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The Baseless Fabric:
Literary Worlds and Global Relations in English Renaissance Literature

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The Baseless Fabric:
Literary Worlds and Global Relations in English Renaissance Literature

By

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An abstract of
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Abstract

The Baseless Fabric:
Literary Worlds and Global Relations in English Renaissance Literature

By Brent Dawson

"The Baseless Fabric" is a study of the multiple senses of worldhood in early modern literature and culture. Its aim is to provide a new model for discussing global relations by attending to the tensions that animate early modern notions of universal connection and that, I argue, still structure modern ideas of globalization. Crossing national and disciplinary boundaries, I trace the connections and tensions between the multiple notions of worldhood that circulate in the period—travel accounts of the "New World," philosophical theories of multiple worlds, cartographic representations of the globe, and the "world" of a work of art. Each chapter centers on one literary work and a sense of worldhood developed therein—worldly matter in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the world-as-stage in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, polygenesis in Cavendish's *Blazing World*, and multiple worlds in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. By attending to the plurality of discourses of worldhood in early modernity, I offer a starting point for thinking the range and complexity of ideas of universality in the period beyond a traditional humanist framework.

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Introduction:
"A Kind of World Remaining"

What in the world is a world?

What *in the world* is a world?

How do we come to have a sense of the world if the world is always beyond the horizon of what we see? Even if we were to survey the entirety of the planet, using up-to-the-moment satellite imaging to view it from every scale, moving from the blue orb floating in space to a building located at a particular address, we still wouldn't see a world. We wouldn't perceive the entire complex array of things at once, much less the interactions between those things, which are only visible over time. The world is unlike any *thing* in the world; that is, the world is not something that can be represented. So the answer to the question "What in the world is a world?" may just be, "But it isn't."

In spite of the difficulty of perceiving a world, we are more frequently than ever reminded that we are living in one. Our computers access the World Wide Web; the World Bank exercises fiscal control over those entities still for the moment known as sovereign nations; images of the globe pervade news broadcasts and the emblems of international organizations like the United Nations; the word finds its way into political slogans and revolutionary cries ("Workers of the world, unite!"). One might start to suspect that the need to repetitively reinforce that we are living in a world today in fact suggests this idea isn't so obvious.

While images of the globe make it seem as if the world were an empirically visible entity, the globe is today more than ever an allegorical symbol. Indeed, globes

appear without any representational purpose in contemporary advertisements and logos. A recent advertisement by Diesl, a transportation and logistics company, shows a realistic satellite image of the world being pulled away, revealing a symbolic globe underneath composed of compass lines.[1] This symbolic globe stands in for the feeling of connection that using Diesl's services presumably will bring, a feeling reinforced by the appearance of two masculine, business-suit-clad hands shaking over the more abstract globe. The image as whole thus offers a fantasy—to move from the frightening complexity of globalization, looming like a planet seen from space, to the simple, accessible unity of a geometric shape, the unthreatening connection of a handshake. As allegories, globes manifest harmony, connection, the vast expanse of the world made compact. The allegorical icons of the globe in modern advertisements supplement transnational finance, global mass media, the cyber-world of the internet, suggesting that whatever dizzying displacements and disorientations these systems produce as they spread across the world, they really are only mediations, doing no more than bringing the world together as a world. They imply that the world really is a spatial structure, a connection of individual nations, persons, and things that fit together as a whole, no matter how much substitution, exchange, and disequilibrium is taking place along the way.

The prevalence of globes as allegories also undermines the overwhelming emphasis in discussions of globalization on calculation, computation, and representation. For allegories belong to religion and art; they are images that stand in for what cannot be shown directly. They suggest a curious proximity between "post-modern" globalization and "pre-modern" modes of figuring the world. Indeed, the allegorical use of globes

today suggests a particularly Renaissance inheritance of modern globalization. Since the sixteenth-century development of three-dimensional representational globes, they have served as allegories of either the glory or the hubris of modern systems of representation. While early modern emblem books use globes as symbols for the lust for money tied to the emergence of capitalism, atlases of the period feature Greek deities holding up globes that figure the god-like perspective of new cartographic representational methods.[2] Literature of the period is saturated with figures of the globe, from Shakespeare's metadramatic gestures toward the world as a stage in his Globe theater to Spenser's metapoetic justification of Faerie Lond as a new world, to Cavendish's baroque play of worlds within worlds in her romances. Globalization's fixation on the globe as symbol owes itself to the Renaissance.

With this difference—the Renaissance calls attention to the globe as symbol. "The Baseless Fabric: Literary Worlds and Global Relations in English Renaissance Literature" studies how the period questions, works through, and offers unique reformulations of what a world is, through the examples of Spenser, Shakespeare, Cavendish, and Milton. Where the globes prevalent in advertising and media today ask above all to be taken at face value and not attended to, these authors' literary play with the figure of the world gives the lie to the illusion of the globe. To call the world a stage may inflate a play into being a world of its own, but it also deflates the world into a sort of make-believe. Not that this play is all light-hearted; indeed, the world becomes a question in the Renaissance with an intensity that I think has not been seen since. It is a moment in which older, Christian notions of the world exist alongside emerging rationalist and technological

paradigms. The authors I study here hold together, while holding in tension, these differing paradigms. The way Renaissance literature foregrounds the world as a question makes it valuable for contemporary discourses of globalization, which by and large don't.

The strands of the Renaissance I trace in this dissertation not only question pre-existing notions of the world, they also formulate a unique sense of worldhood distinct from Enlightenment or medieval versions. The common thread running throughout the authors I study is a sense that there is nothing outside the world, no transcendental source beyond it determining its order and value. In the Renaissance, the cosmos becomes infinite, through exploration and history "new worlds" are discovered, and so beyond the world it seems there is simply more world. Instead of a source of order beyond the world, the authors I study locate, each in their own way, a worldliness within the world that is both ecstatic and common. The Renaissance inherits from medieval Christianity a sense of the worldly as the total complex of material conditions that prevent the realization of God's order in this existence: the flesh and its desires, the pursuit of wealth and political power, to see the world not clearly but through fictions. The Renaissance, however, emphasizes that the worldly is what opens any possibility of contact and relation in this world. The worldly is ecstatic in that it prevents any existing thing or order from being complete or permanent, holding it open to vulnerability and loss as well as transformation and growth. The worldly is common in that it is the universal condition of all things made of matter and created in time, whatever their differences. By tracing the Renaissance sense of worldliness, I mean to suggest that there are alternative conceptions of the world in modernity to the version which has come to predominate in contemporary discourse on

globalization. For globalization reduces the world to what Jean-Luc Nancy calls monovalence, a single value (capital) that can be totalized into a system and empirically determined. Renaissance worldliness, in contrast, offers a thinking of the world in which difference and alteration is what is common.

The introduction is divided into six sections which all serve to develop the Renaissance conception of worldliness sketched in the above paragraph. The third section is the crux of the introduction, defining more fully this conception. It does so by looking at the paradox within Christianity between the sense of the world as God's creation and the sense of the world as the worldly, and how Renaissance authors develop from this paradox a sense of worldliness without transcendental outsides. The first and second sections make a case for the relevance of Renaissance notions of worldhood in contemporary critical and theoretical discussions of globalization. The fourth section, on genealogy, outlines how the Renaissance inherits this paradox in worldhood from medieval Christianity and revises it. The fifth section suggests how the "New World" of the Americas became an important site for thinking through this worldliness and its biopolitical consequences. The final section concludes the introduction by sketching how the authors I study in each chapter contribute to this sense of worldliness: in Spenser, by revising the medieval notion of the world as a great chain of being; in Shakespeare, by exploring the capacity to make and inhabit fictions as universal; in Cavendish, by treating the common conditions of embodiment and generativity; and in Milton, by taking up consideration as a fundamental ethical stance in such a world.

Criticism

       Literary criticism's resurgent interest in the world as an object of study has been

troubled by a simple yet stubborn problem—a lack of agreement about what "world"

means.[3] While an increasing number of voices argue it is vital to attend to the world, what

that implies can range from formalist study of fictional worlds in the vein of Thomas

Pavel, the computerized tracking of literary influence across the geographical space of

the real world, reading diasporic texts, or asserting the cosmopolitan values to be found in

literature. The dominant current sense of worldhood derives (not by chance) from the

certainty offered by the social sciences. Immanuel Wallerstein's influential world-systems

theory defines a world-system as "a spatial/temporal zone which cuts across many

political and cultural units, one that represents an integrated zone of activity and

institutions which obey certain systemic rules" (*World-Systems* 16). Wallerstein's

approach is valuable because it opens a retelling of capitalism and modernity as a story

that is global from the start, that is, bound up in exchanges that exceed the proper name

of "Europe" or any individual nation. Yet translating Wallerstein to literary studies

requires caution toward Wallerstein's evacuation of the concept of "world" from its

philosophical, religious, and political heritage. The world, as Pheng Cheah and others

have pointed out, is tied indissolubly as an idea to its history, a history for Cheah of

Enlightenment and Romantic visions of spiritual cosmopolitanism, but which also

includes Renaissance humanism and Christian claims to universality (30).[4] While it is

more necessary than ever to study the historical movements of commerce and migration that transgress national boundaries, making the world into an object of study omits the way in which the world as idea has been deployed rhetorically to justify hegemonic oppression, whether capitalist, imperialist, or Christian, as well as one that has been mobilized to resist such hegemonies and forge new political alliances. Literary criticism can supplement the approach opened by Wallerstein by attending to how the tension between different ways of conceiving the world, as well as between the world as idea and the world as object, has shaped processes of globalization.

Much innovative and important work today in global studies of literature borrows from Wallerstein's social scientific paradigm. Franco Moretti has discussed Wallerstein's influence on his idea of world literature, and his more recent work on global literary history is explicitly modeled on scientific methods; while scholars like David Damrosch, Wai Chee Dimock, and, in early modern studies, Daniel Vitkus, Barbara Sebek, and Jyotsna Singh have taken hybrid approaches that attend to the material circulation of texts as well as textual representations of transnational historical processes.[5] These critics have shown how what is called "English" Renaissance literature and culture is profoundly shaped though and reflective of a transnational web of commerce and exchange, the beginnings of what Wallerstein calls the modern "world-system." While the work of these scholars has demonstrated powerfully how early modern literature can speak to contemporary concerns about globalization, it has tended to treat the early modern world as a historical entity external to the literature being studied rather than something shaped and contested by it. The "globe" found repeatedly in the titles of such work—"The New

Globalism," *A Companion to the Global Renaissance*, *Global Traffic*, *Global Interests*—is too frequently taken as a factual object rather than a cultural concept whose history is imbricated in the legacy of early modern capitalism and colonialism.[6] To understand how literature is part of global history requires not just studying how it circulates historically, but how it conjures a sense of what the world is. For the concept of the world, as I argue above, plays a role in global history through rhetoric and ideology. This dissertation complements such approaches through a consideration of how literature both shapes a sense of worldhood and brings out a paradox within it.

The idea of the globe has defined the study of the Renaissance since the beginnings of that study in the nineteenth century. Jacob Burckhardt, whose *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* founds a notion of the period which is still influential, describes the period as one of "the discovery of the world and of man," as one of his sections is titled. The world becomes understood as an objective, systematic entity capable of scientific knowledge, an ontological sense of worldhood which, for Burckhardt, goes hand-in-hand with the imperial spread of European society across the globe. Burckhardt's influence on twentieth-century Renaissance criticism can be seen, for example, in how Stephen Greenblatt begins *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* with a reference to Burckhardt's notion of the discovery of the self in the period. That the co-implication of Greenblatt's self-fashioning is world-fashioning, the framing of the world as picture through which the autonomous, agential subject knows himself as such, has been well-documented by other critics. Both Kent van den Berg in *Playhouse and Cosmos* and John Gillies in *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* have studied

how drama in the period assists in the creation of such a sense of the world, as have

Angus Fletcher in *Time, Space, and Motion in the Age of Shakespeare* and Harry Berger,

Jr. in *Second World and Green World* for the period's literature more generally. Others,

like Shankar Raman in *Framing "India"*, find in the objective representation of the world

a means by which the possibility of empire was imagined in the period.[7] As Gayatri

Spivak argues in *Death of a Disipline*, this abstracted and flattened sense of worldhood

dominates the contemporary understanding of globalization as a large-scale system of

interactions which can be mapped, calculated, and predicted (72).

And yet, to read the Renaissance as the beginning of the modern sense of the

world is to look at it with a retrospective teleology. The idea of the globe was still in

formation in the period, as Ernst Cassirer suggests in *The Individual and the Cosmos in

Renaissance Philosophy*, another foundational work for the study of the period. For

Cassirer, the period witnesses a slow movement away from the medieval notions of the

cosmos as what Lovejoy calls the Great Chain of Being whose continuing resonances in

the Renaissance are cataloged by E.M.W. Tillyard in the *Elizabethan World Picture*.

Cassirer believes the eventual endpoint of that movement is a modern ontology not far

from Burckhardt's, in which the subject is abstracted from a scientifically knowable

world. Yet as Jonathan Goldberg argues, Cassirer's work suggests the uniqueness of some

Renaissance theories of worldhood:

> [Cassirer's] story is conventional enough—it has Plato on one side and
>
> Kant as the inevitable culmination toward which early modern philosophy
>
> moves. To that extent, his story is questionable. Nonetheless, it shows how

many versions of the subject-object problem were at play in the early

modern period... Renaissance philosophy, he shows, features its own

peculiar working out of problems posed by classical and medieval thought.

(*Seeds* 114)

Building on Cassirer, this dissertation argues that the Renaissance is distinctive in its

understandings of worldhood from the modern global paradigm. The Renaissance senses

of the world I trace in this dissertation are all, in their own ways, interested in retaining

aspects of medieval ontology, the sense of the world as a series of reflections and

arrangements. Indeed, I will argue that what characterizes the period (or at least the

strands of it I follow), is an attention to a paradox within the medieval idea of the world, a

paradox which I outline in the following section. This attention to the world as

paradoxical, an attention manifest in the period's description of worlds as multiple,

shattered, and fictional is what makes the period distinct. It is also what is foreclosed by

the modern understanding of the world as global. The desire to understand global

relations as a calculable, predictable, visualizable system reduces the world to a single,

easily comprehensible sense.

Of course, I am far from the first to question the idea of a paradigm shift in the

period. Recent critical accounts of the development of early modern science have shown

how interest in magic, astrology, and correspondence contributed to and lasted into what

we now call the beginning of modern science.[8] Gabriel Egan, drawing on an ecocritical

perspective, has suggested that the medieval great chain of being remains interesting for

its refusal of absolute differences between humans and other beings. While these works

influence my approach here, my aim is not to affirm the medieval paradigm over and against the modern, nor is it exactly to show how the one contributes to the other. Rather, what interests me is how Renaissance authors transform medieval symbolic worldhood as a response to the developments of early modern empiricism. These revisions seem to me distinctively early modern, and yet not the same as Cartesian paradigms of mathematical worldhood then emerging. The authors studied here offer some points of entry for understanding that modernity is multiple, and not all of its versions decisively reject the medieval sense of humanity's attunement to the cosmos.

Theory

The early modern question—what is a world?—anticipates late modern theory's attempt to re-invent notions of worldhood, universality, and commonality. Since I cannot do justice to the variety and complexity of thinkers working on this topic—a brief list of which would include Badiou, Derrida, Hardt and Negri, Glissant, Spivak, Bersani, Laclau, Mouffe, and Butler, among others—I will focus on a single one, Jean-Luc Nancy. The choice, though, is not arbitrary: Nancy has, from early works like *The Sense of the World* to more recent ones like *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, argued more explicitly than anyone else that what is known as "post-structuralism" or "theory" offers a powerful way of thinking about worldhood. Theory, at least in some of the ways it was taken up in the United States or caricatured by those made anxious by it, was taken to be suspicious of all universalizing or totalizing claims. Nancy offers a strong rejoinder to

such characterizations, suggesting that theory thinks through not only the limits of universality but also a universality of the limit, a universality that begins in our common exposure to one another. Nancy also practices an unfolding of older religious, philosophical, and artistic notions of worldhood, notions that seem anthropo- or Euro-centric, in ways that de-center those notions, bringing out other possibilities from them. If Nancy's ideas resonate with the Renaissance's play with notions of worldhood, it is perhaps because he is attuned to bringing out historical modes of thinking the world in their multiplicity.

Nancy has described the contemporary historical situation of globalization as an "increasingly concentrated interdependence that ceaselessly weakens independencies and sovereignties" (*Creation* 37). For Nancy, as for Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire*, this order can no longer be characterized as an inter-national one—an arrangement between relatively discrete nations— but a global one in which organization is both trans- and supra-national (3). Examples of that order would include juridical apparatuses like the United Nations and International Declaration of Human Rights, but also notions of the right to intervention and global police force through which the wealthy nations of the West justify their violence and control. While in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it may have been possible to imagine stable boundaries between the West and its outsides, today these borders are highly flexible and mobile. The outside is within—through immigration with or without papers, occupation, terrorist cells, computer viruses—and the inside is extended—through capital being increasingly made up of transnational corporations and institutions.

Nancy argues that there are two forms of world-making possible in response to this situation: "globalization" and *mondialisation*, a word that is untranslatable but could be rendered as "world-forming."[9] On the one hand, there is globalization as what Nancy calls "agglomeration" or infinite accumulation (33). The "West" no longer even has a coherent picture or plan for its world-order, rather there is just the endless amassing of capital for its own sake. Nancy calls this a few times, citing Hegel, a "bad infinite" (39): global capital that has no end except its own perpetuation. Capitalist value rests on a principle of equivalence, everything can be reduced to a quantifiable amount. This is also what Alain Badiou calls, in a similar diagnosis of contemporary politics, "capital's empty universality" (7). The discourse of modern economics suggests that everything can be reduced to a single value—the dollar. The pursuit of capital is held up as though it were some kind of god of the bottom line, capable of reconciling every discrepancy over the worth of a thing or person into a mathematically countable number. So too in the realm of human identity—where global capital seems capable only of recognizing all people as the same blank liberal subject whose sole recognizable act is consumer choice or as hyper-specific micro-identities that must be seen as pre-given and determinative of one's thought and action. The various fundamentalisms, whether Islamic or Christian, are only the flipside of this emphasis on a single value—a desire to return to the roots, usually religion or a devout nationalism, that also oppressively rejects all other values. Nancy holds that both capitalism and religious fanaticism are "two figures of absolute value... the God whose name is inscribed on the dollar, and... the God in whose name one declares a 'holy war'" (39).

To this globalization as agglomeration Nancy contrasts an alternate possibility: *mondialisation*. This *mondialisation* is a universality of what Nancy calls elsewhere "being singular plural," a recognition of everything that exists ("being") as at once totally unique from all other beings ("singular") and from the start divided and multiple ("plural") (*Being* 28-30). It is a universality that begins not at the center, some humanity through which all things are measured, but at the limits, those places at which things are exposed to others. For limits at once make something singular, cut it off from fusion with its outsides, and yet also make it plural, as the limits belong to those outsides as much as to the thing. In thinking about human relations, Nancy is arguing against liberal models that assume that people first "have" discrete identities and then come together, combine, and attach these individual units to each other through contracts, bonds, and attachments (i.e. the myth of the Social Contract). Nancy proposes that people do not "have" properties like meaning or identity, but rather that both meaning and identity are processes of circulation without rest or end: "we are meaning," as he declares at the outset of *Being Singular Plural* (1). Thus, meaning only appears in its relation to others, in the various contacts that produce it. Rather than conceiving contact as secondary and accidental in community, Nancy suggests that we imagine contact, or touching, as the starting point of being, as originary and essential. Touching presumes a difference between the two things that come into contact—what Nancy calls a "heterogeneity of surfaces" (*Being* 5)—but also that the contact produces the two things as themselves, so that from the start and in each moment of contact there is multiplicity (two things. . .), diversity (. . . that are different from each other. . .), and relation (. . . and in contact with

one another). This form of universality does not suppose that we all have some shared value or identity, but simply that we are alike in our common exposure and vulnerability to others, and in our meaning that only comes in the process of relating to others.

Nancy's *mondialisation* is also a universality of bodies. Most Western attempts to define the universal have grounded it on a subject, capable of self-knowledge and abstraction from the material conditions of her place in culture and history. This has reserved the universal not only for the human, but for particular (male, white, bourgeois) humans. Nancy in contrast argues that his generalized "ontology of being-with is an ontology of bodies, of every body, whether they be inanimate, animate, sentient, speaking, thinking, having weight, and so on" (*Being* 84). However, unlike a liberal politics of identity, Nancy's body is not imagined to anchor any specific identity or viewpoint toward the world (which would be precisely the erasure of the body under a categorical label). Rather, the body is what divides and extends the self: divides the self from itself and from any categorical label, extends the self out in contact with others who complicate and interrupt that self's definition and belonging. This division and extension are not secondary properties of a self that befall it one fine day, rather division and extension are the life of the self. To borrow a phrase from Shakespeare, the body is what "bodies forth" (*Midsummer* V.i.14), throwing beings outside themselves and into the world, or as Nancy says, "the 'body' really means what is outside, insofar as it is outside, next to, against, nearby, with a(n) (other) body, from body to body, in the dis-position" (*Being* 84). This does not mean that identities are meaningless or solely pernicious, but that there is identification without identity, and identification is an endless and errant

process. Nancy contends that "the whole task... is to do right by identities... without ceding anything to their frenzy, to their presuming to be substantial identities" (*Being* 147).

This universality of the body implies as well a way of thinking differently about pleasure. Nancy contrasts to capitalism's infinite deferral of pleasure—accumulation for its own sake—an "enjoyment" that is not something one possesses, but is the body's condition as ecstatic (*Creation* 45). If one enjoys something, one is carried out of oneself by it. Pleasure does not go toward any greater end but simply out of oneself and among others. Here Nancy seems to draw on Bataille's notion of erotism. For Bataille, society tends to imagine desire as being purposeful, directed toward some greater end (a "reproductive futurity," of the family or nation). However, as Bataille notes, human erotic activity, "unlike simple sexual activity, is a psychological quest independent of the natural goal... [of] reproduction and the desire for children." Insofar as reproduction is understood as a simple desire for the perpetuation of life, for life to continue, erotic activity breaks from the reproductive understanding of life, for "although erotic activity is in the first place an exuberance of life, the object of this psychological quest... is not alien to death" (*Erotism* 11). Sexuality is defined not in terms of healthiness or (re)productive purpose but its ecstatic shattering of the controlled self, the abasement of life as purposeful before its ultimately meaningless end. Nancy's enjoyment is another name for this universal condition of embodiment as being outside oneself, of existence as ecstatic. Of course, another word for Nancy's enjoyment would be sodomy, which is how the Church and then Western law defines purposeless sex. Indeed, Nancy's thinking of the

body and of enjoyment is where he comes closest to ideas of queer universality as set forth by Leo Bersani, among others.[10]

For Nancy, these forms of world-making extend from a much older problem in the definition of worldhood. This problem is that the world as it has been traditionally understood has been defined in opposition to some transcendental value outside it, God for Christianity or the human subject for the secular West of the Enlightenment (*Creation* 40-1). These world concepts have resulted in world-projects: spreading the good news for Christianity (by any means necessary, including torture), spreading civilization for the Enlightenment (through imperialism, slavery, and capitalism, with God on our side). Posit a universal value—man or God—and it results in a project, the realization of that value everywhere. The world is not an object but a project or process—that is, something made (*Sense* 8). And yet, at the same time, Nancy traces alternative strains of thought from within these same traditions, showing how a thinking of a world without absolute outsides is already present from within them. Christianity is nothing if not a thinking of the divine and universal as both present within the world (the Incarnation) and withdrawn from it (the Ascension). This double tendency within Christianity seems for Nancy best expressed through art, including the enormous amount of painting of Christian scenes, particularly Renaissance, that he has written on. Indeed, what ties the Renaissance closely to Nancy's philosophy seems to me to be the way that period re-invents and interrogates Christian notions of worldhood through the various challenges put to it by the paradigm shifts taking place in science, geography, and anthropology. As I argue in the definitional section, the literature of the period seems to work through the paradox and tension

inherent in Christian notions of the world, not to abandon it, but much like Nancy, to bring out other possibilities from within it—to attend to it differently. Nancy points out this genealogy of worldhood not in order to argue that we need to overturn traditional Western ways of conceiving the world, but rather that we need to turn to these traditions again while turning them from their traditional aims, to bring out the possibilities within them that exceed narrow and idealizing definitions of the world.

Definition and Paradox

I here propose a disambiguation of the term "world." I argue that the Renaissance receives from medieval Christianity two contradictory senses of what a world is, the world as reflection of divine goodness and the world as the realm of human sin. One of the curious aspects of Christianity is that it goes on about the beauty and order of the world as God's creation while bearing a disdainful attitude toward worldly life and its valueless ways and gains. What interests me about the strands of Renaissance thought and writing that I examine is how they bring these two opposed senses into close proximity with one another, bringing out an underlying paradox in the concept of the world between harmony and disruption.

Christianity understands the world as God's creation. It reflects in plurality his unitary goodness and in temporality his eternal majesty. The entire cosmos is thus a vast organized structure, organized down to the most sparrow-like detail. The Renaissance would primarily have understood this sense of the world through the notion of the Great

Chain of Being, as Lovejoy puts it and as famously studied by E. M. W. Tillyard as the "Elizabethan World Picture." In this conception of the world, all of creation is a carefully interlinked set of symmetries ranked together in a hierarchy from angels to matter. Nature itself is God's book, as Milton's Raphael tells Adam, a total structure of meaning. The human is the image of God, the father, and the king, and he rules over the animal kingdom while being ruled by the angels and heavenly forces above him. While the "global" in globalization is certainly quite distinct from the Christian "world," as I will argue further below, both presume an ideal unity and an underlying structure to the totality of human relations with one another and with the non-human realm.

I maintain that there is a second sense of worldhood in Christianity, the worldly or mundane. The medieval period develops the whole complex of meanings still surrounding this term. The worldly is life insofar as life is finite, contrasted with the eternal life offered by God. Finite in two senses: first, that all its pursuits (money, sex, power) pass away. Both Shakespeare's *Lear* and *Timon*, in their moments of despair, betray a deep loathing toward the entire complex of these worldly pursuits. Timon delivers a near point-by-point condemnation of the elements of existence Christianity associated with the worldly after abandoning Athens: sex—"To general filths / Convert o' th' instant, green virginity! / Do't in your parents' eyes."—wealth—"Bankrupts, hold fast! / Rather than render back, out with your knives, / And cut your trusters' throats," and social rank— "Bound servants, steal!" (IV.i.6-10). Second, the worldly is finite in the sense that it is bound up with others, mixed up in the swirl of other people, living beings, and things. In Spenser, one of the ideas most frequently associated with the world is

wandering. When Guyon takes the infant Ruddymane after his mother kills herself out of heartbreak, he elegiacally declares the child "Poor Orphane! In the wild world scattered" (II.ii.2.5). So too in *Paradise Lost*, where the final moments sees Adam and Eve go "hand in hand with wandering steps and slow" out into the post-lapsarian world (XII.648). The fallen world is wide and wild, individual existence in it strays, held out far from the divine course.

The paradox that the Renaissance inherits from medieval Christianity was how the world could be both these things at once, both the reflection of divine order and the finite existence that strays from that order. The traditional answer, as Tillyard details compactly, is by reference to original sin and salvation: "The world picture which the Middle Ages inherited was that of an ordered universe arranged in a fixed system of hierarchies but modified by man's sin and the hope of his redemption" (5-6). If the world of violent plagues and crusades seemed utterly unlike a vast canvas on which God's unity and perfection were gloriously painted, then that was because "with the Fall both man and (it was thence deduced) the universe also were corrupted" (21). Discord is a temporary detour on the way to a final, and perhaps greater, accord. Milton's God gives voice to this view when he claims that Satan's "damage" to his plans will be repaired through humanity's eventual redemption:

> But lest his heart exalt him in the harm
>
> Already done, to have dispeopled heaven
>
> My damage fondly deemed, I can repair
>
> That detriment, if such it be to lose

> Self-lost, and in a moment will create
>
> Another world, out of one man a race
>
> Of men innumerable, there to dwell,
>
> Not here, till by degrees of merit raised...
>
> … earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth,
>
> One kingdom, joy and union without end. (VII.150-61)

Although God is here talking about Satan's fall, not humanity's, the point is the same. Through the fortunate fall, God will be able to redeem humanity through Christ and eventually bring the entire cosmos back into harmony.

In the Renaissance, the orthodox solution to the paradox becomes complicated by ideas that develop of a world that is unknowably vast, and possibly infinite, in time and space. The providential narrative requires, as narratives do, a set beginning and a set end. But this becomes considerably more difficult if the cosmos seems to stretch unknowably far in space and time, without real beginnings or endings. When Montaigne reflects on the existence of civilizations in the Americas unknown to any Western tradition before then, he quotes Lucretius that "Before the Trojan War, before Troy fell, / Were other bards with other tales to tell" (Montaigne 841; Lucretius V.326). The implication that Montaigne hints at is stated explicitly by those that asserted theories of polygenesis, like Giordano Bruno or Isaac Peyrère, that humanity had other beginnings besides the one told in Genesis, and thus not all of mankind fell with Adam and Eve. Similarly, the idea, raised by the astronomy of Copernicus and Galileo, that in an infinite cosmos there would likely be other inhabited worlds, also suggested, as Empson keenly noted, that humanity's

fall and redemption could no longer be the central event of the entire cosmic drama ("Donne the space man"). This may have lead some into a state of anxiety, as in Donne's famous declaration that "new Philosophy cals all in doubt," breaking the old cosmic chain: "'Tis all in pieces, all cohaerence gone; / All just supply, and all Relation" ("The First Anniversary" 205, 213-14). One can never be sure how serious Donne is, though— he is after all attributing this cosmic upheaval to the death of a girl he never knew, probably hoping to earn some extra income. In any case, it becomes harder to take Donne at his word if one believes, as Empson argues, that Donne's poetry suggests a belief in multiple worlds. For others, as with Montaigne, there is a palpable sense of relief in these ideas, for they had seen through the religious wars how much totalizing narratives can lead to tremendous cruelty and violence. The idea of multiple worlds suggested that there either was no world or nothing but the world, depending on which of the two Christian senses one adopted. Before or beyond the world there was no idealized harmony or unity, there was simply more world.

This intensification of the traditional contradiction of worldhood does not imply that the Renaissance simply abandoned the idea of cosmic harmony. Nor does the period yet have the sense of eighteenth-century science that meaning is the creation of a human subject isolated from the world she studies. (Descartes and Bacon look forward to this idea, certainly, but their positions are not the only ones in the period.) Rather, I think the question that peculiarly insists itself upon the authors I study (and many whom I do not), is, how does the idea of the world *qua* universality and harmony linger on and continue to have effects even after the notion of a world-order has been broken apart? How does this

lost, fragmented, or scattered unity remain in mundane existence? Even Donne, in the same poem where he declares all coherence gone, nevertheless says that "there's a kind of world remaining still," and Elizabeth Drury, who has been elevated to the status of world-soul, continues to give the world "a glimmering light," and again a few lines later, "the twilight of her memory doth stay" (67, 70, 74). If anything, the world-as-universality remains for these authors, not as a stable image or ideal, but as an interruption to existing customs, ideas, and orders. Montaigne, in his advice on education, recommends his student to take the world, in all its variety of customs and ways, as the greatest object of study: "This great world, which some multiply further as being only a species under one genus, is the mirror in which we must look at ourselves to recognize ourselves from the proper angle" (II.26; 141). While this maxim repeats the quite traditional Christian idea of the world as God's book, Montaigne's point is radically different than seeing in the world a fixed image of interlocking hierarchies. Rather, "whoever considers as in a painting the great picture of our mother Nature in her full majesty" will pick out "such universal and constant variety in her face" that the student will "find[] himself there, and not merely himself, but a whole kingdom, as a dot made with a very fine brush" (II.26; 141). The world does not confirm existing order but reduces it to a passing speck, overwhelmed by the magnitude of variety surrounding it. In these authors, there is a sense of the materiality of the universal or the worldliness of the world, where mundane existence bears traces of the divine harmony that it nonetheless also puts off and displaces. When the poet asks the painter in *Timon* "How goes the world?", the painter replies, "It wears, sir, as it grows" (I.i.3-4). This reply is not just an Ovidian narrative of

the world's decline through its ages, for the reply also means that the world grows as it wears. The world's wearing itself out is also its growing into itself. In this mundane existence there can be nothing but wandering, error, and fragmentation, but fragmentation *of* a lost universality. This universality doesn't so much confers order on what exists as ensure that any order in this world will be fragmented, open to decay and therefore change.

Genealogy of Worldhood

The world as a concept is massively Christian in its history. From Paul onward, Christianity distinguishes itself by claiming to be the religion in which there is "neither Jew nor Greek" (*KJV* Gal. 3:28). Its salvific narrative applies to all, superseding every tie of nation, kinship, rank, and gender. This section traces the development of the world as a concept from the beginnings of Christianity through the early modern period. Paul first develops the paradox of worldhood I discuss in the preceding section and which continues into the Middle Ages and Renaissance. By looking at Descartes' notion of worldhood, I gesture toward how this paradox continues to inform modern notions of the global, and by implication, globalization. However, I also place Descartes in context, as one of several responses to the challenge brought to Christian worldhood by the Renaissance.

The word translated into English as "world" in Paul's letters, *kosmos*, already has a long and complex sedimentation of meanings in Greek by the time Paul uses it. In

Homer, the term means either an "apt or harmonious arrangement" or an "ornament" (Thayer). *Kosmos* is order insofar as order is good and beautiful. Somewhat later, the word begins to be employed to describe the universe or the earth; in those cases, it implies that the universe or the earth were such beautifully arranged systems. By the time Paul writes, then, two distinct senses have fused: an earlier sense of order, and a later sense of the totality of existence. The fusion between the two senses implies the possibility that they could coincide, that is, that the universe in sum could be an order. Already, this Greek usage looks forward to the medieval notion of the great chain of being, the cosmos drawn together as one intricate system where each being's unique place is formed in relation to all others. While the Greek sense of *kosmos* is, like the Christian "world," a double sense, in Greek these two meanings are drawn together into accord.

In Paul's writings, the term undergoes a reversal. Paul is writing in a moment when Christians were being persecuted by the Roman empire and the Jewish establishment. He wants the Christian communities to throw off the world and to find a spiritual brotherhood in Christ. So rather than the world as orderly, the term denotes existing socio-political orders as part of a realm that refuses God's order. One New Testament lexicon defines "kosmos" as "the whole mass of men alienated from God" and "the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments, riches, advantages, [and] pleasures" (Thayer). Paul often sets God and the world in antitheses: "we speak... not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 2:6-7). This offers the real beginnings of the Christian notion of the worldly in the sense of sinful existence. Paul connects the *kosmos* with flesh, sin, and

death, alongside political power and wealth.

The Pauline world hardly reflects a transcendent order outside it. Although Paul declares that "the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7:31), he remains emphatically circumspect about what is after the world. Paul describes the coming world only through negations: "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). For Paul, the resurrection of the messiah has less to do with the arrival of another world than the unhinging of this world's order, the throwing off of institutionalized norms for how life should be lead, divesting from the values of jobs and family and power. Paul is quite careful not to be simply anti-worldly: he exhorted his followers not to give up family or jobs if they didn't want to, but to "live in the world as though not living in it," a demand to not take the values or ideals imposed on one too seriously. The brilliance of Paul is in his exhortations to followers to wake up, to shake off the norms of the lives they were living, without promising much at all in return, some life to come that would be completely unknown.

This unhinging is indicated in a paradox diminished in the King James translation of Paul's claim, "the fashion [*schema*] of this world [*kosmos*] passeth away." *Schema*, meaning 'form,' doubles the sense of *kosmos* as 'arrangement.' Paul, despite his distaste for worldly existence, is one of the first to try to think about a world that isn't a fixed schema, a regulated and orderly system. Yet in keeping the term *kosmos*, Paul suggests that the possibility of order reveals itself in the world's resistance to that order. The things of this world, though sinful, still bear a trace of the divine: "Ever since the creation of the

world his invisible nature… has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Rom. 1:20). Paul describes a world that has been ruptured by its proximity to the world to come, on whose threshold it lies. In this, Paul lays the groundwork for the Renaissance notions of fragmented worldhood that I discussed in the previous section. The possibility of the world-to-come, when one shall see another in the full and final harmony of the face to face, is what suspends and drains the value of all existing identities and communities. This world has little positive description in itself and Paul seems to primarily describe it as a force of negation. Because the other world is nigh at hand, there is neither Greek nor Jew, master nor slave.

Paul's double sense of worldhood bears also on his thinking of the body and sex. Paul carefully distinguishes his thought from the Corinthian church's outright rejection of sex. It is true that Paul overtly condemns forms of sex outside marriage and allows sex within marriage only as a concession. For although "the married man is anxious about worldly affairs," it is still better for him to be married if being single he would be too tempted (1 Cor. 7:33). Paul gives non-marital sex a complex position, or lack thereof. Insofar as it is the prime manifestation of the flesh and fleshly life, it is connected to the world, those things which ought to be of no concern. But, Paul aligns not sex but marriage with "worldly affairs." If non-marital sex disrupts the business of worldly affairs, then it perversely mirrors the "impending distress" of Christ's return that will suspend the ways of the world. In any case, Paul argues that because of Christ's coming, everyone ought to remain in the positions they currently occupy in the world, but live within those positions differently: "[L]et those who have wives live as though they had

none… and those who buy as though they had no goods," and finally, as though in summary of these injunctions, "and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it" (1 Cor. 7:29-31). While Paul's statements regarding marriage might be taken as a disgust toward any form of bodily relation, among which marriage is only the least bad, it is also true that Paul's cryptic pronouncement allows for marriage as the site of other forms of desire not organized around reproduction or the family (the love among members of the community, the longing for Christ's reappearance). Which is why Pauline theology has been interpreted both to support the most stringent and body-hating regulations of sex and communities of free love.[11] Paul does not reject living in the world, but that life is constitutively double. Living in the world, one must live as though already outside it. Being in the world is marked by a radical irony, a perpetual "as if." There can by Paul's own definition be no law which could dictate what it meant to practice marriage "as though" one were not doing so, because Christ has put to death the law. Paul's statements neither legislate for or against marriage, but they do make marriage—and along with it any other possibility of organizing desire– radically divorced from any knowable future purpose. Life in the world is also life outside the world, and there can be no rule to govern the relation between the two. For Paul, worldly life is a radical fiction.

The medieval ontological scheme, the so-called great chain of being, develops Paul's sense of a fallen world charged with divine traces into a much more thoroughly laid-out system. Paul's sense that the world's form was disappearing entered into a tension with a positive sense that the world was a vast series of reflections of divine order, as I summarized above. Aquinas provides a clear example of this notion of worldhood. For

Aquinas, the world is created by God so that his goodness, which exists simply in himself, may be represented in diversity (*ST* 1.21.1).[12] That diversity, in order that it reflect God, is ordered into ranks which proceed from the simplest levels of matter up through animals, humans, and angels (1.21.2). The total structure of the world, as well as each creature within it, must have some orientation toward a final good, which is participation in divine goodness, a reunion with the oneness whose detachment was the creature's beginning. For Aquinas, every existing thing tends toward its proper place in the divine scheme through the natural law (law, Aquinas points out, originally means a binding link), which only humans can break due to their free will. Aquinas's discussion of the order of the universe are filled with comparisons to properly functioning homes and cities, which are not simply illustrative metaphors, but repetitions of the same single order on a smaller scale, a microcosm. To summarize: there is a single order which structures the entire universe and distinguishes the pieces of that universe into a hierarchy. Order, while originating in God, is not external or opposed to the cosmos: every existing thing has that order within it, as the natural law, which leads it toward its intended place and end. The universe is synecdochal: order is and is reflected everywhere, the smallest thing capable of showing the whole of the cosmos. While the Pauline world is like a shattered vessel, charged with the traces of a coming universality without name or positive content, the medieval great chain of being places greater focus on the world as an orderly system.

And yet though the medieval scheme is a naturalized hierarchy, it is still one in which being is ecstatic. Like the accretion of allegorical meaning over a biblical event,

the human is at once itself and much more. In Dante's *Commedia*, each historical individual found on the journey through the afterlife is at once herself and himself and at the same time the personification of virtue and vice. Hamlet's declaration of "man's" station, a repetition of this theme, makes the human a cross between person, animal, angel, god, and earth: "'What a piece of work is a man!... In action how like an Angel! in apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?" (2.2.293-98). The world is, as Raphael puts it, the "book of God," making objects part of what Foucault calls "the prose of the world," the array of symbols through which the human might understand her place. This scheme makes an essential part of human life its attentiveness toward the world. As Tillyard puts it, "if [man] is to regain true self-knowledge he must do it through contemplating the works of nature of which he is a part" (20). Tillyard cites Milton's "Of Education" to support the point, where Milton argues that education aims to "repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God right"; this "knowledge of God and things invisible" can only be achieved "by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature" (qtd. in Tillyard 21). Alienated from itself by the fall, humanity must seek its sense out in the world. Its being is liminal; its mode of existence attentiveness. This sense of ecstatic existence is where the medieval great chain of being is closest to Paul's sense of "being in the world as not being in it," indeed develops this sense into a baroque and elaborate sense of connections between humanity and nature and the supernatural.

In the traditional narratives of the Renaissance as a the beginning of "modernity," the Christian cosmos fades as the grounding framework of the world and is replaced by

the human subject capable of rationally understanding the globe as an objective system of

natural laws. Capitalist notions of economics, scientific notions of nature, and contract

theories of governance all emerge in this epistemic shift in worldhood.[13] In "The Age of

the World-Picture," Heidegger argues the modern age marks the breakdown of the

medieval cosmos as a grand system of analogies where "to be in being means to belong

within a specific rank of the order of what has been created... and as thus caused, to

correspond to the cause of creation (*analogia entis*)" (130). As allegory fades,

representation emerges as the logic of the new frame, one where the substitution of all

things by signs—financial, cartographic, or scientific—allows for the understanding of

the world as a systematic unity with underlying laws.[14] Man sets himself up as subject in

mastery over an objective world. And yet, as I argued above, this notion of a historical

break in the understanding of the world is a false one. For however large and important

the differences between scholastic and empirical notions of worldhood, even in the

modern era, the globe itself is an ideal that must be taken on faith, a presumption of unity

that cannot be empirically observed. The difference between the two is that while

Christianity had, at least in theory, thought of the worldly (desire, power, possessions) as

opposed to the divine order, modernity understands the worldly as what must be

controlled and harnessed in order to produce the world. Foucault suggests in *Security,*

Territory, Population a distinction between medieval Christianity and later arts of

government, including mercantilism, in terms of how power is conceived in relation to

the world.[15] In Aquinas, political and ecclesiastical governance is congruent with the

divinely managed order of the world. Mercantilism, in contrast, depends on the idea of a

divide between state power and the world. The world is a field of resources that states compete over in order to maintain their power. Through that management of resources and competition amongst one another, order is exercised over the world. The world is external to the state and yet necessary to maintaining the state's power.[16] Yet at its core the modern notion of the world still bears an unease toward finite existence and its vicissitudes. For it values desire only insofar as desire can be regulated toward a productive end, abstracted from itself into the predictable of form of calculable economic systems. Hence what Foucault calls biopolitics: the development of mercantilism and other arts of government that takes human desire as what must be regulated to maintain a whole and harmonious world.

Descartes provides a clear example of the ontology underlying this understanding of the world. In the *Meditations*, the *cogito* is abstracted from the world; its existence and inner essence can be known prior to any knowledge of the world. In tandem with this abstracted subject emerges a mathematical world. Objects can be known for Descartes insofar as they are like geometric shapes: rigid, isolated, and fixed before the observer. The "world" of these objects is that of a mathematical system of laws, what Nancy, drawing on Heidegger, calls the world as world-view and world-picture *(*Nancy *Creation* 43; Heidegger "Age" 128-29*)*. The world-picture removes the subject from the world, making the world merely something she stands over or against (as its manager or conqueror), but not something she can stand in (40). Descartes retains the medieval sense of the world as a total order and even amplifies the claim of humans to have access to it. He does so by cutting off, nearly entirely, the medieval sense of ecstatic existence. The

subject knows herself prior to any knowledge of the world; the world is merely that which she exercises her reason upon.

Indeed, the narrator of the *Meditations* is able, after doubting the real existence of all things, to know through sheer reason alone that he is thinking. However, the same is not possible for his knowledge of the world. Only after the narrator reasons himself into believing in the existence of God can he come to trust that physical objects do in fact exist. When Descartes considers, in the final meditation, the possibility that what he believes to be the physical world is in fact an illusion sent to him by God or another creature, he rejects the proposition only through his faith: "God is not a deceiver [*fallax* Lat.; *trompeur* Fr.]; it is perfectly obvious, therefore, that he does not send these ideas to me directly from himself" (63). The perceptible, stable, systematic world which Descartes comes to know through his meditations has to be taken on faith, a promise given by God (who wouldn't play games about these things). The world is thus still tied to its Christian origins, and still a faith that the illusory ways of worldly existence carry behind them a unified order.

But Descartes' is not the only revision of worldhood in the Renaissance. As I argue above, others move in a different direction, taking the sense of ecstatic existence as primordial and making universal order as something that can only be seen in glimpses or imaginatively. One alternative to Descartes important to Spenser, Cavendish, and Milton is Giordano Bruno. Bruno accepts the medieval notion that the universe is the reflection of God's glory. However, for Bruno, because God's own glory is infinite, so too the universe must be infinite. God is the "incorporeal infinite," creation the infinite, material,

image of his Nature and Goodness (*On the Infinite* 257-58). Since the universe has no end, God cannot be outside it; rather, God is within all of the universe as its animating principle (257-58). Poetic and philosophical inspiration alike for Bruno are a welling up of this glory within the self, an ecstasy that carries one beyond oneself and into secret communion with the mysteries of the universe, as he argues in the preface to his sonnet collection, *The Heroic Frenzies*. The totality is in every person, not as what polices their place in existing political or natural orders but as what takes them outside themselves. As in Paul, the universal is a kind of rupture. Like Descartes, Bruno thinks through a world that no longer has ends or a natural center, but unlike Descartes, Bruno is concerned with this world's animate movements rather than mathematical stability. This ecstatic existence that Bruno thinks through, as well as his notion of multiple worlds, offers a philosophical resonance for the ideas of a fragmented and plural worldhood that I argue appears in the literature of the period.

One indication of that resonance is the two volumes which Bruno dedicated to Philip Sidney, including the *Heroic Furies*. While it is unclear what degree of intimacy, if any, between the two that dedication indicates, it does suggest at the least the availability of such philosophical ideas to Sidney and other English authors. Bruno's ideas of multiple worlds certainly seem to find their resonance in Sidney's notion of the poet as maker of fictional worlds. In *An Apology for Poetry*, Sidney argues the poet "doth grow in effect another nature" (64). Bruno's ecstatic inspiration, too, is echoed in Sidney's claim that the poet "freely rang[es]... within the zodiac of his own wit" (64), a cosmic outside within that exudes forth in poetic creation. The idea of fiction as world-making runs through

Renaissance literature, from Sidney to Spenser, Shakespeare, Cavendish, Donne, and

Marvell. Certainly, one way this world-making has been read, by Harry Berger in *Second*

World and Green World among others, is alongside the development of the modern

subject. In such an argument, the subject, capable of abstracting herself from the world,

can make mental models of the exterior world within. But such a reading does not do

justice to the emphasis on moving between worlds ("ranging freely" for Sidney) or on

worlds themselves as being fractured and dispersed (as in Donne). This insistence on

being between and incomplete suggests, as I have been arguing, a notion of worldhood as

itself ecstatic, ongoing, and incomplete, that is quite different from the stable systematic

worldhood associated with the modern globe. The Renaissance offers a unique way of

conceiving worldhood as a paradoxical and fragmented universality. This conception

draws on the conflicting definitions of the world as both God's creation and mundane

existence that it had inherited from medieval Christianity. Unlike notions of the world as

globe, the Renaissance ways of thinking the world I trace here do not try to break entirely

from these older theological ways of understanding the world. In thinking through

worldhood as paradoxical and yet necessary, ecstatic and multiple, Renaissance literature

looks forward to the difficulties of our own moment of postmodern globalization.

Colonialism

One of the realms of Renaissance life in which these shifting ideas of worldhood

become most volatile and consequential is the exploration and invasion of the Americas,

what Europe would come to call the "New World." (I take the Americas as exemplary because the idea of an entirely unknown realm weighed so powerfully on the imagination of the period; I do not mean to exclude the "Old World" or those parts of Europe considered "savage," like Ireland, that were also affected by these paradigms.) Amerigo Vespucci first gives the Americas the name of "New World" in his published account of his (perhaps fictitious) voyages there, *Novus Mundus*. That Vespucci is influenced by contemporaneous conversations over the idea of worldhood is suggested not only by the title of his account, but his own educational background. Vespucci was educated in the humanist culture of 15th century Florence where the neo-platonic ideas of Marsilio Ficino and others were circulating that would also influence Bruno. It is possible to trace a line of influence from Ficino to Vespucci through Giorgio Antonio Vespucci, a member of Ficino's humanist circle and Vespucci's uncle and tutor (Arciniegas 143). The idea of the Americas as a "New World" is often, with good justification, read in line with what I have been calling the modern global ontology. The Americas, in such an argument, are not just a new world but a new type of world on which the European subject will project himself in order to realize himself as subject. This sort of argument dates, as I suggest above, at least back to Burckhardt. This section places Vespucci's idea of the "New World" alongside a different intellectual trajectory, the notion of the world as multiple and fragmented that I have outlined. In doing so, my aim is by no means to deny the role the idea of the "New World" would play in imperialist modes of thought, but rather to show that the idea is volatile and ambiguous. What exactly is a "new world," after all? The idea, I will argue, suggested multiple possibilities in the Renaissance, including some

theories of a world that did not presume total and hierarchical difference between Europe and the Americas.[17]

When Vespuccci speaks of the "New World," he seems to have in mind a world which is outside all markers of religious determination: "We do not encounter among those peoples any who had a religion, nor can they be called Moors or Jews, and are worse than heathens, because we never saw them perform any sacrifice" (64). The accusation of American natives as atheists places them in an abject status, lower than Jews, Muslims, or Greco-Romans, the major non-Christian groups of the "Old World." Yet at the same time, Vespucci locates a realm of life outside the division of the Christian cosmos into believers and infidels, a humanity which troubles the schema of fall and redemption that organizes the Christian orientation of the world toward the divine. When Vespucci does occasionally try to position the "New World" within a Christian cosmology, he either refers to it as an "Earthly Paradise," or, in the one direct Biblical allusion in his accounts, compares the indigenous peoples to the crowds of the redeemed gathered before heaven in Revelations, "a great multitude, which no man could number." (Vespucci 37; *KJV* Rev. 7:9). The New World is thus situated just before or after Christian history, brief moments in the drama of salvation in which time stops and life exists without teleological aim. Just as the cosmological idea of multiple worlds troubles the traditional Christian schema by locating life outside the earthbound drama of the fall, so too the location of another world within this suggests a mundane existence that does not fit within the Christian frame. What troubles and fascinates Vespucci (and his vast sixteenth-century audience) in his account is the possibility of worldly human existence

that challenges the theological order of the cosmos.

Vespucci also elaborates the "New World" as a space of plurality. He describes the "dwellings" of the groups he meets as "communal," housing hundreds of people under a single roof (64). In addition, these communities are mobile, picking up and moving entirely every few years for agricultural purposes. This plurality is repeated in the sheer quantity of life there, as Vespucci describes the new world as being "inhabited by more numerous peoples and animals than in our Europe, or Asia or Africa" (45), as well as in the variety of species, for "our Pliny did not come within a thousandth part of the type of parrots and other birds and animals which are in those regions" (52). As these quotations suggest, Vespucci is fascinated by the innumerability of the Americas. Unlike a cosmos organized by a strict notion of hierarchy, the innumerability of life in the Americas suggests an organization of life without precise boundaries or positions. Vespucci thinks through how sociality and kinship might exist beyond the naturalized order of the Great Chain of Being.

Of course, Vespucci's description of this plenitude of life is also symptomatic of his desire to appropriate and hierarchically differentiate that plenitude. Vespucci's description of American bounty usually runs alongside his cataloging of the potential resources it offers: the gold he is told is there, the medicinal quality of the plants, the easy availability of the women, and so on. When that life resists appropriation, as when the natives attack (always without attributed motive), that plenitude becomes a disorder that needs to be brought under control. In Vespucci's case, desires for superiority and unlimited appropriation in his text sit alongside ideas of life that do not entirely coincide

with those desires. Vespucci's claim that the Americas are a "New World" suggest forms
of life and social organization that complicate the pre-determined organization of
medieval ontology.

Vespucci's interpellation of the Americas as a "New World," itself ambiguous, is
appropriated in later writers as both an ideological justification for colonialism and a
suggestion that the world might mean something more than European destiny. The
former, colonial, appropriation responds to the expansion of the globe as though it were a
wound, a fragmentation of the Christian world that must be bound back together. Richard
Hakluyt, in the dedication to the second edition of his *Principal Navigations*, compares
the many voyages the English have undertaken to "torn and scattered limbs" that will be
"incorporate[d] into one body" by his anthology (32). Unlike the Crusades of centuries
earlier, however, there is no longer a unified Christendom to oppose to the heathen world.
Indeed, European expansion into the Atlantic takes place more or less simultaneously
with its own internal "wounding" through the massacres, divisions, and diasporic
displacements of the Wars of Religion. As Christianity is itself fractured, the nation-state
took the place of the organized church as the bearer of the one supreme truth and culture
that should be spread throughout the world. Samuel Purchas cites as the first example of
global commerce Solomon, whose venture to Ophir to gather wealth for the temple
demonstrates that trade is morally salutary. Since humanity all derives from one blood,
Purchas argues, they are meant to mingle and become one body again through commerce.
The spread of Islam eastward through the Ottoman Empire outlines, for Purchas, the
demonic parody of what God enjoins the English to do. The language of the body in these

figures suggest how the colonial idea of worldhood cannot be separated from race and gender; the scattered "blood" of the human "race" to be gathered back into one through trade; the dismembered body of the world to be made whole again the woman Europe will possess in a reverse blazon. Colonialism recognizes the multiplicity of the world in early modernity, but it perceives that multiplicity as a tragic wound to be repaired through morally-sanctioned violence and acquisition in the name of national power. This model of worldhood undoubtedly anticipates modern globalization, bringing the world into order through commercial and military expansion.

While for Purchas and others the variety of cultures throughout the early modern globe threatened to tear apart the coherence of the world, there were other perspectives. Montaigne will serve as an example here, although the points I am making could be traced in their differences and similarities to More, Bruno, Marlowe, Las Casas, and others. For Montaigne, who witnesses the incredible violence of the European Wars of Religion, where Protestants and Catholics both believed in the absolute truth of their causes, the panoply of cultures across the globe is something of a relief, as it confirms that truth was not something one group could monopolize. Montaigne recognizes too, how these paradigms of absolute truth were justifying imperial violence. One of the few moments in the *Essays* where Montaigne seems unreservedly angry occurs during his discussion of the Spanish conquistadors who claim that the "Pope, representing God on Earth," gave them the right to dominion over all the Indies, and who used their "belief in one single God and the truth of [their] religion" as justification to conquer and enslave American societies (844). For Montaigne, the alternative to such practices is to see the

world as an endless proliferation of changes. Directly preceding his discussion of Spanish conquest and clearly framing it, Montaigne discusses Egyptian societies far predating Greece and Rome, and the invention of gunpowder in China, as demonstrating the absurdity of imagining there is anything particularly special about his own society. The world, he asserts, is "a perpetual multiplication and vicissitude of forms," an indefinite expanse of cultures extending throughout space and time far beyond the accounts of human knowledge (841). The world, then, is a collection of incredibly different customs and beliefs, not entirely unified or tidy, much like Montaigne's essays themselves. The tales and anecdotes Montaigne gathers from other places allow him to take a step backward from his own culture, to reveal that the practices and beliefs which seem natural and rational are in fact socially constructed fictions. "Whence it comes to pass that what is off the hinges of custom, people believe to be off the hinges of reason: God knows how unreasonably, most of the time" (100). Montaigne's philosophy is not, as it is often mistaken to be, a mere cultural relativism. It is, rather, a practice of finding unexpected connections between oneself and the strange, out-of-place, and monstrous. The central experience of life for Montaigne is being-out-of-place, dispossessed, thrown into drunken or dizzying motion, being "off the hinges." In a historical moment where colonialism, religion, and capitalism was dispossessing and uprooting unprecedented numbers of people, Montaigne's writing expresses a commonality to be found in that experience. Montaigne imagines a world composed through, not in spite of, the dizzying changes of his time. Where the colonial model perceives the variety of the world as a wound, Montaigne sees an opening toward other forms of connection. Montaigne's sense

of the world illuminates what I have above called the Renaissance's notion of a

paradoxical and fragmented worldhood. For Montaigne, the path toward grasping the

universal lies through understanding the world as constantly challenging and giving rise

to new forms.

Montaigne's quotation of Lucretius, that "before Rome fell, there were other bards

with other stories to tell," raises the possibility of polygenesis, another idea that circulates

throughout the Renaissance that complicates the medieval notion of a divinely ordered

cosmos.[18] These theories of polygenesis are particularly important to consider alongside

the figure of Maleger because they, too, suggest variability as the common condition of

life. In *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, Giordano Bruno mentions the Aztec

calendar stone, whose records seem to go back over ten thousand years, as evidence that

human life existed far before the beginning allotted to it in the Bible (250, 307 n. 52).

Elsewhere, Bruno develops a fuller elaboration of multiple human origins where humans

are not "sprung / From the generative force of a single progenitor," but "[e]very island

everywhere may give a beginning to things" (qtd. in Loomba and Burton 130). Richard

Popkin argues that Bruno's theories of polygenesis anticipate modern racial ideologies of

fully and hierarchically separable humans. ("Philosophical Bases" 90-91). Some accounts

of polygenesis in the period, such as Paracelsus's, work like Sepulveda's to deny the

Indians the status of full humanity, and so confirm Popkin's argument. At times, Bruno

appears to agree with such a position, but not at others, as when he affirms the Aztecs as a

source of knowledge and divine wisdom as Popkin acknowledges ("Pre-Adamite Theory"

60). Indeed, Bruno's account of an infinite universe of populated worlds makes it difficult

to construe any particular origin of human life as having special privilege. The polygenetic argument advanced by Bruno that there are multiple origins for the same human species troubles a linear genealogy that would rigidly delimit boundaries of kind. Bruno's account suggests a multiple worldhood in which origin and kind are singular and yet multiple, the world from the start pluralized.

These ideas, of polygenesis and of the globe as multiple worlds, permeate the literature of the period. As I detail in the third chapter, Cavendish raises the possibility of polygenesis in her philosophical writing and invents a plethora of non-earthbound humanities in *The Blazing World*. Perhaps one of the reasons authors were fascinated by the notion of the Americas as a new world is that it implies, as Montaigne states outright in "Of Coaches," that creation is ongoing, the world continuing to make new worlds. This includes fictional creation as part of a basic generativity of worldly life. I trace throughout this dissertation how the authors I study were interested in the capacity to create fiction as a universal property, shared by all, offering a commonality that transgresses without erasing borders of culture and religion. The "New World" in these portrayal was not always or only an objectified savage realm, but the paradigmatic instance of such worldliness. When Spenser compares the setting of *The Faerie Queene* to another Brazil (II.Proem.2), he makes the Americas the lens through which to understand his own fictive creation. Renaissance notions of the world as multiple offer, I will be suggesting throughout, a means to think a universality that inheres not in a privileged ideal but in life's complexity.

<u>Chapter Summaries</u>

The first chapter of my dissertation, "Making Sense of the World: Allegory and Materiality in *The Faerie Queene*," looks at how Spenser's epic transforms the traditional Christian allegory of the cosmos as a golden chain. The aim of the chapter is twofold: to show how a Christian orientation toward world-unity continues to structure emerging mercantilist notions of the world as globe, and to trace how Spenserian allegory, in its errant and incomplete structure, models a more dynamic form of worldhood. I attend to a critically neglected parallel between Spenser's imagery of the cosmic chain and his allegorical depiction of mercantilism in the cave of Mammon episode. Mirroring the Christian allegorical cosmos with mercantilist worldly ends, Spenser suggests both depend on a paradigm of the world as a single harmonious order. The parallel also suggests Spenser's revision of the Christian cosmos as being, in his present moment, fragmented and scattered. I argue that the errant structure of Spenser's own allegory mimics this complex worldhood. Looking at the Castle of Alma episode's description of the "slimy" material of the body, I argue Spenser depicts worldly life, in its difficult corporeality and sexuality, as universal through its resistance to categorization.

My next chapter, "The World Staged: Universality and Fictiveness in *Antony and Cleopatra*," examines tropes of the world as a stage or fiction in the early modern period through Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. The chapter provides a new approach to these tropes: instead of emphasizing the imperial power of the stage to represent exotic

locales, I dwell on the theatrical ability to be in multiple worlds at once as an alternative way of imagining global relations. Cleopatra's final performance in *Antony and Cleopatra* exemplifies such an imagination by withdrawing from the Roman empire and re-imagining a fantastical relation with her deceased lover. While previous studies of the world-stage trope have imagined Shakespeare to transition away from medieval notions of an illusory *theatrum mundi* toward modern cartographic senses of an objectively representable world, I show how Cleopatra reclaims medieval treatments to insist on global relations as fictive, shifting, and contradictory.

My third chapter, "The Pleasure in Parts: *The Blazing World* and Early Modern Polygenesis," asks how early modern notions of polygenesis, or multiple human origins, might offer a different way of understanding how race, and kind in general, is understood in the period. Cavendish's scientific romance *The Blazing World* features a myriad of bear-men, spider-men, and other human-animal hybrids alongside green-men, purple-men, and other diversely colored humans. I demonstrate how Cavendish draws on early modern ideas of multiple worlds and polygenesis, or multiple human origins, to suggest a nature that resists simple categorization. In particular, I show how Cavendish draws on the French theologian Isaac La Peyrère, whose writings on pre-Adamite humanity aims, in large part, to offer a more universal understanding of humanity that takes difference as fundamental and shared. I trace a tension in *The Blazing World* between the portrayal of a fictional world where every natural kind has a precise function and the text's delight in cataloging extraneous races and species that serve no narrative purpose whatsoever. Cavendish's improvisatory, superfluous kinds are not a sign of disorganization in her

writing, I argue, but reflect a globalizing image of nature that is always differing from itself, reinventing itself, deforming and reforming its own categories through mixture and contact. This chapter intervenes in Cavendish scholarship, which generally connects her interest in polygenesis to developing modern notions of race, by showing how polygenesis resists biblical notions of race that imagine humanity as a single family.

"Milton and the Stars: Consideration in *Paradise Lost*," my final chapter, examines how Milton takes up and transforms seventeenth-century debates about the size and shape of the cosmos. Rather than siding with or against heliocentrism, Milton's angel Raphael asks what difference the cosmos makes to human life. Taking up the medieval notion of the stars as one of the foremost signs of the world as God's book, Raphael revises this idea, arguing that the stars now signal the inability of humanity to have access to divinely-secure knowledge. By marking the withdrawal of divine sense, the stars arouse human curiosity and open the possibility of con-sideration of the world. The final section of the chapter transitions from these cosmic concerns to mundane political ones, arguing that Milton sees human freedom also made possible by the withdrawal of a sovereign position of knowledge. The final two books of *Paradise Lost* give a dialectical retelling of biblical history in which, because humanity is fallen, the development of liberty in a community always overgrows into faction, corruption, and eventually imperial enslavement. Milton speaks to the present-day question of how it is possible to make an absolute demand for freedom in all nations without that demand legitimating an imperialism that imposes its version of liberty on other societies. Milton offers an account of liberty which is always compromised by faction and therefore in process. It is not the

property of any one society, but is repeatedly connected with migration and, like the angel Michael, hovering "betwixt" one cultural world and another.

Throughout the dissertation, I attend to how the contradictions and multiplicity that inform early modern senses of worldhood offer a way of thinking universality such that it always needs to be critiqued, interrogated, and re-invented in order to remain open to the ever-shifting possibilities of the world. My dissertation looks forward from the tension animating worldhood in early modern texts toward the contradictory anxieties and glorification that surround present-day globalization's proliferation of media, markets, and migration.

Chapter One

Making Sense of the World:

Allegory and Materiality in *The Faerie Queene*

Allegory points elsewhere. In this, it has a special relation to worldhood, which

similarly gestures beyond the horizon of the perceptible. Among major examples of

allegorical literature, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is especially interesting because it is

written at a liminal moment between the fading of the medieval and the emergence of the

modern world-picture, a moment when it is especially uncertain what a world is. Despite,

or perhaps because, of this uncertainty, Spenser's poem has often given critics the

impression of encapsulating an entire world within itself. C. S. Lewis rhapsodizes near

the end of *The Allegory of Love*, "[Spenser's] work is one, like a growing thing, a tree;

like the world-ash-tree itself, with branches reaching to heaven and roots to hell... The

'great golden chain of Concord' has united the whole of his world" (359). E.M.W.

Tillyard similarly cites Spenser's poetry as an example of the *The Elizabethan World*

Picture near the outset of his book (12). More recently, a whole volume has been

dedicated to *Worldmaking Spenser* in which Roland Greene, in an argument that guides

mine here, contends that in *The Faerie Queene* the idea of an "integral and singular"

world is "finally an untenable concept" (10).

And yet, as Greene's point suggests, *The Faerie Queene* also calls into question

the ability of allegory to form a coherent world. This interpretation of the poem's form

has been ramified by several attentive readers. Harry Berger has argued in *The*

Allegorical Temper that the epic asks its readers to meditate on the difficulty of making meaning, while Jonathan Goldberg contends in *Endlesse Worke* that the poem diverges from the structural closure of endings in favor of a continual working through of a relation to alterity. Is Spenser's poem the last expression of a medieval sensibility that makes sense of the world through allegory? Or does it, rather, think through the limits of that world-making drive?

For all the grand (and insistently multiple) visions of cosmic accord in *The Faerie Queene*, there is another conception of worldhood repeated throughout the poem that has received less critical attention. When Mammon in book II declares himself "god of the world" (vii.8.1), he names a sense of worldhood as what Christianity calls the "worldly" that runs throughout the poem, from Archimago and Duessa's association in book one with worldly temptation to the fragmentary Mutabilitie Cantos' depiction of a world whose ruler is change. Mammon's sense of the worldly associates the world with the material, the flesh, desire, power, and wealth—everything that ends in time. How do these two visions of the world relate to one another in Spenser's poem? Can there be any accord between a notion of the world as spiritual accord and a notion of the world as fleshy discord?

It may be the case that Spenser imagines the discrepancy between these two senses of worldhood as a historical problem. *The Faerie Queene* speaks often enough of a world "runne quite out of square," as it is put in the proem to book V (1.7), as though the medieval world-view were no longer possible in an era that encounters new continents, planets, and ways of social order. Certainly, Mammon has been read, by Daniel Vitkus in

"The New Globalism" among others, as expounding an account of modernity and a modern theory of economy that stands in opposition to the feudal understanding of exchange. Richard Helgerson in *Forms of Nationhood* sees the poem as a whole as nostalgic for a feudal system that was no longer possible and as deeply suspicious toward the new modes of organizing the world suggested by Elizabethan nationalism. But given that Spenser is expressing his reservations of these modern world-systems from within an allegorical poem, it may not be so easy to divide the allegorical from the modern world-picture. What if, rather than articulating a longing for a fading era, Spenser were showing how the difficulties and complexities that inhabit allegory also run through modern ways of conceptualizing the world? What if Spenser were showing the continuing relevance of allegory to the modern world-picture?

This chapter is divided into two parts, each of which focuses on one of the senses of worldhood in *The Faerie Queene* I have outlined. The first half argues that, in thinking through allegorical notions of the world, Spenser brings out a paradox which animates them—that allegory is itself a disruption of the world conceived as total harmony, and thus the world can never quite be as harmonious as allegory depicts. Through the description of Mammon, Spenser suggests that paradox continues to inhabit emerging modern notions of worldhood in mercantilism. While the first half focuses on the difficulties Spenser brings out in medieval and modern notions of worldhood, the second half suggests that Spenser by no means rejects the idea of a world. Rather, what Spenser calls the "worldly" always carries traces of a universality that it at the same time disrupts and delays. I trace how a peculiarly Spenserian term for the flesh of the body, "slime,"

suggests that the unpredictable generativity and unavoidable corruption caused by worldly matter is what opens the possibility of a world existing at all.

1. Allegory

Concord: The Golden Chain

Genealogical accounts of worldhood as a concept have often made allegory the defining feature of the medieval notion of the cosmos, from Heidegger's "Age of the World Picture" to Foucault's *Order of Things*. While the medieval world is characterized by a total order of allegorical correspondences in which signs are part of the world, the modern world is one where signs have become separated from an objective world of systemic laws which they represent. A similar point is made by literary criticism that studies how literature creates senses of worldhood—works like M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Thomas Pavel's *Fictional Worlds*, Harry Berger Jr.'s *Second World and Green World*, and more recently Eric Hayot's *On Literary Worlds*. These literary studies, like their philosophical counterparts, tend to assume a modernity bracketed from its allegorical past. Hayot, for example, asserts that in modernity "ideas of sequential, physical cause and effect supplanted the dominance of a set of largely allegorical relations between activities at different 'levels' of the Ptolemaic cosmic sphere" (99). Even for Pavel, who strives for a formalism that doesn't make overarching historical claims, modern realist novels and medieval allegorical romance frequently form the two

polar extremes by which qualities of fictional worlds are measured.[19] This historical

bracketing runs into a considerable amount of difficulty once one considers that, in fully

separating these world-pictures from one another into objectively contained systems of

thought, these accounts methodologically assume the framework of objectivity and

systematicity belonging to the modern world-picture. The medieval era and its allegory

exist in these works from within modernity and thus cannot so easily be cordoned off

from modernity. Allegory is modern worldhood's excluded other, essential to the modern

world-view as what it rejects in order to gain a sense of its own bounded and systematic

order. Historically bracketing medieval allegory from modern representation offers an

idealizing picture of modern worldhood. Allegory continues to inform modern notions of

the world. Spenser's poem, positioned on the threshold between the modern and medieval

conceptions, articulates how allegory crosses this paradigm shift.

As an example of allegory's relation to worldhood in *The Faerie Queene*, here is

the description of Concord from book four that C. S. Lewis claims, as I quoted

previously, "unite[s] the whole of [Spenser's] world":

> By her the heauen is in his course contained,
>
> And all the world in state unmoued stands,
>
> As their Almightie maker first ordained,
>
> And bound them with inviolable bands;
>
> Else would the waters ouerflow the lands,
>
> And fire deuoure the ayre, and hell them quight,
>
> But that she holds them with her blessed hands. (x.35.1-6)

Concord draws together a mass of violent and chaotic elements, forming them into a cosmos in the Greco-Roman sense of a pristine order. Concord is a cosmic principle of balance, drawing a multitude into a unity that nevertheless preserves their differences. While each of the elements, like individual nation-states, attempts to dominate the others, Concord maintains peace by balancing their forces. However, the image also brings out elements of conflict in the process of world-making. For in order to keep the violent elements in order, peaceful Concord must herself exercise no small amount of force, binding them down "with inviolable bands." The chain brings the different elements together in such a way that they are kept in their place—that is, subdued and neutralized. The great golden chain is also a set of handcuffs; undoubtedly it is the same chain that Guyon, the knight of Temperance, elsewhere uses to imprison the magician Acrasia.[20] Concord's world is never entirely in concord, for although she pacifies the discordant elements, she herself is also an element of discord, exercising force on them. This paradox, I contend, is a general rule for how worldhood is imagined in Spenser: any entity that attempts to bring the world into full harmony, to realize peace between the world's conflicting members, will fall short of doing so, because it is also a member of the world and therefore also an element of conflict. One need only look to book five's treatment of justice to see the violence that can be carried out in the name of restoring balance.

Concord harmonizes the world not only horizontally by bringing together the different elements, but also vertically by uniting different levels of existence. As Harry Berger argues, the relation between concord and discord is the "central impulse of

Spenser's thought," found not just in the cosmological register described above but also essential to Spenser's ethics and politics (*Revisionary* 20). The passage above, for example, goes on to style Concord the "mother of... *Friendship*," regulating interpersonal relations, as well as the mother of "blessed *Peace*," guiding governmental interactions (34.1). Concord thus becomes rapidly generalized, turning into a model for just about everything. Correspondence unites all levels of the world; the cosmos as harmonious chain becomes the model of all other relations, standing in analogically for everything from physics through politics. And since a spatial order standing in analogically for something else is the definition of allegory—Angus Fletcher describes allegory as presenting its "objects all lined up... on the frontal plane of a mosaic"—it is clear that the allegory of Concord presents the entire cosmos as *itself* (*Allegory* 104). Allegory doesn't really point toward or represent a world that is outside it. Rather, it presents itself as the structure of the world, a microcosmic analogy that claims analogy is how the world works. Concord isn't just any allegory, then, despite my earlier assertion that it was an example. Concord is the allegory that legitimates allegory as the form of the world.

Because Concord is never complete, it continually repeats itself. Not only does it spread to the different political and ethical registers I've mentioned, it resurfaces throughout *The Faerie Queene*. In the canto in which Concord appears, the description I've quoted is preceded by a more disturbing, yet structurally analogous, depiction of Concord forcing together Love and Hate. The scene is followed by Spenser's translation of Lucretius's hymn to Venus, where love creates and maintains earthly harmony. The same allegory of the world as structured order will appear through negation in the proem

to book V where "the world is runne quite out of square" (1.7) and the final cantos of the poem where "the worlds faire frame" is threatened by Mutabilitie (VII.vi.5.5). Nor should Spenser be seen as exceptional in this regard: as Tillyard points out, the cosmic image runs throughout the Renaissance, from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* to Raphael's speech to Adam in *Paradise Lost*. These images are not new in the period, belonging to a longstanding Christian tradition that runs from Boethius onwards.[21] Despite the Christian claim to an essential underlying harmony to the cosmos, these repetitions are the *work* that goes into realizing such a vision, a work that, just because it is work, undermines the notion that such harmony is inherent. In a serious sense, allegory is *globalizing*; it is a totalizing drive toward structure that continually proliferates itself. If Concord hypnotically reiterates its own image everywhere, it is because it can never provide a foundation for itself. Able to explain everything in the world except for why it should explain everything, Concord repeats its own illusion, driving toward itself as the total structure of the world. There is more than an analogical similarity between this proliferating process of allegory and the technological and financial spread apparent in globalization. Sense-making is a totalizing drive, whether in literature or politics. Not only is globalization an allegory; allegory is globalization.

And yet it is to Spenser's credit that *The Faerie Queene* frequently calls into question these depictions of world-harmony. Indeed, what criticism on Spenserian allegory has shown is that, as Roland Greene puts it, "the concept 'world' no longer names something singular and unitary" in the poem (9).[22] Brenda Machosky contrasts the errant, unfinished structure of *The Faerie Queene* to the complete world-picture of

Dante's *Commedia* to demonstrate how in Spenser cosmic harmony becomes "disrupt[ed]" and "confus[ed]" (112). Harry Berger also argues that complete unification is in Spenser a "hazardous lure," for Spenser's cosmos follows a scheme of *discordia concors* where "diversity and unity are sustained together in equilibrium" (*Revisionary* 20). Yet such statements bear further complication if one considers that "equilibirium" is another word for concord, and thus the tension between concord and discord, if it is truly a tension, cannot always be so elegantly balanced. Concord doesn't just harmonize discordant elements, but creates discord in maintaining itself. If Concord is, as I'm suggesting, a form of world-making, then the unstable relation between concord and discord can indicate how world-making processes engender disorientation and disequilibrium alongside integration and stability.

Berger, in an insightful reading, demonstrates that the images of concord in the poem themselves differ from one another (*Revisionary* 20-22). Berger's reading opens the possibility that one depiction of concord might complicate or undermine the others' focus on forcefully maintaining order. There is one depiction of the cosmic chain, not frequently read by critics in relation to the theme of concord, that brings out the paradoxical tension I am suggesting underlies worldhood.[23] The reason for this relative inattention is likely due to the fact that the image appears in the cave of Mammon, a sequence of the poem associated with greed, ambition, and Spenser's critical depiction of modernity and early forms of capitalism. While this image's placement suggests that it should represent excess rather than harmony, if Concord is the name for a relation between concord and discord, excess cannot exactly be opposed to harmony. In the midst

of the vast cave system through which Mammon, the "god of the world" (8.1), leads

Guyon, the hero of book II, tempting him with scene after scene of immense wealth his

for the taking, sits one particularly large chamber in which the vast masses of humanity

attempt to scramble up a golden chain:

> There, as in glistring glory she did sit,
>
> She held a great gold chaine ylinked well,
>
> Whose vpper end to highest heauen was knit,
>
> And lower part did reach to lowest Hell;
>
> And all that preace did round about her swell,
>
> To catchen hold of that long chaine, thereby
>
> To clime aloft, and others to excel:
>
> That was *Ambition*, rash desire to sty,
>
> And euery lincke thereof a step of dignity. (II.vii.46.1-9)

Note the similarities to Concord: a chain uniting the world whose divergent elements are

drawn together by an allegorical female figure at the top. This woman, Philotime, is a

repetition of Concord in which ambition takes the place of balance, causing the new

cosmic chain, money, to pull everything into disarray. It might appear as though Spenser

is straightforwardly criticizing greed as the root of social ills, and yet as another iteration

of Spenser's golden chain, Philotime is not entirely negative. This version of the chain

complicates the dynamism Berger argues is essential to Spenser's conception of concord,

for movement here does not maintain an ideally calibrated harmony. It might seem like

motion in the chain were ultimately stabilized by its orientation upward, with everyone

falling over each other to make it to the top of the ladder. However, while the chain

appears to hang vertically, its name, "ambition," has the etymological sense of "going

around," *amb-ire*. Movement in the chain doesn't run up or down so much as out of place.

Indeed, most of the verbs characterizing movement in this passage—"excell," "swell,"

"sty," "clime"—carry the sense of overflowing position. And because no person or god

occupies the summit but an allegorical figure whose meaning points somewhere else, the

center of this chain is motion. This passage suggests a complex and universal dynamism,

a ubiquitous falling out of place that belongs essentially to worldhood in Spenser. The

world creates disruption and uprooting in the process of its becoming world-wide, its

globalization.

Philotime portrays world-making as engendering a restless, migratory movement.

The passage illustrates on a grand scale Guyon's accusation toward Mammon: "realmes

and rulers thou doest both confound / And loyal truth to treason doest incline" (13.2-3).

What is remarkable about this statement is that Mammon doesn't draw people's loyalty

away from one authority toward some other; he doesn't, say, lure a magistrate into service

to the rival of his present king. Mammon inclines people toward *treason*, the condition of

not belonging fully to any one sovereign. This tableau can be read in relation to the birth

of the nation-state system, as thinking through a form of sovereignty that asserts itself in

the midst of the fragmentation of existing power-structures and never quite loses the

sense that its power is insecure, always troubled by the possibility of treason that made its

rise possible.[24] The tableau suggests a similar movement in describing the people

bunched together in the chain as a "prease," that is, a press. A verb for force is

nominalized into a human group, much like the modern "crowd." The term conjures up the Inquisition, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, and the countless torture devices used in the name of confession of the divine truth, the universal truth of the one true religion, and all the unsettlement, the rebellions and migrations of peoples brought on by these human presses. Or of a printing press, one of the most important technologies of the time, the force behind much of the Reformation, which disseminates, scatters a text beyond its author and place of origin, as here people are uprooted from their places. Philotime suggests that world-integrating processes necessarily produce uprooting and displacement.

The allegory's own position is as unstable as that of the individuals portrayed in it. Philotime is one of Concord's many iterations throughout Spenser, but this repetition of the golden chain emphasizes its difference from the original. Philotime's chain calls attention to the quality of allegory that is obscured in Concord, the movement of a sign away from its referent. As Paul de Man argues in "The Rhetoric of Temporality," "allegory designates a distance in relation to its own origin," an origin that would in this case be the idea of the world as peace and harmony, the world as Concord (207). Allegory abstracts, pulls an image out from the chain of the world and sets it adrift, calling out for a meaning to which it is no longer firmly bound. And the errancy of allegory as it tries to totalize itself into a system has implications far beyond literary form. For, as I've argued, Concord presents itself as the general form of politics and ethics in *The Faerie Queene*. One piece of the great chain having been shown to be capable of detaching itself, the symmetry of the whole unwinds. All duplications and representations of the world, every

way in which the world spreads its image as it globalizes, whether through the circulation of text, money, images, or bodies, is not a simple expansion of order but an undoing and a mutation of it.

It would be easy to imagine that Concord and Philotime oppose one another. But note that Philotime's world is, like Concord's, a chain and not a chaotic heap. As Paul Alpers notes in *The Poetry of the Faerie Queene*, the tableau lingers on the beauty of Philotime's chain, how it is "ylincked well" and stretches from "highest heauen" to "lowest Hell" (238-40). Philotime's chain, and the capitalist pursuits it stands for, are not purely destructive. Everything is connected in Philotime's chain through being pulled out of place; it is a chain perhaps more in the sense of a chain reaction. Philotime doesn't oppose Concord's drive toward realizing the world as a total structure, but brings out the restless dynamism internal to that drive. If a world is an order exceeding the particularities of place and name, then only through such an excessive movement outside of the particular can there be any possibility, however minimally, of a world. The complex movement of unwinding depicted in the tableau is what opens the possibility of anything like a world existing at all, and yet this uprooting motion also prevents the world from ever fully realizing itself as a world. Attempts to fashion a world, for better or worse, are struck by a paradoxical tension between harmony and abstraction.

This paradox internal to the world is named explicitly elsewhere in *The Faerie Queene* when the narrator offers a vexed etymology of the 'world': "when the world woxe old, it woxe warre old / (Whereof it hight)" (IV.vii.31.6-7). The line has two meanings that are directly contradictory and yet must both be taken into account: the first, that

'when the world grew old, it grew into something worse than itself' ("warre" being a medieval spelling of 'worse'), and the second, that 'when the world grew old, it became itself' ("warre old" being a homonym of 'world'). The passage makes the world's contamination its very definition, its waning from itself also its "wox[ing]" into itself. There are perhaps two ways to see this disappearance of the world: first, one might see it as a loss, and thus interpret Spenser as a melancholy poet mourning the loss of a Christian harmony ruined by the Reformation, capitalism, or the nation-state system. In such a reading, Spenser no doubt remains committed to the idea of the world as harmony, for it still looms over these events as an idealized contrast to their disorder. The second reading, which I am advancing here, would be to see the world's disappearance as its errancy, it's furtive going-under-ground. (It's no accident that Philotime's chain appears in the cave of Mammon.) That errancy, the need to constantly question and re-imagine what a world is, is precisely what keeps any possibility of worldhood alive in the positive sense of unity-in-multiplicity, fraught though it may be.

To briefly recapitulate: Philotime and Concord are two allegorical images of the world which seem at first glance diametrically opposed to one another. But they bring out the twin poles of a paradox inherent to the idea of the world: a drive toward totality, that is, to bringing all things into a single order, and an errancy that disrupts that drive. I've also suggested that these two facets of worldhood bear a special relation to allegory. On the one hand, allegory creates a sense of the world as a meaningful totality by analogically comparing the world to its own spatial order. But on the other hand, allegory's abstract and detached quality suggests the distance between the world and any

one of its images. This tension within the concept of worldhood in the poem extends

beyond it into the global relations of the period. Europe is in a moment of intense

expansion and interaction, the beginning of the modern world-system; it is also in the

midst of tremendous shifts and destabilization, and these processes bear a non-arbitrary

relation to one another. The relation between worldhood in the poem and these historical

events is not merely one of analogical correspondence. One need only think of the poem's

lavish praise of Elizabeth as the guiding light that "like *Phoebus* lampe throughout the

world doth shine" to begin tracing the imbrication of the poem in England's developing

sense of itself as an imperial nation (I.Proem.4.4). However, as I have shown, the poem's

relation to totalizing world-making is equivocal, and so one needs to be cautious in

relating the dynamics of worldhood within the poem to Spenser's own positions toward

imperialism. While Spenser's stance toward the global relations of his era is a complex

question in itself, the poem offers a powerful reading of globalization that brings out the

instability inherent to it and makes possible a critique of any simple articulation of world-

making as beginning or ending in order, stability, or harmony.

Mammon: The Gold in the Chain

As I have argued, the story goes that allegory fades in modernity, replaced by a

representational understanding of the world as a field of objects. The cave of Mammon

episode, often read by critics as Spenser's meditation on an epistemic break between

medieval Christendom and an emergent capitalism, makes a good test-case for the

relation between allegory and the modern world. While the previous section of the chapter focuses on a tension within allegory, this section elucidates how that tension continues to shape the modern world-view depicted in Mammon's cave. Historical interpretations of the canto have brought out how it captures some of the seismic social transformations of its time. Daniel Vitkus in "The New Globalism" reads Mammon as "the spirit of the global transmission of wealth" whose sense of worldhood is tied to the emergence of global capitalist networks in the period (39).[25] When Mammon tells Guyon that his gold can "kings create" (5.6), there is certainly a parallel with the development of mercantilist ideology in the period. As Jonathan Gil Harris notes, mercantilism, the nascent form of capitalist thought, shifts economics from a branch of ethics to a natural system that can be studied empirically (7). Wealth becomes a science, a mechanics of accumulation, exchange, and power.[26] The management of wealth is the "fountain of all the worldes good" (38.6), the means through which states maintain stability in the world. As David Landreth has suggested, what horrifies Guyon, the knight of temperance and so of concord, is what he calls Mammon's "worldly mucke" (10.5), the golden matter that does not aim to reflect order but produce it (52-101). The cave of Mammon thus does seem to illustrate a conflict between an older, Christian sense of the world as chain-like order and an emergent capitalist sense of the world as a field of resources. The golden chain squares off against the bourgeois necklace.

How different, though, is Mammon's idea of the world as a system of exchanges from Concord's golden chain? For all the important variations between the two, aren't both systems of propriety, ways of maintaining an order deemed natural and proper?

Guyon sees Mammon's worldliness as the destruction of the golden world of lawful rule: "realmes and rulers thou doest both confound" (13.2). Mammon, however, argues that worldly riches are what sustain the world's order, insisting to Guyon that he is the "ample flood" (8.8) that makes possible "all this worldes good" (8.6). Mammon does not differ from Guyon in seeking a neatly arranged world; he simply believes this state can best be arrived at through gold. Both want a world of kings, of sovereign rule and order, though Mammon believes gold, not God, will create that world. Mammon's mercantilist sense of worldhood still relies on Guyon's allegorical sense of the world as an underlying spatial order. Gold takes the position of a divine power that orders the world; it is an outside of the world that is inside the world. The mercantilist system reworks the medieval doctrine of worldhood in which political power is justified through reference to transcendent order, but in mercantilism, that transcendence becomes dispersed within the world. Power is maintained not from above but through flux and mobility. The order to which gold belongs appears to be a rational, calculative system, but like the medieval cosmos, it relies on something transcendent that gives the world its shape.

The underlying congruity between the medieval and mercantilist outlook is brought out by the fact that the character most steeped in Christian theology in the canto is Mammon. When Mammon describes his riches to Guyon with the phrase "neuer eye did vew, / Ne toung did tell, ne hand these handled not" (19.6-7), he echoes Paul's "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (*KJV* 1 Cor. 2:9). It is possible to read these lines as parodic, that is, casting Mammon through antithesis as a false copy of God. Such a

reading would align with Mammon's "vaunt" (9.6) that he is "God of the world and worldlings" (8.1) and the "grace" which he repeatedly offers Guyon in the form of free cash (18.6, 32.9). However, antithesis in order to contrast must also compare, and Mammon's Pauline allusions also suggest the cave has something of the divine harmony of Concord about it. As Jonathan Goldberg suggests, the cave offers a form of "transcendence [that] is not upward, in the direction of spirit, but downward, toward a level of existence that is… invisible… but... not immaterial" (*Seeds* 103).

The congruity between Guyon and Mammon's accounts of worldhood is historically supported by Foucault's account in *Security, Territory, Population* of how the economic apparatuses of the early modern mercantilism take up the techniques of governance developed by the medieval Church (229-31). Pastoral governance is already a mode of power that exceeds the law, even if in doing so it claims it claims to uphold a natural law. Mercantilism reworks that governance as the management of resources required to maintain state power. The Church justifies the management of worldly things and desires through reference to an idea of the world as a reflection of divine order. Mercantilism, similarly, assumes that the proper management of resources is necessary to the maintenance of an orderly world. Although Christianity and mercantilism have significantly different accounts of worldhood, both rely on an assumption of order to be achieved through the management of the things of this world.

Critics have often noted the unsettling resemblances between Guyon and Mammon.[27] While at first glance the canto portrays a series of temptations Mammon offers toward Guyon, Guyon's replies often betray a complicity with Mammon's

perspective. The cave on closer inspection seems less a confrontation between Guyon and Mammon, the Christian and capitalist world, or allegory and representation. Mammon does not come after Guyon in the sense of historical sequence so much as he *comes after* Guyon in the sense of pursuing him, trying to prove that he, better than Guyon, can make the sort of world Guyon desires. If Guyon, in turn, is far more invested in Mammon than one might expect, following him into the cave for no good reason, then perhaps it is because Mammon reflects Guyon, bringing out aspects of Guyon that Guyon wishes to ward off. Both Guyon and Mammon, Christian allegory and capitalist representation, rely on a sense of the world as harmony; neither are capable of recognizing that all the mediations of images and technics through which they aim to create such a world also bring forth instability and contradiction. All images create tarnished reflections of an order they are not; the golden chain is always something of a knock-off. The historical rupture between Christianity and capitalism conceals a more fundamental paradox within both their world-making endeavors.

Take, for example, the origin myth of gold Guyon offers in the canto. Guyon's tale appears at first glance to suggest that "the antique world, in his first flowring youth" prior to the discovery of gold is an era when humanity knew nothing but "naturall first need" (16.1, 16.9). Only after humanity begins to "exceed / The measure of [the world's] meane," the golden balance of Concord, does it dare "with Sacriledge to dig" into the earth and discover gold, "the matter of [man's] huge desire" (16.8-9, 17.4, 17.7). Guyon's myth elucidates how money is never just exchange but is connected through Christianity to the Fall, to sin and evil. The world, in the sense of golden harmony, and the worldly

matter of money oppose one another. This moralizing also links money positively to salvation, to anticipation and divine reward, as the parable of the gold coins in the New Testament suggests. And yet, in Guyon's narrative, the displacement of the break between Christian harmony and modern corruption into a primordial past ought to raise doubts that the poem really maintains there is a locatable time before modernity. As David Landreth argues in *The Face of Mammon*, the cause and effect of the shift from the utopian golden world to the later corrupt one is baffling, such that the passage doesn't allow any simple relation between before and after (63-66). Prior to any discovery of gold, Guyon asserts that humans "encrease / to all licentious lust" because nature itself has made them "fat swolne" (16.7-8). Nature drives humanity toward exceeding the natural order. Similarly, the same "womb" of nature (17.1) that sustains human need also furnishes the "tomb" containing pernicious gold (17.3). Gold does not come after a world of cosmological harmony, securing or disrupting it, but is present from the start. Money, in the sense of disruptive substitution, is made something more than Guyon or Mammon can imagine: the name of a ubiquitous condition. What Christianity disdainfully and capitalism worshipfully names the "worldly" is a mistaken title for a fundamental contradiction within worldhood. The canto does not reveal a historical break between a natural world of allegorical relation and the techno-capitalist world of gold; it shows that the one is always already embedded in the other.

Mammon's gold, far from useful currency, bears a much closer resemblance to allegory's obscure value. Rather than contrasting allegory and the modern representational system of money, the canto brings out the allegorical dimensions of

wealth. When Mammon first appears, the narration hovers on the darkened gold embossing his armor:

> His yron coate all ouergrowne with rust,
>
> Was vnderneath enueloped with gold,
>
> Whose glistring glosse darkned with filthy dust,
>
> Well it appeared, to haue beene of old
>
> A worke of rich entayle, and curious mould,
>
> Wouen with antickes and wild Imagery. (4.1-6)

The gold pictured here stands apart from gold imagined as coin, that is, as pure circulatory value. The armor has rusted to the point where it is no longer easily discernible what its worth is. It only "appear[s]" to have been a richly-made work "of old" (does that mean formerly? still?). The narration doesn't tell what any of the images on the coat are but only gives descriptions, "antique[]" and "wild," that point toward the difficulty of interpreting images. If gold as money is imagined to stand in for some absent commodity, the rusty coat betrays a loss within this fungibility, a decomposition that takes place in substitution. Gold behaves similarly throughout the cave, where it is conspicuously useless, moldering and piling up in corners not touched by anyone. This substitution with loss suggests not the exchange of properties, however mediated, imagined in mercantilism, so much as an exchange between property and something else, some pure loss or impropriety. It is no accident if the gold's "glistring glosse darkned with filthy dust" (4.3) is reminiscent of Spenser's favorite image of allegory as obscured light. The decomposing movement of gold away from discernible value parallels the unsteady

movement of allegory in Philotime's tableau. Gold, despite Mammon's claims, does not make a world of rule and order. Capitalism draws on allegory to ground its sense of worldhood, but like allegory, it continually disrupts its own claims to produce order and stability.

The structure of Guyon's tour through the cave reveals, on a narrative level, exactly such an errancy in Mammon's sense-making operations. The cave is a sequence of strange, quasi-hallucinogenic, not entirely connected scenes, a chain of unstable play like Philotime's. After leading Guyon into his House, Mammon discloses to him a room which contains more riches than "all the wealth, which is, or was, of yore" (31.7) indeed so many riches that they "ne ever could within one place be found" (31.6), though in fact such a place is just what the two of them have come upon. The canto is filled with similar moments that claim to reveal the entirety of the world. And yet, the multiplicity of these moments also calls the veracity of any one of them into question. One would think that, after having displayed the first room to Guyon, which already contained the entirety of the world's bliss in it, Mammon would simply have nothing left to offer. Instead, Mammon escorts the hero to a second room which also contains the totality of riches, only this time in yet-unfashioned form— "Here is the fountain of the worlds good" (32.7) —then to Philotime's chamber, which again is where "all this worldes blis" is "[d]erived" (48.8). The canto proceeds as though there were a structural relation between its various scenes adding up to some larger allegory of worldly temptation, and yet each scene is unhinged from the next, additively repeating slightly reconfigured versions of the same. Like allegory, Mammon's capitalist world-making endeavor is incapable of realizing the

world as a structured whole, but what it does produce, despite itself, is a world that inheres in serial repetition.

Allegory, as a literary mode which calls attention to the distance between a sign and its referent, can shed light on the tensions and incongruities in modern sense of the world and the global. It isn't an accident that Spenser's complex allegorical poem appears at a moment when the modern world-system is just emerging and Christianity is in disarray. For Spenser's poem not only attempts to articulate a complex and fragile idea of universality amidst historical conflict, but also brings out the paradoxes and contradictions that inhere in all notions of universality. The allegory of the cosmos as golden chain that is central to Spenser's poetics creates a sense of worldhood by projecting itself as the world, a spatial order that unites diverse elements. When the golden chain is transformed into a symbol of worldly ambition in the cave of Mammon, it brings out the dislocation and destabilization involved in that world-making. Every attempt to make the world into a total harmony, to bring together its discordant elements into a whole, inevitably goes awry because that attempt is itself a discordant act. Allegory, in Spenser but also as a literary mode in general, names the impossibility of the world ever coinciding with itself, dramatizing the tension between dislocation and unification that animates world-making, including modern globalization.

2. Materiality

Slime, or Worldly Muck

What I have called the destabilization of allegory is persistently associated in Spenser with the material. By "material," I mean material pursuits, the desires for pleasure, wealth, and power that Christianity calls the "worldly." When Mammon calls himself "god of the world," this is the array of associations he conjures. And it is no accident that Mammon's realm is located underground, amongst the dirt. These worldly ends are connected in Spenser with the material in another sense: the common stuff that makes up all bodies, living or not; Spenser's thinking of worldhood is also a thinking of the body and its desires. But not the body in the sense of a stable organism, for Mammon's "worldly" ends are what, in Spenser, corrupt and weaken the body. This instability is not straightforwardly negative, for in weakening the body, matter opens the body to a world of relations. While the previous section of the chapter dwells on the paradox of world-making in Spenser, this sections will suggest how that paradox nonetheless allows for a complex affirmation of worldhood. The worldly, as the resistant and resilient stuff of bodies, carries in Spenser an alternative thinking of universality than the total and stable harmony offered by Concord. The materiality of the body, though it seems in Spenser's poem to prevent any full order in this world, nevertheless bears the traces of a universality that it simultaneously defers. Worldhood, though never achieved, never entirely disappears either, inherent in the fallen stuff of the body.

The House of Alma, which Guyon visits shortly after his time in the cave, offers a clear link between body and world, the tangible physicality of what we all have and a vast expanse that stretches beyond its reach:

> Of all Gods workes, which do this world adorne,
>
> There is no one more faire and excellent,
>
> Then is man's body both for powre and forme,
>
> Whiles it is kept in sober government. (ix.1.1-4)

Playing on the Latin sense of *mundus* as both 'cosmos' and 'ornament,' the passage suggests the body is a microcosm, that crowning jewel of the world most like the world's own pristine beauty. The rest of the canto develops the synecdoche, expanding the human body into a well-run castle whose chambers and fortifications map precisely onto the different human organs. The integrity of the human body, its ability to regulate what it incorporates and expels of the outside world, is made the model of well-run government. As here, the body and its matter are tightly interlinked throughout the rest of book II with ideals of politics and empire: the temperate body is a colonial fortress; maritime adventure verges on self-pleasure at the Idle Lake; acceding to sexual desire is going native in the Bower of Bliss. These organic metaphors serve ideological ends, naturalizing capitalism and imperialism as forms of civilizational health and rendering savages and other cultures as disorders to be contained or overcome.

But can these analogies among body, state, and world move in directions less comforting for imperial ideology? How might flesh, with all its traditional attributes of mutability and impurity, open different ways of thinking universality in Spenser? Goldberg opens the possibility of such a reading of the Castle in *The Seeds of Things*, arguing that while the practices of bodily discipline explored in the canto " could easily correspond with colonialism" (89), since colonialism claims to bring order to

civilization's unruly outsides, but if one follows the affirmative possibilities Foucault's later work finds in these regimes, "such linkages do not exhaust the work of these labors on oneself" (89-90). The possibility Goldberg raises, that Spenserian flesh might cut across the boundaries raised by colonial ideology, is supported by Spenser's longest description of the matter of the body in the Alma canto, which compares human flesh to the cosmopolitan Tower of Babel:

> Not built of bricke, ne yet of stone and lime,
>
> But of thing like to that *Aegyptian* slime,
>
> Whereof king *Nine* whilome built *Babell* towre;
>
> But O great pitty, that no longer time
>
> So goodly workemanship should not endure:
>
> Soone it must turne to earth; no earthly thing is sure. (21.4-9)

Where the canto as a whole dwells on the body as a beautiful and exemplary structure, these lines shift focus toward the viscous matter of which that structure is formed. While the shape of the organism might be beautiful, the matter within it is predisposed to rotting, never permanent or "sure." The passage raises a number of perplexing questions: Why, in a celebration of organic form, this sickly lingering on the body's rotten flesh? What is the relation between the two opposed functions of flesh in the passage, composition and decomposition? Finally, what links together the fatal weakness of the body with which the stanza ends and the dream of a united humanity suggested by the allusion to Babel in its middle? Does the lowest form of ecstasy, the body's dissipation into dirt, and the highest, humanity's transcendence over all barriers of linguistic,

political, and religious difference that divide it, bear some relation here?

For several recent readers of *The Faerie Queene*, the Castle of Alma has offered a privileged point from which to re-evaluate Spenserian materiality. Stephen Greenblatt's influential reading of the poem in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* emphasizes Spenser as a Protestant poet who rejects the sensuous pleasures of the body for the sake of disciplinary control in the service of the Elizabethan state (157-92). Working against the dualism implicit in Greenblatt's reading, Michael Schoenfeldt argues in *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* that the Castle of Alma reveals the productivity of the body in Spenser. The canto's detailed attention to digestive and defecatory processes indicate, for Schoenfeldt, a self fashioned through the maintenance of the body (40-73). David Landreth's *The Face of Mammon* likewise focuses on the generativity of slime in Alma's castle, comparing it to Aristotelian *prima materia*, the shapeless substance out of which all living and non-living forms arise (72-73). The Castle offers, in these critical accounts, an Ovidian body less reified into singular form than dynamic and in process; the self in such accounts is not pre-given and "manacled" to a corporeal inhabitance, as in Marvell's "Dialogue Between the Soul and Body" (4), but made and unmade through bodily processes and practices. For a late capitalist society that insists on classifying bodies in ever more specialized and pigeon-holed ways, the appeal of Spenser's mutable flesh is obvious. Yet these interpretations raise some questions: there are seemingly dualistic moments in Spenser, like the beginning of the Alma canto, that argue that the body must be kept in "sober gouernment" (1.4), presumably by the rational mind, lest it "growes a Monster" (7) through "misrule and passions bace" (6). What would these critical accounts

have to say about such moments' insistence on the disorderliness of the body's flesh? Are they the signs of a residual religious asceticism from which Spenser could not entirely detach himself? Or is the body's unruliness somehow tied in Spenser to its self-fashioning power?

These critics' affirmation of the generative potential of Spenserian flesh is also qualified by how both divide certain good, healthy forms of matter from other, less pleasant or valuable varieties. Schoenfeldt finds Spenser's account of slime in the passage I quote above unappealing and inharmonious with the overall sense of the canto: there is "a tension between the unqualified awe the *form* [of the body] inspires… and the *sinful matter* from which the form is made... Spenser's constructionism chafes against his Protestant disgust" (55). That abrasive, noxious stuff perhaps recurs in what Schoenfeldt sees as the "superfluous excrements" separated from the "matter that nourishes" the body later in the canto (61). For Landreth, slime is the *prima materia* of Alma's castle, holding "boundless potential for nourishment" (73), and contrasting strongly with the "sterile" gold in Mammon's cave whose illusory bounty can only "ape the body" (72). Such divisions between healthy and unhealthy, fertile and sterile, kinds of matter need to carefully avoid duplicating the terms of the traditional division between matter and form. Is it possible to give a non-dualistic account of matter in Spenser that isn't so, well, idealizing? The critical interest in the productivity of matter in the canto, I argue in what follows, is complemented and, at times, challenged by the importance of slime as a material that is useless, decaying, and toxic. For the corrosive power of slime is bound to a miraculous generativity, a generativity unlike ordinary production in being unpredictable

and uncontrolled. Spenserian slime thus inhabits the paradoxical space where corruption and creation intertwine. This paradoxical materiality opens some alternative, queer possibilities for how sexual desire is understood in Spenser, as well as for a non-imperial universality in this muck out of which all life, of whatever culture or species, is made.

Of the nine times Spenser employs the word "slime" in *The Faerie Queene*, a single word is rhymed with it in a majority of cases: "crime." When Christ is incarnated, he is described as "in fleshly slime / Enwombed... from wretched Adams line / To purge away the guilt of sinfull crime" (II.x.50.2-4). Spenserian slime thus alludes to the Christian doctrines of the flesh and of original sin carried by the flesh, as articulated by Augustine and others. The beginnings of the doctrine of original sin are found in Paul's statement that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). The word translated as "flesh" in Paul, *sarx*, is one of several terms Paul uses for the body, *soma* being the most frequent other term. But whereas *soma* denotes the body as an organism, an orderly arrangement like the Greek *kosmos*, *sarx* is something quite different. Etymologically, *sarx* is likely connected to *sairo*, 'to draw,' 'to draw off,' and suggests the meat that can be stripped away from the bones. The flesh is an excess of the skeletal order of the body. Fleshly life in Paul leads to what Goldberg, commenting on Arendt's reading of Augustine, calls "doubled existence" and reads in relation to Foucaultian askesis, a fundamental division of the self that allows the self to continually re-make itself through a process of will and resistance (77). When Paul states, "I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."

(Rom. 7:14-15), he figures this divided state as the self's entrance into commercial relations. From the start, the self is not master of itself, but "sold under sin." For Paul, then, matter is fatal to the self, splitting and sinking it into a network of relations that alter it. The connection between sin and selling highlights Paul's association of material existence with movement, exchange, and transaction, what he generally refers to as the "the world." As Rudolf Bultmann notes, in *The Theology of the New Testament*, "at a certain remove, flesh is equivalent with the world" (235). The world, described in Paul through phrases like "the princes of this world," "the riches of this world," and the "pleasures of the world," and set in antithesis to God's kingdom, is being insofar as being is passing, both into relations with others and into non-existence. "The fashion of this world passeth away," Paul declares, in a statement that is not only eschatological but definitional (1 Cor. 7:31). One need not hear this statement as an orientation toward a transcendental other world, for Paul is quite circumspect about any character of the world to come. Rather, Paul ties the mortal condition of the body, its ecstatic dissipation of itself in death, with the cosmic, the totality of existence in the world.

As the Pauline allusions around the word suggest, the "slime" that forms the temperate body of Alma's castle is not as healthy and orderly as the above critical accounts suggest. While Landreth interprets Spenser's "slime" as the nutrient-rich mud of Egypt, it is unlikely that is the primary signification of the word in this passage (73). As the eighteenth-century editor John Upton notes in his gloss on the word, "The slime used for cement to the bricks, with which Babylon was built, was a kind of bitumen or pitchy substance."[28] The term "slime" was well established in Spenser's time as a word to refer

to bitumen; when the Coverdale Bible describes the construction of Babel, it says, "They toke bryck for stone, & slyme for morter" (Gen. 11.1). Bitumen is what we would today call asphalt, a thick, black, smelly, semi-liquid substance that oozed up from a river near Babylon according to Herodotus (1.179). Arising from the depths of the earth without set form, it must have seemed to Spenser a concrete instance of the Chaos described in the Garden of Adonis. Besides its oozy lack of form, the other defining feature of bitumen is its deadliness. Diodorus Siculus mentions in his *Library of History* that near the source of Babylon's bitumen were two perils: a hole in the earth through which poisonous vapors arose and a lake that dragged swimmers down to its depths (2.12). In *Paradise Lost* it is the material excluded when the Son constructs the world, as Gordon Teskey notes in *Delirious Milton* (39), the "black tartareous dregs, / Adverse to life" (X.562). Commenting on the passage, Teskey calls these dregs "a heterological, virulent remainder… something incapable of assimilation to the world (40). Spenser has made the body of a substance seemingly foreign and threatening to its own existence. The basic matter of the body is its death, a heterogeneous seed resistant to life.

While "slime" is lifeless, it produces structures that allow life to thrive. This paradox, that the slime of the body is pernicious to life's order and yet generative of it, is signaled in Spenser's text by the conflation of the bitumen used to build "*Babell* towre" with the mud indicated by "*Aegyptian* slime." Landreth is right to note that by calling the slime "*Aegyptian*," Spenser is calling up connotations of "the mud of the Nile, from which crocodiles and hippopotami were alleged to be spontaneously generated after the yearly floods" (73). However, the spontaneous generation associated with the Nile, in its

ontological leap from non-living matter to living organisms, has little to do with traditional hetero notions of reproduction, insofar as reproduction is imagined as reproduction of the same, the continuation of the father in the son. Classical accounts of the Nile's life-creation suggest a hyper-generativity that bears no resemblance to the formation of discrete individuals. Virgil's *Georgics*, for example, describes how in the Nile's banks "miraculous creatures.... / swarm together... / until, like rain pouring from the clouds of summer, / they burst forth" (IV.309-13). The droves of creatures emerging from the Nile resemble less the regulated life of Alma's castle than the hordes of troops assaulting the castle. Indeed, Spenser compares these beings to "a swarme of Gnats" rising "Out of the fennes of Allan" in Ireland (ix.16.1, 2). Virgil's bees are described as "miraculous" [*mirus*], that is, unexpected and incredible. Spenser similarly gives slime something of the miraculous in the birth of the Christ-child "in fleshly slime / Enwombed" (II.x.50.2). If the body's slime ties the body to Adam and his crime, then it also gives the body something in common with Christ and his miraculous entrance into the world. Reproduction in these descriptions is not the stable perpetuation of organic life; rather, reproduction here marks the discontinuity of the organism, its monstrous division.

What is most interesting about Egyptian slime is that in Spenser's mind it can change places with Babylonian asphalt. The substitution has long baffled editors; why the misleading name "Egyptian slime" is used, the eighteenth century editor John Jortin remarks, "I can't conceive," while A. E. Sawtelle finds Spenser's phrase "somewhat careless[]." John Upton, defending Spenser, argues that it is a meaningless change and, in

any case, "even historians confound neighboring nations," using the proper names of different places "promiscuously."[29] But it is just this sort of promiscuous and confounding use which Spenser finds generative. Whether or not the substitution is a mistake, it is certainly not insignificant; nor is it singular, for the description of the Castle's walls are not the only time Spenser will make this error. Indeed, in book I, the creature named Error vomits another toxic substance that initially looks like bitumen: "Therewith she spilled out of her filthy maw / A floud of poyson horrible and blacke / Full of great lumps of flesh and gobbets raw." (i.20.1-2). But Spenser transforms the poison to Egyptian mud: "As when old father *Nilus* gins to swell / With timely pride aboue the *Aegyptian* vale, / His fattie waues do fertile slime outwell" (21.1-3), just so does Error's bile spawn swarms of "loathly frogs and toades" (20.7). The conflation suggests that in Spenser the generativity of Egyptian mud cannot be separated from the toxicity of Babylonian bitumen. Life thrives in Spenser on this seething, fatal stuff. Spenserian slime suggests, as does Pauline flesh, that the stuff of the body is alien to the organism. If matter makes the body strange to itself, it also makes the body's negotiation with that alterity into its life, its worldly existence.

Crossings between life and death, the body and the world, culture and its outsides: one name for these crossings might be given by a place that is conspicuously absent from Spenser's account. As Teskey notes, there were three places where asphalt was known to be found among classical civilizations: Babylon, Egypt, and between the two, Sodom (39). Foucault calls sodomy in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* "that utterly confused category" (101), and Sodom here would mark the non-place between the

unstable life-giving origin of Egypt and the deadly remainder of Babylon, between life

that exceeds itself and death that lays the foundation of life.[30] Sodom too marks the

necessary point of indistinction between the categories of sexuality that hang around the

distinctions of matter in *The Faerie Queene*: the fruitfully reproductive slime of the

Tower and the sterile, perverse gold of the cave. Bataille notes at the outset of *Erotism*

that human erotic activity, "unlike simple sexual activity, is a psychological quest

independent of the natural goal... [of] reproduction and the desire for children" (11)

Insofar as reproduction might be understood as a simple desire for the perpetuation of

life, for life to continue, erotic activity breaks from the reproductive understanding of life,

for "although erotic activity is in the first place an exuberance of life, the object of this

psychological quest... is not alien to death" (11). In that case, the idea that there might be

any healthy or natural erotic pleasure, to which sodomy could be contrasted as sterile or

perverse, is no more than a ruse of power. Sexuality just is sodomy and, conversely,

reproduction has nothing to do with sex outside some accidents of biology. In Spenser,

similarly, the erased though still legible place of Sodom in this passage suggests that

slime suspends any meaningful final distinctions between healthy and unhealthy desire.

To return to Alma's castle, the inter-textual allusions around slime suggest how the

material of the body in Spenser is not entirely the purified, healthy stuff Schoenfeldt finds

nor Landreth's nourishing *prima materia*. In making the walls, or structure, of the body

out of slime, Spenser suggests that the body is not an organism. For even as the walls of

the body keep out the dangerous assaults of Maleger and his horde, the walls also

endanger the body through breaking down, since "no earthly thing is sure." That

ambivalence toward matter continues within Alma's castle as well. Schoenfeldt points out

that the nourishment of the body as described in the Castle "continually produc[es]

'superfluous excrements' from the very matter which nourishes it," that is, that matter in

its basic form is both healthy and toxic (61). While Schoenfeldt focuses on the body's

ability to separate waste from food, other moments suggest that the purgation of

contaminants from nutritive stuff is never full or final. Though there are cooks who

"remoue the scum" that rises during digestive processes (31.7), there are others who take

these dregs "to vse according to his kind" (31.9). Furthermore, the heart is depicted as a

"mighty furnace," that burns up the fuel placed in its cauldron to generate the body's

energy (21.6). That energy, or "heat," while it keeps the body running, also risks

"break[ing] out, and set[ting] the whole on fire" (30.2). In the Castle, the body is set

running by what consumes it. And that heat can only be "delay[ed]" by the cooling air of

the lungs, not entirely stabilized, suggesting that stability is the same as death (30.1).

While the narrator in the opening lines of the canto suggests that Alma's castle is a moral

exemplum of a well-governed body, the description of the castle itself suggests that

bodies in Spenser cannot be orderly. For the material processes of life that keep them in

order, functioning smoothly, and alive, are always doing more or less than what they

should: breaking down, catching fire, bursting forth in unexpected growths. The life of

the self is fueled in Spenser by a relation to its death and destruction, and the self can

only partially delay these forces.

 And if even Alma's castle, the most ideally organized body in the poem, is

monstrous, it ought to call attention to just how normal "monstrous" bodies are in *The*

Faerie Queene, whose inhabitance is made up of knights never seen but in their metallic exoskeletons, shape-shifting wizards and temptresses, Ovidian metamorphoses of humans into plants and animals, pairs who seem in terms of allegory and of plot to be disjoint pieces of the same being (Guyon and the Palmer, Furor and Occasion, Acrasia and her knight). Indeed, the cast of Spenserian characters could well be described as "a monstrous rablement / Of... misshapen wights" like the hordes outside Alma's castle (xi.8.1-2). For all Spenser's seeming division between human and monstrous life, a division that recurs in the distinction of civil from savage and Christian from heathen, that division is undercut by the fact that all life is monstrous in the poem. It is certainly true that the self is embodied in Spenser, not dualistically separated into an ideal realm; it is also true that, in Spenser, embodiment is essentially monstrous. That essence is commented on at the end of book II, when Grille, one among the men whom Guyon and the Palmer free from Acrasia's spell complains bitterly about having been returned to human form.[31] The Palmer describes Grille as being of "the donghill kind" that "delights in filth and foul incontinence." The shit the Palmer recognizes in Grille, though, is a matter common to all life in the book, recalling the "slime" that composes the human form in Alma's castle. Grille's doubled state, both or neither human nor beast, is the basic, irreducible stratum of life, the same doubled state that the first stanza of the Alma canto invites the reader to "behold" in the human body, "both one and other," fairest of God's works and unruly monster. The base materiality of slime is foundational to life. This matter exists in excess to life conceived as an organism, as productive being; its vitality is bound up with its own waste, decay, and death. Whatever boundaries Spenser's ontology draws between high and

low, civil and savage, or human and animal life, this common materiality would cut across them. That's not to say that differences between beings and kinds of life don't exist in Spenser, or that those differences are more or less meaningless in the face of this overarching material sameness. Rather, slime is what prescribes that there be difference, that life is never identical to itself, not within a single kind or even a single individual.

Semiramis

If the Castle of Alma figures the ideal state through the metaphor of the body, then how might the slimy materiality of the body translate into questions of empire and politics? One answer might be in what Giorgio Agamben has called bare life, a zero degree of life detached from the particular shapes and forms given through membership in a body politic. Such life might be glimpsed in the figure of Grille, the residual being who refuses Guyon's civilizing mission. In Agamben's account, the sovereign, who founds the law and order of the state and yet is outside it, leaves, as a sort of residue of that foundation, this bare life, humans whose lives do not count as lives (15-29, 81-86). In Bataille as well, both sovereign and lower orders are part of the "heterogeneous world," that life that can't be assimilated within the "homogeneous society" of equivalent individuals, society essentially conceived on the order of the commodity ("Psychological Structure of Fascism" 140-48). Like the body in its relation to slime, politics in these accounts is a relation toward a residue that resists assimilation to the political order. There is a personage in the slime passage who figures, in Spenser, this materiality of the body

politic. This figure is conspicuous through her absence from Spenser's description of the foundation of Babel. She haunts the ambiguously named "King Nine" who constructs the tower. "Nine" most likely refers to Ninus, in Greek history the founder of Ninevah, who is traditionally conflated with the biblical "Nimrod," the king of Babel. Spenser at times conflates Ninus with Nimrod, although in book I he shows he knows the two are distinct by making Nimrod Ninus's father (5.48.1-3). "Nine" could also refer to Ninyas, Nimrod's son, to whom I'll return in a moment. The ambiguity of Spenser's "Nine" invites a reader to investigate who is or isn't being named in this passage. For whoever "Nine" may be, he curiously seems to have taken the place of a woman, Semiramis, whom the two major classical sources on Babylon, Diodorus Siculus and Justinus, credit with the foundation of the city. Making her absence more glaring in the passage, Semiramis is given particular credit for the idea to gather bitumen to build Babylon's walls by both Diodorus (2.11-12) and Justinus (1.2). Ovid comments, "Within the town of whose huge walls so monstrous and thick, /The fame is given Semiramis for making them of brick" (4.67-68). Spenser himself seems aware of this association, as one of the two references to Semiramis in the poem plays on the architectural trope by transforming her into a "famous moniment of womens prayse" (2.10.46). Semiramis, through a sort of metonymic contagion, is attached to the materiality of her state, the walls of Babylon. As the other associations around her will suggest, Semiramis stands in, on the level of politics, for the strange and paradoxical materiality Spenser traces through "slime."

Like slime in Spenser, a fundamental contradiction surrounds the historical narratives about Semiramis. As Spenser's base materiality is both toxic and yet the source

of life, so too Semiramis is at once the ideal ruler, founder of a glorious empire, and a loathsome example of tyrannical disregard for the law. Semiramis figures all the characteristics that sovereignty, in traditional accounts, is not: female, transgressive of sexual and gender norms, criminal, deceptive. One way to read Semiramis, then, is as a queer sovereign who holds a place within social order for the queer life that society normally excludes. Another way, which will be my focus here, is that she brings out a queerness, or monstrosity, within the idea of sovereignty. Accounts of Semiramis register, I will argue, the paradox of sovereignty that both Bataille and Agamben note, that the sovereign, while founder of law and order, is herself outside that order, and thus in a way closer to those seen as excluded from that order: criminals, women, slaves, the sexually transgressive, and so on.

Semiramis, in some of the legends about her and in one of the two references to her in *The Faerie Queene*, is an exemplary emperor, not far from how Spenser imagines Elizabeth. She beautifies her city, expands its territory, and fortifies its walls. Her association with materiality casts her as productive, forging not only a vast but powerful and free state. Diodorus's account is largely celebratory, and Christine de Pizan makes Semiramis the first stone in her *City of Women*.[32] Her erasure from Spenser's description of Babylon, however, likely has to do with the traditions that accrue around her of uncontrollable sexuality and its effects on political rule. The only other allusion to Semiramis in *The Faerie Queene*, drawing on such traditions, locates her in the dungeon of the House of Pride, where among the "Proud wemen, vaine, forgetfull of their yoke" is "The bold *Semiramis*, whose sides transfixt / With Sonnes owne blade, her fowle

reproaches spoke" (I.v.50.2-4). Justinus, whose account is the source of the story to which Spenser here alludes, claims that, in order to assume power, Semiramis dressed in the garb of a man and claimed to be her husband's son, Ninyas. This drag is possible only because the two already closely resemble one another, "the cast of their features similar." Semiramis is so successful as emperor that eventually she decides it is safe to announce she "is" a woman, a confession which, according to Justinus, only increases her subject's admiration for her. Her return to her "true" form is complicated by the love she then conceives for Ninyas, which Justinus calls her "criminal passion." Whether Ninyas reciprocates her love is unknown, but Justinus relates that later he kills her, assuming the throne she had originally occupied as him (1.3.2).

While Justinus remains somewhat neutral toward Semiramis's turn as drag-king and subsequent imperial love, his account fed many narratives which equated Semiramis's allegedly uncontrollable lust with tyrannical rule. Orosius, a widely read historian during the Middle Ages, describes her as "burning with lust and thirsting for blood... in the midst of unceasing adulteries and homicides." Orosius, drawing on the same conflation of Babylon and Babel as Spenser, blames her "swollen ferment of vainglory" for the building of the Tower of Babel. For Dante, to whom Spenser may allude in placing Semiramis in a kind of hell, Semiramis's "sensual vices" connect her to the orientalist "Sultan" who in Dante's day rules her former land, another figure in which is perniciously conflated sinful pleasure and tyrannical rule (Brumble 307). These misogynist accounts equate bad political rulership with the transgression of norms of gender and sexuality, such that Semiramis's inability to control her bodily desires is

equated with her failure to control the state. At the same time, these accusations against Semiramis point up, despite their intent, a queerness to the normative ideal of the sovereign. For Semiramis is attacked for being above the law, for transgressing the laws of incest and gender in the name of pursuing her passions. Her desires, at first to be Ninyas and then to have sex with him, are essentially the same: she wishes to screw the law, the rules constraining who or what the sovereign can do. This "criminal passion" connects Semiramis with those who try to escape the law from below, Bataille's motley rabble of criminals and outcasts. But her desire is also the desire common to sovereignty insofar as it is sovereignty: to be above the law, to have the power to found or suspend rule and order. Moreover, Semiramis's negativity is not purely destructive, for her ability to conceal her gender is initially tied to her ability to rule well, and her "excessive" desire seems akin to her expansive aims to grow her kingdom. The doubled, contradictory accounts of Semiramis reveal a monstrous, queer element within sovereignty, a "lawless" passion internal to the foundation of law and order.

If Semiramis haunts sovereignty in later accounts, that haunting is itself part of Semiramis's story, where after her death, her son/lover Ninyas seems possessed by her, losing interest in being king "as if," Justinus writes, "he had changed sexes with his mother" (1.3.2). Spenser, in substituting Ninus for Semiramis as builder of Babylon, likely aims to arrest an unfortunate chain of proliferations that would connect Semiramis to Alma to Elizabeth as figures of feminine rule, and would make less easy the separation between well-ordered empire and its allegedly monstrous lower orders. But Spenser can only do so by repeating the chain of reversals within Semiramis's history: Semiramis

becomes Ninyas who becomes Semiramis. Semiramis's haunting of later figures of sovereignty suggests that all the doubled figures of female rule in the poem are reflections of this original, base and basic principle of sovereignty: Una and Duessa, Belphoebe and Acrasia, Alma and Philotime. Who better mirrors Semiramis in *The Faerie Queene* than Elizabeth herself, shadowed in both Belphoebe and Gloriana?

How does the Castle of Alma look different once the erased figure of Semiramis is taken into consideration? For all that the description makes the Castle appear a functionalist state in which every member has a precise role, there are several odd moments where the castle reveals its monstrous order. Take, as a matter of comparison, the hordes outside the castle gates making war upon it. The enemies of Alma's state are not another state, equal to her own, but, as I have quoted previously, "a monstrous rablement / Of fowle misshapen wights," a savage multitude incapable of order (xi.8.1-2). On the most surface and ideological level of the poem's politics, war and colonization are justified because the enemies of the state are not civilized, but half-animal creatures over whom rational control must be exerted. But that ideological analogy breaks down since the hordes of Maleger are not quite foreign to the state. When the narrator commands the reader to view the body as "both one and other" at the beginning of the canto, the obvious sense is that the hordes as well as the Castle are part of the body. The hordes allegorically stand for sensations, and sensations are not external to the body but occur liminally between the body and the world. Maleger, the leader of the assailants, symbolizes death and decay, a condition that belongs to the body itself, as its slimy walls indicate.

These unruly hordes are mirrored within the castle by the aristocratic lovers that

stand in for the passions. Unlike the industrious servants in the heart and stomach, these nobles do not work, nor do they, like the higher officers in the castle's tower, assist rule. Instead they "idly s[i]t at ease," singing, laughing, and courting (35.3). This loose, wanton group lacks discipline, much like those bunched outside the castle walls. The variety and incongruity of the horde's monstrous members are paralleled in the upper class's mixture of feelings: "This fround, that faund, the third for shame did blush" (35.6). This state of indolence seems to lead them back into some pre-civilized form of savagery, as one "gnaws upon a rush" (35.8). Spenser's precise anatomization of the state, in which each member serves a specific function, runs into trouble in depicting the literary and amorous aristocracy, who seem to do nothing at all of value. The canto brings out in the aristocracy something that is generally true for Spenser's political society. Society is not order in Spenser; all collective life shares a monstrous element and a desire for de-individuation, for freeing itself from the bounds of social role and the norms that shape selfhood. The erased figure of Semiramis suggests that such "monstrous" desire is not outside social life; indeed, it is the drive that makes any kind of social relation possible.

Babel

When Spenser compares the body to "*Babell* towre" in the lines I have quoted from the Alma canto, he suggests a relation between this base materiality of the body and the dream of a common human culture. The lowest of the low in human existence, the refuse of the body, is connected to the greatest harmony, the reunion of all the world's

peoples. The same tension between organization and heterogeneity seen in the slimy body plays out in Spenser on the level of international relations. In the last stop on Alma's tour of the castle, the library of Eumnestes, or memory, the book of *Briton moniments* tells a sordid tale of the impure beginnings of the British nation. The British were not, as it turns out, native to their own land, which was originally occupied by a race of "hideous giants" born (x.7.2), in a manner akin to Virgil's bees, from England's "natiue slime" (9.4). The autochthonous giants mark, then, an impurity tainting the origin of the British nation, their alien relation to their own land. The language surrounding the giants is marked by the same vacillation between decay and miraculous power found in the description of slime: on the one hand, the giants' "filthinesse / polluted" the "gentle soyle" (9.1-3); on the other, their "stature huge" and "courage bold" makes them seem more manly than the "sonnes of men" who encounter them (7.8-9).[33] The conquest of the giants by Brutus, the legendary Roman founder of Britain, is on its most overt level a historical precedent for imperial colonization in that Brutus "frees" the land of its filthy monstrous inhabitants. However, on closer inspection, this conquest marks a lingering impurity to the British nation that will return throughout the history Spenser tells. That ancestral taint is figured in the narrative through the marks the giants leave on the land, particularly the slimy "gore" from the slain giants that "besprinckle[s]" Hoe Cliff (10.7). That gore, sign of impure "blood" as well as violent division, recurs in the way in which even the noblest of British kings beget monstrously treacherous children, what Harry Berger notes in this canto as "the apparently haphazard operations of nature in the matter of supplying heirs" (*Allegorical* 97). Indeed, decay, as Berger suggests, is one of the overarching themes of

Spenser's national history lesson, seen in the "sad decay" of Roman rule overrun by Anglo-Saxon invaders (62.5) and even in the most sacred spread of Christianity in the land, which "greatly did decay" from its initial seeding by Joseph of Arimathea (53.9). It would not be hard to show how rottenness is associated with other forms of international relations in *The Faerie Queene*, from the gold described as "worldly muck" in the cave of Mammon to the hyper-fertile putrescence of the exotic Bower of Bliss. Worldhood has two contradictory yet joined senses in Spenser: on the one hand, the unifying spread of the nation, of order, civility and holy truth throughout the world, and on the other hand, the rotten decay of that homogeneous nationhood in its expansion through intermixture, migration, and unsure succession. These two, just like the slime of the earth and the heaven-reaching Tower of Babel, cannot be separated from one another, for the decomposing muck, figured as giant's blood, is also what founds the English nation. This monstrous origin story should not be mistaken as peculiar to England; given that the giants arise from the Earth, they can be taken as the general figure for the lost connection to the harmonious and universal world out of which culture in general arises, and which remains "within" culture only as guarantor of its impurity.

The contamination of the nation seen in the giants' story could also be told through the allusion to the Tower of Babel in the slime passage. That re-telling would be a translation from international relations to translation itself, as Babel is the story of the division of human languages. The lines describing slime are, as I've shown, riddled with errors and conflations. Babel and Babylon are merged; "Nine" fuses Ninas and Nimrod while displacing Semiramis; "slime" may mean flesh, tar, or mud. These ambiguities

might appear to be the result of hasty writing on Spenser's part; but in describing the Tower of Babel, is it really an accident that Spenser's language is confusing? If it's not possible to fully determine the referent of Spenser's "slime," then it goes to show that matter, at least insofar as humans have access to it, isn't outside language and linguistic play. Indeed, Spenser's "slime" may not refer so much as it enacts, within language, the unstable yet generative overflowing of individual languages and traditions that base materiality accomplishes on the level of the organism.

In the Genesis account of Babel, too, the connection is made between the building of bricks into a tower and the unity of culture and language:

> And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for morter. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence

upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore

is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the

language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them

abroad upon the face of all the earth. (Gen. 11:1-9)

The passage sketches a compact trajectory shared by both matter and humanity, from amorphous mass to joined structure to ruins. Derrida, reading this passage, comments that the transmutation of slime into brick "already resembles a translation, a translation of translation" ("Des Tours de Babel" 106). The biblical scene suggests that the base materiality I have located in slime bears a trace of human universality, a lost ruin of the Tower of Babel. This trace of universality suggests that the paradoxical relation between contamination and organization I have found in slime also makes possible, strangely, relations between individuals or states.

Walter Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator," like the passage from Spenser I dwell on, compares the lost universality of languages to broken material. In Benjamin, this is accomplished through the metaphor of a shattered vessel: "a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel" (*Illuminations* 78). When one use a word in one's "native" language, one might think there is a direct correlation between word and thing. But in translation one gets a sense of what is sometimes called the *materiality* of language, the uniqueness of "*brot*" as the word for bread in German, as Benjamin suggests, that comes from its homonyms,

rhymes, and anagrams (74). What appears fleetingly in the process of translation is the desire for a universal language and the fact that such a language is, in human life, impossible. There can only be, translation makes clear, fragments and ruins, but fragments and ruins *of* a universal tongue.[34] It's no accident if, in describing the relation between languages, Benjamin employs at times a vocabulary of interpersonal and international relations. All languages partake, he suggests, in a "suprahistorical kinship," a kinship that has nothing to do with connections of blood or nationality. Paul de Man, reading Benjamin's essay, also draws on such a language, arguing that translations reveal in their originals "a wandering, an *errance*, a kind of permanent exile if you wish, but it is not really an exile, for there is no homeland, nothing from which one has been exiled" ("Conclusions" 92). The materiality of language, that which in a language cannot be translated (and translation would here have to be something that occurs within a single language as well), is itself translated by Benjamin and de Man into the register of international relations. The suprahistorical kinship among nations, imagined mythologically in the Tower of Babel story, cannot ever be realized, it can only be glimpsed in the state of exile that one bears in relation to the culture that is allegedly one's own.

Benjamin's shattered vessel translates on the level of language a similar pattern found in Bataille's base materialism. Materiality, now the materiality of language, is connected to the shattering of the whole and the organic. Benjamin's emphasis on what is lost, on the rupture *of* the universal, invites speculation on the relation between materiality and universality, of the common conditions of speaking in a language that is

partial and incomplete just as of living in a body that is by nature decomposing. These common conditions are not the grounds for any kind of utopian cosmopolitanism of mutual understanding or accord, in fact they proscribe such final harmony. But they do offer what might be called a negative universality, the bare fact that one is not an organism or a member of a state. Life grows out of its social bounds and toward a universal state that is nowhere. Both Benjamin and Bataille proclaim not a universality of the material, which would risk subsuming all the violent heterogeneity of life into an overarching and neutralizing sameness, but a materiality of the universal, a universality that is dispersed and divided, glimpsed in the rupture of the familiar and organized. To translate these terms back into Spenser, the fatal slime of human life is the residue of Babel's tower.

Writing at the beginning of the era in which vernacular language becomes the prominent symbol of national identity, Spenser also meditates on this strange materiality of language that, in not belonging to any one language, marks all as fragmentary. In the late sixteenth century, as England is trying to establish itself as a nation comparable to Rome or the continental nations, poetry establishes the purity and worthiness of the English language. From the *Shepheardes Calendar* onward, Spenser writes in a style of conscious anachronism and opaque allusion. In the Epistle that prefaces the *Calendar*, E.K. (often identified with Spenser) comments on the strangeness of Spenser's language and his use of archaic words. Spenser's language comes close, but is not quite, for E.K., a "disorderly and ruinous" old building (60). (An English Babel?) However, E.K. believes Spenser's language to be restoring the English language to the "rightfull heritage" (79)

from which it has been "almost cleare disherited" (81); his archaism in fact a restoration of an allegedly pure English nation. The fault belongs to other writers, who thinking the English language incapable of poetry, have "patched vp the holes with peces and rags of other languages" (85-6). The degraded stuff of foreign tongues is pulled from its proper home and inserted into a ragtag English. The result is that English has become "a gallimaufray or hodgepodge of al other speeches" (90-91). A gallimaufry is a French term for a stew of heterogeneous elements, and E.K's example is one of the earliest citations in the *OED*; the word has not yet at this point been well-digested into the English language. One must suspect that E.K.'s accusations toward these false poets describe no one's writing so well as Spenser's, whose language is constantly creating new words and images out of mixtures of the old and foreign. As in Benjamin, that foreign materiality of language is connected to an alienation toward one's "own" country, for E.K. argues that these false poets ought to be ashamed that they are "in their own mother tonge straungers to be counted and alienes" (96-97). This imagery of stew and rags anticipates *The Faerie Queene*'s slime, a stuff that resists incorporation into the body. It should thus not be surprising that the bitumenic substance Error in book I vomits out is transformed not only into monstrous shapes but also "bookes and papers" (i.20.6). Slime, then, is a figure for Spenser's own writing. Just as slime is a foreign substance within the body, so too Spenser writes in a foreign language within English.

Conclusion

It isn't an accident that Spenser's complex allegorical poem appears at a moment when the modern world-system is just emerging and Christianity is in disarray. For Spenser's poem not only attempts to articulate a complex and fragile idea of world harmony amidst historical conflict, but also brings out the paradoxes and contradictions that inhere in all notions of universality. The allegory of the cosmos as golden chain that is central to Spenser's poetics creates a sense of worldhood by projecting itself as the world, a spatial order that unites diverse elements. When the golden chain is transformed into a symbol of worldly ambition in the cave of Mammon, it brings out the dislocation and destabilization involved in that world-making. Every attempt to make the world into a total harmony, to bring together its discordant elements into a whole, inevitably goes awry because that attempt is itself a discordant act. The depiction of Mammon also shows how so-called modern notions of worldhood that were beginning to form in mercantilism still rely on an allegorical notion of the world as a total system, and thus are still beset by the same paradox and instability as medieval worldhood. Allegory in Spenser names the impossibility of the world ever coinciding with itself, dramatizing the tension between dislocation and unification that animates worldhood.

And yet, that tension is not a rejection. If Spenser's depictions of the world as an allegorical system tend to bear down on the impossibility of there being a fully harmonious world, his descriptions of worldly matter suggest a resilient trace of worldhood that inheres in disruptively generative flesh. What Spenser calls "slime" offers a different mode of universal relation than the golden chain, one in which what all living beings share is the fact that they emerge out of a heterogeneous muck to which

they also return, for, as Spenser says of Babel's tower, "no earthly thing is sure."

Spenser's treatment of slime invites comparison to Bataille, who imagines that "our

random and ephemeral individuality," the precipitation of a specific life out of that basic

sludge, produces, alongside the "tormenting desire that this evanescent thing should last,"

a "yearn[ing] for our lost continuity," a nostalgia for the union with other material beings

that comes closest to achievement in death (*Erotism* 15). That de-individuating desire, an

ecstatic movement toward an impossible universality, is what I locate in Spenserian

materiality where it seems most useless and even destructive. Spenserian slime cuts

across the hierarchical lines separating higher from lower life, including the relation

between civilized and savage, sovereign and rabble, human and animal. That slimy matter

bears a non-arbitrary relation to those monstrous beings in Spenser associated with

uncontrolled desire and improper organization, beings like Maleger and the hordes

assaulting the Castle, and England's native giants. Yet in Spenser these creatures are

marked, again and again, as figures for the common life from which so-called civilization

only superficially and imperfectly departs. Slime offers a place to begin thinking in

Spenser the longing for de-individuation and de-hierarchization as a common condition

of life across lines of society, culture, and species.

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Chapter Two

The World Staged:

Universality and Fictiveness in *Antony and Cleopatra*

Antony and Cleopatra, perhaps more than any other play by Shakespeare, puts the world on stage. In its setting, it flagrantly violates the Aristotelian unity of space, ranging across the Classical Mediterranean in dizzyingly quick changes of scene. The chorus of the play's drinking song, "Cup us till the world go round," might also be taken as the motto of its scenography (II.vii.112). The play is like an early modern attempt at a global imaging system that makes visible large-scale networks of commerce and communication. With this difference: in its merry-go-round changes of scene, the play does a better job at showing the impossibility of making far-flung places cohere into a single comprehensible frame. If the physical integrity of the world is lacking in the play, it is supplemented by a surplus of figures. Antony alone is "the triple pillar of the world" (I.i.12) "the demi-Atlas of the earth" (I.v.23), and one whose arm "crested the world" (V.ii.82). If the triumvirate are the pillars of the world, then the Roman empire itself is the structure of the world, that is, what makes the world a world and not the "huge rude heape" of Ovid's chaos (I.7). Rome defines the extension of its rule as cosmo-politics.

After the flurry of world-hopping throughout the play, the final scene offers a stark contrast in its sense of worldhood. Cleopatra, the world she had built with Antony crumbling after his suicide and the advance of Octavius Caesar, entombs herself alive in her monument. From there, she creates an opulent fictional world, dressing herself as a

queen and summoning Antony before her mind's eye. Cleopatra initially announces

nothing about where she is except an emotional space that is an absence: "My desolation

does begin to make / A better life" (V.ii.1-2). It is unclear if Cleopatra is speaking to the

attendants who follow her on stage or simply to herself, as though she were detached

from the stage she appears on. She seems to hover somewhere outside the fictional world

she occupies, withdrawn from the scene and commenting on it. Her ambiguously

addressed speech is interrupted by the appearance of Proculeius, who enters the space

from somewhere beyond and demands that she follow him back out. His entrance divides

the fictional world before us into an inner space that we see and an outer one we do not.

The space beyond is figured as both a stage and a world, as when Proculeius commands

her to "let the world see / [Caesar's] nobleness well acted" by exiting with him (43-44).

Where exactly *is* such a scene, if it figures the world as what is outside it?

Mark Payne, in *Theocritus and the Invention of Fiction*, argues that the Hellenic

Idylls construct within themselves an off-limits space that is a "double of its own fictional

world" (64). The doubled space "figures the allure of fictional experience as the desire to

enter a world available only through that experience" (64). Such spaces are, then, crucial

to what Payne refers to as the "uncanny" or "unsettling" quality of fictional worlds, the

way they project themselves into our world, seeming both vividly present and yet

inaccessibly remote (55). In Shakespeare's play, however, the off-limits space is not some

one particular location but the entirety of the Roman world. Here again with emphasis are

Proculeius's words: "Let *the world* see / His nobleness well acted." The lines recall those

of Antony at the beginning of the play in which he fantasizes about putting his and

Cleopatra's love on stage before the entire world: "I bind / On pain of punishment the world to weet — / We stand up peerless" (I.i.40-42). This scene, then, is a curious and multi-layered inversion of the model imagined by Payne. On the one hand, the beyond of the scene is the real world from which we, like Cleopatra, are currently detached, in an enclosed space that seems to stand in for her inner world, her "desolation." But on the other hand, that beyond is itself figured as a stage, the place of fiction, and therefore Cleopatra's refusal to go out is a refusal to participate in the fiction. The "real world" of Rome is remote and inaccessible like a fiction while Cleopatra's fictional inner world is vividly before us. The effect is the opposite of theater as mimesis: rather than making a place remote in time and space seem real and present, this scene makes the "real" world of Rome fantastically distant. The scene construes the Roman world as political theater, a staged attempt to appear orderly and secure.

The play, then, offers two visions of world-making: the Roman empire and Cleopatra's make-believe. Both of these are forms of universality, though the first conceives the universal only as the ubiquitous extension of its own order: the Roman empire as synonymous with the world as structured totality. Though Cleopatra's final scene insists on the isolation and singularity of its protagonist, it is by no means a form of world-making limited to her. Indeed, her vision of the world as a shifting array of fictions in which everyone builds their own world is repeated throughout the play, including by Antony, who imagines his body as like the imaginary shapes one glimpses briefly in the clouds (IV.xv.1-14). Cleopatra's is an account of the world in which everyone has the potential to create fictions, none of which entirely cohere, and these fictions provoke and

catalyze new thought and action. Figures of the world are, for Cleopatra, like the simulated fantasy of role-play: a game of meaning shaped by its participants, implicitly one game among others, and neither permanent nor total in its immersion of its users. Cleopatra's world-making expresses an early modern form of plural universality: there is no one world to be pictured, but a series of world-images to be contested, appropriated, and re-framed. This idea of world-making offers a different way of looking at the world than the imperial insistence on unified totality, one that recognizes change and variation as the common ground of life.

This chapter dwells on the relation between fictiveness and universality in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and in Renaissance notions of the world as theater more generally. *Antony and Cleopatra* offers an account of fictiveness as a difficult universal of human (and possibly non-human) life. Inhabiting fictions (always in the plural), making worlds that never fully cohere or impose themselves on others, withdrawing from imposed ideologies—these are the universals which, the play suggests, exceed the Roman attempt to stamp its own order on what is outside it. To that end, I suggest that the trope of the world-as-theater in *Antony and Cleopatra*, and Shakespeare's work generally, has often been misinterpreted. The ability of the theater to form an entirely real, fully coherent, other world, has been overemphasized, whether it is celebrated as a humanist achievement or rejected as only imperialist. I suggest that Shakespeare draws heavily on the medieval notion of *theatrum mundi* which attends to the disruptive force of fictions in politics and society. The play revalues this medieval conception, offering a complex affirmation of fiction's derailing and unpredictable

potential. The play attempts to portray a world that exceeds the stage and representational

order, a world that inheres in the disruptive proliferation of fictions. As I suggest in my

introduction, the Renaissance offers a complex revaluation of the Christian notion of

worldliness, associated with the material, sexual, and commercial. In Shakespeare, this

worldliness is most often figured as the realm of destabilizing fiction, what Prospero in

The Tempest calls the "baseless fabric." As I will argue, this illusory realm is also

construed as a common ground of worldly life.

Critical Accounts

The dominant critical narrative about the trope of the world-as-stage in

Shakespeare, as well as the Renaissance more generally, has been that it participates in

the development in the modern sense of the world as a system of objects governed by

laws of motion. Both John Gillies and Kent van den Berg have given cogent accounts of

this narrative by tracing the use of the trope in both Shakespearean drama and early

modern cartography. Gillies argues that "Shakespeare's theatre and Ortelian

'cosmography'... are dialogically related. Each 'reads' the other" (70). The ability of

theater to create its own world on stage is seen, for Gillies and van den Berg, as

paralleling the cartographic ability to enframe the world within an objective

representation. This power to capture a world, whether on a stage or a map, is not, of

course, politically neutral, as it portrays the non-European world as a blank space to be

carved, conquered, and displayed. Indeed, van den Berg rather blithely notes that, "the

globe had another kind of value—symbolizing and instilling in English sailors the

imperial confidence, so important to the later history of Great Britain, that the entire world could be brought under the dominion of human will" (34). While more recent critics have been less likely to render colonial violence as part of charming narratives of the human will, they have largely shared van den Berg's point that the world-as-theater trope is linked to imperial power. Shankar Raman in *Framing "India": The Colonial Imaginary in Early Modern Culture* finds in the secular and objective representation of the world, in both the theater and cartography, a means by which the possibility of empire was imagined in the period. Likewise, Jyotsna Singh's introduction to the volume *An Introduction to the Global Renaissance* demonstrates how representations of globes became figures for imperial rule in English courts.[35]

And yet there were other possibilities for what the world-as-theater trope could signal in the period. Gillies tracks the lasting influence on the Renaissance of the medieval notion of *theatrum mundi*, where the world is a dissolute place of seductive fictions. Under this medieval notion, the theater does not symbolize man's power to shape the world through fiction, but fiction's power to shape humans. Yet Gillies is committed to a periodizing narrative in which this medieval conception is replaced entirely by the modern paradigm, as are the other critical accounts I mentioned insofar as they presume a single modern sense of worldhood. In contrast, I argue that Shakespeare, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, both draws on and radicalizes the medieval notion of *theatrum mundi*, amplifying its claim that the world is nothing but fictions by de-emphasizing any heavenly order outside the world. Shakespeare also, I will suggest, revalues the medieval trope, opening the possibility that a world of fictions is not merely something to be

rejected.

Development of the World-Theater Trope

This section offers a genealogy for the world-as-theater trope as it appears in *Antony and Cleopatra* and Shakespeare's other plays. I suggest that by the time Shakespeare inherits the trope, it had split into two different senses, an older medieval notion of *theatrum mundi* and an emergent sense of the theater of the globe. These are more or less the two forms of worldhood that appear in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the Roman imperial world tied to the notion of the globe and Cleopatra's fictive world-making indebted to the *theatrum mundi*. While criticism on Shakespeare and the period more generally has tended to emphasize Shakespeare's contribution to the newer formulation, I argue that Shakespeare is fascinated by the older one, which he problematizes and transforms.

The idea of the *theatrum mundi*, the theater of the world, has roots that extend at least as far back as the classical Stoics. While some early Church writers made use of the trope, it largely disappears from the early Middle Ages (Curtius 138-39). The revival of the trope is due to the 12th century writer John of Salisbury, whose political treatise *Policraticus* gives an extended, quasi-visionary meditation on the figure taking off from a few lines in Petronius.[36] The influence of John on Shakespeare (even if indirect) brings out a different sense of the trope and of its relation to the world than as world-picture, world-view, or world-representation. For John imagines not the power of fictions to

portray the world but their violent power to derail world-order.

When John says the world is a stage, he means that human life forgets the divine order to which it belongs. The world is a theatrical performance in that it has forgotten its proper sense: "the life of man on earth is a comedy, where each forgetting his own plays another's role" (III.8). People pretend to be what they are not when they pursue worldly desires of ambition, lust, and greed. These worldly pursuits absorb the world in business, wars, the rise and fall of rulers, and other restless change that does not really go anywhere. Fictions plague the politico-social order through the pernicious flattery of courtiers to rulers and the distracting, idle theater of clowns and entertainers. Fiction is aligned conceptually with the worldly, with material pursuits. Quite in contrast to modern conceptions of the world as a stage that dwell on the power of fictions to make visible the world's order, in John, the power of fiction is disruptive, preventing the world from realizing its order.

While human life occupies the stage, God and the angels watch from the heavenly auditorium. By demarcating a place outside the stage, John contrasts the falsity of human life with the fixity of the place outside it. God's position overlooking the stage from above might seem to place him in the position of sovereign, but God operates through a different form of power in John's conceit. When John claims that life is a comedy because humans forget their proper roles, he implies that God is a playwright, scripting the roles of human life. Sure, these roles are forgotten when humans pursue worldly desires, but the proper order of human life in John is following God's divine script. God's power works behind the scenes, secretly guiding the plans of all men. As in Aquinas's notion of

the world, as I discuss in my intro, God is the manager of the cosmos, operating a form of

invisible and microscopic power. Here, implicitly, that power is a management of fiction,

a scriptive power. The power of fiction that God exercises is diverted by human acting,

the proud attempt to script oneself. Although John certainly would not avow anything of

the sort, his conceit suggests that the power of fictions is in both the divine management

of the *mundus* and the pernicious human transformation of the *mundus* into a *theatrum*

mundi. John's conception of the *theatrum mundi* is thus based on a doubled understanding

of the world. On the one hand, there is the world as *mundus*, as what has been ordered

and planned out by God. Being in the *mundus*, all humans have their role. On the other

hand, being in the *mundus* one is also in the *theatrum mundi*, a theater where everyone

acts an inauthentic role. This theater involves all the worldly pursuits: politics, sex, and

commerce, everything that distracts those in the *theatrum mundi* from being a *mundus*.

In John, we see the medieval Church's frequent contrast between a world that reflects

God's order and the worldly pursuits that derail, or at least delay, that order. And yet, what

is most compelling in the conceit is how that contrast is overridden by a fictive power

that underwrites the divine management of the *mundus* and fractures that managed order.

In either case, fictions do not merely represent a world, making it visible and present, but

is a force that makes and unmakes the world, governing its sway and rocking it off

course.

   For all John's condemnation of life's duality and duplicity in the *theatrum mundi*,

what makes the conceit compelling and able to influence later conceptions of the world as

theater is the suggestion, perhaps in spite of John's explicit intention, of an irreducible

fictiveness to human life. It is oddly enough the achievement of virtuous men to be able to explicitly live in a fiction. These men occupy a double position, both within the world and in God's celestial box-seats: "These are perhaps those who from the lofty pinnacle of virtue look down upon the stage of the world... They are already enjoying their Elysian Fields... They view the world-comedy along with Him who towers above to watch ceaselessly over men" (III.9). By practicing virtue, one might see things for what they are, a play. In doing so, one might exercise a way of being beyond the world while one is still in it, "us[ing] this world... as not abusing *it*," as Paul says (1 Cor. 7:31). Less virtuous humans are also their own spectators but John describes them as spell-bound by their own acting, unable to see their performance for what it is. Only the virtuous, by playing the part of godly spectators while on stage, are able to see their acting as such. Knowing their lives to be staged, they are able to live authentically. Worldly life in John is irreducibly fictive. Either one is, inauthentically, playing the wrong role in life or, virtuously, remaining aloof from the role one must play. Fictions makes the world less an order than a rhythm, a double step that is at once within and without the limits of order. It is not just that fictions corrupt and destabilize the divinely ordered world in John; the world itself will not remain within the bounds of order, continually doubling and dividing into other roles. John certainly does imagine a medieval *mundus* sharply divided between a divine order and human worldliness, but in dwelling on the force of fictiveness, John suggests a world that is always drawing out and shattering the limits of order.

John's understanding of the *mundus* as a *theatrum* lasts well into the Renaissance, and particularly into religious moral attacks on sex, greed, and politics as such. Spenser,

for example, early in his career translated Jan van der Noot's *Theatre of Voluptuous Worldlings*. Other examples appear in emblem books from the time, such as Boaistuau's *Theatrum Mundi* and Zwinger's *Theatrum Vitae Humanae* (Berg 33). The trope would be redeployed even by those defending the Elizabethan theater, as in Thomas Heywood's verse introduction to *An Apology for Actors*:

> If then the world a theater present,
>
> As by the roundnesse it appears most fit,
>
> Built with starre-galleries of hye ascent,
>
> In which Iehove doth as spectator sit
>
> And chief determiner to applaud the best,
>
> And their indevours crowne with more than merit
>
> But by their evill actions doomes the rest,
>
> To end disgrac'd whilst others praise inherit
>
> He that denyes then Theaters should be,
>
> He may as well deny a world to me. (qtd. in Gillies 78)

Heywood repeats nearly precisely the arrangement of John's conceit: the human world as stage to which God is spectator. Heywood's analogy departs from John in its suggestion that the stage is able to create the sort of virtue John had praised. If the world itself is a stage watched by God, then by watching an actual stage performance, one might learn to look with God's sententious gaze. Fiction is valuable precisely in that it allows one to see through the world's fictions.

Shakespeare's debt to the religious conception of the *theatrum mundi* is most

obvious in that his most famous statement "all the world's a stage" from *As You Like It* comes from a speech detailing the illusory roles a man plays throughout his life (II.vii.138). Jacques, the character who delivers the monologue, has earlier in the scene discussed the foolishness that dominates the world. By comparing the world to a stage, he, like John, emphasizes that custom guides human behavior. "One man in his time plays many parts" (141), moving from infancy through adolescence to adulthood, and is thus not one firm thing but a shifting and ephemeral array. Man is inconstant and guided by custom, and Jacques's perspective is meant to advocate for a detachment from the ways of the world. The difference between Shakespeare and John can be seen in the conspicuous absence of God from Jacques's meditation. Jacques, though detached from the world, does not look from the perspective of God and the angels down on the stage as in John. Rather than moving toward a transcendental order above the world, Jacques's speech ends nowhere, in the "[l]ast scene of all" (162), where man is "[s]ans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" (165). One does not withdraw, in Jacques's speech as one does in John, to a fixed and eternal perspective outside the world-theater; one withdraws nowhere, withdraws from the conception of fixed positions of which one might be inside or outside.

This uncertainty about the ground of representation, that is, the perspective on the world from which one can see it is theater, will resurface more strongly in Shakespeare's later treatments of the theme. The theme permeates Shakespeare's later tragedies and romance—from the Dover Cliff scene in *Lear* and its portrayal of a blind faith removed from any notion of a divinity to Prospero's speech in *The Tempest* on the "baseless fabric"

(IV.i.151). And, as I will argue, Cleopatra's final scene in *Antony and Cleopatra*. These treatments all discuss worldly life as a series of fictions without, like John, assuming much about another world beyond this one. Inhabiting multiple, divergent fictions is made into the unstable grounds of life, something not even the most powerful imperial rulers can master. In doing so, they articulate a universality not based on the subject's capacity to reason or the civilized subject's ability to discipline himself (for such accounts are always based in the image of the male), but in the theatricality of playing in and making up fictions.

Global Theaters

Shakespeare's reworking of John's trope coincides with the emergence of a different sense of the *theatrum mundi* as objective representation and world-picture. This new sense appears heavily in the cartography of the period, where many atlases took "theater" as their title and Shakespeare's own playhouse was named after a cartographic implement, the globe. As John Gillies notes, the cartographic sense of the world as a global theater and the dramatic sense of the stage as a globe dialectically inform one another (70). Unlike the *theatrum mundi*, where fiction makes the world unstable, in the theater of the globe, representation brings out the world's underlying order. The globe as a representational figure aims to make the world present, visible, and comprehensible. This new objective sense of representation can be seen in Robert Hues's treatise on Emery Molyneux's globes where Hues writes of the globe as a figure that is more than figural:

> A Globe is of a figure most proper and apt to express the fashion of the
>
> Heavens and earth as being most agreeable to nature... [It] is of the most
>
> convenient form; and therefore more aptly accomodated for the
>
> understanding and fancy (not to speake any of the beauty and gracefulness
>
> of it), for it representeth the things themselves in proper genuine figures.
>
> (qtd. in Berg 35)

For Hues, the globe as a figure is "proper" and "genuine" because it disappears into the

things it represents without altering them. Similarly, Mercator's preface to his famous

atlas imagines the globe not as a metaphor but as the innate form of all being:

> This universall Globe... in regard of the perfect clearenes, and absolute
>
> puritie, is called by the Grecians *κόσμος*, which name Pithagoras gave it
>
> first, the Latines *Mundus*. Plinie in his second Booke, and the first Chapter
>
> of his naturall Historie, saith, it is that, *in the compasse where of all things*
>
> *are enfolded...* this figure is most capable, & most simple, & that all the
>
> parts fall into themselves, & that it supporteth it selfe, & is comprehended
>
> & enclosed in it selfe: having no need of any tie or joincture, not sensible
>
> of beginning or ending in any of the parts thereof..." (qtd. in Berg 33)

Mercator conceives the globe as something in which there is no frame outside the

content. There is no need for an artificial supplementation that would hold the things

within the globe together, no "tie or joincture." Instead, "all the parts fall into

themselves," that is, they are their own framework. The idea of the globe is of a form that

strives to perfectly coincide with its contents, to include every detail of what is within it,

to leave no extraneous edges or seams where it exceeds the thing itself. The globe, as a fiction, aims to erase itself as a fiction and instead be the presentation of the thing itself. Representation is a drive to encompass, to swallow the proliferating complexity of the world into a figure, to make that destabilizing diversity present and visible.

The representational globe seems, at first glance, to reverse the disruptive force of fiction in John's *theatrum mundi*, turning it into a creative and regulatory power. Instead of fictiveness being a sign of inauthenticity, representation captures and makes comprehensible the real. Being on stage and playing roles in John marks a distance from reality, a forgetting of the divinely appointed order. But in the idea of the globe, fictiveness and representation become ways to structure the order of the world. As Hues puts it, the figure of the globe "expresses" the world, bringing out and making visible the world's order. The figure of Atlas holding up the world recurs frequently in the new cartography, often on the frontispiece of atlases themselves. The mythical figure of Atlas aptly expresses the creative force of the figure of the globe. Atlas holds up the world in the sense both of presenting it (holding a ball, a globe) and giving it its order (holding the sky from the earth). Atlas constitutes the order that gives him power, standing on nothing but the world that he himself holds up. The divine power of God to manage the world in the *theatrum mundi* becomes the power of human representation of the world. And whereas in John, the source of this managerial power hovers somewhere above and outside the world, in cartographic representation, power perfectly coincides with the limits of the world. Power drives at order through capturing in every detail the things of this world. Whereas in John fiction disrupts the management of the world, in Mercator

and other texts that take the globe as the paradigm of the world, fictions becomes the means to maintain the world's order. This shift towards a regulatory power of fictions in the figure of the globe intersects with a more general turn in the early modern period toward secular forms of governance structured around calculation and management.

As much as the notion of the globe seems to depart from the *theatrum mundi*, these two ways of representing the world share the same underlying sense of the disappropriating force of fiction. Although Mercator praises the figure of the globe, he praises it precisely because it comes asymptotically close to having no difference from what it represents. As in John, there ideally ought to be no difference between fiction and reality, really just no fiction in general. Mercator desires a figure without, as I have quoted, "tie or joincture" (qtd. in Berg 33), without any artificial seam that disrupts the unity of the world expressed. And yet Mercator's atlas is itself such a seam, a technological device necessary to make the world visible. The modern world-picture proliferates such seams in drawing itself—globes, atlases, illustrations, travelogues, and so on. The globe is a figure that aims to erase its own work as a figure, to present a world as if it were an order not in need of figural distortion to come to light. Hues's oxymoronic description of the globe as "a figure most proper," expresses the tension between representation as world-making and world-shattering. As the proper figure, the globe has the power to bring the world to light, but it must destroy itself because, as a figure, it distorts and alters the thing itself. As in John, we see a force of fiction that is not merely representative but works to order the world and, at the same, threatens to prevent the world from attaining order.

When theaters of the period take up, architecturally and through commentary, the idea of the *theatrum mundi*, they not only use the medieval idea of the theater as the space of moral judgment revisited by Heywood, but also a newer sense of a theater like a globe. Richard Bernheimer details in "Theatrum Mundi" the architectural features of Giulio Camillo's plans for a theater of the world that would mimic in its form the order of the cosmos (226-31). The theater, in Camillo's neoplatonic schema, is a world replicated in miniature. By bringing the cosmos down to a human scale, Camillo suggests the power of the human mind to duplicate in itself the working of the cosmos and to draw power from its communing with the underlying order of things. If the claim is true that the Globe Theater has as its emblem Hercules or Atlas carrying the globe, that emblem likely carries similar resonances. As Kent van den Berg puts it, "The emblem symbolizes the achievement of the players in sustaining their own theatrical realm and holding it up as an equivalent to the real world" (38). The Globe is like a globe because, through the power of the stage, it objectively portrays other spaces. Like Mercator's globe, it is a representation that is not a representation because it substitutes entirely for the world. And as in the case of Mercator's globe, we have a power that operates not through its distance from the world but in fully capturing the world, in coinciding with it entirely. These modes of power depend on calculation that creates order through being able to fully simulate the globe.

Is there in Shakespeare a shift toward an objective portrayal of the world, the world turned into a picture? Perhaps the clearest supporting example is the prologue to *Henry V*. Yet, as I'll argue, even this play, as it seems to describe a modern cartographic

sense of worldhood, also brings out a fictiveness which underlies its representational claims. The Chorus meditates in the prologue on the possibility of representing on stage the grand and expansive events of Henry's campaign in France: "May we cram / Within this wooden O the very casques / That did affright the air at Agincourt?" (12-14). On the one hand, the "O" mentioned by the Chorus is the space of the stage. The Chorus asks if one space may be substituted for another and if the small space of the stage may stand in for the grand space of Agincourt. The substitutability of the little for the great is not merely an issue of spatial dimension but also one of human rank, what we might somewhat anachronistically call "class." The Chorus asks if the stage, with its low-ranking and unimportant players, might stand in for kings: "O for… A kingdom for a stage, princes to act" (1-3). The Chorus' question therefore concerns whether the proper rank and order of human beings might be displaced in order to make one human substitutable for any other. In asking into the possibility of substituting one position (whether spatial or social) for another, the play suggests the transition from a medieval sense of the *mundus* in which position is inherent toward a sense of the world in which position is arbitrary and substitutable.

On the other hand, the "O" of the Chorus is not only the stage but also a '0,' a zero. The Chorus brings this pun out: "O pardon, since a crookèd figure / May attest in little place a million, / And let us, ciphers to this great account, / On your imaginary forces work" (15-18). As a zero is nothing in itself but can hold the place of a million, so the stage and its actors will reduce themselves to nothing in order to substitute for the great. For the cartographic sense of the globe, space is nothing, but an infinite and

homogenous nothing in which any place is substitutable for any other. The Chorus wishes to make the space of the stage an empty space with no determinate position of its own. Having become empty space, it can take the place of any other. The Chorus abstracts the stage from its own concrete place, leaving only the residue of an empty space which any place can fill. The blank space of the stage, moreover, functions like a map, in which any small point can stand in for a vast region and one person might symbolize a multitude: "Pierce out our imperfections with your thoughts: / Into a thousand parts divide one man" (23-24). The chorus thus wishes to present the stage as the empty, arbitrary, and substitutable space of modern science. By reducing the stage to a 0, the Chorus also enframes the world within an "O," making all places and social positions representable, able to be brought before the eyes and comprehension of the audience. The stage, then, functions like a globe, where there is ideally no difference between sign and referent. Like Mercator's suggestion that the globe represents the world entirely without artificial seams, so in making the stage a zero, the Chorus suggests it can disappear entirely into what it represents.

Finally, the "O" of the Chorus is the emotive sigh, a decidedly non-representative use of language: "O for a muse of fire" (1) "O pardon" (15). These emotive sighs seem to stem from what is incredible about the play's representation: not only the incredible events of Henry's campaign, but the incredibleness of bringing those lofty events down onto the stage. When the Chorus longs for a muse with which it could present the events, it performs a rhetorical sleight-of-hand: on the one hand claiming such events are beyond its ability to present, on the other hand going on to present precisely those events. The

Chorus' trick makes it seem as though it were presenting the unpresentable. The work of the play is to translate what can merely be sighed before ('O!') to what can be framed on the stage (the "O") by making the stage a zero ("0"). In the non-representative "O!," the force of fictive representation is fleetingly visible. The stage exercises a force that, in making the world visible, makes the unpresentable present, makes what is too grandiose to be comprehended comprehensible. The necessary work of the stage is to make this grandeur visible, but in doing so it alters and transforms that grandeur.

What is the political function of such representation? As we see in the campfire scene, the English nation is made up of difference, with people of different races (Cornish, Welsh, Irish) who do not all understand one another's speech and mistrust one another. What unites the different people around the campfire is their obedience to the King, the one who stands above them all. One of the men, Williams, even questions the justice of the King's war, but nevertheless recognizes that "to disobey the King were against all proportion of subjection" (IV.i.138). Williams seems to affirm the natural rank and "proportion" of human beings. But the work of the play in substituting an actor for the King transgresses that proportion. (As Williams speaks, the King stands on stage, "misrecognized" as a common person.) The play works to persuade those who, like Williams, have doubts about the King and are unable to see his justice and majesty and the common destiny that unites the nation by presenting that justice, majesty, and destiny on the stage. The "world" that *Henry V* stages is the English nation and its sovereign, presented as an organic unity, something that fits together naturally into one. But in presenting that wonder and majesty, it makes use of precisely what would call them into

doubt: the arbitrariness of persons, the emptiness of space. Like the modern world-picture, then, the play upholds the power of the subject to shape and give order to the emptiness of space. But in doing so, it harnesses a force of representation that perhaps cannot entirely be controlled, and that always threatens to make the arbitrary and excessive nature of the world visible at the same time as it shows the world's order. *Henry V* makes the nation visible to itself, but also begins to make visible the seams, the disruptive force of fictions, on which such representation depends.

Shakespeare makes use of two different models of the world as a stage. While criticism has tended to focus on Shakespeare's interest in the ability of the stage to create a world of its own, I believe Shakespeare is far less persuaded by this notion. At the same time that he shows, in *Henry V*, the political power of fiction to impose order on the world, he also is fascinated, in *As You Like It*, with a democratizing quality of fiction-making, that it is an aspect of existence which no one escapes. Fiction has the power to make a world, but also the capacity to withdraw its participants from the world as a stable entity. As in the multiple roles which Jacques says each person plays over the course of each life, living in fictions is to live multiple lives at once, with none of them quite taken to be stable or fully real.

The World-Stage in Antony and Cleopatra

Antony and Cleopatra takes up the notions of fictive worldhood seen in *As You Like It* and other plays and inserts them into the political questions that motivate the

depiction of the globe-as-stage in *Henry V*. The play repeatedly refers to "the world" as the space of the Roman empire. The empire's power is its ability to arrange and order the space within it. Thus, at the beginning of the play, Antony is called one member of the "triple pillar of the world" (I.i.12). The phrase figures the world as though it were a structure— not a random mass of things but an assembly of pieces meant to fit together in a precise way. The triumvirate of which Antony is one "pillar" holds together the structured space of the world. The world is a political ordering of space and is by definition implicated in power relations that divide so-called civilization from its outsides. As in *Henry V*, the play thinks through the ability of theater to hold together this imperial world. The link between theater and empire is assumed is implicit in both Antony's and Cleopatra's fantasies, prior to their deaths, of being put on display before all of Rome, a Rome which in the play is equivalent to the world, and a Rome which is somehow entirely gathered together to behold their defeat. It is as if, gathered together in one place and one act of watching, the vast multiplicity of the crowd becomes one thing. That thing, in turn, as an organization of a multitude, stands in proportionally for the entire world. Antony and Cleopatra fantasize about the power of theater to create a world. This creation occurs through binding a crowd together in the act of spectatorship and riveting it to the single central point of the stage.

However, unlike *Henry V*, the play takes up the theme of *theatrum mundi* with the world-stage as the site of an inauthentic life that should be surpassed. Although Antony at times calls to be put on stage before the world, he also states his desire to "let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch / Of the ranged empire fall" (I.i.35-6). Antony wishes to

step outside the ordered world of Rome, to let that order collapse into pieces. There is a careful and compressed word-play in these lines: the "arch" means on the one hand a support structure that holds up and maintains the order of Rome. On the other, it means the triumphal arch raised to celebrate Roman victories. As a triumphal arch, it is merely theatric and symbolic. In conflating the two arches, the line suggests that Rome is supported by its political theater. Finally, by calling the arch "wide.. of the ranged empire," Antony suggests that Rome's order is wide of its theatrics, that the two do not quite line up, and so Rome is unstable, precariously open to fall. When Antony continues, a few lines later, to say he wishes to stand up before all the world, he means oddly that he wishes to present himself to the world in order to declare that he is outside of it and no longer interested in its values. The play, then, is less interested in portraying the world on stage than in exploring the limits of such a portrayal.

The Roman ideal of world-making in the play is itself a fiction that is never fully under control. From within the empire, the power of fiction is seen through the rumors that circulate, giving and taking power from those on the political stage. As I will argue, the depiction of rumor shows Rome to be less the coherent and stable world it imagines itself, and closer to how I suggest Cleopatra imagines the world: a tissue of fictions. Rumor's sway is seen from its opening scene, which begins with a couple seemingly much more trivial than its titular characters. Two men, Demetrius and Philo, are whispering to one another about their general, Antony. It's significant that this initial pair is a pair of men. Heterosexuality is linked throughout the play with imperial ambition—conquest in all its senses. This initial moment offers not only differently gendered erotic

currents, but one in which desire is explicitly tied to the circulation of rumors, or fictions. It is a scene of pleasure in fiction and its powers. Through his description, Philo summons Antony to Demetrius's imagination and, by implication, to the audience's. The two men are gathered together in the act of whispering about and gazing at the projected image of another man. Philo conjures an aestheticized and eroticized image of power: Antony looks like a god, his eyes shining and his chest bursting through his armor. But it is also an image of power subdued: Antony has been "ben[t]" and "turn[ed]" from his old self, the hard "temper" of his armor lost. Although Philo attributes Antony's submission to his love for a woman, his language may also describe the disruptive force of rumor. Antony's image is taken out of his own hands and put into Philo's control. At this point, neither Demetrius nor the audience knows the veracity of Philo's claims: his picture of Antony has taken Antony's place on stage, come before it and circulated more quickly than Antony can hope to catch up. Coming before Antony, the rumor also prevents Antony from being clearly seen: "Behold and see," Philo instructs Demetrius—and the audience—before Antony appears, as though seeing Antony will only fill in the frame that Philo's rumor has made for him. The spectators will never see Antony without their suspicions having already been stirred by rumor. This scene of the eroticized circulation of rumors repeats the associations in John's *theatrum mundi* with desire as a disruptive fiction with the potential to distract the political ruler. It belongs to a sense of human relations in which fiction does not impose itself on a world outside itself, nor does desire seize an object imagined to be external, but rather the proliferation of fiction and desire is itself the grounds of worldhood. Cleopatra's final monologue, though delivered to an

absent Antony, will take up this sense of desire, longing for an image of her lover that is explicitly acknowledged as a fiction.

The small exchange between Demetrius and Philo marks only one point of a much larger network of rumor that traverses the world of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Rumors of Antony's behavior are already circulating in Rome in the first scene, for Demetrius after having watched Antony's behavior with Cleopatra declares, "I am full sorry / That [Antony] approves the common liar who / Thus speaks of him at Rome" (I.i.61-3). How does Demetrius know these rumors exist in Rome? Has he traveled there while stationed in Egypt? Or has he only heard reports from others about what Antony is called there– a rumor of rumors. Antony himself is aware of his image problem: although he proclaims his disinterest in the entirety of Rome— "Let Rome in Tiber melt"— he still demands that the empire recognize his true and blameless self: "I bind/ On pain of punishment the world to weet — / We stand up peerless" (40-42). Cleopatra immediately recognizes Antony's claim as a deliberate lie— "Excellent falsehood!" (42)— implicating Antony in a game of image- and fiction-management, trying to overcome the (true) rumor of his guilt with another fiction. Antony's desire is to stand before the world— as though he were on stage— and through a transfixing performance to "bind" the world, to limit its proliferations of rumors. And yet he can only do so through the production of yet more fictions, ones that will circulate beyond his control.

Rumors belong to a much different relation between fiction and social order than Antony's aim for politically staged representation.[37] Representation, as in *Henry V*'s and this play's concern with bringing the world to the stage, aims to bind the world together

into an orderly system. Representing the world is, then and now, an ideal fantasy of an objective portrayal of a systematic totality of nations and individuals bound together by the instantaneous technological circulation of information. Rumor might be seen as the monstrous double of that fantasy, in which fictions disseminate faster than anyone can hope to control. Rumors provide another way to imagine the world than as an organic unity, something more like the unstable and unpredictable circulation of fictions, something which, although not opposed to the organic, has already pulled any body outside itself before it ever steps foot on stage. No one exercises full control over rumors because they have always begun somewhere else and mutate in their transmission. The destabilizing power of rumor in *Antony and Cleopatra* recalls the suspicion toward the politically pernicious power of fictions in the trope of the *theatrum mundi*. However, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, rumor is as much what binds the world of the play together as what upsets it. The play is a long series of messages that are not heard on time or misinterpreted, of reports about what people are saying about other characters, and of characters anxiously imagining what the world thinks about them. Rumor is an economy of fictions, a circulation of representations which political power tries to manage but is never outside.

If rumor travels the social world of the play, what of the play's center, the romance between Antony and Cleopatra? Does it not portray an attempt to overcome the vicious social circulation of rumors, to step outside the claims of the world? And yet, even when the two titular characters are directly before one another, they are often most concerned with what is being said about one or the other by someone else. There is something

unhinged about their responses to one another, as though they were not really hearing

what the other said. Just as in rumor, where as a message is transferred it alters and takes

on a life of its own, so even in the most intimate communication in the play, words are

immediately subject to fictional transformation.

The first encounter between the two in the play illustrates well both these points.

The lovers have time only to exchange a few lines before they are interrupted by a

messenger. Cleopatra insists that Antony allow the messenger to be heard, but rather than

allowing the messenger to actually speak, she immediately begins to narrate what she

imagines the possible contents of the message to be. It would seem, then, that prior to the

arrival of the actual message, Cleopatra has already imagined the possibility of various

messages arriving. These fantasmatic messages concern what is being said or thought

about Antony elsewhere: "Fulvia perchance is angry, or who knows / If the scarce-

bearded Caesar have not sent / His powerful mandate to you" (I.i.21-3). Even when

Antony is in Egypt, then, Cleopatra's thoughts are already about him elsewhere and about

how he is being perceived there. These errant thoughts structure how she sees him while

he is directly before her. Antony blushes after hearing her imagined messages (or so she

claims, at least), and she reads the blood on his face as though it were a response, not to

her, but to those in Rome who have summoned him: "that blood of thine/ Is Caesar's

homager; else so thy cheek pays shame / When shrill-tongued Fulvia scolds" (32-34).

Cleopatra is not alone in filling the direct encounter between the two with thoughts of

distant spectators. Antony, after denying Cleopatra's demands to hear the messenger and

in the midst of fervently asserting that his only "space" is the relation between the two,

fantasizes, as I have already quoted, about making the entire world the spectators they "stand up peerless" before (40). Antony and Cleopatra's direct exchanges are shot through with fantasies of others watching them, whispering about them, imagining from a distance their relation, in short with fantasies about rumors. While the play might seem to contrast Antony and Cleopatra's romance with the social world of rumor seen through Demetrius and Philo, it in fact shows how much like the homoerotic currents of rumor their own intimacy is. In doing so, it suggests that relations in the play are not governed by oppositional binaries of male/female, Rome/Egypt, image/reality, sex/politics, but by a circulation of fictions that traverses and undermines those boundaries. The work of rumor in the play exemplifies the fictional worldhood Cleopatra will more explicitly describe, a world in which all actors are playing off multiple, not fully fixed scripts. Though political power in the play depends on the work of rumor, rumor proliferates fiction too quickly and erratically for any management to catch up with.

Cleopatra and Radical Fictiveness

The final act of the play seems to take place after the end of the world-order that has been brought down with the collapse of Antony. Cleopatra repeatedly takes up a Christian language of a world that has become meaningless. Immediately after Antony dies, Cleopatra rhetorically asks, "Shall I abide / In this dull world, which in thy absence is / No better than a sty?" (IV.xvi.62-64). This sense of taking place after the end is amplified by the last scene literally taking place within a tomb. In this uncanny space, the

play articulates an outside the world that is still in the world, in the sense of a world that

exceeds representation and the political order it supports. In the final scene, Cleopatra

narrates to Iris her concern that if she is brought to Rome, actors will portray her on stage

unfaithfully, complaining that "I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness /

I'th' posture of a whore" (V.ii.219-21). Cleopatra's worries are twofold: first, that the boy

actor's performance will fail to capture her "greatness," but second that the performance

will succeed all too well, portraying her as a "whore," and presumably convincing the

audience that such a role is in fact her self. Although Cleopatra is speaking specifically

about the attempt to represent herself on stage, we might want to take her speech as

making some generalizable claims about the representational power of the stage. On the

one hand, representation fails to capture the truth, and on the other hand, representation

succeeds in imposing itself in place of that truth, creating the effect of a truth that is too-

readily understood. Cleopatra is also quite aware that the representational power of the

stage has political implications. When, as I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter,

Proculeius tells Cleopatra she should "Let the world see / [Caesar's] nobleness well

acted," he implies that Caesar's power is theatrical. Remaining in power requires

convincing the world of the truth of his own nobility, a nobility which will be displayed

through Cleopatra's submission. Cleopatra, in choosing to commit suicide, acts to disrupt

Caesar's political theater, denying him the staging of her defeat in Rome which will in

turn convince the world of his power. It is useful to contrast Cleopatra's description of the

stage to the stage's portrayal in *Henry V*. While the emphasis there is on the ability of the

stage to substitute for any other place, here Cleopatra emphasizes the heterogeneity of the

stage and her own world and the impossibility of one being substituted for another.

Cleopatra's speech demands to be read in some measure ironically: for, although she denounces the ability of a boy-actor to capture her greatness, her denunciation, at least on the Elizabethan stage, is performed by a boy actor. The difficulty of reading this moment invites us to understand fictiveness as not merely operational or bound up with the workings of power to produce objective truth. If we accept fully Cleopatra's claim that a boy would portray her falsely, we are in quite a bind, for we cannot take that claim seriously as it is spoken by a boy-actor. In order to perceive anything at all of Cleopatra, even if it is only the assertion that she is being misrepresented, we must accept the power of misrepresentation to convey some sort of truth. That truth is not the same as the representation that appears on stage, in fact Cleopatra makes the truth and representation antagonistic, but somehow representation still gestures at that truth. As Benjamin argues about the messianic in history, so we might here say about the truth in representation: the truth flashes up in representation, but as a disruption, in this case a disruption of representation's claim to adequately substitute itself for the truth (*Illuminations* 255).

At the same time that Cleopatra's denunciation of acting highlights the distance of truth from the stage's fiction, it also calls attention to the body actually on stage, the "Cleopatra boy" portraying her. As Jonathan Gil Harris points out in "'Narcissus in thy face,'" this moment reveals a desire for sameness—the English boy—misconstrued as desire for an exoticized other (423). In doing so, it suggests that the qualities projected onto Cleopatra and Egypt are in fact internal to English culture and its theatrical practice as well. Indeed, anti-theatrical tracts of the period, which Jyotsna Singh has shown in

"Renaissance Anti-Theatricality, Anti-Feminism, and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*" the play mimes, associate with boy actors the characteristics Romans have attached to Egypt—effeminacy, uncontrollable desire, and dangerously fluid identity. Cleopatra's line thus highlights, in spite of its literal sense, a similarity between Cleopatra and the "Cleopatra boy," not because his portrayal captures her essence, but because the figure of the boy-actor is already seen as foreign within England. Stephen Gosson's *Schoole of Abuse*, one of the most famous Renaissance anti-theatrical tracts, compares actors who play "strumpets" to "the caterpillars that have devoured and blasted the fruit of *Egypt*" (33). Alluding to one of the plagues God sends to punish the Egyptians in Exodus, Gosson construes actors as a foreign swarm sent to wreak havoc on the English nation.[38] The trope transforms the actors within England as representatives of foreign alterity and multiplicity—the monstrous swarm—that must be contained to protect the nation. For a nation that uses gender and sexuality to mark the difference between the cultures with whom it interacts and its own godly restraint, the boy-actor is dangerously proximate to the exotic women he portrays. Gosson's florid language states, despite its intent, that England is crossed by multiple worlds, that foreign alterity is already within it, but it proclaims this insight only to demand a more strenuous internal policing of who counts as English.

There is a less vicious mode of relation between boy-actor and Egyptian queen opened by Cleopatra's lines than fear of the other-within. Where Gosson's rhetorical strategy is to fix the boy's essence as dangerous outsider, Cleopatra turns "boy" into a verb, and a transitive one at that: "I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra *boy* my

greatness." The fluid status of boyhood suggests a boundary-overflowing, worldly form of being. To boy, Cleopatra's line implies, is not something one is, but something that happens in relation. Cleopatra is boyed by the actor, becomes the squeaking thing she fears to be, but the boy also boys through her, becomes a boy when playing a queen. Cleopatra means by "boy," moreover, something like "portray," suggesting that a boy's part is to play, that he is most himself when he is another. Her comment is apt for a humanist culture that saw boys as highly malleable beings shaped through education, particularly education predicated on learning to imitate the speeches of others. The moment shows how something like the play's Egypt already is in England, on its stage, not only in the figure presented but in the disappearing contours of the one who presents her. Just as Cleopatra will go on to assert, in her final performance, the multiplicity of her being in the face of an imperial system that demands self-coherence, so here, the boy-actor is shown to have a plural being—the "Cleopatra boy"—in the midst of a culture that demanded firm cultural boundaries. Cleopatra demonstrates how the English theater, in spite of its aim to maintain a sense of cultural distinction, continually produces out-of-this-world beings like the boy-actor and Cleopatra, beings that seem to inhabit multiple worlds from within England. The moment, then, attests to a kind of fictional worldhood where all inhabit multiple roles.

When Cleopatra in her monument recalls the figure of the deceased Antony to Dolabella, she comes close to "staging" Antony in precisely the way she herself fears being staged by Caesar. But in doing so, she elaborates an alternative to the orderly representation of Rome, bringing out a force of fiction that Roman representation both

depends on and remains blind to. Antony contains in Cleopatra's eyes the entire cosmos and more:

> His face was as the heav'ns, and therein stuck
>
> A sun and moon, which kept their course and lighted
>
> The little O o'th'Earth...
>
> His legs bestrid the Ocean, his reared arm
>
> Crested the world. His voice was propertied
>
> As all the tunèd Spheres... (78-83)

Antony contains in himself the entire universe, comprehending all the spheres that make up the Ptolemaic cosmos. The image works meta-fictionally, suggesting the presentation of Antony on the "little o" of the Globe's stage, as in the Prologue's question in *Henry V*, "May we cram / Within this wooden O the very casques that did affright the air at Agincourt?" (12-14). Antony is one who, like the actor on the stage, seems to create a world out of an "O," making performance into reality, that is, making the world visible through the illusions of the stage. The image also recollects the emblem of the Globe Theater where Atlas or Hercules stands holds up the world, granting Antony a sovereign, god-like power to give the world order. Cleopatra's description of Antony seems to grant him the spectacular power to make the world seem like an order.

However, in recollecting that sovereign image, Cleopatra dissolves and displaces its power. Her image of Antony brings forward its own status as an image, emphasizing its unrealness and its disruptive force. Cleopatra does not claim her recollection not as truth, but rather says she "dreamt there was an Emperor *Antony*" (75). She is aware that

her memory of him is not real in the sense in which a mimetic representation aims to be. Her Antony is not Antony himself but "an" Antony, her dream of him. That's not to say her dream is merely false or a subjective wish. When Dolabella tells her that the Antony she describes never could have existed, she tells him that "It's past the size of dreaming" (96), that is, Antony must have been real because he is too much to be imagined. At no point does Cleopatra think her image equivalent to some real Antony; either it is a dream or what exceeds that dream. Unlike the actor who creates a world on stage, this Antony brings out the impossibility of his own creative power, his non-equivalence to his own image. Her formulation is the opposite of the imperial globe's approach to representation, where the globe makes perceptible the existence of the world. Rather, here, Cleopatra's representation of Antony makes him irrecuperably strange and unreal, an outside-the-world that flashes up in the world.

Cleopatra's description of Antony thus repeats a sovereign-like representation but is not the same as that representation. Her description, in fact, provides an image of such an uncanny repetition when she claims that "His delights / Were dolphin-like; they showed his back above / The element they lived in" (87-89). Antony as a dolphin leaping over the waves is another image of a sovereign who is above the world, but it is no longer an Atlas who stands above the world. Turned upside down in a flip, Antony has been literally reversed in being elevated. No longer grounded on a firm foundation beneath him, he floats, momentarily, over an abyss. Antony is lifted outside the world by his "delights," all the worldly, illusory pleasures he pursues throughout the play that make him intoxicating as a leader and ultimately bring him down.[39] The image presents itself

here not, as in cartographic notions of representation, as what reveals some world-order but as a violent, destabilizing force that makes and shatters Antony's world.

Cleopatra's refusal of her stage-portrayal by a Roman boy and her dream-like image of Antony outline a force of fiction that exceeds representation. In Cleopatra's final monologue, this force is used to destabilize the representation of the Roman world seen in the play thus far as well as the future order of the *pax Romana* that follows her death. As Stanley Cavell notes in *Disowning Knowledge*, Cleopatra takes on in her last speech all the roles that have been denied her in the play: wife, mother, and goddess (28). Alongside her attack on how she will represented on stage, the monologue invites us to reconsider the first four acts of the play as a particular representation of Cleopatra, one that may or may not correspond to the truth. Cavell, clearly, sees the speech as a transcendent one, not only achieving the heterosexual union in marriage Antony and Cleopatra miss in the play, but overcoming the skeptical loss of a grounding order of the world through a faith in the world as a theatrical presentation (28). Cavell's sense of the success of this scene, powerful as it is, fails to see its violence. Its violence in two sense: first, and most obviously, that the scene depicts a woman with very few options committing suicide isolated and surrounded in her own tomb. Second, that even Cleopatra's "success" requires her to step into all the roles she avoids (one suspects for good reason) throughout the play: Roman wife, mother, goddess, etc. Seeing "successfully" both the violence of this scene and how it performatively undoes the Roman world of political theater requires a double vision, that is, seeing Cleopatra as both wife and performer at a distance from that role. Cleopatra's performance of the role

of wife is not the same as her becoming a wife or even fully desiring that role. Her performance re-creates the role of Roman wife as something different: as a vehicle for performance, for the making and unmaking of a role that is never fully occupied. In doing so, she presents the Roman world as illusory, its order made and unmade by fictions that never fully cohere.

That incoherence can be heard in how the object of Cleopatra's address in the final monologue shifts and cannot be precisely located. She begins with commands, that is direct addresses, to her servants, Iras and Charmian: "Give me my robe... Put on my crown" (271). The speech aimed at the servants, however, begins to shift toward something more like a soliloquy, a narration to herself of a scene which only she can see. After Cleopatra's pause in the middle of the line, "Yare, yare, good Iras, quick—" (274), it is impossible to tell whether the phrase that follows, "methinks I hear / *Antony* call," continues her address to Iras or acts as an anacoluthon that begins a speech with no direct addressee. Even if Cleopatra, on stage, continues to look at Iris, one could not be sure if her looking were seeing, or if it were the blank looking of one who sees a phantom. Her speech thus portrays someone moving between looking at what is physically present before her and at what is present to her in a fiction. It presents to the spectator fiction as double vision: seeing the world as what it is and otherwise. Her speech suggests a fiction that is a destabilizing force, a break in representational order.

The role of Cleopatra's attendants in this scene has been greatly neglected. Cavell and others read the scene as an imaginative recreation of heterosexual union between Antony and Cleopatra— and they are not wrong— but to insist entirely on the cross-sex

trajectory of the scene erases the clear same-sex relations within it. This is, after all, a moment which takes place between women (and the silent presence of the eunuch Mardian), and which involves them dressing one another and kissing. The fact that a fictional vision of Antony is becoming apparent to Cleopatra's eyes gains its strength through the way her speech veers away from and back toward addressing Iras and Charmian. If this is a scene of Cleopatra's self-performance, making a new role for herself, then Iras and Charmian are both audience and participant in it. When Cleopatra asks Charmian, "Dost thou not see my baby at my breast, / That sucks the nurse asleep?" (300-301), she manifests her own creative ability to make the snake into a child through presenting to Charmian what Charmian cannot possibly see. Cleopatra's taking on and shrugging off of the various roles she plays in the scene requires the same of her attendants. At times, they inhabit the role of lover, taking Antony's place, as when Cleopatra spends "the last warmth of [her] Lippes" on them (282). At other times, they are her teacher, modeling for her the suicide she wishes to perform. At other times, they take on her role, competing with her to be with Antony, as Cleopatra imagines the dead Iras racing ahead of her to kiss him in the afterlife. In Cleopatra's self-performance, these other women are essential parts. Cleopatra's relation to her attendants suggests that the scene is not an event of (heterosexual) reunion but an event that spreads and circulates, destabilizing identity, role, and representation, much like rumor had been earlier in the play. The performance is not a fulfillment so much as a shattering that proliferates outward.

That destabilizing spread continues not only between Cleopatra and the attendants

but also between the stage and the spectators. The strange power of Cleopatra's monologue is that it is a theatrical scene that demands to take place before no spectators. Caesar and his crowd have been turned out; Cleopatra has refused to play a part on their stage. Here, though, in the solitude of her monument, she performs her final scene. Refusing presentation, the scene presents a private victory. Where does this position the spectators? Are they like eavesdroppers, overhearing a speech for which they ought not be present? There should be no audience for the scene and yet its incredible performance calls out for an audience. The audience is fractured in being present, there and at a distance simultaneously. The difficult, unstable position of the audience is brought forward in the moments of Cleopatra's direct address. When she directs her speech to Antony, a character not present on stage, it is as if she spoke beyond the stage and to the audience: "Husband, I come" (278). The speech, in suggesting Cleopatra's withdraw into her own vision, is a reminder of how the audience ought not be present at this moment. And yet, in seeming to speak directly toward the audience, the audience is pulled into the scene as a role within it. The audience, like Cleopatra, has no stable role as exterior witness, but hovers unsteadily on the scene's margins. The audience is most like the attendants, Iras and Charmian, who drift in and out of Cleopatra's self-presentation. The image of the scene shatters the boundaries between the subjects who observe and the objects presented, instead presenting an unsteady and unpredictable rhythm between the two.

Cleopatra's last act is a fiction that must be seen at the least doubly and dynamic. It is a fiction that does not present itself as representing any stable world-order, but rather

as an excess to the world in the world, a violent force that destabilizes order. *Antony and Cleopatra* presents a world that exceeds representational order, a world that takes place in the unstoppable and unpredictable proliferation of fictions. That proliferation, as much as it is violent and uproots political order, also makes possible the foundation of new order and acts that call into question the existing order, like Cleopatra's suicide. *Antony and Cleopatra* presents a vision of worldhood where what is common, transgressing borders of culture, history, and gender is fictiveness. If the world is a like a stage, it is in that each being within does not have a stable identity or role, but must play multiple roles at once, navigate, manipulate, and create fictions. The play thus draws on the medieval notion of *theatrum mundi*, which associates the "worldly," as I have called it in my introduction, with deceptive and impermanent illusion. The play's reassertion of this idea also transforms it: Cleopatra does not assert the theatricality of the world in order to turn her attention toward some heaven beyond the world (the heaven in which she sees Antony is manifestly a fiction), but to take a step back from the Roman notion of the world as a single fixed order. The play also thus differs from developing Renaissance ideas of the globe as an objectively representable entity. Rather, it shows the political motivations under such drives to frame the world as an entirely coherent single space, a drive which still shapes the discourse of globalization today. *Antony and Cleopatra* offers a different account of worldhood than the one which has become dominant in globalization and which has often been projected back onto the Renaissance, as the origin of the notion of the "globe." Cleopatra's fictional worldhood is one in which what people have in common is not that they can be counted, tracked, represented, or managed, but that they

are creative, inhabiting multiple roles, never fully belonging to any one.

Chapter Three

The Pleasure in Parts:

The Blazing World and Early Modern Polygenesis

"Were all *black Moors*, who seem a kind or race of men different from the white,

produced from *Adam*?" This question, added to the second edition of Cavendish's

Observations upon Experimental Philosophy (115), has been taken more than once as

incontrovertible evidence of Cavendish's commitment to emerging scientific notions of

racial difference. For Rosemary Kegl and Sujata Iyengar, the question, in analogizing

skin-color difference to species difference, anticipates nineteenth-century ideas of

polygenesis. Cavendish's seventeenth-century natural philosophy is, anachronistically,

mapped onto later faux-Darwinian notions of humanity as comprised of several species,

with non-Europeans closer to animals. But why assume polygenesis always and only

means modern racism, an idea whose name, at least, suggests its indebtedness to pre-

modern Christian paradigms? To make that assumption goes against the goal of Iyengar's

project, one I share in this chapter, to bring out the multiplicity of racial paradigms in the

period and to "resist the imposition of a straightforward historical trajectory 'toward'

racialism" (1). In making Cavendish into an endpoint for the period, Iyengar suggests that

the plurality of early modern racial understandings is resolved by the modern era,

claiming that the initial appearance of theories of polygenesis in the Restoration "marks a

radical change from the mythologies of color that predominated during the Elizabethan

and Jacobean periods," a change Iyengar conflates with beliefs in African "species

difference" and "the notion of an inherited slave caste" (Iyengar 223). As Lara Bovilsky

suggests in *Barbarous Play*, this periodization of race risks making modern racism seem

a more coherent and consistent ideology than it actually is (28).

Both Kegl and Iyengar also, while taking this passage as crucial to Cavendish's

views on race, nevertheless suggest that it is anomalous, clashing with her fictional

portrayal in *The Blazing World* of a panoply of differently colored and shaped beast-men,

bird-men, grass-green-men, and so on. For Kegl this contradiction suggests the

incoherence of seventeenth century ideas of race, while for Iyengar it is evidence of

Cavendish's fictional escapism. Even Cristina Malcolmson, who views Cavendish as

largely critical of nascent racial paradigms, accepts Kegl's and Iyengar's interpretation of

this passage while contending that *The Blazing World*, in contrast, satirizes scientific

racism (135-36). It is odd, to say the least, to assume such a divergence between

philosophy and fiction for Cavendish, who appends *The Blazing World* to the

Observations, in what I take to be a fairly clear suggestion that the two are meant to be

read together. Perhaps the multiplicity of meanings which fictional world-making makes

possible is not unrelated to the multiplicity of human kinship Cavendish explores in her

philosophy.

Indeed, the meaning of the line taken as evidence of Cavendish's pseudo-scientific

racialism is not entirely straightforward ("Were all *black Moors*, who seem a kind or race

of men different from the white, produced from *Adam*?"). It is, after all, a question. And

even the difference in kind between whites and blacks is stated as a matter of appearance

—"black Moors, who *seem* a kind or race of men different from the white"—in the midst

of a sentence where the relation between external color and internal kind is under question. The larger chapter to which the line belongs in the *Observations* is not, in the main, interested in issues of human difference but in complicating causality more generally. Cavendish spends most of the chapter arguing that a single phenomenon, ice, can have multiple causes. Even if in a laboratory ice can be created in a certain way, she contends, we can't know that ice found in nature is always made through the same process. This multiplicity of causes bears a close relation, for Cavendish, to the variability within a single type of phenomena, there being many different sorts of ice, cold, and snow (114). Cavendish's comments about human biological differences and reproduction largely accord with this view of the natural world. Whether or not all men descended from Adam is besides the point (and Cavendish's position is ambiguous), for one phenomenon—humanity—may have multiple causes and a single producer, like Adam, may reproduce individuals different from himself. Although Cavendish frames this question as if—*seemingly*—there were stable racial kinds with distinct origins, the question sets up a complication of that assumption.

What critical readings of this passage have assumed are linked—origin and kind, descent from Adam and membership in the same race—are in fact what it decouples. Cavendish suggests an alternative means of understanding the relation between reproduction and kinship. Where traditional Christian accounts make humanity one because they derive from a single progenitor (Eve being forgotten), Cavendish suggests that what links humans together is also what they have in common with all living things —the fact of reproduction itself: "For *Negroes* are still produced by the same action, or

way of generation, as white men are. So are *beasts*, yet *Adam* had no hand in their

production" (115). Not any single origin forms the common ground of humanity, but sex

—which is always a production of multiplicity out of multiplicity. If Cavendish holds a

notion of polygenesis, it is not in trying to map distinct kinds onto distinct origins; rather,

it is that generation for her is necessarily polymorphous, recreating the same differently.

      The way in which Cavendish's polygenesis has been interpreted is largely

congruent with accounts of polygenetic ideas in the Renaissance more broadly. In their

rich sourcebook on early modern varieties of racial discourse, Jonathan Burton and Ania

Loomba see Giordano Bruno's late sixteenth-century polygenetic ideas as, again,

anticipatory of nineteenth-century scientific racism (Loomba and Burton 129). This

epistemological divide, which reads polygenesis as modern and a break from earlier

racial theories, can lead to a fall-type narrative in which Christian monogenism is given a

false power to inhibit racial beliefs. Colin Kidd, for example, argues in *The Forging of*

Races that:

> During the early modern era theological concerns helped to inhibit—and at
>
> the very least to circumscribe—the articulation of racial prejudices and the
>
> formulation of identities based upon race. The orthodox belief in common
>
> biological origins transmuted what might be viewed in different
>
> circumstances as ethnic Otherness into a form of ethnic cousinage,
>
> however distant" (57).

John Lie asserts bluntly in *Modern Peoplehood*: "Christian anthropology stunted racial

science" (83). By folding together all accounts of polygenesis, these critics circumscribe

the possibility that the multiple ways of understanding human variety they find in the Renaissance might continue in modernity.

The opposition between a benevolent monogenesis and deleterious polygenesis seems to me misguided. Historically, the Christian mission and outlook informed the beginnings of the African slave trade and the eradication of the American native population. Philosophically, there is no reason to assume that the belief in a single human *kind*, rooted in biological derivation from a parental couple, differs radically from a belief in human *kinds*, again determined by biological origin. As Keith Thomas suggests, somewhat grudgingly, monogenism like polygenism can easily license belief in inferior racial kinds:

> It is true that monogenism did not prevent the emergence of notions of racial inferiority, for blackness was usually regarded as a deformity and it was common to explain the different varieties of men in the world by saying that the blacks had degenerated from their common ancestor, Adam, while the whites had stayed constant or even improved" (135)

Monogenesis still relies on a biological notion of lineage, where human relatedness and ethical consideration depends on common ancestry; it expands the notion of kin with all its ideological limitations to a global level. Moreover, monogenesis holds humans together by holding us apart from other living beings, as though our bonds to one another depended on the idea that we belong to a race, a human race, apart from others. Indeed, the notion of kind is one place where early modern race criticism could gain valuably from the rich work being done in early modern animal studies by Laurie Shannon, Bruce

Boehrer, and others on what Shannon terms early modern "cosmopolity across species" (28). Some versions of polygenesis, I argue, offer a way of understanding human commonality not through opposition to animals as a kind apart but the variation we share with other living beings.

This chapter offers a different context for Cavendish's polygenesis than nineteenth-century pseudoscience. Before examining polygenesis in Cavendish's own fiction and philosophy, I describe in detail the work of Isaac La Peyrère, a seventeenth-century heretical French theologian whose *Prae-Adamitae* set off a scandal across Europe. In between the two, I glance at some members of the British Royal Society's writings on poly- and monogenesis in order to elaborate the complex relation between polygenesis, science, and colonialism. My aim is to show that polygenetic ideas for La Peyrère, Cavendish, and plausibly others in the Renaissance could offer a way of thinking a complex universality, where what is common among humans is also what they share with other living things, their generation out of matter and the body.

Terminology

I here propose a disambiguation of some ideas and terms that have become conflated in treatments of early modern notions of human biological variety. First, "polygenesis," which I take to mean that humanity has or could have several origins. In many critical treatments, polygenesis is synonymous with what I will call "the race-species conflation," the notion that physiological or genealogical difference within

humanity is in fact the difference between humans and those who are considered not or only barely human. The race-species conflation joins ideologically racism with speciesism: the abstraction of humanity into a kind distinct from and elevated above other living beings re-enforces the fixing of one human form and lineage as the one truly worthy of ethical consideration as human. While polygenesis can be joined with the race-species conflation, it also has a long history in skeptical and materialist traditions apart from it. For Lucretius, the notion of multiple human origins is a logical consequence of the fact that we are made from matter that is constantly recombining in different ways. If we are here, then there are others like us elsewhere:

> If the same force and the same condition abide everywhere
>
> Such that atoms are thrown together just as they're united here,
>
> You must confess that there are other worlds with various races
>
> Of people and species of animals in other places.
>
> (II. 1072-76, modified trans.)

Finally, both polygenesis and the race-species conflation are distinct from "autochthony," itself a complex cluster of related ideas, but the sense in which I'm interested is that a group of people's character is indelibly shaped by the region in which they began. Various nationalisms depend on this conflation of blood and soil that imparts a mystical power to both. When polygenesis and autochthony are combined, it results in the idea that separate origins of humanity imply purely distinct characters of humanity. As I'll argue, however, polygenesis can also affirm the constitutive role of mixture in forming human societies; the idea of one kind of life having multiple origins can suggest that origins are never

simple or pure.

La Peyrère

      Isaac La Peyrère was a mid-seventeenth century French theologian who proposed an idea he thought innocuous and much of Europe found shocking: the Biblical story of Adam and Eve, while true, is not the only origin of humanity. As Richard Popkin recounts, before La Peyrère's work on what he called the Pre-Adamites was even published in 1655, Hugo Grotius had written an attack on its views, which he called "a great danger imminent to religion" (*Isaac La Peyrère* 6). Within a year, La Peyrère was arrested, coerced into renouncing his views, and converted to Catholicism with little evident conviction. Despite the uproar raised by his Pre-Adamite thesis, La Peyrère was quite conversant with the dominant Parisian intellectuals of the day, belonging prior to his arrest to a social coterie that included Gassendi, Mersenne, Pascal, Grotius, and probably Hobbes, many of whom Cavendish knew or had read (5). The more than forty refutations published of La Peyrère's work in the eighty years following its appearance testifies not only to the ire his ideas roused but also to their widespread influence (80-81). Whether or not many accepted La Peyrère's polygenetic theory, his ideas certainly disseminated. The question remains, though, if La Peyrère's ideas were so obviously absurd, why so many intellectuals felt the need to refute them. Clearly his ideas captured something that seventeenth century Europe found catalyzing.

      That something may well be the global variety of human life evident in the period. La Peyrère is fascinated in his writing by the indigenous cultures of the Americas and

other societies that Europe had come into contact with in the last few centuries. He is

particularly interested in the historical records of some of these societies, like the Aztecs

and the Chinese, as well as those of the ancient civilizations like Egypt and Chaldea with

which the Renaissance had become familiar. These records shocked much of European

society because they suggest a swath of history extending far beyond the genealogical

account laid out in the Old Testament (Poole 3). La Peyrère was personally familiar with

the mixture his global moment was stirring up in Europe. A Calvinist Protestant who

converted to Catholicism and frequently suspected of being a Marrano, La Peyrère lived

across the religious boundaries that were carving up and tossing about much of the

European population. His intellectual ideas witness the same errant existence: proposing

a syncretic narrative which could encompass Jews, Christians, and the various other

cultures Europe was coming into contact with, his ideas were rejected by each of these in

turn. La Peyrère's epitaph testifies to this eclecticism, describing him as:

> La Peyrère, that good Israelite
>
> Huguenot, Catholic, Preadamite,
>
> Four religions pleased him at the same time
>
> And his indifference was so uncommon
>
> That after eighty years when he had to make a choice
>
> That good man left and did not choose any of them. (qtd. in *Isaac* 20)

I argue in this section that La Peyrère's polygenesis offers a framework for a

syncretic human history in which being dispersed on the planet is the point held in

common by all of humanity. La Peyrère has little to say directly about human racial

difference; his preadamite thesis is far more concerned with human histories. For La Peyrère, all humans are children of God for the simple fact that we are made of the same common stuff, regardless of what ancestry we have. Matter, infinitely variable in its combinations, offers a place to begin thinking human relation on a world scale. This kinship of matter, I argue, is replicated in La Peyrère's thought by a common historical condition: being dispersed on the planet. In contrast, the notion of a single origin of humanity and with it a normative notion of what Adam looked like supports racial notions of a proper human form. By retelling world history, La Peyrère offers a syncretic account of human plurality.

La Peyrère describes human commonality through a shared material nature rather than a putative common forefather. In doing so, he also suggests humans proximity with animals. La Peyrère places humans alongside animals in the biblical account of the days of God's creation, the Hexameron. Where traditional readings of Genesis emphasize man as the pinnacle of creation, the last and most perfect of God's works, La Peyrère insists that, being created on the same day, man's creation is coequal with animal life: "It is clear then that from the beginning of *Genesis*, in that sixth day wherein the earth brought forth all creatures, *That God upon the same day made man and created the male and female...*" (*Theological* 130; 3.1). La Peyrère thinks it does not make sense that God would create plants and animal life and not create mankind at the same time to enjoy and make use of them (130; 3.1). This creation, the creation on the sixth day, is separate from the creation of Adam, which occurs ages and ages later. This secondary creation, Adam's making, is not any different on a biological level than the original creation, as Philip Almond notes:

"In spite of later adaptations of pre-Adamitism which would equate men before Adam with non-Caucasians and Adamites with Caucasians, La Peyrère himself saw all people as biologically identical" (Almond 168). La Peyrère's account removes the Judeo-Christian claim that humanity has one origin in which humanity's ideal form and, consequently, destiny can be found, an origin from which all variations in human life can be derived and explained. What all humanity shares among its kinds, Jews and Gentiles, is also what it shares with animal life, the simple fact of being created from imperfect and corruptible matter.

La Peyrère's polygenetic theory opens the possibility of humanity existing outside the totalizing Christian narrative of history. The Bible is a grand narrative: humankind derives from a single progenitor (Eve usually being omitted in these accounts), making all the nations of the earth, in a sense, exiles, migrant communities who have come to their countries, settled into their particularities, from an original home, Eden, to which none still belong. Edward Stillingfleet summarizes this idea in one of the first English responses to La Peyrère: "However men now are so dispersed in their habitations, and differ so much in language and customs from each other, yet they were all originally of the same stock, and did derive their succession from that first man whom God created" (Stillingfleet 138; 3.4.1). In these formulations, blood, or "stock," itself invisible in daily life and entirely symbolic in value, comes to stand in for a natural realm that unites humanity beneath and beyond, rather than within and through, these differences of language, custom, and place. These monogenetic biblical narratives, for all the dispersal, migration, and processes of differentiation of humanity they suppose, rely on the notion

of an origin and, with it, an original human who is, as Stillingfleet puts it, "the standard and measure of all that follows" (Stillingfleet 138; 3.4.1). These theological beliefs have real consequences in the period: the intellectual gymnastics that explorers and scholars went through to place American Indians somewhere within biblical history morally justify efforts to convert them by whatever means necessary. Other arguments at the time that Indians were simply not human function in a similar manner, making a place for these people within the biblical narrative by placing them in a realm of nature removed from human history. Both of these arguments form the matrix of so much racial ideology that was to follow with black Africans: making these people either lesser, earlier, or simply not human is a way of preserving the notion of a single, determinable human form with a linear history. As Popkin argues, by multiplying the origins of humanity, La Peyrère limits the scope of the Bible from world-history, the master narrative of humanity and the cosmos, to the particular history of the Jews and, later, the Gentiles (*Isaac* 76). Its story is not the only one; its humanity cannot claim to be the measure of all others.

La Peyrère's work has the effect of suspending the question of human origin altogether, at least any origin that could be knowable or traceable. For La Peyrère doesn't suggest that men existed before Adam in order to move creation back a few centuries or millenia, but to move creation indefinitely and unknowably far back:

> It is written, I confesse, *That God created the heaven and the earth, in the beginning*. That I dare affirm we know not the beginning. I know there is a setled number of the stars in heaven, there is a determinate number of the grains of sand in the Seashore: But I think to make up a sum of all those

stars, all those grains, all those ages which have bin from the beginning is

without the compasse of all Arithmetick and humane account. In these

numbers there is no number, nor need we to comprehend the number of

them. (259; 4.10)

In this claim, La Peyrère assents to without explicitly affirming the doctrine of the

eternity of the world. So Montaigne, quoting Lucretius, argues "Before the Trojan Ware,

before Troy fell, / Were other bards with other tales to tell" (Montaigne, 841, III.6;

Lucretius, V.6-7).[40] Humans have existed as far back as we might know, indefinitely far

back, and within the bounds of human knowledge, eternally. Against determinable

origins, La Peyrère affirms multiplicity. In comparing human eras to stars and grains of

sand, he places our history in the perspective of a material universe of shifting forms.

This indefinite expanse of human history means for La Peyrère that no nation's records

can extend back to include its origin or founder.

The one thing which even the greatest and oldest of the world's historical societies

can attest to is the periodic return of natural or artificial catastrophes that wipe out

historical records:

To this add the length of time, which changes and consumes all things,

from whose devouring jaws the *Egyptians* could not rescue themselves.

For they, though they showed abundance of ancient monuments, both of

their own and other nations, had notwithstanding lost the Annals of their

king god *Vulcan*, and of the Sun, his son. To these deluges, fires, and

devouring times, add that grosse ignorance, which in several ages hath

orerun, more powerfull than fire, than water, than time it self, which hath
swallowed, blotted out, and defaced the memory of things past. (273-74;
4.13)

In the place of firm origins, La Peyrère substitutes the periodic return of disorienting loss
and erasure. All nations can only trace their beginnings so far, to the moment where their
records were destroyed; they "begin," at least so far as they know, in a shadowy moment
they know nothing about. These moments are, I would argue, the repetition within human
history of being created originally from matter: beginning in the obscure, the opaque and
"grosse," the contingent and unknown. Just as La Peyrère affirms human commonality
through our being made of earth, so too he finds the common point of history this loss of
origin. Matter is associated in traditional religious and philosophical accounts with the
accidental and contingent, the worldly; it seems to me that La Peyrère affirms our
materiality not only in creation but in history, where, in the place of an original proper
form that falls into dispersal and contention, La Peyrère places this serial accident of
losing one's home.

La Peyrère recounts how stories of origins are usually artificial tools of power, as
rulers erase the history of those that came before them in order to impose their own rule
as the new origin of that society:

> *Alvarez a Samedo* in his History of *China*, relates, That a certain King
> called *Tein*, commanded by a Proclamation to burn all the Books of
> *Chinensians*, except Physick-books: and was so careful in bringing an utter
> destruction for 40 years that he reigned, that he utterly overthrew all

learned men, and all learning in his own age. As that was likewise the

ambition of vanquishing Princes, which so much alter'd the computation of

time, when they chang'd the Epoche, and would have the times nam'd by

their names. Hence those known Periods, from the death of *Alexander*: of

Augustus, from the fight of *Actium*: and that which was call'd the Epoche

of *Dioclesian*. (274; 4.13)[41]

La Peyrère tells an inverted universal human history, where instead of a shared origin,

what's common in human history is the motivated fiction of recorded origins. In one list,

La Peyrère brings together, in a fashion again reminiscent of Montaigne, anecdotes about

China, Chaldea, Greece, and Rome, as all equally false in their attempt to pinpoint their

beginnings.

What all this means for La Peyrère is that no nation is autochthonous, all are

migrants without knowable origin or founder:

We must needs imagine that all climates of the world have been diversely

ruin'd, but successively, and by turns, not all with one push, or at one

time... That by divers chances and fortunes mankind hath been toss'd

hither and thither, nor could not alwayes continue in the same stations.

Hence it is, that no land could ever boast it self of its Aboriginals. (275;

4.13)

Note the emphasis on diversity, plurality, and seriality in La Peyrère's account of

anthropological history. This is a radical retelling of the story of the Flood. Because in the

biblical narrative the Flood happens all at once, it offers a new beginning, as pure and

singular as Adam's creation, symbolized by the rainbow. La Peyrère suggests that human history is discontinuous: the Flood doesn't happen all at once, but here and there at different times, successively. The result, though, is a rejection of autochthony: there is no nation that is totally indigenous; all are migrants from flood to flood. Note, too, the seriality of La Peyrère's structure: history is made up of these little breaks that turn it off course from a single complete story; like Montaigne, for La Peyrère in history "we do not go in a straight line; we rather ramble, and turn this way and that" (840; III.6). La Peyrère's world history is against human origins, or at least against any origin from which we might derive a privileged human form or seed. It opens a space for the histories of different groups to fit together without giving precedence to any one. It also suggests a world history in the sense that it normalizes migration. By stretching the bounds of history far beyond the limits of knowledge, La Peyrère suggests that, being in history, people don't know where they came from.

While La Peyrère is more interested in history than biology, his theology does elevate to special status certain ways of thinking about biological relation. La Peyrère emphasizes the ability of kinds to cross and mingle. Where paradigms of racial difference often privilege the purity and distinction of races from one another, holding mixture as a sin against nature, La Peyrère elevates crossing to a status of sacred importance. For while the Jews, in La Peyrère's account, are somewhat special in being the first to receive God's "election," the promise made to them through which they can become like God, this election is open to all. The Jews, though a special kind, are also a family whose membership is radically open. La Peyrère emphasizes that Jews have only temporal

precedence over the rest of creation: "If God have preferr'd the Jews in a mystical election; let the Gentiles have next place with him in the same election. But by no nearer title did the Jews cleave to God, than by this; that they were the first-born in this mystical election" (84; 2.5). La Peyrère re-inflects the traditional biblical language of fathers and sons away from its linear, exclusive dimensions by prioritizing adoption as the metaphysical means through which Gentiles can be included in the kinship of the Jews. Gentiles "were esteem'd the Sons of the Jews, not according to flesh and nature, but according to that adoption which is perfected by mystical nature... But because they come in by a second degree, by adoption, are onely call'd and esteem'd adoptive Sons" (84; 2.5). This mystical adoption is an "imitation of nature" (84; 2.5), though it is not in any sense lesser than nature; it truly makes, as far as La Peyrère is concerned, the Gentiles "sons of *Abraham*" (85; 2.5). For La Peyrère, the secondary, artificial, and supplementary is made equivalent to the primary and natural, sons by adoption and natural sons are alike sons of Abraham. Considering that the creation of the Jews is also "secondary" to man's original creation and, like adoption, not of a biological nature, re-creation is more important than creation in La Peyrère's system.

While the language of adoption is special to humanity, La Peyrère also draws on a natural language to describe this mystical process, grafting: "the Gentiles [are] different in their Original from the Jews, both by their adoption, and by their engrafting in the Jews: for adoption concerns strange families; and trees of several kindes are grafted in one another" (88; 2.6). Again, La Peyrère's thought is about the possibility of strange and familiar interchanging; Jews and Gentiles, though alien to one another, are at the same

time not so, they can be made into one stock through grafting. This arboreal vocabulary

points up not only the artifice in what is held as natural, the different kinds of trees, but

also serves to naturalize the mystical and intellectual process of conversion. It also draws

this mystical generative process closer to the primary material creation of humanity out

of the earth, another entangling of two kinds, earth and life. La Peyrère makes this

relation explicit when he cites John the Baptist's claim in Luke 3:8 that "*God out of these*

stones could raise up seed to Abraham" (La Peyrère 85; 2.5). God can make sons of

Abraham out of anything, La Peyrère argues, and his original miraculous ability to call up

men from earth signals his ability to make Gentiles Jews through adoption: "Who can call

men out of stones, and turn the stones themselves to be men: stones, I say, that are distant

from men in the whole scheme of animals: I say, God, that could doe these things, which

are without and beyond nature, could likewise adopt Children to *Abraham*, which is an

imitation of nature" (85; 2.5). Far less important than relation by descent is relation by

matter, the fact of having come from the unliving stuff shared by people and other living

beings. Kinship does not come from the lineage of the body but from having a body at

all, which implies that one is constitutively mixed. The original, miraculous generation

from stone to flesh makes plausible, in La Peyrère's mind, that anyone could transform

into the kin of another. This shared materiality is also, then, a shared generativity: that all

living things create and are created by what is different than themselves, a kinship in the

ability to transform the world and the inability to remain isolated or pure. In a historical

moment where Europeans were asserting the biological difference of the cultures with

whom they interacted as a means to justify conquest, enslavement, and innate superiority,

La Peyrère argues that natural differences are not so great or fixed when regarded in relation to humanity's material commonality.

For La Peyrère, world history translates to an irenic present-day politics. Almond describes La Peyrère as "a universalist who believed that ultimately all would be saved" (168). In his first published work, *Du Rappel des Juifs*, La Peyrère argues that the imminent return of the messiah will bring about universal peace as well as, most provocatively, the reconciliation of Christians and Jews. As Popkin argues, while there were many flavors of messianism in the seventeenth century that called for the conversion of the Jews, La Peyrère uniquely "put practically none of the onus on the Jews. It is Christians who are responsible for the failure of the Jews to convert because they fail to see the merits of the Jews, and they engage in anti-semitic practices" (*Isaac* 8). In order to encourage Jews to convert, Christians needed to cease anti-semitic practices and, incredibly, to alter their own theology and liturgy. La Peyrère called for a primitive, Pauline church that would, as Popkin narrates, "adhere to a minimal Christian belief that would at the same time be acceptable to Jews. Such a church, he envisaged, would have no doctrines, dogmas or creeds except for belief in Jesus and belief in the resurrection of the dead. This church would have no rational theology" (57-58). On a formal level, La Peyrère implicitly proposes a regrafting of Judiasm into Christianity through the grafting of Christianity onto a religious system that is Judaic if not outright theist. Once again, La Peyrère tries to find kinship among two disparate groups that alters both while drawing out their underlying similarities.

Through adopting a more welcoming stance to the Jews, Christians would cause

the Jews to gather in Europe and specifically France, where the King would lead the Jews back to Palestine, rebuild Jerusalem, and bring about a time of universal peace among nations (*Isaac* 54). La Peyrère invokes, as Popkin points out, a divinely-sanctioned nationalism akin to Protestant groups in England claiming special status as God's chosen nation (*Isaac* 60). However, unlike many varieties of messianism, La Peyrère's was virtually without violence, whether human or divine:

> His picture is devoid of the apocalyptic elements that pervade previous and contemporary Millenarianism and Messianism. No Anti-Christ is mentioned who has to be overcome. No great battles and wars are to be waged before the Millenium... La Peyrère also stressed that one has to distinguish carefully between the renewing of all things and the consummation of all things, thus distancing his picture from the finale in Revelation. (*Isaac* 67-68)

No doubt this rosy picture has its limits, particularly in which groups are included; no mention is made of the violence presumably involved in taking Palestine back from its current inhabitants, and one among the reasons La Peyrère gives for France being the home of the universal king is that it does not permit slavery: "*La France ne souffre point d'Esclaves, et que qui la touche, est libre*" (*Du Rappel* 135). While France did have laws forbidding slavery within the metropole, it also permitted its own large trade in slavery in the colonies (Stinchcombe 142). Nevertheless, it is a rather provocative universal vision in comparison to the various violent Protestant and Counter-Protestant images of apocalyptic world-conquest. For La Peyrère, accepting polygenesis as history ought to

lead to a cosmopolitan politics that at least attempts to peacefully embrace all groups. It attempts to envision some global solidarity based on a minimized religion and an attempt to be welcoming towards other beliefs. Like his recounting of the biblical beginning, La Peyrère was against attaching too much importance to a singular or privileged end. The Apocalypse is not the end of all time or the destruction of the infidels; it's a peaceful get-together and a rebuilding project. This vision speaks to what La Peyrère keeps returning to in his attempt to account for global diversity: the sheer facts of material existence and of generation, which are endlessly variable and yet common.

Lodwick

This section examines Francis Lodwick's later account of polygenesis as an example of how polygenesis was quickly used to support racist outlooks and buttress global industry in the seventeenth century. Lodwick's polygenetic ideas, though they borrow much from La Peyrère, are quite distinct: they insist that each earthly population is shaped indelibly by the region in which they originate. Lodwick thus reifies the physiological and cultural differences between people, explaining difference through pure and separate origins. Lodwick illustrates how these ideas can be transformed for the purposes of nascent scientific racism and global capitalism. At the same time, Lodwick's theories show how scientific racism, like La Peyrère's pre-adamism, is a reaction to the mixture and variety of humanity apparent in the seventeenth century's global milieu. Lodwick, elected to the Royal Society in 1681 and a member of Robert Hooke's

intellectual circle which discussed polygenetic ideas, serves as an exemplary locus of

how La Peyrère's ideas are translated (or perhaps just emerge differently, polygenetically,

somewhere else)— not only into English intellectual discourse, but into concerns with

science, trade, and human biological variation (Lodwick 8).

Lodwick wrote several manuscripts which held ideas of human origin quite

similar to La Peyrère: there were men before Adam, men were created in multiple places

across the planet, and men arose spontaneously out of the earth. Although he, like La

Peyrère, makes several attempts to justify his views through biblical exegesis, the aim of

Lodwick's speculations was not La Peyrère's new theology, but an explanation for human

physiological and linguistic difference in which, as William Poole notes, skin color

difference between blacks and whites is "fundamental" (11). Lodwick argues in his "A

Supposal of the Manner of Creation" that the humans who were produced in diverse

regions of the earth were "fitted to the climat in which they were produced," a diversity

which was evident in the "the figure[,] color[,] and language of natives in countries

diuers," like "the blaknes and curling of the hair of the Guineans" (255). The main

difference between the two versions of polygenesis is that Lodwick maintains that

different origins remain distinct in contemporary cultures, where La Peyrère had believed

that polygenesis opened an expansive human history in which no culture could be

considered native to its place. Given this isolation, the different origins can then explain

the specific character of each human group: Black Africans have dark skin because they

originated in a dark climate. Moreover, by attributing these characteristics to the primeval

origin of the alleged race, Lodwick suggests the impossibility of those characterists

changing. Where La Peyrère aims to find human similitude in an impressive diversity of

cultures and histories, Lodwick's aim is to hypostasize human differences.

Polygenesis allows Lodwick a way of denying the constitutive role of mixture and

migration in the formation of human groups. In another essay, "Concerning the Originall

of Mankind," Lodwick advances the argument that polygenesis must be true because

human societies can be found in diverse regions around the globe, including some whose

climate seems inhospitable to life, "som scorched with heat others frozen with could... yet

all more or lesse inhabited" (201). If humans originated only in one place, presumably the

pleasantly climatized region of Eden, "who," Lodwick poses, "can conceive that from a

Temperate country they would seeke a habitation into a frosen or scorching climate[?]"

(201). The crucial turn comes when Lodwick concedes that although in the present

moment, people are willing to migrate to any region of the world for the purposes of

trade, such commerce was in this primitive moment of human history "in its infancy" and

men looked for their needs "no further then what was nigh at hand" (201). A little later,

Lodwick reiterates the point in regards to language. Denying that there was any universal

language divided at Babel, Lodwick holds it impossible that the Irish, whose language he

believes is only spoke on that island, "litle versed in maritime affaires should leaue the

maine land to seeke an Iland for habitation," and did so "without leauing any track of

their Language in the countryes through which they must be supposed to passe" (201).

For Lodwick, trade can only be a modern activity that takes place after racial and

linguistic differences have been reified, not a cause which explains them. Variation

cannot result from mixture and fragmentation, it must be cordoned off within a natural

realm prior to them.

Lodwick knew his fair share of commerce and migration. Growing up within London's Dutch community to parents who spoke French and Flemish, Lodwick was the product of the late Renaissance's own waves of population movements and exiles in the wake of the Reformation (2). Lodwick was a merchant by trade who invested in the East India Company and helped back an attempt by the company to reopen trade with Japan (4-5). Lodwick was a devoted book collector, who owned books in languages as diverse as Japanese, Malay, and Syriac (18-19). Lodwick also worked extensively on the creation of a universal language, which Vivian Salmon has argued, in her editorial introduction to Lodwick's writings, was spurred in part by expansion of global trade requiring communication among merchants of different languages and between merchants and clients (18). We can see in Lodwick how race emerges in a moment of global capitalism as a means of naturalizing differences that seemed to be made less secure by the flux of trade and transportation. Lodwick's own life suggests that he was intensely aware of the power of migration and trade in human affairs. His theories, both of polygenesis and of language reform, are universalizing visions, offering a complete picture of human relations. However, Lodwick only wishes mobility, expansion, and communication to be a product of modern European relations, a universality created through capitalist and scientific endeavors. Confronted with a moment in which Europe was coming into contact with, vying with, and exploiting other cultures, Lodwick freezes La Peyrère's polygenesis into static groups in order to deny the shaping role of contact in transforming human groups.

Lodwick's ideas were taken up and repeated by other members of the Royal

Society, including Hans Sloane and Abraham Hill. As Cristina Malcolmson points out in

her extensive research into the development of racial thinking in the Royal Society,

members debated polygenetic theories as well as whether black Africans were "a distinct

race of men" (Malcolmson 75-86). While many members continued to believe

monogenetic theories that supported the biblical account, others continued to press for a

hard-wired biological difference between blacks and whites that could be rooted in blood

or biological inheritance. These accounts, like Lodwick's, tend to emphasize

physiological variation as indicative of deep, ancient, and natural difference. Hans Sloane

argued at one meeting that the "the Cuticular Diseases, and Ulcers of Negrows... argued

a Specifick Difference as to the Skin." Sloane also fixates on hair: Sloane "said that in

Jamaica he had seen a white Woman born of a Black Father and Mother with fair woolly

hair, whereas all Mullatoes being engendered of a Black and white have other hair, and he

conceived, that the woolly head was as much a Characteristick, as any other of the Negro

race of Mankind" (qtd. in Malcolmson 76). Similarly, the anonymous L.P. writes that "Tis

plain their colour and wool are innate, or seminal, from their first beginning, and seems to

be a specifick character which neither the sun, nor any curse from Cham could imprint

upon them" (qtd. in Malcolmson 89). Note the language of specificity, characteristic, and

distinction, which crowds out any notion of variation; marks here indicate firm and deep

difference. What's telling about these accounts is how much their own examples speak,

despite themselves, to the sheer amount of crossing and inter-relation at the time. Sloane

relates in his account of hair differences between blacks and whites that "in Jamaica he

had seen a white Woman born of a Black Father and Mother with fair woolly hair,

whereas all Mullatoes being engendered of a Black and white have other hair" which for

him implies that hair as much as skin color is a sign of innate difference (qtd. in

Malcolmson 76). L.P. echoes the cargo-like shipping of black bodies across the globe in

his claim that "a Negro will always be a Negro, carry him to Greenland, give him chalk,

feed and manage him never so many ways" (89). The most striking example is from

Sloan's records of his visit to Jamaica, where he notes in shocking detail the brutal

violence committed against slaves, with some horror but a lack of moral condemnation.

The burning, branding, mutilation, and whipping Sloane describes is in his mind "are

sometimes merited by the Blacks" because they are "a very perverse Generation of

People" (77). The quite literal, precise and technological, transformation of the black

human body by the slave owners into a slave, given the visible marks of violence that

signify his or her condition as chattel, is through Sloan's rhetoric projected into the black

body itself as its own "perverse Generation," its innate difference and degeneracy. This

horrific scene suggests how natural differences replace the violent and cultural mixtures

and transformations of peoples in this early moment of capitalism. It also shows the

tendency of racial thought to only be able to understand variation as degeneration or

perversion. This is the great difference between La Peyrère and these later accounts:

where La Peyrère naturalizes variation and change through his notions of polygenesis and

mystical grafting, these accounts naturalize static and hierarchical difference. Both,

though, react to a global moment in which it was apparent that humanity did not have a

single form or history.

<u>Boyle</u>

Robert Boyle, although a proponent of monogenesis, offers an account of natural variation that is in many ways similar to La Peyrère's thinking of proximity across different human cultures and histories. By looking at Boyle, I aim to show that monogenetic accounts, too, can open a space for human variation that is not seen as degeneration. I see Boyle differently than Cristina Malcolmson, who argues that Boyle's *Considerations Touching Colors* critiques polygenetic views of humanity. While on the surface Boyle asserts monogenesis, his account of human differences in many ways seems to draw on, or bear similarities to, what was considered vexing about polygenetic ideas in the seventeenth century (Malcolmson 93). In his views on slavery and non-European cultures, Boyle was, as Malcolmson notes, an interesting mixed bag. Boyle had universalizing aspirations, supporting British trade abroad in the hopes that it would gather knowledge for scientific benefit and help to spread Christianity. Boyle believed the goal of science was to restore "the Empire of Man over the little creatures" (qtd. in Malcolmson 15) the original Edenic state of man's rule over the animals. Malcolmson suggests that Boyle at times saw this scientific empire as congruent with political aspirations toward empire but at other times saw the two as contrasting, science and religion offering more peaceful means toward world unity than arms and subjection (15).

Where other theories of race, whether monogenetic or polygenetic, hold that physiological difference must be a marker of difference in kind, Boyle's theories open

considerable room for variation within a race or species. In this regard, Boyle's approach

to natural variation bears similarities to his chemical theories, which affirm mixture as

irreducible and ubiquitous (Schmidgen 41-52). Boyle begins his discussion of black skin

by pointing out that people would not find color difference in humans so surprising if

they attended to the variations in hue found in many animal species: for "some whole

races of other Animals besides Men, as / Foxes and Hares, are Distinguish'd by a

Blacknes not familiar to the Generality of the same Species" (Boyle 84). Humans and

animals are considered continuously, which allows Boyle to think about color difference

as taking place within one kind (Boyle uses "race" and "species" interchangeably) rather

than distinguishing kinds. Animality belongs in general to humanity, it is not the

particular provenance of a certain race within it. Boyle similarly recognizes a huge

amount of color variation within humans that cannot be reduced to a single binary divide:

within Europe, Danes and English are whiter than the Mediterranean nations; within

England, laboring classes become tan through their work outdoors (85). The people

whom "we are wont to call the *Negroes*," Boyle notes, are not a monolith but "many

nations" (84). While Boyle holds, like Lodwick and other racializing accounts, that skin

difference is caused by "seminal impressions," he is well aware that this difference is not

static, recounting how in the Americas mixtures between Indians and Blacks "generated a

distinct sort of men," and twins born to European and African parents might have one

dark-skinned and another light-skinned child (89).

Boyle strongly refutes the notion that natural variation need have any moral

meaning attached to it. Boyle denies the theological notion of the curse of Cham on the

grounds that it isn't evident that blackness is a curse. After all, as Boyle points out, many African cultures believe the devil is white. Nor does blackness have anything to do with beauty, since even among Europeans beauty is determined by stature, symmetry and "good features in the face" (160). Boyle holds out the possibility of meaningless and causeless nonce variation to occur that then sticks and is reproduced in subsequent generations (which is one of Darwin's basic tenets). Boyle relates how he once saw a crow that was completely white, whose owner affirmed that he found it in its nest with a sibling who was as black as a regular crow (90-92). Boyle hypothesizes that the same could well occur for humans: two white parents could have a black child or vice versa: "I see not why it should not be at least as possible, that White Parents may sometimes have Black Children, as that *African Negroes* should sometimes have lastingly White ones" (92). How far apart is Boyle's variation within humanity from La Peyrère's plural humanity? Both offer a way of thinking difference not attached to a moral schema, where differences are itself taken as what draws the diverse forms of life on earth together.

And yet, Boyle's desire to fit manifold variation within a monogenetic framework where humanity has one single origin limits his account of variation. Boyle has a habit of employing the adjective "peculiar" to describe variation. "Peculiar" was in the seventeenth century undergoing its metamorphosis from an older sense, closer to "particular," to a modern sense of "strange and unusual" (*OED*). Boyle's usage shifts between the two, and it's often difficult to tell which is which. When Boyle states that "the Principal Cause... of the Blackness of Negroes is some Peculiar and Seminal Impression," he may simply mean that this impression is distinct and individuated, as all

impressions are (89). And yet as Malcolmson points out, Boyle is committed to imagining that one color must be originary, the other an alteration from it: "a Race of *Negroes* might be begun, though none of the Sons of *Adam* for many Precedent Generations were of that Complexion" (92). Thus "peculiar" also seems to mean the perverse and unordinary. When Boyle lists the physiological features caused by "peculiar impressions" in non-European groups, his list is marked by a sense of distaste and judgment, most egregiously with the "Blobber-Lips and Flat-Noses" of sub-Saharan Africans. By way of comparison, Cavendish's usual word for distinctions within a kind is "particular," which lacks the sense of deviation Boyle's term has. Boyle's belief that all of humanity can be derived from a single originary couple is highly congruent with his desire for Christianity to be the world's one religion, as it is with his desire for total and complete knowledge of the world's human groups. Boyle's curiosity toward global variation sits in tension with his desire to fit this variation within a single schema centered on Europe. For such a belief, the particular must peculiar, not foundational.

Cavendish's Theory of Kinds

This chapter began with an interpretative question on a passage from Cavendish's *Observations* that has been taken as evidence for Cavendish's polygenetic belief and anticipation of scientific racism (the two being conflated). The broader context of seventeenth-century debates on polygenesis beginning with La Peyrère shows, however, that polygenesis could offer a way of questioning notions of human biological kind and

lineage. In the following sections, I argue that polygenesis in Cavendish is congruent with a larger natural philosophy in which commonality among living beings stems from a shared materiality and generativity. That generativity includes, for Cavendish, the act of fictional world-making, which, in *The Blazing World*, is described as a pleasurable response to and participation in a world of ongoing variety.

To what extent did Cavendish know of La Peyrère's polygenetic theory? There is no mention of La Peyrère in *The Blazing World*, nor in the places where she mentions the possibility of pre-Adamism in *Observations on Experimental Philosophy* (115; 1.27) or the *Philosophical Letters* (15; 1.3). Whether or not Cavendish had read La Peyrère directly, she likely knew of his work from the intellectual milieu she was part of. Like La Peyrère, Hobbes, and many others, she lived in Paris in the 1640s when polygenetic ideas were being discussed. The controversy over La Peyrère was, moreover, in the intellectual air of the Royal Society, as I have suggested through my treatment of Lodwick and Boyle. Cavendish's interest in the possibility of non-Adamic humanity, and her creation of alternative human kinds, owes something to La Peyrère even if Cavendish's polygenesis is quite different from his in detail and in purpose.

Like La Peyrère's theories of human history, Cavendish's natural philosophy insists on variety as principle. Cavendish's natural philosophy works through a tension between order and totality, elaborating an idea of universality that distances itself from firm divisions between kinds. This tension runs as follows: 1) Cavendish believes in an orderly and harmonious nature. All of nature is infinitely divisible and yet fits smoothly together as one. As Catherine Gallagher points out, Cavendish analogizes this oneness of

nature to the happy oneness of monotheism and monarchy. Everything in nature fits together into a unified whole for Cavendish. At the same time, 2) Cavendish holds that nature is infinite and infinitely various. There is no sense in saying *all* of nature, Cavendish argues in *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, for in nature there is always something else: "though but *one matter,* yet there is no such thing, as the *whole matter,* that is, as one should say, *All*" (1). "*All*" would imply a finite set capable of definition, whereas nature is that set of things that precludes definition. However, 3) if nature is infinitely various then it cannot also be orderly. All the extensive tabulations of different kinds made by Cavendish functioning smoothly in harmony must reach some sort of limit; nature cannot be more than "all" and yet "one." The play between variation and unity runs throughout all of Cavendish's thinking, an alternation between, on the one hand, a desire for some vast systematic unity underlying not just all of the physical world but also social relations and, on the other, a desire for repetition and variation to extend beyond any meaningful larger scheme that could contain them. Cavendish's philosophy might seem more or less in accord with that emerging version of natural philosophy that, in classifying the natural world into distinct genera, sought to reify and distance European man's position above the rest of humanity, and humanity's above the rest of life. However, her interest in variation cuts against that philosophy's insistence that its divisions and groupings add up to some meaningful difference between its various species and races. Cavendish takes the interest in making groups and classifications and shows that impulse can itself work against the claim that there is a natural order subtending social relations.

Every kind in Cavendish's system rearticulates within itself the paradoxical

category of nature. Cavendish's writings are replete with kinds: animal, vegetable, and

mineral life; within each, many subdivisions like the fantastic array of orange-, green-,

and animal-men in *The Blazing World*. Cavendish's insistence on nature being divisible

into forms is matched by her assertion that every kind contains within itself an infinity of

variations. The Empress of *Blazing World* proclaims that "nature was infinitely various in

her works, and that though the species of creatures did continue, yet their particulars were

subject to infinite changes" (33). And these species repeat, in different manners, across

the cosmos. Cavendish, like Bruno, advocates in her *Philosophical Letters* (among other

places) for the possibility of multiple worlds:

> There may have been worlds before [ours], as many are of the opinion that
>
> there have been men before *Adam,* and many amongst Divines do believe,
>
> that after the destruction of this World God will Create a new World again,
>
> as a new Heaven, and a new Earth; and if this be probable, or at least may
>
> be believed without any prejudice to the holy Scripture, why may it not be
>
> probably believed that there have been other worlds before this visible
>
> World? (15)

Given that nature is infinite and eternal, this world, with its finitude in space and time,

cannot have been the only. While the formal division of life into animal, vegetal, and

mineral kinds remains constant across different worlds, each world repeats these kinds in

new forms.[42] The same life repeats itself differently, somewhere else. In the end, nature is

only one kind for Cavendish, matter, a kind which is infinitely divisible: "There is but

one *kinde* of *matter,* yet there are *infinite degrees* of *matter,* as *thinner* and *thicker, softer*

and *harder, weightier,* and *lighter;* and as there is but one *matter,* so there is but *one motion,* yet there are *infinite degrees of motion*" (*Opinions* 1). For Cavendish, variation structures nature.

Nevertheless, one must ask whether this is a philosophical compromise that allows Cavendish to revel in the pleasure of variety while conserving the idea of classification that naturalizes hierarchies of race and species. But what Cavendish means by "kind" is something vastly different than an orderly array that can be fully distinguished and therefore ranked in comparison to others. Kind is not for Cavendish separable from the particular. In a marvelous chapter of *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* titled, appropriately enough, "Of Repeating One and the Same Work, and of Varieties," Cavendish puts severe pressure on the separation of kind and instance. At first, Cavendish suggests her usual idea that though there is variation on the level of the individual, kind seems to remain constant across nature. However, she quickly rejects this notion as merely seeming to be the case. In fact, "the several kinds may be as infinite as the particulars." If there can be multiple worlds, Cavendish reasons, then:

> Worlds may differ from other worlds, not only as Man from Man, but as Man from Beast, beast from birds, birds from fish, and so as vegetables do; for an oak is not like a tulip or rose, for trees are not like flowers, nor flowers like roots, nor roots like fruit, nor all flowers alike, nor all fruits alike, nor all trees, and the rest... so there may be infinite worlds, and infinite variety of worlds, and be all of that kind we call worlds, *yet be nothing alike, but as different as if it were of another kind*, and may be

infinite several kinds of creatures, as several sorts that we can never

imagine, nor guess at; for we can guess or imagine at nor other ways, but

what our senses brought in, or imaginations raised up. (*Opinions* 106-107)

Because of the fact that variation must always be possible, to have one world be of the

same kind as another world would be too limiting, an upper bound on what can change.

Worlds then can be so different as to be "as if" they were of another kind from one

another. Following this logic down the scale of the universe, Cavendish holds that the

same is true for the more mundane category of vegetables: it makes as much sense to say

that the oak and tulip are utterly different from one another as that they belong together.

Our whole sense of what can be in nature is based on what we can sense, here, though it

may be otherwise somewhere else; given that, even what is most proximate and familiar

to us could be so different as to be an alien planet that we have no way of recognizing.

"Kind" here marks the fact of repetition as "particular" marks the fact of differentiation,

but to think either implies some total organizing system would be an error. It would also

be misguided to think that these complicating moves are a rejection of scientific modes of

thought. Indeed, Cavendish amplifies the new science's epistemological wonder—its

drive to catalog all the differences and similarities of a world that in this globalizing

seventeenth century moment seems to expand beyond what has been known—to a point

where it breaks apart its own assumption of total order.

Let's return briefly to the concerns about race that began this inquiry into

Cavendish's natural philosophy, considering them now from the standpoint of the analysis

given of Cavendish's understanding of difference in nature. The question remains why

Cavendish takes skin color difference to be indicative of racial difference in the first place. Undoubtedly, such a division perniciously marks surface difference for deep difference, an association Cavendish repeats in her fiction when, in both the *Blazing World* and *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity*, people of different social ranks possess different skin colors. However, Cavendish's reflections on race and species are powerful for the pressure they put on the notion of "kind." While some versions of empirical science were using the idea of a classifiable nature to assert inherent differences between species and races, Cavendish suggests another, less coercive idea of kind-ness. In Cavendish, the observation and enumeration of difference and variation seems to exceed any larger order that would contain it. In doing so, it suggests that differences may not be attached to any inherent larger meaning at all. They may simply serve to indicate nothing but their own fact, that things are different from one another; what is called nature is this fact on the largest scale. Like La Peyrère, Cavendish finds variation to be what is common across nature. Both place humans on a continuum with other living beings, suggesting that the material world of change that holds us in common with animals and plants is also what we have in common with one another, not some genealogical inheritance. Where La Peyrère is mostly interested in history, Cavendish dwells on nature. Her polygenetic views bring out an aspect of modern science that is often forgotten in accounts of its invidious distinction: its desire to list, catalog, and detail the seeming infinite variety of a newly expanded world. That desire can but does not necessarily lead to a totalizing system that hierarchizes differences within and across species.

The Blazing World

Cavendish's fiction extends the attention to variety found in her natural philosophy. Indeed, they are twinned by the opening preface,"To the reader," of *The Blazing World*, where Cavendish states that she "joined them as two worlds at the ends of their poles" (6). The attentiveness to plurality in her natural philosophy is mirrored by the array of animal-men and colored-men of *The Blazing World*. Although some critics have seen Cavendish's fiction as self-gratifying withdrawal, it seems to me like a response to the pleasurable complexity Cavendish sees in actual living beings, the mind adding what might be to the never completely known compendium of what is.[43] For Cavendish, fictional world-making is an ethical response, based on pleasure, to a world that seems limitless in variety. She gestures toward a non-imperial politics offered by this fiction-making.

Although Cavendish does not raise the issue of polygenesis in *The Blazing World*, her account leaves open the possibility. To state the obvious, the Lady travels to another world inhabited by humans, which confirms at the least Cavendish believes in the possibility of multiple inhabited human worlds. Such a belief de-centers the biblical account of Eden as sole origin of humankind. Yet multiple worlds was a more palatable and widely held notion in the seventeenth century than polygenesis. The latter, more radical theory is suggested by the name of the capital city of the Blazing World, "Paradise" (12). Later in the narrative, the Lady asks the immaterial spirits "whither

Adam fled when he was driven out of the Paradise," to which the spirits reply "Out of

this world... you are now Empress of, into the world you came from" (57). Given that

there are other humans in the city of Paradise and its world who, evidently, did not flee

with Adam, Cavendish's narrative suggests pre- or co-Adamite humanities. The point is

re-enforced by making Paradise its own world and yet one of many; like La Peyrère,

Cavendish suggests Paradise is a particular beginning of humanity, not its only. Things

get trickier when one considers that this Paradise is in a world that Cavendish avows is

her own fantastic creation in the preface "To the reader," or that the world into which this

Adam flees is not our own, for the text distinguishes the lady's world (EFSI) from that of

the "Duchess of Newcastle" who later joins the lady as her scribe. Is this Eden or this

Adam even the beginning of Earth's humanity? Perhaps it matters that Cavendish

consistently names the capital Paradise, not Eden, for this cradle of humanity may be

distinct from the Mesopotamian Eden. The theological suggestions Cavendish makes by

conflating the Blazing World with Paradise underscore a larger point: there are multiple

humanities of myriad histories and forms in *The Blazing World*.

In any case, what is humanity in *The Blazing World*? Just as La Peyrère suggests

that genealogy isn't the sole factor by which to determine humanity, so Cavendish's

animal-men suggest that physiological form is not the only, or even most important,

criterion. Her bear-men, spider-men, and fly-men are not hybrids in the sense of mixing

human and animal physical characteristics. Other than the fact that each of these kinds of

men walk upright, they look exactly like their standard animal counterpart. The bear-men

the Lady first encounters are "in shape like bears, only they went upright as men," and

Cavendish specifically notes that they have "paws, that served them instead of hands" (9). Unlike the developing scientific notions of race, Cavendish asserts that physiology is not pertinent when considering who qualifies as human. Cavendish gives great importance in her physics to form; there being only one matter, form is all that determines kind, and form is always changing due to internal motions. Her fictional description of the human, or of humans, suggests that humanity is nothing but a form, that is to say, a posture, there being no specific physical quality that makes humans human.

Nevertheless, one could perceive in *The Blazing World* a strain of the desire to naturalize social order that runs throughout racial thinking. Echoing Lodwick's claim that each race of man has been bred into a climate for which it was suited, the various animal-men of the Blazing World each live in a different habitat ideally suited to their nature (9-10). Developing this logic of suitability in more nefarious ways, the Lady encourages each of the animal-men in Paradise to follow one specific "profession as was most proper for the nature of their species": the bird-men are astronomers, the parrot-men orators, and the giants architects (18). The Lady carries out what Boyle only dreams of: a restoration of an Edenic state in which knowledge could be pursued in an orderly manner and without restraint. To do so, however, each kind of human being must have a knowable task that is its unchangeable nature; their service to the Lady having been predetermined, nature grounds politics. The animal-men profess to the Lady their distaste for division and faction in society and their belief that as "it was natural for one body to have but one head," so too there could only be one unquestioned head of state (18). Like Hobbes at the

outset of *Leviathan*, Cavendish imagines nature on the order of an enormous and efficient machine, one whose frame is correspondent to social order (Hobbes 81). This is, at least, the reading of *The Blazing World* famously offered by Catherine Gallagher.

And yet: surely the first thing no one thinks of concerning Cavendish's romance is tidy order. For the fiction is a sprawling narrative crossing at least three worlds that never quite seems to end, or better, seems to keep going past its various logical endings. Whatever claims the text repeats about complete social integrity, the narrative dynamism suggests a restless wandering that never fits into a neat whole. Something similar can be said for the animal-men: what is most memorable about them is not the efficient division of their labor, but their variety and proliferation. Cavendish's description of the animal-men take the classifying impulse which belongs to science, the impulse that wishes to parcel out humanity into races and life into species, and abstracts from it a barer, less totalizing impulse: to enumerate. Cavendish seems content to list, add, qualify, and modify the various kinds of life, without ever reaching the harmonious totality of classification.

Take for example the Lady's initial introduction to the people of the Blazing World. After having been lost at sea and the crew of the ship kidnapping her having been pitilessly frozen to death, the lady is rescued by a group of the bear-men. In the space of a few pages, she is led from this outer place of maximum powerlessness to the capital where she is made Empress and sets about putting the Blazing World to work as her scientific laboratory. Yet this brisk narrative momentum is dilated and diverted by the repetitive description of the various sorts of humans on the planet whom the Lady meets

in turn. First bear-men, then fox-, then bird-. Three being enough to establish a pattern, Cavendish begins to vary the formula of animal-men, the next being satyrs, human-like beings that do exist in earthly mythology, and then grass-green men, distinguished by their color rather than animal-nature, although their placement in the sequence makes one wonder whether Cavendish did not want vegetal-men as well (9-10). Her list of animal-men is too long and too errant to be persuasive as a totalizing description of the orders of human being. Indeed, some of the beings mentioned in the list never appear elsewhere in the text save other such lists, serving no narrative purpose whatsoever. In Cavendish, the list and the narrative vie against one another as means of organization, the narrative the fictional equivalent of total order, everything coming together in one grand meaning, while the list, which continually prolongs the narrative, offers an open-ended and looser sense of relation.

This listing offers a different way of thinking through race and species that is proximate to polygenesis. Biblical monogenesis transforms the variety of human beings on earth into a narrative with a fixed beginning, a cause behind the confusion of peoples and tongues, and a fixed end. There must be meaning behind dispersal and difference. Transforming variation into narrative easily leads to ideological and moralizing ends, where color differences are exchanged for moral culpability. Versions of polygenesis like Lodwick's and those of nineteenth century scientific racism also confirm this impulse to narrate. Rather than one grand narrative, there are a series of micro-narratives, each distinct and knowable origin explaining the character of the people associated with it, and the narrative of one people in particular becoming the world-historical narrative of the

people fit to subject the others. Polygenesis in La Peyrère and Cavendish is arguably counter to this narrativizing. There are many beginnings, some of which can't be known, and a variety of human histories stretching back into the murky past, each differently. La Peyrère universalizes the state of not knowing one's own culture's beginning, of being scattered; Cavendish, similarly, suggests in her endless list-making a commonality in the sheer variety of life. Black and white are easily enough opposable and lend themselves into translation into a moral register; but once the kinds of human include, purple, azure, grass-green, amber, and so on, it is not so easy to give a moral sense to the motley array.

Although these lengthy lists can create the sense of a system into which Cavendish is just filling different variables, running through each possible animal or color combination with -men, each instance offers the chance for nonce variation. The bear-men have paws for hands—why this detail about hands, which is not pointed out for any other group? The same can be said for the delightful and singular moment where Cavendish, describing the geese-men, says they had feather-tails "trailing after them like a lady's garment" (10). This excess, the delight in the extraneous, is characteristic of Cavendish. She herself enjoyed wearing clothing that exceeded function, and was mocked by others for her outlandish garb (*Observations* xv). Cavendish's early poetry describes earrings as little microcosms:

> If foure *Atomes* a *World* can make, then see,
>
> What severall *Worlds* might in an *Eare-ring* bee
>
> …
>
> And if thus *small,* then *Ladies* well may weare

A *World* of *Worlds,* as *Pendents* in each *Eare"* (*Poems* 45)

The flair of the conceit comes from its substitution of the seemingly trivial ornament of the earring for the more typical and masculine vehicle of the microcosmic metaphor, Man. Those things that are typically opposed to nature and the natural body—artifice, fashion, decoration—are here made metaphors for nature itself, for the totality of the cosmos. The same occurs in the geese-men, whose "lady's garment[s]" are made part of their own bodies and forms. While fashion and ornament are seen, in the Christian notion of the worldly, as adulterations of the natural form and needs of the body, here Cavendish includes that mixture, complexity, and style within the body. To have a body is not to have natural or pure form but to have flair. That excess is apparent, too, in the sex of the geese-men, a sex that could not be read into any easy sort of binary of male/female, as the geese-men (all male? male and female?) have feathery decor like a lady's (the Empress's? Cavendish's?) garment. The feathers, trailing down off the body of the geese-men, symbolize the variety that is always just going outside the limits of form (of gender, nature, and kind) while yet remaining part of that form. Cavendish's nature inheres in this shifting nuance. Cavendish's animal-men and colored-men suggests a humanity that is both innumerably diverse and yet one, common in its variance, its natural extravagance.

When the Lady initially sees the bear-men trudging toward her on the ice, although she is "extremely stricken with fear," the initial adjective used to describe the men is "wonderful" (9). Wonder, which combines an intense observational stance alongside a bracketing of knowledge toward its object, is an emotion whose possibilities Cavendish explores for an ethics and politics. Certainly Cavendish draws this sense of

wonder from the travel discourses of the day, the shock of the new felt as Europeans flung themselves across the earth, but there is very little of the subsequent fear, anger, disgust, or pity which often follows in these accounts. She seems, rather, to an extreme degree interested in the ability of wonder to suspend and set aside such affects. This wonder characterizes Cavendish's own fiction-making, a responsiveness to the variety of people and living things being discovered through travel, commerce, and war that delights in suspending knowledge and appropriation. Midway through *The Blazing World* a moment arrives where the text recursively describes its own making: the Lady has summoned the Duchess to her world but wishes to give her a world of her own to rule. The two decide to set about imagining their own worlds of which they are rulers. In other words, Margaret Cavendish makes a fictional world in which she is taught to create a fictional world by her own fictive character. Cavendish insists on a discourse of pleasure to describe the Lady and the Duchess's world-making: the Duchess takes "delight and pleasure... in making this world of her own," and when she shows her freshly created universe to the Empress, she "is so ravished with the perception of it, that her soul desired to live in the Duchess's world" (75). The delight the women exhibit together is an ethics of pleasure that wonders at the world and creates in response. This universal generativity has no inherent relation to biological reproduction, as it takes place through writing and pleasure exchanged outside procreative sex, among women. If Cavendish is always talking about complete systems of nature, she seems to have less interest in finishing them than in continually revising and elaborating them. Part of the reason the two women begin making worlds at this point in the plot is that there is nothing left to do in the

Blazing World (and, seemingly, in *The Blazing World*), everything having been set into decent order. The two design any number of worlds, trying out the various physical theories of the day, then rejecting them as illogical or distasteful, before finally settling on a uniquely Cavendishian one, one which sounds much like the Blazing World (although Cavendish carefully distinguishes between the two). Rather than narrative conclusion or complete creation, Cavendish's fiction-making is ordered by this repetitive, additive building up and tearing down of worlds only lightly sketched out. This enjoyment of the world, and the correspondent capacity to create, is another form of the generativity Cavendish finds to be universal across nature. Just as, like I suggested in the introduction to the chapter, what all beings share for Cavendish is being created out of sex, so too all share a generativity that is apparent in fictional world-making.

This pleasurable attention to variety has, Cavendish suggests at times, political implications. When the Lady wishes to give the Duchess a world to rule, she first asks her immaterial spirits whether one might be conquered. They reply that it is possible, as there are infinite existing worlds, but that "conquerors seldom enjoy their conquests," hated by those they rule, stuck up in the seat of government, and unable to go out and actually enjoy the vast extension of what they have subdued (71-72). Indeed, they suggest that "the truth is, a sovereign monarch has the general trouble; but the subjects enjoy all the delights and pleasures in parts" (72). This delight in parts is not a bad name for Cavendish's wondrous list-making, akin to a traveler moving through a kingdom not having the totalizing, removed view of a sovereign. The spirits instead counsel the Duchess to create her own world "within the compass of the head or skull," an act, which

as Cavendish later points out, can be "more easily and suddenly effected" than "the conquests of the two famous monarchs of the world, Alexander and Caesar" (109). Moreover, she adds, she has caused fewer "dissolution of particulars, otherwise named deaths," than either of these world-conquerors and yet has had more "delight and glory" (109). World-making is related to, though diverts from, military conquest. Cavendish's making of her own world, in which she can be, as she puts it, "Margaret the First" (6), has an effect of multiplying history like La Peyrère's polygenesis, making multiple narrative paths down which anyone can have priority and centrality. For "it is in anyone's power to do the like" (6) to make a world of her own, which Cavendish invites her reader to do instead of trying to usurp her blazing one, to which she adds that she would happily "choose to create another world for another friend" (109). For Cavendish, the embrace of natural and human variety leads toward pacifist and democratic possibilities. In recognizing other worlds and other humans as not rigidly and threateningly distant, but as signs of the variety that is common to all, one is encouraged to set aside conquest for making up worlds that add to the general mixture.

Chapter Four

Milton and the Stars:
Consideration in *Paradise Lost*

After Raphael's long and patient explanation to Adam of the cosmic drama that
lead to his creation across books five through seven of *Paradise Lost*, Adam informs him
that "something yet of doubt remains" (VIII.13). Everything about the Genesis creation
story and the Christian narrative of the fallen angels has been told to him, everything that
should inform of his being and place in the grand scheme, yet something still does not sit
right with Adam. Looking at the stars and other heavenly bodies, Adam wonders how it
could be that the Earth is "served by more noble than herself," that is, why all of God's
creation would turn around "this earth a spot, a grain, / An atom" (17-18). Raphael's
response raises, tantalizingly for those interested in placing Milton's poem alongside
seventeenth-century scientific and philosophical developments, the possibility of an
infinite universe of multiple worlds, only to moot the question in its conclusion that
whether earth is center or not does not matter to the fact of God's glory.

Critics have long debated whether Raphael and Adam's conversation, and Milton's
poem as a whole, represents a Copernican or Ptolemaic cosmos. By determining which
world-picture Milton supports, it becomes possible to know whether Milton is a
theologian critiquing the new science or a modernist who supports the scientific
enterprise. John Leonard has recently in his *Faithful Labourers* traced the history of these
debates, for him the history of an error. The forward-looking implications of Milton's
cosmos—an infinite and de-centered universe—have been, in his account, since the
eighteenth century increasingly papered over by a critical dogmatism that insists on

Milton's orthodox Ptolemaic scheme (805). Leonard suggests that this dogmatism stems, in part, from the assumption that Milton's cosmos has the sort of coherence and consistency that could be reduced to a diagram. Indeed, as Leonard's account provides evidence, one of the curious symptoms of critical approaches to Milton's cosmos has been to draw it, as if the complex temporality and play of perspectives in the poem could be flattened into the neat lines of a two-dimensional sketch. Rather, as Leonard suggests, Milton had more than "just two astronomical systems... the Ptolemaic and the Copernican" from which to choose. Beyond heliocentrism, there were those like Bruno who raised the idea of a plurality of worlds and an infinite cosmos (761). The need to constrict Milton's choice to an either/or, modern or medieval, scientific or theological, outlook says more about the limited world-view of critics than it does of Milton. Indeed, Leonard's account suggests that the ambiguities of cosmology in the poem suggest a mind at work over the variety and complexity of cosmologies in the period.

Yet even Leonard seems to fall back into the sort of binarism his account calls into question. Milton's poem is decisively, in his account, a break from the Ptolemaic world-view toward a modern and scientific understanding. Somehow even though, as the beginning of Leonard's chapter asserts, "Milton's universe defies description" (705) we can know by the end of Leonard's account "the *true* universe of *Paradise Lost*" (819, my emphasis). This universe is in accord with the "real astronomers" studying the "real universe" (819), the modern scientific viewpoint that lies on the other side of Copernicus's discovery. In doing so, Leonard reasserts the binaristic history his account begins by troubling: before/after, superstitious/rational, closed-/open-minded. Leonard is

far from alone in this regard; a similar pattern informs several recent insightful and attentive accounts of Milton's cosmology. Catherine Gimelli Martin, for example, while calling into question the idea that theology and science were opposed in the seventeenth century, nevertheless is able to label Raphael's outlook "protoscientific" ("What If" 239). Angus Fletcher, who suggests that the mixture of different cosmologies in the poem "organizes a loosening of the universe," nevertheless firmly affixes Milton's cosmology to Galileo, the poem's "second author" (*Time* 133, 130).

Perhaps the difficulty critics have had in satisfactorily answering the question of which world-view *Paradise Lost* supports stems, in part, from it not being the question in which Raphael and Adam are interested. Raphael's long monologue to Adam does not address the issue of which model is correct, but of what significance either model has for human existence. Raphael's oft-quoted question, "What if the sun / Be centre to the world[?]" is in fact a rhetorical question (122). It could be more clearly phrased '*So* what?'. The answer to which is, as Raphael states, "whether heaven move or earth, / Imports not, if thou reckon right" (70-1). Raphael's concern is not physical fact but "import," that is, in what way the shape of the cosmos matters to human life. The critical focus on which model is correct is anachronistic. For the paradigm of correctness, which the poem might provide "evidence" for, is derived from a scientific outlook. The question which troubles Adam is one which is much more indebted to a medieval question, of what sense or meaning might be derived from the universe's shape. The question that critics have asked of the poem's cosmology is a modern outlook beholden to a scientific paradigm still in the process of formation in this period.

By framing Adam and Raphael's dialogue in terms of "import," I am suggesting that Milton's poem is interested in, to borrow the title of a book by Jean-Luc Nancy, the sense of the world. The conversation between Raphael and Adam addresses not the veracity of Copernican heliocentrism, but the Cartesian ontology underlying it. What that ontology presumes is a subject abstracted from the world, in that its existence and inner essence can be known prior to any knowledge of the world. Descartes, stripping away all the troubling illusions of sensation, can know the existence of the *cogito* prior to lending any credence to the world. In tandem with this abstracted subject emerges a mathematical world. Objects can be known for Descartes insofar as they are like geometric shapes: rigid, isolated, and prostrate before the observer. The "world" of these objects is that of a mathematical system of laws, what Nancy, drawing on Heidegger, calls the world as world-view and world-picture *(*Nancy *Creation* 43; Heidegger "Age" 128-9*)*. The world-picture, for Nancy, abstracts the subject from the world, making the world merely something she stands over or against (as its manager or conqueror), but not something she can stand in (40).

Raphael's reply to Adam responds not to the results of astronomical inquiry—he emphatically does not reject heliocentrism or an infinite cosmos—but to the mathematical ontology that developed alongside it. Raphael jabs at those who can only conceive the world in terms of a picture as scribblers who are missing the point:

Hereafter, when they come to model heaven

And calculate the stars, how they will wield

The mighty frame, how build, unbuild, contrive

> To save appearances, how gird the sphere
>
> With centric and eccentric scribbl'd o'er. (79-83)

All of Raphael's language points to this mathematicization of the world: "model," "calculate," "frame," "build," and "gird." Even if, as Leonard and Martin argue, the phrase about saving appearances is mocking scholastics and their Ptolemaic cosmos, the overall target is the conception of the world as model, whichever model that may be (Leonard 705-7; Martin "What if" 243). In responding to this mathematical ontology, Milton aims to conserve an element of the medieval world-picture, the element of a sense of the world, figured in phrases like "the book of God" and "the chain of being." Milton insists on retaining the notion that the sense of human existence—its purpose, meaning, form—lies outside itself, written in the world. He insists on it, even though and at the same time, he insists that this meaning is now remote and unknowable. Now that the shape of the cosmos is uncertain, it is no longer as easy to claim its shape reflects back natural order and symmetry to humans. Milton's revision of this idea of a sense of the world, I will argue, lays out a world in which things remain remote and yet in relation to one another. Milton's ontology is like Nancy's in that it is concerned with what takes place at the limits of the subject, those parts of herself where she is outside herself and among others. For Nancy, the world is not a system of discrete objects but a complex force, a play at and on the limits of things, holding them exposed and yet apart:

> A world is a space in which a certain tonality resonates... that tonality is
>
> nothing other than the totality of resonances that the elements, the
>
> moments, and the places of this world echo, modulate, and modalize.

(*Creation* 42)

In Milton, this resonance takes place between humans and the stars, which hold out the promise of a sense to the world while also keeping it remote. Like Adam, drawn toward the stars whose sense he cannot quite know, the human orientation toward this world is one of *con-sideration*, being with what remains alien and distinct, or as Raphael puts it in a line I will quote more than once, "dwell[ing] not in [one's] own" (103).

Others have traced in Milton's ontology direct historical and political resonances. For John Rogers, Milton's self-organizing matter closely corresponds to liberalism and democratic possibility. Eric Song, in a more dialectical vein, finds the interplay of chaos and creation translates into Milton's belief in the necessity of empire but also, paradoxically, the necessity of resistance to it. These accounts demonstrate that the ontological question of how order is made and unmade cannot be separated from political considerations of power and identity. Milton himself would not deny this, as he explicitly crosses theological and ontological registers with political ones: God in *Paradise Lost* is said to have an "empire" and Chaos to be an "anarch." Milton's thinking of worldhood, as well, brings together questions of how the cosmos came to be and hangs together with questions of how nations are created and changed, as both are referred to as "worlds" in the poem. In asking what a world is, Milton is asking not only a question of meaning but of history and of power, a question which anticipates the modern era when the West will try to spread its world-picture as an imperial world-project across the globe. This chapter is more oblique than these critical accounts in tying Milton's ontology to his politics. I argue that consideration is universal in Milton's sense of worldhood, in that nothing has a

position that is absolutely or knowably defined. Consideration is also a mode of relation among beings within Milton's universe, an attunement toward what remains remote and distinct. *Paradise Lost* is filled with worlds that are proximate yet alien to one another— our own world and the pre-lapsarian one of Milton's narrative, humanity and the angels who visit them, the hell the fallen angels occupy and the heaven toward which they look back. In the final section of the chapter, I look at how consideration also occupies a place in the politico-historical narrative of the final books. There, I argue that consideration, in the sense of questioning and remaining uncertain are what, for Milton, open the possibility of freedom and the new creation of states. Consideration, then, in Milton is a mode in which a common world of beings relate to one another, continually problematizing and modifying one another.

As I note in my introduction, an old-fashioned but still highly influential way of periodizing the Renaissance is to see it as a threshold between two understandings of the subject and the world. On the one side, the medieval great chain of being with the human embedded in its intricate networks of correspondence and degree. On the other, the modern mathematical understanding of the natural world and the abstracted subject capable of making sense of it. Between the two, a rupture that throws into question the stable order of the medieval cosmos, stemming from the major discoveries of the era: the New World, the Galilean telescope, the Protestant nation-state, the circulation of blood. So much Milton criticism still is, as I suggest above, interested in placing Milton on one side or another of this divide. But Raphael's speech suggests that there is more than one way in which the Renaissance responds to the challenge posed to the old model by the

events of the period. Not all of these lead toward a Cartesian objective sense of the world, nor do all simply discard, to borrow C. S. Lewis's term, the medieval image.

To understand Raphael's response to Adam, one has to understand that the stars were in the "medieval image" the foremost symbol of cosmic correspondence. Raphael's speech draws on a medieval theological paradigm in which the created world is "as the book of God before thee set," an orderly totality in which everything is a symbol revealing God's providence. Human life is interwoven in the larger fabric of the universe and can through contemplation of the created realm better understand its own meaning and station. Tillyard calls "typical" of the medieval thinking of correspondence "the habit of acting in accordance with the position of the planets" (6). Cassirer argues that in the Renaissance the heavenly bodies are held as the most clear and legible examples of "the immanent law of the cosmos" (101). Cassirer points out how for Renaissance astrologers the stars become "not only the signs of the divine will" but "its genuine and indispensable intermediaries" (104), the symbols and executives of a lawful, orderly universe. Adam's question to Raphael is predicated on this assumption that human destiny and form ought to be found in the stars. Asking how earth could be "served by more noble than herself" (34), served by the brighter sun and stars, he translates cosmological relations into the moral and political register of nobility. To have the lesser serve the greater would be to make "nature wise and frugal... commit / Such disproportions" (26-27), to violate the correlative order of the universe.

Milton senses that modern astronomy raises questions about the old ontology. The great deep, to use one of Milton's favored words to describe space, in which the stars lie,

and which was being studied by Galileo and others, makes it impossible to know exactly

what form the universe has. And if the form of the universe is uncertain, then how can it

reflect the natural order of things which man ought to study and imitate? Indeed, how

could humanity know if it was at the center or periphery, or if there was any such thing as

a center or periphery? When Raphael and Satan, both, glimpse on their journeys to Earth

the stars which look like they might be other created worlds, they raise the possibility of

such a possibility. Raphael sees that Earth is "not uncomform to other shining globes,"

that is, that the stars he glimpses seem similar to an inhabitable planet (V.259). Similarly,

as Satan weaves his way through the cosmos he takes note of the bodies of light that

appear "stars distant, but nigh hand seemed other worlds" (III.567). In these passages, the

sort of doubt which initially stirs Adam's question to Raphael about the shape of the

cosmos becomes more apparent. As I suggest in my introduction, the notion of an infinite

universe of multiple worlds is provocative in seventeenth-century thought for the

difficulty it raises for traditional theology. For Christian theology after Paul, Adam's fall

and Christ's resurrection are the fundamental events of the entire created world. However,

as William Empson points out in "Donne the space man," if there are other worlds of

beings that are not descended from Adam and have never even heard of Christ, then it

would remove the centrality of humanity's fall and redemption from the cosmos. If the

stars appear to Satan as "like those Hesperian gardens famed of old" (III.568), then

perhaps, as John Leonard suggests, they "might have their own gardeners free to stand or

fall," and so "extraterrestrials need not be punished for Adam's sin and Christ need not

die on other worlds to redeem a Fall that did not occur there" (764). However, the doubt

which the depths of space arouses elicit a variety of responses in the seventeenth century, many of which do not assume the flattened objective worldhood of Descartes and Newton. The response Empson finds in Donne is one of these, for Empson believes the early Donne thought the Incarnation was repeated infinitely, on every planet and even in every lover—a plural and relativized divinity. Empson's ontology is not without the sacred, but one where the sacred is not the sole possession of a central authority, where the sacred permeates the cosmos.

Like what Empson finds in Donne, a transformation of the medieval ontological paradigm takes place in Raphael's speech that does not reject that paradigm entirely. While Raphael assumes that the world is an array of symbols revealing divine harmony, he interprets both the traditional Ptolemaic and the new Copernican cosmologies through this paradigm. If the earth is center, then it is acceptable that greater lights serve the lesser because "great / Or bright infers not excellence" (90-91), while if there is no center, then it speaks to God's plenitude which fills nature with other suns and other worlds (144-58). Moreover, Raphael's ability to defend both models depends on a startling reinvention of the idea of natural symbols. The stars are symbols in Raphael's speech that, paradoxically, reveal nothing more than the remoteness of God's design from human understanding. While Raphael speaks of God as a "great architect" (72) and repeats that God has designed the cosmos entirely, it is important to remember that this sense remains remote:

> God to remove his ways from human sense,
>
> Placed heaven from earth so far, that earthly sight,
>
> If it presume, might err in things too high,

And no advantage gain. (119-122)

The distance of stars from the earth is here not a quantitative but a qualitative distance, the withdrawal of God's "ways," his design, from sensuous appearance to the human observer. The world does not offer up its sense to the human observer, things are always at a remove from the meanings humans would make of them. If "earthly sight" presumes a divine perspective, the sort of perspective of a divine creator looking down at his work from above, it will "err." There is no abstract perspective available to humanity from which to grasp the sense of creation, no position from which to escape the looming state of non-knowledge signaled by the stars.

And yet God's removal of his ways from human sense is not a total removal; he withdraws not into the pitch-black of night but into the dim light of the stars. While the stars signal the remoteness of God's ways from human sense, they are also a sign left by him of his being:

> ...if [humans] list to try
>
> Conjecture, he his fabric of the heavens
>
> Hath left to their disputes, perhaps to move
>
> His laughter at their quaint opinions wide. (75-78)

The stars remain in heaven to incite curiosity. While here Raphael mocks those who claim mastery over God's designs, this curiosity is not necessarily negative. For, as Martin points out, Raphael encourages Adam's curiosity, beginning his speech by telling him, "to ask or search I blame thee not, for heaven / Is as the book of God before thee set, / Wherein to read his wondrous works" (66-68; Martin 239). The stars offer a sign of the

cosmos as God's creation, a meaningful totality that is gathered together harmoniously as one. As a book or work gathers its disparate elements, so too the world is bound up into a whole. For the whole, totality, the time when God will be "all in all" is what Milton persistently associates with the divine promise given to humanity (III.341). The stars are a sign of this promise of unity and meaning to creation. Yet even as the stars mark this promise of meaning, they also suggest that God's design remains, for the time being at least, unknowable. They are part of the "fabric of the heavens," God's design, and yet they are designed to throw off the scientists and theologians who try to comprehend them. They are the element in the design that marks the design as withheld.

This withholding is what arouses human consideration in the first place; because the stars are remote, humans wish to read them. Adam, like the foolish scribblers Raphael foresees, is spurred to consider intention and design in creation through the sight which marks that message as occluded. This sustaining of consideration is why Milton's poem does not resolve whether the stars are or are not other worlds. When Raphael, with the benefits of angelic sight, looks at the stars on his descent to earth, what he sees is not an answer to this cosmic question, but the dim light which holds open possibility:

> As when by night the glass
>
> Of Galileo, less assured, observes
>
> Imagined lands and regions in the moon:
>
> Or pilot from amidst the Cyclades
>
> Delos or Samos first appearing kens
>
> A cloudy spot. (V.261-66)

The comparison of the "less assured" observational powers of Galileo to Raphael is not necessarily derogatory; after all, juxtaposing human science to angelic sight is hardly an insult. Human science, like Galileo's telescope, is limited in what it can know, and not just by the technical fallibility of the telescope. It is unable, even if its sight were as sharp as Raphael's, to discern the divine pattern, the underlying order, governing the whole. Thus the comparison of Galileo to Raphael actually has the effect of elevating Galileo's project: it is not that his vision is worse for being less assured, but even that being entirely certain, like Raphael's, it would be unable to make out divine intent. What can be glimpsed in all three visions (Raphael's, Galileo's, and the Cycladean pilot's), though not as the direct object of their perception, is possibility, the remainder of meaning which stays remote. Like the pilot for whom the island first appears a "cloudy spot," this vision makes out possibility where apparent order remains withdrawn. The pilot does not see anything about the island he glimpses, not even that it is an island; it is only a spot. All the pilot glimpses is that there is something there which he must take heed of. The spot calls his attention. So too, the stars do not disclose whether the cosmos is Ptolemaic or Copernican, whether humanity is alone or among many; they simply beckon for attention. The stars, then, are less of a sign than a signal or a beacon. They summon in humanity a sense of consideration; in doing so, they summon it toward the heavens and the search for meaning and harmony. At the same time, though, the beacon is a warning sign, telling humanity that this meaning will remain remote. Lara Dodds ties this uncertainty to subjective possibilities for action: "These other worlds are not simply the environment through which Satan travels, but a potential space for Satan's action.... In this moment the

reader catches a brief glimpse of possibilities foreclosed by the narrative of the poem"

(167). Teskey ties this welling up of possibilities to a mental version of chaos that makes

creation possible, in the moment of "indecisive subjectivity" or "mental blankness" just

prior to decision, when "hallucinations appear and the mind cleanses itself" (85). By not

investigating whether the stars are worlds, Satan and Raphael (and by extension, Milton)

leave them open as possibilities.

The ambiguous signaling of the stars resembles the calling that Heidegger, in

"Language," believes poetry to do outside any sort of representation or expressive

meaning. Calling someone or something, notes Heidegger, brings them into both

presence and absence. Things called are "present in the call... [y]et they in no way fall

among the things present here and now" (196). A call, in order to be a call, must also

keep what it summons at a distance. If a call succeeds in bringing what it calls here

before me now, then it is no longer a call. All calls are, to some extent (though Heidegger

does not quite make this point outright), distress calls, both summonings and wardings. It

is never fully possible to determine whether that flashing light in the distance is a hail or

a warning. This structure of the call, which allows for presence-in-absence, is

fundamental to how Heidegger understands worldhood. For Heidegger, for the world to

world, its various elements must be brought into relation with one another and yet kept

apart, allowed to be themselves. Elsewhere Heidegger speaks of worlding as an

"expropriative appropriation" ("The Thing" 178) like a "mirror-play" or "round dance"

(179), that, drawing things out of themselves, simultaneously allows them to be

themselves. In *Paradise Lost*, the stars function like such a call or signal, holding humans

off from possessing any sense of the world at the same time that they summon humans to it. This is where Milton differs from the medieval notion of the natural symbol that he draws in. For while in the traditional notion of the great chain of being, the stars reflect back the natural order of things to humanity, in *Paradise Lost*, the sense given back seems to lack any definite form. It is a chain that draws out and an echo that calls forward, without fixing in place any certain sense of what human purpose is. Humans are bound to a world that makes them strange to themselves.

While it might seem anachronistic to compare Milton and Heidegger, Milton's stars, in whom the sense of the world does not vanish but becomes more secretive and withdrawn from human apprehension, draws on a larger development in the Renaissance where natural symbols become less clear and precise signs of divine providence than active and fluid. The love for enigmas, curiosities, and paradox in the period suggest a symbolic order where the content of symbols is less important than their form and force. Cassirer suggests the possibility of this development when he discusses how the Renaissance "clothe[s] the content" of astrology "in a *new* form" (102). Even as the belief in readily discernible influence of the planets on human life fades, the form of astrology, and its premise of a meaningful universe is nevertheless kept. Cassirer traces the importance of this new form of astrology in individuals whose contribution we now recognize to modern science: Paracelsus, Ficino, Pico, and Kepler. For Cassirer, this reworking of symbolic worldhood is merely an intermediary step on the way toward the rational subject who comprehends models as cognitive creations abstracted from nature. The artistic symbol prefigures and cedes its intellectual importance to the mathematical

object.

Yet perhaps the path is not so straight. Cassirer cites a passage in Giordano Bruno as "the characteristic symbol of this whole intellectual movement" toward empiricism. According to Cassirer, in this moment Bruno claims the old constellations "must be toppled and replaced" by the "principle of conscious and consciousness" (121-22). But Bruno expresses even this overthrowing as a symbol, a desire to place a zodiac within himself:

> Let us put in order the heaven that intellectually lies within us... and then that visible heaven that presents itself bodily to your eyes. Let us remove from the heaven of our mind the bear of roughness, the arrow of envy, the foal of levity, etc. (qtd. in Cassirer 122)

While the heaven within might be read as a metaphor for the Kantian moral law, as Cassirer clearly thinks, it also locates an exteriority within. Placed in an abyss, the content of the symbol no longer presents itself, and yet it remains as a force, a call towards greater understanding. This forceful symbol, guarding its meaning and drawing humans toward contemplation, resonates with Milton's distant stars. Milton is often placed historically at the the threshold between the Renaissance and modernity. Rather than seeing him as transitional, I am arguing that Milton's stars exemplify how the Renaissance offers alternatives toward Cartesian versions of modernity and its worldhood. While the objects in Cartesian worldhood are flat and fixed, Milton's stars vibrate, signal, and draw. Cartesian worldhood performs a violence toward its objects, pinning them down and tearing them from sense, fixing them in fully knowable and

calculable forms. For Milton this is the height of human pride. If the stars are any example, knowledge begins in Milton by being drawn toward the symbols whose meaning is allowed to remain remote, to be a force for continued consideration.

The Creation of Space

Adam and Raphael's conversation concerns not just the significance of the stars but also the "deep," the great depth of space, in which they lie. Leonard notes how many of the spatial terms in *Paradise Lost* move between two senses—the "deep" as ocean and as abyss, "heaven" as sky and as God's kingdom, and "world" as both Earth and the entirety of the cosmos (711-12). Among these terms is "space" itself, for Leonard repeats the claim of the *Oxford English Dictionary* that Milton is among the first to use the word in its modern sense. When the narrator proclaims that "Space may produce new worlds," Leonard reads the word as equivalent to the Lucretium *spatium*, the infinite empty void that allows atoms to join into forms and dissolve (712-14). For Leonard, the term also looks forward to the "modern" ontology of Descartes in which space is geometrical, a neutral container in which objects are located precisely. Again, though, as I have argued for Milton's cosmos more generally, the sense of space in the poem, while certainly differing from the medieval Aristotelian sense, is not equivalent to a Cartesian plane. The line itself does not so easily yield to a modern ontological sensibility; for, if space is neutral, how could it produce?

The shift between the two world-systems I have discussed also entails a shift in

the sense of space. As Andrew Mattison notes, the dominant historical narrative about location in the period is that the Renaissance shifts from a paradigm of place to one of space (5). According to a cosmological model going back to Aristotle, each element that makes up the cosmos has a specific place in it to which it is drawn—earth, being heaviest, to the center, with water, fire, and air above it. Spenser repeats essentially the same idea in his description of Concord in *The Faerie Queene*, where Concord keeps the different elements "bound with inuiolable bands" to their proper place lest "the waters ouerflow the lands, / And fire deuoure the ayre" (IV.x.35.4-6). But the importance of place is challenged by Copernican heliocentrism, which raises the idea of an infinite universe in which place can only be relative. Instead, space, which had previously only been a boundary between one object and the next, becomes the all-encompassing void in which objects move. This de-centering of space is often coupled, in our modern understanding, with the Cartesian mathematical sense of space as a neutral void in which velocity and location can be precisely measured. Mattison's reading challenges the applicability of this spatial paradigm to *Paradise Lost*, where he argues that a classical sense of place reasserts itself and "disrupts" the moral thrust of the poem (5). My own focus will not be to retrieve a classical sense of place, as Mattison does, but to suggest that the poem offers a decisively different sense of space, not as a placid container, but as a creative force.

Nancy argues that Western metaphysics has been mistaken in conceiving space as something external to the bodies which dwell in it, an empty and homogeneous void. Rather, to be in space is to be ecstatically, held outside oneself and in relation to others,

not secluded in an impenetrable interiority. Space is held open by a rift, a dividing line which throws things into relation with one another at the same time as it keeps them in tense distinction. In his discussion of painting in *The Ground of the Image*, Nancy argues that paintings possess a *trait*—a distinguishing mark and a dividing line—that sets them apart from the everyday world and the same time that it holds them out in relation (2). Space is made for the image through this rift. This spatiality is not only peculiar to paintings, but is what makes a world in general, holding things apart (and therefore together). Heidegger, for example, will speak of the "dimension" between earth and sky as what opens the world humans dwell in ("Poetically" 218). In *Paradise Lost*, the stars act like this trait, coming between earth and heaven (God's heaven, not the visible one), opening the human as something both alien to and bound up with the sense of the world.

    Paradise Lost is straightforward about space not being a passive emptiness. God offers the following ontological declaration of the nature of space: "Boundless the deep, because I am who fill / Infinitude, nor vacuous the space" (7.168-69). Although space is infinite or "boundless," it is not "vacuous" because it is charged with God's being, the infinite "I am." These lines look forward to Michael's promise of a "paradise within" (XII.587), a line which implies that, as Jonathan Goldberg puts it, "God is everywhere and distance makes no difference" (*Seeds* 193), an immanent philosophy that befits the notion of a centerless universe, recalling Bruno and anticipating Spinoza. Yet Milton's immanentism is a complex one; for God immediately qualifies his statement of plenitude:

        Boundless the deep, because I am who fill

        Infinitude, nor vacuous the space

(Though I uncircumscribed myself retire,

And put not forth my goodness, which is free

To act or not): necessity and chance

Approach not me, and what I will is fate. (VII.168-73)[44]

Gordon Teskey has recently argued that these lines represent the originary event of the Miltonic universe, a moment which precedes even creation. God, Teskey argues, withdraws himself from the boundless deep of infinite space, leaving chaos as the residuum of his body: "For Milton... the first thing that ever happened was that God, a substance extending to infinity, threw a part of himself out of himself by contracting, or withdrawing into one place" (87). Martin would perhaps disagree with Teskey only in that she sees God retiring not to one place but to none. Setting Milton alongside Pascal as a **"theologian of infinite space,"** she argues these lines describes a new universe in which God is nowhere and thus in the very lack of predetermined place given to beings in this cosmos: "the God of *Paradise Lost* ultimately represents a zero-function... a vanishing point everywhere and nowhere in the universe" (68). Milton's God is at once a "mysterious unity... yet is also its cancellation, the mysteriously absent placeholder of a temporal creation external both to his eternity and infinity" (68). God marks the absence of absolute grounds for belief or action. Martin's reading of Milton's void is persuasive, but does not necessarily imply Milton's alignment with empirical science in the way she assumes it does. What space could science make for an emptiness that is not empty but charged with God?

If Martin's reading is correct, then space is not a vacuum but a rift and a span. For

this moment is not only the origin of chaos but of space: God's retirement of himself opens space as a division and a distance. This withdrawal cannot be a withdrawal from one place into another (as it precedes space), but rather must be a withdrawal "from" space itself. Distance here is a distance between being as pure being—the sort of being that God has, the infinite I am—and the being of existing things, the being of appearance and emergence. Created things have a being that is constitutively between—between the being of God that is infinite and everywhere—and their own alienated, finite being. They are like Adam, who is made in God's image and yet must await the time when God is all in all, lodged for the moment in small partition before the remoteness of the stars.

Space, then, is not a passive void; it is a complex force, a tension of holding open and holding apart. This tension is bound up with the act of creation, producing new worlds, making space for things, letting them come into being. The first description of God's creation in the poem, in the opening proem, associates the abyss of space with the production of things, when the Spirit "Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss / And mad'st it pregnant" (21-22). The spirit broods on the abyss, allows its nothingness to grow, to deepen, to become pregnant with meaning. The pregnant abyss suggests that space, the withdrawal of God's purely present being, makes possible creation. The depiction of space here draws attention away from God as the omnipotent creator and focuses it on a creation that seems to arise out of itself. For in the place of the masculine, sovereign command of God's "Let there be light!", we find something not so easily gendered, a maternal brooding that at the same time impregnates. If this strange coupling is echoed anywhere else in the poem, it is in the pair of Chaos and Night, matter and

space, that precede and make possible creation. These two appear more directly when the moment of creation is retold later in the poem:

> His brooding wings the spirit of God outspread
>
> And vital virtue infused, and vital warmth
>
> Throughout the fluid mass, but downward purged
>
> The black tartareous cold infernal dregs
>
> Adverse to life. (VII.235-39)

As Teskey points out, this toxic stuff is the "heterodoxical, virulent remainder" of chaos that resists and cannot be contained within God's creation (40). The expurgation of chaos echoes, too, the initial withdrawal of God that made space. The emptiness that originally made creation possible—God's withdrawal from being—returns within creation as a chaotic element. The void of space in the poem is not a passive medium but that which makes creation possible, an intensive and extensive force.

While I have so far described space as a rift in *Paradise Lost* in terms of an ontological distance between created being and divine being, this spanning also holds between created things. Objects do not "occupy" space but are held out in space, held with and against other objects. In the lines immediately following God's banishment of the chaotic dregs from creation, the void of space is described as holding together the elements of creation:

> … then founded, then conglobed
>
> Like things to like, the rest to several place
>
> Disparted and between spun out the air,

And earth self-balanced on her center hung. (239-242)

While in the classical cosmology on which Milton draws, air is one of the four elements, in these lines air is described as being between the elements of creation. I propose that "air" here must mean void, for all "things" have been joined together. Air, which is no thing, is what is between things, holding together the disparate elements of creation like a web. Emptiness takes the place of a substance, a thread, as the sticky stuff holding other elements together. While similar matters are joined together—forming fire, water, and the other elements—in order to keep this conglomerating process from continuing endlessly until the universe is an infinitely dense heap, there must be a span of space holding apart things so that they can be distinct. This allows the earth to be "hung" in the midst of vast emptiness, held together by the force of this spacing. What divides holds, as the verb Milton selects, "dispart," suggests, which can mean either to "to part asunder, to cleave," or "to divide into parts or shares, to distribute" (*OED*). The verb's original use in English comes from Spenser, who uses it to describe Moses' parting of the Red Sea—"That bloud-red billowes like a walled front / On either side disparted with his rod" (I.x.53.3-4) — a violent cleaving of the elements of water and earth that simultaneously creates the beginning of the Israelites as a people of God. Like the ghostly filaments of the air, threading between the other elements and allows the world hang together, space is not only resistant to creation but its possibility and guiding force.

Much as space is bound to the theme of divine creation, it also is what makes possible sin and rebellion. For if, as I've argued, space from divine being opens the possibility of creation, then that space can also be the space taken from and against God.

Indeed, Danielle St. Hilaire links space in an ontological sense similar to what I have been discussing with a specifically satanic mode of creation. Hilaire associates divine creation with truth and knowledge, such that all God's creation ought to be legible as his creation, belonging most properly to him (94-95). Taking up Satan's assertion that "we know no time when we were not as now" (V.859), St. Hilaire argues that Satan makes the epistemological point that it is impossible to know the moment of one's creation and, consequently, one's creator. In such a knowledge that he cannot absolutely know his beginning, and by extension, his end, in such a knowledge of non-knowledge, Satan must work to define himself, and thus opens a wedge in God's claim to be all-creator. Left in doubt, Satan must to some degree invent himself, stand on the abyss of his own inability to know. He is, as St. Hilaire argues, thus philosophically if not literally correct in claiming he and the other angels are "self-begot, self-raised / by our own quick'ning power" (*PL* V.860-61; St. Hilaire 89-96). St. Hilaire then suggests that the epistemological "space" of Satanic doubt is at the same time the space that opens new creation:

> Satanic language... is also, by virtue of its estrangement from the pure positivity of divine language, intensely creative, opening up possibilities of thought within the negative space it generates. "Space may produce new worlds," Satan offers to his following as a shred of hope, and indeed space already has done so, for when Satan recreated himself negatively the universe made a new room for the fallen, expanding God's creation from one "world"—Heaven—to two. (106, quoting *PL* I.650)

Precisely because Satan is not certain of his place, he must create, and does, through

rebelling, questioning, and persuading. These acts are not simply destructive, for they in

fact cause Hell to come into being as well as the fallen world approached at the poem's

end.

As persuasive as St. Hilaire is in her reading of how Satan creates, she is less so in

strictly separating divine from satanic creation. For St. Hilaire, God and Satan are

antagonists, the heroically individualist Satan carving out a space for himself against the

suffocating omnipresence of divine truth. But is it so clearly one or the other? What if

Milton's poem did not oppose Satan to God so much as, like Empson suggests, usher in

through Satan a different understanding of the divine? The entanglement of God and

Satan can be seen in the role which even God admits Satan in creation:

> But lest his heart exalt him in the harm
>
> Already done, to have dispeopled heaven
>
> My damage fondly deemed, I can repair
>
> That detriment, if such it be to lose
>
> Self-lost, and in a moment will create
>
> Another world. (VII.150-55)

Here it is not the antagonism between two modes of creation, Satan's making of Hell

squaring off against God's formation of Earth, but antagonism that creates. God forms the

world in response to Satan's rebellion. God seems to admit, grudgingly, that Satan's

actions have had consequence and are a "detriment" to his plan. He claims to be able to

spin this loss to his advantage, being able "good out of evil to create," but in so doing he

implies that evil plays a crucial role in creation, that his good emerges out of evil (V.188). Perhaps God believes that, according to the economic schema of the *felix culpa*, evil is only a temporary detour on the path to good's full and final manifestation. But if it is true that, as the angels attest, that "every star [is] perhaps a world / Of destined habitation," then perhaps this strife is fundamental, the rift that streaks the universe being what founds and opens it, a present absence signaled by the stellar constellations (VII.621-22).

To circle back to the textual crux over *Paradise Lost*'s spatial terms that began this section, it is now possible to see this rift, too, in and between the senses of these terms: "deep," "world," "heaven," and "space." The sense of space in *Paradise Lost*'s stellar passages oscillates between two senses: quantitative measure and an ontological sense. Similarly, Adam is initially daunted by the "magnitudes" of the cosmos which seem to dwarf the Earth, but Raphael, in his speech, argues there is a gap between quantitative magnitude and qualitative "magnificence": "And for the heaven's wide circuit, let it speak / The maker's high magnificence" (17, 100-101). While "high" might suggest a hierarchy, Raphael goes on to qualify this subjective space further, arguing that God left "his line stretched out so far" in order "That man may know he dwells not in his own; An edifice too large for him to fill" (102-104). Here, distance and magnitude are neither qualitative measurement nor moral superiority but the "distance" of humanity from knowing or dwelling in the divine unity. This distance is itself what opens humanity's dwelling; its element is this spaciousness.

Paradise Lost can be read as a long meditation on space, but space in it is never the mathematical sense of a neutral container. The poem's space spans, holding objects at

their limits out toward one another. In the first section of this chapter, I discussed how

Miltonic objects are symbols that seem to act, withdrawing meaning while holding it out.

Space, then, is not so much the emptiness between these objects as that very activity that

thrusts them into relation with one another. Space is also dynamic in the sense that it

opens the possibility of creation, whether for God or Satan. Space makes space for and

allows for new activity, keeping things from becoming set and fixed in their nature.

Space, for Milton, offers a way of thinking about distinction in relation, of a world that

holds together while also holding things apart.

Dwelling

In Raphael's speech, the remoteness of divine sense from human life, symbolized

by the stars, is also connected to Adam's orientation toward Eden as a community of

human and other life-forms. The stars make the pre-lapsarian world appear for the first

time as a world, as that which concerns humanity. As Dodds points out, the trajectory of

the speech moves from the cosmic to the intimate, from the shape of the universe to a

concern for the self. The remote distance of the stars lights up, through contrast, what is

near and intimate. The stars shine a light on a world whose meaning, purpose, and design

cannot be known entirely, in any case not known imperiously, proclaimed loudly, or

claimed for one's own cause, but rather a world where because meaning is remote, one

must attune oneself to it, be careful and attentive to meaning, remain curious and open.

The stars summon humanity into a world, a world over which they cannot proclaim

absolute dominion or knowledge, but which they tend. Raphael argues that God "his line

stretched out so far" so "that man may know he dwells not in his own, / An edifice too

large for him to fill" (102-104). But the implication seems to be not just that the distance

of the stars shows man he dwells "not in his own" but that he dwells at all. He is not

contained in himself or master over the world; he exists essentially in such-and-such a

place, "lodged in a small partition" (105). He is insofar as he is in a world, out among

other beings and involved with them. Humanity's being is, as Heidegger argues, dwelling:

being-near, being-in-the-world.

Raphael's injunction to "Think only what concerns thee and thy being" tells Adam

that his being is concern toward the world and the beings in it, the animals and plants and

rocks and Eve. These other beings must be conceived of as a gift: "Joy thou / In what he

gives to thee, this Paradise / And thy fair Eve" (171-172). Undoubtedly, these lines

support the anthropocentric and patriarchal assumptions of the poem, where Eve and the

garden belong to Adam. But Raphael's injunction is also intended to remind Adam that

neither Eve nor Paradise belong entirely to him. Gifts, to remain gifts, cannot be totally

possessed by those to whom they are given. And there is always the possibility that the

gift turns out to be a curse—indeed at a certain point gifts have to be cursed in that they

don't give themselves over entirely. The gift of the garden is also the ever-increasing

labor demanded of the two humans, which leads to their splitting up on the day of the

Fall, and Eve's "place" in Eden and in relation to Adam is a vexed one, his supplement

and his lack, as James Stone among others points out. If Eden and Eve are gifts, this does

not entirely make them possessions, nor does it mean that Adam's relation to them is a

simple one. Like the stars, these gifts are near and yet remote, their sense at hand demanding attention and yet staying remote. The stars are the rift in which the world first appears: holding meaning out at a distance, they open a space for the world. Because harmony and design remain remote (or undetermined), they must be tended for, looked after. Meaning and unity must be striven for and sought after, guarded and protected.

To call Eden distinct from the other worlds of the poem suggests that a world, as Nancy describes it, is not merely a collection of objects but a "totality of meaning" (41). A world could be a town, a culture, or a poem, wherever there is a multiplicity held together in meaningful relations. Take an example from Heidegger's well-known discussion of the Greek temple in "Origin of the Work of Art," the temple opens a world in the sense that it gathers around itself humans, secludes within itself a deity, and rears itself upon the earth. Each of these become themselves only through being gathered together—the earth, for example, doesn't appear as earth until it is set off against the built temple. If something is, like a temple, it is itself in virtue of its manifold relations with the other things around it. This ecstatic nature of being also makes worldhood not an object like a picture but a gathering force, more like a tension—Heidegger says that "the *world worlds*" ("Origin" 43). Thus, for example, even as the temple brings the earth into its world, the earth resists that tug, asserting itself as what is by definition remote from the world. In *Paradise Lost*, Eden is referred to as a "world," as is the historical world which Adam and Eve face as they exit the poem. So too, the heavens to which the angels belong is a world comparable to Eden. Karen Edwards adds to this, as well, the pagan world which enters into the poem through its metaphors and Milton's historical present,

which surfaces in the proems and narrative parabases (497). One way to understand *Paradise Lost* is as a poem whose world emerges in trying to hold together each of its distinct worlds, bringing forth the truth of each even through its echoes and similitudes in other worlds while still maintaining those worlds as distinct. This is, in all its complexity, Milton's ambitious aim in writing the epic of creation: to bring forth God working in all things at once, differently.

And yet this entire conception of worldhood as gathering and community in *Paradise Lost* can only be known retrospectively, as the paradise that is lost. This is foreshadowed by the stars, for if the stars open up the world as dwelling place, they also cut man off from ever dwelling fully or entirely. Though humanity dwells, it dwells *not* in its own. Though the stars signal the divine promise of purpose, they also appear in place of any positive declaration of what that purpose is. The stars, in opening the world of the human, also prevent its total realization, prevent, for now, any reconciliation of divine purpose with human existence. The stars' gift—the world—is also its curse—being alienated from the world. This paradox is what makes Milton so compelling, for it implies that humanity's attunement and concern is fundamentally bound up with its status as out-of-place, alien, worldless—basically, fallen. If humanity exists in a world at all, has any attunement toward the other people and beings around it, then it is also out of place, as are the things for which it cares. The orientation toward the world Adam and Eve feel as they leave the Garden, when "the world was all before them" (646), is never entirely lost in subsequent human history. Humanity's being in a world, meaningfully approached by that world that remains before them, is fundamentally tied to its being a

stranger in that world. Whatever world humans live in is not one whose meaning they define, and they are among others they do not choose, in a situation not of our their creation. And yet humans do dwell, make a home out of this homelessness, find their possibility in the state of not having access to the design of creation. If Adam and Eve's course through such a world is to take "wandering steps and slow" (648), then it is because the divine course remains uncertain, leaving them to find their own path, which can never be as certain and involves careful consideration. Cartesian versions of modernity make humans placeless in order to grant them the status of mastery and abstraction over the world; humans dwelling or being situated in and among others does not matter. In Milton, on the other hand, humans are constitutively out-of-place, and yet this is also, at the same time, their place and dwelling. This means for Milton humans are not entirely masters over the world but must remain, like Adam and Eve, attendant toward a world that remains before them, strange and vast.

Political Openings

Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* established a critical paradigm for relating early modern ontology to its political practices. For Burckhardt, the period is one of the "discovery of the world and of man," as one of his sections is titled, a moment where the world first becomes approachable rationally as an objective system, signaled by developments in astronomy and other sciences. Among these discoveries is "the state as a work of art" as another section puts it; human social

organization becomes conceived as an abstract and technically designed entity comparable to other human technical productions. Politics is on its way to becoming a science. This conception of statehood differs from a medieval conception in which regal authority is part of the fabric of the universe, a reflection of God's rule over the world. Politics extends from nature rather than being a human artifact placed on top of it. This association of an orientation-toward-the-world with issues of politics and power has continued to be powerful in early modern criticism, providing the means for many of the critiques of science in the period. Of course, others have questioned the narrative paradigm split I outline here: Feisal Mohamed has demonstrated that Milton's heavily theologized understanding of the state complicates the narrative of the poet and the period leading toward secularism (1-7). My own aim in this section will be to show how *Paradise Lost*'s ontology leads to a politics that, while distinctively modern, is not based on the paradigm of technical production that motivates Burckhardt. Rather for Milton human authority still bears a relation to divine authority, but also to its remoteness.

Paradise Lost refers to human societies as "worlds." After Michael relates to Adam the story of Noah and the Flood, he tells him, "Thus thou hast seen one world begin and end, / and man as from a second stock proceed" (XII.6-7). In a poem which expends so much energy thinking through the divine creation of the world and other worlds, Milton's choice of terms is not an accident. By referring to human culture as a "world," Milton parallels the divine act with the human ability to found a society. Teskey argues that the Christian Patriarchs understood creation on the model of politics: "In creating the world, God is less like the maker of a shoe, an artisan, than he is like the

founder of a city... God *decides* this world will be rather than not be" (101). While Teskey believes Milton misunderstands the theological point, the parallel use of "world" suggests otherwise. This usage of "world" suggests that Milton mirrors divine creation and the human creation of society. World-making is not a technical act imposed on nature, human or otherwise, but a way of making sense, a particular kind of relational totality. It divides, in book eleven, Eden from the "lower world" of fallen life (283), and in book twelve between the world of giants and angels walking among men before the flood to the more recognizably human era after. In suggesting that human cultures are worlds, Milton indicates that the process of making meaning, wresting sense out of existence, is integral to the growth and change of human social life.

The paradigmatic act of human creation is the Fall, the choice to eat the Fruit which expels Adam and Eve from the Garden, God's creation, and leaves them to carve out a world for themselves. Then, in books eleven and twelve, a series of subsequent creative acts occur in the foundation of different societies over the course of history, from Noah to Moses and Abraham and onwards. The sinful event which begins history haunts the subsequent foundations of states. The growth of societies is also their decay; the righteous order which they began in pursuit of remains permanently withheld, as sinful nature always leads to a decay of social order. In *Dominion Undeserved*, Eric Song offers a dialectical account of the biblical history contained in *Paradise Lost* that draws on this play between creation and the fall. Song sees the complexities of divine creation as replaying themselves within this historical dialectic. Examining Michael's pronouncement on Nimrod that "tyranny must be, / Though to the tyrant thereby no

excuse" (XII.95-96), Song argues:

> The single word "must" conveys an unhappy truth about the fallen world, in which liberty and peace necessarily succumb to conquest and usurpations of power... Yet far from being merely a pitfall to be avoided or even a fitting punishment for wicked nations, undeserved dominion must be because it advances history. Before Nimrod, only familial and tribal rule had been established. (12)

Liberty and tyranny exist in an unstable relation, where not only is tyranny an ineradicable presence in history due to man's fallen nature, but it even advances history forward, propelling social organization. For Song, this political dynamic is an extension of Milton's view of creation, where the chaotic matter necessary to divine making returns within that creation as contingency and mutability. In the case of Babel, as Song points out, that chaos manifests in the material out of which the Tower is constructed, the bitumen that wells out of a "black... gurge" in the earth that seems the very "mouth of hell," and is combined with brick to build the Tower (XII.41-42). This unnatural stuff that allows the Tower to come into being also, for Song, presages its fall, and so also the fall of the empire into a multiplicity of tongues and nations (80). The creation of empire sows the seed of liberty that empire's inevitable decline will bring forth.

Song's comparison of Nimrod, the founder of Babel, to God as creator opens itself to the rejoinder that Nimrod, unlike God, is a tyrant. Nimrod's form of political creation is meant as a contrast in the text to other creators, like Noah, Abraham, and Moses. Nimrod's form of world-making corresponds not to the God who withdraws from his creation to let it be, but the image of God as sovereign-producer. Nimrod's form of

creation is the sovereign-producer in its political form of the tyrant, the one who holds

himself in absolute power over his state. Now, the construction of Babel carefully echoes

Adam and Raphael's star discussion in book eight. Just as God laughs,

uncharacteristically, at the astronomers' and other speculators' scribbles, so too "great

laughter was in heaven" after the splitting of the tongues at Babel (59). Nimrod, like the

astronomical knowledge-makers in book seven, aims for a deific perspective over the

world, building up toward the sky rather than gazing at the stars. Nimrod does create a

world: like the Greek temple Heidegger describes in "Origin of the Work of Art," the

Tower gathers men around it and causes a new culture to spring forth. But Nimrod's is a

particular form of worldhood—the world as world-picture, as a represented object

separate from its lofty creator. This version of worldhood is much closer to the

technological statecraft that Burckhardt describes. For Milton, the state as work of art is

an idol.

It's also important to note that Nimrod is not just a human ruler who tries to usurp

the position of God, but also a ruler who claims his sovereignty from God, who deigns to

say that his acts are sealed by God. Milton suggests this by saying that Nimrod is called a

hunter before the Lord either because he acts "in despite of heaven, / Or from heaven

claiming second sovereignty" (34-35). Even though Milton believes that a just ruler

ought to follow the inspiration of God, to claim the authority to act in God's name he

rejects. Even as he critiques technological statecraft as idolatrous, Milton also

complicates the medieval notion of the king as God's double.

The forms of world-making carried out by the other Old Testament patriarchs in

Michael's history offer a revision of this medieval model. Nimrod and the others are not entirely opposed; Song rightly says that Babel bears a dialectical relation to the rest of the biblical history. For Nimrod, according to Milton, derives his name from "rebellion," and this resistant, asocial element to world-making, which Song identifies with chaos, will carry over to the patriarchs (36). Just as Nimrod echoes the astronomers who attempt to bring the world into objective knowledge, so too the patriarchs echo Adam's dwelling in a world that remains alien.

The world-making of Abraham, Moses, and the other figures of book twelve is not quite the foundation of a state, as Teskey suggests creation is modeled on. The building up of walls, laying claim to property and dominion over others is more associated with tyrants like Nimrod than these personages. Rather, their world-making is a moment just prior to the creation of state, a moment of rebellion or of exile. Moses frees his people and wanders in the desert, but never himself steps foot in the promised land. This creation, too, is associated with visions and disembodied voices, a sense of being-called toward the making of a world that is never quite realized—and this is what political world-making, for Milton, has in common with the stars, which beckon humans toward a sense that remains outstanding. Abraham's moment of world-making begins when "him God the most high vouchsafes / To call by vision from his father's house, / His kindred and false gods" (120-22). This being-called is a moment of loss and withdrawal, of setting-out in resistance to the world that is, its social organizations and religion. If Abraham will eventually become the patriarch of the Jewish people, far more of Milton's description is spent on his time wandering in search of where he can set down and dwell.

And unlike Nimrod, who claims sovereignty from God, whatever divine direction Abraham receives is obscure; "he straight obeys" God's call "not knowing to what land, yet firm believes" (126-27). Like the stars which send an opaque message that human knowledge is insufficient, God's call to Abraham is nearly without content, pulling him out of place from his world without setting him firmly down in any other, making him dwell not in his own.

The reason why creation rests in this moment prior to the state itself has to do with man's fallen nature. Michael informs Adam that, due to his sin, freedom will never actually be possible in political life:

> Since thy original lapse, true liberty
>
> Is lost, which with right reason dwells
>
> Twinned, and from her hath no dividual being:
>
> Reason in man obscured, or not obeyed,
>
> Immediately inordinate desires
>
> And upstart passions catch the government
>
> From reason, and to servitude reduce
>
> Man till then free. (83-90)

Here the inner subjection of human reason to sin mirrors and causes the external decay of political freedom, until "God in judgment just / Subjects him from without to violent lords" (92-93). Given this state of affairs, in this world liberty must always remain at something of a distance, pursued through rebellion or glimpsed in visions and calls. This is not entirely cynical: much as Derrida argues for his concept of "democracy-to-come,"

this implies a need for constant vigilance over the ways liberty will be threatened or invoked for nefarious purposes. It also implies that for Milton political creation is not statecraft, but rather bears an important tie to the stateless: exiles, nomads, and rebels. Political authority operates for Milton much like epistemological authority does in the stellar passage: withheld by God from man, it sets man into an uneasy freedom: "man over men / He made not lord; such title to himself / Reserving, human left from human free" (69-71). God's authority exists in the withdrawal of authority from men. Freedom is sustained precisely in this absence of definite authority (which isn't the same as simple anarchy; it means that no authority can claim full or definite right for its own rule). Earlier I asserted that Milton's space is a torsion, holding objects out of themselves and in relation to one another. When these objects are individuals and those bonds political, Milton's thinking of space translates into a complex sense of freedom. Freedom for Milton exists through spacing: between God's authority and human authority, between Adamic freedom and fallen freedom, and between one human authority and another. Thus freedom is for Milton not the power of an individual, but what arises because power is not centered in a single person or site. Freedom also seems to bear a close relation to the consideration toward the world that I discussed earlier in relation to the stars. Because freedom can never be fully possessed by fallen man, it can only exist through continuing to listen and trying to discern the voice of divine guidance, a voice which can always turn out to be satanic.

Paradise Lost offers an original thinking of ontology, worldhood, and space. Milton is not primarily interested in questions of cosmology, the size and shape of the

universe, but in the sense of the world. Milton's ontology is not the same as the Cartesian

empiricism that would prove so influentia l, nor is it a conservative return to a medieval

world-view. Rather, Milton is fascinated by a feature of medieval worldhood—the notion

that humans might "read" their own meaning out beyond themselves, among the stars.

The stars looked on by Raphael and Adam are not mere objects for study; they hold a

meaning for humans. Yet at the same time they hold this meaning back—asserting

nothing but raising consideration, calling humans toward a sense that remains remote. For

Milton, this consideration is a fundamental part of the universe, the space that holds

things apart and toward one another. Consideration is a mode of relation in a common

world, a way of creating that arises out of the lack of definite position of beings toward

one another. The notion of consideration is at work each time differently in his thinking

of creation, whether divine, satanic, or human. It forms, too, part of his political thought,

where human freedom is made possible by the withdrawal of divine authority. Milton's

worldhood points toward the fact that there are multiple versions of modernity at work in

the Renaissance, not all of which fall under the rubric of empiricism. This worldhood

does not presume a subject abstracted from a world which is brought before her and

pinned down for her contemplation. Milton's version does not decisively break from the

medieval ontology in which being is extended outside itself in the great cosmic chain, but

rather he radicalizes that ontology. For sense to be extended in Milton, it must remain

remote and therefore cannot be read, comprehended, or diagrammed in some hierarchy,

its purpose and nature remaining remote. Milton's version of worldhood still holds out

something that needs to be thought through further in the present moment of

globalization, a willingness to find distinction in relation for those with whom we must

share a world.

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1   "Diesl Media Center," Diesl, accessed 27 October 2013, http://www.diesl.in/images/globe-ad.jpg.

2   Geffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems and Other Devices* (1586); Gerard Mercator's *Atlas Sive Cosmographicae Meditationes* (1596).

3   See Eric Hayot's similar point in *On Literary Worlds* (31).

4   See also Jacques Derrida's argument in "Globalization, Peace, and Cosmopolitanism" that the world is both indissolubly connected to its Christian heritage and yet also able to distance itself from, turn against, and re-invent that heritage. In *Death of a Discipline*, Gayatri Spivak distinguishes between the technologically determinable paradigm of the globe and an aporetic notion of shared alterity she calls "planetarity" (72).

5   Franco Moretti, "World-Systems Analysis, Evolutionary Theory, *Weltlitteratur*"; Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary Theory*; David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*; Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time*; Daniel Vitkus, "The New Globalism: Transcultural Commerce, Global Systems Theory, and Spenser's Mammon"; Barbara Sebek, "Global Traffic: An Introduction"; and Jyotsna Singh, "Introduction: The Global Renaissance."

6   A notable exception is Roland Greene's outlining of "immanentist" and "ambassadorial" ideas of multiple worlds in his essay "A Primer of Spenser's Worldmaking" (9).

7   Other important treatments of the development of a modern sense of space in literary works of the period include Tom Conley, *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France,* Bernhard Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland*, and John Archer, "Islam and Tamburlaine's World-Picture."

8   See, among others, Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park's *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150-1750,* Mary Baine Campbell's *Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe*, and Keith Thomas's *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and*

Seventeenth-Century England.

9   See Nancy's prefatory "Note on the Untranslatable *Mondialisation*" (27-28) as well as François

Raffoul and David Pettigrew's introduction to their English translation (1).

10 See in particular the preface to Bersani's *Homos*:

> If homosexuality is a privileged vehicle for homo-ness, the latter designates a mode
>
> of connectedness to the world that it would be absurd to reduce to reduce to sexual
>
> preference. An anticommunal mode of connectedness we might all share, or a new
>
> way of coming together: that, and not assimilation into already constituted
>
> communities, should be the goal of any adventure in bringing out, and celebrating,
>
> the "homo" in all of us. (10)

11 Take, for instance, the coincidence in seventeenth century England of rigid Puritanism with some of

the more radical religious communities of free love whose reinterpretations of New Testament

doctrines concerning the flesh are discussed by Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*,

306-323.

12 Why God would want diversity in the first place is a vexing question for scholastic thought, and

Aquinas answers it circularly by saying that it is because God wishes to communicate his goodness

to his creatures. Ficino, citing Pseudo-Dionysius, makes the bold suggestion in his comments on the

Symposium that Love precedes God and forces him to multiply: "Out of this love of propagation, all

things are created by him. Therefore our Dionysius says, 'Divine Love did not permit the King of

all things to remain in Himself without issue'" (III.ii, 64). But the most insightful answer, or non-

answer, comes from Cusanus, who admits that it is impossible to understand why God would create.

See *On Learned Ignorance*, II, 2: "Who, then, can understand created being by conjoining, in

created being, the absolute necessity from which it derives and the contingency without which it

does not exist?" In that case, the world is the name for the aporia between unity and diversity.

13 See also Carl Schmitt's argument in *Nomos of the Earth* that the European discovery of the Americas is the decisive event in the shift from a medieval Christian to a modern nation-state sense of worldhood (86-100).

14 Foucault's account in *The Order of Things* is particularly rich on the shift from a medieval and Renaissance "prose of the world," where chains of resemblance (which are another way of referring to allegorical correspondence) make up the framework of the cosmos, to an Enlightenment conception of linguistic representation where signs are detached from the objective world they represent (17-24, 50-57).

15 Foucault describes the shift between these senses of the world and their relation to modes of governance in *Security (*236-38*).* For Foucault, mercantilism is "a technique and calculation for strengthening the power of competing European states through the development of commerce and the new vigor given to commercial relations. Mercantilism... identifies commerce as the essential instrument and fundamental weapon in this intra-European competition that must take place in the form of equilibrium" (337-8). Mercantilism occupies a divided place in Foucault's narrative about the arts of governance. On the one hand, it is the "first threshold of rationality in this art of government" in that it conceives political governance as no longer continuous with the governance of other parts of the cosmos (102). It is thus connected with other modern governmental techniques like population management and the police (337-38, 69). On the other hand, mercantilism is "blocked" because it is still attached to the notion of the sovereign (102). I am less interested in delineating precisely when mercantilism begins and ends than in examining it as this divided site between religion and economics.

16 See also Carl Schmitt's account in *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, where the early modern period marks the beginning of the world conceived as a territory divided and balanced among states (86-138).

17 Alison Brown's study of *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence* supports my reading in

its suggestion that Lucretius afforded alternative models for understanding the new cultures Europeans were coming into contact with, both in Africa and America. See particularly the discussion of Lucretian ideas of natural law and their relevance to travel in the period (27-41), and the discussion of Vespucci (89-90).

18 The claim that the Americas were never mentioned in the Bible could also be mobilized to support arguments that the Indians were simply non-human and lacking in soul, as Juan de Sépulveda suggests in his debates with Bartolomé de Las Casas (Livingstone 20). Others, like Jean de Léry, react against Vespucci's claim through dubious suggestions that American peoples were descended from one of the Mosaic lines and had been visited by St. Thomas (Léry 134-151). Léry grants the Indians human status by reclaiming them within a Christian schema, but also places them in a degenerate and infantile position within that taxonomy, "a people accursed and abandoned by God" (150).

19 See, for example, how Pavel outlines the quality of incompleteness, which belongs to all fictional worlds, by contrasting "late medieval allegory" and "Baroque and Mannerist poetry" that foreground their incompleteness with the "vast realist constructions" like Balzac and Zola that conceal it (108).

20 Acrasia is bound at the end of book II when Guyon and the Palmer destroy her home, the Bower of Bliss, and take her lover Verdant from her:

> They tooke them both, & both them strongly bound
>
> In captiue bandes, which there they readie found:
>
> But her in chains of adamant he tyde;
>
> For nothing else might keepe her safe and sound. (xii.82.4-7)

Concord's "inviolable bands" echoes Acrasia's and Verdant's "captiue bands" and the claim in this passage to make Acrasia "safe and sound" brings out the violence implicit in Concord's harmonious

governance.

21 Boethius in book II, song 8 of *The Consolation of Philosophy* describes a binding cosmic chain that stands for God's sovereign love which holds all things together.

22 Other important works on Spenserian allegory besides the few from which I quote in the following sentences include Gordon Teskey, *Allegory and Violence*; Jon A. Quitslund, *Spenser's Supreme Fiction: Platonic Natural Philosophy and* The Faerie Queene; Christopher Burlinson, *Allegory, Space and the Material World in the Writings of Edmund Spenser*; Maureen Quilligan, *Milton's Spenser: The Politics of Reading*; Theresa M. Krier, *Gazing on Secret Sights: Spenser, Classical Imitation, and the Decorums of Vision*; Harry Berger, Jr., *The Allegorical Temper: Vision and Reality in Book II of Spenser's* Faerie Queene; and Frank Kermode, *Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne: Renaissance Essays*.

23 The exception is Jon Quitslund's *Spenser's Supreme Fiction*, which, in a reading that anticipates mine, views the tableau as indicative of the impossibility of a static and hierarchical cosmos in Spenser. I differ somewhat from Quitslund in explicitly connecting the tableau to Concord and other similar images, where Quitslund implicitly contrasts the tableau with the dynamism seen elsewhere (141).

24 Along these lines, see Geoffrey Bennington's reading of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, which argues that sovereignty in the play, and in the Henriad generally, is haunted or contaminated by the possibility of treason.

25 See also David Read's interpretation of the canto in *Temperate Conquests*, where Mammon represents the gold-laden Spanish conquistador the English subject must imitate and yet not too closely resemble (65-82).

26 See Michel Foucault's argument in *Security, Territory, Population* about a shift in the arts of governance from a medieval Thomasian conception where political governance is continuous with

the divine governance of the cosmos to an early modern understanding where political calculation is separated from and necessary to maintain control over the world (237-8, 337-8). Foucault identifies mercantilism as a "first threshold of rationality in this [new] art of government" (102).

27 In *The Allegorical Temper*, Berger calls attention to the prurient curiosity shared by both Mammon and Guyon (3-40). This argument has been echoed by Quilligan (55-7), Read (65), and Vitkus (44), who all see the proximity between the characters as symptomatic of the ambivalence of the text's critique of nascent capitalism.

28 Quoted in volume 2 of the *Variorum* Spenser (288-89).

29 Quoted in volume 2 of the Spenser *Variorum* (288-89).

30 See Goldberg's analysis of Foucault's term in *Sodometries* (1-28).

31 Grille originates in a dialogue of Plutarch's where he is written back into the *Odyssey*'s Circe episode; Spenser perhaps knew the story from the Renaissance Italian author Gelli's *Circe*. Plutarch's Grille speaks for animal kind, upholding their life as morally superior to human life for, among other reasons, being more temperate. In alluding to Plutarch, Spenser raises the possibility that this common dungy life is not opposite to the virtue of temperance, nor to its hero, Guyon, who shares with Grille a primary letter. See the discussion of the passage in the second volume of the *Variorum* (294-95).

32 See Maureen Quilligan's account of Pizan's recuperation of Semiramis in "Allegory and Female Agency."

33 See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's work in *Of Giants* on the ambivalencies that surround cultural depictions of giants from the Middle Ages onward (29-61).

34 I draw here on Barbara Johnson's insightful commentary on Benjamin's essay in *Mother Tongues*, where she comments that, in the essay, the relation between translation and pure meaning has the structure of an imperfect subjunction, what would have been (57).

35 Other important treatments of the development of a modern sense of space in literary works of the period include Tom Conley, *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France,* Bernhard Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland*, and John Archer, "Islam and Tamburlaine's World-Picture."

36 There is no single complete translation of the *Policraticus* into English, although one can be patched together from multiple editions. The sections I draw on here are taken from Cary Nederman's translation, titled *Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*. The remaining sections can be found in John Dickinson's volume, *The Statesman's Book of John of Salisbury*.

37 See Meredith Evans excellent account of rumor as a destabilizing, non-sovereign political force in *2 Henry IV*, "Rumor, the Breath of Kings, and the Body of Law in *2 Henry IV*."

38 The King James Bible translates "caterpillar" where modern editions have "grasshopper," see for example Psalms 78:46.

39 In "Aught an Eunuch Has," Ellis Hanson also attends to the oddness of this image, although focusing on its sexual implications (53).

40 Though Montaigne quotes Lucretius, the direct sense of the passage from *The Nature of Things* is the opposite; Lucretius poses the question rhetorically, affirming that the world must have had a recent birth since no Greek poets sing of earlier times. Nevertheless, Montaigne is quite apt in that the quotation captures the larger sense of Lucretius's poem, that things are always recombining in new ways.

41 The anecdote La Peyrère mentions is from the Portugese Jesuit and missionary Alvarez Semedo's *The History of that Great and Renowned Monarchy of China*, published in French in 1645 and English in 1655. The full text is as follows:

"Although the *Chinesses* have been so diligent in their *Chronicles* & Re|cords, that they

have preserved the memorie of above 3000 yeares to this time; neverthelesse they have suffered a great losse and damage in the knowledge of many things contained in them by the burning of those books, which are called by them *The History,* and in reality, the businesse was thus.

"A King named *Tien,* (whither it were as some think out of the hatred he bore to learning, or as some hold with more probabilitie, that he might extinguish the memory of his *Ancestours,* and leave only his owne to prosteritie) excepting only the books of *Phisick,* as only necessarie to the Common-Wealth, commanded by a rigorous law, that the rest of their books should be burnt, with so much severitie as if every volume were guilty of high treason, and under so great penalites for any that hid them, that it was to cost him no lesse than his life, and in effect he caused fourtie *Litterati* to be burned together with their books which they had hid.

"This persecution lasted the space of fourty years, at what time they began to renew their ancient *Chronicles,* by meanes of certaine books and fragments that had escaped, some of them being buried under ground, and others immured in the middle of walls, and after many yeares and a diligent search, they set on foot againe the more principall matters; yet there were many things wanting, and especially concerning the first *Kings* and *Princes* of this *Kingdome*." (1.22)

42 See also *Blazing World*, 71. In *Sociable Letters*, a man voicing a philosophy strongly reminiscent of Cavendish's argues for the eternity and multiplicity of worlds against several doubters who argue that such multiplicity precludes the possibility of God having designed a well-ordered cosmos. The female narrator, when asked her opinion, argues that they should simply change topics as it is impossible to have firm knowledge either way. This might be one of the few moments where Cavendish points, if obliquely, toward the tension I suggest remains unresolved in her thinking (Cavendish, *Sociable* 165–66).

43 For example, Bruce Boehrer argues in *Animal Characters* that the diversity on display in Cavendish's fiction doesn't matter because it is light fantasy. While "The *Blazing World*'s entire

array" of animal-men "may be understood as a way of rendering the traditional species boundary so nuanced as to be immaterial," "one difference does matter, manifestly and obsessively, to [Cavendish]," the difference between herself and the rest of the world (197-98). Boehrer characterizes this self-interest as "solipsistic" and oneiric (196), "an instrument of self-gratification" (198). My own reading strives for a less pleasure-averse interpretation.

44 I accept the syntactical revisions which Gordon Teskey makes a case for in *Delirious Milton* and prints in his critical edition of Milton.