.5). She lures the child Artegall away from human companionship and raises him in a cave, teaching him her diluted version of right and wrong, and encouraging him to practice justice not *with* human beings—where it might be dialogized—but *on* "wyld beasts" (i.7) incapable of interpretation and re-accentuation. Artegall's questionable past serves to dialogize each of his judicial decisions; it acts as a consistent reminder that "[a]uthoritative discourse can not be represented—it is only transmitted" (Bakhtin *Dialogic* 344), or, as Baudrillard would have it, *only already represented*. Once again, we are not dealing with straightforward hypocrisy, for, like the Fox News broadcasts earlier discussed, Spenser's book of Justice displays its contradictions and its hyperrealism as explicitly as its authoritative discourse, and there are ample opportunities—invitations, rather—to reintroduce past narratives.

[23] See Jeff Dolven, "Spenser's Sense of Poetic Justice," *Raritan*, 21.1 (2001): 127-140. "[P]unishment … is a pedagogical mode," Dolven argues, but certain of Artegall's punishments "transcen[d] questions of … justice." Dolven explains, for example, how the treatment of Munera "becomes a pure testament to someone's power to dissect. It is an allegory which does not need to explain itself, and its inscrutability is the perfection of its threat" (139). Judith Anderson also remarks on Artegall's "simplistic, furious, even vengeful" impositions of justice, which by the end of the book are "inconclusive" ("Nor man" 65). Elsewhere Anderson describes the outcomes of Artegalls' "unqualified absolutism" as "conceptually strained and recurrently touched by whiffs of parody" (*Words* 173).

Many readers, for example, have discussed the incompatibility of the argument Artegall presents to the second canto's giant with the argument of book V's proem; Artegall claims that "no change hath yet been found" in the Universe (V.ii.36), while the Proem laments the "dissolution" of the cosmos and "of all this lower world" (V.proem.4).[24] A similar dilemma occurs at the beginning of Canto viii, which rewrites Britomart's selfless repression of her "womanish complaints" (V.vii.44) into an attempt to seduce Artegall away from his duty. Radigund, the real captivator of Canto vii, seems effectively erased from Artegall's memory, while Britomart is remembered as the conniver who tried to delay his mission with "her strong request" (viii.3). This lurking alternative springs into visibility, inspiring some uncomfortable (though by this point, hardly unexpected) questioning of the "original" narrative, a questioning that disallows any reliable movement beyond appearances. Perhaps the best example of such unreliability in book V is Malfont, the lewd poet whose tongue is nailed to a post, above which appear the words "BON FONT: but *bon* that once had written bin, / Was raced out, and *Mal* was now put in" (ix.26). Judith Anderson explains that "Malfont's fate threatens both its opposites, whether unrestrained or immaterialized expression;" he "embodies an amorphous but very real danger, the meaning of which is hard to contain, though clearly this danger touches free expression—even language itself—to the quick" (*Words* 187).

Book VI emphasizes and more or less establishes the inability to move beyond appearances and the general "failure of discourse" Baudrillard describes as an inevitability. In this book appears the last threat not neutralized in the *Faerie Queene*, the

[24] Anderson discusses Artegall's encounter with the giant in great detail. In addition to pointing out the divergence between Artegall and the proem, she remarks on the "ritualized rhythms" of Artegall's final arguments: "What is 'heard' in the passage is less truly a 'voice' than a text, a rhythmically and allusively defined block of biblical writing" (*Words* 175), what Bakhtin would certainly label already represented authoritative discourse.

Blatant Beast, a rumor-mongering monster that escapes its bonds and promises to speak its speech anywhere and everywhere. No discourse is safe from this ranging, raging beast; it is the embodiment of lurking alternatives, and of the (counter)network, too. For the poet to pretend otherwise would mean fostering a delusion of the possibility of unquestionable access to, and invulnerable imposition of, authority, and ignoring what Hadfield calls the "problematic and amorphous presence of Britain," which, as it embraced expansion, encouraged paradoxically the undermining of its own monarchy, "even if the stated reason for the expansion was to protect such a system of government through the establishment of an imperial authority" (590). Thus the concluding image of the last complete book of the *Faerie Queene* must be the Blatant Beast "barking and biting all that him doe bate" (VI.xii.40), infecting the ears and minds of the nation, such that all Spenser may ask of his own rhymes is that they, like the speech of some originally benevolent but now bitterly exhausted god, "seek to please" (41) his audience, rather than directly change, inspire, or rule them.[25] Perhaps Spenser would have been more at home in the role of a pundit, for the "combination of capacious skepticism and provisional idealism" (Anderson *Words* 189) in his parting wish to please may be read as a desire to seduce as effectively and inexhaustively as the Beast.

[25] Here Spenser appears to locate himself and the authority he respects at one end of an extreme while locating the Blatant Beast on the other. His impulse toward extremism is relevant, for it allows us to return to Lessig's presentation on copyright law quoted in the introduction. Lessig identifies a similar extremism in reaction to copyright infringement on the Internet: one side interprets the law as strictly as possible and supports the removal of any copyrighted content, while the other supports "copyright abolitionism;" Lessig describes "a generation that rejects … copyright and believes that the law is nothing more than an ass …. The extremism on one side begets the extremism on the other." Lessig ultimately hopes, however, for a neutral platform upon which both sides can locate themselves, find a way to communicate, and strike some kind of creative balance. If such an accord is not struck at the end of the *Faerie Queene*, Spenser at least recognizes that the creative potential for unauthoritative, bestial speech cannot be contained or silenced. If such potential fills him with anxiety, it does not stop him from writing, from practicing his art, like Artegall, upon "wyld beasts" that are perhaps more capable of understanding than those in more traditional positions of authority are ready to admit.

As our 24-hour news networks prove, there is a place for a rhetoric that extends a constant invitation to investigate the relationship between discourse and ideology. And the most extreme rhetoric may perhaps extend this invitation most strenuously, even as it relinquishes no territory from its extreme position. The Blatant Beast spends all its time "barking and biting all," yet it only grows stronger, for it has perfected the strategy necessary to function and flourish in a (counter)network, where extremism works best not (only) through fear and domination but through complicity—comprehensive agreement that the false says as much as or more than the true. Called out for his use of false footage on November 12th, "We screwed up," Hannity admitted, acknowledging the collective error of his network. Unquestionably and absolutely, Fox News got it wrong. But why, after all, would they want to be right?

Chapter Three

The Gods Must be Asses:

Recognizing the Constitutive Potential of Social Networking in *Much Ado About Nothing*

1. Strategic Manipulation

Chapter two has focused on the seductively unstable image of the network as an appealing representation of the world in both the early modern and the postmodern eras. Just as attractive in contemporary discourse is the idea of network*ing*—furthering one's professional, social or romantic interests through advantageous interactions with people and groups linked in a complex web of associations. Networking is a strategic method of interaction; it is also paradoxical, as Paul McLean explains:

> We become more fully the persons we are through interaction, our personhood being constructed out of a number of different identities we adopt, singly or in combination, in different interactional settings…. We want autonomy, but the only way to get it is by becoming connected. Freedom must be relationally achieved; autonomy without connection is isolation. (2)

Beyond this initial paradox, there are further difficulties attached to networking. The introduction to this dissertation briefly discussed the murky conceptions, among student

users of Facebook, of how networking actually works. Many of the survey responses suggest a belief that social networking sites such as Facebook facilitate networking automatically, that the common use of the site is enough to bring about any particular interaction. But such an assumption ignores the more cautious but more accurate understanding of networks as "places where action is happening, not where it has already happened. [Networks] do not simplistically determine mobilization, or alliance building, or career formation. They are more like congested, and therefore potentially fecund, arenas of persuasive social interaction" (McLean 16).

The students surveyed respect the network's potential, but their responses lack a sense of how potential translates into action, and, following that translation, what the discourse of the action looks and sounds like, what is strategically persuasive about it. Forty-Seven percent of the 231 users surveyed used identical phrasing to answer questions about the use of Facebook: to *keep in touch* or *stay in contact.* But almost none of these responses, or the other 53%, detailed any specific explanation of just how Facebook facilitates such a process.[1] *Keeping in touch* appears to be shorthand for the specific interactions that actually occur on the site. While the responses suggest widespread agreement that a person's Facebook page communicates enough about her that she may be successfully and consistently *kept in touch* with, where, how and when these communications actually take place is less clear. Indeed, what is most vaguely recognized is the precise role of language in social networking, the image of the network full of not only people, but also conversation—dynamic, contingent, rhetorical speech. Too often absent from the fantasy of collectivity are the specifics of speech between the

[1] Other similarly imprecise phrases that showed up in multiple surveys include the following: *to see what everyone is up to*; *to connect*; *to communicate*; *to creep*.

collective's members, the language they choose, and how those strategic choices reflect what a site like Facebook is believed to reflect—the identities of the people who use it.

Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* provides a portrait of a social network confused about the functionality of language and its relationship to identity, but it may also provide some strategies for how to confront that confusion. Other critics have already noted the ways in which "[s]ocial transmission becomes a medium of distortion" (Salinger 228) in the play, but more can be said regarding characters' shifting and often inconsistent attitudes towards the distortions they encounter. Though "[i]ncidents of news, gossip, reporting follow thick and fast" (Salinger 227) the play's opening scene, it is possible to pause and examine the unique features of individual misinterpretations in addition to the ways they amalgamate to overwhelm what might otherwise be an uncomplicated comedy. Undoubtedly, the main events of the drama are driven by an increasingly irrepressible hearsay, absent scenes wherein conversations are witnessed by particular characters, but off-stage and out of range: Antonio hears Don Pedro and Claudio talking in the orchard; Borachio overhears the same two men; the courting of Hero by the disguised Don Pedro is also absent from the text, though we do hear of his success in Claudio's name; Claudio overhears Margaret, disguised as Hero, conversing with Borachio. All of these important scenes are introduced twice-removed, as hearsay, so that scene after scene in *Much Ado* consists of characters talking about listening to other characters talk. But what is this talk? Of what does it consist? And what is so confusing about it that each of the play's many eavesdroppers, somewhere in between overhearing and reporting these absent scenes, often misinterpret and thus misreport what they hear? *Much Ado* places social networking under pressure, its main instrument—

language—under increasing suspicion, yet it is unclear who or what is applying the press.[2]

Lynne Magnusson suggests that "[f]rom the outset, the characters treat mistake-making as their normal expectation of language. They anticipate mistaken communications, and more important, they deploy a complex range of prevention and repair mechanisms to compensate" (158). She concludes that "the play deals not only with mistake-making and mis-taking in words, but also in their remedy and correction. Its concern is not with how language fails but with how language works. And this practical outlook on language is also the play's general outlook on life" (158). Reworking this argument slightly, it is possible to say that the play's concern is not with how language fails, but with how speakers fail. Shakespeare dramatizes Language's capacity to work despite characters' incapacity or reluctance to work with it. Language is in some ways the hero of the play, the nothing/noting over which to make much ado.[3]

Magnusson is certainly correct to suggest that characters, from the outset, make much ado over language and seem trained to anticipate mistakes, but what is most curious is how this anticipation does not translate into pessimism. Indeed, the pressure to

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[2] Possibly Shakespeare registers an anxiety over oral communication. Many scholars have speculated about a growing conflict between oral and textual communication in Renaissance England, specifically in the contexts of the printing revolutions and the Reformation. Margaret Ezell comments on how "histories of print and of bookselling have framed their narratives as histories of a type of civil strife, with the new (young, democratic) technology overthrowing the established (old, aristocratic) one to usher in a new, better world" (7). But more recent scholarship, such as that by Adam Fox, suggests that "[w]e are much better off conceiving of overlapping spheres of the oral and the literate" (8), and that "far from being the twin enemies of speech, literacy and print culture may have actually reinforced the spoken tongue" (34). Alexandra Walsham agrees, "For all their 'imperialistic potential' print and writing never entirely displaced speech: on the contrary, their increasing diffusion served in the short term to enhance and rejuvenate oral culture and communication" (173). Oral communication is certainly enhanced in *Much Ado about Nothing*—it is responsible for the unnecessary complications in the courtship between Hero and Claudio. Then again, it is the presence of multiple voices engaging in oral communication that is responsible for bringing together another couple—Beatrice and Benedick.

[3] For more on the nothing/noting pun, see Paul Jorgensen; Dorothy Hockey.

compensate for misunderstandings seems less urgent than Magnusson implies. Anthony Dawson suggests that the pleasure for both the audience and the characters "resides in the transport rather than the content of messages, and the world the play creates is one in which attention is directed as much to the way meaning is produced as to what the meaning is" (211). Characters do not only expect mistakes; they live by them, rely on them, with pleasure and even enthusiasm. The play's most impressive protagonist, Don Pedro, embraces quite eagerly the kind of askance communication that gets things moving throughout *Much Ado*. It is his idea to disguise himself as Claudio in the wooing of Hero, vowing to "take her hearing prisoner with the force / And strong encounter of my amorous tale" (I.i.324-25).[4] It is likewise his plan to fool Benedick into falling in love with Beatrice. He boasts a supreme confidence in his own power to see the manipulative capacity of language, though he must rely on Hero's and Benedick's inability to recognize this same manipulative capacity. Here we can begin to understand why social networking is defective in this play—because its practitioners operate under a reductive definition of what language is and what it can accomplish. Language for Don Pedro is less a functional argument or rhetorical interaction than it is a magic spell, pre-constructed and formulaic. Such a definition does not appear immediately to be reductive, and in fact tries to pass itself off as the opposite, as a glorification of language's power to operate. But Don Pedro's self-congratulation has more to do with his privileged access to an already established modus operandi than with any constructive rhetorical skill. His logic is similar to the logic of simulacra explicated by Baudrillard, a logic in which "[e]verything that appears to serve a function becomes a sign of the abstraction

[4] All quotations from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd edition, ed. G.B. Evans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

functionality," so that "an object does not actually need to function for it to signify functionality …" (Bishop & Phillips 135-36). Similarly, Don Pedro's rhetorical skill does not actually need to function for him to celebrate its functionality. He uses language, performs language, but in so doing he threatens to substitute the spectacle of communication for communication itself.

Initially, Don Pedro discusses the Beatrice/Benedick matchmaking proposal as if it is both impossibly difficult *and* the easiest thing in the world to accomplish. "I will in the interim undertake one of Hercules' labors, which is, to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection th' one with th' other," he claims (II.i.364-67), exaggerating the difficulty of his enterprise. Yet a few lines later he confidently asserts that he will teach his co-conspirators "how to humor [Beatrice], that she shall fall in love with Benedick, and I, with your two helps, will so practice on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice" (380-84). On the one hand Don Pedro's actions are supernaturally creative, akin to the feats of demigods; on the other they are simple, natural skills that can be passed along by a good teacher. Indeed, Hero, who seems to need little or no directions from Don Pedro about what to say to convince Beatrice of Benedick's affection, solicits the help of Ursula, "teaching" her the appropriate language:

> Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,
> As we do trace this alley up and down,
> Our talk must only be of Benedick.
> When I do name him, let it be thy part
> To praise him more than ever man did merit.
> My talk to thee must be how Benedick
> Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter
> Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,
> That only wounds by hearsay. (III.i.15-23)

The ways of "little" Cupid are hardly mysterious to the educated gentleperson.[5] In comparing themselves to the god of love, Don Pedro and Hero are remarking both on how powerful and remarkable is language, and how remarkably easy it can be to come to such power.[6] Anyone can be a Cupid—"his glory shall be ours," as Don Pedro says (II.i.385)—and yet the universality of this capacity somehow fails to diminish the sense of accomplishment—"for we are the *only* love-gods" (386, my emphasis). The explanation lies in the subtlety of Don Pedro's attitude toward the undertaking. He himself is a Hercules or Cupid, but the tools he uses—words—are only that. Language is an accoutrement, a vessel for Don Pedro's inherent intellectual artillery. The words themselves become weapons, which anyone might pick up, but which only Don Pedro (or his hand-picked students) can appropriately aim.[7]

Such boasting seems not uncharacteristic when we take into account some of the paradoxical attitudes toward rhetoric that flourished during the Renaissance. Mary Thomas Crane explains how

> rhetoric and other *artes* could not be considered authentic unless they were in some sense natural, perfect, and God-given, while at the same time they could not be taught as skills unless they were also artificial, and unless the

[5] This trend of characters aligning themselves with gods is easily spotted throughout the play, but the arrogance of the gesture is often diminished by the low stakes with which these supposedly godlike efforts are associated. Before Hero, Ursula and Don Pedro, Benedick is first associated with Cupid. In Act I, Beatrice claims that Benedick "challeng'd Cupid at the flight" (I.i.40). Joost Daalder explains: "Beatrice wishes us to view Benedick as claiming that he can shoot further, if both he and Cupid use flight-arrows, than Cupid can. He claims, in effect, that he, the military man, is more capable than Cupid of wounding a woman so as to make her fall in love with him" (523). Stephen Dobranski comments on Benedick's efforts to align himself with Hercules when Benedick "suggests a series of Herculean labors to escape Beatrice," but he points out that Benedick initially appears more as a "burlesque version of the Greek hero … rattl[ing] off a list of pointless Herculean labors" and, in short, introducing "the idea of a great deal of work for nothing" (235).

[6] We might also interpret this as commentary on the anxieties of anti-theatrical writers who devoted themselves to alerting helplessly compliant audiences about the dangerous, corrupting influences of theatrical spectacles. See Nova Myhill; Jonas Barish.

[7] See Rebecca Bushnell, who uses a different metaphor [that of "harvesting or mining" (129)], but who also comments on the "materiality of the textual fragment" and its conversion "into counters or currency, spatially distinct, usable, and exchangeable" (133).

> natural, God-given state was in need of completion by artificial means …. Supplementation allowed [humanists] to present a double face to power, claiming that they were simultaneously both essential and inessential to its assertion. (16)

Don Pedro is similarly double-faced here, though it is important to note he is no humanist. Though he is temporarily willing to share his divine titles with Hero, he is little interested in passing on the means by which one might attain his trademark double-facedness.[8] And again, his communications toward Benedick are organized as a series of false fronts, designed to manipulate rather than educate. What this suggests is a belief on Don Pedro's part that words always exist at someone's disposal; his own script will skate across the surface of Benedick's consciousness, dragging behind it the appropriate strings Don Pedro has decided to pull, thus moving Benedick in the preferred direction. This is in large part an entirely sophisticated comprehension of how language works. Of course words exist at someone's disposal. Bakhtin tells us that

> [w]e speak only in definite speech genres, that is, all our utterances have definite and relatively stable typical forms of construction of the whole…. We know our native language—its lexical composition and grammatical structure—not from dictionaries and grammars but from concrete utterances that we hear and that we ourselves reproduce in live speech communication with people around us. We assimilate forms of language only in forms of utterances and in conjunction with these forms. (*Speech Genres* 78)

But Bakhtin also reminds us that "the words of a language belong to nobody …" (*Speech Genres* 88) and that "it is necessary to come to terms with discourse as a reified, 'typical' but at the same time intentional phenomenon" (*Dialogic* 367). Don Pedro undercuts this intentionality when he suggests that only certain people are equipped to assimilate and

[8] This seems true enough especially when we recall Don Pedro's earlier consideration of Hero's intellectual capacity; Myhill points out that when he first sets out his plan to woo her for Claudio, "[t]he possibility of failure, or even of a response from Hero, never crosses Don Pedro's mind" (298).

manipulate language; the rest are there to be manipulated. And these categories, in Don Pedro's eyes, are fixed quite early on. "I would fain have it a match," he says of his plans for Beatrice and Benedick, "and I doubt not but to fashion it …" (II.i.367-69). The "lovers" are entirely in his hands.

What the Prince doesn't account for, however, is the inevitable diminishment of his own authority should his perspective on the creative potential of language be universally accepted. By celebrating the success of his effort to bring together Beatrice and Benedick before the actual effort is performed, by anticipating "[t]he sport [that] will be, when they hold one an opinion of another's dotage" (II.iii.215-16), Don Pedro in fact robs the romance of its capacity to occur as a real, interactional event. Baudrillard explains how "[w]hen an event and the broadcasting of that event in real time are too close together, the event is rendered undecidable and virtual; it is stripped of its historical dimension and removed from memory. We are in a generalized feedback effect. Wherever a mingling of this kind—a collision of poles—occurs … we see the confusion of existence and its double" (*Evil* 75). Don Pedro assumes, inhabits, and finally privileges, a virtual reality on top of the real, but in doing so he positions himself to demonstrate the instability of his own power and privilege, the inevitable way in which "[p]ower itself fights against becoming total" and in the end "works secretly against itself" (Baudrillard *Evil* 24). For, to borrow another question posed by Baudrillard, "[h]ow are we to believe in reality once its production has become automatic?… There is no way now for the dream to be an expression of a desire [when] its virtual

accomplishment is already present" (*Evil* 19).[9] So when Don Pedro assumes the virtual accomplishment of Beatrice and Benedick, he comes close to stripping it of its genuineness and flattening it into an automatic, non-event, one in which its major players—the lovers themselves—have no say and no part.

Don Pedro's deafness to the interactive potential of other voices contributes in large part to his reductive, lopsided impression of social networking, the idea that only a handful of people are ever fully conscious of it working. To put it another way, Don Pedro rightly sees the social network as a place where action is happening (because he, and the few others like him, make it happen), but he assumes that almost everyone else sees it as a place where action has already happened. He sees no contradiction in these conflicting perspectives, but the most damaging miscommunications that occur in the later acts of the play arise from this irresolvable conflict.

2. Strategic Oscillation

Indeed, the flaws in Don Pedro's ungenerous perspective reveal themselves as the play moves forward.[10] While he successfully demonstrates that "[a]ction in networks is …strategic" (as McLean says of networking in Renaissance Florence), he fails to recognize that action as simultaneously "constitutive of identities" (McLean 34),

[9] Alan Sinfield asks a similar question: "if we come to consciousness within a language that is continuous with the power structures that sustain the social order, how can we conceive, let alone organize, resistance?" (35). He suggests that "dissident potential derives ultimately not from essential qualities in individuals (though they have qualities) but from conflict and contradiction that the social order inevitably produces within itself, even as it attempts to sustain itself" (41).

[10] Many critics have discussed Don Pedro's diminishing authority and credibility in Messina. "He should be the most levelheaded man in the group," says René Girard, "the fixed point of reference around which everyone and everything could form a stable configuration. However, he is the very reverse …" (89). Morriss Henry Partee agrees that "Shakespeare circumscribes the ability of Don Pedro to function as a stabilizing force in this work."

identities which are not always predictable, subject to one-sided manipulation. While it is true that "networking really is more like a sport than other aspects of social life, since actors are typically conscious of it as a game and have meditated upon and theorized about the 'rules,'" it is nevertheless important not to "eviscerate the temporal unfolding of social action and ignore the suspense that derives from not knowing with certainty how another actor will respond" (McLean 19). Beatrice and Benedick's complex responses to the conversations they overhear exceed the parameters of Don Pedro's original strategic action and prove their capacity to assimilate and manipulate language in the service of strategies of their own. Persuaded to begin thinking of each other romantically, Beatrice and Benedick do not stop there; they are able to reclaim the *eventness* of their courtship, for their fresh romantic pursuits are accompanied by nothing less than the renunciation of their current identities in favor of behaviors more palatable to not only each other, but their entire social circle. Subjectivity, through Benedick and Beatrice, is depicted "as something of a dialectical negation of power, not a mere effect of its operations; as an orientation to multiple potential selves or identities, not merely the production of a unitary one; as a mental space critically distanced from, and not entirely defined by, circulating ideologies and discourses of institutions of power" (Grady 121).

Hercules and his cupids do succeed in their work, though in a rather curious way, for Beatrice and Benedick both are inspired more by the censure of themselves than by the reported merits of the other, the first sign that Don Pedro is not as in control of the discourse as he would like to believe. By overhearing themselves described, Beatrice and Benedick come to see, and then focus on, their own defects: "I hear how I am censur'd," says Benedick; "they say I will bear myself proudly, if I perceive the love come from

her…. I must not seem proud; happy are they that hear their detractions, and can put them to mending" (II.iii. 225-230). Beatrice is likewise first struck by overhearing herself "condemn'd for pride and scorn so much. Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adieu!" (III.i.108-9), she resolves. Neither eavesdropper questions or denies the shortcomings attributed to them, or indeed any part of the conversations they overhear. "This can be no trick," Benedick says; "the conference was sadly borne" (II.iii.220-21). But if we can fault them for their comic gullibility, we are soon given more and weightier matter to consider; Beatrice and Benedick appear less and less as the pawns in Don Pedro's Herculean labor as we hear them (re)situate themselves, strategically and persuasively, as the authorities on their own identities. They appear, in fact, as both subjects and objects, simultaneously.

Both characters begin by settling on a single and primary goal: to reverse the censures against them. And both quite optimistically assume they can accomplish their ambition. The emphasis shifts back and forth from failure—the deep-seated personality or identity issues that may have made Beatrice "too disdainful" (III.i.34) or reserved in Benedick his "contemptible spirit" (II.iii.180-81)—to repair—Beatrice will tame her "wild heart" (III.i.112) while Benedick "will be horribly in love with her" (II.iii.235). Thus both characters project dual identities: they see themselves, at once, as others currently see them, and as they would like to see themselves in the near future. Benedick's remarks are particularly supportive of this projective faculty:

> I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have rail'd so long against marriage; but doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humor? No, the world must be peopled. (II.iii.235-42)

Here Benedick relegates his repeated vows against married life to "quirks and remnants of wit," which he anticipates will be thrown back at him as proof of his inconsistency. But such "paper bullets" do not trouble him seriously, because indeed they were never seriously indicative of any fixed identity; they were merely the declarations of a youth who "did not think I should live till I were married" (243-44). Benedick admits here to fashioning an unstable, inherently alterable version of himself through "paper bullets of the brain," "odd quirks and remnants," youthful rhetoric. Now he is ready to be true to a more serious and stable self, one interested in high social callings such as peopling the world.

In fact, Benedick provides another example of the paradox of rhetoric and rhetorical education, or what Richard Lanham describes as "rhetorical man," one who "was a dramatic game-player but [who] was always claiming that the ground he presently stood upon was more than a stage. Rhetoric's central decorum enshrined this bi-stable oscillation: the great art of art was the art of hiding art, but you had better start out with some art to hide. In behavior, you should always be sincere, whether you mean it or not" (*Electronic* 111).[11] Benedick implies in his speech that his bachelor front is a mere leftover from a youthful appetite that need not have anything to do with this newer, and thus more real, Benedick, the one prepared to people the world. Overhearing the conversation about himself offers Benedick the opportunity for a unique kind of perspective, an interactive encounter with himself, as object, from the point of view of a different self, as subject. We have no guarantee beyond Benedick's word that his professed love for Beatrice is anything more than another paper bullet of the brain. His

[11] Philip Collington locates specific instances of *sprezzatura* throughout *Much Ado.*

railing for marriage may be just as much a matter of appetite as railing against it, but he can objectively view and interpret only one version of himself at a time. Lanham explains:

> That we can see one version of ourselves only while inhabiting the other violates deep-seated feelings about the wholeness of human vision. That every front stage only exists when seen from a back stage, and vice versa, is something that at a very profound level we simply do not want to admit…. Self-consciousness is burdensome enough, but to have to choose your degree of it, and then vary that choice from time to time, constitutes a real interpretive challenge. (*Electronic* 149)

It is such an interpretive challenge that *Much Ado About Nothing* places before its readers. Benedick's self-consciousness depends on using language both self-consciously (strategically) and un-self-consciously (constitutively). Lanham explains: "To look at language self-consciously is to play games with it; to look through language unselfconsciously is to act purposively with it," the goal being to "break down the compelling urge to see through our means of seeing to the 'reality' established by that seeing. Fabrication of the 'decorous,' unselfconscious Western reality, stylistic or social, is done through a trick, a series of tricks, just like perception itself, and we want to know how the trick is done" (*Electronic* 189, 81). The study of rhetoric provides the means by which this urge can be mastered, for rhetoric can be seen as "a method of literary education aimed to train its students to toggle back and forth between AT and THROUGH vision, alternately to realize how the illusion is created and then to fool oneself with it again" (*Electronic* 81). This is what Lanham means by the "bi-stable oscillation" he claims marks rhetorical man (*Electronic* 111).

Benedick first demonstrates such oscillation early on in the play, while in conversation with Claudio about the charms and merits of Hero. Benedick offers Claudio

a choice: “Do you question me, as an honest man should do, for my simple true judgment? Or would you have me speak after my custom, as being a profess’d tyrant to their sex?” (I.i.166-69). Claudio must repeatedly assure Benedick that his interests are serious and sober before the two companions manage to find the “key” to harmonize their conversation (186), though Benedick, for his part, continues to speak of Claudio’s intentions at least half in jest, as if his “simple true judgment” and his customary discourse may not be divided after all. When Don Pedro arrives and asks the two men what they have stayed behind to discuss, Benedick, rather than answer his question directly, introduces an alternate scenario in which he must break Claudio’s confidence in telling Don Pedro of Claudio’s love for Hero. However, no such confidence exists to be broken; “If this were so, so were it utt’red,” Claudio says (215), but in fact the situation is hardly so complex. Benedick simply imagines it to be so, and invites the other two speakers to imagine likewise their roles in this resituated conversation. Benedick suggests “that every conversation is … made up of playlets at least minimally pre-scripted” (Magnussen 155.) He continues to demonstrate his skill as a collector of genres of discourse—in fact painting himself as a very genre or *sign* of discourse (and intercourse) when he vows that, if ever he fall in love, his eyes are to be plucked out “with a ballad-maker’s pen, and hang me up at the door of a brothel-house for the sign of blind Cupid” (252-54). Don Pedro plays along, suggesting that Benedick “wilt prove a notable argument” (256)—will function, that is, as either a manifestation of what goes on in a brothel or the matter for a debate on the subject. In attaching himself, even transforming himself, to a particular instrumental example of speech, Benedick shifts the conversation’s theme: the remainder of the discourse in this scene is marked by the self-

conscious impulse to role-play and manipulate, to play games with language while acting purposefully with it, to examine even the plainest phrases for both their instrumental customs and tricks, and their "simple" truth. Benedick oscillates between both tasks more successfully than his companions, who get a bit carried away in one direction. When Don Pedro, for example, states simply that "the lady (Hero) is very well worthy" (221-22), Claudio accuses him of "speak[ing] this to fetch me in" (223). Discounting the coexisting presence of simple truth in Don Pedro's statement, Claudio assumes instead that the form, emptied of substance, is all. Later, when Benedick takes leave of his companions, he frames his valediction in the form of a closing for a letter. Claudio and Don Pedro, both eager to spotlight ornamentation , quickly recognize this familiar form of discourse and jokingly extend it:

> Bene: I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassage, and so I commit you—
> Claud: To the tuition of God. From my house—if I had it—
> D. Pedro: This sixt of July. Your loving friend, Benedick. (279-284)

"Nay, mock not," Benedick rejoins, for "[t]he body of your discourse is sometime guarded with fragments, and the guards are but slightly basted on neither. Ere you flout old ends any further, examine your conscience …" (285-89). His parting words remind his friends not to be too eager to perform just one task—looking AT language—without also vigilantly and reflexively looking THROUGH, even if that means looking through the most stilted, affected valediction. When he urges his friends to examine their consciences, Benedick not only reminds them that everyone is guilty of uttering formulaic speech tags; he also links conscience explicitly with language. His chief purpose may be to suggest that every utterance is a "living impulse" that "tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms

are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word" (Bakhtin *Dialogic* 292-93). If he entered this first scene of the play in cheerful control of his own witty discourse, the oscillating Benedick leaves asking for an examination of conscience and context which should sober the levity inspired by his amusingly mannered exit, or at least decelerate Claudio's sudden romantic interest in Hero in order to make room for some additional attention to the inevitable "taste" his communication with her will finally have. Claudio himself admits that his "liking might too sudden seem," and wonders if it ought to be "salv'd … with a longer treatise" (I.i.369), but his brief gesture towards a deeper examination of conscience and context is discarded by Don Pedro, who convinces him that "what will serve is fit: 'tis once, though lovest, and I will fit thee with the remedy" (I.i.317-19). Once again Don Pedro reduces language to a fixed and pre-assembled form—a remedy, absent any socially charged overtones, that he may fit onto a context equally fixed.

Benedick seems to understand, already, what his comrades do not about the interactive potential of language, and as the play moves forward he is able to expose handily the limitations of Don Pedro's perspective, proving that not just Herculean princes are capable of seductive and subtle rhetorical designs. But there is a reason that Don Pedro and Claudio persist in laughing at Benedick rather than pondering his advice. Like many of the characters in *Much Ado,* they are clearly aware of the instability and illusive aspects of language, and they indeed make use of such instability self-consciously in their efforts to make things happen, to make each other laugh and to manipulate other characters. And yet they are themselves fooled by the same kinds of manipulative tricks when, "[i]n conceiving of themselves as subjects making discoveries,

they become the objects of deception" (Myhill 294). Innocent as some of these tricks may be, one of them, Don John's slander against Hero, results in the public humiliation of an innocent woman. One could argue that characters like Don Pedro and Claudio are too eager to fool themselves in this play, that the bi-stable oscillation Lanham defines breaks down into self-delusion, as characters, expectant of mistakes in direct conversation—and rather entertained by them—assume a mistake-free veracity surrounds the conversations they indirectly overhear.[12] This inconsistency betrays more flaws in Messina's social network, its members unreliably vigilant about their own communicative competence and the extent to which this competence extends to their neighbors. Such unreliability stems from the paradox—coming into increasingly brighter view throughout the play—of a network at once strategic and constitutive: "where all agents are aware of the strategic subtlety of others, how can intrinsic relationships ever get locked in?" (McLean 33). Don Pedro and Claudio react to this very anxiety, to "the puzzle of how intrinsic relations can be secured through instrumental means," through "culturally specific strategies" to which everyone inside that culture has access (McLean 33). This is similar to the question asked earlier: "How are we to believe in reality once its production has become automatic?" "By presenting the manipulation of interpretation and questioning the privileged status of the spectator," Myhill asserts, "the play challenges the idea of omniscience in any spectator, or the possibility of any spectator having the sort of automatic access to truth that the position implies" (294). If everyone can be a Cupid, and knows he can be a

[12] Girard remarks on the oddity in Claudio's suspicion that Don Pedro has betrayed him and courted Hero for himself: "Having heard the promise of the prince with his own ears, he should trust Don Pedro, but what he knows for a fact seems less credible to him than the unconfirmed rumor spread by people who have no firsthand information" (83).

Cupid, who is left to shoot? If everyone can labor like a Hercules, is it even fair to call it labor? If not just men but all people are "deceivers ever" (II.iii.63), what becomes of constancy? How can any communication, any form of social networking, be trusted as sincere once the hierarchy of access is toppled? When looking AT begins to feel automatic, how can one remember to look THROUGH?

3. Strategic In-articulation

In light of these questions, the cruel eagerness with which Claudio condemns Hero may also be interpreted as a strange and stubborn optimism, for by Act IV, the play is less interested in defending Hero than in defending the framework of its entire social network, one that can accommodate only a reductive understanding of the open access of rhetorical skill. Claudio is able to trust what he overhears only because he does not trust that Don John is capable enough to fool him.[13] For as long as possible, the social network of Messina accommodates Don John as a truth-teller—because deception and manipulation and all the "instrumental means" by which reality is produced are determinedly reserved in *Much Ado*, not for bastards like Don John, but for the real elite.[14]

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[13] Don John himself is guilty of the same oversimplified understanding of social interaction. Partee points out that though Don John claims to be a "plain dealing villain, he resorts to the coarsest of subterfuges," relying completely on Borachio; "Appropriately, the least sophisticated clown in Shakespearean comedies foils this one-dimensional villain."

[14] See Joseph M. Williams; attaching these morally questionable methods to Don Pedro may at first resonate uncomfortably with the work of Williams and other scholars who have documented the growing sense in the sixteenth century of "a congruence between a person's language and his social status," along with a movement toward condemning "language spoken by those that were not the 'better sort' as not merely barbarous but morally degenerate" (Williams 75, 73). *Much Ado*, however, seems to be playing with this idea of a distinct line between *good* speech and *bad*, along with the idea that the potential usefulness of so-called barbarous language might be attractive to some of the "better sort," attractive enough to appropriate, to use strategically but not constitutively. Don Pedro, in other words, does not run the risk of losing his membership among the better sort, despite engaging in deceptive rhetoric. Patricia

Indeed, for Claudio to scrutinize the words of Don John with the same misdirected energy with which he earlier attended to the teasing wit of Benedick and the possible betrayal by Don Pedro would be, quite frankly, exhausting. For proof of the strain of this effort, we need look no further than the verbal recitals of Constable Dogberry and Verges. These lawmen show complete self-consciousness in their use of language; they also happen to be completely wrong in such their use of it, to the point where they literally speak the exact opposite of what they mean. Not only do Dogberry and Verges misspeak single words—salvation for damnation (III.iii.3), desartless for deserving (9), senseless for sensible (23)—but the full directives they give the Watch succeed only in relieving the latter of any responsibility. Dogberry in particular is interested in using decorative, rhetorical flourishes in his speeches and in demonstrating his skills in logical argument. His answers to the questions put to him by the Watch read like epigrams or axioms drawn from rhetorical "places" identified by leading rhetoricians:

> Dog: If you meet a thief, you may suspect him, by virtue of your office, to be no true man; and for such kind of men, the less you meddle or make with them, why, the more is for your honesty.
> 2 Watch: If we know him to be a thief, shall we not lay hands on him?
> Dog: Truly by your office you may, but I think they that touch pitch will be defil'd. The most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, is to let him show himself what he is, and steal out of your company.
> …
> Verg: If you hear a child cry in the night, you must call to the nurse and bid her still it.
> 2 Watch: How if the nurse be asleep and will not hear us?

Fumerton suggests that "[a]s a marginalized consumer group, the aristocracy becomes particularly everyday in its use of the trivial, common, or low—a practice redefined in terms not of a suppression or absorption of that other but of a more nebulous involvement or negotiation with it" (5-6). See also Stallybrass & White; Bryan Reynolds; Bristol & Marotti.

> Dog: Why then depart in peace, and let the child wake her with crying, for the ewe that will not hear her lamb when it baes will never answer a calf when he bleats. (III.iii.50-72)

While Dogberry pays some deference to his and the Watch's "office," he is more interested in delivering quotable but ultimately impractical answers to straightforward questions about how to perform a particular job. What is remarkable is that despite their frequent mistakes and their poorly conceived directives, Dogberry and Verges are not misunderstood to any lasting degree; generally they remain comprehensible in their incomprehensible choice of words. The Watch, for example, are not paralyzed by Dogberry's oratory, but succeed in apprehending Borachio and Conrade, even as they display their own lack of verbal dexterity in the process. Rhetorically expert or not, they get their men.

Much more successfully than Don Pedro, Dogberry demonstrates both the strategic aspects of social networking and its constitutive aspects. Don Pedro's attitude toward language actually prevents us from seeing its full constitutive potential—he simply identifies himself as a god and assumes that what he says and does will reinforce that already constructed identity. Dogberry, however, in his attempts to assimilate language skillfully and train his Watch effectively, constructs himself, word by word, as an ass. And the portrait is entirely believable, if rather exhausting to examine. More than any of the elite, Dogberry provides a lesson for how language works—indeed, for how it refuses to fail. It is language that appears heroic, despite its inarticulate speaker, for Dogberry does not simply use language—he is made up by it. Words still exist at his disposal, but he is able to demonstrate how "[d]iscourse lives … beyond itself, in a living impulse toward the object" (Bakhtin *Dialogic* 292). Don Pedro, in contrast, has detached

himself from this impulse, so that all he can offer "is the naked corpse of the word, from which we can learn nothing at all about the social situation or the fate of a given word in life" (*Dialogic* 292).

The tiresome Dogberry offers plenty of opportunities to learn the fates of words, and he prevents any hasty assertion of the disconnection of language from the identities of those who speak and hear it. Instead, he offers the opportunity for a different kind of departure, best explained by Carla Mazzio. The inarticulate utterance, Mazzio says,

> when represented as something to be heard and not simply dismissed as a comedy of error or a marginalized sociolect, could generate a halting effect in the process of reception as well as transmission, a halting that could make space for alternative temporalities and directions of thought otherwise eclipsed by the flow of verbal fluency. Departures from communicative norms … provided drama with an almost ready-made form of tensional error: occasions for laughter, doubtless, but also for investigating the psychological, sociological, and theological stakes of indistinct speech. (*Inarticulate* 56)[15]

Dogberry's departures from communicative norms certainly have the potential to generate halting effects, though more often than not his frustrating exhaustiveness only decelerates, temporarily, the conversations in which he takes part. As a result of Dogberry's tediousness, for example, Leonato refuses to stay for the examination of the apprehended criminals, and as a result Don John's plan to disgrace Hero is allowed to come to fruition. Leonato, in his rush to make the wedding, believes himself to be uninterested in what he considers the tiresome nonsense of the constable's speech—he

[15] Anthony Dawson provides a perfect example of such investigation in his dissection of Dogberry's eager reminders that he be written down as an ass:

> the simple correlation, ass-Dogberry, is complicated by a series of interpretative interventions on our part, a series which goes something like this: he is saying he's an ass; he doesn't mean what he says; this is not because he doesn't understand the word "ass" or the word "am," but because he lacks the linguistic power to achieve control over his meaning; nevertheless, what he is saying is true; in fact saying it shows him to be an ass" (218).

refuses to halt to examine Dogberry's surfaces attentively. By neglecting the offered opportunity for investigation, Leonato unwittingly drags the comedy of the last scene of Act III into the catastrophe of Act IV.[16]

Importantly, in the following scene Claudio, Don Pedro, and again Leonato make the same mistake in their rush to condemn Hero, despite her attempts to defend herself and her honor. Claudio attacks Hero's "seeming" (IV.i.56). "She's but the sign and semblance of her honor," he claims; "O, what authority and show of truth can cunning sin cover itself withal! … Would you not swear, all you that see her, that she were a maid, by these exterior shows?" (IV.i.33-40).[17] Oddly enough, Claudio gives Hero credit here for a temporary ability to deceive and manipulate, but the hierarchy of access to rhetorical skill still stands, for as Hero is welcomed into the elite club she is simultaneously booted out of it. She is given no opportunity to interact or reconstitute her defamed identity as her accusers position her as nothing more than "the object of a gaze constituting itself as respectable and superior by substituting observations for participation" (Stallybrass & White 42). And yet, an expressive defense still arrives to preserve her. Claudio and Don

[16] Kathryn Walls points out the paradoxical significance of this scene: "it accomplishes nothing" (200). But like all the other "nothings" in this play, we can make much of it. Others have commented on the sandwiching of the church scene between two scenes that feature Dogberry. Steve Cassal suggests that "[t]hese comic scenes are meant to cushion the negative impact of the church scene, and it is primarily through this cushioning that the ugliness of that scene is absorbed within the comic spirit of *Much Ado* …. and so the play accommodates the sordid business of the church scene and maintains its comic trajectory" (140-41). But this reading appears to underestimate the disruptive impact of Dogberry's speeches, and indeed the comic trajectory *is* disrupted before the church scene begins—when Leonato cuts short the scene that precedes it. What we see is not absorption but, once again, oscillation—a perpetual shifting back and forth between the elements of comedy and tragedy present in all three scenes, and a reassertion of "the theme of the mixed, paradoxical nature of feelings, of the unexpected relations between pathos and gaiety, and outward expression and inward emotion, [which] runs through the whole play" (Salingar 232).

[17] William McCollom points out the "distortion of wit" Claudio expresses in this scene, especially his punning on Hero's name—"Claudio's speeches rely more and more on the verbal tricks recorded in the rhetorical texts of the time" and on conventional idioms "of the kind that Shakespeare will overtly ridicule at the turn of the century" (167). Though less exaggerated than Dogberry's lack of wit, Claudio's is still noteworthy, and his unimpressive rhetorical displays further link him, and the whole of the church scene, to the distorted wit of the constable.

Pedro are all too eager in this scene to paint themselves as perspicacious, critical thinkers capable of seeing beyond surfaces to hidden depths and truths, but the reported scene, in which Don John fooled them with a superficial disguise—Margaret for Hero—rebuts their claims for their own exceptional discernment. It is this reported scene—we may call it an absent one—that arrives and speaks to us most persuasively during Hero's censure.[18] Answering the question—"What kind of speech is better than that which is clear, open, distinct?"—Mazzio further explains how

> the unclear, the less than accessible, distinct, or even audible, when examined as a process rather than a product, was the key to transforming tragedies of cultural deafness into a comedy of another kind. Conversely, the resistance of individuals and collectives to acknowledging the potential content and power of the indistinct utterance could lead to something more like tragedy …." (*Inarticulate* 93)

Claudrio and Don Pedro are perhaps more ignorant than resistant, which keeps the scene from toppling fully into tragedy. Angry as they are, neither man comprehends what is really at stake in the scene, for Hero and for themselves. They arrive in the church already failures, having neglected to examine appropriately Don John's less than accessible, less than distinct Margaret-as-Hero—having neglected to follow Benedick's advice to examine their own consciences/contexts as well. Every word they speak is marked by these failures, and most of their hearers (Hero, Beatrice, Benedick, the friar) recognize them as easily as they recognize Dogberry's constant gaffs. And just as the sense of Dogberry's meaning appears beneath the transparent senselessness, the unreliability of Don Pedro and Claudio's slander appears beneath their brash confidence. The absent scene, hyperconforming to its own silence, makes the racket of Act IV, Scene

[18] Thomas Moison suggests that the scene's invisibility "only underscor[es] the infidelity that hasn't occurred" (170).

1 brazenly clamorous by contrast, and exposes it, as Don Pedro's earlier brash speech about Benedick and Beatrice was exposed, as a performance of communication rather than communication itself.

4. Strategic Conformity

It is the friar who first articulates, at length, his sense of the failure of discernment on the part of Claudio and Don Pedro. He produces his own elaborate plan to save Hero's reputation, recover her groom, and teach a lesson about the strategic and constitutive potentials of language at the same time. Committed to their nontransgressive view of Messina's social network, Don Pedro and Claudio prove in Act IV their failure to respond to or consider the merits of the rhetoric of struggle or of the strategy of oscillation first performed by Benedick and later exaggerated by Dogberry. The final scenes of the play call for a more drastic strategy whereby these elites may finally and inescapably confront the constitutive aspects of rhetorical networking. Specifically, the friar proposes the strategy Baudrillard describes as hyperconformity (*Selected Writings* 218). Since Hero is effectively dead to Claudio already, her subjective self suffocated by Claudio's objective reproach, Claudio will be informed that Hero "died upon his words," the hope being that the

> idea of her life shall sweetly creep into his study of imagination, and every lovely organ of her life shall come apparel'd in more precious habit, more moving, delicate, and full of life, in the eye and prospect of his soul, than when she liv'd indeed. Then shall he mourn, if ever love had interest in his liver, and wish he had not so accused her; *No, though he thought his accusation true*. (IV.i.223-233, my emphasis)

The friar suggests that Hero disappear into the objective identity Claudio has accused her of inhabiting, but disappearance, as Baudrillard explains, "is a very complex mode"

(*Selected Writings* 213); denied subjectivity by Claudio, Hero "is not only condemned to disappearance, but disappearance is also [her] strategy; it is [her] way of response to this device for capture, for networking, and for forced identification" (*Selected Writings* 213). Hero embodies Baudrillard's conception of "an original, positive, possibly victorious strategy of the object," turning herself "into an impenetrable and meaningless surface, which is a method of disappearing" (213). By overconforming in this way, by reflecting back Claudio's image of herself, Hero additionally passes along "a wave of derision, of reversal, and of parody which is the active exploitation, the parodic enactment by the object itself of its mode of disappearance" (214). This is "refusal by overacceptance" (219), meant not to dislodge Claudio from his subject position but to expose the subject position as "absolutely alienated in its sovereignty" (214).

On the surface, what the friar proposes is a kind of discernment test: Claudio must let Hero's silent body move him as her living, protesting body could not. Indeed, Hero dead does not and cannot protest, for the friar includes the possibility that her death might be regarded as an admission of guilt. Claudio, confronted not with protest but with acceptance of his accusation, still will "wish he had not so accused her." The problem, however, is that Claudio is not given the chance to pass or fail this test. While it is true that he barely reacts to the news of Hero's death, he is hardly given the opportunity to contemplate the idea of Hero's inarticulate body, lambasted on both sides as he is by Leonato and Antonio, who loudly and very articulately accuse both him and Don Pedro of murder and villainy. The Friar's strategy is undermined by their noise, and then by Benedick's poorly timed challenge, which occurs just after Leonato and Antonio exit in their huff.

Meeting Benedick, Claudio and Don Pedro request that he use his wit to drive away their melancholy. Benedick, however, is in no mood to jest, constrained as he is to challenge Claudio at the request of Beatrice. It is not until the end of their confrontation that Claudio or Don Pedro begin to consider that Benedick's anger is sincere, despite Benedick's direct and repeated declarations that Claudio is a villain (V.i.145) and has "kill'd a sweet lady" (148). Direct as he is, Claudio rightly supposes that it is Benedick's love for Beatrice that is responsible for such charges. Thus Claudio quite accurately discerns Benedick's true motives beneath the surface of his seemingly unequivocal challenge. Finally, he successfully manages to look both AT and THROUGH Benedick's rhetoric, understanding the strategic seriousness of the challenge as well as the way in which Benedick's words constitute him inside a specific identity as he delivers his speech. Philip Collington remarks that Don Pedro's and Claudio's "quips after Benedick's departure barely conceal their nervous apprehension that, even in his foppish civilian dress, Benedick has never been so fierce or frightening as he is *for the love of Beatrice*" (301).

Regardless, Claudio's discernment skills are inconsistent and ungenerous, and the wit in this scene is "a struggling wit" that points more to callousness and ineptitude than sensitivity (McCollom 168). For what good is judging Benedick if Claudio cannot subject himself and his own complicated affairs to the same scrutiny? "What your wisdoms could not discover these shallow fools [Dogberry and Verges] have brought to light," (V.i.232-233), Borachio pointedly announces upon informing Don Pedro and Claudio of his part in Don John's deception. We are a long way from Don Pedro's confident identification with the likes of Hercules and Cupid. Dogberry, the text makes clear on multiple occasions, is

an ass (IV.ii.73, V.i.306), not a god, and yet he bears the truth Don Pedro and Claudio failed to uncover, thus acting successfully as the outside party that reunites Claudio and Hero, as Benedick and Beatrice were united by outside parties. The ways of little cupid are, finally, as legible to the play's fools as to its heroic elites.

Gods or Asses? Subject strategies or Object strategies? The characters of *Much Ado* do not know quite how to think of themselves by the play's conclusion, but, optimistic as ever, they seem for the most part untroubled by the idea of such an extreme oscillation. Benedick and Beatrice are not angry upon discovering they have been deceived into affection for each other by their friends; if the "halting sonnet[s]" (V.iv.87) discovered in their pockets make asses of them, they are also dubbed miracles (91) which somehow seal their fondness for each other.[19] "[M]an is a giddy thing" (108), Benedick asserts in his final speech, and it is still true despite the fact that Benedick has self-assuredly, and not at all giddily, declared man to be so. Like Dogberry, he and the stage-full of speakers around him are each eager to let it be remembered "that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass" (IV.ii.77-78). Benedick speaks what these characters have learned—they are asses, but now they know it. And with this new omniscience, now they may "be vigitant" (III.iii.94) about it.

Much Ado may not come to a perfect resolution, but nor does it dissolve into an impenetrable incoherence. The kind of dialectic that Benedick establishes via his "conclusion" (109) about humankind's inevitable inconclusiveness is in fact what allows the play to end happily. Benedick invites all his fellow men and women to inhabit the

[19] Dawson discusses how messages such as these along with the entire "act of message-sending and receiving … are integral to both the comic obstacles (those features which retard the resolution of the comic action), and to the resolution itself. Hence messages become in themselves signs, as well as vehicles, of the major concerns of the play" (214).

object position while retaining their subject positions. Act V finally legitimizes both strategies, articulating the route that the characters and the audience of *Much Ado* have been encouraged to find "between ineffectual directness and effectual indirectness: between the urgently 'said' and the 'fourme' of address that might leave a great deal unsaid but still manages to get something done" (Mazzio *Inarticulate* 85). Indeed, most of the successful social networking in the play is accomplished through this combination of ineffectual directness (a rhetoric of assertion) and effectual indirectness (a rhetoric of struggle), though the latter strategy perhaps asserts itself more impressively and more memorably through the likes of Dogberry and the "dead" Hero. The object strategy is, of course, the harder sell, for both an early modern and a postmodern audience. Baudrillard asserts that object strategies are effective because people actually want to transfer the responsibility to know what they want—hardly a comfortable thought. But rather than reproach the masses with "stupidity and passivity," Baudrillard is quick to suggest instead that

> the mass is very snobbish; it … delegates in a sovereign manner the faculty of choice to someone else by a sort of game of irresponsibility, of ironic challenge, of sovereign lack of will, of secret ruse. All the mediators … are really only adapted to this purpose: to manage by delegation, by procuration, this tedious matter of power and of will, to unburden the masses of this transcendence for their greater pleasure and to turn it into a show for their benefit. (*Selected Writings* 216)

The object strategy involves, then, the subjective, sovereign authority to abandon authority—a "merry war" if there ever was one. To identify as an object requires "a strategy of ironic investment in the other;" elites like Don Pedro "are there … to tell the masses what they want," and the masses, in turn, "thoroughly enjoy this massive transfer of responsibility because perhaps, very simply, it is not easy to want what we want;

because perhaps, very simply, it is not very interesting to know what we want to decide, to desire" (Baudrillard *Selected Writings* 215-16). Baudrillard's conclusiveness does not entirely hold for all the characters in *Much Ado*: Beatrice and Benedick are interesting and interested people before and in spite of being told what they want by others, but it is finally quite comforting, even for these lively and decisive subjects, to be able to rely on others to make decisions, to be swept up in the spectacle of ironic investment in the other. "[G]et thee a wife, get thee a wife" (V.iv.122), Don Pedro himself is urged in the play's final scene, a piece of advice as intricate as the friar's invitation to "let wonder seem familiar" (V.iv.70), because it encourages him to do exactly that—to allow others' authority to feel as familiar as his own. Part of the masses now, whether he likes it or not, Don Pedro must open himself to the rewards of the object strategy, abandoning his old-fashioned belief that being alienated in sovereignty is the sole efficient or operative strategy inside a community that thrives on unrestricted interaction, which can only result in a commingling of subject and object, elite and servant, god and ass.

5. Strategic Objectivity

Baudrillard's theories are not easy to accept without reservation, but the numerous student-Don Pedros surveyed about Facebook could benefit from a similar encounter with the constitutive potential of social networking. Like Don Pedro, almost every student surveyed demonstrated, in his or her response, a reductive perspective of networking, describing the entire site, all its various communicative applications, as one big tool to use strategically, but not constitutively, and therefore not fully interactively. Students privilege the subject position, claiming almost universally that Facebook exists

to help the user *keep in touch* with other users. Almost no one discussed the actual construction of his or her own pages or reflected on the idea of someone else looking at specific components of his or her page. Using just these gathered responses, it would appear that everyone on Facebook is in the subject position at all times, and that this position is invulnerable—as if every Facebook friend were a Hero seen close up, rather than a Margaret, disguised and "afar off" (III.iii.151). There *are* efforts to look AT and even THROUGH the content of others' pages, yet once again Benedick's advice to "examine your own conscience" is discarded. But what better way to describe Facebook than as one giant object strategy, a chance to examine oneself, as Benedick does, from backstage? Facebook puts users in the perfect position to oscillate between relinquishing responsibility and reassuming it—shifting back and forth between *the page I make* and *the page that makes me*. Social networking welcomes both extremes, but it appears students either do not want or do not know how to talk about both of these strategies, not when every survey response ignores the strategic and constitutive possibilities of the object position. These possibilities should be explored, for if the preceding discussion of *Much Ado* has demonstrated anything, it is that subject strategies do not always function effectively, and may furthermore result in hasty and alienating assessments that may spill over from discrete experiences of online social networking into daily habits.

Shakespeare's protagonists needed a lesson in "vigitance," some proof that they could be just as vigilant as objects as they were as subjects. Facebook demonstrates such vigilance with every status update, each one an opportunity to constitute further a rhetorical identity as well as draw attention to that constitutive effort. Facebook is an interactive site that partakes of "an *interactionist* theory of culture" (McLean 7), and it is

time its users talked about it as a site that *moves* its members rather than *keeps them* locked in the stagnant, "generalized feedback effect" that must result from any "failure of representation" (Baudrillard, *Evil* 78).[20] Baudrillard imagines this failure as a screen that "reflects nothing. It is as though you are behind a two-way mirror: you see the world, but it doesn't see you, it doesn't look at you" (*Evil* 78).[21] Baudrillard is in fact quite skeptical of any possibility of "discovering something in cyberspace," which he compares to a drug and then describes as "closed-circuit interactivity" (Evil 81), but his own theories on object strategies suggest that a kind of discovery may be possible inside the virtual. Once we convince ourselves of the emptiness of such boring mantras as *Facebook helps me keep in touch with people* or *The web puts a world of information at my fingertips*—refrains as pathetically un-incisive as Claudio's proclamation that, because Hero blushes, she must be a whore—we may discover instead the possibility that "the attraction of all these virtual machines no doubt derives not so much from the thirst for information and knowledge as from the desire to disappear, and the possibility of dissolving oneself in a phantom conviviality" (Baudrillard *Evil* 82)—hyperconforming, in other words, to the transcendence of the objectified mass. This is strategic action, and it is not the end of the story. It promises instead—more than any easy mantra from a position of lonely sovereignty—the kind of happy panic, the merry war, the oscillating self- and social-criticism, the relational autonomy that marks the happily inconclusive conclusion of *Much Ado*. Though the moral, political and/or romantic positions of every character are

[20] The feeling of being locked into a generalized and depersonalized feedback effect is perhaps the reason for the recent uproar over Facebook's privacy settings, designed not to protect privacy but to broadcast personal information to partner sites, sponsors and advertisers. The debate over Facebook privacy would seem to supply the perfect opportunity to consider the movement between object and subject strategies.
[21] See Debora Shuger, "The 'I' of the Beholder: Renaissance Mirrors and the Reflexive Mind."

less impervious than before, the instability has lead to a re-energized perspective on language, on networking, on identity construction—on a whole community that, now that it has been looked at, looked through, and disappeared into, may finally look back.

Chapter Four

Teaching, Speaking, Living the Rhetoric of Struggle: Elizabeth Cary's School of Wisdom

1. Oaths of Allegiance in the Contemporary Classroom

Chapter three emphasized the energizing potential of hyperconformity as an object strategy as well as the potential for users of such strategies to appreciate the possibilities of relational autonomy, that "sovereign lack of will" utilized by the masses in a "game of irresponsibility" (Baudrillard *Selected* 216). If the student survey responses about Faceboook, also discussed in the previous chapter, did not register any conception of the existence of object strategies, their responses about electronic writing, given on the same survey, are a different story altogether. When asked to consider what effects electronic communication might have on the average person's writing ability, most students asserted that e-writing has a negative effect on writing in general and academic writing in particular.[1] Once again, the explanations students provided for their assertions were remarkably similar: almost everyone who claimed that e-communication weakens writing abilities elaborated by giving examples having to do exclusively with grammar, vocabulary and spelling. But even those students who wrote that e-communication has no effect on writing abilities still included the same reductive impressions of what writing involves. In other words, if the first group of students wrote that electronic communication is detrimental because it causes them to abbreviate or misspell words in academic papers, the second group wrote that electronic communication is *not*

[1] See Introduction, page 28-29.

detrimental because they always remember *not* to abbreviate or misspell words in academic papers. In both cases, "writing abilities" is synonymous with grammar and mechanics.

These responses bring to mind, and indeed seem to move beyond, David Bartholomae's concerns in "Inventing the University" that student writers must always *try on* a discourse even though they lack "the knowledge that would make the discourse more than a routine, a set of conventional rituals and gestures" (136). Bartholomae goes on to list several examples of student essays that rely on poor approximations of the "specifically acceptable gestures and commonplaces" of the academic community (143); when students, in the process of writing, get lost in a discourse they are not fully familiar with, approximations are all they have to go on. My survey responses, however, suggest nothing so dynamic or dramatic. While the preoccupation with grammar and spelling certainly suggests a relationship, even an identity, between writing and "conventional rituals," there is no indication in any of the responses that writing consists of unfamiliar commonplaces associated with particular communities or, indeed, that it consists of any actual discourse at all complex enough to get lost *in*. This is not to say that students' writing processes do not involve diligence and vigilance, but if the surveys are any indication, this vigilance is primarily focused not on ideas but on aesthetics, not on content but form. And form, in addition to being a matter of professionalism and presentation is, as John Clifford articulates, "also an attitude toward reality; it is rhetorical power, a way to shape experience, and as such it constructs subjects who assume that knowledge can be demonstrated merely by asserting a strong thesis and supporting it with three concrete points"—or, according to the surveys, by avoiding chat

speak and remembering to spell check. "But rarely is knowledge or truth the issue," Clifford continues. "Writing subjects learn that the panoply of discourse conventions are, in fact, the *sine qua non*, that adherence to ritual is the real ideological drama being enacted" (43). This is not simply a matter of "imitation or parody" performed by unskilled students struggling to enter a particular discourse community, and it requires a better explanation than even Roland Barthes' oft-referenced theory that "[a] writer does not write … but is, himself, written by the language available to him" (Bartholomae 143).[2]

The survey responses emphasize not imitation or unintentional parody or any complex textualization of the self, but hyperconformity to traditional conventions and rituals of academic writing, such that these rituals become the *only* drama worth talking about, the only elements brought to mind when students are asked to reflect on communication and writing and the relationship between the two. Hyperconformity, by Baudrillard's definition, concerns more than alienation or submission. That means that Clifford is only giving us half the story when he writes:

> The good student … knows that little depends on the ideas in the essay, that the discursive shell matters more than the ideation inside. As a result, the status of the 'I' that 'writes' the essay is so decentered, so alienated from actual experience that many students have as much emotional identification with their school writing as they do with geometry. That identification is absent because students sense that only their submission to a task is required. (48)

Clifford is correct that students (and not just the "good" ones) sense the requirement that they submit to discursive conventions, but this does not necessarily lead to an absence of identification, emotional or otherwise, with writing for school. Another possibility is that

[2] See Barthes' "The Death of the Author:" "it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is … to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'" (143).

students are identifying with this kind of writing in a different way, by over-accepting the allegiance to submissive decentering required of them. Once again, this would be disappearance as strategy, a "mass reply" to the academy's "device for capture" (Baudrillard *Selected* 213); it is a "parodic enactment," not (only) of the specific discourse required of students, but of their own "mode of disappearance" imposed by that discourse (Baudrillard *Selected* 214). The survey responses bear this out; the suspiciously identical reductive definitions of writing are a perfect parodic enactment of the only response possible within what is perceived to be an artificial conversation. Students are not approximating any more appropriate definition of writing, telling us that it is all about grammar because they do not understand what writing is *really* about. This is the reductive definition they are taught to embrace, and so, naturally—but perhaps also strategically—they embrace it.[3] Their responses have nothing to do with writing as most composition instructors and rhetoricians prefer to conceive of it—as the major process "through which discourse shapes human thought and social relations in a context of change and struggle" (Harkin & Schlib 6)—and everything to do with writing as an "insidious and invidious" mode of reification that seeks to impose order and inflexibility (Vitanza 141). Victor Vitanza has vigorously argued that traditional rhetorics, "[w]hile they appear to be informed by a set of assumptions that (democratically-capitalistically) value heterogeneity (in the name of the 'individual'), they are, instead, only a reactionary devaluing of heterogeneity through the homogenization of heterogeneity (as mass society). While they allow, they simultaneously disallow and disenable" (141).

[3] There may be, in other words, a sophisticated and comprehensive response to language inside, or alongside, or hovering over, the reductive response that actually appears on the survey.

Again, the survey responses perfectly illustrate this contradiction. Take this characteristically apologetic example:

> *I do think that electronic communication affects writing because on the computer we use slang terms and type in codes or have inside jokes that we wouldn't really write in a paper or say out loud. It also affects grammar and spelling because on a computer it corrects or tries to correct the mistakes it picks up on and recognizes where in real life we don't have that luxury and have to catch them by eye. So it makes people lazy in the long run and inhibits our abilities to need to expand our vocabularies and use the correct form of words.*

Here e-communication, as a relatively new method of rhetorical communication, is cautiously celebrated as emancipatory, in that it allows for slang, inside jokes, coded abbreviations and automatic editing, but these opportunities are simultaneously censured as detrimental and *in the long run* inhibitive—distractions from *the correct form of words*. Language both allows and disallows, enables and disables, in this response. If we look at it as an example of a strategy of hyperconformity, we can also say that it is marked by anticipation of the kind of response the student estimates the survey-giver, an instructor and member of the academy, is looking for. This student is telling me what I want to know, in other words, and then some. He or she supposes that I, as a member of the academy, am interested in privileging, even protecting, the kind of writing the academy teaches. Even though the survey question asks about a kind of writing that usually takes place outside the academy—electronic writing—it can be safely assumed that the instructor/survey-giver/member of the academy views e-writing as a potentially interesting but ultimately debauched form of communication in comparison to academic writing. The student anticipates and imitates the "right" answer, that e-writing can only intrude on an already approved mode of communication—hence the characteristically apologetic responses about chat speak. Students know it's bad, and they express their

regret, in advance, for the inevitable slip-ups, the occasional emoticon or abbreviation. *Lol*, survey after survey assures me, has no place in an academic paper. But such reassurances are overdetermined and over-apologetic; their performative deference can easily turn to parodic enactment, for within the reverence reserved for academic writing can be located the unobtrusive but no less bizarre allegation that the integrity of a formal writing assignment can be fundamentally disrupted by the presence of a smiley. This is a parody of respect for a form of writing imagined, *in the long run*, as *all* form, truly a "discursive shell"—one that could crack up completely if splintered by too many abbreviations for *laughing out loud*. Is academic writing really so inflexible that this is the only effect students can imagine another form of communication, another style of writing, might have on it? Competition without interaction? Destruction without deconstruction? Traditional academic rhetorics may be under threat, but from *lol*? Is the *King James Version* of Genesis also in danger of being replaced by its translation into lolcat? ("Oh hai. In teh beginnin Ceiling Cat maded teh skiez An da Urfs."[4]) After reading the fourteenth apology for *lol* and other abbreviations, I began reading something much less deferential between the lines of these responses:

> *Yes, fine, we're all in agreement that e-writing does have an affect on writing for school. We apologize that our casual slang sometimes interrupts the careful process of writing lifeless prose. We know it must really bug you. As good students, we realize that the expressions that come naturally to us, the ones we've made, have nothing to do with the artificial assignments we are forced to complete in school.*

I do not mean to suggest that each of these 268 World Literature students was on this same particularly, crushingly cynical wavelength when they completed their surveys, nor do I want to generalize that the academic writing they submit to their instructors is

[4] From http://lolcatbible.com

artificial, drained of intricacy, or inflexibly bland. But I do believe the uniformity of responses suggests a common frame of mind among students regarding, if not how to write, then at least how to talk about writing. Indeed, the discrepancy between the two activities seems evident, for it is inconceivable to imagine that all a student need do to prepare for a research paper is brush up on his grammar and avoid instant messenger for a few hours.

Much has been said about what can easily be perceived as such limited engagement with, or alienation from, the actual *work* of rhetorical work.[5] This chapter attempts to contribute further to discussions among working scholars about how to approach composition pedagogy, how to incorporate discourse strategies that more effectively uncover the social constructiveness of both texts and selves, how to avoid activities that reinforce exploitation, dominance and suspicious consensus and instead make room for writing and communication as exercises in ambiguity, vulnerability, and multiplicity—interaction-without-consensus—but its most immediate purpose is to suggest that our students may be already somewhat ahead of the game, better placed than we might realize to experiment with different discourse strategies and to accept rhetorical positions that disrupt the classroom allegiance to authoritative clarity. As Donna Haraway explains through her elucidation of what she calls "cyborg positions," writing "can carry

[5] Scholars such as Patricia Bizzell and Don Bialostosky suggest confronting this alienation with more thorough introductions to the various discourse communities or contact zones university students must encounter, the goal being that students "reaccent, not just reproduce, the disciplinary languages we and our colleagues impose on them" (Bialostosky 18). A different approach is taken by those critics such as Jeff Rice, or the contributors to composition journals like KAIROS, who encourage a deeper investment in incorporating technology into writing pedagogy. Other scholars stress working harder to (re)situate writing and/or literature courses within specific sociopolitical contexts and so liberate the field of composition and rhetoric from its service obligation. More radical critics like Victor Vitanza and Diane Davis agree that community "traditionally has been the end of rhetoric" (Vitanza 140), but question whether or not it must be or should be. Vitanza envisions discourse as art, as game, an (anti)strategy concerned not with the production of order, discipline, or even community but with the exposure of free-flowing, paratactic links.

a lot of the weight for worldly practice because it insists on our own implication in meaning-making materiality," and the best way for a writer to ensure her own writing can carry this weight is to

> take [her] implication in a fraught world as the starting point. I don't think that's true for authoritative writing practices that try very hard to produce the kind of masterful "I," a particular kind of authority position that makes the viewer forget the apparatus of the production of that authority. I think cyborg writing is resolutely committed to foregrounding the apparatus of the production of its own authority, even while it's doing it. It's not eschewing authority, but it's insisting on a kind of double move, a foregrounding of the apparatus of the production of bodies, powers, meanings.[6]

"This is not to say that writers must reject authority," Gary Olson further explains, "but that in a truly ethical and postmodern stance they must reveal how authority is implicated in discourse" (12).

The surveyed students engage in the very "double move" Haraway describes, careful to maintain respect for an assumed authority (academic writing) while simultaneously foregrounding the apparatus of its production (grammar and spelling, form and formula) through an object strategy that maintains, by its insistence on the least dynamic elements of writing, an "ironic power of nonparticipation of nondesire, of nonknowledge, of silence … of expulsion of all powers of all wills, of all knowledge, of all meaning onto representatives surrounded by a halo of derision" (Baudrillard *Selected* 217). Without necessarily knowing what to call it, students have taught themselves a quite sophisticated object strategy, and the similarities among responses suggest they have arrived in this strategic position quite comfortably and easily. Certainly I see in

[6] Haraway's cyborg position is similar to Baudrillard's object strategy in that it rejects the assumption that "people are always … willing partners in the game of truth, in the game of information" (Baudrillard *Selected* 213). It is also easy to see the connection between Haraway's emphasis on "foregrounding the apparatus" of production and Lanham's ideas about looking AT language as well as THROUGH language. See chapter three.

these responses, despite being as predictable as the responses to the Facebook question, more potential for a rhetoric of interaction or struggle between strategic (writerly) positions, one that exposes the instability of authoritative discourse and its unsettled attachment to those it would direct, as opposed to a rhetoric of assertion (Davis "Finitude" 141) that can only reinforce the prevalence and privilege of the authoritative/subject position, the "I" that would write without being written.

As the e-generation, exposed to multiple platforms for expression, invention and dialogic exchange, current students are already actors in various dramas that involve direct engagement with language and often increasingly pressing obligations to decide what kinds of words are expected and accepted in particular contexts. The surveys suggest they are already capable of being attentive to language in more than one way—perceiving it, in other words, as a material substance that might interrupt or destabilize an authoritative agenda (the chat speak that slips into formal writing); as an inert, reified form that represents the agenda itself (the formal writing fragile enough to be disrupted by such chat speak); and as a playfully inconclusive sign that is not wholly representative of, and thus does not fully correlate with, any single idea on or beyond the page, yet still manages to communicate its own ambiguous reality (the object strategy of hyperconformity, the mixed deference/derision that can be deciphered "between the lines" of the uniform responses).

It is this drama of direct engagement with the slippery substance of language and its resulting reservations and inarticulations—an engagement that does not ignore the real work of rhetorical work—that instructors can join as they lead composition and writing intensive literature courses. And it is another Early Modern drama, Elizabeth Cary's *The*

Tragedy of Mariam, that provides an experimental model of how to navigate through a social body's multiple and often conflicting efforts to use language to do its own rhetorical work. Such labor is never innocent, and Cary deftly demonstrates, through characters who undoubtedly take their implication in a fraught world as their starting points, the inflexibility of certain discourse conventions in intertextual contradiction with more unrestricted, imprecise discursive techniques. Mariam's tragedy, her fatal choice, has everything to do with expression, with making a case, with the power of language to constitute reality,[7] and her decision to place her faith in one sustained and logical argument dooms her to public execution. The masterful "I" is marked as the losing strategy in Cary's text, easily, albeit tragically, spurned as other and more ambiguous rhetorics work their wrack on this closet drama's "stage."[8]

2. Allegiance to Pieces: the Multiplicity of Identity and Experience

The first line of the play alerts us to the substantive significance of language, as does Cary's source material—Thomas Lodge's translation of Flavius Josephus' *Jewish War* and *Antiquities of the Jews*. Before Mariam's opening soliloquy, the argument invites us to imagine Cary's drama situated on this foundational material, or as its partial

[7] Indeed, to borrow the title phrasing of Judith Anderson's well-known work, *words matter* in *Mariam*, and in several overlapping ways: "as currency and commodity; as vow, memento, inspiration, and sacrament; they matter as graphic character, as icon, as template, as *topos* or 'place.' They matter increasingly as the basis of meaning shifts from essence to word and logic to lexicon. They are the matter of fiction …; they are the matter of equality and justice and the matter of salvation, belief, and perdurance" (*Words* 231).

[8] Alexandra Bennett agrees that the tragedy "is not simply a tale of one woman's unshakable integrity in the face of oppression, but instead an exploration of duplicity, multiplicity, and their implications …" (298). Bennett's focus is a specifically feminist examination of "the ways in which both [Salome and Mariam] choose to construct themselves as speaking and performing agents, revealing a remarkable awareness of the possibilities afforded to women by different tactics of self-representation" (298). This chapter will pay more heed to language than gender, but it is important to note that as a woman and a Catholic sympathizer and eventual convert—a sort of double minority—Cary was well-situated to consider the merits of rhetorical performativity.

duplication, adjusted by those few revisions that will ultimately make this tragedy Mariam's.[9] We are informed of crucial past events: Herod has once before embarked on an uncertain journey to Rome, once before given orders to have Mariam killed in the event of his death, and once before returned only to execute the subject who revealed to Mariam the substance of his decree. Rarely do Mariam or any of the other actors explicitly state any sense of déjà vu, but their speeches reveal concerns with the reliability of their own experiences, and, in particular, with the ways they have tried to use language to reflect these experiences responsibly. The more characters discuss their real passions inside real incidents, the more these experiences seem disconcertingly unverifiable and uncategorizable, though none the less meaningful for their ambiguity. This violates, of course, what some early moderns considered the ideal and most urgently essential purpose of language: to express the truth and to clarify the uncertain—a purpose inherited from the period's "profound questioning of ecclesiastical authority," which had "cast doubt on the relation between the human and the divine," on "[r]eason and knowledge, their place, order, reliability, and indeed their very nature" (Reiss 127), and which had contributed to an increasing anxiety that related "civic catastrophe to linguistic and conceptual incapacity" (Reiss 131). Cary's characters violate also the "habits of thought" often assumed to predominate in an early modern culture in which it is possible to locate "the obsessive desire for systematic order evident in the compulsive symmetries of Ramist dichotomizing, in the visceral hatred of 'mixture' that pervades Calvinism, and

[9] In addition, as Nancy Gutierrez points out, Mariam's first soliloquy begins with a quite recognizable form of expression, the sonnet, which "indicates that [Cary] will respond to both the political and social meanings of the sonnet that her own elite readership would recognize" (240).

[later] in the radical dualism of Descartes" (Shuger 9).[10] Thomas Sloane points to "[t]he disappearance of *controversia* in rhetorical theory" in this period, and to "an almost frantic and nonhumanist urgency to organize clearly" (150). It is evident, as Debora Shuger asserts, that "these years exhibit conflicting and contradictory tendencies" (11); "the movement from premodern to modern thought describes a thickening of boundaries," but "Renaissance habits of thought did not move in a steady, unilinear direction from interpenetrating boundaries to compartmentalized space. Nevertheless, these polarities seem to govern the ideological 'shape' of the dominant culture, stiffening, relaxing, and reconfiguring the lines between categories" (11).[11]

One of the prime instigators of these reconfigurations was probably James I, who, according to Shuger, led "a concerted effort … to 'remystify' church, state, and the social order" and exhibited "a perhaps overly insistent desire to transform mundane institutions and events into manifestations of the divine" (124, 145). In "longing for mystification" (145), James gets exactly what he asks for. His enthusiasm for his own divine-right absolutism, his claim to an unconstrained, "absolute and mysterious prerogative" (Shuger 154), is tested soon enough by the controversies surrounding Catholic recusancy and especially the oath of allegiance, which, in order to substantiate James' sacred kingship, could not be what it superficially claimed to be: a merely political act. Michael Questier suggests that this confusion marks the oath's brilliance—he calls it "the most lethal measure against Romish dissent ever to reach the statute book" (313), in that it "clearly

[10] Stephen Greenblatt suggests that "Elizabethan and Jacobean visions of hidden unity seemed like anxious rhetorical attempts to conceal cracks, conflict, and disarray" (*Shakespearean Negotiations* 2).
[11] See Alexandra Walsham's "The Reformation and 'The Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed." Walsham takes on "the tendency to herald the Protestant Reformation as a milestone on the road towards modernity and secularization" and the elimination of "assumptions about the intervention of magical and supernatural forces in the world …" (497).

probed further than the oath-taker's temporal allegiance" (319).[12] "The limited restoration of Roman forms of religion in England," Questier explains, "relied entirely on maintaining a clear and united front towards a regime, by turns hostile or tolerant" (316), but it was just such unity and clarity that the oath denied.[13] It would be a mistake, then, as Questier says, to "assume that the formulation and enforcement of this particular statutory measure is a sign of the beginning of a divorce between religion and politics in the divided English Church" (329). Shuger agrees that the controversy "centered on the question of participation—the mystical relation between the apparently separate. If the final outcome of such debates was to deny the sacral character of society, the intermediate stages present no such clear picture" (124). What they do present is the impression of a conflict "that seemed to have less to do with formulated doctrines … than with barely articulated assumptions and feelings about how the pieces of the world fit together, about what counts as fitting" (Shuger 14).[14] Shuger uses the phrase *habits of thought* "to denote this indissoluble mixture of feeling and ideation that constitutes

[12] See also Walsham's *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700*. Walsham cautions modern readers not to misconstrue seemingly neutralizing gestures of toleration in the early modern period, for toleration was also charitable hatred: it "emphatically did not mean religious freedom. Nor did it proceed from indifference or neutrality. To tolerate was not to recognize or to grant equal rights to a rival system of belief; it was to permit or license something of which one emphatically disapproved …. It was … a conscious decision to refrain from persecuting something one knew to be wicked and wrong" (4).

[13] See the rest of Questier's article for more detailed explanation. The crux of his argument is that Catholic opponents "saw that the polemical genius of the oath, an oblique affirmation (on one reading) of the supremacy through an ambiguous delineation of allegiance in terms of widely recognized definitions of temporal and spiritual power, could push people, perhaps unwittingly, towards a protestant view of the relationship between church and state, and hence make them concede many of the regime's demands over conformity" (321). See also Questier's "Puritans, Papists, and the 'Public Sphere' in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context," co-written with Peter Lake, for a more broadly conceived discussion of the ideological struggles between Catholics, anti-Catholics, and the Crown.

[14] Walsham, for example, remarks on "the extent to which people throughout the period demonstrated an ability to participate in two cultures simultaneously: both in an intolerant discourse of confessionalism and in a piety that subordinated polemical enmities to a wish to preserve Christian concord" (*Charitable* 305).

experience" in the early modern period, "where 'experience' is not simply elemental feelings but feeling that has become meaningful by being interpreted" (254).

Such habits are difficult to reconcile with more conservative beliefs about "[t]he concept of proper praxis … rooted in natural moral laws" (Adams 566) and with "the rise of confidence … in the availability of truth, and in the forms of certainty" (Sloane 151). According to John Charles Adams, it was the Puritan Ramists who most actively reinforced this belief in "a natural moral order—that there is a bond that exists among all people and that what is good is not simply a matter of human convention but has some status in the order of nature" (566). Emotion, furthermore, is according to Sloane "irrelevant to Ramist thought" (153), as truth is presented "in a manner that the audience's mind itself can perceive unaided—with no distraction by or even assistance from pathos or ethos. Truth in its proper form is intuitive, impersonal, clear of emotion, and ultimately nonverbal. The system conceptualizes a kind of natural order, with first things first …" (152). In short, Experience under this system cannot be a matter of meaning-making interpretation, because Experience, as part of the natural order, has already been interpreted and requires only an intuitive "fitting in." John White argues that this idea was especially attractive to Puritans, since "having faith depended … on the individual's unmediated understanding of his or her relationship to God and place in the divine scheme. Ramist logic was the key to this understanding. It showed how individual items of knowledge about the world could be plotted on an all-encompassing map" (438). White goes so far as to say that "Puritans took it for granted that anything they observed

or discovered in the world could be fitted into such a scheme" (438).[15] But in opposition to this Puritan impulse were the tendencies, identified by Shuger, of the many early moderns interested not (only) in fitting experiences into a scheme but (also) in exploring what counts as fitting.[16] Such an interest could spotlight not the discovery of meaning in an already established and encompassing scheme but its invention as essentially ambiguous experiences or actions (such as the oath of allegiance) were so mystifyingly, excessively classified as one thing, or another thing, or both.

Such ambiguity is urged by the ruling regime's efforts to welcome mystification—supposedly as a route to the divine and unadulterated, but experienced, in fact, as a route to itself. Mystification as a process leads to no necessary product. As Cary demonstrates, such an interpretive strategy invites the contemplation of a variety of "pieces" of experience, which fit together in ways that, by the standards of the strictest interpretive methods, may not "count as fitting." Cary dramatizes the effort of individuals

[15] Sloane agrees that Puritanism exhibited an overconfidence, "with its belief that natural reason with guidance from the Scriptures is enough for salvation, that any man with a Bible under his arm is equal to the pope" (152). Timothy Reiss tempers this enthusiast link between Puritanism and Ramism when he points out that, though Ramus method certainly arose out of a context of generalized anxiety about the lack of "any divine confirmation of an assured relation between mind and world and its presentation in language" (127), it did not necessarily set out to provide this confirmation, which can best be seen as "more or less a side effect of the endeavor to set the relation between idea, word, and thing on some firm philosophic and linguistic ground" (126). The elements of Ramist method, "logic, dialectic, and the proper use of words[,] do allow us to get at meaningful truths," Reiss further explains. "But they are truths of relationship and practical truths of manipulative action …. There may be still some hidden origin of order, but our discourses have no longer any access to it" (139), for discourse under Ramism is "no longer backed by some founding origin. The relation of orders sufficed …" (140).

[16] Scholars disagree on the scope of Ramist influence, and I do not want to "misconstrue the complexity of the critical response" to Ramus' method or over-emphasize his ultimate influence in seventeenth century thought (Feingold 289). Nor do I want to suggest that Cary's discursive strategy forms in direct response to the methods of Puritan Ramists, methods which, Mordechai Feingold argues, lost much of their appeal by the early seventeenth century and were even interpreted by some humanists as "arrogant, superficial, and injurious to learning" (289). However, by the time Cary writes her play Ramism can certainly be said to contribute to the atmosphere in which she contemplates the organization of her own work. In addition, the strictness and all-encompassing nature of the method has something in common with the "assumption of a 'social essence'" (13) that Diane Davis locates inside contemporary composition classrooms, where, again according to Davis, "we validate (encourage), as if it were *thinking itself*, a style of thinking that operates via negation …" (12). For theories about the extent to which such operations are inherited directly from Ramus, see Walter Ong's *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*; see also Anna Freadman.

to interpret (and sometimes over-interpret) an experience expressively, to make the pieces fit in any and every way they can.[17] We might say that the anxiety hovering over the play is that these articulations will exceed their boundaries (as an experience will exceed its boundaries and create a sense of déjà vu), that the language the characters use will move past the reflection of their realities to the creation of alternate and/or divergent realities, multiple, non-encompassing schemes—hardly an exercise in clarification.[18] As in *Much Ado about Nothing*, language refuses to fail in Cary's drama, but success has little to do with clarity and much to do with an inexhaustible ambiguity. The rumor of Herod's death is only the first example of a speech act powerful enough to mystify reality, in the sense that it allows all the players to react to a death that has not occurred, building on a reality that proves no less habitable—no less fitting—for being false.

"How oft have I with public voice run on / To censure Rome's last hero for deceit?" Mariam regrets in the poems opening lines (1-2). Recanting her "too rash … judgment" (6), "too too common" in a woman (8), she claims a new insight into Caesar's reaction to Pompey's death, weeping over the rival he hated. "Now do I find by self-experience taught, / One object yields both grief and joy" (9-10). What before Mariam publicly censured as hypocrisy she now understands as ambiguity, two contrary feelings

[17] To borrow Davis' terminology, they replace "hypotactic linking/thinking strategies," where hypotactic is understood as "a writing style [and] a *value system* that privileges hierarchy, mastery, and (Final) closure" (12), with paratactic strategies, where paratactic is understood as "a pattern of connection based on coordination rather than subordination" (*Breaking UP* 108).

[18] Bennett gets close to an identification of the risk in Cary's strategy: if "the ideal of a stable society depended upon the direct linkage of words and actions to the ideas and beliefs these actions were to represent (i.e., taking the Tudor Oath of Supremacy or accepting the sacrament at Anglican Communion, thereby reaffirming one's allegiance to Crown and Church), the articulation and exploitation of the discrepancy between the inner and the outer person was politically as well as religiously subversive" (296). Cary's approach is actually more radical than exposing discrepancies between easily identifiable dualities (inner and outer, Church and State). Her interest lies less in discrepancy than in ambiguity and indistinction—relationships that, reasonably or logically, should not relate, interactions that should not interact, mergings that should not merge, but do anyway.

that should either battle for prominence or cancel each other out, but instead do neither. Mariam presents her insight as an apologetic clarification of a previous miscalculation, but clarity disappears almost as soon as it is proffered, for ambiguity does not substitute itself neatly for hypocrisy. It requires a longer explanation, and what follows is an expansive attempt on Mariam's part to navigate her own ambivalence. She steers quite admirably, articulating the various reasons for both grief and joy over Herod's demise; her words, then, are not necessarily difficult to follow, but one does get the sense that, were she not interrupted by the arrival of Alexandra, she could continue this oscillation between grief and joy indefinitely. Lack of clarity is not a matter of obscurity but excess, points that insist on connecting on a line of indeterminate length. Mariam proves that she is the authority on her own sentiments, but this authority is not imposed, readymade, on her discourse; it appears as the result of her own effort to make meaning, to make her feelings fit, an effort she foregrounds, and one which is remarkable in that it is not interested in closing off inquiry or settling on a single conclusion. Mariam's reflections bring to mind Lyotard's impression of thoughts as clouds, "pushed and pulled at variable speeds," always "changing their location one with the other," so that when it comes to the "rules" of language, "everyone learns by groping around in the stream of phrases like children do" (*Peregrinations* 6). To ignore this unregulated groping, Lyotard adds, to believe "that thinking is able to build a system of total knowledge about clouds of thoughts by passing from one site to another and accumulating the views it produces at each site—such an idea constitutes *par excellence* the sin, the arrogance of the mind" (*Peregrinations* 6-7). Olson agrees and, aided by Haraway and Lyotard, praises instead a "nonassertive writing" as an alternative to "the discourse of the master," and he links it

explicitly with an approach that is open, patient, and feminine (13).[19] By foregrounding this feminine posture, Mariam playfully undermines her earlier apology for her sex—"too rash" judgment may not be, in fact, the province of the woman, and more than one female character will aid Mariam in demonstrating this revelation as the play moves forward.

First is Alexandra, who arrives to scold her daughter for her tears but who also manages to contribute to Mariam's rhetoric of struggle as an alternative to a rhetoric of assertion. In large part Alexandra's speech is certain and unwavering in its condemnation of Herod, but she also foregrounds the inevitable slippages involved in any effort to discover—that is, to make—meaning. She castigates Herod for his audacity in killing Hircanus and Aristobolus in order to "royalize by right your [Mariam's] prince-born breath" (ii.42), a gesture she points out was not only murderous but also unnecessary: Mariam's children are part of "Alexander's brood" (65), and Alexander "of David's blood" (67). Herod "did not raise them," Alexandra claims, "for they were not low, / But born to wear the crown in his despite" (71-72). She effectively locates the rashness in Herod's impulsive authoritative undertakings. Of course, she is also speaking rashly in her claims that the supremacy of Mariam's blood is unquestionable. Still, the ultimate impression Alexandra leaves is one of struggle and vulnerability; Herod may have had no real authority to kill his betters, but he killed them nonetheless. At the end of her speech Alexandra waxes nostalgic about her earlier, apparently unsuccessful efforts to woo Felicity "by winning Antony" (88). She'd sent pictures of Mariam and her son, hoping that this "double slight" might "captivate / The warlike lover" (93-94). But her gesture exceeded itself, for Antony, she imagines,

[19] For more on feminism and/in composition, see Susan Jarratt; Lynn Worsham.

fared like a hungry guest,
That to some plenteous festival is gone;
Now this, now that, he deems to eat were best ….
And, thus distracted, either's beauty's might
Within the other's excellence was drowned;
Too much delight did bare him from delight,
For either's love, the other's did confound. (97-99, 105-109).

The two images function here as symbolic representations of what Diane Davis calls the "inappropriability of meaning" ("Finitude" 130). Alexandra rashly assumed her intentions would be communicated to Antony effectively, but she now understands that the tools she used to affirm her communication worked too well. Antony was so captivated by both images that he was overwhelmed and, finally, confounded. Alexandra acknowledges her shortsightedness in having assumed only one possible outcome of her communicative gesture, and in doing so she exposes a more generous attitude toward meaning-making. As Davis explains, it is a limited view of communication that portrays it as "a reaffirmation of what one already knows or what one is already programmed to assimilate …" ("Finitude" 130). Alexandra admits this limitation and, in her vision of Antony neither straightforwardly accepting nor rejecting the images but instead interacting with them in an entirely different and ambivalent manner, she portrays communication as a real and unpredictable "event" that "exceeds any interpretive endeavor" (Davis "Finitude" 130). Mariam's picture, like her earlier grief and joy, is foregrounded as inspiration for a description of a rhetoric of struggle that, once again, does not close off inquiry but only pauses, briefly, in the picture of Antony's bewilderment, before moving on to an altogether different scenario in which Antony, the recipient of Mariam's picture alone, rejects Cleopatra, kills Herod, and makes Mariam empress of Rome. True, Alexandra *is* trying to have it both ways, illustrating how any

communicative endeavor is unpredictable but engaging in fantasy predictions anyway. But she has already exposed the vulnerability of her own discourse; her final vision of Mariam sitting on Rome's thrown, however confidently asserted, is as suspect as anything in her entire speech, which is perhaps why Mariam neither affirms nor denies the possibility of this alternate reality, but simply says she has no desire for it.

Characters are constantly engaging in these "what-if?" scenarios throughout the play, as if they cannot quite trust the solid reality of their current positions. Even the most assertive characters regularly stutter in the course of making their assertions, introducing hesitation, doubt, bewilderment, contradiction, or simply a general sense of unease. After ridiculing Salome for her audacity in threatening him with a divorcing bill—"Are Hebrew women now transformed to men? / Why do you not as well our battles fight, / and wear our armor? Suffer this, and then / Let all the world be topsy-turved quite" (I.vi.47-50)—Constabarus admits that his wife probably does have the means to "reverse all order" (84). She has done it before, after all. Constabarus can remember when he "was Silleus, and not long ago / Josephus then was Constabarus now; / When you became my friend you proved his foe, / As now for him you break to me your vow" (87-90). The repetition of the indefinite masculine pronouns accentuates the ambiguity Constabarus begrudgingly welcomes into his indictment. Certain as he is that Salome is worthy of censure, Constabarus, like Alexandra, ultimately cannot leave the impression of certainty. "My prophesying spirit doth foretell / Thy [Salome's] wavering thoughts do yet but new begin" (99-100), he equivocates toward the end of his scene, now couching his disapproval in prophesy rather than direct affirmation. What if "Herod's death had been delayed?" (103), he imagines next; then Salome would have betrayed himself, the sons of

Baba, and "the sweet-faced Mariam" (113). Constabarus replaces his earlier certainty of Salome's obvious, verifiable shame with the certainty that what is obviously supportable is not a necessarily credible factor in how events determine themselves. "Though all Judea yield [Mariam] innocent," Constabarus anxiously but gravely supposes, Salome would still "work her wrack" (117; 116).

Undoubtedly Salome is the character who most noticeably and most willingly foregrounds the apparatus of the production of authority. As Shari Zimmerman points out, Salome "remains alert (as Mariam does not) to the multiple ways in which things may, or may be made to, signify—and thus to the 'weak uncertain ground' … of meaning itself" (575). We see Salome re-alerting herself to this position in her first soliloquy. At first troubled and distracted by Mariam and Alexandra's insults, Salome too participates in a series of "what-if?"-style suppositions: if Herod were alive, Mariam "should not miss her merit" (I.iv.4); if fate had not been "too too contrary" (13), she might have laid eyes on Silleus before Constabarus. But just as she establishes her tone of helpless complaint, she stops herself: "What childish lets are these? Why stand I now / On honorable points? 'Tis long ago / Since shame was written on my tainted brow" (21-23). If she had ever cared about her reputation, after all, she would still be married to her first husband, Josephus, whose death she implicitly assumes responsibility for in this scene. Since Impudency already sits on her forehead and "bids me work my will without delay," Salome resolves, "for my will," to "employ my wits" (34-36). Essentially, she stops to remind herself of everything her husband will later, somewhat redundantly, accuse her. It is here that Salome defiantly resolves to "be the custom-breaker, and begin / To show my sex the way to freedom's door" by divorcing her husband (49-50). She then appears to

backtrack by reverting to another what-if-Herod-had-lived scenario, fantasizing about accusing Constabarus of treason, securing not only divorce but death. But she quickly replaces this unlikely visualization of the future with a glance back to the past, remembering with regret how she once begged for Constabarus's life: "I curse my tongue, the hinderer of his doom" (60). Finally Silleus arrives, and Salome ends her speech by playfully, but also notably and cannily, declaring that had she not named him, "longer had he stayed" (64).

Through the stuttering, the many twists and turns she includes in this monologue, Salome covers some rich rhetorical ground. It is first of all noteworthy how quickly she is able to escape from the self-pity Mariam and Alexandra inspire; as she reminds herself that she does not stand on her poor reputation, she also suggests that, had she wanted, she could have "affected an unspotted life" (26). This serves as an effective answer to Mariam's accusation that Salome's "baser birth" dooms her to inevitable disgrace (I.iii.27)—for Salome, neither disgrace nor its opposite are inevitable, the result of inherent advantages or deficiencies. More consistently than Mariam, Salome reveals that "[p]ersonal integrity is … not necessarily a natural state, but a careful self-construction …" (Bennett 301). Careful is the key word, for Salome does succeed in (re)unifying her reputation with her single authority over her reputation, fitting together her experiences quite differently than Mariam, who offers an entirely different interpretation of the reputation-making process. Both approaches are inflexibly authoritative, however; Salome perhaps even uses Mariam and Alexandra's inflexibility to startle herself out of complacency, for she forefronts her interest in construction—of herself, her experiences, and the experiences of others, up to and including their lives and deaths—for the duration

of her speech. Indeed, we come to see her as a figure brash and powerful enough to "reverse all order" and "work her wrack," but she still engages in Haraway's "double move," foregrounding the apparatus of the production of her authority even while she is producing it, and thus making room for the ambiguity that is a defining feature in Cary's work. Salome's renewed sense of authority over her own reputation, for example, is stimulating enough to extend itself to the authority she assumes as a custom-breaker who can "hate as well as men" (48). This extension, however, is more paratactic than it is linear or logical. It *is* and *is not* a credible link, for while it is hardly difficult to assume a connection between Salome's awareness of her own reputation-making and her daring promise to be the first woman to sue for divorce—and thus contribute further to her poor reputation—she complicates the sense of direct, logical, justificatory movement between the two propositions. There is actually a vast distance, in other words, between reputation-making and custom-breaking. Lyotard explains how paratactic linkages work:

> Conjoined by *and*, phrases or events follow each other, but their succession does not obey a categorical order (because; if, then; in order to; although …). Joined to the preceding one by *and*, a phrase arises out of nothingness to link up with it. Paratax thus connotes the abyss of Not-Being which opens between phrases, it stresses the surprise that something begins when what is said is said. (*Differend* 66)[20]

Salome's vow to sue for divorce is certainly surprising, but not simply as another audacious remark that stems directly from a pre-established bravado. Though it initially appears as if Salome is subordinating her custom-breaking to her reputation-making (because she has managed the one, she can manage the other, and by the same means), the cause-and-effect link she makes is ultimately coordinative—it undoes itself, making

[20] Lyotard goes on to point out that *and* as a literal conjunction is not always present: "there can be a comma, or nothing" (*Differend* 66).

her vow to sue for divorce exist side by side, but independently of, her earlier vow of impudency.[21] We might say this is parataxis masquerading as hypotaxis, but the former breaks through. Indeed, once the many pieces of Salome's speech are considered, hypotactic constructions are rendered illegible. They can no longer count as fitting.

Davis explains that "what paratactic linkages do for us is point at the wide open spaces between phrases, at the phrases that are not being uttered" (*Breaking Up* 109). And there is something wide open about the leap Salome makes from determining her reputation to divorcing her husband, something wide open between her question, "cannot women hate as well as men?" (48), and her answer, "I'll be the custom-breaker …" (49). Like the speakers already discussed, Salome foregrounds authority, such that we anticipate the answer to her rhetorical question: yes, women can hate as well as men. But even as she sounds this authority, Salome, again like the other speakers, cannot foreground certainty, cannot lead us comfortably into some hypotactically arranged conclusion: *Because I can hate as well as a man, I'll be the custom breaker*. Any smooth cause-and-effect process breaks down "because linear sequences of causality depend upon being able to define a one-way interaction between the event regarded as a 'cause' and that considered as an 'effect'" (Hayles 19). Salome's interactions in this scene, however, are multidirectional (Hayles 20): unquestionably, she puts her own will and wit at the forefront, but in first introducing the divorce question, she invites other wills and other wits to occupy the same ground, and it is these interruptions that disrupt the possibility of any smooth, logical movement in her discourse. When she questions the privilege granted to men to divorce their wives, she is doing just that—questioning the

[21] See Freadman, 42.

privilege, the authority itself, not those who hold it. Authority, as she describes it here, is something that is "given" (45), not made. This butts against her earlier decisiveness about her own capacity to construct authority, and the implication that all authority is so self-constructed. So when she assumes the role of custom-breaker, it is unclear what exactly this gesture means: is she planning to prove somehow to Heaven (47) that women are just as worthy of being granted this pre-made authority? Or will she be leading a charge on Heaven to seize this authority, still pre-made, without permission? Or will she (re)make, apart from Heaven, an entirely different but much more conveniently applicable version of this authority? Before she divorces Constabarus, in other words, must she first divorce God? Has she, in fact, already done so, in her eagerness to reveal her tireless past efforts to construct her own reality and to make decisions that, while not always wise, were always hers? Does not Salome become her own idol here, though without asking for idolatry, for by exposing all the means by which she has achieved her own prominence, has she not made idolatry impossible?

What Salome initially presents as a simple matter of lack of power—a man can divorce, a woman can't—explodes into questions that have nothing to do with lack and everything to do with excess. She offers not some predictable answer to an uncomplicated question about women versus men, but instead offers "a way out of binary logic" and into what Davis calls a nonpositively affirmative third position: "Nonpositive affirmation celebrates the parts, the excess, the playfulness, viewing the No/Thing not as a loss or lack of 'Some/Thing'. Rather, the excess is assumed to preexist the abstractions and categorizations that we have foisted upon it: there never was any lack but only and always an ominous and overflowing excess" (*Breaking Up* 61). By the end of her speech,

Salome appears not as some impudent, over-reaching woman; she hardly appears as a subject at all, but as "a hoard of multiplicities, rhizomatic loose ends that will always overflow abstract categorizations" (Davis *Breaking Up* 57).[22]

It is perhaps this ominous idea of herself as a loose fluidity rather than a bound subject that provokes Salome to revert to another "what-if" scenario immediately after her reflections on divorce. To tattle on Constabarus to a living Herod would indeed be significantly easier (to follow) than breaking the customs guarded by Biblical precedent, and it is understandable that Salome would imagine a clearer path to sexual autonomy. It is also possible to read her final quip about summoning Silleus to her presence by naming him out loud as an attempt to reinforce playfully all the aggressive assumptions of authority she has just listed—all the presumptions, the lives she claims to hold, or to have held, in the palm of her hand. But Salome's jest also re-emphasizes the difficulty introduced by the divorce question: the idea that not every apparatus of constructed authority can be foregrounded, that the agency behind some privileges are so mysterious that they can only be remarked on and marveled at, gathered but never fitted in a single, encompassing scheme.

Certainly Salome presses us to consider more deeply the relationship between speech-making and meaning-making. In terms of plot, the primary purpose of scene four is to provide a space for Salome to remind herself of her own agency, to talk herself into being the prime mover of the play. And she succeeds in convincing herself of this special

[22] "[I]t is certain," say Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, "that neither men nor women are clearly defined personalities, but rather vibrations, flows, schizzes, and 'knots'…." (362). See also Carla Mazzio's "Sins of the Tongue in Early Modern England." Mazzio is also concerned with unruly and excessive speech, which she suggests "encodes concerns about uncontrollable and contradictory forms of human subjectivity" ("Sins" 97).

authority, bringing into focus the connection between speech and agency—but it is a connection that moves far beyond a typical perception of rhetoric as an art of persuasion. Salome's rhetoric (not to mention Mariam's, and Alexandra's, and Constabarus') is too stutteringly, uncertainly certain for its primary purpose to be merely persuasion towards some single or established position. Persuasion occurs almost instantly for Salome, as she works to expel any higher power beyond her own initiative. But she inevitably invites back in more than a measure of inscrutability, offering her revitalized self-importance as an opportunity to defer a clear picture of a defined self-identity. Words are power—that Salome knows. Handled with skill, they can persuade people to think and act in certain ways, and thus constitute and reconstitute reality. But even the most skillful handler can find herself at the mercy of a material so incessantly itinerant. Indeed, where exactly does Salome stand at the end of her first speech, appearing as she does as "one who expresses a discourse" and who is "simultaneously an expression of discourse" (Baillif 78)? Is she a custom-breaking heretic, a broken idol, a restless adherent to a code she can only articulate but feel no loyalty toward? We watch the care she takes to make herself into a text, but even though we are witnesses to the process, we still face the illegibility of the final product.[23] As Davis explains, when "[o]ne meaning [is] perpetually deferred, we are also perpetually deferred. Language is finally incapable of *habeas corpus*; it cannot produce a stable, unified subject. Our faith in agency … is based on our faith in grammatical structure, which requires that every deed have a doer, that every action have

[23] Salome enacts what Davis describes as "the failure of foundations to hold solid for us, the failure of both idealism's individual and modernism's constituting subject fully to appear …" (45). If foundations are always contingent, Davis asks, "[i]f what it means to be human in a posthumanist world is to be a scattered and/or scatterable disidentity with no sub/stantial referential image, it is necessary that our question become: How will these disidentities share the world?" (47). Cary asks a similar question through her disidentified characters who must share a stage.

an agent" (*Breaking Up* 94). But when the subject is problematized, disidentified, scattered—as Salome is—"every attempt to reduce difference to sameness is dispersed …" (*Breaking Up* 95).

Judith Anderson attempts to trace the awareness, among early modern scholars, of the resistance to fixity that is a feature of language and, if Salome is any indication, a necessary feature of the people who use language to navigate their own identities. She explains that "[a]lthough language in this period appears to be immensely more flexible and fluid than in modern times, the pressures and the means to stabilize it were building. Somewhat paradoxically, they were both reflecting and contributing to a sense of its always ambivalent substantiality, its elusive manageability, its equivocal 'thingness'" (*Words* 65). Dictionaries appeared as "arbiter[s] of verbal correctness," but the effect of the dictionary, Anderson explains, was "finally and doubly two-sided, at once to freeze language and to display its irrational if productive mutability, and at once to substantiate its referentiality and its own thingness," displaying "on the one hand frozen reifications and on the other variable, mutable, arbitrary openness" (*Words* 64, 80, 98). The effect of Salome's verbalizing is also double-sided, at least. Her shameless self-construction spotlights a confident belief in a direct correlation between word and thing, but this unification, Salome's discursive attempt to freeze her *self* as prime mover, leads to a clarity that, paradoxically, must accommodate ambivalence, a melting variety, an identity that is confidently articulated but also in crisis. Salome's *self* is both substantive and referential, like Mariam's picture in scene two—finally getting hold of it initiates the very possibility of losing hold of any one interpretation.

We might go so far as to say that Salome is primarily responsible for substantiating the play's startlingly articulate incoherence—a persistent ambivalence is the wrack she works. It is inside this incoherence that we can find justification for the rhetoric of struggle with which Cary continues to experiment. We discover what is particularly and peculiarly seductive about this kind of discourse, and we discover what is less than seductive about its opposite, the rhetoric of assertion. Salome is able to see the appeal of her own self-constructed illegibility and extend it, once again, to accomplish some perplexing but effective rhetorical work. When Herod returns, she knows better than to approach him with any unambiguous accusations against Mariam. Her disparagement is instead careful, sometimes subtle, and home to more tentative questions than blanket assertions. Most significantly, as Alexandra Bennett points out, "the negative picture she delineates for Herod is based, in part, upon her own traits" (304): Mariam will never blush, Salome suggests, "[t]hough foul dishonors do her forehead blot (IV.vii.50); "[s]he speaks a beauteous language," though "her tongue / Doth but allure the auditors to sin" (74-76); she has had multiple lovers, but "[f]or sure she nevermore will break her vow, / Sohemus and Josephus both are dead (147-48). All these attributes—the forehead blotted with dishonor, the alluring tongue, the past lovers—are reminiscent of Salome's first speech and of Salome herself. Notice too that all of her contributions, though purposefully snide, cannot be deemed outright condemnations; though she more than implies Mariam's infidelity, she makes sure to include the possibility that Mariam will be chaste in the future, now that her "lovers" are dead. Indeed, Herod seems to react most passionately to this denial of a clear view of his own wife's "wavering heart"

(154).[24] He can reach no consensus; he can never again be sure of either her guilt or her innocence. Herod has enough sense at this point to rail against Salome, calling her a "foul-mouthed Ate" (155) who has "made Herod insecure" (159). Though helplessly confounded about his wife, Herod proves attentive enough to identify the primary effect of his sister's rhetorical strategy—she has not persuaded Herod of anything, only made him doubt, and doubt is all Salome needs to get everything she presently wants. While Mariam rejects the rhetoric of struggle, gravitating instead toward belief in some foundational principle or grand narrative—in this case, a beautiful, invulnerable innocence—that she can use as a shield against all the less absolute principles that surround her, Salome retreats from the idea of any absolute power beyond her own inventive capacity. Opposed to Mariam's "attempts to articulate herself as a unified subject" is Salome's "revision in her own multifaceted image" (Bennett 304), a revision that proves much more potent than the unwavering certainty of her rival.[25]

Cary more than adequately prepares us to spot the weaknesses in Mariam's losing strategy. Zimmerman reminds us that, as despicable as "the discerning Salome" may be, her "dissembling speeches and actions … become more defensible, even essential (both as survival strategy and hermeneutical critique), while the chaste behavior of the unsuspecting Mariam, unconcerned with the matter of Herod's suspicion or the show of her own 'impudence' … becomes quite clearly, even hopelessly, naïve" (556). Zimmerman is right to point out that Mariam's conviction appears especially pathetic

[24] Another link to Salome, who describes her own heart as "wandering" in I.iv.61.
[25] For a different reading of Salome in her scenes with Herod, see Reina Green, who locates Salome's skill as "the ideal active listener" and suggests that "it is not [her] skill as a speaker that allows her to unseat her rival, but her skill as a listener who knows how to manipulate what she hears" (465).

when placed alongside Salome, her sometimes double, sometimes foil, but Cary inserts an additional and more consistent comparison to highlight the untrustworthiness of Mariam's steadfastness: the chorus.

3. Allegiance to Drifting: Ambiguity, Mobility and Production

In the first scenes of the play, every character's speech demonstrates a wandering, unsettled rhetoric which, while determined and home to severe and concentrated passions, remains vulnerable to an open and continuous inquiry. But just as we are poised to follow the rhetorical flow Cary works so hard to assemble, she unexpectedly reverses the current. The chorus at the end of Act I warns us away from the discontented, "wandering mind[s]" we have observed in the first five scenes. Such "wretches, seeking what they cannot find" (123), are doomed to torment, for "[t]o wish variety is sign of grief" (137), and the only person "happy in his fate" is one who "is delighted in a settled state" (141-42). Mariam, the chorus' primary target, is misread as a woman incapable of contentment, perpetually grieved at what she does not possess and disdainful of what she does. Of course, we remember Mariam's earlier navigation of her own feelings, which she proved were hardly so predictably unequivocal. She can hardly be said to wish for variety—rather, like all the other characters, she suffers it, wonders about it, and reflects it in her speech.

The Chorus' rhetoric of totality, its stiff proverbial wisdom, seems singularly inappropriate given the drift of the drama thus far. As the play moves forward, it threatens to entrench itself deeper and deeper into a too-articulate irrelevance. At the end of Act II, the chorus takes prejudice as its theme, accusing all the actors, and humanity in

general, of believing rumors too eagerly, "never try[ing] before we trust" (II.iv.122) and "drown[ing] objections in the flood / Of partiality" (131-32). Those who want Herod dead believe that he is dead immediately, says the chorus, while those who want him alive doubt the rumor at first, but are quickly swayed by "the multitude" (139). The implication is that the believability of a rumor is dependent first on the existence of already-established, clearly-defined prejudices. But we have already seen that, when it comes to Herod, such unambiguous feelings are nonexistent. The chorus make no space for ambiguity—everyone, they claim in the final stanzas, believes "the news of Herod's death … of most undoubted credit" (149-50), and no one stops to consider "the peril that ensu'th, / If this should prove the contrary to truth" (145-46). Once again, in their haste to over-generalize, the chorus is guilty of a careless and shortsighted misreading/miswriting. No character in the tragedy accepts Herod's death without doubt, even those who have the most to gain by it. The "what-if?" suppositions continue into Act II, as everyone pauses to consider the "peril" that will ensue if the rumor proves false: Pheroras, thrilled that Herod's death means he can marry Graphina without interference, still imagines a reanimated Herod "leav[ing] the sepulcher" (II.i.81) to "be my nuptial hinderer" (83); the sons of Baba each "fear this tale of Herod's death, / At last will prove a very tale indeed" (II.ii.61-62), and so wish to remain in hiding; Constabarus, whose doubts we are already acquainted with, attempts to rally them, but ultimately concedes that, if Herod "have his life, / Concealment would not then a whit avail; / For certain 'tis, that she that was my wife, / Would not to set her accusation fail" (110-13); even Doris imagines Herod returning to show some kindness to their son Antipater, despite his cruelty to herself. Such examples hardly provide unequivocal support for the chorus' conclusion that

prejudice "makes us foolish, heady, rash, unjust" (II.iv.121). Prejudice is too totalizing and unambiguous a word for what is really going on among these characters, none of whom exhibit any perfectly straightforward bias; all of them entertain the possibility of at least two realities, one in which Herod is dead, one in which he is alive.

Having exposed its sloppy and neglectful deductions, Cary provides her chorus with a somewhat atypical function—it begins to stand for the rhetoric of assertion and all its limitations. It becomes the frozen embodiment of this particular discourse, the kind that refuses to wander, the kind that relies on proverbs or *sententiae* that "operate as templates of meaning, freeze language, and appear to solidify it" (Anderson *Words* 35). Such precepts could function, in the early modern period, as "the spectacles through which new experiences are seen and hence understood. The essential significance of an experience appears to be settled beforehand. … Experience merely provides an occasion on which to fit the precept …" (Anderson *Words* 35-36). Cary displays what can happen to an experience once it is enclosed within a precept's discursive shell. The experience of the characters, the very drama of the play, bears little to no resemblance to the chorus' individual summations of the drama, enclosed in the several even stanzas appearing at the end of every Act, summations which are clearly meant to unify all the elements of experience into an inflexible, carefully assembled whole. But each of these "wholes" utterly fails to encompass the parts it is meant to assimilate, and so "[t]he whole not only coexists with all the parts; it is contiguous to them, it exists as a product that is produced apart from them …" (Deleuze & Guattari 44). Indeed, the contrast between what actually happens and the chorus' restrictive, moralizing abstracts grows more and more distinct, so that by the time we hear Mariam make her strange pronouncement that, despite

knowing she "could enchain [Herod] with a smile, / And lead him captive with a gentle word" (iii.45-46), she will instead put all her hope in her innocence (62), unassisted by any discursive rhetorical strategy, we see her as not only naïve but also stubbornly, even selfishly obstinate. Act III's chorus accuses Mariam of lack of self-restraint (iii.102), another misreading, for by asserting the existence of an unassailable, totalizing innocence, Mariam is showing all the restraint in the world, uncomplicating herself the same way the chorus tries to uncomplicate the tragedy.[26] Each dispenses with ambivalence in favor of single and supposedly irrefutable interpretations. Mariam settles on innocence, even going so far as to claim, in front of Herod, her inability to "frame disguise" or teach "[m]y face a look dissenting from my thought" (IV.iv.58-59)—a claim we know, as Bennett points out, "to be fundamentally and factually untrue" (300). Likewise, the chorus settles on a single theme each time it appears—in Act I, variety; Act II, prejudice; Act III, verbal chastity; Act IV, forgiveness[27]—in an attempt to reduce the drama's complex inarticulations to a few clear-cut, catch-all diagnoses. Ignoring the variety of factors that may contribute to Mariam's impending arrest and execution—Salome's machinations, Doris' prophetic curses, Sohemus' disloyalty, Herod's capriciousness, Mariam's refusal to flatter—the chorus of Act III settles on a single cause, Mariam's "common mind" (III.iii.126), and, engaging in their own brand of "what-if?" hypothesizing, declare that if she had just kept her mouth shut around everyone but Herod, she would be "free from fear, as well as innocent" (132). In Act IV,

[26] Nancy Gutierrez is less hard on the chorus, and suggests that their "critical comments about Mariam's assertiveness, on the one hand, misconstrue the reason for Mariam's rebellious stance, but, on the other hand, pose the moral problem of the validity of self-assertion when it results in self-destruction" (246).
[27] The cherry-picking strategy of the chorus proves impossible to sustain by the end of Act V. See below.

however, the chorus changes its mind, settling on a different all-inclusive fault of Mariam's on which to blame the tragedy, her lack of "virtuous scorn" (IV.viii.123):

> Had Mariam scorned to leave a due unpaid,
> She would to Herod then have paid her love,
> And not have been by sullen passion swayed.
> To fix her thoughts all injury above
> Is virtuous pride. Had Mariam thus been proved,
> Long, famous life to her had been allowed. (135-140)

There is no indication that the chorus is building on the case it earlier made in Act III, no attempt either to link hypotactically Mariam's unchaste verbosity to her inability to forgive or to suggest that one fault contributed more to Mariam's fate than another. Both are credited as *the thing* that destroys Mariam's chances for life, fame and happiness. Inadvertently but also inevitably, through hyperconforming to its responsibility to sum up the drama, through over-settling the significance of the characters' experiences, the chorus finally does court ambivalence when it includes two contrary explanations, both of which claim prominence. If these two interpretations are not to cancel each other out, if they are to link at all, they must do so paratactically, inelegantly and even, to borrow the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenically. Deleuze and Guattari use their belief in a productive, desiring, not essentially repressive unconscious to argue for the existence of disjunctive, non-exclusive "flows," which are impossible to absorb or contain fully —to encompass in (or as) a Whole or a Cure—and which they place in a forceful and interactive relation with the traditional ego, the bounded subject of psychoanalysis. In contrast to the psychoanalyst, the schizoanalyst "is not an interpreter, even less a theater director; he is a mechanic, a micromechanic. There are no excavations to be undertaken, no archaeology, no statues in the unconscious: there are only stones to be sucked … and other machinic elements belonging to deterritorialized constellations"

(338). Certainly what we see in Cary's work is a constellation of experiences, parts that do another kind of work than cohering or synthesizing. They work, in fact, to de-synthesize, to deterritorialize, to lead us away from familiar or common ground, away from consensus, including the consensus that would deliver to us a fully legible explanation for the tragedy of Mariam. "The task of schizoanalysis is that of tirelessly taking apart egos and their presuppositions; … mobilizing the flows they would be capable of transmitting, receiving, or intercepting; establishing always further and more sharply the schizzes and the breaks well below conditions of identity …" (Deleuze & Guattari 362). So the chorus' inadvertent de-legitimizing of their own conclusiveness—*instead of being* this *kind of woman, Mariam should have been* this *kind of woman ... or wait,* this *kind ... or* this *kind!*[28]—saves them from dismissal, in that their productively unconscious discursive activity ultimately does *not* neglect, and thus betray, the full and actual dramatic action of the drama. Finally, they become part of it.

By Act V, in fact, the chorus seems to acknowledge consciously the necessary revision of its inferior rhetorical strategy, admitting that the "strange events" (i.261) of this drama will from its participants and witnesses "all certainty bereave" (263). True, the chorus reverts to its familiar tendency to try to resolve irresolvable complications with one more, by now familiarly unreliable, "what-if" proposal: "Had [Herod] with wisdom now [Mariam's] death delayed, / He at his pleasure might command her death" (283-84)—hardly a prescription for a happy or even a fully intelligible conclusion. If Herod had only waited to kill Mariam, he could have killed her later? The chorus does better to

[28] This is what Deleuze and Guattari call free disjunction: "A disjunction that remains disjunctive, and that still affirms the disjoined terms, that affirms them throughout their entire distance, *without restricting one by the other or excluding the other from the one*…. 'Either … or … or,' instead of 'either/or'" (*Anti-Oedipus* 76).

admit the weak ground of such a proposal and reiterate instead Herod's unbalanced raving, just one home for the "many changes" (291) present in this drama, one arena for the "admirably strange variety" (292) that persists through the text and exists in service to no larger, grander, or final narrative.

4. Allegiance to Education: Agency in Uncertainty

That said, the chorus is not wrong to read into its own inconclusiveness a "warning to posterity" (290) and to see in these events potential for a "school of wisdom" (294). Such a pedagogy would partake of the nondisciplinary rhetoric of struggle modeled by Cary's characters, a rhetoric that "speaks no logical course of action; it gives us no rational answers. But it does, nevertheless, urge us to act in our uncertainty" (Davis *Breaking Up* 103). The disquieting link Davis makes between language and drug use is perhaps relevant here: she proposes a pedagogy that

> would invite students to take a full hit of language, to Be-on-language without censorship, without *protection*. [This pedagogy] would invite them to shed their inherited need to fix meaning and erect solutions; it would offer them a not-at-all safe space to test the boundaries of the Proper …. This pedagogy would not be interested in creating a safe space. It would not be interested in protecting categories, borders, genders, or genres. It would, rather, offer students the chance to write, to be written, to follow … a text that will *blow their minds* and, in the process, blow up the 'order of things'" (*Breaking Up* 252-53).[29]

Part of Davis' point is that these kinds of explosions are happening anyway. This is already what readers/writers/speakers do as they explore both how their experiences fit together and what counts as fitting. Already, we work inside unsafe spaces where "we

[29] For a response to the idea of nondisciplinary rhetoric, see Robert Scott. Though Scott's reply is directed to Vitanza, his warning about bewaring "the transcendental impulse" (236) is also relevant to Davis' arguments. Scott urges critics to "note well the impulse toward transcendence, that is, a justification of justifications, in this case, the automatic operating of language in itself as inexorable. If we are not careful, foundationalism …will live again" (236).

both are and are not a function of language," in that 'we both speak and/but are also always already spoken …. [E]ven as we speak for free-flowing desire-in-language, it speaks us. Even as we speak our desires, we are always already subject to the desires of that speech" (Davis *Breaking Up* 80). "For language thinks, thinks us and thinks for us at least as much as we think through it" (Baudrillard *Passwords* xii). Cary's tragedy is remarkable in that it does not flee from this "paradoxical space between doing and being done, speaking and being spoken" (*Breaking Up* 71). Cary writes with unflinching attention the windfalls and the catastrophes that occur simultaneously inside this space, where characters prove to be most active, most memorable, most intimidating, most dangerous, when they are most uncertain, when they speak less as single subjects inhabiting a single site than as fluid, multiplicitous (over)flows that occupy several positions at once. Salome is the best example, but Herod too inaugurates an active and ominous uncertainty. Even before Salome works him over,[30] Herod exhibits a longing for mystification in his compulsive need to see Mariam as a figure both sacred and secular, public and private. She is at once a "rare creature" (IV.i.10) with the miraculous power to "make the day more bright" (11), to "make months minutes, days of weeks" (18), and she is Herod's own "best and dearest half" (IV.iii.2) who disappoints him with her "dusky habits" (4) and undutiful, "froward humor" (53). "Even for love of thee / I do profoundly hate thee," Herod says after accusing Mariam of planning his murder (iv.42-43). Unable to decide her punishment, Herod can only conclude, "Without her I most miserable am. /

[30] Boyd Berry, in fact, downplays Salome's role entirely when he asserts that "the play has no Iago" to tempt Herod and thus "rationalize" his "rapid swings in mood" and general errant behavior (258).

And with her more than most" (92-93).[31] The last example illustrates how, by deferring one consistent portrait of his wife, Herod defers a clear picture of himself as well. His bewildered, ambivalent effusions over Mariam are another example of a discourse that welcomes mystification, that resists closure. And yet, Mariam *is* killed, and her death marks an undeniable closing off, a break in at least one flow that will not and cannot resume, despite Herod's insistence on the possibility of reviving Mariam's decapitated body: "Why, yet methinks there might be found by art / Strange ways of cure, 'tis sure rare things are done / By an inventive head and willing heart" (V.i.91-93).

Herod's emphasis is on strangeness, rarity, invention, art—all of which are emphasized throughout the play as being inexorable.[32] If having Mariam killed was Herod's desperate, conscious or unconscious attempt to declare his own strange, inventive, ambivalent *habits of thought* impossible, the same habits return with a vengeance, as Herod's rhetoric after Mariam's execution is just as scattered and vulnerable as it was before.[33] The difference is, we now have a dead body on our hands. We now have a tragedy, which the text urges us to remember; even as it makes it

[31] Here again is Berry: Herod's "ramblings … are hard not to read as laughable. In love with a person whom he constructs, almost superstitiously, as a miracle, then as a whore, he infects both the actions of other characters and the rhythm of the play, rendering it as abrupt and jerky as his emotional swings" (259). I would agree, other than to point out that the play's rhythm is established long before Herod the lunatic patriarch arrives, physically, on the scene. He establishes nothing; he goes with the flow(s).

[32] Rosemary Kegl suggests that "within the logic" of the text, "it is not entirely fanciful to imagine that Mariam's fate might have repeated that of Herod" (147), who is, as Pheroras says in Act III, "reviv'd from certain death" (ii.41)

[33] Mariam is linked with Abraham (V.i.96), Abel (139), and her own grandfather (190); she is "one inestimable jewel" (119) smashed "all to pieces" (129), then again she is Herod's "better half" (134); she is the crown of her sex (163-64), the "best birth" of Jewry (202); she is the pride and joy of all the Greek gods, who mourn her death (208-26), except that they hate her and in fact rejoice at her fall (227-34), or they would if they were not mere "fictions … void of sense … dreaming falsehoods" (235-36). Herod displays what Avital Ronell calls "writing on the loose, running around without a proper route … return[ing] only to haunt itself, refusing to bond with community or affirm its health and value—consistently reflect[ing] a situation of depropriation, a loss of the proper" (qtd. in Davis 238).

"possible and desirable to produce both a 'tragic' Herod and a comic Herod … the situation of Mariam is never comic" (Berry 270). Cary's rhetorics of fluidity and struggle are by no means apolitical, amoral or nihilistic, because, for one thing, they still provoke the question: how, once authority is revealed as constantly unsettled, can it still be grasped and wielded, to devastating effect, by the abusive and tyrannical?

Deleuze and Guattari offer one explanation: when it comes to those excessive flows that cannot be contained, that are always doing the work of deterritorialization, that work is always "accompanied by … reterritorializations, reterritorializations that always reconstitute shores of representation. What is more, the force and the obstinacy of a deterritorialization can only be evaluated through the types of reterritorialization that represent it; the one is the reverse side of the other" (316). "In reality, everything coexists" (377), the authors continue; "everything happens at the same time" in a "process that is always and already complete as it proceeds, and as long as it proceeds" (381-82)—de-familiarizations and re-familiarizations; de-codings and re-codings; de-authorizations and re-authorizations. Investment in the social field guarantees that "the movement of deterritorialization can only be grasped as the reverse side of territorialities" (369). This does not mean that escape or revolution is impossible, but the coexistence of "the most varied kinds of investments" (378) does mean that revolutionary groups can easily reassume the form of subjugated or reactionary groups: "they mobilize desire," but "they are also continually closing up again" (349), so that creating new land means "we must go back by way of old lands …" (318). Still, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize breakthroughs rather than breakdowns, urging us to remember that "at least something

arose whose force fractured the codes, undid the signifiers, passed under the structures, set the flows in motion, and effected breaks at the limits of desire: a breakthrough" (369).

Several such breakthroughs are effected in Mariam, and they do not lose their status as breakthroughs despite their contribution to the system of subjugation that reasserts itself with the death of the heroine. Salome's breakthroughs, for example, the flows she sets in motion to destabilize her identity, pour into the re-authorization of Herod's identity quite readily. Cary primes us to perceive these mystifying relationships between processes and tendencies that should be contradictory—but are not. One wonders if this is what Cary had learned to expect from authorities: a bewildering and often reckless inclination to mystify and unsettle combined with a conflicting insistence on the necessity of single positions. Though it would be years after writing her tragedy that she finally converted to Catholicism and separated from her husband, she was perhaps already experienced in the discursive strategies utilized by those who would continue to presume authority over her faith and her person.[34] Again, what was the oath

[34] Zimmerman relates the story of a young Elizabeth Cary's intervention in a witchcraft trial: the wrongly accused woman had been urged to confess to crimes she hadn't committed. Realizing this, the child Cary "devises a plan (which she whispers into her father's ear) whereby this supposed witch is led to confess to the murder of a man who, unbeknownst to the accused, is one of the living bystanders—a confession of guilt that instantly establishes the woman's innocence" (559). Yes, but it is an innocence necessarily mystified by the contagious ambivalence of the entire proceedings. Lying, the accused is assured, will mean mercy. Cary then leads the woman to hyperconform to this advice (as the friar leads Hero in *Much Ado*), such that the woman's dissembling confession—a different guilt than the guilt she confesses—is made to appear side by side with the proof of her innocence. She must embrace the lie in order to reach the truth, but what happens to truth and innocence once they are brought into such close contact with their supposed opposites? At a very young age, according to Cary's biographer, she proved capable of not just making transparent the less than straightforward strategies used by the courtroom's presiding authorities, but of responding in kind with a device of her own. Her response to the discovery of these less than reputable habits of thought is similar to the response Haraway discusses when she suggests that "noticing the trouble of a certain way of making meanings is not a justification for not doing it that way. What it *is* is a reminder, a thorn, not to try to hide the trouble." Our obligation, Haraway suggests, "having inherited what we have in terms of knowing about how meanings work … is to remember that you do know about these things and that while you're engaging in meaning-making with others, you at least at some point in your project deliberately stutter, deliberately trip; you don't try to smooth out the trouble. The tripping and stuttering … is a kind of precious moment that blocks idolatry."

of allegiance if not a directive that encouraged indistinction even as it demanded transparency? It performs a particular kind of rhetorical work that, if Questier is correct, achieved a rather diabolical success in disrupting the certainty of its target group. Cary experiments in mimicking this kind of rhetorical strategy, welcoming its mystification—partly to mock it, perhaps, but also to deconstruct it with the most serious, solemn attention. Her characters live in a fraught world and so engage in habits of expression that are equally fraught. So many of their speeches provide experimental models for the kind of ruptured writing that "open[s] toward unprecedented things" (Davis *Breaking Up* 13).

In addition to these models, what teachers of writing might take from Cary is the possibility that, when we urge student writers to "reign in their own multiplicitous sites of exploration in the name of *The* authoritative voice" (Davis *Breaking Up* 17), we are not doing them any favors, because so often "*The* authoritative voice" is itself multiplicitous—that's how it gets things done.[35] The potency of authority, its often dangerous potency, can lie in its disunity, its excess, its insistence that it constructs itself and its sheer cheek in letting you watch the process, which quite obviously appears to be absurdly illogical, destructively short-sighted, or both. Most students already know this. They've grown up through the search for nonexistent weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the bailing out of failing banks "too big to fail," and the reluctant exoneration of Wall Street traders whose dubiously legal, fiscally and ethically toxic financial deals caused the housing market to collapse and the economy to tank. They've watched the rise of increasingly bewildering fringe-politics on thriving 24-hour "news" programs

[35] We might add here Haraway's thoughts on agency, which she explores as "a material effect of our practices of working. It is not something you *have* and then go out and *use.* It's a verb, not a thing that you either possess or don't possess. So this business of being multiplicitous is not about having so many pieces that never come together that you can't do anything because you're never one enough to do it.… Agencies are about the potency to make something of the world."

operating by likewise increasingly bewildering standards of journalism. We ought to do them the courtesy of dropping the charade that reason and logic will always win the day.[36] Writing courses can and should keep practicing an investment in sociopolitical culture, of course, but Davis is on to something when she suggests that we begin to put ourselves "in the service of writing rather than the other way around" (*Breaking Up* 235). What would happen, she asks, if we were to teach "writing *for writings sake?* Writing as a pressing of the limits of discourse? Not a writing that stabilizes identities but one that b-l-o-w-s minds?… A writing that costs us a myth … but grants us [a] life?" (*Breaking Up* 235, all Davis' emphasis). Couldn't such a nondisciplined approach to a nondisciplined rhetoric have more to say about a world that has so often proved so defiantly undisciplined itself? Couldn't it remind us of the ways we *actually* fit together, rather than (or perhaps in addition to) the ways we pretend we do? Couldn't it, as the chorus says of Cary's play, bereave from us all certainty and yet still call itself a "school of wisdom?"

[36] As Baudrillard says, if "the state of the world is paradoxical—ambiguous, uncertain, random or reversible—we have to find a thought that is itself paradoxical. If it wishes to make an impact in the world, thought must be in the world's image" (*Passwords* 86).

Chapter Five

Now You Don't See it, Now You Don't: Annihilation, Virtuality and Oblivion in Marvell's "Upon Appleton House"

> "For 'tis better that evil Men should be left in an undisturbed possession of their repute, how unjustly soever they may have acquired it, then that the Exchange and Credit of Mankind should be universally shaken, wherein the best too will suffer and be involved. It is one thing to do that which is justifiable, but another that which is commendable; and I suppose every prudent Writer aims at both …" (*The Rehearsal Transpros'd: The Second Part* 237)

1. The Influence of Excess

Spenser exits book VI of *The Faerie Queene* in bitterness over the inevitability of the Blatant Beast's rhetorical outmaneuvering. He leaves behind a sense of dejection at the realization that the false can say as much as the true, or that the false and the true can be reported together without contradiction. The same realization translates to bewildered celebration in *Much Ado About Nothing*, to a lunatic and lonely mourning in the *Tragedy of Mariam*. Marvell's poetry, also coming to this realization, takes us to less easily identifiable conclusions. Countless scholars have commented on the impossible ambiguity of Marvell's work.[1] "It has not seemed possible," says Annabel Patterson, "to make a completely whole man out of this poet with too many personae … except by excluding what will not fit our immediate focus" (*Civic Crown* 5). His poems "do not show consistency," says David Norbrook; "with great force, they make incompatible utterances" (*Writing* 244). Rosalie Colie notes "the elusiveness and mysteriousness at variance with the apparent precision of [Marvell's] language" (3). Blair Worden describes Marvell as "a man … who can inhabit a range of voices, each of them authentic

[1] See John Klause for comments on this trend in Marvell criticism.

at the moment of delivery" (150). Pairing Marvell with Donne, Joseph Summers remarks on these poets' "occasional approach to poetry" and suggests "[t]hey could imagine an attitude which they themselves or someone else had felt or might feel, and they could write a poem embodying it without permanently committing themselves to it. They … could exaggerate the claims of something they did approve to the point that the very exaggeration indicated the limitations of the claims" (161). Andrew Barnaby suggests an explanation for Marvell's elusiveness when he argues that his poetry responds "to mid-century English culture's anxiety over a lost discursive community;" he produces "his own peculiarly 'metaphysical style' precisely as a rhetoric by which to measure, if never finally overcome, the epistemological distance that makes private knowing a world unto itself" (Barnaby 335).

Certainly the settings of some of Marvell's most famous poems can best be described as epistemological; they provide space for cognitive activity and they can furthermore be said to represent that activity. Their speakers attempt to validate their rhetorical processes—ways of delivering information—by exploring the questionable ways in which rhetorical processes are validated. This is close to what Barnaby means when he notes that, because words were considered "the most dangerous contagion of all" in mid-century England, Marvell's "very efforts to elude the public disease through writing were necessarily part of what he was seeking to inoculate himself against" (335). So the private worlds Marvell constructs in his poems are hardly private, and even as they insist on journalistic detachment they move closer to the inevitable implosion Baudrillard argues is the result of any "*excess* of information" when "[i]t is information itself which produces uncertainty" ("The Masses" 580).

The experience of excess information was emergent but influential in the developing public sphere of mid-century England.[2] "The sinews of communication made the Civil War possible," states Nigel Smith, and "communication and authority were fought over and disputed until the end of the century" (1). "From the outbreak of hostilities between King and Parliament," says Sharon Achinstein, "the press was instrumental in the conflict;" printing, both authorized and unauthorized, provided "a public forum in which political debate over vital issues could be conducted," enabled the "development of a political culture that extended far beyond the perimeters of the court and the royal household," and ultimately "refashioned political consciousness" (51). Norbrook agrees that "the widening of the public sphere" encouraged people "to look on themselves as agents in making and writing history" ("English Revolution" 235). More than a few took on the burden of speaking for a particular interest, even as it became more difficult to identify the major principles of any one cause.[3] Protestantism, Republicanism, Constitutionalism: "[t]his was a period when institutions were fragile, and ideas powerful …" (Scott 24). Martin Dzelzainis points to the "constant ideological repositioning" which makes the conflict of the war "more complicated than is often supposed" (38). "At the level of ideology," he argues, "the conflict between Parliamentarians and Royalists appears to be replicated several times over in the opposition between Calvinists and Arminians, constitutionalists and absolutists, and republicans and monarchists. In each case, it seems, we find progressives and reactionaries squaring up to each other," though "the categories of progressive and

[2] See Peter Lake & Steve Pincus; Steven Zwicker; Joad Raymond; Nigel Smith.

[3] For an examination of this difficulty inside the republican experiment in particular, see David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660.*

reactionary simply fail to work out as expected" (35-36). He gives the example of the Ship Money trial of John Hampden in 1637, prosecuted by "those who attributed to the royal prerogative the authority to dispense with the law," defended by "those upholding the rights and liberties of the subject …" (36).

> By 1642, however, and the time of the militia controversy over who controlled the raising of the troops in the counties, the positions had been reversed. Now it was the two Houses and their apologists who used arguments from necessity to justify overriding the letter of the law, while the King's propagandists condemned these arbitrary doctrines and declared their allegiance to the known laws. Thus not all absolutism was Royalist. (36)

Other examples can be found in the arena of religious toleration. Groups that aligned themselves against the inflexible uniformity of the Presbyterians could find themselves opening doors to uncomfortably radical positions (such as those of the Ranters) impossible to exclude without undermining their original case for increased acceptance (Dzelzainis 44). The press could exacerbate any of these isolated disputes by providing the means for expression and dissemination unburdened by any "standards of impersonality or 'equal time' for a balanced view of events" (Achinstein 58). Lois Potter observes that "[h]aving more news meant, for many, not more but less truth," for "the unprecedented nature of the things that really were taking place in public life made it possible for the wildest statements of the press to win belief" (5-6). Smith elaborates:

> [T]he notion of a consensus of meaning in available public languages had disappeared for many. Viewed objectively, what was understood as enormity or anarchy was really the multiple capturing in words of the same events; many differing narratives being produced simultaneously to explain one single set of occurrences, and the repetition of these textual simultaneities over and over again for successive events. Familiar enough to us, but not to them. The witnesses to this inflated repetition seem to be telling us that it caused a social trauma. (*Literature and Revolution* 25)

Jonathan Scott quotes Marvell himself on the subject of print culture: "*O Printing!* how hast thou disturbed the Peace of Mankind! that Lead, when moulded into Bullets, is not so mortal as when founded into Letters" (51).

In addition to giving birth to, or at the least lending vitality to, public opinion and public participation, the amplified access to and concern with the circulation of ideas creates a situation in which it is less and less possible "to isolate reality or human nature as a fundamental variable. The result is therefore not at all any additional information or any light on reality, but on the contrary, … a state of suspense and of definitive uncertainty about reality" (Baudrillard "The Masses" 579-80).[4]

When Marvell's poems collapse—and many of them do, more than once—they collapse inward, in recognition of their own definitive uncertainty about the very realities they describe. Destruction, even annihilation, are essential themes of Marvell's work, as is suspense, but he distinguishes himself in including images of annihilation that consistently fail to annihilate. Rather, just as Nature in the "Horatian Ode" accommodates Cromwell's greater spirit (44), Marvell's poems carry themselves through and past their own ruin, making room for the very excess that threatens their collapse. Said in the Ode to hate both emptiness and overlap (41-42), Nature responds to the conflict between the two not by choosing but by making room. So Marvell makes room in his poems for contradictions that should, but do not, contradict. And his speakers, who are intent—perhaps to a fault—on recording experience, rely on an erratic, meandering commentary

[4] One of the most passionate antagonists of such uncertainty was Thomas Hobbes, whose *Leviathan* seeks in large part to identify the fundamental variables or humanity and so establish "the constitution of man's nature" (273). Hobbes locates the seed of the rebellion against the monarchy in the emerging public sphere, specifically in the reading of classical texts; he concludes that there is nothing "more prejudicial to a monarchy than the allowing of such books to be publicly read, without present applying such correctives of discreet masters as are fit to take away their venom: which venom I will not doubt to compare to the biting of a mad dog …" (273).

that surrenders the closure of a single perspective, yet without sacrificing the curious shelter that results from their unique commitment to provide such multifaceted views. "The beasts are by their dens exprest," the speaker tells us in stanza two of "Upon Appleton House." Likewise the structure of this poem will assume an instinctive capacity to speak, not only for Fairfax, but for us; it will express the exploratory nature of "man unruled" (9); it will "measure out," at what turns out to be great and bewildering length, our "place" (16).

The speaker begins by making promises about what we will see: "all things are composed here / Like Nature, orderly and near;" the lines are admirable, the mathematics holy; he predicts future pilgrimages to what must become a sacred place, though for now it remains "clownishly" humble, only "a mark of grace" and "an inn to entertain / Its Lord a while, but not remain" (25-26; 42; 47; 35; 60; 70-72). Careful as he is to accommodate this dual perspective coherently, the speaker threatens to rupture his traditionally epideictic strain quite early on, when he imagines Fairfax's entrance into the "swelling hall," which "[s]tirs, and the square grows spherical; / More by his magnitude distressed, / Than he is by its straitness pressed" (51-54). This is a vision we might better expect from Spenser's Scudamore, narrating his journey through the magical, wish-fulfilling Temple of Venus. How does this swelling, eagerly accommodating hall (re)square with the speaker's earlier image of sober-minded men "practicing, in doors so strait, / To strain themselves through Heaven's Gate" (31-32)? Already we sense our tour-guide's ambiguous perception, and we can expect more excuses disguised as non-excuses for his untethered impressions, like the one that begins line 61: "And yet what

needs there here excuse, / Where ev'ry thing does answer use?" The exact nature of that "use" is already ambiguous.[5]

Like Scudamore, our speaker appears faced with the task of not simply recording but selling us on an experience, and he chooses, initially, to oversell. Once again we confront the possibility of seduction by weakness, by hyperreal descriptions that lack any referent, and by a narrative that, despite its supposedly extemporaneous flights of fancy, reveals itself to be already reproduced. "We *opportunely* may relate / The progress of this house's fate" (83-84, my emphasis), the speaker tells us, *as if by chance*, and what follows is what should be a familiarly suspicious account of a silent virgin's bold abduction from the center of a circle of vaguely threatening women.[6] The parallels between Isabel Thwaites and Spenser's Amoret are obvious, and though Scudamore rehearses his own supposed adventure while Marvell's speaker narrates from a greater distance the prowess of William Fairfax, at stake for both speakers is the same opportunity: to shape, with perfect freedom, an unexperienced experience. It is an opportunity that proves irresistible to these storytellers without (real) stories, despite the risk that, if found out, they might invalidate both the experience and the shaping of it. But as Chapter 2 discussed, there are degrees of invalidation, and not every liar can (or should) be so easily abandoned by an audience made wise to his lie. More artful by far than the self-interested Scudamore, Marvell's speaker exposes himself even as he appears to relinquish the spotlight by ventriloquizing the "subtle nuns" (94). As Sarah Monette points out, our suspicion is in fact "encouraged by the indications of the nun's guile: she

[5] For notes on how the poem "swerves from the anticipated path of country-house discourse" (104), see Anne Cotterril.

[6] Sarah Monette suggests that "Marvell deploys the women in the poem to show ruptures between history and poetry, and between the historical poet and the poetic speaker" (155), and indeed it seems necessary to separate poet from speaker at this point in our exploration of the poem.

speaks to Thwaites *as if by chance.* Like the language of 'Upon Appleton House,' her speech may seem careless, but it has been carefully thought out. The speaker has figured the nun's speech in such a way as to make his own speaking look more innocent," though he ultimately "exposes, by the very act of concealment, the deceit [he] wishes to conceal"—that is, his own deceit (Monette 158-59, my emphasis).[7] We discern his voice in the nun's double-voicedness. If in book IV of the *Faerie Queene* the silence of Venus was meant to work in Scudamore's favor, here the opposite is true: it is necessary that the speaker highlight the subtle nun's careful flattery of Thwaites, her insinuating disparagement of Fairfax, along with the popish practices of the nunnery itself ("When we have prayed all our beads, / Some one the holy Legend reads; / While all the rest with needles paint / The face and graces of the Saint"), so that when Fairfax arrives, we are prepared to recognize the terrible difficulty of his position, outmaneuvered as he is by these "[h]ypocrite witches," these smooth-tongued thieves hiding behind their ambiguous religion (121-24; 205; 200; 207; 224-25).

But a problem arises when, after the skillful set-up of this epic battle, the two sides primed to clash, the confrontation itself turns out to be far from satisfying. As Fairfax pushes his way to the altar (through such ineffectual obstacles as "Wooden Saints," an "old holy-water brush" and "the disjointed Abbess thread[ing] / The jingling chain-shot of her beads" [250; 242; 253-54]), we are told that the nuns' "loud'st cannon were their lungs; / And sharpest weapons were their tongues" (255-56). But it appears to

[7] Anne Cotterill further links the speaker's digression on the nunnery with the rest of the poem when she points out that "[t]he poem's first words, 'Within this sober frame,' and those of the nun's subtle speech, 'Within this holy leisure' (97), are interesting twins," and suggests that "in stanza 13 we begin the poem again but on a deeper note" (110). Michael Schoenfeldt's interpretation goes in a different direction: he argues that Marvell "makes so much of the estate's origins in a convent … because the nuns' desire for religious retirement and internal freedom is so uncomfortably close to his own" (245).

be less convenient now to make room in the narrative for the nuns' most memorably intimidating weapon. Whatever and however much they say, Fairfax waves all aside "like flies" (257), arriving at the altar and his weeping Thwaites. Powerless and beaten, the women "guiltily their prize bemoan" (267), before the speaker, overzealously committed to his villainous illustration of nun and nunnery but undecided how best to describe their downfall, imagines the cloister vanished (270), then wasted (271), dispossessed (272), and finally demolished (273).

Out of this overkill comes Fairfax the war hero. Great battles, we are clearly meant to believe, are his legacy, but the poem fails to deliver a believably detailed account of the reality of these battles;[8] we must settle for the speaker's suspicious reportage, which in fact stops short of a narrative and relies instead on pre-constructed and disconnected sketches: the subtle nun, the indomitable fiancé, the weeping virgin. History is not deformed; it is absent, and the scene takes on its own reality. Here Barnaby's theories can help us. He suggests that Marvell's rhetoric "perversely enacts" the "crisis of linguistic confidence" in mid-century English society (334-35). Poems like "Upon Appleton House" imagine a private world which, while it can provide "a much needed respite from the cacophony of culture," can also become "a site of struggle for Marvell's speakers, a struggle less to locate positions from which to speak for themselves than to imagine a public space in which meanings might be shared at all" (335). These speakers register the "impossibility of ever bridging the gaps of representation: between self and other, signifier and signified" (339). "[B]ecause there is no escape from

[8] Nor are the details that are included historically accurate. Brian Patton remarks on Marvell's impossible attempt to "balance the demands of the historical record with those of a desirable notion of history as a process that is both teleological and comprehensible" (829). The actual, and verifiable, history of the property reveals William Fairfax as a Catholic who disinherited his eldest sons, facts which sully the poem's dramatic "founding of a dynasty" (829).

representation, one must always test how the mind actively (re)constructs experience as artifice" (339), and Marvell's poems *are* these tests. However, they spotlight not reconstruction as much as pre-construction. Experience is not in fact available as a touchstone, not when the artifice comes first. We are back in Baudrillard's territory, for this is the definition of fourth-order simulation, in which signs become simulacra: simulations without referents. They bear no relation to reality.[9]

2. (Anti)Annihilation and Preventive Accumulation: Reality Deterred

For a briefer example of a speaker's reliance on pre-construction, we may consider the poem "The Mower's Song," which begins tellingly:

> My mind was once the true survey
> Of all these meadows fresh and gay,
> And in the greenness of the grass
> Did see its hopes as in a glass. (1-4)

Christopher Ricks has remarked that "[a] characteristic figure of speech in Marvell is that which goes beyond saying of something that it finds its own resemblance, and says instead, more wittily and mysteriously, that something is its own resemblance" (34). The speaker in "The Mower's Song" tells us his mind is not the surveyor but the survey, the comprehensive view, of the meadows; the poem's setting, then, is not the meadow but the speaker's mind as the meadow's simulation. Before we can begin to get comfortable with this image, however, the speaker adds that his mind also sees in the meadow, or the simulation of the meadow, its hopes, as in a glass. This glass is a reflecting surface added, in what seems a superfluous or excessive gesture, to the virtual surface. The speaker's mind as sign, in other words, sees the green grass as a reflection, a copy of itself. The first

[9] See Baudrillard's *Selected Writings*, chapter 7, esp. page 170.

four lines of the poem thus remove us from any real meadow and situate us in the speaker's mind; and they make the mind both object and agent, engaging in these somersaulting feats of perception, transforming itself into a reflection so that it may have a reflection. Here again is Ricks on this "self-inwoven simile … a figure which both reconciles and opposes, in that it describes something both as itself and as something external to it which it could not possibly be. In one of its most teasing forms, something finds itself compared to both of the terms within a comparison" (34). The mind is the meadow; the meadow is a glass; the mind is the glass. But the survey comes first, and ultimately both grass and glass must conform to it. Enter Juliana: "and she, / What I do to the grass, does to my thoughts and me" (6). The refrain *should* read fairly straightforwardly: the speaker is a mower, what he does to the grass is cut it, so Juliana cuts down his thoughts and him. But the first four lines tell us that mower and meadow enjoy a much more complicated relationship. Forget any literal mowing; the speaker's concern is to make the meadow coincide with his mind.

Juliana's entrance in the refrain, then, means one of two things: either she is an external agent looming over the poem's scene, threatening to interrupt the speaker's self-absorption, or she is in fact another of the speaker's mirror images. After all, if Juliana does what the mower does, then the threat she represents cannot be interruption but must be repetition, even redundancy. According to the speaker's formulation, Juliana must be as desperate to make of the speaker something she can recognize as coextensive with herself as he is desperate to make the meadow coincide with his mind as pre-constructed survey: she must simulate the simulation. If Juliana is not the agent of Reality but another reflection in search of a reflection, then the poem becomes a mobius strip, an ouroboros

continually recreating its own energetic artificiality, immune to the interruption of reality because unrelated to it. Juliana's threat thus signifies not any straightforward chopping but the destabilizing of any idea that the speaker has an identity apart from hers (as the meadow has no identity apart from the speaker). The poem enacts such destabilization: "But these" (7), the mower begins the next stanza. These what? The grass? His thoughts? The hopes of line four? All of the above? The "I" that pines with sorrow is hopelessly entangled with the growing blades of grass, even as it is pulled away from the meadow by Juliana's similar efforts to entangle the speaker in her own simulacral relationship. Knowing the meadow not as a literal meadow but as simulation, we can never fully separate grass from thought, object of perception from perception itself. So when the speaker scolds the "unthankful meadows" (13), as if from a distance, for foregoing a "fellowship so true" (14), he is simultaneously as close as ever to the meadow that is his mind, despite his sense of oppression under Juliana's invisible but competing effort to turn his mind to a new direction, a new sign. The speaker's mind threatens to divorce itself at the same time as it begs to reconcile itself with itself.

Stanza five provides the climax to this perplexity, as the speaker becomes iconoclast and Juliana moves to the present tense. He will take revenge on the meadow for its lack of compassion, which is really his mind's own metamorphosis, "And flowers, and grass, and I, and all, / Will in one common ruin fall" (21-22). The mower promises annihilation as a potential escape from the cycle of reflexivity. It is no coincidence that this is the moment when Juliana "comes" (23), when she finally arrives to close the distance between herself and the speaker-as-reflection of whatever she has made of herself. Inevitably this means the ruin of the mower's mind as meadow's simulation. That

image violently shatters as both preparation and repudiation for whatever Juliana has prepared. Apocalypse turns out to be the poem's only hope of escaping redundancy.

And Apocalypse fails. The refrain of stanza five repeats itself with an almost tragic perfunctoriness. Still the mower speaks of "what I do to the grass," and still the correlation exists between his action and Juliana's. Not even the poem's apocalypse can break its rhythm, which is reinforced not only by one more refrain but also the addition of an entire stanza. "The Mower's Song" trudges into this bittersweet realization: Marvell can bring his poem to annihilation, but he cannot make it stick. The artificial reasserts itself, and with seemingly no inventive assistance from any mindful party. The refrain becomes automatic, involuntary, habitual. It is difficult to celebrate such mechanical success, harder still to try to conceive of the poem's phony catastrophe. Annihilation that doesn't annihilate? This is easily as absurd as a knight of love who fails at loving. But Marvell implies more than the ironic absurdity of Scudamore's absent love story; the incongruity here is so much larger, enclosing a worldview, and then a world, that fails to be real enough to be destroyed. Baudrillard has argued that "[t]he most widespread belief is in a logical progression from virtual to actual," and this is definitely a movement that "The Mower's Song," with its inclusion of apocalypse, attempts to achieve: it will explode itself out of its pure cognition and into the real and fallen world, resituating us, perhaps, in a real meadow. But once the virtual has overtaken the actual, Baudrillard explains, "we must be content with this extreme virtuality which … deters any passage to action. We are no longer in a logic of the passage from virtual to actual but in a hyperrealist logic of the deterrence of the real by the virtual" (*Gulf* 27).

"The Mower's Song," then, contains no mowing, no meadow even, the latter disappeared along with the rest of reality. For a poem that uses such earthy images, we are nowhere grounded, not, perhaps, until the last stanza. Here the poem essentially digs its own grave, as the speaker invites the meadows to become "the heraldry … With which I shall adorn my tomb" (27-28). Again we sense the irony in celebrating surviving the apocalypse with a funeral, but more than this we are left with the question of what death can possibly mean for a speaker who has already survived ultimate ruin? What is mere death post-annihilation? The space by which this funeral is so claustrophobically encapsulated robs it of its affective properties, as the redundant refrain proves in its final sapping of the poem's energy. This is not closure but enclosure, not an end but certainly a defeat, in the sense that the first stanzas of "The Mower's Song," helped along by an anticipation-generating refrain, promise and report on a rich, if entirely hyperrealistic, conflict—mower vs. Juliana, mind vs. mind—but ultimately can deliver nothing *but* that pre-packaged refrain, a redundancy impossible, thanks to the fourth stanza, to find credible or meaningful, but as impossible to dislodge and replace more satisfactorily. So the poem must persist in eating its own tail, as Juliana and Mower are locked into their mimicry by stanza five's refrain, the tool of the poem's stalling movement. "This is the problem with anticipation," writes Baudrillard. "Is there still a chance that something which has been meticulously programmed will occur? Does a truth which has been meticulously demonstrated still have a chance of being true? When too many things point in the same direction, when the objective reasons pile up, … [f]ar from reinforcing the probability of the conflict, these function as a preventative accumulation…" (*Gulf* 36).

This is the technique we will continue to see in "Upon Appleton House:" preventive accumulation will destroy the possible referentiality of Appleton House as it destroys the referentiality of the mower's meadow, enclosing the poem by those piling details that must ultimately materialize as no ordered tour but a rude heap, an unlivable habitation in which we will then be invited to live.

3. Extreme Virtualities

The first sections of "Upon Appleton House," which rehearse the history of the residence, deal in pre-constructed, incredible images that, if they cohere at all, do so in service to what Baudrillard calls an "extreme virtuality" that may deter the real (*Gulf* 27), in the sense that Baudrillard's virtualities are never simply false representations of real events but are themselves different kinds of events.[10] Already we are wise to the liberties taken by our speaker, but he is still the only guide we have. As the tour of the house resumes, the narrative continues its "frankly irregular" pace, "flaunt[ing] its own seams, point[ing] to its own joinery, publiciz[ing] its own gaps" (Colie 181). This is the speaker doubling his efforts at deterrence, continuing, less and less apologetically, to draw attention to his own exertion and so to invite our skepticism. We are told that, because Fairfax "could not cease" his "warlike studies" (284), he laid out his gardens in "the just figure of a fort" (286). The speaker energetically pursues the metaphor, enlarging it to include England itself as "the garden of the world" (322). Fairfax's eccentric inability to retreat fully from the world of war appears at once as an idiosyncratic design choice and a microcosm of a purer England—except that ambiguity enters in again. It is unclear

[10] See Paul Patton's introduction to *The Gulf War did not Take Place*, p. 16.

whether the speaker is using the garden-as-fort metaphor as a means of transitioning to a nostalgic tribute to England's unadulterated past (moving from point A to B), or whether he intends for the metaphor to function equally as the description of both Fairfax's garden and England's past (point A *is* point B):

> Unhappy! shall we never more
> That sweet Militia restore,
> When gardens only had their tow'rs,
> And all the garrisons were flow'rs;
> When roses only arms might bear,
> And men did rosy garlands wear?
> Tulips, in several colors barred,
> Were then the Switzers of our Guard. (329-336)

War in this interlude is ultimately condemned as an intrusive and corrupting influence which, the speaker laments, "all this doth overgrow" (343). But what can the word "this" possibly conjure? Overgrowth is, so far, all there is to see, for Paradise, in the speaker's description above, is never unassociated with war. In his construction of "that dear and happy isle" (321), every feature is imagined in terms of battle, so that "war" must function as both metaphor and referent, a reflection of itself.[11] Just As in "The Mower's Song," the artifice comes first; roses have always been arms, and England has always been prepared for war. This guarantees the ambiguity of stanza 44, in which the speaker half-accusingly asserts that Fairfax

> Might once have made our gardens spring
> Fresh as his own and flourishing.
> But he preferred to the Cinque Ports
> These five imaginary forts. (347-50)

We might legitimately ask the speaker what, at this point, is the difference between artificial forts and real ones. Given that he has expended every effort to sell Appleton

[11] "[I]s war only gardening or is gardening actually war?" asks Leah Marcus, who also comments on how, in "Upon Appleton House, "metaphors have a way of undoing themselves" (*Politics* 244).

House as a battle ground, his attempt in the above stanza to represent it as a mere metaphor, to draw a solid line between real war and the mere overlay of war, is unexpected and disorienting—even to an audience already prepared not to take this speaker at his word.

Monette suggests that such a gesture is typical of Marvell, who habitually "turns his metaphors against himself" (164). For an additional example, she concentrates on Thestylis from stanza 51, who, in crying out that "he called us Israelites" (406), "expresses her awareness of the poet and the poem" and so crosses "from the poem into a kind of metatextual existence that, rather than literally allowing [her] to escape from the poem into life, forces the poem backwards into a space where fiction cannot pretend not to know that it is fiction" (164). Her cry signals, more forcefully than anything in the poem, that the experience being narrated *is* the poem, and not the tour. The drama lies in the speaker's ambiguous and suspicious articulations about what he *wants* us to see, rather than what is there *to* see. Thestylis thus denies neither fiction nor reality, but in entangling the two she deters both from asserting any final prominence. Like Spenser, Marvell gives his readers the opportunity for another response beyond the easy dismissal of a discourse that has revealed itself to be an unconvincing representation of reality. Reality, we come to realize, has nothing to do with this poem, so to dismiss the latter in allegiance to the former will get us nowhere. Once again we are seduced by a narrative that does not want "to get beyond appearances" because it recognizes that "getting beyond appearances is an impossible task: inevitably every discourse is revealed in its own appearance, and is hence subject to the stakes imposed by seduction, and consequently to its own failure as discourse" (Baudrillard *Selected Writings* 150), a

failure that introduces the "abyss of language" (Baudrillard *Selected Writings* 152). Marvell primes us to confront this abyss when his speaker uses the very word to describe the meadow: "And now to the abyss I pass / Of that unfathomable grass" (369-70). And he seems to invite us to decide, along with his speaker and others who inhabit the poem, whether we "fall through it or go" (380). The speaker decides on the latter: he is like one of the mariners who "bring up flow'rs so to be seen, / And prove they've at the bottom been" (383-84). Each of his stanzas, which continue to progress by means of war imagery, functions as a flower of proof, carried up from the bottom of the abyss in order to make sense of it, to fathom what he himself has dubbed unfathomable. Thestylis, however, handily exposes this containment effort as fiction or wish-fulfillment; her cry reinforces the unfathomable and deprives the speaker, and his audience, of the choice to move through the poem's abyss willingly and willfully. It can only be fallen through.

Knowing this, we might find it easier to bestow a condescending admiration on the speaker's tenacious efforts to continue what Patterson calls "this frivolity of the imagination" (*Civic Crown* 104); refusing to abandon his original sketch, he describes the mowed plain as a "camp of battle … quilted o'er with bodies slain" (420, 422), and imagines every mower as an Alexander (428). But tenacity translates soon enough into a kind of obsessive denial. Stanzas 55 and 56 mark the speaker's attempt to reassert an authority, in the face of the unfathomable, that we can hardly find credible. Thestylis may have prevented him from reaching the bottom of the poem's abyss, but his response is simply to head for the top: stanza 54 describes the freshly mowed meadow, piled with bundled hay, as "a calm sea" that "shows the rocks" (434). The speaker is careful to illustrate the hay bales as protrusions on a surface that can be viewed only from a position

of firm footing—his own. Stanza 56 repeats the assertion, though with more audacity. We are told that the "Scene" withdraws—though it is the speaker, still half-committed to his tour-guide role, who withdraws it—bringing "[a] new and empty face of things" (442), a "leveled space … smooth and plain" (443), a "table rase and pure" (446). There is nothing unfathomable about this space itself, only the path by which we arrived in it. Unapologetic as ever, the speaker hurries to fill his blank slate with villagers and cattle, and in a grand attempt to show off his clear-sightedness from any depth or height, through any optical obstacle or shift in perception, he imagines the simple pasture scene as a landscape reflected in a glass, the cows shrunk to spots and then fleas, appearing in the distance to "feed so wide, so slowly move, / As Constellations do above" (463-64). Cows of unintimidating size have replaced the giant grasshoppers of the unfathomable meadow, and our speaker seems much more secure as the pilot of these shifting scenes than as the fellow passenger whom Thestylis accused him of being.[12]

From the reader's perspective, however, security reads as overconfidence, even before the overkill of stanza 59. Here the cataracts of neighboring Denton open, and the flood, the speaker tells us, "makes the meadow truly be / (What it but seemed before) a sea" (467-68). Again we must feel compelled to ask our too-careless guide, what is the difference? His scene change is truly a sea change, but what proof can he possibly offer that both seas are not seeming seas? This flood, after all, is redundant; a few short stanzas ago we were already inside the unfathomable, and it is only on the speaker's word that we ever escaped, first to the abyss's surface, then to the blank plain. Now we find we "escaped" only to be inundated again. Like the mower of "The Mower's Song," who adds

[12] See Marcus, *Politics* 253.

a glass atop the simulation of the meadow, our speaker adds a flood on top of an abyss, adds the unfathomable to the unfathomable. For what purpose would he do this, unless it were to draw more attention to his unbelievably casual decision, in stanza 61, to "retir[e] from the flood" and "[t]ake sanctuary in the wood" (481-82). In other words, not only does our speaker manage to escape a sea on top of a sea, but he also describes it as if it is not an escape at all—just the next portion of the tour.

"Marvell's way with this standard *topos* for inversion should give us pause," Rosalie Colie says (202), but pausing is difficult in the wake of a speaker bent on following "the contours of the Fairfax estate," despite having revealed more than once that "the poem's deepest and most coherent landscape … extend[s] not in a linear fashion but in a vertical dive whose lifeline is not genealogical but poetic and psychological" (Cotterill 123).[13] Our ground is neither solid nor literal but fluid and imagined, yet still the speaker persists in selling the experience of the tour as a real going rather than a falling through, and as Colie notes, "although the imagery inverts so much, … the man in the poem is in fact never turned upside down: he stays upright through everything" (203). The inevitable but invisible exertion this implies makes our speaker more overbold than any Scudamore, whose overconfidence grated largely because the dangers he described provided no impressive obstacle. Marvell's speaker, by contrast, narrates scenes of near-catastrophe that are truly intimidating. These are dangers that actually would feel dangerous to a mid-century English audience: a deceptive and seductive alternative religion, an England increasingly intertwined with violence and perhaps unrecognizable

[13] Cotterill has much to say about Marvell's extended metaphors of flooding and drowning: "Behind the celebration of lineal descent, the poem contains a chaotic plummet, a descent which sounds 'within.' The Marvellian line plumbs" (123). She toys with the idea of strategic indifference, argued for below, when she concludes that "finally the poet can reverse gravity with a mocking twang of an angler's line as if nothing had happened" (123).

apart from it, unpredictable and disorienting shifts in perception, movement that feels like swimming, living that feels like drowning. These threats grow more abstract as they are introduced, but they also feel more encompassing and personally inescapable. Annihilation is as present in this poem as in "The Mower's Song." Once again, however, it fails to annihilate, leaving us more skeptical about our and the speaker's deliverance, unsure, in fact, whether deliverance is the appropriate term. Can one be delivered from a threat inverted inexplicably into safety? Is it rescue we witness or a tacky brand of magic: *now you see disaster, now you don't*?[14] With every phony annihilation, Marvell threatens to reduce his strongest metaphors to glib ironies. If Appleton House is to be sold as a sanctuary from the potentially crushing babble of the rest of the rude world, then, when such rudeness intrudes upon the poem—through the conniving nuns, the unflagging war imagery, the disorienting abyss, and finally the flood—it must be faced and faced down. But the speaker's strategic response to such dangers consists primarily of indifference. He ignores. He withdraws. He retires. It is not as if he provides no commentary on each of these diversions from the structured tour, but his commentary cannot be trusted; indeed it seems to bear less and less relation to the conditions evoked by the poem's language. War imagery evokes war, in other words, and a flood evokes apocalypse, but these associations are welcomed into the poem only to be dismissed, as the speaker confuses,

[14] Unlike the refrain in "The Mower's Song," which mechanically reasserts itself, as if guided by no hand, the speaker's discourse in "Upon Appleton House" maintains a strained connection with its discourser. It is the connection to the audience that threatens to sever. Where Spenser gave his readers enough breathing room to allow them the opportunity to participate in the meaning-making of his poem, Marvell has created a speaker so intent on the hurried accumulation of various scenarios that he hampers the meaningful experience of any one event. As readers we may still want to participate, but intervention seems impossible in a narrative so entirely diversionary. We are perpetual spectators of a discourse entirely taken over by artifice, one that perpetually deters the real. Still, we are curious spectators, seduced enough to want to see how far this brash speaker will go to sell us on his sanctuary. But we must devote more effort to construct an invitation into a discourse that works harder than even Scudamore worked to put us off.

abandons, or refuses to participate in the very substance of the language he himself chooses.[15] We witness a curious strategy of communication, a method of participation in language that more and more resembles its opposite. We see in the speaker what Baudrillard might describe as an "extreme form of non-participation" (*Silent Majorities* 48), in which the power of catastrophe—brought on by competing ideologies, civil conflicts, even natural phenomena—is neutralized by, of all things, indifference. So when the nuns fire their voice cannons, the speaker silences them with his own silence about what it is they say; when war overruns England such that war imagery dominates all description of the country, past and present, the speaker continues to assert that the gardens of Appleton House are unique in their design; when the already inundated meadows are inundated again by a second flood, the speaker finds footing where there is none, and calmly retires from cataclysm. The imposition of whatever antagonistic or restrictive power is met with nothing like subversion. The speaker's strategy is much closer to that of Baudrillard's silent majorities, his evilly genius masses, who "up a bid of neutralization with more neutralization. So it becomes a game, at this point, it's become something else. It is no longer exactly a historical or political space" ("Interview" 309-10). Like "The Mower's Song," "Upon Appleton House" traces a conceptual space, a private cognition infiltrated by those permeating threats that still only resemble the real, and so cannot be responded to as if they are *really* real. The poem increasingly appears as both an example of, and a response to, the kind of communication that relies on the accumulation of meticulously gathered but ultimately insignificant, diversionary

[15] For an alternate reading, see Margarita Stocker's *Apocalyptic Marvell: the Second Coming in Seventeenth Century Poetry*. Nature in the poem, "like the nation, is out of joint," Stocker says, and "natural categories are confused…. Such disarray … was characteristic of the Latter Days" (57).

details—details that do not represent reality but deter it, distract from it, even erase it. *Now you don't see it, now you don't.*

Baudrillard's infamous example of this kind of discourse is the media coverage of the first Gulf war. Writing first in January 1991, Baudrillard argued that, based on "the available evidence (absence of images and profusion of commentary)," the war would be "pure and speculative, to the extent that we do not see the real event that it could be or that it would signify" (29). What viewers did see was a virtualization of war "which is like a surgical operation, the aim of which is to present a face-lifted war, the cosmetically treated spectre of its death…" (28). In finally asserting, after the end of hostilities in February, that the Gulf War did not take place, Baudrillard expresses "not irony so much as the kind of black humour which seeks to subvert what is being said by pursuing its implicit logic to extremes: so you want us to believe that this was a clean, minimalist war, with little collateral damage and few Allied casualties. Why stop there: war? what war?" (P. Patton 7). We can attach such black humor easily enough to Marvell's work: so Appleton House and its vast grounds can provide sanctuary from disorder and catastrophe? What disorder? What catastrophe? What subtle nuns? What war? What abyss? What flood? Marvell's mockery is thus double-edged: in part he scorns the very possibility of locating or constructing orderliness in an England overrun by war and war's aftermath, but he also locates the absurdity in the idea of articulating safety or retreat from a threat to which one simultaneously strives to be indifferent.

That Marvell would experiment with habituating such absurd insensitivity is not inconceivable, even if we assume the poem's early composition in 1951, nine years before the Act of Indemnity and Oblivion in 1660, after which, as Norbrook points out,

"[f]orgetting was officially sanctioned" (*Writing* 1), subjects encouraged by decree to train themselves towards a necessary amnesia and a careful silence that, if objectively observed, could resemble indifference.[16] Barnaby suggests that "the Act merely codified what had already come to be understood: that the forces of revolution were as much rhetorical as military and political" (332). According to Stephen Zwicker, "the memory of that lamented translation from language to arms remained vivid and potent throughout the rest of the century. Civil war was an event that changed the conditions of public utterance …" (9).[17] But also changed were the conditions of memory. "Different kinds of forgetting and remembrance were implicit in the new law's status as an act at once of oblivion and of pardon," explains Paulina Kewes; "[a]n act of oblivion ostensibly indicates an intentional disregard or an arranged state of having been forgetten, while a pardon seems to be an intentional remembrance of an act only to excuse or forgive it" (113). However, "[g]ood memories were hard to separate from bad ones, and the arbitrary nature of selective forgetting and selective remembering was obvious to everyone" (Kewes 113). Here was "a period uniquely under the shadow of its past. Like a road accident victim, this generation remained susceptible to both nostalgia on the one hand, and nightmares on the other" (Scott 26). "[F]or good or ill," says Scott, "the nation remained a prisoner of memory" after 1660.

But Marvell's poem suggests that, even before the Restoration proper, survivors of the war and regicide may have spent the years before 1660 experimenting with the

[16] The Act established legal consequences for anyone who would "presume malitiously to call or alledge of, or object against any other person or persons any name or names, or other words of reproach any way tending to revive the memory of the late Differences or the occasions thereof." Excluded were a specified few who participated directly in the execution of Charles I.
[17] See also David Cressy.

strategy of forgetting. Certainly Fairfax did. His commonplace book contains the following lament on the regicide:

> Oh Lett that Day from time be blotted quitt
> And lett beleffe of't in next Age be waved
> In deeper silence th'Act Concealed might
> Soe that the King-doms Credit might be save'd
> (qtd. in Patterson, 97)

For Fairfax, retreat to his country estate was a means of forgetting. Indeed, a practiced non-commitment to one's own experience may have been the most attractive habit to cultivate, which is not to say that it was easy. The several examples of post-Restoration anti-republican violence Norbrook lists suggest that "forgetting would not happen of its own accord, the evidence must be actively erased" (*Writing* 3). There is no reason to suppose that forgetting was any easier before 1660, when the republican experiment was just beginning in the immediate aftermath of the regicide. In any case, "Upon Appleton House" may certainly be said to attempt to enact an active erasure through the strategy of neutralizing indifference, extreme non-participation. The speaker models perfectly the simultaneous indifference and hyper-vigilance the Act of Oblivion would later attempt to codify.[18] Over and over again "Upon Appleton House" thrusts its dangerous, world-destroying/world-inverting imagery before our eyes and then insists, as we are looking, that we not look, that there is nothing much, after all, to see. But it is "not as comforting as it ought to be that most of the things inverted in this poem are not in fact inverted" (Colie 204), and it is even "disturbing to realize that all this is *not* crucial, or that our

[18] Such a pairing is not identical to, but is perhaps akin to, the "alliance of levity and seriousness" that T.S. Eliot identified as a characteristic of Marvell's wit (104). Jonathan Goldberg points to a joining of "creative energy to annihilative loss. [Marvell's] poems are replete with emblematic moments of creative annihilation …" (14).Compare also Patterson's assertion that Marvell "was a man in whom discretion and indiscretion, detachment and involvement, were so inscrutably mixed that … he became, finally, a politic irony, a figure of speech" (48).

emotional reactions to the evident meaning of the words used are continually undercut and undermined by what the [speaker] does next …" (Colie 205). What collapses in this inconsistently traumatic exhibition is any understanding of the aims of information, as the speaker's commentary "loses itself in a completely unreal space" (Baudrillard *Gulf* 31) and his audience is "amnestied by the ultra-rapid succession of phony events and phony discourses …" (Baudrillard *Gulf* 51). We can neither fall through the abyss(es) nor go, stunned as we are not by the force of Marvell's images but by their "sinister insignificance" (Baudrillard *Gulf* 51).[19]

The last section of the poem is Marvell's attempt to shake us from our stupor by illustrating the ideal citizen in a territory willing to risk everything for shelter from its own bad memories. Maria is the product of the speaker's process of extreme non-participation. She is also the price of it.

4. "Nothing that is So is So": Reality Reflected

The entrance of Maria is the most significant feature of the final portions of Marvell's poem. Her accomplishments, rehearsed below, are many, but gifted as she is, it is Maria who finally offers us a way into the poem's exclusionary discourse. Her name calls forth literal associations between Mary Fairfax and Marvell, her tutor, and indeed it seems possible to begin closing the gap between poet and speaker, who come together as we are encouraged to see the latter as no longer a mere tour-guide, but a teacher.

[19] We might compare this to Victoria Silver's conclusion that "in Marvell's pastorals, the artistic works not to incite or fulfill but rather to extinguish desire, as the driving problematic of the human condition. For once things become artificial, they become peculiarly quiescent, memorial, and anaesthetized … in the sense of dead to the pain of living in this world" (41).

Before Maria arrives, however, our speaker continues to enjoy his privileged exclusion. His initial description of the wood as an ark half-functions as an explanation for his easy retirement from the flood, except that this ark is "yet green, yet growing" (484)—not even constructed yet. The speaker simply assumes rescue like he assumes the "easy" philosophizing (561) he shares in the following stanzas, which culminate in his assertion that

> I, easy Philosopher,
> Among the Birds and Trees confer;
> And little now to make me, wants
> Or of the Fowls, or of the Plants.
> Give me but wings as they, and I
> Straight floating on the air shall fly:
> Or turn me but, and you shall see
> I was but an inverted tree. (561-568)

Things progress quickly after the affirmations of stanza 71. Following his declaration of his essential affinity with Nature, the speaker claims fluency in the wood's "most learned original" language (570). Language he links to prophecy—weaving Sibylline messages out of "scattered … [l]eaves" (577). Prophecy he links to history—reading all the discourses of East and West "in this light Mosaic" (582), "Nature's mystic Book" (584). And history he links to theology—moving through the trees "[l]ike some great Prelate of the Grove" (592). Surprisingly, such responsibilities provoke no anxieties. Our speaker "languish[es] with ease" (593), resting on moss while "the wind, cooling through the boughs, / Flatters with air my panting brows" (595-96). The scene is set for ease and safety, and as before, when he oversaw the filling of his *tabula rasa*, the speaker seems to be just where he wants to be. He goes so far as to ask the "courteous Briars" (616) to chain and nail him to this spot—a brutal and threatening image that, as Marcus points out, is "utterly characteristic of [the speaker] and of the topsy-turvy logic of his poem"

(*Politics* 259). This too turns out to be a (non)threat that passes as easily as the (non)threat of the flood: "For now the waves are fall'n and dried, / And now the meadows fresher dyed" (625-26).

But just as the speaker seems content in his perfect ambiguity, contemplating the meadow as "a crystal mirror slick; / Where all things gaze themselves, and doubt / If they be in it or without" (636-38), he once again resorts to overselling. "The young Maria" (651) enters, and though the speaker makes every effort to build her up as a fantastic phenomenon, superior to anything encountered in the poem so far, she is in large part just as redundant as the poem's second flood—impressively redundant, but redundant nonetheless. Maria is special, we are told, because she enjoys an affinity with Nature, but then again so does the speaker. Nature's hushed, reverent admiration at Maria's entrance is a more enhanced but certainly still comparable response to the leaves and ivy which earlier embroidered, with similar reverence, a vestment for their speaker/prelate. Next, Maria is said to "converse in all the languages as hers" (708), but the speaker has already claimed a similar adeptness in the signs and speech of the woods. Maria is also safe from the "ambush" (719) of courtship, but no safer than the speaker, "encamped … [w]here Beauty, aiming at the heart, / Bends in some tree its useless dart" (602-604). Finally, both Maria and the speaker must admit an unfortunately tenuous connection to the spaces of the poem: Maria hangs on "like a sprig of mistletoe" destined to be cut by the priest who marries her (739, 742), while the speaker anticipates his own detachment enough to ask the woods to "stake [him] down" (624).

All this is not to say that the speaker's praise of Maria is necessarily insincere, just that he conjures her presence for additional reasons beyond the opportunity to

compliment her. That Marvell was Mary Fairfax's tutor is a fact impossible not to consider once we see how much the poem's Maria seems made in the image of the speaker—all her special features he has already enjoyed. In relinquishing control of the poem to her, the speaker essentially awards the authority he has clenched so tight-fistedly to his own reflection. The poem then follows all her movements and all her orders:

> Tis she that to these gardens gave
> That wondrous beauty which they have;
> She straightness on the woods bestows;
> To her the meadow sweetness owes;
> Nothing could make the river be
> So crystal-pure but only she;
> She yet more pure, sweet, straight, and fair,
> Than gardens, woods, meads, rivers are. (689-96)

Despite her hyperreal capacity for control, Maria obviously appears as the product of an educative process. She is the speaker's means of not only claiming the poem but rewriting it, further deterring the referents to reality we may have suspected Maria, as Mary, to restore. Instead, she is granted the authority to grant retroactive integrity to the muddled descriptions of garden, wood, meadow and river we have only just witnessed. No mention is made of the overlay of war on garden or meadow; the latter is sweet rather than bloody; the river is crystal-pure rather than swimming with astonished cows (472) and eel-invaded oxen (474). Maria gathers together all the rude heaps of images the poem has accumulated and by giving orders, restores order. She is more than a good student. She proves what the best forgetting can do.[20]

[20] She also proves its limitations. Brian Patton points out that, in his allusions to Maria's marriage—"And find a Fairfax for our Thwaites" (748)—"Marvell's equation of Mary Fairfax with Isabel Thwaites is a witty one, but it is subtly misleading: if there is to be a 'Fairfax' involved …, surely it would have to be Mary herself … [but] Mary's husband cannot be a Fairfax. In the present moment of the poem, then, the house of Fairfax is facing a dynastic crisis" (833). Monette points to "Maria's lack of involvement in the metaphorically violent process she is undergoing…. [S]he becomes first an object, passive and victimized,

In a way "Upon Appleton House" simply demonstrates what is most obvious about acts of oblivion: they require action—specifically the energetic and creative commitment to non-commitment that a strategy of forgetting requires. That energy we see in our speaker's endless restlessness as he conducts his tour; his creativity we see in Maria herself. As the speaker's finished product, Maria is proof that forgetting is not a matter of delusion but of design.[21] She is wholly objectified, the speaker's bad habits given form and flesh and finally power, an avatar picked to live in this artificial present now denuded of its equally artificial past. Lest we forget, the entirety of the poem is already an experiment in hyperreality; the speaker's rhetorical habits—a reliance on preventative accumulation, the absence of fundamental variables, the dependence on language that is already reproduced—have landed him in this extreme virtuality, making Maria an artifice added to the artifice that has always come first. Reality is still deterred. Action is not.[22] Marvell illustrates here, as he does in "The Mower's Song," how much work there is still to be done even inside the hyperreal. And as in that poem, there is no retreat from the hyperreal, no escape from these habits that have become habitation.

Ultimately we must see "Upon Appleton House" as both: a place to live and an ongoing articulation of living, another enclosure without closure. Despite himself the

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and then simply erased. Her parents rejoice in her marriage, but Maria herself is not granted an opinion" (166).

[21] Garrett Sullivan agrees in his study of memory and forgetting in Renaissance drama that forgetting "is more than a mere failure of memory" (2). It "has a content—indeed, different contents in different discursive contexts" (134), and it "aims to prescribe a future" (21). Compare also Grant Williams' and Christopher Ivic's assertion that "[t]here is much more to forgetting and conversely much less to memory than meets the eye…. Memory is not a totalizing field, and forgetting is neither the outside nor a lack within such an idealized field" (1). See their entire edited collection, *Forgetting in Early Modern English Literature and Culture.*

[22] Here again is Colie, who comments extensively on the poem's unreality, which "give[s] the whole poem an air of being not totally experienced, not totally grasped. The disjunctions of this world suggest its habitation by a being distracted, a being whose mind was not wholly free to control and order the experiences offered him, but who was doing a pretty good job of trying to control them in spite of his own preoccupations" (263).

speaker has constructed a dwelling "superfluously spread … / Where Winds as he themselves may lose" (17; 20). This kind of disorientation is the inevitable result of indifference combined with vigilance. When the speaker lectures the "fond sex" (729) in stanza 92, mocking their "useless Study" (730) and predicting, "Yet your own Face shall at you grin, / Thorough the Black-bag of your Skin" (733-34), it is a prophecy he can already attach to himself. Maria is his reflection, his poem's new face, and by the end she is the one doing all the ordering, all the leading, all the looking, relieving the speaker of his previous vigilance. However, as her reflexive image—as her—he is of course not relieved at all.[23] "When we penetrate the surface of things" in this poem, "we uncover yet another surface" (Dolan 253). We go round and back around. Maria replicates and substantiates the poem's major motif: that artifice comes first, reflections create reflections, and "all things gaze themselves" (637).[24] It is at once absorbing and liberating, excessive and conservative, brave and irresponsibly superfluous, though in the end Marvell encourages neither celebration nor despair over this oddly escapist process of self-reflection. As Ricks explains, such self-infolded imagery is "apt to civil war. It is not only a language for civil war (desolatingly two and one), but also, in its strange self-conflict, a civil war of language and the imaginable. The peculiar attraction of the figure,

[23] We might compare this to the pattern Patterson locates in Marvell's career "of alternating"—though a better word here might be simultaneous—"commitment and retreat, of rash involvement followed by self-doubt or apology, of changes of mind and direction" (10). She also remarks on the "trick of style in his personal letters, of speaking of himself in the third person, which is only partly explained by the need for secrecy" (11).

[24] Certainly likeness runs the poem, despite the impossibility of locating stable referents. Consider the last stanza, in which the salmon-fishers, carrying their canoes on their heads, appear as "Antipodes in shoes" (771), who then appear as tortoises (773), whose shape is used to describe the darkening hemisphere enclosing the estate (775-76). As Colie remarks, "[t]here are too many possibilities in this image for readers to keep straight …" (204). Marcus agrees that "the effect is rather to suggest the continuing vitality of an 'upending,' carnivalesque mode of vision" (*Politics* 262).

though, is that while it acknowledges (as truth must) such a civil war, it can yet at the same time conceive (as hope must) a healing of such strife" (55).

Indeed, the poem tests the notion of healing as it continues its interest in threats that do not threaten, in disasters which everyone may survive. "'Tis not, what once it was, the World, / But a rude heap together hurled; / All negligently overthrown" (761-63): the speaker knows this at the same time as he has already forgotten it. It is true that there is something deeply irresponsible about this kind of knowledge posing as oblivion. When Baudrillard called out the 1990s news media for its similarly fraudulent commentary on the war in Iraq, when he came to the only conclusion possible based on the information made available—that a war which had clearly taken place did not in fact take place—he articulated the shameful unreliability of the media's habits of superficiality without accountability; news that infolds upon itself is not news. Marvell exposes a similar failing in his culture's developing standards of discourse,[25] but better than Baudrillard he elucidates their potentially seductive appeal when he projects the news-givers as themselves self-infolded, already engaged in creative oblivion, such that every looking out is at once a looking in. Such self-reflection need not be self-defeating.[26] The speaker in "Upon Appleton House" asserts that a rude heap can be made legible, can be put "in more decent order" (766), and he offers the poem itself as incredible, ostentatious proof. Naturally, we cannot believe the evidence. The speaker's order is,

[25] See Barnaby as well as his major source material, Richard Kroll's *The Material Word*. Marvell's exploration of the appeal of self-infolded imagery can be compared to the movement Kroll locates in the Restoration to accept the contingency of knowledge "as inevitable and desirable" (52). Submission to contingency, according to Kroll, "achieves the force of ideology" in this period, and it is propagated by a rhetoric "that enacts its own failures to achieve epistemological certainty and allies that failure to a defined social ethic" (52-53).

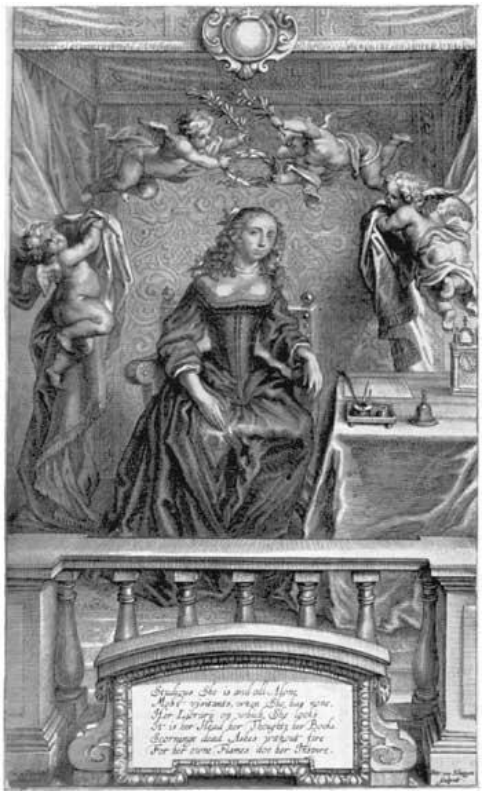
[26] As Colie says, though "nothing seems to be itself" in this poem, another way of looking at it is that nothing is "itself alone" (212). The speaker "uses himself … to call into question the principles of definition, limitation, and boundary" (212).

after all, still an unfathomable mess. But, disturbingly and also wonderfully, it is presented as a functional mess, a habitable mess. At the moment of most staggering disorientation, when the whole world has been negligently overthrown in a heap, the last stanza urges nothing less than that we make our way "in" (775), to perhaps any one of the jumbled spaces: house, garden, meadow, flood, woods. The poem flatteringly assumes that we know the way now, that we have been adequately trained to see doorways into disaster, to find a home in a heap. The implication that like the speaker we can go through the necessary and continuous steps to see what we want to see, to erase what we do not, to make a sanctuary appear in a scene of devastation, is irresistibly if shamefully satisfying. Marvell's purpose is not to condemn this choice—though he leaves that option open[27]—but to reveal in as much detail as possible the temptations that position a person to make this choice, and to articulate the complexity of oblivion, a state of mind so sublimely multifaceted that people may risk anything for it, even their own integrity, their own sense that what is so, is so.

[27] Indeed, it is not difficult to make the leaps from the narcissism displayed in "Upon Appleton House" to the conspiratorial and arbitrary government Marvell would write about in his later prose works. See *The Prose Works of Andrew Marvell*, eds. Annabel Patterson & Martin Dzelzainis; *Marvell and Liberty*, eds. Warren Chernaik & Martin Dzelzainis.

Chapter Six

Hell is Other People: Dissent and Deterrence in Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*



Studious She is and all Alone
Most visitants, when She has none,
Her Library on which She looks
It is her Head her Thoughts her Books.
Scorninge dead Ashes without fire
For her owne Flames doe her Inspire.
(Frontispiece to Cavendish's *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, 1655)

"History is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the topic is nomads."
(Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 23)

1. Bad Company: Naiveté, Pride and Dangerous Discourse

"Upon Appleton House" is Marvell's imaginative defense against the determinism of apocalyptic events. It suggests that with the right perspective, annihilation does not have to annihilate. While the healing process Marvell envisions is more than a little ethically ambiguous, the realistically intimidating features of the dangers he narrates lend sympathy to his speaker's more questionable coping strategies. Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, is another writer of the early modern period who appears drawn to the idea of annihilation. This may seem an odd claim to make of the woman who

imagined "what severall Worlds might in an Eare-ring bee,"[1] and whose organic materialism hypothesized the world as a rational, self-generating organism,[2] but Cavendish's works prove as concerned with elimination as generation. Indeed, Cavendish often inserts the experience of multiplicity or multiplication—of worlds, creatures, opinions, etc.—only to nullify its utilitarian value. In *The Blazing World* especially, variety is introduced to be effaced.

Cavendish thus situates herself in opposition to ongoing debates among early modern intellectuals on the utility of knowledge and the practical possibility of certainty or consensus arriving directly out of conflict.[3] Joanna Picciotto points to Bacon and Milton as early spokesmen for the paradoxical belief in this era that variety and diversity of opinion could provide "a means toward ultimate consensus; opinion was valued as, and only as, 'knowledge in the making,'" and collective effort was necessary in "the sacred work of truth production" (85). Barbara Shapiro outlines the later development in England's Royal Society of a slightly but significantly different view of collaboration, a "probabilistic view of human knowledge and natural science" (15) where "cooperative, collective efforts by many investigators, over time, would achieve relatively error-free findings that, if not 'certain' in the old sense, would at least attain to the highest level of the probable" (4-5). "Trust thus stood at the nexus of knowledge and social order," says Adrian Johns; "only with trust in people could come credibility for their observations and theories" (1128). This trust derived in large part from the belief in a gentlemanly disinterest. Gentleman witnesses would contribute "through etiquette-based processes of

[1] From the poem "Of Many Worlds in this World," in *Poems and Fancies* (1653), 45.
[2] See Lisa T. Sarasohn.
[3] See Peter Harrison.

mutual dependency" to the constitution of "matters of fact," which Mario Biagioli calls "disciplined (one might say choreographed) form[s] of evidence" (210, 236). Steven Shapin elaborates on this "more decorous and reserved way of speaking about" reality (309):

> A consequential distinction was commonly made between the scholar's goal of rigorously attaining and securing formal knowledge and the gentleman's more disengaged and pragmatic attitude towards the truth and certainty of knowledge…. To require very great rigor, precision, and certainty might be to put too great a strain upon conversation; it was to endanger its continuance. Certain conceptions of truth and precision were not worth that price. They ought to be civically bounded. (351)

The Royal Society thus re-examined the concept of certainty: "[l]owered expectations of philosophical accuracy, a more reserved way of speaking, a less passionate attempt to claim exact truth for one's claims were justified on explicitly epistemic as well as explicitly moral grounds" (Shapin 309). Still, the Royal Society did adopt a Baconion method of research, and according to Shapiro certain members, for example Robert Hooke, retained aspirations towards Baconian certitude, such that "[t]he line between universally true generalization derived by the Baconian method, and propositions that were so highly probably or morally certain that one should treat them as if they were universal generalizations, is … not always easy to draw" (35).

From Margaret Cavendish's perspective, probability and certainty are equally dubious aspirations, and all the Royal Society had really managed to do was establish a means by which it "did not have to look outside itself to confirm its authority" (Sarasohn 155). Though in her early *Poems and Fancies* she celebrates the movement in Nature from diversity to harmony as an imitable process, claiming in "Dialogue betwixt Wit, and Beauty" that "I can the work of *Nature* imitate" (51), in her later work she registers much

more skepticism about flawed humanity's capacity to reproduce the workings of the natural world. Lisa Sarasohn explains that "in Cavendish's eyes, by trying to make themselves the ultimate arbiters of natural philosophy, society members were not only irreverent to authority but also in rebellion against it. They were introducing civil war into the society of the learned …" (155). Provoked by the Society's presumptuous self-sufficiency, Cavendish promotes a much less optimistic view of variety's potential to lead to consensus through discourse, and she refuses to locate virtue in dissent to the extent that does the Royal Society. Cavendish easily mistrusts words as much as Andrew Marvell: discourse, she comes to believe, is always an artificial, and thus unreliable and potentially damaging, construct.[4] Her concern in *The Blazing World* is to spotlight what is untenable and naive in a theory that links dissent, however good-natured, to order.[5]

This is not to say that either dissent or uniformity have a more prominent place in Cavendish's writing. In fact, she makes equal room for both. Critics have brought much attention to the contradictions, fragmentations and ambiguities in Cavendish's work,[6] all

[4] See Christine Mason Sutherland for a discussion of Cavendish's "anomalous position vis-à-vis the rhetorical tradition" (260). Sutherland highlights not distrust of language so much as indecisiveness: Cavendish found herself caught uneasily between proponents of the plain style and of the grand style, and her lack of formal education exacerbated her discomfort. Sutherland identifies works by Cavendish that seem to "disvalu[e] the rhetorical tradition that excludes her" alongside works that express a "manifest regard" for the same traditions (262).

[5] See Peter Lake and Steve Pincus. They discuss the development of the public sphere in England from the post-Reformation to the post-Revolutionary period, and suggest that while many "political actors understood relatively unfettered public discussion to be normatively desirable" (290), others continued to see public discussion as a threatening "form of 'popularity,' a dangerously seditious appeal to the people inimical to good order and monarchical rule" (277). Cavendish's skepticism corresponds to the latter camp's apprehension about "deliberatively discovered truth" (284).

[6] She is "anything but methodical," says Sutherland, and "she disliked the constraint of following a set program, particularly one not designed by herself" (268). "Her ambivalent stance as author and fluctuating awareness of selfhood points towards a fundamental amorphousness that resists any straightforward modern categorization," says Mami Adachi (70). Judith Kegan Gardiner comments on Cavendish's "narcissistic philosophy of self-generated pleasure," a program she suggests can shed light on "one of the distinctive characteristics of Cavendish's self-presentations, the paradoxical figure of the bashful exhibitionist." See also Angus Fletcher for comments on the relationship in Cavendish's work between irregularity and hierarchy.

of them in uneasy juxtaposition to her staunchly royalist sympathies and personal devotion to rigid hierarchies of class. But amidst the indecipherable wavering of her texts we can locate an attitude towards the nature of dissent that appears uncompromising: dissent is dissent, and no matter how polite, it cannot translate to consensus of any kind, especially not the pure consensus achieved through Nature's mysterious reconciling of diversity. Inside the laboratory, dissent and consensus are just two artificial rhetorical activities that also happen to be contrary and thus uncooperative. Cavendish's skepticism works on two levels then: she questions both the Society's naiveté—its belief that dissent will translate to consensus—and its pride—that the consensus it manages to achieve will contribute legitimate insight on, rather than destructive uncertainty about, the natural world.

Cavendish's cynicism can be explained in part by her early attraction to atomism, a theory of matter that assumes the fallibility of the senses and rejects the possibility of stability. Anna Battigelli explains that, while Cavendish dropped atomism as a theory in 1655, she retained it "as a metaphor for the brutal and frightening clash of conflicting certainties" and "as the basis for her understanding of the instability of political institutions" (*Exiles* 57). "If she was sure of anything," says Battigelli, "she seems to have been sure of the ease with which society could dissolve into social and political chaos" (*Exiles* 57). The Royal Society, from Cavendish's point of view, irresponsibly whitewashes this ease. *The Blazing World* is her attempt to articulate what is most naïve about its research methods and its very philosophy, one that makes a virtue out of variety by denying its essential variousness. The only way the Society's particular brand of

dissent can lead to consensus, Cavendish concludes, is if it was never really dissent in the first place. And the only way consensus can provide insight into Nature is if it imitates Nature with perfect faithfulness—a too tall order that none of the characters in *The Blazing World* can fulfill.

To best expose the Royal Society's naïve optimism, it is their dissent-less dissent that Cavendish incorporates into her own work, immersing her text in the probability-establishing process espoused by the Society by creating a protagonist who falls victim to its seduction. *The Blazing World* redefines variety according to Cavendish's interpretation of the Society's vaguely articulated standards: variety as dissent-less dissent, not quite akin to agreement, but best understood as disagreement without any stakes, without the atomistic potential to incite chaos. Cavendish carries the Society's logic to its extreme, removing the variousness from variety, but in doing so she also gains the opportunity to argue the merits of her own philosophy of retreat, what Battigelli calls her exiles of the mind. Her work of fantasy, *The Blazing World*, is designed to spotlight "the subjectivity in which our inquiry into the world is … inevitably trapped" (Battigelli 104). To ignore this is to live in a dangerous, albeit seductive, denial, and Cavendish goes to great lengths to display both the dangers and the seductions of the Blazing World. It is a paradise built on wholly untrustworthy ground.

Consider the introduction, in which Cavendish seems to provide permission for anarchy when she encourages her readers to "create worlds of their own and govern themselves as they please" (109). What she actually promotes is neither a recipe for anarchism nor a reconciliation of collective and individual creative potential. The power to create worlds belongs to everyone, but Cavendish will make it increasingly clear as her

narrative moves forward that none of these newly created worlds may combine meaningfully, usefully, or even threateningly; they belong as private possessions to their singular creators. Communal world-making turns out to be entirely coincidental, neither collective gesture nor cooperative effort, but almost the opposite—separate incidences of detached self-aggrandizement. Cavendish admits in her preface to *The Blazing World* that she herself is

> as ambitious as ever any of my sex was, or can be, which makes that though I cannot be Henry the Fifth or Charles the Second, yet I endeavour to be Margaret the First, and although I have neither power, time nor occasion to conquer the world as Alexander and Caesar did, yet rather than not to be mistress of one, since fortune and the fates would give me none, I have made a world of my own, for which it is in everyone's power to do the like. (6)

Ambition drives the Duchess of Newcastle to world-making, and her provoking references to Charles, Caesar and Alexander seem designed to lend a menacing intensity to her determination, an intensity that is immediately undercut by her concession to everyone else's power "to do the like" inside worlds of their own. Certainly Cavendish flaunts her own egoism here,[7] but as Battigelli explains, her ambition can also be read "as a philosophical positioning of the 'self' that allows for an exploration of the problem of subjectivity" (*Exiles* 105). She implies that every person has the same capacity for the same arrogance, but by internalizing her own arrogance she eliminates its confrontational potential. Already we can draw the crucial conclusion that the only way to deactivate the corrosive power of a collective creative faculty is immediately to deny its collectiveness.

[7] Gardiner, for example, reads Cavendish's ambition entirely in the context of her self-absorption; Cavendish is "a narcissist who seeks to substitute stable self-mirroring for reliance on the fickle regard of others."

The ideology Cavendish delivers is curiously contradictory: a celebration of limitless and potentially conflicting imaginative enterprise must be quickly subsumed by a relentless interest in (re)establishing limits—restrictions that make shared capacities impossible actually to share. Such limits are echoed in the first descriptions of the Blazing World. Vast as it apparently is, it has but one emperor, one language, one religion—even its entrances and exits are limited.[8] Habitually, uncomfortably, Cavendish reduces the vastness she imagines, renders it as monotonous and mundane as it is infinite. This is best seen in her endless depiction of the various hybrid creatures and their particular means of conveyance through the waters of the Blazing World. Rescued from her corpse-laden vessel by the bear-men, and then conveyed out of their territory to that of the fox-men,

> after she had made some short stay in the same place, they brought her cross that island to a large river, whose stream ran smooth and clear, like crystal; in which were numerous boats, much like our foxtraps; in one whereof she was carried, some of the bear- and fox-men waiting on her; and as soon as they had crossed the river, they came into an island where there were men which had heads, beaks and feathers, like wild-geese…; and after the bear- and fox-men had declared their intention and design to their neighbours, the geese- or bird-men, some of them joined to the rest, and attended the Lady through that island, till they came to another great and large river, where there was a preparation made of many boats, much like birds' nests, only of a bigger size; and having crossed that river, they arrived into another island, which was of a pleasant and mild temper, full of woods, and the inhabitants thereof were satyrs, who received both the bear-, fox- and bird-men, with all respect and civility; and … some chief of the Satyrs joining to them, accompanied the Lady out of that island to another river, wherein were many handsome and commodious barges; and having crossed that river, they entered into a large and spacious kingdom, the men whereof were of a grass-green complexion, who entertained them very kindly, and provided all conveniences for their further voyage …. (10)

[8] "[A]s their Blazing World had but one Emperor, one government, one religion, and one language, so there was but one passage into that world, which was so little, that no vessel bigger than a packet-boat could go through; neither was that passage always open, but sometimes quite frozen up" (*BW* 91-92).

Angus Fletcher explains how "in a shallow sense, all of the people that the empress encounters are different," but their distinctions are purely superficial, and "the overwhelming feeling conveyed by this passage [above] is movement for the sake of movement," with no effort to "explore the unique perspectives afforded by this variety of peoples" (136). Fletcher goes on to comment on "[t]he frequency with which [Cavendish's] writing becomes a list of details, none of which is significant enough to hold her attention more than momentarily," a seeming negligence which "often turns the experience of reading into a forced march to no-where. As each new discovery proves as absent of satisfaction as the last, any readerly sense of curiosity is replaced with the frustrating experience of being willfully dragged by the author through an unending sequence of observations …" (136-37).[9] The variety of the Blazing World is essentially unvarious, and Fletcher is correct that the reader experiences not diversity but a monotonous inventory that annihilates its own multiformity as it is introduced.

But Cavendish's lack of curiosity is strategic, as is her Empress-protagonist's. That diversity *as* diversity cannot be experienced in the Blazing World is Cavendish's means of commenting on Royal Society members' impossible construal of dissent in their own organization. This is what difference without any stakes looks like. The Empress enacts the same stingy concentration on variety after she makes the mistake of founding several societies to house the intellectual efforts of her various subjects' various professions, and she supplies specific reasons for such sparing interest. First come the

[9] Perhaps this stylistic device worked more effectively in Cavendish's poetry. Hero Chalmers tells us that "[t]hroughout *Poems and Fancies*, Cavendish favors rhetorical structures that create a list-like effect imitative of her vision of the flickering diversity of Nature that must animate poetry" (128). But in the prose of *The Blazing World* this "breathless account of the multiplicity of Nature" (128) is replaced by a tedious, plodding testimony.

bear-men, dubbed experimental philosophers by the Empress, who are called in after a confusing exchange between the Empress and the bird-men regarding "the nature of thunder and lightning" (26). In order to "avoid hereafter tedious disputes, and have the truth of the phaenomenas of celestial bodies more exactly known" (26), the Empress commands the bear-men to observe these bodies through their telescopes. To her disappointment, the bear-men can present only divided conclusions. Cavendish writes that the use of the telescopes provokes such "differences and divisions amongst them" that "the Empress began to grow angry at their telescopes, that they could give no better intelligence. 'For,' said she, 'now I do plainly perceive that your glasses are false informers and instead of discovering the truth, delude your senses; wherefore I command you to break them …" (27). Cavendish's fiction mimics her very real position on Robert Hooke's *Micrographia*, which celebrated the microscope as an instrument that might resolve the distortions of the natural senses through the promise of procedural objectivity. Cavendish, as ever, was skeptical; according to Eve Keller, she saw such "claims of methodological rigor, value-neutrality, and objectivity, not as monolithic conduits for achieving certainty, but as social constructions that are endorsed as much because they advance the needs of their adherents as because they are deemed to be scientifically effective or true" (451). The bear-men confess to Cavendish's worst suspicions. "[E]xceedingly troubled" by the Empress's command, they admit that "we take more delight in artificial delusions, than in natural truths …; for were there nothing but truth, and no falsehood, there would be no occasion to dispute, and by this means we should want the aim and pleasure of our endeavours in confuting and contradicting each other; neither would one man be thought wiser than another …" (28). The bear-men's

confession legitimizes Cavendish's "sense of natural philosophy as a discipline of self-interested, and even egoistic, construction, rather than one of rational discovery or passive revelation, as the new scientists had claimed" (Keller 456). Still, when the bear-men beg the Empress "to spare our glasses, which are our only delight, and as dear to us as our lives" (28), she grudgingly relents, "upon the condition that their disputes and quarrels should remain within their schools and cause no factions or disturbances in state or government" (28). The logicians are given a similar order to "confine your disputations to your schools, lest besides the commonwealth of learning, they disturb also divinity and policy, religion and laws, and by that means draw an utter ruin and destruction both upon church and state" (48-49). Even more displeased by the lice-men, the Empress abruptly "told them that there was neither truth nor justice in their profession, and so dissolved their society" (46).

It is worth emphasizing that the Empress restricts her critique of the bear-men's conclusions to their instruments; she is said to "grow angry at their telescopes," blames these "deluders" and "false informers," and praises the bear-men's "more regular," natural sense and reason (27). Though she reserves even harsher criticism for later groups—the logicians and mathematicians—both groups also rely on instruments for their research. The lice-men experiment with weights in order to "measure all things to a hair's breadth" (46), although these weights, we are told, "would seldom agree" (46). The logicians can also be said to use a tool in their art of disputation—the syllogism. They present a series of syllogisms to the Empress:

> Every politician is wise:
> Every knave is a politician,
> Therefore every knave is wise.
> …

Every philosopher is wise:
Every beast is wise,
Therefore every beast is a philosopher. (47)

The Empress interrupts to complain that such "chopped logic … disorders my reason, and puts my brain on the rack" (48). "Your art of logic," she goes on to say, "consists only in contradicting each other, in making sophisms, and obscuring truth, instead of clearing it" (48). The Empress has no patience for the falsely informing artifice, whether it be microscope or syllogism. "As reason is above art," she asserts, "so much is a natural, rational discourse to be preferred before an artificial; for art is for the most part irregular and disorders men's understanding more than it rectifies them, and leads them into a labyrinth whence they'll never get out, and makes them dull and unfit for useful employments" (48). The Empress sees no way out of this labyrinth, and so resigns herself to being surrounded by a plethora of intellectual societies which will be of no apparent use to her or to her kingdom. Once again she mimics Cavendish's real perspective on deluding artifice: she would sooner wear a microscope than use one.

The Empress's lectures to the various groups of scholars who present their findings to her provide space for Cavendish's own distinctive theories on several fields of inquiry—astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, natural philosophy—but most importantly we come to understand, through the Empress's impatience with what proves to be superficial coherencies, that "the notion of coherence itself, the idea of consistency and regularity, seems for Cavendish to be a construct…; she seems to sense that the desire to reduce to simplicity, to mathematical neatness, has more to do with the desire to promote a certain image than it has do to with being accurate to some empirical truth" (Keller 458). Nevertheless the Empress allows the societies to continue their studies, with the

understanding that their findings will never achieve credibility outside their own walls. This supports Battigelli's assertion that "Cavendish's real criticism lies neither in the empiricists' tediousness nor in their lack of utility; her concern is their unwillingness to acknowledge the inevitable interference of their own subjectivity" ("Between the Glass" 34). But more importantly, here is where we begin to see Cavendish both diagnosing the reductive impulses of intellectual culture and exploiting them in the same breath. She diverges from her Empress when the latter, on the one hand, exposes the impossibility of consensus, especially within societies that hypocritically value dissent more than the coherence toward which they claim to be working, but on the other, makes room for these societies in her kingdom, despite her dismissiveness, and without requiring them to change their methods. The societies are apparently still valuable to her; she projects their existence while dismissing their substance. It is finally the Empress, in other words, who makes possible dissent-less dissent.

2. Better Company: Deterrence, Deceit and Non-Events

Through her protagonist, Cavendish engages in what Baudrillard might describe as the substitution of the absent or pseudo-event for the real. "If there are any historical stakes" attached to events such as these, "they remain secret, enigmatic; they are resolved in events which do not really take place" (Baudrillard *Illusion* 15). Baudrillard's humble modern example of this phenomenon is a soccer match in Madrid in 1987, played inside an empty stadium at night, all spectators banned by the International Federation because of their behavior during a previous game. This "'real' event occur[ed] in a vacuum, stripped of its context and visible only from afar, televisually" (*Transparency of Evil* 79),

says Baudrillard, and he sees in this rather modest example a metaphor for "the events of our future," which will "likewise unfold, in a sense, in an empty stadium … whence any real public has been expelled because of potentially too lively passions, and whence nothing emerges now save a television retranscription…" (*Transparency of Evil* 80). "No one will have directly experienced the actual course of such happenings, but everyone will have received an image of them…. [E]verything begins to operate as though some International Political Federation had suspended the public for an indeterminate period and expelled it from all stadiums to ensure the objective conduct of the match" (*Transparency of Evil* 80).

Cavendish's Empress functions like Baudrillard's International Federation, turning all of her societies into empty stadiums. Her engagement with her scholar-subjects is in fact her means of diluting their disruptive potential. Their work may go on, but any effects of their studies are perpetually deterred. And deterrence, as Baudrillard explains, "is a very peculiar form of action: it is *what causes something not to take place*" (*Illusion* 17). The Empress establishes a series of pseudo-events, "events which do not in any way advance history, but rather run it backwards, back along the opposite slope, unintelligible to our historical sense …, events which no longer have a negative (progressive, critical or revolutionary) potency since *their only negativity is in the fact of their not taking place*" (*Illusion* 17). Baudrillard concludes this comment with the single word, "disturbing," and deems deterrence to be a "diabolical force," "the baleful form which presides over the nullity of our age" (*Illusion* 17). But for Cavendish, deterrence is also liberation, and nullity promises safety from future threats of civil distress—sanctuary, in effect, from history. Indeed, substituting the nullification of an active social

body's revolutionary potency for the diabolical force of another civil war—inevitable should such social bodies' potencies be allowed to manifest in a truly public space—is for her a fair and responsible trade. Cavendish's world view tells her that civil strife is always on the horizon, so that whatever enthusiasm she brings to the intellectual pursuit of truth must come secondary to her interest in preventing the proliferation of competing falsehoods. Ultimately this prevention, this deterrence, must assume all of Cavendish's energy. Hers is a negative approach to certainty, which arrives not through weighing options, with either passion *or* neutrality, but through withdrawing the stakes that make the presence of passion or neutrality an issue. What began as an expose of the Royal Society's naïve probability-establishing procedures has developed into complete immersion in what turns out to be a perfect means of deterring dangerous debates. We see the seductive potency of Cavendish's negative approach increasing in the text, as the Empress's enthusiasm for deterrence swells, and she begins to anticipate the dissent that will disorder her kingdom, quelling it before it truly exists.

An example of such anticipation occurs just after the Empress pronounces judgment on the various intellectual societies. Her next order of business is the matter of the conversion of her subjects from their inferior religion. This she smoothly and quickly accomplishes, both by building churches and instituting a congregation of women with herself as head preacher. But no sooner has the Empress converted her entire kingdom and "gained an extraordinary love of all her subjects throughout the world" than she doubts the permanence of her success (49): "pondering with herself the inconstant nature of mankind, and fearing that in time they would grow weary, and desert the divine truth, following their own fancies, and living according to their own desires, she began to be

troubled that her labours and pains should prove of so little effect, and therefore studied all manner of ways to prevent it" (49). The solution she settles on involves building two chapels lined with one of two kinds of special stones available in the Blazing World: the fire-stones, which when wet "appear all in a flame," and the star-stones, which "cast a splendorous and comfortable light" (50):

> In the chapel which was lined with the fire-stone, the Empress preached sermons of terror to the wicked, and told them of the punishments for their sins, to wit, that after this life they should be tormented in an everlasting fire. But in the other chapel lined with the star-stone, she preached sermons of comfort to those that repented of their sins, and were troubled at their own wickedness…. [T]he empress appeared like an angel in it; and as that chapel was an emblem of Hell, so this was an emblem of Heaven. And thus the Empress, by art, and her own ingenuity, did not only convert the Blazing World to her own religion, but kept them in a constant belief, without enforcement or blood-shed; for she knew well, that belief was a thing not to be forced or pressed upon the people, but to be instilled into their minds by gentle persuasions" (50-51).

A better word would be trickery. The text outlines not a process of persuasive enlightenment but a crafty scam dependent on the spectacle of art much more than on reason. William Poole suggests that "the scientific ruse by which Cavendish's Empress converts her country … is in keeping with Cavendish's interest in what science is for" (16), but this conclusion ignores the Empress's very clear interest, stated just pages before, in establishing her preference for "a natural, rational discourse" over artifice. The text, in fact, has yet to grant us a clear picture of "what science is for." Here the Empress's paranoia convinces her to ignore her own preferences, and it is not the last time she will do so.

In the second part of *The Blazing World* the Empress again chooses artifice and spectacle as her primary means of instituting order, this time in the world from which she

came. Informed by the immaterial spirits that her native country is beset by war, she resolves to return with an army of her new subjects from the Blazing World. Appearing first before her own countrymen, in garments adorned with glistening star-stone, and borne on the surface of the water by the fish-men, the Empress "persuades" them that she is "an angel, or some deity, and all kneeled down before her, and worshipped her with all submission and reverence," the Empress making sure to keep "her accoutrements" out of sight (96). After destroying enemy ships and several stubborn cities by means of the fire-stone, she ensures that her native country is made "the absolute monarchy of all that world" (100). The ruse continues until (and presumably after) the Empress takes her leave, appearing once more "upon the face of the water in her imperial robes," reproducing her larger-than-life majesty for all comers, effecting

> a great admiration in all that were present, who believed her to be some celestial creature, or rather an uncreated goddess, and they all had a desire to worship her, for surely, said they, no mortal creature can have such a splendid and transcendent beauty, nor can any have so great a power as she has, to walk upon waters, and to destroy whatever she pleases, not only whole nations, but a whole world. (100-101)

The last compliment is particularly unsettling, for it purposefully emphasizes not a liberating power but a destructive one. As the Empress departs from her home we too depart with a sneaking suspicion that in saving her world from conflict, she may have effaced its natural varieties completely. Awe and/or fear of her godlike power must deter, indefinitely, the possibility of dissent not only in her native country but throughout this *whole world*. Eternal deterrence can only be imagined through these two means: stupor or apocalypse. Either way, this is a world hollowed out by the event of the Empress's arrival, what Baudrillard would call a meteoric event, "of the same chaotic inconsequence as cloud formations" (*Illusion* 19). Such pseudo-events "have no sequel," says

Baudrillard, and even when we sense their importance "we do not know how to draw any consequences from them" (*Illusion* 19). "[T]hey evade any desire to give them meaning and elude the heavy attraction of a continuous history" in favor of a discontinuous one that "fluctuates at the same irregular rhythm as natural phenomena" (*Illusion* 19). Perhaps this, after all, is *what science is for*: reinforcing Nature's inscrutable irregularity. From Cavendish's increasingly pessimist perspective, this is all natural philosophy can hope to accomplish. This means that even though Fletcher argues convincingly that *The Blazing World* is Cavendish's effort "to translate Nature's qualities onto a mortal woman" (125), it is important to remember that at the same time as the Empress becomes larger than life, symbolizing Nature's awesome illegibility, she continues to represent those who would merely imitate Nature through distinctive and perfectly mundane procedures. Her accoutrements may be hidden from her countrymen, but as readers we see everything. To us, Cavendish's Empress is still the anxious monarch, guilty of the same pride that *The Blazing World* exists in large part to condemn, enacting the very behaviors she polices so uncompromisingly. She is so eager to establish dissent-less dissent that she betrays her own reverence for reason and, seduced by her own goddess ruse, comes to represent all the dangerously naïve practitioners of natural philosophy, those who manage to persuade themselves—when they are not, like the bear-men, too busy arguing amongst themselves—that the steady progress they advocate for the sake of understanding Nature is not in fact synonymous with the casual annihilation of any meaningful contact with the natural world. Because the Empress is undoubtedly an annihilator as much as a savior: when she rescues her world she also siphons its future, and in doing so she teaches no specific, repeatable lesson; rather, she imposes a void. The world she leaves behind is

another empty stadium, or, to use a perhaps more appropriate metaphor, it appears as a kind of suspended specimen—like the lark Robert Boyle once suffocated in an air-pump—destroyed so it can be preserved. We would do well to consider Fletcher's warning to those critics of Cavendish who suggest "that there is something inclusive and therefore inviting about her style…. Although it is true that she wanted to give her readers the delight afforded by the wondrous varieties of nature"—a delight that the witnesses to the Empress' magic and majesty arguably experience—"she also wished to touch them with the sense of unease that Boyle experienced when looking at the convulsions of the suffocating lark" (137-38). Her strategy is in fact similar to Marvell's in "Upon Appleton House:" she more than hints at all there is to see in Nature's "unregulated motion" (Fletcher 138), but she simultaneously insists that, for our own good, we not look too closely. Otherwise we become like the Empress, so obsessed with regulating the un-regulatable, with imitating Nature, that she becomes a destructive force, blind to her own eradicating power.

3. Worst Company: Diversity, Disposal, and Annihilation

What Cavendish ultimately displays in *The Blazing World* is a lose-lose situation. Not only is the unavoidable problem of dissent not recognized as a problem by some of the most learned creatures, but those who do recognize its disruptive potential contain it ineffectively and injudiciously. When the Empress fakes immortality for the sake of order, she means to imitate, with due attention and reverence, the entirely un-artificial and perfectly functional dissent-less dissent already at work in Nature: this is the paradox, explored so enthusiastically in *Poems & Fancies*, which says that diversity is, through the

spontaneous energy of the natural world, translated into harmony. But Cavendish's impression of a too-flawed humanity, an impression which must ultimately include her avatar-Empress, means that human beings are excluded from the smooth process of disintegration and reintegration that occurs in Nature. We are in fact cut off from Nature, condemned to an artificial reality where, by word or by deed, Nature cannot be imitated. Lost is Cavendish's earlier confidence in linking the variety of Nature "with the poetics of the written text" (Chalmers 137). Language falls short, and so does the Empress, making her mimicry of Nature an imposition and not an homage.[10]

Rather suddenly we understand that our protagonist has been sliding down a depressing spiral. The high premium she places on deterring the obvious dissent she witnesses in her scholarly societies leads her to anticipate conflict in the rest of her empire before that conflict occurs, and her response to her own unreasonable, perhaps even unnatural, anxiety is deceitful, disturbing and destructive—perhaps just as destructive as the chaos that would have occurred anyway, if dissent had been allowed to manifest fully, perhaps even more destructive, because performed with such amateurish capriciousness. The Empress takes us further and further away from Nature, from reason—from what she claims to value most. In both examples discussed above—Empress as converter of the Blazing World, Empress as savior of her native world—

[10] This reading diverges from Keller's and Catherine Gallagher's interpretations of the thoroughness of Cavendish's skepticism. Nature "cannot be wholly known," Keller explains, because "there simply exists no outside vantage point from which to view and thereby to control" it (456). Gallagher remarks on the regressive relationship between absolutism and subjectivity in the text: "(1) the absolutist imagines the self as microcosm; (2) the microcosm requires an absolute ruler, a figure of the self in the world of the self; (3) the ruler of the microcosm, finding herself to be but a part of the microcosm she inhabits, must create yet another microcosm in order to meet the demands of absolutism. Such a text finally imagines subjectivity as an infinite, unfathomable regression of interiority" (32). I suggest instead that Cavendish's skepticism stems from her belief that humanity has in fact driven itself to an "outside vantage point," has severed its links to a rational Nature. *The Blazing World* is a text that moves out and away from Nature rather than deeper into its folds.

virtue is located not in reconciling variety but in going out of one's way to eliminate the possibility of variety. These are preemptive strikes of the kind first articulated by none other than the Duchess of Newcastle, who appears as a character in *The Blazing World* when she (or rather, her soul) is summoned there to act as a scribe to the Empress. At the end of the first part of *The Blazing World*, in response to the Empress's complaints about the disagreements among the various intellectual societies, the Duchess urges her, without hesitation,

> to dissolve all their societies; for 'tis better to be without their intelligences, than to have an unquiet and disorderly government. The truth is, said she, wheresoever is learning, there is most commonly also controversy and quarrelling … which must needs breed factions in their schools, which at last break out into open wars, and draw sometimes an utter ruin upon a state or government. (88)

It is not the first time that the Duchess has declared the essential uselessness of such collective pursuits of consensus. Shortly after her arrival in the Blazing World, the Duchess responds to the Empress' desire to make a Cabala:

> I would desire you to let that work alone, for it will be of no advantage either to you or your people.… [T]he vulgar interpretation of the holy scripture would be more instructive and more easily believed than your mystical way of interpreting it…. Wherefore the best way … is to believe with the generality the literal sense of the scripture, and not to make interpretations everyone according to his own fancy, but to leave that work for the learned, or those that have nothing else to do. (69)

Briefly but effectively, the Duchess explains why the Empress need not waste her time creating a theological, philosophical, moral or political Cabala, and again it is the impossibility of consensus, the belief that "to add nonsense to infinite would breed a confusion" (69), that mutes enthusiasm for the Empress's proposals. Initially it appears that the Duchess's sole function in the Blazing World is to reject, for the sake of maintaining the stability the Empress has temporarily established through deterrence, all

of the Empress's less passive and potentially more creative ideas. But in saving the Empress from herself, the Duchess threatens to do to her friend what her friend did to her native world when she siphoned the life out of it. She exacerbates *The Blazing World*'s impossible, lose-lose dilemma: to ignore the fact that dissent must be contained if it is not to breed an endless confusion is naive, but to believe that it can be contained effectively is arrogant. The Empress and Duchess's discussions show that once confusion is prevented from breeding without restriction, something else breeds instead, something superfluously destructive rather than merely disruptive. Purposefully or not, Cavendish hints at this glitch in her activism whenever she includes the uneasy performances of abortive creation that occur periodically throughout her text: the construction of the stone-lined chapels, the fraudulent establishment of the Empress' native country as supreme monarchy, and, perhaps most tellingly, the attempt to find a random world for the Duchess to conquer and then rule with as much authority as the Empress rules the Blazing World.

The Duchess admits early in her friendship with the Empress that she "would fain be as you are, that is, an Empress of a world, and I shall never be at quiet until I be one" (70-71). Seeking guidance once more from the immaterial spirits, the women are informed that "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" (72). They wonder why the Duchess desires "to be Empress of a material world, and be troubled with the cares that attend your government? whenas by creating a world within yourself, you may enjoy all both in whole and in parts without control or opposition, and may make what world you please,

and alter it when you please…" (73). Persuaded by the spirits, the Duchess embarks on the strenuous activity, but the project soon takes a disconcerting turn. The Duchess spends as much time annihilating worlds than creating them:

> [F]irst she resolved to frame it according to the opinion of Thales, but she found her self so much troubled with demons, that they would not suffer her to take her own will, but forced her to obey their orders and commands; which she being unwilling to do, left off from making a world that way, and began to frame one according to Pythagoras's doctrine; but in the Creation thereof, she was so puzzled with numbers, how to order and compose the several parts, that she having no skill in arithmetic, was forced also to desist from the making of that world. Then she intended to create a World according to the opinion of Plato; but she found more trouble and difficulty in that, then in the two former … that her patience was not able to endure the trouble which those ideas caused her; wherefore she annihilated also that world… (73-74).

The Duchess continues to model her world after the methods of other scholars; the opinions of Epicurus, Aristotle, Descartes and Hobbes are found equally wanting, until, "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," a world which, "after it was made, appeared so curious and full of variety, so well ordered and wisely governed, that it cannot possibly be expressed by words" (75).

We are asked to believe that the Duchess's invented world, rich with self-moving variety, perfectly mimics the natural world, which in Cavendish's philosophy moves the same way; finally a one-to-one correlation between Nature and human invention has been asserted. But note the Duchess's insistence that this world "cannot possibly be expressed by words." Its inexpressibility is apparently its biggest selling point, but the Duchess's awkward insistence on silence actually distracts us from her creative success and reminds us of the mistrust of discourse that is palpable throughout this text. Note too the clear indications that the Duchess makes no attempt to integrate any of the various methods

with which she experiments: she simply rejects them one after another. The varieties she introduces only exist as reminders of their irrelevance. Once again we experience a sense of vastness that is also monotonous, another forced march to nowhere, this time in a list of details regarding Plato, Epicurus, Hobbes, etc. to which we are not meant to be attentive.[11] This is a hyper-deterrence of variety synonymous not with caution but with a capricious destruction. The Duchess is an annihilator of worlds, and the annihilation she systematically enacts becomes the most conspicuous feature of Cavendish's narrative, such that any of Cavendish's specific and valid critiques of the methods of the various thinkers she names are lost in the tedium of her demolition. There is no argument present, only dismissal. And that makes the Duchess's Eureka moment ring as falsely as the Empress's final farewell to her duped countrymen. Both women have made worlds, yet we remember them as un-makers, hell-bent on dismantling what they wish to preserve.

4. No Company: Oblivion, Exile, and the Void

Cavendish's campaign to expose the true nature of Royal Society procedures, to identify their dissent as essentially dissentless, is entirely successful, though in the midst of her accomplishment Cavendish also exposes her own deep attraction to the same kind of deterrence, along with the poisoned world view that is responsible for such enticement. Her skepticism about humankind's potential to commune with Nature teeters on the edge of a despairing faithlessness in public discourse, a position that convinces her that, by any

[11] Gallagher presumes that "the character Cavendish's world will, like the blazing world, also contain a Margaret Cavendish who wishes to be empress of a world and decides instead to create a microcosm, etc. ad infinitum" (32). Eve Keller extends this argument by pointing out that "there is no reason to assume that the progression does not go backwards as well—that the self that creates the Blazing World is not itself created by some previous self.… [T]he self is endlessly generated, like the infinite, organic world it occupies" (463).

means necessary, heterogeneity must be expunged from a heterogeneous body if that body is not to destroy itself. Hence her steady immersion in the quest for a disposable diversity, a dissent-less dissent—which she finds, for though there is plenty of talk in the Blazing World, all the talk is cheap. However, if the stakes seem low inside Cavendish's fantasy exiles, they also reflect how high the stakes are elsewhere. We might say that Cavendish deals in inverse proportions: the least concern the Duchess displays as she annihilates entire worlds can alert us to the extreme concern Cavendish experiences in the real world, where she can hardly debunk competing theories so efficiently and effectively. It is perhaps because we sense this proportion that we react to the Duchess's casual destruction of multiplicity with such unease, an unease that threatens to extend itself to cover Cavendish's entire engagement with heterogeneity: is such engagement not counterfeit? Do not all her experiments with multiplicity have pre-determined outcomes? Is her apparently rhizomatic writing strategy not in fact reducible to the most childishly redundant binary: *Everybody is wrong but ME!*

Deleuze and Guattari's theories on the rhizome can in fact help us here. In their introduction to the concept, they briefly discuss the rhizomatic relationship between the orchid and the wasp. The flower, they explain,

> deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid's reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome … not imitation at all but a capture of code … a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp…. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome … "the *aparallel evolution* of two beings that have absolutely nothing to do with each other." (10)

Deleuze and Guattari see the same aparallel evolution between book and world as they see between wasp and orchid. Books do not reproduce the world any more than the insect reproduces the flower. Mimicry, say the authors, is in fact "a very bad concept, since it relies on binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature" (11). Rhizomes are not mere tracings of various observable phenomena; they are relationships that include ruptures and reversals as much as unifications and hierarchizations. And it is just this constant modification that guarantees the productive evolution of the rhizomatic relationship.

However, this is just what Cavendish denies when her Duchess finally succeeds in imagining a world that imitates perfectly Cavendish's natural philosophy. It is impossible to celebrate this relationship between "book" and world as rhizomatic when we remember that its production depends on the violation of what Delueze and Guattari identify as the rhizome's basic principles: connection, heterogeneity, and multiplicity. "[A]ny point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, *and must be*" (7, my emphasis), explain the authors, for multiplicities have to connect with other multiplicities. The Duchess's annihilative energy cannot accommodate these connections, and so cannot accommodate Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the rhizome:

> It is a question of a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again…. We invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another. We employ a dualism of models only in order to arrive at a process that challenges all models. Each time, mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass. Arrive at the magic formula we seek—PLURALISM = MONISM—via all the dualisms that are the enemy, an entirely necessary enemy, the furniture we are forever rearranging. (20-21)

Certainly Cavendish attempts a movement from pluralism to monism, but she emphasizes elimination rather than rearrangement. Cynicism prohibits her faith in perpetually moving models. *The Blazing World* betrays also her necessary lack of interest in evolution. Her unstated goal is almost the opposite: to stop history in its hideous tracks.

Knowing her personal history, we can perhaps understand Cavendish's impulses.[12] But it is difficult not to feel disappointment when such a profound imagination reduces itself to what can look like simple dualism: *my world or nothing*. When Cavendish neglects all conjunctive possibilities between the multiplicities she invokes, she ignores also the potentialities of the rhizome: it is "alliance, uniquely alliance" (25); its fabric "is the conjunction, 'and…and…and…'" (25). In ignoring this or any conjunction Cavendish ignores the potentialities of basic dialogue, of discourse altogether. In fact, the *my world or nothing, with me or against me* dualism is too generous a description for the position ultimately inhabited by Cavendish, who is neither with nor against anyone, who is without company. "In Cavendish's works," Catherine Gallagher explains, "the private realm is not simply country retirement, nor is it the sphere of the family, nor the scene of domestic productivity, nor the space of erotic encounter. It is, rather, absolute privacy, void of other bodies and empty even of other minds" (30). Gallagher points us to the frontispiece of Cavendish's *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, which shows her sitting alone in a library ostentatiously empty of

[12] During the Civil War, Cavendish followed Queen Henrietta Maria into exile in Paris, as one of her ladies in waiting. Her brother, a Royalist general, was executed by Parliamentary forces in 1648 after surrendering the town of Colchester. Cavendish's mother and two siblings had died a year earlier: their graves were defiled, and Cavendish's home vandalized, in the aftermath of the siege. Cavendish suffered terrible grief for her family along with increasing distress over her husband's financial difficulties. Because his estates had been confiscated by Parliament, Cavendish's husband struggled with creditors throughout their exile in Paris and Antwerp, and though he was made a Duke after Charles II's restoration, he was never invited to play a significant role in court, an oversight Cavendish found difficult to reconcile, despite her loyalty to the royalist cause. See Gallagher for a thorough discussion of Cavendish's Toryism.

books.[13] Her head is her library, the legend informs us, "her Thoughts her Books," and "her owne Flames doe her Inspire." Mami Adachi notes the "freedom of the imagination" such an "inviolable space" could offer a female writer like Cavendish (82), but Gallagher seems more on the mark when she calls this "a strangely haunted and even feverish solitude. There is a sense of alarm raised especially by the image of the flaming head. And this is just one of numerous instances in which Cavendish seems imperiled by her total self-referentiality" (30).[14]

In the prefatory epistle to *Poems & Fancies*, Cavendish confesses that she "would either be a world or nothing," a statement that not only reveals her ambitious imagination but also alludes to her depressing apprehension that to make a world of herself, she must make nothing of the world. Disguised but present in this early work is Cavendish's later tendency to link the fullness of a world with the emptiness of a void. *The Blazing World* finally displays for us the paradoxical but undeniable likeness between these contraries, for the worlds we encounter are busy voids, full of experimentation and conversation and invention, but empty of progress and denied history. As in Marvell's poetry, we are introduced to a complex oblivion, exile that poses as engagement after legitimate engagement has become too upsetting or impossible to perform. The habitable oblivion Cavendish constructs anticipates the divorce of World and Book, or "the trouble that happens when reality is brought into contact with models" and these models, thereafter, "become reality's ultimate predator" (Rubenstien 148, 149). Such is Cavendish's position: eagerness to imitate Nature leads to its removal from our sphere. "[I]t is not that

[13] See the image above, original by Pieter Van Schuppen, London, 1655. Accessed August 21, 2010 through she-philosopher.com, Gallery Cat. 10.

[14] For another perspective on Cavendish's tendency to "creat[e] utopian heroines who take women's sequestration to extremes" (339), see Erin Lang Bonin's "Margaret Cavendish's Dramatic Utopias and the Politics of Gender."

the real no longer exists but rather that its *principle* has faltered…" (Rubenstien 149). Cavendish's work suggests her apprehension that the real world has lost its natural principles, and that exchanges that take place in groups such as the Royal Society can only fetishize processes now permanently removed from Nature.[15] "Fetishistic investment is an extreme form of singularity and literality," explains Diane Rubenstein (151), and this is exactly what we see in the frontispiece to *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* and in *The Blazing World.* Though the Duchess and the Empress appear to commit, fully, to interacting with their world(s), all their interactions are in fact movements away from Nature. This is the habit the virtual world instills, says Baudrillard: "at the same time as we plunge into this machinery and its superficial abysses, *it is as though we viewed it as theatre*" (*Intelligence of Evil* 84). To sense the speciousness of an activity but to plunge into it anyway is the very betrayal of the reality principle Cavendish outlines, step by step, in *The Blazing World*. By the end her avatars prove no less out of touch than any Royal Society gentleman, and dissent-less dissent—discourse without stakes—proves to be even more damaging than the alternative, for it leaves us, quite literally, in a no-man's land, where events both fail to occur and somehow prove devastating at the same time. All roads, it seems, lead to the same empty study, the same exile into a reality deprived of its principles. "We witness the collapse of metaphor into the real" (Rubenstein 161), for

[15] Baudrillard explains the movement from simulacrum to virtual reality and the fetish: "initially, the real object becomes sign. But in a subsequent stage the sign becomes an object again, but not now a real object; an object much further removed from the real than the sign itself—an object off camera, outside representation, a fetish. No longer an object to the power of the sign but an object to the power of the object—a pure, unrepresentable, unexchangeable object, yet a non-descript one" (*Impossible Exchange* 129). Applying this to Cavendish, we can say that, initially, the real object or event is dissent, which is taken for a sign by the Royal Society; that is, its translation into dissent-less dissent is designed to replace real discourse with a representation of discourse. It becomes discourse without stakes. In the subsequent stage, dissent-less dissent becomes a fetish, empty of content and antagonistic to interaction rather than merely indifferent: this is the Empress as fake god, imposing dissent-less dissent as a *thing* and not a process. Discourse becomes a sign and then a fetish.

the Empress's empty studies/stadiums can no longer function as metaphors for our non-engagement in real events, not once the entire scene of principled reality has removed itself. A metaphor without a referent, after all, is no longer a metaphor. This is what Baudrillard means when he says that "[t]he sign, ceasing to be a sign, becomes once again a thing among things" (*Intelligence of Evil* 68). And this explains the Duchess's complete lack of reverence for the worlds she systematically destroys: they are only things among things, desirable, as fetishes are, but unexchangeable and non-descript. What else would one do with them but throw them away?

We may not find a model perspective in Cavendish's despairingly antagonistic attitude toward discourse and progress, but we can appreciate the indictment against fetishistic formulas that *The Blazing World* ultimately demands. And we may learn a careful vigilance against the exile that poses as engagement. Examples abound in the media, but perhaps the closest link to Cavendish's fetishized world-making is the pervasive exploitation of the political poll, ubiquitous during (not to mention before and after) any campaign season.[16] Critics of polls have commented on their pseudo-science, their "phony populism" and our inability "to judge whether opinions polls are reflecting something genuine" (Butovsky 92, 100). At their best polls can only capture an incomplete picture, for "just knowing how to measure something is not quite the same as understanding what is really going on" (Lang 4). Pierre Bourdieu has dubbed polling "[t]he 'science without a scientist' … the equivalent of what is, in another context, the dream of a 'bourgeoisie without a proletariat,'" but he includes the reminder that "false science has real political effects" ("Opinion Polls" 169, 172). Charles Briggs summarizes

[16] See Diane Heith's "Continuing to Campaign: Public Opinion and the White House."

Bourdieu's position and other harsh dismissals of polling as a "pervasive and relatively nonintrusive way to conduct surveillance and to induce individuals to internalize the beliefs, attitudes, ideas, fears, and desires produced for them" (699).[17] But Briggs goes on to suggest that it is "misleading and unproductive to think that the power of polls emerges from a secret pragmatics that is 'systematically blocked from view' … (699). Baudrillard agrees that "the matter is at once less serious and more serious" than the threat of manipulation from an elite or corporate conspiracy working to surreptitiously manufacture public opinion ("The Masses" 579). Pollsters can hardly conceal their methods, and most agencies openly acknowledge a margin of error for their findings, brought about through interviewer bias, awkward or misleading questions, non-representative samples, etc.[18] But as Briggs meticulously explains,

> [c]riticizing poll results on these grounds reproduces polling communicability and its deep connections with democratic ideologies; to raise basic questions regarding capital, power, and discourse would place an individual in the realm of those who have failed to learn how polling and democracy function—that is, of the pre-modern, ignorant, irrational subject who threatens democratic governance…. Polling communicability helps to render illegitimate or even unthinkable our ability to criticize one more way that capitalism claims to enable the people to speak. (698)

Briggs looks far beyond minor procedural flaws to question the presumption that polling data could say everything (perhaps even anything) about public opinion. Forget condemning polls for failing to measure "an authentic essence of the social;" what if there is no authentic essence, no "objective truth of public opinion" to measure? (Baudrillard "The Masses" 578). What if when "America Speaks," to borrow the Gallup

[17] See also James Druckman & Lawrence Jacobs; Pierre Bourdieu, "Public opinion does not exist;" B. Ginsberg; Susan Herbst; Tom Rosenstiel.
[18] What is often less transparent is the specific corporate context behind any specific poll—who is responsible for funding. See Sarah Igo, 109-134.

Poll's famous catchphrase, no one is *actually* talking? Baudrillard, as skeptical of opinion polls as Cavendish is of the Royal Society, has specific answers to such questions, and his theories are worth quoting at length:

> The uncertainty which surrounds the social and political effect of opinion polls (Do they or do they not manipulate opinion?) … will never be completely relieved—and it is just as well! This results from the fact that there is a compound, a mixture of two heterogeneous systems whose data cannot be transferred from one to the other. An operational system which is statistical, information based, and simulational is projected onto a traditional values system, onto a system of representation, will, and opinion. This collage, this collusion between the two, gives rise to an indefinite and useless polemic. We should agree neither with those who praise the beneficial use of the media, nor with those who scream about manipulation—for the simple reason that there is no relationship between a system of meaning and a system of simulation. Publicity and opinion polls would be incapable, even if they so wished and claimed, of alienating the will or the opinion of anybody whatsoever, for the reason that they do not act in the space/time of will and of representation where judgment is formed. For the same reason, though reversed, it is quite impossible for them to throw any light at all on public opinion or individual will, since they do not act in a public space, on the stage of a public space. They are strangers to it, and indeed they wish to dismantle it. ("The Masses" 579)

Baudrillard situates us in the same no-man's land that does Cavendish, a space in which it is impossible to reconcile "two heterogeneous systems:" one a system of meaning, the other a system of simulation. The public revealed in an opinion poll is fundamentally different from the public that exists "in nature," just as the natural philosophy revealed in Royal Society experimentation is fundamentally different from the philosophy of Nature itself. Polling agencies may present "the 'people's voice' as transparent and wholly unmediated by their method of calling it into being," may claim to discover "average Americans' views [simply] … by asking them" (Igo 117), but as careful critics like Briggs, Baudrillard, and Cavendish demonstrate, it is impossible to detach any statement from the circumstances of its creation (Briggs 693). The accoutrements cannot be

concealed, not fully, and not from everyone. If there is any call to action in either Baudrillard's or Cavendish's antagonistic hypotheses, it entails a renewed vigilance against any and all systematic attempts to render the world so comprehensible that we end up leaving the world behind. On the watch for these forced marches to nowhere, we can begin to discuss how to redirect them, not into empty stadiums, studies, or specimen jars, but into a territory of invested responders eager to assemble in unique alliance with the accoutrements of every discourse and every discourser—our own versions, we might imagine, of Henry the Fifth, Charles the Second, Alexander, Caesar, and "honest Margaret Newcastle" (*BW* 109).

Coda

Be Bold, Be Bold … Be not too Bold

"There is no Redemption of the object," says Baudrillard (*Passwords* 5). What, then, might be redeeming in a project that spotlights a strategy of the object? I hope I have sufficiently demonstrated that the previous six early modern writers discovered an aesthetic utility in the inarticulate that is echoed in postmodern media. But beyond, or perhaps alongside, the aesthetic potential for the rhetoric of struggle lies, I believe, the potential for dissidence. There may be no redemption of the object, but as Baudrillard says, "[s]omewhere there is a 'remainder,' which the subject cannot lay hold of …" (*Passwords* 5). Inside this remainder are the makings of a dissidence that "derives ultimately not from essential qualities in individuals (though they have qualities) but from conflict and contradiction that the social order inevitably produces within itself, even as it attempts to sustain itself," a dissidence that "posits a field necessarily open to continuing contest, in which at some conjunctures the dominant will lose ground while at others the subordinate will scarcely maintain its position" (Sinfield 41, 49). This loss of position is a risk, certainly: the dissident him or herself must become a figure more interested in identifying as an object than as a subject. But as we have seen through the operations of Salome, Hero, Scudamore and others, with risk comes reward: disgracing subjectivity may bring about a heightened recognition of the conditionality of language, and of everything associated with language, in any historical period: law, politics, religion, philosophy, identity. In the object strategy is the secret of seduction, described beautifully, ominously, and characteristically indirectly by Baudrillard as a secret that

reveals itself *in movements*—"movements whose slowness and suspense are poetic, like a slow motion film of a fall or an explosion, because something has had, before fulfilling itself, the time to be missed and this is, if there is such a thing, the perfection of 'desire'" (*Selected Writings* 163).

There are *teaching moments*, then, in each of these chapters (or, perhaps, *teaching movements*). Inarticulate voices oblige deceleration as they invite participation: *Be bold, be bold … be not too bold*. The warning Britomart encounters in the House of Busirane is just the sort of seductively paradoxical directive that could be uttered by any of the objects discussed in the previous pages. Charged at once to be autonomous and obedient, Britomart's response is to slow down and acknowledge the inescapable-ness of the contradiction. *Then* she acts. Significant is not only the success of her eventual rescue of Amoret (Redemption!), but also the proof she supplies that it is possible to act in uncertainty (the Remainder).

It seems to me that it is just as important to recognize the Remainder attached to Britomart's action as it is to recognize the Redemption, and this can translate into a larger recognition of the inevitability of remainders linked to even the boldest, most straightforward performances. Why not acknowledge them, as Britomart does? Particularly in the composition classroom, there is room to discuss and to imitate the strategically inarticulate, space to begin acknowledging the mismatch that exists between what many instructors profess is crucial in composition in the classroom and what actually passes—and passes successfully—for discourse in the rest of the nation. This is less a giving in to the rhetoric of struggle than a coming clean about how present it has always been in the development of language and culture. "Words are very rascals," as

Feste says, and we are all, with varying degrees of skill, corrupters of them (*Twelfth Night* III.i.19-20; 34-35). Why not use the composition classroom as the place to grow "wise enough to play the fool" (58)? "This is a practice," as Viola says, "as full of labor as a wise man's art" (63-64). It is a proposition easier to accept in literature than in life. But as Eliot shows us Fear in a handful of dust, we may very well find that we can see Wisdom (or Coherence, or Harmony, or Humanity itself) all the more keenly in a figure's complete and utter failure to achieve it.

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