Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis or dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis or dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis or dissertation. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

Signature:

_____ _____

Lynn Maxwell Date

Wax Figures and Forms in Early Modern Literature

By

Lynn Maxwell

B.A., University of Virginia, 2004

English

_____

Jonathan Goldberg, Ph.D.

Advisor

_____

Patricia Cahill, Ph.D.

Committee Member

_____

Richard Rambuss, Ph.D.

Committee Member

Accepted:

_____

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.

Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

_____

Date

Wax Figures and Forms in Early Modern Literature

By

Lynn Maxwell

B.A., University of Virginia, 2004

Advisor: Jonathan Goldberg, PhD

An abstract of

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the

James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In English Literature

2011

Abstract

Wax Figures and Forms in Early Modern Literature

By

Lynn Maxwell

"Wax Figures and Forms in Early Modern Literature" investigates the circulation of wax imagery and actual wax forms in Early Modern literary and philosophical texts, as well as early modern cultural spaces such as the stage and the art studio. Just as the wax seal on a letter acts as a piece of writing and narrates a story – so too the shape wax takes both within texts and in the real world signifies in multiple ways. I contend that tracing wax figures and forms in early modern texts and other cultural spaces reveals major shifts in philosophical and literary understandings of epistemology, the nature of desire, and the purpose of mimesis during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

While this project begins with wax, and never leaves its materiality behind, the range of topics it implicates readily suggests that wax raises questions about the demarcation of boundaries. Wax allows us to ask how and to what extent philosophical questions overlap with literary questions. It also allows us to explore the cultural work of philosophy, literature, and art, which leads us to larger questions about the boundaries between self and other, self and machine, self and God. In pursuing these questions this project aims to help break down traditional boundaries of the field and offer possibilities for interdisciplinary scholarship. Wax provides an anchor that keeps my project engaged with specific texts and cultural objects, while simultaneously connecting seemingly disparate places, works, philosophies, and genres. Over the course of the project the texts and cultural practices we will consider include William Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* and *Twelfth Night,* John Donne's *Sappho to Philaenis,* Margaret Cavendish's *Philosophical Letter,* René Descartes' *Meditations on the First Philosophy,* Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy,* various treatises on art, Tintoretto and Michelangelo's artistic processes, John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi,* Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Ambroise Paré's *Oeuvres,* and Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene.* Through these diverse texts and practices we will trace the paths offered by wax.

Wax Figures and Forms in Early Modern Literature

By

Lynn Maxwell

B.A., University of Virginia, 2004

Advisor: Jonathan Goldberg, PhD

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the

James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In English Literature

2011

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the Department of English for its support of my work and project. I am especially grateful to my adviser, Jonathan Goldberg, and my committee members Patricia Cahill and Richard Rambuss. Jonathan patiently read every draft and pushed me to develop my ideas and arguments more fully. He also taught me to trust my own vision of the project. Pat and Rick provided valuable support and feedback. Paul Kelleher also served as a de facto committee member, stepping in on several occasions to save the day. I could not have completed this project without their help and guidance.

I also would like to thank the Folger Institute for access to their archives and for enabling met to participate in a research seminar directed by Kristen Poole. Moreover, I would like to express my appreciation of the Emory Graduate School of Arts and Sciences for its generous financial support of research trips and conferences that helped shape this dissertation.

I am thankful for the feedback I obtained on work presented at the Group for Early Modern Studies, and the Shakespeare Association of America. I am also grateful to my fellow graduate students at Emory University, whose excitement for my project and support throughout the process was invaluable to completing my degree. I am further indebted to my students, who taught me when they thought I was teaching them.

I will be forever grateful to my family who supported me in so many ways. Thank you Mom, Dad, Lachy, Jenna and Kristen. You believed in me when I had doubts, and let me know that I always had a net to catch me if I fell. Also, thank you Grandad and Grandmom Maxwell and the whole extended family for taking pride in my accomplishments and pushing me to achieve more than I thought possible.

Finally I want to thank my best friends. Margaret Boyle was my writing buddy and sounding board. Supraja Narasimhan was a fountain of enthusiasm, always ready to cheer me on or help in any way she could. Shannen Naegel was with me every step of the way. She read several chapters at several stages, listened tirelessly as I talked through my various stumbling blocks, and whisked me away when I needed a break. Last, but not least, Kevin Guthrie pulled me to the finish line. He provided me with the ultimate incentive to finish, an unwavering faith in my abilities, and an immense amount of support. Thank you does not seem sufficient.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

The Contours of Wax

René Descartes begins his consideration of what one can know about wax by asking his readers to consider wax's material attributes. "Let us take, for example, this piece of wax," he suggests, and proceeds to describe wax in all its specific, sensory details: the wax " has just been taken from the honeycomb; it has not yet lost the taste of honey; it retains some scent of the flowers from which it was gathered; its colour, shape and size are plain to see; it is hard, cold and can be handled without difficulty" (20). Descartes then applies fire to the wax and registers how completely the wax has changed in every material attribute: "the residual taste is eliminated, the smell goes away, the colour changes, the shape is lost, the size increases; it becomes liquid and hot; you can hardly touch it, and if you strike it, it no longer makes a sound" (20). As Descartes makes clear, the simple application of heat has transformed the wax completely, leading him to ask, "does the same wax remain?" (20). Descartes concludes that it must, and suggests that the nature of wax must be reducible to those qualities that remain once you "take away everything that does not belong to the wax, and see what is left: merely something extended, flexible, and changeable" (20). Descartes' simple experiment of observing a piece of wax before and after it has been subjected to fire allows him to deduce what he sees as the essential qualities of wax, "what is left" when all the contingent properties have been swept away.

This moment of Descartes' *Meditations* is laden with philosophical significance, as I will consider more fully in Chapter 2 below. I open with it here because, like Descartes,

I want my readers to consider wax, but not in order to reduce it to its essential qualities. In this project, wax is not "merely something extended, flexible, and changeable" (20). Instead, I want to recapture for wax all the properties that Descartes elucidates and then discards, along with a range of other qualities and contexts that his account skips over. Rather than stripping wax to its essence, I want to register fully its complex and sometimes contradictory nature, as well as the wide range of meanings that become attached to it through its deployment as a functional material, a substance of art, and an object of discourse. While Descartes is concerned only with what the mind and the senses can deduce from examining an individual piece of wax, I want to embed that knowledge within a natural, economic, artistic, and philosophic history. Thus I want to open this project with a consideration of both the material properties of wax and an overview of how wax has been valued and used throughout history. I want to show wax, not stripped to its essence, but amplified by all the possibilities it embodies and all the contexts inscribed on it by culture.

Ultimately this project will trace the circulation of wax images and wax forms in early modern literary and philosophical texts, as well as early modern cultural spaces such as the stage and the artist's studio. Just as the wax seal on a letter acts as a piece of writing and narrates a story – so too the shape wax takes both within texts and in the real world signifies in multiple ways. I contend that tracing wax figures and forms in early modern texts and other cultural spaces reveals a complex set of relationships between philosophical and literary understandings of epistemology, gender, the nature of desire, the purpose of mimesis, and the possibilities offered by prosthetics and automata during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

While this project begins with wax, and never leaves its materiality behind, the range of topics it implicates readily suggests that wax raises questions about the demarcation of boundaries. Wax allows us to ask how and to what extent philosophical questions overlap with literary questions. It also allows us to explore the cultural work of philosophy, literature, and art, which leads us to larger questions about the boundaries between self and other, self and machine, self and God. In pursuing these questions this project aims to help break down traditional boundaries of the field and offer possibilities for interdisciplinary scholarship. Wax provides an anchor that keeps my project engaged with specific texts and cultural objects, while simultaneously connecting seemingly disparate places, works, philosophies, and genres. Over the course of the project the texts and cultural practices we will consider include William Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* and *Twelfth Night,* John Donne's *Sappho to Philaenis,* Margaret Cavendish's *Philosophical Letter,* René Descartes' *Meditations on the First Philosophy,* Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy,* various treatises on art, Tintoretto and Michelangelo's artistic processes, John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi,* Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Ambroise Paré's *Oeuvres,* and Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene.* Through these diverse texts we will trace the paths offered by wax.

1. Wax in Criticism

In taking up wax, I am placing myself in conversation with other critics who have discussed the place of wax in various discourses and fields. Among these are several notable works, which I will briefly survey here. *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculptures and the Human Figures,* is a collection of essays edited by Roberta Panzanelli and Julius

Schlosser that interrogates the meanings of wax sculptures that bear human forms. Among the topics covered are eighteenth-century anatomical waxes, Madame Tussaud's wax museum, and wax ex-votos. The collection includes essays by Roberta Panzanelli, Joan B. Landes, Uta Kornmeier, Lyle Massey, Whitney Davis, Sharon Hecker, and Georges Didi-Huberman who variously connect the project of representing the human figure in wax to questions of religion, mimesis, gender, sexuality, decay and mortality. With the exception of Landes, whose training is in history and women's studies, all of these scholars are art historians, and the volume takes up wax from that perspective. In addition to this landmark volume, other scholars have recently taken up wax. Rebecca Messbarger's work on Anna Morandi Mazolini asks about the importance of gender in the production of wax anatomy sculptures. Karen Newman's *Fetal Positions* is also interested in questions of gender, examining wax anatomy sculptures of women and representations of the pregant female form. In the essay she included in her edited volume, *Sensible Flesh*: *on touch in early modern culture,* Elizabeth Harvey connects early modern wax sculptures to literary preoccupations with the body and bodily interiors. Umberto Eco explores the phenomenon of wax museums in "Travels in Hyper Reality," a subject also taken up by Michelle Bloom in *Waxworks: A Cultural Obsession*.

Other scholars have taken up wax's association with the mind and memory. Veronique Dasen traces the connection between wax and ancient conceptions of memory in "Wax and Plaster Memories: Children in Elite and non-Elite Strategies". Mary Carruthers analyzes discussion of memory in the Middle Ages in her chapter, "Models for the Memory" in *The Book of Memory: a Study of Memory in Medieval Culture.* Wax's importance as a philosophical model for the mind has been commented on by

Giorgio Agamben in *Stanzas: word and phantasm in Western culture,* and by countless others. Closer to my concerns in chapters that follow, in "Imprints: Shakespeare, Gutenberg, and Descartes," Margreta de Grazia explores the connections between wax as philosophical model and literary trope in the early modern period. De Grazia's work also begins to ask about the relationship between wax and technologies of writing, a topic that is central to investigations by Raphael Lyne and Jenny Mann into the wax materiality of writing tablets in Ovid's poetry and its early modern translations of Ovid.

As this survey of writing on wax suggests, wax opens itself to diverse inquiries. Yet as Roberta Panzanelli remarks, wax is a material that has not been sufficiently studied. She asks, "what is it about wax that has kept it anchored in artistic practice for millennia yet confined to the margins of art history?" ("Introduction" 1). It is not only in art history that wax has evaded sustained scrutiny. Literary representations of wax are also often quickly glossed over and left unexplored. This project seeks to remedy that oversight, at least for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literature, and to place these literary representations of wax in conversation with the questions raised by the deployment of wax in philosophy and art.

2. Scope and Method

My project takes the early modern period, and particularly the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as its focus. My own specialization in that period of English literature was, of course, a major factor in that decision. However, there are other reasons why this period, in particular, is suited to this study. Among these is the fact that the seventeenth century is very important in the history of philosophy. Critics often look to

the seventeenth century as the period during which both science and modern philosophy begin to emerge as they moved away from scholastic philosophy. Natural philosophers, relying on empirical observations and experiments, began to reject Aristotelianism and seek out alternative philosophies, laying the groundwork for modern science. Meanwhile, Descartes, breaking fundamentally from the past, articulated a philosophy of the subject that has been heralded as the foundation for modern metaphysical philosophy. As we will see in chapter 3, these transitions can be figured through wax because wax was already an important philosophical model in scholastic philosophy; philosophers such as Margaret Cavendish and Descartes to figure their departure from scholastic traditions deploy it.

The philosophical uses of wax can be related to wax metaphors in literature during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; these reveal changes in understandings of gender, sexuality, and perceptions about what makes men and women human. Just as wax is malleable and its forms are marked by an intrinsic instability, so too are our understandings of ourselves and our relations to others. The use of wax to explore these questions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries engages with and responds to the philosophical investment with wax, and the shifts in philosophy reverberate through the literary; at the same time changing literary formulations transform philosophy. Thus while the questions of gender, sexuality, and the nature of humanity, which I take up in this project are not limited to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they are pressing questions in the period that take on new and intriguing shapes in the discourse of the period.

Importantly, wax can also be used to figure the period's relationship to other historical moments. Through wax, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries connect to the

classical period and simultaneously prefigure modernity. As we will see wax was of great significance in the classical era, used to make death masks, and statuary and to serve as a mold for bronzes. Thus when artists used wax in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they were tapping into this artistic history, and bringing new life to a traditional form. At the same time, since wax itself is an impermanent material, susceptible to decay and degradation, it insists always on engaging first and foremost with the present. It is, to an extent, a material that insists on its immediacy, that promises no future and offers up no past. As a material of art it aims at current viewers not future ones and thus anticipates a kind of modern mentality which Charles Baudelaire gives voice to in "The Painter of Modern Life" when he explains, "by modernity I mean the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent" (13). Moreover, the seventeenth century's use of wax as the material of anatomical anatomical models connects wax sculpture to emerging scientific discourses, linking it again to modernity, although this time through science. Wax is a material that can mediate between past and present and can represent simultaneously an insistence on both.

As my introductory remarks and this brief discussion of scope have no doubt signaled, this project is highly interdisciplinary, reading literary texts alongside philosophical texts and artwork. Each of these types of texts has presented unique challenges. To read a painting, a poem, or a philosophical treatise you must place it in its aesthetic and historical contexts. I have tried to be attentive to the different contexts of the texts that I take up, although my training as a literary scholar has led me, perhaps, to see works of art and philosophy in slightly different terms than critics in those disciplines would see them. This difference of perspective has enabled me to broaden the

conversation about artistic and philosophical objects. Yet although this project is interdisciplinary, insofar as it brings literature into conversation with philosophy and art, the literary remains its primary object of study. The choice, to prioritize literature, and specifically the English literary tradition, reflects my own training; however, it also inflects the shape that the project ultimately takes. The contours of wax, as outlined in the project, would appear different if other literary traditions were privileged, or if I had chosen a more strictly historical or anthropological approach. Still, my primary aim has throughout this project has been to uncover connections and conversations that disciplinary boundaries might otherwise obscure. Consequently, I have tried to be suggestive rather than deterministic in my readings of texts, literary or otherwise, and to open up pathways that other scholars can follow rather than suggest only singular possibilities.

In taking up this project, I have adopted a series of methods and critical perspectives derived from new historicism, feminism and queer theory. My approach is new historicist insofar as I take seriously the relationship between texts and culture and seek to offer a "cultural poetics" (Greenblatt 5). Moreover, it is feminist insofar as it asks feminist questions about the association of women with wax. For example, I ask whether there is space for female agency when women are figured as perfectly malleable wax in Shakespeare's *A Rape of Lucrece,* and what we can learn from Spenser's waxy false Florimell's ability to pass as a woman. I ask, further, how Shakespeare's texts depict female friendship, whether Margaret Cavendish's physics advocates female rule, and how Webster presents female rule and female identity in *The Duchess of Malfi.* In asking these questions I follow paths opened by Valerie Traub's work on material representations of

gender, Laurie Shannon's treatment of female friendship, Eve Keller's feminist readings of science, and Dympna Callaghan's treatment of dramatic representations of female rule.[1] These scholars have offered me a framework and language with which to discuss the gendered questions that arise around wax.

Finally, in conceptualizing my method, I have been heavily influenced by queer theory, which has illustrated, for me, the power of complexity and irresolvability. My debt to queer theory is to some measure topical. Questions of gender and sexuality recur throughout my work and my approach to those questions is largely inflected by my reading of theorists such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and Jonathan Goldberg. Yet while questions of gender and sexuality are an important component of my project, queer theory has also inflected how I have come to understand wax itself as a material that is queer insofar as it embodies contradictory discourses and refuses to maintain one legible shape. The inherent instability of wax means that no matter what shape it takes, it speaks always of its own constructed nature and threatens always to take on new figurations. If as Annamarie Jagose suggests, "queer is always an identity under construction, a site of permanent becoming" then wax might be a productive figure through which to understand queerness, while the theoretical underpinnings of "queer" might provide a useful starting place for understanding how wax figures in early modern texts and cultural spaces (*Queer Theory* 131).

By moving thematically through literary questions, I have allowed the project to take on a shape of its own, a shape determined not by chronology, but by connections that

---

[1] See, for example, Valerie Traub's "Gendering mortality in early modern anatomies," Eve Keller's "Producing Petty Gods: Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Science," and *Generating Bodies and Gendered Selves: The Rhetoric of Reproduction in Early Modern England,* and Dympna Callaghan's *Women and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy*.

reach across time and space. If I offer a history of wax in early modern literature, it is a history best understood if we allow wax to stand as a figure of that history. Wax, as we have seen is malleable and prone to taking new forms. If history is comprised of moments that could be located on the body of wax, then as that piece of wax is molded and reshaped, previously noncontiguous moments can be brought together. In this project I am tracing the connections that wax itself offers as its appearance in different cultural spaces and different discourses brings disparate texts and contexts into temporary alignment. Moments not explicitly connected by close proximity in time, or by direct influence are brought together by their interest in a materiality figured through wax in various forms and situations. Thus Descartes' discussion of automata around wax speaks to Spenser's deployment of the false and waxy Florimell in *The Faerie Queene,* despite their distance from each other in so many other respects.

3. Wax as a Material

If the story that this project will ultimately offer about wax involves the bringing together of noncontiguous moments through the materiality of wax, we still can begin with a relatively straightforward investigation of wax as a material object that has a specific material history. Like Descartes, we will start by considering the physical properties of wax, although we will do so not to reveal any essential truth about either wax or the mind, but rather to understand further the functional, artistic, metaphorical and philosophical uses of wax. When Descartes defines wax as an "extended, flexible, and changeable" material, he offers us an important basis for understanding wax (20). Indeed malleability is often regarded as the key characteristic of wax. Still, to arrive at that

abstraction, Descartes starts with a very particular account, not of wax in general, but rather of a particular piece of wax in two states: first, as virgin wax that has just been taken from the hive, and second, as melted wax. Both of these states carry with them specific sensory characteristics that Descartes adumbrates and which I have quoted above. The wax first has "the taste of honey… the scent of the flowers" and "its colour, shape and size are plain to see; it is hard and can be handled without difficulty" (20). After it has melted, the wax loses the smell of flowers and the taste of honey and becomes "liquid and hot". Thus, while Descartes' meditator explicitly claims to offer only one truth about wax, its essential nature as an "extended, flexible, and changeable" material, he actually paints a far more complex picture of wax by detailing the specific properties of wax in these two very different states. Reading Descartes we are reminded of the way wax looks, feels, smells, and even how it tastes, both when it has just been taken from the hive and also when it has been melted. The truths of these observations, which Descartes regards as inessential and disposable, are important for this project, as is Descartes' more abstract essentialization of wax since all the shapes wax take give it literary and philosophical meaning (20).

In considering these two states, Descartes does not exhaust the possibilities inherent in wax. Wax can take on other forms, both materially and within text. Melted wax will re-solidify with slightly different properties from those that inhered in the original wax, hence the distinction made between "virgin wax" or "fresh, new, or unused bees-wax, sometimes that produced by the first swarm of bees," and all other forms of wax (OED). According to John Trevisa's translation of *Bartholomeus De Proprietatibus Rerum* (1495) "the more newe wexe is the more able it is to take inpressyon and pryntage of

dyuers fygures and shapes" (19.61.897). Presumably, the newer the wax, the more the smell of flowers and the fragrance of honey inhere in it as well. Thus other kinds of wax would be less odorous, have less taste, and be less malleable than Descartes' wax. Moreover, as the quote above begins to suggest, wax that is "virgin" has different poetic implications than wax that has been previously pressed. Its name and heightened sensitivity to impression have erotic connotations that poets happily avail themselves of. In Philip Sidney's *Old Arcadia,* Pyrocles, dressed as a woman, describes Philoclea's navel as "a dainty seal of virgin-wax, / Where nothing but impression lacks" (209). The "seal of virgin-wax" suggests Philoclea's purity and simultaneously promises that her "lack" can be remedied, her virginity can be violated.[2]

It is not just re-solidified wax that Descartes omits from his account. Wax can also occupy an in-between state as the result of a gentle application of heat. Before wax melts, it softens. The heat generated by a thumb rubbing against the surface of the wax is sufficient to soften it, a fact Ovid makes use of in *The Metamorphoses*, when he describes Icarus at play, "soften[ing] with his thumb the yellow wax" (8.202). Once softened, wax is malleable and can be pressed with a skilled hand into any shape. Yet until has been molded, the forms of wax are only potential, thus in this state wax can represent the process of becoming. Wax can also exist in a vaporous state, as we will see when we examine the physics of candles. As a gas, even Descartes' essential quality of "flexibility" no longer inheres in wax. (It is quite possible that Descartes did not know that wax could exist as a gas and there is no indication in the literature or philosophy that the possibility of gas captivated the cultural imagination.)

---

[2] This moment is complicated by Pyrocles's cross-dressing. The song in which he makes this comparison is intended to seduce Philoclea, but his own masquerade as woman puts him in a position where he is unable to remedy her "lack," not at this moment, at least not through masculine penetration.

While most of these states, ultimately confirm Descartes' conclusion that wax is "something extended, flexible, and changeable," they also confirm that wax is a complex material that exists in several distinct states, all of which have different material properties. Further, as this discussion has begun to suggest, wax can take on poetic and philosophical meanings in its various states. While, ultimately, as we shall see, the malleability and mutability of wax are the qualities most frequently capitalized on by poets and thinkers, the textual deployments of wax also avail themselves of the specificities of the taste, feel, smell, touch and appearance of wax. Ultimately, Descartes would not disagree with the observations we have made about wax in its various states, except perhaps to question how we know we are observing anything at all and not merely dreaming or being otherwise deluded. Still, for Descartes, such observations are important only to the extent that they provide the mind material to reflect on. He is quick to move to abstraction. Yet I will argue, the particularized characteristics of wax, combined with the general qualities of "flexibility" and "changeability," help make wax a complex object to explore as it takes on so many different forms and meanings in the world and on the page.

4. Wax in Nature

Wax also gains meaning from its status as organic product and its association with flowers, bees, and the pastoral landscape. While much of the wax we use today is petroleum based, wax in the period was beeswax, collected from hives and purified and refined by beekeepers before being made into candles or other products and sold in markets. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century treatises on beekeeping explained how bees

collected wax and how farmers should harvest it. We know now that wax is produced by bees, whose glands convert sugar into little white flakes which are secreted, masticated, and then used to construct honeycomb (Cowan 524). During the period under consideration, however, natural philosophers believed that wax was collected from flowers and trees and carried back to the hive by bees.

In the belief that wax was a material bees gathered, sixteenth and seventeenth century philosophers followed Aristotle. Aristotle claims in his *History of Animals*, "the honeycomb is made from flowers, and the materials for the wax they gather from the resinous gum of trees, while honey is what falls from the air, and is deposited chiefly at the risings of the constellations or when a rainbow is in the sky" (873, 553b28-554a11). Later in the same volume, Aristotle revisits the question of wax, explaining "Bees scramble up the stalks of flowers and rapidly gather the bees-wax with their front legs; the front legs wipe it off on to the middle legs, and these pass it on to the hollow curves of the hind-legs; when thus laden, they fly away home, and one may see plainly that their load is a heavy one" (971, 623b26-627b23). Thomas Hill glosses over these details in *A pleasaunt instruction of the parfit ordering of Bees* (1568), saying merely ""but being a cleare and fayre morning ... [The bees] flye forth and returne againe to their hyues, laden with the substance of the flowers on their legges" (Fol. 5). Still we can hear the echo of Aristotle clearly in Rev. Charles Butler's *The Feminie Monarchie* (1609) when he writes about "the wax they gather with their fágs" or "flaps" (OED, s.v. "fag"). Once they have gathered the wax, the same "being kept soft with the heat of their little bodies, of the aire, and of their hiues is easily wrought into combs" (G2 verso). This basic understanding of wax as a product collected from flowers did not change until well into the nineteenth

century and impacts literary representations of wax in the early modern period. For example, In *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth,* King Henry likens fathers to bees: "Our thighs packed with wax, our mouths with honey, / We bring it to the hive; and, like the bees / Are murder'd for our pains" (4.3.204-206). Shakespeare depicts worker bees as overburdened, laden down with both honey and wax, for which they will ultimately be killed. The trope conveys a sense of bodily sacrifice, both in the work the bees do and the reward they receive for it. Moreover, as we will see further in Chapter 2, wax's association with the pastoral and the harvesting of flowers also enhances its erotic associations. Early modern poets were quick to connect bees to penetration and to attach both flowers and wax to virginity.

Furthermore, the fact that bees use their wax to construct hives also fascinated poets and thinkers. Wax was an organic building material, used by bees to create functional art. In Hill's treatise on bees he exclaims: the bees "frame by a marueylous skill and cunning, their cotages of waxe unto mans use, that no workeman (be he neuer so ingenious) can do the like" (Fol. 5) The skill of the bees workmanship renders their hives marvelous. In Michael Drayton's "The Quest of Cynthia," we see again a fascination with honeycombs, this time connected to a larger consideration of Edenic desire. The speaker follows Cythia's prints and traces into "secret shades" (line 141).[3] Where she, surprised, threatens him to transform him just as Diana transformed Actaeon (145-148). Instead, the speaker accepts her power over him, proclaiming "transforme me to what shape you can, / … / Yea what most hateful is to man, / So I may follow thee" (165, 167-168). His willingness

[3] He pauses over her footprint, "which stuck there like a curious seale, / As though it should forbid / Vs, wretched mortalls, to reueale, What vnder it was hid" (29-32). This seal-like footprint could be connected to our discussion of wax seals that is continued in Chapters 1 and 2. Here the image seems to represent a seal that Cynthia has set on her own chastity, one that refuses any further penetration.

to eschew human form, to become as wax in her hands, proves his trueness to Cynthia. She suggests that the lovers make their own chaste paradise together, "here our sports shall be: / Such as the golden world first sawe, / Most Innocent and free" (182-184). One of their first "sports" will be to examine a hive:

> The waxen Pallace of the Bee,
> We seeking will surprise
> The curious workmanship to see,
> Of her full-laden thighes. (189-192)

Here, Cynthia registers fascination with the "curious workmanship" of the hive and the way that construction connects to the bee's body, to "her full-laden thighs." Yet what starts as a desire "to see" is transformed by the next stanza to a desire to "suck the sweets out of the Combe" and enjoy food fit for the gods. The "chaste desires" that the lovers imagine are sensual. The wax palace of the bee satisfies both curiosity and hunger, substituting for other bodily desires. Throughout this project, the status of wax as an organic material of art, a material always connected at least to the bodies of bees, will have ramifications to our consideration what it means to use wax as a trope and to make art out of wax.

5. Wax in Early Modern Society

In the chapters that follow I look carefully at how wax takes on meaning in particular texts, and around particular materials. Here, however, I want to offer a quick survey of the physical locations that wax manifests in early modern culture and provide a brief sketch of how the physical reality of wax objects impacts the meaning of textual

wax, in particular. For early modern poets and thinkers, the process of harvesting wax heightened its connection to the purity of virginity, as the more refined wax was, the more greatly it was valued. As early as Pliny (the elder), we can find a detailed description of the process. Pliny writes:

> Wax is made after the honey has been extracted from the combs, but these must be first cleaned with water and dried for three days in the dark; then on the fourth day they are melted into a new earthen vessel on the fire, with just enough water to cover them, and then strained in a wicker basket. The wax is boiled again with the same water in the same pot, and poured into other water, this is to be cold, contained in vessels smeared all round inside with honey. (21.49)

The process that Pliny describes, by which honeycombs are melted and strained is almost identical to the processes that Hill and Butler describe in their accounts of beekeeping. The accounts of Pliny, Hill and Butler stress the need for pure wax, and go on to offer methods by which wax can be further refined. Pliny, for example, suggests that the best wax is Punic wax, which is yellow wax that is bleached and boiled three additional times to further purify it and give it "the greatest whiteness" (21.49).

In London, the wax chandler's guild was ensured with protecting the purity of wax in order to maintain its economic value. In 1581 'An Acte for the true melting making and working of Waxe' was passed. It stated:

> Whereas by the Goodness of God this land yields great plenty of honey and wax not only for home consumption but also for export, but much wax has lately been found corrupt, by reason of deceitful mixture … It is therefore enacted by the authority of Parliament that after the Feast of Pentecost next anyone concerned

> with trade who shall mix wax with resin, tallow, turpentine or other substance for sale, shall forfeit the said corrupted wax … To enable offenders to be traced, every melter and maker-up of unwrought wax shall have his own stamp or mark the breadth of six pence, graven with his initials and shall stamp every piece of wax triangle in three places, on the outside of the upper part, on pain of forfeiture of each piece unmarked. (Dummelow Appendix 10)

The penalty for selling contaminated wax was 2s per pound, an amount that would purchase approximately the same quantity of goods as would £40 now (Officer). Like a woman's value in marriage, the value of wax depended on its lack of corruption. The practice of stamping the wax with the creator's signet to signal that purity seems very much connected to the role that fathers were supposed to play in early modern culture in attesting to their daughters' virtue. When we look at the association of female bodies with wax in Shakespeare's work and especially in *The Rape of Lucrece*, we will return to the questions of ownership and virtue raised here.

Once wax was refined, it was ready to be sold on the market and made into a variety of products, all of which further invest the substance with meaning. Most beeswax went into the production of candles, which were consumed primarily by the elite, and, prior to the Reformation, by the Catholic Church.[4] Candles made of tallow, a substance derived from animal fats, substituted for wax in poorer household. The fact that beeswax was elite material added to its positive cultural valences, especially since beeswax burned more cleanly than tallow, which gave off a foul odor and significantly more smoke. While the association of candles with Catholicism might have tainted their

[4] See the conclusion for a brief discussion of the significance of wax and candles in England's religious history.

virtue for some Protestant authors, outside of conversations about religion they seem to have retained their association with virtue. After all, candles were the purest way to bring light to the darkness. In Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part III,* Clifford, dying, compares his life to a candle, "here burns my candle out — ay, here it dies, / Which, whiles it lasted, gave King Henry light" (2.6.1-2). The candlelight represents both Clifford's life and the hope that he was able to offer the King. In *Macbeth,* Macbeth also associates candlelight with life, mournfully lamenting, "out, out, brief Candle. / Life's but a walking shadow" after hearing the news of his wife's death (5.5.22). For Shakespeare's villain it is the shadow cast by candlelight that signifies his own life's path. The candle here still stands for virtue and by associating his life with shadow, Macbeth signals his own fraught relation to the virtuous path.[5]

While candles may have been the most common application of wax, they were not the only important application of the material. Its use in the field of medicine also was important. All of the treatises on bee-keeping that I mentioned above, detail the medicinal uses of wax, which was valued because, according to Butler, because "waxe hath no certaine elementar quality, but is a meane betweene … hot and cold, and betweene dry and moist, it … mollifieth the sinewes, [and] it … ripeneth & resolveth ulcers" (M5 recto and verso). This Galenic description of the value of wax as medicine ascribes it a place as the "meane" between the four humoral qualites. It straddles the difference between "hot and cold" and between "dry and moist," which allows it to sooth the "sinewes" and

[5] If the candle's ability to light darkness lends it symbolic and poetic resonances, its complex mechanics also make it an object of physics, although not in the period under consideration. In his 1860 lecture, *The Chemical History of a Candle,* Michael Faraday commented, "there is not a law under which any part of the universe is governed which does not come into play and is touched upon in [the phenomena of burning a candle]. There is no better, there is no more open door by which you can enter into the study of natural philosophy than by considering the physical phenomena of a candle" (86).

"ulcers." Further, this in-between quality makes wax like skin, leading Pliny to suggest, "all wax … is emollient, warming, and restorative of flesh; the fresher it is the better" (22.55).

These medicinal uses of wax start to show how wax comes to be associated with bodies. In the the medicinal uses of wax we see an association with the female body in particular, as Butler goes on to relay:

> The quantity of a pease in waxe beeing swallowed down of nurces doth dissolue the milke curded in the paps, and…ten round pieces of wax of the bignes of so many graines of millet or hepseede will not suffer the milke to curdle in the stomach. (M5 verso & recto)

Wax is a cure here for maladies that can only afflict women, such as the pain caused by "milk curded in the paps." Hill provides an almost identical list of medicinal uses for wax. As we will see in Chapter 1, it was through medical discourse concerning humoral constitutions that women come to be associated with wax. To be a reproductive woman also was to be like wax, since biological reproduction was understood as proceeding in the same way that wax receives the impression of a signet ring. As we will explore further throughout the project, the associations of women with wax has far-reaching implications for questions of gender and sexuality.

Another form wax takes in the world is as a material of writing. Wax tablets, for example, were used as writing surfaces in ancient Rome and Greece and the practice continued throughout the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As a result of its characteristics as a writing surface, wax accrues additional meaning in literary texts. Wax becomes a suitable surface for writing because even in its most solid

state wax is soft enough that it can easily be scratched with a stylus, and firm enough that it can retain inscription. Moreover, because wax can be remodeled, wax tablets, like slates can be wiped clean and reused. Since wax writing has a temporary quality, it has never been a medium for official documents. Instead wax tablets were used during the classical period for writing poetry and making private notations (Cowan 18). The classical practice of writing on wax continued into the middle ages where wax tablets were used by schoolboys, accountants, note taking, and private correspondence (Bischoff 14). Wax is a surface most suited to ephemeral inscriptions.

The ephemerality of wax inscription informs Shakespeare's Sonnet 122, in which the speaker rejects the young man's gift of a writing tablet:

> Thy gift, thy tables, are within my brain
> Fully charactered with lasting memory,
> Which shall above that idle rank remain
> Beyond all date, even to eternity;
> Or at least so long as brain and heart
> Have faculty by nature to subsist,
> Till each to razed oblivion yield his part
> Of thee, thy record never can be missed.
> That poor retention could not so much hold,
> Nor need I tallies thy dear love to score;
> Therefore to give them from me was I bold,
> To trust those tables that receive thee more.
> To keep an adjunct to remember thee

Were to import forgetfulness in me.

While the speaker never names the material of the "tables," Amanda Watson suggests that these "'writing tables' or 'table books'" were "made of paper covered in wax for easier erasure" (353). Thus they materially contain the possibility of erasure in a way that paper alone would not. Jonathan Goldberg, paying attention to the indeterminacy of the tablets, argues "the gift returned is a pad whose space of inscription is at the same time a space of erasure. Whether a pad full of tallies is rejected, or whether filling a pad with tallies is rejected, both possibilities — of the written pad and the blank pad — are apparently the same scene of inscription and erosion" (*Voice Terminal Echo* 95). Rejecting the tablets, the speaker insists on the superiority of his mind and that his beloved is "fully charactered" there "with lasting memory."[6] Moreover, the speaker suggests that to accept the gift would be an admission of fallibility: "To keep an adjunct to remember thee / Were to import forgetfulness in me." Still, the possibility of forgetting is intrinsic to the act of memory when memory is made physically a part of the body. Thus even as the speaker advocates the superiority of his own memory, he worries about what will happen to that record when he dies. The claim that memory will last "Beyond all date, even to eternity" gives way to the admission, "Or at least as long as brain and heart / Have faculty by nature to subsist." Yet since, for the speaker, memory will last all the eternity he will experience, he chooses to return the tables, and to reject the physical reminder of erasure that they embody.

[6] The speaker's association of memory with wax inscription connects to the philosophical understanding of the mind as a block of wax upon which impressions can be made. Here though, the speaker imagines that the memory works not through stamped images but inscribed words. Amanda Watson connects this image to a humanist pedagogy for memorization (351-354).

It is not just the temporary nature of writing on wax that differentiates the practice of writing on wax from other practices of writing and gives it additional poetic resonances. Since words are carved into the body of the wax with a stylus, they become part of the wax, giving it form until they are wiped away. Writing on paper or slate requires a writing instrument that leaves a residue of ink, graphite, or chalk to make meaning, while writing on wax is a more physical experience and depends only on the pressure of the stylus to make a mark. In classical cultures, wax tablets were fashioned together to form diptych and triptych booklets. These booklets could be closed and sealed, protecting the contents inside, and often were filled with love poems, which the recipient could wipe away and then replace with a reply (Cowan 18). The form of these booklets together with the wax tablets provided a surface for both lover and beloved to express themselves, functioning as locations of intimate inscription that were themselves almost bodily, as we can see in Ovid's poetry. In *Amores* 1.11 and 1.12, which I will return to again in chapter 2, he foregrounds the wax surface on which his poem is inscribed. In 1.11, he instructs a servant:

> Receive and take early to your mistress these tablets I have inscribed, and care that nothing hinder or delay! … Should she ask how I fare, you will say my hope of her favour lets me live; as for the rest, it is charactered in the wax by my fond hand. (1.11. 7-8, 13-14, trans. Raphael Lyne)

The wax not only holds the words of Ovid's poems, it "show[s] the stroked words, softened by a passionate heat" (Lyne 193). As Raphael Lyne suggests, "the physical nature of wax leads to an implicit connection with bodies and their warmth and pliability; the texture of the surface is a starting point for evoking a physically intimate poetry, the

immediacy of which is reflected in the marks on the wax" (192). Thus, wax tablets do not merely become a location where writing can happen. They also affect the process of writing itself, making it a more physical and intimate experience. Moroever, as Quintilian claims in his *Institutes of Oratory* (*Institutio Oratoria*), wax might facillitate writing because the process of writing on wax more closely resembles the flow of thought than writing with ink, he explains, "we can write best on *waxen tablets*… parchment, though it assists the sight, yet from the frequent movement of the hand backwards and forwards, while dipping the pen in ink, causes delay, and interrupts the current of thought" (10.3.31). Thus it is not simply that wax makes the experience of writing more bodily, it also makes it more like thought.

In addition, wax also becomes a material of writing when used for sealing letters; this further expands the range of meanings available to textual and artistic deployments of wax. Wax seals are fundamentally iconographic in nature, and are used to signal authorship and ownership of a letter or document as well as to testify to its authenticity and, at times, the secrecy of its contents. Wax is a good material for sealing since it can be melted and imprinted with signet rings as it begins to re-solidify. Wax both holds an impression, and proves a good binding material, adhering to the paper it is melted onto. Again, like the process of inscribing poetry in wax, the process of sealing a letter with wax becomes associated with bodies and sex. As we will explore in chapters 1 and 2, the trope of signet/seal is taken up in philosophy and poetry to figure epistemological and biological reproduction. We encounter the trope in Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare's "Rape of Lucrece" and *Twelfth Night,* Donne's "Sappho to Philaenis," and Margaret Cavendish's *Philosophical Letters.* While both the process of inscribing a wax tablet and

sealing a letter depend on some measure of force, the latter becomes more strongly associated with forceful encounters and attached to binaries of passive and active.

Wax also gains meaning as a material for artistic practices. Just as writing on wax tablets is a practice that gains meaning from the use of wax and also uses wax to create meaning, so too artistic deployments of wax both take and give meaning to wax. The use of wax in sculpture started in ancient Rome and Greece and continues to this day. During the early modern period, as we will see more fully in chapter 3, wax was put to several sculptural uses. Wax effigies were made of saints and recently departed nobility (Cowan 22). In Italy, it was common for wealthy individuals to have miniature portraits commissioned in wax. In his *Lives,* Vasari notes "it would take too long if I were to speak of all those who execute portrait-medals of wax, seeing that every goldsmith at the present day makes them" (87). From ancient times on, wax figures were also used in the service of magic, a topic we will return to in Chapters 2, and 3.[7] By the end of the seventeenth century, wax also was being used for anatomical models. Further, wax was used to make molds for bronzes and provisional models for marble sculptures and paintings. These artistic deployments of wax link it to questions of representation and mimesis.

As we can already begin to see wax's physical deployments and uses have a complex relationship to the meanings that wax takes within texts. My discussion of writing technologies and artistic mediums suggest that the boundaries between function and art blur around wax. Throughout this project we will return to these issues of

[7] While we will return to the association of wax and magic, some sources that connect the two include: Theocritus's "Idyll ii," and Raphael Holinshed's *The Second Volume of Chronicles*, esp. 149-150.

boundaries. Now, however, I want to conclude this introduction to consider one crucial use of wax for this project, its use in philosophy.

6. Wax in Philosophy

I opened the introduction by glancing at Descartes and in chapter 2 we will explore more fully how wax enters early modern philosophy. Here, however, I want to explore wax as an object in Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy. This is important, since unfailingly all the philosophical and literary texts that I will discuss in future chapters were in some way influence by the treatment of wax in classical philosophy and particularly by how Plato and Aristotle use wax to conceptualize the mind and soul.

The connection between wax and a consideration of what we can loosely term the soul actually predates both philosophers and can be found in Homer's *Iliad*. Homer refers to the heart as "shaggy" in 2.851 and 16.554, which, at least for Plato, implies a wax materiality. Both references occur in passing and Homer does not fully articulate the ramifications of having a shaggy heart, although it seems to be valenced positively.[8] Still, according to Plato, impressions are made on the waxen block in "the heart of the soul, as Homer says in parable, meaning to indicate the likeness of the soul to wax ({ker keros}" (298, 194b-194d). The linguistic similarity between {ker} [soul] and {keros}[wax] becomes the basis for connecting the two first in poetry and then philosophy. Plato uses Homer as an authority upon which to build his discussion of the mind as wax. Yet while neither Plato nor Aristotle can be credited with first connecting wax to what Plato calls

[8] Plato objects to Homer's suggestion that the shaggy heart is positive. He writes, "but when the heart of anyone is shaggy — a quality which the all-wise poet commends …. then there is a corresponding defect in the mind… the shaggy and rugged and gritty… have the impressions indistinct" (298, 194e - 195b).

the soul, they proved to be the most influential in their formulations through the early modern period and beyond.

In his *Theaetetus,* Plato uses wax to explain how the mind works. There, Socrates asks Theaetetus to "imagine ... that there exists in the mind of man a block of wax, which is of different sizes in different men; harder, moister, and having more or less purity in one than another, and in some of an intermediate quality" (294, 191c-191d). This block of wax functions as a tablet on which memories can be imprinted, "as from the seal of a ring" (294, 191d-191e). By figuring the mind as wax, and treating all external stimuli as "the seal of the ring," Socrates provides a model for how the outside world is internalized. In this model, the mind is passive and acted upon by outside forces. Socrates uses the model of the block of wax to consider the nature of knowledge and falsehood. If the mind works like a block of wax, erroneous opinion is only possible if the mind confuses the impression of two objects. As Socrates tells Theaetetus:

> The only possibility of erroneous opinion is, when knowing you and Theodorus, and having on the waxen block the impression of both of you given as by a seal, but seeing you imperfectly and at a distance, I am eager to assign the right impression of memory to the right visual impression, and to fit this into its own print, in order that recognition may take place; but if I fail and transpose them, putting the foot into the wrong shoe — that is to say, putting the vision of either of you on to the wrong impression, or if my mind, like the sight in a mirror, which is transferred from right to left, err by reason of some similar affection, then ‘heterodoxy’ and false opinion ensues (297, 193b-193d).

The likelihood of this kind of confusion is greater in those minds of inferior quality: “the shaggy and rugged and gritty, or those who have an admixture of earth or dung in their composition, have the impressions indistinct, as also the hard, for there is no depth in them” (298,194b-194d). The mind, or soul, of a man can be too impure, too hard, too soft, or even too small for proper impression to take place and the result is that “such men are said to be deceived in their knowledge of objects, and ignorant" (298, 194e-195b). Socrates’ model of the mind as wax provides a means of explaining not only the possibility of knowledge and error, but also why some minds are more prone to error than others.

This is only one model of how the mind works presented by Socrates, however, and it is ultimately discarded. Socrates has no sooner offered up this claim about the nature of false opinion than he provides an example of error that cannot be understood through this model of the mind: arithmetic error. The wax mind can only confuse objects of perception, not objects of thought. Consequently it should be impossible to think that five and seven is eleven rather than twelve. The person who makes such a mistake knows both eleven and twelve, and thus “does think one thing which he knows to be another thing which he knows; but this, as we said, was impossible… because otherwise the same person would inevitably know and not know the same thing at the same time" (300, 196b-196c). To explain this kind of error, Socrates abandons the model of the mind as a block of wax and offers a second model for the mind. Instead of conceiving of the mind as a block of wax, he figures it as an aviary in which “the birds are kinds of knowledge" (302, 97e-197e). This aviary is empty when we are children and “whenever a man has gotten and detained in the enclosure a kind of knowledge, he may be said to have learned

or discovered the thing which is the subject of the knowledge: and this is to know" (302, 197e-197e). The analogy of the aviary allows Socrates to explain the difference between having knowledge and using it. He claims that while there is:

> … no case [in which] a man [can] not know that which he knows, but he may get a false opinion about it [for]… when the various numbers and forms of knowledge are flying about in the aviary, and wishing to capture a certain sort of knowledge out of the general store, he may take the wrong one by mistake. Thus it is that he may think eleven to be twelve, getting hold, as it were of the ring-dove which he had in his mind, when he wanted the pigeon. (304, 199a-199b)

Socrates solves the problem of abstract errors through his alternative model of the mind. Yet even this solution proves unsatisfactory to Socrates since it does not explain how a person could recognize his own false opinion.

Ultimately, Socrates refuses to resolve on any model. Yet as he rejects the aviary model, he recalls the model of the mind as wax, asking Theaetetus "will you proceed to tell me that there are other knowledges which know the types of knowledge and ignorance, and which the owner keeps in some other aviaries or graven on waxen blocks according to your foolish images, and which he may be said to know while he possesses them, even though he have them not at hand in his mind" (305, 200a-200c). While Socrates implies that such an extension of either model would be absurd, this pairing of the two together also could suggest that there is as much truth in the model of the mind as wax as there is in the model of the mind as aviary. Neither model is privileged, and no perfect model is offered in their place. Instead, the attempt to define knowledge fails. Socrates and Theaetetus agree that Socrates' "art show[s] that you have brought forth

wind, and that the offspring of your brain are not worth bringing up" (319, 210b-219b). The dialogue ends with an admission of failure rather than with any positive claims, except perhaps a claim about the power of Socrates' art and the power of conversation to rout out errors and explore the limits of knowledge.[9]

Despite the fact that Plato does not ultimately claim that wax is a satisfactory model of the mind, his formulation was very influential. Aristotle's treatment of the senses in *On the Soul* (*De Anima*) seems to build on this understanding of the mind, while avoiding the philosophical problems of error and knowledge. Aristotle explains that "generally about all perception, we can say that a sense is what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible form of things without the matter, in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron or gold" (674, 424a18-424a23). Like Plato, Aristotle is using wax as a model or analogy. He does not explicitly render the mind as wax. Instead he understands sense perception to work on the mind in just the way that a signet would work upon a block of wax. Yet Aristotle's insistence on the perfect symmetry between the two processes stands in stark contrast to the Platonic dialogue's refusal to adopt any model to explain perception. While there are clear echoes between Aristotle's description of sense perception and Plato's description of wax minds and memory formation, the Aristotelian use of the model comes much closer to being a claim of fact than the Platonic use does.

The Aristotelian engagement with wax is not limited to sense perception. He also uses wax to explain the relationship between body and soul and to help lay out the distinction between passion and action. In *On the Soul,* while discussing the relationship

[9] Still, there seems to be an implicit claim about the production of knowledge made throughout the piece by the trope of the midwife. From the very beginning of the dialogue, Socrates positions himself as a midwife attempting to aid Theaetetus in the birthing of his ideas and the determination of their worth.

of the soul to the body, Aristotle invokes wax to settle definitively the question of the unity of body and soul. He claims we "can dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one" because "it is as though we were to ask whether the wax and its shape are one, or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter. Unity has many senses (as many as 'is' has), but the proper one is that of actuality" (656, 412a27-412b9). For Aristotle, the body is material and the soul is form, or that "of which" body "is the matter" (656, 412a27-412b9). The two together are inseparable and intrinsically intertwined. They form a unity in which the material is actuality, the form potentiality, and both are required for each other.

Aristotle's choice of wax as an exemplary object seems to be rooted in special properties of wax. Yet, if we return to Aristotle's invocation of wax, we must still ask the question of whether wax allows us "to dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one?" When Aristotle arrives at a consideration of the "whole living body" he tells us the:

> … soul plus the body constitutes the animal. From this it is clear that the soul is inseparable from its body, or at least that certain parts of it are (if it has parts) – for the actuality of some of them is the actuality of the parts themselves. Yet some may be separable because they are not the actualities of any body at all. Further, we have no light on the problem whether the soul may not be the actuality of its body in the sense in which the sailor is the actuality of the ship. This must suffice as our sketch or outline of the nature of soul. (657, 412b25-413a3)

Aristotle leaves his discussion of the nature of the soul on a mark of uncertainty that is quite far from the claim that we can quickly dismiss the question of the unity of soul and

body. Instead, by the end of this section of *On the Soul*, Aristotle seems only to be comfortable in claiming that some part of the soul must be inseparable from the body, because some part of the soul consists in providing functionality to the various parts of the body – such as enabling the eye to see. The possibility that the relationship between soul and body might be more like that of sailor to ship than that of form to matter radically problematizes the relationship suggested by Aristotle's discussion of wax. However, in some ways, that relationship was problematized from the very beginning when Aristotle chose wax to exemplify it rather than a more stable and less complex object.

Wax's ability to model the mind, sense perception, the distinction between passive and active, and the relationship between body and soul, was explored further in philosophers that followed Plato and Aristotle. For example, Cicero's *Dialogue concerning Oratorical Partitions* (*De Partitiones Oratoriae*) gives voice to a theory of how memory connects to acts of writing. Cicero explains,*"*for as [writing] consists of the characters of letters, and of that substance on which those characters are impressed, so a perfect memory uses topics, as writing does wax, and on them arranges its images as if they were letters" (493). Here, Cicero explicitly makes memory an act of writing, and not simply impression, expanding on the Platonic and Aristotelian formulations of the mind. Similarly, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* his Pythagoras seems to respond to the Aristotelian association of wax with the question of the relationship between body and soul. For Ovid's Pythagoras, wax's malleability figures the capacity of the soul to take on many forms (bodies) and still remain the same:

As the pliant wax

Is stamped with new designs, and is no longer
What once it was, but changes form, and still
Is pliant wax, so do I teach that spirit
Is evermore the same, though passing always
To ever-changing bodies. (15.170-174)

This vision of the relationship between soul and body (and form and matter) is radically different from the Aristotelian version: whereas Aristotle holds that the soul and body are inextricable and, consequently, that the soul has no life outside the body, Pythagoras's soul is capable of taking on a plenitude of bodily forms. Still, both philosophers use wax to figure the tension between continuity and change. Wax also becomes, in Augustine, a material to model the trinity, and to conceptualize the relationship between the Old Testament and the New.[10] In deploying wax, Augustine invokes philosophical treatments of wax and the biblical claim that Christ's relationship to the Father can be understood through a metaphor of sealing: "for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6.27). In Augustine both of these traditions come together to theorize questions of religion.

When we take up Margaret Cavendish and René Descartes in chapter 2, we will look carefully at how they use wax to set their philosophies apart from scholastic philosophy. As we have just seen, wax has a long and complex philosophical history in which early modern thought plays a part. Further, the philosophical engagement with wax extends beyond the seventeenth century. In Freud's consideration of the mystic writing-pad and in Derrida's reading of Freud the traditional association of wax with the mind

[10] Augustine relates the trinity to wax in *The Trinity* (305-306). He figures the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament through wax in "Sermon 272b: On the Day of Pentecost" in *Sermons (230-272B) on the Liturgical Seasons,* (305).

continues to prove a compelling launching point for conceptualizing the mind. This project is in line with the ongoing interest in wax within philosophy.

7. Chapter Summaries

All of the contexts that I have outlined above, and will detail further below, are crucial to understanding how early modern literature engages with wax. In the chapters that follow I will explore the connections between art, writing, philosophy, and science as they are figured in wax. My first chapter, "Women and Wax: Metaphors of Impression, Possibilities of Agency in Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* and *Twelfth Night,*" takes up Shakespeare's association of female affective locations with wax materiality. Shakespeare plays off Aristotelian and Galenic philosophies of epistemology and reproduction to create a narrative of gender difference; at first this model seems to be as binary in nature as the Aristotelian distinction between passive and active. Hence, Shakespeare's figuration of women's hearts and minds as wax that can be imprinted by a masculine signet marks women as soft, malleable, and vulnerable to masculine impression, severely imperiling the possibilities of female agency. Yet, at the same time, in both *Rape of Lucrece* and *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare displaces the apparatus of signet and seal onto relationships between women. In *The Rape of Lucrece,* the narrator invokes the trope of signet/seal to explain the relationship between Lucrece and her maid, although it clearly testifies to Tarquin's rape of Lucrece. In *Twelfth Night,* Viola/Cesario employs the trope while lamenting the effect s/he has had on Olivia. These same-sex relationships include possibilities for mutual exchange and afford greater space for female agency than the metaphor of signet/seal initially suggests. By situating the trope in

these contexts, Shakespeare seems to play on the malleability inherent in wax, allowing his text to bend away from the rigid discourse of difference he explicitly narrates and leaving the relationships narrated by the metaphor of signet and seal open to renegotiation.

In my second chapter, "Wax Matters: Modeling Philosophy and Desire in the Seventeenth Century," I continue to investigate the trope of signet/seal around questions of relationships as figured in poetry and philosophy. In John Donne's depiction of Sappho's heart in "Sappho to Philaenis," he portrays Sappho's heart after it has been impressed and while it is melting. By taking up the heart as a melting waxy object, Donne is able to put forward a complex vision of the ramifications of erotic loss and the relationship such loss has to a sense of self. Sappho's melting wax heart imperils her project of seduction by imperiling her poetic voice. Moreover, once that voice is imperiled, it loses its "enchanting force" and its ability to work upon Philaenis's heart, to "draw" or inscribe the waxy surface of Philaenis's own heart. Thus Sappho is unable to use wax to draw Philaenis back through a kind of sympathetic magic. Similarly, Sappho's efforts to reconstitute the image in her heart also fail. In Donne's hands, the trope of signet/seal is re-imagined, but it does not give Sappho the power over Philaenis that she desires. Despite her best attempts to use wax as a basis of enchantment and seduction, it still represents Sappho's own powerlessness. While Sappho cannot find empowerment for women in wax, Margaret Cavendish does. In her *Philosophical Letters,* Cavendish re-imagines the underlying physics of the trope of signet/seal. Cavendish locates perception and self-motion in the wax and replaces impression with patterning. According to her philosophy, wax is not shaped by the pressure of a signet, but instead actively patterns it

out through its powers of self-motion and perception. Her physics implies that what is true of the wax would be true of all seemingly passive positions; thus it has connotations for gender relations. Finally, in the *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, Descartes explores relationships by calling their very existence into question. He considers wax alone without the signet, symbolically enacting the priority of the mind that dominates his epistemology. The solipsistic nature of Descartes' philosophy suggests that meaningful relationships of any kind, founded on gender difference or not, may be impossible. While each of these authors employs wax in different ways, they all find the material useful for exploring new models of the self and of relationships (or their lack).

In my third chapter, "Mimetic Wax: Truth, Deception, and the Art Object," I argue that mimetic wax forms epitomize the function of the early modern art object. Starting with aesthetic texts of the period including Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy,* Leon Battista Alberti's *On Painting,* Leonardo da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting,* and Vasari's *On Technique,* I claim that the art object is an in-between object that mediates between ideal forms and the reality of material existence. As such, the relationship of art to both nature and the realm of ideals can be modeled through wax. Moreover, wax is itself a material of art and artistic process. Since its forms can be temporary, wax can be used as in aid in working out artistic vision, bridging the gap between mental conception and finalized artwork. Looking at the description of the process of sculpting marble in Vasari's *On Technique,* as well as the techniques of Michelangelo and Tintoretto, I argue that wax offers an intermediary between mind and marble and between mind and oil. Further, when wax sculptures become art themselves, instead of part of the artistic process, they continue to serve as intermediary between body and corpse, life and death,

and art and nature as I show by looking at wax effigies and other forms of wax sculpture. Finally, I take up the wax figures in John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* and suggest that by embedding wax figures within the already aestheticized space of the stage Webster makes use of the liminal status of wax to question the relationship between these binary categories. Ultimately I suggest that wax sculpture's position on the margins of art, magic, even of science, makes it a privileged location for understanding what is at stake in artistic representation

Finally, chapter four, "Wax Walking: Supplementing and Supplanting the Human" explores prosthetics, automata, and the anxiety produced by the possibility that the world might not be peopled with people. Starting with Ovid's classical story of Icarus, whose wings are bound to his body with wax, I suggest that wax figures both the promise and limits of prosthetics. Wax's malleability and its ability to mimic human skin allow it to bridge the distance between the feathery wings and the boy's body. Yet when Icarus flies too high, the wax melts and he plunges to the ground. The very material that enables his flight also dooms it. In Ambroise Paré's *Oeuvres,* we can see the same sense of possibility and caution that we saw in Ovid, and wax continues to be a useful conceptual model for understanding early modern attitudes toward prosthetics. Moving from machines that might augment human bodies to machines that could pass for human, I take up the link between wax and fully-fledged automata in Descartes' *Meditations* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* where the true and false Florimell and the iron man Talus are my main concern. In both of these texts I look at how wax is used to figure both the possibility of human machines and humanity as machine. This chapter builds on the previous chapters, taking up such questions as how relationships are formed and come to

impact the self, how we know whether anyone outside ourselves is real, and what differentiates humans from representations as technologies of replication become increasingly sophisticated.

While each of these chapters covers very different territory, wax proves to be the common thread that brings them into conversation with each other. Descartes' simple imperative, "let us take…this piece of wax" opens a path of exploration that ultimately proves a compelling journey through literature, philosophy, art, and even into emergent technologies. It is a journey that twists and bends back on itself and finally suggests that the waxy connections that lead us from one text and discipline to the next model essential truths about how the early modern period works.

Chapter 1

Women and Wax: Metaphors of Impression, Possibilities of Agency in Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* and *Twelfth Night*

Within Shakespeare's canon, *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Twelfth Night* are spatially, temporally, and generically worlds apart. The first is a tragic narrative poem based on historical legend; the second a comic play set in fictional Illyria. As such, they share very little in terms of content. Moreover, these two works represent different moments in Shakespeare's career and have very different publication histories. Shakespeare wrote *The Rape of Lucrece* relatively early in his career and at a moment when the theaters were closed and his livelihood was threatened. As Nancy Vickers has argued, the poem was designed to showcase his poetic talents, win him patronage and establish him as a serious poet ("Blazon" 108-109). *Twelfth Night*, on the other hand, is believed to have been written around 1601, seven years after Shakespeare published *The Rape of Lucrece,* and well into his career as a playwright. Like so many other dramatic works of the day, *Twelfth Night* was conceived as a performance, not as a literary work, and was not published until after Shakespeare's death. When taken together all of these differences, of content, genre, and publication history, have prevented critics from discussing the two together, with very few exceptions.[11] Yet despite these differences, the two works resonate with each other through the figure of Lucrece, their association of women with

[11] Critics who have placed these two works in conversation have almost exclusively done so around the imagery of wax and the construction of gender. Edward Burns looks at the imagery of the house and the metaphor of signet/seal in both the poem and the play in his 1987 article, 'and Call Upon My Soul within the House': Rhetoric and Response in Twelfth Night." Ann Thompson and John O. Thompson note the gendered wax metaphors in both *Twelfth Night* and *The Rape of Lucrece* in "Meaning, 'Seeing', Printing." Margreta de Grazia gestures at connections between the two in "Imprints: Shakespeare, Gutenberg, and Descartes." Joel Fineman also mentions *Twelfth Night* in his discussion of *Rape of Lucrece* in "Shakespeare's *Will:* The Temporality of Rape."

wax, and their utilization of tropes of impression, particularly that of a signet ring being pressed into a wax seal.

The Lucrece who inhabits both works is, of course, Lucretia, the legendary Roman wife who is fabled to have plunged a dagger into her own breast in order to preserve her honor after being raped. As Ian Donaldson chronicles in *The Rapes of Lucretia,* the story of Lucretia was told and retold in ancient, medieval, and renaissance texts and paintings. In these texts and images, we find significant variation in the details of the story and the moral lessons to be learned from it. According to Donaldson, Lucretia's suicide is often presented in these texts as "a moral triumph, an act that establishes her superiority not merely to her fate and ravisher, but also to her husband Collantinus" (12). Lucretia stands as a model of female chastity and virtue, an example to be admired, if not emulated. Yet this reading of Lucretia's suicide is contested by Augustine's claim in *The City of God* that Lucretia committed a crime in killing herself. For Augustine, since Lucretia is not guilty of adultery, she does not deserve death. Thus when "Lucretia…who is so celebrated… slew the innocent and chaste Lucretia, who had, moreover, suffered violence," she committed homicide (30).[12] After Augustine, many Christian scholars argued that Lucretia's suicide was a sin of pride, motivated by her shame. Others argued that Roman values and standards, rather than Christian ones should be used to judge Lucretia (Donaldson 30-39). Thus before Shakespeare ever mentions Lucrece, she was already a contested figure, and "a theme for disputation" (line 822).

Shakespeare wades into these muddied waters with his *Rape of Lucrece,* originally titled simply *Lucrece* (Kahn 46). The short original title signals the main focus

[12] For a thorough discussion of Augustine's treatment of Lucrece, see Donaldson 21-39.

of the poem, which devotes considerable space to detailing the aftermath of Lucrece's rape, while almost eliding the rape itself. The rape occupies only a few short lines and is masked in metaphor: "The wolf hath seized his prey, the poor lamb cries, / Till with her own white fleece her voice controlled / Entombs her outcry in her lips sweet fold" (677-79). Here the penetration of Lucrece's lips by her bedclothes doubles for the penetration of her vagina. The remainder of the poem, which stretches on for more than one thousand lines, deals with Lucrece's response to the rape. Yet while Shakespeare devotes considerable attention to Lucrece, what he wants us to make of her is hard to discern. As Donaldson argues Shakespeare never makes clear the moral compass with which we are supposed to judge Lucrece, seeming to vacillate between Roman and Christian ethical codes. Thus, while Shakespeare's Lucrece's "interior world of shifting doubts, hesitations, anxieties, anticipations and griefs" is laid open for the reader to see, these very uncertainties "[introduce] a fatal element of moral uncertainty into the poem itself" (Donaldson 44). Shakespeare takes the debate over Lucrece's suicide and embeds it within his poem, but chooses not to take a side or even define the terms upon which Lucrece should be judged.

Alongside this considerably developed, although interpretatively challenging Lucrece, I want to place the Lucrece of *Twelfth Night.* Lucrece enters *Twelfth Night* as an impression, quite literally. Her form imprinted on a piece of wax constitutes the seal of the letter Malvolio finds and allows him to (mis)-recognize Olivia as the author of the missive. While, as I have already noted, there was considerable debate over the morality of Lucrece's suicide during the early modern period, Olivia's choice of Lucrece as her signet suggests that Olivia consciously and positively identifies with Lucrece. Thus for

Olivia, at least, Lucrece represents virtue rather than sin. Olivia's choice of Lucrece as her impressure invites critical analysis, especially since, given the artistic conventions of the time, the pictorial representation of Lucrece would have depicted her at the moment of her suicide.[13] It is tempting to see Olivia's choice as evidence of Olivia's understanding of the duty a woman owes to the men in her life or to see the image as proof of Olivia's finely wrought sense of dramatic self-sacrifice evinced by her own method of mourning her father and brother.

While such investigations might be illuminating, I want to focus instead on the figure of the wax seal itself, or rather what it means to figure Lucrece or Olivia or any other woman as a wax impression or seal. As Margreta de Grazia notes Malvolio's discovery of the letter and (mis)-recognition of the seal is a sexually charged moment in which the epistolary seal stands in for the female body, which is "sealed in two states: virginity and chastity" (de Grazia 42). When Malvolio breaks the seal moments after finding the letter, he is metaphorically penetrating both Olivia and Lucrece. Moreover, Malvolio's act recalls and revisits the tragic history depicted in the image. Thus Lucrece exists in *Twelfth Night* as only a transitory image. No sooner witnessed than broken, she functions as a specter of the tragedy and violence of rape in a play that seems to flirt constantly with darker possibilities than those it stages. At the same time, she serves as a figure of writing, a symbol of the power and limits of representation. Yet while Lucrece enters *Twelfth Night* as a wax image, she is not the only waxy woman to inhabit Illyria. Nor is this image of her pressed on the body of wax incongruent with the metaphorics of

[13] Sixteenth century paintings and illustrations of Lucretia tend to show either her rape or her suicide. Since Olivia's impressure is "her Lucrece" the latter is more likely. Examples of portraits of Lucretia that show her committing suicide include Albrecht Dürer's *The Suicide of Lucretia,* 1508, Lucas Cranach's multiple depictions of Lucretia such as *Lucretia, c.1524,* and *Lucretia,* 1533, and Veronese's *Lucretia,* 1580-85.

The Rape of Lucrece. Instead in both of these works Shakespeare attaches the trope of signet/seal to relationships between men and women by figuring women as soft, malleable wax, easily molded by the men in their life.

1. Tragic Impressions

The formation of a seal depends on the material difference between the signet and the wax. The signet ring's hardness allows it to act upon the wax, and the wax's malleability along with its capacity to phase change from liquid to solid, from malleable to hard allows it to be imprinted. The resulting image serves simultaneously as a copy and inversion of that located on the surface of the ring or stamp. At the same time, the signet ring itself is unchanged. Thus the relationship between signet and seal is one governed by binary difference in which one object dominates the other. Such a narrative of difference is at work in *The Rape of Lucrece,* when the narrator claims that all women have waxen minds and suggests that waxiness has detrimental effects on female agency and power and again in *Twelfth Night* when Viola/Cesario uses the metaphor to explain Olivia's sudden infatuation. In both cases, Shakespeare's association of women with wax seems to testify to feminine weakness and vulnerability.

Yet when we press harder on these moments, we find that Shakespeare's association of women with wax is not as easily readable as it first appears. Just as Malvolio makes a mistake in reading the impressure of Lucrece as definitive evidence that Olivia has written the letter, so too we would make a mistake to stop at a narrative of male power and female weakness, of absolute and all-encompassing gender difference. If we examine wax more closely we can see that the same physical qualities that make wax

susceptible to impression, also challenge the stability of the relationships narrated by the interplay of wax and signet ring. Since wax is malleable, the application of heat or pressure can change the wax and partially or fully efface the image inscribed upon it. Constantly changeable, the relationship wax bears to any form is tenuous. As a result, the possibility of change and erasure are embodied in the act of image creation allowing the metaphor to act doubly -- at one moment creating relationships based on the binary differences of hard and soft, rigid and malleable, and at the next calling those same binaries into question. In both *Twelfth Night* and *The Rape of Lucrece,* Shakespeare makes use of this doubleness by displacing the metaphor onto relations between women. These displacements destabilize and queer the binaries of active and passive, dominant and submissive, hard and soft, which mobilize the trope. By mapping the trope onto relations between women, Shakespeare suggests that neither the trope nor the relations described by the trope are as straightforward as they might appear. Shakespeare's manipulation of the trope, his re-molding of language to make it speak new narratives of power and relationality, suggests that the materiality of metaphors matters -- the malleability of wax leaves the relationships narrated by the metaphor of signet and seal open to renegotiation.

To fully understand how Shakespeare uses wax's malleability to provide an alternative narrative for gender relations, we must place the trope of signet/seal in its philosophical context. As de Grazia has shown, the creation of an image by pressing a signet ring onto a piece of wax provided a model for both epistemology and sexual reproduction from classical times through the Renaissance (30-44). Shakespeare's association of the female body and mind with wax engages with both of these

philosophical traditions, even as it ultimately creates its own narrative concerning the female mind. Shakespeare's women are figured as having waxen minds, but the association of wax with cognition and knowledge production is not limited to women. In the realm of epistemology, the trope of signet/seal has modeled the production of knowledge since Plato's *Theaetetus,* which figures all minds as wax. In the *Theaetetus,* Socrates tells Theaetetus to "imagine... that there exists in the mind of man a block of wax, which is of different sizes in different men; harder, moister, and having more or less purity in one than another, and in some of an intermediate quality" (294, 191c-191d) This block of wax functions as a tablet on which memories can be imprinted, "as from the seal of a ring" (294, 191d-191e) By figuring the mind as wax, and treating all external stimuli as "the seal of the ring," Socrates provides a model for how the outside world is internalized. In this model, the mind is passive and acted upon by outside forces[14]. Plato is not alone in using wax to model knowledge production, in Aristotle's *de Anima,* he uses wax to explain sense perception and we can trace the model all the way through to Shakespeare's time.[15] Thus, in Roger Ascham's "The Schoolmaster" (1570), he explains that young children are best able to learn because "the pure cleane witte of a sweete yong babe, is like the newest wax, most hable to receiue the best and fayrest printing: and like a new bright siluer dish never occupied, to receiue and kepe cleane anie good thyng that is put into it" (200).

Shakespeare's choice to associate the mind with wax draws on a long philosophical tradition that was still very much current in his day. However, in

---

[14] As we saw in the Introduction, the dialogue moves on from this model of the mind, yet the model was still transmitted through the early modern period.

[15] De Grazia traces the model of signet/seal from Plato and Aristotle through Shakespeare and Descartes. See 30-31.

Shakespeare, while metaphors of impression are applied to explain how men and women alike are influenced and shaped by powerful figures, the female mind alone is figured as wax.[16] The association of the female mind with wax suggests that Shakespeare theorized it as fundamentally different from the male mind, and perhaps inferior to it. In the history of epistemology, there is nothing to explain this insistence on gender difference. However, if we turn to theories of reproduction and gender difference, we can better understand why Shakespeare associates women with wax. Like Socrates' epistemological model, the Aristotelian model of reproduction uses the metaphor of signet / seal. This time the model explicitly genders the "two parts of the apparatus... the form-giving seal [is] male and the form-receiving wax female" (de Grazia 32) Conception occurs when "the male bearing down on the female [leaves] a foetal imprint" (de Grazia 32). Like the epistemological model the reproductive model depends on material difference to explain how form and matter combine. Yet while the epistemological model imagines the difference in materiality to exist between the mind and all external influences, the reproductive model locates that material difference in sexual difference. Impression can occur because female bodies are fundamentally and materially different than male bodies.

Shakespeare's association of women with wax seems to follow from this Aristotelian schema. Yet, it is important to note that Aristotle himself does not actually extend sexual difference beyond the reproductive organs and into the psyche in a

[16] For example, in *Measure for Measure* when Angelo is about to take on the Duke's power and become temporary ruler of Vienna, he declaims, "Let there be some more test made of my metal / Before so noble and so great a figure / Be stamped upon it" (1.1.48-50). Angelo imagines the transference of power in terms of impression, but he sees himself as metal, not wax. In the same play, Isabella complains that women are "ten times frail, / For we are soft as our complexions are, / And credulous to false prints" (2.4.128-29). While Isabella does not explicitly associate women with wax, there are clear parallels between Isabella's assertion about women and that of the narrator in *Rape of Lucrece*.

systematic way.[17] Moreover, as Marguerite Deslauriers has argued in "Sexual Difference in Aristotle's *Politics* and His Biology," while Aristotle certainly sees men and women as different politically as well as biologically, he does not provide a clear link between the two. In fact, Deslauriers suggests that for Aristotle matter does not and cannot determine form. Thus material differences between men and women cannot cause differences in cognitive capacities (Deslaurier 224). If we are looking for a connection between bodies and minds we have to look not to Aristotle but to Galen and most accurately to the many popular tracts inspired by Galen's humoral theories. While Galen's theory of reproduction does not perfectly align with the model of signet/seal, Galen understands women to be physiologically different from men because of their dominant humors: coldness and wetness.[18] Moreover, for Galen the female humoral constitution has real consequence for female bodies and minds. Still, as Ian Maclean notes, Galen was hesitant to take the connection between physiology and psychology too far (43). Despite Galen's hesitation, the popular literature of the Renaissance was all too happy to connect bodies and minds. As Gale Paster explains, when John Selden remarked in 1614 that "the Minds inclination follows the Bodies Temperature," he was giving voice to an accepted Galenic view: sexual difference with regard to bodily temperature had real consequences for the mind (b4). Thus, in the popular imagination of the Renaissance, if not in the medical texts themselves, "the coldness and sponginess of female flesh, relative to the flesh of men,

---

[17] Aristotle does claim in *The History of Animals,* 608a19-608a29, that "In all genera in which the distinction of male and female is found, Nature makes a similar differentiation in the characteristics of the sexes" but he does not systematically explain those differences or link the bodily biological differences to the mental ones. For more discussion, see Ian Maclean, esp. 40.

[18] Galen's model differs from Aristotle's in that it is a two seed model, meaning that both men and women contribute seed in the formation of a child. Since both men and women contribute seed, and consequently play similar roles in reproduction, Galen's philosophy of reproduction does not map on to the trope of signet/seal as straightforwardly as Aristotle's reproductive philosophy does.

become traits of great ethical consequence by explaining the sex's limited capacity for productive agency, individuality and higher reason" (Paster 79). Humoral theories of sex difference combined with epistemological models that equate the mind with wax together provide a philosophical basis for Shakespeare's association of women's minds with wax.[19]

Yet as we saw in the Introduction, texts that take up the medical uses of wax stress that wax has an in-between nature in it humoral constitution. In the beekeeping tract of Charles Butler, wax is described as having "no certain elementar qualities;" instead, it "is a meane betweene … hot and cold, and betweene dry and moist" (Butler M5 recto and verso). This humoral in-betweenness suggests that the association of women with wax would destabilize narratives of sexual difference at the elemental level, since wax refuses to occupy one half of either set of humoral binaries. Thus, natural philosophy provides not only an association of women with wax that fuels narratives of sexual difference, but also starts to suggest how those narrative might be unmade. Just as we will see, Shakespeare's *Lucrece* narrates sexual difference and simultaneously destabilizes that narrative.

Of course, one of the questions of this piece is whether or not Shakespeare deals with sexual difference per se, or whether his works instead deal primarily with gender difference. Or to put it differently, to what degree does Shakespeare attribute differences between men and women to biology or nature, and to what degree are those differences a matter of social and political conditioning. We normally discuss Shakespeare in terms of gender difference because society seems inextricably involved in the construction of the

[19] I am not arguing that Shakespeare had thorough knowledge or either Galen or Aristotle, but rather that he would have been familiar in some form with their thought, and that in his treatment of sexual difference we can see the influence of both philosophers.

individual. Shakespeare's association of women with wax seems to speak to a more innate sexual difference because it suggests a material difference between the constitution of men and women. Yet looking at *A Midsummer's Night Dream* we can see that even this material difference might have a cultural component. At the beginning of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* when Hermia refuses to conform to her father's wishes and marry Demetrius, Theseus admonishes her, telling her that:

> To you your father should be as a god,
> One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
> To whom you are but as a form in wax,
> By him imprinted, and within his power
> To leave the figure or disfigure it. (1.1.46-51)

In this speech, Theseus prescribes what he sees as the right relationship between a daughter and a father. He admonishes Hermia for refusing to accede to her father's wishes and exhorts her to remember that her father is responsible for her creation. She should be "as a form of wax" and conform herself to his desires. While this passage associates Hermia with wax, Theseus's use of "should" highlights that feminine softness and malleability is an ideal, one that Hermia does not embody, at least not as manifested in her relationship with her father. Theseus's figuration of a father/daughter relationship exists as nothing more than a prescription. The state may give Egeus the power of life and death over his daughter, but she retains a choice in how she reacts to his wishes and is mistress of her own desires. Indeed throughout the play, Hermia's desire for Lysander remains constant, despite the considerable pressure applied by outside and even magical forces. Thus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* we can safely claim female waxiness as a

gender role, not a matter of inescapable biological sexual difference. While Hermia is chastised for "stubborn harshness," she has the ability to resist the pressure exerted on her to marry Demetrius.

In *The Rape of Lucrece,* Shakespeare's association of women with wax seems more intrinsic than it does in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. When Shakespeare declares, "men have marble, women waxen minds" he is not offering a prescription, but instead claiming difference as inherent (1240). In a poem that constantly defines its two protagonists, Lucrece and Tarquin, in opposition to each other, Shakespeare's emphasis on difference is hardly exceptional.[20] However, Shakespeare's assertion that "men have marble, women waxen minds" goes further by universalizing difference and attaching it not to Lucrece or Tarquin as individuals, but to the genders (or the sexes) as a whole. Moreover, whether that difference is biologically or culturally constructed, it does not seem possible for either the men or women of the poem to refuse to be like marble or wax. Perhaps they are merely falling victim to what Katherine Maus has identified as "the dangers of metaphor" in the poem. Maus claims "both protagonists construe particular metaphors as if they were literally true, drawing unwarranted conclusions from them, and that the narrative voice displays the same literalizing tendencies" (66). While Shakespeare's comparison of women to wax and men to marble may be mere metaphor, the philosophical significance of the trope makes it both more dangerous and more appropriate to take the assertion as true, if not quite perhaps literally so.

---

[20] Sarah Quay notes in "'Lucrece the Chaste': The Construction of Rape in Shakespeare's the Rape of Lucrece," *Modern Language Studies* 25, no. 2 (1995), that the poem progresses through binary oppositions: Lucrece is "'saint' to Tarquin's 'devil' (85), 'dove' to his stalking 'night owl' (360)… 'doe' (581) to his 'woodman'(580)" (7).

If we look at the lines surrounding this assertion of difference, we find that there are consequences for these material constitutions. At the same time, by looking carefully at the context of the digression and how it resonates with other moments in the poem, we can see that Shakespeare's association of women with wax here is not as limiting to female agency or to the possibilities of beneficial cross-sex relations as it first appears. After asserting the material difference between men and women, the narrator continues:

> And therefore are they formed as marble will;
> The weak oppressed, th' impression of strange kinds
> Is formed in them by force, by fraud, or skill.
> Then call them not the authors of their ill
> No more than wax shall be accounted evil
> Wherein is stamped the semblance of a devil. (1241-46)

The conjunctive adverb "therefore" suggests that the impression of women by men logically follows from their materiality and the violence of the language of "force" and "oppression" makes it clear that such impressions violate women. Indeed, the impression of female minds here seems tantamount to rape, a possibility that is strengthened by the reproductive resonances of the stamping metaphor and the violence of impression, which work to metaphorically revisit Tarquin's rape of Lucrece. Additionally, Shakespeare's association of women with wax recalls the only other wax object of the poem: the torch that Tarquin lights to serve as "lodestar to his lustful eye," on his way to Lucrece's bedchamber (179). This torch doubles for Lucrece, a connection Tarquin makes explicit when he lights the torch and proclaims, "'As from this cold flint I enforced this fire, / So Lucrece must I force to my desire" (181-82). Like the torch, Lucrece is a body to be

forced, and a body whose softness and malleability makes force effective. Moreover, as this passage suggests, the same is true of her mind.

By aligning women's minds with wax, the narrator effectively excuses Lucrece from any blame for the rape or its aftermath. Even if Lucrece experiences desire or pleasure in the sexual act, her mind's waxy nature is to blame. Tarquin's forceful act shapes her womb and her mind, affecting her emotions, desires, thoughts and perception. Presumably her waxy mind, which functions as an affective location, can be forced to flame like the torch. If desire can be forced, then her womb can also be forced to take on Tarquin's impression. Consequently, conception cannot serve as proof that Lucrece is at fault in the rape.[21] Yet while the narrator's assertion that women's minds are made of wax excuses Lucrece, it does so at a significant cost to possibilities for female agency and self-determination. By making both women's weakness and the manipulation of that weakness by men material, Shakespeare lends violent impression a certain inevitability and naturalness. If Lucrece cannot be held responsible for her actions, is she capable of agential action?

The problem of agency becomes more insidious when we consider, once again, the metaphor in play. The trope of signet/seal not only provides a model of the physical and mental impact of Tarquin's rape on Lucrece, but also seems to normalize that relationship. After all, the material interaction of wax and marble always proceeds along predictable and seemingly innocuous terms. Consider: when a signet ring is pressed into wax to form a seal, the wax always takes on the shape of the ring because of the material difference between them. Furthermore, the cultural connotations of imprinting wax also

[21] In early modern legal and medical texts, conception on the part of a rape victim was often taken as a sign of consent. See for example, Barbara J. Baines, "Effacing Rape in Early Modern Representation."

work to normalize the exchange between Tarquin and Lucrece. Sealing letters, for example, is a daily, mechanical, and completely unobjectionable act. Even if we think of the philosophical connotations of imprinting wax, we are left with reproductive and epistemological reproduction, two acts that are inextricably entwined in being human and intrinsically harmless. Thus when the trope of signet/seal is used to speak about rape, its association with commonplace and innocuous acts starts to suggest that, “rape is hardly outrageous; it is almost the nature of things" (Maus 75). Thus not only does the vulnerability of women seems to be a matter of innate sexual difference here, but the exploitation of that vulnerability seems both expected and natural.

Yet the passage is far more complicated than such a reading allows. First, while the conjunctive adverb “therefore” suggests logical inference, it might not carry the full weight of causality suggested above. The material constitution of men and women’s minds makes violent impression likely, but not inevitable. If we think again about the exchange between marble and wax, we can see that the mere existence of a marble stamp and a piece of wax does not necessitate impression. The two need never come into contact, and if they do, that contact need not be forceful. Moreover, while such force might be a daily part of life, Shakespeare’s passage reminds us that the frequency of an act does not affect its morality. As already discussed, the narrative digression makes the immorality of the mental impression of women clear through its language of violence and oppression. By combining that discourse with the normalizing trope of signet and seal, Shakespeare’s passage reminds us that an act can both seem natural and be depraved. Oppression and violation are not always easily visible as such and can appear both normal and inevitable. Furthermore, while Shakespeare seems to be suggesting that

female vulnerability is intrinsic, he also makes it clear that such vulnerability need not be exploited. Just because marble is always capable of impressing wax, does not mean that it has to do so.

So far, I have shown that Shakespeare's association of women with wax and men with marble suggests intrinsic differences between the sexes and renders women as soft, vulnerable, weak, and subject to dominating impression. While Shakespeare seems critical of oppressive relationships arising out of these sexual differences, he does not seem to question the differences themselves. Yet, if we look more closely at the context of the narrative digression, we can see that the association of Lucrece with wax and malleability does not merely narrate feminine weakness, but also suggests possibilities of flexibility and change. While these valences do not seem at first glance to be at work in a passage that emphasizes "weak[ness]" and "oppress[ion]," when we look carefully at the context of this narrative digression we find space for female power and agency. The girl and her tears disrupt the discourse of rigid and absolute difference. As previously noted, the maid's sympathetic response to Lucrece's grief inspires the digression and is supposedly explained by it. The girl finds Lucrece crying, and without knowing the cause of her sorrow, mirrors it. Her tears are "enforced by sympathy / Of those fair suns set in her mistress' sky" (1229-30). According to the narrator, the maid cries because she is a woman, and "Their gentle sex to weep are often willing, / Grieving themselves to guess at others' smarts, / And then they drown their eyes or break their hearts" (1238-40). It is at this moment that the narrator offers up the stanza that begins, "for men have marble, women waxen minds," as though sexual difference provides some explanation for the maid's tears.

The strange placement of the rant on female weakness in and around Lucrece's maid's tears is in itself an exercise in malleability. The meaning of the lines bends to accommodate the same-sex exchange of Lucrece and her maid: Lucrece, by virtue of her class status and emotional gravitas comes to occupy the position of the signet, while her maid becomes the subject being impressed. By the logic of the trope, Lucrece occupies the masculine position -- she is no longer weak and passive. Instead, she possesses the ability to affect and influence others. Since the lines are used to narrate a relationship between women, the rigid sexual difference narrated in the trope is disrupted. At the same time, the lines bend the narrative away from this sympathetic exchange and back to the rape of Lucrece. The language of force and oppression recalls and revisits the moment of Lucrece's violation. The poem folds back on itself and these two moments of impression are fused together. To a degree, this fusion suggests that the relationship between Lucrece and her maid is as oppressive as that between Tarquin and Lucrece. Perhaps the class difference between the two women creates a similar power difference to that attributed to the sexual difference between Tarquin and Lucrece. Certainly, the rhetoric of stamping and impressing does not exclusively pertain to the relationship between Tarquin and Lucrece. Several stanzas after the apology for women, the narrator names the maid a “poor counterfeit of [Lucrece’s] complaining" (1269). For the maid to be a “counterfeit” she must, like Lucrece, be impressed and that impression must be fundamentally constraining. Moreover, since counterfeit coins were made of inferior metals, the figure of the “counterfeit” serves to emphasize the class difference between the two women. By figuring that class difference as material and implying a relationship of stamping and

impression, Shakespeare suggests that the relationship between Lucrece and her maid is governed by difference and shares in the violence of impression.

If we look at the metaphorics of this part of the poem, we can see that Shakespeare does not figure the two women as equals nor is their interaction one of mutual exchange. The vectors of force seem to run primarily from Lucrece to the maid, as evinced by Shakespeare's use of cosmological metaphors to describe their relationship. Shakespeare compares Lucrece's eyes to suns and the maid's eyes to flowers, emphasizing the difference in magnitude between the two displays of emotion (1226-32). Simultaneously, he makes clear the degree to which the maid's tears are a response to Lucrece's. The setting of those suns "makes the maid weep" (1232), rather than whatever causes the suns themselves to set, presumably Tarquin's rape of Lucrece. By positioning Lucrece's eyes as suns, Shakespeare suggests that they form the center of the maid's universe, and that she weeps in response to their movement, just as presumably her mistress's needs and desires form the center of the maid's life of service. The class difference between Lucrece and her maid heightens the degree to which the maid is susceptible to Lucrece's sorrow. At the same time, the metaphorical deployment of flowers and suns seriously problematizes the possibility that the maid might have the power to similarly move Lucrece. Like the relationship between Tarquin and Lucrece the power seems to be concentrated in one half of the pairing.

However, while there are similarities in how Shakespeare figures the two relationships, he devotes considerable attention to differentiating between the way Tarquin impresses Lucrece and the way that Lucrece impresses her maid. The two moments do not seem to be connected in order to show that they are identical. Instead,

the relationship between Lucrece and her maid seems to offer an alternative possibility for how one individual could influence another in a schema that while not entirely divorced from power difference is also not fundamentally evil or abusive. A major difference between Tarquin's act and Lucrece's seems to be intention. Unlike Tarquin, Lucrece does not purposefully affect her maid “by force, by fraud or skill” (1243); instead, her maid’s grief is an unsought effect of her own sorrow, as evinced by Lucrece’s reaction to her maid’s tears. Lucrece admonishes, “if thou dost weep for grief of my sustaining, / Know, gentle wench, it small avails my mood. / If tears could help, mine own would do me good” (1272-74). Far from desiring her maid's tears, Lucrece scolds her for them.

Indeed, it is possible to see the maid as the active agent in this exchange. As David Marshall notes in his study of eighteenth texts, sympathy can be theorized as an imaginative act: “since we cannot know the experience or sentiments of another person, we must represent in our imagination copies of the sentiments that we ourselves feel as we imagine ourselves in someone else’s place and person" (5). If sympathy does work through imagination, then the maid, as the imagining agent bears the responsibility of impression. Shakespeare seems to suggest as much when the narrator explains that “their gentle sex to weep are often willing; / Grieving themselves to guess at others’ smarts, / And then they drown their eyes or break their hearts” (1239-40). In these lines the maid’s tears seem to become an act of will and imagination. She “guess[es]” at Lucrece’s “smarts” and suffers for it. In these lines Shakespeare almost seems to be suggesting that sympathy is a futile act of the imagination that only leads to self-inflicted pain and suffering.

Yet Shakespeare's treatment of sympathy is not quite so simple. First, he never fully moves away from the narrative of force embedded in the signet/seal model, even though he explicitly attaches responsibility for that force to "sympathy" rather than Lucrece (1229). Since the maid is "enforced" she does not seem, after all, to be the active agent responsible for impression, or at least she does not seem to be solely responsible. Instead, Shakespeare seems to turn to sympathy here precisely because sympathy is a force that can work through the "conformity of feelings, inclination or temperament," and depends on an "agreement in qualities, likeness, conformity, [or] correspondence." Where such similarity exists, objects (or people) can be "similarly or correspondingly affected by the same influence, affect or influence one another… or attract or tend towards each other" (OED, s.v. "sympathy") Despite their differences in class and situation, Lucrece and her maid share a sex, and are, on the basis of that sex, equally vulnerable to the violence of rape. Lucrece moves her maid to tears by the force of similarity and shared materiality rather than her difference. Since sympathy works through similarity and has transformative force it seems to offer an alternative model of force from that described by the interaction of signet and seal.

Moreover, if that force works not through an imaginative act of identification but through an actual exertion of pressure, than sympathy seems to offer, at least potentially "a transport that would transcend the distance and difference between people" (Marshall 5). We can begin to see the collapse of such distance if we press harder on the lines quoted above. The narrator claims that the result of sympathy is violent suffering, first women imagine others' hardships, "then they drown their eyes or break their hearts." The most straightforward reading of this line is that the sympathizers hurt themselves through

a fundamentally imaginative act. However, the pronouns are quite ambiguous, raising the question who exactly is being hurt, and by whom? This ambiguity illustrates a collapse in the distance between subjects that might be intrinsic to the model of sympathy and marks it as different from the model offered by the trope of signet/seal. The very similarities between subjects that give sympathy force also seem to threaten a loss of individuality, and dissolution of difference that threatens the integrity of the self. Imagine two soft impressible bodies, two pieces of tempered wax being pressed or pressing into each other. The result of such an interaction could be nothing other than a union that would erase difference and bodily integrity.

Yet, as I have already shown, Lucrece and her maid are not figured as equally impressible. Lucrece is the sun to her maid's flowers. Their relationship does not seem to map well onto either the signet/seal model or the model of soft wax forms that I have just relayed. Instead, their relationship shares certain features with both. It might be more precisely figured by a third alternative, an intermediate possibility made possible because wax is not uniformly soft and malleable. Instead, it can also be melted or allowed to harden. If we imagine a piece of hard wax being used like a stamp on a piece of softened wax, we might come closer to the truth of Lucrece's relationship with her maid. Such an exchange would create an impression while simultaneously affecting the form of the wax body acting as stamp, albeit more subtly than if both wax bodies were soft. We can imagine parts of the soft wax adhering to the firmer wax, yet fundamentally the two bodies would remain more distinct than if two soft pieces of wax were pressed together. This model occupies a middle ground and allows for the possibility of exchange while retaining difference.

I am not trying to say that Shakespeare understands the relationship between Lucrece and her maid as being like the interaction of a hard wax form with a softer one. There is no evidence that Shakespeare has such a model in mind at this moment. However, the model seems useful for figuring the middle ground their relationship seems to occupy. In Lucrece's reaction to her maid, we can see some evidence that both women are affected by the sympathetic exchange. While the girl is most likely more affected, Lucrece seems to feel threatened by the maid's sympathetic response. Lucrece admonishes the maid for her tears and explains that she does not want to relay her grief to her, as:

> The repetition cannot make it less;
> For more it is than I can well express:
> And that deep torture may be called a hell
> When more is felt than one hath power to tell. (1285-1288)

Embedded in these lines is the possibility that if Lucrece only had the words to convey her sorrow, repetition would be able to help. Since the maid herself provides another possibility of repetition, Lucrece's speech seems to speak doubly to the possibility of a verbal recital and the visual repetition offered by the maid's tears. Without attempting to tell her story, Lucrece rejects the possibility that language can fully express her sorrow, and the possibility that on hearing what has happened to her, the maid could provide a more genuine reflection of her pain. Perhaps Lucrece is right that both would prove fundamentally inadequate. However, her quick rejection of the possibility seems to suggest that she fears that "repetition" *can* "make it less" and that the maid's tears will take something from her. If that is the case, there is power in the maid's position and in

the possibility of repetition and reflection that she offers. Moreover, even if Lucrece is right, and an imperfect or incomplete repetition results in a "deep torture," the maid still has power, albeit only the power to hurt. Since both Lucrece and her maid are capable of affecting each other, we have a version of relationality that is significantly different from that of the marble signet and wax seal.

If we step back from Lucrece and her maid, the question becomes whether sympathy is a mode available to other relationships in this poem, and whether sympathetic exchange is limited to women or to members of the same gender, or whether it is a mode available for cross-gender relationships. If men's minds are marble to women's wax, is there any possibility of malleability available for men? While pieces of wax can affect another and be affected in return, the same mutuality does not seem to be available to an exchange between marble and wax or to an exchange between two marbles. Smashing two marbles together might result in damage to one or both, but marbles, unlike pieces of wax, cannot combine with each other. The difference, of course, is a matter of material. Unlike wax, marble is not easily transformed. Yet despite its material intransigence, Shakespeare's poem reminds us that marble can be changed without the application of violent brute force. When Tarquin surprises Lucrece in her bedchamber, she implores him to leave her honor intact. She exhorts, "If no harder than a stone thou art / Melt at my tears and be compassionate / Soft pity enters at an iron gate" (593-95) Lucrece's appeal to Tarquin depends on the fact that as hard as stone may be, it can be softened, worn down, and shaped by water. In Sonnet 55, Shakespeare capitalizes on the susceptibility of stone to erosion, when he proclaims, "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme." Lucrece, playing off the

same material qualities, suggests that Tarquin's hardness does not preclude the possibility for pity, and that her verbal appeal should have the power to penetrate his will. Lucrece's appeal also suggests that Tarquin's hardness is in excess of his gender. Even if men's minds are marble, marble is only stone and stone can still be moved by water. When her appeal fails, the fault seems to lie in Tarquin's impenetrability as an individual rather than as a man. He may indeed be "harder than a stone," harder than the "marble" of other men and thus not susceptible to the call of pity. Since he is not swayed by his allegiance to any "holy human law" or "common troth," it may be that he has gone beyond the hardness of his sex and betrayed his own humanity (571).

Sympathy and pity are alternative modes of relationality to the mental rape described using the trope of signet/seal. Since they allow for the possibility of shared affect and power in the passive position, they are modes that contain more possibility for female agency, and mutuality, and consequently destabilize the suggestion that oppression is natural or that all male influence on women must be conceived as the irresistible pressure of hard upon soft. If sympathy can occur between two women, in the interaction of two waxen minds or two waxen hearts, then the binary of wax and marble no longer applies. Moreover, if pity offers an avenue for the softening of men, then it is possible to conceive of other models for male/female interaction, models that afford more power to softness and malleability. It may not be possible to imagine an erasure of gender or power difference, but the poem opens up the possibility that gender difference exists on a continuum and that relationships between men and women can take multiple forms.

Yet while the poem offers alternatives to the relationship of force and violence that is explicitly attached to the signet/seal trope, those alternatives are not realized within

the poem. Tarquin does not soften. He rapes Lucrece, and she perceives that impression as both permanent and totalizing. However, even after being raped, Lucrece retains some power that can be located through the trope of marble signet and wax seal. She retains the power of a written text. The trope of signet/seal works as a model for reproduction (both biological and epistemological) because of its connection to writing: a teacher can inscribe his knowledge onto the mind of a student; a man can imprint his image onto the womb of a woman. Moreover, while affixing a seal to a letter may have limited discursive possibilities, the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century made stamping a viable form of writing by mechanizing the process and consequently expanding the connections between the trope and writing (de Grazia 82-83). Thus both Tarquin's rape of Lucrece and the maid's sympathetic grief, because they are figured through the trope of signet/seal, can be understood as moments of writing.

If we look at what happens when Lucrece tries to write a letter detailing her grief to Collatine, we can see the power and the limitations of writing, as well as the power and limits of text itself.[22] Lucrece writes Collatine immediately after the exchange with the maid. She wants to send the missive quickly, as "the cause craves haste" (1295). Yet the moment that Lucrece sits down to write, she is stymied; "Conceit and grief an eager combat fight; / What wit sets down is blotted straight with will" (1298-99). As Joel Fineman remarks, "the writing of Lucrece's letter establishes within Lucrece an indecisive, though still 'eager,' fight between her 'wit' and 'will.'"(52). Lucrece recognizes that it is difficult to translate experience into language. Language itself gets in the way rendering "this… too curious-good" and "this blunt and ill" (1300). More

[22] In *Chaste Thinking,* Stephanie Jed connects the rewriting and mistranscribing of the Lucretia myth in Renaissance Florence to the questions of chastity that figures in all retellings of the myth. This scene of writing in Shakespeare's *Lucrece* bears comparison to Jed's discussion.

importantly, she realizes that once she puts words to paper, she has limited control over what happens with them. While she can choose what to write, she cannot control how her text is read. Ultimately, she chooses to fold "up the tenor of her woe, / Her certain sorrow writ uncertainly" because she is aware that texts can be dangerous (1310-11). She cannot control how Collatine will interpret events when he reads her texts, so she purposefully renders her sorrow vague. This problem of control, of possibilities within a text that cannot be constrained by its author, is an issue not only for Lucrece's letter but also for the texts created during the other two moments of impression we have been discussing. The maid, once imprinted with Lucrece's grief, also becomes a text that other members of the domestic household could potentially interpret. Similarly, like the letter and the maid, Lucrece becomes a text to be read after her rape. Moreover, just like all other texts, the violence written on her body can be interpreted and misinterpreted.

There are three different ways that Lucrece's body becomes legible or potentially legible after the rape. First, the visible and audible signs of Lucrece's grief can be read. Lucrece's face is figured as a "map which deep impression bears / Of hard misfortune, carved in it with tears" (1712-13). Like the maid, Lucrece's face displays her grief and is legible to those who witness it. In addition to her grief-stricken visage, Lucrece also has "sighs and groans and tears" that "may grace the fashion / Of her disgrace" (1319). These complimentary displays combine with her face to create a picture of grief. Yet that grief, like the letter, unfolds only the "tenor of her woe" rather than the exact nature of Tarquin's crimes (1310). The maid, reading Lucrece's grief, learns only that she is upset, not the nature of her sorrow. While Lucrece's face may be a "map" it is not a map that maid can read.

Secondly Lucrece's body threatens to reveal Tarquin's crime through pregnancy. Yet her status as a married woman renders that display ambiguous, as her pregnant body could be read as the result of a happy marriage and the pleasures of the marital bed. Moreover, pregnancy takes time to transform the female body. Lucrece's suicide aborts the potential text her pregnant body might have offered. At the same time, her suicide functions as an alternative and final way that Lucrece's body becomes legible after her rape. While the grief written on Lucrece's face and the show offered by her womb are predominately visual, Lucrece's suicide amounts to a theatrical performance, one that combines speech, display, and even writing to narrate her story. Part of Lucrece's justification for committing suicide is that taken alone, Lucrece finds writing, speech and bodily display to be unreliable and insufficient. Each of these modes of communication is limited in what it can reveal. However, at first glance the visual seems to be preferred. As the narrator explains, "To see sad sights moves more than hear them told; / For then eye interprets to the ear / The heavy motion that it doth behold," (1324-26). Yet while the narrator seems to articulate a preference for vision over hearing, it is the ear and not the eye that is ultimately prioritized. "The eye interprets to the ear," suggesting that the ear is the ultimate witness, and the auditory the final language to which all other sensory inputs must be translated. Thus while Shakespeare seems to be advocating for the visual, the power of "sad sights" seems to be that of theatrical performance. As the narrator continues to elaborate on the limitations of the auditory, he simultaneously makes the argument for performance. He explains, "When every part a part of woe doth bear. / 'Tis but a part of sorrow that we hear." (1324-28) Again, while the problem is explicitly the

limitations of hearing a sad story, it is implicitly a problem of segmentation, of breaking the tragedy into "part[s]."

Armed with this logic, Lucrece decides not to relay her story to the maid or to Collatine.

> …the life and feeling of her passion
>
> She hoards to spend when [Collatine] is by to hear her
>
> When sighs and groans and tears may grace the fashion
>
> Of her disgrace… (1317-20)

Lucrece plans to show Collatine her passion, while simultaneously narrating Tarquin's crime.. Yet since Tarquin's act imprinted every part of Lucrece, since "every part a part of woe doth bear," every part of Lucrece's body must speak. It is not enough for Collatine to see her tears, and hear her words, Lucrece must translate the full weight of Tarquin violation into her presentation.

Lucrece's suicide becomes the mode of that translation. As Mercedes Maroto Camino suggests, she "turns the knife against herself in order to re-present Tarquin's conquest on the map of her body" (137). Lucrece's suicide is an act of will, and marks her as an agential actor. Her will might be, as Stephanie Jed suggests, "to restore her previously severed state," a state of chastity that is invested in "being 'cut off' from human intercourse," yet it is an act of will nonetheless (42).[23] Still, suicide is, as Elizabeth Robertson puts it, "an act that terminates choice" and one that leads to the complete "erasure of her subjectivity" (286). As a type of writing, Lucrece's body performs the same doubleness. In a way, as Melissa Matthes claims, "her suicide…

[23] Jed is analyzing Coluccio Salutati's *Declamatio Lucretiae,* but her comments are applicable to Shakespeare's *Lucrece*.

becomes a form of female power, a kind of 'ennobling violation'" … in which she "determines how her body and life will be read"(7).[24] Yet as Katherine Rowe reminds us, "writing translates thoughts into material forms that have a life of their own" (9). Thus Lucrece's dead body becomes an interpretative location over which she has no further control. She must consent to "being read… by anyone in the literate domain… as it is the condition on which she can write herself" (Crewe 162). In that sense, Lucrece's bodily display is as unreliable as any other form of writing.

Still, her suicide achieves its ends. It manages to powerfully and convincingly convey both Tarquin's crime and Lucrece's sorrow. Moreover, as Matthes, looking at other retellings of the Lucretia myth has shown, the suicide of Lucretia (or Lucrece) also has the effect of inscribing a female body at the heart of the narrative of the foundation of republics. That inscription affords the female body with "a kind of authority" which is "ascribed to [its] materiality" (6), a materiality that in Shakespeare's text has everything to do with wax. While Shakespeare does not emphasize the political significance of the Lucrece myth, he does conclude the poem with the Roman nobles falling "jointly to the ground" before the bleeding body to vow revenge on Tarquin, a revenge they only undertake after receiving the consent of the Romans. Joint republican action follows from the outrage over Lucrece's violation. Lucrece's body is displayed through to the last stanza of the poem, continuing to speak her woe but also already conscripted into other narratives.

I began by suggesting that wax's material nature, and specifically its malleability prevents it from creating stable meaning, and leaves it constantly open to erasure, to re-

[24] Like Jed, Matthes is specifically addressing other versions of the Lucretia myth. Jed discusses the accounts by Livy, Machiavelli, and Rousseau.

molding. While that may be true of Shakespeare's trope, which simultaneously narrates several different relationships at once, is it true of Lucrece? If Lucrece's mind were made of wax, it would be susceptible to impression, but it would also be easy to erase that impression, and replace it with a new print. Yet the tragedy of *The Rape of Lucrece* is that Lucrece sees no way forward except through suicide. The damage done by Tarquin's rape seems permanent, at least to her. While suicide provides her with relief and allows her to make her violation legible, is it fundamentally an act of authorship? Despite the echoes between Lucrece's suicide and Tarquin's crime, I would argue that Lucrece still authors the act. Driving the knife into her own heart, she makes an impression in her body and in the hearts and minds of her audience. Once she is dead, she is incapable of further authorship, yet her body continues to be legible. Unfortunately for Lucrece, the text of her death, like wax, and like all texts, proves malleable in the hands of its readers. In choosing suicide, Lucrece surrenders all future acts of authorship and becomes only a text, which, of course, is exactly how she enters the world of *Twelfth Night*.

2. Comic Manipulations

In *Twelfth Night*, Lucrece is an image stamped on a piece of wax, a picture open to interpretation. As I noted towards the beginning of this article, the image on Olivia's seal, "her Lucrece" would most likely show Lucrece at the moment of her suicide. Such an image, filled with the violent resonances of the poem, seems to have little to do with *Twelfth Night.* And, indeed, for Malvolio, Lucrece's image is a picture that registers primarily as Olivia's signature, as the image which his mistress "uses to seal" her letters (2.5.85). The narrative of suicide displayed on the stamp and its resonances of

victimhood and tragedy seem all but erased by the quotidian nature of Olivia's signet, which would have been used to seal all of her correspondence. Yet while Malvolio may register the image merely as proof of Olivia's authorship, as an audience we are less accustomed to Olivia's signet and thus perhaps more alert to the sexual connotations implicit in breaking that seal. Moreover, Lucrece's story is not vanquished from the play once the seal is broken. Instead, as Malvolio reads the letter he finds that "silence like a Lucrece knife / With bloodless stroke [the author's] heart doth gore." Now Lucrece's tragic act has been repurposed as a hyperbolic metaphor to convey the weight of unexpressed love – a "silence" that in this case has been concocted by Maria as a practical joke. If breaking the seal of the letter repeats in some way the rape of Lucrece and the moment of her suicide, so too does the text of the letter itself. Yet these repetitions are parodies. The scope of Lucrece's tragedy has been forgotten, and the meaning of her death has been co-opted. There is no place in *Twelfth Night* for a full expression of Lucrece's tragedy. Yet her presence in *Twelfth Night*, fleeting as it is, does remind us of darker possibilities that the play chooses not to explore. While Lucrece's bloody display has been repurposed in *Twelfth Night*, it has not been entirely effaced. Instead, it retains some of the tragic significance and power that it has in *The Rape of Lucrece*, while simultaneously bending and adapting to a world that is far less tragic.

Twelfth Night not only provides us with an opportunity to revisit Lucrece's narrative, but also with another chance to consider Shakespeare's association of women with wax in a play that is not as rigidly attached to strict gender roles as *The Rape of Lucrece* is. Viola can cross-dress as Cesario and gain access to spaces that would normally be unavailable to chaste ladies. Moreover, the ending suggests that such

unfeminine and potentially dangerous behavior will not prevent her from finding a good marriage, or re-entering society as a woman, although that re-entrance is deferred to some future time after the curtain closes. In *Twelfth Night* it is this chameleon-like figure, Viola/Cesario, who connects women to wax. Viola, disguised as Cesario, has been sent to woo Olivia on Orsino's behalf. Her attempts to seduce Olivia prove successful, but not in the way that she intends. Instead of winning Olivia's heart for Orsino, she wins it for herself, which she discovers when Malvolio, who has been sent to return a ring that Viola never left, overcomes her on the road. On receiving the ring, Viola exclaims:

> Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness
> Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.
> How easy is it for the proper false
> In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!
> Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we,
> For such as we are made of, such we be. (2.2.25-30)

Viola's speech reveals a philosophy of desire grounded in sexual difference and female "frailty." Just like the narrator in *The Rape of Lucrece,* she renders sexual difference as material and suggests that women are like wax and hence "easy" to mold. Viola's assertion "such as we are made of, such we be" seems every bit as deterministic as "for men have marble, women waxen, minds / And therefore are they formed as marble will" (1240-1241). The affective location has shifted from mind to heart, but otherwise the philosophy seems very much the same.

Yet while Shakespeare does offer a narrative of desire grounded in material sexual differences and female weakness, the context of Viola's speech complicates and

problematizes that narrative, just as it did in *The Rape of Lucrece*. Olivia, after all, has just become infatuated with Cesario, who is Viola in disguise. Once again, what seems like a metaphor about sexual difference and its role in desire is being applied to relations between two women, not a woman and a man. Since both Viola and Olivia are women they should share a material constitution. Both of their hearts should be made of wax, which Viola seems to testify to when she adopts the plural, "for such as *we* are made of, such *we* be" (emphasis added). All of which raises the question, if Viola possesses a waxen heart, if her own body and mind are soft, passive and susceptible to impression, how can she imprint Olivia? How can she occupy the male role of the signet ring? It is the same question that we asked of Lucrece and her maid. However, now class difference cannot provide an answer. After all Viola/Cesario is presumed to be significantly lower in the social hierarchy than Olivia, and it is the page not the lady who acts as signet. The most obvious answer as to how Viola could imprint Olivia lies in her disguise. Dressed as a man, and perceived as a man, she may be able to perform like a man. Yet the male disguise she occupies is that of a eunuch, a man incapable of sexual performance and hence of being an agent of bodily impression. Although many critics have suggested that Shakespeare abandons the conception of Viola as eunuch, she certainly does not make a very manly man. Indeed, Orsino sends her to woo Olivia because she is effeminate, claiming, “they shall yet belie thy happy years, / That say thou art a man” (1.4.29-30). While Orsino accepts Viola’s disguise as Cesario, he notes, “all is semblative of a woman’s part” (1.4.33). Cesario’s femininity calls into question the possibility that Viola’s disguise provides a sufficient illusion of difference for her to play signet to Olivia’s wax. Moreover, Orsino’s choice to send Cesario to woo Olivia on the basis of

his femininity suggests that Orsino, at least, believes desire does not operate through difference but despite it.

Of course, if Viola/Cesario can in any way occupy the position of signet on the basis of sexual difference, it is only through the perception of such difference. Putting on a disguise does not change her sex or gender, at least not fully, leaving her in an in-between state, which Viola insists on throughout the speech. She/he is a "poor monster" (2.2.32), and complains:

> … As I am a man,
>
> My state is desperate for my master's love.
>
> As I am a woman, now, alas the day,
>
> What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe! (2.2.34-37)

Since Viola/Cesario is neither fully male nor female, her relationship to Olivia cannot be mapped onto the binaries of active male impression and passive female impressibility. While she might lament the waxen quality of female hearts, her own ambiguous gender position, makes such essentializations highly suspect. As a woman in love with Orsino and as a man beloved by Olivia, Viola/Cesario seems to be able to occupy the position of both signet and seal. She may share a wax heart with Olivia, but she also has succeeds in impressing Olivia's heart.

If Viola/Cesario is as feminine in appearance as Orsino claims, does material sexual difference or even the perception of such difference govern desire in *Twelfth Night*? In *The Rape of Lucrece* Tarquin's influence on Lucrece is explicitly attached to difference; however, if we look carefully at the language of Viola/Cesario's speech we can see that the same ambiguity embodied by Viola/Cesario plays out on the level of the

language itself. While Shakespeare is explicit that women's hearts are like wax, the gender of the agent or agents responsible for impressing those hearts is ambiguous. Viola's speech never makes the claim that men impress women's hearts, which is not to say that no mention is made of the agents of impression. Over the course of the speech she blames "disguise," "the proper false," and "the pregnant enemy" for acting upon the female heart. While all of these nouns could be read as referring to masculine agents, none is clearly gendered male. Viola's "disguise" is masculine insofar as she is wearing male clothing. Yet to what degree does gender attach to clothes? Even if the clothes make the man, so to speak, Viola does not seem to be locating the "wickedness" of the disguise in its gender. Instead, the disguise seems to be wicked because it is artful and deceitful, as can be seen by the subtle play on the word "art" combined with the way "disguise" relates to the two other nouns under consideration. Disguise seems to give space for the "pregnant enemy" to work because it is false, not because it is male. Moreover, "the proper false" seems to refer both to disguise and art. While the term has often been glossed as meaning "handsome, but deceitful men," neither "proper" nor "false" implies gender. Instead, the two together suggest a decorous or seemly falsehood. Similarly, the term "pregnant enemy" does not seem inextricably connected to the male gender. While the term has often been read as referring to devil, the adjective "pregnant" potentially writes the "enemy" as gendered female or double gendered. Not only does the adjective suggest the female body with a fetus in utero, but also "easily influenced, receptive, inclined, ready" (OED, s.v. “pregnant”). Shakespeare uses this meaning of "pregnant" in *Hamlet, Pericles,* and elsewhere in *Twelfth Night*, making it highly plausible that he has it in mind here as well. Regardless of whether "pregnant" is referring to the female body or

to a state of receptivity, it suggests malleability, which in this passage is feminized. Thus the "pregnant enemy," like "disguise" and the "proper false" and Viola herself has an ambiguous relationship to gender categories which suggests that the construction of desire may not be proceed upon gendered terms, or at least upon the simple binaries of male/female, active/passive, and hard/soft.

My discussion thus far has highlighted the passage's ambiguity regarding the masculine half of the trope -- the signet. Viola's speech suggests space in the figure of the signet for multiple actors to act, and none of these actors are clearly gendered male. Yet even more than the signet, the figure of the wax heart refuses to participate in a simple narrative of impression. Or rather, it fails to explain how any of the women involved participate in the network of desire. If we look more closely at Olivia and her waxen heart, we find that like Viola, she has a complex relation to the narrative embodied in the trope. Both women seem to simultaneously occupy both halves of the trope. Viola becomes a masculine figure through her disguise and her ability to incite Olivia's desire. Olivia occupies a figuratively masculine space by sending Viola her ring. This ring, while most likely not a signet ring itself, recalls the male half of the trope. It is the only ring verbally or visually staged during Viola's speech and thus provides a visual counterpart to the waxen heart. Of course, the ring simultaneously suggests the female body, and specifically the vagina. Yet, if we consider how Olivia maps onto our binary categories during this scene, we see that her decision to send the ring is an active choice, an attempt to woo, to arouse Viola/Cesario's desire and imprint his/her heart. She uses her ring to perform the male act of impression. While her attempt ultimately proves unsuccessful with the disguised Viola, her success with Viola's twin, Sebastian, suggests that her

failure is not rooted in her gender. With Sebastian she is able to take on the active, masculine role, which suggests that the narrative inscribed in the trope of signet/seal is far more flexible than might be readily apparent.

Shakespeare's association of women with wax in *Twelfth Night* seems to allow them more flexibility in their relationships and more agency than his treatment of women does in *The Rape of Lucrece.* In the relationship between Lucrece and her maid, their sympathetic exchange hints at the possibility of mutual influence, but Lucrece still occupies the dominant position. Lucrece's suicide provides her the opportunity to write her own story, but at the cost of her life and all future agency. However, in *Twelfth Night,* the possibility that desire might be governed by similarity or sameness seems to be taken as a given, from the moment that Orsino decides to send Cesario to woo Olivia on his behalf. Moreover, while women are once again understood as being like wax, that waxiness is not mapped onto a system of difference. Instead, Viola/Cesario's speech about the waxiness of women revels in ambiguity and refuses to pin down an agent or a materiality responsible for impression. Despite the fact that Viola refers to female "frailty," the waxiness of women in *Twelfth Night* seems to indicate the power of desire more than the weakness of women. Women's desires may be easily shaped, but they also have the power to shape the desires of others. Viola/Cesario creates an impression in Olivia's heart, and Olivia succeeds in wooing Sebastian.

Yet for all the possibilities suggested by Viola's ability to take on the guise of a man and Olivia's association with the signet and the male role of seducer, by the end of the play, same-sex desire is more or less shut down. As Viola laments, the same-sex pairings of Cesario - Orsino and Viola - Olivia represent desire at its most "desperate"

and "thriftless" (2.2.35-37). The bonds of desire create "too hard a knot" for Viola to untie (2.2.39). Ultimately the play resolves with "happy" heterosexual marriages (or almost marriages), suggesting that Shakespeare has retreated from the erotic possibilities raised in act 2, scene 2, and elsewhere in the play. Yet, I would argue that the ending of *Twelfth Night* functions much like the trope of signet/seal does here: it narrates heterosexuality while simultaneously staging more subversive possibilities. Sebastian equivocates on his gender, naming himself a maid, and Viola remains dressed as Cesario yet still engaged to Orsino. The malleability of gender, like the malleability of wax leaves open the possibility of queer exchanges despite the appearance of heterosexual norms. While *Twelfth Night* certainly voices the possibility of feminine weakness and vulnerability, the play refuses to settle on that vision of women or male/female relations.

In both *Twelfth Night* and *The Rape of the Lucrece* Shakespeare's use of the trope of signet/seal suggests that sexual difference is bound up in male-female relations and can be used to figure both the initiation of desire and the violence of rape, naturally and forcefully as the result of material differences between the sexes. Yet at the same time, embedded in this model of desire and domination are other possibilities – possibilities of queer desire and same-sex relationships of force and sympathy that are intrinsically less readable and which cannot be mapped onto bodily difference. These other possibilities point to the inherent instability of the metaphor –wax can be re-molded. The possibility of malleability can never be erased. Unlike other impressible substance such as clay, which maintains its shape once hardened, wax can always melt. The application of fire can efface the entire seal, or merely transform the edges, allowing them to re-solidify in slightly different shapes. The malleability of wax invades the trope of signet/seal itself

and allows the trope in both *Twelfth Night* and *The Rape of Lucrece* to simultaneously produce the binaries of male and female, active and passive, dominant and submissive and destabilize them. Moreover since the trope is vitally important to figurations of male-female desire, consummation, and reproduction, Shakespeare's deployment of it around same-sex relations suggests that these "heterosexual" acts may be neither simple nor "straight."

Chapter 2

Wax Matters: Modeling Philosophy and Desire in John Donne, Margaret Cavendish and René Descartes

As we saw in the previous chapter, Shakespeare's use of wax to figure the female heart and mind is heavily indebted to a set of philosophical and societal conventions. In particular, Shakespeare's use of the metaphor of signet and seal draws on epistemological and reproductive models that depend on binary understandings of gender difference in which men are rendered as hard and impervious, while women are conceptualized as soft and malleable. Yet as I argued in chapter 1, in Shakespeare's works these binaries collapse even as they are narrated. Shakespeare applies the trope to relationships between women and in doing so destabilizes the rigid gender differences that he gives voice to. If women can be both wax seal and metal signet, then the differences between men and women cannot be as totalizing as the trope would at first suggest. Moreover, as I suggested in Chapter 1, wax's mutability, particularly its propensity to phase changes, to soften and harden, melt and re-solidify, problematizes the association of wax with perfect malleability and softness. The instability of wax invades the trope of the signet / seal even when it is voiced in order to narrate binary difference.

In this chapter, I will continue to explore the possibilities of the trope of signet / seal for seventeenth-century literature and philosophy, alert especially to what new meanings become possible when that trope is repurposed or dismantled. It is tempting to offer up a teleological narrative in which as poetry and philosophy move forward toward

modernity, wax begins to speak in new ways and radical ways. Certainly the possibilities of wax as metaphor and model are re-imagined and re-energized as increased pressure is brought to bear on scholastic Aristotelianism by new theories of the self, the body, physics, and metaphysics. Yet despite the rhetoric of novelty that we can locate in Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* or in Donne's lament that "the new philosophy calls all in doubt" ("An Anatomy of the World" 205), much remained the same.[25] Aristotelianism still dominated the schools and heavily influenced many fields including medicine. Moreover, even the most cutting edge philosophy still owed much to the traditions to which it responded. If we look at how wax operates in seventeenth-century literature and philosophy, we find that the old associations of wax with women, reproduction, and epistemology remain important to the ways those texts create meaning. As Ian Maclean argues in *The Renaissance Notion of a Woman,* the scholastic tradition was marked by inconsistences and incoherencies, encompassing a wide range of opinion. This breadth may have given it staying power.[26] A teleologically driven narrative would provide only a partial view of how wax functions in these seventeenth-century texts. Wax continues to refer to and invite scholastic understandings of gender and the mind, becoming in some cases a bastion for older world views, and in other cases a battleground on which new philosophy can encounter the old. When we place John Donne's "Sappho to Philaenis" next to Margaret Cavendish's *Philosophical Letters,* and René Descartes' *Meditations on the First Philosophy,* we find that wax, in all of these works, continues to speak in gendered terms about the nature of desire and possibilities for human relationships. At the

[25] All citations of Donne are to the Oxford edition edited by John Carey.

[26] For a further discussion of the inconsistencies and incoherencies of the Renaissance reception of Aristotelianism and how they inform understanding of sexual difference, see Ian Maclean's *Renaissance Notion of a Woman,* esp.2-4, and 28-46.

same time, each of these works uses wax to re-imagine the limits of self and to articulate new perspectives on the relationship between the self and others.

1. The Melting Erotics and Seductive Power of Wax

In"Sappho to Philaenis," Donne, like Shakespeare, associates the female heart with wax and consequently invites a consideration of the gendered traits we have seen associated with it, particularly passivity, weakness, and submission. Yet by placing that wax heart in a lesbian poet[27] actively involved in poetic expression and by using her to explore the nature of same-sex erotics, Donne challenges these associations and ultimately goes further than Shakespeare in problematizing the gendered narrative typically attached to the association of women with wax. Moreover, Donne's focus on the wax heart as it melts, invests the trope with new energy and allows it to speak in complicated ways about romantic loss and its relationship to selfhood and creative expression.

"Sappho to Philaenis" is an elegy written in Sappho's voice and directed at her former lover, Philaenis, who has left Sappho for a young boy. In the poem, Sappho laments the loss of her lover and details the effects that Philaenis's departure has had on her. One of the earliest images that Sappho offers up to illustrate her loss, is the image of an imperiled wax heart. Sappho exclaims:

> Only thine image, in my heart, doth sit,
>
> But that is wax, and fires environ it.

[27] By describing Sappho as a lesbian poet I do not mean to imply that her sexuality is identical with the modern identity of lesbian. However, the term seems apt to describe the female poet from Lesbos who has erotic liaisons with women. For a complex engagement with the term as it applies to the early modern period see Valerie Traub's *Renaissance of Lesbianism.*

My fires have driven, thine have drawn it hence;

And I am robbed of picture, heart, and sense. (9-12)

Sappho's poetic figuration of a female heart as wax is similar to Shakespeare's association of female affective locations with wax. Like Hermia, Lucrece, and Olivia, Sappho is a woman who can be impressed, and who thus must be malleable. While Donne does not explicitly claim that Sappho is weak, her turn inward to gaze on her own heart reveals an imperiled landscape in which she seems to be little more than a passive participant. Despite the fact that Sappho's "fires" work on the wax image along with those of Philaenis, and that she has an active role as poet, she portrays herself as as a victim: "I am robbed of picture, heart, and sense." As in Shakespeare, however, the context of Donne's deployment of the wax heart immediately problematizes this narrative of gender difference. Sappho's heart, after all, bears the imprint of a female beloved. While the formation of that imprint is elided from the poem, it seemingly cannot have proceeded on the basis of gender difference. Some external force such as a personified love, a Cupid or Eros, might have impressed Sappho's heart, but the most likely source of the imprint is Philaenis herself, suggesting that such impressions do not require gender difference at all.

Yet unlike Shakespeare, while Donne is explicit about the materiality of Sappho's heart, he does not claim that her waxiness is a matter of gender. There are no totalizing statements such as we found in *The Rape of Lucrece,* when the narrator declares "for men have marble, women waxen, minds / And therefore are they form'd as marble will" (1240-1241). Donne does use tropes of impression later in the poem to figure love between men and women, but questions of gender difference are displaced from Donne's

consideration of the wax heart. Men might be made of different metal, all women might be waxy, but the question of gender difference is not fully explored around questions of materiality. Donne, speaking in Sappho's voice, is concerned with the depiction of an individual's affect, with the status of Sappho's heart. Her heart is wax, and whether that would be true of other hearts, female or otherwise, is a question that Donne does not explicitly take up. Instead, Sappho's loss is rendered in highly individualized terms.

Still, individuated as it is, Sappho's wax heart suggests a complex narrative about the power of erotic desire and the passions that it provokes. Perhaps because this image occurs as part of Sappho's exploration of her own interiority, Donne develops the image to a much greater degree than Shakespeare ever does. Rather than simply naming the female heart as a location vulnerable to impression, Donne shows us a wax heart that has been impressed and now is imperiled not by the threat of impression, but by competing fires of passion. By line 12, when Sappho declares that she has been "robbed of picture, heart, and sense,*"* the fires have done their job, melting image and heart together into a semi-congealed mass, a distorted shape that might bear echoes of an image but offers neither a stable "picture" nor a solid foundation for either affect or "sense." As William Empson has shown, "sense" was a complex word in the period, one that covered "sensuality," "sensibility," and "in a less direct way through the ideas of 'a truth-giving feeling' and a 'reasonable meaning,'" also could mean "sensibleness" (270). Thus, Sappho's claim that she has lost her "sense" could mean a loss of any or all of these faculties, certainly it suggests that her concept of self has been imperiled. This image powerfully plays off traditional poetic conceits to powerfully convey the transformative and potentially destructive power of love. Yet despite its power, this image of Sappho's

wax heart has received little critical commentary. Most critics focus on other moments of the poem, or dismiss the poem outright.[28] James Holstun names Sappho's heart, "a failed act of erotic iconography" one that "creates a momentarily engaging ambiguity" on which Sappho fails to capitalize. Yet, I would suggest that the image does not fail, but instead reverberates through the poem as it continues to be interested in the possibilities of impression and image-making.

Before moving on to the rest of the poem, however, I want to spend some time fully unpacking the image itself, and what is at stake in Donne's depiction of Sappho's heart as wax. First, we should pause over what it means that Sappho's heart has been impressed by Philaenis. As I have already noted, the moment of impression is elided from the poem along with the exact mechanics of that impression. What we do know is that it must have occurred at some point and in that moment Sappho's heart must have been transformed, since wax impression by its nature is transformative. Moreover, since images do not sit on the surface of wax, but rather penetrate it, we know that this transformation is not simply superficial; it has depth. Thus the fact that Sappho's wax heart bears an impression of Philaenis testifies to the significance of their affair in shaping Sappho's affect.

Since the moment of impression occurs outside of the poem, we can only read the heart as it currently stands a posteriori to the moment of impression and on the verge of destruction. We know that the image of Philaenis is integral to Sappho's heart, not only

---

[28] Helen Gardner initiated the critical dismissal of "Sappho to Philaenis" by assigning the poem to Donne's "dubia," questioning its style and doubting that Donne would wish "to assume the love-sickness of Lesbian Sappho"(xlvi). More recent criticism has been more engaged by the poem's possibilities for understanding Donne (e.g. Janel Mueller, James Holstun, Valerie Traub, Barbara Correll, Paula Blank, William West, Cecilia Infante, Stella Revard, Anne Prescott, Raphael Lyne, Elizabeth Wahl, and Elizabeth Harvey).

because it has penetrated the wax, but also because Sappho asserts: “Only thine image, in my heart doth sit" (10). Encapsulated in this statement are several claims about the nature of Sappho’s love for Philaenis and the power of that love. First, Sappho seems to be punning on the word “only,” suggesting not only that the print of Philaenis in her heart is her “only” remaining access to Philaenis; but also that Philaenis is the singular occupant of that space, that she occupies it “onely.” That possibility is heightened by Sappho’s suggestion that the image “sit[s]” in her heart. While Sappho may just mean that the image is located in her heart, “sit” also figuratively suggests “to sit on the…throne, to reign” (OED). The possibility that a lover’s heart could be ruled is a Petrarchan conceit that enters the English tradition through the translations of Petrarch’s Rime 140 by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. While both Wyatt and Surrey personify love and figure him as residing in the lover’s heart, Surrey more explicitly figures love as a ruler than does Wyatt. Surrey writes, “Love that doth reign and live within my thought / And built his seat within my captive breast,” making explicit the claim that Love rules, and that his “seat” is the speaker’s heart(1-2). While the lexicon of monarchy is more muted in Donne than Surrey, the regal connotations of a “seat” still carry in Donne’s poem. Thus Sappho’s love for Philaenis has not only transformed her heart, but also come to rule it.

Of course, Sappho does not turn inward to her heart simply to register the power of her love for Philaenis. She also wants to show the devastation wrought by Philaenis’s erotic betrayal. Thus Sappho describes her heart, not merely imprinted with Philaenis’s form, but also on the verge of annihilation. Again, Donne’s emphasis here is very different from Shakespeare’s. Where Shakespeare is concerned primarily with the

susceptibility of women to falling in love, Donne is more interested in what happens to the heart when that romantic attachment is broken. Wax for Donne is vulnerable not because it can be imprinted, but because it can be melted. The fires that environ Sappho's heart threaten its annihilation and along with it the annihilation of her lover's image.

A third reason that Sappho looks into her heart is to find inspiration for her poetry. As James Holstun has argued, Sappho's turn inward to meditate on her own heart recalls the poetic convention articulated in sonnet 1 of *Astrophil and Stella*, when the muse tells the uninspired poet: "'fool'… 'look in thy heart, and write'" (14). Perhaps, Holstun suggests, the imperiled status of Sappho's heart has a direct impact on her ability to craft poetry. When she looks in her heart, she finds not inspiration, but destruction. For Holstun "her uninspired opening leads to an uninspired poem," since she lacks "*Picture, Heart, and Sense*" to provide her with inspiration (838).[29] Yet while I agree with Holstun that this moment of turning inward to the heart can be understood to fuel Sappho's poetic project, I disagree that result is "uninspired." Without digressing into a discussion of good and bad poetry, I want to suggest that the incoherence Sappho finds within her heart is refracted through the rest of the poem in ways that are both interesting and compelling, and that the waxiness of Sappho's sense of self can help us understand the project of her poetry and measure its success. Throughout the remainder of the poem Sappho searches not only for language and arguments that will seduce Philaenis into returning to her, but also for a means to repair the image inside her, whether or not Philaenis returns. The poem thus becomes not only a lament over a lost love or an attempt to regain that love, but also a search for a stable sense of self that never is fully realized.

[29] Ultimately I agree with Holstun that if Sappho's end in writing this poem is to win Philaenis back, there is a good chance that she fails. Holstun suggests that as a Donne poem, the poem succeeds but as a Sappho poem it fails and that Donne uses Sappho to dramatize the failure of lesbian love to signify.

Sappho's exploration of her own wax heart helps us understand the nature of her poetic project by showing us that she understands love as deeply transformative and that she desires Philaenis's image within her heart and is desperate to regain it. However, that project and its ends are introduced before Sappho ever looks inward, in the very first lines of the poem. Although Sappho makes no mention of wax until she gazes at her heart, I would argue that wax is at work from the beginning and seems to subtend Sappho's entire poetic project. In the opening lines of the poem Sappho asks,

> Where is that holy fire, which verse is said
>
> To have? Is that enchanting force decayed?
>
> Verse, that draws Nature's works, from Nature's law,
>
> Thee her best work, to her work, cannot draw. (1-4)

These lines suggest that Sappho's quest is two-part: to recover the "holy fire" of "verse" and then use it to "enchant[]" Philaenis. "Enchant," derives from the latin "incantare," literally to sing upon (OED). Already in that etymology we can begin to locate the connection between poetry and magic. Yet if we press harder on the connections between verse and enchantment, we find that they are further connected through wax. Wax provides the bridge between the project of writing and the possibilities of enchantment that Sappho attaches to writing verse. It also connects her own sense of loss as figured in her melting wax heart, and her desire to be reunited with Philaenis insofar as that can be understood as a desire to re-inscribe her own image on Philaenis's heart.

The project of writing seduction poetry can be understood through wax, even without the magical connotations of enchantment that Sappho invokes here. In the lines just quoted, Sappho's defines verse as an art "that draws Nature's works, from Nature's

law." On one level this definition implies enchantment. Verse possesses a force capable of "draw[ing]" or "pulling" "Nature's works" away from their natural place as dictated by "Nature's law." Yet on another level, this lines can be read as offering an aesthetic theory about the work that verse performs. If we read "drawing" not as "pulling" but as "represent[ing]" an object by a drawing or picture" then Sappho is suggesting that verse works by depicting nature, representing it, and inscribing it according to "Nature's law".[30] Thus Sappho's poetic project can be understood as a project of representation. Just as she wants her wax heart to bear Philaenis's image, she wants her verse to carry an image or impression of Nature's "best work," Philaenis.

Moreover, since wax served as a medium for writing in Ancient Greece, we can connect it to the project of verse in more physical and material ways. It is highly plausible that Donne imagined his Sappho composing her poem on wax tablets. As we saw in the introduction, inscribing wax is a mode of writing that is almost bodily, as wax inscription depends on the penetration of the stylus on a body of wax. This connection between bodies and wax was used by poets to great effect. In the *Amores,* Ovid imagines that the work a writer does upon a wax tablet can echo the work he wishes to perform on his beloved's body. Thus the speaker of 1.11 tells a servant:

> receive and take early to your mistress these tablets I have inscribed, and care that nothing hinder or delay! … Should she ask how I fare, you will say my hope of her favour lets me live; as for the rest, it is charactered in the wax by my fond hand. (1.11. 7-8, 13-14, trans. Raphael Lyne)

[30] This theory of poetry is related to those we will discuss in chapter 3 in which poetic invention is closely linked to nature.

Here, Raphael Lyne argues, the wax not only holds the words of Ovid's poems, it "show[s] the stroked words, softened by a passionate heat" (Lyne 193).[31] Thus the recipient of the poem can read the speaker's intention not only in the text of the poem but also in the way "it is charactered in the wax by [his] fond hand." Ovid and Donne connect through their treatment of wax and also through their portrayal of Sappho. As Elizabeth Harvey has shown, Ovid's *Heroides* XV*,* a verse epistle in Sappho's voice, serves as a subtext for Donne's *Sappho to Philaenis.*[32] While the medium of Sappho's verse is never specified, Donne may well have had wax in mind.

Moreover, the connections between verse and wax here, along with the waxiness of Sappho's heart, suggest that the act writing and the act of seducing may be one and the same, a possibility also raised in Shakespeare's Sonnet 122 through the close association of writing tablets and minds[33]. By inscribing her words on a wax tablet, Sappho is figuratively caressing and impressing her beloved, demonstrating in the act of inscribing words on wax what she hopes once again to do to Philaenis's body. While this comparison is complicated by the fact that Sappho and Philaenis share a gender, Sappho's description of her own wax heart as a location that has been stamped with Philaenis's image suggests that some of the bodily connections between writing on wax and seducing the body still figure.

Yet the connections between wax and seduction become even stronger when we take up the question of poetic enchantment. As Heather Meakin has noted, Sappho may be alluding to Ovid's Orpheus when she claims that "verse… draws Nature's work, from

---

[31] Jenny C. Mann also takes up the question of Ovid's wax and its connection to sixteenth century translations.

[32] For a further discussion of the relationship between Donne's poem and Ovid's, see Elizabeth Harvey's *Ventriloquized Voices.*

[33] For a further discussion of sonnet 122, see the Introduction.

Nature's law" (113). In *The Metamorphoses* 11, immediately before Orpheus's death, Ovid describes the power of the Orphic voice, claiming "with such songs the bard of Thrace drew the trees, held beasts enthralled, and constrained stones to follow him." Certainly, the Orpheus connection conveys the power that Sappho searches for in her poetry.[34] His verse holds the "beasts enthralled" and even works on stone. Yet while the Orpheus allusion conveys the force of poetic enchantment, it does not shed any light on how it might work. Again, however, wax allows us to begin to work out how Sappho might enchant Philaenis.

Although the poem is silent on the issue, we can easily imagine that Philaenis too, has a heart of wax, or at least that Sappho imagines Philaenis's heart as waxy since throughout the poem insists on the likeness and oneness of Sappho and Philaenis. We find the fullest articulation of that likeness toward the end of the poem when Sappho relays:

> My two lips, eyes, thighs, differ from thy two,
>
> But so, as thine from one another do;
>
> And, oh, no more; the likeness being such,
>
> Why should they not alike in all parts touch? (44-47)

Here Sappho insists on the bodily sameness of herself and Philaenis. Yet that sameness has been disrupted by the impact of Philanesis's new lover. Since Philaenis has replaced Sappho with a new love object, her wax heart would no longer bear Sappho's imprint. Thus for Sappho to reclaim her place in Philaenis's heart she must imprint it or re-

[34] Meakin also connects Sappho to Orpheus through their "unacceptably (homo)sexual bod[ies]" and by noting the connection both have to the island of Lesbos. For Meakin, Sappho's desire to "draw[] Nature's work, from Nature's law" references the discourse of unnaturalness that surrounded homosexuality in the Early Modern period (113-114.)

inscribe it. Once Sappho's image is inscribed in Philaenis's heart, like will attract like, and the similarity of original and image will draw the lovers back together again.[35] Such a possibility is consistent with the suggestion that the force of verse is also the force of fire. Fire, after all, can work on wax, making it more malleable and vulnerable to impression. While fire may not be capable of inscribing wax, it certainly can prime it for inscription. Further, fire could be used to erase whatever image currently resides within Philaenis's heart, again, readying that affective location for new impressions.

Certainly, Sappho would not be the first to understand the enchanting force of poetry in terms of wax impression. In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Egeus testifies to the enchanting force of poetry in just such waxy terms when he accuses Lysander of using poetry to enchant Hermia. Egeus claims:

> This hath bewitched the bosom of my child.
> Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
> And interchanged love tokens with my child.
> Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
> With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
> And stol'n the impression of her fantasy (1.1.27-32)

Here, Egeus imagines that poetry has the power to bewitch and that verse has the power to steal "the impression of her fantasy." Specifically, Egeus accuses Lysander of giving Hermia "rhymes," "interchang[ing] love tokens" and singing "verses of feigning love." Together these acts, most of which are acts of poetry, have the effect of "bewitch[ing] the bosom of [his] child" and "[stealing] the impression of her fantasy." While Egeus does

[35] Elizabeth Harvey suggests something similar in her reading of these lines. She notes "an alternate reading of these lines suggests in addition the reciprocal attraction between an original in nature and its representation or copy 'drawn' in verse" (129)

not name Hermia's heart, it is presumably the location he means when he refers to her "bosom." Thus Egeus accuses Lysander of doing exactly what Sappho wishes her poetry could do. While Hermia is not figured as wax in the lines just quoted, only a few line later, Theseus admonishes Hermia for not being waxy enough, as I discussed in Chapter 1. He reminds her that her father should "as a god;/…/To whom you are but as a form in wax/ by him imprinted." Despite Hermia's perceived shortcomings as an insufficiently waxy woman, it is precisely because Egeus believes that she is like wax, and therefore can be imprinted, that he accuses Lysander of stealing "the impression of her fantasy."

While *A Midsummer Night's Dream* suggests that when such an impression is made the result is love, it does not explain the physics of the enchantment. Sappho's description of verse as a power that can doubly "draw," both "delineate" and also "pull," goes further by suggesting the force of such enchantment is the force of sympathetic magic, a force of imitation that derives power from likeness[36]. As we saw in the introduction, when sympathetic magic is worked on people it is often enacted through the manipulation of wax simulacra. Such magic depends on the similarity between an object and the subject being worked on. We have already traced two distinct readings for Sappho's claim that "Verse draws Nature's Work, from Nature's law," but what if both of those meanings co-exist? What if Verse can pull "Nature's Work" away from "Nature's law" because it has the power of delineating or describing nature? Together, the two meanings of "draw" suggest that the the force of poetry might be an attractive force based on likeness that poetry itself creates. The beloved is moved by a poem because she recognizes herself within it, because she sees in the poem a copy of herself and is attracted to that image on

[36] In Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesie,* he suggests that Orpheus's power is "though in a full wrong divinity" an "imita[tion of] the unconceivable excellencies of God" (217).

the basis of similarity. The connection between poem and beloved would be heightened if they shared a materiality, if the poem was inscribed on wax, and the beloved bore a wax heart, for example. Since writing poetry on a wax tablet is a process that physically echoes what Sappho hopes to accomplish on Philaenis's heart, the logic of sympathetic magic would suggest that the mere similarity between wax tablet and wax heart and between inscription and impression might be sufficient for enchantment. Thus Sappho's poem itself can be understood as a vehicle designed reshape Philaenis's affect and allow Sappho to physically write her own image back into Philaenis's heart thus drawing her back to her former love for Sappho and erasing the differences that her encounters with her masculine lover have introduced .

If Sappho intends her poetry to inscribe or describe Philaenis, it most likely fails in that regard. As many critics have noted, Sappho's description of her beloved gets caught up in negations. She claims:

Thou art so fair,

As, gods, when gods to thee compare

Are graced thereby; and to make blind men see,

What things gods are, I say they are like to thee.

For, if we justly call each silly man

A little world, what shall we call thee then?

Thou art not soft, and clear, and straight, and fair

As down, as stars, cedars and lilies are,

But thy right hand, and cheek, and eye, only

Are like thy other hand, and cheek and eye. (15-25)

Again and again in these lines, Sappho resists actual description in favor of emphasizing similarity and self-identity. When she claims that by comparison to Philaenis, blind men would "see, / What things gods are," her words are ironic. As Paula Blank notes, "those blind men will not 'see the gods any better for the comparison Sappho makes, because they cannot see Philaenis to begin with" and Sappho's poem does not fill in for the deficiencies of their vision (361). Holstun suggests, "Sappho begins with a stock Petrarchan rejection of stock Petrarchan similes. But she does not move beyond them to a positive description of Philaenis through some rejuvenated language. Instead, she attempts to generate a self-contained signifying system that rejects analogies to anything outside itself" (840). For Holstun, this sui generis system is ultimately stultifying, leading to the non-representation of Philaenis. Certainly, by the end of the poem, we do not know the color of Philaenis's eyes or hair, only that her cheeks are "red" and "white" (59, 60). If the enchantment of Philaenis is supposed to proceed by "drawing" her in poetic verse, by describing her so that she will recognize herself in the poem, then it is difficult to see how Sappho's poem could succeed.

Yet Sappho's descriptions here present a vision of Philaenis and herself that is more than negation. By claiming an identity between Philaenis and the gods and later between herself and Philaenis, in the lines quoted above, Sappho inscribes them both within a system of creative generation.[37] Moreover, by insisting that Philaenis is fundamentally most like herself, Sappho places her above comparison (at least to earthly things). In Shakespeare's *Henry V*, the king is said to be "like himself" (Prologue.5) Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra* is also self-compared (2.2.4). Donne uses the trope of uniqueness,

[37] This set of identities is similar to the connection Sidney draws between Orphic poetry and the imitation of God, noted above.

of being only like oneself, to join Sappho and Philaenis as one autonomous whole that does not need further reference or inscription. The promise of such oneness might seduce Philaenis back to Sappho, especially when contrasted to the threat offered the female body by cross-sex encounters.

After establishing the sui generis system, Sappho outlines the consequences of cross-sex love, making what Janel Mueller has described as a "brief for lesbianism" (182). Sappho reminds Philaenis:

> Thy body is a natural paradise,
>
> In whose self, unmanured, all pleasure lies,
>
> Nor needs perfection; why shouldst thou then
>
> Admit the tillage of a harsh rough man?
>
> Men leave behind them that which their sin shows,
>
> And are as thieves traced, which rob when it snows.
>
> But of our dalliance no more signs there are,
>
> Than fishes leave in streams or birds in air. (35-42)

Sappho shifts away from figuring Philaenis, and seems at first also to shift away from the possibilities offered in inscribing Philaenis's wax heart. She no longer seems to be drawing Philaenis by appealing to her affect or by describing her form in verse. Instead she appeals to her sense, advocating the superiority of lesbian erotics to cross-sex erotics by way of reason. Yet since Sappho registers the melting of her own heart as robbing her of "sense," and since the mind can also be a waxy locale, as we saw in Chapter 1, this new tactic still has everything to do with wax. Sappho continues to try to shape Philaenis, this time through an attempt to make her realize the superiority of same-sex relations.

At the same time, this effort is complicated by the subject of Sappho's argument. In the lines quoted above, Sappho aligns impression with heterosexual sex acts and simultaneously suggests that impression is violent, and deleterious. She insists that Philaenis's body is "a natural paradise" that needs neither manure nor "perfection." In Donne's "Epithalamion Made at Lincoln's Inn" he suggests that it is only through marriage that a woman can find "perfection," ending each verse with the refrain, "put on perfection, and a woman's name." Yet here Donne allows Sappho to insist that Philaenis does not "need[]" such perfection. What she has is sufficient, even if not perfect. As Valerie Traub explains, Donne's Sappho conceives of "women's erotic innocence, purity, gentleness, and pleasure…in direct opposition to the difference, friction, and reproductive after-effects of heteroeroticism" (*Renaissance of Lesbianism* 339). Moreover, as Traub further notes, the "dalliance" of Sappho and Philaenis which produces no "signs," is directly contrasted to "the 'tillage' of a harsh, rough man," a sin which leaves indelible traces (semen, pregnancy)" (*Renaissance of Lesbianism* 339).

Yet there seems to be a tension between these lines, and Sappho's desire to regain the enchanting force of verse, which I have suggested is also a desire to re-imprint Philaenis's heart. Sappho's depiction of hetero-erotics is cast in terms of impression. "Tillage" is "the act, operation, or art of tilling or cultivating land so as to fit it for raising crops" (OED), or, more specifically "to till" is "to plow," which is "to make furrows in and turn up (the earth, the land) with a plough, esp. as a preparation for sowing or planting" (OED). The process of making furrows in the earth resembles the process of impressing wax as a furrow is made by pressure of the plow on the soft earth. Moreover, this image of planting is also a classic trope for writing, appearing, for example In

Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory* (284, 10.3.2). Just as a furrow is a type of impression, so too are the footprints that "thieves" leave who "rob when it snows." The tread of feet in snow leaves a print just like the stamp of a signet ring on wax. In fact, the image of a footprint in the snow is so like to the impression of wax that the two images frequently appear together in early modern literature. Over the course of this project we will observe many other moments in which snow and wax imagery are used in close succession and speak to each other about the nature of impression. Yet unlike the wax heart, these images of impression are negatively valanced within this poem. Tillage might make the land more fertile, but it mars its surface. Similarly, the footprints are evidence of robbery, disrupting the otherwise pristine snowy landscape with their impressions.

If "tillage" and footprints are both impressions and are both negatively valanced, what can we make of Sappho's desire to maintain the image impressed on her wax heart and her desire to regain the "enchanting force" of poetry which I have suggested would entail impressing Philaenis's heart. There must then be some difference between the bodily impression that Sappho disparages and the affective impression that she seems to advocate and which seems to be the desired end of her poetic project. All of these impressions are imagined as bodily, so that cannot be the answer. Valerie Traub's reading of the poem offers us one potential solution. Traub suggests that the lesbian erotics of the poem are an erotics of surfaces rather than depths. Thus the transformation of the heart, hidden as it is, would not despoil the female body in the same way that sex with a man or pregnancy would. Instead the wax heart, like the wax poem functions as a different kind of reproduction. Traub argues that the only kind of reproduction available to same-sex female lovers is the "production of love itself or to its aesthetic memorialization in

bracelets of hair or the lyric poem" (*Renaissance of Lesbianism* 339). The imprint on a wax heart would be "a production of love itself," while the poem that Sappho crafts would function as "its aesthetic memorialization." Thus while, as we have seen, inscription wax can be as erotic as sex and the imprinting of wax as productive as biological reproduction, the impressions made on wax tablets or on the wax heart are still fundamentally different from the production of children, especially in the way that they affect exterior beauty.

Still, there seems to be in the poem a frustration over the fact that these signs of lesbian love are not indelible and not alway legible.[38] While Sappho celebrates the idea that "of our love no more signs there are / Than fishes leave in streams or birds in air," she also mourns the loss of the image in her heart (42-43). Moreover, she uses the language of theft to describe both what happens when men have sex with women, and what has happened to her heart. The claim that she "is robbed of picture, heart, and sense" echoes against the accusation that men are "as thieves, traced, which rob when it snows." The lexicon of thievery suggests that Sappho is aligning herself with these other women who enter into liaisons with men and are victimized by them. Just as men have a propensity to leave behind footprints, empty spaces that mark their passing, Philaenis also has left an absence, an absence that Sappho makes visible in her description of the melting wax heart and an absence that is not filled within the space of the poem.

I suggested at the beginning of this discussion that Sappho is interested not only in reclaiming Philaenis's affections, but also in restoring the integrity of her own wax heart. Restoring that image might give Sappho back her poetic voice, and also might enable that

[38] This frustration over the invisibility of lesbian love is one that recurs through literature and has sparked considerable critical interest. Annamarie Jagose suggests by registering that invisibility, poems like Donne's paradoxically make lesbians visible (2).

voice to work sympathetically on Philaenis. Again, if Sappho's heart bears an image of Philaenis, that image might attract the original back to her. When Sappho gazes on herself in the mirror, she is effectively trying to repair that image. Sappho pines:

> Me, in my glass, I call thee; but, alas,
>
> When I would kiss, tears dim mine eyes, and glass.
>
> O cure this loving madness, and restore
>
> Me to me; thee, my half, my all, my more. (55-58)

At first glance Sappho's act of gazing in the mirror seems to have nothing to do with the tropes of impression that we have been discussing and little to do with the image of the wax heart. Yet if we take into account theories of perception in the period, we are reminded that an act of vision is an act of impression.[39] Thus when Sappho looks at an image in her glass and calls it "thee" she is attempting to reconstitute her image of Philaenis and, through that image, the image of herself. If she can re-inscribe her heart with an image of herself, that she names Philaenis she can fool herself into believing that she posses not only "me" but also "thee." This image might have the power to "draw" Philaenis. Or it may be that such an impression will restore to Sappho a wholeness that could never again be threatened. With her own image inscribed on her heart, she would not need an external love object, especially if she can mis-recognize that image as Philaenis. Yet before such an impression can be fully made, "tears dim mine eyes, and glass," preventing the act of vision that could lead to such a re-inscription. Sappho cannot use her glass to regain "picture, heart, or Sense" and thus is left once again calling for

---

[39] Aristotle held that sense perception was a matter of impression, as we saw in the introduction, see "On the Soul" 674, 424a18-424a23. Seventeenth-century philosophers articulated similar theories. Descartes, for example, claims in his *Principles of Philosophy* that "sense-perception occurs in the same way in which wax takes on an impression from a seal… thus in the eye, the first opaque membrane receives the shape impressed upon it by multi-coloured light" (40).

Philaenis to restore "me to me; thee, my half, my all, my more." Even if her tears had not dimmed the glass, gazing on herself in the mirror would still not guarantee Sappho everything she desires. As Paula Blank has suggested, Sappho's concern about change is also a concern about aging. With time, the image in the mirror would also change, and would no longer match the image inscribed in Sappho's heart.

The only possibility of preserving their images and their love from time seems to be through Sappho's poem itself. In "Shakespeare's Preservation Fantasy," Aaron Kurin suggests that poetry "proposes a violent intervention in the given world that would suspend two of the limiting conditions on human life, mortality and temporality" (93). Analyzing Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, Kurin suggests not only that early modern poets believed poetry offered a solution to the problem of mortality, but also that poetry might provide poets with the power "to act directly" on their subjects, giving them a future that they may neither desire nor be aware of. Sappho and Philaenis will grow old and die, but their names will live on in Donne's poem, making the prayer for the preservation of Philaenis's beauty a reality:

> So may thy cheeks' red outwear scarlet dye,
>
> And their white, whiteness of the galaxy,
>
> So may thy mighty, amazing beauty move
>
> Envy in all women, and in all men, love,
>
> And so be change, and sickness, far from thee,
>
> As thou by coming near, keep'st them from me. (58-64)

At least Philaenis's beauty will be preserved in the poem if Sappho can describe it before "tears dim mine eyes." Still while the extent to which Sappho succeeds in delineating

Sappho is debatable, the poem does capture their union. Even if Philaenis continues to love men, Sappho's poem keeps her "near." She will be the woman Sappho loved forever, and Sappho can insist on their similarity and beauty repetitively, insistently, for all time. That the poem is actually Donne's poem, describing a love affair with scant historical record, only substantiates the power of poetry to immortalize even without consent. For Donne, Sappho and Philaenis's union was productive. Just as Shakespeare's procreative sonnets eventually conclude that poetry is preferable to procreation, so too does "Sappho to Philaenis."

As we have seen, Donne's "Sappho to Philaenis" offers a complex narrative about erotic attachment and loss that can be understood through the figure of the wax heart and the possibility of sympathetic enchantment through verse in which likeness can become "all.. [and] more," an alternative to an erotics of difference. Hence many critics have read Donne's poem as offering a consideration of the power of representation available to lesbians (or the lack thereof); however, this narrative is not explicitly limited to female affect and has implications beyond the lesbian context of the poem[40]. Perhaps all hearts are as vulnerable as Sappho's and perhaps the fires of passion that surround a heart have a transformative effect not only on a lover's heart but also on the possibilities of poetic speech. Whereas Holstun suggests that when Sappho looks in her heart and finds only a melting image of Philaenis her poetic voice is compromised, I would suggest, instead, that Sappho's voice is transformed rather than silenced. Ultimately, despite the fact that Sappho claims she cannot locate the "holy fire" of "verse," her poem offers up new poetic possibilities for the portrayal of loss, union, and creative generation.

---

[40] See for example, Elizabeth Wahl, especially 18, 53-55. See also, Traub, Mueller, Holstun, Revard, and Harvey.

While I have suggested that Donne's figuration of the wax heart is not necessarily attached to gender difference in the same way that we saw in Shakespeare, the extent to which Donne's portrayal of Sappho is gendered remains open. If Sappho is speaking of a vulnerability that is unique to women, then the poetic possibilities created by the melting heart are available only to female poets, or perhaps to the men like Donne or Ovid who ventriloquize them. Nonetheless, if Sappho is looking for a way to render lesbian love as mutual, non-hierarchical, and outside of notions of gender difference, the figure of the wax heart could compromise that mission through its alliance to impression. While it may be that Donne imagines all hearts as wax, the historical association of women with wax is difficult to escape, especially given the ubiquitous association of the figure of signet/seal with reproduction. While Sappho accomplishes much in her quest for an erotics of sameness, the question of masculine force re-emerges because Donne authors the poem, ventriloquizing Sappho's voice, as Elizabeth Harvey has persuasively argued. Moreover, the heterosexual implications of impression seem to cling to the image of the wax heart even as it is attached to same-sex desire. This happens, perhaps, because the physics of impression depends on the binaries of passive/active, at least in an Aristotelian system.

2. Wax Patterning and Wax Relations

Perhaps, then, the only way to free wax impression from narrating a specific relationship governed by the binaries of passive and active is to re-conceptualize the physics of impression, which is exactly what Margaret Cavendish does in her philosophical writings. Cavendish's philosophical writings offer a vitalist philosophy that breaks radically from Aristotelianism and from the mechanist philosophies of Descartes,

Hobbes, and others. Many seventeenth-century philosophers, influenced in part by Paracelsian theories, embraced principles of vitalism, which "holds in its tamest manifestation the inseparability of body and soul and, in its boldest, the infusion of all material substance with the power of reason and self-motion" (Rogers 1). Cavendish is among those that Rogers would call "boldest;" her philosophy invests all matter with rationality and self-motion. As Susan James notes, many seventeenth-century philosophers believed that not "all natural phenomena are mechanically explicable by appeal to the motions and impacts of inert particles of matter," but Cavendish's total rejection of mechanism, combined with her 'theological audacity and impulse to comprehensiveness" makes her "an extremely unusual vitalist" (219).

Together with other vitalist philosophers of the seventeenth century including Jean Baptiste van Helmont, William Harvey, and Francis Glisson, Cavendish found in vitalism a means of "articulat[ing] scientific figurations of agency distinct from the oppressive voluntarism of Calvin on the one hand and, on the other, the amoral ascendancy of spiritless physical force implicit in the materialist philosophies of Hobbes and Descartes" (Rogers 10). While her philosophy did not ultimately have the same influence on her contemporaries as that of Hobbes or Descartes, or any of the male vitalist philosophers mentioned above, Cavendish's vitalism illustrates a thorough engagement with the scientific questions of her time and a creative re-imagining of the possibilities inherent in wax and other seemingly passive objects[41].

---

[41] Recent critics have found serious merit in Cavendish's work and important continuities between her thought and the work of other seventeenth-century philosophers. Both John Rogers and Susan James connect Cavendish to other vitalist philosophers. Catherine Wilson's "Two Opponents of Material Atomism: Cavendish and Lebniz," takes seriously the philosophical connections between Cavendish and the far more respected Leibniz. Jonathan Goldberg's discussion of Cavendish in *The Seeds of Things* builds on this trend by explaining the importance of Lucretius to Cavendish's thought.

In Cavendish's *Philosophical Letters*, patterning replaces impression as an explanation for how wax takes on new forms. Since wax has a history as a philosophical model, her use of wax helps differentiate her philosophy from both Aristotelianism and mechanism by calling into question the location of agency in the exchange between signet and wax. Yet even as Cavendish uses wax to signal her difference from Aristotle and the mechanists, she deemphasizes the importance of wax as an example. In Cavendish's work, wax becomes just one example among many, suggesting the comparatively decentralized organization of her philosophy. At the same time, Cavendish's evocation of wax and of the signet/seal trope also works to connect the physics of objects to the physics of subjects, or, to put it differently, to the nature of relationships between individuals. Although Cavendish does not explicitly connect her physics to questions of gender and sexual politics, her use of wax to model patterning has ramifications for how we might understand gender relations and the possibilities of erotic desire. Moreover, her physics of patterning offers the possibilities of mutuality that Sappho seems to seek in "Sappho to Philaenis," but fails to find.

Cavendish begins her discussion of patterning by asking, "when a bodies figure is printed on the snow, or any other fluid or soft matter, as air, water, and the like; whether it be the body, that prints its own figure upon the snow, or whether it be the snow, that patterns the figure of the body?" (*Philosophical Letters* 104).[42] While a mechanist would argue that the body does indeed "[print] its own figure upon the snow," Cavendish argues the opposite. She claims that it is actually "the snow that patterns out the figure of the body" (*PL* 105). The snow is not a passive recipient in this account since, for Cavendish,

[42] Hereafter, abbreviated *PL*.

all matter is capable of self-motion and perception. As a result all matter has a certain kind of agency. Thus the exchange between the body and the snow is not an interaction between one active and one passive object, but between two active objects. Immediately after the snow example, Cavendish turns to wax. She explains:

> … if a seal be printed upon wax, 'tis true, it is the figure of the seal, which is printed on the wax, but yet the seal doth not give the wax the print of its own figure, but it is the wax that takes the print or pattern from the seal, and patterns or copies it out in its own substance, just as the sensitive motions in the eye do pattern out the figure of an object, as I have declared heretofore. (*PL* 105)

Just as she does with the snow, and with the eye, Cavendish argues that the wax is active. It "*takes* the print or pattern" and "*patterns* or *copies* it out in its own substance" (emphasis added). Where for Aristotle and his followers, the apparatus of signet/seal modeled the relationship between the outside world and the mind, rendering the external stimuli active and the passive mind, for Cavendish both the signet and the seal actively participate in the process of patterning. The signet moves, and the wax responds to the image on the signet and patterns out its figure. According to Cavendishian physics, no object causes the movement of another object. While it might appear that the signet is moved by the hand, for Cavendish it only “occasions” its movement. Similarly the wax patterns out the signet out of its own free volition. No movement is forced.

The concept of occasioning provides Cavendish a framework to consider motion that does not seem to be self-generated. Yet even occasioned motion is still fundamentally different from mechanist explanations of movement. As Cavendish explains in her *Observations on Experimental Philosophy:*

> When a man moves a string, or tosses a ball, the string or ball is no more sensible of the motion of the hand, than the hand is of the motion of the string or ball; but the hand is only an occasion that the string or ball moves thus or thus. I will not say , but that it might have some perception of the hand, according to the nature of its own figure; but it does not move by the hand's motion, but by its own: for, there can be no motion imparted, without matter or substance. (163)

Thus to occasion movement is in some sense to cause it. Yet as Cavendish takes great pains to establish there is still a mutuality; "the string or ball is no more sensible of the motion of the hand, than the hand is of the motion of the string or ball," which is to say that they perceive each other equally. Moreover, the movement of the ball or string is fundamentally its own motion "for, there can be no motion imparted." Thus while the signet in the above example might not move if it were not for the hand, its movement is its own. The hand merely provides an occasion for self-movement.

By insisting that the signet and wax move themselves, Cavendish departs from both mechanism and Aristotelianism. While Aristotle is himself in some ways a vitalist, asserting that terrestrial objects move downward or upward toward their natural place as the result of their elemental composition, he understands motion from side to side as violent motion that requires a mover. Aristotle does not explain how motion continues after an initial application of force, but his followers developed theories to account for such movement. Jean Buridan, for example, proposed a theory of impetus in the fourteenth century. According to Buridan, "when a mover sets a body in motion he implants into a certain impetus, that is, a certain force enabling a body to move in the direction in which the mover starts it, be it upwards, downwards, sidewards, or in a

circle…. It is because of this impetus that a stone moves on after the thrower has ceased moving it" (qtd. in Pederson 210). Thus scholastic Aristotelianism holds that motion can be transferred, a concept that Cavendish explicitly rejects. Similarly, Descartes also talks about motion in terms of transference, although his theory of motion is quite different from Aristotle's. In *Principles of Philosophy,* Descartes explains that "when a body collides with another, if its power of continuing in a straight line is less than the resistance of the other body, it is deflected so that, while the quantity of motion is retained, the direction is altered; but if its power of continuing is greater than the resistance of the other body, it carries that body along with it, and loses a quantity of motion equal to that which it imparts to the other body" (242). Descartes' theory allows for both inertia and the conservation of motion and thus prefigures Newtonian physics. Cavendish, on the other hand, by insisting that motion is intrinsic to objects (and constant within them) anticipates modern atomism, which holds that at the level of the atom matter is always moving, even if that motion is not perceptible.

We can also trace that departure through her treatment of vision and sense perception more broadly, which as we have seen was mapped onto the trope of signet/seal by Aristotle and also by Descartes. Aristotle understands vision to work by impression, as he does all sense perception. As we have seen before, Aristotle models perception through the trope of signet /seal. He claims, "generally about all perception, we can say that a sense is what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible form of things without the matter, in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron or gold" (674, 424a18-424a23). Vision in particular occurs when color transforms the medium which then presses on the eye, causing the eye to take

on the shape of whatever is being seen[43]. Descartes similarly uses the same trope to figure sense perception, holding with Aristotle that "sense-perception occurs in the same way in which wax takes on an impression from a seal. It should not be thought that I have a mere analogy in mind here: we must think of the external shape of the sentient body as really being changed by the object in exactly the same way as the shape of the surface of the wax is altered by the seal … thus, in the eye, the first opaque membrane receives the shape impressed upon it by muli-coloured light" (40). Thus Cavendish, by eschewing impression also eschews both Aristotelian and Cartesian theories of vision. In doing so, she may align herself with other theories of vision in which the eye is not understood as passive including the Galenic theory of vision.[44]

While Cavendish's theory of patterning and her understanding of movement are considerably different from both Aristotle and Descartes, her choice of examples in explaining her philosophy is strategic. Since both Aristotle and Descartes explain sense perception by analogy to the process of imprinting wax with a signet ring, Cavendish's decision to use the trope of signet/seal as one of her examples works to signal her awareness of those previous philosophies as well as her departure from them. Yet it is not simply Cavendish's choice of wax that is strategic, but also her decision to make wax one example of many. In the passage just quoted, the inquiry is occasioned not by observing images pressed in wax, but by looking at footprints in the snow. The image of a footprint in snow shares, of course, many similarities with a printed seal. First, as we saw in "Sappho to Philaenis," the footprint, too, is a figure of impression. Moreover, like

---

[43] See Aristotle 663-667, 416b17-419b4.

[44] In the Galenic theory of vision, the eye emits pneuma which allow it to conceive "the visible world upon itself" (Lobanov-Rotovsky 199). For an expanded discussion of Renaissance theories of vision see Sergei Lobanov-Rotovsky's essay "Taming the Basilisk."

the printed seal, it is also a literary trope that is frequently invoked in the literature of the period to figure theft, as we saw in Donne. In Donne, footprints in the snow mark the "sin" of men who leave their mark both on their women and on the landscape. By investing this image with the physics of patterning, Cavendish frees the snow from connotations of passivity and recasts the footprint as evidence not of violent trampling but of the snow's self-motion and voluntary figuring. As Cavendish continues to develop her philosophy, she turns to vision and the "sensitive motions of the eye" to solidify her claims. Here too, Cavendish overturns conventional theories that held that vision was the result of the eye being imprinted the external world.[45] Instead, for Cavendish vision once again depends on patterning or voluntary self-motion.

By positioning wax as one of many objects, locating it between the example of the footprint and that of the eye, Cavendish makes the point that patterning does not apply only to malleable objects, or only to encounters between hard and soft objects. Instead, patterning is the system that governs all natural movement because all things are composed of the rational, sensitive, and grosser parts of matter (James 225). Consequently, all things are perceptive and self-moving. One consequence of Cavendish's theory of patterning is that it starts to suggest that it is not that exceptional to be human, as everything has the power of self-motion and perception. As Eve Keller argues, "Cavendish's acceptance of organic materialism… holds implications for her vision of the self: like the object of its study, the self for Cavendish is irregular, prone to contradiction, and nondiscrete" (458) Cavendish's de-emphasis of wax, given its

[45] We looked briefly at the Aristotelian model of sense perception in the Introduction. Aristotle treated all perception as impression, and his conception of vision was highly influential. Both Hobbes' and Descartes' theories of vision also depend upon impression. Cavendish first offers her theory of sense perception in response to Hobbes. However, in the passage that is quoted she is responding to Descartes.

philosophical connection to the human mind, participates in this leveling process by placing the human mind on the same continuum with every other object including other parts of the body which might have different sympathies and antipathies than the mind iteself.

Yet at the same time that Cavendish's contextualization of the wax model suggests that there is nothing exceptional about being human, her invocation of wax invites the reader to connect Cavendish's philosophy to the human mind and to human interactions. After all, for Cavendish everything is material: "not anything in Nature, what belongs to her, is immaterial," which means that not only physical objects but also, "Motions, Forms, Thoughts, Ideas, Conceptions, Sympathies, Antipathies, Accidents, Qualities, as also Natural Life and Soul are all material" (*PL* 12). Cavendish articulates a physics that applies to thoughts, psyches, and subjectivities, as well as the more traditional objects of snow, wax, and eyes. Thus Cavendish makes it possible to conceive of a physics of subjects in which their interactions proceed just as relations do between all things in the natural world. Precisely because humans are not so different from anything else, her physics can be applied to human interaction of all kinds. Since wax has a long philosophical history of figuring biological and epistemological reproduction, Cavendish's turn to wax helps her readers recognize the ways that her physics apply to people. In fact, if we return to the passage we first quoted, we see that the examples of patterning Cavendish supplies takes us closer and closer to a considerations of human relationships. The footprints in the snow evoke human impact on nature. From this starting point, Cavendish transitions to the figure of the signet and seal, a figure connected to human interaction both through the philosophical resonances and through its

connection to writing. Finally, Cavendish addresses human perception and human agency when she moves from discussing the wax to detailing the "sensitive motions of the eye." Rather than moving away from human concerns, Cavendish seems to be zeroing in on them.

Recent criticism has examined the connection between Cavendish's physics and questions of gender and politics. While there is still contention over whether or not Cavendish's physics offers up a feminist politics, as I discuss below, Cavendish's philosophy itself seems to authorize its extension into human affairs. Despite an explicit claim that her text does not to "discourse or write of either Church or State," Cavendish invites political considerations by turning frequently to the world of human interaction in order to explain her physics, and by framing her treatise, in part, as a response to Hobbes, who explicitly connects his physics to politics. Cavendish's frequent engagement with human behavior to elucidate how the physical world is organized, makes it clear that she see the two as very much related. For example, Cavendish suggests the foot that leaves a print in the snow is "just like a man, whose picture is drawn by a Painter, when he goes away, he leaves not his place with his picture, but his place goes with his body; and as the place of the picture is the place of the colour or paint, and the place of the copie of an exterior object patterned out by the sensitive corporeal motions is the place of the sensitive organ, so the place of the print in snow, is the snows place" (105). These types of comparisons are made frequently, and while her examples connected to political question, they do have implications for how we understand relationships between people. This is especially the case when Cavendish discusses the difference between forced motion and free motion.

Establishing the difference between forced motion and free motion is crucial to Cavendish's philosophy. For Cavendish, all matter has "the freedom" to work against reason, move irregularly, and be combative. Motion can be forced, but that is the exception, rather than rule. Cavendish explains:

> 'Tis true, 'tis the freedom in Nature for one man to give another a box on the Ear, or to trip up his heels, of for one or more men to fight with each other; yet these actions are not like the actions of loving Imbraces and Kissing each other… and so is likewise the action of impression, and the action of self-figuring not one and the same, but different; for the action of impression is forced, and the action of self-figuring is free" (23-24)

Here Cavendish allows that the action of impression exists, but she likens it to the violence of men fighting. If we fail to recognize the difference between patterning and impression, it is equivalent to not recognizing the difference between fighting and "loving Imbraces." Such a misunderstanding would have a devastating effect on how we reacted to seeing people kiss, as we would read that act not as sign of affection, but instead as a violent action. While matters of kissing and fighting are not always political, they certainly can be. Cavendish's philosophical texts have political implications, despite her avowal in the preface to *Philosophical Letters* that "I shun, as much as I can, not to discourse or write of either Church or State" ("Preface" b2).

The fact that Cavendish situates her natural philosophy as a response to a philosopher like Hobbes, who overtly extends his natural philosophy into politics, further confirms the premise that we can extend Cavendish's physics to questions of politics and gender politics. Consider how Hobbes opens *The Leviathan:*

> Nature (the art whereby God hath made and governs the world) is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an artificial animal. For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within, why may we not say that all automata (engines that move themselves by springs and wheels as does a watch) have an artificial life? For what is a heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings... Art goes yet further, imitating the rational and most excellent work of Nature, man. For by art is created that great leviathan called a commonwealth, or state (in latin, civitas), which is but an artificial man (3).

Hobbes suggests in this opening moment of his political treatise, that the body is essentially a machine put in action by mechanical processes and that the same is true of the state. Hobbes argues that the state "is but an artificial man," making use of the metaphor of body politic to cement the connections between his natural philosophy and his political philosophy. In *The Leviathan and the Air Pump,* Stephen Shapin investigates the relationship between natural science and political theory through Hobbes and Boyle, suggesting “solutions to the problem of knowledge are solutions to the problem of social order" (332). Elizabeth Potter’s *Gender and Boyle’s Law of Gases* suggests that not only state politics but also gender politics relate to scientific questions in the period. Thus looking for politics in Cavendish’s natural philosophy is only to afford her the same consideration in that regard as her contemporaries.

So what happens when we apply Cavendish’s physics and particularly her conception of patterning to human interactions? Since Cavendish invests agency in all supposedly passive positions, her physics has implications for traditionally vulnerable

positions. Yet Cavendish's own avowedly royalist politics short circuit any possibility that she intends her philosophy to offer a foundation for republican or egalitarian frameworks. Instead, it seems that question of kissing and fighting are more properly the questions that her philosophy engages, which is to say that her philosophy seems to intervene in a politics of gender that is, for the most part, restricted to the private/domestic arena, although Cavendish certainly considers the possibility of female rule.

In making the claim that Cavendish's physics primarily connects to a politics of gender, I am not alone. Other critics have read various components of Cavendish's physics as challenging the patriarchal norms. For example, Misty Anderson argues that "Cavendish's animism carries both a philosophical challenge to Cartesian objectivity and a political challenge to the characterization of women as mere body or legal chattel exchanged by Lockean subjects by claiming the intelligence of the body" (335). Similarly Lisa T. Sarasohn argues that "Cavendish used the skeptical methodology of the new science not only to attack traditional natural philosophy, but also as a weapon in her battle for the recognition of female intellectual equality" (289). John Rogers takes these claims even further, arguing that Cavendish's primary goal "behind the lessons in spiritualized matter that fill so many volumes of her natural philosophy is to supply the metaphysical foundations for a social agenda from which she had almost no contemporary support -- the liberation of women from the constraints of patriarchy" (181). Although these critics acknowledge that Cavendish never explicitly connects questions of natural philosophy to questions of sexual politics, they all suggest that such a critique is implicit.

Still, Deborah Boyle is not alone when she argues that "there is very little evidence for attributing such protofeminism to Cavendish" (196) and insists that "future scholarship should abandon trying to make her out to be a protofeminist, and should focus instead on explicating and evaluating her arguments on their own terms" (227). While Boyle takes on a variety of arguments that have been made for Cavendish as protofeminist, the most relevant for my concerns in this chapter are the criticisms that she levels against Rogers' association of Cavendish's rational matter with femininity and her sensitive matter with masculinity. On the basis of this gendering, Rogers is able to assert that "Cavendish's science, is to be sure, a sincere exercise in organizational physics; but this physical vision functions most powerfully as a utopia of female rule" (202). Boyle attacks Rogers' claim by pointing to other moments in Cavendish's writing where Cavendish makes explicit that men are more apt for rational thought than woman. Consequently, she suggests, it is incorrect to read Cavendish as associating the feminine with rationality and or as offering a vision for female rule and governance. Boyle is right to caution against aligning too closely the categories of matter with categories of gender, and Rogers, perhaps, carries too far the implications of Cavendish's natural philosophy as social agenda.

Yet Boyle's critique of Rogers does not actually touch the possibility that Cavendish's physics has implications for how one understands gender relations and gender norms. Rogers convincingly argues:

> If the traditional natural philosophy of Mother Nature and God the Father figured sexual hierarchy in the language of relatively reciprocal relations, the new mechanistic science of agency and organization flattened the relation of

> reciprocity to one of absolute subjection; it rendered natural and inevitable the rights and privileges of physical force. Any organizational analogy between the mechanistic microworld of material particles and the social world of men and women could only accord significance to that sex in possession of greater physical strength. (186)

Cavendish may or may not have been creating a scientific basis for arguing for the superiority of women or advocating female rule. She certainly seriously entertains the question of female leadership in her fiction. In her utopian piece, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing-World,* Cavendish's heroine, the empress, who is also a figure for Cavendish herself, has absolute power "to rule and govern all that world as she pleased" (132). Yet the work is ultimately ambivalent about the efficacy of the Empress's rule. When the Empress starts to rule *The Blazing World* it knows neither war nor hardship. Yet the Empress makes changes for variety's sake (201). These interventions upset the world's balance and it is only when the Empress reverts all of her changes and returns the country to the status quo that Cavendish celebrates her leadership.

Regardless of whether she would advocate female leadership, Cavendish does seem to be worried about the "flatten[ing of] the relation of reciprocity [between the genders] to one of absolute subjection," or perhaps, more broadly the flattening of relations. Whether or not Cavendish's philosophy ultimately advocates female rule and signals female superiority, she is invested in lessening the importance of brute physical strength (an investment which may have to do with her royalist tendencies as well.) As both Rogers and Boyle note, Cavendish attaches physical strength to masculinity in *The Worlds Olio* when she writes that "there is a great difference betwixt... Masculine

Strength and the Feminine... for Nature hath made Mans Body more able to endure Labour" (A4 recto). Yet while Cavendish is interested in gender difference, she recognizes that some women are stronger than some men, thus "Nature hath not made women so strong of Body, and so clear of understanding as the ablest of Men" (A6 recto). While Cavendish recognizes that there may be some differences in strength between the ablest of men and the ablest of women, she does not claim that all men are stronger than all women. Nor would she claim that all men have clearer understanding then all women. When later in *The World's Olio,* Cavendish asserts that "if I were to choose a Sex, I had rather be a Pigmy, stuft with rational spirits, then a Giant empty thereof" (216), the slippage from gender to mythic races of very small and very large beings does suggest a relation between questions of size and strength and questions of gender. Yet I would not be as quick as Rogers to claim "Pigmy" as feminine and "Giant" as masculine, or to suggest that "the new distinction... works to reinscribe, in a new key, the antinomies of sexual difference" (203). Instead, Cavendish's answer explicitly refuses the possibility that masculinity, strength, and rationality necessarily run together. Cavendish wants to be "stuft with rational spirits" no matter what gender that might make her. Being a man would be meaningless if it meant being a "Giant empty thereof." What seems most important to Cavendish is to break the connection between gender, strength, and understanding, while prioritizing understanding regardless of the form it takes, be it "Pigmy" or "Giant," masculine or feminine.

If we return to Cavendish's division of matter into rational, sensitive, and gross matter, we see that the same connections between size and rationality play out on the level of her physics as in her consideration of giants and pygmies. However, once again,

what seems important is not whether or not the small particles of rational matter can be connected to women, but that rationality governs. Rational matter is more powerful even though it lacks the brute strength of sensitive matter. Moreover, the two must act together to entice grosser matter to move, suggesting a system of harmony and cooperation. Cavendish is advocating a physics and a politics that are not ruled by subjection, that allow for relations to be governed by rationality rather than brute force. While such a physics certainly has implications for patriarchy, or at least the ethical relationships between men and women, it does not seem to support a claim for female superiority or female rule.

Still, even if Cavendish does not go so far as to advocate female rule, by offering an alternative to impression that affords women agency and desire, she re-imagines the dynamics of male-female interaction that we began tracing in Chapter 1. For Cavendish, the female body no longer is passive material to be molded by masculine pressures. Instead, the female womb actively patterns out the fetal imprint. Cavendish's theory of patterning would thus sidestep the question of whether women contribute seed to the reproductive process by positing that the female body is actively involved in the formation of the fetus, regardless of whether seed is contributed. [46]Yet since in an encounter between wax and signet, wax will always take on the shape of the signet, Cavendish's physics cannot change the realities of gendered interaction, only our perception of it.

---

[46] There was considerable disagreement during the early modern period as to whether or not women produced efficacious seed. Generally, follower of Galen claimed that women did, while those who followed Aristotle claimed that they did not. For a further discussion, see Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, 30-38.

Cavendish's philosophy of patterning does not change the way objects in the world behave. Moreover, if we map signet and wax onto male and female bodies, we find that the female body is still read as malleable, and with it, perhaps, the female heart and mind. Yet, Cavendish's move from impression to patterning does change the dynamic between gendered bodies and minds by allowing that influence to be the result of a female desire to be shaped and transformed rather than by a male desire to own and inscribe. Even if women are like wax and are formed by the men in their lives, Cavendish's philosophy affords them the possibility of consent, cooperation, and influence.[47] Further, by locating motion and perception in all matter, and consequently in every part of the body, Cavendish opens up the possibility that one part of the body can be complicit in an act that other parts refuse. The self can be divided. Thus, if Shakespeare's Lucrece were impregnated by Tarquin, it would not, for Cavendish signal her desire for him, at least not a wholly integrated person. Instead, pregnancy could result simply because her womb's desired to pattern itself after his seed. The part can act without the consent of the whole. In *The Seeds of Things,* Jonathan Goldberg suggests that Cavendish "might be understood… as a figure for whom desire splits rather than resolves relations between inner and outer, self and society" (131). Her infusion of sensitive and rational matter into every piece of matter problematizes our understanding of identity and sexuality.

---

[47] In Cavendish's *Female Orations,* she elaborates on the possibilities she sees for women, presenting a range of opinions on gender difference and gender politics. Oration 7, the final oration, concludes with a summary of the power that women possess over men: "we Women are much more Favour'd by Nature than Men, in Giving us such Beauties, Features, Shapes, Gracefull Demeanour, and such Insinuating and Inticing Attractives, as Men are Forc'd to Admire us, Love us, and be Desirous of us, in so much as rather than not have and Injoy us, they will Deliver to our Disposals, their Power, Persons, and Lives, Inslaving Themselves to our Will and Pleasures; also we are their Saints, whom they Adore and Worship, and what can we Desire more, than to be Men's Tyrants, Destinies and Goddesses?" (147).

Cavendish show us is that in the realm of philosophy, re-imagining the relationship between wax and signet can create new models of subjectivity, epistemology, and physics. Since the model of wax seal and signet occupies a crucial position in the inherited scholastic legacy, disrupting it is an important tactic to offering new versions of natural philosophy. Yet as we began to see with regard to Shakespeare, in chapter 1, the wax/signet model also has considerable power to figure the relationships between men and women. Thus Cavendish's intervention in natural philosophy also has implications for understanding desire and destabilizes figures of impression by offering new possibilities for agency. Cavendish's philosophy allows us to locate agency in both the object that provides a pattern, and the object that adopts that pattern as its own. When mapped on to new relations, such re-conceptualization provides women with considerably more power in determining their own futures by affording them some measure of control over their own desires.

If we think back to Sappho's project, which involved an attempt to conceptualize same-sex desire in ways that were non-hierarchical and yet could still endure, we might begin to see in Cavendish's patterning a suitable physics. If Sappho believed that imprints were formed by a free act of patterning on the part of the person or object that seems to be in the passive position, she would not need to escape the world of signs in order to find a space for mutuality. Every encounter, even sex between a man and a woman, could be seen as a moment of patterning. Of course, the fact that cross-sex relations would also become nonhierarchical means that Sappho may not have been able to carve out a space for female erotic relations to function differently from those between men and women. Ultimately, as Goldberg suggests, it becomes in Cavendish's philosophy very difficult to

differentiate one thing from another, since all matter is a mixture and it is only "the particular mixture of rational and sensible matter] that differentiates one thing from another" (131). It may be that Donne's Sappho would have found Cavendish's physics more useful for conveying lesbian desire, but no more successful as at tool to articulate the superiority of lesbian relations since difference becomes less radical in Cavendish.

3. Wax Alone

Wax for Cavendish, then, is a means for figuring her philosophy of patterning and suggesting new possibilities for physics and for erotic and gendered relationships. For her, wax is just one example among many, and not so different from the other subjects and objects that pepper her philosophical texts. Cavendish's departure from other philosophers is enacted in part through this decentralization. René Descartes, on the other hand, like Aristotle before him, treats wax as an exceptional object[48]. Wax works in his *Meditations* as the example par excellence for understanding what the mind thinks it can know about external objects and what it actually is capable of knowing. It symbolizes his relationship to other philosophers, and provides his readers with an accessible means to think through his philosophical claims. Moreover, the *Meditations* itself offers a new foundation for all of Descartes' future philosophical projects. Thus it is not only that wax underlies the *Meditations* itself, but also, we might argue, Descartes' entire philosophic project. Descartes re-forms wax to reform philosophy. At the same time, wax works in Descartes' texts in ways he may never have intended, especially insofar as it seems to

[48] In moving from Cavendish to Descartes, we have moved slightly out of chronological order. Descartes' Meditations (1641) was written before Cavendish's Philosophical Letters (1664). In fact, as we have seen, Cavendish explicitly responds to Cartesian theories, which she became aware of while in exile in France, where she actually met Descartes.

retain some of its poetic and philosophic associations with the female body. Thus we can begin to see in Descartes a theory of erotic desire that accompanies his new theory of the subject.

Descartes makes clear from the beginning of *The Meditations* that its aims are revolutionary. Its stated goal is to establish a new base for knowledge, “to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations;” such a foundation will allow the possibility of “establish[ing] anything at all in the sciences that was stable and likely to last" (12). By rejecting the accepted foundations of knowledge, Descartes is in effect rejecting Scholastic Aristotelianism and the emphasis of the schools on tradition as a source of knowledge. Instead, Descartes proposes to trust only what he can determine to be true using his own mind. Thus, as he makes clear in the Second Meditation, “anything which admits of the slightest doubt I will set aside just as if I had found it to be wholly false; and I will proceed in this way until I recognize something certain, or, if nothing else, until I at least recognize for certain that there is no certainty" (16). Since the senses sometimes mislead us they must be doubted completely, as must memory: “I will suppose then, that everything I see is spurious. I will believe that my memory tells me lies, and that none of the things that it reports ever happened. I have no senses" (16). While it is possible to doubt the senses in Scholastic Aristotelianism, by the seventeenth century the claim “there is nothing in the intellect which is not first in the senses” had become a scholastic commonplace. Descartes’ attempt to separate the mind from the senses and from the act of sense perception is part of what makes his project revolutionary.

By calling into doubt all sensory perception, memory, and even the body, Descartes arrives at *The Meditation*'s version of the *cogito*.[49] In an effort to find something to believe in other than uncertainty, the meditator takes up the question of God and existence. He asks, "Am I not so bound up with a body and with senses that I cannot exist without them? But I have convinced myself that there is absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, no mind, no bodies. Does it follow that I too do not exist? No: if I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed" (16). This realization leads his to "conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist,* is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind" (16) and that "I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks" (18). This line of argument leads Descartes to prioritize the mind as the only undoubtable object of knowledge and to attempt to determine what exactly belongs to the mind or the thinking self. Again, by prioritizing the mind over all other objects of knowledge, Descartes radically differentiates his philosophy from scholastic Aristotelianism. As we saw in our discussion of Aristotle in the introduction, form and matter were inextricably intertwined for Aristotle. Descartes' rejects that integral connection between body and mind and suggests that what truly matters about being human is mind.

Wax participates in Descartes' revolutionary metaphysical project. It enters Descartes' philosophy after the priority of the mind has been established because the mind finds the rejection of the senses difficult to accept:

> From all this I am beginning to have a rather better understanding of what I am. But it still appears — and I cannot stop thinking this — that the corporeal things

[49] The actual phrase comes from a recapitulation of the philosophy in *A Discourse on the Method.* In the Cottingham translation, the proposition is "I am thinking, therefore I exist" (137). I give it here as "I think therefore I am" since this is the more common (and famous) translation.

> of which images are formed in my thoughts, and which the senses investigate, are known with much more distinctness than this puzzling 'I' which cannot be pictured in the imagination. And yet it is surely surprising that I should have a more distinct grasp of things which I realize are doubtful, unknown, and foreign to me, than I have of that which is true and known — my own self. But I see what it is: my mind enjoys wandering off and will not yet submit to being restrained within the bounds of truth. Very well then; just this once let us give it completely free rein, so that after a while, when it is time to tighten the reins, it may more readily submit to being curbed. (20)

Descartes' framing of the wax argument suggests, at first, that it is a digression away from the main line of inquiry, and not in fact a pivotal moment within his *Meditations.* He treats the turn to wax as a backtracking of sorts. The meditator has already discarded sensory observations as unreliable, and yet "cannot stop thinking" that he knows "corporeal things… with much more distinctness than this puzzling 'I.'" Since he cannot rid the mind of these thoughts, the meditator chooses to indulge the mind so that "when it is time to tighten the reins, it may more readily submit to being curbed" and wax becomes the object with which the meditator indulges his mind, seemingly in error. Yet this framing of the wax passages as a "wandering" seems to be mere sleight of hand. By the end of he discussion of wax, Descartes has used the material to return to his main assertion, that the mind must be the primary object of all knowledge, and that "every consideration whatsoever which contributes to my perception of the wax, or of any other body, cannot but establish even more effectively the nature of my own mind" (22). His

discussion of wax then, is less a digression, and more a second path to establish the same conclusion that the mind's nature is the most certain object of philosophy.

Descartes' is able to use wax to establish the preeminence of the mind, in part, because as Margreta de Grazia aptly notes, "wax waxes" (29). First, Descartes describes wax, detailing it on every sensory register:

> Let us take, for example, this piece of wax. It has just been taken from the honeycomb; it has not yet quite lost the taste of the honey; it retains some of the scent of the flowers from which it was gathered; its colour, shape and size are plain to see; it is hard, cold and can be handled without difficulty; if you rap it with you knuckle it makes a sound. In short, it has everything which appears necessary to enable a body to be known as distinctly as possible. (20)

Yet while the meditator can see, smell, taste and even hear the wax, he claims that these sensory perceptions turn out not to offer him any real knowledge about the wax because they are not universally valid. The meditator goes on to show this by placing the wax by the fire:

> And look: the residual taste is eliminated, the smell goes away, the colour changes, the shape is lost, the size increases; it becomes liquid and hot; you can hardly touch it, and if you strike it, it no longer makes a sound. (20)

The difference between the wax before it is brought near the fire and after leads to the question, "does the same wax remain? It must be admitted that it does; no one denies it, no one thinks otherwise. So what was it in the wax that I understood with such distinctness?" (20). By abstracting from his observations, the meditator finds the answer.

He exhorts his reader, “let us concentrate, take away everything which does not belong the wax and see what is left: merely something extended, flexible and changeable” (20).

The mutability of wax leads the meditator to reject the specific sensory characteristics of wax as the qualities that define it. Instead, he argues that only those qualities that are always true of the wax can be ascribed to it. It turns out such qualities are only graspable in the mind, and not through sensory perception or even imagination. Again, Descartes turns to wax to illustrate the point. The meditator asks, “but what is meant here by ‘flexible’ and ‘changeable’? Is it what I picture in my imagination: that this piece of wax is capable of changing from a round shape to a square shape, or from a square shape to a triangular shape? Not at all; for I can grasp that the wax is capable of countless changes of this kind, yet I am unable to run through this immeasurable number of changes in my imagination, from which it follows that it is not the faculty of imagination that gives me my grasp of the wax as flexible and changeable" (20). While the imagination can picture wax in a great number of shapes, the move to abstraction requires the mind. Moreover, as the meditator insists, “the nature of this piece of wax is in now way revealed by my imagination, but is perceived by the mind alone” (20). Since the truth of wax only can be known through thought, the meditator deduces “the perception I have of it is a case not of vision or touch or imagination — nor has it ever been despite previous appearances — but of purely mental scrutiny” (20). Even this mental scrutiny is ultimately insufficient to ensure our knowledge of wax. While it might seem that we now know wax, having derived an abstract understanding of it as “something extended, flexible and changeable,” the meditator insists that in that process of abstracting we have actually more firmly confirmed the nature of our mind than any

truth about the wax. We have returned to the point from whence we departed, and once again confirmed that the mind is a thinking thing. Even though the meditator claims that the turn to wax is a wandering, it is actually a crucial reworking of Descartes earlier arguments.

As this brief analysis of the wax passage has shown, Descartes' project was intended to be revolutionary and wax is an important component of that project. It offers the meditator a second path to think through the implications of the *cogito*, and confirm the pre-eminence of the mind. Moreover, as de Grazi argues, Descartes' choice of wax symbolically represents his departure from scholasticism. It is a "choice of wax-without-signet. To feature wax alone was to dismantle the apparatus which… was key to those old opinions he determined to clear from his mind." Where "signet and wax had represented the process by which objects in the world became objects of knowledge; wax by itself suggests an autonomous consciousness, dependent on its own ideational resources" (31). It becomes the perfect model for Descartes' new understanding of the mind.

If de Grazia's work begins to suggest the symbolic implications of Descartes wax, it does not exhaust them. Its presence in the text also signals continuity. John Hollander suggests in *Melodious Guile,* that wax also stands as a topos for " "sameness-under-apparent-change" (218). No matter how many shapes wax takes, or whether a signet is involved in determining those shapes, it is, in Descartes' own words "the same wax" (20). While Descartes, of course, is literally talking about one piece of wax that is still "the same wax," even after it has been melted, we can take that statement more broadly as a comment on metaphysical philosophy. Descartes' project might be radically different than Aristotle's, but it is still the same type of project. It is still a philosophy of the mind,

and the mind is still understood to be fundamentally like wax. Whether it shapes itself or is pressed into shape by the pressure of a signet, it is the same material. Thus wax in Descartes' not only signals change, but also his place within a philosophical history. Moreover, while Descartes' focus on the wax alone marks a movement away from Aristotle it may also represent a movement towards other philosophical traditions. Augustine uses wax without signet to signal that a change in shape does not equate to a change of essence.[50] A careful reading of Descartes' relation to Augustine lies outside the scope of this project, yet Augustine's wax like Descartes' is used to figure a cohesive subject.[51]

If Descartes' wax enacts symbolically his relationship to other philosophers, that is only one register on which it acts and it gains access to that register because of its material qualities. We have already seen that Descartes takes full advantage of wax's mutability, detailing the way that wax can change on every sensory register and using wax's mutability to underscore the importance of mental scrutiny. It is wax's malleability that allows it to become a trope within philosophy. In Plato, Aristotle, Ovid, Augustine, and Descartes, wax figures the mind because it is mutable and malleable. Thus to fully appreciate Descartes' use of wax we must not sideline its malleability, as de Grazia does when she relays "it is generally assumed that [Descartes] chooses the object most noted for mutability. Wax waxes" (29). Instead, to understand Descartes' use of wax to

---

[50] Hollander reads Descartes alongside Ovid's Pythagoras and Augustine, see 217-219.

[51] Augustine is discussing the limits of the mind's ability to change in "The Immortality of the Soul." He writes: "If, for example, wax somehow changes from a white to a black color, it remains, none the less, wax. It is also the same if it changes to a round form from a square, or from soft to hard, or from warm to cold. All these changes are within the subject, and wax is the subject. And wax remains no more and no less wax, even though these qualities are changed. Therefore, a change of those qualities can occur in the subject, while the subject itself, in regard to its essence and its name, is not changed" (25). For a thorough consideration of the relationship between Descartes and Augustine see Stephen Philip Menn's *Descartes And Augustine.*

symbolize his relationship to philosophical tradition more fully, we must understand Descartes' wax to work on multiple interrelated levels.

Just as important to Descartes' deployment of wax is its status as an object of the every day. Wax is a material that that his audience would have been familiar with and would most likely have also had on hand in their studies. Thus Descartes' readers can follow along with his experiment by repeating it in their own studies. They too can take a piece of wax and melt it by the fire and observe what happens, and then use that wax to think through the philosophical questions that Descartes poses. Descartes' meditator invites this kind of participation from his readers. The vocative, "let us take, for example, this piece of wax," invites readers to consider wax with the meditator, whether they do so in their imaginations or by reaching for their own similar piece of wax[52]. By choosing a familiar and accessible object, the meditator ensures that his readers can also use wax to conceptualize his philosophical claims. Wax offers a conceptual aid for thinking beyond wax.

At the same time, the ordinariness of Descartes' wax helps make his case that what he says about wax would be true of any other object. He is able to engage in the fiction that his choice of wax is an accidental happenstance and let it appear as though wax were in fact simply a convenient object plucked at random from his study. As John Hollander notes "the disarming 'let us take, for example, this piece of wax..' seems to suggest that the wax was lying there on the philosopher's table," that it is a "reached-for-at-the-moment piece of notional wax" (217, 218). By presenting wax as a convenient choice, rather than as symbolically or philosophically laden, Descartes may have been attempting

[52] The vocative is also present in the original latin.

to manipulate his readers into seriously considering the validity of his argument without realizing the full scope of its attack on Aristotelianism.[53] Certainly, Descartes meant *The Meditations* to win people's minds without their realizing the full stake of his commitments, as we see in a letter he wrote to Marin Mersenne:

> I may tell you, between ourselves, that these six Meditations contain the entire foundations for my physics. But it is not necessary to say so, if you please, since that might make it harder for those who favor Aristotle to approve them. I hope that those who read them will gradually accustom themselves to my principles and recognize the truth in them before they notice that they destroy those of Aristotle. (*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* 173)

As Daniel Garber has noted, the letter makes clear that "the *Meditations* is, as it were, a Trojan horse that Descartes is attempting to send behind the lines of Aristotelian science" (82). Descartes fully intends his principles to supplant those of Aristotelianism, but his attack on Aristotelianism is purposefully disguised and hidden. Just so, the full import of his choice of wax also is hidden behind the conceit of the "reached-for-at-the moment piece of notional wax" (218).

While some Cartesian critics have suggested that other objects could have substituted equally for wax, no other objects seems flexible enough to work in all of these ways within the text. John Carriero suggests that "a piece of putty, molten glass, or lead would have done as well" (108), because they, like wax, change significantly with the application of heat. Yet none of those objects has the same status, both as philosophical model, and as an every day material. Moreover, none of these objects has the same poetic

[53] This is despite the overt ambition of the project to uncover new foundations for knowledge, which I have already discussed above.

resonance as wax does. This poetic resonance, when combined with the philosophical history of wax, begins to open Descartes' text to a consideration of the nature of desire around the figure of wax.

Although Descartes certainly does not tackle erotic attachment directly in *The Meditations,* his text does seem to invite a consideration of the connection between the desire to know the external world and sexual desire. When Descartes takes up the question of romantic attachments explicitly, it is in his final work, *The Passions of the Soul*, which investigates the passions as a means of overcoming the strict dualism between body and mind. In that text Descartes identifies sexual love or attraction as one of the most violent passions "because what enters the soul through the senses affects it more strongly than what is represented to it by reason" (85).[54] Erotic passion is both deceptive and seductive because of its alliance with sensory perception. Thus, Descartes' momentary reverie over sensory stimuli in *The Meditations* can be connected to his understanding of desire. Further, in framing *The Meditations,* Descartes employs the form of a religious meditation, a form traditionally occupied with the question of salvation. Yet Descartes repurposes the form. As Aryeh L. Kosman notes "the hero of our meditations is cleansed of error and doubt, not (simply) of sin, and, on one reading at least, 'logodicy' replaces theodicy as a central issue: the justification of reason to man, in the face of dubitability" (Kosman 23) Kosman's qualification "not (simply) of sin" hints that Descartes' text still, obliquely at least, considers questions of morality and sin.[55]

---

[54] For more on Descates' treatment of passions, see Anthony Beavers's "Desire and Love in Descartes's Late Philosophy," 285.

[55] For more on Descartes' meditational form see Amélie Oksenberg Rorty's "The Structure of Descartes' Meditations" and Aryeh L. Kosman's "The Naïve Narrator: Meditation in Descartes' Meditations."

When Descartes frames his inquiry into wax in terms of wandering and error he invites a consideration of the relationship between sin and error, and provokes the question:what might wax (or his consideration of wax) have to do with sin? Gordan Teskey's analysis of the treatment of error in "From Allegory to Dialect: Imagining Error in Spenser and Milton" suggests that in the Renaissance it was possible to conceptualize error in complex terms or as a simple matter of good and evil. Tesky suggests that "whereas Spenser is willing to attribute great moral latitude and complexity to error, Milton forces the concept to either side of a distinction between good and evil" (9). He then goes on to argue that "In Spenser, error is represented *diagetically,* in all the various forms offered by a narrative romance. In Milton, error is represented *dialectically,* as the negation of all that is good" (9). Error within Descartes' *Meditations* seems to function more like error in Spenser than error in Milton. As in Spenser, error in *The Meditations* leads to narrative, and while it has (or may have) something to do with sin it also a "wandering away from, or obliquely toward, truth" (14). Descartes' meditator, as we have seen, becomes frustrated with his mind's entrenchment in old ideas and blames his inability to move forward, to "stop thinking" that it knows objects of the world better than itself, on the mind's delight in error: "I see what it is: my mind enjoys wandering off and will not yet submit to being restrained within the bound of truth. Very well then; just this once let us give it a completely free rein, so that after a while, when it is time to tighten the reins, it may more readily submit to being curbed" (20). The meditator's decision to indulge the mind is a conscious decision not to hold it to truth, to "give it a completely free reign," and it is this decision that leads Descartes to take up wax. Since Descartes ultimately claims that this "wandering" leads him back to a fuller

understanding of the mind, his narrative seems to be in fact “a wandering… towards truth" (14). Yet does the mere claim of truth completely remove the possibility of sin from the Descartes’ “wandering”?

If sin enters this equation it is through the meditator’s decision to gratify his mind, to give in to its desires and allow it to “wander[] off” and have a “free rein.” When allowed that freedom, the meditator’s mind desires a sensory knowledge of wax, a material that we have seen is frequently attached to depictions of femininity and to the female body. Thus we could say that the error or sin here is one associated with erotic desire. This possibility is heightened if we pay attention to the language that the meditator uses to describe the body of wax. The description of wax borders on the poetic and evokes the pastoral. The meditator mentions the remnants of the “honeycomb,” “the taste of honey,” the “scent of the flower” all of which invite the countryside into the philosopher’s study and call to mind the process of wax production. This process is easily rendered erotic as bees drawn by the “scent of the flowers” penetrate them, extract their pollen and carry it back to their hives where they produce both honey and wax.

A quick survey of sixteenth- and seventeeth-century pastoral poets shows the erotic potential of harvesting flowers. Consider for example, Richard Barnfield’s “Affectionate Shephard.” Here the speaker exclaims “O would to God (so I might have my fee) / My lips were honey, and thy mouth a bee” and continues the conceit for several more lines (XVI). Or consider Shakespeare’s Ariel who proclaims, “Where the bee sucks, there suck I, / In a cowslip’s bell I lie” (*The Tempest* 5.1.88-89). While Ariel might simply mean that he, like a bee, drinks the nectar of flowers, the close proximity of “suck” and “lie” suggest more intimate activities. No poet, perhaps, capitalizes on the

erotic potential of honey collecting to the degree that Thomas Carew does in both “Upon a Mole on Celia’s Bosom” and “A Rapture.” In the former, the “mole” turns out to be “a bee / who built her amorous spicy nest / I’th’Hyblas of her either breast” (1-3). Celia’s body replaces the pastoral landscape, her breasts become “twin-sister hills” and her “balmy sweat” functions as nectar that the bee can harvest (10). As the poem develops it becomes clear that the bee not only has to Celia’s bosom and the an intimate relation with her that the speaker craves, but also that the bee guards its territories. Thus any who would taste her bosom, “the sweet, and smart, from thence shall bring / Of the bee’s honey and her sting" (15-16). In the latter, “A Rapture,” the lovers occupy a pastoral landscape and the speaker suggests that after their first pleasure is spent, he can replenish his store:

> as the empty bee that lately bore
> Into the common treasure all her store,
> Flies 'bout the painted field with nimble wing,
> Deflowring the fresh virgins of the spring,
> So will I rifle all the sweets, that dwell
> In my delicious paradise, and swell
> My bagge with honey, drawne forth by the power
> Of fervent kisses from each spicy flower. (55-62)

Carew aligns flower with virgins, bees with men who deflower those virgins, and honey with semen. Descartes’ wax can be placed beside these passages and the erotically charged pastoral landscape that they figure.

Moreover, wax itself seems to retain the ability to stand in for a female body in Descartes' text. When we considered wax as a material attached to an erotic female body in Chapter 1, we were operating under an understanding of gender very much underwritten by Aristotelian understandings of reproduction. As we saw, in the Aristotelian schema, the female body is understood as passive and aligned with wax, while the male body is active and aligned with the signet. Reproduction occurs when the two materially different, gendered bodies meet. While Descartes' use of wax is very different from Aristotle's and operates independently of a signet, his wax is arguably still a feminized erotic object to be stripped and examined. We can make that argument not only on the basis that he arrives at his consideration of wax through a "wandering," or that his description of the wax take on erotic tones, but also because he insists on a congruence between his project of abstracting wax and the removal of clothing:

> When I distinguish the wax from its outward forms — take the clothes off, as it were, and consider it naked — then although my judgment may still contain errors, at least my perception now requires a human mind (21).

Wax here is subjected to the male gaze. The meditator "take[s its] clothes off" and "consider[s] it naked," like a lover would. In *Nudities,* Agamaben suggests that in philosophy and mysticism, "nudity — or denudation — [serves] as a cipher of knowledge," relating not only to the object of knowledge, but also "to the very process of knowledge" (82-83). The stripping of Descartes' wax represents the search for knowledge and simultaneously reminds us of how bodily wax can be.

This return to body occurs at the very moment that the meditator insists that we know wax most fully when we use our mind to understand its essential nature. In *The Animal that therefore I Am*, Derrida, considering this passage, asks:

> But is it insignificant that Descartes then denotes that intelligible extension as a denuded body, an undressed body, according to the figure of nakedness stripped bare, that of a pure body, in the sense of purely extended, and hence purified because I, as mind, as a human mind, would have divested it of its sensible finery [*parures*] or facing [*parements*]. (73)

Derrida's question "is it insignificant…?" implies that for him Descartes' connection of wax to nakedness is anything but inconsequential. There is a double impulse of the text to move beyond body to mind but also to cast that in terms of the very bodily act of undressing. To strip wax of its clothing seems an unlikely task, made impossible by the fact, as Derrida reminds us, that Descartes has abstracted the wax from sensory perception and thus "it remains invisible untouchable!" (73) Wax's bodiless state further complicates the already fraught problem of undressing wax, which Derrida points to with his teasing question, "have you ever tried to undress wax?"

As Derrida helps make clear, the incongruity of Descartes discussion of nakedness and intelligible extension problematizes any easy move to read the wax in eroticized terms. Yet if we allow the wax to register for a moment as an eroticized other, what could we learn from it about the nature of desire or the possibility of relationships? As we have seen, Descartes' text calls into doubt the existence of objects outside the self. Wax, women, his readers may not exist. Moreover, everything he attempts to learn about any of those objects or subjects leads the meditator deeper into himself. To look on another

person, to desire another person, to love another person, always leads back to the self. Moreover, the hunger to look outside is already an error and a wandering. Thus if *The Meditations* offers a theory of relationships or desire, it is a theory which calls into question the possibility that desire can be externalized at all. Whereas Cavendish's physics calls into question the integrity of the self, Descartes *Meditations* problematizes the possibility of others. Descartes' wax becomes in a way like Sappho's mirror. For Sappho what seems external to the self is, ultimately, only a reflection of the self. For Descartes, the wax may actually exist, as may other people, but both are more important as a means of gaining a deeper understanding of the self. What starts as an externalized gaze turns back inwards.

Chapter 3

Mimetic Wax: Truth, Deception and the Art Object

In the first two chapters of this project, I took up the figure of the wax seal as it manifests itself in Shakespeare, Donne, Cavendish and Descartes. I argued that the figure of signet/seal proves a ground upon which conceptions of gender and of relationships between people are narrated, explored and contested. Throughout these chapters I suggested that wax, already a figure that stands for change and malleability, becomes in the hands of early modern writers a material for remodeling and re-imagining theories of gendered interaction and desire. In making that argument, I ascribed a certain amount of dimensionality to the figure of the wax seal, holding that it was not as flat as it may initially seem to be in texts such as Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece.* Instead, it proves a figure with surface and depth, a figure that can work multiple ways and on several levels to challenge traditional gender binaries and standard formulations of desire.

In this chapter and the one that follows, I will move away from considering the wax seal to examining other forms of wax sculpture and their place within cultural, dramatic, and literary locations in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. By wax sculpture I have in mind a wide variety of sculptural figures operating in diverse locations and serving diverse purposes. During the Italian Renaissance, the seventeenth century and beyond, wax sculpture in Italy was both a foundational step for the creation of other sculptures and paintings, as well as an art in itself. One type of sculpture for which wax models were created was bronze sculpture. In the making of bronzes, early modern

sculptors sometimes employed the technique of lost wax casting, a technique that destroys the underlying wax model and sometimes an indirect casting process, which preserves the wax model. In this latter case, models were often kept as art objects in their own right. Since bronzes have to be cast, and since wax can be used to fashion a mold, it is not surprising that wax figures were made in service of bronze sculpture. Yet wax figures also served as three-dimensional sketchbooks for sculptors of marble, an art in which the relationship between model and finished sculpture is less intrinsic. Still, as we will see, in the more forgiving medium of wax, sculptors were able to work out the translation of artistic vision into matter and then translate that form from wax to marble. Similarly, models were made to work out compositions and other formal considerations for paintings by artists such as Michelangelo and Tintoretto.

In moving from wax seals to sculptures, I do not wish to minimize the connection between the two, but rather to extend it. Wax seals are sculptures after all: the images that emerge on wax surfaces are created by crevices, grooves and differences in depth. They are sculptures formed in bas-relief and intimately connected to other forms of relief sculpture as well as sculpture in the round. While my project has focused thus far on other aspects of these seals, they can be read as art objects and studied in terms of their aesthetics. Yet there seems to be a fundamental difference, at least in cultural function, between these relatively flat sculptures and their more three-dimensional counterparts. Wax seals act or masquerade as utilitarian objects whose primary function is to make claims of authorship and privacy. Whereas, the three-dimensional forms of high relief and sculpture in the round seem to function always as objects of art even when they are conscripted to utilitarian purposes and even when, as is often the case of wax sculpture,

they are never intended to be finished pieces of art. If there is a functional difference between wax seals and other wax sculptures, there is also an aesthetic difference, although that difference is not universally maintained. A quick survey of wax seals reveals that the images imprinted on them are not necessarily sculptural in nature. Instead, the wax seals that adorn sixteenth- and seventeenth-century letters bear initials, coats of arms, and other symbolic images, in addition to portraits such as that of Olivia's Lucrece.[56] Sculpture as art form, on the other hand, like the art of painting in the period, is committed to the study and imitation of nature and thus cannot be said to act (simply) in symbolic and allegorical terms. Both because wax seals function primarily as utilitarian objects and because they are not necessarily committed to sculptural form, they are fundamentally different from the wax sculptures that form the basis of this chapter.

Of course, the wax seals of my first two chapters are also different from the wax sculptures of this chapter in that they are textual as well as physical. They enter into the world sometimes as language rather than as things, metaphors rather than objects. All of the sculptures in this chapter, however, are at least potentially, actual objects. The wax figures of *The Duchess of Malfi* are the only possible exception. These figures could be staged in a variety of ways, not all of which would necessarily involve putting wax sculptures on the stage. Real bodies could, for example, masquerade as wax figures. However even if such a substitution were made it would still speak to the nature of wax and the ability of wax figures to stand in for real bodies and vice versa. Further, since 1623, the play has existed in printed form and consequently read as a text. For readers, the wax figures of the play would be realized only in the imagination. Still, despite any

[56] See the discussion of Olivia's signet ring in the first chapter of this dissertation.

complications in the staging or non-staging of the wax figures of *The Duchess of Malfi,* all the wax figures that I treat in this chapter are more a part of a world of objects than the wax seals which I dealt with in the first two chapters. Webster's play engages with wax sculptures as though they will be staged, so it does not matter whether that staging is actualized or not. Yet, as I will suggest throughout this chapter, although wax sculptures are objects or things that have a bodily existence in the world, as aesthetic objects they are not simply things the way that a rock is a thing. Instead, as art they are creations of the human mind rendered material and they carry the possibility for figurative meaning just as metaphors and textual objects do.

Whatever the differences between wax seals and other wax sculptures, all of these objects are forms of wax and therefore continue to point to the importance of wax — as a substance, as a figure — to examine some crucial conceptual and representational territory in early modernity. In this chapter I will investigate the relationship between wax sculpture and other forms of art and sculpture. In doing so I will ask what the materiality of wax sculpture offers to our understanding of the truth or truths towards which early modern art tends and I will consider Ernst Cassirer's claim in *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* that art works to differentiate between "the 'necessary' and the 'accidental' and distinguish "that which is fantastic and that which is arbitrary" through its pursuit of form (152). As I trace questions of form through early modern artistic practices, I will examine how wax figures probe the limits of form through their malleability and their connection to the human body. I will also examine what happens when the mimesis of the stage meets the mimesis of art in the wax figures of *The Duchess of Malfi.*

1. Wax as Intermediary and Foundation

As I mentioned above, wax sculptures in the early modern period were made both as finished pieces of art and as aids to the artistic process, functioning as a step in the formation of finished artwork in other mediums. As final artistic product, wax sculpture was not highly regarded by art critics of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. In a letter proclaiming the virtues of sculpture over painting, Michelangelo excludes wax sculpture from the proper materials of sculpture. He defines sculpture as a process of removal, explaining "by sculpture I mean the sort that is executed by cutting away from the block: the sort that is executed by adding on resembles painting" (14). While Michelangelo allows that "adding on" is a form of sculpture he suggests that it is more like painting than like marble sculpture and thus, for him, inferior. Vasari's definition of sculpture similarly limits sculpture to the art of cutting away. For Vasari, sculpture is "an art which by removing all that is superfluous from the material under treatment reduces it to that form designed in the artist's mind" (*On Technique* 143). There is no room in Vasari's definition for a sculpture of "adding on," which is undoubtedly the type of sculpture offered by wax. [57]Moreover, when Vasari mentions wax portraits in his *Lives,* he dismisses them as common, saying "it would take too long if I were to speak of all those who execute portrait-medals of wax, seeing that every goldsmith at the present day makes them" (87) Yet while wax sculpture was not considered to be of the same caliber as marble sculpture, it proves to be fundamental to the artistic process of carving marble,

[57] As Robert Klein notes, the distinction between the two types of sculpture is classical in origin and can be found in Pliny (14n.3). Yet the clear preference for marble sculpture, or more generally sculpture "that is executed by cutting away from the block," in both Michelangelo and Vasari suggests that wax sculpture was not a privileged art form.

casting bronzes, and executing paintings because wax is the ideal material for translating mental conception into material form and for exploring the possibilities of form.

After making his preliminary remarks about sculpture as an art of "removing all that is superfluous," the first sculptural material that Vasari considers is wax, and he suggests that modeling in wax is essential to working out sculptural forms prior to carving marble. Vasari relays, "sculptors, when they wish to work a figure in marble, are accustomed to make what is called a model for it in clay or wax or plaster…because they can exhibit in it the attitude and proportion of the figure that they wish to make" (*On Technique* 148). The process of addition allows the artist to work "with judgement and manipulation" (*On Technique* 149). He "impresses the wax by means of tools made of bone, iron, or wood, and again putting on more he alters and refines till with the fingers the utmost finish is given to the model" (*On Technique* 149). The models that Vasari describes are not quick sketches or rough-hewn approximations of the form that the marble will take; instead, they are given "utmost finish," refined until they "exhibit the attitude and the proportion of the figure" that will be carved in marble. In short, they display form as perfectly as Michelangelo's marbles.

Wax models receive such attention from sculptors because they are the material with which the sculptor's conception of form is translated from mind to matter, and sculpture in the period is understood as an act of mental conception. Recall Vasari's definition: sculpture reduces a material to "that form designed in the artist's mind." Sculpture is an act of design which occurs within the mind, and the artist who wishes to "exhibit his ability in [sculpture]" must possess "great skill in design" (*On Technique* 155). For Vasari, design or *disegno* is "like a form or idea of all the objects in nature,

most marvelous in what it compasses … design is not other than a visible expression and declaration of our inner conception and of that which others have imagined and given form to in their idea" (*On Technique* 205). Sculpture is not an art that begins with the block, it begins with "our inner conception" and becomes the "visible expression and declaration" of that conception.

In fact, theorists of the period suggest that all art is a work founded on the mental comprehension of nature. When Leonardo da Vinci argues for painting's superiority to sculpture, he does so on the basis of the mental difficulty of painting. He writes:

> Painting is a matter of greater mental analysis, of greater skill, and more marvelous [than sculpture,] since necessity compels the mind of the painter to transform itself into the very mind of nature, to become an interpreter between nature and art. Painting justifies by reference to nature the reasons of the pictures which follow its laws: in what ways the images of objects before the eye come together in the pupil of the eye; which, among objects equal in size looks larger to the eye; which, among equal colors will look more or less bright. (*On Technique* 7)

The mind of the painter must shape itself "into the very mind of nature" in order to perform the work of the artist. Like wax, the artistic mind is malleable, changing form so that it can interpret between nature and art. Thus, painting is a rational art; it "justifies by reference to nature the reasons of the picture which follow its laws." Since both sculpture and painting are understood as acts of mental conception of nature, we can say of art generally that it looks to understand and portray natural forms. Wax proves an invaluable

aid for understanding that process in both arts, as we can see in Vasari's discussion of the role of wax sculpture as sculptural aid.

Vasari's text reveals that the process of translating vision to marble all but requires the mediation of wax. While a sculptor could begin directly with marble, Vasari warns, "many errors in statues spring from [the] impatience of the artist to see the round figure out of the block at once, so that often an error is revealed that can only be remedied by joining on pieces… [which] is ugly and despicable and worthy of the greatest blame" (*On Technique* 152). The malleability of wax allows the material rendering of artistic vision to be a gradual process during which errors can be corrected, and the avoidance of error was key to artists who understood beauty and truth to be intimately related.[58] Once a sculptor has perfected his wax model, he can translate wax form to marble with relative ease and accuracy since the wax model is a site that can be mapped and measured.

Vasari details how a sculptor can work from either a clay or wax model to systematically translate the form of the full-size model onto the marble, suggesting a system of carpenter squares that would enable the artist to take precise measurements. The artist would then:

> … proceed to carve out the figure from these measurements, transferring them to the marble from the model, so that measuring the marble and the model in proportion he gradually chisels away the stone till the figure thus measured time after time, issues forth from the marble. (*On Technique* 151)

Like the creation of the wax model, the creation of the marble statue is a slow process, but the ability to measure the wax leads to a more straightforward translation. The marble

[58] In Neo-Platonic philosophy beauty and truth are intimately linked, as we will discuss further below.

is "measured time after time" to make sure that it conforms to the wax form as perfectly as possible and the marble is chiseled away "gradually." Elsewhere, Vasari mentions that "the eye must give final judgement, for even though an object be most carefully measured, if the eye remain offended it will not cease on that account to censure it" (*On Technique* 146). Yet here he prioritizes measurement as the best means of precise translation, suggesting that careful measurement is all that is required for the figure to "issue[]" forth from the marble. The creation of the marble sculpture runs the risk of being governed by measurement[59], while the creation of the wax model is governed by judgment.

Both Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci relied on highly developed wax models to make sculpture. According to Vasari, Leonardo made a wax model, "which was held to be perfect" for a bronze horse that was never completed (*On Technique* 292). Vasari also details that Michelangelo made a small wax model for his David, which is not extant. These examples show that wax sculpture played an important intermediary role in the work of two of the greatest artists of the Italian renaissance, and proved a necessary step in translating artistic vision from mind to marble.

Wax models not only played an intermediary role for other forms of sculpture, they also played a similar role for painters, who relied on them to work out figures for painting. When Michelangelo suggested, in a passage quoted above, that the sculpture of "adding on" was more like painting than sculpture he was not simply denigrating the

[59] Of course in practice, the translation of wax to marble is most likely not as strictly methodical as Vasari might lead us to believe. Indeed even Vasari seems to indicate that it is not. In addition to his account of the importance of the eye as a corrective to measurement, Vasari also describes the different techniques that marble carvers use to "give the stone a wonderful grace"(152). Vasari's treatment of these techniques suggests that even if the basic form of the marble is translated from wax by careful measurement, the refinement of that form in marble still requires the hand of an artist.

value of the sculpture of addition, but also giving voice to a fundamental relation between painting and the process of wax sculpture. Both proceed through addition, and both are relatively forgiving of errors, when compared to the practice of carving marble. Moreover, as Alberti makes clear in *On Painting*, the process of painting like the process of wax sculpture involves a gradual refinement of perception. He explains:

> First, in seeing a thing, we say it occupies a place. Here the painter, in describing this space, will say this, his guiding outline with a line, is circumscription. Then, looking at it again, we understand that several planes of the observed body belong together, and here the painter drawing them in their places will say that he is making a composition. Finally, we determine more clearly the colours and qualities of the planes. Since every difference in them is born from light, we can properly call their representation the reception of light. (68)

The artist, according to Alberti, builds his mental conception of the subject he is painting by searching out first the outlines of its space, then observing its planes, and finally its colors. Ultimately, the painter conveys the complex truths of the "reception of light" on objects, but those truths are revealed through a study of lines, planes, and colors. The process Alberti describes is like the process of modeling wax. Forms are slowly developed and refined until they fully conform to the artist's vision of nature.

Yet the relationship between wax sculpture and painting is not simply one of analogy. For sculptors, wax sculpture proves the ideal ground for translating mental conception into material because it marries the three-dimensionality of sculpture with the forgiving nature of painting. For painters, wax sculpture proves a useful conceptual tool because it provides access to the three-dimensionality of the human body. Alberti

suggests that fledgling artists might practice sculpture in order to refine their understanding of form before moving on to painting, for “he who does not understand the relief of the thing he paints will rarely understand it well" (95). Yet even for painters who understand “the relief of the thing they paint” wax models prove invaluable, since they allow the artist to manipulate that form in ways that would never be possible for an actual human body. Thus, wax models again offer artists the ability to translate conception into material form, and also to envision possibilities beyond the bounds of nature.

The usefulness of wax as a conceptual tool for painters can be demonstrated by looking at the artistic processes of Michelangelo and Tintoretto. In *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting* (1586), Armenini asks, “Is there anyone who does not yet know that simply turning one or two figures in round relief in different ways, one can derive many diverse models for one’s paintings?" (169). He then suggests that:

> By looking at Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment,* one can see that he followed the same procedure I have described. And there have been some who said that he used some wax models he had made himself and that he would first immerse the joints in hot water to soften them and would then twist the limbs to suit his needs. I leave the proof of the possible success of this method up to you. (169)

Armenini is hesitant to assert too strongly that Michelangelo employed wax models, qualifying his claim with “there have been some who said” and eventually specifying that “Leonardo da Vinci had the courage to say, according to what one of his pupils in Milan told me, that he was displeased by *The Last Judgment* only because too few figures had been used in too many ways and, therefore, it seemed he saw as many muscles in the figure of a youth as in that of an old person" (170). By including this statement and

attributing it to da Vinci, Armenini provides some proof for his claim about how Michelangelo used wax figures. At the same time he suggests a limitation of the models: the same human figure should not be used to represent "a youth" and "an old person." The differences in human forms make it dangerous to repeat the same figure in a painting too often if one wants to create a realistic scene.

Yet Armenini's explanation of how models might be used and reused, whether within the same painting or not, is intriguing, even if it may not represent Michelangelo's actual artistic process. Certainly the wax materiality of these purported models allows for their flexibility. With the careful application of heat the poses can be changed, and the artist can "twist the limbs to suit his needs." Thus one wax model, while it might only be able to represent one kind of body, old or young, male or female, can represent the truth of that body in diverse positions. These wax models may not have completely substituted for either live models or sketches. We can imagine that live models would still have been needed to suggest what forms were possible, as wax sculptures are almost too malleable, able to take on forms that lie outside of the possibilities available to human bodies. Further, sketches would continue to be important as an intermediary step for translating from three-dimensions to two, from sculpture to painting.

Still, wax models, because of their flexibility, portability, and ability to hold forms that would be impossible for the human body to maintain, offer artists such as Michelangelo constant access to truths about form that is crucial to the construction of painted masterpieces. More, if we believe Armenini's claim about how Michelangelo manipulated wax figures we can begin to understand why wax sculptures so frequently were made in the service of other art forms rather than as finished pieces of art

themselves. Wax sculpture, for Michelangelo, offered the truth not simply of one posture, but of multiple poses. It also allowed him to go beyond the limits of nature and represent human bodies capable of performing super-human feats like flying, which, as will see, was also one of the reasons that Tintoretto made wax models Yet all of these manipulations of wax required the intervention of the artist. The artist must apply heat to make the joints flexible, manipulate those joints according to a plan or artistic conception, and represent the wax sculpture as unbound in order to make it seem to fly.

Michelangelo was not the only painter to turn to wax models as a means of working out his compositions: the process was actually fairly common. The Venetian painter Tintoretto also used small wax models to mediate his artistic vision and help him to conceptualize the human form, space, and lighting. In Tintoretto's use of wax figures we again see wax sculpture deployed as a step that leads to painting. However, if for Michelangelo the primary value of the wax sculpture may have been that one model could show the human form in different postures, for Tintoretto the primary value of wax sculpture seems to be its ability to give him access to perspectives that otherwise would not have been available to him and gain through those perspectives a greater understanding of the intersection of form and vision. Already in our discussion of Michelangelo's process, we can see that his art sought not only to represent nature but also to reach beyond it and manipulate it. In Tintoretto's paintings we can see him pushing the boundaries of natural forms to an even greater degree.

For Tintoretto, sculpture in general is important in part because it allows the artist to consider and create ideal forms. According to early biographies, Tintoretto turned to sculpture at various points in his artistic process. He often sketched from sculptures and

occasionally incorporated forms taken from sculpture directly into his paintings, such as his Cupid in “Venus, Mars, and Vulcan” which was painted after a sculpture by Michelangelo (Falomir 201-202). In *Delle maraviglie dell’arte* (1648), Ridolfi explains the value of sculpture to Tintoretto. He writes that Tintoretto’s “acute intellect made him aware of the fact that in order to become a great painter one had to become skilled in copying reliefs, and that strict imitation of nature was not enough. For nature produces mostly imperfect things, and only rarely links together parts of equal beauty” (54). Tintoretto sees nature as “mostly imperfect” and yet containing the “parts” of beauty. We can find a similar understanding of ideal beauty in Alberti’s much earlier treatise. There, Alberti explains that for a painter to understand beauty "it is useful to take from every beautiful body each one of the praised parts and always strive by your diligence and study to understand and express much loveliness" (Alberti 92). Thus he praises the artist that despairing of finding the quintessence of beauty in one woman “chose, therefore, the five most beautiful young girls from the youth of that land in order to draw from them whatever beauty is praised in a woman" (Alberti 93).

Wax sculpture provided Tintoretto with the means of combining beautiful parts into one ideal form that could then be painted. Modeling in wax, as Vasari suggests above, allows the artist to work out the “attitude and the proportion of the figure” and Tintoretto appreciated sculpture for the access that it provided to the beauty of form. Still, Tintoretto was a painter, not a sculptor, and his interest in sculpture served as a bridge to painting rather than an end in itself. Tintoretto painted the forms he worked out in his sculpture onto canvases, panels, or frescoes. There, figures became part of complicated

compositions that explored not only the physical form of objects but also how those forms intersected with light, and ultimately could be used to convey meaning.

"A great painter" becomes "skilled in copying reliefs" because doing so allows a painter to learn from sculpture how idealized forms interact with light, and other aspects of their environment. For Tintoretto, that meant both making sketches and studies from sculpture, and also making his own sculptural forms. Ridolfi explains that Tintoretto:

> … also learned by making little models out of wax or clay and dressing them in scraps of cloth and carefully draping them so that the folds emphasized the shape of the limbs. These small models he placed in little houses and perspective boxes. He would place little lights in the windows so that light and shade would be produced. Still other models he suspended from the beams of his ceiling. This enabled him to observe the effect they made when seen from below, from which he learned how to make foreshortenings for ceiling frescoes. (54)

Tintoretto's wax models allowed him to explore how clothing reveals and obscures the human form. Further, by placing models in "little houses and perspective boxes" he was able to observe how those forms related to architectural spaces. Since the models and the boxes they were placed in were small, Tintoretto could manipulate all aspects of his composition to find the most beautiful arrangement of forms. Moreover, as Ridolfi mentions, Tintoretto could control the "light and shade" by positioning "little lights in the windows." In short, the "little houses and perspective boxes" became miniature worlds, stages that Tintoretto could light and transform until they closely represented the vision he wanted to capture in paint. Again, the scale of these models gave Tintoretto almost god-like control over all of their particulars. He could elevate or lower the stages or move

his position to alter the perspective and find the most startling and dramatic angles. He could also study how they appeared from a great distance, or adopt a narrow or limited perspective.

Perhaps even more tantalizing than the possibilities offered by the perspective boxes is Ridolfi's suggestion that Tintoretto suspended some of his small models from his ceiling, "from which he learned to make foreshortenings from ceiling frescoes." Tintoretto could make his wax figures appear as though they were flying, and in doing so he could visualize how forms should appear from vantage points that would be impossible to obtain with live models. While one could certainly elevate a live model on a stage and begin to explore the extreme perspective offered by looking up at a severe angle, that perspective would still not allow for the consideration of unbounded forms. However, the lightweight wax models, affixed to the ceiling, provided just such a possibility of unboundedness. As Boschini muses in *Ricche Minere della Pittura Veneziana* (1674), "difficult as foreshortening is on a flat surface, it is still more difficult to do in the air. Nor can one make statues fly. But our learned Venetians make human figures fly" (52). While Boschini makes the claim for all "learned Venetians" he offers as his prime example Tintoretto's "very light nude figure depicting *Venus in the Act of Crowning Ariadne* that one sees over the stairs that leads to the Collegio" (52). Tintoretto's process, of suspending wax figures, provided him access to a vision of form that would otherwise be unavailable. When that vision was translated into painting it created the effect of making "human figures fly," an effect that is not possible for statues, not even for wax ones. The wax sculptures, small, lightweight and easily mobilized into new positions do not themselves fully embody the beauty and power that Tintoretto

realized in his paintings, instead they served as necessary vehicles for the working out of his artistic vision.

In his paintings, Tintoretto was able to show the world not as it was, but as it ought to be, could be, or should have been. By creating his own miniature worlds, Tintoretto was able to work out new visions of the world. When he used those dioramas as the foundation for religious and allegorical paintings, Tintoretto's art reflected the early modern understanding that the purpose of art was not only to show beautiful forms, but also to teach moral virtues, although for Neo-Platonists the two were intimately related. Spenser for example, suggests in "An Hymne in Honor of Beauty," that virtuous souls "Frame to themselves most beautifull and brave / Their fleshly bower/…/ For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make" (121-22, 133). Thus a beautiful body can signify inner beauty. [60]Tintoretto's subjects include historical, religious, and allegorical themes. His exploration of human figures viewed at dramatic angles and holding extreme positions, allowed him to dramatically portray his artistic vision which encompassed not only the nature of human forms or the interplay of light and dark on figures and landscapes, but also his understanding of virtue.

We can find an articulation of the importance of virtue to art in Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesie.* There he holds that good art and good poetry portray virtue[61]. Since

---

[60] Although a glance at Spenser's *Faerie Queene* reveals that he, himself, problematizes the connection between virtue and beauty. As we will see when we take up the beautiful false Florimell in Chapter 4 below.

[61] There is an intimate relationship between the aesthetic theory articulated around poetry and painting. In *Ut Pictura Poesis,* Rensselaer Lee observes that sixteenth and seventeenth century critics of painting did not inherit "any seasoned advice… concerning good taste or effective presentation that could compare with the shrewd good sense and practical wisdom of [Horace's] *Ars Poetica*"(6). As a result, painters derived their aesthetic justifications from Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica,* extending those borrowing beyond the moments where those authors compare painting and poetry (7). The result is a theory of painting that very much resembles that of poetry. While the comparison between poetry and

they are not constrained by historical truth, both art and poetry can convey higher order truths through their fictions. While Sidney admits that it is possible that a painter or a poet could abandon moralistic stories and "please an ill-pleased eye with wanton shows of better hidden matters" good artists will never do so (236).[62] Instead, Sidney claims that the most excellent painter like the most excellent of poets "having no law but wit, bestow that in colours upon you which is fittest for the eye to see: as the constant, though lamenting look of Lucretia, when she punished in herself another's fault, wherein he painteth not Lucretia whom he never saw, but painteth the outward beauty of such a virtue" (218). Sidney claims that the virtue of the excellent painter is to do more than imitate "what is, hath been, or shall be." Tintoretto's use of wax represents his willingness to explore and manipulate form at all levels. He not only used wax figures to understand the three-dimensionality of human forms, but also to build his own worlds which he could manipulate until they conveyed not only his visual aesthetic but also his conception of the forms of virtue.

Yet Tintoretto's conception of form might go beyond the form of virtue. If we want to understand what wax figures, in particular, offer Tintoretto, we might consider Boschini's claims for the superiority of painting over sculpture. Boschini suggests that the consideration of extreme foreshortening in painting reveals an understanding of form that goes deeper than that which can be expressed in sculpture, "for the statue-maker can easily make use of measurements, whereas the painter uses form without form, even with

---

painting may at times be forced, it is frequently deployed in both treatises on painting and poetry suggesting that early modern thinkers found the formulation.

[62] Here Sidney presents art (and the artist) in gendered terms. Like a woman art can perform virtue or can "please an ill-please eye with wanton shows of better hidden matters." As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, wax was attached to representations of femininity in the period. Thus, if we move associatively we can also attach wax to art through gender and particularly through femininity.

the form deformed, [and finds] the true formation in fluid form" (52). This highly baroque consideration of form is worth pausing over. The statue-maker accesses form in a measured and verifiable manner. The arm might bend, but it still is proportionate to the rest of the body. Yet the painter's access to form is through "form without form" or through form that is heavily mediated by the constraints of vision. As Boschini explains "if one represents an arm that recedes and is out of proportion [because it is foreshortened] it will appear in proportion to the eye. If one wants to measure it, it will turn out to be not even a fifth of what it would be if drawn fully extended" (52). The truth of Tintoretto's paintings is the discovery in "the form deformed" of the "true formation in fluid form," and wax because of its own fluidity and mobility acts as the perfect material to facilitate the discovery of that truth. To a certain degree, we might also say that Tintoretto's depiction of virtue is also a matter of "fluid" forms. By portraying religious subjects including the savior as dynamic human forms, foreshortened and "deformed," Tintoretto offers a truth about human vision and our ability to understand and pursue virtue.

Figure 1. ***The Temptation of Saint Anthony,*** **c. 1577-78**

In Tintoretto's ceiling frescoes and his immense paintings we can see the success of his manipulation of wax and his pursuit of

forms. His intense interest in the human form results in paintings that figure bodies dynamically and powerfully. Consider, for example, Tintoretto's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, c.1577-78 (see fig. 1). The large canvas spans over nine feet high, and consists of six figures, all in motion. As Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman note in "Veronese and Tintoretto: Mature Altarpieces," "the figures define the space in the painting… the male and female demons pulling down and away in different directions… [while] the saint himself twists upward toward the miraculous apparition [of the savior], which seems to burst forward through the picture plane" (147). All of the figures are foreshortened, showing Tintoretto's mastery of form and perspective. Yet the flying savior figure is the best example for the efficacy of wax sculptures as purveyors of form. He "swoops down from heaven head first in a burst of golden light" and seems to actually fly (Echols and Ichman 147). Looking at the figure, we can easily imagine Tintoretto suspending a wax figure from his ceiling and then slowly adjusting both the figure and his own relation to the figure until he had found the most effect and dynamic perspective. The result is an image laden with power and movement that speaks to the majesty of the scene and our limits as human viewers, only capable of seeing a fraction of the body of the savior.

Tintoretto's paintings show his commitment to a truth that is not identical to realism. For example, the lighting in his final paintings is often improbable, suggesting that Tintoretto did not confine himself to realistic treatments of shadow and light. Instead, he manipulated the interplay of light and shadow to increase the drama of his paintings, purposefully departing from reality in order to heighten the impact of his work. His finished paintings suggest a tension between idealism, imagination, and realism, and in

that tension we can see Tintoretto striving to produce truth that bears some relation to each of these categories but is not identical to any of them. Tintoretto's ability to pare the human body down to its essentials, to take the reality of lighting and enhance it with his imagination results in paintings that are perhaps more committed to truth than a faithful reproduction of vision would allow. His paintings are both highly imaginative, treating of biblical stories and mythical tales, and yet highly committed to conveying truths about the human form, and the movement of form through space. Where he deviates from the natural and the necessary he does so with purpose, as if to show that the aesthetic object is not actually bound to the same limits as the natural world, and that painting is not simply a copy of reality onto the limits of canvas. While Tintoretto's wax figures no longer exist, they are fundamental to the larger intellectual process of Tintoretto's art as they provided him with material to explore the limits of nature and the possibilities of different perspectives.

As our discussion of Tintoretto has begun to suggest, wax is important to understanding early modern art because of its role as conceptual tool and also because it can be used to model the work that art does. The visual expression of mental forms is an expression not simply of nature but of natural forms molded and remade to speak truths about beauty and virtue. Moreover, both of the dominant models for art, imitation and invention, can be modeled in wax: wax can take the print of nature, or be formed into any imaginable shape. While wax figures are still bound by gravity and natural laws, as Tintoretto's practice of suspending wax figures illustrates, the lightness and malleability of wax allows these laws to be, to a certain degree, set aside.

In Sidney's *Defense* he also advocates the setting aside of nature's laws, claiming, "only the Poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better then nature bringeth forth, or quite a new, forms such as never were in nature" (216). For Sidney, it is possible to invent a Lucretia that would exceed the historic Lucretia in the perfection to which her form conveys meaning. Poetry at least can refuse "subjection" and ignore all "law," yet in doing so it does not necessarily eschew truth. Instead, since stories are "not affirmatively but allegorically and figuratively written" the truth-value they offer is of a different nature than that offered by history (235). Sidney's allegorical history is a history of ideals, one that shows "what may be and should be" and searches out forms beyond those available in nature in order to teach moral truths. Sidney's poetics looks to nature and history in order to move beyond them.

Yet while these artists seek forms beyond nature, they look to nature for an understanding of those forms. Sidney, despite his desire to escape subjugation to nature, holds that "there is no art delivered to mankind that hath not the works of nature for his principal object" and grounds invention in nature, naming it "Nature's child" (*Defense* 215-216*, Astrophil and Stella,* sonnet 1, line 10). Tintoretto, as we have seen, created models and paintings that drew on nature, parting from it for dramatic effect. Alberti similarly stresses that it is important that the artist looks to nature and represents forms and motions that conform to nature's laws. For example, he is critical of the artist that thinks to be praised for "expressing too violent movements and…making the breast and the small of the back visible at the same time in the same figure – a thing which is neither possible nor becoming" (Alberti 80). For Alberti the truth offered by art seems to consist

of wedding the study of nature with a striving towards ideals. Thus the artist seeking to convey the most beautiful woman in Alberti's example, looks to real women as models, but conceives of and paints a woman who surpasses any individual woman. He is not willing to discard all laws, but rather seems to believe that part of the truth offered by painting is a commitment to nature's laws. Again, in Alberti's consideration of the relation of painting to nature, we see that for him the greatest truth of art is the representation of idealized versions of forms derived from nature.

Wax modeling represents that process of transformation, of reaching beyond while still pursuing the realities and limits of form since wax sculptures are still governed by their own material realities and limits. While wax can figure imitation or invention, it most aptly figures the coexistence of these two artistic modes. In Sidney, Tintoretto and Alberti imitation and invention coexist: the shapes of virtue and beauty are found in nature, conceptualized and remade in the mind, and find material articulation in art. In *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy,* Cassirer claims the artist has a double nature, which encompasses both a "dedication to the world of sensible appearance and… [a] constant reaching and striving beyond it" (135). We can understand the double movement of the artist through wax's expansive malleability, its ability to work multiply and appear to transcend nature's laws even as it is governed by them. Wax represents not only the conceptual process of art, but also the work of translation and re-conceptualization that occurs between the study of nature and the act of visual expression that is the work of the artist. As we saw in our discussion of aesthetic theory and the works of Michelangelo and Tintoretto, wax provides a material for working through questions of form and for learning to differentiate between nature's laws and accidents.

This work may, as Cassirer suggests aid in laying the groundwork for Descartes' new subjectivity, a subjectivity that as we saw in Chapter 2 can also be figured through wax. Moreover, as we have just seen in our discussion of Tintoretto's painting, art might also pursue fluid forms or "form without form," suggesting that the truth of art may have something to do with the malleability that inheres in wax and its ability to change, melt, and take new forms.

2. Wax Corpses and *The Duchess of Malfi*

At the beginning of this chapter, I remarked that wax sculptures were not highly regarded by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century critics of art as finished artistic products. While that is certainly true, wax sculptures still performed important cultural work, and as we will see that work is intimately connected to the questions of form and deformation that we have been discussing. I have in mind here wax representations of human bodies and particularly wax effigies. These finished wax sculptures negotiate intermediary spaces between body and art, life and death, in much the same way that the provisional wax sculptures we have been discussing mediate between nature and ideals. Moreover, these finished wax sculptures evoke the history of wax as material of memory that we began to trace in the Introduction. As effigies, wax sculptures serve as objects of memory that construct and formalize the process of memorialization. They simultaneously bring the dead near and banish them to the world of art. Further, when placed in formally constrained spaces such as the stage, they begin to call into question the possibility of constructing stable and enduring forms.

Wax effigies, portraits, and anatomy sculptures all seem to manifest, or at least have the potential to manifest, the force that Alberti ascribes to painting in Book 2 of *On Painting.* According to Alberti, painting possesses a force that makes "absent men present, as friendship is said to do, but moreover makes the dead seem almost alive" (63). Alberti's contention points to painting's ability to bring before the eye images that are not there, whether that absence is the result of death or not. Yet sculpture, and particularly wax sculpture may be even more capable of rendering the dead "almost alive." Certainly the ancient Romans ascribed great power to wax sculpture. Pliny (the elder) tells us in his *Natural History* that in the halls of his Roman ancestors:

> … portraits were objects to be admired. They were not statues by foreign artists, not bronzes, not marbles, but wax masks of members of their family, and these were displayed on individual urns so that their likenesses might be carried in procession at family funerals. For invariably, when someone died, all the members of his family who had ever existed were present. The family tree was traced by lines connecting the painted portraits (35.6)

Wax for Pliny is a material of memory, a material that captures "likeness" and enables the past to be present in the form of wax portraits. If wax masks evoke the presence of the dead, wax effigies move beyond wax masks by rendering the entire body in three-dimensions and making that presence more palpable. By portraying the body fully, these sculptures attain a higher degree of realism, which enhances their truth-value.

When effigies are rendered in wax the material also provides both a heightened possibility of verisimilitude and a particular set of philosophical and poetic associations. Wax is a particularly apt material to imitate the human form. As Vasari notes in *On*

Technique, technologies of tinting wax had become so advanced by his day that modern artists "make the flesh tints, the hair, the clothes and all other details so life-like that to these figures there lacks nothing as it were, but the spirit and the power of speech" (149). Vasari is specifically talking about the makers of wax portrait jewelry at this moment, but the possibility of polychromatic coloring is not limited to these small novelty models. Indeed, funeral effigies and anatomy models would have been colored as well. The addition of color to wax allowed artists to combine the powers of painting and sculpture, creating figures that "lack[] nothing as it were, but the spirit and power of speech." Moreover, wax's malleability makes it suitable for taking impressions from actual flesh, and such impressions were probably the foundation of the wax masks that Pliny describes and many early modern wax effigies (Panzanelli, "Compelling Presence" 21-23). Further wax effigies offer the possibility of bodily change and motion; like a real body, a wax body can at least potentially, be repositioned. Finally, as Elizabeth Harvey suggests, "wax is like flesh in its responsiveness to touch: it warms and changes shape, it seems almost to respond to touch as if it were flesh" (101-102). Thus both on the visual and tactile registers, wax sculpture is particularly able to represent the human figure, as any contemporary visitor to Madame Tussauds can verify. Moreover, if we recall our discussions of wax's connection to the body in Chapters 1 and 2, it is hardly surprising that wax is used to represent human forms. From the humoral connection of wax to skin in Galenic medicine, to the representations of the mind and heart as malleable wax in Shakespeare, Donne, and Descartes, wax has already proven to be a material with the capacity to model what it means to be human

Effigies, of course, portray the human body as a corpse. To the extent that they represent death and decay they lack the power to make "the dead seem almost alive." Alberti's assertion has more to do with art's capacity to show "arrested life…[a] body without movement or time, a subject physically absent or no longer living" that nonetheless appears to have been frozen in life (Panzanelli, "Introduction" 2). Certainly, there is a difference between a wax sculpture that portrays a corpse and a wax sculpture that figures a person that is now dead, but who seems alive in the sculpture. Yet how great of a difference is there between portraying life and death? Neither the figures of painting or of sculpture can actually be dead or a live. They are figures of art, frozen forever in a space that has no real relation to life or death. Or at least, as Kenneth Gross points out in his work on *The Dream of the Moving Statue,* "we run a risk if we mistake the statue's stillness for that of any living thing, if we project our own limiting constructions of life or death onto it" (13). Alberti, still writing about painting, considers how to differentiate dead bodies from living ones in art and suggests, "the members of the dead should be dead to the very nails; of live persons every member should be alive in the smallest part. The body is said to live when it has certain voluntary movements… therefore the painter, wishing to express life in things, will make every part in motion – but in motion he will keep loveliness and grace" (74). Alberti emphasizes motion, which can exist in a statue only as "at best a resonant figure of speech" (Gross xi). Seemingly, the only difference between the statue that seems to live and the statue that does not is the lack of apparent motion in the second and perhaps a visual representation of decay.

Still, wax is perhaps even more apt as a sculptural material that can depict corpses than it is as a material that can figure living statues. Wax is, after all, relatively

lightweight, especially when compared to marble or bronze. Thus in funeral processions and in the anatomy theater, wax figures can be easily mobilized along with the meanings embedded in those forms. They can be carried, entombed, and otherwise moved just like real bodies. Moreover, wax bodies have certain advantages over real corpses. Most notably, a wax corpse escapes the problems inherent in displaying corpses: the stench of rot, the flow of bodily fluids, and the mess of human flesh. Thus in funeral processions, a wax effigy, precisely because it is not subject to the ravages of decay, can represent more than the body of the dead king. As Ernst Kantorowicz argues the normally "invisible body politic" is rendered visible "by the effigy in its pompous regalia" (421). In the contexts of a royal funeral parade, the wax statue doubles as a representation of the king's death and as a representation of the enduring institution of monarchy. The wax effigy of a king presents the ideal forms culturally required to signify the power and enduring nature of the monarchy. Still, the wax materiality of effigies and their association with death and bodies suggest the possibilities of change and deformation even as they stand for the power of enduring institutions.

Wax figures are figures of art that can signify death and simultaneously embody a promise of unchanging representation and the constant threat of incoherence. In John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* and wax figures are placed on the stage, perhaps the most liminal space of all. Here wax sculptures substitute for corpses because Ferdinand has no corpses to produce. In moving to a consideration of art on stage, it seems worth pausing over the way that theater doubles the questions of aesthetics already being explored. Wax sculptures are already engaged in a pursuit of truth through form and embedding them in the formally constrained and already aestheticized space of the stage only heightens the

insistence with which they ask about the nature of truth. In a scene of artful deception, Webster masterfully makes use of this doubleness and uses wax sculptures to question the relationship between truth and artifice, life and death, and subject and object. While such concerns are explored throughout the play, they come to a head in the final two acts of the play after Ferdinand has captured his sister and her two youngest children and cut her off from all communication with the outside world. Playing on her vulnerability and fear, Ferdinand decides to torture her by staging a spectacle of death in wax. Ferdinand's spectacle embeds the waxworks crafted by an Italian master within his own theatrical show of revelation. Yet since Ferdinand's show is part of a play, its status as art within art complicates further any claims made of truth or reality. If art objects pursue truth through a pursuit of form, in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, the truth they ultimately offer may be about the power of form to structure realities that lie outside of any objective possibilities for truth. Wax in this schema, becomes an important material with which to illustrate that truth because wax can be molded and remolded into any shape and its malleability gestures at the impermanence of form.

The purpose of these figures, and their relationship to the rest of the play has been a subject of critical debate. Some have seen the figures as gratuitous (Ekeblad 254), while others have argued that they "are central and crucial since they strike at the heart of the Duchess' reason for living, namely, her love for Antonio and the children" (Bergeron 331). Yet claims for their importance have not sufficiently considered the relationship that these figures have to the play's considerations of question of art, artfulness and theatricality. Even Bergeron, who takes up the relationship between the wax corpses and funereal sculpture, does not fully consider how such a relationship fits into the play's

larger thematics. I would argue that these figures bring into relief the interpretative problems occasioned by art and are very much a part of the play's larger consideration of idealism.

Webster's play questions the connection between outside forms and inner qualities from the very first Act. When Delio suggests to Antonio that the Cardinal is "a brave / fellow," Antonio responds, "Some such flashes superficially hang on him, for / form: but observe his inward character: he is a melancholy churchman" (76 -77, 80-82). Later in the same scene, Antonio considers the three siblings, the Duchess, the Cardinal, and Ferdinand and claims, "You never fix'd your eye on three fair medals, / Cast in one figure, of so different temper" (114-115). Here materiality comes to represent the different temperaments of the siblings. They share "one figure" but a different "temper" or "constitution, character, or quality of a substance or body" (OED). If the form of a sculpture can reveal moral virtues or represent ideals, Webster rejects such a possibility for the appearances of his characters. Their inner metal defines their character. Yet as the first speech makes clear, when Antonio talks about forms he does not just mean physical appearance, but also social behavior. Thus, the Cardinal's liveliness "hang[s] on him, for / form." Similarly, Ferdinand is condemnable because "what appears in him mirth, is merely outside, / If he laugh heartily, it is to laugh / All honesty out of fashion" (1.2.95-97). Unlike her brothers', the Duchess' discourse and her practices reveal, at least to Antonio's estimation, her true metal, even though these too are forms. Thus "her days are practis'd in such noble virtue, / That sure her nights, nay more, her very sleeps, / Are more in heaven, than other ladies' shrifts" (1.2.126-128). Antonio makes clear that the Duchess' virtues become externalized through her practices. Yet the correlation between

outside form and inner nature proves an exception rather than a rule. Only the Duchess embodies the sculptural ideal of harmony between matter and form.

Still, importantly, she refuses Antonio's attempt to conceptualize her as sculpture when she insists on wooing him and setting aside her social superiority to him. She exhorts:

> Sir, be confident,
> What is't distracts you? This is flesh, and blood, sir
> 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
> Kneels at my husband's tomb. Awake, awake, man,
> I do here put off all vain ceremony,
> And only do appear to you, a young widow
> That claims you for her husband, and like a widow,
> I use but half a blush in't. (1.2.372-379)

Far from being the paragon of virtue that Antonio initially presents, the duchess insists that she is "flesh, and blood" and "not the figure cut in alabaster / Kneels at my husband's tomb." That figure is frozen in grief or prayer, perfect in form but incapable of any movement or any other emotion. By rejecting an identity between the statue and herself, the Duchess claims for herself the imperfection of the body. She further insists on her fleshliness as she notes that "like a widow, / I use but half a blush," reminding Antonio and the audience that she is no virginal maid.[63]

The idealized form represented by "the figure cut in alabaster" is not the only form that the Duchess must reject in order to secure Antonio. She must also put aside "all

[63] For a further discussion of the Duchess resistance to being idealized see Mary Beth Rose, "Heroics of Marriage in Renaissance Tragedy," esp. 127-28.

vain ceremony" in order to approach him as only "a young widow." In wooing Antonio, the Duchess discards not only the ceremonies attendant with their differences in rank, but also the traditional ceremony of church marriage, substituting "a contract in a chamber" for it. By replacing the public forms of marriage with private contract she expresses her willingness to look beyond outward forms. While Antonio believes her outward form reflects her inner virtue, the Duchess is not concerned with outward appearance, at least not beyond what is necessary to protect her family and her rule. Far from the easy connection that Antonio suggests between the Duchess's outward forms and appearances and her inner virtues, the Duchess must embrace deception to preserve her private world with Antonio.

Antonio, on the other hand, seems torn between his idealized conception of the duchess, and the "flesh and blood" duchess that confronts him in the scene of wooing. She claims his reaction is one of distraction, that he is "draw[n] in different directions" or "draw[n] asunder or apart" (OED, s.v. “distract”). While he accepts her proposal, he is quick to replace his idealized vision of the duchess with an idealized view of marriage, exclaiming, "may our sweet affections, like the spheres, / Be still in motion" (1.2.398-99). The spheres are “still” or continually in motion, as Antonio hopes their “sweet affections” will be; at the same time his description of the spheres as “still in motion” implies a lack of action implicit in that continual movement. The motion of the spheres is constant and unchanging, and Antonio wants to attach marriage to this same idealized motion. In his formulation, movement becomes compatible with form not something disruptive or external to it.

When their marriage is revealed through Bosola's espionage, Ferdinand catches the Duchess and most of their children, while Antonio escapes with their eldest son.[64] Once he has her in his power, Ferdinand uses wax figures shaped in the forms of Antonio and their children to torture the Duchess, who is unaware that they are safe. Ferdinand's use of wax sculpture recalls and revisits the play's earlier engagements with sculptures and forms, pointing to the insubstantiality and malleability of social forms. In the Duchess's rejection of a formal church wedding in favor of a simple contract, we can see her prioritization of meaning over form. Ferdinand, on the other hand, embraces form in order to pervert it and render it meaningless. Starting with the social forms of oath and marriage, he proceeds by problematizing the form of reality itself in an attempt to drive the Duchess to madness.

After surprising the Duchess in her bedchamber, in the hopes of learning who the father of her children is, Ferdinand vows, "I will never see you more" (3.2.137). In order to torture her once she is in captivity, Ferdinand distorts that oath. He sends Bosola to the Duchess to explain:

> Your elder brother the Lord Ferdinand
> Is come to visit you: and sends you word
> 'Cause he rashly made a solemn vow
> Never to see you more; he comes i'th' night;
> And prays you, gently, neither torch nor taper
> Shine in your chamber: he will kiss your hand;
> And reconcile himself: but, for his vow,

[64] The other children are captured with the Duchess but apparently not originally imprisoned with her, as she does not know their status.

He dares not see you. (4.1.21-28)

Under the pretense of preserving the form of his oath never to see her again, Ferdinand comes to visit the Duchess using the cover of darkness. The spirit of the oath is discarded, but the form is preserved, allowing Ferdinand the conceit of keeping his “solemn vow,” and an appearance of honesty. Ferdinand uses his oath to justify visiting the Duchess in the dark, which gives him further power to mold her experience. The darkness renders the Duchess more susceptible to deception by giving Ferdinand power over what forms the Duchess can see and when, limiting her ability to make independent inquiry throughout the scene. Ferdinand manipulates reality like an artist molding wax, pressing it into the forms most suited form him and illustrating the weakness of social forms and perceptual knowledge as he does so.

Once in the Duchess’s presence, Ferdinand continues to pervert ceremonial and ritual forms. He explains that he has come to “seal [his] peace with [her]” and offers her “a hand / To which you have vow'd much love: the ring upon't / You gave” (4.1.43-44). Instead of proffering his own, he gives her instead a “dead man’s hand” (SD), taken from the wax sculpture of her husband. Ferdinand has affixed her wedding ring on this wax hand and she kisses it, believing that she is performing a ritual of reconciliation. Together, ring, wax, and kiss offer all the components necessary to “seal” their peace. Yet the fact that the hand she kisses is not her brother’s renders the ritual ineffectual. At the same time, the resemblance between the hand she kisses and her husband’s hand and the presence of a wedding ring transforms the ritual into something else entirely. Ferdinand tells the Duchess to "bury the print of [the ring] in [her] heart,” playing off of the association of erotic love with the imprinting of affective locations that we have

traced through Chapters 1 and 2 (4.1.46). In Shakespeare the imprinted heart is a symbol of the extent to which a woman's heart could be shaped by a lover's impression, yet it still stands for union, reproduction and the possibility of a future. Here, however, Ferdinand aligns the heart with a grave, suggesting that the impression symbolized by the ritual kiss is a form without a future, both insofar as it represents forgiveness and as it recalls her marriage.

At the same time, Ferdinand's game of formal substitutions, positions him in the role of potential lover. He adopts the language of a suitor, telling the Duchess:

> I will leave this ring with you, for a love-token:
> And the hand, as sure as the ring: and do not doubt
> But you shall have the heart too. When you need a friend
> Send it to him that ow'd it: you shall see
> Whether he can aid it. (4.2.47-51)

The gifts that Ferdinand offers of ring, hand, and heart are the gifts of marriage. Yet, of course, Ferdinand intends neither his offer of forgiveness, nor union. These possibilities are parodied in his offerings. The ring, which is supposed to symbolize the creation of permanent bonds that cannot be broken, loses that significance through its location on a severed hand. The unnaturalness of the separation of hand from body suggests the fragility of all forms, natural or social. Moreover, by promising the Duchess "the heart too," Ferdinand further adulterates the figurative gifts of love, rendering them macabre. The artificiality of the wax hand testifies to the disjuncture already created by the presentation of hand, heart, and ring. The gifts Ferdinand offers are twisted forms, works of art that like wax sculptures affirm the impermanence of form even as they display it.

Throughout the rest of the scene, Ferdinand continues to torture the Duchess through wax sculpture, allowing her to believe that the wax forms of her husband and children are their bodies. Ferdinand uses his control over the Duchess's sensory experience to create a reality for her that is completely separate from the truth. Since the senses were understood during the period as operating through form, impressing the mind with images seen, this control is also formal. In manipulating her access to light and vision and other sensory information, he also forms and controls her access to his spectacle.[65] After Ferdinand gives the Duchess the wax hand, he leaves her, calling for Bosola to restore the lights and reveal to her the truth of the hand she still grasps. It is only with the light that the Duchess comes to learn that the hand she held is not merely "cold" but is instead what she takes to be "a dead man's head" (4.2.55). The light of the torch, most likely itself fueled by wax, does not reveal that the hand is wax; only that it has been severed from its body. The wax hand so strongly resembles a dead one that both when touched and seen in the light it convincingly registers as a part of a corpse. By accepting that the wax hand is part of a human body, the Duchess accepts the reality that Ferdinand offers her. Still, she does not make the connection between the hand and Antonio that Ferdinand desires until Bosola reveals "the artificial figures of Antonio and his children; appearing as if they were dead" (SD). Ferdinand remodels the Duchess's sense of reality gradually through a process that involves the revelation of wax forms in much the same way that master artists described above slowly revealed their artistic visions through the manipulation and adding on of wax. Once the lights are restored and

[65] For a further discussion of Ferdinand's exercise of control over this spectacle, see Hillary Nunn, *Staging Anatomies: dissection and spectacle in early Stuart Tragedy*," 94-95.

the wax corpses revealed, the Duchess understands the hand to be a dead, disembodied part of her husband, accepting the false reality that Ferdinand offers her.

Yet of course neither this new realization on the Duchess's part nor her previous belief that the hand was Ferdinand's is congruent with the reality at hand. The hand Ferdinand offers is neither his own, nor Antonio's; it is merely a prop in Ferdinand's spectacle, costumed with the stolen wedding ring. This truth is one that we, as spectators learn later in the scene when Ferdinand reveals that the artificial figures are, in fact, "fram'd in wax / By the curious master in that quality, / Vincento Lauriola" (4.1.111-113). The waxes are the work of a "master," an artist who specializes in wax and is employed by Ferdinand for the purpose of making waxworks. This artist succeeds so fully in representing the forms of the Duchess's husband and children in wax that even with the restoration of light she cannot perceive them as wax. Like the wax effigies and other wax sculptures discussed above, the wax effigies themselves bear no essential relationship to life or death. Yet by portraying living characters as dead, they offer an illusion of death that becomes the Duchess's reality. Ferdinand's artful manipulation of the Duchess combined with the artful manipulation of "the curious master in that quality, / Vincento Lauriola," succeed in collapsing the boundaries between art and reality, at least for the Duchess.

Faced with the wax corpses of her husband and children, the stricken Duchess responds with her own version of subject/object relations that illustrates their collapse. She exclaims that the sight "wastes me more / Than were't my picture, fashion'd out of wax, / Stuck with a magical needle, and then buried / In some foul dunghill" (4.1.63-5). What the Duchess is describing is a form of black magic in which a living person is

affected by the treatment of a wax simulacrum. The enchantment the Duchess describes is reminiscent of the enchantment of King [Duffe] portrayed in Holinshed's Chronicles and suggests the possibility of a magic that works on sympathy as we saw in our discussion of Donne's *Sappho to Philaenis*. In Holinshed, witches roast a wax simulacrum on the fire, and the damage done to the image manifests in the sickness of the king (149-150). If the manipulation of wax figures could magically affect people in the world of the play, Ferdinand's display should have the greatest impact on Antonio. The severing of the wax hand in such a schema would affect his powers of agency, since as Katherine Rowe has shown the hand stands for agential action in the period.[66] Moreover, the portrayal of his form as a corpse might have the effect of wasting his spirit. The play does not foreclose these possibilities, as Antonio accomplishes very little in the remainder of the play and dies in a fog. Still, the Duchess poses the possibility of magic as a counterfactual, and understands it in terms of herself, not Antonio (who she thinks is dead).

The Duchess does not believe that there is a wax image of her buried in a dunghill; although, she does seem to believe that black magic is possible and provides the most compelling vocabulary to describe what is happening within her heart. Moreover, her claim that Ferdinand's display "wastes [her] *more*" than such magic would, suggests

---

[66] See *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency, Renaissance to Modern* especially 1-23. Both Katherine Rowe and Alberti Tricomi link the severed hand to magic but neither of these critics makes much of the wax materiality of the hand. Rowe suggests that the dead hand is the Hand of Glory and that it is important for "it legal status as the sign and tool of *maleficia,* or evil acts" (Rowe 101). Tricomi claims instead that the dead hand can be connected to lycanthropy. Neither of these accounts is entirely satisfactory, as the hand does not perform the type of magic in this scene that one would expect from a Hand of Glory. Nor does it fulfill the same function as the ringed hand in the lycanthropic story that Tricomi cites. Yet Rowe's account is compelling for her reading of how hands symbolize agency throughout the play, and for her claim that the "prosthetic, disembodied form challenges the fiction of marital *coueverture,* or single person" that the original exchange of hands in the wedding ceremony between the Duchess and Antonio is meant to sustain (Rowe 94).

that her sense of herself as a subject is strongly linked to her husband and children's well-being and that her bond to them is stronger than the identity between magical simulacra and self (emphasis added). Yet what is more striking than the Duchess's belief in magic, is the fact that she refers to wax simulacra without knowing that the figures she sees are wax. Her intuitive turn to wax suggests that the materiality of the figures is far from incidental. Through the entire scene, wax acts as the material that models the relations between subjects and objects, and we can understand that relationship as akin to magic. While the figures themselves may not be magic, they are an artful means to weaken the Duchess's inner strength. The Duchess's intuitive association of the staged corpses with voodoo magic invites the audience to consider what the real difference might be between magic and the psychological torture that Ferdinand is attempting.

Ferdinand's goal is "to bring [the Duchess] to despair" as he makes clear in his conversation with Bosola (4.1.114). When she exclaims, that "there is not between heaven and earth one wish / I stay for after this," her willingness to abandon life seems to confirm that Ferdinand's design on her mind is a fait accompli (4.1.61-62). Since despair is the "action or condition of losing hope," the Duchess's declaration that she has no "wish[es]" suggests that Ferdinand has exactly succeeded in his mission (OED). Moreover, Ferdinand could be punning on the now obsolete "dispair" which means, "to undo the pairing of" or "separate from being of a pair" (OED, s.v. "dispair"). In that case, the success of the wax sculptures at convincing the Duchess that Antonio is dead repeats the symbolic lesson of the severed hand with wedding ring. If Antonio is dead, the duchess has lost her "pair" and been ripped out of the matrimonial form that Antonio

earlier hoped would prove to resemble "the loving palms, / Best emblem of a peaceful marriage, / That nev'r bore fruit divided." (1.2.401-403).

While the spectacle of wax figures brings the Duchess "to despair," that turns out not to be sufficient. It is not enough for the Duchess to lose hope or even to lose her sense of herself as part of a pair. He also wants to drive her mad. In the same conversation with Bosola, Ferdinand exclaims, “excellent; as I would wish: she’s plagu’d with art” (4.1.110). A plague is disfiguring, deadly, and contagious, and Ferdinand seems to hope that the Duchess will catch the form of death from the wax sculptures and be undone by that form. After staging the wax figure, he surrounds the Duchess with denizens of the local mental hospital, to finish the process. The mental hospital patients bombard her with sound, which she cannot shut out. Again, the sounds impress her mind, but this time the goal is not to create new forms, but rather formlessness. As the ear is an undefended bodily orifice, this insistent penetration in some senses furthers the dis-pairing energies of the wax sculpture torture, driving the Duchess’ mind towards the formlessness of insanity. The entire process of torture is governed by a consideration of form and a persistent drive to deform, to distort the forms of perception, pervert the forms of marriage, and finally deform the mind through madness.

This final torture scene may not have its intended effect. The Duchess understands Ferdinand’s intentions and insists to her maid, Cariola, “I am not mad yet” (4.2.24). Still, when she asks her maid, Cariola, “Who do I look like now?" (4.2.30), Cariola answers, “Like to your picture in the gallery, / A deal of life in show, but none in practice: / Or rather like some reverend monument / Whose ruins are even to be pitied" (4.2.31-34). Cariola’s first answer seems to suggest that the Duchess while perhaps not

mad is in a sense no longer living. She has "a deal of life," but only in show. As we saw above, the truth offered by painting, and art as a whole in the early modern period is found in the pursuit of ideal forms that have some resemblance to nature. Yet, as we noted in our discussion of statues, art has no essential relation to life or death. Its forms can suggest either, but it is always "show," visual expression that takes on the forms of life (or death) as derived from nature. When Cariola describes the Duchess as "like to [her] picture in the gallery," she reverses the direction of the relationship between living things and art. The picture was once drawn to resemble the Duchess, but now in her state of imprisonment, the Duchess has come to resemble the painting and the frozen idealized forms presented in the portrait, forms that are not equivalent to either death or life.

The second answer, "like some reverend monument / Whose ruins are even to be pitied" problematizes the possibility that the Duchess still conveys the forms captured in her portrait. By comparing her to a "reverend monument" in "ruins," Cariola suggests that the Duchess's form has eroded, been "ruin[ed]." Cariola could have in mind here simply the Duchess's aging physical appearance, which Bosola comments on later in the Act, when he tells her, "thou art some great woman, sure; riot begins / to sit on thy forehead (clad in grey hairs) twenty years / sooner than on a merry milkmaid's" (4.2.134-136). Yet even Bosola here is doing more than comment on the Duchess's aging body. He assigns the blame for that aging on her status as "some great woman" subjected to more strain than a "merry milkmaid," suggesting that her appearance reflects her position. Likewise Cariola's comparison does more than suggest the Duchess's outward beauty has declined. It also seems to reflect Cariola's perception of the Duchess's inner self or inner form, which has been assaulted through Ferdinand's various acts of torture.

That form may also lie in "ruins," but Cariola's comparison suggests that it is recognizable enough "to be pitied."[67] Indeed, the play insists that Ferdinand does not succeed in driving the Duchess to madness. Her last instruction to Cariola is to care for her children, "I pray thee look thou giv'st my little boy / Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl / Say her prayers, ere she sleep," suggesting that the Duchess continues to maintain the forms of her family until the end (4.2.203-205). Moreover, she goes to her death insisting, "I am Duchess of Malfi still," claiming her formal identity as political ruler. Finally, while death deprives her of her physical form, her reemergence in Act 5 in the form of an echo suggests that Ferdinand never succeeds in reducing her inner form to incoherence.

Nor perhaps does he succeed in fully dis-pairing her from Antonio. Suggestively, Webster equates one other moment in the play with torture. While the Duchess is giving birth, Antonio relays that the Duchess is "expos'd / Unto the worst torture, pain and fear" (2.3.65-66). That child cements the bond between Antonio and the Duchess, and stands in effect as a translation of the form of their love into matter. In the final Act, Delio, Antonio's loyal friend, tells him:

> I'll fetch your eldest son; and second you:
> It may be that the sight of [Ferdinand's] own blood
> Spread in so sweet a figure, may beget
> The more compassion. (5.3.51-53)

Delio will serve as Antonio's "second," providing him support in his search for justice, but his true "second" is his son, who doubles him and is "next in rank, quality,

[67] In "Dominance of the Typical," Susan Wells claims "the Duke's spectacles undo what the Duchess and Antonio had done [in creating a space for private passion], by reducing her to a public, monumental image and making her an abstracted representation of herself" (157).

importance" (OED, s.v. "second"). As several critics have noted, this seconding does not follow the proper sequence of inheritance, as the Duchess has a surviving son with her first husband who should properly inherit[68]. Still, the son of Antonio and the Duchess is the promise of futurity in the play, and he is supposed to remind Ferdinand that his own blood finds continuance in the line begun by the Duchess and Antonio's secret marriage. The boy's "sweet…figure" should inspire compassion because it resembles Ferdinand's own. After all, as we have seen, the three siblings are, in Antonio's estimation, "cast in one figure" (1.2.114).

When Delio returns with the boy, Antonio has already died, as has Ferdinand and the Cardinal. Yet the Duchess and Antonio continue to be figured by the boy, who stands on stage with Delio as the play draws to a close. In his last speech, Delio exhorts the Roman courtier Malateste:

> Let us make noble use
> Of this great ruin; and join all our force
> To establish this young hopeful gentleman
> In's mother's right. (5.5.110-113)

Here, the child represents the potential reconstitution of the political forms that Ferdinand and the Cardinal dismantled by murdering his mother. He offers a way to make use of the "great ruin" caused by the deaths of the Duchess and Antonio.

Against the hope promised in the figure of the child, Delio juxtaposes the childless villains. Despite the shared blood that Delio earlier made much of, the brothers

---

[68] See for example, Michelle M. Dowd, "Delinquent Pedigrees: Revision, Lineage, and Spatial Rhetoric in *The Duchess of Malfi,*" and Theodora A. Jankowski, "Defining/Confining the Duchess: Negotiating the Female Body in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*," 244–45.

bear no essential relationship to the child. For all their artfulness, Ferdinand and the Cardinal:

> Leave no more fame behind 'em, than should one
> Fall in a frost, and leave his print in snow;
> As soon as the sun shines, it ever melts,
> Both form and matter (5.5.114-17)

They do not leave a legacy of their own, and since they had no enduring virtues their impact on the world is fleeting, like a "print in snow." As we saw in Chapter 2, the figure of the footprint is a figure of impression that often is associated with thievery in the poetry of the period. The violent and disfiguring actions of Ferdinand and the Cardinal have the effect of marring the surface of the snow. That violence is not simply that of a footprint, but rather the larger impression of a body that has "fall[en] in a frost." Still, "as soon as the sun shines, it ever melts, / Both form and matter." Their violence has no staying power as death threatens the destruction of "both form and matter," unless that form is preserved somehow, either through biological reproduction, fame, or some combination of the two. Where art offers the truth of form rendered material, death threatens its dissolution.

Yet the play is, finally, art. Ultimately, its characters are constructions that find neither life nor death on the stage. Ferdinand and the Cardinal do not melt away, but instead find new articulation in every performance. As the curtain closes on the stage, we are reminded that we have been watching a play, a malleable construction that takes new form with every staging. The characters are merely actors and all of the action as potentially insubstantial as prints on snow. The play exceeds the life of the characters

staged within it, the actors who originally played them, the author, and even the wax sculptures that may have been deployed in its first staging. Where wax offers us matter that can take infinite forms, plays offer us forms that can be filled with new matter. These forms mimic life, remind us of the extent to which our life is governed by our own adherence to cultural forms and our own desire to embody ideals, but only when we see them as artistic forms.

While we are watching plays, we may, like the Duchess fail at first to distinguish between the appearance of life and its reality. Webster's wax sculptures force us as spectators to confront the ways in which theatrical performance works on us, to notice our relief that the wax sculpture are not real bodies, when in fact we always should have known that they were not. Or at least we always should have known that they were works of art, staged fictions. By placing wax sculpture on stage, Webster reminds us that the theater is fundamentally an aesthetic space, and that we often fail to distinguish it as such. Like the sculptures and paintings of the period, Webster's play imitates life, in order to offer up greater truths about the nature of perspective, subjectivity, beauty, and even virtue. Yet the truth that Webster's play seems to offer is that while none of these forms are stable and they all threaten incoherence, form of some kind will persist, be it the form of political inheritance or the form of a play.

Chapter 4

Wax Walking: Supplementing and Supplanting the Human

In Chapter 2, we looked at how philosophers deployed wax models in order to re-imagine relationships between objects, and between the self and the world. We saw these projects become tinged with desire, take on eroticized language, and start to work not only as physics or metaphysics, but also as theorizations of more intimate relations between people and of desire itself. Yet when desire meets natural philosophy, it is not only in shared models of relationships, but also in the shared dream of transforming and creating anew the human body. To an extent, that dream can be realized through art, as we saw in Chapter 3. Wax as an artistic medium offered early modern artists a material well suited to modeling the human form and mimicking the properties of human flesh. Wax bodies can pass as human bodies, at least in the right situations. Yet while the sculptures we discussed in Chapter 3 may have a seeming life, they are not actually mobile, nor do they attempt to offer actual human bodies abilities that otherwise would be denied to them, except on a representational level. Tintoretto could make his wax sculptures fly, and through them conceptualize the human form in flight; however, those sculptures did not provide him or any real bodies with the power of flight. Tintoretto's art works on man's vision, not his body.

The project of transforming the human body, while intimately related to art, is a fundamentally different and depends on the creation of prosthetics and machines. Likewise the project of building an artificial body with the power of spontaneous motion takes the dream of sculpture and infuses it with science, technology, or perhaps, as we will see in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* magic. This chapter asks what wax has to

do with imagining these projects. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Descartes' *Meditations,* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* wax is deployed in various ways to imagine and explore prosthetics and automata. Since wax can take any form, it can be used to conceptualize the transformative possibilities of human invention and intervention in the body. Moreover, the connection between wax and artificial bodies or body parts occurs in no small measure because wax is an excellent material to represent the human body and mind, as we have seen throughout this project. Further, while wax gets caught up in the dreams of human creation and transformation, it also can figure those dreams as nightmare. The fundamental malleability of wax, the very attribute that makes it well-suited to figuring the human form, makes it a poor choice for real-world prosthetics and an unlikely choice for automata.[69] These real-world limitations take on figurative power when wax is used to represent the limits of human invention, as well as its potential.

Using early modern texts I will explore the representative power of wax in relationship to prosthetics and automana in ths chapter. First, I take up Ovid's telling of the myth of Icarus and Daedalus along with Early Modern retellings and illustrations of that myth. In these mythic imaginings, wax serves as the bridge between the human body and prosthetic wings. It is the link that simultaneously enables the augmentation of Icarus's body and proves his undoing. Using this myth as a launching off point, I will consider the Early Modern discourse about prosthetics as evinced in Ambroise Paré's *Ouevres.* Next, I will turn to Descartes' consideration of automata in his *Meditations,* and

[69] A brief glance at actual seventeenth century prosthetics reveals a preference for other materials. When Ambroise Paré constructed prosthetics for French soldiers, his goal was durability and functionality, and the materials that he turned to were wood, and metal. Similarly, the small mechanical automata that were being crafted in the seventeenth century were composed primarily of metal parts. Wax, with its capacity to melt and soften is clearly not the most practical material to augment a broken human body or to build an automata from.

finally to Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, in which wax helps form the substance of the false Florimell's body and differentiate her from other artificial bodies that inhabit the poem. While the false Florimell is crafted by magic, I suggest that Spenser's exploration of her artificiality is very much of a piece with Early Modern concerns about automata. Consequently, I read Spenser together with Descartes' theorization of automata, which happens in and around his discussion of wax. With the exception of Paré, who is actively engaged in constructing prosthetics, all of these accounts are speculative. None explicitly try to warn against real inventions and innovations. Still, in all three of these works we can trace certain anxieties about the possibility of usurping the creative role of God, as well as the outlines of a dream to do just that. In exploring these works, and the tension between the hope of new possibilities and the perceived threat of those possibilities, I ask how the materiality of that dream matters, which is to say, why wax comes to figure both the dream and the threat of prosthetics and automata.

1. Myths Made Material

When Ovid relays the story of Daedalus and Icarus, he emphasizes the role of wax both in the creation of the wings and their destruction. Daedalus, desperate to escape Crete, turns to the heavens as the most viable means of escape: "'though land and sea', he thought, / 'the king may bar to me, at least the sky'/ Is open; through the sky I'll set my course" (8.185-187). Since the sky is the only escape available to him, he undertakes a project in the "unimagined arts" that will "alter[] nature's laws" (8.189-190) This new invention proves to be the prosthetic wings that he builds in his workshop. Ovid relays that Daedalus:

Row upon row of feathers he arranged,
The smallest first, then larger ones, to form
A growing graded shape, as rustic pipes
Rise in a gradual slope of lengthening reeds;
Then bound in the middle and the base with wax
And flaxen threads, and bent them, so arranged,
Into a gentle curve to imitate
Wings of a real bird. (8.191-198)

Daedalus constructs the wings out of three materials: feathers, thread, and wax. While Ovid proclaims that Daedalus is out to alter the "nature's laws," there is a certain naturalness to his project. Both feathers and wax are organic materials, and both have a connection to flight. Admittedly, the connection between wax and flight is more tenuous than that between feathers and flight. Still, as we saw in the introduction, classical philosophers believed that wax was gathered from flowers and carried back to beehives where it was used to construct honeycomb. Thus while wax is not a material that produces the flight of bees, it is a material compatible with their flight, a material that can be transported through the air without upsetting the natural order of things. Thread, similarly, while not an organic material, is a material that is picked up by birds and used to fashion nests. Thus all the materials of Daedalus's wings belong, to various degrees, to the domain of flight. The naturalness of the materials complements the design. The feathers are laid out to "imitate / Wings of a real bird." The multiple materials that comprise the wings work together in an attempt to align the wings with nature, an alignment that ultimately does not hold.

While the wings are not constructed of wax alone, wax plays an essential role in the creative process and is emphasized throughout the poem. Wax forms the "base" of the wings, serving both the foundation and as the material that enables the transition between prosthetic wing and human body. Since wax, as a sculptural material, can mimic human flesh, using wax at the base of the wings helps bridge the gap between prosthetic and body, visually as well as physically. Moreover, on a practical level, wax proves an apt material for constructing artificial wings because it is both lightweight and makes a good binding agent. After softening the wax, Daedalus can press feathers into the wax, and let it harden around them. Further, the flexibility of the wax allows Daedalus to bend the wings into the gentle curve that mimics bird wings. Yet perhaps more important than these functional considerations are the symbolic connotations of wax.

Since wax's malleability allows it to be worked into any number of shapes and forms, it can be understood as a metaphor for artistic creation rendered more broadly, as we saw in Chapter 3. Wax is an artful material, one that can be pressed into service of any artistic vision, and that can facilitate the transition of an artistic vision from model to marble or bronze, which is to say it can facilitate more permanent creations. Moreover, as I argued in Chapter 3, wax epitomizes the project of art because it insists on an intermediary status, bridging the gap between idealized conceptions and the imperfections of the physical world. Ovid emphasizes the status of the wings as a link between nature and art by comparing them to "rustic pipes" that "rise in a gradual slope of lengthening reeds" (8.193-194). Music emerges from these pipes which are themselves simply collected reeds artfully bound together. Likewise, wax covers the distance

between prosthetic wing and human body not only physically and visually, but also symbolically.

With the wings attached, Icarus and Daedalus become new creatures, or at least they appear that way. Once they are in flight, Ovid muses:

> An angler fishing with his quivering rod
> A lonely shepherd propped his crook,
> A ploughman leaning on his plough, looked up
> And gazed in awe, and thought they must be gods
> That they could fly. (8.217-221)

These human figures engaged in their daily activities give perspective to the flight of Icarus and Daedalus and Icarus's consequent fall. In *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (1560s), long attributed to Bruegel and now believed to be an early copy of his original composition, Icarus is portrayed as only a small pair of legs in the bottom right corner.[70] His humanity is emphasized both by minimizing his form and emphasizing instead the shepherd and ploughman. Ovid's mention of the figures has the effect of reminding us that from the perspective of the ground, flying seems superhuman. Viewed from below, the wings would not appear separate from the human bodies, but rather as organic extensions of them. That illusion would be facilitated in part by the properties of the wax that bind the wings together, and in part by wax's significance as a material of art. The organic augmentation of the human body makes the two travelers appear as "gods," rather than as mere mortals or machines. The prosthetic wings offer a transformation that goes beyond their primary function of offering Daedalus and Icarus a means to escape the

[70] The authenticity of the painting was called into question following technical examinations in 1996. For a further discussion see Lyckle de Vries' "Bruegel's 'Fall of Icarus': Ovid or Solomon."

island of Crete, a transformation that gives them the appearance, at least of superhuman entities.

Yet Icarus and Daedalus are not gods, as Bruegel's painting reminds us. Despite appearances, they remain mortal. As Ovid tells it, once in flight:

> …The boy
> Began to enjoy his thrilling flight and left
> His guide to roam the ranges of the heavens,
> And soared too high. The scorching sun so close
> Softened the fragrant wax that bound his wings;
> The wax melted; his waving arms were bare;
> Unfledged, they had no purchase in the air! (8. 224-230)

When the wax adhesive melts, the wings fail Icarus, and he falls to his death. Once again, just as he emphasized wax as a key material in the creation of the wings, Ovid emphasizes the role that wax plays in Icarus's fall. Ovid mentions the wax twice. First, the "scorching sun… soften[s] the fragrant wax," then the "wax melt[s]." Presumably, this leads the feathers to detach from the base and fall away from Icarus's body, yet the poet focuses only on the wax, here. It is the wax that changes, melts away, and causes the wings to fail.

Between the two passages that I have quoted, lies one additional mention of wax that links the two through a description of Icarus at play in his father's studio. Ovid uses this passage doubly to remind us both of the power of human invention and to forewarn us of Icarus's fall. Ovid writes that Icarus, ignorant of the danger that awaits him, "plays with his peril, tries to catch/ Feathers that float upon the wandering breeze, / Or softens

with his thumb the yellow wax" (8.200-202). Since, as Katherine Rowe argues, "philosophers since Aristotle have seen the hand as the special embodiment of the human ability to manufacture and control the material world" (Rowe 4). The pressure of Icarus's thumb on the wax suggests again man's power to give form, invent, and perform "wondrous work" (Ovid 8.204). At the same time, the softness of wax, its vulnerability even to the heat of touch, warns us of the impending tragedy. Just as wax symbolized the creative possibilities inherent in art and the possibility of transforming the human body through prosthetics, it now comes to symbolize the dangers of such transformative projects. Wax can become soft because of human touch, but it also can soften as the result of natural forces. While this passage also seems to suggest a danger in the lightness of the feathers that can be carried with a "wandering breeze," ultimately it is the wax that proves Icarus's undoing and echoes throughout the myth as symbol both of human ingenuity and human shortcomings.

Icarus's tragic plunge into the sea reveals an anxiety about his flight that I will argue is essentially about prosthetics, about transgressively overstepping the bounds of the human body. On a simple level, Icarus falls because he literally flies too high, and the wax melts. Yet the mythic importance of his flight and fall cannot be simply reduced to the fact that the sun melts wax. The myth has endured not as a lesson that engineers should be more careful in choosing their materials, but as a more subtle warning about the need to limit human invention, and circumscribe human activities. Ovid clearly suggests that something about the flight of Icarus or Daedalus's project of creating prosthetic wings is transgressive, yet exactly how they overstep human bounds is more ambiguous. Perhaps the transgression is Daedalus's initial project of setting aside the

"nature's laws" and enabling flight, perhaps the transgression is Icarus's propensity to play and be led by desire into abandoning the middle way prescribed by his father, or perhaps both father and son transgress. Arguments can be made for all of these possibilities. Ovid's characterization of Daedalus's project as being outside the laws of nature suggests the first may be true. His treatment of Icarus's play in the workshop and his delight in flight suggests the second. Yet since Ovid leaves ambiguous the exact action that leads to Icarus' downfall and as a result the myth itself is not (simply) didactic. The treatment of wax, desire, and transgression in the Ovidian myth is complex and layered, and seems always to return to an anxiety over transgressive bodies and transgressive desires.

Even though we can read Ovid's version of the myth as a warning about overstepping the boundaries of human flesh, that does not mean that was how sixteenth and seventeenth century readers interpreted the myth. Ovid was popular in the Early Modern period, and the myth would have been widely available both in Latin and in translation, after Arthur Golding's translation was published in 1568. However, while the Ovidian myth itself suggests that Daedalus's art is transgressive because it transforms the human body, sixteenth and seventeenth century translations and adaptations suggest other lessons. In Golding's prefatory poem he writes:

> Wee may perceyue in Dedalus how euery man by kynd
> Desyres too bee at libertie, and with an earnest mynd
> Dooth seeke too see his natiue soyle, and how that streight distresse
> Dooth make men wyse, and sharpes their wits to fynd their own redresse.
> We also lerne by Icarus how good it is to bee

In meane estate and not too clymb too hygh, but too agree

Too wholsome counsell: for the hyre of disobedience is

Repentance when it is too late forthinking things amisse (a.iii recto)

Here Golding holds Daedalus up as an example of ingenuity in the face of hardship, or of how "streight distresse / Dooth make men wyse." Far from being faulted for his willingness to overstep the natural of things, he is applauded for his "desyre[] too bee at libertie" and his ability to act on that desire. Icarus, on the other hand is admonished for "disobedience" and his lack of foresight. He is an example of "how good it is to bee / In meane estate and not too clymb too hygh." "Meane" suggests "occupying a middle or intermediate place" (OED). Thus for Golding, Icarus's flight is transgressive because he abandons the middle way, disregarding his father's warning, not because flight itself is forbidden to man.

Likewise, Early Modern emblem books do not suggest that the myth is about transgressive bodies. Instead, they attach it to warnings about the dangers of intellectual curiousity[71]. As Carlo Ginzburg has shown, in "High and Low: The Theme of Forbidden Knowledge in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" illustrations of the myth often accompanied the Pauline motto "noli altum sapere," and its vulgate translations. Moreover these warnings were often attached to specific fields, such as Astrology, that pushed the limits of human knowledge. Ginzburg traces the motto itself through the centuries, suggesting that in its original context the words "noli altum sapere" were intended to condemn moral pride, rather than intellectual curiosity. However, as a result of loose translation techniques and increasing decontextualization those words came to

[71] For a discussion of the Icarus myth in emblem books see Carlo Ginzburg's "High and Low: The Theme of Forbidden Knowledge in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." *Past and Present,* No. 73. (Nov., 1976), 28-41.

serve primarily as warning against the pursuit of dangerous knowledge by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It may be that in the association of Icarus with these Pauline mottos, the myth experiences the same slippage in meaning as Ginzburg posits for the Pauline motto itself, coming to stand as a warning against the pursuit of knowledge, where it first stood as a warning against pride. When the publishers of emblem books paired the Icarus illustrations with these warnings, they narrowed the possible interpretations of the Icarus myth, reducing it to a warning about overstepping human bounds presumably by seeking knowledge beyond mankind's limits.

One example of an emblem book that seemingly reduces the Icarus myth to a simple warning about the pursuit of forbidden knowledge, is Andrea Alciati's *Emblematum Liber* (Augsberg 1531). Emblem 104 pairs an illustration of Icarus falling with a Latin poem, which literally translates:

> Wax melting made you, Icarus, while you were flying aloft, fall headlong into the sea. Now the same wax and the burning fire revive you, to teach with your example a well-defined truth. Let the astrologer beware of making predictions, for the impostor, while flying over the stars, will fall headlong to the earth.[72]

Just as Ovid emphasizes wax's role in the myth, so too does Alciati's poem. Alciati places wax in the nominative case twice, emphasizing its central role in both Icarus's fall and in his revival through art. Alciati names the second wax, "the same wax," suggesting that wax offers a continuity between the new incarnation of Icarus and the old. Yet where

---

[72] Translation provided by Carlo Ginzburg in "High and Low: The Theme of Forbidden Knowledge in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries."The Latin text reads:
Icare, per superos qui raptus et aera, donec
In mare praecipitem cera liquata daret,
Nunc te cera eadem, fervensque resuscitat ignis,
Exemplo ut doceas dogmata certa tuo.
Astrologus caveat quicquam praedicere: praeceps
Nam cadet impostor dum super astra volat.

Ovid stress Icarus's playfulness and his desire for exploration, Alciati emphasizes Icarus' status as "impostor" in the skies. The ambiguity of Ovid's myth is reduced to a more straightforward message directed at the astrologer. "Let the astrologer beware of making predictions" because knowledge of the future is not available to men and "imposter[s]… will fall headlong to the earth." Still, while Icarus is clearly named an "impostor," and used to teach a moral lesson about the limits of knowledge, Alciati does not actually suggest that Icarus's flight itself has anything to do with knowledge. Instead, the warning to astrologers connects to Icarus's flight through the concept of the "impostor" or "one who imposes on others; a deceiver, swindler, cheat; now chiefly, one who assumes a false character, or passes himself off as some one other than he really is" (OED, s.v. "impostor"). The astrologers are like Icarus because they falsely claim knowledge they do not have, while Icarus assumes a false character by taking to the skies. Icarus's prosthetic wings transform him into an impostor, not any pursuit of knowledge on his part.

Alciati's poem may offer a straightforward moral about the merits of astrology and human flight, yet his treatment of wax here is anything but straightforward. Like Ovid, Alciati stresses that wax is both a material of Icarus' destruction and of his creation. Yet while Ovid starts with a story of wax creation — Daedalus using wax to give prosthetic wings form — Alciati starts with the destruction of those wings and then shifts to a new version of artistic creation that bring Icarus new life. However, Alciati is rather vague on the nature of that new artistic creation. If we trace the poem back to its source in *The Greek Antholothy*, an epigram by Julianus known as "On a Bronze Statue of Icarus which

stood in a Bath" (16.107), that ambiguity is easily resolved.[73] Julianus tells the statue, "now by wax the worker in bronze has restored thee to thy shape," referring to the artistic process of lost wax casting.[74] A second epigram by Julianus, immediately following the first, treats Icarus's new bronze materiality ironically. In this epigram, Julianus exhorts the statue to "remember thou art of bronze, and let neither art nor the pair of wings on thy shoulders delude thee; for if, when alive, thou didst fall into the depths of the sea, how canst thou wish to fly when formed of bronze?" (16.108).[75] For Julianus, the new life provided to Icarus is the life of a statue, a life governed by the material limits of bronze. The statue's winged form is not sufficient to guarantee it the possibility of flight. Instead, the weight of the bronze proves to be the governing factor of Icarus's new life.

While the epigrams from *The Greek Anthology* reveal how wax provides Icarus with a new life, Alciati's poem is far more ambiguous. By erasing any references to bronze and statues from his own text, Alciati offers Icarus a new life that is not so materially bound, even while he connects that new life to wax. If we read Alciati's poem without knowing his source, we would not know that Icarus is a bronze statue. Indeed, detached from the specific connotations of statue making, the combination of wax and fire might suggest a whole network of possibilities around writing itself. As I have previously noted, wax is a material of writing: wax tablets were common writing

---

[73] The *Greek Anthology* is a collection of poems from the classical and Byzantine periods of Greek literature that was transmitted to Europe by Maximus Planudes.

[74] To create a finished bronze statue using lost wax casting, an artist first makes a preliminary model in wax, and then creates channels for the wax to escape. Next, the artist encases the model with a ceramic coating. Once that has dried, the artist can melt away the wax and fill the mold with molten bronze.

[75] Translation by William Roger Paton in *The Greek Anthology,* vol.5. London: W. Heinemann, 1918.

surfaces, and wax seals offer there own kind of writing.[76] Moreover, wax is also a material that facilitates reading. The light of a wax taper might illuminate Alciati's own text. Thus we can almost read Alciati as suggesting that wax offers Icarus a new life within his book, even though wax would not actually have been used in the manufacture of a printed book in the sixteenth century. Such a possibility is further strengthened by the connection of fire with the creative process. As we saw in Chapter 3, when we read Donne's "Sappho to Philaenis", fire can be associated with the power of poetry. Sappho searches for "the holy fire, which verse is said / To have" (1-2). When combined with the absence of references to statue making and bronze, the connections between wax and writing help allow the wax in Alciati's poem to become a material of creativity beyond the specific process of casting bronze statues or fashioning Icarus's wings. Moreover, we can understand instruments of writing to be prostheses, extending the human capacity for memory. Thus the ambiguity Alciati introduces over the new life available to Icarus may even serve to rehabilitate the possibility of the prothesis. The prosthetic wings lead to Icarus's downfall, but the statue, the poem, or whatever new creation has been engendered by the new meeting of wax and fire have redemptive possibilities in that they can offer warnings to future generations, or even just tell the story again bringing Icarus back to life and reanimating his flight.

Reading Golding's translation of Ovid alongside Alciati's *Emblematum Liber* suggests that for sixteenth and seventeenth century readers, the myth of Icarus could have offered more than a singular lesson about the possibility of seeking to know beyond the limits of knowledge proscribed by God. Golding suggests that we can learn from Icarus

[76] For more on how wax is a material of writing see my discussion in the Introduction and Chapter 1.

to live "in meane estate and not too clymb too hygh" and Alciati admonishes us not to claim knowledge of things we cannot know (Golding a.iii recto). Yet in Alciati's emblem we also can see an awareness that prosthetics can be both dangerous and enlivening. Alciati's Icarus loses his mortal form because the prosthetic wings fails him, but that failure ultimately offers him new form as a figure of art, on the page and as a statue.

2. Material Repairs

In Ovid, Daedalus's choice of wax is a choice of form, function, and symbolic meaning. As we saw, wax offers Daedalus the means to craft natural-looking wings that seem to attach organically to flesh. Wax comes to symbolize the creative possibilities of art, and the dream of bridging art and machine. At the same time since the vulnerability of wax to heat ultimately leads to the complete destruction of the wings, wax in Ovid comes to represent the impossibility that artifice can take the place of nature, or at least that humans can remake their own forms. Throughout *The Metamorphoses* Ovid takes seriously the possibiity of human transformation, but transformative power is ultimately the domain of the gods. Artful men like Daedalus and Pygmalion, who I will discuss below, can come close to changing or creating human forms, but without the intervention of the gods, Icarus's wings fail him and he falls, simply a boy, and Pygmalion's carving remains just that.

As we turn to Ambroise Paré's discussion of prosthetics in his *Works* (*Oevures*), we leave behind wax as a material used in the fashioning of prosthetics.[77] Yet wax still offers a model around which to theorize the practice of prosthetics, even though it does

[77] At least wax is never mentioned in Pare's text. Since Pare's prosthetics are made of metal, however, and metal was often cast in wax molds, wax might still materially participate in the formation of these prosthetics.

not figure in Paré's text, and this is no surprise considering, as we have seen throughout this dissertation, that whatever else wax is, it is something useful to think with. In Paré's work we see that designing prosthetic devices demands a flexibility of vision and expansion of the job of surgeon, not unlike the malleability that we can find in wax. Moreover, just as wax is a material of art because it is well-suited to mimicking human flesh, so the materials of prosthetics are chosen in part for their ability to appear like flesh or a human organ. At the same time, just as the wax wings ultimately fail to stably fuse art and nature, so too Paré's prosthetics either repair appearance or restore functionality; they fail to do both.

Ambroise Paré was a sixteenth-century French surgeon, famous for his battlefield medicine and his innovative surgical techniques. A pioneer in the field, his interest in prosthetic devices may have stemmed from his concern for injured soldiers. Paré took up prosthetics as one type of surgery, discussing the practice briefly in his introduction to surgery, and detailing it in the twenty-third chapter of his *Works,* entitled in its English translation of 1634, "Of the Meanes and Manner to Repaire or Supply the Naturall or accidental defects or wants *in mans body.*" Taken as a whole, Paré's writing about prosthetics, and his accompanying illustrations reveal considerable enthusiasm about the possibility of remedying the human body and repairing or restoring it to a state approaching wholeness. Yet as the title of his chapter on prosthetics reveals, Paré sees his intervention in the human body as a means of repairing "naturall or accidental defects or wants." By yoking his devices to a discourse or restoration and repair, Paré carefully limits their scope. He does not believe that the surgeon should augment the body or extend beyond its natural limits. The wings of Icarus and Daedalus would not fall within

his domain. Instead, the surgeon's goal is merely to fix what is broken and "repair[] those things which are defective, either from infancy, or afterwards by accident, as much as Art and Nature will suffer" (4). In this way, by insisting on a natural norm, the anxiety about transgressive bodies reappears in Paré's work. He seeks to hide deformities and refuses to consider the possibility of artificially augmented bodies.

Despite the limits Paré places on his art, he still finds ample opportunities to intervene in human bodies through prosthetics; in that expansive range we can find some of the flexibility we have come to associate with wax. When Paré first defines the practice of prosthetics he provides a catalogue of examples, writing of the surgeon who supplies the defects of nature this way, as someone:

> who sets an eare, an eye, a nose, one or more teeth; who fils the hollowness of the palat eaten by the Poxe, with a thinne plate of gold or silver, or such like; who supplies the defect of the tongue in part cut off, by some new addition; who fastens a hand, an arme, or legge with fit ligaments workemanlike: who fits a doublet bumbasted, or made with iron plates to make the body straight; who fills a shooe too big with corke, or fastens a stocking or socke to a lame mans girdle to help his gate. (4)

Paré's list reveals something of the materiality of prosthetics in practice. While he is not always explicit about his materials, we can locate in this passage "gold or silver, or such like" to fill the hollowness of a palate, "iron plates to make the body straight," "corke" to fill a shoe, and cloth stockings to "help [the] gate" of a lame man. Moreover, the description of "fasten[ing] a hand, or arme, or legge with fit ligaments workemanlike" suggests materials of metal and wood that would be proper to a workshop. Nowhere in

this passage do we see any mention or suggestion of wax. Still, despite the literal absence of wax as a material for making prosthetics in Paré's text, the range of materials and prosthetic devices actually crafted suggests that the practice of making and attaching prosthetic devices is creative and somewhat malleable. The surgeon has to adapt his techniques and materials to the particular needs of an individual wounded body, and the flexibility of that process has everything to do with the qualities that wax figures in the texts we have examined. Wax's plasticity, its associations with artistic vision, and its ability to represent the bridge between man and machine allow it to represent the possibilities of prosthetics and those possibilities find articulation in the prosthetic devices that fill Paré's text.

Paré's prosthetics also resemble waxworks insofar as they are representations of the human body designed to give the appearance of life, but lacking it themselves. As we saw in chapter 3, wax is a material particularly suited to figuring corpses as it so convincingly mimics human flesh and can be molded to take on human forms. Yet no matter how convincingly wax can substitute for flesh, wax figures cannot be anything but art, animated, perhaps, by magic or machine but without a life force of their own. The same limitations apply to prosthetics. Whether substituting for an eye, or a limb, whether mechanized or lacking all motion, a prosthetic represents a piece of flesh that is no longer living, or is not present. Thus like a wax figure, it has some relationship to life and death because it substitutes for a part of the body and cannot, at least given the technological limits of the time, be fully incorporated into that body.

Still, there may not be such a great difference between body parts and these prosthetic devices, depending on how we understand the body. As we saw in Chapter 2,

the nature of the body was a matter of great debate between natural philosophers in the early modern period. For scholastics the body was matter formed by the soul, although this concept was Christianized to allow for the immortality of the soul. Under such a schema, there would be an essential difference between prosthetic hand and that it replaced. For mechanists such as Hobbes, on the other hand, there was an evolving idea that the body itself was a machine, which minimizes the difference between body part and mechanical replacement. In a passage from the *Leviathan,* quoted in Chapter 2, Hobbes predicates his vision of the state on his view of the body as a machine, "for what is a heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings"(3). Descartes' *Meditations* offers a similar view of the body as machine, as we will see below when we take up his discussion of automata which includes animals. For Descartes' the distinction between man and machine rests in the soul, not organic tissue. Even the distinction promised by the soul becomes problematized in Julien Offray de La Mettrie's *Man a Machine* (1748). While that text postdate our period, it illustrates the logical extension of ideas already being discussed by mechanists in the seventeenth century. For these thinkers, prosthetic devices would differ from the limb it replaced only to the extent that it was incorporated into the machine that is the body. Finally, for vitalists, including Cavendish, the fundamental sameness of matter and the presence of motion and rationality in all its parts would promise little difference between prosthetic and limb.

Still, while the full integration of prosthetic parts into a body may be theoretically possible for a mechanist or vitalist, the real world prosthetics of the sixteenth century did not offer such possibilities of full restoration. Instead prosthetics offered the appearance of normalcy by covering up the absence or defect of a body part, while attempting to

restore some function that the body has lost. If Daedalus's wings offered a bridge to the human body through wax and suggest that a perfect union between art and body might be possible, the fact that they melt away reminds us of the technological limitations that prevented the perfect realizations of such a feat. Similarly Paré's text insists on the limits of his materials.

At the same time, Paré makes it clear that he chooses materials for his prosthetics in part because of how well they can masquerade as a natural part of the human body. Throughout his text, Paré places a great emphasis on the appearance of normalcy. If a surgeon can make a body appear more decent, he should always intervene. Thus if it should happen "that the face is deformed by the sudden flashing of Gunpowder, or by a pestilent Carbuncle, so that one cannot behold it without great horrour. Such persons must be trimmed and ordered, that they may come in seemely manner into the company of others." The appearance or seemliness of a patient is a subject that Paré frequently returns to. We see the same attitude, for example, in his description of a counterfeit nose. After explaining that "when the whole nose is cut off from the face, or portion of the nostrils from the nose, it cannot bee restored or joyned againe: for it is not in men as it is in plants," Paré exhorts "it is requisite to substitute another made by Art" for the lost nose (871). Similarly, he tells us that after the loss of an eye, "you may put another eye artificially made of gold or silver, counterfeited and enamelled, so that it may seem to have the brightnesse, or gemmie decency of the natural eye, into the place of the eye that is so lost" (869). In his discussion of the eye, we see that Paré's emphasis on restoring the appearance of his patients leads him to choose materials that mimic attributes of the human eye. He suggests "gold or silver, counterfeited and enamelled" in order to capture

“the brightnesse, or gemmie decency of the natural eye.” While Paré sometimes can only replicate the form of a missing appendage, he tries to capture other aspects of appearance when possible.

Still, as Paré’s text proceeds he moves from discussing purely aesthetic prosthetics to those that restore function. As he does so, his discussion of appearance largely drops away. If the melting of Icarus’s wings suggest the difficulty of pairing aesthetics and function, Paré’s text reveals a preference for function. His treatise includes mechanized prosthetics that allow his patients to retain some movements that would otherwise be precluded by the loss of limb. For example, Paré describes a general who, because of a severed tendon in his hand, “could hold neither sword, speare, nor Javeline in his hand, so that he was altogether unprofitable for war, without which he supposed there was no life" (878). Paré refuses the general’s request to amputate the thumb and instead “caused a case to bee made of Latine, [a mixed metal of yellow color, brass (OED, s.v. ‘Latten’)] whereinto I put the thumb: this case was so artificially fastened by two strings that they were put into two Rings, made in it above the joint of the hand, that the thumbe stood upright, and straight out, by reason whereof he was able afterwards to handle any kinde of weapon" (878). With the thumb encased in its protective and supportive case, and rigged to close over a weapon, the general is able to fight once again. This mechanized prosthetic, crafted of materials to ensure its functionality, allows the general to continue to fight. Still, there is a trade-off between appearance and functionality in the general’s prosthetic. Ensuring functionality requires a move away from materials that most resemble human flesh and organs to materials that are durable and suited to machines.

Such materials are limited in the degree to which they can represent flesh, but they also offer function that neither Ovid's wax nor Paré's gemmie eye can offer.

In the transition from Ovid to Paré we left the world of dreams and myths to enter a world of bodies, deformity, and pain and we can see that shift reflected in the shift of materials from wax to metal and wood. Daedalus's hands are the hands of an artist, while Paré worries that both he and his hands must become mechanical in order to successfully perform his work. Thus to a certain degree the practitioners can be understood through their choice of materials. Paré writes, "a chirurgeon must have a strong, stable, and intrepide hand, and a mind resolute and merciless, so that to heale him that he taketh in hand, he be not moved to make more haste than the thing requires; or to cut lesse than is needful; but which doth all things as if he were nothing affected with their cries" (5). Paré reminds us of the pain of surgery, and the mercilessness required of a surgeon. While wax can still figure his practice or prosthetics, it also has a very limited place (if any) within his art itself.

Paré's text reminds us that the practice of repairing bodies via prosthetics in the sixteenth century was both exruciatingly painful and limited in what it could offer. The bodies that Paré sought to repair were not like wax, they did not bend to accomodate the addition of new limbs. No amount of modeling or smoothing made the process organic. Moreover, to be a surgeon Paré may have needed a mind of wax able to imagine new possibilities for the bodies in front of him and to conceive of a wide range of prosthetics. However, at the same time, he needed a mind "resolute and merciless," not prone to softness and wax-like pity, in order to perform surgery as humanely as possible. Both his prosthetics and his understanding of what it means to be a surgeon suggest that the real

life practice of prosthetics is one simultaneously founded on the possibilities of wax and the need to adopt harder understandings and harder materials.

3. Allegorical Materials

In philosophical and imaginative literature, both the realities of bodies and the technological limits of the sixteenth and seventeenth century matter far less. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, it is in these literatures that the question of how and whether to augment the human body gets expanded or generalized into the question of what makes a person human and how one can recognize the difference between people and other beings. I briefly raised the possibility of a figure of art becoming human above, when I mentioned Ovid's Pygmalion. In that myth, the transition from sculpture to flesh requires the intervention of the gods. Pygmalion's ideal woman transitions from immobile ivory to breathing flesh, in a movement figured through wax. The sculpture's ivory hardness:

> … yielded to his hands, as in the sun
> Wax of Hymettus softens and is shaped
> By practised fingers into many forms" (10.284-287).

The sculpture wakens to life, embodying the ideals of feminity that Pygmalion worked into the ivory, and becomes, it seems, instantly pregnant, "The goddess graced the union she had made, / And when nine times the crescent moon had filled / Her silver orb, an infant girl was born" (10.297-299). Pygmalion's sculpture, made wax, made flesh offers us another vision that equates women with wax and the waxy female form with reproduction. Yet as living art, Pygmalion's wife starts to raise the questions that we will grapple with for the remainder of the chapter. Does she become human? Or is she

something else altogether? And what relationship does she have to mechanical automata or to Spenser's False Florimell, another animated figure of feminity (perhaps even another creation of Venus to the extent that the witch and her son might be versions of Venus and Eros)?

Against Pygmalion's statute we can place the possibility of human machines. As discussed above, the human body in the period was understood by some natural philosophers to be itself a machine. Yet apart from this, there was great interest in the period in the possibility of creating automata that could mimic the actions of animals and humans. These automata demonstrated the ingenuity of human invention, and fascinated spectators because they could move convincingly, and in complex ways. Leonardo da Vinci is credited with craftin a flying bird automata, and a lion that walked, stood, and roared. He also designed a robot using a pulley system (Nocks 17). Gianello Torriano built a knight automaton and is also believed to have crafted a small clockwork monk for the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (Nocks 17). When wound up, the monk not only walked in a square, but also raised and lowered a cross in his left hand, moved his head back and forth, and mouthed a prayer. Other mechanical curiosities of the time include a miniature coach and horses designed for Louis the XIV. All of these automata display complicated movements and intricate designs and suggested the creative power of humankind. Primarily, curiosities for royal courts and the very rich, these automata suggested that art could mimic the motion of nature, and that the current limitations of machines could be overcome.

While none of these automata could pass as human in the same way that Pygmalian's wife could pass as human, responding to his touch and offering the promise

of reproduction, the seed of the dream of mechanical humans rests in these early automata. Moreover, the gap between these machines and Venus's animation of the Pygmalion statue, is not so great as it might seem. While they do not at first glance seem to have anything to do with magic or the possibility of magical creatures. However, for the sixteenth and seventeenth century thinker, both types of nonhuman lay just at the edge of possibility; since most viewers of these mechanical beings did not understand the mechanics of their movement, they were regarded as almost magical themselves[78].

Already, in Ovid's *Pygmalion,* wax figures the possibility of living art, acting as threshold material. Yet has less to do, it might seem, with the possibility of mechanical automata. Like Paré's prosthetics, wax does not enter the story because it is the obvious material for creating either automata or magical figures (although a more compelling argument could be made for the latter than the former since wax's malleability makes it a poor choice for machines, and simulacra were used to magically affect subjects, as we saw in Chapter 2). Still it seems likely that nobody thought that there were actually wax people, magical or mechanical, walking around early modern Europe. And yet, wax as we will see becomes a material associated with these possibilities, not only in Ovid, but also in the writings of both René Descartes and Edmund Spenser. The reasons for this association are most likely manifold, but I want to pause for a moment and sketch out some of the possibilities that emerge out of the discussions that we have already had in this project. As we have seen before, wax is a material that is linked to the possibilities of art and also to the possibilities of copying, reproduction, and mimicry. In chapter 1, we saw that wax can be used to reproduce an image, and conceptualize biological and

[78] For a discussion of attitudes toward automata during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance see Alexander Marr, "*Gentillé curiosite:* Wonder-working and the culture of automata in the late Renaissance" and Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*.

epistemological reproduction. Then in chapter 3, we saw that wax as a material of art can convincingly suggest human skin and can be used to create convincing models of human body. Together these uses of wax as a material of modeling, both philosophically and physically, begin to coalesce towards something like a human. Wax can stand for the mind, and can be used to model the body; it offers the possibility of reproduction. Thus wax begins to model humanity itself.

Perhaps the connections between wax and representation of humanity explain why Descartes raises the question of automata in and around wax. For him, the link is primarily one of contiguity. At the end of the "Second Meditation," Descartes, still pondering his discussion of wax, which I discussed in Chapter 2, raises the question of how one knows men are men and not automata. He writes:

> But, meanwhile, I feel greatly astonished when I observe [the weakness of my mind, and] its proneness to error. For although, without at all giving expression to what I think, I consider all this in my own mind, words yet occasionally impede my progress, and I am almost led into error by the terms of ordinary language. We say, for example, that we see the same wax when it is before us, and not that we judge it to be the same from its retaining the same color and figure: whence I should forthwith be disposed to conclude that the wax is known by the act of sight, and not by the intuition of the mind alone, were it not for the analogous instance of human beings passing on in the street below, as observed from a window. In this case I do not fail to say that I see the men themselves, just as I say that I see the wax; and yet what do I see from the window beyond hats and cloaks that might cover artificial machines, whose motions might be determined by

> springs? But I judge that there are human beings from these appearances, and thus I comprehend, by the faculty of judgment alone which is in the mind, what I believed I saw with my eyes. (*Meditations on the First Philosophy* 21)

The connection between automata and wax here occurs at a semantic level. Descartes moves from his discussion of wax to a discussion of automata because the "terms of ordinary language" almost trick him into saying that he "see[s] the same wax" when, in reality, he is only judging that what seems to be the same is actually the same, and that what he sees actually exists. The difference between seeing and judging here triggers his turn to automata, a turn that is both striking and disturbing. When the meditator looks out his window and thinks he is seeing people, he is struck by the fact that nothing in his sensory observation proves that they are anything other than "artificial machines, whose motions might be determined by springs."

The question of automata recurs in Descartes works; it is not only in *The Meditations,* but also in his consideration of animals. While animals seem at first glance to be very different from the artificial machines of the "Second Meditation," for Descartes they are roughly analogous. He writes of humans, "the body" should be understood "as a machine which, having been made by the hands of God, is incomparably better ordered than any machine that can be devised by man, and contains in itself movements more wonderful than those in any such machine" (139). Since Descartes understands bodies, be they human or animal, as fundamentally mechanistic, the difference between man and animal is ultimately one of mind and soul, as that is made manifest through language. As Descartes explains:

> …if any such machines had the organs and outward shape of a monkey or of some other animal that lacks reason, we should have no means of knowing that they did not possess entirely the same nature as these animals; whereas if such machines bore a resemblance to our bodies and imitated our actions as closely as possible for all practical purposes, we should still have two very certain means of recognizing that they were not real men. The first is that they could never use words, or put together other signs, as we do in order to declare our thoughts to others. For we can certainly conceive of a machine so constructed that it utters words and even utters words which correspond to bodily actions causing a change in its organs (e.g. if you touch it in one spot it asks you what you want of it, if you touch it in another it cries out that you are hurting it, and so on). But it is not conceivable that such a machine should produce different arrangements of words so as to give an appropriately meaningful answer to whatever is said in its presence, as the dullest of men can do. Secondly, even though such machines might do some things as well as we do them, or perhaps even better, they would inevitably fail in others, which would reveal that they were not acting through understanding but only from the disposition of their organs. (*Discourse on the Method* 139)

Descartes takes seriously the possibility of very sophisticated machines that could mimic mankind perfectly with respect to "our body" and "our actions as far as was morally possible." Yet these machines would be recognizable as imitations to any careful interlocutor because their capacity to respond to human speech would be limited, as

would their ability to fully perform the full range of actions of which the human body is capable.

Despite the fact that the technology to produce such sophisticated machines did not yet exist, Descartes finds the question of how one knows that a person is a person to be worth serious consideration. Since art could produce both complex machines and highly realistic models and statues of people, the possibility of merging the two into a walking talking human facsimile seemed possible, if not in the immediate future, than at some not too distant future point. Wax, because it is a material of replication, and a material that is associated with mind and body, seems to haunt this discussion even though it does it enter into it as an analogy rather than substantively. Although Descartes did not believe that these future automata would be crafted from wax, there is, in that way, a connection between Descartes' reconsideration of wax as model for the mind and his worry over these nonhumans.

In Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, wax actually does become the material of an automaton, or at least the material of a magical replica of a person that functions in many ways like an automaton, imitating human forms and actions to pass as a person. The question of personhood in the *The Faerie Queene* is of course fraught from the beginning. The poem is as Spenser himself terms it "a continued allegory, or darke conceit." As such, none of the characters within the poem are intended to be exactly human. They stand not for complete people, but for particular virtues and vices, or for some combination of attributes that can be infused with allegorical meaning. Yet as Jonathan Goldberg suggests, these characters "are not themselves exactly singular, fetched as they are from so many anticipatory models, modeled as they are on real

persons and fictional ones, divided and reassembled out of parts that are not always themselves self-identical" (*Seeds of Things* 65). Spenser's characters resist being quickly and irreducibly flattened into allegorical figures, yet they also never cease being allegorical. Amidst these allegorical humans (among whom I would include those of mixed fairy-human and god-human birth), are entities that are created by artificial means. I am talking in particular about the false Florimell and Talus, two very different figures that Spenser treats as creatures of art rather than nature. The false Florimell is made of wax, snow and feathers, while Talus is made of iron. Spenser uses these two figures to explore the impact of materiality on personhood, which is to say, how the material constitution of these constructed figures relates to the way they behave and interact with the other figures of *The Faerie Queene*.

We are first introduced to the false Florimell (and the true one), in Book III of *The Faerie Queene*, the book that deals with "Chastity, / That fairest vertue, farre aboue the rest" (3.proem.1-2). Since the false Florimell is a figure who is associated with art from the moment of her creation to that of her destruction, I want to pause over the opening of Book III, where Spenser raises the question of art and the truth of art together with the virtue of chastity. Spenser proclaims that the best example of chastity is Queen Elizabeth herself:

> Sith it is shrined in my Soueraines brest,
> And form'd so liuely in each perfect part,
> That to all Ladies, which haue it profest,
> Need but behold the pourtraict of her hart,
> If pourtrayd it might be by any liuing art. (3.proem.5-9)

Like so many other female hearts, the heart of Queen Elizabeth holds an image or figure. Yet unlike the heart of Sappho, Hermia, or Olivia, the figure inscribed on the heart is not that of the beloved, but rather the perfect figuration of chastity, "formed so liuely in each perfect part." While Spenser does not mention the materiality of this image, the multiple figurations of female hearts as wax, and the "so liuely" figuration of chastity in Elizabeth's breast, raises the question: is the Queen's heart wax? If Elizabeth's heart is wax, and thus the figure of chastity is a perfect figure formed in wax, would that suggest that chastity is a figure of change and malleability? Or that chastity is a virtue that only gains meaning to the degree that it faces change and malleability? The first of these possibilities seems unlikely, given the rest of the Book. Yet the second seems quite possible, especially if we allow that the figuration of chastity might include a masculine impression, but only one. Which is to say, that a chaste heart could be imprinted by a beloved's image, and remain chaste so long as it does not change its print. If this were so, than the figures of the poem who yearn for or pursue a singular beloved, such as Britomart and Florimell, would occupy the category of chaste so long as they resist other formative pressures, especially forces of masculine impression. Given Queen Elizabeth's self-presentation as the Virgin Queen, Spenser's presentation of chastity as compatible with marriage could reflect concerns about inheritance.

Since Spenser does not explicitly figure the queen's heart as wax, I do not want to make too much of these possibilities, at least not until we turn to a consideration of the Florimells and the questions of materiality raised around them. Yet I do want us to notice that from the opening lines of Book 3, despite the absence of any explicit reference to wax, questions that we have come to associate with wax materiality start to invade

Spenser's consideration of virtue and art. Here, it is not simply that the female heart often is associated with wax, especially when understood as a location that can bear an image or impression, but also that Spenser's description of Queen Elizabeth's heart, chastity, and the possibility of representation recalls what we have seen in our discussion of wax as a figure of art earlier in this project. For example, Spenser seems to suggest that the virtue of chastity, or at least the figuration of it in the queen has a status between life and death, sharing the same liminal status as the wax effigies of Chapter 3. The figure is entombed or "shrined" in Elizabeth's breast. Moreover, while it is "formed so lively in each perfect part," that is not the same as having life. "Liuely" could suggest "living [or] animate," but the more likely meaning here seems to be "lifelike" since Spenser is discussing the form of its parts (OED, s.v. "lively"). Thus, like the wax sculptures we saw in the proceeding chapter the virtue of chastity may have both a seeming life and a seeming death, while not really having either. The virtue of chastity seems to become a figure of art, caught in the space between life and death. Yet what exactly is "shrined in my Soueraines brest"? Is it an image of the virtue or the virtue itself? To "shrine" is "to enclose, envelop, engird, as a shrine or sanctuary does the body or the image of a saint" (OED, s.v. "shrine") and Spenser is not clear which occupies Elizabeth's heart. If a lady were able to look upon the monarch's heart would she see chastity itself or an image of chastity? Truth or Art?

Regardless, the interiority of the heart precludes its study. We cannot look upon the "Soueraines brest" to study chastity (or its form). Instead, Spenser suggests that Ladies should "behould the portraict of her hart, / If pourtrayd it might be by any liuing art." Art, Spenser suggests, may provide a means for representing moral truths and teaching them.

A “portraict” of Elizabeth’s heart, at least according to this conceit, would be a re-presentation that might provide access to some form of truth. Yet in the very next verse, Spenser discards such a possibility. He proclaims, “But liuing art may not least part expresse/ Nor life-resembling pencill it can paint” (3.proem.2.1-2) These lines reopen the question of the relationship between art and life (what exactly is the distinction being drawn between “living art” and “life-resembling pencill”?) and close down the possibility of representation. Spenser suggest that not only would a “portraict of her hart” be an imperfect representation it “may not the least part expresse.” Indeed, even if the artist were a god, “his daedale hand would faile, and greatly faint, / And her perfections with his error taint" (3.proem.2.4-5) “Daedale” means “skillful, cunning to invent or fashion;” however, the term derives from the proper name Daedalus, the mythic figure around whom we opened this chapter and whose artful wax wings failed to safely convey his son to freedom. Thus the “error” introduced by the artist’s skillful and cunning hand is already associated with Daedalus and with the project of constructing prosthetic wings, and by extrapolation with the wax that serves as the basis for those wings and for the false Florimell who comes into being in Canto 8.

Spenser’s discussion of art at the beginning of Book 3 also serves as an apology for his art and another argument for allegory. He continues by discarding the possibility of perfect representation in verse, writing, “Ne Poets wit, that passeth Painter farre/…/So hard a workmanship aduenture darre, / For fear through want of words her excellence to mar" (3.proem.2.6, 8-9). Despite language’s malleability or because of it, it lacks the power of perfect representation and that “want” is potentially disfiguring. Since Spenser “Cannot your glorious pourtraict figure plain,” he sets out “in colourd showes” to

“shadow it, / And antique praises vnto present persons fit" (3.proem.3.7-9). Spenser imagines art to have real power over the queen, power to mar her figure if it is described inadequately in language plain. Allegory offers him the ability to offer a “glorious pourtraict” that is anything but plain, and which gains power from moving beyond mere representation. Moreover, allegory, by making “antique praises vnto present persons fit” seems not only to disrupt the temporal division between antique and present people but also the geographic division between Spenser and the Queene. When she reads his poem, she becomes a “present person,” present to the poem, her portrayal in it, and also to Spenser himself. Of course. Spenser also imagines that his praise of the queen will be ingratiating, yet more seems to be happening in these lines than mere flattery. Spenser is clearly making a claim for allegory as a more appropriate representational mode than poetry that purports “figure plain.” Again while wax is absent from the text at this moment, it may have something to do with poetry or allegory. After all, wax figure and allegories are constructed forms, works of art and retain a measure of malleability, and it is this malleability which seems to contain the excess that differentiates allegory from strict representation.

Thus in these opening verses, we can see Spenser raising questions about art that eventually are mapped onto questions of materiality with the creation of the false Florimell. That these questions are initially raised around Elizabeth, a beautiful / powerful woman whose appearance and comportment are artfully orchestrated for political effect, is not incidental. Like *Lucrece,* or the *Duchess,* Elizabeth’s performance of femininty is a particular kind of gendered performance. These questions gender, art, and representation are to some degree already waxy in their early formulations. Yet they

become more so when Spenser releases the false Florimell onto the landscape of Faerie Land. The False Florimell can be associated with wax not only because wax is a material of her creation, but also because her relationship to the true Florimell resembles the relationship between originals and imitations. Just as wax impressions bear the likeness of the object they are derived from, so the false Florimell is an imitation of the true Florimell, based on the impression of that Lady that the witch and her son have received. If the metaphor of wax impression fits imperfectly, given that the False Florimell is ultimately a fully fleshed out copy of the original, perhaps we can better understand her relationship to the original Florimell through a metaphor of casting. In the process of casting a finished piece of art, an impression is used to create a mold and that mold is then used to create a three-dimensional copy of the original. The finished copy more accurately mimics the original's appearance than an impression does, since the impression creates an inverse image in negative relief.

Since the false Florimell is a copy of the true Florimell, we can only understand her by comparison. Within the poem, the two Florimells only meet once, a meeting that results in the spontaneous melting of the false Florimell. Yet before that meeting each Florimell follows her own path, circulating through the poem's pages and interacting with a wide range of other figures. Looking at how each Florimell enters the poem, reveals much about how Spenser uses them to create meaning. As readers our first glimpse of the true Florimell coincides with the first sighting of that lady by the heroes of the poem: namely Britomart, Guyon, and Arthur. Spenser relays:

> Vpon a milke-white Palfrey all alone,
>
> A goodly Ladie did foreby them rush,

Whose face did seeme as cleare as Christall stone,

And eke through feare as white as whales bone:

Her garments all were wrought of beaten gold,

And all her steed with tinsell trappings shone,

Which fled so fast, that nothing mote him hold,

And scarse them leasure gaue, her passing to behold. (3.1.15.2-9))

As A.C. Hamilton has noted, Spenser's description of Florimell at this moment shares many similarities with Ovid's description of the fleeing Diana (209). Both authors associate the fleeing female body with chastity, despite the fact that female movement is generally associated, in the sixteenth-century with the absence of chastity rather than its presence[79]. The true Florimell is portrayed as pure through the colors that Spenser associates with her here, and particularly with whiteness. She rides "a milk-white Palfrey," and her face is both "cleare as Christall stone" and also "through feare as white as whales bone." While it is fear that robs her face of all color, the viewers register her paleness as a sign of beauty. The other color strongly associated with Florimell is gold. We are told in the next stanza that her "garments all were wrought of beaten gold" and "her faire yellow locks behind her flew." Seeing the beautiful Florimell chased by the Forester, the men abandon their sport and give in to "beauties chase" (3.1.19.2)

When the witch crafts "another *Florimell"* to placate her son's amorous desire for the original, the false Florimell resembles the original, "in shape and looke / So liuely and so like, that many it mistooke" (3.8.5.6-7). Spenser emphasizes the materiality of the new

[79] For a further discussion of Florimell and Diana, see Amy Margaret Braden, *As She Fled: Women and Movement in Early Modern English Poetry and Drama.* Diss. University of Southern California, 2010.

Florimell, as the materials of her creation both aid in creating a likeness and make a perfect similitude impossible:

> The substance, whereof she the bodie made,
> Was purest snow in massie mould congeald,
> Which she had gathered in a shadie glade
> Of the *Riphoean* hils, to her reuealed
> By errant Sprights, but from all men concealed:
> The same she tempred with fine Mercury,
> And virgin wex, that neuer yet was seald,
> And mingled them with perfect vermily,
> That like a liuely sanguine it seem'd to the eye. (3.8.6.1.1-9).

Like the true Florimell, the false Florimell bears a white complexion. Yet while the true Florimell appears "through feare as white as whale's bone," the false Florimell is pure white because she is made of pure white materials. She is not merely made of snow, or wax, but of "purest snow" gathered from an area beyond the knoweldge of men and "virgin wex, that neuer yet was sealed." False Florimell's whiteness and purity can, on the basis of her materials, exceed the true Florimell's. Yet by the end of the stanza we learn that the False Florimell is not pure white. Instead, the pure wax and snow are "mingled with perfect vermily" or vermillion. As Rufus Wood has noted, "vermillion pigment … mixed with wax [produces[the ('sanguine') blood-red colour of sealing wax" (117). Thus the false Florimell is also colored red, at least in some parts. Exactly which

parts are not specified, though one could imagine the cheeks and lips at least might bear a rosy blush, and that blush might differentiate her from the true Florimell.[80]

As the poem continues Spenser once again explicitly demonstrates how the materiality of the false Florimell introduces difference:

> In stead of yellow lockes she did deuise,
>
> With golden wyre to weaue her curled head;
>
> Yet golden wyre was not so yellow thrise
>
> As *Florimells* fair haire: (3.8.7.1-9)

The yellow of the true Florimell's hair finds an echo in the false Florimell's "golden wyre." Yet, as Spenser insists there is an irreconcilable difference between gold and yellow.[81] Spenser suggests "golden wyre was not so yellow thrise / As *Florimells* faire haire" (3.8.7.7-8). Over the course of these two stanzas questions of materiality get mixed up with questions of superiority. Is it more beautiful to be pure white snow? Or flesh? Is it more beautiful to have hair? Or golden wire? The narrative voice cannot quite decide which of the Florimells is more beautiful, oscillating back and forth, suggesting first "that euen Nature selfe enuide" the false Florimell "And grudg'd to see the counterfet should

---

[80] Wood suggests that the "snow is being mixed to produce a sanguine complexion," which can be humorally associated with "boldness, success and amourousness"(117). Regardless, the question of the false Florimell's complexion is quite interesting, as red is a color that is only explicitly associated with the true Florimell when she is brought to stand next to her counterpart in Book 5. At that point "her bashfull shamefastness ywrought / A great increase in her faire blushing face; / As roses did with lilies interlace"(5.3.23.3-5). While Florimell's blush increases her beauty, it also marks her shame. If the false Florimell's cheeks are always already red, than she is either always blushing or incapable of a blush, both of which could suggest immodesty.

[81] The distinction between gold and yellow pigments applied in painting as well. The two colors were not generally interchangeable. As Paul Hill explains in *Venetian Colour,* gold was often used to provide background depth to mosaics: "browner than yellow, gold is an impure colour… the gold field is darker than the grey and white marbles used to highlight the figures, and for this reason nowhere does gold suggest an analogue for the even luminosity and infinite recession of the sky" (47). In Venetian art gold and blue were popular pairs, eventually replaced by blue and white. Yellow on the other hand, was less affected by changes in light "tend[s] to stand out as a local colour disrupting any reading of pictorial light" (142-143). Hill posits that Bellini avoided yellow for this reason. Thus gold is a color of painting and art more properly than yellow, and the two function very differently in paintings.

shame / the thing it selfe" and then reminding us that gold can never be yellow (3.8.5.4-6). Spenser's insistence on the difference between the two Florimells should remind us of his discussion of Art at the opening of Book 3. Just as it is impossible for any artist to figure Queen Elizabeth's heart perfectly, it is also impossible for the counterfeit Florimell to be a perfect copy of the original. The difference in materiality alone, is sufficient to ensure meaningful difference.

Yet the false Florimell's materiality does not simply determine her appearance. Instead, the materials that constitute the false Florimell seem laden with symbolic importance. Critics have noted that the body of the false Florimell is comprised of tropes derived from Petrarchan sonnets.[82] Thomas Roche argues that the false Florimell is essentially a 'pin-up'; "she is composed of sonneteers' epithets and represents the same type of wish-fulfillment and debasement of the female form as her modern counterpart" (162). She is, as Linda Gregerson suggests, "a likeness made of likeness, a composite beauty whose features derive from the interwoven similes of the Petrarchan sonneteers" (136). Mihoko Suzuki concurs, calling her "an amalgamation of literalized Petrarchan conceits" (176). Building on Nancy Vickers's seminal work on the blason in Petrarch, Suzuki argues that "through the creation of a counterfeit doll by joining various artificial body parts, Spenser exposes the violent appropriation of woman implicit in the *blason*" (176). Reading the false Florimell as a reaction to the sonnet tradition reveals that it is not only the false Florimell who is a creature of art. The true Florimell is also presented via blason, and her body is also a collection of Petrarchan tropes. Together the two Florimells suggest that idealized femininity is always a construction and a construction that depends

[82] See for example Linda Gregerson 136-137, Mihoko Suzuki 176, Thomas Roche 162).

on a certain dehumanization. As Vickers says of Laura, these Florimells represent "a code of beauty, a code that causes us to seek, or to seek to be 'ideal types, beautiful monsters composed of every individual perfection'" ("Diana Described" 277).[83] Still, the materials that comprise the false Florimell matter not merely because Spenser seems to be mocking a particular poetic tradition or exposing its violence, but also for the ways that these particular materials work together to construct a particular women. We may be able to trace Florimell's snowy complexion, her waxy materiality and her hair of golden wires back to specific sonnets, but we can also locate within Petrarchan sonnets countless other possibilities. Spenser's choice of snow, wax, and gold gain meaning within, beyond and prior to their association with Petrarchan sonnets and these histories helped imbue them with symbolic resonances.

If we look at the particular materials that go into the construction of the false Florimell we can begin to tease out these associations. The golden wires that comprise false Florimell's hair, not only repeat the poetic fascination with blonde hair found in Petrarchan poetry, but also perhaps suggest the alchemical possibilities of gold, along with richness and largesse. Her snowy composition renders her not only fair, and lends her connotations of purity, but also connects her to a pristine natural landscape that is somewhat ephemeral in nature. While the snows of Riphoean hills may never melt in their natural clime, transposed into faerie land they are more precarious, as becomes evident when the false Florimell melts away in Book 5. Yet even before she melts, the false Florimell's materiality, as Christopher Burlinson points out, "reminds us that the body is something that is substantially, constructed, and constructed from substance that

[83] Vickers is quoting Elizabeth Cropper's "On Beautiful Women, Parmigiano, *Petrarchismo,* and the Vernacular Style," 376.

seem on the verge of melting, losing their shape" (113). Further, just as a snowy field is susceptible to being despoiled by passing footsteps, so too both the purity and form of false Florimell's body seem to be rendered vulnerable by her snowy constitution. This vulnerability is fundamentally the same susceptibility to impression and pregnancy that Donne's Sappho ascribes to women through the figure of the footprint.

The wax that is mixed into the snow shares many of its properties. Like snow, it is susceptible to being remodeled and reshaped, it too can melt, and like the snow its virgin status seems only temporarily ensured. As Rufus Wood argues, "there is a suggestion that it is only virgin because never before sealed, but will shortly be unsealed. Even the word 'wex' punningly draws out the sense in which wax is essentially malleable and unconstant" (118). According to Linda Gregerson, the wax materiality of Florimell's body gains meaning by comparison to Sidney's *New Arcadia,* in which "Philoclea's navel is blazoned as 'a daintie seale of virgin-waxe, / Where nothing but impression lackes.'" Gregerson explains, "the virgin wax *invites* impression: 'lacking' is the work it does…'impression' is the stamp of [masculine] ownership. And pleasure (the contemplation of virgin wax, for example) requires that ownership be thwarted or precarious or not-yet-achieved" (137). The use of virgin wax suggests pliancy, femininity, iterability, artfulness, and possibilities of inscription that can be associated with fertility.

Some of these associations are Petrarchan. However, they also gain inflection through the association of wax with philosophy, aesthetic theory that we have been tracing in this dissertation, and wax's various deployments in the world as a material of writing and art. Wax only can figure virginity compellingly, because it can be used to

model reproduction. If, as Gregerson suggests, “the virgin wax might be a summary for the entire Petrarchan construct of desire,” it might also be a summary of the entire project of constructing an artificial or artful female form. Thus while wax is only one of the many materials that comprise the false Florimell, it is a materiality that helps us understand her nature as an image of femininity. Moreover, wax can also help us understand the false Florimell as not simply an image, but a fully mobile automaton who resembles Florimell not only in appearance but also in behavior.

We can understand the false Florimell as the product of impression, but we must look more carefully at the impression she makes on the witch to understand her ultimate manifestation.While Florimell’s beauty in flight is the first impression we receive of her as readers, as something fleeting, enticing, seductive (and not necessarily chaste), it is quite different from the impression of her that the witch receives. Florimell approaches the witch’s cottage “to find some refuge there, and rest her weary side" (3.7.5.9). She is weary from her travels and in a state of disarray, and it is not at first, her beauty that earns her entrance. Instead, Florimell play on the witch’s sympathies, after explaining that she merely wants shelter from the storm, she wordlessly continues her plea:

> With that adowne out of her Christall eyne
> Few trickling teares she softly forth let fall,
> That like two Orient pearls, did purely shyne
> Vpon her snowy cheeke; and therewithall
> She sighed soft, that none so bestiall,
> Nor saluage hart, but ruth of her sad plight
> Would make to melt, or pitteously appall; (3.7.9.1-7)

Florimell's physical beauty aids this display of distress and helps earn her the witch's pity, but it is not her beauty alone that "melt[s]" the witch's heart. Indeed, when Florimell first enters the house, she is greeted with fear followed by "foolish wrath" (3.7.8.1). Florimell earns her welcome with her "few trickling teares" and her "soft" sigh. It is not until after this diplay, and a quick tidying up that the witch is "astonisht at her heauenly hew, / And doubted her to deeme an earthly wight, / But or some Goddesse, or of *Dianes* crew" (3.7.11.5-8). If the false Florimell takes her form from the impression that Florimell makes on the witch, then we must recognize that the witch's perception of Florimell is formed through a series of interactions with the girl. It is an impression of both physical beauty and a set of behaviors that make the most of that beauty. With eyes like "Christall," tears like "Orient pearls," and "snowy" cheeks, Florimell's piteous display is still aligned with beauty, but she does not make the same dazzling instantaneous impression on the witch that she makes on Arthur, Guyon, and Britomart, whose response is itself divided — Britomart refuses to lightly undertake the pursuit of beauty, while Arthur and Guyon join in the chase, connecting them in dubious ways to the witch. Instead of an instant impression, the witch's understanding of Florimell is developed over the course of stay and include Florimell's gentle fending off of the attentions of the witch's son, which she performs by accepting his gifts of courtship with "countenance meeke and milde," but offering him no further encouragement (3.8.17.9).

Given that Florimell displays to the witch not only her physical beauty, but also a set of behaviors that takes full advantage of that beauty, it is little wonder that the false Florimell the witch creates mimics not only Florimell's appearance but also her behavior. The false Florimell would not begin to substitute for the true one if her body were not

animated by "a wicked Spright yfraught with fawning guile" who knows how "himselfe to fashion likest *Florimell" (*3.8.8.6). While the spright lacks materiality, he, like wax, epitomizes malleability and testifies to a certain vision of woman as inconstant, flirtatious, wanton. Despite his masculine gender he can form his actions and fashion himself to be "likeest *Florimell."* To be like requires neither a shared gender or a shared materiality, but rather only the ability to appear the same both in physical form and in the form of one's comportment. The spright imitates Florimell so perfectly that she too rejects the witch's son: "the more to seeme such as she hight, / Coyly rebutted his embracement light" (3.8.10.4-5). Eventually the witch's son is challenged by Bragadocchio, who wants to claim the beautiful Florimell for himself, who in turn is challenged by another knight, and the false Florimell begins to circulate from knight to knight just as the true Florimell does.

Our waxy Florimell raises questions of interpretation for us and for the characters within the poem. Some critics have been quick to ascribe allegorical meaning to the two Florimells. Many critics have suggested that the two Florimells offer a neo-Platonic allegory. Perhaps the most representative reading along these lines is that provided by Thomas Roche, who argues that the two Florimells retell a version of the Troy story, in which the real Helen went to Egypt and the Helen who ran off to Troy was a phantom look-alike, in Neoplatonic terms.[84] Roche suggests that Spenser uses the two Florimells to distinguish between types of beauty and between love and lust (155). Many critics have followed Roche in mapping the two Florimells onto neoplatonic ideals and extending these ideals to Christian morality. For example, Carol Kaske suggests that "the

[84] This version of the Troy story was presented by Herodotus in his *Histories,* and presented by Euripides in *Helen.* It is also the subject of H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt* and Richard Strauss's opera, *Die ägyptische Helena* (*The Egyptian Helen*)

False Florimell is the evil twin, the demonic parody of the true" and that since the reader "is in on the ruse from the beginning and knows who is who, she can easily translate the situation into a distinction such as 'some apparent beauty is not true beauty because it is purely material and not subtended by soul'" (63). Kenneth Borris claims that the contrast of the true Florimell "with the False Florimell, a spurious copy created by a witch, corresponds to the Platonic distinction between icastic (truthful) and phantastic (falsified) modes of representation in the arts" (209). Where for Roche and Kaske the allegory was about beauty, for Borris it is about artistic representation.

Another set of critics argue that it is impossible to so cleanly interpret the two Florimells or to ascribe a virtue to the true Florimell and its opposite to the false. Patrick Cheney suggests, "Florimell has too many problems to become merely an emblem of 'true' or 'spiritual' beauty" (311). Harry Berger explains that "Florimell is no less a male invention than the False Florimell. Both equally project and reflect male desires, and their effects sometimes converge, just as Neoplatonist fantasies easily slide into Petrarchan fantasies" (221). Linda Gregerson follows Berger in emphasizing the similarities in how the two Florimells are treated in the poem. She explains, "Florimell, like so many of Spenser's poetic figures, has a double, and in the reciprocal formulation of these two preeminent beauties, we may read the poet's critique of the motive — the desire — that binds them" (135). Gregerson suggests that ultimately the shame Florimell feels in Book 5 when she confronts her double, is "because the excessive adoration prompted by the latter implicates the former as well" (141). Critics such as Cheney, Berger, and Gregerson, seem right to point out the moments where there seems to be a slippage between the Florimells. Yet all of these critics, whether they map the Florimell's onto

binary oppositions or not would agree that Spenser's treatment of the two Florimell's is an interrogation of the nature of femininity, art, and beauty.

Understanding the Florimells through the artistic process of impressing and counterfeiting can help explain those slippages and why the characters within the poem have so much trouble differentiating between the two. The false Florimell most clearly presents an interpretive problem for the figures within *The Faerie Queene* in Book 4 when she tries to win the girdle of chastity and inBook 5 when she is placed next to the real Florimell. In both of these moments, she is put under the critical scrutiny of the other allegorical figures, and in both of these occurrences when they first see her they believe that they see Florimell. In Book IV, Spenser relays, "all were glad there *Florimell* to see; / Yet thought that *Florimell* was not so faire as she" (4.5.14.8-9). Similarly in Book 5, the spectators exclaim, "that surely *Florimell* it was, / Or if it were not *Florimell* so tride, /That *Florimell* her selfe she then did pas" (5.3.17.6-8). Both these scenes present moments of mis-recognition coupled with a registering of difference that is not quite sufficient to upset the perceived recognition. Even the narrative voice, which is never confused as to which Florimell it is describing, cannot quite make up its mind which is the most beautiful. Like two sculptures formed in the same shape but of different materials, the Florimells are near identical and beauty inheres in the form of both.

We also might be able to shed light on the meaning of the two Florimells by placing the waxiness of the false Florimell, in dialogue with the name Florimell, which literally means"flower honey." Sean Kane has argued that her name associates her with fertility myths and with seasonal change (462). Moreover, Kane agrees with Maurice Evans that "Her name… puts her among the flowers that grow [in the Garden of Adonis], joined to

first matter, they go out into life and are mown down by time's scythe, to return to the garden once more" (Kane 466, Evans 167). For Kane and Evans, Florimell's connection to flowers and nature give her meaning. Harry Berger likewise finds meaning in her association with flowers, suggesting that she is "a human version of the 'aboundant flowres' the earth throws forth in spring to tempt 'a liuing wights' to love" (219). Yet if we take seriously her association not with flowers, but with honey, a product of both flowers and bees, than we have another way in which the false Florimell's waxy nature matters. Honey and wax are, after all, the two products that humans harvest from bee hives. Moreover, the collecting of honey and harvesting of wax happen together as part of one process. As Thomas Hill explains in his treatise on bees, after the honeycombs are removed from the hive they "ought to be putte into a cleane Presse, being yet warme, and new gathered out of the hyves the same daye, which let lye there, untill the honnye by little and little be runneth forth" (Fol. 32). After this first collection of honey, the "fine pieces or crommes of the combes, which yet remaine in the bagge of wicker… put into an earthen potte… ouer a verye softe fyer, that same may heate withoute boylinge, and alwayes keepe your hande in the vessell, to stirre still aboute, hyther and thither the honnye and waxe, and to open also the waxe by peace meale until the honnye and not the waxe, shalbe thoroughly molte" (Folio 33). Finally once all the honey has been removed, the combes are melted and the wax refined according to the process detailed in the introduction. Harvesting both products from a honey comb depends on successfully separating the two and refining each separately. Like the two Florimells, wax and honey are, at least at first, intimately connected and always share an origin story.

Yet the true Florimell must reject any connection she might have with wax in order to reject Proteus, whose primary attribute, as Thomas Roche has noted, was "his ability to change shapes" (159). After rescuing Florimell from the lecherous fisherman, Proteus attempts to win her love by changing himself, "For every shape on him he could endew" (3.8.40.2). When these attempts fail, he tries fear and finally eternal thralldom. But:

> Eternal thraldome was to her more liefe,
> Then losse of chastitie, or chaunge of loue:
> Die had she rather, in tormenting griefe,
> Then any should of falseness her reproue,
> Or loosenesse, that she lightly did remove. (3.8.42.1-5)

The temptation Proteus offers is the temptation of wax. He can change shapes, and take on any form that she might desire. All that is required of Florimell is that she "chaunge her love" and allow herself to be "false[]," like the false Florimell. When I discussed the proem's treatment of Queen Elizabeth's heart, I raised the possibility that for Spenser chastity might require not an absence of wax materiality, but rather a determination to prevent that waxy location from being shaped or changed as the result of masculine pressures. Proteus's attempts to change Florimell along with her determination not to be changed suggest that chastity for Spenser might be exactly that: a capacity for change or malleability that can be refused through flight or some quality of will that Florimell seems to possess. Proteus's failure to "chaunge" Florimell suggests that her heart, already impressed by her love for Marinell, will not trade its print for Proteus, even after he places her in chains and despite the mulitudes of forms he takes, including the form of "a

Faerie knight" (3.8.40.1). She eschews the possibility of change signified by wax materiality, which is embodied at this moment by Proteus.

Yet while Florimell refuses to be false, the false Flormell continues to exist for another entire book, often passing as true, as we saw above. Other than the story of her creation, the most crucial moment for the false Florimell is her destruction in Canto 3 of Book 5. For the first time, the two Florimells occupy the same space, and simultaneously, both of them= lay claim to the same name and the title of fairest. When the spectators see both Florimells, they cannot, as mentioned above, determine which is the true Florimell. Even Marinell, who has just married Florimell, begins to think that the false Florimell must actually be the true Florimell. The moment of revelation occurs when Artegall stands the two Florimell next to each other in Book 5:

> Like the true saint beside the image set,
> Of both their beauties to make paragone,
> And triall, whether should the honor get.
> Streightway so soone as both together met,
> Th' enchaunted Damzell vanisht into nought:
> Her snowy substance melted as with heat,
> Ne of that good hew remayned ought,
> But th' emptie girdle, which about her wast was wrought" (5.3.24.2-9).

Although Artegall sets out to make "triall" of "their beauties" he is never given the chance. When the two Florimells encounter each other, it is not left to any outsider to judge which of the two is the true Florimell, or even which of the two is more beautiful. Instead, the snowy Florimell simply melts. Spenser suggests that Artegall's act of setting

the two women next to each other is like setting "the true saint beside the image." While this comparison suggests that the question comes down to one of truth and falsehood, original and art, it also invokes the fraught debate between Protestants and Catholics over the role of images, and, for that matter, saints in religion. The false Florimell, as an image of the true, still would have had significance in a Roman Catholic schema, while neither saint nor image would have mattered much to a Protestant. Still, the encounter between the two Florimells and the melting of the false Florimell suggests that there is something more authentic about the true Florimell than the false. Perhaps the difference between them is the difference of art, although such claims are complicated by the fact that both Florimells are allegorical figures. Still, as we have been discussing, the true Florimell is more chaste than the false, and there is something about her chastity that resists the waxiness of art or exceeds it. Thus it follows that if, in a confrontation between the two, all that was waxy melted away, the true Florimell would remain, or at least some core part of herself that was not represented in false Florimell[85]. This is not to say that there is nothing portrayed through False Florimell that was not in her original. As we have seen, Spenser's poem insists on their non-identity and suggests that the False Florimell, with her hair of golden wires might be more beautiful than the original. Yet those qualities that inhere more in the false Florimell, seem to be waxy, snowy qualities that also melt away.

So far, I have been arguing that despite the false Florimell's composite materiality, she is waxy and that our understanding of wax, developed over the course of this entire project can help us understand much about her status in the poem: her malleability, her artificiality, … As we have also seen, the substance (or lack of it) of the false Florimell is

[85] Of course, if this is true, it also makes the Florimell rather uninteresting as a character, which is perhaps why it is at this moment that she also disappears from the poem.

also attached to snow; indeed in Spenser's treatment of the false Florimell in Book 5, he makes no mention of her waxiness. Instead, again and again she is referred to as "snowy."[86] We need therefore to assess the relationship of these two notions of materiality attached to wax and snow. While we knew in Book 3 that snow was an important component of the false Florimell, along with wax and gold, given that my focus is on the figure's waxiness, it seems necessary to consider how and why her snowiness comes to dominate this portion of the poem. If we were to go back through this project and note every instance that snow imagery accompanied wax imagery, we would find that the two materialities often accompany each other in poetic discourse. Not only is the false Florimell comprised of both, but also Donne and Cavendish employ both metaphors of footprints in snow and impressions in wax.

We have already seen that the two materials share important similarities insofar as they are both impressible material, both, at least in their purest forms, white, and both subject to radical change with the application of heat. Yet there are also significant differences between the two materials. Snow is of course cold, and the heat required to melt it is significantly less than the heat required to melt wax. As a result, snow is more ephemeral than wax, and the figures formed in it are even more fleeting than their wax counterparts. When snow melts, just as when wax melts, it leaves behind a liquid counterpart. Yet when snow becomes water that water evaporates with the heat of the sun or seeps into the ground, leaving no tangible signs behind. Wax on the other hand, only remains liquid while it is still hot, then it re-solidifies. In Spenser's poem, it is important that the false Florimell vanish completely, leaving behind her only the girdle of chastity.

---

[86] The false Florimell is referred to as Bragaddocio's "snowy dame" (5.3.10), the "snowy *Florimele"* (5.3.17), "that snowy mayd" (5.3.18), and "that snowy one" (5.3.24)

She cannot be placed next to the true Florimell and survive Artegall's justice-laden gaze because she is inconstancy itself and as we will see in our discussion of Talus, justice in the *Fairie Queene* is constant, "immoueable, without end," everything in short that the false Florimell is not (5.1.12.7). For this reason alone, Spenser may insist on Florimell's snowiness. Since her vanishing act is more suited to snow that it is to wax. Wax, despite its malleability, offers more of a possibility of permanence than snow does, which might explain why Spenser dow not emphasize the false Florimell's wax materiality in Book 5.

At the same time, the fact that Florimell's waxiness stops registering in Book 5 also seems of a piece with the nature of wax as artistic material. As we saw in chapter 3, in so many artistic creations, wax acts as a mediating material, one that helps form and construct the final product, but is not actually present in it. The lost wax technique of casting bronze is one example of an artistic creation in which wax matters, but ultimately disappears. The carving of marble, while very different, also involves wax only as an intermediary for working out the perfect form before it is translated onto the more permanent and impervious marble. Similalry, the false Florimell's waxiness plays a formative role in her construction, even if it recedes from view by Book 5. Moreover, as we have seen, wax allows us to understand how she relates to the True Florimell, as imitation and copy that both exceeds and is exceeded by her original. Through wax, we can connect the two Florimell's to the discussion of chastity and art that opens the book and Spenser's suggestion that art that merely represents might mar the figure. The False Florimell is, despite her waxiness or because of it, bad art, distorting and disfiguring the True.

Next to the false Florimell, we can place Spenser's man of iron: Talus who also invites the question of the relationship between automata and people, although his status within the poem and his material constitution are quite different from the false Florimell's. First, he enters the poem fully formed and leaves it intact, which sets him apart from False Florimell and also suggests that his presence in the poem has less to do with questions of creating art than her presence does. Still, like Florimell, Talus constructedness is used to question what it means to be human, and whether there is a difference between humans and machines that can be maintained.

Unlike the false Florimell, Talus's allegorical purpose is unambiguous. He represents the iron hand of justice, and he materialy embodies that figure. He is "made of yron mould" (5.1.12.6) and characterized as, "immoueable, resistlesse, without end" (5.1.12.7). His iron body marks him as impenetrable and as the allegorical figure of the iron hand of justice, he moves through the poem without mercy and with an absolutist mentality. For example, when Artegall and Talus find that a local lord is guarding a bridge to take advantage of local travelers, Talus not only destroys the lord, but also kills his lady:

> And lastly all that Castle quite he raced,
> Euen from the sole of his foundation,
> And all the hewen stones thereof defaced,
> That there mote be no hope of reparation,
> Nor memory thereof to any nation. (5.2.28.1-5)

The punishment that Talus executes is extreme and relentless. As Spenser relays, it is a punishment designed to erase both "hope" and "memory." The death of the lady is

particularly cruel. Despite her pleas for mercy, Talus cuts off her hands and feet, before drowning her in the mud. The justice that Talus executes is hard, just as his body is, and while Artegall pities the lady, "Yet for no pitty would he change the course / Of Iustice, which in *Talus* hand did lye" (5.2.26.1-2). The exacting hardness of Justice is, as we have seen, incompatible with the waxy falseness of false Florimell. Here, we see that it is also incompatible with pity, a trait that in Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* was also a trait of wax. Since sympathy depends on likeness and on the possibility to become like, to deny pity, is to deny the power of wax. Justice without pity or wax seems to be the model condoned by both Talus and Artegall, who is the primary figure for justice within Book 5.

While the false Florimell is misidentified and misread by the characters within *The Faerie Queene,* none of the other figures in *The Faerie Queene* seem confused as to Talus's status. Perhaps, he does not arouse confusion because his primary relationship to almost all the figures he encounters occurs on the battlefield. With all the knights outfitted in armor, Talus may or may not be recognized as artificial (as his iron body would blend in). However, that recognition seems to be beside the point. Talus is disturbing, both to Spenser's readers, and to the figures within the allegory because he is incapable of mercy. As a machine, he is capable only of applying rules to situations, and cannot have a human response. He cannot bend the rules to fit a situation; he is without wax. Thus, once Britomart has slain Radigund, Talus breaks into her fortress and "There then a piteous slaughter did begin: / For all that euer came within his reach, / He with his yron flale did thresh so thin" (5.7.35.5-7). Britomart has to order him to stop, "For else he sure had left not one aliue, / But all in his reuenge of spirite would depriue" (5.7.36.8-9).

Moreover, Talus lacks other marks of humanity. For example, other than the few words he speaks to Britomart to inform her of Artegall's captivity, Talus is silent and he does not seem to have any relationship to any characters other than his role as Artegall's squire.

Yet despite the fact that he is a machine, perhaps the biggest problem Talus presents lies in how little difference there actually is between him and the other knights. After Britomart has freed Artegall, he immediately returns to his quest, taking only Talus with him as "the true guide of his way and vertuous gouernment" (5.8.3.9). What follows, almost immediately, is an encounter with a damsel in distress. Artegall sees "a Damzell, flying on a palfrey fast / Before two Knights, that after her did speed" and "Soone after these he saw another Knight, / That after those two former rode apace" (5.8.4.2-3, 5.8.5.1-2). This latter knight, who we later learn is Arthur, manages to close the gap between himself and the two chasing knight and engage one of them in combat. Artegall chases the other knight and also fights him. Both Artegall and Arthur win their battles. At which point Arthur, confusing Artegall for one of the original villains, chases him down and they too begin battling. They are only stopped from killing each other by the intervention of the damsel in distress. This episode highlights the mechanicalness of both Artegall and Arthur's performance of knighthood. They both are moved to action before gaining any understanding of the situation, and once in action, they are both relentless and immoveable, not unlike Talus. Here, the difference between automata and people is a matter only of materials, their behavior is otherwise identical, determined by the social codes of knighthood, and enacted without inquiry or judgment.

Talus's mechanicalness is different from the false Florimell's and yet they both are ultimately machines programmed to perform in certain ways, and both come to represent gendered stereotypes and expose them as mechanical forms. Talus's relentless application of justice, and rigid performance of knighthood problematize masculine virtue in much the same way that the false Florimell's success at deploying feminine wiles and in winning contests of beauty calls into question the virtues of femininity. Spenser's treatment of gender in Books 3-5 of *The Faerie Queene,* and his connection of gender to specific materialities, brings us back full circle to where we started this project with Shakespeare's waxy women and the possibility that the ideal woman would be perfectly malleable and soft and consequently supremely vulnerable to masculine impression. More, just as Shakespeare portrays Tarquin as hard, Spenser's men (and sometimes his women), encased in armor, also threaten to be too impervious[87]. Britomart's turn to knighthood and her adoption of arms suggests the power offered by encasing flesh in armor, even when that flesh is female. At the same time, Talus's relentless application of justice and mechanical responses to the situations he find himself in, also shows the dangers of that type of hardness, especially since Talus's behavior is at most a somewhat more extreme version of the other knights' actions. The true Florimell, who comes to epitomize the female expression of chastity, is not as soft and malleable as the false Florimell. Not only is she not comprised of wax and snow, but also the poem insists on her own active role in defending her chastity and in choosing her future. She flees from all threats to her chastity and ultimately pursues Marinell, choosing to follow him and ultimately to become his wife. Spenser, by counterpoising the true Florimell

[87] For a further discussion of Britomart and what armor offers her, see Kathryn Schwarz, "Dressed to Kill: Looking for Love in *The Faerie Queene*" in *Tough Love,* 137-174.

with the false, is able to push back on the construction of the feminine as perfectly soft and malleable, and show that incarnation to be essentially parodic, and ultimately empty. To be always pliant, is to be nothing of and for oneself. Just as to be always hard is also to be empty of selfhood.

In pursuing Spenser's treatment of automata through his depiction of Talus and the false Florimell, I have tried to show how materiality figures into the possibility and threat represented by automata. That Spenser, writing in the 1580's and 90's, takes up these questions, reminds us that the story we have been telling is not a narrative of progress. Instead, wax materiality connects moments from different times and illuminates conversations that persist across time. Spenser's concern about the false Florimell and her ability to pass is not all that different from Descartes' worry that the people he sees in the street might be automata. Of course since the false Florimell is animated by a spright, that is by an intelligent being, she would pass Descartes' tests for a person. She has a command of language and the capacity to build knowledge that Descartes does not believe possible of an automaton. Yet she is still mere imitation. Her body is an imitation of the true Florimell's body, an imitation that might be understood best through the wax that gives her form: her shape is flexible, feminine, and human-like, yet her wax materiality also reminds us that she is fundamentally a figure of art like Pygmalion's wife, and as such, at least for Spenser different from a person. For Spenser both "yellow" and "gold," nature and art, may exceed the other in some qualities, but they are never strictly equivalent, or at least their equivalence cannot be conveyed through simple representation and imitation, but instead requires an allegorical mode.

The anxiety of both Descartes and Spenser about the boundaries of art are extensions of the problems raised by Ovid and his translators and by Ambroise Paré. Extending the human body, augmenting it, or replacing may be contrary to God's plan, as Paré worries. It may be somehow demonic, as the false Florimell's magical origins suggest. Moreover, it might be too ambitious a set of projects for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The creation of wings that could give humans flight, or of thinking, speaking automata that could pass for human might lie outside the limits of human ingenuity and might seem to overstep the bounds of nature. Yet contemplating such creations also seems to authorize the interventions that Paré is willing to make in the human body, and fuel a consideration of the nature of humanity, functioning as a source of invention and imagery in Descartes and Spenser. Wax provides a surprising thread throughout these narratives, suggesting that the possibility of such inventions has much to do with the discourse surrounding art (that we have seen figured through wax); it is not yet firmly attached to conceptions of metallic machines; wax provides a bridge between art and humanity that both through its possibilities and limitations helps figure the dream and threat of human creation.

Conclusion

A Figure of Wax

Over the course of this dissertation we have moved from the golden age of Elizabethan literature to the edges of the seventeenth century and back again. We have wandered to Italy and France, and returned to England, following wax impressions and figures into the various cultural spaces and literary texts that they inhabit. Like Descartes' purportedly errant consideration of wax, our study of wax has not simply been a wandering but has brought us some version of truth. It has proven the lie of the false etymology of "sincere" that would connect truth to a lack of wax through the Latin "sin cera" (OED, s.v. "sincere"). Certainly, our pursuit of wax has revealed a nexus of questions about gendered bodies, the nature of the mind, the relationship between the mind and other entities, the nature of writing, and of art and imitation rendered more broadly. It also has led us to considerations of what makes us human and how that question is complicated by technology and the promise (or threat) of prosthetics and automata. While wax may not have revealed to us the truth of gender, the mind, art, or humanity, it has allowed us to see more clearly how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thinkers engaged with those questions and conceptualized them. Moreover, by tracing the complex ways in which these thinkers engage wax we have seen that these questions overlap and threaten at times to merge to become the same question, like pieces of wax pushed together, melted and solidified into new shapes. The malleability of wax allows it to speak to the messiness of the very questions that it authorizes and also allows it to tell a nonlinear version of history. Thus wax offers us different stories and different truths than more traditional narratives.

As I suggested in the Introduction, this project itself can be conceptualized as a wax sculpture, a sculpture which takes its shape from the way different moments, texts, art forms and thoughts connect across time. In traveling along its surfaces, following wax into various discursive spaces, we have, perhaps, been standing too close to it to see its contours fully. Or maybe our exploration through this material is more closely akin to the experience of running our fingers over a wax sculpture with our eyes closed. We have been tracing out the edges of the sculpture, which itself figures the work of wax in the period. Now that we have traversed the surface of the wax, what can we say about the shape or shapes that have emerged? We certainly have not discovered the full extent of the figure, we have touched only its surface, and while our fingers have moved purposefully and searchingly along its contours, we have not touched every point of its body. We cannot name the figure we have explored; it is not recognizable, although there have been moments when it has seemed almost to be human, almost to be female even. Yet we can say something about its contours, and our experience tracing those contours. We have observed a figure of some complexity, with curves of varying intensity. Sometimes in tracing one shape or curve, we have found ourselves back on the verge of traversing a familiar surface, re-encountering questions that we thought left behind and chose to continue along our current path. Now that our exploration has reached an end, I we can talk about both the paths we chose and the paths that were left unexplored.

One of the major paths offered by this project has been the figuration of gender and particularly women through wax (is it any wonder that the shape of the wax seems almost female?). In the first chapter, when we took up the figure of the wax seal, we asked what happens to female agency when women are associated with wax. We found that, for

Shakespeare, wax's malleability and softness suggested female vulnerability and weakness. Wax was one half of a binary opposition, on the other side of which lay marble and steel and an impervious version of masculinity. Yet as we pressed on Shakespeare's wax and his women we found that neither were so soft or yielding. We discovered that his trope bent to accommodate same-sex relations, and that agential women such as Viola could come to occupy the "masculine" half of the trope. In the second chapter, we asked how the association of women with wax changes when Donne uses the trope to explore what happens to the self in the face of erotic loss and how wax can figure the seduction of a woman by a woman. We asked, also, what happens to the trope of signet/seal when wax is invested with perception and self-motion by Margaret Cavendish's natural philosophy? In these shifts, we found the shape of wax changing along with the meaning attached to its materiality. We found new potentials in the association of women with wax, and moved on to consider how wax can be used to figure any mind, following a new path from Sappho's melting sense of self, to Cavendish's fragmented self, to Descartes' waxy mind. Yet as we continued to trace the contours of wax, we found ourselves returning to questions about gender in Chapter 4, when we took up Spenser's false Florimell, a waxy female figure whose performance of femininity seems contingent on perfect malleability.

Another path that we traced throughout this project concerns the purpose and limits of art. At first that path was subtle, a gentle ridge running along our consideration of gender, emerging in the first two chapters as a meditation on the art of writing around the edges of our consideration of gender, affect, and mind. Both *The Rape of Lucrece* and "Sappho to Philaenis" consider the power of the written word as a performance. For Lucrece, writing offers the possibility of narrating her own story, but also the possibility

of being mis-read. Her suicide becomes a form of writing that re-inscribes the violence of Tarquin's rape, but also forever silences Lucrece's voice. In Donne's "Sappho to Philaenis," on the other hand, verse is imagined to have a "holy fire" capable of enflaming the beloved's passions and the power to "draw" to inscribe and attract the beloved's heart. Whether Sappho's address to Philaenis succeeds in recapturing Philaenis's heart is a question that is not resolved within the poem, but the possibility that art can be transformative is clearly raised. The power of the authorial voice, however, is also called into question by the waxiness of Lucrece and Sappho. Shakespeare raises the possibility that Lucrece's voice is no longer her own after her mind has been impressed by the force of Tarquin's rape. Likewise, Donne, by having Sappho look inward at her melting heart to find inspiration for her poem, questions the possibility that Sappho can capitalize on her passions and win back Philaenis. In Chapters 3 and 4, the path we traced became more pronounced as questions about art, its purpose and its limits were raised more explicitly. In Chapter 3, we looked at aesthetic texts and artistic works to explore the way that wax sculpture as a form of art that negotiates between reality and ideals comes to represent art as a whole by speaking to its in-between-ness. Finally in Chapter 4, we explored some of the concerns that artistic achievement raises, as the possibility of imitating human form threatens to become the possibility of modifiying or creating human bodies. By looking at Ovid's myth about Daedalus and Icarus, the way that myth recycled through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and how Ambroise Paré described the practice of making prosthetics we were able to consider early modern fears about the limits of knowledge and the possibilities of human invention and their relationship to questions of art. Moreover, when we took up Descartes' consideration of

automata and Spenser's treatment of Talus and the false Florimell we were able to consider how questions of materiality and invention intersect with questions about the nature of humanity.

In the course of this study we have returned repeatedly to wax as philosophical model and wax as literary topos. These two paths ran intertwined through the discussion of gender, and came together again around our consideration of subjectivity in Donne, Cavendish and Descartes. The path of wax as philosophical model was well defined at times, outlined explicitly in the introduction and in Chapters 1 and 2. We saw that wax functioned as a philosophical model in ancient Greece and continued to function as such through to our period. We also saw that seventeenth-century thinkers (both philosophic and literary) found in wax a material that could be re-molded and used to offer new narratives about gender relations, the nature of the mind, and the physical underpinnings of the universe. In our final chapters the path of wax as philosophical object was more muted, yet in our consideration of aesthetic theory in Chapter 3 we found its contours once again. Moreover, as we considered the limits of humanity in Chapter 4 we touched on the path of wax as philosophical model ever so gently as we juxtaposed the waxy Florimell and the mechanical Talus. Wax as literary topos ran on from Shakespeare to Donne to Cavendish, Webster, and Spenser, dancing through other less literary authors as well, such as Descartes. In each of these literary deployments the meaning of wax shifted. It stood for softness, malleability, the threat of loss and death, the promise of mimesis, and the promise of continuity in change. Perhaps then wax in literature is less a "topos" and more a shifting landscape of meaning and possibility.

Running our fingers along the wax, we have returned most persistently to wax's capacity to interrogate the nature of humanity. Thus, as I mentioned above, our wax figure seems at times to be almost human in shape. In Chapter 4, we looked at how wax is explicitly used to consider the limits of humanity when it is applied to a discussion of prosthetics and automata. But the connection of wax to the question of what it means to be human has been a path that we have been exploring since the beginning of the project. Our consideration of wax and gender and the ramifications of wax hearts and wax minds in Shakespeare, Donne, Cavendish and Descartes began that work. When we moved on to consider wax's role in art both as a material of creation and a material that facilitates artistic conception and mediates between nature and ideals we continued to ask about the limits of humanity. What we found throughout was that wax proves a material suited to representing what it means to be human, and also to testing those limits. Wax's ability to mimic skin, represent body, and figure mind and heart, make it a material of humanity. Still, its lack of life and its status as copy set it apart from human experience.

These explorations of wax as figure for gender, art, and philosophy have yielded no concrete conclusions. Yet, given wax's malleability, that is hardly surprising. As we have traced the contours of wax in the period through this project, the heat of our fingers on the surface of wax has threatened already to change its shape, never mind that the wax sculpture itself contains paths we have not traced. We could, for example, have traced religion through wax. To do so, we would have looked more carefully at how wax figures in Augustine's work as a model for our relationship to God, and the relationship of the

Old and New Testament to each other.[88] We also would have looked at the Reformation through its relationship to wax.

Prior to the Reformation, the largest consumer of wax in England was the Catholic church, which consumed great quantities of wax for masses, and encouraged devotees to light candles to aid a lost soul's movement out of purgatory. Yet with the Reformation, the use of candles in churches was severely restricted. For example, Thomas Cromwell's *Injunctions to the Clergy* forbade clergy to "suffer from henceforth no candles, tapers, or images of wax to be set afore any image or picture, but only the light that commonly goes across the rood loft, the light before the sacrament altar, and the light about the sepulcher, which for the adorning of the church and the divine service you shall suffer to remain" (qtd. in Bewsher 77). The Reformation can be understood in part as movement away from wax. Not only because of the restriction of candles, but also in the elimination of images. In Italy, wax ex-votos "anatomized and configured the human body as a palpable presence and they celebrated votary identity in proximity to holy objects in consecrated spaces" (Holmes 160). Yet these ex-votos are exactly the type of images critiqued by both Protestant and Catholic reformers as idolatrous. Even tracing the path of religion in this rudimentary way along the surface of wax raises tantalizing possibilities that could no doubt be explored further.

Also path not traced in this project is the path that would have carried us beyond the seventeenth century into later manifestation of wax. Throughout our discussion has been limited to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and to a lesser extent to their

---

[88] As mentioned in the Introduction, Augustine explains the trinity through wax in *The Trinity* (305-306). He also suggests that relationship between the Old Testament to the New Testament is like the relationship of a wax mold to a final bronze casting in "Sermon 272b: On the Day of Pentecost" in *Sermons (230-272B) on the Liturgical Seasons,* (305).

appropriation of the waxworks, wax technology, and philosophies of the classical and medieval periods. Yet wax does not disappear at the end of the seventeenth century. Instead its possibilities mutate and expand. If we pursued wax figures further into the future, we encounter the eighteenth-century wax anatomical figures and the way they construct and intervene in the medicalized human body, and particularly again in the construction of the feminized body.[89] We also encounter the wax figures of Madame Toussaud, figures of spectacle built on the bloodshed of the French Revolution. In the modern wax museum we can locate an aggressive collision of pop culture and the ancient traditions of the death mask. To wander a wax museum is to confront uncanny replicas of dead and living celebrities frozen in time.

Important work has been done on these later incarnations of wax, as we noted in the Introduction. Still, more work needs to be done to reach across time periods and consider what broader narratives could be offered about wax and its relation to culture and the production of knowledge. A panel entitled "Theorizing Wax" at the 2011 annual conference of the Association for Art Historians called for more attention to be paid to the unique challenges of studying wax. According to organizers, the panel's "twofold aim is to broaden the study of the function and meaning of wax, as well as seek ways of finding alternative art historical approaches by taking rare and marginalized wax artifacts as point of departure, for which current methodologies developed for portraiture or sculpture do not suffice" (Goudie and Grootenboer). This call to arms suggests that much work still needs to be done in theorizing and studying wax objects and in recovering the history of those objects, since "the history of wax has been a history of disappearance,

[89] wax anatomical figures predate the eighteenth century, but the collection of wax anatomical figures in Bologna and Florence began in the 1740s.

partly due to the perishable quality of the wax" (Goudie and Grootenboer). If wax is a medium that has not sufficiently been explored in art history, the connections between wax objects, philosophical models, and literary metaphors have been even less explored. This project offers to fill that gap for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but more work must be done to address the absence of similar projects in later periods.

Stepping back further, if this project can be understood as a wax sculpture, there are other objects that could be displayed alongside it, other studies that would resonate with our study of wax, and which are to a degree authorized by it. Much of this project dealt with wax as an impressible medium, a medium that shares important similarities with other impressible mediums, such as clay and snow. These alternatives have both made appearances in this project, but neither has been fully explored. We encountered clay as an alternative to wax in Chapter 3 when we explored the artistic process of model making, but we did not explore what else might offer as a material of art. Moreover, clay might also connect to wax through the mentioned but unexplored connections between wax and religion. According to *Genesis*, God formed Adam out of clay, and also in his image. Thus, we could compare clay as a material of model making to wax around religious questions of the relationship of creator to image.

Snow has made more of an appearance in this project than clay. As I mentioned in chapter 2, the trope of footprints in the snow is employed frequently in close proximity to the trope of the signet/seal and often seems in conversation with that trope. We found the two together in Donne's "Sappho to Philaenis," Margaret Cavendish's *Philosophical Letters* and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. Moreover, in Chapter 4, we saw that in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, wax and snow combine with gold wire to make up the

substance of the false Florimell's body. Throughout I have tried to be attentive to the significance of this common coupling of snow and wax, yet because my project has been centered on wax, I have not fully explored the potential depth offered by snow or by the trope of the footprint. A project that took on snow related tropes could prove enlightening and could further complicate the relationship that I have narrated between tropes of wax and snow.

While snow and clay immediately suggest themselves for further study, other materials also share qualities with wax and could be discussed alongside it. For example, plaster casts are a mimetic artform founded on impression and a study of plaster could have much to say to our study of wax.[90] Moreover, substances that less connection to wax might also be pursued along similar lines of inquiry. Perhaps studying the movement of gold, iron, or marble through similarly diverse cultural registers would reveal compelling intersections and narratives. As I suggested in the introduction, one of the goals of this work has been to provide a new methodology for interdisciplinary research. Other studies that explore the way materials are used in philosophy, literature, and the real world could greatly enhance our understanding of the way objects circulate and the importance of materiality in philosophy and literature, as could studies that looked at wax alongside other technologies of image reproduction such as photography. Any of these projects would share some contours with our wax figure, despite the differences of materials. Together these studies would offer a broader narrative about the relationships between materials, tropes, and technologies, just as an exhibit in an art gallery allows various pieces of art to enter into conversations with each other.

---

[90] The recent volume, *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present,* edited by Rune Frederikson and Eckart Marchand, for example, could be placed next to this project.

Let us look one last time at our piece of art, the figure of wax we have been exploring, the figure that has helped us think through and conceptualize the work that wax does in the period. It is, of course, itself, a rhetorical construction that figures other rhetorical, literary, philosophical and cultural constructions. In doing so, it has taught us many truths about how wax manifests itself in those spaces. Perhaps, though, it has one final lesson to teach, the lesson offered by its own wax materiality. If this project is a wax sculpture, its waxiness can remind us of the infinitude of possibilities inherent in the study of the history of literature, philosophy, and art. While this project, embodied as wax, has a specific shape that we have traced and re-traced, as I suggested in my reading of Shakespeare's tropes of impression, the mutability of wax insists that any shape it takes is provisional. Wax always can be re-molded, twisted into new shapes, used to tell new stories. Still, whatever form it takes, it is still "the same wax," just as the objects we study continue to exist no matter what stories we tell about them (Descartes 20). Thus the wax figure that represents this project also represents the work we do more broadly as scholars.

Bibliography - Print Sources

Agamben, Giorgio. *Nudities.* Trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011. Print.

---. *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. Print.

Alberti, Leon Battista. *On Painting*. Ed. John R. Spencer, John. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966. Print.

Alciati, Andrea, *Viri Clarissimi D. Andree Alciati ... Ad D. Chonradum Peutinger U ... Emblematum Liber*. Ausburg, 1531. Print.

Anderson, Misty G. "Tactile Places: Materializing Desire in Margaret Cavendish and Jane Barker." *Textual Practice* 13.2 (1999): 329-52. Print.

Aristotle. “History of Animals.” *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Jonathan Barnes. Vol. 1. Bollingen Series LXXI. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. 774-993. Print.

---. "On the Soul." *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Jonathan Barnes. Vol. 1. Bollingen Series LXXI. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. 641-692. Print.

Armenini, Giovanni Battista. *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*. Ed. Edward J.Olszewski. New York: B. Franklin, 1977. Print.

Ascham, Roger. "The Scholemaster." *English Works: Toxophilus; Report of the Affaires and State of Germany; the Scholemaster*. Ed. William Aldis Wright. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1904. Print.

Augustine. *The City of God against the Pagans*. Ed. R. W. Dyson. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.

---. "The Immortality of the Soul." *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation.* Trans. Ludwig Schopp. Vol. 4. NY: Catholic University of America, 1947. 15-50. Print.

---. *Sermons, (230-272B) on the Liturgical Seasons.* Vol. III/7. Trans. Edmund Hill. New Rochelle, New York: New City Press, 1993. Print

---. *The Trinity.* Trans. Edmund Hill. Vol. I/5. Brooklyn, New York: New City Press, 1991. Print.

Bacon, Francis. *The New Organon*. Eds. Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Baines, Barbara J. "Effacing Rape in Early Modern Representation." *ELH* 65.1 (1998): 69-98. Print.

Barnfield, Richard. *Poems. 1594-1598*. Ed. Edward Arber. English Scholar's Library of Old and Modern Works. Birmingham: [The editor], 1882. Print.

Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays*. Trans. Jonathan Mayne. London: Phaidon, 1970. Print.

Beavers, Anthony F. "Desire and Love in Descartes's Late Philosophy." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 6.3 (1989): 279-94. Print.

Berger, Harry. "'Kidnapped Romance': Discourse in *The Faerie Queene.*" *Unfolded Tales: Essays on Renaissance Romance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989. 208-256.

Bergeron, David M. "The Wax Figures in the Duchess of Malfi." *Studies in English*

Literature 18.2 (1978): 331-339. Print.

Bewsher, Frederick William. *The Reformation and the Renaissance (1485-1547)*. Bell's English History Sources. London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1913. Print.

Bischoff, Bernhard. Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Trans. Daibhm O. Cróinin and David Ganz. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press. 1990

Blank, Paula. "Comparing Sappho to Philaenis: John Donne's 'Homopoetics.'" *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 110.3 (1995): 358-68. Print.

Bloom, Michelle E. *Waxworks: A Cultural Obsession*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. Print.

Borris, Kenneth. "Platonism and Spenser's Poetic: Idealized Imitatation, Marlin's Mirror, and the Florimells." *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual* 24 (2009): 209-68. Print.

Boschini, Marco. "Ricche Minere Della Pittura Veneziana." *Italy and Spain, 1600-1750; Sources and Documents*. Eds. Robert Enggass and Jonathan Brown. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970. Print.

Boyle, Deborah. "Margaret Cavendish's Nonfeminist Natural Philosophy." *Configurations: A Journal of Literature, Science, and Technology* 12.2 (2004): 195-227. Print.

Braden, Amy Margaret. *As She Fled: Women and Movement in Early Modern English Poetry and Drama.* Diss. University of Southern California, 2010. Print.

Burlinson, Christopher. Allegory, Space and the Material World in the Writings of Edmund Spenser. Cambridge, Eng.: D.S. Brewer, 2006. Print.

Burns, Edward. "'And Call Upon My Soul within the House': Rhetoric and Response in Twelfth Night." *Km 80: A Birthday Album for Kenneth Muir, Tuesday, 5 May 1987*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP. 28-30. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter.* 1993. New York: Routledge, 2011.

---. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* 1990. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Butler, Charles. *The Feminine Monarchie or a Treatise Concerning Bees, and the Due Ordering of Them: Wherein the Truth, Found out by Experience and Diligent Observation, Discovereth the Idle and Fond Conceipts, Which Many Haue Written Anent This Subiect. By Char: Butler Magd*. At Oxford: Printed by Ioseph Barnes, 1609. Print.

Callaghan, Dympna. *Woman and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy : A Study of King Lear, Othello, the Duchess of Malfi, and the White Devil*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989. Print.

Camino, Mercedes Maroto. "'That Map Which Deep Impression Bears': The Politics of Conquest in Shakespeare's Lucrece." *Shakespeare: World Views*. Eds. Heather Kerr, Robin Eaden and Madge Mitton. Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1996. 124-45. Print.

Carew, Thomas. "Upon a Mole in Celia's Bosom." *Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets.* New York: WW Norton & Co., 1975. 184. Print.

---. “A Rapture.” *Poems*. London: Printed by *I. D.* for Thomas Walkley, 1640. 83-89. Print.

Carriero, John Peter. *Between Two Worlds: A Reading of Descartes's Meditations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009. Print.

Carroll, Robert P. and Stephen Prickett, eds. *The Bible : Authorized King James Version*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

Carruthers, Mary J. “Models for Memory.” *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 18-56. Print.

Cassirer, Ernst. *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*. Trans. Mario Domandi. New York: Harper & Row, 1964. Print.

Cheney, Patrick. "'and Doubted Her to Deeme an Earthly Wight': Male Neoplatonic 'Magic' and the Problem of Female Identity in Spenser's Allegory of the Two Florimells." *Studies in Philology* 86.3 (1989): 310-40. Print.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. “A Dialogue concerning Oratorical Partitions,” *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*. Trans. C.D. Yonge. Vol. 4. London: Bohn, 1852. Print.

Correll, Barbara. "Symbolic Economies and Zero-Sum Erotics: Donne's 'Sapho to Philaenis'." *ELH: English Literary History* 62.3 (1995): 487-507. Print.

Cowan, T. W. *Wax Craft, All About Beeswax; Its History, Production, Adulteration, and Commercial Value*. London: S. Low, Marston & co., 1908. Print.

Crewe, Jonathan. *Trials of Authorship: Anterior Forms and Poetic Reconstruction from Wyatt to Shakespeare*. New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics: 9. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. Print.

Cropper, Elizabeth. “On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, *Petrarchismo,* and the Vernacular Style.” *Art Bulletin* 58 (1976): 374-94.

Dasen, Véronique. “Wax and Plaster Memories: Children in Elite and Non-Elite Strategies.” *Children, Memory, and Family Identity in Roman Culture*. Eds. Véronique Dasen, and Thomas Späth. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 104-146. Print.

Daston, Lorraine and Katherine Park. *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750.* New York: Zone Books, 1998.

da Vinci, Leonardo. "Treatise on Painting." *Italian Art, 1500-1600; Sources and Documents*. Eds. Henri Zerner and Robert Klein. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966. Print.

De Grazia, Margreta. "Imprints: Shakespeare, Gutenberg, and Descartes." *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*. Eds. Brooks, Douglas A. and Jennifer Wynne Hellwarth. Women and Gender in the Early Modern World. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005. 29-58. Print.

De Vries, Lyckle. “Bruegel’s ‘Fall of Icarus’: Ovid or Solomon.” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 30.1/2 (2003): 4-18. Print.

Derrida, Jacques, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Trans. Marie-Louise Mallet. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. Print.

---. "Freud and the Scene of Writing." Trans. Jeffrey Mehlman. *Yale French Studies* 48 (1972): 74-117. Print.

Descartes, René. *Discourse on the Method*. Trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch. The Philosophical Writings of Descartes. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Print.

---. *Meditations on First Philosophy : With Selections from the Objections and Replies*. Ed. John Cottingham. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Print.

---. "The Passions of the Soul." Trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Print.

---. *Principles of Philosophy*. Trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch. The Philosophical Writings of Descartes. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Print.

---. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch. Vol. 3. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Print.

Deslauriers, Marguerite. "Sexual Difference in Aristotle's *Politics* and His Biology." *Classical World* 102.3 (2009): 215-31. Print.

Donaldson, Ian. *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and Its Transformations*. Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1982. Print.

Donne, John, *The Elegies, and the Songs and Sonnets*. Ed. Helen Gardner. Oxford,: Clarendon Press, 1965. Print.

Donne, John. *John Donne*. Ed. John Carey. The Oxford Authors. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. Print.

Doolittle, Hilda. *Helen in Egypt.* New York: New Directions, 1961. Print.

Dowd, Michelle M. “Delinquent Pedigrees: Revision, Lineage, and Spatial Rhetoric in *The Duchess of Malfi.*” *English Literary Renaissance* 39.3 (2009): 499-526. Print.

Drayton, Michael. “The Quest of Cynthia.” *Minor Poems of Michael Drayton*. Ed. Cyril Brett. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907. Print.

Dummelow, John. *The Wax Chandlers of London; a Short History of the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers, London*. Chichester, Eng.: Phillimore, 1973. Print.

Echols, Robert, and Frederick Ilchman. "Veronese and Tintoretto: Mature Altarpieces." *Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese : Rivals in Renaissance Venice*. Eds. Frederick Ilchman and Linda Borean. Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2009. 144-47. Print.

Eco, Umberto. “Travels in Hyper Reality.” *Travels in Hyper Reality: Essays*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986. Print.

Ekeblad, Inga-Stina. "The 'Impure Art' of John Webster." *The Review of English Studies* 9.35 (1958): 253-67. Print.

Empson, William. *The Structure of Complex Words.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989. Print.

Euripedes. “Helen.” *Medea and Other Plays.* Trans. James Morwood. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 119-168. Print.

Evans, Maurice. *Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism: a Commentary on the Faerie Queene.* Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1970. Print.

Falomir Faus, Miguel. *Tintoretto*. English ed. Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2007. Print.

Faraday, Michael. “The Chemical History of a Candle.” *Scientific Papers: Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Geology.* Ed. Charles w. Eliot. New York: P. F. Collier & Son Co., 1910. 86-172. Print.

Fineman, Joel. “Shakespeare’s Will: The Temporality of Rape.” *Representations* 20 (1987): 25-76. Print.

Frederikson, Rune and Eckart Merchand. *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present.* Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. “A Note upon the ‘Mystic Writing Pad.’” *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*. Trans. Philip Rieff. New York: Touchstone, 2008. Print.

Garber, Daniel. "Semel in Vita: The Scientific Background to Descartes' Meditations." *Essays on Descartes' Meditations*. Ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. 81-116. Print.

Ginzburg, Carlo. "High and Low: The Theme of Forbidden Knowledge in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." *Past & Present* 73 (1976): 28-41. Print.

Goldberg, Jonathan. "Calling out the Law." *Shakespeare's Hand*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. 79-104. Print.

---. *The Seeds of Things: Theorizing Sexuality and Materiality in Renaissance Representations*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009. Print.

---. *Voice Terminal Echo: Postmodernism and English Renaissance Texts*

Golding, Arthur, et al. *The .Xv. Bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, Entytuled Metamorphosis, Translated Oute of Latin into English Meeter, by Arthur Golding Gentleman, a*

Worke Very Pleasaunt and Delectable. 1567. Imprynted at London: by Willyam Seres, 1567. Print.

Goudie, Allison and Hannah Grootenboer. "Theorizing Wax: on the Function and Meaning of a Disappearing Medium." *Association of Art Historians. Academic Session 30: Warwick 2011.* Web. 25 May 2011.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Print.

Gregerson, Linda. *The Reformation of the Subject : Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic*. Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Print.

Gross, Kenneth. *The Dream of the Moving Statue*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992. Print.

Hamilton, A. C. *The Spenser Encyclopaedia*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.

Harvey, Elizabeth D. "The Touching Organ: Allegory, Anatomy, and the Renaissance Skin Envelope." *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*. Ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. 81-102. Print.

---. *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Herodotus. *The Histories.* Trans. Robin Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. Print.

Hill, Thomas. *The Proffitable Arte of Gardening, Now the Third Tyme Set Fourth: To Whiche Is Added Muche Necessary Matter, and a Number of Secrettes with the*

Phisick Helpes Belonging to Eche Herbe, and That Easie Prepared. To This Annexed, Two Propre Treatises, the One Entituled the Marueilous Gouernment, Propertie, and Benefite of the Bées, with the Rare Secrets of the Honny and Waxe. And the Other, the Yerely Coniectures, Méete for Husbandme[N] to Knowe: Englished by Thomas Hill Londiner. Imprinted at London: By Thomas Marshe, 1568. Print.

Hills, Paul. *Venetian Colour: Marble, Mosaic, Painting and Glass, 1250-1550*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan : With Selected Variants from the Latin Edition of 1668*. Ed. E. M. Curley. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1994. Print.

Holinshed, Raphael. *The Second Volume of Chronicles: Conteining the Description, Conquest, Inhabitation, and Troblesome Estate of Ireland; First Collected by Raphaell Holinshed; and Now Newlie Recognised, Augmented, and Continued from the Death of King Henrie the Eight Vntill This Present Time of Sir Iohn Perot Knight, Lord Deputie: As Appeareth by the Supplie Begining in Pag. 109, &Amp;C*. 1586. Print.

Hollander, John. *Melodious Guile: Fictive Pattern in Poetic Language*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1988. Print.

Holmes, Megan. "Ex-Votos: Materiality, Memory, and Cult." *The Idol in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World*. Eds. Michael Cole and Rebecca Zorach. Farnham, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2009. 159-82. Print.

Holstun, James. "'Will You Rent Our Ancient Love Asunder?' Lesbian Elegy in Donne, Marvell, and Milton." *ELH* 54 4 (1987): 835-67. Print.

Howard, Henry, Earl of Surrey. ""Love That Doth Reign"." *Sixteenth-Century Poetry : An Annotated Anthology*. Ed. Gordon Braden. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005. 67. Print.

Infante, Cecilia. "Donne's Incarnate Muse and His Claim to Poetic Control in 'Sapho to Philaenis'." *Representing Women in Renaissance England*. Eds. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997. 93-106. Print.

Jagose, Annamarie. *Inconsequence : Lesbian Representation and the Logic of Sexual Sequence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002. Print.

---. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press, 1996. Print.

James, Susan. "The Philosophical Innovations of Margaret Cavendish." *Margaret Cavendish*. Ed. Sarah H. Mendelson. Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England 1500-1700 (Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England 1500-1700): 7. Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009. 209-34. Print.

Jankowski, Theodora A. "Defining/Confining the Duchess: Negotiating the Female Body in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi.*" *Studies in Philology* 87.2 (1990): 221-245. Print.

Jed, Stephanie. *Chaste Thinking: the Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989. Print.

Julianus. "Emblem 104." *The Greek Anthology*. The Loeb Classical Library. Vol. 5. London: W. Heinemann; G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1916. Print

---. “Emblem 105.” *The Greek Anthology*. The Loeb Classical Library. Vol. 5. London: W. Heinemann; G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1916. Print

Kahn, Coppelia. "The Rape in Shakespeare's Lucrece." *Shakespeare Studies* 9 (1976): 45-72. Print.

Kane, Sean. "Spenserian Ecology." *ELH: English Literary History* 50.3 (1983): 461-83. Print.

Kantorowicz, Ernst Hartwig. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957. Print.

Kaske, Carol. *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999. Print.

Keller, Eve. *Generating Bodies and Gendered Selves: The Rhetoric of Reproduction in Early Modern England*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007. Print.

---. "Producing Petty Gods: Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Science." *Margaret Cavendish*. Ed. Mendelson, Sara H. Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009. 171-95. Print.

Klein, Robert, and Henri Zerner. *Italian Art, 1500-1600: Sources and Documents.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966. Print.

Kosman, L. Aryeh. "The Naïve Narrator: Meditation in Descartes' Meditations." *Essays on Descartes' Meditations*. Ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. 21-43. Print.

Kunin, Aaron. “Shakespeare’s Preservation Fantasy.” *PMLA,* 124.1 (2009): 92-106. Print.

La Mettrie, Julien Offray de. *Machine Man and Other Writings.* Ed. and trans. Ann Thompson. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Lee, Rensselaer. *Ut Pictura Poesis: the Humanistic Theory of Painting*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1967. Print

Lobanov-Rostovsky, Sergei. "Taming the Basilisk." *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*. Eds. Hillman, David and Carla Mazzio. New York: Routledge, 1997. 195-217. Print.

Lyne, Raphael. "Lyrical Wax in Ovid, Marlowe, and Donne." *Ovid and the Renaissance Body*. Ed. Goran V. Stanivukovic. Toronto, Can.: University of Toronto Press, 2001. Print.

Maclean, Ian. *The Renaissance Notion of Woman : A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life*. Cambridge Monographs on the History of Medicine. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1980. Print.

Mann, Jenny. "'Dull Ciphers' and 'Sweet Words': Marlowe's Soft Translation of Ovid's *Amores*." *Early Modern Colloquium*. Northwestern University. Levy Mayer Hall, Chicago, IL. 13 November 2010.

Marr, Alexander. "*Gentille Curiosit*é: Wonder-working and the Culture of Automata in the Late Renaissance." *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment.* Eds. R.J.W Evans and Alexander Marr. Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2006.

Marshall, David. *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy : Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. Print.

Matthes, Melissa. *The Rape of Lucretia and the Founding of Republics: Readings in Livy, Machiavelli, and Rousseau.* University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000. Print.

Maus, Katharine Eisaman. "Taking Tropes Seriously: Language and Violence in Shakespeare's Rape of Lucrece." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37 1 (1986): 66-82. Print.

Meakin, Heather L. *John Donne's Articulations of the Feminine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. Print.

Menn, Stephen Philip. *Descartes and Augustine*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.

Messbarger, Rebecca Marie. *The Lady Anatomist : The Life and Work of Anna Morandi Manzolini*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010. Print.

- -. "Waxing Poetic: Anna Morandi Manzolini's Anatomical Sculptures." *Configurations: A Journal of Literature, Science, and Technology* 9.1 (2001): 65-97. Print.

Michelangelo. "Michelangelo: Answer to Benedetto Varchi." *Italian Art, 1500-1600: Sources and Documents*. Eds. Robert Klein and Henri Zerner. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966. 13-14. Print.

- -. *Last Judgment.* 1537-1541. Sistine Chapel, Vatican City.

Mueller, Janel. "Lesbian Erotics: The Utopian Trope of Donne's 'Sapho to Philaenis'." *Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment England: Literary Representations in Historical Context*. Ed. Claude J. Summers. New York: Harrington Park, 1992. 103-34. Print.

Newcastle, Margaret Cavendish. *The Blazing World and Other Writings*. Ed. Kate Lilley. London: Penguin, 1994. Print.

- -. "Female Orations." *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader.* Eds. Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson. Ontario, CA: Broadview Press, 2000. Print.

- -. *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy*. Ed. Eileen O'Neill. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Print.

- -. *Philosophical Letters: Or, Modest Reflections Upon Some Opinions in Natural Philosophy, Maintained by Several Famous and Learned Authors of This Age, Expressed by Way of Letters: By the Thrice Noble, Illustrious, and Excellent Princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle*. London: [s.n.], 1664. Print.

- -. *The Worlds Olio· Written by the Right Honorable, the Lady Margaret Newcastle*. London: printed for J. Martin and J. Allestrye at the Bell in St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1655. Print.

Newman, Karen. *Fetal Positions: Individualism, Science, Visuality.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Nocks, Lisa. *The Robot: The Life Story of a Technology*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007. Print.

Nunn, Hillary M. *Staging Anatomies : Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Tragedy*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005. Print.

Officer, Lawrence H. and Samuel H. Williamson, "Purchasing Power of Money in the United States from 1774 to 2010," MeasuringWorth, 2009. Web. 29 May 2011.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. A.D. Melville, and E. J. Kenney. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. Print.

Oxford University Press. "Oxford English Dictionary". [Oxford; New York, N.Y.], 2000. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/>.

Panzanelli, Roberta. "Compelling Presence: Wax Effigies in Renaissance Florence." *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure*. Eds. Roberta Panzanelli and Julius Schlosser. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008. 13-40. Print.

- -. "Introduction: The Body in Wax, The Body of Wax." *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure*. Eds. Roberta Panzanelli and Julius Schlosser. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008. 1-12. Print.

Panzanelli, Roberta and Julius Schlosser, eds. *Ephemeral Bodies : Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure*. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008. Print.

Paré, Ambroise. *The Workes of That Famous Chirurgion Ambrose Parey Translated out of Latine and Compared with the French.* Trans. T. Johnson. London: printed by Th: Cotes and R. Young, 1634. Print.

Paster, Gail Kern. *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Print.

Paton, W. R., ed. *The Greek Anthology*. The Loeb Classical Library. 5 vols. London: W. Heinemann; G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1916. Print.

Pedersen, Olaf. *Early Physics and Astronomy : A Historical Introduction*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Print.

Plato, “Theaetetus,” *The Collected Dialogues of Plato.* Eds. Benjamin Jowett, Edith Hamilton, and Huntington Cairns. Clayton, GA: Past Masters (InteLex Corporation), 1993, http://library.nlx.com. Web. 29 May 2011.

Pliny. *Natural History*. Trans. H. Rackham. The Loeb Classical Library. Vols. 3, 6, 9. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938. Print.

Potter, Elizabeth. *Gender and Boyle's Law of Gases*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. Print.

Prescott, Anne Lake. "Male Lesbian Voices: Ronsard, Tyard and Donne Play Sappho." *Reading the Renaissance: Ideas and Idioms from Shakespeare to Milton*. Eds. Marc Berley and Edward W. Tayler. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne UP, 2003. 109-29. Print.

Quay, Sara E. "'Lucrece the Chaste': The Construction of Rape in Shakespeare's the Rape of Lucrece." *Modern Language Studies* 25.2 (1995): 3-17. Print.

Quintilian. *Institutes of Oratory or Education of an Orator.* Trans. John Selby Watson. London: George Bell and Sons, 1875.

Revard, Stella P. "The Sapphic Voice in Donne's ‘Sapho to Philaenis.’” *Renaissance Discourses of Desire*. Eds. Claude J.Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993. Print.

Ridolfi. "Delle Marviglie Dell'arte." *Painters on Painting*. Ed. Eric Protter. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1963. 53-54. Print.

Robertson, Elizabeth. "Public Bodies and Psychic Domains: Rape, Consent, and Female Subjectivity in Geoffrey Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde." *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*. Eds. Elizabeth Robertson, Elizabeth,

Christine M. Rose and Christopher Cannon. New York: Palgrave, 2001. 281-310. Print.

Roche, Thomas P. *The Kindly Flame : A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's Faerie Queene*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964. Print.

Rogers, John. *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry and Politics in the Age of Milton*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1996. Print.

Rorty, Amélie Oksenberg. "The Structure of Descartes' Meditations." *Essays on Descartes' Meditations*. Ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. 1-20. Print.

Rose, Mary Beth. "Heroics of Marriage in Renaissance Tragedy." *The Duchess of Malfi : John Webster*. Ed. Dympna Callaghan. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. 122-43. Print.

Rowe, Katherine. *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency, Renaissance to Modern*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999. Print.

Sarasohn, Lisa T. "A Science Turned Upside Down: Feminism and the Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 47.4 (1984): 289-307. Print.

Schwarz, Kathryn. *Tough Love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000. Print.

Sedgwick, Eve. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Print.

---. *Epistemology of the Closet.* 1990. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Selden, John. *Titles of Honor by Iohn Selden*. London: By William Stansby for Iohn Helme, and are to be sold at his shop in S. Dunstans Church-yard, 1614. Print.

Shakespeare, William. “Antony and Cleopatra.” *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print

---. “The Life of Henry the Fifth.” *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print.

---. "Measure for Measure." *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print.

---."A Midsummer's Night Dream." *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print

---. "The Second Part of King Henry IV.” *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print

—.“Sonnets.” *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print.

---. "The Rape of Lucrece." *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print

---. "The Tempest." *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print

---. “The Tragedy of Macbeth.” *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print.

---. “The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York and the Good King Henry the Sixth.” *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print.

---. "Twelfth Night, or What You Will." *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print

Shannon, Laurie. *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. Print.

Shapin, Steven. *The Scientific Revolution*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.

Sidney, Philip. *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (the Old Arcadia)*. Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. Print.

---. *Sir Philip Sidney*. Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Print.

Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*. Eds. Thomas P. Roche and C. Patrick O'Donnell. London: Penguin, 1978. Print.

---. “An Hymn in Honor of Beauty” *The Complete Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser.* Ed. R. E. Neil Dodge. Cambridge, Eng.: The Riverside Press, 1908. 746-750.

Suzuki, Mihoko. *Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and Epic.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Teskey, Gordon. "From Allegory to Dialectic: Imagining Error in Spenser and Milton." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 101 1 (1986): 9-23. Print.

Theocritus. “Idyll ii.” *The Greek Bucolic Poets.* Trans. by J.M. Edmonds. Loeb Classical Library, Vol. 28. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1912. Print.

Thompson, Ann, and John O. Thompson. "Meaning, 'Seeing', Printing." *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*. Eds. Brooks, Douglas A. and Jennifer Wynne Hellwarth. Women and Gender in the Early Modern World. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005. 59-86. Print.

Traub, Valerie. "Gendering Mortality in Early Modern Anatomies." *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*. Eds. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan and Dympna Callaghan. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 44-92. Print.

---. *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*. Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Print.

Trevisa, John, et al. *Bartholomeu[S] De Proprietatib[Us] Re[Rum]*. Westminster: Wynkyn de Worde, 1495. Print.

Tricomi, Albert H. "The Severed Hand in Webster's Duchess of Malfi." *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 44 2 (2004): 347-58. Print.

Vasari, Giorgio. *The Lives of the Artists*. The World's Classics. Eds. Julia Conway Bondanella and Peter E. Bondanella. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. Print.

---. *On Technique; Being the Introduction to the Three Arts of Design, Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, Prefixed to the Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. Eds. Louisa S. Machlehose and G. Baldwin Brown. New York: E. P. Dutton & co., 1907. Print.

Vickers, Nancy. “‘The Blazon of Sweet Beauty's Best': Shakespeare's Lucrece." *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*. Eds. Parker, Patricia and Geoffrey Hartman. New York: Methuen, 1985. 95-115. Print.

---. “Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme.” *Critical Inquiry* 8.2 (1981): 265-79. Print.

---. "'This Heraldry in Lucrece' Face.’” *Poetics Today* 6 1-2 (1985): 171-84. Print.

Watson, Amanda. "'Full Character'd': Competing Forms of Memory in Shakespeare's Sonnets." *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Ed. Schoenfeldt, Michael. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. 343-60. Print.

Wahl, Elizabeth Susan. *Invisible Relations : Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999. Print.

Webster, John. *The Duchess of Malfi.* Ed. D.C. Gunby. London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1995. Print.

Wells, Susan. "Dominance of the Typical." *The Duchess of Malfi: John Webster*. Ed. Dympna Callaghan. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. 122-43. Print.

West, William N. "Thinking with the Body: Sappho's 'Sappho to Philaenis,' Donne's 'Sappho to Philaenis.'" *Renaissance Papers* (1994): 67-83. Print.

Wilson, Catherine. "Two Opponents of Material Atomism; Cavendish and Leibniz." *Leibniz and the English-Speaking World*. Eds. Pauline Phemister Brown and Stuart C. Dordrecht: Springer, 2007. Print.

Wood, Rufus. *Metaphor and Belief in "The Faerie Queene."* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997. Print.

Wyatt, Thomas, Sir. ""The Long Love That in My Thought Doth Harbor"." *Sixteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Ed. Gordon Braden. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005. 42. Print.

Bibliography - Visual and Audio Sources

Cranach, Lucas. *Lucretia*. 1524. *Alte Pinakothek,* Munich.

---. *Lucretia*. 1533. *Staatliche Museen*, Berlin.

Dürer, Albrecht. *The Suicide of Lucretia*. 1518. *Alte Pinakothek*, Munich.

Strauss, Richard. *Die ägyptische Helena.* Vienna State Chorus and Orchestra. Cond. Josef Krips. Wiener Staatsoper, 1970.

Tintoretto. *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*. 1577-1588. *San Trovaso*, Venice.

Veronese, Paolo. *Lucretia*. 1580-5. *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, Vienna.