Year : 2022

Metaphor and Ethical Agency in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. A Deconstructive Perspective

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FACULTÉ DES LETTRES

SECTION D'ANGLAIS

Metaphor and Ethical Agency in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

A Deconstructive Perspective

THÈSE DE DOCTORAT

présentée à la

Faculté des lettres
de l'Université de Lausanne

pour l'obtention du grade de
Docteur ès lettres

par

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MONSIEUR VINCENT LAUGHERY

intitulée

Metaphor and Ethical Agency in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

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Lausanne, le 28 octobre 2022

Léonard Burnand
Doyen de la Faculté des lettres

Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have come to fruition without the support and guidance of a great many people. I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Kevin Curran, whose blend of open-mindedness and rigor as a mentor enabled me in more ways than one to produce a sustained piece of academic research. I have greatly benefitted from his gentle guidance with the direction of the project, his tireless commitment to reading my work, and his infinite patience with the slow thinker and writer that I am. I am also thankful to Kevin for introducing me to other scholars and thinkers in the field and for providing valuable career advice. I have thoroughly enjoyed working under his supervision as well as collaborating with him on various academic and theatrical projects, such as the very special yearly *Lausanne Shakespeare Festival*. I am also greatly indebted to Andrew Cutrofello for assuming the role of secondary supervisor to this thesis and helping me organize a research stay at Loyola University Chicago, even allowing me to use his office on campus. I am nothing short of amazed at Andrew's continuous generosity throughout the project. My deepest thanks to him for his keen insights into Shakespeare and philosophy, his ability to recognize and help cultivate an idea's potential and his willingness to set aside time and energy for a random Swiss Ph.D. student. My heartfelt thanks go to James Knapp and Pascale Drouet for agreeing to act as jury members in the assessment of my dissertation. Conversations with James Knapp in Chicago and Lausanne were earnest and stimulating, as was my exchange with Pascale Drouet, who was open and helpful when we met at a conference in Paris. The generous comments, careful readings and astute observations they both provided at my colloquium truly helped this thesis take several important steps in new or underdeveloped directions. I must also thank the Swiss National Science Foundation for its generous grant, the University of Lausanne for hiring me and providing office space and administrative inclusion in the English Department, without all of which this project would not have been feasible. I am very thankful also to the ACIDUL for all their efforts to ensure fair conditions for doctoral students and junior staff. And I would like to offer sincere thanks to all my colleagues in the English Department for providing such a stimulating and kindly work atmosphere.

I was only able to even envisage writing a Ph. D. thanks to the teaching and friendship of Roelof Overmeer, Michael Groneberg, Kirsten Stirling and Rachel Falconer. I am grateful to Roelof for over ten years spent learning with him in the classroom and acting together on stage. His sensitivity and attentiveness have forged my belief in the force of collective, creative thinking. I thank Michael for his commitment to empowering student creativity and his dedication to fostering dialogue between critical and artistic processes. And I am obliged to both Kirsten and Rachel for their inventiveness in the classroom and the generosity of their teaching, from which I and countless students have greatly benefitted.

Writing a thesis is a lonely endeavor and I consider myself lucky to have been able to count on the support and fellowship of a great many other Ph.D. students. My warmest thanks to Andy Reilly, Philip Lindholm, Kader Hegedüs, Sonia Saunier, Hazel Blair and Cécile Heim for sharing in the highs and lows of Ph.D. life, as well as for their emotional support, intellectual stimulation and sense of humor, during writing afternoons and apéros alike. I am grateful also for the sense of fellowship I found and the exchanges I had at CUSO and FDI activities; the organizers and participants at both these organizations made my time as a Ph.D. student more

interesting and livelier. I am furthermore deeply appreciative of the company and friendship of Stéphane Maffli, Alice Bottarelli, Suzanne Balharry, Colin Pahlisch, and Matthias Heim over the course of fifteen years spent at or around UNIL.

I would not have been able to spend five years doing research had I not been periodically brought back down to earth by hard-working, selfless, creative individuals who welcomed me into various artistic projects. I wish to thank Sarah-Jane Moloney, Rebecca Frey, Grégory Thonney, Gil Terra, Sophie Müller, and Kendra Simmons, for all sharing in vital theatrical activities. I am extremely thankful to Marylène Rouiller, Sofia Verdon and Hervé Langlois for initiating me to the tradition and profession of clowning and for reminding me of the values of humility and humor. I would also like to extend my deepest thanks to the eleven women with whom I was fortunate enough to train as a clown over the course of nine months filled with joys, trials and discoveries. All of these people have enabled me to find that crucial balance between art and research and have continuously nurtured my perceptive and affective thinking.

My deepest gratitude goes to my family and close ones. I am truly thankful to my father for reading my work at various stages of the project and providing valuable feedback. His engagement with the big philosophical questions and his awareness of the various manifestations of meaning in the world have shaped my thinking and outlook on life. I wish to thank my mother from the bottom of my heart for her support and interest in all my activities including research as well as for her keen interest in the arts, which undoubtedly contributed to my own love of literature. Both my brothers also deserve thanks, as does my cousin Samuel, for their uplifting presence throughout this process. I also consider myself extremely lucky to be part of a large and caring family, step-family and tight-knit group of long-term friends to whom I am forever thankful. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my partner Alisa, without whose love and companionship I could not have imagined writing a Ph.D. thesis about poetries of desire. I am so grateful for your steadfast support and incredible patience during long years of research and writing which have left me in various states of mental and emotional availability. Thank you for being there for me at the end of the day.

Contents

Introduction

This thesis explores the relationship between metaphor and ethical agency in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Blending formal literary analysis with broader avenues of intellectual investigation, it regards metaphor as an act of enunciation with a performative grammar. This is to say I approach metaphorical utterances as theatrical implementations of figuration that question the role of language in determining agency. More specifically, this approach leads me to read metaphors in *Romeo and Juliet* as dramatic sites of negotiation with an enhanced power to articulate literary inheritance, philosophical enquiry, and the ethical terms of love relationships. I hold that beyond its status as a trope with semantic effects, metaphor is employed in this play as a unique writing instrument capable of generating events, producing material changes, and heightening the ethical stakes of drama. In short, this thesis discusses what pictures of ethical agency are formed when metaphor is understood as a dramatic process that scripts action and performs meaning in a play.

As a formal feature of literary texts, metaphor is traditionally thought of in connection with states, aspects of being, or identity. This is hardly surprising given that the figure operates without a comparative structure, sometimes hinging on the copulative verb "to be" to form a predication that is literally false but figuratively pertinent, as in Romeo's "Juliet is the sun" (2.1.46);[1] other times, it simply substitutes one subject for another, like Juliet's "O serpent heart hid with a flow'ring face" (3.2.73), spoken about Romeo. But as dramatic utterances, these metaphorical identifications are also fraught with implications for the notion of ethical agency. After berating Romeo through a string of metaphors and oxymora for killing her cousin Tybalt, Juliet almost immediately regrets her words, concerned that she has "mangled" Romeo's name. Alive to the power of words and aware of her role as Romeo's "three-hours wife," Juliet proves self-conscious in her use of metaphor (3.2.99). By contrast,

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[1] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Romeo capitalizes on Juliet's solar beauty to weave a long cosmic conceit on her appearance from the cover of the orchard.[2] Neither revealed by this "sun," nor afraid to gaze at it,[3] Romeo remains somewhat removed from the metaphorical force of his own image. He even urges the sun "to kill the envious moon" (2.1.47) – he who later kills Tybalt for his "envious thrust" (3.1.168) and is called a "serpent heart hid" for it. In each case then, the recourse to metaphor is charged with dramatic significance, engages speakers as agents, and manifests different relationships to the metaphorical power of language.

These constructions of agency around the dramatic utterance of metaphor invite many questions. Some of these pertain to characters as agents: what are Romeo and Juliet each doing in uttering these metaphors? Do the metaphors enable or constrict their speakers? To what do they engage them ethically? Others concern the relationship between form and action: what processes occur in these figurations? Which figurative agents are thus appealed to? In what sense can metaphors be said to "do" things and how might this reflect on character agency? Finally, the enquiry reflects back onto each term: what conceptions of metaphor, agency, and ethics are best suited to approaching processes of figuration occurring in a field of dramatic performativity? In attending to such questions, which connect a formal level of inquiry to philosophical concerns about the nature of language, action, and performance, this thesis provides a yet inexistent account of metaphor as a site for the articulation of agency and ethics in Shakespearean drama. As such, I also consider the dramatic performance of meaning as belonging to a wider field of action, which allows me to set in on a par with other types of action and to describe agency as something that pertains to

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[2] Gayle Whittier thus views him as a Petrarchan sonneteer, while Robert N. Watson and Stephen Dickey present him as a potential rapist. Gayle Whittier, "The Sonnet's Body and the Body Sonnetized in 'Romeo and Juliet,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1989): 27-41; Robert N. Watson and Stephen Dickey, "Wherefore Art Thou Tereu? Juliet and the Legacy of Rape," *Renaissance Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2005): 127-56.

[3] By contrast, in *The Rape of Lucrece*, Tarquin is blinded by shame and the sun-like brilliance of Lucrece's beauty when he draws her bedcurtain (365-378). William Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 1 March 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Poem.aspx?WorkId=52.

both acts and performance. My approach rests on the double claim that in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare on one hand invests metaphor as a literary locus to negotiate ethical and dramatic questions about speech, action, and performativity, on the other hand that the dramatic text also destabilizes and complicates the ethically charged performative gesture of resorting to metaphor.

In order to explore the intersection of metaphor and ethical agency in *Romeo and Juliet*, I rely on a combination of close reading, poststructuralist thought and historicization. Because it proves particularly well adapted to this investigation and complements recent studies on metaphor and Shakespearean drama by offering new ways of thinking about the literary use of this rhetorical figure, my methodology is informed throughout by Derridean deconstruction. In my introduction, I thus present some basic definitions of metaphor before situating Derrida's approach to this figure within the tradition of Classical rhetoric. In so doing, I highlight the relevance of deconstruction to my investigation and its interest to the field at large and present my approach more fully and specifically, discussing methodological choices. Next, I position my approach with regards to existing research, underlining how my claim responds to, departs from and advances recent discussions of metaphor, ethical agency and performativity. Finally, I offer a chapter-by-chapter outline of how this project unfolds.

 1. *Defining metaphor: methodology and approach*

Metaphors are powerful tools, allowing speakers to forego the literal and engage a figurative level of meaning, to connect their present situation with a vast, unconnected fictitious realm, as in the following quote by Juliet:

> JULIET. Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
> That runaways' eyes may wink, and Romeo
> Leap to these arms, untalked of and unseen.
> Lovers can see to do their amorous rites
> By their own beauties; or, if love be blind,

It best agrees with night. (3.2.5-10)

Although the first part of the quote borders on personification, Juliet's utterance is metaphorical in its depiction of what the darkness of night allows lovers to do. The general metaphor at the heart of Juliet's complex figurative process could roughly be restated as: "night is a curtain." Curtains offer privacy and they block out light. The utterance thus derives its figurative pertinence from framing night as a general cloaking device that conceals from sight and affords intimacy.[4] Depicting the eagerly awaited nightfall as a curtain enables Juliet to imagine herself in bed with Romeo behind closed curtains. It also allows her to form a further metaphorical elaboration of "love" as "night," in which lovers are first attributed a faculty to see "by their own beauties," then said to "be blind," such that love "best agrees with night."[5] Thus, the enamored Juliet works out a connection between night as a mere time she is awaiting and night as an element suited to how she feels. Her metaphorical constructions allow her both to connect night with love, as well as to connect herself, as a speaker and lover, with night, which she addresses as one that "agrees with love." In appealing to the figurative, Juliet is therefore reaching for what she does not have, metaphorically and dramatically. This leads to an important question about metaphor. How, strictly speaking, does metaphor relate a present situation with a fictitious realm? In what does the connection between a *tenor*, "love," and a *vehicle*, "night," consist?

In his discussion of metaphor in *The Poetics*, Aristotle posits several types of relation between what we now tend to call "tenor" and "vehicle:" "Metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species

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[4] See Levenson, *Romeo and Juliet*, 263.

[5] Disguised as a boy, Jessica also establishes a connection between night's concealment and the blindness of love: "I am glad 'tis night, you do not look on me,/ For I am much ashamed of my exchange. / But love is blind, and lovers cannot see / The pretty follies that themselves commit" (2.6.34-7). She goes further than Juliet in extending the idea of love as a visual deprivation to the realm of consciousness: lovers are not only blind, they are unaware of the follies they commit. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 1 March 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=18.

and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy."[6] In this view, the connection is insured by taxonomic relation as well as by analogy. The history of rhetoric followed Aristotle in focusing mostly on the last case, though Renaissance rhetorician George Puttenham also recognizes metaphors based on "affinity" when he defines the figure as "a kinde of wresting of a single word from his owne right signification, to another not so naturall, but yet of some affinitie or conueniencie with it."[7] Henry Peacham's contemporaneous definition of metaphor in *The Garden of Eloquence* is close to Puttenham's, though in keeping with Aristotle's heavier focus on analogy it emphasizes the role of semantic similarity in achieving the transfer as an "artificial translation of one word, from the proper signification, to another not proper, but yet nigh and like."[8] Ideas of propriety in signification in Renaissance definitions of metaphor are squarely aligned with Classical Roman definitions of metaphor. Quintilian thus emphasizes the suppletive function of metaphor:

> A noun or a verb is transferred from the place to which it properly belongs to another where there is either no literal term or the transferred is better than the literal. We do this either because it is necessary or to make our meaning clearer or, as I have already said, to produce a decorative effect. (8.6.5-6)[9]

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[6] *Aristotle. The Poetics*; "*Longinus.*" *On the Sublime; Demetrius. On Style*, trans. Hamilton Fyfe, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 1457b.

[7] George Puttenham, *The arte of english poesie* (London, 1589; 1590), accessed 1 March 2022, https://www.proquest.com/books/arte-english-poesie-contriued-into-three-bookes/docview/2248517279/se-2?accountid=12006. "Affinity" suggests kinship, or lexical relation, especially as distinct from "conueniencie," or appropriateness, pertaining rather to usage. See the entries for "affinity," "convenience" and "conveniency" in David Crystal and Ben Crystal, *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion* (London: Penguin, 2002; 2004), digital edition.

[8] Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London: 1577), accessed 1 March 2022, https://www.proquest.com/books/garden-eloquence-1577/docview/2138580405/se-2?accountid=12006. See Mason Tung, "From Theory to Practice: a Study of Theoretical Bases of Peacham's Emblematic Art," *Studies in Iconography* 18 (1997): 203.

[9] Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, *III*, trans. H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959). At a very basic level, modern interpretations of metaphor as primarily conceptual maintain the idea that metaphors arise where sophisticated ideas must rely on vocabularies related to concrete, physical things and processes. See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981).

Emphasizing impropriety, Quintilian sees metaphors as the misapplication of a word to fill a lexical lacuna or improve on literal designation. Laying aside all but Aristotle's analogy-based type of metaphor however, Quintilian goes so far as to state in his *Institutio Oratoria* that metaphor "applies words to things with which they have strictly no connexion." As to what the transferal consists in, Quintilian states: "On the whole metaphor is a shorter form of simile, while there is this further difference, that in the latter we compare some object to the thing which we wish to describe, whereas in the former this object is actually substituted for the thing (8.6.8)."[10] While emphasizing continuity with the comparative mode of simile, Quintilian also takes care to distinguish metaphor as a substitutive trope. By and large, all of these definitions either ground metaphor's operation in a taxonomic or lexical kinship, or, in the absence of this connection, relate it to an idea of analogy, comparison, or semantic likeness, thus ushering in the comparative word that metaphor dispenses with. Yet, they each also all perceive a movement of departure from proper designation, or a stress placed on language by metaphorical use.

The question of how metaphor connects separate realities has not since been solved. In her basic modern-day definition of the rhetorical figure of metaphor, Sonja Koss stresses the role of comparison – for her, metaphors are "nonliteral comparisons in which a word or phrase from one domain of experience is applied to another domain."[11] Yet, the idea that metaphor as a kind of likeness has also been opposed. In reference to Romeo's metaphor of Juliet as the sun, David Hills signals a resistance to the similarity view of metaphor in his entry on "metaphor" from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "Romeo (or Romeo's

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[10] This substitutive view of metaphor is roughly the one Jacques Lacan comes to borrow, with the difference that Lacan eschews the notion of comparison in his substitutive understanding of metaphor. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits, A Selection* (Paris: Seuil, 1966; trans. Alan Sheridan, London: Tavistock, 1977; London: Routledge, 2005), 125.

[11] Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press 1988; 2009), 249.

speech) likens Juliet to the sun . . . But it is unclear what we mean when we say this, to the point where some are reluctant to appeal to likeness or similarity in explaining what metaphor is or how it works."[12] Hills contrasts comparativist approaches with the "brute force account" of metaphor, which posits a "framing effect" at the heart of the metaphorical process rather than a veiled comparative construction.[13] This leads Donald Davidson, a preeminent proponent of this account, to oppose the idea of an additional figurative level of meaning in metaphor:

> My disagreement is with the explanation of how metaphor works its wonders. To anticipate: I depend on the distinction between what words mean and what they are used to do. I think metaphor belongs exclusively to the domain of use.[14]

By focusing strictly on use in his analysis of "how metaphor works its wonders," Davidson underscores the participative activity of interpreters in the work of metaphor: "understanding a metaphor is as much a creative endeavor as making a metaphor, and as little guided by rule."[15] But Davidson is by no means the first to give attention to readers or hearers as active recipients of metaphors.

In *De Oratore*, Cicero provides an account of metaphor which, even as it furnishes Quintilian with his definition of metaphor as a lexical plug, also focuses on the component of pleasure, stressing the aesthetic effect of metaphors on their hearers:

> For if a thing has not got a proper name and designation of its own. . . necessity compels one to borrow what one has not got from somewhere else; but even in cases where there are plenty of specific words available, metaphorical terms give people much more pleasure, if the metaphor is a good one. I suppose the cause of this is either that it is a mark of cleverness of a kind to jump over things that are obvious and

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[12] David Hills, "Metaphor," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed 1 March 2022, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/metaphor.

[13] See also Max Black, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962).

[14] Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," *Critical Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (1978): 33.

[15] Davidson, 31.

choose other things that are far-fetched; or because the hearer's thoughts are led to something else and yet without going astray, which is a very great pleasure or because a single word in each case suggests the thing and a picture of the whole; or because every metaphor, provided it be a good one, has a direct appeal to the senses especially the sense of sight, which is the keenest. . . . [T]he metaphors drawn from the sense of sight are much more vivid, virtually placing within the range of our mental vision objects not actually visible to our sight.[16]

Cicero thus identifies pleasure as a central component of metaphor.[17] In speculating on the source of this pleasure, Cicero attributes it to various metaphorical activities: jumping over obvious things to choose far-fetched ones; being led to something else without going astray; perceiving a word-based relation between one thing and a picture of the whole; finally, feeling an appeal to the senses, especially to sight. In describing the technical operation that subtends metaphor, Cicero therefore blends mental and sensory/kinetic activities, presenting operations of the mind as jumping, being led elsewhere, and rendering vivid. In so doing, Cicero not only describes a certain metaphorical activity at work in the operation of the trope. He also does what most definitions presented so far do in their appraisal of what metaphor does, which is to rely on metaphor in the act of describing how metaphor works.

In some cases, this metaphorical reliance occurs in the description of what metaphor affords or enables. Thus, in his account of metaphor, Quintilian states: "*metaphor*, the Greek term for our *translatio*. . . is in itself so attractive and elegant that however distinguished the language in which it is embedded it shines forth with a light that is all its own" (8.6.4). Perhaps indebted to Plato's analogy of the sun, Quintilian's image of metaphor as a beacon is undoubtedly also influenced by Cicero's insistence on metaphor's vividness and its relation to sight. Though technical in Quintilian's text, the word *metaphor* and its Latin equivalent *translatio*, which in their morphological construction each convey the sense of "carrying over

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[16] Cicero, *De Oratore III; Paradoxa; Paradoxa Stoicorum; De Partitione Oratoria*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1960), 159-60.

[17] Cicero thus furnishes Peacham with a Classical precedent for his "necessity" and "pleasauntnesse" as functions of metaphor.

or across," lent themselves to metaphorical elaboration in the early modern reception of the trope. Indeed, the vehicular function of metaphor was thought of in connection with a host of social, political, and cultural processes of transferal in the Elizabethan period also described as "translations."[18] Metaphor is thus "the figure of *transport*" for Puttenham, while Peacham uses the English verb "translate," to describe how a word moves from one signification to another "nie" one.[19]

In other cases, the appeal to metaphors within the critical description of metaphor's mental or linguistic operations is made in relation to the misapplication or displacement inherent in the operation of the trope. In the definition presented above, Peacham also sees in translation a "wresting" motion, which suggests a strain placed on standard language use in the forceful displacement of a word from its usual meaning. As for Aristotle, he describes the metaphorical term as "strange," or "allotriou," from *allotrios*, foreign or alien. In resorting to metaphors to critically describe the kind of tension metaphor creates between a "wrested" or "alien" use of language and an enlightening, clever or pleasurable effect, these authors set the stage for a twentieth-century philosophical exchange that occurred between Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida. The debate revolved around the question of how to read such gestures of appeal to metaphor, and what to make of the alien, enlightening role of the figure in philosophy. Here, the idea of metaphor as a tension between the outlandish and the revelatory was developed into an elaborate conceptual discussion of how these two movements fit together and what role the poetic or literary was seen to play in relation to speculative thought. I briefly outline the debate and lean on it to present my own understanding of the appeal to metaphor in a dramatic text.

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[18] Judith Anderson offers an account of how the figure of *translatio* is thought of in connection with other activities described as "translations," such as transferals of land ownership, ecclesiastical properties or political responsibilities. Judith H. Anderson, *Translating Investments: Metaphor and the Dynamic of Cultural Change in Tudor-Stuart England* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 9, 218 n.3.

[19] Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*.

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Paul Ricoeur reads Aristotle's use of the word *allotriou* as part of a tension in Aristotle's discussion of metaphor in *The Poetics* between kinship, or *kurios*, that which is "'used by everybody' or 'in general use in a country' (1457 b 3)" and *allotrios*, "'the alien name' (1457 b 31)." He states: "the use of metaphor is close to the use of strange, ornamental, coined. . . terms. In these characteristics of opposition or deviation and kinship are the seeds of important developments regarding rhetoric and metaphor."[20] In contrast to Aristotle and much of the rhetorical tradition, Ricoeur argues that metaphor occurs as an entire uttered sentence rather than as a word-based substitution. As to what such an utterance does, he presents metaphor as a figure that shocks, transgresses or breaks away from established references to achieve a "*semantic innovation*, or *semantic event*."[21] This break and innovation can be appreciated only as an enunciative act, or as Ricoeur puts it, "only when the statement-character of metaphor is fully recognized."[22] Metaphorical utterances thus defy preestablished categories of thought and language, performing an "eclipse of the objective, manipulable world."[23] When we detect "the appearance of kinship where ordinary vision does not perceive any relationship," as Paul Ricoeur puts it, our usual everyday task of interpreting speech is heightened as we seek to make sense of it. Metaphors, as Ricoeur rightly points out, strain communication: they are "impertinent."[24] As such, they ask us to depart from a commonly shared dimension of established references, patterns of thought, and agreed upon meanings and to enter into an idiosyncratic, singular, "far-fetched" use of language in which all existing lexicons are suspended. They carry us into a

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[20] Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1977; London: Routledge, 1978; 2003), 19.

[21] Ricoeur, 114.

[22] Ricoeur, 24.

[23] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory. Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 51.

[24] Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, 68.

pleasurable, yet, strange picture of reality as seen through the eyes of an inventive speaker. If "semantic innovation" is achieved, the hermeneutical struggle ends with a new meaning being gained in a "metaphorical interpretation whose sense emerges through non-sense," thus changing the status quo and transforming the field of thought that metaphor first transgressed.[25] In this Ricoeur shows himself a keen reader both of the Classical rhetorical tradition, renewing the concept of metaphor and its role in philosophy, as well as of the phenomenological tradition, since for Ricoeur, semantic innovation is not only a creative act, but a matter of revelation. Ricoeur ultimately views metaphor as offering a "tensional truth"[26] between identity and difference, in which metaphor identifies new modalities of experience, setting the world at a distance only to redescribe it in a way that dynamizes our understanding of it – metaphors thus ultimately create new modes of existence: "poetic feeling itself also develops an experience of reality in which invention and discovery cease being opposed and where creation and revelation coincide."[27]

If Ricoeur is an innovative thinker of identity through difference, Derrida is nothing if not a provocative thinker of radical difference. With regards to the appeal to metaphor in the act of defining it, Derrida reads this gesture as the impossibility for philosophy to master the differentiating motion of metaphor, to stabilize it into a notion of identity. This is roughly Jacques Derrida's critique of classical definitions of metaphor in *White Mythology*.[28] No science of metaphor is possible without resort to metaphorical expression – the object of critical discourse is thus engaged in the very discourse that seeks to circumscribe the notion. This would imply that there is no way of either severing oneself off from poetic utterance,

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[25] Ricoeur, *Rule*, 292.

[26] Ricoeur, *Rule*, 371.

[27] Ricoeur, *Rule*, 291.

[28] Jacques Derrida and F. C. T. Moore, "White Mythology. Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," *New Literary History* 6, no. 1 (1974): 5-74.

nor of recovering a correspondence to being or truth as in Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor. Part of Derrida's argument proceeds from his analysis of catachresis, or conventionalized metaphors that have taken on the currency value of proper designation. Catachreses, Derrida argues, betray (reveal) the metaphoricity of all language, however objective in its pretensions.[29] As dead or forgotten metaphors, catachreses show us how denotation can only be posited on the condition that we forget the metaphorical origins of all designations. Derrida appeals to Anatole France's image of coins at the hand of knife grinders, whom he imagines as thinkers in the metaphysical tradition. These craftspeople grind out the images on the coins until they have disappeared, that they may claim: "'These pieces have nothing either English, German, or French about them; we have freed them from all limits of time and space; they are not worth five shillings any more; they are of inestimable value, and their exchange value is extended indefinitely.'"[30] This view poses a challenge to the idea that metaphor is able to mint new currency in order to revitalize the economy of discourse and renew speculative thought. If, the appeal to catachresis tells us, there is no theoretical gesture or language through which it might become possible to entirely set apart the metaphorical from the non-metaphorical, if no non-metaphorical definition of metaphor can be given, how could there be such a thing as a metaphor offering semantic innovation? This is not however to exclude that language achieves certain kinds of meaning, nor that metaphor is not a tension between obscurity and understanding, only that semantic innovation is conditional, temporary, and perhaps entirely singular, rather than essential or enlightening.

What Derrida further resists is the primacy of the semantic in treatments of metaphor within the Classical rhetorical tradition. As a marginal, intermediary, double-sided category,

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[29] In this he rearticulates a Nietzschean position, taken up in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

[30] Anatole France, *The Garden of Epicurus*, trans. A. Allinson, in *The Works of Anatole France, III*, ed. F. Chapman and J. L. May (London and New York, 1908), III, 205ff. Cited in Derrida and Moore: 7-8.

both a kind of proper and kind of metaphorical designation, catachresis troubles the dichotomy.[31] To Derrida, it shows the distinction between proper and figurative to be based on an unacknowledged original gesture that sets one apart from the other. Deconstruction insistently attends to such gestures (as illustrated in the knife-grinders example), investigating the semiotic values undergirding semantically opposed notions. If Derrida's view may hold some compatibility with Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor as an utterance operating a transgressive break, engaging a singular perspective, it suspends however the idea of a semantic innovation within a discursive community as well as the return to being and truth that Ricoeur defends.[32] Conversely, it also causes Derrida to highlight the historical tropicality built into all language, philosophical and literary: texts come to us with inbuilt tropic materiality, enforcing bents and dependencies that are often difficult to draw out. Even the distinction between literary and philosophical, which is at stake in Derrida's argument, seems difficult to operate once the philosophical debt to metaphor is fully recognized and once literature is found to reproduce gestures which are not merely poetic, but conceptually layered and argumentative. In both cases, the appeal to metaphor is highlighted as an important gesture holding both poetic and philosophical significance. In considering the semantic implications of metaphor, it appears equally important therefore to attend to the performative nature of the appeal, remaining attentive to its literary as well as historical and philosophical strands.

My approach thus consists in bringing the material, performative sense of Derrida's understanding of metaphor to bear on the dramatic implementation of metaphor in *Romeo*

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[31] Derrida and Moore, 58, n. 49. Derrida states: "What concerns us here, then, is this production of a proper sense, of a new sort of proper sense, by the violence of a catachresis whose intermediate status tends to escape the dichotomy of primitive and figurative, holding the 'middle ground' between them. When the middle ground of a dichotomy is not a mediation, there is a strong likelihood that the dichotomy is irrelevant."

[32] Whereas "White Mythology" precedes the publication of *The Rule of Metaphor*, which purports to incorporate and move beyond Derrida's view, Derrida also responds to the critique and restates his position in Jaques Derrida, "The *Retrait* of Metaphor," *Enclitic* 2 (1978): 5-33.

and Juliet. To come back to the quote from Act 3.2 with which this section began, Juliet's appeal to metaphor appears as much a dramatized appeal to metaphor as it does a metaphorical moment of drama. As Juliet appeals to night, the gesture may also be read as an appeal to the metaphoricity of night, its ability to convey Classical literary antecedents (Juliet mentions the early night Phaeton brings on in Roman mythology) as well as its much more recent association with the figure of Romeo ("Come night, come Romeo, come thou day in night" [3.2.17]). Calling for night to fall, Juliet is also enacting an eminently metaphorical dynamic of obscurity and revelation. In her metaphorical appeal to a night that she brings into relation with love, Juliet imaginatively heightens the sense of pleasure that is as of yet deferred, striving, to the best of her abilities, to place Romeo "within the range of [her] mental vision" in Cicero's words, envisioning the "amorous rites" that will go on behind closed curtains. At the same time, the image also draws the curtain. Juliet is asking for a night to fall that agrees with love's blindness, and for prying eyes to be closed. It is not too much of a stretch then to feel ourselves alluded to in the textual crux that is Juliet's "runaways' eyes." Even as she shares with her audience her innermost feelings, Juliet also gestures to an entirely singular, intimate night, shared only between blind lovers, or lovers who may see "by their own beauty."

Crucially, Juliet metaphorically states love as a condition for a kind of sight, posing a question which forms part of the project of the play as I explore it in this thesis: what metaphorical force might ensure that lovers will find and identify each other in the darkness of love's night? What figurative light can each lover appeal to that might illuminate the other without revealing them to a host of third-party others? And if such a lover's light can be found, to what extent can it be shared by the beloved other? In Juliet's metaphorical appeal to night therefore, conceptual relations are relied on which are also used throughout the critical history of metaphor, such as interplay between metaphor as a beacon and the more worrying

strangeness, eclipse, or forceful wresting that is meant to constitute only a moment in the semantically productive operation of metaphor. Following Cicero, metaphor can thus be looked at as a stage brimming with kinetic, affective and perceptive activity. Turning to drama and away from the theoretical cases of rhetorical treaties and handbooks, I propose to explore what happens when metaphors are not successful in the ways described above, outside of the ideal case of metaphor's triumphant revelation. More precisely, I seek to examine the dramatic conditions in which metaphors enact a dynamic of strain and meaning. In resorting to deconstructive methods and to Derrida's understanding of metaphor, I attend therefore to Juliet's metaphor of night both as a metaphor, with built-in conceptual and literary materials, and as a gesture, with a performative grammar and implications for the notions of action and agency that in turn involve ethical considerations.

Derrida's account of metaphor is part of what will be explored in this thesis. In giving the time and space to this exploration, I argue that what we come away with is an extremely useful tool for the analysis of metaphor as it occurs in dramatic form. In one sense, what Derrida is doing in his reading of catachresis and metaphor is restating the impossibility of stabilizing the signified. Yet, this does not mean, as it is sometimes taken to mean, that Derrida's position condemns us to an endless deferral of all meaning, or that no meaning can ever be had, nor yet that the signifier is primary with respect to the signified. This position may, according to Derrida, be attributed rather to early Lacanian literary criticism.[33] What Derrida argues rather, is that metaphorical signifier and metaphorical signified are in a constant relationship of making and unmaking, coupling and uncoupling: they are genetically co-constitutive. One could even say that in lieu of either the category of "metaphor" or "meaning," Derrida posits "metaphor-meaning" or "meaning-metaphor" a dynamic enunciative syntax in which each side of the dichotomy reverts into an articulation of the

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[33] I thus present a full argument of the relations between Lacanian psychoanalytic criticism and Derridean deconstruction in relation to their respective conceptions of metaphor in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

relationship between the two. The emphasis is on a processual instability in the shaping and misshaping of metaphors, "metaphorization" as an activity running its course. The argument is in fact more complex than this and one of the aims of this thesis is to present it clearly and accurately. Yet, I do so only because this keys us into an appreciation of how Shakespearean drama exploits just such an enunciative syntax in its use of metaphorical utterance. Furthermore, it does so in a way that forces us to ask some of the highly philosophical questions that surround metaphor and its own in-between, mediative status in relation to the opposition between "literal" and "figurative."

In resorting to a deconstructive methodology, I do not limit myself to Derrida. Recognizing the rich intellectual legacy of deconstruction, I interact also with Judith Butler (Chapters 1 and 2), Luce Irigaray (Chapter 2), and Paul de Man (Chapter 3). I also respond to more recent thinking on the notion of agency as it pertains to literary criticism by drawing links between Derrida's deconstruction and Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (Chapter 4). Finally, I also carefully mark out the specificity of Derrida's understanding of metaphor in relation to meaning-making from the early work of Jacques Lacan (Chapter 3) and examine how it implicates ethical agency, notably in relation to Levinas (Chapters 4 and 5). I thus bring out a certain "productivity" of deconstruction, resisting the idea that deconstruction condemns readers to a negative pattern of endless deferral. By rigorously and thoroughly reconsidering deconstruction and its intellectual heritage, I offer a new understanding of what, precisely, a "deconstructive" reading of literature consists in. Examining Shakespeare through a deconstructive lens follows a renewed interest for Derrida in the field of Shakespeare studies, notably in regards to his views on ethics (Chapter 5), which received less attention in the heyday of deconstructive literary criticism.[34] I strive to contribute to this

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[34] See for example Richard Wilson, *Shakespeare in French Theory: King of Shadows* (London: Routledge, 2007); Hélène Cixous, "Shakespeare Ghosting Derrida," in *Oxford Literary Review* 34, no. 1 (2012): 1-24; Julián Jiménez Heffernan, *Limited Shakespeare. The Reason of Finitude* (London: Routledge, 2019); Chiara Alfano, *Derrida reads Shakespeare* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020).

discussion by relating Derrida's early semiotic conceptuality with his later concerns with ethics, showing how the latter are implied by the former. Derrida's essay on *Romeo and Juliet*, "Aphorism Countertime," occurs within this shift and as such, offers valuable insights into the way questions of language and literary form are tied up in and respond to specific ethical preoccupations and agential challenges.[35]

Building up throughout this thesis to a deconstructive understanding of metaphor that sheds light on the neglected performative nature of the trope, I also investigate the early modern parameters that afford such an understanding of literary performativity. My approach does not involve a historicization of *definitions* of metaphor properly speaking as this work has already received a good deal of recent critical attention.[36] Instead, I seek on one hand to link the metaphorical utterances I read to larger Classical and Renaissance intellectual, cultural and textual contexts that condition them as features of an Elizabethan play; secondly, I attend to historical articulations of the notions of literary meaning and meaning-making to shed light on the way metaphor participates in these dynamics in the Shakespearean text. Thus, I seek to offer a historically based, conceptually informed enquiry into the literary-discursive conditions that make of metaphorical utterances in *Romeo and Juliet* a particularly fertile dramatic exploration of a strange, pleasurable, ambivalent kind of performance, with broad semiotic and ethical implications to be drawn out on the basis of this specific textual encounter.

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[35] Jacques Derrida, "Aphorism Countertime," trans. Nicholas Royle, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992). This perspective moves a deconstructive approach to literature forward by tending to some of the aspects of deconstruction that were neglected or misread when it was a critical trend, which according to some led to its progressive abandonment. See for example Jeffrey T. Nealon, "The Discipline of Deconstruction," *PMLA* 107, no. 5 (1992): 1266-79.

[36] Also, definitions of metaphors found in early modern handbooks follow Classical examples in classifying metaphor as a trope, as opposed to a scheme. Tropes are lexical figures; schemes grammatical and syntactical ones. In approaching metaphor as a lexical *and* grammatical-syntactical agent, what I am looking at is not necessarily the same thing as that which is designated in definitions of metaphor as found in early modern handbooks of rhetoric, since it acts ahead of the categorical gesture of marking out tropes from schemes. As in Classical definitions, Renaissance critical discussions of metaphor tend to be based on a primacy of semanticism, which Derrida precisely suspends.

While drawing on a range of Renaissance and Classical sources, this study focuses primarily on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. This answers several strategic purposes. Because it interacts so heavily with the Petrarchan sonnet culture of the 1590s, *Romeo and Juliet* allows for a unique appreciation of the kind of gesture I am interested in. Carrying over complete sonnets into the play, one of which is distributed into a dialogue between two protagonists, the play reflects on the ideological and ethical stakes of a metaphorically saturated poetic genre, hugely fashionable in European and English courts, and devoted to the singing of desire: in converting a traditionally comic love plot into a tragedy, Shakespeare also problematizes the poetic utterance of love declarations. What is more, he does so specifically through the dynamic I have attempted to bring to light in the above remarks on Juliet's metaphorical utterance, focusing on metaphor as an action and a literary site for the articulation of agential relations. The sustained appeal to the figures of hyperbole and oxymoron throughout the play further underscores these dynamic sites: in *Romeo and Juliet*, metaphor systematically heightens dramatic stakes and struggles with paradoxical implications. The one-play formula also allows me to make a sustained argument about the play, responding to influential interpretations of the play such as those by David Schalkwyk and Paul Kottman in ways that both challenge and open these studies to fresh enquiries.[37] Finally, since Derrida himself wrote an essay on *Romeo and Juliet*, concentrating on this play allows me to situate Derrida's response to it as part of a shift that was occurring in Derrida's thought from the heavily linguistic and semiotic concerns of his early career to the ethical dimensions of deconstruction he later explored.

2. *Overview of critical literature*

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[37] David Schalkwyk, *Speech and Performance in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Paul A. Kottman, "Defying the Stars: Tragic Love as the Struggle for Freedom in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 1-38.

This thesis follows a long tradition of critical engagement with figurative language in Shakespeare studies in which questions about its dramatic, historical and conceptual status arise differently at different times. In a classic study of Shakespeare's imagery, Wolfgang Clemen purports to follow more carefully the dramatic structures of Shakespeare's figurative language in contrast to Caroline Spurgeon's taxonomic approach in the seminal *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us*.[38] In an article published in *Shakespeare Survey*, R. A. Foakes in turn criticizes studies of Shakespeare's imagery that had arisen in the past twenty years as a reaction to the character-based approach to the tragedies that prevailed during the nineteenth century, still practiced at the beginning of the twentieth century by scholars such as the prominent A. C. Bradley.[39] Foakes calls for a tighter definition of "image" to be given, dissatisfied with the idea of Shakespeare's plays as *generalized metaphors* or *dramatic poems*, to him loose notions that prevailed during the first phase of interest in Shakespeare's tropes in the foundational works of G. Wilson Knight, L. C. Knights, Caroline Spurgeon, Cleanth Brooks and Wolfgang Clemen.[40] Robert Weimann later echoes the plea and extends it to metaphor, begging for performance-based, historically-informed accounts of the significance in Shakespeare of metaphor, a literary device which he identifies as central to Shakespeare criticism.[41] In combination with the parallel emergence of studies devoted to classical and early modern rhetoric such as that of Miriam Joseph Rauh, these articles contributed to a shift from an interest in "image" on the part of the scholars of

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[38] Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935). Wolfgang Clemen, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (London: Methuen, 1951).

[39] R. A. Foakes, "Suggestions for a New Approach to Shakespeare's Imagery," *Shakespeare Survey* 5 (1952): 81-92.

[40] G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearian Tragedy* (London: Routledge, 1930); L. C. Knights, *How many children had Lady Macbeth? An essay in the theory and practice of Shakespeare criticism* (Cambridge: The Minority Press, 1933); Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn. Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (London: Methuen, 1947).

[41] Robert Weimann, "Shakespeare and the Study of Metaphor," *New Literary History* 6, No. 1 (1974): 149-67.

imagery from Knights to Clemen, to a focus on "metaphor," the figure of speech as it was given in Renaissance handbooks of rhetoric.[42]

Weimann's interest in metaphor relates to a growing discussion of the figure as a structure of thought,[43] namely in philosophy,[44] notably in continental debates.[45] A heavier focus on metaphor as a formal, literary feature may concurrently be observed in the field of Shakespeare studies, where it has prompted several important studies.[46] More general studies on Shakespeare and language cite or treat the figure of metaphor as an area of concern.[47] After this second phase of interest in figurative language in Shakespeare's plays, literary critics seem to have taken a distance from the recent poststructuralist turn in the discussion, also finding less to borrow from the increasingly predominant conceptual theory of metaphor as a thought process rather than a linguistic one. Close readings of formal patterns and rhetorical tropes in Shakespeare's plays became less fashionable in literary criticism of the 1990s and 2000s, during the onset of the theoretical frameworks of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism. However, a renewed interest has recently brought metaphor back to the foreground of dramatic criticism, one which has clearly taken aboard the work of Cultural

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[42] Miriam Joseph Rauh, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947).

[43] Warren Shibles, *Essays on metaphor* (Whitewater, WI: Language Press, 1972); David Miall, ed., *Metaphor: Problems and perspectives*, (Brighton: Harvester, 1982); Andrew Ortony, ed., *Metaphor and thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Raymond Gibbs, ed., *The Cambridge handbook of metaphor and thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[44] Mark Johnson, ed., *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981).

[45] Jacques Derrida, "La Mythologie Blanche," in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972) 247-324, and "Retrait de la Métaphore," in *Psyché. Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1998), 63-93 ; Paul Ricoeur, *La Métaphore Vive* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

[46] Marjorie Garber, *Dream in Shakespeare: from Metaphor to Metamorphosis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974); Ralph Berry, *The Shakespearean Metaphor: Studies in Language and Form* (London: Macmillan, 1978); Ann Thompson and John O. Thompson, *Shakespeare: Meaning and Metaphor* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987).

[47] Ifor Evans, *The Language of Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Methuen, 1964); James L. Calderwood, *Shakespearean Metadrama* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1971); Jane Donawerth, *Shakespeare and the Sixteenth-Century Study of Language* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Ekbert Faas, *Shakespeare's Poetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Materialists and New Historicists:[48] studies of Shakespeare's engagement with material, economic and political forces as well as with different resources of early modern English signal a deep compatibility between questions of form and language, and injunctions to historically informed research.[49]

As for the continental philosophical debate on metaphor on one side, and the historicized approach to early modern conceptions of rhetoric on the other, these discussions have since been brought together, for example in an edited volume by Judith Anderson and especially in a monograph by Maria Franziska Fahey.[50] The background on which Fahey considers what is at stake in understanding metaphor in Shakespearean drama is given both in the definitions of metaphor by Renaissance rhetoricians and through recent philosophical discussions such as Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor*, which forms Fahey's own comprehension of metaphor. By attending to the deconstructive contributions to the debate that opposed Ricoeur to Derrida on the subject of metaphor, this thesis complements existing research and provides an alternative to the appeal to Ricoeur in studies of metaphor from the perspective of continental philosophy in the field of Shakespeare studies. I argue for the usefulness of Derrida's less explicit notion of metaphor and exploit some of its unheeded

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[48] This important discussion is pursued and developed in Chapter 1 in a discussion of the notions of "materiality" and "concept" as they were discussed in the early 2000s.

[49] Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Catherine M. S. Alexander, ed., *Shakespeare and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Douglas Brooks, ed., *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, (London: Routledge, 2005); Douglas Burnham, *The Poetics of Transubstantiation. From Theology to Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 2005); Heinrich Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004); Stefan Daniel Keller, *The Development of Shakespeare's Rhetoric: a Study of Nine Plays* (Tübingen: Francke Press, 2009); Jonathan Hope, *Shakespeare and Language. Reason, Eloquence and Artifice in the Renaissance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010); Harry Newman, *Impressive Shakespeare. Identity, Authority and the Imprint in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 2016); Gillian Knoll, *Conceiving Desire in Lyly and Shakespeare. Metaphor, Cognition and Eros* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020).

[50] Anderson, *Translating Investments*; Maria Franziska Fahey, *Metaphor and Shakespearean Drama: Unchaste Signification*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). See also Barbara Muller, *Les Métaphores dans les romances de William Shakespeare. Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale et The Tempest: des prescriptions rhétoriques à l'écriture dramatique*, PhD dissertation (Université de Strasbourg, 2016), and "Briser les chaînes de la métaphore: romances shakespeariennes et métaphores ravivées," *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* 37 (2019), accessed 27 February 2022, https://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/4477.

explanatory potential for dramatic criticism, in particular its performative aspects. I also offer a different historical anchoring than the one Fahey practices, closer perhaps to Anderson's broader analysis of various cultural processes of "translation" in the early modern period. The view of metaphor I defend helps us appreciate some of the properly dramatic effects of metaphor in *Romeo and Juliet* by contrast to the figurative language of sonnets with which the play interacts. It also locates in metaphor a unique capacity to incorporate and negotiate specific conceptual and literary inheritances and puts this function into conversation with the cultural-historical context of Renaissance reading and writings practices.

In comparison to metaphor, the study of agency in Shakespeare studies has enjoyed far less critical attention. This is partly because the term "agency" covers a variety of areas of inquiry, pertaining to metaphysical and logical functions such as causation,[51] or the ideas of free will and volition.[52] Mainly though, it has arguably been overshadowed by the study of selfhood, an important area of inquiry in Shakespeare studies, foregrounding reflexivity and the formation of the self to a larger extent than subjects as authors of actions.[53] Understudied as it is, the notion of agency has nonetheless received its share of interest, in part thanks to feminist criticism. Indeed, feminist readings of the tragedies often necessarily focus on agency in the evaluation of seemingly underdeveloped female characters (both in criticism

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[51] G. E. Haupt, "A Note on the Tragic Flaw and Causation in Shakespearean Tragedy." *Interpretations* 5, no. 1 (1973): 20-32; Paul Dean, "Shakespeare's Causes," *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 36, no. 1 (1989): 25-35; Richard Strier, "Shakespeare and the Skeptics," *Religion & Literature* 32, no. 2 (2000): 171–96.

[52] Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Andrew Escobedo, *Volition's Face: Personification and the Will in Renaissance Literature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016); Jason Gleckman, *Shakespeare and Protestant Poetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

[53] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from Moore to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body. Essays on Subjection* (London: Methuen, 1984); Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993; Hugh Grady, "On the Need for a Differentiated Theory of (Early) Modern Subjects," in *Philosophical Shakespeares*, John J. Joughin, ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), 34–50; Kevin Curran, ed., *Shakespeare and Judgment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Kevin Curran, *Shakespeare's Legal Ecologies: Law and Distributed Selfhood* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017). Curran also considers agency in the process of investigating selfhood, especially in the third chapter of this book: "Criminality: The Phenomenology of Treason in *Macbeth*," 79-100.

and in the tragedies themselves). Several of these studies correlate this focus with questions of literary form.[54] Part of my argument is based in and responds to such feminist criticism, addressing the question of female dramatic roles and speech in drama as a way of interrogating and pluralizing the notion of agency.

Other studies with a broader focus on agency in the tragedies include a study by John Freund, who uses chaos theory to show how Shakespeare's tragedies give rise to interesting agential formations when structural symmetries that organize the play are broken.[55] More recently, an edited volume by Michael Bristol initiated a discussion on some configurations of moral agency in Shakespeare's plays.[56] My own approach gives importance rather to an ethical framework, seeking to open the discussion especially to the ethical stakes of enunciative acts, in line perhaps mostly with Keira Travis' contribution to Bristol's volume. Her research focuses on certain words used in assertions of agency with etymologies related to movement in order to show how we may distinguish an understanding of agents as objects in motion.[57] Travis further demonstrates how puns and metaphors contain precious information about a character's epistemic relation to their surroundings and about how they conceive of their interaction with those surroundings. I depart from this account mainly in my analyses of language as an expropriative device in Chapter 5, where I question the idea that metaphors reveal the psychological dispositions or the ethical self-presence of their speakers.

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[54] Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Philippa Berry, *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings: Disfiguring Death in the Tragedies* (London: Routledge, 1999); Carol Thomas Neely. *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Ayanna Thompson, *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[55] John Freund, *Broken Symmetries. A Study of Agency in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991).

[56] Michael D. Bristol, ed. *Shakespeare and Moral Agency* (London: Continuum, 2010), digital edition.

[57] Keira Travis, "Wordplay and the Ethics of Self-Deception in Shakespeare's Tragedies," in Bristol.

A number of early modern performance studies have also focused on linguistic preoccupations in relation to actor, audience, and stage life.[58] Some have even offered smaller-scale versions of my project in analyses focusing on the role of metaphor in the framing of agency. Ann Thompson and John O. Thompson show how the syntax of animal-related metaphors in King Lear complicate grammatical agent – patient relations with interesting implications for different hierarchies – and subversions thereof – in the play.[59] Jonathan Hope devotes a chapter to agency and syntax in which he sets out to show how Shakespeare's syntax contributes to uncertain attributions of agency.[60] He examines how some metaphors attribute animacy to entities generally not thought of as animate. Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann also usefully look to the liminal function of the prologue between two realities, that of theatre-going and that of the play.[61] In connecting my own working notion of agency to actor-network theory, I open new possibilities for connections between form and agency by subordinating actors to networks and recognizing the agency of non-human actors, which bears on ethics. I also read metaphor as eminently liminal in the agential functions it plays in drama, negotiating between active and passive processes, past

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[58] Ralph Berry, *Shakespeare and the Awareness of Audience* (London: Routledge, 1985); Michael W. Shurgot, *Stages of Play, Shakespeare's Theatrical Energies in Elizabethan Performance* (London: Associated University Presses, 1998); Robert Weimann, *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice. Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre. Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (London: Routledge, 2004); Hugh Macrae Richmond, *Shakespeare's Tragedies Reviewed. A Spectator's Role* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015); Pascale Drouet, ed., *The Spectacular In and Around Shakespeare* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009). These studies develop as part of a longstanding historical interest in conditions of early modern performance. See Bertram Leon Joseph, *Acting Shakespeare* (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1960); Muriel Clara Bradbrook, *The Rise of the Common Player* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964); Anne Meredith Skura, *Shakespeare. The Actor and the Purposes of Playing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Lesley Wade Soule, *Actor as Anti-Character* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000); John H. Astington, *Actors and Acting in Shakespeare's Time. The Art of Stage Playing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[59] Ann Thompson and John O. Thompson, "Animal Metaphors in *King Lear*," in Thompson and Thompson, 47-88.

[60] Jonathan Hope, "Agency and Uncertainty in Shakespeare's Syntax," in Hope, 138-69.

[61] Bruster and Weimann.

and present meaning, author and reader figures, poetry and drama, text and stage, self and other, and freedom and responsibility.

3. Chapter outline

The argument of this thesis unfolds across five chapters. In chapter 1, I attend to the notion of materialism and discuss its significance to an approach of metaphor as a trope that puts discourse in tension with the material world in Shakespearean drama. I begin by examining the critical context of studies of materiality and immateriality in early modern literature and qualifying my approach as investigation into a materialism of discourse. Considering a few of the metaphors that connect speech with materiality in Shakespearean tragedies, I suggest this connection has generic specificity. In the rest of the chapter, I read elemental metaphors from the first half of the play in light of early modern cultures of materiality and provide an overview of Romeo's move from a language of material conjunction in Act 1 of the play to an alchemical trope of separation in Act 3, after news of his banishment.

Chapter 2 turns from material contexts to rhetorical and textual commonplaces in various literatures of desire. All of these share a concern for gender disparities in depictions and attributions of agency. I begin by reading some of Romeo and Mercutio's dialogues in Act 1 on the background of Lorna Hutson's idea of an early modern textualization of male friendships through fictions that present women and female desire as threats. I then take into consideration more fully the problem of women's agency by observing how Shakespeare interacts with the longstanding, philosophically inherited signet-seal trope in the Friar's depiction of Romeo as a "form of wax" in Act 3.3 of the play, troubling gender norms. On this basis, I offer a broader examination of the metaphorical mirroring between orders of procreation and of technical production. I highlight first the Renaissance and contemporary metaphorical and conceptual inheritance of the Platonic notion of *chora* from the *Timaeus*, a

"third-kind" receptacle for the articulation of the sensible and the intelligible, then move on to look at how alchemical discourses also develop this idea, furthering the tropology around reproduction. I end the chapter with a consideration of how the Petrarchan sonnet incorporated all these strands of metaphorical conceptuality, analyzing the depiction of Romeo in Act 1 as an ambivalent poet figure in relation to these sonnet dynamics.

Chapter 3 offers a more rigorous appraisal of the notion of metaphor as a figure with special significance for the dramatic analysis of a play that exhibits such material and rhetorical dynamics. Identifying Derridean deconstruction as a promising way of interacting with the contexts of materiality and textuality from Chapters 1 and 2, this chapter begins by introducing core deconstructive concepts before contradistinguishing Derrida's work on metaphor with Lacanian literary criticism. This serves to highlight a specificity and richness of deconstruction for literary criticism, as a response to the notion of the impossible made possible in fiction, beyond Lacanian emphases on lack and deferral. In order not to lose touch with the early modern context, I anchor my theoretical discussion in an important account of the sonnet as a genre exhibiting a structure of desire as lack, by Catherine Bates. Departing from the idea of lack, I illustrate the performative notion of metaphor Derrida keys us into through a reading of Juliet's "impossible" answer to her mother in Act 1.3. I close by expanding on Derrida's conception of metaphor with an appeal to Paul de Man's concept of a materiality of event. This secures my understanding of metaphor as a textual-material phenomenon with performative implications.

Chapter 4 picks up where the previous chapter left off. Moving on to the agency component of my approach, I discuss Renaissance conceptions of the activities of writing and reading based on elements of *Romeo and Juliet*'s plot development. Relating Capulet's metaphors of earth in 1.2 to his Servingman's trudge through Verona's streets in search of a reader for the list he has been given, I draw on Lyly's *Euphues* as an intertext to link this

passage to an account of two early modern authorial strategies for owning textual meaning. Moving on to figures of readers, I discuss early modern and medieval practices of reading and highlight their ethical dimensions. I then return to Romeo's breakdown in Act 3.3 to forefront drama as an essential component in how Shakespeare materially owns textual meaning and uses metaphor as a liminal site in which different actors such as literary precedents, author, character and audience are all put into conversation. Finally, taking the argument one step further, I resort to Bruno Latour's actor-network theory to argue that poetic enunciation functions as a "mediator" in *Romeo and Juliet*, agential in its own right. I conclude by illustrating this point through a reading of Romeo and Juliet's shared sonnet, demonstrating its appeal to the sonnet form as an act of textual owning, a material event, and a reliance on a third-party linguistic "actor."

Chapter 5 draws out some of the ethical implications of the picture of agency offered in Chapter 4. I examine the role played by metaphorical utterance as it conditions character agency and spreads it across material and textual networks. Concentrating on Romeo and Juliet's exchange in the balcony scene, I confront two philosophical accounts of their dialogue, by Paul Kottman and Jacques Derrida respectively. These accounts diverge sharply on the question of third-party interference and the disagreement has vast ethical implications for the understanding of language and agency, particularly in the context of a love relationship. I draw out these implications in detail. Offering my own take on the scene, I rely on later Derridean texts engaging with matters of ethics to present metaphor as a grammatical, material-textual, performative feature that articulates ethical tensions between singularity and otherness which are constitutive of how metaphor creates meaning.

As a whole, this thesis demonstrates that metaphor and ethical agency are intimately and productively connected in Shakespeare's tragedy of young lovers. Rooting this argument in contexts of Renaissance material and rhetorical cultures, I demonstrate the relevance of a

deconstructive approach to an evaluation of the behavior of metaphor in *Romeo and Juliet*. Contrasting this approach with the related theoretical framework of Lacanian psychoanalytic criticism and attending to some of its modern-day developments in the works of Paul de Man, Judith Butler and Bruno Latour, I show how Derrida's view of metaphor keys into the dramatic stakes of metaphor in Shakespearean drama as a material-performative event. Agency in *Romeo and Juliet* is located in liminal, mediative sites of metaphor in which various participants in the process of meaning making are related to one another. This view holds several ethical implications, in particular for the tension between the love relationship and the medium of language that conditions it. In discussing these implications, this thesis demonstrates how metaphor contributes to shaping the agency of speakers, hearers and lovers in *Romeo and Juliet* in ways that respond both to Renaissance literary preoccupations and to contemporary concerns with how meaning is performed and how this bears on ethical relationships, notably in a play considered by some as the "preeminent document of love in the West."[62] Ultimately, this is also to question, from both a philosophical and a literary perspectives, what values it is that criticism of the play identifies and often celebrates in this story of woe about star-crossed lovers.

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[62] Dympna Callaghan, *Romeo and Juliet: Texts and Contexts* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003), 1.

1.

Discursive Materialisms:
Setting the Scene for Tragedy

Introduction

This chapter aims to frame my discussion of *Romeo and Juliet* in terms of the materiality of discourse. It is in this general context that the notions of metaphor and agency which are central to this thesis can be construed as an association bearing an explanatory power not achieved when focusing on either of these terms alone. Reading metaphor tends to demand an interest in rhetoric and presumes a close reading of form; commenting on agency calls for a more structural approach to plays, focusing either on characters, on the author(s), on stage directors, on audiences, on language, on social or cultural forces – in brief, it requires keeping an eye on what is being done, how, and by whom (or by what). This initial focus on materiality provides the historical-conceptual basis of my appraisal of dramatic agency as it is informed by the figurative discourse of the play, specifically in the behavior of metaphor as a formal, material, rhetorical, and philosophical structure.

What is meant by "materiality" and "the materiality of discourse" are two questions that must be addressed, and it is to these that I turn in this first chapter. I begin by situating my approach within the variegated body of Shakespeare studies that carry a focus on materiality, and affiliating my research to a series of calls for philosophical engagement with the topic as well as to a deconstructive critical lineage. I go on to argue that Shakespeare's tragedies call attention to discourse as a phenomenon of material import problematizing the comedic characterizations of speech as changeable and impermanent. Focusing on metaphors from the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, the rest of the chapter is devoted to drawing out specific literary historical contexts that inform Shakespeare's figurative language of materiality as well as his depiction of speech in material terms.

1. *Discourse and materiality*

Although shared across several different critical trends, the term "materiality" has a history of heated controversy in Shakespeare studies, as James Knapp attests in an article that retraces some of the steps in the evolution of the discussion surrounding this notion:

> "Materialism," "materiality," and "material culture" have become key terms in early modern studies and Shakespeare scholarship over the past two decades. Responding to perceived subjective shortcomings of the New Historicism and Cultural Materialism of the 1980s and early 90s, "new materialist" approaches have emerged in scholarship ranging from Book History and textual studies to affect theory and ecocriticism.[1]

Knapp cites Hillis Miller's presidential address at the 1986 MLA Convention as a reaction to the contemporaneous "turn toward history, culture, society, politics, institutions, class and gender conditions, the social context, the material base in the sense of institutionalization, conditions of production, technology, distribution, and consumption of "cultural products," among other products." Miller also qualifies this material turn as an "almost universal turn away from theory in the sense of an orientation toward language as such." He further refines what he means by "an orientation toward language as such" by identifying it as "the theory of rhetorical reading or of deconstruction."[2] In this perspective, seeking to complexify the shape of the material turn as an opposition between an involvement with theory on one hand and a commitment to more tangible realities on the other, he points out that the "[t]he material base includes in addition the one time only of each unique act of reading,"[3] urging scholars to bear

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[1] James A. Knapp, "Beyond Materiality in Shakespeare Studies," *Literature Compass* 11, no. 10 (2014): 677.

[2] J. Hillis Miller, "Presidential Address 1986: The Triumph of Theory, the Resistance to Reading and the Question of the Material Base," *PMLA* 102 (1987): 283.

[3] Miller, 288.

in mind that any approach to materiality outside of theory is unthinkable if only because interacting with the materiality of literature is inescapably phenomenological.[4]

Some twenty years later, it was the turn of New Historicists and Cultural Materialists to find themselves on the declining side of a turn as revisionist accounts of their findings constituted a "new materialism." To Knapp, this changing approach to materialism has been in the best of cases "more nuanced and poetic (read: analytical and abstract) than objective and fact-based."[5] However, in an article titled "Shakespeare's Ghosts," written at the time this new materialism was just getting into gear, David Schalkwyk was quick to point out a problem common to many of these approaches. In what is essentially "a personal overview of work in Shakespeare studies during the past five years" which "focuses especially on the re-emergence of the ghosts of the author and ideality in the face of the recent ''obsession'' with materiality,"[6] Schalkwyk calls attention to the frequency with which scholars continue to resort to notions of authorship and ideality in spite of their claimed departure from these ideas, suggesting that "our current obsession with history, especially through its materiality, also reveals a reticence to respond to the conceptual demands of philosophy."[7]

Both writing on the cusp of a shift in the discussion of materiality in Shakespeare studies, Miller and Schalkwyk warn against abandoning methodologies that allow for a philosophically grounded treatment of the concepts that underlie our critical vocabularies: history, materiality, reading, authorship, etc.[8] Taking stock of the situation since the early 2000s, Knapp follows suit and issues his own words of caution in the form of a warning

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[4] Knapp makes a similar point, noting that "the problem with elevating "material" facts above analytical abstraction is that the material never speaks for itself. Knapp, 679.

[5] Knapp, 679.

[6] David Schalkwyk, "Shakespeare's Ghosts," *Shakespeare* 1, no. 1-2 (2005): 219.

[7] Schalkwyk, 236.

[8] See Stephen Cohen, ed. *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism* (London: Routledge, 2007), which attempts to blend new historicism and a conceptually layered reading of form.

against material determinism: highlighting the same fact Miller and Schalkwyk do from within their distinct perspectives, Knapp observes that "things are always conceptually saturated," and adds: "[m]ore important, perhaps, than the claim that we still need ideas – a claim that few would challenge – is the debate over the way ideas relate to the material world."[9] He takes up an accordingly critical stance toward the principle that "material facts can alter our ideas about them but not vice versa," arguing that "to take such a position is potentially to downplay the role ideas play in the production and reception of Shakespeare's texts."[10] Although he does not support a turn away from the concern with materialism as David Hawkes does in more radical fashion,[11] Knapp calls for greater conceptual clarity in appeals to the much bandied term "materiality": "such discussions would be more valuable if the terms were interrogated and alternatives were considered."[12] This problem becomes all the more apparent in efforts to historicize the notion, as in studies focusing on early modern conceptions of materiality. As Knapp states in his subsequent book on the topic:

> [T]he recent explosion of interest in the 'Lucretian Renaissance', . . . rests, in part, on the belief that modern physics is more like Lucretian atomism than either of the Aristotelean or Neo-platonic alternatives available in the early modern period.[13]

This assumption, therefore, runs a high risk of presentist fallacy.[14] In an effort to avoid the pitfall of blindness towards underlying presentist assumptions in accounts meant to amend the existing state of our knowledge of the past, Knapp calls out a current bias in disfavor of

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[9] Knapp, 681.

[10] Knapp, 681.

[11] See David Hawkes, "Against Materialism in Early Modern Studies," in *The Return to Theory in Early Modern English Studies: Tarrying with the Subjunctive*, ed. Paul Cefalu and Bryan Reynolds (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 237-257.

[12] Knapp, 682.

[13] James A. Knapp, *Immateriality and Early Modern English Literature: Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 13.

[14] See Jean-Michel Chapoulie, "Un cadre d'analyse pour l'histoire des sciences sociales," *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* 2, no. 13 (2005): 99-126.

phenomena that are precisely not material, and proposes to move the discussion forward by appraising early modern materiality in its specific ties to the opposite notion of immateriality. He notes that "[t]he consequences of the so-called material turn in early modern studies. . . has had the unfortunate side effect of demoting the immaterial as a category for serious enquiry."[15] The transition Knapp operates from following the historical-critical contours of the debate around new materialism in Shakespeare studies to a reformulation of the problem as a conceptual deficiency in our understanding of "materialism" is significant and reflects an attempt to bring together the historicist's sensitivity towards understanding the past with an awareness of the philosophical coordinates that come into play with the question of what it means today. Knapp appropriately brings his article to a close with the expressed hope that "the next turn of the material/ideal wheel of critical fortune will not be a return to idealism, but a rejection of the opposition altogether."[16]

In *Immateriality and Early Modern English Literature* (his own attempt to respond to such a wish), Knapp turns towards the vexed notion of immateriality with an intention to bring greater clarity to the literary experience as it reflects affective and conceptual dispositions toward the interplay between the material and the immaterial. His investigation sheds light on the ontological, spiritual and speculative frameworks where the negotiation between material and immaterial is articulated. Although the book is firmly rooted in literary analysis and involves a close attention to the kind of language used, both in literary and non-literary material, to talk about the immaterial, provoking new readings of Shakespeare, Donne and Herbert, no chapter is devoted to language as a category of thematic scrutiny. Being, believing and thinking, are the three areas of human experience under investigation here. In a sense, due no doubt to Knapp's historical phenomenological approach, it could be

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[15] Knapp, *Immateriality,* 13.

[16] Knapp, "Beyond Materiality," 686.

argued that the whole project is steeped in a deep curiosity for the way the world was "read" in the early modern period based on early modern literary negotiations of material and immaterial experience.[17] This would be especially true of the last chapter: "'Neither Fish nor Flesh, nor Good Red Herring': Phenomenality, Representation and Experience in *The Tempest*," which arguably adds "reading," or something very close to it, to the list of being, believing and thinking.[18] Indeed, Knapp comes closest to flashing the light on a semiotic category of human experience in this chapter, whose approach might appropriately be characterized as a phenomenology of signs. The book ends on a note of symbolic abstraction, perusing what is perhaps Shakespeare's most meditative play under the angle of representation, or the way characters (as well as audience and readership) make sense of strange and hybrid phenomena, even closing with a consideration of theatrical signs in that most famous bridge from dramatic fiction to the phenomenality of the stage that is the epilogue spoken by Prospero, having forsaken the books from which he partly derives his magical powers.[19]

My approach picks up where Knapp's leaves off, with a consideration of the materiality (and immateriality) of language, specifically of literature. Miller, Schalkwyk and Knapp are each differently aware of the necessity of a continued investigation of the conceptual foundations of research emphasizing materiality.[20] If Miller and Schalkwyk both clearly bring to their work a focus on language, not just as literary material but as a thematic

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[17] The book sheds light on a number of concepts along the way, such as "thing," "nothing," "self," "concept," "action," "time," the "world," the "divine," "spirit," "mind," "body," and "representation".

[18] Knapp, *Immateriality*, 358.

[19] Knapp, *Immateriality*, 386-7.

[20] See also Jonathan Goldberg. *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1990).

concern,[21] I have argued that Knapp's book ends on such a note – to this it should be added that although he claims a heritage both historicist and philosophical,[22] a claim tangibly reflected in his work, the project of Knapp's book is, with respect to the theme of materiality, mainly conceptual: what readers come away with is a better sense of how to think about materiality, immateriality, and the intermixedness of these categories in early modern thought and literature. My own research aims to carry on in this conceptual vein, specifically from a deconstructive perspective, attending more closely to the im-/materiality of spoken as well as written discourse, eminently literature – an area of experience figured in Shakespearean drama, and one of especial interest in thinking about the relationship between materiality and immateriality as a philosophically fertile soil for *inventio* in early modern works of literature.

Attending to the "matter" of language is not an unfamiliar gesture in the history of Shakespeare criticism. Keir Elam's *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse* devotes an entire chapter to the topic of semiology and early modern cultures of linguistic naturalism.[23] Mainly however, it occurs in correlation with equally historically grounded feminist materialist studies of the 1990s. In the opening paragraph of her introduction to *Shakespeare from the Margins*, Patricia Parker identifies her approach as one that "takes seriously the 'matter' of language as part of the 'material Shakespeare.'"[24] The term "materialist Shakespeare" references Catherine Belsey's "Afterword" in Valerie Wayne's *The Matter of Difference*

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[21] See for example David Schalkwyk, *Speech and Performance in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[22] Knapp, *Immateriality*, 11-2.

[23] Keir Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse: Language-Games in the Comedies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 114-176. The theory of linguistic naturalism is explained in the following section.

[24] Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 1.

which questions, and ultimately welcomes the term "feminist materialism."[25] Parker also credits Judith Anderson's then forthcoming *Words that Matter* with initiating the approach to language as "material."[26] Indeed, Anderson's book on Renaissance conceptions of language focuses especially on the "equivocal 'thingness' of language." She understands the period as one that features "the interplay of language with the growing cultural emphasis on externalized expression and on the material world, coupled with the considerable evidence that this interplay is an historicized perception rather than simply a modern one."[27] Philippa Berry grounds her reading of tropes in certain tragedies in an assessment of early modern theories of materiality in order to construct a larger argument about genre in *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings*.[28]

These approaches should be placed under the general influence of Judith Butler's work on materiality and discourse, especially in *Bodies that Matter*,[29] the much reiterated title of which articulates her approach to materiality as a relationship between the matter of bodies and the prominence of their representations in public discourse – how they are made to matter.[30] Butler's theoretical framework, her understanding for instance of the materiality of the body as dependent on repetitive, citational, iterative performances of linguistic representations and social constructs is in turn heavily indebted to poststructuralist theory, notably that of Michel Foucault for his analysis of power and the subject, and that of Jacques

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[25] Catherine Belsey, "Afterword: A Future for Materialist Feminist Criticism?" in *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Valerie Wayne (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 257-270.

[26] Judith H. Anderson, *Words that Matter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 2.

[27] Anderson, 2.

[28] Philippa Berry, *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[29] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (London: Routledge, 1993).

[30] This project builds on Butler's work on discourse, performativity and gender carried out in *Gender Trouble* that was influenced by Monique Wittig's linguistic transformations of the corporeal lexicon into poetic material in *Le Corps Lesbien* [*The Lesbian Body*]. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990); Monique Wittig, *Le Corps Lesbien* (Paris: Minuit, 1973).

Derrida for his views on language, performativity and the role of the discursive in forming representation,[31] as well as Luce Irigaray for her conception of a materiality aside from matter, as an exteriority to discourse similar to Derrida's notion of *supplément*.[32] Bringing back issues of materiality to a conceptual engagement with linguistic issues, and more specifically, reading understandings of "matter" as citations of earlier discourse constitutes a theoretical gesture whose influence on Shakespeare scholarship and literary criticism in general can still be felt today, for example in approaches affiliated to thing theory and object-oriented ontology.[33] One of the most noteworthy developments of Butler's approach to materiality is found in Karen Barad's agential realism. Reworking Butler's idea that "[t]he process of that sedimentation or what we might call materialization will be a kind of citationality, the acquisition of being through the citing of power,"[34] Barad views matter and discourse (also materiality and ideas) as *intra-active*, that is to say "[t]he relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment. Neither is articulated/articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated."[35] Both Butler's and Barad's views on the relationship between discourse and matter have important implications for the notion of agency. Barad refines Butler's contention that "the account of agency conditioned by those very regimes of discourse/power cannot be conflated with voluntarism

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[31] It is specifically Derrida's notion of *itérabilité* that plays a key role in Butler's approach to performativity and the "material."

[32] This notion is presented below.

[33] See Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) and Bill Brown, *Things* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004); Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Peru, IL: Open Court, 2002) and Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology. A New Theory of Everything* (London: Penguin, 2018).

[34] Butler, *Bodies*, xxiii.

[35] Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs, Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 28, no. 3 (2003): 822.

or individualism, much less with consumerism, and in no way presupposes a choosing subject"[36] into the view, constitutive of her agential realist ontology, that

> [m]aterial-discursive practices are specific iterative enactments—agential intra-actions—through which matter is differentially engaged and articulated (in the emergence of boundaries and meanings), reconfiguring the material-discursive field of possibilities in the iterative dynamics of intra-activity that is agency. Intra-actions are causally constraining nondeterministic enactments through which matter-in-the-process-of-becoming is sedimented out and enfolded in further materializations.[37]

Whereas Butler views agents as constrained by "regimes of discourse/power," Barad goes further in her determination of agency by viewing matter and discourse as part of the same *causal intra-activity* (rather than interactivity, since the ontological distinction between matter and discourse no longer holds).[38]

Among other things, this allows Barad to question the distinction between human and non-human, admitting, along with other thinkers working from different approaches such as Jane Bennet or Bruno Latour, the non-human as agential.[39] It is usually in this regard that Barad is invoked in Shakespeare studies, as in Jennifer Monroe and Rebecca Laroche's *Shakespeare and Ecofeminist Theory* and in Marlis Schweitzer and Joanne Zerdy's introduction to *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things*.[40] William B. Worthen notes points of contact between the materialism of Karen Barad and theatre as technicity as he

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[36] Butler, *Bodies*, xxiii.

[37] Barad, 822.

[38] Butler, *Bodies,* xxiii. "The paradox of subjectivation (*assujetissement*) is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power."

[39] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[40] Jennifer Munroe and Rebecca Laroche, *Shakespeare and Ecofeminist Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 7-8; Marlis Schweitzer and Joanne Zerdy, eds., *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1-3.

develops it in "Shakespearean Technicity."[41] Barad's agential realist ontology has proved useful, or at least suggestive, in offering a way forward for intellectuals looking for an alternative metaphysics to the fundamental binaries and normative logics of the metaphysical tradition. Her work thus informs such projects as Karen Raber's "Shakespeare and Animal Studies" and Christine Varnado's "Queer Nature, or the Weather in *Macbeth*."[42] It is perhaps in this ever-growing refusal of traditional binaries, in pushing the boundaries of passed-down distinctions that Derrida's intellectual legacy is felt most vividly today in the field of Shakespeare studies.

Deconstruction is routinely cited as part of this legacy in works that draw on deconstructive methodologies in order to question longstanding dichotomies. On the theoretical front, in their respective uses of Derridean "iterability,"[43] both Butler and Barad borrow from Derrida's notion of "restance,"[44] the idea that the materiality of writing, in its inherent iterability, produces a supplementary trace or mark,[45] which is what allows for deconstruction. It is in this sense that, in the context of their discussion of the material effectuality of discourse and its role in acquiring being, both thinkers refer to the image of "sedimentation" in the above quotations, arguably a commonly sourced image which informs their projects differently.[46] As to the Shakespeare criticism referred to above, Goran

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[41] W. B. Worthen, "Shakespearean Technicity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 341.

[42] Karen Raber, "Shakespeare and Animal Studies," *Literature Compass* 12, no. 6 (2015): 294; Christine Varnado, "Queer Nature, or the Weather in *Macbeth*," in *Queer Shakespeare: Desire and Sexuality*, ed. Goran Stanivukovic (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 183-4.

[43] The notion of *itérabilité* is present throughout Derrida's work, but it plays an especially crucial role in "Signature, Event, Context," published in *Limited Inc.*, where Derrida critiques Austin's concept of speech acts, which Butler also examines in *Bodies that Matter* (170-1) and *Excitable Speech*. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 1-24; Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[44] Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, 51-2 *;* Jacques Derrida, *La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 13.

[45] Derrida elaborates on this through the notion of "le graphique de la supplémentarité" in Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), 327-378.

Stanivukovic acknowledges the important methodological role deconstruction has played in queer studies in his introduction to *Queer Shakespeare*;[47] Munroe and Laroche associate the history of ecofeminism with a "transcultural deconstruction of such associations" as "the woman/land connection that underscores culture/nature binary;"[48] and Raber recognizes that heeding Derrida "requires that we resist the trap of binarism set by religious and philosophical traditions."[49]

One reason literary critics from Miller to Raber appeal specifically to Derrida in work on literature and materiality, apart from the now obvious facts of his own numerous engagements with literature and of the usefulness of deconstruction in submitting binaries, such as matter/form, matter/spirit, matter/mind, matter/idea, or matter/discourse to a practice that challenges and subverts them, is Derrida's own materialist tendencies. As he himself states in *Positions*, these are difficult to outline given that he consciously avoided labeling deconstructive work as materialist, wary of the tendency for the term to be reinvested with logocentric values: thing, reality, presence, sensuous presence, plenitude of substance, of

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[46] Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 21, 25, 128, 231. Jacques Derrida, *Khôra* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), 27, 35. Derrida himself tends to use the word "*sédiment*" to refer to the way textual signification inevitably reprises older concepts and rests on binary distinctions for its meaning. It is this very process however which creates *restance* – the possibility for the meaning of a text not to coincide with its utterance or be defined by hermeneutical theses but to be deferred in a process of *itération*. Derrida also speaks of *de-sedimenting* signification. In this sense, "sedimentation" clearly appears to refer to the concretion of textual material into meaning, and "de-sedimenting" to the deconstruction of such meaning. This understanding is also reflected in Derrida's treatment of Husserl's notion of "sedimentation" (*Sedimentierung*) in Jacques Derrida, "Introduction," in Edmund Husserl, *L'origine de la Géométrie*, trans. Jacques Derrida (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962). In his discussion of the meaning and significance of the term for Husserl, Johan Blomberg states that "the concept of sedimentation is used to describe the gradual abstraction and stabilization of meaning in language (and in other symbolic systems like mathematical notation) that allows for ideality to be represented in a way that ensures that the same meaning is intended on every single use. While Husserl is adamant to emphasize the necessity of sedimentation for meaning to be stabilized and communicable across space and time, he also sees this as a process that entails a forgetfulness of the origin that made the sense in question possible in the first place." Johan Blomberg, "Interpreting the concept of sedimentation in Husserl's *Origin of Geometry*" *Public Journal of Semiotics* 9, no. 1 (2019): 78-94.

[47] Stanivukovic, *Queer Shakespeare*, 6-8.

[48] Munroe and Laroche, *Ecofeminist Theory*, 5.

[49] Raber, "Animal Studies," 290.

content, of reference.[50] In such instances, Derrida argues that "matter" undergoes a theoretical regression and reverts to a "*signifié transcendental*" [transcendental signified].[51] How then is Derrida's work materialist and what does this term mean for him? In a portion of his interview with Jean-Louis Houdebine and Guy Scarpetta quoted in translation in Butler's *Bodies that Matter*, he states:

> It goes without saying that if, and insofar as, in this general economy, *matter* designates, as you were saying, radical otherness (I will specify: in regard to philosophical opposition), what I write might be considered as 'materialist.'[52]

Butler importantly underlines the relative status of the designation: "what is excluded from this binary [form/matter] is also *produced* by it in the mode of exclusion and has no separable or fully independent existence as an absolute outside," noting furthermore that in a deconstructive framework "matter must be redoubled, at once as a pole within a binary opposition, and as that which exceeds that binary coupling as a figure for its nonsystematizability."[53] "Matter" appears therefore as uncontainable by the binaries that attempt to oppose it, hierarchically, to a superior principle, such as form. Within the logic of such a binary, the materiality of matter generates supplementary material, a remainder of yet uninterpreted, unorganized reading material (as opposed to the organization brought to the material by binary interpretations) which stands as a figure for the impossibility to systematize that which will always evade enclosure into systematic reading, what Derrida calls "radical otherness" with respect to philosophical oppositions and, further, identifies as

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[50] Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 87.

[51] Derrida, *Positions*, 88.

[52] Derrida, *Positions*, 87. "Il va de soi que si, et dans la mesure où, dans cette économie générale, *matière* désigne, comme vous le disiez, l'altérité radicale (je préciserai : par rapport à l'opposition philosophique), ce que j'écris pourrait être considéré comme 'matérialiste.'" Unless otherwise specified, all translations of Derrida are mine.

[53] Butler, *Bodies*, 13. The deconstructive practice of redoubling will be presented in Chapter 3.

écriture [writing].[54] This refusal to mark out "discourse" (*logos*) and "matter" (*hyle*) in the process of reading, this resistance to the hegemonic inclusion of otherness into the selfsame logic of logocentrism, and this instance that deconstruction is "materialist" only to the extent that this "materialism" appears in the exercise of an interpretive practice is precisely the strand of Derrida's thinking that still fuels literary critical engagements with the concept of materiality in the field of Shakespeare studies today. This thesis strives to continue moving beyond the longstanding distinction between materiality and idea by using one term to read the other, reading ideological constructs of materiality through a Derridean, and post-Derridean materiality of metaphor in the Shakespearean text.

Taking into account the branching out of new materialism, of deconstruction, and of recent developments in philosophically informed resistance to binary thinking into such various fields as ecofeminism, queer theory, and animal studies, just to name a few, this thesis begins with an examination of the relationships between materiality and speech in the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet*. My aim here is to outline the metaphorical materiality involved in introducing the fictional world of the play. Although I do this from the perspective of a current-day intellectual position in the debate on discursive materiality, most of the work done in this chapter consists in framing the historical-textual picture of materiality and speech implicated in setting the scene for a tragedy. I begin by offering some considerations of the specificity of *Romeo and Juliet* as a tragedy and examine the opening of the play, turning an eye to metaphors of materiality. This allows me to provide the appropriate contexts attending to materiality as I propose to think about it in relationship to rhetoric and agency throughout the rest of this thesis.

2. *Shakespearean tragedy and the materiality of speech*

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[54] Derrida, *Positions*, 87-8.

Discourses on the nature of matter tend to become sites for the articulation of larger worldviews – how matter is defined thus has an impact on the way more specific constructs are understood such as body, soul, identity, agency, even language. Thus, Butler's notion of gender performativity is closely tied to the way materiality was associated with femininity throughout a philosophical history she strives to deconstruct. This is as true today as it was in the early modern period. Gerard Passannante for example analyzes "the imaginative and often involuntary creation of speculative disasters as an expression of and response to materialist philosophies and forms of explanation," a process he refers to as "catastrophizing."[55] He contends that "the experience of materialist thought is never very far from the potentially frightening business of imagining ends or limits." This assumption influences the definition he provides of materialism:

> Materialism is a way of knowing that carries the mind from the world of the sensible to the insensible, reaching for physical principles that render the notion of intention or divine agency unnecessary. It relies on the assumption that the mind might arrive at the hidden world of matter by means of its own devices.[56]

This is an example of how constructs such as intention, agency and a theological worldview are implicated in inquiries into the nature of matter, specifically materialist avenues of investigation. Passannante also stresses the extent to which image and analogy are involved in the process of thinking about matter. To show how materialist explanations of the world feed into cultural determinations of abstract concepts is thus "to pay attention to the distinct shape of images and the feelings they elicit—and to understand the making of images itself as a form of argument."[57] This bestows on images of materiality – and most of those that

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[55] Gerard Passannante, *Catastrophizing: Materialism and the Making of Disaster* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 1.

[56] Passannante, 2.

[57] Passannante, 3. He also emphasizes the importance analogy in the making and reaction to image. See Passannante, 6-8.

Passannante considers are verbal – a force of persuasion that charges makers of such images with considerable responsibility. In what follows, I show how this conceptual and tropic fertility of materialism can be felt in the Shakespearean canon, especially in relation to how words are understood to connect to the physical world, sometimes bearing a materialistic weight and wield themselves. I then analyze how metaphors from the opening of *Romeo and Juliet* combine different literary and philosophical materialist accounts and images in a way that creates tensions between incompatible views of the world. This work is carried on in Chapter 2, where I discuss more specifically how textuality fits into the picture both as a means through which writers may regain control over a materiality sometimes deemed threatening and unwieldy.[58]

In *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse: Language-Games in the Comedies*, Keir Elam examines what he terms "the self-consciousness of Shakespeare's language" in the comedies.[59] In his third chapter, titled "Signs," Elam is specifically concerned with semiotization, or the way sign-making is carried out by characters. Focusing most heavily on *Love's Labour's Lost*, he shows how the play stages different levels of involvement with a faith in linguistic naturalism.[60] Elam notes a sustained engagement throughout the play with Occult Neoplatonic schools of thought including Hermeticism, Cabalism and Orphism, as movements that inform Renaissance syncretic naturalist conceptions of language. His closing statement on Shakespeare's use of Occult theories of meaning in the comedies is that "[t]he meanings of light words may indeed be dark, but in the sets of semantic tennis so essential to Shakespearean comedy, they too are light enough to be tossed endlessly back and forth or

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[58] Passannante thus speaks of "a renewed anxiety about materialist philosophy" in the early modern period (Passannante, 10).

[59] Elam, 1.

[60] Elam bases his discussion on the Medieval-inherited Renaissance dispute between nominalism, the notion that language is bound only by convention with regards to its referents, and naturalism, the belief that words and things are essentially linked.

simply carried off on the (*flatus vocis* or perhaps *spiritus comoediae*) wind."[61] What Elam seems to argue here is that tensions arising from certain practices of meaning-making are resolved in virtue of the generic nature of the comedies. If this is the case, one might wonder whether plays belonging to other genres, notably the tragedies, and perhaps most prominently *Romeo and Juliet*, also display a treatment of the belief that language is somehow essentially connected to reality. If so, does the generic difference call for or result in a different treatment of this belief?[62] My contention is that *Romeo and Juliet*, roughly contemporaneous with *Love's Labour's Lost*, is a play that also exhibits self-conscious language and explores more seriously the question of how language and reality are connected, namely in the figurative language of the play where metaphor plays a special role in connecting speech and materiality, poetry and the theatre as well as language and love. I explore the first of these associations in the following pages.

In his article "Feeling Dreams in *Romeo and Juliet*,"[63] Matthew Spellberg shows how in Shakespeare's Verona public speech is self-referential and stands apart from experience, in the image of the opening scene where, shortly before they provoke the Montague servants into a fight, the Capulet servants pun abundantly on the subjects of sexual pleasure and their rivalry with the Montagues. To Spellberg, they do so in a way that "clings obsessively to this divorce between words and experience:"

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[61] Elam, 176. *Flatus vocis* is a nominalist concept meaning literally "breath of the voice" and refers to words which correspond to no objective reality, but are mere words, an utterance of no importance which can be reduced to the breath it produces. The term was coined by Roscelin. Edward A. Synan, "Nominalism," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillebrand (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), accessed July 8 2020, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195064933.001.0001/acref-9780195064933-e-1004. For a discussion of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in relation to the debate between nominalism and naturalism, see Jean-Jacques Chardin, "Le débat entre naturalisme et nominalisme dans quelques pièces de Shakespeare," *Société Française Shakespeare* 19 (2002): 19-31.

[62] The linguistic framework for the naturalism which Elam analyses in his chapter *Signs* is provided mainly by the language of love-making or in the context of courtly love.

[63] Matthew Spellberg. "Feeling Dreams in *Romeo and Juliet*," *English Literary Renaissance* 43, no. 1 (2013): 62-85.

> The problem is that no matter how frequently reality manifests itself through violence in Shakespeare's Verona, the people of the city continue to speak (and thus, to view the world) on a level of disastrously ignorant artificiality, as if language has withdrawn itself so neatly from the pleasures and dangers of living that even when it is forced to confront them, it simply passes on, returning to its old vocabularies.[64]

But the very aspect of public speech and street talk to which Spellberg refers as the "non-experiential, anti-corporeal strain of social language in Verona," also a "reference-denying language",[65] is also repeatedly depicted, in material terms, as inseparable from realities of physicality and action:

> BENVOLIO. Here were the servants of your adversary,
>   And yours, close fighting ere I did approach:
>   I drew to part them: in the instant came
>   The fiery Tybalt, with his sword prepared,
>   Which, as he breathed defiance to my ears,
>   He swung about his head and cut the winds,
>   Who nothing hurt withal hiss'd him in scorn:
>   While we were interchanging thrusts and blows,
>   Came more and more and fought on part and part,
>   Till the prince came, who parted either part. (1.1.106-15)[66]

Here, in Tybalt's recounted behavior, words and actions work together, his "sword" as a natural extension – and common anagram – of his *words*. "Word" and "sword" are also rhymed in a quatrain spoken jointly by Benvolio and Tybalt:

> BENVOLIO. I do but keep the peace: put up thy sword,
>   Or manage it to part these men with me.
> TYBALT. What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word,
>   As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee. (1.1.67-70)

Benvolio tries and fails to put a stop to the fight in a combined effort of words and action. Tybalt latches onto the ambiguity of Benvolio's physical disposition to reject his "talk of

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[64] Spellberg, 64-5.

[65] Spellberg, 66.

[66] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

peace." As one who thinks himself a man of action, Tybalt's hate for "the word" might also be read simply as a distrust of language, finding all the truth he needs in the physical. However, Tybalt responds to Benvolio's couplet with a matching, rhyming couplet, harnessing the power of rhetoric to oppose his adversary. He is already dueling with Benvolio before they engage in actual sparring. In the earlier exchange between the servants, thumb biting is a physical gesture that demands linguistic clarification. Once language has confirmed the suspected intention, the fight may begin. Crucially however, language does seem to offer a possibility at this point to defuse the tension, "No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir" (1.1.49), excusing the ambiguity of the gesture. It is then a separate affront, the word "better," which precipitates the dialogue into physical violence. No such buffer zone seems to exist in the confrontation between Benvolio and Tybalt. Benvolio's words are inextricably tied to his physical disposition which impedes and distorts their meaning in the heat of action. As "sword" calls for "words," the rhyme "sword/word" also crystallizes a fateful tendency in Verona for "word" to be converted to "sword" in the ancient quarrel between Capulets and Montagues.

In this verbal-gestural imbroglio, words and actions even trade places with respect to their usual respective relationships to the physical world. What we get in Benvolio's recounting of the fight is a focus on the materiality of the action of speaking, on the physical condition necessary to use speech in the first place, or breath, and a focus on ears as the bodily organ of reception.[67] As for the action of waving his sword, it is also depicted in connection with the air around it or "winds," which are conceived of not only as material – as

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[67] To go one step further, Tybalt being described as "fiery" in the preceding line, his breathing defiance, as aggressive behavior, even suggests breathing of fire rather than air, as if his words had the capacity to cause physical harm. As such, he would be partaking of a version of the Stoic active material principle of fiery breath, or *pneuma*. Bruce R. Smith examines in great detail the conditions of speaking and hearing as material, sensory phenomena in Bruce R. Smith, *The Accoustic World of Early Modern England. Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999). The critical approach of "historical phenomenology," which originated with Smith's work, is subsequently defined as "the study of sense experience during a specific historical past" by Kevin Curran and James Kearney in their introduction to a collection of essays devoted to Shakespeare and phenomenology. See Kevin Curran and James Kearney, "Introduction," *Criticism* 54, no. 3 (2012): 353–64.

the object of cutting – but also as animate in their reaction: hissing in scorn. The element of air even recurs in the next line in the polysemy of "blows." If this is *flatus vocis* it might be more adequately termed *flatus actionis*: action, specifically violent physical action, is generally ineffective here, whether one considers Benvolio's "drawing" to "part," Tybalt's "cutting the winds," the poorly substantiated brawl, even the vacuity of the general rivalry.

Only the word of the Prince manages to "part either part," where, drawing his sword Benvolio could not, precisely, "part them". He does so however by pulling words as far into the direction of physicality as he can.

> PRINCE. Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,
>   Profaners of this neighbour-stained steel,--
>   Will they not hear? What, ho! you men, you beasts,
>   That quench the fire of your pernicious rage
>   With purple fountains issuing from your veins,
>   On pain of torture, from those bloody hands
>   Throw your mistemper'd weapons to the ground,
>   And hear the sentence of your moved prince.
>   Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,
>   By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
>   Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets,
>   And made Verona's ancient citizens
>   Cast by their grave beseeming ornaments,
>   To wield old partisans, in hands as old,
>   Canker'd with peace, to part your canker'd hate:
>   If ever you disturb our streets again,
>   Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace. (1.1.81-97)

The Prince's address is not immediately successful as the brawlers do not heed him, causing him to call into question their very humanity. Considering this in light of Benvolio's account of the fight, in which Tybalt's words carry into speech his sword-waving, such that he might as well be breathing fire for what his use of language is worth, it is as if, in the fight, the brawlers cross an Aristotelean boundary of language from "men" to "beasts" and lose touch with society, moral reasoning and the power of speech, which oppose man to beast (*therion*) in the *Politics*.[68] The Prince then doubles down on the material trope he introduced in "steel:"

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[68] Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1253a.

"quench the fire", "purple fountains", "bloody hands", "airy word" and "canker'd with peace[69]." He shifts from calling to castigating and threatening physical harm in the form of "pain of torture". As for the "airy word," it seems to be meant as a form of *flatus vocis*, calling for the wind to carry off words. What also appears with equal clarity is that this is not the case, since the "civil brawls" are "bred airy word" such that "words" are "airy" in a way that integrates them into a world of shifting, fertile materiality of which air partakes as an element.[70]

When Spellberg asserts then that "[i]n Shakespeare's Verona, the means of understanding the world has been largely divorced from its material referentiality," this is at best only half the picture. With regards to materiality in the play, if "[t]he few things that are material are constantly threatened by an absorption into language",[71] this is true only to the extent that the things that are linguistic are also constantly threatened by an absorption into a logic of materiality and physicality. *Flatus vocis*, made literal so to speak in the material trope of words as air, does not obtain its usual deflationary sense in the opening of *Romeo and Juliet*, nor does it serve in the general frame of the tragedy to lightly defuse tensions as it does in the comedies according to Elam. Although Juliet seems to yearn for this kind of language in her "What's in a name?" speech (2.2.43), the possibility that the play might be relieved of its sticky association of words and things by an overarching comic nominalism may be foreclosed in that here, words are precisely not light enough to be "carried off on the wind." The focus on the inseparability of words and things in the opening of *Romeo and*

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[69] It can be noted that even affective dispositions are in the Prince's speech consistently rendered in material terms: as in Benvolio's account of the fight *defiance* is *breathed* and *scorn* is *hissed* by the winds, so *rage* is here a *fire* and *hate* is *cankered*. The scene is set for Romeo to link the affect *love* with the material traces of the fight, introducing the association of love and materiality in the play.

[70] Knapp, *Immateriality*, 146. Knapp alludes to early modern conceptions of air as life and air as a contaminating threat to life, noting an identification of air as "something, albeit something ostensibly insensible" rather than "nothing." In the context of his analysis of Falstaff's "honour" speech in *I Henry IV*, he sees the material corruptive power attributed to "breath/air/life" extending to "corruption of language."

[71] Spellberg, "Feeling Dreams," 64.

Juliet might be read as a generic announcement, threading the first scene into the eye of the prologue's needle: if the comedies frequently end on the note of symbolic representation fading into air, as instantiated, most famously perhaps, in *The Tempest*: "These our actors, / As I foretold you, were all spirits and / Are melted into air, into thin air," Shakespearean tragedy seems to tend more often towards foreclosing dissolution as resolution early on in their development, often signaling a permanence of spoken language in the form of *writing* (4.1.148-50).[72]

Looking at a comparable evaporation in *Macbeth*: "…what seemed corporal melted / As breath into the wind,"[73] it appears that the ambiguous physicality and uncertain materiality of those who are termed "imperfect speakers" (1.3.69) has everything to do with how their words should be taken:[74] dissolution here breeds irresolution. "Would they had stayed!" (1.3.80-1) One might go so far as to say that such resistance to dissolution might even be construed as formative of the tragedy, laying the conditions for the events of the play to unfold, as the tragic working out of dark meanings in airy words.[75] Hamlet's *cupio dissolvi*: "O, that this too too solid flesh would melt / Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew" (1.2.129-

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[72] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed July 8, 2020, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=12.

[73] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed July 8, 2020, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=13.

[74] "BANQUO. The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, / And these are of them. Whither are they vanish'd? / MACBETH. Into the air. . ." (1.3.78-80).

[75] Though the witches disappear, their words stick and have acquired, by the time they reach Lady Macbeth, the form and force of *writing*. In *Totalité et Infini*, Emmanuel Lévinas relates the phenomenology of the witches' speech to Descartes' *malin génie*, arguing that their dissimulative spectacle gestures towards silence, carrying speech beyond the usual opposition between lying and telling the truth: the witches' speech does not so much dissimulate the speakers as it does remove speech from the realm of communication. The witches speak an "antilangage," or "l'envers du langage" [the reverse side of language], "comme un rire qui cherche à détruire le langage" [as a laugh that seeks to destroy language], a form of speech to which one cannot possibly respond, and curiously, a laughter which, far from dissipating tensions in comedic release, announce tensions to come through a foreboding sense of derisive irony, emanating from obscure agents. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini : Essai sur l'extériorité* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1990), 92. These characteristics of a speech which responds only with silence and threatens the communicative dimension of dialogue are also found in Socrates' critique of *writing* in Plato's *Phaedrus*, as Derrida reads it in "La Pharmacie de Platon." Jacques Derrida, *La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972).

30),[76] is also an impossible dissolution, this time of flesh by the power of words: Hamlet has words, but not those of Prospero which might magically resolve in the dissolution of fiction. A few lines later, "Heaven and earth! Must I remember?" signals to another, interior, undoable permanence, which later becomes a receptacle for this play's supernatural airy words (parallel to *Macbeth*):

> HAMLET. O all you host of heaven! O earth! what else?
> . . .
>   . . .Remember thee!
> Yea, from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
> All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
> That youth and observation copied there;
> And thy commandment all alone shall live
> Within the book and volume of my brain,
> Unmixed with baser matter: yes, by heaven! (1.5.92-104)

Here too, the suspicious words of a suspicious supernatural being are written. When Hamlet decides to erase what records have already been inscribed in his memory, this once again presents a dissolution that is formative of the tragedy rather than a release from the play's dramatic tensions. In the tragic universe of Othello, it does not take much human substance for light words to grow strong:

> IAGO.   . . .Trifles light as air
> Are to the jealous confirmations strong
> As proofs of holy writ: this may do something.
> The Moor already changes with my poison:
> Dangerous conceits are, in their natures, poisons.
> Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
> But with a little act upon the blood
> Burn like the mines of Sulphur. (3.3.319-26.1)[77]

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[76] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed July 8, 2020, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=2.

[77] William Shakespeare, *Othello*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed July 8, 2020, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=9.

In adding to empty words but "a little act upon the blood," Iago portrays himself as an alchemist running an experiment on the sulphurous potential of conceits.[78] As "Trifles light as air" grow strong, by their addition to mere, insubstantial sulphurous vapours, they become "proofs of holy writ." Airy words, in tragedy, do not get dissipated, they get written. In a play that would "wage against the enmity of the air" (2.4.204) and "outface / The winds and persecutions of the sky" (2.3.11-2), in the absence this time of any supernatural presence,[79] Lear's "Nothing will come of nothing: speak again" (1.1.90) is perhaps the highest tragic expression of a principle whereby speech, that "nothing," far from resolving much ado into nothing, necessarily both generates – not lands and material wealth as it might have for Cordelia – reality and dismantles it. Shakespearean tragedy is no less a theatrical fiction, only in such a way that the fiction of theatricality marks the beginning, not the end of dramatic tension.[80]

Having identified materiality as a recurrent thematic feature in the tragedies, I now return to the Verona of *Romeo and Juliet* in order to present the main configurations of materiality, and how these intersect with rhetorical dynamics. I strive to link, in what follows, the metaphors of materiality at the opening of the play with great narrative accounts of cosmogony in an effort to reflect on what is at stake in the insistent figured materializations of the spoken word in the play.

3. *Cosmogonies and contraries*

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[78] Hamlet invests a similar conceit when he speaks of the "baser matter" of his memory, to which the Ghost's command will not be mixed, only he does so in a way which makes his own mind the object of the experiment.

[79] Othello, after having taken trifles for "holy writ" under Iago's influence, both sees Iago as a devil and, remarkably, unravels this vision, though he still casts the blame on Iago, a "demi-devil" (5.2.298) then. As the Ghost in *Hamlet* the Witches from *Macbeth* who put their finger to their lips to indicate silence, the notion that Iago "ensnared" Othello's "soul and body" remains an incomplete account, receding into a *tacet*: "Demand me nothing: what you know, you know: / From this time forth I never will speak word" (5.2.300-1).

[80] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed July 8, 2020, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=11.

Not long after the brawl, on discovering signs of the struggle, Romeo exclaims:

> ROMEO. Here's much to do with hate, but more with love.
>   Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!
>   O any thing, of nothing first create!
>   O heavy lightness! serious vanity!
>   Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
>   Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!
>   Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!
>   This love feel I, that feel no love in this. (1.1.175-82)

Leaving aside for the moment the Petrarchan undertones running through the speech, there is another intertext to be examined here. In the Oxford edition of the play, Jill Levenson reads this passage as a recasting of Genesis 1.1-2, but it might also be read as a reference to the opening of Ovid's cosmogony in Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses*.[81] Romeo's chaos of shapes, together with his elemental oxymora, echo the Ovidian account of a specifically material chaos of prime matter with its implicit notion of creation as separation and distinction of physical opposites:

> Of shapes transformde to bodies straunge, I purpose to entreate,
> . . .
> Before the Sea and Lande were made, and Heaven that all doth hide,
> In all the worlde one onely face of nature did abide,
> Which *Chaos* hight, a huge rude heape, and nothing else but even
> A heavie lump and clottred clod of seedes togither driven,
> Of things at strife among themselves, for want of order due.
> . . .
> No kinde of thing had proper shape, but ech confounded other.
> For in one selfesame bodie strove the hote and colde togither,
> The moist with drie, the soft with hard, the light with things of weight.
> This strife did God and Nature breake, and set in order streight.
> The earth from heaven, the sea from earth, he parted orderly,
> And from the thicke and foggie ayre, he tooke the lightsome skie.

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[81] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 156. Lisa Starks-Estes claims the play as a whole to be an "Ovidian tragedy" in the context of an argument about Ovid as a model for the development of Shakespeare's "perspectives on the power of creativity and transformation." Jonathan Bate analyzes the intertext with the cosmological myth of Phaeton in the play as a moment that both foreshadows and follows "tragedy, the moment of separation." Lisa Starks-Estes, *Violence, Trauma, and Virtus in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays: Transforming Ovid* (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 162; Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 177.

> Which when he once unfolded had, and severed from the blinde
> And clodded heape, he setting eche from other did them binde
> In endlesse friendship to agree. . . . (1.1-25)[82]

It is of crucial importance to note that the divine act that brings about the existence of the world as recounted by Ovid appears more as a shaping of preexisting materials, as this contrasts with the *fiat* of the Genesis account of creation. Citing a portion of the same passage from the *Metamorphoses*, Philippa Berry recognizes that "[t]his idea of prime matter was heretical because it contradicted the Christian doctrine of creation from nothing (ex nihilo),"[83] to which Romeo also refers in "O any thing of nothing first create!" In his awkwardly fabricated analogy between outer public unrest and private inner turmoil, between hate's unruly violence and the vehemence of unrequited love, Romeo problematically meshes together the creationary narrative of Genesis 1 and that of *The Metamorphoses*.[84] How does this mythological substrate relate to Romeo's forlorn lover idiom? What is at stake in the metaphorical use of foundational accounts of the world in Romeo's first monologue, at the opening of the play? How might one read the uneasy vacillation between Christian doctrine and pagan myth when it comes to depicting the material origins of the world?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to understand how the speech may be related to late-sixteenth-century vitalism, an alternative view on materiality to the more common Aristotelean take on matter during the Renaissance. Discussing "an aspect of the

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[82] Ovid, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*: *The Arthur Golding Translation*, ed. John Nims (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books 2000).

[83] Berry, *Endings*, 17.

[84] The thematic problematicity of the speech is reinforced by a metrical, grammatical and predicative breakdown. The speech begins with regular iambs and a sentence with a main verb and a clear idea. As the sentence structure is reduced to a series of apostrophes, the meter becomes increasingly erratic, until Romeo lands on his feet again in the final couplet, in the kind of diction which the speech began. Arguably, the leading rhetorical lines of oxymoron and antithesis are not enough to make the speech rhetorically accomplished: although the first line creates expectations of a well-balanced period exploring the opposition with which it begins, the reduction of opposition to a declaimed, or exclaimed, list of short would hardly have passed as much of a development of the opening idea from the perspective of Renaissance rhetoric and poetics.

contemporary mimesis of classical myth which becomes especially marked in England during the 1590s," Philippa Berry argues that an increased awareness of the pagan origin of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* played into literary meditations upon originary matter in works such as Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*. [85] She links this double concern for classical literary antecedent and the material origins of the world to "the emergence, in late sixteenth-century natural philosophy, of a new animist materialism. . . whose view of matter differs both from the Aristotelianism of the schoolmen and also from the mechanical philosophy of the seventeenth century."[86] In the Aristotelian hylomorphic conception of matter held by the Catholic Church, form determines and gives shape to an otherwise inanimate matter. Drawing on a large and varied body of recently translated texts such as "Plato's *Timaeus*, Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, the *Orphic Hymns*, the *Hermetica*, some fragments of the thought of Empedocles and other pre-Socratic philosophers, and the texts of Cicero and Plutarch,"[87] the Renaissance vitalist conception of materiality, Berry argues, is also indebted to the Stoicist concept of *prima materia*, and to Epicurean physics. These philosophies were engaged with during the Renaissance following the rediscovery of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* in the fifteenth century, as well as through their influence on Cicero and, later, Petrarch.[88] Among this variety of ancient physics, Stoicism's monistic doctrine of matter proved most influential, with its view that matter is animated by a

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[85] Philippa Berry, "Renewing the Concept of Renaissance: The Cultural Influence of Paganism Reconsidered," in *Textures of Renaissance Knowledge*, ed. Philippa Berry and Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 25-6.

[86] Berry, "Renewing," 26.

[87] Berry, *Endings*, 14.

[88] For an account of the influence of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* on Renaissance conceptions of the interrelatedness of language and physics, letters and atoms, or text and physical matter, see Gerard Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011).

pantheistic *spiritus*, described as a combination of air and fire.[89] Renaissance vitalism, borrowing from this view of an inherently animate matter, conflicts therefore with Aristotle's understanding of hylomorphic substances as perishable as well as his view, in *De Anima* III.5, on the immortality of the intellective soul insofar as this argument was used in the Scholasticism of the Church to argue in favor of the Christian belief in the immortality of the human soul as opposed to the mortal body.

Aristotle's distinction between a formal cause (organization or structure) and a material cause (matter) in his quadripartite conception of causality accounting for why and how things are, move and change, was later developed by Scholastics into a hierarchical relation, form determining matter. Renaissance vitalism, crucially, departs from this idea by conferring agency to matter, drawing from an Epicurean view that every part of the universe is connected to the rest of it through organic sympathies and antipathies.[90] Leah Marcus goes so far as to assert in "*King Lear* and the Death of the World" that "[m]any early modern vitalists held that objects could experience emotions and sympathies, and that these ties could connect them even across considerable distances, as in the ties of bodies posited in alchemical and astrological proto-scientific thought."[91] Like Berry, Marcus argues for the importance of vitalism as an influential current of thought at the time Shakespeare wrote,

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[89] Brian P. Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 13-14 and 196-200.

[90] Berry, *Endings*, 16. See also Lynn Joy, "Scientific Explanation from Formal Causes to Laws of Nature," in *The Cambridge History of Science,* vol. 3, ed. Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 70-105.

[91] Leah Marcus. "*King Lear* and the Death of the World," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 424. It is interesting to note that even Aristotelian entelechy is interpreted and appropriated as a vitalist process, reading Aristotle as a thinker of monism and immanence in lieu of the dualism and transcendence that Christian Scholastics attributed to him in order to ensure his compatibility with the Christian doctrine of the soul-body distinction. See also Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance*, 78-119.

acknowledging its multiform and rarely systematic elaborations with diverse entities or images presented as the source of life or prime principle of motion:[92]

> Early modern vitalism was pervasive and took many cultural forms, none of them particularly methodical: the 'entelechy' of Aristotle and 'vital spirits' of Galen, the 'Archeus' or vital force of Paracelsus, the world soul of Hermetic philosophy, and some strains of Christian ontology that argued for the pervasiveness and immanence of the divine, as in Cabbalistic teachings and Thomas Vaughan's 'Light of Nature … the Secret Candle of God'.[93]

The influence of vitalist ideas is notably perceptible in Romeo's speech through the literary motif of *discordia concors*. Appealing to Thomas McAlindon's *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos*, Berry supports the idea of a connection between paradoxicality in Shakespeare's tragedies and "Empedoclean theories of the strife between the elements, which was chiefly responsible for the popularity in Renaissance thought of ideas of *discordia concors* or the harmony of the contraries."[94] Leaving aside the larger discussion about paradox and tragedy, what we see at work in Romeo's impromptu metaphors appears to be a perfect illustration of the metaphysical notion of elemental tension in the fabric of the universe. Empedocles' Strife of the elements is all the more relevant in Romeo's speech considering that Strife is only half the picture when it comes to interactions between elements as described in Empedocles' extant fragments. The opposite and equal force governing the interplay between elements is none other than Love (*Philotes*). Bodies are to Empedocles associations of elements brought together by a cosmic force of Love, whereas the decay of those same bodies is the result of Strife or Hate (*Neikos*) between the elements constituting the body:

> I shall tell thee a twofold tale. At one time it grew to be one only out of many; at another, it divided up to be many instead of one. There is a double becoming of

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[92] This is corroborated in Copenhaver and Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 288-9.

[93] Marcus, 424.

[94] Thomas McAlindon. *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), cited in Berry, *Shakespearean Endings*, p. 14.

perishable things and a double passing away. The coming together of all things brings one generation into being and destroys it; the other grows up and is scattered as things become divided. And these things never cease continually changing places, at one time all uniting in one through Love, at another each borne in different directions by the repulsion of Strife. [95]

The human moment in this endlessly recurring cosmic struggle occurs in the middle of the progression from total Love to total Strife, as affinity and combination give way to distinction and separation. Noticeable especially in the Ovid quote from *The Metamorphoses*, Empedoclean materialism can also be felt in Romeo's speech as well as in the rest of the play, in the forms in which it would have been available to Shakespeare.[96]

That Shakespeare, after Ovid, borrows this Empedoclean framework of love and strife, variously referred to in the period as concord and discord, union and division, amity and enmity, sympathies and antipathies, should come as no surprise given the frequent allusions to Empedocles by Classical and early modern authors alike, specifically to credit him with the materialist view of a universe alternating between cycles of concord and discord and in which souls, being material and lodged in the blood, are not immortal.[97] An interesting

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[95] John Burnet. *Ancient Greek Philosophy* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1920), 203.

[96] An example of such forms may be found in the writings of Lucretius. Influenced by Empedocles to the extent that he commends him for his accomplishments, interacting with his Greek forerunner at length, Lucretius would have constituted a sturdy Latin vehicle for Empedoclean theories to early modern English readers. Eric Langley claims such a Lucretian heritage to *Venus and Adonis*, regarding the materiality of love in Venus's courtship of Adonis culminating in their kiss: "As Lucretius' lovers squeeze together, attempting total union, so too do Venus and the momentarily overwhelmed Adonis." Eric Langley, *Narcissicm and Suicide in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 78. For a recent discussion of the literature on Empedocles's influence on Lucretius, see Jason S. Nethercut, "Empedocles' 'Roots' in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*," *American Journal of Philology* 104, no. 1 (2017): 85-105. Passannante also mentions Henri Estienne's *Poesis philosophica* (1573) as a possible influence on the work of Francis Bacon, observing that "the idea of assembling pre-Socratic wisdom became more common among scholarly men of Bacon's generation." Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance*, 145.

[97] Although fragments attributed to Empedocles only mention the cosmogony resulting from the cosmic shift from unity to separation, interpretations exist in which a converse world might come to pass through the opposite movement from separateness to aggregation, as K. Scarlett Kingsley and Richard Parry acknowledge: "Certainly, the symmetry of the fundamental principle might suggest a second cosmogony. However, we do not find in the remains of Empedocles' poem a description of another cosmogony, one taking place under the influence of Love. Of course, that we do not find one does not mean that it did not exist, given the fragmentary nature of the text. In fact, Aristotle suggests in a number of places (*De Caelo* II 13, 295a29; *De Generatione et Corruptione* II 7, 334a5) that Empedocles was committed to such a second cosmogony. But he says Empedocles shied away from holding to such a cosmogony because it is not reasonable to posit a cosmos

example is the 1594 translation of the French Classical scholar Louis Leroy's *Douze livres de la vicissitude ou variété des choses de l'univers*:

> *Empedocles* maintayned, not of discord by it selfe, but that with concord, it was the beginning of all things: meaning by discord, the varietie of things that are assembled, and by concord, the vnion of them: But the vnion in this assemblie ought to exceede the contrarietie: Otherwise the thing should be dissolued, the principles diuiding themselues: So we see in the Heauen contrarie mouings to preserue the world: Venus pla|ced in the midst neere vnto Mars, to asswage his fircenes, which of his owne nature is corruptiue: And Iupiter next vnto Saturne, to mitigate his malice.[98]

The assignment of the cosmic principles of concord and discord to planetary bodies points not only to early modern astrological theories of correspondences between the celestial bodies and humors in the case of Venus, bearing influence on erotic love, and Mars, on strife, but also to the heavens and the underworld in the references to Jupiter and Saturn, yielding an image of the affective and moral as well as spiritual universe. It is important to note that these correspondences are between different kinds of material entities, and Leroy goes on to list a great number of "bodies" in which the structure of contraries allows for fundamental distinctions in bodily structure:

> There are found in the bodie of the world, Earth, Water, Aire, Fire; Sunne, Moone, and o|ther starres: There is matter, forme, priuation, simplicitie, mixtion, sub|stance, quantitie, qualitie, action, and passion.[99]

The list he compiles further contains the human body, the economical and politic bodies, as well as art, music, grammar, the sciences, physic and ethics. It is not clear from this list to what extent distinctions which seem evident to a modern reader such as between literal and

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coming to be from elements already separated—as though cosmogony can only happen through the separation of elements out of a previously blended condition of them all (*De Caelo*, III 2, 301a14)." K. Scarlett Kingsley and Richard Parry, "Empedocles," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed 21 September 2022, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/empedocles.

[98] Louis Leroy, *Of the Interchangeable Course. . . . Written in French by Loys Le Roy Called Regius: And Translated into English by R.A.Fovid* (London, 1594), "Early English Books Online," accessed July 8, 2020, https://search.proquest.com/docview/2240944167?accountid=12006.

[99] Leroy, 6.

metaphorical bodies are made by Leroy in his catalogue of bodies structured by an Empedoclean contrarietal makeup. His breakdown of grammar exemplifies the way in which the distinctions he makes are material renditions, "anatomizing", as it were, what we think of as an abstract set of symbolic relations into the three parts of "letters, vowels and mutes," which together constitute the material body of grammar. Other references to Empedocles in early modern literature also frequently focus on moral discord and public dissension, as in Thomas Floyd's *The Picture of a Perfit Common Wealth*:

> These first motions, being bred and formed in that part, by meanes of the obiect which presenteth it selfe, doe passe forth in continently into the irascible part of the minde, that is to say, to that part, where the soule seekes all meanes possible of obtaining or auoyding that which seemeth vnto her good or bad: for the auoiding hereof we must not imitate nature which, as Empedocles saieth, vseth no other means to destroy, ruinate and ouerthrow her creatures, then discord, & sedition. . . .[100]

Once again, the analysis of how sedition is bred appears as strikingly material. To the direct sources of sedition, it is also important to note that the author adds "nature" as a corrupter of "her creatures" in a reading which seems to borrow even Empedocles' pagan spiritual picture of the world in place of the expected Christianization which is elsewhere applied in the period to non-Christian thinkers.

Though Ovid may remain the most likely candidate for an explanation of the presence of Empedoclean contraries in Romeo's monologue, the speech as well as the generalized resort to *discordia concors* in the very project of the play may also stem from the culture's engagement at large with the theories of Empedocles. Sacvan Bercovitch provides a handy outline of the transmission of Empedoclean thought to the English Renaissance, showing how this body of thought was made available to early modern readers. Commented on by Plotinus, Empedocles' notion of cycle was thenceforth given a Platonizing interpretation, causing

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[100] Thomas Floyd, *The Picture of a Perfit Common Wealth* (London, 1600), "Early English Books Online," accessed July 8, 2020, https://search.proquest.com/docview/2240884349?accountid=12006.

subsequent Neoplatonists to "*specifically,* 'translate Empedocles' cycle into terms of the neo-Platonic antithesis between the 'sensible and intelligible worlds'."[101] Bercovitch adds that "Giordano Bruno widens the meaning of this 'twofold nature' to include the intellect-will struggle– 'ascent proceeds in the soul from the faculty and tendency which. . . are in the intellect and the intellective will, by which the soul naturally directs itself and aims toward God. . . as Empedocles well said'."[102] He goes on to argue that Empedoclean thinking began to be referenced in literature throughout Europe in this Platonized form. Adding the Platonic structure of sensible and intellective to the reading of Love as an act of the intellect directing the soul toward God, it is hardly surprising to note that the examples Bercovitch gives of references to Empedocles come from treaties on love and humanist love poetry.[103] One such use is from Gabriel Harvey's 1573 poem *The Scollers Loove: or Reconcilement of Contraries*,[104] which, as Jennifer Richards presents it in "Gabriel Harvey's Choleric Writings," "relates the tribulations of a philosopher's love affair and the fickleness of his beloved, . . . though this soon descends into parody."[105] To Richards, this poem "tries to understand positively the experience of contrariety, recognizing that 'All societies consist of contraryes'," and advocates that "moderation is crucial to managing one's body and emotions, which, according to contemporary humoral physiology, are always in flux".[106] The

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[101] Clara E. Millerd, *On the Interpretation of Empedocles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908), quoted in Sacvan Bercovitch, "Empedocles in the English Renaissance," *Studies in Philology* 51, No. 1 (1968): 71.

[102] Giordano Bruno, *De gli eroici furori*, quoted in Bercovitch, "Empedocles," 72.

[103] Bercovitch cites examples from Leone's *Philosophy of Love* and Rabelais' *Pantagruel*, 72.

[104] "Did not Empedocles (…) / Say all things were create / Of contraryes by Fate? / Withoute all exception I subscribe to his opinion. / In honour of humanity / I reverence contrariety. (…) / Trust me no better axiomes in topicis / Than those same be De oppositis." Gabriel Harvey, "The Scollers Loove: or Reconcilement of Contraries," in Gabriel Harvey, *Letter-Book of Gabriel Harvey, A. D. 1573-1580*, ed. E. J. Long Scot (London: Nichols, 1884), 133.

[105] Jennifer Richards, "Gabriel Harvey's Choleric Writings," in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature 1485-1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 667.

[106] Richards, 667.

contrarietal makeup of society and psychology, explicitly related by Harvey to Empedocles, helps to identify the latter as having been received on the late Tudor literary scene as a candidate to be credited as the original thinker of the structure of contraries, not only in the sense of cosmic forces, but as powers resisting individual freedom, like Harvey's lovelorn philosopher who is met with contrariety, an experience that directs him to reading Aristotle as well as modern-day fables treating on reconcilement with contrariety.

The interplay between competing accounts of cosmogony in Romeo's speech (a kind of *discordia concors* in itself) bears significantly on wider rhetorical and material problematics in *Romeo and Juliet*. Although the culture of Petrarchan imitation, ripe for parody by the time Shakespeare wrote, is a more likely source for Romeo's comically naïve rhapsodizing, it is interesting to note with Richards that Harvey also puts immature and underdeveloped amorous verse into his philosopher figure's mouth in *The Scollers Loove*.[107] Bearing in mind it is sometimes assumed that Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost* was written as a parody of Harvey himself in the context of competing desires between the erotic knowledge of women and scholarly learning,[108] Harvey's poetizing protagonist, mocked by his author in *The Scollers Loove*, presents a suggestive antecedent to the character of Romeo, whose dialogue with Benvolio in the rest of I.2 about forgetting Rosaline features an impressive number of metaphors of higher learning,[109] their exchange ending with the words:

> ROMEO. Farewell: thou canst not teach me to forget.
> BENVOLIO. I'll pay that doctrine, or else die in debt. (1.1.237-8)

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[107] Richards, 666-7.

[108] For a discussion of the alleged inspirations for the character of Holofernes throughout the critical history of the play, see Felicia Hardison Londré, "Love's Labour's Lost and the Critical Legacy" in *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays*, ed. Felicia Hardison Londré (London: Routledge, 1997), 3-40.

[109] This aspect is further developed in Chapter 2.

This is to argue that Shakespeare necessarily drew from Harvey's *A Scholar's Loove* – the parodic image of the lovelorn fledgling poet was far from uncommon at the time. But the combination of an Empedoclean cosmic structure of Strife that challenges such a figure as Harvey's protagonist and causes him to convert erotic desire to intellectual aspiration paints an interesting picture of a late humanist engagement with courtly love poetry in relationship to Romeo,[110] who later shows himself incapable either of reconciliation to "the Prince's doom" (3.3.4): "Not body's death, but body's banishment" (3.3.11), or of moderation in his display of emotion at this point, leading the Friar, champion of moderation in the play,[111] to some harsh words: "Art thou a man? thy form cries out thou art: / Thy tears are womanish; thy wild acts denote / The unreasonable fury of a beast" (3.3.111). Romeo's effusion of tears – a watery and thus female element – vastly upsets whatever humoral balance he had in such a way that the Friar's "armour" (3.3.55) against contrariety, "Adversity's sweet milk, philosophy" (3.3.56), also Harvey's remedy in *The Scollers Loove*, is rejected by Romeo who would "Hang up philosophy" (3.3.58). It is also interesting to note the echo of the Prince's earlier castigation, "you beasts" (1.1.83): here too, Aristotle's shadow looms, cast perhaps by Harvey's scholar's copy of Aristotle's *Politics*:

> I am shaken, like a kixe,
> With a thousand sutch fittes;
> And yet returne at laste
> To my accustomid taske;
> As close at Tullyes Orations and Aristotles Politickes. (3.3.115)

Harvey's protagonist finds solace in Aristotle's *Politics*, whereas Romeo, also shaken, to the point of beastly unreason in the Friar's eyes, turns a cold shoulder to the staying, humanizing power of philosophy, tossed about by the unruly strife and of his elemental humors. "I

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[110] That Harvey is in fact a major literary figure in his time is an argument made by Richards (and her editors): "To place Gabriel Harvey at the beginning of this part of the book is to assert his centrality to Elizabethan literary culture." Richards, 655.

[111] He even specifically advises: "love moderately" (2.6.14).

thought thy disposition better temper'd" (3.3.115). the Friar continues, adding an alchemical tinge to his vocabulary, "Thy noble shape is but a form of wax, / Digressing from the valour of a man" (3.3.126-7). He thus recapitulates Aristotle's hylomorphism to the point of borrowing the famous wax-and-seal metaphor for body and soul from Aristotle's *De Anima*.[112] Romeo's corporeal behavior is deemed highly problematic as the materiality of his body seems either to be escaping the *seal* of the formal cause, or to be formed by some new seal deforming his "noble shape" into the – in the friar's logic – degraded form either of a woman or of a beast. What is most interesting in this passage is that images of Empedoclean materialism and elemental Strife therefore take over, in the properly material overactivity of Romeo's gushing, where the Friar's presumably consciously Aristotelean attempt to describe Romeo's physical disposition leaves off.[113]

Throughout most of his literary career, Harvey remains intent on promoting moderation in rhetoric, whether literary or other. The lack of moderation displayed eminently by Ovid under Augustan rule is perceived by Harvey as an unacceptable threat to the order of the state:

> No publicke security without private moderation. . . . Youth is youth: & age corruptible: better an hundred Ovides were banished then the state of Augusts endangered, or a sovereign Empire affected. Especially in a tumultuous age.[114]

The transformation undergone by his enamored philosopher in *The Scollers Loove* is conservative in tone and the *contraries* he faces are accordingly *reconciled*. Harvey's use of Empedocles thus allows him to further his recurring agenda to encourage moderation in the face of adversity. By contrast, it should be said of Shakespeare that he is Empedoclean partly via Ovid's literary affiliation to the Pre-Socratic thinker. The references to Ovid in Romeo's

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[112] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 412b, trans. Mark Schiffman (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2011), 49-50.

[113] This passage is analyzed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

[114] Gabriel Harvey, *Four Letters and Several Sonnets* (1592), quoted in Richards, 663.

first attempt at Petrarchism rather open the world of the play to a wider instability than the personal, emotional turmoil depicted by Harvey. The "chaos" from Romeo's speech, although spoken through the mouth of an emotionally distraught youth, characterizes Romeo's social world but also, formally, the intertextual apparatus in the metaphors of his speech. As Romeo attempts to pair interior striving with exterior strife and one thing with its contrary ("love"-"hate"; "mis-shapen"-"well-seeming";…), he also assimilates two incompatible creationary narratives and in so doing, alarmingly, lists the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* in a series of oxymorons, even revealing the fundamental contrarietal structure in "any thing of nothing first create," as if making it just another element in a series of Empedoclean-Ovidian opposites, in other words, as if perceiving God's *fiat* to be subordinated to a deeper cosmic structure of natural contraries. This is, after all, the case in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the original elemental strife is settled by "God and Nature," (the word "and" used in Ovid to differentiate on the level of predication rather than to distinguish between separate referents), the divine act appearing more as mediation than originary creation.[115] If Romeo's later lack of moderation might have earned him banishment alongside Ovid in Harvey's view, his syncretism in this speech opens him to more serious charges of heresy. In what follows, I pursue my consideration of Romeo and material metaphor by shifting attention to a more specifically elemental trope, moving back from the vast cosmological structure of contrariety to the concrete level of elemental materiality and the body in order to observe how the play's Ovidian vitalism sits vis-à-vis a Christian discourse of end times.

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[115] An implication of the monism and immanence of vitalism, whether ancient or early modern, is that the divine, if it is to exist at all, is one and the same with nature, although Christian-argued accounts of God acting through nature would not have necessarily made the position incompatible with the supremacy of God in the Christian worldview. This is the sense of Golding's translation of the Latin "*deus*" – usually rendered "a god" – as "God" as well as his dissimulation of the identification of "*deus*" with "melior. . . natura," or "a better nature," which stands in opposition to the preceding chaos of "*natura*" at the opening of the poem. Not only is the divine a mediator rather than a creator *ex nihilo*, it appears, if anything, merely as nature's more favorable aspect.

4. Elemental metaphors and doomsday

The structure of a primal mediation of elemental strife occurs in the midst of the fray itself in the Prince's address to the brawlers, in images both of the Love-Strife antagonism as well as in Empedoclean quadripartite materialism.[116] In Golding's Ovid, "God and Nature" end the elemental strife by *parting orderly* the elements, "he setting eche from other did them binde in endless friendship to agree." First comes parting, as in Benvolio's description of the Prince's intervention: "While we were interchanging thrusts and blows, / Came more and more and fought on part and part, / Till the prince came, who parted either part." This is followed in Ovid by a bind to indefinite friendship. Although he also binds the feuding families to enduring peace, the Prince does not specifically bind them to friendship. On the other hand, this is explicitly what Romeo subsequently attempts when, problematically according to Mercutio, he *comes between* ("Why the devil came you between us?" [3.1.102-3]) the latter and Tybalt during their duel, crying "Hold, friends! friends, part" (3.1.165), according to Benvolio's later recounting of the events that caused the death of Mercutio, kinsman to the Prince. Romeo thus steps in as a neutral arbiter, in Mercutio's place then, failing, as Benvolio did earlier, to talk Tybalt out of strife. Attributing his desire to see Tybalt and Mercutio both as friends to a reprehensible *softening* brought about by his amorous relationship to Juliet, Romeo foreshadows the Friar's disapproval of his "feminine" reactions, in elemental, alchemical terms: "O sweet Juliet, / Thy beauty hath made me effeminate / And in my temper soften'd valour's steel!" (3.1.113-5)

Similarly to the metallurgic metaphor and pun in the last quote, images of alternation between Love and Strife in the play are generally supported by an elemental conceit. I have already noted some of the material images to which the Prince resorts in his opening speech,

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[116] The *Fragments* are split into two parts usually referred to as *On Nature* and *Purifications*. Fundamentally to the history of vitalism, the first part introduces the notion of earth, water, air and fire as the four basic elements.

and although this may appear strained, these observations may be refined such as to find references in the speech to each of the four elements of Empedocles' natural philosophy: "fire," "fountain," "ground" (as well as several references to metals), and "airy" split metaphorically into the four elements of the doctrine of quadripartite materiality. This said, as Berry remarks, a more commonly available source to Shakespeare for notions of vitalism and quadripartite materialism would likely have come from "the quasi-popular discourse of alchemy, which in the late classical period had been closely interwoven with anti-Aristotelian speculations on the nature of matter."[117] Predating the Renaissance by some several centuries, (translations of Arabic writings including books on alchemy had existed in Europe since the twelfth century), alchemical experimentation progressively morphed from a science of minerals and metallurgy, including theories on the transmutation of metals and the prolonging of life through distilled elixirs into a more abstract, holistic belief system that integrated theology and soteriology as part and parcel of its rational inquiry. It thus considered the relationship between language and the world, the metaphorical value of the idea of transmutation of base metals into gold as an image of the purification of the soul, the idea that Man's soul is divided and striving constantly to find and recover its other half, an idea that goes back to Plato's *Symposium*. In its Christianized form, alchemical thought was integrated into Ficino's Neoplatonism and reinforced its focus on rational humans living in a rational world according to a scale of correspondences from cosmic macrocosm to human microcosm. These ideas spread from the Medici court to the rest of the continent through foreign scholars educated in Florence, such as Cornelius Agrippa. Its discourse served as a framework to specialized technical discourses such as Paracelsus' medical opus, where Man's nature is divided into a material body and an astral spirit, both perishable and returning at death to their native material, respectively stellar, element; and a soul, eternal and in the

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[117] Berry, *Endings*, 18.

image of God. In England, John Dee, mathematician at the court of Elizabeth and, based on his travels and scholarly career, one of the sharpest minds of his time, was heavily engaged in Hermetical thinking, boasting one of Europe's most extensive libraries not only on alchemy but on Renaissance humanism in general. His *Monas Hieroglyphica* attests to the importance alchemy and Hermeticism held for him and his investment in these fields crossed the boundary of a generation as his son Arthur Dee also wrote influentially on both alchemy and Hermetic philosophy.[118]

Fundamental to Renaissance alchemy is a relationship to matter as a living entity as discussed earlier in relation to late-sixteenth century vitalism as Berry understands it: "Alchemy perceived matter as containing a spiritual principle that – in a process at once self-devouring and self-generating – ultimately perfects it, through repeated reversions to the state of prime matter."[119] There are two movements in this process: the first, fundamental to Berry in her reading of the poetically productive femininity of tragic endings and the category of the *preposterous* as presented in Parker's *Shakespeare from the Margins*, consists in "repeated reversion to the state of prime matter."*[120]* The other is that of progression and transcendence, the process that "ultimately perfects" matter.[121]

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[118] For a survey of the history, practices and language of Renaissance alchemists, see Wayne Shumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance: A Study in Intellectual Patterns* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 160-200. For an overview of the historiography of alchemy, see Lawrence M. Principe and William R. Newmann, "Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy," in *Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. William R. Newmann and Anthony Grafton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 385-432. On alchemy as an experimental and occult science in early modern English society, see Glyn Parry, *The Arch-Conjuror of England: John Dee* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012). On alchemy and religion, see Bruce Janacek, *Alchemical Belief: Occultism in the Religious Culture of Early Modern England* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011). For a discussion of the influence of alchemy on medieval and early modern English literature, see Stanton J. Linden, *Dark Hierogliphicks: Alchemy in English Literature from Chaucer to the Restoration* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

[119] Berry, *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings*, 18.

[120] Berry refers to the opposed prefixes of "pre" and "post" in Patricia Parker's "preposterous" as a reading of a temporality of reversion, distinct from, even opposed to, linear time. Parker, 20-55.

[121] Berry, *Endings*, 18.

Within the Christian worldview, it was not uncommon for alchemy, as a discourse constituted by analogy and metaphor, to be read as the process of separation of human soul and body, as well as of Christian souls from heathen ones in the context of the *Dies Irae*, as in Luther's *Table Talk*:

> The science of alchemy I like well, and, indeed, `tis the philosophy of the ancients. I like it not only for the profits it brings in melting metals, in decocting preparing, extracting, and distilling herbs, roots; I like it also for the sake of the allegory and secret signification, which is exceedingly fine, touching the resurrection of the dead at the last day. For, as in a furnace the fire extracts and separates from a substance the other portions, and carries upward the spirit, the life, the sap, the strength, while the unclean matter, the dregs, remain at the bottom, like a dead and worthless carcass; even so God, at the day of judgment, will separate all things through fire, the righteous from the ungodly. The Christians and righteous shall ascend upward into heaven, and there live everlastingly, but the wicked and the ungodly, as the dross and filth, shall remain in hell, and there be damned.[122]

Returning to materialism in the opening of *Romeo and Juliet* in connection with the Prince, we thus find echoes not only of metallurgic refinement, but of the Day of Judgement. Concentrating first on the former, the clearest metallurgic image in the Prince's speech is also a common one throughout the play: "mistemper'd weapons" refers to the process of tempering swords, which involves a heating and a cooling process designed to remove some of the hardness in a metal (thereby increasing its toughness, or resistance to fracture). This process is evident in Romeo's previously cited "O sweet Juliet, / Thy beauty hath made me effeminate / And in my temper soften'd valour's steel," in which the heat, presumably of love for Juliet's beauty, is construed as having thus softened a Romeo who likely finds himself lacking the sturdiness of a knight's sword. By contrast, earlier metaphorical elaborations of tempering offer a striking parallel: where love provided the heat necessary to tempering in Romeo and Juliet's relationship, affects linked to the social strife between rival clans appears to constitute the hot element in the Prince's metaphorical reading of the Capulet-Montague

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[122] Martin Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, trans. William Hazlitt, ed. Thomas Keppler (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1952; Mineola, NY: Dover, 2005), 191-2.

enmity: "What, ho! you men, you beasts, / That quench the fire of your pernicious rage / With purple fountains issuing from your veins. . . ." Quenching is an integral part of tempering and refers to the cooling of a heated metal, usually with the help of a liquid. In this case, the act of wounding, or drawing blood through a sword strike, shows the *weapons* to be metaphorically "mistemper'd" in blood.[123] The accretion of material tropes at work in the Prince's speech yields an image of his *word*, which *parts* each *part* as one of original mediation between striving elements, and one which Romeo unwittingly picks up toward the end of the scene, relating the strife trope to one of inner affective chaos brought about by the frustration of unrequited desire and, later in the play, developed into a reading of catastrophic love-tempered knightly steel that runs parallel to the Prince's castigation of the brawlers for inappropriately tempering their swords through *pernicious rage* and *fountains of blood*.

Luther's metaphorical meditation on alchemy as an image of the rapture encourages a connection between the cosmogonic strain in the opening of *Romeo and Juliet*, notably in Romeo's Ovidian chaos and in the Prince's figurative mediation of elemental strife with an aspect of the Prince's speech that is developed later in the play: the Prince's role as the voice of supreme judgment is introduced when, after having killed Tybalt, Romeo asks: "What less than dooms-day is the Prince's doom?" (3.3.9) As an eschatological episode of division and reconciliation, doomsday stands as the end-times opposite to the imagery of cosmogony at the opening of the play. This seems to be confirmed when Romeo equates the Prince's sentence of banishment with death and perdition:

ROMEO. There is no world without Verona walls,

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[123] The alchemical conceit helps to solidify the reading of "fire," "fountain," "ground" and the metallurgic images, and "airy" as constituting the four elements. Indeed, the process of tempering to which the Prince alludes involves all four elements: the heat of fire or rage; earth or the metal in swords; water to quench the hot metal or blood to quench it. As for the air in "airy word", together with Benvolio's depiction of Tybalt it appears as the element fueling the fire rather than that cooling the hot metal as it also might have been. This gives language the problematic status that I have identified in the first section of this chapter. The reference to this process yields a metaphorical significance that strengthens the Prince's rhetoric: that the fight is an inappropriate use of violence and "*canker'd*" partisans to settle a "*canker'd*" conflict.

But purgatory, torture, hell itself.
Hence-banished is banish'd from the world,
And world's exile is death: then banished,
Is death mis-term'd. (3.3.17-21)

The question of the materiality of the imagery is deepened and specified with respect to the elemental chaos at the outset of Romeo's trajectory as a lover figure. In Romeo's early images of Empedoclean materialism and the Ovidian cosmogony, the Christian account of Creation is subordinated to a broader narrative and logic of elemental origins, but this world of possibility seems to close down in his perspective as his figurative language takes a sharp turn toward the Christian notion of end-times as *Dies Irae*. Although spiritual, the eschatological conceit applies to the present physical world, as brought out in the Friar's announcement of the Prince's sentence, with the words: "Not body's death, but body's banishment" (3.3.11). He also prefaces this with a focus on the materiality of the Prince's speech act: "A gentler judgment [than death] vanish'd from his lips" (3.3.10).[124] Whatever the Friar's rhetorical strategy here, perhaps to emphasize the relative *lightness* of the grammatical sentence compared to the weight of the death sentence, there is a contrast between the words of the Prince, evanescent in matter, vanishing while bringing down a world of significance in reality (as in other tragedies examined in the previous section), and the "body" for which the word holds consequences.

As the Prince has shifted from the figure of an Ovidian god as mediator between elements at strife to that of a Protestant God as judge at *Dies Irae*, so has the sense of contrariety Romeo brought to the play at the outset evolved from a mobile, dynamic materiality, from a language of conjunction, of Love in the Empedoclean sense of a

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[124] The antithetical, affective tension in language relative to the sentence of banishment occurs also in *Richard II*, where Richard holds the other end of the stick with respect to Romeo, with different stakes though with no less anguish: "O God, O God! that e'er this tongue of mine, / That laid the sentence of dread banishment / On yon proud man, should take it off again / With words of sooth!" William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 21 September, 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=22&Act=4&Scene=1#192482, 3.3.134.

dissipation of distinctions, into an Empedoclean sense of adversity, or worldly resistance to subjective desire, found in Harvey's Reconcilement of Contraries, bringing along with it a Christian language of end-times that seems this time to take over the Classical intertext. How exactly does Romeo's private idiom fit in with the social language of Verona, or how are his metaphors of love linked to figures of Strife in a public world of hate? Why is it that these specific spheres of action and imagery which, though linked, are quite distinct at the outset of the play, have catastrophically merged in Romeo's predicament: banished from Verona and thus condemned to a "hell" of separation from Juliet? These questions contribute to setting the orientation for Chapter 2.

Conclusion

Opening with an overview of recent discussions on the concepts of materialism, materiality and immateriality in Shakespeare studies, this chapter has positioned my approach as an enquiry grounded in intellectual contexts attendant on the idea of a materiality of discourse in *Romeo and Juliet*. From a broad generic perspective, I have looked at the way speech is suggestively construed, at the outset of some of Shakespeare's tragedies, as bearing a threatening material effect, one that is usually dispelled in his comedies. I have used early modern receptions of classical vitalism and pre-Socratic cosmogony to shed light on figurations of the action and effect of speech at the opening of the play. In particular, I have described Romeo's trajectory from his first monologue to news of his banishment in Act 3.3 as shift from an Ovidian idiom of Empedoclean conjunction to a language dominated by the alchemical trope of a Christian discourse of end-times. In connecting these opening metaphors to early modern cultures of materiality, I suggest that in their relationship to material cultures they participate in setting up the play as a tragic exploration of the connection between discourse and the materiality that subtends, inheres in, or derives from it.

In the following chapter, I reverse the perspective, moving on to an exploration of rhetorical contexts feeding into the play's discourses on love preceding Romeo and Juliet's encounter. Although many of these are ironized in the figure of the early Romeo, they also shape the stakes of the play's more ambitious intersections of metaphor and agency, originating in the ethically complex sequence of the shared sonnet in 1.4. In what follows then, I investigate the sense in which the play's early metaphors of materiality not only negotiate relationships between discourse and matter, but are themselves material sites where love discourses and the materialist dynamics that often subtend them begin to be suspended, rescripted, and transformed.

2.

Crafting Procreation:

Some Early Modern Discourses on Love

Introduction

Contexts pertaining to the theme of Renaissance materiality have been presented in Chapter 1. The present chapter will in turn provide a cursory glance at some early modern rhetorical contexts relevant to this thesis, while showing how prevalent discourses of love that inform the play feed off the material dynamics identified in the previous chapter. The aim is to observe interplays between language and the physical world, both in early modern cultures of rhetoric and poetry, and in Shakespeare's staging of them in *Romeo and Juliet*. The sense of mobility and dynamism derived from the monistic frameworks of materialities built into Ovid, Empedocles and Lucretius are further explored with a focus on the agency of physical and textual/scriptorial materialities, while the image of language as a god-like act of creation carries on into an engagement with cultures of alchemical discourse and of sonnet writing. This leads to an understanding of how these cultural concerns are inscribed in metaphors of materiality that act as sites of negotiation in the play. It also allows me to begin sketching out how notions of eroticism, procreation and poetic creation are explored through an eminently metaphorical vernacular.

This chapter is divided into four parts. In the first section, I examine the shift during the Renaissance towards textual proofs of like-mindedness as a central feature in the consolidation of male friendships. This allows me to cast light on interactions between Romeo and Mercutio, especially in Act 2.3, showing how rhetoric and textuality are instrumentalized as a way to bolster male friendships, solidify certain gender roles and exclude women from affective and intellectual resonances between men. The next section is a contextualization of the signet-seal trope that characterizes the soul-body, and more largely,

the immaterial-material relationship in Renaissance reprisals of Aristotelean and Platonic depictions of matter. I base the discussion on the Friar's and the Nurse's injunctions to Romeo in 2.3, showing how Romeo's affective misconduct is repeatedly perceived as physically deforming his male-gendered body and highlighting the discursive and philosophical contexts in which these transformations may be read. I then turn to the late humanist rhetorical discourses of alchemical metaphor, Neoplatonic metaphysics and Petrarchan desire. These sections include close readings that serve to root the concerns of the preceding sections in the metaphorical substrate of the play. Together, the contexts examined in this chapter enable an understanding of how cultural discourses on love are sedimented into material metaphors in *Romeo and Juliet*, where they become open to rearticulation.

By Shakespeare's time, a prevalent culture of textuality had developed under the combined influences of the humanist educational program, the Protestant emphasis on divine revelation through Scripture, and advances in print technology. Texts had become a part of how one conceived of and spoke about the world.[1] Accordingly, the craft and trade of textual production presented a trove of conceptual metaphors for thinking through problems in terms of printing and/or textuality. Each of the following sections reflects this concern and strives to link discourses on textuality to a ubiquitous textual/imprinting metaphorization: the section on the textualization of male friendships considers the way texts, notably plays, came to function as social signs to be deciphered; the stamp/wax metaphor (akin to the printing process) depicts the body in terms of a printed text; the Platonic notion of *chora* as a material support to inscription is related to Renaissance figurations of the womb as an alchemical

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[1] Although this would mainly have concerned a literary elite, as literacy rates remained low in early modern England, even the uneducated may have been aware of the growing importance of printed texts and the increased availability of books written in English. Illiterate characters in Shakespeare's plays frequently appeal to language as a written medium, not least in *Romeo and Juliet*. In Chapter 4, I consider Capulet's Servingman as a character who cannot read yet displays a confused reverence for what he has learned from that which is written (1.2.38-44). Similarly, the Nurse appeals to the notion of alphabetic letter to secure a connection between "Romeo" and "rosemary," supposing that both must begin by the same letter, then contradicting Romeo and insisting that this letter must surely be some more refined letter than "r," which, she exclaims, is the sound a dog makes. (3.195-201)

alembic; finally, tropes of reproduction and immortality in the Petrarchan sonnet cycles are considered in light of the Platonic anabasis towards purification and new life in the last section. Thus, the chapter contributes to the development of my argument by offering crucial insights into how Shakespeare's early tragedy of young lovers relates to broad cultural perceptions of technical production, notably textual/print craft, in terms of eroticism, sexuality, union and procreation.

1. *The textualization of male friendship*

Undoubtedly one of the most prominent formal features of *Romeo and Juliet* is its explicit interactions with the Petrarchan sonnet. If Romeo is Ovidian in parts of the opening of the play, he is far more consistently Petrarchan, as Mercutio declares of him in 2.3: "Now is he for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in. Laura to his lady was but a kitchen-wench – marry, she had a better love to berhyme her. . . (2.3.37-9)."[2] On closer inspection, it appears that Romeo's identity as a Petrarchan lover is not only made fun of by Mercutio, it threatens their friendship as well as Romeo's masculinity. As in other early – and later – plays by Shakespeare, male bonding in *Romeo and Juliet* competes with the romantic relationship as far as the male lover is concerned:[3]

> MERCUTIO. Signor Romeo, *bonjour*: there's a French salutation to your French slop. You gave us the counterfeit fairly last night.
> ROMEO. Good morrow to you both. What counterfeit did I give you?
> MERCUTIO. The slip, sir, the slip – can you not conceive?
> ROMEO. Pardon, good Mercutio, my business was great, and in such a case as mine a man may strain courtesy.
> MERCUTIO. That's as much as to say, such a case as yours constrains a man to bow in the hams. (2.3.42-51)

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[2] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[3] Alan Bray reads this plot as "echoing an old prejudice that in the fourteenth century in Chaucer's *Knightes Tale* had divided its two ideal sworn brothers through the jealousy aroused by a woman." Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 198.

By punning throughout and calling out Romeo's slowness to "conceive" of his meaning, Mercutio provokes Romeo into a lengthy skirmish of bawdy quibbles.[4] The exchange takes the form of a duel of wits in the midst of which Mercutio semi-ironically cries out "Come between us, good Benvolio, my wits faints" (2.3.64-5).[5] He concludes the exchange thus:

> MERCUTIO. Why, is not this better now than groaning for love? Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo, now art thou what thou art by art as well as by nature; for this drivelling love is like a great natural that runs lolling up and down to hide his bauble in a hole. (2.4.83-7)

Not only does Mercutio deem the verbal joust superior to "groaning for love," whether this refers to sexual intercourse or to composing sonnets, he goes so far as to construe these activities as detrimental to Romeo's intellect, punning on the fool's baton and the hole in which he hides it as male and female sexual organs.[6] Female society, in his view, poses a clear threat to men.[7]

More than a form of male bonding to the exclusion of women, the practice of witty repartee as a form of sparring is meant to redress Romeo's social masculinity as a gentleman, one who must be prepared to engage in an actual duel:[8]

> BENVOLIO. Tybalt, the kinsman of old Capulet,

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[4] The pun on "conceive" sets the all-male intellectual conception up against the sexual "conceiving" Mercutio presumes Romeo has given in to during the night. It initiates a series of puns and quibbles that put sexual terms to work in a witty banter between men that appears generally hostile to women and sexual intercourse with women.

[5] The wording anticipates Romeo's mediating intervention in the actual duel between Mercutio and Tybalt as he "came. . . between" them in 3.1.102-3.

[6] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 156.

[7] *Romeo and Juliet* thus begins with a generic convention common to many of the comedies (*Much Ado about Nothing* is perhaps the best example) which highlight the converse threat male bonding poses to women and, in a generic sense, to generativity.

[8] Markku Peltonen presents dueling as an activity that reached Early Modern England through "Italianate ideology of courtesy and civility," and one which faced several waves of criticism beginning in the 1590s when lawyers and preachers refuted the practice. Markku Peltonen, *The Duel in Early Moden England: Civility, Politeness and Honour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13; 86.

> Hath sent a letter to his father's house.
> MERCUTIO. A challenge, on my life.
> BENVOLIO. Romeo will answer it.
> MERCUTIO. Any man that can write may answer a letter.
> BENVOLIO. Nay, he will answer the letter's master, how he dares, being dared.
> MERCUTIO. Alas poor Romeo, he is already dead, stabbed with a white wench's black eye, run through the ear with a love-song, the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft; and is he a man to encounter Tybalt? (2.2.6-16)

Letter-writing here functions as a general conceptual metaphor (instantiated metonymically)[9] for provoking and accepting a dual. Tybalt's letter appears as a uniquely masculine use of language, in contrast with Romeo's saliently Petrarchan linguistic relationship with a woman and the figure of Cupid, the field of dueling serving as a metaphorical vehicle to talk about love-making. At a deeper level, the metaphorical fields are reversed, and Romeo's courtly idiom is conversely figured as weak dueling.[10] The language of love in which Romeo is engaged – Mercutio pokes fun at stock Petrarchan images – seems to predispose him inevitably to being penetrated in a way that conflates bellicose dominance with sexual penetration. This double role of the penetrated and subdued was frequently attributed both to women and boys, hence Romeo's subordination, hinted at in Mercutio's provocative words, both to a woman and a youth.[11] If stabbing and shooting through the ear are familiar puns for

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[9] Ann Thompson and John O. Thompson show how the meaning of metonymies, notably those involving print, may depend on a deeper metaphorical structure in Ann Thompson and John O. Thompson, "Meaning, 'Seeing,' and Printing," in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, ed. Douglas Brooks (London: Routledge, 2005), 77. For an account of metaphor as a conceptual phenomenon, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[10] The images that Mercutio choses obscure the many ways in which Petrarchan verse also instantiates a form of male control over women. See Nancy Vickers, "Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 2 (1981): 265-79.

[11] On the analogy between womens' and boys' roles in sexuality, taking his cue from studies by Bruce Smith and Stephen Orgel, Sean Mulcahy summarily notes that "[p]ederastic homosexual relationships were built on a power structure of the man having power over the boy, just as patriarchy was concerned with the man having power over the woman." Bruce Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 75; Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 103. Sean Mulcahy, "Boy Actors on the Shakespearean Stage: Subliminal or Subversive?" *Anglistik* 28, no. 2 (2017): 104. Alan Stewart discusses early modern accusations of sex between males occurring within hierarchic relations, "between masters and their live-in servants, between tutors and students, between artisans and apprentices." Alan Stewart,

sexual penetration, and the image of the cleft pin (center of the target) of the heart and the "bow-boy's butt-shaft" ("unbarbed arrow for shooting at butts")[12] seems clearly enough to suggest sodomy, it appears that: 1. The role played by woman and boy here, albeit *in absentia* and without actually *doing* anything, is to subdue Romeo and invert the traditional sexual roles of women/boys and men, and 2. since being sexually penetrated is perceived ultimately in terms of a defeat in an armed face-off, it may not be much of an exaggeration to conclude that for Mercutio, sexual intercourse, whether between members of the opposite sex or between a man and a boy appears for the most part as a species of conflict or competition between adult men.[13]

Rhetoric plays a crucial role in practicing the kind of social performance of gender that Mercutio condones. In this respect, it is interesting to note how the metaphorical field opens with letter writing and the ability to answer before moving on to sexual penetration and the ability to spar. Accordingly, it is also through a verbal skirmish of wits that Mercutio attempts to whip Romeo the dueler back into shape, shaking the lover out of his Petrarchan daze. As Levenson notes, this scene "displays the concentrated use of rhetorical figures as the

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Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xvi. In the context of the early modern stage, Valerie Billing surveys some literature on antitheatricalist fears related to male actors, namely that they effeminized young male actors playing female roles as well as male spectators, and that they aroused in men desires of same sex relations with boys. Valerie Billing, "Gender Fluidity and the Transvestite Theater," in *A New Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney and Thomas Warren Hopper (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 447-8. On enamorment as a threat to the dominant role of men in sexuality, Lynn M. Maxwell notes how in the context of the commonly used signet-seal metaphor, literature of the early modern period identifies love as an area in which men's hearts are impressed with an image of their beloved, reversing the traditional direction of the metaphor that posits men as printing their images into women in the process of procreation, an image made to conform with the conception of sexual intercourse as a male act of penetration. This trope will be further examined in the following section. Lynn M. Maxwell, *Wax Impressions, Figures, and Forms in Early Modern Literature: Wax Works* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 64-66.

[12] Levenson, 227.

[13] This would seem distinct from the homoeroticism Gary Spear finds in male relations on the battlefield in *Troilus and Cressida*. See note 13. That Mercutio's relationship to battle is at times sexually connoted and that he more largely brings homoeroticism into the play as a character are possibilities that has been discussed extensively. See for instance Joseph A. Porter, *Shakespeare's Mercutio: His History and Drama* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1988), 156-7, Dympna Callaghan, *Romeo and Juliet: Texts and Contexts* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003), 190 and Levenson, 26. For a reading of Mercutio's aggressiveness as sexual, in line with the servants' wordplay in 1.1, see Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave, 1989; 1995; 2002), 75.

discourse of choice among Romeo's friends and as the definition of sociability for Mercutio."[14] Mercutio bonds with Romeo over a series of puns and metaphors in 2.3. Their verbal interaction serves therefore, at a third pragmatic metaphorical level,[15] to restore Romeo's masculine ability to penetrate with a sword in a duel, a form of penetration deemed more suitable for a man than sexual intercourse with a woman.[16] Thus, when Mercutio puns "Thou hast most kindly hit it" (2.3.53), meaning both that Romeo has caught his meaning and that he has had sex the night before, he sets up the "hitting on" done between men in punning about sexual relationships with women as competing directly with any actual, potentially effeminizing sexual relationship with a woman.[17] The rhetorically performed bonding around the depreciation of female company is a well-documented phenomenon in Renaissance scholarship, and one to which I now turn.

Elaborating on the theoretical model of male homosocial desire developed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick,[18] Courtney Quaintance has coined the term *textual masculinity*, a form of male solidarity in Renaissance Venice she analyses in *Textual Masculinity and the*

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[14] Levenson, 226.

[15] 1. Stabbing as penetration (visual metaphor). 2. Sex as combat (conceptual metaphor) 3. Verbal sparring as sparring with swords (pragmatic metaphor). It has been claimed of Mercutio that he harbors feelings for Romeo, and that their shared investment of sexual innuendo points towards an undeveloped homoerotic tension between the two characters. This would create a competitor to the pragmatic metaphor of "verbal sparring as sparring with swords", which would read something like "verbal sparring as homosexual love."

[16] In a similar vein, in his study of *Troilus and Cressida*, Gary Spear finds that "[n]umerous puns on the penetrability of the male body conjure the heroic ethos of warfare as both homoerotic and sodomitical, most noticeably with the double entendre of 'arms' as both military weapons and the embracing arms of a lover, a double meaning that foregrounds the antithetical nature of excessive heterosexual passion and military victory." Thus, he observes that "Achilles must redirect his heterosexual urges into the homoerotics of male combat by transferring his sexual desires from one arena to another." Gary Spear, "Shakespeare's 'Manly' Parts: Masculinity and Effeminacy in *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1993): 419.

[17] As Valerie Traub has argued: "And if 'lust' was seen as effeminizing in its power to subordinate men to women by making men more 'like' women, then anxiety about desire itself obviously infused and structured heterosexual relations." Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 1992), 64. Phyllis Rackin also claims that in the Renaissance, "excessive lust in men was regarded as a mark of effeminacy." Phyllis Rackin, *Shakespeare and Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 105.

[18] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). Sedgwick posits a "continuum between homosocial and homosexual" in relationships between men with "homosocial" defined as "social bonds between persons of the same sex. . . . In fact, it is applied to such activities as 'male bonding.'" Sedgwick, 1.

Exchange of Women in Renaissance Venice.[19] The phenomenon consisted in consolidating social bonds between men by penning and circulating literary fictions about women to the effect of feminine disparagement and exclusion as well as to enforce literary and social aspirations as strictly male privileges.[20] This argument fits with Lorna Hutson's idea, in *The Usurer's Daughter*, of a progression in the performance of male social agency in sixteenth-century England from feats of arms to the composition of literary texts as well as persuasive eloquence, which she links to the technology of print and the influence of humanism.[21] Hutson argues:

> The notion of "friendship" between men was transformed from that of a code of "faithfulness" assured by acts of hospitality and the circulation of gifts through the family and its allies, to that of an instrumental and affective relationship which might be generated, even between strangers, through emotionally persuasive communication, or the exchange of persuasive texts.[22]

This homosocial relationship also involves an "economic as well as emotional dependency" in the construction and upkeep of male social agency. Hutson thus considers the "economic implications of tropes and figures in their practical capacity to transform the conditions of exchange in the contexts of daily life," arguing that although humanist rhetoric changed practices of proofs of friendship from an economy of gift-giving and faithfulness to one of

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[19] Courtney Quaintance, *Textual Masculinity and the Exchange of Women in Renaissance Venice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

[20] Quaintance, 5-6.

[21] Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in 16th Century England* (London: Routledge, 1994). Accordingly, she traces a transformation in fiction from the medieval genres of *chanson de geste*, chivalric romance and troubadour lyric into "a literature featuring men who seem obsessed with the problem of 'reading' the probable signs of clandestine sexual activity between their wives or daughters and the male 'friends' to whom they risk having given the persuasive edge by having (in friendship) communicated too much." Hutson, 85.

[22] Hutson, 2-3. See also Lisa Jardine's chapter on Erasmian textual strategies for conveying intimacy in *Reading Shakespeare Historically* (London: Routledge, 1996), 78-97.

persuasion and like-mindedness, the fictions circulated within the new regime of friendship management also produced doubts of economic fakery and unfaithfulness.[23]

As far as women are concerned by this "textualization of friendship" between men,[24] as well as by the humanist displacement of a system of gift exchange to one of like-mindedness,[25] Hutson contends that these newly fashioned relationships fostered both "closer bonds of sympathy through the exchange of sentiments" as well as "insecurity in a new form, one that was to be far more productive (in the creation of fiction) than the insecurity that moved men to pledge their good faith in the exchange of gifts. For a radical lack of assurance now haunts – as a result of literary gifts – the signs of friendship themselves."[26] This anxiety around the ability to recognize signs of friendship (false signs often involving a vocabulary of monetary counterfeits) and thus distinguish between earnest like-mindedness and strategic flattery results in a victimization of women. In correspondences and in literary fictionalization featuring processes of persuasion, women are viewed as mere signs of a healthy, respectively treacherous friendship.[27] Thus, Hutson remarks about prose fiction in the 1560s and 1570s, which she holds to be vastly influential over Shakespearean drama in terms of formal and thematic concern,[28] that "[w]omen stand in, as victims, for the indirection or inadmissibility of the rivalry between men within the medium of persuasive argument that wins its victories by eliciting affection."[29]

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[23] Hutson, 9.

[24] Hutson, 78.

[25] Hutson, 4-9.

[26] Hutson, 6.

[27] Hutson, 112.

[28] Hutson, 12.

[29] Hutson, 112.

Though Romeo and Mercutio are not rivaling for the affection of a woman, Mercutio is nonetheless hard at work in this scene to bring out in Romeo the qualities that will keep him in an arena of male-only relationships, soliciting him in affective terms as a like-minded partner in communication, in a social performance of persuasive wit that excludes and demeans women for fear either of their effect on men or of their symbolic import in relations between men. In her chapter on Shakespeare's sonnets, Sedgwick notes how female figures thus assume the role of Ovid's pool in which Hermaphroditus is half transformed into a woman in Book IV of *The Metamorphoses*: "In the Sonnets, the pool in which this transformation takes place is the female Hell. Only women have the power to make men less than men within this world." She goes on to note that for a man to have a male rather than female beloved "is less radically threatening."[30] One reason Sedgwick gives as to why this is the case is that

> for a man to undergo even a humiliating change in the course of a relationship with a man still feels like preserving or participating in a sum of male power, while for a man to undergo any change in the course of a relationship with a woman feels like a radical degeneration of substance.[31]

On the way women are construed and symbolized in theatrical fiction of the 1580s and 1590s as the weakness, even downfall of men (as is this case in the imagery Mercutio resorts to above), Hutson demonstrates a sixteenth-century male anxiety over the "association of the persuasive technology of the dramatic fiction with a form of plot involving the *problematization of good faith between men*, and the disruption of alliance-friendships by secret love affairs."[32] Antitheatricalists worried for instance that audiences were employing the ruses witnessed on stage in real life. But on stage, "secret love affairs" were also

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[30] Sedgwick, 40.

[31] Sedgwick, 45.

[32] Hutson, 160.

symptomatic of a husband's dread of duplicity among friends, of a wife unchaste, persuaded by another man's rhetoric. Hutson thus reads *Othello* as the tragic deployment of a persuasive rhetoric that succeeds in winning over a woman's affections and public assent to the marriage, but ultimately defeats itself in its dependency for its legitimacy and in order to disprove Brabantio's accusation of dark magic on the assignment to Desdemona of a "tendency to 'err'. . . in [her] own nature."[33] Hutson finds in the literary portrayal of women fictionalizations of all-male relationships of friendship as defined by *meetings of minds*.[34] Thus, for a man, to be swayed by the wrong kind of rhetoric (the hollow sort practiced by flatterers) was proof of undiscerning wit and poor husbandry and would result in the breakdown of the economic unit of the house as well as jeopardize the symbolic capital produced in the proofs of like-mindedness among a network of friends.[35] The figure of the wife thus potentially always threatens to turn from a sign of strong husbandry and persuasiveness to a sign of male weakness in these areas. It is easy to see how it should follow from this that the anxiety over the frailty and precariousness of the textual signs of friendship are, as Hutson argues, assigned to women in their fictive portrayals as depositaries of an accumulation of capital in an all-male economy.

If this background cannot in the most restrictive of senses be mapped onto all of the plot-related specifics of the situation between Mercutio and Romeo, it is nonetheless easy to pick up on overtones of this culture in the entire exchange. Doing so lends period-specific, even genre-specific (it is after all Petrarchism, the symbolized language of seduction, that is on trial in Mercutio's mockeries) significance to Mercutio's charge of effeminacy. The case for reading this scene alongside Renaissance scholarship on male bonding and the violence of

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[33] Hutson, 155.

[34] Hutson, 4-9. The expression is from Erasmus' *Parabolae sive Similia*.

[35] This rests on the assumption that in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, husbandry was conceived increasingly in intellectual terms as a care of the mind. Hutson, 69-74.

its exclusionary mechanisms towards women is also strengthened if we consider Mercutio's parody of Romeo praising the beauty of Rosaline by debasing canonically beautiful literary heroines: "Dido a dowdy, Cleopatra a gipsy, Helen and Hero hildings and harlots, Thisbe a grey eye or so, but not to the purpose" (2.3.41-2). Mercutio's inclusion of "harlot" in his impersonation of a Romeo portraying these literary female figures as unattractive suggests not only that in this list of beautiful women, Rosaline will also pale when a more attractive woman catches Romeo's eye, but also, potentially, that she will be unfaithful, as others have been before according to his implied argument, by giving in to another man's love as Helen, or merely giving in to a man's successful rhetorical courtship, as Ovid's Hero (and more so Marlowe's).[36] From this, Mercutio emerges as having not fully donned the garb of modern bourgeois masculinity, eager to engage in persuasive feats of rhetoric, aware of the special productivity of this technology when kept between men, familiar with the positions women hold in it, while at the same time appearing to be in denial about the crucial role marriage plays in deploying this productive technology. Himself a bachelor, at the first sign of Romeo putting into application his rehearsed courtly posturing, he seems to resist the idea of relinquishing the safeguard of his effective masculinity to women on account of their inconstancy. In short, he follows through to their paradoxical ends the contradictory injunctions placed by such a conception onto both women and men. A figure caught up by changing times, Mercutio also seems eager to fuel and take part in a form of masculine performance (feats of arms) that according to Hutson was, at the time *Romeo and Juliet* was written and performed, on the wane, and had been for some time.[37] It is all the more

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[36] This also casts the idealization of the beloved in Petrarchan sonnet cycles, to the point of likening her chasteness to the chastity of a saint, in an interesting light. In Section 4 of this chapter, English sonneteering of the 1590s will be evaluated as a rhetorical practice in which the beloved plays an essentially preserving function for the uninterrupted deployment of male lyrical subjectivity.

The implied assignment of responsibility of male inconstancy to female unchastity jars spectacularly with Benvolio's project of having Romeo leave his courtship to Rosaline in 1.2 by redirecting his affections to another woman, which rather presents homosocial male rhetoric as spurring men to inconstancy.

interesting that the worlds of dueling and of clever rhetoric live alongside in the play, in seemingly seamless continuity – Mercutio's duel with Tybalt follows an onslaught of witty, verbal attacks, and is precipitated by an attempt on Romeo's part to smooth over the conflict with a rhetoric of peace and kinship.

Mercutio, whose attitude also appears somewhat vindictive in this scene, hinting perhaps at feelings among others of resentment at having been duped by Romeo, refers to his friend's disappearance from the revel in 1.4 in monetary terms: "You gave us the counterfeit fairly last night" (2.3.43-4). Bearing in mind the socio-economic structure Hutson gives to her analysis of literary fiction in mid-sixteenth century England and the anxiety over true, alternatively *counterfeit* value of signs of friendship, it is interesting to observe that although Mercutio has no qualms about being bested by Romeo at a competition of wits, he feels otherwise about Romeo's unexplained absence and suspected activities with a woman, hence perhaps the evocation of that dreaded false sign in economic terms: the "counterfeit," followed by "the slip, sir, the slip – can you not conceive?" (2.3.47)[38] Mercutio even prompts Romeo to think figuratively in order to seize on what he is getting at, in terms which ironize about his supposed sexual activity the previous night through the polysemy of "conceive." Figurative language in the scene is the stage on which masculinity reasserts its bond of friendship, replacing heterosexual conception with all-male rhetorical conception. In Mercutio's evocation of counterfeit currency, there is perhaps also an anxiety as to Romeo's

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[37] She claims for instance in a chapter titled "From Knight Errant to Prudent Captain," that "humanism relocated the space of trial for masculine *virtus* from battlefield to text," and observes an ensuing "displacement of masculine agency from prowess to persuasion." Hutson, 99; 89. Evidently however, and as made explicit in Peltonen's study of early modern dueling, although the early modern practice of dueling could not sustain the literary trope of a medieval masculine *virtus* that proved itself through feats of arms such as single combat, the honor duel survived as a practice well into the following century. In Book I of Castiglione's *The Courtier*, Pietro Bembo identifies the profession of letters as superior and of higher necessity to the perfect courtier with regard to the profession of arms. His interlocutor, the Count, prefers to view them as equivalent. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Courtier*, trans. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1967; 2003), Book I, digital edition.

[38] As Levenson notes, "counterfeit and slip both refer to false coins" (231). The line also recalls Sylvia's castigation of Proteus as a "counterfeit to thy dear friend" to his friend in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (5.4.53.1). William Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 14 February, 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=5.

fidelity to their friendship after his involvement with a woman, thus precipitating a slew of exchanged puns where women come under no less fire than Romeo. Neither a husband nor a father, Mercutio nonetheless preempts the husband's anxiety about secret love affairs and the father's fear of clandestine marriage (in a way altogether distinct from the question of his sexuality or his own views on marriage and husbandry), well aware perhaps that women play a problematic and important part in the deployment of his misogynistic rhetorical bonding.

Friar Laurence echoes the economic conceit in the charge of usury he figuratively brings against Romeo:

> FRIAR LAURENCE. Fie, fie, thou shamest thy shape, thy love, thy wit,
> Which like a usurer abound'st in all
> And usest none in that true use indeed
> Which should bedeck thy shape, thy love, thy wit. (3.3.121-4)

These lines further characterize expectations towards the kind of male social agency practiced by men such as Romeo and Mercutio in each other's company. The distortion of shape, love and wit, all three misused by Romeo, is likened to the economic practice of usury as an improper use of capital, the economic conceit thus serving as an indicator of Romeo's masculinity. When it is found lacking or improper, images of questionable or deceitful economic relations are used to illustrate the ethical-social malaise Romeo creates. Harmonious social relations are insured in part by conforming to gender expectations. When these are not met, economic relations appear as the worrying double of rhetoric, that guarantor of healthy friendship. Romeo's usurious investment of shape, love, and wit point to deeper issues with gender performance in the scene with the Friar, having to do with the very physical constitution of his body in the expression of passion. In the following section, I look over some of the agential dynamics at work in gender-related material imagery and investigate some of its philosophical underpinnings.

2. Waxing metaphorical

The metaphorical dynamics analyzed in the previous section might be better termed catachrestic. As figurations that have become commonplace, they are all the more dangerous in that they inform gender conceptions in the much the same way denotation would. The following section expands on this ambivalence, showing how a philosophical arch-metaphor of imprint comes to translate commonly held assumptions about the actual bodily and spiritual constitution of women as opposed to men. It also begins to show how Shakespeare invests this kind of accumulated background figurality with a metaphorical force that destabilizes some of those assumptions. The result, as I will continue to argue beyond this section, is a dramatic exploration in which metaphors bear as much on the agential dynamics of materiality as materiality does on the agency of metaphor.

The theme of Romeo's gender instability develops in his breakdown in Act 3.3, after he receives the news of his banishment. The Friar disparages Romeo for his tears and talk of suicide later in 3.3, drawing attention to his "form:"

> FRIAR. Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art.
>   Thy tears are womanish; thy wild acts denote
>   The unreasonable fury of a beast.
>   Unseemly woman in a seeming man,
>   And ill-beseeming beast in seeming both,
>   Thou hast amazed me. By my holy order,
>   I had thought thy disposition better tempered. (3.3.107-14)

Romeo's behavior and actions jar with his "form," suggesting once again an affiliation to the culture of male anxiety around the performance of gender. Romeo's display of emotion threatens to deform, as Juliet did in Mercutio's view, the male-gendered shape of his body, to turn the form of man into another kind of form:

> FRIAR. Thy noble shape is but a form of wax,
>   Digressing from the valour of a man;
>   Thy dear love sworn but hollow perjury,

Killing that love which thou hast vow'd to cherish;
Thy wit, that ornament to shape and love,
Mis-shapen in the conduct of them both,
Like powder in a skilless soldier's flask,
Is set afire by thine own ignorance,
And thou dismembered with thine own defence.
What, rouse thee, man! (3.3.125-34)

One effect love has on Romeo then is to soften male solidity and formally reconfigure materiality, whether waxen or steel. His masculine form, no longer governing his body, shamefully jars with his effusion of tears, which threatens his human faculty of reason and virile quality of valor. This idea develops from Mercutio's fear for Romeo's masculinity and readiness to duel to Romeo's own assessment of the way love has changed him in the context of the duels in 3.1, through to Romeo's physical and emotional state at finding out the consequences of his duel in 3.3 in company of Friar Laurence and later of the Nurse.

The metaphor of the body's overly malleable, waxen materiality has a long history reaching back to ancient Greek philosophy. It is analyzed in part by Lynn M. Maxwell in "Writing Women, Writing Wax: Metaphors of Impression—Possibilities of Agency in Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* and *Twelfth Night*" as part of the signet-wax trope of impression she identifies as recurrent in early modern culture. The basic idea is as follows:

Just as a signet ring pressed on a piece of hot wax leaves its print on the surface of the wax, so men, at least by the logic of the trope, have the power to shape women, while neither signet ring nor man is transformed by the encounter.[39]

In her more extensive treatment of the theme in *Wax Impressions, Figures, and Forms in Early Modern Literature*, Maxwell points to Plato and Aristotle for the origin of the metaphor, leaning on Socrates' tentative (and ultimately abandoned) model of the wax block, in Plato's *Theaetetus*, to explain how the mind receives external stimuli and how well it

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[39] Lynn M. Maxwell, "Writing Women, Writing Wax: Metaphors of Impression—Possibilities of Agency in Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* and *Twelfth Night*," *Criticism* 58, no. 2 (2016): 434.

learns and retains information, and on Aristotle's elaboration of Plato's image of wax to describe sense perception in *De Anima*, as well as, in the same text, on his resort to wax to

> explain the relationship between body and soul and to help lay out the distinction between passion and action…. For Aristotle, the body is material and the soul is form…. The two together are inseparable and intrinsically intertwined. They form a unity in which the material is actuality, the form potentiality, and both require each other.[40]

In *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings,* Philippa Berry remarks on the association of this theory with ideas about women:

> The… Aristotelian conception of *materia* – as a formless and receptive sphere which requires both shaping and ruling – had not only informed many branches of thought, including grammar and rhetoric, but had also determined ideas of women, since the female sex was conventionally associated with this formerly degraded sphere.[41]

One reason for this association can quite simply be brought back to the fact that Aristotle himself put it forward in his work on sexual reproduction, *Generation of Animals*:

> …the female always provides the material, the male provides that which fashions the material into shape… Thus the physical part, the body, comes from the female, and the Soul from the male, since the Soul is the essence of a particular body.[42]

In "Imprints: Shakespeare, Gutenberg, and Descartes," Margreta de Grazia shows how the signet-wax metaphor in the context of procreation was reprised in early modern engravings: "the form-giving seal was male and the form-receiving wax female. The male bearing down on the female left a foetal imprint." She rightly concludes that "[t]he signet and wax

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[40] Maxwell, *Wax Impressions*, 18. See Aristotle, *De Anima*, 412b, 49. In Plato's *Theaetetus*, the metaphor of the waxen mind is applied to all, some having softer wax surfaces and some harder. The former are quick to learn but also quick to forget while the latter exhibit the reverse tendency. See Plato, *Theaetetus; Sophist*, trans. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921) 191a–196c.

[41] Berry, *Endings*, 12.

[42] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals,* trans. A. L. Peck (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 738b. For a reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in light of the "Neoplatonizing language of the 'figure in wax' as of printing or imprinting," and of the "neo-Aristotelian language. . . of the 'matter' of a mother" see Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 104.

apparatus, then, served to illustrate both processes of *conception*: the having of thoughts and the having of children."[43] Maxwell draws attention to the role Galenic psychological theories played in the connotation of men as wax forming principles and women as waxen bodies being formed: "For Galen, gender difference is predominantly a difference in dominant humors: women are colder and wetter than men. These humoral differences extend to the psyche." She goes on:

> Shakespeare's move to associate wax with the female mind plays off of both Aristotelian and Galenic philosophies to figure the female mind as a space that doubles the female womb and is particularly vulnerable to shaping pressures.[44]

In accordance with the shaping, form-imparting role men have in the process of reproduction in Aristotelean and Galenic models, their material constitution is therefore understood as determining not only their psychological, emotional, mental dispositions, but by extension those of women, subordinating female agency to a naturally more consistent, therefore dominant male psyche.

Returning to *Romeo and Juliet*, it seems evident that The Friar is drawing from a signet-wax trope sourced at least in part from Aristotelean hylomorphism in his reproach: "Thy noble shape is but a form of wax, / Digressing from the valor of a man" (3.3.125-6). In letting his conduct be affected to such an extent by his sorrow, Romeo resembles a woman, whose malleable materiality is more easily prone to such displays of emotion. He thus defies the physical laws of sexual distinction. "Unseemly woman in a seeming man" paints a picture of a man's body governed by a female essence or soul, which results in the monstrous display the Friar qualifies as beast-like. Consider Maxwell's reading of the maid's tears in *The Rape of Lucrece*:

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[43] Margreta de Grazia, "Imprints: Shakespeare, Gutenberg, and Descartes," in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, ed. Douglas Brooks (London: Routledge, 2005), 32.

[44] Maxwell, "Writing Women," 436.

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 gender difference could provide some explanation for the maid's tears.[45]

It is this preconception that Romeo flouts in letting his physiological-psychological disposition, which the Friar claims to have thought "better tempered," be deformed to such an extent by external stimuli, as a woman would in the logic of the trope. Yet, the wax-seal trope is also limited in its depiction of agency as it does not offer a clear picture of how Romeo's male constitution could become so vulnerable to a womanly behavior.[46] The word "tempered" could either refer here to humoral theory, as Levenson claims it does,[47] or, in an extension of the signet-wax metaphor to the field of metallurgy, to the tempering of metals, an image Romeo has appealed to earlier: "O sweet Juliet, / Thy beauty hath made me effeminate / And in my temper softened valour's steel!" (3.1.113-5) How is it that a hard male mind should prove so susceptible to female softening? Whether humoral or metallurgic, the gendered wax-seal trope the Friar relies on as a model of agency seems challenged by a certain unwieldy agency of materiality.

Having no agency or motion of its own in Aristotle's metaphysics, the topic of material unwieldiness can more easily be traced back to Platonic textual antecedents. Although Plato asserts the dominance and preeminence of the Intelligible over the Sensible, his dialogues also exhibit myths, allegories, comparisons, dreams and nightmares in which matter is thought on, dreamed of, or fretted about more freely. Renaissance translators and interpreters showed a great appetite for this literary strain, developing Platonic arch-images

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[45] Maxwell, "Writing Women," 437.

[46] Maxwell exploits this lack, presenting the ability to sympathize as its own means of mental persuasion, eventually connecting it to the agency of writing.

[47] Levenson, 280.

into vast textual deployments of speculative, metaphorical discourse. Thus, I argue that Romeo's unseemly display of emotion exhibits conceptual-textual sediments related to Plato's phantasmagorical understanding of *chora* as a kind of formless receptacle in the *Timaeus*, a dialogue which influenced Renaissance conceptions of procreation, soul-body relationships, and even material agency. In the metaphorical accretion of this philosophical substrate, I suggest, Romeo's passionate effusion comes to figure an unstable inscriptional site. Like metaphor itself, Romeo's body threatens to rewrite the dialectics that constitute it, including in the subordination of matter to form.

In the cosmological dialogue between Socrates and Timaeus, the notion of *chora* is developed as a formless receptacle containing the demiurge's (or supreme craftsman) modelling of the sensible world after its paradigmatic eidetic models. As Andrew Gregory sums it up, *chora* is likened by Timaeus to "a moulding-stuff or wax, or soft material, and is referred to as mother, nurse, and as an odourless base for perfumes…. The receptacle is also that 'in which' things occur, is space, is a seat or place…."[48] In Plato's text, it is described as follows:

> It both always receives all things, and nowhere in no way has it ever taken on any shape similar to the ones that come into it; for it's laid down by nature as a molding stuff for everything, being both moved and thoroughly configured by whatever things come into it; and because of these, it appears different at different times; and the figures that come into it and go out are always imitations of the things that *are*, having been imprinted from them in some manner hard to tell and wondrous. . . .[49]

With reference to the "moulding stuff," or *ekmageion*, Peter Kalkavage's translation quotes from Taylor's landmark *Timaeus* commentary, which renders *ekmageion* as "a uniform mass

[48] Andrew Gregory, "Aristotle and Some of His Commentators on the 'Timaeus' Receptacle," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Supplement*, no. 78 (2003), 31. In Ficino's commentary: "He has already adduced as evidence the numerous names of matter such as the *invisible type*, the *formless bosom which is able to assume all forms*, *nature*, *power*, the *mother of the world*, the *nourisher of forms*, the *subject*, the *receptacle*, and the *place*." Marsilio Ficino, *All Things Natural. Ficino on Plato's* Timaeus, trans. Arthur Farndell (London: Shepheard-Walwyn, 2010), 92.

[49] Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Peter Kalkavage (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016), 50c, digital edition.

of wax or other soft stuff on which you can print the different devise of innumerable seals"

and links it to Plato's memory-related signet-seal image from *Theaetetus* as well as to the

wax metaphors of the *Republic*.[50] In a passage of Marsilio Ficino's Latin commentary of the

Timaeus, the presentation of this notion departs somewhat from its purely receptive role,

threatening to take on a kind of disorderly will or agency of its own:

> Thus the result was that that intellect, the immediate maker of the visible world, took
> from the Good Itself matter that was to some extent imbued with life but was close to
> deteriorating, formless and void, into the vast mass beneath it and on the point of
> wavering in disordered fashion if it were able to move of itself. But through the order
> of Ideas, which had been received from the Good, the intellect gave it form and
> restored it to order before it could stray away from order, particularly because it first
> imbued it with the rational soul, which presides over movement of the most ordered
> kind.[51]

In this passage in which a certain metaphorical volubility takes over, Ficino goes so far as to

imagine matter having independent motion, an attribute which Aristotle's conception of *hyle*

could not accommodate.[52] In this, the phantasmagory of a chaos-driven matter begins to

resemble *Phaedrus*' soul-chariot in which the rational soul charioteers the passions (246a–

254e).[53] In this allegory, appearing in a dialogue discussing a madness of love, two horses

figure the passions and more highly material parts of the carriage, one irrational and

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[50] Alfred E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), 321.
The link to the *Theaetetus* is also made in Maxwell's and de Grazia's studies. The translation is of Ficino's
Compendium in Timeum (1484).

[51] Ficino, 19.

[52] The word *hyle* itself means only wood, or construction material, before Aristotle's hylomorphism.
Arguably Aristotle's notion of matter is closer to such a definition than Plato's. In those instances where
Aristotle does conceive of matter as an active principle, matter tends, as the *dynamis* of form, towards order, not
chaos. As evidenced in the signet-seal metaphor, arguably influenced also by Aristotle's view of perception as a
reception of form without matter, in the form-matter compound, it is largely form that appears as more
independent and fueling to early modern imaginations.

[53] The entire notion of *chora* in *Timaeus* is linked to the dreamworld according to the modality of the
only discourse possible on *chora* which is qualified as a "bastard reasoning," grasped at "when we dream."
Plato, *Timaeus*, 52b-c. 42. As in Plato's myth of the chariot, the cosmological elaboration in the *Timaeus* is
cautiously modalized.

intemperate, the other rational and well-behaved. Both are driven by a less material, rational charioteer to guide them.

The distinction of purer, less material, and of baser, more highly material constitutions is more Neoplatonic than it is Aristotelean, and offers an alternative or complement to the Friar's assessment of Romeo's misbehavior in terms of hylomorphism, partaking of the tradition of a nightmarish chaos-driven, downward-inclined entropy of materiality, as in Ficino's passage above, threatening to disperse or unmake the order and unity of the human body and the world.[54] The movement of a sinking decline into the misshaping or shapeless materiality of unmastered passion appears elsewhere in the play, as in Act 1.4 where love is figured as just such a threat by Mercutio: "If thou art dun, we'll draw thee from the mire / Or – save your reverence – love, wherein thou stickest / Up to the ears." Here, Romeo's love-sickness or melancholy resembles a mudhole into which, as a helpless draft horse, he has sunken.[55]

The chaotic, material world threatening to engulf reason and confound or revert distinction, as in Ovid's myth of Hermaphroditus, is also associated with both women and beasts in the *Timaeus* in what John Sallis refers to as a "descentional bestiary" in his commentary on the dialogue.[56] As Timaeus finishes describing the ascent of the rational soul and its ultimate unification with its paradigmatic origins, he suddenly turns back from a consideration of the transmigration of souls to the topic of human reproduction. Examining first the male reproductive anatomy and biology, then the female one, Timaeus moves on to a

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[54] The Platonic moral condemnation of excessive appetitive and sensuous behavior, heeding the baser parts of the soul, carry on to Christian morality of the Middle Ages, as Damien Boquet argues in Damien Boquet, *L'ordre de l'affect au Moyen Age: Autour de l'anthropologie affective d'Aelred de Rievaulx* (Caen: Publications du CRAHM, 2005), 51-114.

[55] Levenson cites Dent D642: "Draw dun (the horse) out of the mire." Levenson, 182. In its own way, Mercutio's image thus degrades Romeo, comparing him not only to an animal, but to one that symbolizes humankind's mastery over the animal kingdom and possibly also over the materiality of "mire" through tilling and land management.

[56] John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's* Timaeus (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 138.

description of different animals and to reasons why one might be reincarnated into such beasts, from birds to land animals, to sea creatures. Sallis reads this sudden slip back down the Platonic ladder in the *Timaeus* as one of Plato's "[c]omedies that release the play of ἔρως and that draw us back to the abyss," the effect of which is "to interrupt the high-minded ascent of those who would fix their gaze upward or suspend themselves in the clouds."[57] The menace of the soul's descent, at the end of the *Timaeus*, into the body of a woman, and further down the ladder, that of a beast, thus constitutes a dialectic arguably still active in Romeo's flawed masculinity, opposing the rational, male mastery of the soul to the malleability of the female mind and body and to the unreasoned passions ("unreasonable fury") of animals (3.3.110). In its most simplistic form, the Aristotelean sealing metaphor is therefore misleading. It is not only that men shape and women are shaped: based on the richer conceptual and imaginative resources of the image's Platonian sources, the shape-lacking materiality of women always threatens to overcome and misshape, and degrade the masculine order, especially in connection with an explosive, passionate soul which "Like powder in a skilless soldier's flask" might even "dismember" him. As in Section 1, women are associated with a potentially active, indeterminable materiality that both interferes with more spiritual male agendas and threaten to deform or maim the male body. Yet, characterizing materiality alone is still only half the picture.

Romeo's material recession into passionate effusion also translates a larger anxiety about what it is that articulates form to matter, or "wit," "love," and "shape" which in Romeo's "temper" are "softened" into "a form of wax," "not used in that true use indeed / Which should bedeck thy shape, thy love, thy wit." It is worth tracing *chora* back to its articulation in Plato's *Timaeus*, the dialogue in which it appears, as the notion is also indicative of the uneasy relationship between material and spiritual realms which came to

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[57] Sallis, 138.

characterize Medieval and Renaissance bodies of thought, not only in the problem of the soul's seat in the body, but also in the context of philosophical conceptions of love, which is, after all, part of what Romeo, along with the overwhelming discourses of patriarchy discussed above, blames for having softened him.

The wax-like material of *chora* plays a complex role in the Platonic cosmology of the *Timaeus*. As in Ovid's cosmogony, the sensible world in *Timaeus* is said to have been created by a demiurge who shaped a preexisting materiality (the one Ficino depicts as willful and corrupt) into all earthly bodies. Kalkavage's translation refers to the crafting demiurge as "our wax-modeler." Thus, he underlines the analogical structure, in the Platonic text, between the relationship of intelligible soul and sensible body and that between sensible-intelligible bodies and *chora*.[58] As the intelligible soul is contained in the sensible body, so is the sensible-intelligible compound contained by *chora*. As Derrida points out in *Khôra*, his essay on Plato's dialogue, *chora* therefore participates in a distinction between intelligible and sensible which it is also meant to contain.[59] *Chora*'s wax-like receiving of a matter itself printed by the intelligible – in other words of the soul worked into the waxy body by the demiurge – reveal how problematic and difficult the distinction is. *Chora*'s function seems to double that of matter with regard to paradigms. These determinations famously cause Aristotle to conflate *chora* alternatively with matter (*hyle*) and with place (*topos*).[60] Caution should be observed then, when approaching the signet-seal metaphor in the context of Plato's *Timaeus* on account of *chora*'s status as neither intelligible nor sensible.

It is tempting because of the basic structure of the wax trope to fold choric materiality too quickly into a run-of-the-mill Platonic dualism that can be made to agree with Aristotelean hylomorphism purely in terms of agential distribution and formal-material

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[58] Plato, *Timaeus*, 74c.

[59] Jacques Derrida, *Khôra* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), 16.

[60] Aristotle, *Physics*, 209b. Sallis, 152-3.

hierarchy (form determining matter), distinguishing between a printing, forming principle, and a formed matter. The status of *chora* in the *Timaeus*, however, is nothing short of exceptional with respect to Plato's ontology of two kinds. What Plato introduces with *chora* is a "triton genon," or "third kind," to be added to the distinction between "the form of a model – intelligible and always in the self-same condition – and the second, an imitation of the model, having birth and visible."[61] Ficino seems to respect at least the terms of this introduction of a third kind (though he further confers upon it an intermediary status, dividing it into an entire series of intermediaries until he reaches seven distinct forms, thus arguably folding it back into a form-matter continuum):

> God devises, within the intelligible world that is close to Him, one power that is able to receive form and another power that is able to impart form…. He also devises the intermingling of these two powers and understands that a third form at once arises from this mixture.[62]

Ficino alternatively understands what Plato refers to as *chora* as a formal feature of the intelligible world, as he does here, and as an eminently material part of the sensible world, in which he distinguishes between "formed" and "formless matter", the latter of which he conceives of as prior to formed matter. More specifically, formless matter is matter prior to God's shaping of it through intelligence and appears to be a reprisal of Plato's *chora*.[63] What we get in Plato's *Timaeus*, which is to an extent reproduced in Ficino's text, is a vast and troubling query into what it is that is holding together the sensible and the intelligible in the world as we know it.

Without specifically establishing an intertext, it should nonetheless be pointed out that Romeo's breakdown in the Friar's cell, that moment in the play which I have read as the

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[61] Plato, *Timaeus*, 48e-49a.

[62] Ficino, 26.

[63] Ficino, 134.

failure of a conjunctive idiom and the reversion to a language of separation, may also be read as reflecting the Platonic concern about how the spiritual and material live together in the body.[64] In the Friar's question "Why railest thou on thy birth, the heaven, and earth / Since birth and heaven and earth, all three do meet / In thee at once, which thou at once wouldst lose?" for example, heaven and earth refer, according to G. Blakemore Evans, respectively to the soul and the physical body, at least in the second line (3.3.118).[65] Soul and body are thus depicted as attributes meeting in Romeo, following a spatial conceptualization of Romeo as a place for these attributes to mingle, though in him they are "misshapen," as the Ovidian "misshapen chaos" of Romeo's opening monologue. The Friar's diction underscores the fact that Romeo may "use" heaven and earth differently, that the tempering of these elements or their articulation to each other is within his power to define. As to Romeo, he turns what sounds more like a metaphysical meditation into an affective issue when he bemoans his "birth,"[66] parsed as parentage or lineage:[67] "In what vile part of this anatomy / Does my name lodge? Tell me, that I may sack / The hateful mansion" (3.3.105-7). What is problematic to him, and later to Juliet, is the association of an immaterial notion of identity, or native affiliation to a name, with his material body, or the fact rather that the two are, to him,

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[64] The affiliation of Shakespearean imagery to Neoplatonic sources led a generation of critics in the 1950s and 1960s to find in Shakespeare echoes of Plato and his Renaissance Italian mediators which they were eager to develop into arch-readings of the play. This led to a general reception of these readings as forced, "wrenching the meaning of a text in order to make it fit an allegorical pattern," and to a frequent perception of critics associating Shakespearean and Neoplatonic corpuses as "allegorizers of Shakespeare." In contrast to such readings (and without needing to condone either the critical trend nor its critique, both of which arguably have their merits), my approach does not seek to establish a working out of a Platonic movement in the play I am reading, nor even to detecting Platonic echoes per say, but rather, along with such critics as Maxwell and De Grazia, to point to the powerful imaginative and conceptual resources as well as important metaphysical challenges Plato's metaphorical treatments of matter provided to Renaissance thinkers and writers, especially in contrast with the more sober Scholastic-Aristotelean take on matter. Ernest Schanzer, *The Review of English Studies* 14, no. 53 (1963): 79–81. The review is of John Vyvyan's important study, *Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959).

[65] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984; 2003), 155.

[66] This is the only one in the Friar's threesome of birth, heaven and earth which Romeo in fact bemoans in the playtext. Both Levenson and Evans note that it is rather in Burke's source text that Romeo goes through such a succession in his lamentation. Levenson, 280; Evans, 155.

[67] Evans, 155.

indelibly linked in birth. The name, as I argue in Chapter 4, is thus beyond his material ability to erase, tear, rewrite, or change. The Friar and Romeo thus sit on either side of a divide, the former emphasizing the power of Romeo's intellective soul to determine the relationship between soul and body, and Romeo bemoaning the immateriality of the notions that are causing him so much pain, his name, which he has learned also pains Juliet, as well as the Prince's word.[68] Yet, from either side, both treat Romeo as a meeting place of the material and immaterial, each defending very different senses of what is in Romeo's power to change. In this sense therefore, Romeo's dilemma is a highly Platonic one, one which Plato addresses influentially in the *Timaeus*, and one which will carry on haunting the history of philosophy into Cartesian dualism:[69] how and where do the material and immaterial, and more specifically the soul and body fit together and to what extent do we have power over their articulation?[70]

3. Procreation and production

As a whole, the unease in Act 3.3. of *Romeo and Juliet* about the materiality of Romeo's passion, moving from charges of womanly and beastly displays to a quasi-metaphysical query, plays into a larger, transhistorical cultural concern about the receptive faculty of materiality, its role as a container for the spiritual. *Timaeus* features prominently in articulations of this faculty, both in the past and today. The deconstructive interest for such inscriptional spaces has led modern commentators to pause on the broader cultural

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[68] How hast thou the heart, / Being a divine, a ghostly confessor, / A sin-absolver, and my friend professed, To mangle me with that word 'banished.'" Romeo stresses the Friar's agency in the realm of the immaterial, bestowed with a power to absolve sins, to deal in the ghostly and the divine, to emphasize his cruelty in presenting banishment as anything else than "death mistermed."

[69] The problem led Descartes to conceive of the *pineal gland* near the center of the brain as the main bodily seat of the soul in *The Passions of the Soul* (1649).

[70] The scene as a whole reads as a sort unreconcilable dialectic between Romeo's feeling and the Friar's "philosophy" (3.3.55). The Nurse in fact concludes she "could have stayed here all night / To hear good counsel. O, what learning is!–"

significance of this text. Commenting on the *Timaeus*, Butler too remarks that within this dialectic, "[i]n a sense, woman and beast are the very figures of unmasterable passion," and that "if a soul participates in such passions, it will be effectively and ontologically transformed into the very signs, woman and beast, by which they are figured." Relatedly, she makes the further connection that "woman represents a descent into materiality."[71] After Derrida and Irigaray, Butler investigates the link between femininity and the Platonic *chora*. On the shoulders of Irigaray's *Speculum de l'autre femme*, she calls attention to *chora*'s status as an inscriptional space generating "a *materiality* that is not the same as the category of matter whose articulation it conditions and enables."[72] This view is shared, as Butler observes, by Derrida in his deconstruction of the classical opposition of form/matter, where matter is doubled according to the principle of *greffe* and *espacement*, generating a non-coincidence between matter and the matter that is opposed to form, or in other words, a supplemental "second inarticulate 'matter'."[73]

Although in Plato's *Timaeus*, Derrida, Irigaray and Bulter have demonstrated the strong links between this supplemental matter and womanhood, both functioning as figures for the unsystematizability of Plato's opposition of form to matter, Butler also rightly points out, after Irigaray, that "the receptacle is not a woman, but the figure that women become within the dream-world of this metaphysical cosmogony." If indeed, "the entire history of matter is bound up with the problematic of receptivity"[74] and if women have since Plato been closely associated with the function *chora* plays in this history of matter, then "as nurse,

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[71] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (London: Routledge, 1993), 17.

[72] Butler, 13.

[73] Butler, 13. For an elaboration on the operations of *greffe* (*graft*) and *espacement* (*spacing*), see Jacques Derrida, "Signature Événement Contexte," in Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la Philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 376-81; Derrida, *La Dissémination*, 253-7; Derrida, *Positions*, 96 and 132.

[74] Butler, 26.

mother, womb, the feminine is synecdochally collapsed into a set of figural functions."[75] *Chora* then begins to appear as a notion that not only reduces womanhood to the nurturing, spatial function of the womb, but which threatens to stand in as a substitute for the female womb, the possibility of a disincarnated matrix that might allow the order of production, of *poiesis* to generate on its own without paradoxically (given that the order of production is understood in the *Timaeus* as a foundational creationary act on the part of the supreme "wax-modeler") meeting its limits when it comes to giving life. Whereas *chora* seems therefore to give women an agency of the type Maxwell also finds, a literary agency that is, it also leads to an erasure of femininity by syechdochally collapsing it into this figural function which, after all, other inscriptional spaces may play therefore. This dynamic is also characteristic of the early modern period, when lexicons of printing and of reproduction cross-fertilized to produce a vast cultural discourse in which craft is discussed as procreation (as in the signet-seal trope), and in many ways considered as a preferable alternative to it.

As Margreta De Grazia notes, during the Renaissance, the signet-seal trope is also linked to concerns of fatherhood as authoring, as well as of authoring as fatherhood, notably under the influence of new technologies of writing reproduction: "In the English Renaissance, comparisons of mechanical and sexual reproduction, imprints and children, seem to multiply, as if the new technology of the printing press revitalized the ancient trope."[76] Douglas Brooks states, in the introduction of the same volume, that "[i]n the specific context of the English stage, dramas indebted to the romance tradition were especially preoccupied with the relation between paternity and print," adding that in Shakespeare's work such concerns already appear in the early comedies.[77] The model Romeo fails to

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[75] Butler, 25. This observation is arguably also shared by Hutson in her reading of female characters in Elizabethan drama as metonymic signs of relationships between men.

[76] De Grazia, 34.

[77] Brooks, 8.

conform to, then, is also one that subsumes matters of procreation under the banner of production. Men's rational souls are understood and expected to govern their minds and bodies and their role in procreation is conjointly understood as conforming to this pattern of control: in sex as in all things, the man imprints his form into the woman and forms the shape of the offspring, a ready-made homunculus which then grows in the nurturing space of a female womb considered as little more than a propitious environment, a material space imparting no form of its own. Unsurprisingly then, Romeo's failure to govern his own shape and wit appears to his interlocutors as emasculating in Act 3.3.

Unintentionally no doubt, the Nurse makes the link explicit when she carries over the Friar's philosophically minded expectations towards Romeo's masculinity into the realm of sexuality:[78]

> NURSE: Stand up, stand up, stand an you be a man;
>   For Juliet's sake, for her sake, rise and stand.
>   Why should you fall into so deep an O? (3.3.88-90)

The *double entendres* in the Nurse's speech paint the picture of an impotent lover, whom she urges to "rise and stand," or have an erection, ridiculing him in spite of herself for losing stamina while still in the threateningly engulfing space of a vaginal "O." Along with his inability to mold his speech into a proper form, Romeo's behavior is troped as a sexual failure. The scene further appears to stage the rearing of Romeo as a kind of paradoxical attempt to mold him into a shape strong enough to master his own materiality as well as enter and imprint Juliet's, with a Friar breast feeding him philosophy and arming him with a rhetoric of persuasion, and a Nurse unwittingly reprising Mercutio's masculinist role in 2.3, enforcing gender norms. Juliet's headstrong nature and Romeo's tendency to easily feel emotionally overcome are by now manifest. More crucially, Romeo has earlier declared

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[78] Indeed, her injunctions precede the Friar's.

himself ready to abandon his father's name and be "new baptized" (2.1.93) by his beloved in a total reversal of traditional patriarchal understandings of lineage and gender sexual roles (with Romeo's thematized body imprinted as it were by the father-like intellect of Juliet's spirited words). Based on this pattern of gender role reversal, it appears that Shakespeare is precisely investing the tropic coextensions of paternity and seal, womb and wax, as a metaphorical-dramatic surface – Romeo's body – on which to renegotiate traditional gender divisions of agency. He does so in virtue of a conception of bodies and metaphors that appear to proceed from the Renaissance-exploited metaphorical force of an old Platonic dream.[79]

In Plato's *Timaeus*, the problem of how form and matter are joined creates a kind of philosophical malaise, one which seems to feed the imaginative, creative character of the dialogue, much as Plato's myths do in some dialogues ending aporetically. This uneasiness takes the form of an inconsistency or tension in the relationship between the dualism of form and matter and the spatially connoted material receptacle which is meant to contain this dualism and allow the metaphysical and ontological articulation of form and matter. At the same time as he introduces *chora* as a "third kind," Timaeus defines it as "a receptacle for all becoming, a sort of wet nurse."[80] Far from arbitrary, the image of the nurse, and the related metaphors of mother and matrix mentioned above form part of the dialogue's hesitation about how best to characterize *chora*. As such, they have also proven fertile to the reevaluation of the dialogue in studies by Derrida, Irigaray, Kristeva, and Butler. According to John Sallis, the introduction of *chora* in *Timaeus* forms a broad "transition from the order governed by

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[79] Giordano Bruno, for example, exploits a notion of love that turns lovers into "receptacles" of divine spirits and may, in some cases, enable them in this way to become creative as authors and artists. As I will move on to argue, Shakespeare does not seem to allow Romeo to become the poetic creator he seeks to be in the opening of the play. See Sabrina Ebbersmeyer, "The Philosopher as Lover. Renaissance Debates on Platonic *Eros*," in *Emotion and Cognitive Life in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Martin Pickavé and Lisa Shapiro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 133-155.

[80] Plato, *Timaeus*, 49a.

the twofold distinction between paradigm and image (the order of production) to the order governed by the threefold (the order of procreation and birth)."[81] In Plato's text:

> [I]t's fitting to liken the received to a mother, the "from which" to a father, and the nature between these to an offspring, and to notice that if the imprints are going to be sufficiently various with every variety to be seen, then that in which the imprints are fixed wouldn't be prepared well unless it's shapeless with respect to all those looks which it might be going to receive from elsewhere.[82]

As Sallis picks up on, the metaphorical alternation between an order of procreation ("mother," "father," "offspring") and one of production ("imprint") makes it difficult to identify whether Plato is subordinating production to procreation or procreation to production. In Ficino's commentary this "hovering between the order of production and that of procreation and birth" appears tilted towards procreation, at least in its expression, as a semantic field the symbolism of which Ficino may have had less qualms about appealing to.[83]

> The divine intellect is the father of the world, and matter is the mother of the world. The glory of the world is the divine offspring in the womb of matter. That matter may readily bear all forms and clearly reveal them, she herself must needs have no form of her own. For if she did, either she would not receive the other forms or she would bring them into disorder. The forms of the elements and of things elemental, being imperfect, depend on something external, that is, they depend on the specific Ideas of the divine mind.[84]

According to Linda Deer Richardson in *Academic Theories of Generation in the Renaissance*, although "[t]he most important text for Plato's theories of generation is the *Timaeus*," in this dialogue "Plato turns from the biological question, 'where does human seed

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[81] Sallis, 110. See also M. H. Abrams' study of the trope in Meyer Howard Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954; 1971).

[82] Plato, *Timaeus*, 50d.

[83] Sallis, 110.

[84] Ficino, 133. This said, Ficino does not instruct his readers on how they are to take the quasi-allegorical images he finds in Plato, as he sometimes does elsewhere, thus leaving open the possibility, even probability, that procreation metaphors are merely useful ways of speaking of a productive creation of the world, as creative action of the divine intellect.

come from?' to the philosophical question, 'how is the immortal soul confined in mortal life?'"[85] This observation is consistent with the readings I have proposed of Romeo's emotional turmoil as a scene that begins with gender and sexual discordance and ends up rehearsing a longstanding philosophical unease with the dualism of its sociology and biology of procreation.

Plato in fact conceives of semen as ensouled matter, a *pneuma*-bearing substance, which is what is transmitted to the offspring in the procreative act. This explains why Plato describes male genitals as disobedient and willful, "like an animal that won't listen to reason, and attempts to master all things through its stinging desires"[86] – all the more so the female womb that is "desirous of childbearing" and becomes "difficult and irritable" if left childless past its "due season." In fact, reproduction through procreation only comes about with the creation of women in a presumably previously all-male world. Although the dialogue goes on to understand women as inferior to men, in terms of generation, it provides a soul-based understanding of procreation in which women as well as men contribute seeds, both growing together in the womb. As Richardson summarizes: "Male and female produce equally fertile seed, though Plato does not make it clear how a single organised animal, or even several, are formed from the two 'seeds' sown separately into the womb."[87] This reproductive model conforms to the chorological model and reinforces the association of *chora* with womb, given that Plato conceives of the womb in terms of a space to receive two opposed yet complementary principles. If this view seems to reenable female agency to a certain extent by conferring upon women a more active role in reproduction, Richardson issues a reminder that although "a number of distinguished Renaissance medical writers were prepared to take

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[85] Linda Deer Richardson, *Academic Theories of Generation in the Renaissance: The Contemporaries and Successors of Jean Fernel (1497-1558)*, ed. Benjamin Goldberg (Cham: Springer, 2018), 33.

[86] Plato, *Timaeus*, 91a.

[87] Richardson, 34-5.

Plato's theory seriously," and that beyond questions of anatomical accuracy, "Plato's ideas on generation were quoted with respect long after observers had disproved his curious descriptions of male and female anatomy as literal truths," it nonetheless remains very much the case that to Plato's *Timaeus* at least, "all women, by their nature, possess an inferior grade of soul" and "he ascribes a variety of female ailments to [the womb], in words which were echoed by misogynists, and others, in the Renaissance."[88] Deeply engaged in this dual relationship to the "womb" as model that both values feminine-gendered agency yet also seeks to artificially surpass or replace it, alchemical discourses developed an influential gendered metaphorical language in its attempt to make the alembic a kind of womb.

In her study of one such application of alchemical language, Katherine Eggert shows how old theories of human reproduction are resorted to in natural philosophy which are known to be less likely than newer, more uncomfortable ones, and how this practice feeds on alchemical methodology and theory in order to make the commonly held Aristotelean and Galenic models of reproduction look more convincing.[89] Both these models attribute to the male seed the main role in reproduction, Aristotle's model positing a "'one seed' model of masculine form imprinting itself on inert feminine matter," and Galen's, a "'two seed' model, in which both sexes contribute to human reproduction even though the man's influence is far greater than the woman's."[90] Eggert notes "conjunctions between alchemical theories of material production and biological theories of human reproduction," especially after Ficino's translation of the *Pimander*, a newly recovered Hermetic text in the fifteenth century attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.[91] In alchemical readings of this and older Hermetic texts,

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[88] Richardson, 34-6.

[89] Katherine Eggert, *Disknowledge: Literature, Alchemy and the End of Humanism in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2015), 3. Eggert refers to this process as "disknowledge:" "the conscious and deliberate setting aside of one compelling mode of understanding the world – one discipline, one theory – in favor of another," as way of "managing unpalatable knowledge in an age of late humanism."

[90] Eggert, 162.

a number of contrasting and even contradictory theories about reproduction are used in order to explore and develop two processes essential to alchemic endeavor: the purification of metals into gold, a process imaged and theorized in sexual terms, and the creation of humans in a way which might circumvent the usual, biological involvement of women in this process. Crucial to the former process, called transmutation, is the sexual vocabulary associated with *prima materia*, often thought of as a pure, basic stuff of creation, "Aristotelian matter stripped of all form,"[92] referred to also as "*menstruum*, the Latin word for menstrual fluid that was used to name the solvent in which the alchemist dissolves whatever substances are employed in the action." No less central is the notion of *coniunctio*, "the embrace of 'King' sulfur and 'Queen' mercury" or "'chemical wedding,' a mystical marriage of male and female. . . as a form of copulation and pregnancy" as well as a "culminating step in the alchemical operation."[93] As for generating humans in a non-reproductive manner, alchemy drew on *De natura rerum* (1572), "a text widely attributed to Paracelsus" in order to

> propose that the highest end to which the alchemical vessel could be put was the creation of the homunculus: a true human, perhaps one that even resembled its maker and was infused with a soul. The homunculus is grown from heated male semen alone.[94]

Paracelsus in fact did not write *De natura rerum* and rather put forth a novel "three-seed" model of reproduction in which male (Sol) and female (Luna) seeds interact with a third, hermaphroditic element (Mercury) that acts as a container. For Paracelsus, "alchemy is at work at all times and in all bodies, both terrestrial and celestial… Paracelsus envisions a universe that continually generates and incubates seeds that exist in all things and all

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[91] Eggert, 161.

[92] As I have tried to argue in the previous section, contrarily to Plato and his Neoplatonic appropriation, Aristotle did not in fact develop a conception, mythography, or dream version of a matter "stripped of all form."

[93] Eggert, 164.

[94] Eggert, 167

creatures." He thus reads human reproduction as "nothing other than an alchemical process."[95] Strongly reminiscent of the cosmology of the third-kind element of *chora* in the *Timaues* and more so even of Plato's anatomical description of procreation in this dialogue, the coming together of male and female seeds into an equally active, hermaphroditic third seed that contains their union, along with Paracelsus' alchemical view of reality gave rise to the possibility that some other third container, such as an alembic, could act as a matrix within which the *chemical wedding* should occur, male and female seeds remaining only analogically in an alchemical process that strove to realize a male fantasy of reproduction without women.[96] The transformational process of alchemy, refining base materials into gold through material-metaphysical union, cross-fertilized another body of texts in which a dialectical process comes to be described as a purification of the desire for union, the English sonnet cycle.

4. *Desire, purification, and the sonnet*

Borrowing from Neoplatonic discourses of desire purified, the metaphorical language of the English sonnet frequently serves to depict poetry as a transformative force capable of elevating erotic desire. By the time Shakespeare writes however, Neoplatonic desire, Petrarchan sonneteering and the resort to alchemy in describing reproduction are all losing steam. In the following pages, I examine how Shakespeare ironizes elements of Petrarchan aesthetics and ideas of desire as the spiritual love of beauty by portraying Romeo as an inept poet figure who, together with his male friends, appeals to a cultural metaphorical substrate of Petrarchism and Neoplatonism in order to prop up his attempts at achieving poetic diction

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[95] Eggert, 165.

[96] Eggert, 168. I have mentioned how textual production among friends was conceived of in terms of patrimony. In Plato's *Symposium*, Diotima argues that men's minds are pregnant and that the highest reproduction of which they are capable is of an intellectual nature (206c). This intertext will be developed in the following section.

and intellectual prowess. The theme of catachresis runs on here, and not merely in the tired clichés Romeo borrows: after presenting some of the Neoplatonic dialectics of desire that structure Petrarchan aesthetics, I consider several metaphorical knots in Romeo's lines from Act 1 that draw out problems in the performative gesture of appealing to Petrarchan commonplace imagery.[97] As earlier in this chapter, my contention is that the metaphors considered below are sites where figurality enters a state of tension. From a thematic perspective, this tension translates into some the dramatic stakes that inform more ambitious uses of figuration in the play considered in Chapters 4 and 5. From a theoretical perspective, it leads me into the more in-depth theoretical discussion of metaphor in Chapter 3, which provides the required notional equipment to analyze the complex intersection of metaphor with agency in the shared sonnet and the balcony scene – dramatic sequences in which an ethics of erotic love is explored.

In the early stages of *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo attempts to carve out an identity for himself as a desiring lyrical subject, in a way that draws on the models of Petrarch and on English Petrarchan sonneteers of the late 1500s. As Gayle Whittier puts it in "The Sonnet's Body and the Body Sonnetized in 'Romeo and Juliet':" "in this persona he suffers less from love than from his desire to live out artistic imitation. . . . Beyond poetic forms, Romeo seeks to become the author of the persona he imitates."[98] This lyrical forgery is, according to Catherine Bates, fundamental to the structure of desire in love sonnets. Stressing the "want" or lack at the heart of "desire" in English sonnet sequences, Bates distinguishes between a transitive and an intransitive desire.[99] The first kind is a desire that attaches itself to an object,

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[97] The theme of a courtly fashion of poetic imitation as another reason Petrarchism and Neoplatonism had become ripe for parody by the time Shakespeare wrote is addressed in Chapter 3, in connection with the Lacanian mechanics of deferral that underwrite both desire and the structure of sonnet cycles.

[98] Gayle Whittier, "The Sonnet's Body and the Body Sonnetized in 'Romeo and Juliet'," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1989): 29-30.

the beloved. Fueled by its own aspiration, the second kind requires no object. It is this latter form of desire, the one that constitutes a fundamental lack at the heart of sonnet sequences, that most interests Bates. Somewhat schematically, these different forms of desire also get charted onto temporal axes, one horizontal and one vertical:[100]

> The first, horizontal axis is that which tells the 'story' – the broadly linear, chronological narrative. . . . Since this horizontal axis is geared toward a final end or objective, it might be seen to correspond to what I have been calling transitive desire.[101]

As for the vertical axis, it is tied to

> the speaker's current, immediate, existing and ongoing situation. Since this vertical axis is geared more toward the speaker's subjective experience of love, it might be seen to correspond to what I have been calling intransitive desire.[102]

Along the horizontal axis the narrative is constituted in which the desiring subject falls in love and pursues his beloved. Transitive desire, the process or story of pursuing the beloved, takes place within a chronological sequence where time passes. Intransitive desire focuses rather on the present moment in which the experience of the lyrical subject occurs and is charted onto a vertical axis intersecting with the horizontal one, and along which different moments on the horizontal axis are gathered and referenced in the present continuous of a vertical axis.[103] In Bates' logic, the latter form of desire stems from a failure to persuade (in a humanistic vein) one's addressee (the horizontally charted story in which the Lady does not

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[99] Catherine Bates, "Desire, Discontent, Parody: The Love Sonnet in Early Modern England," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet,* ed. A. D. Cousins and Peter Howarth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 105. This understanding of desire appears distinctly Lacanian, as Bates herself hints.

[100] Bates, 110. "For sonnet sequences generally present time as operating in two modes – along a horizontal and a vertical axis, as it were – onto which the different figurations of desire I have been describing might plausibly be mapped."

[101] Bates, 110-1.

[102] Bates, 111.

[103] Bates, 110-11.

give in to the lover's advances). According to Bates, this failure constitutes the foundation of the poetic enterprise of the sonnet cycle.[104] Intransitive desire is unanswered and unsuccessful because its object is not the beloved; by definition, it has no object. Repeating the fiction of horizontal failure then serves to draw, with each renewed fictional attempt, a newfound vertical axis, along which the lyrical subjectivity arguably ascends through discursive means. The failure of transitivity on the social plane thus leads, through reversion, introversion and introspection, to a realization that "the speaker is finally more interested in (intransitive) Desire."[105]

The combined ideas of attaining Desire through desires and of vectorizing the sonnet cycle as moving along a vertical axis places verticality in continuity with the rising motion of anabasis, forming the dialectic logic of the Platonic ladder of love, which moves from distinguishing the qualities of beauty in objects and persons to the Idea of Beauty, through a rising dialectics of "beautiful discourse,"[106] as in Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium*:

> . . . the correct way . . . is to begin from the beautiful things in this world, and using these as steps, to climb ever upwards for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, and from beautiful bodies to beautiful practices, and from beautiful practices to beautiful kinds of knowledge, and from beautiful kinds of knowledge finally to that particular knowledge which is knowledge solely of the beautiful itself, so that at last he may know what the beautiful itself really is. That is the life, my dear Socrates', said the visitor from Mantinea, 'which most of all a human being should live, in the contemplation of beauty itself. . . .'[107]

One need not look as far back as to Plato however for source material related to the idea of Platonic love and spiritual ascension through love. Marsilio Ficino's vastly influential Latin adaptation of Plato's text, *De Amore*, relates the passage (while Christianizing it and taking

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[104] Bates, 105-7.

[105] Bates, 110. The capital "d" serves here to refer to the personification of desire in sonnet cycles, though it works according to a logic that predates (and informs) Renaissance poetry.

[106] Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. M. C. Howatson, ed. M. C. Howatson and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 210a, 48.

[107] Plato, *The Symposium*, 211c, 49.

care to obscure the Greek culture of pederasty as part of learning); Pietro Bembo makes use

of it in *Gli Asolani*; Baldassare Castiglione reprises it in *The Courtier*, through the mouth of a

fictional Bembo at the end of Book IV.[108] The following passages from *The Courtier* reads as

a philosophical setting down of the intransitive form of desire in the Petrarchan love cycle:

> Therefore, to escape the torment caused by absence and to enjoy beauty without suffering, with the help of reason the courtier should turn his desire completely away from the body to beauty alone. He should contemplate beauty as far as he is able in its own simplicity and purity, create it in his imagination as an abstraction distinct from any material form, and thus make it lovely and dear to his soul, and enjoy it there always, day and night and in every time and place, without fear of ever losing it; and he will always remember that the body is something altogether distinct from beauty, whose perfection it diminishes rather than enhances. . . . For he will always carry the treasure that is so precious to him safe in his heart; and by the power of his imagination he will also make her beauty far more lovely than it is in reality.[109]

This process of substituting the Lady with an idealized version of the desired that one can

hold within one's one imagination seems consistent with Bates' view of the sonnet cycle as

exhibiting "the self-reflecting, self-mirroring and ultimately narcissistic nature of this

[intransitive] desire," stating that in this mode of desire "the Lady is simply a screen"

(110).[110] As part of a process of spiritual elevation through love the vertical dynamics of

which is evidenced in terms such as "climb" and "ladder," paths that "lead to heaven" and

references to biblical episodes such as "the fiery chariot of Elias" throughout Bembo's

speech, which he explicitly affiliates to Plato,[111] Bembo also urges:

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[108] Earthly love, including erotic desire, also formed an integral part of Neoplatonic dialectics in the works of Plotinus and Proclus and was converted by early Christian thinkers into the possibility for spiritual ascension through the love of God. See for instance Dimitrios A. Vasilakis, *Eros in Neoplatonism and Its Reception in Christian Philosophy: Exploring Love in Plotinus, Proclus and Dionysius the Areopagite* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

[109] Castiglione, Book IV.

[110] For a view on idealization and demonization of women in Shakespeare's sonnets, see Rackin, 95-111.

[111] Castiglione, Book IV.

instead of directing his thoughts to the outward world, as those must do who wish to consider bodily beauty, let him turn within himself to contemplate what he sees with the eyes of the mind. . . .[112]

Intransitivity, verticality and introversion are each common to the Christian-Platonic elevation of the soul and to the Petrarchan sonnet cycle. Placing the sonnet cycle in continuation with the Platonic dialectic of the ladder of love emphasizes an implicit aspect of intransitive desire: it too is in a certain sense a removal from the world. Retreating from the social plane and suits of love into the interiority of subjective experience ultimately paves the way toward a more refined sense of love in which the relationship to the world is recovered, renewed and purified. This movement of qualitative elevation thus furnishes the frustrated lyrical subject with an axis distinct from that of social interaction and sensual relations, ascending towards the general and the abstract. Although the horizontal plane is no less a part of the fiction of ascendancy through failure, its intersection with a vertical axis also marks out fiction as the place for a deployment of subjectivity and as a point of departure from the social plane. In this sense, the sonnet converts desire in society, along with attending social shapes, codes and rituals such as courtship, into a desire qualitatively elevated through discursive means, applied reflexively to one's own subjectivity. Thus, within the poetic fiction, the experience of desire becomes more important to the speaker than the object of that desire. The repetitive narrative of the lover endlessly stalled is the condition at which a vertical plot can initiate.

Romeo and Juliet, which Dympna Callaghan refers to as the "preeminent document of love in the West," is a play featuring a story about erotic rather than metaphysical love.[113] In the first scene of the play however, Romeo seems, in singing his unmet desire, to strive for a poetic recuperation and edification of failed courtly agendas. His metaphors in particular are

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[112] Castiglione, Book IV.

[113] Callaghan, 1.

frequently doubly scripted, the complaint becoming the transformative site for a burgeoning poetic endeavor. After Romeo's speech in 1.1.167-179 establishes him as Petrarchan would-be sonneteer, the presence of typical Petrarchan love sonnet conceits grows stronger towards the end of the scene. In the first dialogue between Romeo and Benvolio in Act 1.1, in which Romeo confesses to his friend the cause of his melancholy, the subordination of amatory rhetoric to a religious framework, a commonplace of Petrarchan verse, is at work in Romeo's profession of love for Rosaline, as in his statement that his beloved will not "ope her lap to saint-seducing gold" (1.1.210) (as well as in his affirmation that "She is too fair, too wise, wisely too fair, / To merit bliss by making me despair" [1.1.217-8]). Romeo's Petrarchan image of gold is a slippery one, as it comes to represent the unique ability the poet has to separate and withdraw this pure material from the debasing processes in which it is caught up. He introduces the image, as Levenson remarks, "to enhance the description of his beloved,"[114] to appraise Rosaline's possession of equivalent worth – her beauty. That his beloved saint's beauty is its own form of richness is indeed a recognizably Petrarchan idea, but the image of gold is also referred to as currency, notably one which can purchase the chastity of a young woman: "saint" in this sense would refer to the harlot as the medieval antithesis of the saintly woman.[115] Romeo thus debases his own courtship, reshaping his love making as the pursuit of sexual appetite achieved not by rhetorical persuasion but through commercial transaction. He would in this picture have Rosaline store up gold exchanged for sexual favors rather than beauty in chastity. Underscoring this reading are several Classical allusions in the speech in which the line appears:

> ROMEO. Well, in that hit you miss: she'll not be hit
>   With Cupid's arrow, she hath Dian's wit;

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[114] Levenson, 159.

[115] For a connection between female sainthood, prostitution and money in medieval legend, see Ruth Mazo Karras, "Holy Harlots: Prostitute Saints in Medieval Legend," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1, no. 1 (1990): 3-32. For a connection to Shakespeare, see Traub, 25-50.

> And in strong proof of chastity well armed,
> From love's weak childish bow she lives uncharmed.
> She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
> Nor bide th'encounter of assailing eyes,
> Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold.
> O she is rich, in beauty only poor,
> That when she dies, with beauty dies her store (1.1.204-12).

Rosaline is likened by Romeo to Diana, the Roman goddess of chastity but also of fertility, in 1.1.205, and distinguished in 1.1.210 from Danaë, whose father, wishing her to remain chaste, locks her up in a brazen tower, to no avail however as she is then impregnated by Zeus who visits her in a shower of gold. The uncertainty and duplicity of female agency here is characteristic of Hutson's understanding of the metaphorical economic connotation of deceitful fictional women in the circulation of texts among circles of male readers: neither the harlot's gold, nor the chaste young woman's store of beauty are of any worth per say, as both are exposed in their own way to sexual commerce, that is to being seduced by gold. As a Petrarchan lover, Romeo has everything he needs from Rosaline in order to maintain his view of her as a pure, unflinching saint, well-armed against male persuasion. As a young man desirous of a courtship, his diction lets in images of harlotry subordinated to a misogynistic appropriation of Classical myth: if Rosaline gives in to Romeo, she will be no better than Danaë, who in this understanding is perceived as having been not raped but seduced by the prospect of profit. Even in his desire for Rosaline to give in to the gold of his poetry-making, he stands ready to condemn her as a harlot. In this sense, Romeo has every chance of being caught in the endless loop of Petrarchan sonneteers, not only because the Lady is not giving in to his advances but because she cannot do so without instantly ceasing to be that for which Romeo desires her – it is preferable for him to render Rosaline's starting capital of beauty into poetic gold than for her to capitalize on it by selling her body. Better Diana than Danaë.

Yet, Romeo's unmet desire is also an indispensable condition for the writing of poetry. If poetry is born as an elevation of failed courtship, the poet must remain a courtier,

writing his poetry into the very speech acts of persuasion that Romeo presents as part of a vilifying commerce of gold he must forsake in order to accumulate his own poetic gold. Focusing on the trope of poetic gold, Bates also draws out its connection to the poetic process of linguistic innovation: "[w]hen Petrarch's speaker shifts his attachment from Laura to *lauro* or to *l'auro*, for example, these shift again to what those words in turn signify: the laurel leaf, poetic fame; gold, the aureate, Apollonian verse that is worthy of that fame."[116] The purification of desire through lyric places poets alongside alchemists, philosophers, and prophets (Bembo's mention of Elias). Turning base desire into "poetic gold," the rhetorical display has become the very object of the transformation. Accordingly, it is no longer the beloved but the lyrical subject itself that is to undergo a change of heart. As long as there are words, these riches will be available to the successful poet. In the migration from the social plane to individual fantasy, language has morphed from the rhetoric of courtship as a prelude to marriage and procreation to a self-transformative medium that no longer depends on the beloved for its effectivity but rather insures the symbolic extension of the poet's subjectivity, or in other words, a symbolic alternative to procreation.[117]

This movement is in keeping with Diotima's speech in the Symposium:

> "But why is the object of love procreation? Because procreation is a kind of everlastingness and an immortality for the mortal creature, as far as anything can be. . . . Those whose pregnancy is of the body," she went on, "are drawn more towards women, and they express their love through the procreation of children, ensuring for themselves, they think, for all time to come, immortality and remembrance and happiness in this way. But [there are] those whose pregnancy is of the soul – those who are a pregnant in their souls even more than in their bodies, with the kind of offspring which it is fitting for the soul to conceive and bear. What offspring are these? Wisdom and the rest of virtue, of which the poets are all procreators, as well as those craftsmen who are regarded as innovators."[118]

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[116] Bates, 116

[117] See Catherine Bates, *The Rhetoric of Courtship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1992; 1995), 15-20.

[118] Plato, *The Symposium*, 206c, 44.

By making procreation the aim not just of sexual intercourse, but of love, all love, Diotima, as recounted by Socrates, makes it possible for the poet as the philosopher to substitute heterosexual procreation with what Patricia Parker has referred to as a form of male parthenogenesis, the individual and autonomous birthing of ideas, literary works, poetic creation conceived as "reproduction without the detour, error, of the feminine."[119] The Platonic idea of love as a conduit to intellectual procreation has a rich Renaissance legacy. In his speech in *The Courtier*, Bembo provides the Christianized version of the end of love:

> And thus, just as material fire refines gold, so this most sacred fire consumes and destroys everything that is mortal in our souls and quickens and beautifies the celestial part which previously, because of the senses, was dead and buried. . . . O most Sacred love, . . . [a]ccept the sacrifice of our souls; and burn them in the living flame that consumes all earthly dross, so that wholly freed from the body they may unite with divine beauty in a sweet and perpetual bond and that we, liberated from our own selves, like true lovers can be transformed into the object of our love and soar above the earth to join the feast of the angels, where, with ambrosia and immortal nectar for our food, we may at last die a most happy death in life, as did those ancient Fathers whose souls, by the searing power of contemplation, you ravished from their bodies to unite with God.[120]

In this passage, reminiscent of Luther's thoughts on alchemy, quoted in Chapter 1, Castiglione's Bembo illustrates how love ultimately separates the soul from the body and reunites it with God in eternity. The Christian take on Plato's birthing by authoring is quite different in that images of sexual union and procreation are replaced with a spiritual union of the soul to God. Rather than perpetuating the self in the other, it dilutes and loses the lover's self in the holy object of love. That this process is frequently illustrated, as it is in Bembo's impassioned speech, through alchemical metaphor connects it to Platonic antecedents in that alchemy is appealed to as an innovative craft whose aim it is to produce symbolic offspring in which the self might live on. As for Ficino, to some degree, his commentary on Plato's

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[119] Parker, 104.

[120] Castiglione, Book IV.

Symposium remains faithful to the original in that Plato's idea that men wish to perpetuate through others the wisdom in their own soul is simply prefaced with an argument that presents human generation as a gift of God, on account of the similarity between generation and immortality, as well as defused by presenting the eternity reached through intellective means as merely "eternal among men:"

> . . . But since generation, by continuation, renders mortal things like divine, it is certainly a divine gift. . . . In the adult body, love stimulates the seed itself and arouses pleasure of producing offspring so that what is unable to live forever in itself may live forever preserved in offspring like itself.
> The love of generation attributed to the cognitive part of the soul brings it about that the soul desires truth as its own food, through which in its own way it is nourished and grows. . . . This love stimulates the soul which has reached maturity with a powerful desire for teaching and writing, so that in knowledge, generated either in writing or in the minds of the students, the wisdom of the teacher [and truth] may remain eternal among men.[121]

If Petrarchan sonneteers, like Castiglione's Bembo, are frequently inclined to focus on the gold of their writing, they mobilize more readily the eternizing trope as a form of patrimony. Passed down to future generations, the monumental achievement of a poetic oeuvre guarantees an afterlife and descendance chosen and shaped by their own, singular craftsmanship. This desire is informed by the Ficinian sense of a propagation of knowledge through writing "to bring forth a wisdom like itself by polished writing in a beautiful style."[122]

Taking up tropes connected to Shakespearean preoccupations in the sonnets, Romeo's complaints about Rosaline harbor their own projections of the immortalizing trope:

> BENVOLIO. Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?
> ROMEO. She hath, and in that sparing makes huge waste,
>   For beauty, starved with her severity
>   Cuts beauty off from all posterity.   (1.1.213-6)

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[121] Marsilio Ficino, *Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's* Symposium, trans. Sears Reynolds Jayne (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1944), 203-4.

[122] Ficino, *Symposium*, 204.

Levenson indicates a play on words in the homonymy of waste/waist,[123] yielding an image of pregnancy that takes the image into a direction that undercuts Romeo's argument and suggests Rosaline's economical prudence holds its own capacity for reproduction (following perhaps Diana's double function as a goddess of chastity insuring fertility and childbirth). In the context of sonnet-writing, the image may be read as underscoring the conception of poetry as giving further life, one which Shakespeare explores beginning in Sonnet 18 (to a male addressee). In order for her beauty not to revert to "waste," poetry might, through Romeo's well-rehearsed verses, redeem it by allowing it to be rather a "huge waist."[124] Although Rosaline does not cede to Romeo's courtship, his composition of poetry might, in collaboration with a Rosaline that is now only an idealized addressee in a shift from transitive to intransitive desire – a shift Romeo seems to have taken – breed desire and literary creation and thus allow for what the desiring lyrical subjectivity requires at a more fundamental level than that of sexual intimacy: desire itself, as food for poetry. The idea of nourishment is one that Romeo appeals to even in his description of the perpetuation of beauty through procreation: "starved" implies nurturing as its opposite, recalling the trope, originating with Plato's *chora*, of poetic creation as a form of procreation that reduces women to wombs, and wombs to empty spaces designed to receive forms. Romeo does not need Rosaline to give in to his advances. He is (dis)content for her to feed his conceits, even those in his improvised couplets with Benvolio.

A question of how beauty might best spawn beauty, the twofold image of procreation plays of notions of generation as parthenogenesis in more than one regard. With Romeo's

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[123] Levenson, 160. She also reads the image as conveying pregnancy, judging that it "blurs the meaning."

[124] Although the waste/waist homonymy which drives my argument here is a pun rather than a metaphor, it is however introduces by way of the metaphor of "sparing" and depends on this deeper metaphorical structure for the intelligibility of its implications.

attempts at composing poetry as an alternative to courting, a form of creation preferable to a relationship involving procreation, the pregnant poem takes the place of the female womb as a better means towards human reproduction.[125] Additionally, the idea of beauty transmitted faithfully from one generation to the next arguably has more to do with the conception of poetry's mimetic ability to frame, reproduce and immortalize beauty than it does with ideals of eugenics. Romeo appropriately ends his speech turn with a description of his own pining poetic subjectivity: "She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow / Do I live dead that live to tell it now" (1.1.219-20).[126] The dramatic depiction of a desiring subjectivity so characteristic of sonnet cycles raises the question of whether an actual love relationship might be beside the point for Romeo. It seems entirely possible that his amatory rhetoric is on some level aimed more at the kind of worthy intellectual pursuits next to which an actual courtship would, from such a perspective, prove a distraction, as is the case in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Thinking himself in love, the material and economic metaphors to which Romeo resorts escape him, betray his intentional meanings, and reveal key aspects of the kind of desire he is indulging in at this point (puppy love aside), a desire for female chastity to enable the development of a self-made, self-sufficient, self-generating, socially lived-out poetic subjectivity.

Alongside its grand transmutational aim however, and as these uneasy inscriptions of poetic ideals into the frustrated protestations of a young man suggest, Petrarchan poetry is also imbued with a sense of extreme precarity. As Bates notes:

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[125] In this sense, *Romeo and Juliet* opens with the threat of a similar forfeiture that occurs irreparably in *Love's Labour's Lost* – or at least not reparably within the scope of the play, since *Love's Labour's Lost* ends with the possibility of love relationships deferred, following a point made by Eggert in the context of her discussion of alchemical metaphors in *Love's Labour's Lost* as a suitable way "to purify love's less seemly aspects," notably those related to women's bodies (Eggert, 198-205). Crucially, *Romeo and Juliet* only *opens* with echoes of this pattern, as Romeo's encounter with Juliet sets the play onto a decidedly different track. For an account of the poem or text as a male womb, see Katharine Eisaman Maus, "A Womb of his Own: Male Renaissance Poets in the Female Body," in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, ed. Douglas Brooks (London: Routledge, 2005), 89-108. Relatedly, Bates arguably considers the practice of sonnet writing to fall in line with Lacan's take, in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, on the tradition of the courtly troubadour and the Freudian notion of sexual sublimation in *Civilization and its Discontents*.

[126] *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.1.219-20.

> The masterly, golden verse of the laureate, aureate poet. . . turns out to be based on something disconcertingly fragile and fleeting – a mere insubstantial breath of air – as Petrarch suggests when, in yet another pun on his beloved's name, he tropes Laura into *l'aura*, the breeze.[127]

As such, the whole endeavour is either at risk of being deflated or, more optimistically, depends on the mere breath of future readers for continued life. The idea of *flatus vocis* recurs here in the threat of a material "collapse" of poetry or "erasure of writing."[128] This shows *flatus vocis* in a very different light to the one in which I examined it in Chapter 1, not as the comic unraveling of violence in its symbolic form, but on the contrary as the catastrophic undoing of vertical aspiration (a movement which Sallis regards, however, as a comic episode in Plato's dialogues reasserting the forces of eros in the midst of high-minded intellectualism). In a sense, it is this return back to the starting point that characterizes the sonnet cycle to a greater extent than any fulfilment of vertical aspiration. As Bates notes, not only is it typically the case that "the poet's desire for a conclusive ending is necessarily suspended and held off to some distant and unrealizable point in the future",[129] but

> being happy, healthy, whole, contented and in possession of the beloved object are no more achievable than being a master of meaning who is able to use words effectively and to be praised for doing so…. That is why one comes away from the Renaissance sonnet with the impression of an eternally weeping and inconsolable lover, for such is the nature of desire.[130]

This pattern of deflation, this recurring status quo with no progression in either the horizontal story or in the qualitative elevation is an observable feature of the metaphors resorted to by

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[127] Bates, "Desire," 115.

[128] Bates, "Desire," 115.

[129] Bates, "Desire," 122.

[130] Bates, "Desire," 117.

Romeo and Benvolio in their dialogues around love in the opening scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Images of all-male reproduction appear in other parts of Romeo and Benvolio's dialogue, adding to the economic materiality brought out above a quadripartite elemental materiality and building up an alchemical *topos* as well as tapping into its cousin-dialectic, the popular Neoplatonic strain in sonnet cycles of the 1590s. While alchemy, as a discourse and a field of experimentation, provided sonneteers and intellectuals with a rich and suggestive source for metaphors of change, the Neoplatonic views on love, beauty, knowledge and salvation contributed to the literary and rhetorical scene of the 1590s in England a dialectic model of spiritual life that paired nicely with alchemical images of material purification:

> ROMEO. Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast,
> Which thou wilt propagate to have it pressed
> With more of thine; this love that thou hast shown
> Doth add more grief to too much of mine own.
> Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs,
> Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes,
> Being vexed a sea nourished with loving tears:
> What is it else? A madness most discreet,
> A choking gall and a preserving sweet. (1.1.182-90)

Speaking to Benvolio, Romeo appeals to a physics of affect to describe the effect of unrequited love. He opens with a conceit on the heaviness of griefs.[131] These griefs are structured by an economy of excess which causes propagation. Levenson notes a sexual pun here, reading "propagate" as "conceive." She also notes that the conception need not be strictly sexual, alluding to Brian Gibbons' reading of the image as a botanical process of generation, or propagation by layering.[132] As if in contrast to the love which causes heaviness

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[131] The physics of affect may even be found to have a metrical correspondence if the line is parsed as containing three consecutive stressed syllables at the center of the line "own lie heavy," two of which at least also feature long vowel sounds.

and conceives through excess, the rest of the speech reverts to lighter elements and moves into the direction of rarefaction: the "smoke raised with the fume of sighs" becomes even lighter in the next line, about which Levenson notes "love purified becomes fire, the highest and brighter of the elements."[133] The ideal image of love made light and bright, "purged" or purified by fire, connects to the idea of alchemical experimentation as well as to the corresponding Neoplatonic view of spiritual love. Appropriately, it is in the "lover's eyes" that this love is visible, the eyes being the organs of sight, that key faculty in the Platonic dialectic of contemplation. As fire is "vexed" by water, so love "being vexed" is "a sea nourished with loving tears." Love is here introduced once again into a life cycle that bypasses intercourse in favor of an idea of feeding and growth. The theme of nurture is developed two lines down (the following line about madness developing the psychological aspect of love "vexed") in the image of love as "a choking gall and a preserving sweet." As Levenson observes, this line anticipates the Friar's philosophical-botanical monologue noting the dual capacity of plants and humans both for good and ill. Nourishment in Romeo's conceit yields a two-part metaphor of nurture and its polar opposite, poison: "a choking gall" is detrimental to the organism whereas "a preserving sweet," as Levenson comments, prolongs life, as an alchemist's "elixir" or "cordial." Throughout the whole speech Romeo thinks metaphorically, one image yielding to another or splitting into separate parts that are then developed in their own right. Although this is on the level of form merely a series of rhyming couplets, the kind of intellectual liveliness and metaphorical density Romeo attempts to display is typical of the sonnet, presenting in fourteen lines a self-enclosed thought process, the shortness of which makes poetic form essential to rendering the practice more

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[132] Levenson, 157. See Brian Gibbons, *Romeo and Juliet*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1980).

[133] Levenson, 157.

complex and sophisticated. Romeo seems therefore to be striving for an intellectual prowess characteristic of a sonneteer's wit.[134]

Due to the combination of Romeo's pretentiousness and his ineptitude, the dramatic effect is arguably comedic, though as is already the case in the contemporaneous comedy, *Love's Labour's Lost*, the perils attendant on the enduring presence of catachrestic vestiges are no less effective. The play's treatment of Romeo changes after he meets Juliet as the language of play the departs from the figurative settings with which it opens, but it does not wait for the play's purple patches to begin this process. The plotline of *Love's Labour's Lost* is thus recast as a tropological background to a tragedy that paradoxically presents the courtly success deferred at the end of the comedy. But as is evidenced in complex metaphorical knots in the dialogue between Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio, *Romeo and Juliet* also does not wait for the sequence of the shared sonnet to begin the intricate process of dismantling and rescripting, through a sophisticated metaphorical vernacular, some the period's most important – and increasingly outdated – inherited philosophical and poetic conceptions of matter, gender and desire.

The metaphors in the rest of the dialogue display a humanist scholarly *topos* in relation to Romeo's love for Rosaline which can be linked to the efforts of the male protagonists of *Love's Labour's Lost*'s "little academe" as well as to sonnet cycles published in the 1590s.[135] Both can be characterized as presenting a Neoplatonist view of love stemming from Ficino's translation of *The Symposium* and *The Phaedrus*. At the end of 1.2, Romeo's figurative speech presents a view of love matters as an academic discipline, in high Neoplatonic fashion:

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[134] Both Levenson and Whittier make note of Romeo's would-be Petrarchan tone, underlining how Romeo's figurative language in these early stages of the play escape him, yielding contradictory meanings – or revealing contradictory mindsets – and dismantling his naïve rhetorical display of unmastered poetic technique.

[135] For a discussion of alchemical metaphors in *Love's Labour's Lost* and their affiliation to the syncretic intellectual climate of hermeticism and Neoplatonic thought, see Eggert, 198-205.

ROMEO. O, teach me how I should forget to think!
BENVOLIO. By giving liberty unto thine eyes,
    Examine other beauties.
ROMEO.   'Tis the way
    To call hers exquisite, in question more;
    These happy masks that kiss fair ladies' brows,
    Being black, puts us in mind they hide the fair.
    He that is stricken blind cannot forget
    The precious treasure of his eyesight lost;
    Show me a mistress that is passing fair,
    What doth her beauty serve, but as a note
    Where I may read who passed that passing fair?
    Farewell, thou canst not teach me to forget.
BENVOLIO. I'll pay that doctrine, or else die in debt. (1.1.222-34)

Elam analyses how in *Love's Labour's Lost*, written slightly before *Romeo and Juliet*, love's labor is carried out by the would-be scholars as an academic endeavor through which they come to view love as a Neoplatonic virtue leading to intellectual amelioration:[136] "What changes is the linguistic field of the labours: no longer Navarre's abstruse texts but the ardent poetry and amour courtois of the Platonic lover, with, as their prize, a god-like eloquential efficacy."[137] In Romeo and Benvolio's man-to-man exchange on how to deal with amorous feelings, a similar academic conceit sets in: "*teach* me how I should forget *to think*," "*Examine* other beauties," "To call (…) in *question*," "What doth her beauty serve but as *a note* / Where I may *read* …," and "I'll pay that *doctrine*." Platonic conceptions of love and knowledge are also borrowed: "Show me a mistress that is passing fair, / What doth her beauty serve, but as a note / Where I may read who pass'd that passing fair?" The lines refer to Plato's dialectical ladder of the love of beauty. In the present case however, beauty remains carnal as she who is "passing fair" brings to mind she "who passed that passing fair." The structure of rememoration – the main operative in Plato's dialectic – in turn recalls the theory of knowledge in *Phaedrus*, another dialogue on love, and the question of whether the

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[136] See for example Anthony David Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 119.

[137] Elam, 147.

technology of writing allows for the soul to remember the ideal forms it once contemplated before becoming embodied or whether writing rather allows only for the soul to be reminded of the contents of a written document, causing it to remain therefore limited to an appearance of wisdom rather than being taught the quality of wisdom through true remembrance. If Romeo is a Platonic lover, his metaphorical resort to the technology of writing at the end of the scene here confirms his failure to allow his soul, as it were, to rise out of the material world, of which written notes are a part, and recognize true beauty. The lover's contemplating eye does not lead him to wisdom, as he cannot conceive of a vision of a higher order than straightforward eyesight: "He that is strucken blind cannot forget / The precious treasure of his eyesight lost." Although Romeo plays the Neoplatonic student, his failure to use lost eyesight as a cue to recovering vision as a faculty of the soul keeps him very much within the material world of physical beauty and written notes, elements which to the Platonic lover should serve only as starting points to an elevation of love towards true beauty and wisdom.

The "comedy" in this situation is that Romeo is actually trying to be taught not how to remember true beauty, as any good student of Platonic love would, but how to forget physical beauty – "Farewell, thou canst not teach me to forget" –, which manifests itself to him in material signs of a beauty that would, to a Platonic lover, be abstract, but to him are fully fleshed out in his lady: "These happy masks that kiss fair ladies' brows / Being black put us in mind they hide the fair;" these lines, closest to a Platonic sense of abstraction, are to Romeo just another way of expressing his inability to either be successful in his love suit or forget the Lady that he claims to love. In a sense, courtship in turn mars the Neoplatonic agenda, yielding an image of a confused lover, unsure of how to go about expressing his love in a sophisticated manner, whether as a rhetorically skilled modish Petrarchan lover or as a prestigious Neoplatonic academic through a philosophical dialectic of love of the mind. In so

doing, Romeo on one hand forfeits the possibility of sexual intercourse as an end to courtship by affiliating himself to models of love that foster a spiritual rather than carnal love. On the other hand, his chances of achieving spiritual regeneration (another version of the self-sufficient mode of generation that crops up in his sonnet-minded conceits of gold and beauty, in his alchemical take on love and in his metaphors of vegetal grafting) seem foreclosed by his incapacity to climb the Platonic scale leading from beauty in the specific to beauty in general. "Farewell, thou canst not teach me to forget," he concludes. Though he goes on to blame his Lady for barring herself off from the possibility of perpetuating beauty in the next generation, he shows himself no more capable at this point of *propagating* anything more than his griefs, *pressed* suggestively by the love he misidentifies (misconstruing empathy as amusement) in his male companion Benvolio. This fleeting appearance of homosociality characterizes the whole sequence as a rhetorical exchange that strives towards, yet fails to deliver (or breed) persuasion and foster like-mindedness but trails off aporetically, ending on the somewhat dark note of a relationship that has figuratively slipped into economic obligation: "I'll pay that doctrine or else die in debt."

The all-male negotiation of notions of love carries on in 1.4, where the elemental-alchemical distinction of *light* from *heavy* recurs:

ROMEO. Give me a torch: I am not for this ambling;

Being but heavy, I will bear the light. (1.4.9-10)

The image is of a heavier element finding its natural place under a lighter one and thus supporting it. What follows is a quibble as to whether love weighs down the lover or whether it is so light as to buoy him up:

ROMEO. . . . I have a soul of lead
        So stakes me to the ground I cannot move.
MERCUTIO. You are a lover; borrow Cupid's wings,

And soar with them above a common bound.
ROMEO. I am too sore empiercèd with his shaft
                    To soar with his light feathers, and so bound,
                    I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe;
                    Under love's heavy burden do I sink.
MERCUTIO. And to sink in it should you burden love,
                    Too great oppression for a tender thing.
ROMEO. Is love a tender thing? it is too rough,
                    Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn.
MERCUTIO. If love be rough with you, be rough with love;
                    Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down. (1.4.13-26)

The image of lead rehearses an elemental, alchemical trope which orients the rest of the exchange. As Romeo seeks to distance himself from the lightness of "ambling" by underlining his own heavy physical composition, presenting this as the result of unrequited desire, Mercutio argues that love should on the contrary elevate his body to the higher, airy realm. Cupid is an important agent in shaping metaphorically this physics of love. Exploiting different properties of the Roman love god, Mercutio and Romeo both justify in mythical terms why love should correspond to their description of it as respectively light or heavy. The conceit moves on as Mercutio sexualizes it, converting Romeo's sinking in the heaviness of unrequited love into the act of penetration. From there, the image morphs the implied lovers into duelers in full combat although the bawdy implications remain, as in "Prick love for pricking." In stereotypical sonnet fashion, the lover's main relationship is not with his beloved, but rather with love itself, personified here as the male Cupid. Mercutio's sexualized images are frequently of same-sex love and his lovers, as made explicit in the proximity of the love conceit with the world of dueling, is predominantly an all-male affair. Possibly, the all-male relationship here would have Romeo express both sides of his male identity as Mercutio would have it, as a lover *and* a dueler, without risk of the latter being threatened,

diminished, or distorted by the former, since one presumably feeds the other in Mercutio's misogynistic economy of love as dueling.[138]

The elemental aspect of Romeo and Mercutio's figurative language develops in the rest of the scene, playing on the polysemy of "light" as in weight but also in brightness, as Romeo has already done in the above quote ("light"; "dull"):

> ROMEO. A torch for me. Let wantons light of heart
>   Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels;
>   For I am proverbed with a grandsire phrase:
>   I'll be a candle-holder and look on;
>   The game was ne'er so fair, and I am done.
> MERCUTIO. Tut, dun's the mouse, the constable's own word.
>   If thou art dun, we'll draw thee from the mire
>   Or–save your reverence–love, wherein thou stick'st
>   Up to the ears. Come, we burn daylight, ho! (1.4.33-41)

Once again, the conceit straddles the axes of light-heavy and light-dark, love submerging Romeo in its elemental heaviness and darkness. Neither the fire which Romeo would carry, or that which burns inside him ("Being purged a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes"), allow for his leaden love to be "purged" and refined into a nobler, nor even a lighter element, reminiscent rather of Ovid's cosmogonic account of primal, elemental separation and distinction. Residing in darkness and the mire, Romeo also resembles Erebos, primal deity in Hesiod's *Theogony*, the first god with Night in the narrative to reproduces, thanks to the existence of Eros, sexually rather than through spontaneous generation.[139] All through the beginning of this scene therefore, love appears as a physical and economic phenomenon, the properties of which the characters negotiate, though Romeo's sense seems to prevail, as Mercutio sets

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[138] See Sedgwick, 40-45.

[139] "In truth, first of all Chasm came to be, and then broad-breasted Earth, . . . and Eros, who is the most beautiful among the immortal gods, the limb-melter – he overpowers the mind and the thoughtful counsel of all the gods and of all human beings in their breasts. From Chasm, Erebos and black Night came to be; and then Aether and Day came forth from Night, who conceived and bore them after mingling in love with Erebos." Hesiod, *Theogony. Works and Days. Testimonia*, trans. Glenn W. Most, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), ll. 116-125, 13.

himself the mission to extricate Romeo from the depressed state in which love, according to him, causes his friend to wallow. In this he echoes Benvolio's self-appointment to help Romeo leave behind what can be recognized as his sonnet-like desire, though neither Benvolio nor Mercutio do so directly by encouraging Romeo to form an actual relationship with a woman, respectively to dance with one. Although this may be the gist of what they each suggest, in both cases their figures of speech resist and undermine these injunctions, offering alternative conceptions of desire as the veritable solutions to Romeo's love problems: in Benvolio's case, a scholarly, Neoplatonic desire that gives more agency to the male homosocial than to the amorous heterosexual relationship; in Mercutio's, a male-only belligerent attitude towards abstract love. Ironically with respect to these characters' intentions to extricate Romeo from the paradigm of desire in which he seems stuck, both of their solutions appear merely as variations of the very intransitive desire that has him in a rut, as if conceptions of love as production stifled the possibility of desire.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore the rhetorical contexts pertinent to understanding how reading metaphors in *Romeo and Juliet* poses questions pertaining to agency and discourse that cannot easily be addressed within traditional categories of activity and passivity, especially when linked to issues of gender. Furthering the discussion initiated in Chapter 1, which identified the materiality of discourse as an area of investigation, I have argued in Chapter 2 that discourses conceived of as having material import pave the way for notions of symbolic material generativity.

Attending first to the textuality of male friendship, I discussed how the humanist emphasis on rhetorical persuasion replaced an economy of gift-giving with new and harder to read signs of friendship where fictions of women function as metonymic signs of

relationships between men, leading to an economic regime in which the same tools and relationships that yield capital also threaten to disperse it. This made production dependent on marriage and exchange in contrast to the feudal model of primogeniture which strove to restrict economic flow and male public activity. I linked this to scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* displaying male bonding especially in connection with the character Mercutio, for whom dueling and the performance of wit contribute to an all-male economy that is threatened by femininity, the threats it poses to male agency and the changes it can wreak on the active male body.

That the body, in its very material consistency and agency, always threatens to be changed and reconfigured the way signs are, is confirmed in the following section. In this portion of the argument, I traced the signet-seal metaphor back to the philosophical antecedents of Aristotle and especially to Plato, whose contribution to the trope has possibly been undervalued in Shakespearean scholarship on the topic. Rooting my observations in the Friar's and Nurse's reproaches to Romeo in 2.3, I strove to identify Plato's *Timaeus* and its Ficinian interpretations as fundamental to understanding what goes on when masculine materiality and agency misbehave. No longer determined as exclusively operative in an act of procreation viewed as a form of artisanal production, Romeo's passion-distorted body comes to rehearse central tensions in the *Timaeus* between a dualistic order of production and a three-pronged order of procreation, adding *chora* to the binary of form and material. I further suggested that Romeo's metaphors, as his body, lend themselves to be read as textual sites of inscription for the renegotiation of these relationships.

Expanding on the tension and implications that arise from metaphors depicting procreation as production in the early modern period, the next section considered parallel metaphorical dialectics in the textual discourses of alchemy, theories of reproduction and the Platonic notion of *chora*. I drew attention to the importance of alchemy as a rhetorical tool,

showing how the alchemical ideals of extending life, elevating the spirit, and generating living human bodies contributed to the misogynistic climate that denied the role women played in human reproduction. It did so by reducing women to wombs and wombs to nurturing spaces that could be replaced with superior, purer and exclusively man-made spaces, propitious to the development of homunculi and consistent with the role played by *chora* in the *Timaeus*.

More importantly, I examined the Platonic lineage of the articulation of desire in the sonnet cycles. I argued that the Petrarchan sonnet is conceived of as offering what might be described as a chorologic textual space for the pursuit of life extension. This conception depends on a resort to metaphors both of production and of procreation that derive from Renaissance Neoplatonic writings and the culturally prevalent arch-tropes examined in other sections. In order to illustrate how this dynamic is mobilized and presented in Act 1 of *Romeo and Juliet*, I looked at how the play opens by interrogating the idea of the sonnet as an alchemical process linked to areas explored earlier: spiritual elevation through love, mating as craft, the masculine reliance on exchanges reminiscent of textual friendships, as well as elemental tropes linked to theories of materiality and cosmogonic narratives explored in Chapter 1.

Together, these interlinked rhetorical contexts mark out the agency and materiality of discourses on love as suggestively hovering between orders and images of production and of procreation, with crucial implications for the understanding of desire and of the role played by poetic craft in *Romeo and Juliet*. They also reveal how many of the images in the early scenes of the play are catachrestic, commonplace images that in some cases have taken on a quasi-literal value as they are used to defend outdated conceptions of matter, gender and generation. Not limited to their status as clichés however, these images were repeatedly shown to acquire a tropological value as metaphorical sites in which catachresis is set into

figurative tension and sometimes rescripted as kind of metaphor, though metaphor appears more often as the site where renewal might occur. With the necessary contextual backgrounds in place, I continue to examine in the rest of this thesis how the play rewrites these different dynamics. The following chapter offers a discussion of metaphor as a trope with material, rhetorical and performative import, one which connects immaterial notions of meaning with a materiality of text. Contrasting Derrida's view on metaphor with Lacan's, I draw on deconstructive functions of metaphor to gain a vital conceptual perspective into the relationship between metaphor and agency, materiality and discourse, and poetry and drama.

3.

From *Archi-écriture* to Event:
Metaphor Writing

Introduction

The first two chapters of this thesis served to delineate the thematic contexts of materiality and rhetoric relevant to my approach to *Romeo and Juliet*. In Chapters 3, 4 and, 5, I pursue my examination of the play in a more firmly Derridean vein. In relation to dynamics of materiality, rhetoric, and text analyzed so far, this chapter offers a discussion centered more rigorously on what metaphor does, rhetorically, textually, and materially. Chapter 4 then ties back in to the early modern context and connects this view of metaphor to the topic of agency. Chiefly, I seek here to relate the figure of metaphor to Derrida's understanding of *archi-writing* and to his insistence on iterability. This expands on the enquiry, formulated in Chapter 1 and furthered in Chapter 2, as to how *Romeo and Juliet* relates to a problematic materiality of discourse.

I begin with a description of such key and interrelated Derridean notions as *écriture*, *dissémination*, *trace*, *supplément*, *greffe*, *espacement*, *restance*, and *différance*, then examine their reliance on and departure from the Lacanian conceptuality surrounding metaphor and signification, grounding my argument in a critical engagement with Catherine Bates' view of the sonnet form as exhibiting a syntax of lack. Derrida's relationship to Lacan is a fraught one, yet the payoff of reading them side by side is considerable. It holds keys to a better appreciation of dissemination in its treatment of materiality and language; it allows for an understanding of the relationship between Lacanian negativity and Derrida's notion of the impossible, which is crucial to understanding Derrida's essay on *Romeo and Juliet* (examined in Chapter 5); and most importantly, it clarifies Lacanian and Derridean conceptions of metaphor's role in literature and more generally of the process of fiction building. This

concentrated engagement with poststructuralist thinking provides the specific theoretical equipment needed for a description of *Romeo and Juliet* as a play engaged in a performative reading of the sonnet form, one in which metaphor features prominently as a dramatically exploited resource. Accordingly, at the end of the chapter, I look to the work of Paul de Man as it develops Derrida's take on materiality and language into an understanding of a materiality of language as event. This opens an inquiry about agency which is pursued in the next chapter.

1. *Derrida and Lacan: the signifier*

In Chapter 1, I identified in a few Shakespearean tragedies an inscriptive effect, presenting *writing* as a material change in language that seems to allow for otherwise "airy words" to take on a kind of problematic persistence. I would now like to refine this loosely defined process of "inscription" or "writing" by affiliating it with Derrida's understanding of *écriture*. In *De la Grammatologie*, Derrida distinguishes between two kinds of writing, *écriture* and *archi-écriture*, or *writing* and *archi-writing*.[1] The former can be understood as belonging to a recurring view in the so-called metaphysical tradition in Western philosophy that envisages writing as an imitation of live speech. That alphabetic and phonematic writing eventually imposed itself as the dominant form of linguistic inscription in the West is held to have aided in fostering the idea that writing reflects the spoken word. *Archi-writing*, on the contrary, is an aspect of writing to which Derrida draws attention in order to present *writing* as fundamentally other with respect to live speech and the associated metaphysics of being that conceives of language as a conveyer of presence.

Archi-writing is an aspect of the inscriptive medium which remains irreducibly other with respect to its vehicular function of conveying sounds and ideas: this process of

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[1] Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), 83 and 88-9.

resistance to selfsame meaning and of departure from intentionality is identified as *différance*.[2] To Derrida, this otherness cannot be set forth in any systematic way, because "it is precisely that which cannot be reduced to the form of *presence*. Yet, the latter presides over any objectivity of the object, any relationship to knowledge."[3] This leftover otherness (*reste*, *trace*) in the otherwise recognizable structure of writing is also a process of othering undergone by texts over time as an effect of this remainder (*restance*). Though the effects of archi-writing are especially perceptible in written documents, it is active in all forms of expression:

> It [arch-writing] would be at work not only in the form and substance of graphical expression, but also in those of non-graphical expression. It would constitute not only the scheme joining form to any substance, graphical or other, but the movement of the *sign-function* linking a content to an expression, whether graphical or no.[4]

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[2] For example, Derrida criticizes Ferdinand de Saussure's description of the linguistic sign as a biface psychical unity of a concept and an acoustic image. Creating an opposition between a signified and a signifier in which the latter is understood as a vehicle to the former, Saussure views meaning as a psychical presence to language. Derrida's contention is that language is necessarily *other* with respect to the psyche of a speaker. By the same token, *writing* cannot be fully understood as a representation of speech, but exhibits characteristics outside of that function, such as its materiality. This aspect of otherness in systems of representation is what Derrida describes through the notion of *archi-writing*, arguing that this otherness in fact governs the oppositions from which it is excluded. Thus, in Saussurean linguistics, in the oppositions of concept to acoustic image, and of acoustic image to writing, writing is at the bottom rung of this hierarchical ladder, so to speak. Yet, writing is also at work, according to Derrida in the opposition of concept to acoustic image, as the acoustic image is a writing of the concept. Or more precisely, the opposition of concept to acoustic image is carried out by implementing the same criteria that oppose speech to writing. One may see how logically, this would lead one to question the notion of concept (or psyche) as the place where meaning is self-same or unaffected by the otherness of a signifier. Ferdinand de Saussure (*Cours de linguistique générale*, Paris: Payot, 1916 ; 1972), 45 and 98-9; Jacques Derrida, *La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 9-76; Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 28-41.

[3] "Elle est cela même qui ne peut se laisser réduire à la forme de la *présence*. Or celle-ci commande toute objectivité de l'objet et toute relation de savoir." Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 83. All translations of Derrida are my own unless otherwise specified.
"This is because arch-writing, the movement of *différance*, irreducible arch-synthesis, opening at the same time, within one same possibility, temporalization, the relation to the other and language, cannot, as the condition of any and all linguistic system, be part of the linguistic system itself, be situated as an object in its field." "C'est que l'archi-écriture, mouvement de la différance, archisynthèse irréductible, ouvrant à la fois, dans une seule et même possibilité, la temporalisation, le rapport à l'autre et le langage, ne peut pas, en tant que condition de tout système linguistique, faire partie du système linguistique lui-même, être située comme un objet dans son champ." Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 88.

[4] "Celle-ci [l'archi-écriture] serait à l'œuvre non seulement dans la forme et la substance de l'expression graphique, mais aussi dans celles de l'expression non graphique. Elle constituerait non seulement le schème unissant la forme à toute substance, graphique ou autre, mais le mouvement de la *sign-function* liant un contenu à une expression, qu'elle soit graphique ou non." Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 88.

Archi-writing has to do then with the "inscription"[5] – to characterize it in graphological terms – into an expressive form, whether spoken, written or other. In the same way that any *écriture* departs from a notion of writing as a docile medium for the spoken word, there is also an (*archi-*)*écriture* at work in all forms of expression, rendering expression non-coincidental with the expressed content. Indeed, "content" is necessarily abstracted from an expression characterized by materiality in some shape or form. In this sense, the materiality of expression is both that which frames thought and is other to it, and thus alters it.

This idea should be read in conjunction with the presentation of *dissemination* and the definitional gestures with which Derrida opens in *La Dissémination*. In the following, and I quote at length as most of the notions listed here will be developed below, Derrida subordinates a series of metaphysical concepts to the structure of what he calls a *double mark (double marque)*, which posits that such concepts occur in texts along with an ideologically repressed concept figured as its opposite/other:

> No concept, no name, no signifier escapes it [the structure of the double mark]. We shall attempt to determine the law that constrains one. . . to call "writing" that which criticizes, deconstructs, forces the traditional and hierarchized opposition of writing to speech, of writing to the (ideal, spiritualist, phonocentric: first of all logocentric) system of all of its others; to name "work" or "practice" that which disorganizes the philosophical opposition of *praxis / theoria* and does not let it itself be sublated according to the process of Hegelian negativity; to name "unconscious" that which will never have been the symmetric negative or the potential reservoir of "conscience;" to name "matter" that outside of classical oppositions that. . . should no longer have any reassuring form: not that of a referent. . ., nor that of presence in any of its modes. . . nor that of a principle, fundamental or totalizing, nor of an ultimate authority: in brief, all this off-text which might stop the concatenation of writing. . . and for which I had proposed the concept of "transcendental signified."[6]

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[5] Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 19.

[6] "Aucun concept, aucun nom, aucun signifiant n'y échappe [à la structure de la double marque]. On essaiera de déterminer la loi qui contraint. . . à nommer 'écriture' ce qui critique, déconstruit, force l'opposition traditionnelle et hiérarchisée de l'écriture à la parole, de l'écriture au système (idéaliste, spiritualiste, phonocentriste : d'abord logocentrique) de tous ses autres ; à nommer 'travail' ou 'pratique' ce qui désorganise l'opposition philosophique *praxis / theoria* et ne se laisse pas relever selon le procès de la négativité hégélienne ; à nommer 'inconscient' ce qui n'aura jamais été le négatif symétrique ou le réservoir potentiel de la 'conscience' ; à nommer 'matière' ce dehors des oppositions classiques qui. . . ne devrait plus avoir de forme rassurante : ni celle d'un référent. . ., ni celle de la présence sous aucun de ses modes. . . ni celle d'un principe, fondamental ou totalisant, voire d'une instance dernière : bref, tout ce hors-texte qui arrêterait la concaténation

Although I will later come back to each of these terms, I would like to underline here the understanding of matter as the "outside of classical oppositions." Whatever "matter" is, it does not escape dissemination any more than a text does and must therefore be considered to be implicated in textuality in ways explored in Chapter 1. "Matter" also belongs to the list of elements classically excluded from metaphysics, such as Platonic dialectics (taken as a systematic philosophy), wherein being inheres most in ideality, least in materiality. "Matter," and similarly excluded concepts, function for Derrida as levers of deconstructive readings, and thus participate in key ways to the "work" or "practice" at hand, given that matter can no longer be considered as anything stable enough to prop up meaning.

Deconstruction attends to classically marginalized terms such as "matter" in such a way that does not only reverse but deconstructs opposition by showing how a reliance on the excluded other conditions the establishment of privileged concepts such as idea, speech, presence, and knowledge. Derrida relates this process to *écriture* in "Signature, Event, Context," arguing that marks, or inscriptions into a communicative medium, are iterable, meaning their repeatability is both the condition of possibility of signification as well as the undoing of that meaning as a singular occurrence in a specific context (or event). This is what causes texts and marks to be subject not only to polysemy, the possibility for them to mean different things depending for instance on the context of their reading or apprehension, but to *dissemination*, which posits their inherent reliance on the non-singular in order to articulate singular, non-repeatable (because context-specific) meanings. In this sense, Derrida argues that writing works with "the 'death' of the receiver inscribed in the structure of the mark." And he adds:

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de l'écriture. . . et pour lequel j'avais proposé le concept de "signifié transcendantal." Derrida, *La Dissémination*, 10-11.

What holds for the receiver holds also, for the same reasons, for the sender or the producer. To write is to produce a mark that will constitute a sort of machine which is productive in turn, and which my future disappearance will not in principle prevent from functioning and giving, from giving itself itself to be read and to be rewritten.[7]

Our reliance on the otherness, on the materiality in discourse supposes therefore a "logic of the machine," as Derrida states in a later text, "in accordance, however improbable that may seem, with a logic of the event" and that "[a]s a possible legacy from what is above all an event, *l'oeuvre* has a virtual future only by surviving or cutting itself off from its presumed responsible signatory."[8] This seemingly impossible, because antinomic, complicity between machinic repeatability and singular event is something this chapter strives to progressively come to terms with in conversation with *Romeo and Juliet*.[9]

One of the implications of this view for literary texts is that these rely on a means of expression that finds itself fragmented by a kind of generalized *mise en abyme*, whose shape retention properties stubbornly rehearse conceptual, historical, affective and other frameworks as well as allow virtual shapes and configurations, in a way that undercuts formal stabilization – to write is thus to inscribe into a heterogeneous medium, into a disjunctive relationship to time. This slippery stickiness of texts poses the question of creative originality, the possibility of ever authoring anything new, or, more profoundly, of what sense to even give to the word "meaning". This quandary is well illustrated in the final

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[7] Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 8. "Ce qui vaut du destinataire vaut aussi, pour les mêmes raisons, de l'émetteur ou du producteur. Ecrire, c'est produire une marque qui constituera une sorte de machine à son tour productrice, que ma disparition future n'empêchera pas principiellement de fonctionner et de donner, de se donner à lire et à réécrire." Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la Philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 375. See also his comments on the text as machinal reproduction linked to death, as well as that which deploys as a "living force" dividing life in Derrida, *La Dissémination*, 353-4.

[8] Jacques Derrida, "Typewriter Ribbon: Limited Ink (2) ('within such limits')," trans. Peggy Kamuf, in *Material Events: Paul de Man and the Afterlife of Theory*, ed. Tom Cohen, Barbara Cohen, J. Hillis Miller, and Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 280.

[9] Indeed, one might already fruitfully read the double scripting in Romeo's metaphors as an instance of machinic repetition, inscribing the event of a burgeoning poetic endeavor into images expressed in relation to a courtly agenda. Not only is Romeo's awareness of this secondary layer of meaning indeterminable, but it also suspends his desire for Rosaline through traces of a competing desire to compose poetry.

characteristic of the Renaissance English love sonnet as analyzed by Catherine Bates. Completing those mentioned in the previous chapter, the ultimately Petrarchan characteristic of sixteenth-century English sonneteering for Bates is the attempt "to be different from other poets who imitate Petrarch."[10] As she goes on to argue, this desire itself is in fact eminently Petrarchan: constituted by a similar negativity of desire to Petrarch's depiction of desire as a *lack*, it continues to pose *want* as fundamental to subjectivity, including the desire to be different: "this desire, of course, is no more achievable than any of the others. The desire to be different is no less destined to be disappointed than the desire to win the Lady, or the argument, or the bays."[11] The means of expression belie the attempt to set (oneself) apart or stand out, as "signifiers relate in the first instance only to other signifiers, … leaving no one in control of their meaning or with mastery over words, least of all the writer."[12] Bates grounds her analysis in Lacan's reading of Saussurean semiotics, which Derrida and Lacan both used and critiqued.[13] The view that a text is made up of endless chains of heterogeneous signifiers is adopted both in Lacanian psychoanalysis and Derridean deconstruction and as such the emphasis Bates lays on this understanding of semiotics argues for a view of meaning similar to the one I perceive as structuring metaphor in *Romeo and Juliet*. Thus, the coil of what one might call in Bates' perspective a *mise en sonnet* corresponds in *Romeo and Juliet* to a *mise en figure* (both forms understood as inscriptions into a medium of *écriture*

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[10] Catherine Bates, "Desire, Discontent, Parody: The Love Sonnet in Early Modern England," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet,* ed. A. D. Cousins and Peter Howarth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 118.

[11] Bates, 118. This form of desire was also theorized by Marsilio Ficino as a means to self-preservation and self-perfection. See Sabrina Ebbersmeyer, "The Philosopher as Lover. Renaissance Debates on Platonic *Eros*," in *Emotion and Cognitive Life in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Martin Pickavé and Lisa Shapiro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 133-155.

[12] Bates, 118.

[13] I am grateful to Professor Bates for taking the time, in an email correspondence, to clarify the (veiled) references to Saussure and Lacan in her article.

characterized by endless recession of meanings) in ways I began to explore in the final section of the previous chapter.

The literary ambition to transform the object of love *Laura* into *l'auro*, poetic gold, is threatened by a "resistance of signification" to the operation of slipping from *Laura* to *l'auro* in the interposition of *l'aura*, the breath of air, that on which *l'auro* rests and depends.[14] Similarly, the behavior of metaphor in *Romeo and Juliet* bears out patterns of *restance* by appealing to a figurative language that predicates identity (or metaphors, by contrast to similes) in which the vehicle domain recurrently brings with it a surplus of meaning that not only does not apply to the tenor domain but also challenges its readability and coherence – the antithetical "waist" in Romeo's "waste" uttered in the midst of an economic conceit about production and decrepitude, for instance, which opens the field of capitalist economy to an order of procreation that challenges the means of production it has developed and relies on.

Despite deep similarities however, there are also important differences between deconstructive and Lacanian semiotics, having to do notably with the privilege Lacan attributes to the signifier in his system. Because of the bearings of these differences on the discussion of materiality and event, I dwell on the relationship between Lacan and Derrida in the following pages in a way that also allows me to better demarcate my own position from Bates' and further articulate the pertinence of a disseminative reading with respect to my reading of metaphor and its relationship to agency in a dramatic text, specifically one which seems itself to offer or invite a "reading" of the sonnet form. Lacan and Derrida's relationship, although important to both thinkers, is a contentious and difficult one, in part because of their commonalities. As Michael Lewis puts it:

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[14] In "The agency of the letter in the unconscious or reason since Freud," Lacan posits an irreducibility of Saussure's signifier to the signified, or "resistance of signification." Jaques Lacan, *Écrits, A Selection* (Paris: Seuil, 1966; trans. Alan Sheridan, London: Tavistock, 1977; London: Routledge, 2005), 125.

> If something about Lacan disturbed Derrida, we suggest that it was his proximity. Lacan shared Derrida's terrain, his own problematic. . . . Towards the very end of their long, sporadic, joust, Derrida came to think of Lacan and himself as 'lovers', and what are lovers if not two subjects who actively strive, not for each other, but for a common object beyond both of them, accidentally almost, in reaching for this forbidden fruit, clutching each other's hand?[15]

Indeed, the word "dissemination" itself almost seems, in its very etymology ("dispersal of the seed"), to have been selected in contradistinction with Lacan's early understanding of the signifier in terms of the seminal charge of the *phallus*. "Phallus" for Lacan is the signifier of lack in the symbolic, of the lack of a stable signified and thus precipitates an endless concatenation of signifiers, as in Bates' understanding of sonnet desire. On one hand, this concatenation of uncompleted signification is shared with deconstruction, suspending any appeal to what Derrida refers to above as a "signifié transcendental," a privileged, transcendental signified that might stabilize the slippage of meaning.[16] On the other hand, Lacan's view of the symbolic phallus can be shown to occupy the role of a privileged signif*ier* in early Lacanian thought in a way that reproduces to some extent the gesture of appeal to a transcendental signified.

This charge of transcendentalism, and therefore of unacknowledged collusion with metaphysics, can be articulated on the basis of two distinct characteristics of the signifier in what Michael Lewis refers to as Lacan's middle period.[17] Firstly, Lacan conceives of lack as an entry point into the symbolic, which he articulates in *Séminaire III* as a human prosthetic: "as *unique*, as a pure *novelty* with respect to the rest of nature,"[18] humanity "survives by

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[15] Michael Lewis, *Derrida and Lacan: Another Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 8. The image seems to recall even something of the process of signification as infinitely recessive.

[16] "This is the deconstructive import of the phallus, it indicates that the chain of referrals can never find a reassuring end in any moment that would be outside of this referentiality or 'text'." Lewis, 69.

[17] It is "unacknowledged" in that it does not remain, as Lewis puts it, "true to" the "origin of Lacan's thought in the medical, the scientific." Lewis, 17.

[18] Lewis, 49

invention, *technê*, by a crafting of supplements that constitute another, non-natural order."[19] The role played then by the symbolic order is to make up for insufficient instinctual abilities.[20] Thus, "[w]hat is unique about man is the signifier."[21] Secondly, following Saussurean linguistics, the signifier can only occur as part of a total structure of differential semiotic relations.[22] "One can only think of language as a network, a net over the entirety of things, over the totality of the real. It inscribes on the plane of the real."[23] It is this combination of naturalizing lack and positing the symbolic as that which occurs as a total system spread "over the entirety of things" which erects the symbolic into a transcendental system and interprets the relationship between the "real" and the "symbolic" as an opposition, to be added to the list of deconstructible oppositions such as nature/culture or signifier/signified. Somewhat paradoxically, it is Lacan's specific conception of the signifier of lack here that causes the open-endedness of signification so key to poststructuralist thinking to take place within a structuralist whole, closing and totalizing the system by instating in the human relationship to nature a general division between an inside and an outside language. Thus, there remains in nature a stable point of reference outside language, onto which language is superimposed, and the lack in signification is no longer just a lack of signified; rather a stabilized sense of "lack" becomes that which, precisely, is signified.[24] This

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[19] Lewis, 54. Arguably, the notions of supplement and operative are recognizable enough to view here as informing the Derridean "écriture" of the first few pages of *La Dissémination*.

[20] Lewis, 55. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book III, The Psychoses 1955-5*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (Paris: Seuil, 1981; New York: Norton, 1997), 96.

[21] Lewis, 49.

[22] "[W]e must start with the idea that this order constitutes a totality. In the symbolic order the totality is called a universe. The symbolic order from the first takes on its universal character." Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II, The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-55*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (Paris: Seuil, 1978; New York: Norton, 1991), 29. "It isn't constituted bit by bit. As soon as the symbolic arrives, there is a universe of symbols." Lacan, *The Seminar: Book II*, 53.

[23] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book I, Freud's Papers on Technique*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester (Paris: Seuil, 1975; New York: London, 1991), 262, cited by Lewis, 53.

closure and totalization are to be related with a second aspect of the signifier, the *name-of-the-father*.

The name-of-the-father (*nom-du-père*) also forms an entry point into the symbolic. Lacan relates it to the prohibition (*nom-non*) of incest which governs and regulates human sexuality and thus institutes the law of the symbolic. "The name-of-the-father is the moment at which subjects are stitched into a wider *inter*subjective textile, language and linguistically structured legality, the realm of culture."[25] This accession to intersubjectivity, language, legality and culture occurs as the child's realization of an impossible completeness with the mother, or in other words of an immediate relationship with the real:

> [T]he child is forced to accept his determination by the signifier, initially in the form of the name of the father, he is forced to accept his inheritance of and subordination to the father as symbol. The father's intervention amounts to the intervention of the signifier in the child's life, or the dawning awareness that a signifier will always already have governed his destiny. Thus he will never have been one with the mother, with the real.[26]

For this reason, the name-of-the-father is the signifier of the signifier, of all signifiers, as it "stands on the threshold of culture and indicates it as such and as a whole." This privileged precedence of the signifier furnishes a third characteristic Derrida will come to criticize. Ushering in transcendentalism, the name-of-the-father too, "by occupying a point external to [the symbolic order], allows it to form a totality."[27]

The totalization of the symbolic, the opposition of symbolic to real and the primacy of the signifier in Lacan's structure form three gestures which deconstruction attempts to resist. If it seems clear enough how the first two open themselves to criticism for unthought

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[24] Symptomatic of this way of thinking is, to Derrida, Lacan's interpretation of *The Purloined Letter* as a story about lack, one which presents as its message the centrality and circuitousness of lack. See note 29.

[25] Lewis, 57.

[26] Lewis, 65.

[27] Lewis, 59.

metaphysical affiliation, it is worth looking more closely at why the primacy of the signifier in Lacan's early seminars and in his *Écrits* seems problematic to Derrida, especially given the shared position of deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis on the slippage of meaning under the signifier's indexation. In an important footnote in *De la Grammatologie*, Derrida seems to have in mind Lacan when he makes a provision about the "originary" status of text, or writing with respect to the idea of a pre-existing, textually independent meaning:

> Which does not mean that by mere inversion the signifier should be fundamental or prior. The "primacy" or "priority" of the signifier would be an untenable and absurd expression, being formulated illogically in the very logic it wishes, legitimately no doubt, to destroy. The signifier shall never rightfully precede the signified, else it should no longer be signifying and the signifier "signifier" would have no possible signified. The thought that announces itself in this impossible formula without succeeding to reside in it must be articulated differently: it shall only be able to do so at the condition of suspecting the very idea of the sign, of the "sign-of" which will always remain attached to that precisely which is in question here. By destroying therefore, if need be, the whole conceptuality distributed around the concept of sign (signifier and signified, expression and content, etc.).[28]

What Derrida works elsewhere into a more general critique is here faintly outlined:[29] Lacan's view on the signifier's indexation, Derrida contends, is not only that it lacks a signified, but that "lack" becomes precisely what the signifier signifies. This is problematic as it leaves intact the signified of the signifier "signifier." Holding a primacy either of the signified or of the signifier is thus untenable as both end up leaving intact and perfectly functional the scheme of signifier-signified. The signifier cannot be held prior to the signifier any more than the reverse, as this gesture necessarily replicates a grounding of the system in an undue,

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[28] "Ce qui ne veut pas dire, par simple inversion, que le signifiant soit fondamental ou premier. La 'primauté' ou la 'priorité' du signifiant serait une expression intenable et absurde à se formuler illogiquement dans la logique même qu'elle veut, légitimement sans doute, détruire. Jamais le signifiant ne précédera en droit le signifié, sans quoi il ne serait plus signifiant et le signifiant 'signifiant' n'aurait plus aucun signifié possible. La pensée qui s'annonce dans cette impossible formule sans réussir à s'y loger doit donc s'énoncer autrement : elle ne pourra sans doute le faire qu'à suspecter l'idée même de signe, de 'signe-de' qui restera toujours attachée à cela même qui se trouve ici mis en question. Donc à la limite en détruisant toute la conceptualité ordonnée autour du concept de signe (signifiant et signifié, expression et contenu, etc.)." Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 32.

[29] Jacques Derrida, "Le Facteur de la Vérité," in Jacques Derrida, *La Carte postale: de Socrate à Freud et au-delà* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), 439-524.

unacknowledged privileged meaning: if all signifiers can be viewed as indexing only other signifiers with the exception of the signifier "signifier" (construed into the operatives of *phallus* and *name-of-the-father*), thought is conditioned by an originary double gesture of preservation (of meaning) and relegation (of the signifier to a secondary status). The signifier "signifier" is thus allowed to occupy a privileged place in the system – it has become a transcendental signifier. For this reason, Derrida calls for the destruction of the whole conceptuality around the sign, rather than just half of it, a call which he himself answers to some extent with a series of concepts replacing the Lacanian signifiers (*trace*, *reste*, *différance*). What Lacan allows to function unconditionally is what Derrida calls the "*sign-function*," the suspicious "sign-of" in the above quotation. As mentioned at the opening of this chapter, Derrida specifies in his articulation of archi-writing the relationship this notion has to that of the *sign-function*: "it [archi-writing] should constitute. . . the movement of the *sign-function* linking a content to an expression, whether graphical or no."[30] A full dismantling of the primacy of the signified is thus achieved only at the price of thinking also that which conditions the sign-function in Saussure's semiotic scheme.[31]

Though Derrida maintains a certain operativity of the signifier, he recasts Lacanian lack, that driving force of desire, as *différance*, the differential and deferring play of meaning from signifier to signifier. Recapitulating Lacanian elements such as lack, substitution and the superimposition of meaning, deconstruction develops the notions of *dissemination*, *spacing*, *graft*, and *supplement* in an attempt to resist the appeal to anything outside the tissue of

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[30] "Elle [l'archi-écriture] constituerait. . . le mouvement de la *sign-function* liant un contenu à une expression, qu'elle soit graphique ou non." Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 88.

[31] Indeed, this *sign-function* is none other than the function of the signified, which according to Derrida Lacan preserves, a reservation that leads him to give undue privilege to the signifier "signifier" as an empty indexation that becomes indistinguishable from a successful indexation of lack. Lacan's *signifiant* is therefore still a metaphysical concept. The concepts Derrida uses "in lieu of" Lacan's ultimately transcendental *signifiant*, *phallus*, *nom-du-père*, are conceived as "quasi-transcendental" are accordingly not concepts, but "quasi-concepts," a provision Derrida makes in order to reflect that he too is trapped in a metaphysical vocabulary though deconstruction attempts to include an awareness of the "inscriptivity" of concepts, hence the prefix "quasi-" qualifying, or conditioning rather the notion of a "concept."

textuality in the form of a stabilizing signified. Indissociable from what Derrida terms a "graphique de la supplémentarité," *dissemination* is perhaps best introduced here as such.[32] The two general forms of *writing* (*écriture*) at work in the history of Western textuality are further characterized by Derrida as a logocentric one and a disseminating one. The former is a true, genuine transcription of the spoken word of the father, seminal in its generation of texts faithfully reproductive of an original meaning. It can point to real referents and signify concepts, yielding an image of signification as a closed, stable and integral system. The other writing spreads seeds in wasteful excess, grafts supplementary stand-ins in lieu of the absent original (the father, the *phallus*, the *logos*), and interrupts the signifier in its semiotic indexation. It produces a model of meaning that is open-ended and endlessly recessive. The first writing only ever occurs as it is conditioned by its inscription into the second. Not even the signifier "signifier" (nor "writing" for that matter) may stand outside this general economy of writing.[33]

The shift can be viewed in two ways. It is an *espacement*, or *spacing*, which Bates highlights in Lacan's process of deferred meaning, an opening of the structure to the drifting of signification, and it is a *greffe*, a *graft* or substitution in discourse. The *graft* is a textual operation that consists in collecting traces of the excluded third party held outside of conceptual oppositions, but which occur residually in the excluding system, drawing out consequences of this residue in order to transform the conceptual apparatus attempting to contain and limit it.[34] Derrida's reworking of the Lacanian signification process of deferral and substitution puts back into circulation, as it were, the too-central concept of "signifier." If in Lacanian psychoanalysis, another signifier takes the place of Saussure's signified and

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[32] Derrida, *La Dissémination*, 210-1.

[33] See Jacques Derrida, *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 385-96.

[34] See Jacques Derrida, "Signature Événement Contexte," in Derrida, *Marges de la Philosophie*, 376-81; Derrida, *La Dissémination*, 253-7; Derrida, *Positions*, 96 and 132.

stitches itself into the chain wherever one was expecting a signified, to Derrida this graft must also occur in "indexation" itself: indeed this indexation of the signifier cannot operate without the notion of substitution on which it is reliant – this is the sense of Derrida's footnote in *De la Grammatologie*. To Derrida, *espacement* and *greffe* are not operations of the signifier, are not attributable to any stabilized, isolated sense of signifier.

The divergence between Lacan and Derrida on the notion of "signifier" is important to literary critics because it can be shown to influence how each thinker conceives not just of how meanings are deferred, a tenet sometimes held to be proper to a deconstructive vision of literature, but also how they are obtained, which is perhaps where ears all chewed out with deconstructive rhapsodizing might be felt to perk up. The sense of the Derridean intervention on this end of Lacan's signification process will indeed clarify how the opening of texts to recessive concatenation does more for us than to yield endless negativity (for both thinkers). As Derrida's critique of the Lacanian reading of Edgar Allan Poe's *Purloined Letter* goes to show, theoretical differences between both thinkers play into their relationships to literary analysis. What Derrida warns against is a reduction of the structure of a text to its circulation of an item (the signifier) that might remain intact to effects of *différance*. In Lacan's seminar on the *Purloined Letter*, Derrida thus criticizes Lacan for his understanding of the letter as an indivisible site which constitutes the proper place of the signifier. To him, this gesture leads back to a subordination of writing to live speech and a phallic castration that is not truly a castration, since it is thought that what is lost eventually always returns to its place. The seminar thus stabilizes a sense of lack which it reads into Poe's short story, insuring the privileged position of lack in the signifying system.[35] Striving to put back into the play of

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[35] "What Lacan analyses, decomposing it in its elements, its origin and its destination, discovering it in its truth, is a *story*. . . . This story is certainly that of a letter, of the theft and of the displacement of a signifier. But what the Seminar treats is only the content of this story, that which is precisely called the story, the accountedness of the account, the internal and narrated side of the narrative. Not the narrative itself. The interest for the agency of the signifier in its letter gives way to this agency in that it constitutes, in the first instance, exactly the exemplary content, the meaning, the writ of Poe's fiction, as opposed to its writing, its signifier and

writing this stabilized sense of lack which to Lacan forms something like the signified of Poe's short story, Derrida provocatively states, in "Le Facteur de la Vérité": "The difference that interests me here is that, take it as you will, lack does not have its place[/does not belong] in dissemination."[36] Because this understanding of the signifier is also an understanding of how meaning is gained, touches in other words on what each thinker does with the notion of signified, it is necessary to consider also Lacan's understanding of the relationship of the signified to the signifier and contrast it with changes to the notion of "meaning" that arise once the idea of a proper place reserved for the signifier has been jettisoned with deconstruction. What indeed is a signified anymore, and how is meaning had and made?[37] Though their positions once again share a common core, Lacan's and Derrida's views on the matter diverge significantly.

Though Lacan emphasized the signifier from the Saussurean scheme, this does not mean he wholly abolished effects of signification from his work, on the contrary. So concerned was Lacan with the process of signification that he frequently applied himself to literary analysis in the context of his seminars on psychoanalysis, warranting his inclusion, for Bates as for many others, in the history of our field as a literary critic. Although Bates concentrates on Lacan's view of desire as lack and, accordingly, on his scheme of an endless

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its narrating form. The displacement of the signifier is thus analyzed as a signified, as the recounted object of a short story." "Ce que Lacan analyse, la décomposant en ses éléments, son origine et sa destination, la découvrant en sa vérité, c'est une *histoire*. . . . Cette histoire est certes celle d'une lettre, du vol et du déplacement d'un signifiant. Mais ce dont traite le Séminaire, c'est seulement le contenu de cette histoire, ce qu'on appelle justement l'histoire, le récité du récit, le versant interne et narré de la narration. Non pas la narration elle-même. L'intérêt pour l'instance du signifiant en sa lettre précipite vers cette instance en tant qu'elle constitue précisément, au premier abord, le contenu exemplaire, le sens, l'écrit de la fiction de Poe, par opposition à son écriture, à son signifiant et à sa forme narrante. Le déplacement du signifiant est donc analysé comme un signifié, comme l'objet raconté dans une nouvelle." Derrida, *La Carte postale*, 455.

[36] "La différence qui m'intéresse ici, c'est que, formule à entendre comme il plaira, le manque n'a pas sa place dans la dissémination." Derrida, *La Carte postale*, 470.

[37] This is, in essence, what I ask in Chapter 2 in recognizing a metaphorical site of inscription in Shakespeare's drawn-out treatment of Romeo's body as a "form of wax." After identifying a gesture of inscription which suspends the Friar's and Romeo's antinomic positions, and the broader cultural discourses that subtend them, the question turns to the significance of this gesture as an event, what it rearticulates, offers or calls for.

chain of signifiers, this reflects only one half of the semiotic machinery that undergirds literary activity as much as it does that of our psyche. If the economy of lack characterizing desire is an operation of the subconscious, there remains the work of consciousness completing the engagement of the subject with signs. In what follows, I offer a cursory examination of Lacan's full semiotic apparatus including both the endless indexation and the other half of the process, whereby one signifier is substituted with another. This will allow me to introduce and make use, in the rest of the chapter, of Lacan's notion of *metaphor*, minoring a Derridean adjustment to the concept.

2. *Derrida and Lacan: metonym and metaphor*

Lacan develops his semiotics, somewhat intriguingly, in tropological terms. Thus, the chain reaction of empty signifiers Bates focuses on corresponds to a *metonymic* operation in the psyche that works hand in hand with a converse *metaphorical* process. Basing his argument on an influential publication by Jakobson on different types of aphasia and the effects of brain lesions on language use, Lacan makes a sharp distinction between metonymy and metaphor.[38] The former is considered to work on a syntactic axis. It pertains to the combination of units of language to form speech (affecting the linguistic perception of contiguous relations and of syntactic articulation). The latter is understood to operate along a paradigmatic axis of semiotic substitution (affecting the linguistic ability to distinguish equivalency, synonymy). Metonymy corresponds therefore to the structure of a chain of signifiers *in presentia*. As for metaphor, relating to signifiers *in absentia*, more than a kind of analogy or comparison, this figure of substitution appears to Lacan as a form of identification that recapitulates the emergent functions both of the phallus and of the name-of-the-father.[39]

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[38] Roman Jakobson, "Deux Aspects du langage et deux types d'aphasie," *Les Temps Modernes* 17, no. 188 (1962), 853-80.

[39] Lacan, *Écrits*, 40 and 152.

Metaphor allows to overcome the resistance of signification through the emergence of a signifier that should be read as the condensation of the perception of identity.[40] It is not that one thinks of something analogically or in virtue of another, rather something is perceived entirely as another. This phallic emergence of signification thus institutes an order of signification in which the unattainable signified is substituted with an instituting signifier – *instituting* in that it does not so much provide sense through analogy than it does lay down a symbolic law that achieves meaning as it initiates the subject to a new transcendental symbolic order, much as the child is initiated to language by taking on the name-of-the-father. Thus, metaphor does not, as the Classical rhetorical understanding may lead one to think, present a signifier acquiring a new signified, but a signifier giving way to a new signifier which institutes its own symbolic law.[41]

Metonymy and metaphor work together to create meaning. Metaphorical work is supported by the logically prior operations of metonymy as "articulation, the discursive – . . . an alignment of signifiers."[42] Thanks to the articulatory work of metonymy, a metaphor, or a poetic spark, can be produced, which Lacan deems a *sine qua non* condition for poetry:[43]

> The creative spark of the metaphor does not spring from the presentation of two images, that is, of two signifiers equally actualized. It flashes between two signifiers one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connexion with the rest of the chain.[44]

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[40] Lacan, 125. See also Lacan, *The Seminar: Book III*, 218 and 221. This pertains to Lacan's psychoanalytic view of metaphor as condensation and metonym as displacement.

[41] Lacan, *Écrits*, 120.

[42] Seminar 3, 219. The distinction is based on Jakobson's own opposition between different types of aphasia which affected, "on the one hand the relations of similarity, or substitution, or choice, and also of selection or concurrence, in short, all that is of the order of synonymy, and on the other hand the relations of contiguity, alignment, signifying articulation, syntactic coordination." Jakobson associates the former condition to the notion of metaphor and the latter to metonymy.

[43] "[A] definition of poetical style could be to say that it begins with metaphor, and that where metaphor ceases poetry ceases also." Lacan, *The Seminar: Book III*, 218.

[44] Lacan, *Écrits*, 119.

To illustrate this process, Lacan uses a line from a Victor Hugo poem, *Booz endormi*: "his sheaf was neither miserly nor spiteful,"[45] for which he offers the following analysis:

> That's a metaphor. It's certainly not a latent simile, it's not - *just as* the sheaf was willingly dispersed among the needy, *so* our character was neither miserly nor spiteful. There's not a comparison but an identification. . . . [O]ur use of the term *symbolic* in fact leads us to restrict its sense, to designate only the metaphorical dimension of the symbol. . . . Without the signifying structure, that is, without predicative articulation, without the distance maintained between the subject and its attributes, the sheaf cannot be qualified as miserly or spiteful. It's because there is a syntax, a primordial order of the signifier, that the subject is maintained as separate, as different from its qualities.[46]

This leads Lacan to read the sheaf in Hugo's poem as a signifier through which the signifier "Booz" has been hidden. The metonymic (syntactic and contiguous) relations between "his sheaf" and "Booz" – i.e. the fact that the sheaf is the subject of the sentence,[47] but also that it takes on attributes which apply better to Booz –[48] is combined with the metaphorical substitution of "his sheaf" for "Booz" to produce new meaning. Indeed, Booz's sheaf is not simply a self-effacing symbol for Booz: the latter "has been swept away by the sheaf; and hurled into the outer darkness where greed and spite harbour him in the hollow." This mechanism, which Lacan also links with repression, allows for Booz to resurge in the form of his sheaf, which carries with it a meaning in excess in virtue of its being a metaphorical

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[45] Lacan, *The Seminar: Book III*, 218. See also Lacan, *Écrits*, 119; "Sa gerbe n'était point avare ni haineuse." The figure is more precisely a hypallage, though Lacan's reading of it as a metaphor is not only literary. For a study of transfers of animacy to the inanimate in relation to Shakespeare, see Jonathan Hope, "Agency and Uncertainty in Shakespeare's Syntax," in Hope, 138-69.

[46] For this reason, Lacan judges it impossible for animals to be capable of metaphors, since entering the symbolic order articulated as a metonymic chain of substitutions has been defined as a uniquely distinctive human trait. Lacan, *The Seminar: Book III*, 218-9.

[47] "It's by virtue of being the subject of miserly and spiteful that the sheaf can be identified with Booz in his lack of avarice and in his generosity. It's by virtue of the similarity of position that the sheaf is literally identical to the subject Booz." Lacan, *The Seminar, Book III*, 219.

[48] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book V, The Formations of the Unconscious*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (Paris: Seuil, 1998; Cambridge: Polity, 2017). This is what Lacan refers to as "the debris of the metonymic object." Lacan, *The Seminar: Book V*, 44. "Metonymic" because they occur in the signifying chain. Further, Lacan speaks of elements related to the repressed signifier *in absentia* as "metaphorical waste product." Lacan, 49.

substitute. Thanks to the connective operations of metonymy in the signifying chain and the substitutive operation of metaphor along the paradigmatic axis, the metaphor gains a "power to engender:"[49]

> But if in this profusion the giver has disappeared along with his gift, it is only in order to rise again in what surrounds the figure of speech in which he was annihilated. For it is the figure of the burgeoning of fecundity, and it is this that announces the surprise that the poem celebrates, namely, the promise that the old man will receive in the sacred context of his accession to paternity.

The role played by metaphor is perhaps best understood analogically to what Lacan says elsewhere of its function in a dialogue reported by Freud: in lieu of the absent signifier, "what is called to that place is a metaphor that would mediate between the topic of the conversation as it is unfolding and what he rejects. . . ."[50] Thus, metaphor plays an intermediary role, also perceptible in the example of Hugo's poem, where it mediates between the descendance topic of the poem and the disappearance of Booz. In this case, the metaphor comes to reproduce the patriarchal logic of procreation, which implies both the disappearance and the survival of the forefather in his lineage.[51] What metaphor makes possible is a negotiation of these implications. The productivity of metaphor, or the possibility of reaching a new signified, has to do therefore with its mediative function, the way the old, absent, past signifiers, are repeatedly made metonymically present in speech, repressed and thus maintained, inserted into new, presently unfolding chains of significations, where they seem to demand to be dealt with, so to speak, through the mediative function of metaphor.

Derrida does not explicitly comment on Lacan's distinction of metonymy and metaphor in the process of signification. However, based on his own writings on metaphor in

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[49] Lacan, 24.

[50] Lacan, *The Seminar: Book V*, 50.

[51] That the role of metaphor is described exemplarily through the discussion of a poem where metaphor mediates the theme of patriarchal descendancy rehearses something of the Derridean criticism of Lacan's overly illustrative reading of Poe's short story.

philosophy and on his major claims on the nature of textuality, it is possible to infer a continuity as well as a demarcation from Lacan's tropology that shall prove useful in assessing how the formal category of metaphor deserves to be linked to the notion of agency in dramatic literary criticism, specifically for an appreciation of the relationship to the sonnet in *Romeo and Juliet*. Initially, this demarcation precipitates a form of criticism in which one inevitably recovers elements of Derrida's critique of the primacy of the signifier. Indeed, what Derrida might contest in Lacan's semiotic-psychoanalytic tropology has to do with the oppositional form assumed by Lacan's assignation of the articulatory to the metonymic and of the substitutive to the metaphoric. Let us examine the following claim by Derrida which, though it concerns Rousseau, cannot but reiterate Lacanian conceptions:

> Even that which we say, name, describe under the name of prohibition of incest does not escape play. There is a point in the system where the signifier can no longer be replaced by its signified and, consequently, nor can any signifier, purely and simply. . . Language is neither prohibition or transgression, it couples one to the other endlessly.[52]

If the attention to a central and ever-receding signifier is shared by Lacan and Derrida alike, what distinguishes the latter is the view that language "couples" prohibition and transgression not only processually, but conceptually, in such a way that contradistinction is undermined.

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[52] "Même ce que nous disons, nommons, décrivons sous le nom de prohibition de l'inceste n'échappe pas au jeu. Il y a un point dans le système où le signifiant ne peut plus être remplacé par son signifié, ce qui a pour conséquence qu'aucun signifiant ne puisse l'être, purement et simplement. . . Le langage n'est ni la prohibition ni la transgression, il accouple sans fin l'une à l'autre." Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 376. It seems impossible to consider the following passage, from the same page of *De la Grammatologie*, as wholly independent, to state it euphemistically, from Lacanian conceptuality: "The displacement of the relationship to the mother, to nature, to being as to a fundamental signified, that is indeed the origin of society and of languages. But is it possible thenceforth to speak of origin? What is the concept of origin, or the fundamental signified, if not an indispensable yet situated function inscribed in the system of signification inaugurated by prohibition? In the play of supplementarity, one will also be able to bring substitutes back to their signifieds, the latter will still be a signifier. Never will the fundamental signified, the meaning of the represented being, let alone the thing itself, be given to us in person, outside of sign or play." "Le déplacement du rapport à la mère, à la nature, à l'être comme au signifié fondamental, telle est certes l'origine de la société et des langues. Mais peut-on désormais parler d'origine ? Le concept d'origine, ou de signifié fondamental, est-il autre chose qu'une fonction, indispensable mais située, inscrite, dans le système de signification inauguré par l'interdit ? Dans le jeu de la supplémentarité, on pourra toujours rapporter des substituts à leur signifié, ce dernier sera encore un signifiant. Jamais le signifié fondamental, le sens de l'être représenté, encore moins la chose même, ne nous seront donnés en personne, hors signe ou hors jeu." Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 376.

There is indeed no conceptual opposition that should not yield a *reste* deconstructing the opposition. In relation to metaphor and metonymy, or semantics and syntax, it is not only that both work together in a process of signification characterized by prohibition and transgression, or articulation and substitution; neither of these terms can be distinguished from its counterpart without the opposition being inscribed already in one of the terms of the opposition. If Lacan's view on the recession of the signified leads him to proclaim the priority of the process of syntax, signifier, metonym, with regards to semantics, signified, metaphor, Derrida refutes this gesture, arguing that one is always already coupled to the other, or in other words, that there is no possible consideration of one in isolation of the other, as one will always find the distinction inscribed and operating (because already presupposed) in any expression of the chosen, privileged term. Thus, what deconstruction heeds – and herein lies its own contribution to a Lacanian understanding of metaphor – is, so to speak, the differentiation between the categories of syntax and semantics, or metonym and metaphor, or the dynamic and productive "between" that couples one to the other. This is the amendment to Lacanian semiotics that accounts for a properly Derridean critical thrust, which considers the relationship between syntax and semantics as an effect of *différance* in a productive sense. This allows for the story not to become ultimately one of lack, of an invariable, stabilized sense of infinite negativity.[53]

In *La double séance*, Derrida examines the role of what he calls the *syncategorème* "entre [between]" in the work of Mallarmé:

> One is no longer even authorized to say that "between" is a purely syntactic element. Aside from its syntactic function, through the re-mark of its semantic emptiness, it begins to signify. Its semantic emptiness *signifies*, but spacing and articulation; its meaning is of the possibility of syntax and it distributes the play of meaning. *Neither*

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[53] Although texts are productive, Derrida is careful not to consider dissemination, misapprehended as a reading method then, as the source of this productivity: "Dissemination *affirms* (I do not say produces or constitutes) endless substitution, it neither stops nor supervises the play. . . ." "La dissemination *affirme* (je ne dis pas produit ou constitue) la substitution sans fin, elle n'arrête ni ne sruveille le jeu. . . ." Derrida, *Positions*, 120-1.

purely syntactic, nor purely semantic, it marks the articulated opening of this opposition. [54]

It is this double process of inscription and dismantling of oppositionality, or the graft-and-spacing of *différance*, that Derrida follows and reads as a certain special productivity of texts. By focusing on the supplementary *reste* "left behind" metaphysical categorization, Derrida develops the literary critical (im)pertinence that characterizes his work. The attention to the "entre [between]" is also to a homophonic "antre [cave]," since this syncategoreme (the coupling of a categorical pair) is also characterized as a functional "milieu", French for "middle" as well as "environment." The "between" is therefore not only relational but "elemental" to the operations of *différance* with regards to metaphysical oppositions: "*milieu* as the element enveloping both terms at once: *milieu* as held between both terms."[55] The role of the (non-locatable) *in-between* that conditions the very opposition "outside of which" it is maintained is also developed, in "La Pharmacie de Platon," into the notion of *pharmakon*, used alternatively by Plato to mean "poison" as well as "remedy," among other senses.

In the episode of the myth of Toth in *Phaedrus*, *writing* is contrasted with oral speech and condemned as a technology furnishing *hypomnesis*, a mere remedial stimulus to memory, rather than the activating *mnèmè*, the soul's memory of the transcendental Ideas it once beheld, and which only live speech may bring about through a dialectical process, notably in the company of the midwife figure of Socrates. Writing is accordingly rejected from a more fundamental opposition between the Idea, *eidos*, and live speech, the privileged means to

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[54] "On n'est même plus autorisé à dire que 'entre' soit un élément purement syntaxique. Outre sa fonction syntaxique, par la re-marque de son vide sémantique, il se met à signifier. Son vide sémantique *signifie*, mais l'espacement et l'articulation ; il a pour sens la possibilité de la syntaxe et il ordonne le jeu de sens. *Ni purement syntaxique, ni purement sémantique*, il marque l'ouverture articulée de cette opposition." Derrida, *La Dissémination*, 274.

[55] "[M]ilieu comme élément enveloppant les deux termes à la fois : milieu se tenant entre les deux termes." Derrida, 261. I resist translating *milieu* by "medium," as Barbara Johnson does, which resembles the French "moyen" and denotes an instrumental, vehicular function. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 212.

reach the *eidos*. Remedy to live memory in that it supplements the "mnemic" role of live speech, but one which also risks rather infecting the faculty it seeks to stimulate with the poison of its nature as a stand-in (a substitution to live memory), writing is thus deemed a *pharmakon*. According to Derrida's analysis however, this characterization is problematized considering that the mental beholding of Ideas is metaphorically referred to by Plato as a writing (*graphein*). Knowledgeable live speech *writes* Ideas into the soul.[56] Because of the importance of the passage, and for Derrida's specific and conditional understanding of this act as metaphorical, I quote at length:

> One no doubt commonly feels here to be before a "metaphor." Plato – why not and who cares? – may have thought so too, as a history of "metaphor" (inscription, impression, mark, etc. in the speaking of the brain or the soul) was being engaged, begun even, no doubt, and which philosophy would no longer be able to do without, however uncritical its treatment. It is no less remarkable here that so-called live speech should suddenly be described by a "metaphor" borrowed from the very order of that which one is trying to exclude from it, from the order of the simulacrum. Borrowing made necessary by that which structurally links the intelligible to its repetition in the copy, and the language describing dialectics cannot but resort to it.
> Following a scheme that will go on to dominate all of Western philosophy, a good writing (natural, living, knowing, intelligible, interior, speaking) is opposed to a bad writing (deceitful, moribund, ignorant, sensuous, exterior, dumb). And the good one can only be designated through the metaphor of the bad one. Metaphoricity is the logic of contamination and the contamination of logic.[57]

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[56] "PHAEDRUS: What discourse is this you speak and in which conditions does it take place according to you? / SOCRATES: It is that which, along with knowledge, is written into the soul of the learning man (*Os met' epistemes graphetai en tè tou manthanonthos psuchè*), . . .) / PHAEDRUS : You mean the discourse of he who knows (*tou eidotos logon*), a living and animate discourse (*zônta kai empsuchon*) of which one might rightly say written discourse is a simulacrum (*eidolon*)? SOCRATES: Why yes! Absolutely (276a)." "PHÈDRE : Quel est ce discours dont tu parles et dans quelles conditions a-t-il lieu d'après toi ? / SOCRATE : C'est celui qui, accompagné de savoir, s'écrit dans l'âme de l'homme qui apprend (*Os met' epistemes graphetai en tè tou manthanonthos psuchè*), . . . / PHÈDRE : Tu veux dire le discours de celui qui sait (*tou eidotos logon*), discours vivant et animé (*zônta kai empsuchon*) duquel on pourrait dire en tout justice que le discours écrit en est un simulacre (*eidolon*) ? SOCRATE : Eh oui ! absolument (276a)." Derrida, *La Dissémination*, 185-6. The selective inclusion of the Greek text attests to the metaphorical use of the verb *graphein* and reveals links such as the use of the word *eidolon* for simulacrum, cognate with *eidos*, Plato's word for the transcendental Idea.

[57] "Sans doute a-t-on couramment la sensation d'être ici devant une 'métaphore.' Platon – pourquoi pas et quelle importance ? – le croyait peut-être aussi au moment où s'engageait, commençait même, sans doute, l'histoire d'une 'métaphore' (inscription, impression, marque, etc., dans le dire du cerveau ou de l'âme) dont la philosophie ne pourra plus se passer, si peu critique qu'en soit le traitement. Or il n'est pas moins remarquable ici que la parole soi-disant vive soit tout à coup décrite par une 'métaphore' empruntée à l'ordre même de ce qu'on en veut exclure, à l'ordre du simulacre. Emprunt rendu nécessaire par ce qui lie structurellement l'intelligible à sa répétition dans la copie, et le langage décrivant la dialectique ne peut manquer d'y faire appel. "Selon un schème qui dominera toute la philosophie occidentale, une bonne écriture (naturelle, vivante, savante, intelligible, intérieure, parlante) est opposée à une mauvaise écriture (artificieuse, moribonde, ignorante,

The function of writing as a *pharmakon* is thus constitutively implicated in the opposition between literal and figurative, a distinction on the basis of which metaphor is traditionally defined in Classical rhetoric.[58] Placing between quotations marks what he eventually develops into the notion of *quasi-metaphor*, Derrida here implicitly raises the question of how metaphor is to be understood once the distinction between literal and figurative is shown to be historically linked to a metaphysical understanding of intellection as an inscription from which it supposedly proceeds (a "metaphor" that has been shown to be variously active in the early modern period, as analyzed in Chapter 2).[59] In other words, how do we understand "metaphor" once the appeal to the original is shown to always have been citational, once the literal cannot simply be equated with the "proper" given that it is shown to resort to the figurative in order to articulate its (non-figurative) accession to the "proper?"[60]

Plato's understanding of the aim of dialectics as the inscription of Ideas into the soul is neither fully a metaphor, nor is it a literal or proper designation. It makes use of a "figurativity," or "tropicality" that conditions the distinction between literal and figurative (a metaphysical distinction) according to the logic of *entre* or *pharmakon*:

> If the *pharmakon* is "ambivalent" then, it is indeed to constitute the *milieu* in which opposites are opposed, the movement and play that brings one back to the other, reverses them and makes one pass into the other (soul/body, good/bad, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.). . . . Without being anything in itself, the *pharmakon* always exceeds them [philosophemes] as their bottomless fund.[61]

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sensible, extérieure, muette). Et la bonne ne peut être désignée que dans la métaphore de la mauvaise. La métaphoricité est la logique de la contamination et la contamination de la logique." Derrida, *La Dissémination*, 186-7.

[58] I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936; 1965), 89-138.

[59] Jacques Derrida, "Le Retrait de la métaphore," in Jacques Derrida, *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987 ; 1998), 83.

[60] Derrida develops more fully his notion of metaphor in the essays "La Mythologie blanche" and "Le Retrait de la métaphore."

The placement of the word "ambivalent" between quotation marks is arguably meant to insist on the fact that none of the conceptual dualities can function (i.e. their twofold value [ambi-] cannot be posited) without resorting to the productive "between," or *nothingness* as Derrida defines it here (certainly nothing that could be understood as any kind of substance), much like the notion of *chora* examined in the previous chapter. Coming back briefly to Romeo's sonneteering tendencies in 1.1, in articulating within the same metaphorical predication a rhetoric of courtly complaint and one of poetic elevation, each discourse stands to be commented on by the other and even to yield a third discourse of desire in the combination of, or gap between the two. Indeed, in the company of Benvolio, Romeo's melancholy desire seems perhaps more that of a Petrarchan poet, and Benvolio its distorted Neoplatonic mirror showing the genre's relative vanity or infertility. In contact with Mercutio, Romeo seems more the courtier and Mercutio its gross caricature, provoking duels, engaging in male rivalry and reducing women to sexual objects. And the two, Renaissance courtship and Petrarchan sonneteering, are themselves mirror images of a desire that may exist in one and the same metaphorical predicate in Romeo's diction. Perhaps this is simply because they can be brought back to a common historical-cultural articulation of desire. But it may also be, regardless of whether Renaissance courtship and Petrarchan sonneteering are read as performances of a same desire, a new performance of desire – this indeed will depend on the literary/dramatic performance. Yet the possibility is there, in the productive "between" which metaphor, like a wax surface, may hold together.

According to an analysis further developed in "La Mythologie blanche" and "Le Retrait de la métaphore," Derrida's view of metaphor therefore is that it is unthinkable as a

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61 "Si le *pharmakon* est 'ambivalent,' c'est donc bien pour constituer le milieu dans lequel s'opposent les opposés, le mouvement et le jeu qui les rapporte l'un à l'autre, les renverse et les fait passer l'un dans l'autre (âme/corps, bien/mal, dedans/dehors, mémoire/oubli, parole/écriture, etc.). . . . Le *pharmakon*, sans rien être par lui-même, les [les philosophèmes] excède toujours comme leur fonds sans fond." Derrida, *La Dissémination*, 158.

non-metaphysical notion after Plato, yet no philosophical account of "metaphor" can be had from a philosophical position since in such an account the metaphorical would invariably lead back to the metaphysical and the metaphysical will always be expressed metaphorically.[62] In his reading of Mallarmé, in which the notion of "entre/antre" is developed, Derrida underscores Mallarmé's literary-poetic "miming" of certain metaphysical concepts – such as presence – which Derrida reads as a citation, or allusion to these concepts. What he then refutes – on the basis of his analysis of the supplementary unanalyzed residue, that which is left no position except an (unlocatable) in-between concepts, a "between" he shows to condition the inscription of the very sets of terms it is written out of – is that there can ever be a non-citational, non-allusive, or for what concerns us here, non-metaphorical appeal to metaphysical concepts. This posits a necessary inscription of metaphysical thinking into a form that can no longer be simply read as either original or merely citational, alluded to or alluding to, literal or metaphorical: "In this perpetual allusion at the end of the endless between[/cave], one never knows what the allusion alludes to, if not to itself, embroidering its hymen and crafting its text."[63]

In an analysis of Derrida's "La mythologie blanche," Jean-Luc Amalric underscores a related characteristic of Derrida's take on metaphor, namely a materialist implication:

> *White Mythology* not only extracts the formal law of an auto-implication of metaphor – law according to which there can be no discourse on metaphor that is not said in a conceptual network itself generated metaphorically –, it also shows that this law translates *materially* as a network of dominant metaphors (those of light, of the ground-base, of the home-return) where metaphysics signifies itself in its primordial metaphoricity. [64]

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[62] He also states in *De la Grammatologie*: "It is not about inverting proper and figurative senses, but determining the 'proper' sense of writing as metaphoricity itself." "Il ne s'agirait donc pas d'inverser le sens propre et le sens figuré mais de déterminer le sens 'propre' de l'écriture comme la métaphoricité elle-même." Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 27.

[63] "Dans cette allusion perpétuelle au fond de l'entre qui n'a pas de fond, on ne sait jamais à quoi l'allusion fait allusion, sinon à elle-même en train de faire allusion, tissant son hymen et fabriquant son texte." Derrida, *la Dissémination*, 270.

In its reliance on material metaphors therefore, metaphysical claims are consistently shown to recover the very figurativity from which they strive to demarcate themselves. Moving out of metaphoricity is thus not only an inescapably metaphorical operation, it tends to be asserted through recurrent material metaphors which historically come to stand as major metaphysical "tropes." Amalric mentions light, ground, and home. To this list should be added the ambivalent materialities of wax (analyzed in Chapter 2), and of other inscriptive metaphors (such as Derrida comments on in "La Pharmacie de Platon"). It is in this sense that Derrida proposes to examine "matière" as that which is held outside of classical metaphysical oppositions. And language also being something on which metaphysical claims are made, claims on the materiality of language, especially claims of the reliance of the linguistic on non-linguistic materiality (Plato, Saussure, the early modern English sonnet),[65] or on the immateriality of language (*flatus vocis*, Renaissance Neoplatonism) tend to furnish traces in which *restance* may be found at work, as a material effect. Indeed, language is the privileged medium through which truth is pursued in classical transcendental systematizations of philosophical texts such as Plato's *Phaedrus*. In this effort, writing is that aspect of language which must be left behind, belonging to the material world, obscuring and obstructing access to the ideal. Crucially for my purposes here, this supposes a deep connection between metaphor and writing. Commenting on Saussure's representation of language as a travestying vestment, Derrida notes: "One suspects already that if writing is an 'image' and exterior 'figuration,' this 'representation' is not innocent."[66] Writing is then what inscribes or ties

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[64] "*La Mythologie blanche* ne se contente donc pas de dégager une loi formelle d'auto-implication de la métaphore – loi selon laquelle il n'y a pas de discours sur la métaphore qui ne se dise dans un réseau conceptuel lui-même engendré métaphoriquement – elle montre en outre que cette loi se traduit *matériellement* à travers un réseau de métaphores dominantes (celles de la lumière, du sol-fondement, de la demeure-retour) où la métaphysique se signifie elle-même dans sa métaphoricité primordiale." Jean-Luc Amalric, *Ricœur, Derrida: L'enjeu de la métaphore* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006), 65.

[65] See Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 77 and 93.

"quasi-metaphorically" the immaterial to the material. It is this understanding of metaphor and its connection to materiality and writing that I am proposing to focus on in this thesis.

Although Derrida's explicit treatment of metaphor concerns the use of metaphors in philosophical texts, the implications for the understanding of metaphor drawn out above do not alone concern philosophical attempts to contain the disseminative operations linked to this figure. Indeed, Derrida himself seems to speak on metaphor in such a way that includes both "philosophical" and "literary" texts:

> It is because the metaphorical is from the outset plural that it does not escape syntax; and that it gives rise, in philosophy too, to a *text* that is not exhausted in the story of its meaning (signified concept or metaphorical sense: *thesis*), in the presence, visible or invisible, of its theme (meaning and truth of being).[67]

The point of contention then between Derrida and Lacan in their respective uses of the signifier is not just as a philosophical effort to oppose the semanticism of a certain metaphysical tradition; it is also constitutive of the reading methodologies each thinker develops as he reworks this tradition. Whereas Lacan, subordinating the semantic to the syntactic, finds in Poe's *Purloined Letter* a story about lack, Derrida's own engagement with Poe is intent on not reducing the text to an allegory of the primacy of syntax, treats the text as arising from the constant coupling of the two, which also explains why he tends to derive his vocabulary from the text being read.[68] In this sense, and this is precisely part of his point on

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[66] "On soupçonne déjà que si l'écriture est 'image' et 'figuration' extérieure, cette 'représentation' n'est pas innocente." Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 52.

[67] "Or c'est parce que le métaphorique est d'entrée de jeu pluriel qu'il n'échappe pas à la syntaxe; et qu'il donne lieu, dans la philosophie aussi, à un *texte* qui ne s'épuise pas dans l'histoire de son sens (concept signifié ou teneur métaphorique: *thèse),* dans la présence, visible ou invisible, de son thème (sens et vérité de l'être)." Derrida, *Marges*, 320.

[68] Barbara Johnson argues in an essay on this face-off around the sense of Poe's short story that Derrida, while extending a generosity in his reading of Poe which he feels Lacan did not (even though arguably, Lacan is open about the fact that what he seeks in the short story are parallels of psychoanalytic theory), does not necessarily extend the same generosity to Lacan in his selective reading of the *Seminar on the Purloined Letter*. See John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, eds., *The Purloined Poe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1988), xi; Barbara Johnson, "The Frame of Reference," in *The Purloined Poe*, ed. Muller and Richardson, 213-51.

metaphor in philosophy, Derrida is constantly reading philosophers as authors that do not escape the literariness of the medium they necessarily work with. With this in mind, I return to Bates' perception of early modern sonnet cycles as structured by lack in a way that would eventually be theorized by Lacan in order to interrogate, from a Derridean perspective, what the parallel yields in terms of literary criticism.

3. *Meaning and negativity: experiencing the impossible*

In her reading of the Renaissance sonnet cycle inspired, or conditioned by Lacan, Bates seems to a certain extent to prioritize a syntactic line, which accordingly affects her reading of poetic signification. In the endless deferral from signifier to signifier she perceives, she highlights the Lacanian structure of desire, which Lacan understands as metonymic.[69] The recessive structure underlying Bates' conception of the English Renaissance love sonnet cycle corresponds thus to Lacan's definition of metonym:

> [I]t is the connexion between signifier and signifier that permits the elision in which the signifier installs the lack-of-being in the object relation, using the value of 'reference back' possessed by signification in order to invest it with the desire aimed at the very lack it supports.[70]

This is to say desire only ever refers back to its own order, continuously installing a lack-of-being in the object towards which it is oriented in order to sustain itself by assuming the ability to produce, or defer lack even if the object of desire is attained (desire will have by then moved on and attached itself to another object). Though Bates distinguishes, as I have shown in the previous chapter, a vertical line in this poetry of desire that could be shown to correspond more or less with the paradigmatic, substitutive axis of Lacanian metaphor,

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[69] "[M]an's desire is a metonymy." Lacan, *Écrits*, 133.

[70] Lacan, *Écrits*, 124-5. By "referring back," Lacan recalls his signifier-bound understanding of referral: "The dominant factor here is the unity of signification, which proves never to be resolved into a pure indication of the real, but always refers back to another signification. That is to say, the signification is realized only on the basis of a grasp of things in their totality." Lacan, *Écrits*, 95-6.

substituting desire for the beloved for that of poetic elevation for example, she interprets this

unsatisfied desire as belonging to a chain of other unsatisfied desires all indexing lack, or

want:

> Not winning the Lady, not winning the argument, not winning the bays …it's all one.
> These are simply different expressions of and variant figurations for what is basically
> the same thing – the foundational lack or negativity, the original state of want or of
> not having – that structures human desire and human subjectivity alike.[71]

In a sense then, in finding in sonnet cycles an invariant structure of lack the sense of which is

unaffected by the figurative tenor of the text, Bates' interpretation also posits lack or want as

a kind of transcendental signifier. In more critical terms, to find in the early modern sonnet a

recognizably self-same foundational lack risks bracketing the specificity and metaphorical (in

the Lacanian sense of mediative) function of "different expressions" and of "variant

figurations." Is the failure to win the Lady the same lack as the failure to win the bays? Is this

lack "read" and "rewritten" the same way in Petrarch as it is in Wyatt, Spenser, Sidney or

Shakespeare?[72] Does a reading that sees in literary fiction a structure of desire as pure lack

not bracket the contamination of different metaphorical configurations in which the structure

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[71] Bates, 117.

[72] When Bates argues for instance that "Shakespeare's use of a male addressee in his sonnets is simply taking to its logical conclusion. . . the Petrarchan model of praise in which an idealized object, 'Fair, kind, and true' (Sonnet 105), reflects back to the speaking subject an idealized image of itself," and, thus, that "Shakespeare is simply drawing out what one critic calls 'the homosexual truth subtending the poetics of admiration' that had characterized the Petrarchan mode from the beginning," what is that allows her to separate and distribute authorial and readerly functions in this way, attaching a sense of creative originality to Petrarch while Shakespeare is "simply drawing out?" One might argue that in establishing Petrarch as a model, later generations of poets are the ones who distribute these functions, positing Petrarch as the author and their own poetry as a readerly attempts that do not quite manage to become authorial in the eminent sense they confer to Petrarch. In this sense, Petrarch acts as the *name-of-the-father*: each poet who invests the structure of the sonnet is thus being stitched into to a symbolic order that begins with accepting Petrarch as the *name-of-the-father*. But if that is the case and to come back to Bates' example, does it not also follow that Shakespeare's affiliation to Petrarch, his reading of the sonnet form, is also a fictionalization of an affiliation to Petrarch and that this fictionalization should on one hand suspend any straightforward acceptance of such a reading, according to which Shakespeare is "simply drawing out," and on the other hand present itself as an authorial mediation of the sonnet structure, as a literary innovation establishing the manner in which this structure gives itself to be read differently in the late sixteenth century in England than it did in mid-fourteenth century Italy? To what extent can the Shakespearean reading, mediation, or negotiation of Petrarch's heritage of a subtending homosexual truth in the sonnet be brought back to Petrarch without negating or disregarding the cultural historical setting in which this "drawing out" occurs?

of lack appears? What is the relationship between "the foundational lack or negativity. . . that structures human desire and human subjectivity alike" and the poetic expression of this lack? Unless "lack" is read not only as a syntactic agent, a structural feature, but as one which also receives different effects of signified and belongs to the constant process of reinscribing meaning (the very process it articulates), it runs the risk of becoming, if not unthought, perhaps unread. To claim that Bates neglects the literariness of these poems presenting a structure of desire as lack would be to grossly undervalue the richness, breadth and specificity of her readings and their rootedness in the literary history of the sonnet. Indeed, the various poetic shapes and direction she evokes attest to her consideration of metaphoric concretions, in other words of the texts that arise in the described experience of want. She does not however discuss the implications of positing a same metanarrative of lack taking place behind the thin veil of poetic illusions and precarious fictional constructs. Beyond the Derridean reservations concerning the signifier's function as pure syntactical lack, the question here concerns the reading of a literary desire as formally equivalent with the idea of a purely syntactical lack.

If Bates mainly reads the concatenation of desire – to win the Lady, to win the argument, to win the bays, to be different from Petrarch – as organized by lack, the impossibility to achieve any of these aims might also be read from the point of view of the Lacanian metaphor. The Lacanian formula of metaphorical substitution states: "it is in the substitution of signifier for signifier that an effect of signification is produced that is creative or poetic, in other words, which is the advent of the signification in question."[73] I wish to suggest that in literature, this "effect of signification" – in which one can recognize the Lacanian structure of the "*point de capiton*," or *quilting point*, those points where slippage along the diachronic line of signifiers meets with a knot – condition the inscription of a

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[73] Lacan, *Écrits*, 125.

syntax of lack as much as negativity conditions the expression of desire. Is not the specificity of literature that it works with the traces of this process, the temporary and never satisfactory, always too-late effects of meaning that occur in the inscriptionality of a structuring lack? Is not the purpose of poetic writing then, especially when it figures itself as a substitution for worldly experience, that it become an experience itself? Does not the text arise in the first place from the conditioning impossibility of achieving distinction, of doing anything else than to recede into the negativity from whence it came? And as literary critics, is it not the textual trace of this metaphysical wrestling match that demands our ever-renewed attention and participation in its process of poetic metaphorization? Is poetic "meaning" not precisely a relationship to the text that emerges from/as an experience of the impossible? If such is the case, the determination of the early modern sonnet by a syntax of lack and a scripting of desire as want would seem to demand also to be read in its variant constructions of this impossibility and in a way which accounts for the literary relationship to the ultimate recession of meaning, or in other words the meaning of meaninglessness. In this sense, *Romeo and Juliet* reads as an eminent staging of this negativity, asking the very question of our relationship to the impossible, to the irony of form, and figuring an attempt to move out of the conditional negativity inherent in the poetic expression of desire in the Petrarch-inherited sonnet.

Even construed as responding to the impossible desire to demarcate oneself from a Petrarchan forefather, the lyricizing of desire in a sonnet, sequence or whole cycle cannot be said to operate a signification of lack without also generating what Derrida calls a *restance*.

> And yet there are effects of theme, meaning, figures. The impossible is possible, through the abuse of that torsion which is not yet rhetorical for that it opens and bends the space of rhetoric. The impossible is possible: the "source," for example, but just as

well all that will place it in the position of a second proper meaning to bring back to it gaps and turns. [74]

This passage from another essay found in *Marges de la Philosophie* ("Qual Quelle") rehearses the notion of "quasi-metaphoricity:" metaphor defined as a rhetorical figure is determined, much as writing is by an archi-writing, by a quasi-metaphoricity that posits the figurative as a supplement to nothing – a contradictory proper figurative meaning that is inextricably tied to the operation of figuring proper meaning, the repetition or division of proper meaning that "inscribes death in the mark;" Derrida describes such concepts as "impossible."[75] The response to the impossible, which is also a relationship to death, is in fact precisely how meaning is generated in a Derridean perspective and the very condition of dissemination: distinguishing Derrida from Lacan on the basis of their divergence on the "question of the impossible" – both responses to some extent to Freud's "enigma of the repetition compulsion and the death drive"[76] –, Domenico Cosenza states:

> Derrida defines the heart of deconstruction as a practice that revolves around the impossibility to be said: "the impossible is the agenda of deconstruction."[77] This deconstructive practice should be distinguished from the methodological drift that proliferates in the United States more than anywhere else in the realm of literary

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[74] "Et pourtant il y a des effets de thème, de sens, de figures. L'impossible est possible, par l'abus de cette torsion qui n'est pas encore rhétorique pour ce qu'elle ouvre et ploie l'espace du rhétorique. L'impossible est possible : la 'source,' par exemple, mais aussi bien tout ce qui la mettra en position de sens propre second pour y rapporter des écarts et des tours." Derrida, *Marges*, 337.

[75] "From whence impossible concepts, quasi-concepts, concepts I called quasi transcendental, like archi-trace or archi-writing." "[D]'où des concepts impossibles, des quasi-concepts, des concepts que j'appelais quasi transcendantaux, comme l'archi-trace ou l'archi-écriture." Jacques Derrida, *Résistance de la Psychanalyse* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 44. He also speaks of the work of deconstruction as characterized by the structure of the "*double bind*" (in English in Derrida's text).

[76] "Both were uncompromising readers of 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle,' elevated the Freudian enigma of the repetition compulsion and death drive to the dignity of a structural principle of experience, by measuring their bearings and consequences on the tradition of Western knowledge, discourses and organization of disciplines." "Tous deux ont été des lecteurs intransigeants d'"Au-delà du principe de plaisir," ont élevé l'énigme freudienne de la compulsion de répétition et de la pulsion de mort à la dignité de principe structural de l'expérience, en en mesurant la portée et les conséquences sur la tradition du savoir occidental, les discours et l'ordonnance des disciplines." Domenico Cosenza, "Derrida et Lacan : une rencontre manquée ?" *La Cause du Désir* 2, no. 99 (2015): 198.

[77] Jacques Derrida, "Pour l'amour de Lacan," in Jacques Derrida, *Résistances*, 66, cited in Cosenza, 198.

theory, which is why one should remember with what precision Derrida defined it as an experience of the impossible: "needless to repeat once again that deconstruction, if there is any, is not a critique, even less a theoretical or speculative operation led by someone, but that if there is any, it takes place. . . as an experience of the impossible."[78]

Thus, the impossible is understood both for Lacan and Derrida as "the impossibility to be said, aimed at the blind spot of signification," and more specifically for deconstruction, "the Derridean practice which maintains circular the infinite push that Lacan defined as 'signifying precipitation,' with no conclusive moment."[79] The structure of a circle that is impossible to close thus characterizes the deconstructive endeavor, in some of the paradoxical ways which I have attempted to bring out in these pages, and relates to the distinction between these different experiences of impossibility – not primarily the endless displacement of metaphor by metonym so much as a non-coincidental, repetitious quasi-metaphoricity that constantly couples meaning and meaninglessness.

This in turn would seem to offer a higher compatibility with literary texts as constitutively related to an experience of the impossible, each text forming its own articulation of what a conditioning impossibility suddenly, in fiction, makes *impossibly possible*, as a surplus meaning on the backdrop of its ultimate breakdown into a Lacanian sense of lack.[80] In a sense, it could be said on one hand that the reading of desire as lack

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[78] "Derrida définit le cœur de la déconstruction comme une pratique qui tourne autour de l'impossible à se dire : "l'impossible c'est l'affaire de la déconstruction." Cette pratique déconstructive se démarque de la dérive méthodologique qui prolifère aux États-Unis plus que partout ailleurs dans le domaine de la théorie de la littérature, ce pourquoi on rappellera la précision avec laquelle Derrida la définit comme une expérience de l'impossible : "inutile de rappeler une fois encore que la déconstruction, s'il y en a, n'est pas une critique, encore moins une opération théorique ou spéculative méthodiquement menée par quelqu'un, mais que s'il y en a, elle a lieu. . . comme expérience de l'impossible." Cosenza, 198.

[79] "l'impossible à se dire, visant le point aveugle de la signification ;" "la pratique derridienne qui maintient circulaire la poussée infinie que Lacan a définie comme 'précipitation signifiante,' sans moment de conclure." Cosenza, 198.

[80] An invention in fiction or an event in history are only possible, can only occur as invention, as event, to Derrida, if they are impossible. Derrida unfolds this paradox in a paper from the proceedings of a conference titled "Dire l'événement, est-ce possible ?": "Here we are in a place of creation, art, and invention. Invention is an event; the words themselves indicate as much. It's a matter of finding, of bringing out, of making what is not yet here come to be. . . ." He adds: "if I invent what I can invent, what is possible for me to invent, I'm not

structuring early modern English sonnet cycles also breaks down since it cannot escape the very law it enunciates, under which no sonnet can get away from signifying its own impossibility to escape the negativity of lack. On the other hand, expanding both on Derrida and on the idea of poetic writing as an experience of the impossible, one may draw a "productive" implication of the reading of desire as lack by appealing to Paul de Man's determination of just such a reading in terms of a textual event:

> The deconstruction of the figural dimension is a process that takes place independently of any desire; as such it is not unconscious but mechanical, systematic in its performance but arbitrary in its principle, like a grammar. This threatens the autobiographical subject not as the loss of something that once was present and that it

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inventing." Indeed, "I have the ability to make this happen and consequently the event, what happens at that point, disrupts nothing; it's not an absolute surprise. . . . For there to be an invention event, the invention must appear impossible. What was not possible becomes possible. In other words, the only invention possible is the invention of the impossible. This statement may seem to be a game, a mere rhetorical contradiction. In fact, I believe it is an irreducible necessity. If there is invention. . . , it's possible only on the condition of being impossible. The event's eventfulness depends on this experience of the impossible. What comes to pass, as an event, can only come to pass if it's impossible. If it's possible, if it's foreseeable, then it doesn't come to pass" (450-1) For this to make sense, it is also necessary to reconsider the relationship and meaning of the words "possible" and "impossible," which Derrida does at the end of his paper: "We should speak here of the im-possible event, an im-possible that is not merely impossible, that is not merely the opposite of possible, that is also the condition or chance of the possible. An im-possible that is the very experience of the possible. This means transforming the conception, or the experience, or the saying of the experience of the possible and the impossible." There is therefore a conditioning impossibility that makes something possible in the first place. "Likewise, repetition must already be at work in the singularity of the event, and with the repetition, the erasure of the first occurrence is already underway – whence loss, mourning, and the posthumous, sealing the first moment of the event, as originary" (450). The relationship between event and repetition is analyzed in the rest of this chapter. Jacques Derrida, "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event," trans. Gila Walker, *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (2007): 441-461. "Nous sommes ici dans un lieu de création, d'art, d'invention. L'invention est un événement; d'ailleurs les mots même l'indiquent. Il s'agit de trouver, de faire venir, de faire advenir ce qui n'était pas encore là." "[S]i j'invente ce que je peux inventer, ce qu'il m'est possible d'inventer, je n'invente pas." "Je suis capable de faire arriver cela et par conséquent, l'événement, ce qui arrive là, n'interrompt rien, ce n'est pas une surprise absolue. . . Pour qu'il y ait événement d'invention, il faut que l'invention apparaisse comme impossible ; ce qui n'était pas possible devient possible. Autrement dit, la seule possibilité de l'invention, c'est l'invention de l'impossible. Cet énoncé peut paraître un jeu, une contradiction rhétorique. En fait sa nécessité, je la crois très irréductible. S'il y a de l'invention. . . , elle n'est possible qu'à la condition d'être impossible. Cette expérience de l'impossible conditionne l'événementialité de l'événement. Ce qui arrive, comme événement, ne doit arriver que là où c'est impossible. Si c'était possible, si c'était prévisible, c'est que cela n'arrive pas." (95-6) "Il faut parler ici de l'événement im-possible. Un im-possible qui n'est pas seulement impossible, qui n'est pas seulement le contraire du possible, qui est aussi la condition ou la chance du possible. Un im-possible qui est l'expérience même du possible. Pour cela il faut transformer la pensée, ou l'expérience, ou le dire de l'expérience du possible ou de l'impossible" "De la même manière, dans la singularité de l'événement, il faut que la répétition soit déjà à l'œuvre et qu'avec la répétition, l'effacement de la première occurrence soit déjà engagée ; d'où le deuil, le posthume, la perte qui scellent le premier instant de l'événement comme originaire" (100-1). Jacques Derrida, "Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement," in In Gad Soussana, Alexis Nous and Jacques Derrida, *Dire l'événement, est-ce possible ? Séminaire de Montréal, pour Jacques Derrida* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 79-112.

once possessed, but as a radical estrangement between the meaning and the performance of any text.[81]

This "radical estrangement between meaning and the performance of any text," while taking up a notion of Lacanian metonymic displacement of metaphor, which Derrida underlines in his commentary of this passage from *Allegories of Reading*, also introduces a key concept when it comes to observing the displacement as it occurs textually: irreducible to the figurality around lack, implied by the very condition it institutes, is the gesture of inscribing text. This gesture opens the space of fiction and sets metaphor into motion in a chain that places it always one step away from the reader in a process Derrida refers to as deconstruction's lateness, the non-adequation which reopens systematic metaphors and simultaneously inscribes into metaphor. If then the sonnet offers a systematic, structural reading (metaphorization) of lack – and not just a systematic performance (metonymization) of lack as a structural principle – as the law under the conditions of which it is written, irreducible to this reading is the very inscriptive performance of the sonnet's text. Crucially, this performance must be understood as one that both "dispels the illusion of meaning" through a "pure grammar," or pure writing, as well as subordinates this writerly force of displacement to its own conditional, condensational figuration, its own rehearsal or reading.[82] The persistent displacement of writing, being purely mechanical, both has nothing to do with desire and, in the variant constructions of a relationship to the impossible, cannot be separated from desire. By taking into consideration the performativity of writing as a pure grammar, Paul de Man develops Derrida's view of textuality as a constant coupling of language and matter into an understanding of this process as an event.

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[81] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading*: *Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 298, cited in Jaques Derrida, "Typewriter Ribbon," 356.

[82] That this reading is in fact compatible, or at least not disallowed, by Lacan's later interpretation of the signifier and of the relationship between the symbolic and the real is Michael Lewis' general argument in *Derrida, Lacan: Another Writing*.

Presenting a certain negativity of desire as an experience, carrying it over meta-phorically from poem to drama, is part of what lends the specificity of an event to *Romeo and Juliet*. This is a claim I expand on in chapters to follow, but it may be useful to outline this claim on the basis of what has just been argued. If the event of an aesthetic confrontation to the impossible is where meaning and meaninglessness are coupled and uncoupled, Shakespeare's inscriptional sites in bodies and dramatized metaphors appears to invest just such a modality of experience and displacement as a condition of meaning, even if "meaning" here is only ever the "experience of the impossible" itself. As a form that capitalizes on the tension between machinic repeatability and singular event, drama performs just such an experience, investing it with a surplus of meaning, or *staging* it as a condition of meaning. One might say it couples and uncouples the singular and the machinic in a movement that *dis/figures* the process of meaning-making itself, of sense making in general then, condensing, heightening ethical and existential stakes through displacement, iteration and grafting, such that these stakes must be reread, rearticulated, sought for in the aporetic impasses into which we continually are led. This indeed is a crucial deconstructive insight: where the thought, the system, or "meaning" breaks down, the utterance that occurs in such moments is profoundly relevant – turning from notional meaning to syntactical significance, it calls attention to the performative grammars of all uses of language as responses to the entrapment of signification (in a sense, such is the gesture Plato operates in order to think a materiality beyond matter, and this is achieved only at the price of severing the utterance from the systematic to explore it as a dream or "bastard reasoning" – the rich Renaissance reception of the figurative discourse thus produced suggests the gesture paid off).

By way of illustration, I offer a short reading of one such textual event in Act 1.3 of *Romeo and Juliet*. The use Juliet makes of language is remarkably different from Romeo's. The play itself, titled "Romeo and Juliet," lends itself to an interrogation of how to take this

"and," what its project is and what performative grammar the play works out for it. As yet another instance of two inscriptions held together in a same precarious material or wax surface, Romeo and Juliet, presented each in turn in Act 1, also figure two very different relationships to language. Romeo's relationship to language is variously marked by discursive projects of reproduction and set into different figurations of a desire for self-fulfillment. He is given great range of movement to explore these dynamics and he makes full use of this freedom of speech. Juliet is mainly portrayed as a listener and defined through a series of binds in Act 1.3. The scene opens with the line: "Nurse, where's my daughter? Call her forth to me." It immediately establishes three female characters as the scene's protagonists after the all-male Act 1.2, and it creates a parallel with Romeo, whose comings and goings are questioned by his parents in Act 1.1. In his case, we are quickly given a perspective into *where Romeo is* in his mind, as he is only too ready to voice it. In Juliet's case, the scene develops into stories told about her and speeches made to her but does not give her many lines in which to respond. Themes identified in Chapter 2 recur in Act 1.3: a "Neoplatonic concept of *fair* outside reflecting the *fair* inside,"[83] an image of sexual partnership as "gold clasps lock[ing] in the golden story" (1.3.94) as well as Petrarchan conceits, further explorations of what happens in the union of man and woman in statements such as "women grow by men" (1.3.97), and a depiction of Paris as a "man of wax" (1.3.78). However else the image lends itself to be read, it also looks forward to Romeo's "form of wax," which inverts it as the play moves on and the effigies of sedimented literary-conceptual materiality begin to be overworked and deformed. Juliet is indeed presented with a series of commonplace thoughts, hackneyed tropes and clichés, and her response to them seems to underline the artificiality of such neatly formed "men of wax" as the Nurse and her mother present her with.

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[83] Levenson, 177.

Expressed in an appropriately Petrarchan image, Juliet's last lines in the scene connect to her mother's line "Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?" (1.3.98) in rhyming with it, creating her own mini-sequences of rhyming couplets after Lady Capulet's: "I'll look to like, if looking liking move. But no more deep will I indart my eye / Than your consent gives strength to make it fly" (1.3.99-101). The response leaves more unsaid than it says. It plays out Juliet's own short pharmaconic economy of love. Spoken to appease her mother without outrightly agreeing to her demand, it poses the question of how, if the law of desire is that looking moves liking, Lady Capulet's consent could possibly have anything to do with Juliet's darting eye. The implication of the overall statement is that if one can be forced to marry, one cannot be forced either to desire, nor to refrain from desire. By agreeing on the surface to her mother's demand, Juliet's contradictory promise merely evidences the double bind in which she is put. The meaning of her utterance, which is no promise (at least not the one it says it is), is not in anything she says per say but stems rather from the sense of the speech turn as a performance. Renouncing the possibility of "meaning" in any univocal way, of meaning in any way *in* language (Lady Capulet's demand is impossible to answer, as there is no asking, promising, or forbidding desire),[84] Juliet's utterance severs itself off from the order of language as an enactment of singularity. There is no way she can answer Lady Capulet's demand within language, not even by lying, no option to even begin responding without first ruling out language's ability to convey a subjective presence to the wording of a promise. This is the performative grammar of Juliet's particular use of language here – it voids the linguistic pretension of a psychic self-presence to speech and withdraws from language (rejecting, or rewriting her mother's idea of the "fair without the fair within to hide" [1.3.92]). In other words, it founds the possibility of a reserve, of a language that "means" both through machinic repetition and by singular enactment. Throughout the rest of the play,

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[84] I come back to this point in Chapter 5, as well as to the ethics of different uses of language in the play.

Juliet continues to exhibit this wariness as to the possibility that language has anything to do, to say about the singular, even in her encounter with death, where her own short lines contrast spectacularly with Romeo's monologic lyrical end. She is also repeatedly led to perform impossible responses, for example in surrendering her very body to a grisly iteration of the linguistic strategy of machinic repetition and withdrawal, as she presents herself to her household in the form of a "thing like death" (4.1.74), that she may elsewhere live. Juliet's renunciation of "meaning," her performance of speech when no meaning can be achieved through speech, is what De Man refers to as a material event, or the "productive" side of the alternation of deferral and *restance*.

What I am proposing to think about more extensively then is the metaphorical *restance* that occurs already in a literary fiction in which desire conforms to a purely structural or syntactical sense of lack or absence of meaning.[85] As I will attempt to argue in the next chapter, an attention to this *restance* can also be felt in the interdependency of reading and writing in the early modern period, specifically in views of reading as a negotiation of authoritative texts. In what remains of this chapter, I strive to clarify the sense in which De Man builds on the Derridean attention to *archi-writing* and *restance* so as to consolidate the performativity of these notions and their relationship to event.

4. *Paul de Man: the eventfulness of writing and materiality*

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[85] In this sense, Petrarch's poetry of an ever-wanting, ever-unsatisfied desire undoubtedly constitutes a (literary) historical event in the sense of a material occurrence. This sense of an utterance that inscribes itself materially into history is, as Hillis Miller notes, developed by de Man on the basis of his interpretation of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* as a fracture rather than a bridge between the previous *Critiques*: "History is caused by language or other signs that make something materially happen, and such happenings do not happen all that often. The most radical, and allergenic, counterintuitive, scandalous formulation of this is in "Kant and Schiller." There de Man asserts that Kant's *Critique of Judgment* was an irreversible historical event brought about by the shift from cognitive to efficaciously performative discourse in Kant's own words, whereas Schiller's ideological misreading of Kant and its long progeny in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were nonevents, certainly not irreversible material events." J. Hillis Miller, "Paul de Man as Allergen," in *Material Events*, 188. Arguably, Shakespeare's (among others) "drawing out" of a narcissism inherent in Petrarchan lyrical desire, along with other contemporary innovations on the form, also constitutes an event, radicalizing sonnet desire in such a way that the sense of Petrarchism changes materially and historically.

In the vein of Derrida's work on metaphor in philosophy, Paul de Man's developed *archi-writing* into a notion of material event. In a series of essays later collected and published in *Aesthetic Ideology*, de Man departs from a notion of tropology and metaphor which he regards historically as instruments in a discourse of cognition that bears similarities with Derrida's analyses of the metaphysical discourse in philosophy.[86] This departure from tropes and cognition benefits an exploration of a "materiality of the inscription."[87] The term appears in a reading of Kant in which de Man is interested in "the *passage* from trope, which is a cognitive model, to the performative. . . ." as Andrzej Warminski puts it in a collection of essay's dedicated to de Man's approaches to materiality.[88] He elaborates on the emphasis put on passage from one to the other rather than a wholesale embrace of performativity:

> Not the performative in itself—because the performative in itself exists independently of tropes and exists independently of a critical examination or of an epistemological examination of tropes—but the transition, the passage from a conception of language as a system, perhaps a closed system, of tropes, that totalizes itself as a series of transformations which can be reduced to tropological systems, and then the fact that you *pass* from that conception of language to *another* conception of language in which language is no longer cognitive but in which language is performative.[89]

De Man's concentration on the passage from a conception of language as a system of tropes, which contribute to the formation of ideological, cognitive constructs, to a conception of a

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[86] Andrzej Warminski, "Introduction," in Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1996), 10-11.

[87] De Man, 146.

[88] Warminski's summary of de Man's conclusions brings to mind Derrida's conception of language as a circle of repetitions that cannot attain closure as well as Lacan's linear notion (though also disrupted) of signification as a metaphorical-metonymic process of mediation. "Suffice it to say that both Kant and Hegel cannot complete and close off their systems because they cannot ground their own philosophical discourses on principles internal to these systems. In the very attempt to ground or validate the aesthetic, both must have recourse to factors and functions of language that *dis*articulate the aesthetic and its linking or mediating role. Kant's sublime is one example. Instead of being a 'transcendental principle,' the mathematical sublime turns out to be a 'linguistic principle'—in fact, a familiar metaphorico-metonymical tropological system that cannot close itself off and that in turn issues in Kant's dynamic sublime, whose linguistic 'model' would be that of language as performative, which de Man conceives as a power of disruption that constitutes an event, or occurrence." Warminski, 5.

[89] De Man, 132.

performative language thus appears to allow for some compatibility with Derrida's interest in materiality in relationship to language and in writing as a gesture of inscription, which account for his notion of a quasi-metaphoricity as a similar kind of passage between two conceptions of language.

In this "turn toward inscription and away from 'tropological systems' of substitution," "inscription" may, according to Tom Cohen, be understood as conveying "sheer anteriority."[90] Thus, "[t]he 'materiality of inscription' as a phrase invokes a prefigural domain, the domain of the event and the 'performative.'"[91] It is for this reason that de Man also describes this transition as:

> a movement, from cognition, from acts of knowledge, from states of cognition, to something which is no longer a cognition but which is to some extent an *occurrence,* which has the materiality of something that actually happens, that actually occurs. And there, the thought of material occurrence, something that occurs materially, that leaves a trace on the world, that does something to the world as such—that notion of occurrence is not opposed in any sense to the notion of writing. But it is opposed to some extent to the notion of cognition.[92]

This understanding of a participation of the material in writing and in occurrence supposes a notion of materiality as "a locus through which sheer anteriority is in transit, both accessed and preceded as the facticity of inscription out of which human perception forgetfully is staged." The forgetfulness through which inscription is here said to be construed into human perception recalls de Man's claim, in *The Resistance to Theory*, that "[w]hat we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality, of reference with phenomenalism." Attending to the materiality of inscriptions undergirding our perceptions

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[90] Tom Cohen, J. Hillis Miller, and Barbara Cohen, "A 'Materiality without Matter'?" in *Material Events,* viii-ix.

[91] Cohen, Miller and Cohen, viii. The authors link this move to "the rather banal but imponderably necessary task not only of the "translator" but of the *engineer*. To alter the archive, the prerecordings out of which experience is projected and semantic economies policed is at issue." Cohen, Miller and Cohen, ix.

[92] De Man, 132.

shapes de Man's resistance to ideology, that designation of reality that does not escape language.[93] If this seems to paint a picture of humans as boxed into language in a way that claustrophobically constricts them to an endless errancy through a maze of mirrors of their own construction, such an image appears as the result of historically determined ideological gestures building into languages notions such as interiority and subjectivity, which are metaphysically opposed to an outside world. As in Derrida's analysis of philosophical discourse's reliance on metaphor, a reflection which de Man pursues in his essay "The Epistemology of Metaphor,"[94] materiality also assumes the qualities of heterogeneity, of that which is not recognized by the Platonic contemplative eye, which remains strange to the enlightened cognitive mind, a kind of cipher, or indeed a "facticity of inscriptions," which may be assimilated to "the utter exteriority and otherness to designation and signification of inscribed letters."[95] It is this relationship to otherness through language, to its heterogeneity and discontinuity rather than its ability to gather itself into metaphorical assumption, that allows for the ruptures that constitute events, or occurrences.

It is thus partly the otherness of language that constitutes the materiality of inscription, as a parasitic *restance* of writing in discourse, its non-symbolic, non-ideal part or that which acts as a machine reiterating built-in scripts. Hillis Miller carefully follows this conception of alterity as it relates to a certain material power of the letter in de Man, through which "meaning producing tropes are replaced by the fragmentation of sentences and propositions into discrete words, or the fragmentation of words into syllables or finally letters,"[96] noting how otherness materially inheres in a process of "repetition of words and

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[93] Derrida notes a continuity, perhaps even an equivalence, between de Man's suspension of meaning and of reference. Derrida, "Typewriter Ribbon," 355.

[94] De Man, 34-50.

[95] De Man, 31.

[96] Miller, 193-4.

word parts that calls attention to the absurd and unmotivated echoes among them at the level of syllable and letter: puns, rhymes, alliterations, assonances, and so on, that is, precisely those linguistic features poets especially use."[97] That poets are well attuned to and acquainted with the otherness of language does not however imply that the formalization of language in poetry is an equivalent of the "materiality" of language. Rather, this confusion of aesthetic formalization and the dismemberment of language is perceived by de Man as "the trap of an aesthetic education which inevitably confuses dismemberment of language by the power of the letter with the gracefulness of a dance,"[98] a trap, no less, which constitutes "a mortal danger. . . 'as unavoidable as it is deadly.'"[99] Indeed, the fragmentation of language threatens our grasp on notions so dear and intimate to us as perception, humanity, and identity, as it recedes into material play.[100]

A certain materiality of language thus emerges in rote recitation, which "memorizes by emptying words of meaning and repeating them by rote, as pure arbitrary signs that might be in a foreign language or in no language at all."[101] In this repetition by rote, the generality and otherness of language appears, leading to an implication that de Man draws from a passage from Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, "[s]ince language states only what is general, I cannot say what is only my opinion." As with Derrida's *archi-writing*, speaking is necessarily to inscribe into a heterogeneous medium, to lose oneself in the generality of language. Words such as "I," "here," "now" and "this" and other deictics, "are 'shifters,' placeholders.

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[97] Miller, 194.

[98] Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 290, cited in Miller, 195.

[99] Miller, 195; De Man, *Romanticism*, 290, cited in Miller, 195.

[100] The authors of the introduction of *Material Events* accordingly state: "At stake in de Man's late writings, we might say, is the gamble of a transformation within the conceptual programming of the historial, of agency and event, of the "human" (a preoccupation of these essays)," Cohen, Miller, and Cohen, viii.

[101] The passage concerns the Hegelian distinction between the memories of *Gedächtnis* and *Erinnerung*.

Instantly, as soon as they are uttered, the words assume the utmost generality and can be shifted to any I, any here, now, and this."[102] Poetic formalization, then, would appear rather as an instrument through which to sound the abyss at the heart not only of language but of everything in our experience of life as humans that is conditioned by linguistic clarification (time, space, identity). It serves a mediative function therefore, reconciling and confronting us with the danger of death involved "in all those words that surround us all the time and that generate the reassuring ideologies in terms of which we live our lives." In Shakespearean drama, this mediative role is usually played by/as a histrionic figure, Hamlet's player for instance, holding "as 'twere, / the mirror up to nature" (3.2.21-22) or Capulet's serving-man asking us provocatively, both ironically and earnestly, in a way that suspends any superior knowledge conferred to the ironic: "I pray, sir, can you read?"[103] (1.2.58) As a text that both draws on and breaks with Petrarchan sonnet writing, *Romeo and Juliet* variously dramatizes the sonneteer's experience of impossible desire and poses the question of the relationship between poetic writing and lived experience, text and event, metaphor and agency. This crucial insight is further developed in the following chapter, which returns to the context of early modernity.

If the literary investment of fiction, as a particularization of a relationship to the impossible, presents us therefore with a material eventfulness characterized by a constant coupling of metaphoric substitution, or effects of reading, with metonymic articulation, or

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[102] Miller, 196-7.

[103] *Richard II* also appears as a play in which the titular character is confronted with a sudden gap between such words and comforting ideologies and a danger of death not only in the narrative, but in the flattery of the very words in which Richard has invested his sense of self. The rejection of this order of language is both symbolized and perpetuated in the breaking of the mirror in 4.1, in that the mirror is broken both to rebuke further flattery and in order to better match a face Richard deems should bear more the wrinkles from his past life and the world of worries that assails him now. The ambiguity is carried through to the end of the play, even, arguably in the ambivalent realization that being human is to be met with the prospect of "being nothing" as well as the possibility of being reconciled with it. William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 21 September, 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=22&Act=4&Scene=1#192482, 4.1.272-90; 5.5.41.

writing effects, and if *Romeo and Juliet* can be held to interact with sonnet writing understood as just such an investment, it stands to reason that in virtue of its dramatic nature and based on the contexts evoked in Chapters 1 and 2, the play begs to be read as an experiment with the agency of a writerly materiality, specifically of a lyricizing of desire. In *Romeo and Juliet*, one writing of desire is its pharmaconic inscription into metaphors, specifically of materiality – it is in these materializations of desire through metaphor that Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio conceive, not with women, but rather by substituting mental conceit for reproduction, or that which they (and sonnet cycles before them) conceive as the result of the erotic encounter. It is also in the uncontrolled semiotic waywardness (or dissemination) of their metaphors, in the verbal shapes and forms they elect to sustain their mental conceptions, that these verbal conceptions fail. By setting concepts into the materiality of spoken conceits, these characters open the architecture of their thinking to the operative principle of dissemination: their ideas are deconstructed by the supplementary significance of their words. *Flatus vocis*, or the dissolutive carrying off of dark meanings by the wind of words obtains a darker meaning here: that these winds not only carry off all meaning, but that this carrying off is not a dissolution – in other words, metaphorical figuration harbours an agency in the process of its formation and de-formation that is neither reducible to a concretion of meaning nor to a dispelling of that meaning.[104] If, "anticipating literary and psychoanalytic theory by many hundreds of years," the deferral of final meaning and the ascription of desire to the constitution of subjectivity is, as Bates claims, what "the Petrarchan sonnet sequence gives us in perhaps its purest form," the material *restance* is, following a process of metaphorization – and in this I distinguish my case for a Derridean reading of poetic writing from Bates' Lacanian reading of the sonnet structure –, at work in the staging of this deferral and in the ascription of desire to subjectivity in dramaturgical form.

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[104] See Derrida, "Typewriter Ribbon," 355.

As a dramatic text, *Romeo and Juliet* seems to work through some of the implications of the performativity associated with what Derrida calls quasi-metaphors, as a response no less to the sonnet, and to interpretive relationships to it. The materialization into words, or the way spoken metaphors open thought processes to dissemination, is on one hand a relationship between the spoken and the written: Ovid, Petrarch, the Bible, contemporaneous sonnet cycles, the humanist attention to recovered texts – all these texts and textual dynamics are converted into words spoken on stage. The very first words of the play announce this transformation in the sonnet-shaped prologue and the process is carried on in Romeo's oral composition of sonnet stubs.[105] It is in this sense I speak of the play as a "reading" of the sonnet form, among other texts. But as I have also argued, the play stages on the other hand a converse tendency for the airy word to become materialized, whether in the brawl in 1.1 or in Romeo's sometime forced, sometime successful ascription of reality to his own vision of the world. The interval between speech and writing thus generates its own dramatic stakes. If *Romeo and Juliet* therefore presents on one side readers who derivate their speech and behavior from textual antecedents, and on the other side a problematic of writing and inscription, it stands to reason that the relationship between these two tendencies should be interrogated. The following chapter develops the dialogue between the two, attending more to the properly dramatic role of metaphor and the play's early modern context.

Conclusion

In continuity with the contexts of materiality and discourse discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, this chapter has developed and clarified the Derridean line of analysis of metaphor. In the first section, I presented the notion of *archi-writing* and contrast it with Lacan's understanding of the semiotic process. On this basis, "metaphor" was split into the finer notions of *metaphorization*, a process of metaphorical generation and displacement, and

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[105] See Gayle Whittier, "The Sonnet's Body," 27-8.

quasi-metaphor qualifying metaphorical concretions produced in this process. This understanding of metaphor was shown to rest on Lacan's metonymic-metaphorical line of signification, but also to resist it wherever it was deemed to rehearse metaphysical gestures and appeal to an unacknowledged transcendentalism, notably as it privileges the signifier. In lieu of the categories of signifier and signified, or metonym and metaphor, Derrida opens this relation to the in-between, elemental productivity of the process coupling one to the other. This theoretical position was then used to interrogate some of the implications of Catherine Bates' reading of the early modern English sonnet cycle as invariably characterized by a negativity of desire and meaning. With resort to an example of how I view metaphor to articulate meaning from *Romeo and Juliet*, I extended the inquiry to the relationship between the materiality of language and event, following developments of deconstruction in the work of Paul de Man.

As a whole, this chapter provides a method of analysis that authorizes metaphorical processes, defined on the basis of *archi-writing*, to be aligned with effects of writing and reading characterized as material and performative (such as mediation and machinic repetition). Thus, the arguments developed here have also paved the way for an appreciation of how metaphors open the play to a logic of event, which in turn poses questions of agency. This is the subject of the next chapter, which furthers the discussion of literary meaning and sonnet theme broached in this chapter in order to appraise the literary-dramatic dynamics of a play involving tragic young love and lyrical lovers with respect to the tradition of Petrarchan desire (among others).

Metaphorical Mediation:
Writing, Reading, and Performing Literary Meaning

Introduction

The previous chapter established a theoretical relation between the linguistic materiality of metaphor and performativity. This allowed for a conceptual clarification of such notions as metaphorical writing, or the possibility for figurative language to become performative, as well as of metaphorical reading, or the ability for metaphor to mediate between past and present, text and reader (though neither function can be isolated from the other). In this section, I set out to demonstrate through close reading the relevance of these ideas to early modern drama, showing how the approach to metaphor in *Romeo and Juliet* I have built up to so far connects to plot and event in the text. Whereas the metaphors of materiality from the opening of the play were read in Chapters 1 and 2 as introducing the play's exploration of tensions between material and sexual reproduction, I now look at how such metaphors contribute to plot building and the formation of structural conflict in the play.[1]

The first of this chapter's three sections connects metaphor to agency in the play and draws out some the implications of this connection for *Romeo and Juliet* as an early modern text. Examining Capulet's speech to Paris in 1.2, I begin by identifying an "earth" conceit and teasing out from this material metaphor a semantic play deconstructing Capulet's meanings and threatening to undermine his intentions in his role as a patriarchal, provisional match-maker for his daughter. I then link this Derridean analysis to Capulet's dispatch of the Serving-man, in my view a crucial plot point that begs to be read in connection with the linguistic play from the beginning of the scene. Dwelling on the minor yet pivotal Serving-

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[1] For an account of "conflict" as a stage (the second one) in the structural development of dramatic plot, see Gustav Freytag, *Freytag's Technique of the Drama, An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art by Dr. Gustav Freytag: An Authorized Translation From the Sixth German Edition*, trans. Elias J. MacEwan (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1900).

man, I show how this eminently theatrical agent serves to delineate a critical relationship to the activity of writing, reflecting two modes of early modern authorship, one of which is embodied by Capulet, the other represented by Romeo. As a whole, the section argues that Derrida's insistence on the ongoing productivity of writing (*restance*) also emerges in the early modern period in the form of concerns about different types of literary authorship and the act of owning textual meaning, both of which are perceptible in the opening stages of *Romeo and Juliet*.

The authorial act of writing having emerged as a significant form of agency in *Romeo and Juliet*, the second section leads me to explore the agential importance of the converse activity of reading as a central component of Renaissance theories of good writing. Opening with a survey of critical literature emphasizing the role of reading and readers in the early modern constitution of authorship, I trace a network of references to reading in the play in connection with Romeo as a sonneteer figure whose reading abilities are problematized. After a discussion of medieval and early modern conceptions of reading and their relationships (including ethical) to literary authorship, specifically to sonnet writing, I present Romeo as a character who undercuts the humanist ideal of good literary imitation of authoritative models by favoring the stage as a new privileged locus for the mediation between literary past and present in a way that recalls Lacan's attribution of such a function to the figure of metaphor.

Building on these early modern and postmodern understandings of writing and reading as activities that can open metaphorically to a kind of performativity, I turn in the final section of this chapter to Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory as a methodology that allows for the connection between metaphor and agency to be furthered and deepened. This view keys us into a tension between the reading/writing activity of metaphor in *Romeo and Juliet* and the agency of characters, specifically of the lovers. Through a final close reading, I make a case for viewing the shared sonnet of 1.4 both as peculiar kind of action admitting

various types of agency and as an important theatrical-metaphorical mediation of the Petrarchan sonnet posing ethical questions. The chapter thus closes on the note of consolidated connections between language and event, between literature and the stage, between early modern and postmodern, and between metaphor and agency, while opening the inquiry to more specific questions regarding agency and ethics pursued in the final chapter.

1. *From metaphor to plot: a look into early modern authorship*

The aim of this section is twofold. It seeks to establish a connection between metaphor and plot in Act 1.2 of *Romeo and Juliet* from a Derridean perspective and to consider the questions this raises about the early modern context of literary authorship. I begin by examining the metaphors from Capulet's speech to Paris according to the deconstructive perspective I have been borrowing up to this point and then relate them to a reading of the Serving-man, who appears as an important and enigmatic agent in the development of the plot. This juxtaposition of metaphor and dramatic occurrence leads into a discussion of two opposed models of authorial agency in the early modern period. Finally, the role of reading in the constitution of these different types of Renaissance authorial production, treated in the following section, emerges at the end of this section as an area of concern.

Act 1.2 of *Romeo and Juliet* opens with Capulet's long address to Paris. The speech features a conceit around the notion of "earth," which can be read as an iteration of the signet-seal trope presented in Section 3 of Chapter 2. There is indeed a recurrence, in "earth," of the volatile sense of agency taken on by wax, a material that in literary uses appeared to threaten the traditional hierarchy of mind over matter. The figure was observed to follow a patriarchal agenda, figuring the minds of fathers, husbands and generally men as form-imprinting seals, and the weaker minds and bodies of women as form-receiving wax. Alchemical-themed uses of the trope were also shown to portray women as inessential

material vehicles to procreation, as mere bodies onto which the spiritual forms of men's minds were imparted in order to create new life. Sexual reproduction was thus found to be encoded metaphorically as a mode of material production. At the end of Chapter 2, I also looked at how Romeo and Benvolio tap into these tropes in a Neoplatonic discussion of love in 1.1. In the scene following Romeo's dialogue with Benvolio, to which I now turn, the metaphorical complex of non-sexual reproduction is carried over to a dialogue between Capulet and his daughter's suitor, Paris. Here, metaphors related to different senses of the word "earth" work the dynamics of elemental materiality and the wax-seal trope into the plot of the play.

The concern for perpetuation across generations is picked up by Lord Capulet in terms no less material than Romeo's are in the previous scene: "Earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she; / She's the hopeful lady of my earth" (1.2.14-15).[2] These lines initiate a botanical conceit in which "earth" assumes various connotations in figurations of form and matter. Punning through antimetabole on two different senses of the word "earth," Capulet evokes the basic stuff of earth, that biblical materiality to which the body returns after death, and sets it against a notion of "earth" as "land" to be inherited by his daughter in marriage. In this neat juxtaposition, elemental materiality thus threatens to engulf the process of generation and descendancy. On one hand, Juliet's position in the family line is all drawn out by Capulet. On the other, the mouth of the grave – in "swallowed" – gapes menacingly, simultaneously kept at bay and invited in the double use of the term "earth."[3] To make matters worse, another understanding of the second phrase reads "hopeful Lady" as a flower metaphor, which, as Levenson notes, brings in a further notion of earth as "soil suited for

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[2] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Levenson makes a case for keeping both lines, as an antimetabole which some editors consider to be two versions of the same line. Levenson, 163.

[3] Death is figured repeatedly as having a (hungry) mouth in 5.3.

cultivation."[4] In this version, the same earthly material that swallows life also feeds life.[5] As previously in the play, sexuality and botany are linked. In Capulet's mouth, the trope oscillates between two processes of generation and descendancy: following his intended meaning, Juliet shall, by marrying Paris, ensure her father's descendancy; reading into the tropic supplementarity of the metaphors however, a more gothic reading is obtained in which Juliet's body, were she to share the same sad fate as her presumed siblings, would literally become part of Capulet's land to be inherited, as fertile earth. The repetition of "hopes," which also means "tracts of land," in "hopeful Lady" further fragilizes Capulet's image, challenging his depiction of his daughter as a flower with the possibility she might become rather the earth feeding the flower.

With respect to the tension observed in Chapter 2 between orders of production and procreation, the metaphorical play in this speech therefore adds a darker dimension to the dynamics of material generation supplanting human procreation. By portraying barely nubile young women as budding flowers, Capulet invests a humanly sexed botanical conceit which pairs unfavorably with the bodily decay from which he seeks to distinguish it: flowers may be fertilized with the formless earth of decayed bodies, not so through the lived sexuality of human beings. It is paradoxically the semantic fertility of earth that threatens, through earthly resorption, to dissolve his notion of material bounty back into the more general symbolic soil which gives it its shape to begin with. No mere Aristotelean *hyle*, "earth" behaves here as *chora* was observed to do in wax-seal metaphors, problematizing the *hyle – morphê* hierarchy in scholastic thought. It is not just that earth means more than Capulet intends. It means in such a way that Capulet's particular meanings depend on a general metaphoricity of earth, the

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[4] Levenson, 163.

[5] Echoes of the flower image can be subsequently found in the "two more summers" that must "wither in their pride" – showing female sexual desire as a seasonal flower – before Juliet can be deemed old enough to be married. The image also recurs in "well-apparelled April," which depicts the ladies that will attend Capulet's revel as spring flowers – more explicitly yet, Capulet also refers to them as "fresh fennel buds" (1.2.27, 29).

multiplicity and contrariety of which hints at the potentially problematic character of depicting his daughter in terms of botanical mastery: that Capulet's rhetorical mastery of conceit breaks down on closer inspection begs questions of the viability of his familial management, which appears to hinge on his ability to cultivate the perfect flower.

As "the hopeful lady of my earth," Juliet appears as a product of her father's masterful gardening skills, to such an extent that Capulet cannot fathom that his daughter's "scope of choice" (with "scope" retaining territorial connotations) may extend beyond what his "fair according voice" is prepared to concede.[6] Discord, or a divergent "will," is in other words unimaginable, as is made clear when Juliet rejects Paris later in the play. Perhaps incongruous, this extension of sealing metaphors into the realm of gardening is in fact consistent with early modern parallels between gardening and rhetoric, both serving to illustrate masculine control over the domestic unit. Whatever forms of female agency wax may have taken on to upset the seemingly unilateral male action of sealing in early modern metaphors (already complexified by print culture), "earth" and the early modern practice of gardening seem to expand on it, tying into what Randall Martin refers to in *Shakespeare and Ecology* as "ideological tensions in the proprietary relationship between biodiversity and cultivation." Martin opposes "[h]umanist goals of reforming nature," emphasizing a "providentially ordained dominion over nature" to reservations regarding an extensively utilitarian relationship to nature and skepticism as to "whether humans can safely manipulate species within the manifold interdependencies of biodiversity."[7] Citing the topic of grafting as the crux of these tensions, Martin identifies Leonard Mascall's *A booke of the arte and manner how to plant and graffe all sortes of trees how to sette stones and sow pepins, to make wild trees to graffe on, as also remedies & medicines* (1572) as representative of a "new wave of gentry interest in national husbandry that was replacing nostalgia for martial

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[6] See Levenson, 163.

[7] Randall Martin, *Shakespeare and Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 27.

chivalry."[8] That national distinction should be measured by the yardstick of georgic ideals speaks to the preeminence of agricultural practices and, to the list of areas where fathers and husbands (of the land) may assert and articulate their masculinity adds the items of gardening and agriculture, below those – evoked in Chapter 2 – of textual exchange and the fostering of like-mindedness, strengthening the link between material/natural elements and rhetorical management.[9] Substituting the national for the patrilineal, it seems clear enough that Capulet sits firmly in the camp of effective tilling practices as a measure of territorial-dynastic distinction and cohesion, as he metaphorically transfers the humanist picture of georgic harmony to the target domain of parenting. So confident is Capulet in his poised and thoughtful periods and the distinguished pedigree of his home-grown flower-daughter that he goes so far as to encourage Paris to compare Juliet to other (less) fine specimens of young women as so many "fresh fennel bulbs." In so doing, he lets in another unfortunate association.

"At my poor house look to behold this night / Earth-treading stars that make dark heavens light" (1.2.24-5) extends the association of Juliet with earth to a cosmological, religious and poetic level, carrying on the metaphorical declension of "earth" in a recognizably Petrarchan tone, "earthly" now joined and opposed to "heavenly."[10] As substitutes for an absent sun of Reason, these secular stars compete with that Neoplatonic celestial source of light which traditionally allows for discerning contemplation. Paris' "beholding" is accordingly developed into the "comfort" of a sexualized gaze in the rest of Capulet's speech, positing sexual desire where Platonic love or religious adoration might

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[8] Martin, 93.

[9] See Wendy Wall, "Renaissance National Husbandry," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 27, no. 3 (1996): 767–85, which considers the link between Renaissance textual circulation and early modern notions of gardening as new marks of masculinity. Also, use of the gardening trope in the field of rhetoric was common; handbooks such as Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence* belong to a widespread practice of speaking of tropes and figures in botanical terms.

[10] See Levenson, 163.

have taken seat in the desiring subject of a sonnet cycle (1.2.26). Once again, the metaphor causes Capulet to meld elements he strives to keep apart. This is mirrored in the curiously, perhaps comically mixed signals he gives Paris in this scene. Opening with a counsel of two more years of patience, Capulet proceeds to invite Paris to a revel that very night, at which he advises him not to woo Juliet but to consider other women. He promises that the "view" of young women will excite young men's sexual appetites and goes so far as to depict this occurrence in figurative terms as part of his legacy (1.2.32): "even such delight / Among fresh fennel buds shall you this night / Inherit at my house" (1.2.28-30). "Delight" has a sexual meaning as "orgasm," which here becomes the very object of Paris' inheritance. The image suggestively portrays Capulet as a bawd and his house as a brothel, in stark contrast to the purity of the heavenly stars with which the image opens. In his measured efforts to provide land and a happy marriage to his daughter, Capulet's metaphorical meanings are once again disseminated, generating an image of plural sexual relations, with overtones of pollination. His daughter's inheritance threatens thus to be dispersed, falling into the wrong hands. And this is precisely the plotline Capulet instigates in his next lines.

Breaking off his conversation with Paris, Capulet turns to his illiterate servant and entrusts him with a list of guests to the revel. In so doing, he sets into motion a line of events that seems ultimately to enact the unheeded sexual and fatal dynamics of his metaphorical utterances:

> CAPULET. . . . Go, sirrah, trudge about
>   Through fair Verona, find those persons out
>   Whose names are written there, and to them say,
>   My house and welcome on their pleasure stay. (1.2.34-7)

If the opening of the play repeatedly stages a patriarchal substitution of courtship and sexual intercourse with textual versions of chaster unions (seal and wax; Neoplatonic enlightenment), this is the point at which the tendency reverses itself, as a father's elemental

and cosmic metaphors of inheritance harboring sexual promiscuity and death give way to a

plotline leading through to the events of Juliet's union first to Romeo, then to death. The

unstable nature of the metaphorical medium Capulet relies on to reach his meanings appears

to be brought to stage life in the shape of an inept servant, forced to rely upon the ability of

others to decode what is written on the list he cannot read himself.[11] The accident of

Capulet's stray list stands therefore at the top of an entire branch in the plot: Romeo turns up

at the revel, precipitating the love/death plot with Juliet and the duel-to-the-death plotline

with Tybalt.[12] At the origin of the unfortunate accident of Mercutio's death and the

coincidence of the lovers' perfectly mistimed succession of awakenings and deaths, both of

which also feature in Brooke's poem, Shakespeare thus inserts an equally extravagant

crossing of lines to which later events are causally subordinated, as well as thematically

linked. When Romeo's arrogation of Paris' authorized suit is itself undercut by a

personification of death as Capulet's final heir in a speech in 4.4, metaphorical meanings

finally revert from the senses Capulet wished to give them to those he strove unsuccessfully

to keep at bay:

> CAPULET. O son, the night before thy wedding day
>   Hath death lain with thy wife. There she lies,
>   Flower as she was, de-flow'red by him.
>   Death is my son-in-law, death is my heir;
>   My daughter he hath wedded. I will die
>   And leave him all life living, all is death's (4.4.61-6).

Addressed, appropriately, to Paris, the speech brings to a close the metaphorical and narrative

line that begins in 1.2, ending the plotline of the father, his daughter and the usurping heir,

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[11] That the Servant would presumably have been played by Will Kemp, the famously disruptive clown in Shakespeare's company, further underlines Capulet's delegation as a poor call. For a discussion of the evidence for Kemp's appearance at this point, see Elizabeth Ford. "Will Kemp, Shakespeare and the Composition of *Romeo and Juliet*." *Early Theatre* 13, no. 2, (2010): 162-175.

[12] This gives an ironic edge to Capulet's confidence at the opening of the scene in his and Montague's ability to "keep the peace" (1.2.3).

although the metaphorical crossing of sexuality with death carries on in the last scene of the play. A programmatic synecdoche of the play's events focusing on Capulet's implication, Act 1.2 thus brings into focus metaphorical and characterological operatives connecting Capulet and Juliet, the father and the daughter, to Romeo, the illegitimate suitor.

Although this exchange is, as previous all-male dialogues, enlightened by an understanding of the deconstructive effect at work in the imagery to which the characters resort, the characters' lack of control over the dissemination of "semantic seeds" seems to move up from its background role in 1.1. In this scene, the patriarchal, provisional, directive voice of Capulet is passed on to and counterbalanced with a different type of actant, one who corresponds to Capulet's figurative undoing, subverting, confusing, and spreading across imposed limits as he "trudge[s] about through fair Verona."[13] Unimportant, incapable, rhetorically simple and uneducated, the character is contrasted to Capulet in almost every conceivable way. A minor character, the Serving-man seems to take on a greater importance in the metaphorical-narrative line he contributes to shaping, drawing poetic speech into the realm of theatrical experience, connecting metaphor to agency and driving the agon between old Capulet and young Montague by carrying out orders vagariously, in a way that echoes the function writing plays for Derrida.

Short as it is, the transitional episode of the Serving-man is long enough to accommodate a brief soliloquy that revolves, appropriately, around the theme of writing.

> SERVING-MAN. Find them out whose names are written here. It is written that the shoemaker should meddle with his yard and the tailor with his last, the fisher with his pencil, and the painter with his nets; but I am sent to find those persons whose names are here writ, and can never find what names the writing person hath here writ–I must to the learned–in good time. (1.2.38-44)

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[13] See Algirdas Julien Greimas, *Sémantique structurale* (Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, 1966 ; 1986) for the notion of narrative actancy.

With five occurrences of the word "write" in different grammatical forms, the speech also alludes to a writer. According to most editors including Levenson, the speech is a "recasting of Lyly's euphuism," except that Shakespeare's character gets everything mixed up, attributing the wrong tools to each of the craftsmen he mentions.[14] "Writing" is paired with a confusion in the form of a substitution of attributes. In his rewriting of Lyly, the Serving-man thus anticipates his invitation of the wrong guest, further securing the connection between a Derridean sense of writing and action. But how are we to read this apposition of Capulet's controlled and carefully crafted use of language with his delegate's light, spontaneous, somewhat reckless attitude and total lack of insight into the written medium? What is the precise link between these two things and what exactly does the performative *écriture* of this hybrid scene, its opening of poetic figuration to theatrical figure, tell us about the play? What aspects of writing and/or event secure the connection and how are they related to drama? Furthermore, if "writing" also means, as Derrida suggests, inscribing into a discontinuous, heterogeneous medium, how then are those who "write," as Capulet does in different ways in 1.2, to understand and deal with this resistance of writing to authorial control? What does it mean to write if writing only ends up eventually wrong-footing the author, opening texts to an indeterminacy and deferral of meaning?

In what follows, I contend that this preoccupation around the errancy of writing is not a poststructuralist feature alone, but that the Derrida's notion of *écriture* cues us into similar questions Renaissance writers faced in modelling their literary authorship. The rest of this section accordingly develops a reading of 1.2 as a scene that presents two recognizable Renaissance approaches to authorship contradistinguished by different approaches to owning textual meaning. One approach, embodied by Capulet, views meaning as largely pre-established and consistent with inherited literary tradition. The other, represented by the

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[14] Levenson, 165.

Romeo of Act 1, is characterized by a self-reliant owning of meaning and an often unsanctioned irruption into longstanding lines of passed-down literary textuality. A quasi-puckish agent of chaos between the two, the Serving-man defies, as metaphoric *restance* also does, authorial control, posing difficult questions as to what kind of an action it is to write and to determining who else, or indeed what else, is involved in such an act. Bearing no marks of literary authority himself, he enables critique through the evocation of the ambivalent literary figure of John Lyly.

When it comes to the theme of writing here, there may indeed be more to the choice to parody Lyly by having an uneducated servant both recognize the importance of following what is written as well as misquote *Euphues* while simultaneously preserving the gist of it, i.e. "keep to what you know." As Weiss and Levenson both note in their respective editions, Morris Tilley links the passage to the Epistle Dedicatory of Lyly's *Euphues, Anatomy of Wit*: "The shoemaker must not go above his latchet, nor the hedger meddle with anything but his bill. It is unseemly for the painter to feather a shaft, or the fletcher to handle a pencil."[15] Tilley sees in the inept Serving-man the figure of Lyly positioning himself as a direct counterexample to the popular wisdom dispensed in the above quote, which continues: "All which things make most against me in that a fool hath intruded himself to discourse of wit." He goes so far as to claim:

> [T]he clown's determination at the end of his soliloquy to seek the aid of the "learned" suggests an allusion to Lyly's having sought the aid of certain learned and eloquent writers in his composition of *Euphues*.[16]

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[15] John Lyly, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* and *Euphues and his England*, ed. Leah Scragg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 28; Morris Tilley, "A Parody of *Euphues* in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Modern Language Notes* 41, no. 1 (1926): 2-3; Levenson, 165; René Weiss, *Romeo and Juliet*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 2012), digital edition.

[16] Tilley, 7.

Aside from the lexical insistence on "writing", the passage seems indeed to concern authorship in several respects. It parodies euphuism, Lyly's influential and by then passé literary style; it does so specifically by attaching itself to Lyly's postured authorial self-fashioning; it mocks Lyly's overreliance on previous models of eloquence and learning. Implicit in the parody would seem then to be a familiar accusation of Lylian hollowness: euphuism as a florid, overblown and ultimately vacuous literary style and fashion, against which one might echo Gertrude's injunction to Polonius: "More matter with less art" (2.2.95.2).[17] But the intertext also allows for a more ambiguous reading.

The characterization of Lyly as overly reliant on previous models of authorship should be understood in light of what Courtney Lehman calls, in her reading of *Romeo and Juliet*, "a collision of two conflicting modes of authorial production:"

> . . . the residual ideology of *auctoritas*, which is rooted in the feudal system of hierarchy, deference, and propriety that designates fixed roles for the individual within society–and, . . . an emerging ideology of self-authorship, which begins to drive a wedge between the individual and the community by privileging social mobility through acquisitive appropriation.[18]

Lehmann's notion of acquisitive appropriation is borrowed from Robert Weimann's "'Appropriation' and Modern History in Renaissance Prose Narrative," which delineates the contours of a shift, primarily from medieval Romance, in which the author

> does not primarily, or in any sustained way, constitute himself as a function of this discourse; nor does he appropriate this discourse and the means of its productions as a function of his own individual experience or knowledge about the world,[19]

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[17] See F. Landmann, "Shakespeare and Euphuism: *Euphues* An Adaptation From Guevara," *New Shakespeare Society Transactions* 3 (1880–82): 241–76. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 29 April, 2021, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=2.

[18] Courtney Lehmann, *Shakespeare Remains: Theater to Film, Early Modern to Postmodern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 25.

[19] Robert Weimann, "'Appropriation' and Modern History in Renaissance Prose Narrative," *New Literary History* 14, no. 3 (1983): 471.

to an author function in certain Renaissance prose narratives written in contexts where "a growing market for the products of the printing press affected the property status of [the author's] discursive practice"[20] and favored

> an altogether different type of relationship between matter and meaning, one in which the author, as it were, is not a function of a given mode of signification but, rather, that signification becomes a function of the author's own appropriating activity.[21]

These two modes of authorship seem to reflect the change Lorna Huston notes, analyzed in Chapter 2, from feudal gift exchange and a relatively stable aristocracy to a more mobile bourgeoisie where deferential gift exchange is precariously replaced with textual circulation and the fostering of like-mindedness.[22] In the larger framework of the scene, what Shakespeare would seem to present, then, is two caricatures of these ideologies: Capulet, as a pompous and worn-out figure of *auctoritas*, and Romeo, as a willful, individualistic, self-reliant author, the Serving-man insuring the connection between the two as well as the distribution of their respective roles in a social mobility plot – namely the specific plot identified in Chapter 2 as the acquisitive appropriation most feared by fathers, a clandestine marriage opening the household to charges of poor rhetorical management. Tilley's reading makes sense from this perspective, the Serving-man appearing to parody Lyly's investment of the authorial mode of *auctoritas* in that he exhibits a lack of individual skill and discernment specifically related to his overreliance on the authority of "the learned." The very notion of holding ancient authors and their works as literary authorities would paradoxically seem tantamount, in this farcical rendering, to disabling rather than edifying the

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[20] Weimann, 472

[21] Weimann, 474. Following Andrew Galloway, Lehmann seems to reshape somewhat this distinction into a more gradually unfolding "struggle against the strictures of medieval scholasticism" so as to include "Shakespeare's late medieval predecessors like Chaucer" as an early challenge to "the earlier medieval reliance on ancient and patristic *auctores*. . . ." Lehmann, 30. Andrew Galloway, "Authority," in *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2000), 23-39.

[22] Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in 16th Century England* (London: Routledge, 1994).

reader, or blinding "auctoritative" authors to the appropriations of matter and meaning by more opportunistic author figures. Capulet's self-possessed rhetoric in his opening speech thus obtains a decidedly hubristic ring, his list of guests falling into the hands of a Romeo who, as a volatile young author and lover, appears to some extent as the impertinent Euphues in the plot of social advancement and romantic conquest through rhetorical seduction of the first part of *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*.

However, the Serving-man's figuration of Lyly can also be read as reflecting Romeo's author type as well as Capulet's. Lyly himself self-deprecatingly presents himself, in the Epistle Dedicatory of *Euphues*, as "a fool [that] hath intruded himself to discourse of wit," a self-fashioning suggesting perhaps an authorship more of the acquisitive kind. Indeed, although Lyly's use of analogy with authoritative texts is considerable (especially compared with Shakespeare), although his dialectical style reflects the structure of scholastic disputation and medieval *quaestio*, and although both iterations of *Euphues* are to some extent readable as participating in the genre of educational literature, Lyly's image among his peers was not necessarily of the older model of authorship, or certainly not exclusively.[23] Gabriel Harvey's answer, in *Advertisement for Pap-Hatchet, and Martin Mar-prelate*, to Lyly's contribution to the Marprelate controversy with *Pappe with an Hatchet* sets Lyly against better versed, better educated and more authoritative writers, demeaning euphuism as the mark of a wild wit rather than of true learning and elegant prose, as Nicholas Black notes:

> Harvey sets anti-Martinist prose against a range of recent English and continental publications, contrasting his opponents' railing wit with their contemporaries' more substantial literary, scholarly, scientific, and devotional achievements. The critique is partly the insider's refusal to be impressed by the efforts of a fellow stylist: the "finest wittes," he remarks, "preferre the loosest period in M. Ascham, or Sir Philip Sidney, before the tricksiest page in Euphues, or Pap-hatchet."[24]

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[23] Leah Scragg, "Introduction," in John Lyly, *Euphues*, 3-4.

[24] Joseph L. Black, "The Marprelate Controversy," in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose 1500-1640*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 557.

Katharine Wilson argues certain passages of Euphues suggest "a parody of the abundance of exemplary principles expressed in contemporary conduct books," stating also that "euphuism is a language of opportunism, a guide to how to get on in society" and that it was "further refined as the preserve of courtly villains and seducers. . . ." She also comes back to Harvey's attacks on Lyly, underling that Harvey felt "Lyly himself had opportunistically deprived his then friend of the fame that should have been his."[25] The Serving-man's misquote would in this perspective suggest a reading deficiency coupled with a supercilious defiance of the exigency of great learning in favor of a writing exhibiting a quicker, lighter sense of wit.

With this in mind, the intertext also reads as a parody of appropriative authorship in the Serving-man's reflection of Romeo's obtuse individualism and heavy-handed witticism. The Serving-man furnishes disconcerting and laconic answers to practically-minded questions, as Romeo does in the previous scene with Benvolio as well as in his conversation with the Serving-man, which opens with Romeo side-stepping the Serving-man's questions and ends with the situation reversed.[26] But it is especially the suggestive tone taken on by the Serving-man's repetitive question to Romeo that should alert one to Romeo's main shortcoming as a writer in the opening scenes of the play: "I pray, sir, can you read?" (1.2.58) While the Serving-man evidences Capulet's failure to live with the times, more specifically his backward orientation to what the past has established at the expense of an awareness of the irruptive grafting of the present onto the tended cultivation of his familial-dynastic garden, the comic figure also points to Romeo's failure to read and incorporate the past into

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[25] Katharine Wilson, "'Turn Your Library to a Wardrope:' John Lyly and Euphuism," in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose 1500-1640*, 178; 173; 185, 174.

[26] "SERVING-MAN. I pray, sir, can you read? ROMEO. Ay, mine own fortune in my misery" (1.2.58-9); "ROMEO. . . . Whither should they come? / SERVING-MAN. Up. / ROMEO. Whither to Supper. / SERVING-MAN. To our house. / ROMEO. Whose house? / SERVING-MAN. My master's. / ROMEO. Indeed, I should have asked you that before" (1.2.74-80).

the present, which amounts to a converse ignorance of his verse's conceptual inheritance and of the ways in which his poetic diction has been pre-masticated.[27]

With the insistence on writing he carries, the Serving-man thus allows for the theme of authorship to be developed. Holding no literary abilities himself, he appears to mirror both the model of *auctoritas* and the stratagems and style of appropriative authorship, in such a way as to problematize these general tendencies. Although parodic in tone, the reference to Lyly may suggest, rather than a joke at the expense of an author who arguably failed to achieve in either model the recognition he sought, an ideological unease with both images of authorship that may have originated with Lyly himself. Not able to measure up to the rearguard exigencies of comprehensive learning, reading and eloquence the standards of which his grandfather had contributed to shaping with Lily's *Grammar*, Lyly paid a high cost for playing instead into the quick-paced, short-lived economical model which suffers "the book that at Midsummer lieth bound at the stationer's stall at Christmas to be broken in the

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[27] On one hand then, the intertext with Lyly suggests something of the play's articulation of an authorship distinct from the way in which Euphues earns his author's stripes. Whereas Euphues ultimately becomes an author not through the social mobility / successful marriage plot of the first part of *The Anatomy of Wit*, but as the pious figure of the contrite prodigal son who, in the second part of the novel, applies himself to scholarly pursuits and the moral and intellectual betterment of his mind, Romeo, in his meeting with Juliet, would appear to a certain extent to follow the inverse trajectory, divorcing the marriage plot from its wider social function (though Friar Laurence is aware of its potential political value). See Wilson; Scragg, 8. In its development of the traditionally renounced young love plot, which also stands morally condemned in Shakespeare's source text, Arthur Brooke's *Tragedy of Romeus and Juliet*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* arguably invests the love plot itself rather than its instructional recuperation into a cautionary discourse. On the other hand however, Lyly having himself imbued his writings with a sense of dialectical antinomy, any parody of the author is to an extent preempted in the metanarrative distance taken in *Euphues* with respect to the pedantism of humanist pretentions to erudition and reliance on classical models, as well as in his ambiguous literary treatment of young, appropriative authors such as Euphues. In the spirit of contradiction, echoes of Lyly in the Serving-man's soliloquy may accordingly suggest the play's continuation as well as departure from Lyly's novel and courtly comedies. As Gillian Knoll argues, Shakespeare follows Lyly in his choice of playwrighting to develop his literary career, also embracing, as his predecessor, the sense of ambiguity and contradiction eminently afforded by dramatic dialogue as well as the thematic constant of erotic relationships found in Lyly, both of which, in *Romeo and Juliet*, culminate in the shared sonnet of 1.4, as I shall argue in the last part of this chapter. Gillian Knoll, *Conceiving Desire in Lyly and Shakespeare. Metaphor, Cognition and Eros* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 6-7. See also Valerie Traub, *Thinking Sex with Early Moderns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 176-7. Knoll concurrently presents a view of the "the relationship between linguistic representation and erotic desire" in Lyly and Shakespeare as constitutive, generative, and constructive, distinguishing this position from "[m]ost theorists [who] have framed this relationship in terms of lack." Knoll, 6. See also Jeffrey Masten, *Queer Philologies: Sex, Language, and Affect in Shakespeare's Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 15.

haberdasher's shop."[28] In spite of the massive and rather long-lasting hit of *Euphues* and the popularity of his comedies, Lyly's decline as a professional writer is equally undeniable, having failed later in his career to assume a paid position of any importance and avoid destitution. How then was a young author to negotiate their way through such equally fraught means towards literary success, how to mediate between the strategies of traditional *auctoritas* and those of appropriative authorship?

The early modern negotiation of what it implies for an author to own the matter and meaning of literary writing reflects concerns developed by Derrida and Lacan in relationship to the function of metaphor. Running away with Capulet's list, the Serving-man seems to instantiate a form of textual resistance such that it challenges both authorial strategies. On one hand, the conversion of learned eloquence into writing and action is problematized, a gap appearing between readerly knowledge and writerly acumen. In Derridean terms, the Serving-man seems to illustrate the notion of metaphorical *restance*, that tendency of writing, especially figurative, towards iterability. Put succinctly, in the ideology of *auctoritas*, meaning escapes authorial oversight in what might be described as a kind of forward retreat. On the other hand, writing of the more self-reliant and innovative kind appears potentially frail and lacking in consistency and broader literary experience. It might fail to include Lacan's metaphorical function of negotiating the past in the present, implying a rearward flight of meaning from matter. Both gesture towards an incapacity, which in post-structuralist thought becomes a conditional impossibility, to reach a position from which literary fiction might emerge fully readable and available to poetic transformation, a point made about textuality by Derrida, and about subjective consciousness in the field of psychoanalysis by Lacan. But whereas to Derrida and Lacan, literature can be conceived, in ways described in Chapter 3, as proceeding from such an impossibility, the mastery over meanings past and

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[28] Lyly, *Euphues*, 30.

present were by contrast considered as essential components of good writing in Renaissance writing standards. Deprived of either of these relationships to meaning, a poem written in Shakespeare's time would have been found wanting by the likes of Sidney, who in the *Defence* confers to poetry the "enritching of memory, enabling of iudgment." Furthermore, this conceptual equipment would have been developed through an effective, cumulative practice of reading, "sith it is manifest, that all gouernment of action, is to be gotten by knowledg, and knowledge best, by gathering many knowledges, which is, reading."[29]

When it comes to early modern writing therefore, the main difference between the general authorial tendencies of *auctoritas* and appropriation lies specifically in the attitude towards the function of reading as a part of writing and the question of how writing might marshal reading in the service of the author's appropriation of meaning without either becoming severed from the literary past or remaining ensconced in it. This attempt to actively make reading become transformative in the act of writing lies at the heart of the principle of ideal imitation, a Renaissance practice that finds its roots in medieval attitudes to reading. As a Janus-shaped intermediary between the figures of Capulet and Romeo, the Lylian Serving-man thus appears as an unassuming theatrical agent of mediation between an oblivious older author of a text (the list) and its self-serving young reader. Broaching the theme of writing, his presence on stage gestures towards a crisis of reading in the constitution of authorship. The dilemma of the authorial type becomes a question of how and which reading attitudes and practices might best ensure that literature's requirements of memory and judgement are both carried out. In what follows, I focus therefore on the play's attention to reading and to theatrical mediation, both of which are thrown into relief by the figure of Romeo as an apprentice poet.

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[29] Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetry*, London, 1595, "Early English Books Online," accessed 29 April, 2021, https://www.proquest.com/books/apologie-poetrie-vvritten-right-noble-vertuous/docview/2248522260/se-2?accountid=12006.

2. Readership and Romeo

The episode of the Servingman in 1.2 points to deeper questions about the author's mediation of literary antecedent and the reader's participation in textual meaning. Emerging as areas of concern in medieval conceptions of reading, both these areas develop considerably during the Renaissance – an evolution attested by a wave of scholarly engagement in the field of Shakespeare studies in the wake of poststructuralism's (in)famous decentering of the author. Participating to some extent in this critical phase, Lehmann's reading of *Romeo and Juliet* presents Romeo as an author figure who "proceeds to write himself into his own tragedy" and in so doing becomes the site of a reflection on authorship and literary authority. In this vein, she interprets Romeo's decision to invite himself to the Capulet festivities both as his "first act of independent authorship" and as "establishing the conditions of possibility for his later attempts to authorize his own fate 'without book,'" in opposition to "those who live still by the dominant script of textual *auctoritas*."[30] As I shall argue, this opposition is also subordinated to the play's inquiry into cultural functions of reading practices as they relate to literary authorship. Although Romeo's appropriative strategy is indeed well illustrated by his gatecrashing, his decision to do so is also the result of an act of willful readerly interpretation. In this context, I investigate Romeo's relationship to authorship "without book" in the early stages of the play, emphasizing the notions of *colligere* and *meditatio* from medieval and Renaissance reading theories, untreated in Lehmann's account. I then make a case for viewing Romeo as a character that shuns the humanist ideal of good imitation, favoring instead the theater as a mediative space. This consolidates the connection between theatre and metaphor, extending to the stage the function played by metaphors as localized textual sites for the formal negotiation of relationships to literary authority and authorship.

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[30] Lehmann, 35; 32.

Following script- and book-related metaphors in *Romeo and Juliet*, Lehmann's reading of Romeo as an author figure is part of a more general investigation she carries out into Shakespeare's own authorial modelling, seeking to negotiate between the *auctoritas* of Arthur Brooke and the appropriation of *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*: "*Romeo* becomes the site of Shakespeare's own displaced struggle between the proper imitation of his source-text and his burgeoning 'bibliographic ego.'"[31] As my reading of the Servingman also suggests, both these tendencies are exposed to different kinds of creative failure. For her part, Lehmann extends this negativity to the tragedy as a whole, which to her ends on a rather Lacanian-sounding note of subordination to preexisting or overarching meaning, as Romeo's untutored poetic attempts fail to transform the "signifying chain [that] traverses him." If, in the opening of the play, ironically, "Romeo's naïve exuberance temporarily shields him from the force of textual compulsion that haunts this play," in the end his efforts amount to little more than an "unauthorized struggle for voice amidst the noise of *auctores* seeking to claim him for their own authority."[32] Indeed, he can at best admit his defeat, recognizing: "One writ with me in sour misfortune's book" (5.3.82). Although I follow Lehmann in her detection of a self-critical reflection about authorship in *Romeo and Juliet*, I would like to suggest that writing, in the sense of an act of authorship, occurs mainly as a *quatre-mains* between lovers and that Romeo's individual authorial efforts are in fact better described as a readerly, not a writerly struggle. The first contention is developed in the final section of this chapter, devoted mainly to the shared sonnet. This section addresses the second claim.

Concerned more largely with the interpenetration between bodies and texts, or the ability for corpuses as well as human bodies to contain "the residue of cultural desires, anxieties, and repressions," Lehmann's study seeks to widen and problematize received

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[31] Lehmann, 28. Lehmann seems, in italicizing the name, to refer to Romeo not so much as the fictional character but as the "site" she mentions, a textual locus.

[32] Lehmann, 35; 53.

notions of authorship. Affiliated with some of the work examined in Chapter 1 on materiality and text, her study should therefore also be read against the critical context of a suspension of "the romantic mythology of the Author."[33] Wendy Wall describes this shift as follows: "facilitated by poststructuralist challenges to the primacy of the author," the destabilization of "author-centered literary practices"[34] proceeded from an aim to delineate in lieu of the hegemonic author figure the "set of provisional and sometimes contradictory roles that had not yet fully melded into our modern definition."[35] In stronger statements such as Jeffrey Masten's, the aim was to resituate the notion of author "at a moment prior to the emergence of the author in its modern form and as a mode of textual production that distance[s] the writer(s) from the interpreting audience" in such a way that "disperse[s] the authorial voice (or rather, our subsequent notion of the authorial voice)."[36] A crucial result of this turn away from the centrality of the author was a sustained interest in other participants in the meaning of a text, challenging sharp distinctions between such roles as "author" and "reader" as well as between the creative processes of page and stage.

In her survey of theories of early modern collaborative authorship, Heather Hirschfeld situates the activity of "readers in shaping the meaning and significance of a text" among a number of interactions involving multiple authors, printers, patrons, actors and audiences all placed under the head of collaborative authorship.[37] "Readership" is thus a headword for a variety of interventions in the text and interactions in processing of texts for publication, circulation or performance. Douglas Brooks views the reader's address of the 1623 Folio as

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[33] Lehmann, 2; 3.

[34] Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 10.

[35] Wall, *Imprint*, 21.

[36] Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 13.

[37] Heather Hirschfeld, "Early Modern Collaboration and Theories of Authorship," *PMLA* 116, no. 3 (2001): 610.

subordinating to commercial pursuits the individualization of Shakespeare as an author and the characterization of the book's readers as ensuring the future of the work as an intellectual commodity, thus yielding a view both of "reader" and "author" as rhetorical functions of the book trade.[38] Wall argues that "Renaissance conceptions of authorship emerged in response to the social controversies surrounding print," paying special attention to "complex figures, tropes and rhetorical self-identifications" in the text itself as offering evidence for the appraisal of "'textual commodity' as an object that marks a juncture between the material and the symbolic."[39] Dramatic texts furthermore exhibit the added complication of a double belonging to the modes of production of page and stage, multiplying the number of hands, mouths, ears and eyes involved in the writing of play texts. David Mann looks, as Hirschfeld puts it succinctly, to "the role of the actor" – or "'Elizabethan Player,'" in his own terminology – "as a kind of author."[40] Lehmann herself adopts a similar view in her chapter on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, finding a fin-de-siècle clash between a "player's theatre" and an "author's theatre" as well as distinguishing "an auteur-function. . . located on the very edges of semantic availability," which hovers between the role of the player and that of the author.[41] Masten calls attention to the fact that a text such as *Romeo and Juliet*

> (in quarto form) presents itself not as a communication between writer and reader (or even as book, in the modern sense), but rather as a representation/recapitulation of a theatrical experience, a communication between actors and audience,[42]

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[38] Douglas Brooks, *From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-13. Zachary Lesser presents a related view of the publisher's activity as one who "imagines, and helps to construct, the purchasers of [a] commodity and their interpretations of it." Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17, cited in Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 34.

[39] Wall, *Imprint*, 3-5.

[40] Hirschfeld, 617. David Mann, *The Elizabethan Player: Contemporary Stage Representation* (London: Routledge, 1991).

[41] Lehmann, 54-88, these quotations p. 87. The notion of "auteur" is a category borrowed from the domain of film studies.

[42] Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, 16.

whereas Tamara Atkins holds that earlier playbooks "functioned as scripts 'for future productions'," but were "also printed with readerly consumption in mind."[43] Finally, Philippa Berry accentuates "the collusion of actor and spectator across the divide between stage and auditorium" as "a constant process of mediation,"[44] presenting the theater as a culturally determined space of negotiation fulfilling similar functions to text or, in my perspective, to metaphor.

Other contemporaneous accounts specifically emphasize the figure of the reader.[45] They establish keen readership to have been a key competence in the arsenal of Renaissance authors and find readers to have been frequently and variously tasked with the role of making something of the text in a way they had not been previously. In the article Lehmann appeals to for her notion of "acquisitive appropriation" as a new characteristic of authorship, namely Robert Weimann's "'Appropriation' and Modern History in Renaissance Prose Narrative," attention is also given to what Weimann deems a new mode of readership. If a new mode of authorship can be shown to arise around the Renaissance characterized by an *Aneignung*, or "'making things one's own,'"[46] this *Aneignung* also characterizes the new responsibility of

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[43] Tamara Atkin, *Reading Drama in Tudor England* (London: Routledge, 2018), 3. Though the following studies are focused more specifically on Shakespeare in print, I would be remiss not to also mention Lukas Erne's analysis of Shakespeare's reception and the role readers and commonplacers played in this reception, notably through inscriptive and editorial participations, as well as, elsewhere, his attentiveness to implied readerships. See Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as a Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). On later readers and editors of Shakespeare that seeks to "privilege the authority of the interpretive community as the most important factor in defining what Shakespeare's texts can mean any given historical moment" see Michael Dobson, *The Making of National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660 – 1769* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992; 2001), 12.

[44] Philippa Berry, Höfele and von Koppenfels, 13.

[45] For two seminal studies carrying this general emphasis with palpable Derridean influences (especially the textual condition of *iterability*), see Douglas McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986; 1999) and Jerome McGann, *Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). For the connection with iterability as well as the bearing of these studies on Shakespeare studies, see Graham Holderness, *Textual Shakespeare: Writing and the Word* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2003), 22-6.

the readers of this kind of authorship: "they themselves have to make the text their own in order to fully comprehend and use it."[47] In this "new aesthetic of reception,"

> [t]he reader is summoned to appropriate the text individually and yet thereby project his own faculties universally, beyond all particularity of class and station. The dialectic is one of appropriation and objectification, and it allows, together with a new rhetoric, an astonishing flexibility in the relations of author and readers.[48]

Developing a term borrowed both from Arthur Kinney and from Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton,[49] Stephen Dobranski similarly recognizes "active reading"[50] as an Elizabethan practice and correlates it with the development of a mode of authorship that "establishes its authority by invoking readers who would participate directly in their texts."[51] He extends this

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[46] Weimann highlights the merits of turning to this German word for the English "appropriation:" "The German term has the advantage of not necessarily involving an ideologically preconceived idea of (private) ownership or (physical) property; instead, it allows for acquisitive behavior (both on prehistoric as well as historical levels) as well as for nonacquisitive acts of intellectual energy, possession, and assimilation." This also has gains in what concerns the notion of subjecthood in both literary processes of reading and writing: "Thus, in an approach to Renaissance narrative, *Aneignung* allows for the triumphs as well as the limitations (or the absence) of the subject in reading and writing." Weimann, 466.

[47] Weimann, 481. Peter Burke makes a similar point in Peter Burke, *The European Renaisssance: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), cited in Andreas Höfele and Werner von Koppenfels, eds., *Renaissance Go-Betweens: Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 3,5. Mason Tung also draws attention to Henry Peacham's recognition of the necessity to "own" textual material through a process of digestion, which I describe below. Mason Tung, "From Theory to Practice: a Study of Theoretical Bases of Peacham's Emblematic Art," *Studies in Iconography* 18 (1997): 187-219.

[48] Weimann, 484.

[49] Arthur F. Kinney, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1500-1600*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-10; Lisa Jardine and Athony Grafton, "'Studied for Action:' How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy," *Past and Present* 129 (1990): 30-78.

[50] That Dobranski understands the term as denoting nothing less than a determinant readerly role in shaping the meaning of a text is further clarified: "Readers were conditioned to participate in their books – whether through conventions of decoding, studying, lecturing, or socializing – so that interpretation required, above all, readers' active engagement in determining an unfixed meaning." Stephen B. Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 48. He holds this as distinct from author – reader relations such as may be reconstructed on the basis of Medieval allegory in which the reader's activity "was still being prescribed in advance," all the while citing "allegorical, humanist, and Reformist" traditions as having "underpinned active reading practices" in that they "helped to emphasize the *act* of interpretation over a text's *effects*." Dobranski, 41, 29. Judith Anderson specifically analyzes the role of metaphor in the vestiarian controversy, stating that "the question had finally come down to the right publicly to interpret, and thus to represent, God's word, including its symbolic forms." Judith H. Anderson, *Translating Investments: Metaphor and the Dynamic of Cultural Change in Tudor-Stuart England* (New York: Fordham University Press), 5.

[51] Dobranski, 22.

increasing participation of readers in determining the meaning of texts to authors themselves, arguing

> [t]hat all Renaissance authors began as readers also helps to explain the reader's increased activity: writers who borrowed from and appropriated other writers' work set a precedent for their own readers to become writers and, in turn, use the writers' works for their own purposes.[52]

Victoria Kahn sees this process beginning already with "the programmatic statements and rhetorical practice of the early quattrocento humanists," with an attention to and instructions for "the productive, practical exercise of the reader's judgment." She adds: "What is new in the sixteenth century is not the stress on the activity of reading but the refusal, by some authors, to make moral and pedagogical claims for that activity,"[53] a view that would seem to line up with Weimann's observation of a decrease in extra-diegetical reader instructions on the part of authors conscious that mechanisms of appropriation apply to readers as well as authors. For this reason, Weimann goes so far as to assert that in the prose narratives he examines, "the meaning of the text emerged as a function of the reader's own experience."[54]

What is more, the discernment of a new role played by readers hinges, for Weimann, on new developments in the way texts negotiated the relationship between fiction and history, or metaphor and truth. In a narrative in which the author appropriates both means and matter of writing in order to create a work in which the historical is given to read through fiction and vice versa,

> the world of history in the process of narration and the processing of the world of the story had to be grasped at one and the same time. For the reader to move between these two planes was to acknowledge the distance between his own world and that of

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[52] Dobranski, 42.

[53] Victoria Kahn, "The Figure of the Reader in Petrarch's *Secretum*," *PMLA* 100, no. 2 (1985): 154.

[54] Weimann, 486. He adds: "indeed, there was no need for the author to follow convention and appeal to his readers outside the fabric of his self-invented story."

the story, but it was also and at the same time to be involved in bridging the gulf between the two.[55]

Weimann thus notes an accrued intradiegetical presence of the theme of reading as well as of fictionalized reader figures at grips with the tricky relationship between their existence in history and stories about that history (eminently, as might be expected, in *Don Quichotte*). In this intradiegetic assembly of history and story, "the truth about the world was to be read metaphorically, whereas the metaphoric function of the new fictionality was to be viewed as related to the world as the author conceived of it."[56] Metaphor, coextensive here with fictional literature, therefore seems to play a mediative role similar to Derrida's notion of *metaphorization* as a development of Lacan's work on metaphor: inducting the process of fictionalization and negotiating the relationships and gaps between authors, readers, fiction, text, and world. Playing into the critical context of this focus on the figure of the reader as a textual participant and on the theatre as a site for the mediation of literary meaning, my argument brings the two together, showing how the stage is appealed to in *Romeo and Juliet* as a place where reading and writing, notably through metaphor, become a significant part of what goes on in the action and plot of the play.

In response to Lehmann's analysis of Romeo as an unsuccessful author, I propose to rearticulate part of her argument on authorship and the textual chain of meaning as a problematics of reading and interpretation that responds, in several regards, to elements in the Petrarchan tradition. Making a comically identifiable appearance as a derivative Petrarchan lyrical subject, Romeo's sense of authorship seems primarily related to the genre of the sonnet, catalyzing preoccupations typical of poet figures from sonnet sequences. In this context, Romeo's proficiency as a reader is specifically highlighted and related to the general Petrarchan theme. To the Friar, when it comes to the "letters and the language" of love, in

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[55] Weimann, 485.

[56] Weimann, 485.

2.2, it is quite clear that Rosaline possesses a readerly knowledge that Romeo lacks (1.2.62): "O she knew well / Thy love did read by rote that could not spell" (1.2.62; 2.2.87.2-88). Rosaline's experience as a recipient of love songs is contrasted with Romeo's inability to "spell," which mocks his untutored youth and lack of experience with letters, figuratively his inability to come up with his own "letters and language" of love, rather than playing the Petrarchan lover and parroting sonneteers. This association of schoolboy education with erotic desire echoes a structure borrowed by Sidney in *Astrophil and Stella*.

In his edition, Weiss notes on this line that "illiteracy and reading are a running joke in the play," and cites Sidney's "Who will read must first learn spelling" from *Astrophil and Stella*.[57] Referring metaphorically to a kiss with "spelling," the line sets up a parallel between a lover's desire and basic rhetorical education, which is subsequently developed throughout the cycle, perhaps most explicitly in Sonnet 56. Addressed to a personified Patience who teaches long lessons "without book," the poem features a conceit in which the speaker appears as the weary, restless pupil in schoolmaster Patience's classroom and Stella, his beloved, as the missing book. The speaker argues throughout for the inadequacy of learning "without book" and desires to "read those letters fair of bliss, / Which in her [Stella's] face teach virtue."[58] Acquaintance with the beloved is thus portrayed in terms of reading, which implies that an ability to spell and the presence of a text are essential requirements to the process, imposing serious limitations on the strategy of rote learning. This said, this does not mean that the presence of text is any less problematic to the speaker as a literate reader figure. Indeed, elsewhere in Sidney's cycle, the difficulty of learning to read arises from the insufficiency of text, or rather the reader's the inability to make something of it.[59]

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[57] Weiss. Philipp Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, Second Song, 23. See Philip Sidney, *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[58] Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* (Duncan-Jones), Sonnet 56.

In this vein, Andrew Strycharski points to "conflicted responses to writing" in *Astrophil and Stella*. In a male-centered, hierarchic, educational context geared towards the impossible acquisition of an ideal "full literacy", he argues, the "absent presence" of "[i]nscribed language is susceptible to misinterpretation, and its frustrating failure to communicate intentions reveals that its absences may overpower the presence ascribed to it."[60] As such, the problem of textual interpretation is well illustrated by Sidney's Stella who in the Second Song is most textual when she is asleep as she ceases to be the schoolmistress, "Teaching" only "sleep to be most fair." Here as in the Friar's quip, literacy stands metonymically for larger issues of reading and textual interpretation, with distinctly Platonic overtones, both in Shakespeare's line and in its Sidneyan source. The dependency of readers on rote-learned discourse and the two-edged nature conferred to textuality bring to mind Socrates' characterization of writing as a pharmacon and his critique of free-ranging sophistic readers in *Phaedrus*, overly reliant on memorized speeches and thus cut off from true knowledge. To Socrates, poor reading is related to the essential weakness of texts, which have declined from the animate, live memory of a subjectivity to the textual illusion of speech and subjectivity that serves only to remind readers, not to teach them. In Sidney's poem too, Stella sleeping serves as a weak, passive reminder of her waking self to her willful, problematically unimpeded reader.[61] In a slightly different vein, the Friar's confident and

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[59] Sonnet 11, for istance, argues: "That when the heau'n to thee his best displayes, / Yet of that best thou leau'st the best behinde! / For, like a childe that some faire booke doth find, / With gilded leaues or colour'd vellum playes, / Or, at the most, on some fine picture stayes, / But neuer heeds the fruit of Writers mind." While these lines seem to portray the reader as either illiterate or fanciful, Sonnet 16 evokes a reader who, by successfully learning through spelling, comes to view the text he reads as a poison: "But while I thus with this young lion plaid, / Mine eyes (shall I say curst or blest?) beheld / *Stella*: now she is nam'd, neede more be said? / In her sight I a lesson new haue speld. / I now haue learnd loue right, and learnd euen so / As they that being poysond poyson know."

[60] *Astrophil and Stella* (Duncan-Jones), 106.1. Andrew Strycharski, "Literacy, Education, and Affect in *Astrophil and Stella*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 48, no. 1 (2008): 45; Strycharski bases these readings partly on the isotopy characterizing [i]nteractions between Astrophil and Stella (and Cupid). . . represented in terms of "spelling," "reading," "learning," "lessons," and "teaching." Strycharski, 48. See also Christine Sukic, "'Stella is not here': Sidney's acts of writing as acts of erasing", *Études Épistémè* [Online] 21 (2012). Accessed 29 April 2021, http://journals.openedition.org/episteme/411.

authoritative distinction between rote reading and spelling, or "doting" and "loving" (2.2.82), seems to carry over to the domain of literacy his metaphysical and pharmaconic view of "Two such opposed kings" that "encamp them still / In man as well as herbs" (2.2.27-8), suggesting the Friar may think Rosaline aware, in a way his "pupil" Romeo is not (2.2.82), of the double value of letters and language both as "poisonous," mechanical repetition (to read by rote) and "remedial," creative, able and transformative (to spell). Playing into these well-established Platonic dynamics, the sonneteer's literary education through love problematizes both the agency of readers and the act of reading.

Before even entering an arena of competitive literary courtship no less fraught than the scene of destruction into which Romeo builds his Petrarchan versification in 1.1, both Astrophil and Romeo must learn to interpret. On one hand, this is the bread and butter of any Renaissance writer from grammar school on: the practice of analysis, imitation and amplification of authoritative models, especially in the use of tropes and figures such as furnish the commonplace basis for Sidney's metaphor of the beloved as text.[62] On the other hand, literacy may acquire a deeper meaning here, appearing as an instrument that even experienced authors cannot ever fully master, as Strycharski observes to be the case throughout *Astrophil and Stella*: "although reading and writing promise to teach self-knowledge, they also threaten self-loss when their lessons are unlearnable or the writer loses control of his writing."[63] This process is not only a common theme of Petrarchan poetry; it

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[61] The poem thus depends on the Platonic chassis for its main conflict, which appears as a dramatically engaging variation on the Platonic theme: the central issue concerns Stella's expressed intentions while awake and her inability to renew them when sleeping, which leads to the agency falling over to the reader and his intentions. The increased agency of the inept reader, paired with the helplessness of the text, is cause for concern to Socrates. The problematic sexual politics of readership and poetics, which in part constitute the originality of Sidney's poem with respect to the Platonic antecedent, are addressed more fully in Robert E. Stillman, "Philip Sidney and the Idea of Romance," *Sidney Journal* 26, no. 2 (2008): 17-32.

[62] Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4.

[63] Noting Astrophil's "interpretation anxiety," Strycharski concludes, with the cycle, that "Astrophil will never learn to read in a way that will win Stella's love." Strycharski, 56. For a discussion of the links

also rehearses medieval functions attributed to reading and interpretation. These can in turn be shown to play into Petrarch's own depiction of a struggle with the activity of reading, one which characterizes the creative transformation of literary models as proceeding less from successful reading than from a failure to read.

Lehmann views the early Romeo as an author "in the throes of 'cogitation,'" a rhetorical practice, she reminds us, "of formalizing ideas occurring between invention and composition-proper."[64] From the perspective I am defending, of Romeo as more of an inept reader than an anxious author, Romeo's stubs of poetry strewn throughout Act 1 point to an inability that is perhaps not primarily an issue with how best to express something. Beyond the difficulty with how to arrange ideas and parts of speech and shape them into a final discourse, my reading suggests Romeo may have a deeper deficiency to address in his processing of source materials into a new text, an obstacle overcome, as I shall later argue, only in the originality of the dialogic sonnet with Juliet. If any specific area of rhetoric should be singled out as the origin of Romeo's literary shortcomings, it might lie rather with the function of *colligere*, that process of gathering and imprinting exemplary readings in one's memory, or according to Victoria Kahn, a practice "that collects and orders the fragments of past experience into a coherent self, that is, a coherent narrative."[65]

The function of *colligere* arises as a distinction between *recitare,* memorizing *verbaliter*, word for word, and *retinere et dicere*, or memorizing *sententialiter* or *ad res*, according to the general matter, "in order to facilitate composition."[66] For Mary Carruthers,

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between tragedy and Romeo's literacy, see also David Lucking, "That Which We Call a Name: The Balcony Scene in Romeo and Juliet," *English: Journal of the English Association* 44 no. 178, 1995: 1–16.

[64] Lehmann, 36

[65] Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; 2008), 204; Kahn, 156.

[66] Carruthers, 235.

> [a]d res memorizing supposes that the reader will recreate the original's *sententiae* in words that are at least partly his own; this freedom respects the fruitful *auctoritas* of one's source as ignorant parroting cannot.[67]

What is missing therefore from rote learning, the memorization of mere words, is a process of ruminating *meditatio* through which words are appropriated, their truth understood.[68] This process of meditative reading relies on an imaginative faculty to experience what is encountered in the text. Carruthers outlines Petrarch's discussion of this topic in his *Secretum* in the form of dialogues with Augustinus, a fictional representation of Augustine: "This discussion by Petrarch, I think, makes clear," Kahn argues, that "'what I read in a book' is 'my experience,' and I make it mine by incorporating it. . . in my memory."[69] Appropriative authorship would seem thus to risk bypassing what Weimann's article suggested was half of the authorial process: an act of readerly appropriation, which depends on a sustained imaginative engagement with a text, traditionally the hallmark of *auctoritative* authors. Conversely however, readerly meditation of authoritative texts from the past is pertinent only in that it fosters a sense of prudence relevant to present experience: thus, appropriative authorship also avoids the learned author's pitfall of an accumulation of unapplied or insufficiently translated reading. As Carruthers underlines, "[i]n. . . his *Secretum* Petrarch, devoted textual scholar though he was, shows himself, *as an interpreter of texts*." This distinction between textual scholarship and interpretation is worth insisting on, "interpreter" designating a dedicated ethical function trained through "*meditatio*, the application of reading to moral life." Without the processual appropriation of texts through reading, the practice of

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[67] Carruthers, 272.

[68] See Carruthers, 205.

[69] Carruthers, 211.

imitation therefore remains incomplete in either authorial strategy taken to the exclusion of the other: either insufficiently assimilated, or insufficiently applied.[70]

Appropriating the matter of exemplary texts is aided by a general allegorical or metaphorical reading. Occurring on a *tropological* level, this reading practice draws moral implications from the reading material and applies them to one's own situation in "a free play of the recollecting mind."[71] This turns reading into an ethical activity and makes of *meditatio* an "application of reading to moral life."[72] *Tropology* is the stage of textual interaction at which reading can finally be incorporated:

> All exegesis emphasized that understanding was grounded in a thorough knowledge of the *littera*, and for this one had to know grammar, rhetoric, history, and all the other disciplines that give information, the work of lectio. But one takes all of that and builds upon it during meditation; this phase of reading is ethical in its nature, or "tropological" (turning the text onto and into one's self).[73]

Tropological reading thus allows for a "hermeneutical dialogue" to occur, bordering almost on a kind of metempsychosis: "In this way, reading a book extends the process whereby one memory engages another in a continuing dialogue that approaches Plato's ideal (expressed in *Phaedrus*) of two living minds engaged in learning."[74] The sense of *trope* here is thus much

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[70] The digestive metaphor of memory as a stomach is a useful illustration. A medieval clerical trope surviving into the early modern period, it depicts reading as a necessary double process of assimilation and transformation. Carruthers, 207.

[71] Carruthers, 210.

[72] Carruthers, 206 and 426. This medieval allegorical notion of "tropology" as stage in synthetic reading is split in its humanist reception into the more technical rhetorical sense of tropology and a distinct ethical appraisal in Erasmus' fourfold reading method: for matter; for vocabulary and syntax; for rhetoric and tropes; for ethical instruction. See Mack, 14-15.

[73] Carruthers, 205.

[74] Carruthers, 211. Jonathan Bate finds the notion very much alive in sixteenth-century imitation theory and argues that Shakespeare taps into it in order to articulate his relationship to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the sonnets: "[t]he principle of metempsychosis which Book Fifteen articulates is enacted in the metempsychosis of Book Fifteen into the sonnets." Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 85. Tropological reading should however be distinguished from Pythagorean metempsychosis, both in its ancient conception of a transmigration of the soul from one body to another, and in its metaphorical application by Renaissance authors as an image to evoke *paradigmatic* imitation, a more accomplished and comprehensive imitation of an authorial model than mere *imitation*. See Bate, 85. Tropological reading seems to relate to the

broader than the exclusively speech-oriented treatment of tropes as they are listed in early modern handbooks of rhetoric in the form of extensive Ciceronian taxonomies of *ornate dicere*, or ornaments of speech, such as in George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) or Henry Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence* (1577). The functions of *tropological* reading display characteristics closer to those conferred by Lacan to metaphor, such as the capacity, through figures, to negotiate between subject and text, reader and author, past and present. As with Lacanian metaphor, *tropological* reading also entails that a successful negotiation of the past is achieved only in a coincidence between past and present, self and other: extracting meaning from texts signifies finding a subjective relevance and useful application for them, which occurs as an encounter with otherness through a language one inherits and must as such appropriate. Romeo's alleged shortcomings as a reader may be thus measured against the basic educational principle that "[r]eciting [*recitare*] is what children do when first learning to read, but recollection [*colligere*] is associated. . . with the investigative activities of invention and new composition, the tasks of rhetoric and poetry."[75] Based on this distinction and on the intertext with *Astrophil and Stella*, it is clear that as with writing, the activities of reading and memorizing, although basic, also suppose a gradient of proficiency that stretches out to an impossible readerly ideal in a way that gives ethical weight and complexity to the authorial engagement in mediating textual antecedent.

Romeo's casual *ad lib* composition throughout Act 1 and the running joke of his inadequate literateness can thus be shown in fact to go hand in hand. In his failure to appropriate through adequate reading practices the sources of his commonplace Petrarchisms,

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concept mainly in that it makes text a vehicle for the voice of authors from the past and a conduit for its readers to digest and incorporate through meditation so as to vividly live and feel the matter of the text, which is figured through the trope of *voces paginarium*, or "the voices of the pages" as a process through which, in the reader's own murmuring voice, "the other voice will sound through the written letters." Carruthers, 211-12. In continuity with this form of reading, the principle of metempsychosis becomes a tool to early modern writers for the literary exploration of the flexibility and the relationship body and soul, self and other, and self and world. See for example Siobhán Collins, *Bodies, Politics and Transformations: John Donne's Metempsychosis* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[75] Carruthers, 235.

he cannot move beyond a stale reproduction of the past, falling perhaps somewhere between the first two (inadequate) modes of poetic imitation from Thomas Greene's categorization, namely the "*reproductive* or *sacramental*" imitation, which "celebrates an enshrined primary text by rehearsing it liturgically" and the "*eclectic* and *exploitative*," which "essentially treats all traditions as stockpiles to be drawn upon ostensibly at random," neither of which fully succeed in the task of creative imitation as both ultimately prove anachronic.[76] In a sense, Romeo enshrines not only his beloved, whether Rosaline or even Juliet, but also "poetry" in his uncritical, perhaps unrecognized affiliation to a Petrarchan legacy, reading verse into a real-world store of occasional pretexts which to him just so happen to bring desire to mind. In this he also resembles Sidney's emotionless courtiers reciting love poetry as a textual fancy rather than out of desire for the beloved:

> But truely many of such writings, as come vnder the banner of vnrelistable loue, if I were a Mistres, would neuer perswade mee they were in loue: so coldely they apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather red Louers writings; and so caught vp certaine swelling phrases, which hang together, . . . then that in truth they feele those passions, . . . But let this bee a sufficient, though short note, that wee misse the right vse of the materiall point of Poesie."[77]

Paradoxically, the courtier's deficiency in poetic invention is due to an excessive textuality, with ethical implications on the authenticity of his proclaimed love. Too much a writer, Romeo's "rote reading" is thus not necessarily to be taken literally as an inability to read, rather as an abuse of and perhaps infatuation with text. Contrarily to the auctoritative author, who overinvests text as a reader, Romeo's eye is firmly to the present situation, in which his inadequate textual knowledge is appealed to merely as a formula to advance his agenda. His

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[76] Thomas M. Greene, *The Light of Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 38-9.

[77] Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetry*. Greene also finds coldness in a sonnet by Petrarch he uses to illustrate "eclectic imitation:" "The sonnet as a whole reveals a kind of allusive sophistication but its dexterity remains a little cold." Greene, 39. Romeo has nothing of Petrarch's allusive sophistication, but perhaps some of the coldness from prioritizing the aesthetic expression of courtship over and above its erotic pursuits and relationship to the beloved.

failure to correctly appropriate and digest the matter and meanings of Petrarchan desire causes him to appeal to love poetry as a collection of set speeches, stocks and clichés, the process ultimately amounting to an impossibility of overcoming stale reproduction, or in Lehman's terms, of transforming the "signifying chain [that] traverses him." What he is lacking is an ability to read *tropologically*, or in Lacan's later tropology, to harvest the power of metaphor so as to eradicate a metonymic slippage of textual meaning the ethical implications of which are all the more heightened in the Shakespearean dramatization of Sidney's cold courtier and shrewdly unpersuaded Lady in the first few scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Although the term "trope" reverts in early modernity from its medieval ethical function to a mostly rhetorical understanding, the Renaissance ideal of good imitation should, on the other hand, be understood as proceeding from medieval reading exigencies, namely in the balance it advocates between faithfulness and innovation. Citing "good imitation," one which involves both similitude and dissimilitude, as "a cardinal principle of Renaissance poetics," Jonathan Bate traces its first expression back to a letter by Petrarch, in which the necessity of *meditatio* is highlighted: "Thus we writers must look to it that with a basis of similarity there should be many dissimilarities. And the similarity should be planted so deep that it can only be extricated by quiet meditation." The resemblance should be "that 'of a son to his father,' not that of a portrait to the sitter."[78] Usurping the role of Capulet's son, Romeo's appropriative authorship, symbolized by the actions of reading himself into Capulet's list of guests and later of marrying Juliet, concretizes the metaphor of inheritance from Sidney's wording of imitation theory. Lacking the ability to quietly meditate however,

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[78] Petrarch, *Le familiari* xxiii, 19, in Francesco Petrarca, *Letters from Petrarch*, trans. Morris Bishop (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1966), 198–9, cited in Bate 87-88. The practice of *meditatio* was opposed to that of *lectio*, a reading spoken out loud and in the company of students who could intervene to ask for clarifications and developments on the part of the reader. *Meditatio*, on the other hand, was a self-reflexive process characterized by silence or a "murmur," described by Quintilian as silent motion of the lips. See Carruthers, 202-205.

as a reader, Romeo also comes to reproduce a scheme first set out by Petrarch himself, that of a crisis of the ideal of good imitation, which appears as an impossible exigency to fulfil, fostering only a feeling of inadequacy with regards to authoritative literary models. This readerly struggle of the author figure is what sets the ethical stakes of metaphorical *writing* in *Romeo and Juliet*.

In her study of reader figures in Petrarch's *Secretum*, Kahn examines the opposition in the dialogue between the willful, self-serving, appropriative interpretations of Franciscus, and the allegorical, contextualized hermeneutics of Augustinus, whose conversion has revealed to him their meanings.[79] In a critique that could as well apply to English sonneteers (or indeed to Petrarch himself) as to Romeo's embodiment of the stereotype, Augustinus reproaches Franciscus for his literary praise of Laura: "'infatuated as much by the beauty of her name as of her person, you have with perfectly incredible silliness paid honour to anything that has the remotest connection with that name itself.'"[80] In Augustinus' account, Franciscus has failed not only to read exemplary texts, but to situate himself in regards to his literary past and to confront his own literary practice with this heritage. His willful, worldly desire thus shifts over into a "willfulness or eroticism of interpretation."[81] But things get worse: because a good will is the condition of good reading, Franciscus stands little chance to escape his willfulness – or indeed a certain negativity of desire – through reading alone, since in this activity he merely finds his own psychological disposition reflected, or projected.[82] "Not only do one's nonliterary passions obstruct the application of the text, the text itself can become an

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[79] Their positions can roughly be described as "a medieval insistence on the authority of Christian doctrine versus a nascent humanist insistence on the authority of personal experience." Kahn, 155. The text reads as a fictionalized conversation between Petrarch himself and the exemplary Augustine.

[80] Francesco Petrarca, *Petrarch's Secret*, trans. William H. Draper (London: Chatto, 1911), 134-35, cited in Kahn, 162.

[81] Kahn, 161.

[82] "'It is true, in particular in this passion, as in all others, each is a benign interpreter of his own affairs.'" *Petrarch's Secret*, 142, cited in Kahn, 156.

object of desire."[83] Augustinus thus calls out Franciscus for his readerly practice and willful conduct, but especially for his ambitions of literary fame. In the displacement of his desire for Laura by a desire for literary fame, "writing (the poet's desire) becomes (like the lover's desire) a way of losing oneself."[84]

What fails as writing for Franciscus is a failure in reading, which is itself a failure in conduct. His will being ill-disposed, Franciscus lacks Augustinus' sure reliance on divine revelation (which itself occurs in the *Confessions* at the condition of a unified will, *plene volui*),[85] his "converted memory that collects and orders the fragments of past experience into a coherent self, that is, a coherent narrative."[86] Augustinus therefore advises Franciscus to build up his memory into one that resembles "a cultural, artificial memory, a Ciceronian storehouse of commonplaces that can serve the reader as remedies when needed."[87] Writing thus appears, as in Plato's *Phaedrus*, as a crutch to the all-important activity of memorialization. Kahn remarks: "But if memory needs the external aid of writing, the problem of applying one's reading is not resolved; it is merely reduplicated in the artificial memory of notes."[88] If Franciscus' problem lies in the disposition of his will, his only hope in the dialogue comes from Augustinus' attempt to guide him through a process of change, a prospect that the dialogue seems precisely to problematize. In Kahn's reading, the interest of the dialogue lies in its "questions regarding Augustinus's optimism about his effectiveness and about the *possibility* of his role as a Platonic midwife who simply reminds his charge of what he has forgotten." These questions are all the more legitimate in that Augustinus, a

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[83] Kahn, 160.

[84] Kahn, 162.

[85] Kahn, 164.

[86] Kahn, 156. Sidney's Sonnet 11, quoted above, as the cycle in general, presents such a reader, often depicted as or likened to an unapplied or unable schoolboy.

[87] Kahn, 159.

[88] Kahn, 160.

Petrarchan textual fabrication, as the ironic Socrates of Plato's dialogues, ultimately assumes no further role than that of writing, which here appears also as a pharmacon. The text seems therefore to relinquish the tropological possibility of a creative dialogue between minds:

> Like the optimistic interpreter who presupposes a benign rather than a vicious hermeneutic circle, Augustinus argues for the possibility of preparing the reader or lover, of gradually educating the will, but, as we will see, Franciscus and Petrarch will both remain recalcitrant.[89]

In lieu of any such originary revelation as Augustine's conversion in the garden then, Petrarch inscribes an *act of writing*, not only in the *Secretum*, Kahn argues, but in the *Canzoniere* and in the conclusion to the *Ascent of Mont Ventoux*: in each text, "the moment of conversion is deferred by the act of writing." Thus, Franciscus remains ensconced in the negativity of his reading-writing-desire, but he does not, for all this, renounce writing. On the contrary: "Forgetfulness of oneself, peregrination, is thus a condition of writing the *Secretum* – a work that, like the 'Ascent,' follows on and replaces a potential conversion."[90] In one sense then, Petrarch's act of writing undercuts Augustine's conversion through an act of reading Holy Scripture: faith placed in the voice from above urging "*Tolle, lege* [Take up and read]" as a model of meaning can decidedly not transmigrate from Augustine's text to Petrarch's through a textual figure of metempsychosis.

Romeo and Capulet fall on either side of a divide between a traditional picture of *authorship* and an alternative, newer sense of literary writing. Through their different tendencies towards linguistic formalization and especially in their respective roles in advancing the play's plot, these son and father figures are both engaged in a *writing* that likens one to a problematic authoritative author and the other to a self-serving appropriative author. As a *reader* however, Romeo is opposed to a different readerly and fatherly

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[89] Kahn, 162.

[90] Kahn, 163.

counterpart in the play. Among the numerous readers of Romeo – a character who appears even before his first entry as an unreadable enigma to his father – who also present him with reading methods, such as Benvolio and Mercutio (as analyzed in Chapter 2), the Friar appears to bear all the marks of an authoritative, competent, meditative reader, able to dwell in a present illuminated by the lights of the past. A reader of the Book of Nature from his first words in the play, the Friar's monologue in 2.2 suggests wisdom in human affairs as well. Oft given to aphorism, critical of Romeo's readerly experience, generous in his counsel, he appears in the early stages of the play to master the ethical and moral application of textual knowledge. His function in later stages of the play brings out a strategic shrewdness and resourcefulness in a character seemingly proficient in the use of pharmacons.[91] In ceding to Romeo's demands of marriage only because it proves strategic, "For this alliance may so happy proves / To turn your households' rancour to pure love," Friar Laurence seems fully confident in his remedial capacity to cure "rancour" by converting it to "pure love." In many ways therefore, the Friar seems to embody the ideal interpreter.

As to the early stages in the relationship between Romeo and Friar Laurence, recalcitrant to the Friar's exhortations in 3.3, Romeo may be shown to participate in the kind of force of rupture that Franciscus brings to the *Secretum*, which destabilizes, through a deferring act of writing, the gesture of appeal to recollective memory and to the mental store of authoritative commonplaces. Firmly on the side of personal experience versus the medieval insistence on allegorical reading, Romeo opposes the Friar in a way that suggests the incommensurability of their positions:

> ROMEO. . . . Hang up philosophy!
>   Unless philosophy can make a Juliet,
>   Displant a town, reverse a prince's doom,
>   It helps not, it prevails not, talk no more.

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[91] Alluding to his encounter with Juliet as a double wounding, Romeo confides to the Friar: "Both our remedies / Within thy help and holy physic lies" (2.2.51-2).

> FRIAR LAURENCE. O, then I see that mad men have no ears.
> ROMEO. How should they, when that wise men have no eyes?
> FRIAR LAURENCE. Let me dispute with thee of thine estate.
> ROMEO. Thou canst not speak of that thou dost not feel.
> > Wert thou as young as I, Juliet thy love,
> > An hour but married, Tybalt murderèd,
> > Doting like me, and like me banishèd,
> > Then mightst thou speak, then mightst thou tear thy hair,
> > And fall upon the ground as I do now,
> > Taking the measure of an unmade grave. (3.3.57-70)

Rejecting "philosophy" on the grounds of its lack of practical, worldly use, Romeo sees no application for the Friar's bookish learning to his situation. The one would "dispute" with the other; the latter judges irrelevant a discourse divorced from a suffering its speaker does not feel. This said, the characterization of Romeo and the Friar as occupying Augustinian and Franciscan positions from Petrarch's *Secretum*, enlightening as it is, is also only partial. If the character of Friar Laurence could easily enough be comprehended as conforming to such a type, any straightforward readability of Romeo as a young Franciscus-like Petrarch seems unlikely, if only because Romeo does, in a manner of speaking, undergo a conversion, contrarily to Franciscus. Love-stricken at the very sight of Juliet, his first exchange with her recapitulates a language of religious adoration in the dialogue; we then witness his second baptism in the Capulet garden; finally, although Friar Laurence does not fully believe Romeo's epiphany of love to be in earnest or consistent, he might wonder in earnest when he asks semi-ironically: "And art thou changed?" (2.2.79)

Although the conversionary dynamics complicates any straightforward understanding of Romeo as the kind of willful and unable reader-author-lover figure that Franciscus constitutes in Petrarch's *Secretum*, this may, rather than incapacitate the parallel, suggest something as to Shakespeare's own relationship to the doctrine of exemplary imitation in such a way that Petrarch's departure from Augustine is both reproduced and suspended. In the excerpt from the confrontation between Romeo and the Friar quoted above, the opposition

is also between ears that will not hear and eyes that will not see. Suspicious of the role of eyes in the affairs of love, the Friar suspects in 2.2 that Romeo has not fully moved on from "doting" to "love:" "Young men's love then lies / not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes" (2.2.67-8). The ears Romeo has not, in 3.3, are ears for words of comfort and wisdom, the ears perhaps of an Augustine in distress, saved by the voice that says: "*Tolle*, *lege*." But as I have mentioned, if conversion there is, Romeo has at this point already undergone his. Having twice beheld the beauty of Juliet from a distance, and twice read into it no less, Romeo's experience is of the visible, and the world he lives in that of his town, of Juliet, of the Prince's word of law. Indeed, the world Romeo walks in is not that of the Friar's Book of Nature, read and apprehended "Wisely and slow" (2.2.94): it is instead a world in which the "eye discourses" (2.1.56) and speech must feel, where love, knowing no instrument of measure or control beyond itself, cannot "love moderately" as the Friar urges, but rather, as Juliet this time puts it, "my true love is grown to such excess, / I cannot sum up sum of half my wealth" given that "Conceit, more rich in matter than in words, / Brags of his substance, not of ornament" (2.5.14; 2.5.29-34). Seeking, prompting and exhibiting empathy, this world speaks, tears out hair, falls to the ground, takes the measure of an unmade grave. In short, after meeting Juliet, the world Romeo defends in 3.3 with a candid, melodramatic conviction gestures awkwardly yet perhaps touchingly not only towards the stage, but towards the higher poetic status of the tragic stage.

In the third chapter of his study of Romeo's Ovidian heritage, "The Art of Precedent," Jonathan Bate affirms his intention "to reread the relationship between Ovid and the sonnets in the light of 16th-cent. imitation theory."[92] Rooting his analysis partly in Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*, destined to courtiers, Bate sees Shakespeare problematizing "the humanist

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[92] Bate, 85.

move from precept to practice, from literary exemplum to noble action."[93] Basing his analysis

mainly in two tragedies, *Titus Andronicus* and *Troilus and Cressida*, he argues that in the

former Shakespeare "maintains his copious generation of *exempla*. But he also implicitly

offers a critique of the very humanism he is embodying. What kind of education by example

is it, he seems to ask, that leads you to murder your daughter?"[94] Going one step further, Bate

also notes of this play, which not only relates copiously to paradigmatic textual antecedent,

but also superimposes highly rhetorical speeches onto spectacular displays of violence and

suffering:

> Co-ordinate with the implicit attack on a theoretical education is a defence of a
> theatrical one. The characters put their knowledge of the classics to destructive use;
> the play in the theatre gives the audience a creative knowledge in that it teaches them
> how to respond sympathetically to suffering. In this sense, the play is Shakespeare's
> 'Defence of Poesie'.[95]

Shakespeare's response to the problem of the gap separating "the humanist move from

precept to practice, from literary exemplum to noble action", which in *Titus* is a civic and

moral question, in Petrarch's *Secretum*, a philosophical one, would seem then to offer the

tragic stage as mediative space, one in which reading is immediately transposed to action, and

where actions just as soon become the object of reading. As Capulet's metaphors of "earth"

analyzed above, the stage here adds a spatial, or topological extension to the material

characteristics of "earth." As such, this appeal to the stage also resonates strongly with the

poststructuralist concept of *chora*, that supplemental, womb-like place where form and matter

are joined, holding together the perfectly balanced union of reader and writer conceived as

two intimately proximate minds (through medieval tropology), but which also threatens, in

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[93] Bate, 106.

[94] Bate, 107.

[95] Bate, 112.

the iterability of the material-spatial bridges that are text, trope, to destabilize or trouble the smooth translation from one into the other.

If Petrarch repeatedly defers an Augustinian moment of conversion by undercutting it with an act of writing, Romeo's rejection of the Friar as an *alma pater* offering the "sweet milk of philosophy" as a cure to Romeo's recalcitrant will and indecorous behavior in 3.3, as analyzed above, may be construed as a *mise-en-abyme* for the play, Shakespeare's second tragedy after *Titus Andronicus*, and a further theatrical undercutting of injunctions to creative imitation through a theatrical act, though one which does not translate into a collective celebration of theatre in the Comedy, written around the same time, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.[96] Romeo assures the Friar, in 2.2 and 3.3, that it is love he feels and not just lust, and that the Friar's kind of knowledge falls short where feeling becomes a prerequisite for knowledge. His insistence adds to the sense of a play that is, although breaking with the sonnet tradition, elevating eroticism and feeling interiority, for all its willful spirit and with all attendant perils and dissymmetries, to the level of a textual-dramatic experience of knowledge in lieu of an Augustinian revelation-conversion through readerly meditation of the past. Thus, the transformative imitation of the sonnet genre arguably only gets into gear during the first encounter between Romeo and Juliet, in a dialogue sonnet between lovers that brings together metaphor and agency in such a way that it is as much the act of metaphorizing as the metaphor itself that becomes a *writing* transformative and mediative of the play's Petrarchan inheritance.

3. *Scripts and agents: Akrich and Latour*

This chapter has allowed me so far to show how metaphor engages on one hand processes of inscription, such as in 1.2, where the Servingman seems to extend and lead into the plot the

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[96] For the sonnet-related notion of the *alma pater* as "a pedagogical patriarch who appropriates to himself maternal roles," see Strycharski, 45.

writing of Capulet's metaphorical play, raising questions about the early modern shape of authorship. Conversely, as a mediative figure, metaphor was also related to medieval and early modern approaches to reading. Like metaphor, texts were understood in the Renaissance to offer an imaginative space with *chora*-like characteristics, in which relationships between authors and readers, text and meaning, past and present were negotiated. In Shakespeare's tragedy of young lovers, this dimension occurs also as a theatrical suspension of poetic writing in the undercutting of the ideal of good imitation by drama. In the following pages, I attend therefore to the dramatic nature of metaphors, literally their value as action (from the Greek *drân*, to act), which brings the focus on metaphor to a close, shifting attention over to the theme of agency that will occupy the following chapter.

My reading of 1.2 presents an inscriptive mechanism at work, drawing the plot away from the breezy words of comedy into the more *solid/sullied* realm of tragedy, as metaphor writes on, after intended meanings have been expressed. Taking up a metaphorical-mediative function himself, the Lylian Servingman carries over figuration to stage action in conjunction with Romeo's appropriative authorship and willful reading. In order to fully understand what is at stake in these processes of inscription and mediation however, still missing from my approach is an explanatory tool that would better equip one to deal with these processes as actional. Indeed, certain questions remain as to the relationship established between metaphor and event: what does it mean for the events of the play to *write out* a remnant metaphoricity of Capulet's speech? What does this imply in terms of agency? In order to clarify this point and take my argument – of a connection between metaphor and agency – on to the next stage, I resort to the socio-technological conceptual apparatus of Madeleine Akrich and Bruno Latour, which, as Derrida and De Man, attends to the repetitive, machinic aspects of event. In this perspective, it becomes clear how *writing* is engaged in a mediative process that is dramatized not in its utterance per say, but along with utterance, as a writerly supplement

framing dramatic utterance. Indeed, Latour's development of this conceptuality into Actor-Network Theory offers an understanding of action compatible with poststructuralist conceptions of text as a technological apparatus, rendering it compatible with literary theories presented so far and taking them a step further in the direction of dramatic criticism. Resorting to a blend of sociological and critical literary theory thus serves to better consolidate the bridge I am building between the formal analysis of metaphor and the structural and philosophical level of analysis to which questions of agency pertain, the theatre appearing as a kind of writing uniquely able to develop such continuities between text and action.

Madeleine Akrich and Bruno Latour have both developed sociological analyses of technology by resorting to a terminology shared with literary theorists. Central to Madeleine Akrich's appraisal of technology is the notion of "script:"

> For some time sociologists of technology have argued that when technologists define the characteristics of their objects, they necessarily make hypotheses about the entities that make up the world into which the object is to be inserted…. A large part of the work of innovators is that of '*inscribing*' this vision of (or prediction about) the world in the technical content of the new object. I will call the end product of this work a "script" or a "scenario."[97]

Borrowing a dramatological term, Akrich views technical objects as carrying with them preestablished actions, "scripts" which may or may not correspond to the subsequent real-world use of those objects. Building on this approach, Bruno Latour proposes "to compare machines with texts, since the inscription of builders and users in a mechanism is very much the same as that of authors and readers in a story."[98] Latour develops the notion of script through morphological derivation into a number of processes linked to the "engineering" of

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[97] Madeleine Akrich, "The De-Scription of Technical Objects," in *Shaping Technology/ Building Society Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 207-8.

[98] Bruno Latour, "Where Are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts," in *Shaping Technology*, 236.

scripts, such as, for instance, *prescription*, "the behavior imposed back onto the human by nonhuman delegates. . . . Prescription is the moral and ethical dimension of mechanisms."[99] Inscribed into devices, scripts prescribe certain behaviors to their users, which opens moral and ethical dimensions before the user has even picked up the tool, complexifying the distinction between a technological apparatus and users of technology in favor of a view in which human users are part of the apparatus, just as the inhuman apparatus is always already inscribed with actions.[100]

Latour strengthens the connection between textuality and technology by further appealing to the former as a way of understanding how techniques are charactered with human traits, thus challenging the distinction between human and non-human actors:

> Most sociologists are violently upset by this crossing of the sacred barrier that separate human from nonhumans, because they confuse this divide with another one between *figurative* and *nonfigurative* actors. If I say that Hamlet is the figuration of "depression among the aristocratic class," I move from a personal figure to a less personal one–that is, class. If I say that Hamlet stands for doom and gloom, I use less figurative entities, and if I claim that he represents western civilization, I use nonfigurative abstractions. Still, they all are equally actors, that is, entities that *do* things, either in Shakespeare's artful plays or in the commentators' more tedious tomes. The choice of granting actors figurativity or not is left entirely to the authors. It is exactly the same for techniques.[101]

By redrawing the classical distinction between human and nonhuman actors as a distinction between figurative and non-figurative actors, Latour wishes to avoid attributing actions either to fully conscious human agents or to the full automation of technique,[102] deriving his

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[99] Latour, 232.

[100] The idea seems rooted partly in Heidegger's notion of *Zuhandenheit*, or "ready-to-hand," according to which our practical relationship to things in the world takes precedence over any theoretical consideration of those things (*Vorhandenheit*, or the "present-at-hand"). Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010).

[101] Latour, 240-1.

[102] Latour defines as "*sociologism* the claim that, given the competence, pre-inscription, and circumscription of human users and authors, you can read out the scripts nonhuman actors have to play; and

approach from the observation that "[t]he distinctions between humans and nonhumans, embodied or disembodied skills, impersonation or 'machination,' are less interesting than the complete chain along which competences and actions are distributed."[103] Inhuman actors may thus be counted among the delegates (or cranks and wheels) in a chain of competences and actions, as the result of a *translation*: "[t]he label 'inhuman' applied to techniques simply overlooks translation mechanisms and the many choices that exist for figuring or defiguring, personifying or abstracting, embodying or disembodying actors."[104] In our everyday human experience, we are constantly encountering and interacting with technology, some of which is figurative, some not, but all of which is therefore actorial to some extent since it may always be shown to be the result of a translation, just as the figure of the character Hamlet may be interpreted as a non-figurative actor in the play *Hamlet*.[105] As Latour's mischievous depiction of literary critical interpretation as taking part in these translations in and out of figuration makes clear, literary critics also translate in order to instate their own actors or *explanans* to which they confer the power to account for literary problematics, one might even say enduring enigmas, such as that harbinger of modernity that is still the character of Hamlet.

By virtue of Latour's contention that "the actors at any point may be human or nonhuman, and the displacement (or translation, or transcription) makes impossible the easy reading out of one repertoire and into the next," his view may be considered as compatible with the Derridean notions of *archi-writing* and *quasi-metaphoricity* and more largely Derrida's career-long interest in operatives along chains of textuality, as well as with de Man's thinking on materiality and event. Indeed, they seem to have in common a concern

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technologism the symmetric claim that, given the competence and pre-inscription of nonhuman actors, you can easily read out and deduce the behavior prescribed to authors and users." Latour, 239.

[103] Latour, 243.

[104] Latour, 241.

[105] See Andrew Cutrofello's enlightening discussion of Hamlet as a "conceptual character" in philosophical readings and uses of the play in Andrew Cutrofello, *All for Nothing: Hamlet's Negativity* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2014).

around the machinic structure in textuality and its suspension of a substantialist interpretation of materiality.[106] As Derrida questions the division between material trace and ideal content, famously asserting that "there is no *hors-texte*,"[107] Latour puts into a similar relationship the repertoires of human and non-human, showing them to be dependent on translational mechanisms rather than essential. "Translation," the mechanism securing this relationship, is thus structurally metaphorical in a way that is consistent with poststructuralist uses of the term, but also in a way that places it in conceptual continuity with the classical rhetorical understanding of metaphor in the Renaissance.

Translatio, one of the terms under which early modern writers described metaphor, is indeed the Latin rendering of the Greek *meta-phorê*, to carry over. As attested by Judith Anderson, the sixteenth-century term had a wide array of figurative and "defigurative" uses, usually with the idea of a change in shape, medium, or environment such as "the transfer of an official from one ecclesiastical jurisdiction to another, the transmigration of a soul to heaven, the transformation or refashioning of apparel," "the capture, or exile of a people," or "the glorious transformation of a person into a constellation." It is in this basic and wide sense of "translation," with a similar eye to property transferal, that Latour looks to all action

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[106] Derrida notably draws a fundamental link between the technology of writing and death, as observed at the beginning of Chapter 3. Writing on Freud's mystic writing pad, he further states: "The machine is dead. It is death. Not because one risks death, playing with machines, but because the origin of machines is a relationship to death." "La machine est morte. Elle est la mort. Non parce qu'on risque la mort en jouant avec les machines mais parce que l'origine des machines est le rapport à la mort." Derrida, 335. This relationship to death, accounts, in this text, for an interpretation of writing as a technology, which in turn poses the question of the relationship between the technological and the psychical, both conceived as apparatuses in Freud's writings. He elaborates: "Writing here is the *technê* as a relationship between life and death, between the present and representation, between both apparatuses. It opens to the question of technique: of the apparatus in general and of the analogy between the psychical apparatus and the non-psychical one." "L'écriture est ici la τέχνη comme rapport entre la vie et la mort, entre le présent et la représentation, entre les deux appareils. Elle ouvre la question de la technique : de l'appareil en général et de l'analogie entre l'appareil psychique et l'appareil non-psychique." Derrida, Jacques Derrida, *L'Écriture et la Différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 337.

[107] "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte." Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), 227. *Hors-texte*, sometimes "inset plate," is a printing term designating extratextual elements printed in a book that Gérard Genette developed into a literary critical term to designate textual elements that sit beyond the threshold of paratextuality. Often translated as "there is nothing outside the text" and misconstrued as implying linguistic determinism, the figurativity of this assertion summarizes rather Derrida's general position that an *archi-écriture* necessarily undercuts as well as enables metaphysical hierarchization.

as translated, the result of carrying over.[108] Who or what is doing the carrying over is less important at this stage than the fact that things can be carried over across entire chains of actions. The question of these actions being textual or not belongs more to our account of the actions we choose to describe than to the inherent nature of the actions themselves – even to distinguish something as an action, in the perfective sense of a punctual event, is to characterize it as the result of a translation in a sequence, carrying over, transforming, figuring or "defiguring." In this perspective, Act 1.2 of *Romeo and Juliet* is less "hybrid" than it may at first appear, or rather, it reads as an account of events translated into and out of figuration.

If Latour sees engineers as agents who "build complicated narrative programs and subprograms that are evaluated and judged by their ability to stave off antiprograms,"[109] it should be noted for the present purpose that this definition describes just as well the operations of an able rhetor. Latour himself treats rhetoric as an intermediary step between confiding a task to a human agent and automatizing it through technological equipment. Thanks to his conceits in 1.2, which summon to argue on his behalf the powerfully persuasive "actant" that is the order of natural cycles, Capulet thus deftly builds into his rhetoric a program, loading his metaphors not only with scripts designed to act, but with prescriptions designed to enjoin, all of which are intended to bring Paris and Juliet together at the right time, staving off the antiprograms of Paris' impatience to marry Juliet (and, presumably, Juliet's own unreadiness to choose a husband) and of Paris losing interest in Juliet.[110] As I

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[108] Anderson, 9; 218 n. 3.

[109] Latour, 248.

[110] Latour, 54. Akrich and Latour offer the following definitions: "Actant: Whatever acts or shifts actions, action itself being defined by a list of performances through trials; from these performances are deduced a set of competences with which the actant is endowed; the fusion point of a metal is a trial through which the strength of an alloy is defined; the bankruptcy of a company is a trial through which the faithfulness of an ally may be defined; an actor is an actant endowed with a character (usually anthropomorphic)." Madeleine Akrich and Bruno Latour, "A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies," *Shaping Technology*, 259.

attempted to highlight in appealing to Derrida, this inscription builds far more into his speech than Capulet intends – one could say that in opening his door to the seasonal and cyclical orders of nature he also extends the invitation to errant desire and death, two antiprograms he specifically means to stave off. Metaphors and conceits are therefore formal instantiations of a larger metaphorical function ensuring the translation of Capulet's plan into language, then into a written document and a human agent charged with interpreting and acting on its contents (which in turn will be received, interpreted and acted on by the recipients of the writ). This process of translation is, as I shall now argue, also a general characteristic of *Romeo and Juliet*, the play repeatedly questioning the link between literature and action by deriving dramatic plot from the genre of poetry.

At the heart of what "generates machines and devices" for Latour is another literary concept, offering another description of translation: "technical shifting out inscribes the words into *another matter.*" As Latour explains it, "[i]n storytelling, one calls *shifting out* any displacement of a character to another space time, or character," most often when a character becomes the enunciator of a story. The notion is also useful to describe the investment of a conceit, according to the Lacanian idea of metaphor as instituting a new order of signification, or to Derrida's metaphorization. Indeed, such a dynamic of literary or narrative shifting out in early modern theatre has been explored by Heinrich Plett, who examines the role of *translatio*, which he equates with metaphor, as a rhetorical effect intensifying the theatrical presence of stories recounted by characters in Shakespearean plays, conferring to the recounted characters and actions a sense of immediacy. Thus, in line with a broad sense of metaphorization as a process that ensures a shifting out into another matter, *translatio temporum*, or a change in tense, notably from past to present, creates an effect such that the "the reality of the past appears, as it were, *in actu* on stage." This transition from metaphor to act occurs even more prominently in the second version of the trope Plett analyses, *translatio*

personarum, whereby "a change of roles indicates a change from narration to mimesis" in the apparition of the Ghost in the middle of Barnardo's story, at the beginning of Hamlet: "The talk about the ghost is here replaced by the ghost itself. Mediating narration is superseded by immediate action." As Barnardo is substituted by the Ghost, Act 1.2 of *Romeo and Juliet* offers a *translatio personarum* from Capulet to the Serving-man. Plett also notes a further characteristic of the trope in *Pericles*:

> Each act of this romance is introduced by a narrative presented by a chronicler who appears as a *prosopopoeia* of the medieval poet John Gower. Each time the scenic action, i. e. the actual drama, emerges from a narrative. . . . Epic is replaced by drama, recitation by stage action.[111]

This type of shift is conceived by Plett as belonging to a rhetorical strategy on the part of the playwright, who transfers the responsibility of the storytelling from one means to another. As a play, *Romeo and Juliet* presents a similar process, with its prologue shaped as a sonnet, as if affirming an intention to bring to stage life the stuff of written poetry.[112] In Act 1.2, Capulet's rhetorical conceit slides into stage life according to a comparable, if more drawn out process. More subtle, the shift from the metaphorical irony of Capulet's speech into a sequence that will eventually lead him into a corresponding dramatic irony appears rather to question the nature of the link between rhetoric itself and mimesis, the very passage from an order of

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[111] Heinrich Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture*, Berlin and New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2004, 492; 495.

[112] Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann refer to the sonnet prologue as a "form that thematically transgresses its generic boundaries through a turn from poetic representation to (trans)active presentation," anticipating a shifting out in the very contents of the sonnet: "on the crest of the sonnet's movement, the sestet transfigures the lyrical pathos of the 'starcross'd lovers' into the institutionalized space of its cultural reception." Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama*, London: Routledge, 2004, 95. Gayle Whittier sees the translation as a break: "No longer a poetic end in itself, the sonnet serves as a means to a dramatic issue." Gayle Whittier, "The Sonnet's Body and the Body Sonnetized in 'Romeo and Juliet,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 28; David Schalkwyk emphasizes rather a continuity between lyrical and dramatic sonnet: "In a play that is concerned with the difficulty of dividing private from public, these fourteen lines raise the question of the sonnet itself and the use to which it may be put as a form of social action." David Schalkwyk. *Speech and Performance in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 66.

speech to an order of action.[113] Attentive to the way meaning and action are carried over thus, Latour refines his chain of actancy in the development of Actor-Network Theory by distinguishing between two types of conveyors.

Since figurative and non-figurative actants can both be said to act, Latour formulates otherwise the difference between the participants that transform meaning and action in relaying it and those that do not. In developing the terminology of scripts into Actor-Network Theory (henceforth ANT), Latour makes a distinction between *intermediaries* and *mediators*.[114] The former are to be understood as "what transports meaning or force without transformation: defining its inputs is enough to define its outputs." As for the second kind of involvement in action, "[m]ediators, on the other hand, … transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry.[115] Depending on the trials through which they are put, things that ordinarily are intermedial may suddenly appear as hazardous mediators: "[a] properly functioning computer could be taken as a good case of a complicated intermediary. . . . But if it breaks down, a computer may turn into a horrendously

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[113] As previously argued, this is, in essence, the question at the heart of Petrarch's *Secretum*, distinguishable also in the authorial contrasting of *Romeo and Juliet*.

[114] Actor-Network theory posits that "action is not done under the full control of consciousness; action should rather be felt as a node, a knot, and a conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies." Accounting for the name of the theory, Latour's description of agency as distributed along chains of various actants takes stock of the fact, then, that "no one knows how many people are simultaneously at work in any given individual; conversely, no one knows how much individuality there can be in a cloud of statistical data points." A crucial change Latour makes to the notion of agency, therefore, is to complicate the gesture of designating anything as the *origin* of any singled-out act. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 44; 54. ANT has been applied to the field of literary criticism by Rita Felski and in the domain of dramatic Shakespeare studies, for instance by Jonathan Gil Harris and Franco Moretti – Latour himself frequently uses Shakespeare's plays as examples, as in *Reassembling the Social*. Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2015); Rita Felski, "Latour and Literary Studies," *PMLA* 130, no. 3 (2015): 737-42; Rita Felski, "Comparison and Translation: A Perspective from Actor-Network Theory," *Comparative Literature Studies* 53, no. 4 (2016): 747-65; Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Franco Moretti, "Hamlet by Numbers," *New Left Review* 68 (2011), accessed 29 April, 2021, https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii68/articles/franco-moretti-network-theory-plot-analysis.

[115] Latour, *Reassembling*, 39. To count as a mediator, a participant must therefore be "making some difference to a state of affairs," its transformative effects substantiated by some form of trial. No intentionality is required, only a difference made.

complex mediator. . . ."[116] Such is the case of Capulet's list, entrusted as a mere intermediary to his Serving-man, in whose hands it becomes something of a loose cannon. Latour adds that this "of course, does not mean that such participants "determine" the action."[117] "Rather, it means that there might exist many metaphysical shades between full causality and sheer inexistence." Thus, "things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on."[118]

With this notion of agency as spread out into shades of causality, admitting different kinds of actants, I turn to Romeo and Juliet's shared sonnet from Act 1.4, in which I seek to further characterize the actantial role played by metaphor in the play, fulfilling a similar function to that of the list in 1.2, an intermediary whose breakdown in combination with an ill-suited user causes a mediator to appear in lieu of the predictable delegate Capulet expects. After metaphorical language and plot sequences were thus suggestively linked in the contextual, outside world of Verona, moving from a guestlist to an intricate sonnet, the question turns to the actionality of rhetoric in the more withdrawn, intimate formation of the couple's amorous relationship (though this contrast between private and public worlds is also problematized). This analysis strives to substantiate three interrelated claims. Breaking with the sonnet tradition while also providing a reading of it, the shared sonnet constitutes a textual event in the De Manian sense through the use metaphor as an agent of Latourean translation and Lacanian mediation;[119] the sequence flatters and challenges character agency by allowing for a first encounter to be scripted between a "saint" and a "pilgrim," immediately posing the question of the relationship between this fiction and the encounter

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[116] Latour, *Reassembling*, 39.

[117] Latour, *Reassembling*, 71.

[118] Latour, *Reassembling*, 72.

[119] This is to be distinguished from Latour's "mediator." I have been arguing for a view of metaphor as "mediative" in a sense that comprises Lacan's understanding of metaphor's ability to create meaning and, in a limited a capacity, prevent metonymic slippage, which I have argued is compatible with the medieval conception of reading as a mediating *meditatio*, in particular through the process of *tropology*.

between Romeo and Juliet; following Latour's bifold observation that agents are part of networks and networks too act, it presents singulative, perfective action as partial and distributed across time, space and actants in accordance with a structure of Derridean iteration.[120]

The "shared sonnet" or "dialogue sonnet" of Act 1.4 of *Romeo and Juliet* poses special challenges regarding form and action to literary critics faced with what looks like a sonnet woven into the dialogue of the play, at a crucial juncture of the plot no less (instigating both the love and the dueling plotlines). In the context of an argument on sonnet writing as a form of action, David Schalkwyk dwells on ways in which this sonnet both departs from and aligns with sonnet conventions. I shall therefore use his account as a point of reference to develop my own assessment of what the shared sonnet *does* metaphorically, in light of the theory and historical context presented thus far. Schalkwyk gives considerable literary-historical significance to *Romeo and Juliet*'s contribution to the sonnet tradition, arguing:

> For if the sonnet literary tradition to some degree set the terms of the play's language and story, as Jill Levenson argues,[121] the play itself ensures that the sonnet will never be the same again once it has passed through its essentially theatrical body. The singularity of Shakespeare's sonnets is at least in part made possible by the transforming mode of the tragedy and its social world.[122]

Transforming the sonnet tradition, theatricality is thus recognized as a defining, original feature of Shakespeare's dramatic use of the sonnet, significantly in the shared sonnet of *Romeo and Juliet*:

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[120] Kevin Curran provides an insightful discussion of Shakespearean selfhood as distributed and interactive within ecologies of persons and things. Kevin Curran, *Shakespeare's Legal Ecologies: Law and Distributed Selfhood* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017).

[121] Jill Levenson, "The Definition of Love: Shakespeare's Phrasing in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Shakespeare Studies* 15 (1982): 21-36.

[122] Schalkwyk, 64.

The familiarity of this exchange-as-sonnet should not prevent us from acknowledging the uniqueness of its moment: in which the Petrarchan habit of speaking of one's beloved, or to one's beloved, or behind the back of one's beloved, is replaced by the reciprocity of speaking with one's beloved. This is, of course, obvious. But its very obviousness is liable to prevent us from remarking on the subtlety of that dialogue and its originality.[123]

Part of this originality is due to dialogic form of the sonnet and the interaction that goes with it, which sets it apart from the sonnet tradition as well as other dramatic uses of the sonnet form:

Everything that the Petrarchan tradition has yearned for over thousands of years, *while making it a defining condition that it should not achieve that desire within its own body or in its own time*, is achieved in the play's interaction: words, touch, kiss, given and taken, 'thou mine, I thine' (sonnet 108), . . . giving it the power not merely to say 'yes', but to converse, in interactive dialogue.[124]

Schalkwyk does not however consider the shared sonnet as breaking with the Petrarchan tradition of lyrical sonnets so much as a "inhabiting it afresh." This sonnet, he argues, is "constructed out of a series of speech acts." As such, it draws attention to a general characteristic of the sonnet, becoming "a sign of [the sonnet's] actual engagement – in its Elizabethan forms at any rate – in time and substance." Resorting to Austin's Speech Act Theory, Schalkwyk seeks to establish a certain continuity between the lyrical sonnet as "a form of social action" and its incorporation into a staged play, where "performative uses of language are set in fully developed contexts of interactive dialogue." Dramatic dialogue thus becomes the full-fledged communicational model for understanding how enunciation works in Shakespeare's lyrical sonnets, which Schalkwyk considers not as solitary inner voices in any new and fundamentally modern way, but as part of a social fabric: "Viewing these intensely individual poems through the glass of the plays enables us to see how the sonnets

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[123] Schalkwyk, 67.

[124] Schalkwyk, 68.

enact. . . the degree to which people belong both to themselves and to others."[125] This tension between private endeavor and public belonging is held to be fundamental both to the sonnets and to the plays, as in Romeo and Juliet's shared sonnet, created in a moment of intimacy that escapes not the public eye (Tybalt) and is soon interrupted by Lady Capulet through the intermediary of the Nurse.[126]

In this sense, the shared sonnet can be read as a successful bit of readerly mediation. It remediates to the problem of the sonnet's negativity as read by Bates by opening the chain of endless deferral both to the present time and substance of the stage and to its interactive dialogue. It gives it the power to act productively and allows it to escape the transcendental enunciation of the "I," which subordinates reality to its perspective, including the voice of the beloved. No longer an absent Rosaline fueling Romeo's melancholy verse, but a Juliet in the flesh who speaks and "co-creates almost without effort with her new lover."[127] While some of Shakespeare's lyrical sonnets break conventions of theme, such as that the beloved should be beautiful (eminently Sonnet 130), or that she must be a woman (Sonnets 1-126), the shared sonnet is all too conventional in its religious conceit, banal except in its use to script theatrical experience. The commonplace saint–pilgrim trope is transformed in that, through its Neoplatonic language of desire as spiritual elevation, it now registers erotic seduction and prompts sexual intimacy. Masquerading almost satirically as a sonnet, the dialogue seems to respond, tongue-in-cheek, to the tradition as the play does to the humanist exigency of proper imitation: undercutting the genre's Petrarchism, the shared sonnet both reads as a creative, if willful and erotic transformation of the sonnet form and as a recalcitrant refusal to do so, substituting theatrical dialogue for lyrical poetry. As a piece of poetic writing written *à quatre mains*, the shared sonnet has the force of a historic event, in the De Manian sense

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125 Schalkwyk, 6.

126 See Schalkwyk, 72.

127 Schalkwyk, 71.

described at the end of Chapter 3. Beyond its readerly (or, as De Man might say, cognitive) role, the sonnet is an irreversible material event brought about by language – it is, in the Derridean lexicon, an invention that makes possible the impossible.[128] As Schalkwyk puts it: "the sonnet will never be the same again". The sonnet has such a status, however, in virtue of its performativity, in that it constitutes a material inscription into heterogeneity. The change occurs as a theatrical rescripting of relationships of desire, of relationships to meaning and of relationships to the ethical stakes around performances of desire and meaning. Thus, the shared sonnet is all the more interesting once interrogated as a piece of performative writing, in connection with its imbrication in theatrical time and substance and interactive dialogue. The following close readings of how metaphor works in the sonnet develops this understanding of the shared sonnet as an event, both disjunctive and mediating, the interest lying in the behavior of translational mechanisms.

Schalkwyk locates a tension in sonnet writing between private and social worlds, of which the shared sonnet is an example. He claims of Romeo and Juliet:

> They can forge the reciprocity represented by the sonnet only under the playful anonymity of the common name, through the fictional identities of 'pilgrim, saint, palmer', by which the networks of relationship that tie them to their families' names and distance them from those of others are suspended.[129]

In creating this suspension however, another kind of tension is created internally, in the resort to anonymous identities and in the fictional actions they perform. The neat structural reciprocity that Schalkwyk deems effortless in fact belies tensions that arise from the sonnet's use as theatrical writing, specifically in what makes the shared sonnet's success: its incorporation into the medium of dialogue and action. After Romeo attempts to punctuate or

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[128] See Jacques Derrida, "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event," trans. Gila Walker, *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (2007): 441-461 ; Jacques Derrida, "Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement," in In Gad Soussana, Alexis Nous and Jacques Derrida, *Dire l'événement, est-ce possible ? Séminaire de Montréal, pour Jacques Derrida* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 79-112, cited in Chapter 3.

[129] Schalkwyk, 72.

close the sequence once the sonnet has ended and the kiss has been given and had, the religious conceit momentarily breaks down. From Romeo's supplementary closing line Juliet in fact draws out a certain open-endedness: "Then have my lips the sin that they have took" (1.4.221), reconfiguring Romeo's extra line to reinitiate the sequence. When it appears that Romeo cannot possibly bear the thought of Juliet having sinned because of him, exclaiming "Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged! / Give me my sin again" (1.4.222-3.1), this is not entirely consistent with Juliet's role. Indeed, Romeo arguably ceases to figure Juliet as a saint, kissing her for the second time as the young Veronese girl she is, and as a fellow sinner then. At this point, the logic connecting the scenario to reality falls out of alignment: why would the sinner take back his sin from an absolving saint and thus be urged into trespass, damnation? Yet the lovers do not for all this fall back from the masquerade. A concern develops here around the persistence of fictionalization in sustaining the erotic charge, but also around its persistence once the conceit no longer sustains it. If "sin" means "kiss," the persistence of sin thus implying a continued sexual attraction, the encoding of "kiss" as "sin" cannot easily be stepped out of, or put differently, the activity of "sin" cannot be wholly contained and stabilized as a mere signifier for "kiss," bringing with it an excess of lexical and syntactic tropological activity. In relying still on each other's ingenuity and pursuing their witty though crippled conceit, the lovers both remain within and depart from the Petrarchan figuration of saint and pilgrim. A tension is formed between the enclosed form of the sonnet and the continued live present of the stage, threatening to precipitate the triumph of presence, action and full meaning into that entropic reversion to negativity characteristic of the sonnet.

Another reading of the rupture in the conceit may present a slightly less dysfunctional metaphorical logic. After the first kiss, it is also possible to conceive of a Juliet who in the initiation of a second sonnet has stepped into another role, that of a temptress leading the hero

into pleasures of the flesh and perdition, and to whom Romeo gives in to at the high price of trespass.[130] This would imply that Juliet has either fallen from her saintly pedestal through sinning with Romeo or that she is in fact a devil masquerading as a saint, as in a morality plot.[131] From this perspective, kissing figured as sin would seem to rewrite the metaphorical structure according to a pattern of antithetical inversion. "Give me my sin again" would imply addition rather than transferal, each new kiss a new trespass. Caught in a scheme where "sin is purged" pharmaconically by more sin, the lovers enter a vicious cycle within a subverted Biblical motif of the transfer of sin.[132] In both this and the first reading of the metaphorical structure then, the figuration of Juliet as a saint becomes impossible to uphold. For all this, the metaphor is not broken out of. The program built by the new lovers works towards closure, in the sense both of kiss and of trespass, yet also reboots in the repetition of the act, perhaps necessarily so if the couple wishes to continue living out that which has brought them together so effectively. Finding a new language to sustain their relationship or moving out of it altogether is subsequently at stake in the balcony scene and the linguistic

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[130] The temptation imagery is further developed in Juliet's relationship to the Nurse in 3.2 and 3.5, this time with the Nurse in the role of "damnation" (*Romeo and Juliet*, 3.5.235). In this reading, the scene also recalls Faustus' kiss with the spectral apparition of Helen in *Doctor Faustus*. Shortly before leaving the stage with the Cupids and her, Faustus exclaims: "Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss. / Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies! / Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again." (18.101-5) In a line that has been interpreted as referring to the sin of demoniality, or sexual congress with a demon, the Old Man, who has entered in time to see Faustus and Helen exit together, laments: "Accursed Faustus, miserable man, / That from thy soul exclud'st the grace of heaven." (18.119-20) Christopher Marlow, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen, 1965; London: Routledge, 2005), 106.

[131] Such is the reversion that occurs, figuratively, in *Much Ado About Nothing* in the repudiation of Hero. William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 29 April, 2021, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=23, 4.1.47-50; The metaphorical reversion from saint to devil characterizes Romeo later in the play, in Juliet's antithetical monologue berating her lover for murdering Tybalt: ". . .fiend angelical! / . . . A damnèd saint. . . / O nature, what hadst thou to do in hell / When thou didst bower the spirit of a fiend / In mortal paradise of such sweet flesh? / Was ever book containing such vile matter / So fairly bound?" 3.2.75-85; Antithesis and oxymorons being prominent features of the play, a pattern of reversion is called upon to be generalized as a law of inversion of opposites when Capulet bemoans the apparent death of his daughter: "And all things change them to the contrary" (4.4.116).

[132] The doctrine of the transfer of sin posits that one can step in to take responsibility for another's sin. The lovers buy into the transferability of sin, but without ever reaching absolution, or the purging of sin. See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grands Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 750.

debates that occur in it. Whether in this reading or the first therefore, the move away from the initial investment of the conceit presents a certain machinic *restance* of a metaphorical structure that neither simply falls away nor reinvents itself without either collapsing or lapsing into a form of negativity or recession.[133] The investment of the conceits demands of both parties a sustained and repetitive adherence to the fictionality they have bought into, each now bearing its material trace in who they are to the other, just as the roles of saint and pilgrim have been charged with the material trace of their encounter, both in the play and in the history of the sonnet. Neither wholly productive or negative, both displacing Petrarchism and displaced in its appeal to Petrarchism, this metaphorical writing appears as continuously ambivalent in its generation of new events.

Tensions in Romeo and Juliet's shift-out into the two-headed dramatized conceit of the sonnet are readable not only in role distribution, but also, correlatively, in the way action behaves. Specifically, the conflict is between the actions of the sonnet and the actionality of theatrical experience. This provides an alternative view to that of Schalkwyk, who takes the structure of action in both genres to be equivalent, or at the very least compatible. My approach seeks rather to characterize them as not entirely commensurable (with no necessary pejorative connotation).[134] Destabilizing the metaphorical register, the incorporation of the sonnet form into drama complicates the effectivity of speech acts. This can be evidenced by examining the verbal transitivity characterizing the act of kissing and the speech acts that

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[133] This may be compared with Whittier's point that "writ generally functions in a negative way in Shakespeare's tragedies" due to the menacing transcendental nature of written language in that "by being material, the writ *resubjects* language to the accidents of time and space." Whittier, 30-31. If Romeo and Juliet's shared sonnet has the *writing* effect I am arguing it does, the problem does indeed appear to revolve around a remnant materiality that demands to be "purged."

[134] In his contention that "[t]he sonnets' performative language. . . is a relationship embodied in particular lived circumstances, which Shakespeare's dramatic works frequently re-present in that fullness on the public stage," Schalkwyk tends towards smoothing out the translations the shared sonnet gives to read, as the hyphen in "re-present" suggests, as well as the view that theatre does more "fully" what the lyrical sonnet does, to the effect that the behavior of the sonnet in a dramatic context is predictable on the basis of the way it works in the lyrical genre, which makes it a Latourean intermediary in this respect. My reading suggests, on the contrary, that in the fertility and difficulty of the transposition, the shared sonnet becomes, as Latour's misbehaving computer, a mediator, showing the shift-out to translate only partially as well in excess.

pertain to it. In a nutshell, the linguistic image given of the act of kissing fails to encapsulate the event of the kiss into a perfective action. Thus, as the sonnet form reboots at the end of the shared sonnet, action is similarly inconclusive and given over to repeatability.[135]

Building on the basic distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs, Paul Hopper and Sandra Thompson define transitivity as "a global property of an entire clause, such that an activity is 'carried-over' or 'transferred' from an agent to a patient."[136] They refine the transitive property into a scale from higher to lower transitivity, arguing that "the defining properties of Transitivity are discourse-determined."[137] Using this discourse-determined scale, it is possible to move one step closer to a source of tension in the lovers' appeal to metaphor. In Romeo's "Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purged" (1.4.220), the action of purging, attributed to Juliet (at the very least to her lips), rates as highly transitive. Among Hopper and Thompson's criteria for determining high or low transitivity however, one stands out as locating a tension here, namely the criterion of "affectedness," used to determine to what extent an action is effective. Applied to the object of the verb, or the patient, affectedness can range from total to nil. In Romeo's short, yet intricate sentence, "Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purged," with its peculiar word order and its ambiguous verbal construction, either in the passive mood or a copula with an adjectivized past participle (both however bearing traces of a past action), two scripts occur in the

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[135] The processuality of the kiss seems to be borrowed from Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, in which an iterative repetition of the kiss becomes a pattern presented alternatively as fostering various forms of elevation, as in Bembo's speech in Book 4 of *The Courtier*, and as a means to silence Astrophil (in Sonnets 79 to 82). Sonnet 82 also pleads for a kiss as it begs forgiveness for an earlier fault (the stolen kiss from the Second Song). Echoes of these patterns in the shared sonnet of *Romeo and Juliet* arguably place the dramatic sequence within what James Finn Cotter refers to as a "baiser genre" in medieval romance (with Classical antecedents), in light of which he reads Sonnets 79-82 in *Astrophil and Stella*. The fact that the kiss is repeated, revealing an iterative pattern to which the poetry of the kiss also belongs, likely recasts a traditional ambivalence as to the narrative significance of the kiss throughout its medieval literary history as Cotter discusses it: "Was the kiss the climax of the wooing process or was it a prelude to sexual relation?" James Finn Cotter, "The 'Baiser' Group in Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 12, no. 3 (1970): 386.

[136] This concentration on the verbal role in translating action, or carrying it over, thus aligns itself with the view I am taking of metaphor as a translational actant.

[137] Paul J. Hopper and Sandra A. Thompson, "Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse," *Language* 56, no. 2 (1980), 251.

transitivity of the purge. In one sense, Romeo's sin has been "purged from his lips," and in this he has been totally affected, his sin removed. On the other hand, though the "from his lips" part of the process is indisputably successful, one might debate as to whether the sin has truly been "purged" if Juliet now bears it. Depending on whether "sin" or "Romeo" are determined as the object, the transitivity of the purge will vary: if "Romeo," it is highly transitive, if "sin," perhaps less so. Delving a little further into the understanding of the verbal transitivity of purging gets us closer to the tension in the appeal to metaphor here.

In encoding the action of kissing in this manner, Juliet and Romeo also demonstrate M.A.K. Halliday's notion of "functional transitivity." Distinct from transitivity as a verbal or clausal property, it retains from Hopper and Thompson's work the rootedness in discourse. "Functional transitivity" establishes that the "transitivity grammar" of a text, or the way in which speakers construe processes, also "construes a particular 'world view.'"[138] Thus, just as the physical action of kissing is semantically overdetermined, accruing several different descriptions of what process is occurring,[139] "purged" cumulates at least two senses of "to purge" that appear to belong to conflicting worldviews. The definition of "to purge" as "[t]o make pure or clean in spirit, thought, or morals; to rid *of* or free *from* sin, guilt, error, etc.,"[140] applies best to the idea of absolving Romeo's sin. But this sense is in competition with another sense of the verb, the only one in the OED to include a prepositional object expressing source: "To eliminate or expel (waste or harmful matter, etc.) from the body or an

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[138] M.A.K. Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar: Third Edition*, revised by Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen (Hodder Arnold: London, 2004), 283.

[139] Romeo's "Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purged" depicts an action of which Juliet is the actor, though curiously it is construed quite differently in "Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take," which suggests the action is Romeo's and differently still in "Saints do not move, though grant for prayers sake". The act of kissing would seem best described then as hosting several processes: Juliet's "grant[ing] for prayer's sake," Romeo's taking the effect of his prayer, and Juliet's purging Romeo's sin, each action verb belonging to a different description or aspect of the action.

[140] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "purge, v. 1," 4.a., 29 April 2021, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/154877.

organ."[141] In the sonnet, the understanding of "purge" in the first sense pertains to a spiritual reality, while the second sense, a medical one, inscribes a humoral operation into the first, accounting for the metaphorical characterization of kissing as an action in which something harmful has passed from Romeo's lips to Juliet's and back again. The spiritual sense, a logic according to which the sin would be absolved through the kiss, as in the kissing of an effigy of a saint, is therefore contaminated by the materiality catachrestically associated with "purging." Thus, figured as purging, kissing materializes through a grammar of tropicality a supplemental, active remainder, figured as a transferable property that passes from one body to the other with each new kiss.[142] This reading, of a material effect evidenced in the verbal picture of transferal (or how things get "carried over"), is corroborated by the fact that a similar logic is at work in the duels of the play.

Problematizing the uniqueness of the private endeavor of the shared sonnet, the logic of transferal at work in the verbal transitivity that vitalizes Romeo and Juliet's intricate exchange recurs in other encounters, such as duels between Mercutio and Tybalt, then Tybalt and Romeo, in which metaphor generates meaning in excess. This overproductiveness of figurative language occurs in relation to how language is instrumentalized in relationships of enmity and confrontation. In the brawl at the opening of the play as in the shared sonnet, a

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[141] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "purge, v. 1," 2.a., 29 April 2021, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/154877. It might also be added that the number of senses found by Crystal and Crystal in which "purge" carries undertones of a material process or explicitly figures spiritual cleansing as a material elimination of impurity in Shakespeare's works by far outweighs the senses in which "purge" is restricted to a spiritual sense alone. See David Crystal and Ben Crystal, *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion* (London: Penguin, 2002; 2004), digital edition. The word carries a material connotation in Romeo's earlier line: "Being purged, a fire sparkling in lover's eyes" (1.1.187) – with "tears" and "gall" each appearing in subsequent lines (1.1.188-190) – which also creates an ambiguity as to what the nature is of the process depicted as "purged." See Levenson, 157.

[142] This passage through the lips also bears cultural connotation from the liturgical "kiss of peace," exchanged after the liturgy of the Word, to enact ecclesial communion before the celebration of the Eucharist. As such, the passage reads as a relegation to a metaphorical locus of the erotic-eschatalogical drama of Faustus kissing the conjured Helen of Troy, his soul grotesquely passing back and forth from her lips to his. More precisely, Shakespeare seems to rewrite the episode as a more or less symmetrical erotic encounter between two young people who fall into desire – a script that is also part of his response to the idealization of the beloved from the Petrarchan tradition. As a piece of theatrical writing, the shared sonnet thus appears to stage less a lyrical sonnet inhabited afresh than a generation of scripts proceeding from the machinic repetition brought about in the translation from lyrical to dramatic.

sequence of action and reaction results from gesture, thumb biting, respectively touching, the interpretation of which requires linguistic clarification. As to the brawl, language does nothing to resolve the perceived affront caused by gesture. It merely allows for a delay in hermeneutics, the word "better" soon flung as an unquestionable provocation meant to prompt physical confrontation. In the case of the sonnet, the lines following Romeo's initial gesture allow for a similar delay, clarifying the purpose of touching and, creatively rather than destructively, directing the physical exchange towards an embrace.

For Tybalt and Mercutio, the duel does not originate in a gesture, merely in the spoken request for a word: "Gentlemen, good e'en: a word with one of you." Next, Mercutio provocatively remarks on the lack of physicality, as if the word alone were insufficient to fully express Tybalt's true intention: "And but one word with one of us? couple it with something; make it a word and a blow" (3.1.37-9.), the proverbial association of "a word and a blow" designating a fight, with the "blow" either physical or prompting physical confrontation.[143] Metaphor then participates prominently in Mercutio's effort to provoke Tybalt into a duel, as the former takes advantage of the polysemy of "consort" to artificially draw out an insulting conceit pertaining to music and dance, allowing him to project the image of a consort of minstrels into a performance led by his "fiddlestick," or sword, pairing a word with a blow himself and yielding the whole sequence over to the working out of the transferal in excess that is at the heart of the mechanics of reprisal:

> TYBALT. Mercutio, thou consortest with Romeo.
> MERCUTIO. "Consort"? What, dost thou make us minstrels? An thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords. Here's my fiddlestick; here's that shall make you dance. Zounds, "consort"! (3.1.44-8)

The transferal occurs as a result of figuratively construing "consortest with" as an offense, "thou make minstrels of us," in which a transitive process is drawn out in the form of an

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[143] Levenson, *Romeo and Juliet*, 251.

insult bestowed upon Mercutio and Romeo – the blow Mercutio was looking for. When Tybalt returns after the first duel, he repeats the pivotal "consort" to Romeo: "Thou, wretched boy, that didst consort him here, / Shalt with him hence," again pairing a word and a blow (3.1.130-1.1). The repeated action is insured by redeploying the very verb in which a supplemental transitive process was drawn out. Immediately above this line, Romeo tries to rid himself of a previous insult Tybalt gave him before his duel with Mercutio, "thou art a villain" (3.1.60), when he threatens: "Now, Tybalt, take the 'villain' back again / That late thou gavest me" (3.1.125-6), echoing the kind of replicated process that characterized his earlier taking and giving with Juliet. Construed as something given and taken, the insult seems to remain with one until it is taken back or, perhaps, according to a similar phraseology, until one's honor is reclaimed:

> JULIET. Then have my lips the sin that they have took.
> ROMEO. Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged!
>   Give my sin again. (1.4.221-3.1)

"Sin," encoded here as a prompt to kiss, yields a similar transitive process as "consortest" and "thou art a villain" do in the duels between Mercutio and Tybalt, then Tybalt and Romeo.

It is easy to see how language, especially in the flexibility of metaphor, is instrumentalized in the cycle of violence that endlessly perpetuates the rivalry between Capulets and Montagues, as well as in the symmetrically apposed shared sonnet. As a mediative mechanism, it evidences conceptions of sin and verbal injury as processes that generate and (to some extent) transfer a kind of material mark or trace in the world. It threatens the idea that agents initiate their own actions with the more troubling picture of a network of relationships that constantly designates new conveyors and performers of such material charges. Coming between the dueling Mercutio and Tybalt with peaceful intentions like Romeo does, or beating down the brawlers the way Benvolio does in the opening scene

of the play, such a network does not seem to allow for a mediation of the kind that stands outside or above without getting roped into the process and fanning the flames – of ancestral hate or of youthful desire. Sharing a translational canvas with the machinery of dynastic rivalry, Romeo and Juliet's unique, creative rescripting of the sonnet is therefore called into question by the citationality of their metaphorical investment.[144]

As a final note to the passage and a further preparation for the ethical focus of the last chapter, I end with a consideration of the religious context that underlies the shared sonnet's conceit in order to show how it also participates in forging a view of metaphor as a Latourean mediator. It should indeed be pointed out that the metaphors of the shared sonnet are also mediative in their very iconographic charge, the religious motif of saint and pilgrim rehearsing fundamental theological tensions between a repudiated medieval Catholic iconophilia and its state-imposed Protestant iconoclastic condemnation following the English Reformation.[145] Because of the plurality and sensuousness it induced, the medieval use of fastuous icons (both painted and sculpted), relics, vestments, and ornaments in religious worship, appeared theologically suspect to reformers, as did the worship of saints, since they pluralized what came to be perceived as false, dead idols and deceitful material signs of piety in contrast to the more interior, private religious subjects of Protestant worship, and their unmediated access to God through prayer and Scripture.[146] Julia Reinhard Lupton thus

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[144] For an analysis of the play's symmetrical patterns in dueling and love, see Paul Kottman, "Defying the Stars: Tragic Love as the Struggle for Freedom in *Romeo and Juliet*," in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2012): 1-38. This account and these ideas are further treated in Chapter 5.

[145] The main tenets of the Anglican faith regarding religious icons are set forth in the Elizabethan homily "Against the Peril of Idolatry." Church of England, *The Second Tome of Homilees* (London, 1571), 25-162, accessed 21 September 2022, https://www.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240903066/99841883/400E4F2589B24F59PQ/1?accountid=12006&docview_hit_text=idolatrie.

[146] James Siemon speaks of "a distrust that grows from the primary demands of Protestantism for an authentically interior and individual religious experience rather than an external and objective observation." Michael O'Connell expands on this contrast, arguing that Reformers, and foremost Zwingli, believed that: "The self who is 'played' in public worship may not be the same self one encounters in the privacy of meditation." James R. Siemon, *Shakespearean Iconoclasm* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 38; Michael O'Connell, "The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm, Anti-Theatricalism, and the Image of the Elizabethan Theater,"

suggests that "the danger of the saints lies not so much in their supplementary relation to divine grace as in their uncontrolled propagation through imagery, and thus their insidious dissemination *of* imagery."[147] O'Connell makes mention of the perceived threat of Catholic "avidity for relics and pilgrimages, the multiplicity of saints and their elaborately clad statues, and a pervasive and arbitrary system of symbolism for all the gestures and acts of everyday life:" from the "highly developed painting and sculpture of the period, to architecture of unequaled grace and majesty, to stained glass, to vestments, reliquaries, and chalices of exquisite craftsmanship," all of these seemed to amount in Protestant iconoclastic views to what is perceived as "excesses of this highly sensuous and physical devotion." Undergirding medieval religious practices, O'Connell thus points to an "incarnational sense of religious experience, a habit of understanding which incarnates spiritual values and longings in forms immediately accessible to human senses and emotions."[148] The appeal to sense and emotion, especially to the sense of sight and its ability to generate affect, are crucial to understanding Protestant condemnations not only of showy artefacts but of all visual and material phenomena.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Reform instilled or greatly accentuated a generalized cultural suspicion towards visuality and the material world. "Sight," as Marguerite Tassi states, "was potentially dangerous, erotic, and spiritually deviant, as the medieval phrase *libido videndi* (lust of the eye) and the Protestant emphasis on the 'idolatrous eye' emphasize."[149] The eye indeed features as an especially problematic mediative agent between religious subjects and the material world. James Knapp shows how sixteenth-century

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ELH 52, no. 2 (1985): 296. See also Michael O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[147] Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints: Hagiography, Typology and Renaissance Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 182.

[148] O'Connell, "The Idolatrous Eye," 290.

[149] Marguerite A. Tassi, *The Scandal of Images: Iconoclasm, Eroticism, and Painting in Early Modern English Drama* (Cranbury, NJ: Susquehanna University Press, 2005), 17.

theories of sight drew both on ancient theories of vision based on extramission (the idea that the eye actively projects beams onto the world) and on a more recent understanding of the eye's receptive status on account of its gelatinous anatomy, designed to take on the shape of what it sees. He argues that in a pre-Cartesian philosophical climate in which sensation and cognition were not considered ontologically distinct, the eye ensured a material and ethical link to others, forming a sensuous conduit between the spiritual self and the physical world.[150] By implication, far from being the removed scientific observer that later theorists and thinkers became, the beholder remained very much physically and spiritually caught up in the world they saw. This bestowed on the eye a privileged relationship to the sensuous world, drawing in the viewer into the material realm by eliciting affective and actional responses. Tassi accordingly finds that in early modern drama "painted images are shown to have the power to move the passions of characters."[151] For this reason, Protestant iconoclasm conceived of idolatry not only as a matter of artefacts and external signs but of a corresponding inner idolatry of the imaginative mind. Margaret Aston states that "[i]t was not enough to turn away from the objects made by cunning craftsmen set up in popish places. The destroying must burn within, in the 'house' of the imagination."[152] Romeo's initially expressed desire for Juliet, ripe with visual metaphor, plays as a dramatic elaboration of exactly this idea in a way that informs the lead-up to the shared sonnet.

Before encountering Juliet, Romeo expresses his admiration in highly visual terms for a "rich jewel" and one who "doth teach the torches to burn bright" (1.4.156), confers the qualities of active brilliance to Juliet. By contrast, his speech turn ends with a reversal in visual agency from object to means: "Did my heart love till now? Foreswear it, sight, / For I

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[150] See James A. Knapp, *Image Ethics in Shakespeare and Spenser* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 11-13.

[151] Tassi, 19.

[152] Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts I: Laws Against Images* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 460.

never saw true beauty till this night" (1.4.165-6). Levenson terms the figure in the second part of the first line a "personification of his eyes," attesting to the importance conferred on vision here in determining not only love but religious adoration in the project to "make blessèd my rude hand" by "Touching hers" (1.4.164).[153] The combined brilliance of Juliet's physical appearance and the designation of eyes as the seat in which this new heretical fervor[154] is born highlight the peril Shakespeare's audience would have identified in the interaction between vision and seductive sight, the shining jewel and the mediative lust-inducing eye poised between action and reception, causing the religious subject to fall prey to the allure of an eye-catching idol.[155] But although Romeo's eye threatens to turn idolatrous, Juliet's body concentrates most of the potential for sinfulness from an iconoclastic perspective.

Romeo's visual fascination with the sight of Juliet's physical appearance and his weakness for rhetorical flourish may in fact have both been considered idolatrous. Lupton draws a connection within Protestant iconoclasm between the Decalogue's first and second commandments, which forbid respectively the worshipping of other gods and the making of images, and the seventh and tenth, one forbidding adultery, the other covetousness. As Lupton puts it, "[j]ust as the idolator takes on a second and illegitimate god, the adulterer

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[153] The idea of the touch as blessing is momentarily deferred when Romeo contradicts himself upon touching Juliet, as he presents their contact as a sin requiring absolution. Levenson, 193.

[154] Levenson also recalls Romeo's rebuke, turned ironic, of Benvolio's project to make him forget Rosaline by leading him to a more beautiful woman: "When the devout religion of mine eye / Maintains such falsehood, then tears turn to fire / And these who often drowned could never die / Transparent heretics be burnt for liars" (1.2.91-4). Levenson, 193.

[155] Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theatre in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Huston Diehl mentions the "neoplatonic theory of fantasmic infection," which "grants to the beloved – especially the female beloved – a an extraordinary power over her lover, for when he gazes upon her, her image enters through his eye and in a sense possesses him" (Diehl, 164). The visual dynamics of this sequence from *Romeo and Juliet* must therefore be read against both a waning (and thus ripe for transformative poetic engagement with it) Petrarchan tradition that exploits the image of the woman as a means toward lyrical elevation, in line with the dialectics of the Neoplatonic ladder, and in relation to Protestant condemnations of the image as a conduit from the material particular to the abstract truth. See also James A. Knapp, *Illustrating the Past in Early Modern England: The Representation of History in Printed Books* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 73-123, discussed below.

takes on a second and illegitimate lover."[156] In spite of the fact that neither is married, Romeo and Juliet's interaction would nonetheless have been considered adulterous, occurring outside of marriage.[157] It is not just that the lovers sin abstractly through language as well as concretely with their bodies. Each sin is conceptually and theologically included in the other: their use of figurative language is a form of adultery; the touching and kissing are a species of idolatry. Although in this scheme which theoretically could admit for either husband or wife occupying the position of "God" to their spouse, the connection mostly facilitated an equation of God with husband and adulterous wife both with sinful idolator and with idol, due in no small part to the perceived weakness and sensuousness of the female body considered in Chapter 2: as the idolator is tempted with pleasing images, wives both tempt and are tempted by other men.

Huston Diehl argues that the feminine body on stage becomes the target of destructive violence redirected from iconoclastic impulses in the context of a widespread gynophobia underlying Protestant iconoclasm. She identifies, at the heart of the charge of idolatry, a prevalent notion that images are like women in that both are "artful and artificial," that their "beauty glistens and glitters," appealing to the senses and thus inducing lust and prompting idolatrous behavior:[158] "the imagery of angels and saints," Diehl goes on, "thus constructs erotic passion as a kind of idolatry that endangers the lover's soul."[159] By terming Juliet a "holy shrine" (1.4.207) and touching her, Romeo involuntarily plays into this association of women with a pleasing appearance that hides an inner material corruption and a spiritual peril of death, partially on account of the materiality menstruation deemed spiritually unclean –

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[156] Lutpon, 188.

[157] See Julia D. Staykova, "Adultery, idolatry and the theatricality of false piety in Shakespearean scenes of devotion," *Shakespeare* 7, no. 2 (2011): 176.

[158] Diehl, 160.

[159] Diehl, 167.

Diehl mentions the association in Isaiah 30:22 of images with "the polluted (menstruating) female body," arguing that women themselves became symbolic targets of iconoclasts bent on "ridding their community of what is filthy, polluting and offensive," in no small part due to the corrupted and corruptive materiality of their bodies.[160] The association of Juliet with a shrine is all the more challenging that Romeo later refers to her dead body as making the tomb's vault "a feasting presence full of light" (5.3.86) whilst the Friar subsequently urges Juliet to leave what he terms "that nest / Of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep" (5.3.151-2). The idea that the brilliant light should inspire suspicion in that it may turn out to be secretly nursing a "nest / Of death" and "contagion" may already have been present in the minds of audience members hearing Juliet compared to a shrine, all the more so as Romeo truly touches and kisses her – but as the play unfolds it seems doubtful that the lovers' deaths are presented as the expected moral outcome of their sinful behavior, as is the case in Brooke's source text. Thus, the interaction is at once idolatrous to an exponential degree and couched in a rhetoric of purification and a logic of purging which subverts the clear labeling as sinful or idolatrous of acts and rituals that not so long before had been considered holy under the old religion. If the purification of one group can constitute sin to the next, might this not, from a secular perspective, render tenuous the very logic of religious purging?[161] The question indexes ways in which the body in the sixteenth century became a particularly

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[160] Diehl, 161. Although the scene has nothing to do with menstruation as such, its association of outward beauty with a shrine plays into the misogynistic association of women with dead idols and adorned sepulchers. This said, Juliet does later become the target of an insult bearing the full misogynistic charge of the association of menstruation with death and corruption when her own father furiously chastises her as a "green sickness carrion" (3.5.155).

[161] One of the recurring charges brought against the Roman Catholic Church concerns the superstitiousness of its rituals and theological tenets. Although Protestantism is thus widely held to have facilitated the progressive secularization of social institutions, it has also been demonstrated that their own religious practices carried over much of the "enchantedness" of medieval religion into a progressively "disenchanted" world, producing "cycles of desacralization and resacralization, disenchantment and re-enchantment." See Alexandra Walsham, "The Reformation and the 'Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed," *Historical Journal* 51 (2008): 527, quoted in Jennifer Waldron, *Reformations of the Body: Idolatry, Sacrifice and Early Modern Theater* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3. See also Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

privileged site, especially on stage, for the mediation of competing religious claims to sacredness.

Jennifer Waldron builds a strong case for her argument that, due to its status "as a sacred temple set apart by God" in Protestant doctrine, "the body offers one of the most important examples of the continuities between late medieval and post-Reformation thinking about the material world."[162] To Waldron, the living human body in many ways presented a substitute on which prohibited Catholic relationships to sacred materiality could be transferred: "[a]s temples that God himself had sanctified as a post-Reformation dwelling, bodies offered a newly intensified focal point for divine interventions of various kinds, whether sacramental or providential."[163] She suggests that the accounts of the human body as a sacred temple "lend theater certain kinds of sacramental resonance"[164] and demonstrates that dramatists "used these materials to create new affective and experiential models that tested and extended many of the deepest implications of post-Reformation religious disputes."[165] In her analysis of Hermione's staged revival from lifeless statue to living, breathing human being at the end of *The Winter's Tale* for example, she argues:

> Shakespeare here constructs a post-Reformation theatrical vernacular that syncretically absorbs (rather than rejecting) the religious energies of Catholic and pagan rituals. The actor is both statue and living human in this scene's ingenious spin on the very terms of Reformation iconoclasm: the body of the actor seems to 'break' the magic of the statue even as it stands in its place.[166]

The transferal of which Waldron speaks is also crucial to appreciating the stakes of the metaphorical depiction of Juliet as a statue representing a saint. Here too, body and statue

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[162] Waldron, 9

[163] Waldron, 8

[164] Waldron, 16

[165] Waldron, 12.

[166] Waldron, 16.

become coextensive, though the main "theatrical vernacular" producing the effect is linguistic, or rather it is at the meeting point between word and body. If the effect is not quite as spectacular (fed by different dramatic stakes) than in *The Winter's Tale*, it nonetheless plays into a prevailing ambivalence towards the ability of language to appeal to the visual and carry its own sacramental resonance. This fertile relationship to language as it relates both to figuration and to spectacle can also be understood on the background of post-reformation debates about the place and role of the arts.

As a partly visual, material medium, the theatre became the object of intense and sustained moral scrutiny in post-Reformation England, forcing some dramatists to clearly set apart their art from the more eminently visual and material art of painting or sculpture. Knapp for example discusses the way Nicholas Hilliard and Sir Philip Sidney employed different strategies for staving off the criticism of their respective arts as "idolatrous" and embedded in the material world. While Hilliard leaned on a "discredited notion that things – albeit beautiful things – could serve as catalysts to moral improvement," Sidney emphasized the more spiritual verbal element in his dramatic aesthetic.[167] Sidney's argument rests on what Tassi terms "a longstanding binary opposition: painting belongs to the realm of the senses, the eyes, the body; poetry belongs to the realm of the mind, reason, understanding."[168] O'Connell thus sees Ben Johnson downplaying the spectacular element in the theatre to such an extent that he encourages "near exclusive attention to the verbal element of the mixed art that theater is,"[169] in accordance both with the "a word-centered religious culture released by the development of typography" and with the "logocentrism" of humanist poetics.[170] Yet,

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[167] Knapp, *Illustrating the Past*, 98.

[168] Tassi, *The Scandal of Images*, 22.

[169] O'Connell, "The Idolatrous Eye," 301.

[170] O'Connell, "The Idolatrous Eye," 293.

even as a word-based art, drama was not cleared of suspicion, as language too was understood to paint its own pictures.

Relying to a measured extent on Collinson's description of a "cultural transformation in the sixteenth century, 'a journey from a culture or orality and image to one of print culture,'" Knapp proposes "that the shift extended beyond the use of visual illustrations to a reworking of the use of imagery in literary texts as well."[171] He argues that the distrust of images permeated literary representation, leading for example from Sir Thomas Wyatt's poetic treatment of the visual as an "ephemeral catalyst to spiritual truth" to Spenser's frequent literary depiction of images as "empty illusions."[172] In its general form, the point is also made by Siemon, who recalls that "[t]hroughout the sixteenth century, there are consistent and repeated attacks on the use of rhetorical ornamentation, which is likened to idolatry in that it substitutes a shadow for genuine substance."[173] By figuring Juliet as the statue of a saint, Romeo removes the interaction from reality one step, privileging shadow over substance, just as their love threatens to amount merely to doting and lust, sinful substitutes to substantial love.[174] And yet, these shadows also seem to be invested with substantial dramatic weight, paradoxically heightened through the appeal to the undermined sacramental lexicon of absolution that both intensifies and "disenchants" the erotic interaction. The shared sonnet thus challenges traditional hierarchies of substance and

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[171] Knapp, *Illustrating the Past*, 75; Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in Sixteenth and Seventeeth Centuries* (London: Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 1988), 99, quoted in Knapp, *Illustrating the Past*, 75.

[172] Knapp, *Illustrating the Past*, 75.

[173] Siemon, 39

[174] The metaphor of doting as both a form of devotion to the object of affection and an idolatrous affect is also explored in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, written around the same time as *Romeo and Juliet*. In the opening scene of this play that thematizes the seductive power of the visual, Lysander says of Helena, who is enamored of Demetrius, that she "devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry" (1.1.109). Interestingly, the argument magnifies Helena's affection so as to place blame on Demetrius, the "spotted and inconstant man," rather than on Helena herself (1.1.110). William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 21 September 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=4&Act=1&Scene=1#125556.

shadow, not only in its theatrical appeal to an emotional involvement in a story of star-crossed lovers, but also through certain sacramental as well as literary resonances to each gesture.

The figurative process of the shared sonnet can be said to lend an echo to the investment in a horizontal field of everyday life that Waldron finds at work in Shakespeare's syncretic theatrical vernacular, adding to the mediative site of the body a co-extensive material, metaphorical site. The kissing hands in the shared sonnet echo Sidney's depiction of the praying Pamela in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, described "as if devotion had borrowed her body to make itself a most beautiful representation" and especially the attention to "her naked hands raising upwards their whole length and, as it were, kissing one another."[175] Shakespeare's lovers draw out the erotic potential of the naked kissing hands at prayer reversing the narrative and the figurative: prayer is kept only as a metaphor while the figurative erotic undertone is dramatized and brought to the stage (especially as the hands belong to two different people). Similarly, the kiss recalls Bembo's Neoplatonic discussion of a kiss as a joining of bodies and souls and a possibility to rise from the particular through spiritual elevation towards a contemplation of true beauty. The idea of spiritual elevation through kissing is also present in Sonnet 80 in Astrophil and Stella but it is undermined by Stella's protestations at Astrophil's praise and his demand for Stella to kiss him if she truly wishes to silence him. Shakespeare takes things a step further by staging the interaction, turning it into a consensual relationship, and figuring the kiss not as a conduit towards truth or virtue (as Astrophil argues it to be), nor yet as a forbidden erotic act, but as a potentially sinful act made pure through the mutuality of a commonly invested metaphor that exploits the Protestant understanding of the body as the only authorized image of God: if Astrophil fails to convince Stella of the virtuous potential of kissing, Romeo succeeds in his suit by

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[175] Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (London: Penguin, 1977), 464, quoted in Knapp, *Illustrating the Past*, 101-2.

presenting the moral stakes of the kiss as a game, in jest. The effect is to intensify, paradoxically through language, the importance of the physical interaction, of the here and now of the encounter as opposed to any symbolic or even metaphorical weight. As such the scene corresponds to what Waldron describes as the way "Shakespeare exploited particular trends in Reformation thinking that had shifted the location of the sacred toward the horizontal plane of everyday life" (borrowing a similar spatial metaphor as Bates uses in her reading of the sonnet as discussed in Chapter 2).[176] With the Petrarchan craze on the wane and Neoplatonic thinking out of fashion, as a new privileged locus of the sacred and the sacrilegious the desiring body seems to constitute a foyer of ethical importance on "the horizontal plane of everyday life" in the shared sonnet. As they undermine moral qualifications of physical intimacy, the lovers also find themselves in an open plane in the field of ethics, with new rules to be determined and co-constructed following less clear guidelines perhaps than the lovers have at their disposal to jointly produce a sonnet.

The migration of the sacred to what Waldron calls "the horizontal plane of everyday life" can also be viewed, when it comes to its tropological locus, from a more theoretical perspective. In her iconographies of idolatry, Lupton adds that "in the Decalogue conceived as a marriage contract, the singularity of God as a primal metaphor opposes the metonymic pluralities of both idolatry (the second commandment) and the objects of coveting (the tenth commandment)."[177] Metonymic desire here takes on an interesting new layer of meaning with respect to our earlier treatment of the trope: the danger of metonymy for Protestants lies in what Lupton terms its "next-to-ness," or contiguity. It is dangerous simply because it is there. The world that is physically present and available to the senses competes with the mental focus and spiritual love due to God, whose presence and identity is available only through metaphor, the trope that makes present that which is paradigmatically absent. The

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[176] Waldron, 2.

[177] Lupton, 191.

tropological interest of the sonnet against this religious background has to do with the fact that metaphor here is in competition with metonymy, in a way that ensures a certain continuity with the Lacanian conception of these tropes. Although the couple sin through metonymy, investing in the contiguous (each other) rather than the paradigmatic (God) and charging with the force of metaphor what is in fact only a significance gained through metonymy, they both later insist on the true quality of this love which, in Romeo's terms "Doth grace for grace and love for love allow" (2.2.86). The line may well echo John 1:16, "And of his fullnesse have al we receiued, and grace for grace," which institutes the primal metaphor Lupton speaks of.[178] The religious context thus heightens the Lacanian sense in which metaphor institutes and commands a new order of being. The question then is to determine, beyond the idolatry of this investment, or rather in reaction to its multifold complexity as "idolatry," the significance and ethical weight of this instituting metaphor.

The shared sonnet therefore takes on an added layer of significance in light of its sainthood conceit depicting a pilgrim and a saint engaging what would certainly have been perceived as an act of idolatrous worship both inside and out of the figurative terms of the metaphors: following the fictional coordinates of the conceit, the lovers are engaged in a scene of idolatry; in the public world of Verona, they are committing carnal sin. At the same time, the moral overdetermination of the sequence as idolatrous and carnal turns the Protestant ideological doublet of idolatry and eroticism into an amphibological predicate: each side of their sin is interrupted and hindered by the other. Juliet is no holy shrine but a living human body; the lovers' erotic game is merely the blocking that illustrates the words of the sonnet. Although such a line of defense would certainly have been dismissed as equivocation, it also indexes the theatricality of the scene in a way that undermines religious

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[178] *The newe testament of ovr lord iesvs christ* (London, 1598), accessed 21 September 2022, https://www.proquest.com/books/newe-testament-ovr-lord-iesvs-christ-faithfully/docview/2240877882/se-2. See Naseeb Shaheen, *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), 332, cited in Levenson, 225.

moral precepts as adequate probes to the ethical situation being presented to the judging audience.[179] The combined use of bodily and verbal images keys the spiritual state of Romeo and Juliet's souls to the risky representational means of the theatre as Shakespeare uses them here. The superposition onto Juliet's living human body – played by a male actor – of a verbal image depicting a sculpted effigy of a saint creates a tensional pattern of idolatrous and pious image that makes difficult any clear moral distinction of the pure from the impure even as it heaps sin upon sin, using the full range of theatrical artifice and ultimately charging metaphor with a mediative opacity.

In this regard, the scene qualifies as "ethical" in the sense in which Knapp speaks of it: "[e]thics cannot be thought apart from the singular situations in which human subjects are challenged to make ethical decisions, making ethics infinitely variable."[180] On the tension between ethical situation and moral judgement in Shakespeare and Spenser's treatments of image, Knapp adds: "the clarity of Protestant virtue is continually muddied by the complexity of visual experience, the need to discern true images from false."[181] If, in *The Winter's Tale*, "the body of the actor seems to 'break' the statue's magic even as it stands in its place" according to Waldron, the figurative language of the lovers' metaphors in this earlier play already (in)decisively complicates the relationship between magic and reality, sin and its devout purging, superstition and true faith, in a way that foreshadows the more complex and

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[179] Diehl argues that this was part of the strategy dramatists employed to avoid coming under fire for producing images: they do so in order to appeal to the spectator's sense of judgement, "engaging their spectators directly in the problem of interpretation," calling upon their sense of discernment and heightening the importance in a humanist perspective on the reading and interpreting signs. She claims that "[h]owever seductive the magic of his own theater, Shakespeareare never allows audiences. . . to lose themselves in it. Rather, he engages them in an exploration of their own reactions to erotic and magical images. . . ." Diehl, 8 and 154, respectively.

[180] Knapp, *Image Ethics*, 25.

[181] Knapp, 26.

deeper theatrical treatment of these religious themes in the scene of Hermione's return to a contrite Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*.[182]

What these readings together suggest is that the dramatic event of Romeo and Juliet's meeting qualifies the textual event of the transformation of the sonnet on several accounts. As the sonnet is translated into the conditions of drama, the dramatic characters conversely invest a sonnet conceit with the role of performing their union. Rather than the sonnet itself, it is the staged ethical action of resorting to it, as a problematic performative writing, that lends itself to be read as a response to the Petrarchan tradition.[183] Matching the Petrarchan theme of a willfulness and eroticism of reading, Romeo and Juliet subvert the religious conceit by making a saint and pilgrim fall into desire, touch hands, and kiss in a way that complicates the application of religious precept while also drawing attention to the ethical stakes of the encounter. The protagonists appropriate together, through each other, in a way that presents a reworked picture of the authorial process with respect to the dialogic structure of Petrarch's *Secretum* or Plato's *Phaedrus*, different also to the sonnet's relationships between the poetic voice and the muse, Cupid, or the absent beloved. The shared sonnet undercuts these received models by rewriting them as theatrical dialogue, levelling the epistemological hierarchies of Platonic dialectics and flouting the lyrical sonnet's foundational rule of absence while doubling the roles of lover and beloved. However, tensions in this appropriation hint at the *restance* of these lexicons, notably in the literary form of sonnet desire and its typical negativity, which comes to condition even theatrical presence and the idealistic notion that bodily proximity can be a warrant of the full presence of the beloved to the lover and defuse

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[182] Waldron, 16.

[183] This is where Schalkwyk's argument, which reads Shakespeare's gesture of writing sonnets as a kind of shift-out from drama to lyric (as his reading of the prologue suggests: "the opening sonnet is the product of a dramatist who turns his hand to sonnets rather than a sonneteer who dabbles in drama." Schalkwyk, 66) must, when it comes to the shared sonnet be complemented by a converse appreciation of Romeo and Juliet's shift-out into a sonnet mode. As I am arguing, this investment, which gains to be read as a development of the various relationships to and uses of the guestlist in 1.2, an impossibility to shift-out integrally, without this translation also conveying both more than it was meant to and not all of what it should have.

the sonnet's material performance of absence. As the lovers' interactions are characterized, whether in the conceit's role distribution or in the actions it affords, by a writing effect generated in their appeal to metaphor, the shared sonnet, now used to script a relationship between young lovers, gains a new ethical significance that distinguishes it both from the prevailing sense of negativity Bates finds in the early modern sonnet and from Schalkwyk's reading of the dramatized sonnet as the positive enactment of an effective political power. In the absence of the medieval digestion of textual antecedent through an ethical tropology, it must be determined what new ethical relationships (between readers and writers and between lovers) are inscribed in and prescribed by Romeo and Juliet's investment of the sonnet's religious trope.[184] Attending to the dramatic function of translational agency in the play, the following chapter considers therefore the ethical stakes of the lovers' investment of metaphorical language and form, with an eye to how that investment plays out as theatrical time and act move them away from their initial encounter.

Conclusion

By closely tracing how plot and event develop through metaphorical processes in *Romeo and Juliet*, this chapter used the postmodern theoretical apparatus from Chapter 3 to analyze early modern relationships to metaphor as an articulation between the activities of reading and writing. Bringing two ideological modes of authorial production corresponding to two distinct ways of owning literary meaning, the first section attempted to assess early modern authorship in terms of its relationship to textual authority. The second section continued in this vein, shifting the focus over to medieval and early modern conceptions of reading and its interpretive authorial tools for converting past meaning into present significance. With its emphasis on the essentially metaphorical role of carrying over action as well as meaning,

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[184] "Prescribed" should here be taken in the Latourean sense of the ethical dimension of mechanisms, determined by the behavior it demands from users.

Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory allowed for a view of writing/reading as technological devices with translational mechanisms. Correspondingly, readers/writers were understood to be always interacting with programs pre-inscribed with scripts, displaced by metaphorical processes as well as constantly rewriting them. A final close reading of the sonnet demonstrated the relevance of these ideas to uses of metaphor in *Romeo and Juliet* while drawing out from the analysis questions of agency and ethics to be addressed in the following chapter. As a whole, the chapter moved the argument from its metaphorical component, focused on the materiality and mechanics of metaphor in *Romeo and Juliet*, to the question of the performance of metaphor in the play, its participation in dramatic action, how it constitutes material events, and what ethical preoccupations are raised in the process.

5.

Singular Engagements:
The Ethical Stakes of Metaphor

Introduction

Metaphor has been found to play a copulative, inductive role in *Romeo and Juliet*. It relates dramatic agents to each other, opening lines of action to semiotic and ethical enquiry. Notably, it plays a crucial role in providing the play's protagonists with the imaginative resources to engage in an erotic relationship with one another. Yet, it also works according to a logic of event in which action, like meaning, is participative and disseminated rather than determinant and fully imputable to individual ethical agents. Where does this leave Romeo and Juliet as characters whom we invest with a sense of individual agency, as subjects endowed with free will? What picture of drama does this yield, distinct perhaps from the representation of human subjects with the power to act? In response to these questions, I seek now to draw out the implications for the notion of agency of the view of metaphor taken up in Chapters 3 and 4.

This chapter focuses specifically on the question of third-party agency. Traditionally pitting human subjects against the third-party will of the gods or fate, tragedy classically problematizes agency, and with fearful effects, as Aristotle observes. Like Sophocles' Oedipus, we balk at the idea that our lives may follow patterns that escape us completely and that impressions of control and success are illusory. With the nagging malice of Descartes' genius, tragedy threatens us with the possibility of one day rising from a particularly deep slumber to discover that "A greater power than we can contradict; hath thwarted our intents" (5.3.153-4).[1] Beginning and ending with references to a third-party actor negating human agency, *Romeo and Juliet* focuses on the actions of its "pair of star-crossed lovers" and their

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[1] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

"death-marked love" fore-fronting their efforts to "take their life," both in the sense of claiming their own lives together and of committing suicide (prologue.6-10). This poses the question of the couple's relationship to third-party agents, or all those who are a priori excluded from the two-way erotic relationship. If, as Schalkwyk and Bates remark, sonnet cycles exhibit a painful awareness of the pressures absent third-party agents can place on courtship, what becomes of this three-way structure once it is set to the stage, where desires cross and are crossed? In what follows, I examine the role of a third-party principle in shaping the loves and lives of the titular protagonists in *Romeo and Juliet* and explore its ethical implications.

In the background of this chapter are Derrida's productive notion of "metaphorization," attentive to eventful, processual aspects of figuration, and Latour's effort not to assimilate figurative predications on agency too quickly to systems of explanation that tend to reduce them to banal equivalencies.[2] With this in mind, I seek here to characterize the ethical stakes that inhere in a view of metaphor as a shaping force in the structure of agential configurations, in other words to look at what this view implies in terms of how people relate and react to each other. Because of the philosophical character of this topic, I rely on two important philosophically oriented contributions to the critical literature on *Romeo and Juliet*, respectively by Paul Kottman and Jacques Derrida. After showing how these approaches diverge in their treatment of third-party powers and instances, mainly in reference to the balcony scene, I mobilize aspects of each one in order to present my own reading of the scene as an ethical-agential problematization of the event of the shared sonnet. In short, I approach the second encounter between the lovers as a follow-up to the metaphorical performance of the shared sonnet with an eye to what has changed in the interval.

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[2] See Chapter 3 for "metaphorization" and Chapter 4 for Latour as well as Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): "The mistake we must learn to avoid is listening distractedly to these convoluted productions and to ignore the queerest, baroque, and most idiosyncratic terms offered by the actors, following only those that have currency in the rear-world of the social." Latour, 47.

1. Philosophizing from the balcony

The "balcony scene" in *Romeo and Juliet* is perhaps the most commented on of the play, probably the most quoted and parodied in popular discourse, and certainly the most iconic, having yielded countless depictions in painting and photography. Critical readings that encompass the whole of *Romeo and Juliet* and make a statement about it as a play often seem to consider the scene as crucial, deriving from it much of the orientation of their overall argument. This is true of Paul Kottman's article, "Defying the Stars," and of Jacques Derrida's essay, "L'Aphorisme à contretemps."[3] In what follows, I contrast these approaches and offer my own take on the scene. Confronting Kottman's major critical contribution to the field with Derrida's less ambitious, but nonetheless significant philosophical essay, I discuss the third-party power of language and examine what it changes for the picture of agency in the play, calling attention to different sets of ethical relationships that are hollowed out in its usage. I then identify the problem of naming in the balcony scene as the beginning of a complex relationship to death and discuss what characterization of agency it may call for.

I start with Derrida's "L'Aphorisme à contretemps" and clarify its key notions. This serves to root my investigation of third-party agency in work done on figurative language up to this point. Derrida's examination of *Romeo and Juliet* focuses almost entirely on the balcony scene. In his analysis, he shows how the scene – and the play as a whole – is structured by what he calls "aphorisms." Beyond its rhetorical sense, "aphorism" designates an organizational principle.[4] As that which separates or dissociates (*apo*) as well as ends or marks a boundary (*orizô*), aphorism "brings to an end by separating, it separates in order to

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[3] Paul A. Kottman, "Defying the Stars: Tragic Love as the Struggle for Freedom in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 1-38; Jacques Derrida, "Aphorism Countertime," trans. Nicholas Royle, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York : Routledge, 1992) ; Jacques Derrida, "L'aphorisme à contretemps," in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre II* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), 131-144.

[4] Derrida takes care to distinguish the rhetorical figure of aphorism, which he deems a strategic use of the larger graphematic structure presented in his essay.

end – and to define."[5] Aphoristic marks and demarcations are temporal, spatial and writerly and, tragically, they provoke and define Romeo and Juliet's end and separation through a structure of *contretemps*. In French, "contretemps" can refer either to a setback (*un contretemps*) or to something which occurs offbeat (*à contretemps*), by figurative extension to an event that happens at the wrong or inopportune time.[6] Derrida cites the Friar's "In the mean time, against thou shalt awake," referring to the time frame in which Juliet arises to find Romeo dead, before committing suicide herself – a Romeo who has already found *her* dead and taken his life. What the conjunction of aphorism and *contretemps* suggests, then, is that the lovers' deaths, rather than unfortunate or accidental, are as necessary as they are impossible (4.1.113).[7]

It is hard not to read into such a catastrophic and perfectly mistimed event as the deaths of Romeo and Juliet at the end of the play. On the other hand, poor timing also cannot be left out as an ingredient in the unfolding of the plot. What Derrida suggests, in *L'aphorisme à contretemps*, is that such an accident can only happen as the product of a general spatio-temporal organization. Hinting at the fundamental lack of synchronicity between individual relationships to time, *contretemps* are part of our experience of time and space: "Dates, timetables, property registers, place-names, all the codes that we cast like nets over time and space. . ." are meant to homogenise separate senses of space and time and insure synchrony.[8] We appeal to them to eliminate whenever possible accidents and mishaps,

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[5] Derrida, "Aphorism," 414. "Il met fin en séparant, il sépare pour finir – et définir." Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 131.

[6] *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales*, s. v. "contretemps," 9 February 2022, https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/contretemps.

[7] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Derrida, "Aphorism," 419-20. Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 134; See Derrida, "Aphorism," 426; Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 139.

[8] Derrida, "Aphorism," 419. "Les dates, les calendriers, les cadastres, les toponymes, tous les codes que nous jetons sur le temps et l'espace comme des filets. . . " Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 133.

by establishing shared references. This means that aphorism is also deployed as a binding force:

> There would not be any contretemps, nor any anachrony, if the separation between monads only disjoined interiorities. Contretemps is produced at the intersection between interior experience (the "phenomenology of internal time-consciousness" or space-consciousness) and its chronological or topographical marks, those which are said to be "objective," "in the world."[9]

But this pharmaconic remedy to the disjointedness and plurality of individual relationships to space and time also generates a collectively ratified sense of general spatio-temporal synchronicity that can only arise as the denial of a deeper anachrony or as an attempt to reduce the gaps between individual, private experiences, to defragment what is fragmented. This means that what first appears to be a fortuitous occurrence taking place in the margins of a basically secure, stable and homogeneous sense of time is rather an inescapable, structuring principle in our experience of time: "Le contretemps accidentel vient *remarquer* le contretemps essentiel." In other words, the aphoristic marking that bridges the discrepancy ("dissociation, dislocation, anachrony") between one's experience of time and that of another

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[9] Derrida, "Aphorism," 421. "Il n'y aurait pas le contretemps, ni l'anachronie, si la séparation entre les monades disjoignait seulement des intériorités. Le contretemps se produit à l'intersection entre l'expérience intérieure (la 'phénoménologie de la conscience intime du temps') et ses marques chronologiques ou topographiques, celles qu'on dit 'objectives,' ou 'dans le monde.'" Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 135. The term "monad" refers to Husserl's reworking of a fundamental Leibnizian concept. Paul McDonald sets out the most basic sense at work in Husserl's development of the concept thus: "For both theorists, the monad is a self-contained system of being, one 'without windows.'" Paul McDonald, "Husserl, the Monad, and Immortality," *The Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* 7, no. 2, 16. Karl Mertens identifies the following difficulty as a crucial part of Husserl's use of the concept: "Husserl's attempt at a monadology reveals the weakness in the phenomenological account of intersubjectivity, for by starting with a subject's limited experience, phenomenology cannot account for the communalization which is presupposed in the recognition that an individual's experience is limited." John J. Drummond and Otfried Höffe, "Introduction," in *Husserl. German Perspectives*, ed. John J. Drummond and Otfried Höffe, trans. Hayden Kee, Patrick Eldridge, and Robin Litscher Wilkins (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 9. See Karl Mertens, "Husserl's Phenomenology of the Monad," in *Husserl. German Perspectives*, ed. John J. Drummond and Otfried Höffe, trans. Hayden Kee, Patrick Eldridge, and Robin Litscher Wilkins, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 265-287. This limitedness to an interior experience of the present is arguably what interests Derrida the opposition of shared systems of time- and place-keeping with the monad, which he also alludes to as a "phenomenology of internal time-consciousness." Derrida, "Aphorism," 421; "phénoménologie de la conscience intime du temps." Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 135. Royle's note also reads: "The reference is to Husserl. See, for example, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness,* trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1964). See also Derrida's *Edmund Husserl's 'Origin of Geometry': An Introduction,* 57, and chapter 5 ('Signs and the Blink of an Eye') of his *Speech and Phenomena.*"

necessarily also produces gaps between such institutions and experience.[10] Romeo and Juliet's relationship of desire, born out of the distance that separates them, is intense in its passionate intimacy in that it holds together two proper experiences of time and space, or "monadic interiorities," which are bound to be eventually separated. Thus, aphorism sets up the impossible *contretemps* in which, in each lover's experience, each one survives the other.[11]

The *contretemps* structure of aphorism relates therefore to *archi-écriture*. It builds on a tension between the signified in speech – concepts of time and space as systems of references – and speech itself – the utterance of references to time and space in relation to interiority. The tension has the form of a writing, as spoken references and appointments must be marked in order to be successful. In Old Hamlet's commands, "Mark me," "remember me," and the repetitive "list, list, O, list" demand for words to be kept in the "book and volume of my brain"(1.5.103), re-marked into the indelible graphic form of language: marking however is also that which allows for repetition to be iterative, as it might well be read in Hamlet's play-long working out of the Ghost's command.[12] Although more obvious in *Hamlet*, this dynamic is also present in *Romeo and Juliet*, most flagrantly in the words of Capulet: "And bid her, mark you me, on Wednesday next– / But, soft! what day is this*?*" No sooner has the command been issued to mark than the commander is, ironically,

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[10] Derrida, "Aphorism," 418 ; "dissociation, dislocation, anachronie," Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 133.

[11] Derrida, "Aphorism," 422 ; "intériorité monadique," Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 136.

[12] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed February 15, 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=2, 1.5.2.1; 1.5.111; 1.5.22; 1.5.103.The sense of physically tracing precedes that of heeding in "mark" and the OED includes a meaning of "remember" as "record" in written form (OED *v.* 1; *sb.* 6). As for "list," it does not seem far-fetched to hear in the verb form (*v.* 1) the then relatively new noun form "list" (OED *n.* 6) as "catalogue," used twice in the play. If the Ghost's injunction to "list" is understood as "take note," with similarly scribal undertones as Hamlet seems to perceive in the commands to *mark* and *remember*, Laertes later urges Ophelia to divorce hearing from this kind of permanent annotation, warning not to "*list his songs*" as if they were "permanent" or "lasting," given that Hamlet cannot "carve for himself" but that his "choice is circumscribed / Unto that voice and body whereof he is the head," to which Ophelia enigmatically replies that she will "the effect of this good lesson keep / As watchman to [her] heart" and urging him in return to "reck" his "own rede" in another instantiation of this *topos* which has the general shape of "noting" (1.3.1-52), a word developed into its own plotline in *Much Ado about Nothing*.

de-marked and loses touch with the referential apparatus (to time) he is using. When finally the command is issued, it borrows the same structure as the Friar's "in the mean time against thou shalt awake": "Prepare her, wife, against this wedding-day" (3.4.17-18.1; 3.4.32). It is in the *contretemps* of this anticipation – the re-marking of this appointment – that Juliet will be wed not to Paris but to death, in the idiom of Capulet, whose next and final lines in this scene confirm that references are being strained in their application to the point of losing touch with their referents: "Afore me! it is so very very late, / That we may call it early by and by" (3.4.34-5). The confusion hints at the fragility of time-telling systems and their essential mismatch with the lived time Henri Bergson calls duration.[13] Where *quasi-metaphor* highlighted the tension between literal and figurative, initiating processes of fictionalization, aphorism stresses the fragmentary, disjointed, heterogenous nature of *écriture*, its crossings and tendency to pluralize contretemps in its superposition onto the time of monadic interiorities. As such it seems to impose itself as a constitutive third-party power or element in the fervent back-and-forth dialogue the lovers share in the balcony scene. Among other things, this begs the question of its connection to actual third-party characters in the lovers' bilateral relationship.

In his essay, Derrida attributes the action of resorting to the structure of aphorism *à contretemps* to the Friar:[14]

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[13] In *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, Bergson develops the concept of *durée*, or "duration," a lived, real time that cannot be translated into clock time, or any measure of time without being lost in translation.

[14] Pascale Drouet, "A Shakespearean Exploration of Erasmus' *festina lente*," *Shakespeare* 15, no. 3 (2019): 233-42. It is worth noting that Friar Laurence warns Romeo to go "Wisely and slow" (2.2.94), but then makes "short work" of marrying the couple (3.1.35), and that although he urges to "Therefore love moderately: long love doth so; / Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow" (3.1.14-15) he fails to live up to the Erasmian precept of *festina lente* that the line echoes. See. This places him in the category of characters that Pascale Drouet refers to as those who "try to follow it and experience (more or less successfully, more or less painfully) its exacting balance" (Drouet, 241). According to Drouet, the precept, which emphasizes moderation, promptness, vigilance and gentleness simultaneously so as to avoid regretting rash decisions or excessive passivity (Drouet, 234), "puts the Shakespearean characters to the test, whether betraying their hubris or revealing both their efforts and frailties, thus enhancing human vulnerability in general. . . " (Drouet, 241). Ultimately however, she adds, "the dialectics of timeliness and untimeliness, the perfect intertwining of introspection and action, remains a subjective experience" (Drouet, 241). As such, the Friar's failure to instill the adage in his pupil and his own

An aphorism. . . exposes discourse – hands it over to contretemps.[15] Literally – because it is abandoning a word *[une parole] to* its letter. To abandon speech *[la parole],* to entrust the secret to letters – this is the stratagem of the third party, the mediator, the Friar, the matchmaker who, without any other desire but the desire of others, organizes the contretemps.[16]

Although the Friar's involvement as a third-party agent in the story of the star-crossed lovers may be the most prominent, it is by no means the only one. Capulet's matchmaking, his errant list and his resort to metaphors figuring him as a procurer make him just as amenable to Derrida's description as the Friar. And beyond these calculating "father" figures who take up a third-party role in the deployment of master strategies designed to bring Juliet together with the man she is meant to be with, to synchronize this union, to mark out its time as only they can, one may go so far as to distinguish in the play an extended structure of third-party agency around the couple's love story, putting the protagonists in touch either with each other or with their own desire, mediating between them and their love, or attempting to do so and failing. For a play about contradicted lovers, the list of characters who act either on their behalf or as go-betweens is striking: the Friar, the Nurse, Lady Capulet, Lord Capulet, Lord and Lady Montague, Mercutio and Benvolio, not to mention various messengers in the play who act as, one might say, second-order mediators, or envoys of a more relevant third-party agent, some of whose participations in setting up *contretemps* I have already examined in detail (see Chapter 4).

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unfortunate failure to align his own temporal framework with other temporalities, or rather to perfectly misalign several temporalities, either challenges the applicability of the principle of *festina lente* and/or speaks to what Derrida alludes to through the notion of *contretemps* as a tension between (and rescripting of) disjointed subjective experiences of time and the public time of clocks and calendars.

[15] A more accurate translation might read: "hands it over out of time/offbeat."

[16] Derrida, "Aphorism," 416. "Un aphorisme. . . expose le discours – le livre à contretemps. Littéralement – parce qu'il abandonne une parole à sa lettre. . . . Abandonner la parole, confier le secret à des lettres, c'est le stratagème du tiers, le médiateur, le Frère, le marieur qui, sans autre désir que le désir des autres, organise le contretemps." Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 131.

As Juliet finds herself incapable, in the balcony scene, of disavowing language and the role it plays in her relationship with Romeo, language's persistent and repeated recurrence through metaphorical utterance is paralleled by the appearance in the lovers' dialogue of third-party agents of all sorts, from the threat of Romeo's discovery by a Capulet to the Nurse's repeated interruptions. Juliet promises to rely on a messenger at the end of their exchange to communicate the time and place of their projected marriage: "send me word to-morrow, / By one that I'll procure to come to thee, / Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite" (2.2.144-6).[17] The scene closes with Romeo's plan to visit the most prominent mediator of the play: "Hence will I to my ghostly father's cell, / His help to crave, and my dear hap to tell" (2.2.192-3). Their language too is ripe with metaphorical constructions of agency: there is mention of an idolatrous love-god, the worrying figure of a Jove laughing at false vows of love, the threateningly inconstant moon, even "summer's ripening breath," and the overhearing of "true love's passion (…) / Which the dark night hath so discovered," all of which posit imaginary agents at the origin of specific actions or powers (2.2.121; 2.2.104-6).[18] If there were an offshoot of the Bechdel test designed to measure talk between two lovers to the exclusion of any third-party mention, this scene would fail that test spectacularly. Before the connection can be developed between the linguistic structure of aphorism and the third-party characters who are invested in its organizational deployment, the interest for third-party activity must first be measured up to a view that presents a contrastively strong version of subjective agency and characterological individuality to the exclusion of any third-party principle. In making the play one about subjective freedom, Kottman's "Defying the Stars" seems to side-step occurrences of third-party involvement in

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[17] The word "procure" is especially telling in this reliance on a third-party mediator, which relates to the dynamics of "light" love, prodigal speech and the many commercial metaphors of desire throughout the scene.

[18] The breath metaphor notably hearkens back to notions of breath appearing earlier in the play such as the vitalist Stoic *pneuma*, or (agential) breath of life (see Chapter 1).

the play, and foremost in the balcony scene. This makes his article an excellent vantage point from which to register what third-party involvement changes to a much-celebrated critical narrative, which Kottman sharpens and defends, of *Romeo and Juliet* as a play of young love between two fiercely independent free spirits.

Kottman reads *Romeo and Juliet* as "the drama of a struggle for individual freedom and self-realization," more specifically as "the story of two individuals *who actively claim* their separate individuality, their own freedom, in the only way that they can – through one another." The wager stems from a realization that "nothing, not even mortality, separates or individuates us absolutely."[19] Kottman thus relates the play to Hegel's master-slave dialectic in which two consciousnesses recognize in each other the gesture of staking their own life by seeking the death of the other. This act allows them to prove true their indifference towards mortality, a condition which otherwise determines them as dispossessed objects: "They must engage in this struggle, for they must raise their certainty of being *for themselves* to truth, both in the case of the other and in their own case."[20] Lives must then be staked and the truth of this act recognized as such – if either failed to recognize in the other the intent to kill, neither would truly be involved in the act of staking their life: both the intent and its recognition are necessary in order for the duel to be charged with its ethical significance. Kottman uses this analysis as a basis to read the love relationship in *Romeo and Juliet*, drawing out from the play an implicit claim: "the life-and-death struggle is less elemental and less dramatically compelling than the love relation."[21]

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[19] Kottman, 5-6.

[20] G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 113-114.

[21] Kottman, 9. In this sense, *Romeo and Juliet* presents the possibility of an alternative to Richard's realization, in *Richard II*, that "nothing can we call our own but death," William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 21 September, 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=22&Act=4&Scene=1#192482, 3.2.152. Claudius may well represent the intersection between both worlds in *Hamlet* when in contrast to Richard's list

That the master-slave dialectic is insufficient to guarantee self-knowledge and the institution of freedom is an entailment Hegel himself draws out. In the struggle to the death, my self-consciousness "has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self."[22] Kottman reads Shakespeare as remedying to a comparable insufficiency by investing erotic desire as a more fundamental mutually freeing experience than the duel. In the duel as in love, two conditions are necessary for self-realization to be achieved: "claiming my life and my freedom as *my own* requires both that I risk my life *and* that I find myself in another."[23] In matters of love however, both these conditions are also transformed. To find themselves in the other, the lovers must recognize each other as subjects in a way that only lovers can, by each recognizing the other's irreplaceable and freely determined subjectivity. "The beloved is a living subject on whose reciprocal recognition the lover depends in order to be, or to become, a lover."[24] This emancipating act of recognition is matched by the concomitant realization that if this mutually founded freedom is to be preserved, the lovers must also find a way of making their own everything that separates them: "This awakening leads Romeo and Juliet to the realization that, if they are to claim their lives as their own, they must somehow actualize their separateness for themselves, through one another."[25] Their response is to learn to claim an ability to separate, which allows them to remain, thanks to each other, free and self-realized individuals: "*claiming* this separateness, even in its sorrowful effects, is the essential happiness of their individual lives."[26] This extends to the point of investing suicide as the

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of possession he will have to forfeit, he lists "my queen" among the "effects" he would lose, were he to confess his crime and concede the crown (3.3.55).

[22] Hegel, 111.

[23] Kottman, 17.

[24] Kottman, 19.

[25] Kottman, 5.

only remaining occasion for self-determination and individual realization when the vehicle of life can carry the endeavor no further, in other words to defy the impingement of death onto individual freedom, turning the passive endurance of an external necessity into "the purposeful actions of lovers who embrace their final separation as their own."[27]

Herein lies the remedy *Romeo and Juliet* offers, as Kottman sees it, to the original realization that "nothing, not even mortality, separates or individuates us absolutely." It takes the form of a new realization:

> For Romeo and Juliet, falling in love has brought the realization that they are neither bound to, nor separated from, one another by any "third" power – nature, mortality, family enmity, or civic norms. While these external powers did individuate them for others – as family members or citizens or individual bodily creatures – these powers are not, they come to realize, the substance of their love. They experience freedom and self-realization as lovers, not only by negating these powers – to the point of taking their lives – but in the acts of mutual self-recognition that this negation makes possible.[28]

The negation of third-party powers is thus a key part of Kottman's argument and it flows out of his reading of Act 2.1 as a scene in which "[n]o third party mediates."[29] Here, the lovers, alone together, act entirely freely and in a way that they shall strive to repeat as the access to self-realization is tested, ultimately to the point of death. Their agency in the balcony scene is understood therefore to be irreducibly individual, determined by no obligation or external necessity: "Nothing compels Juliet to her window; she speaks to the stars of her own accord. Romeo does not accidentally stumble upon Juliet in the darkness; he has purposefully sought her out."[30] As I shall now argue, Kottman's attribution of acts of mutual recognition to freely determined individuals skips over an ethical adherence on the lovers' part to the dialogue

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[26] Kottman, 29.

[27] Kottman, 37.

[28] Kottman, 37.

[29] Kottman, 20.

[30] Kottman, 20.

through which they relate to each other. This third wheel in the bilateral love relationship changes the picture of agency considerably, as well as the picture of lovers "neither bound to, nor separated from, one another by any 'third' power."

Kottman's influential article acknowledges a greater debt to Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* than to Derrida's short essay. Laying Derrida's and Kottman's texts side by side, however, is illuminating. Kottman's argument builds on Derrida's insights even as it seems to run against the grain of some of Derrida's deconstructive apparatus. It relates especially tellingly to Derrida's thirty-sixth point – or aphorism – which provides three recapitulations of his article (as well as clarify a figure of irony which to him progressively takes over the play under the aegis of aphorism). The first conclusive point states that the play stages a story of lovers who each survive the other's death: "1) two lovers both outlive each other, each seeing the other die;" Together with Hegel's analysis of the duel, this furnishes Kottman with his starting point to the analysis of *Romeo and Juliet* as a play about the subjective foundation, via a special relationship, of individual freedom. Leaving the second recapitulation aside for a moment, Derrida's third point concludes that the lovers are brought together by that which separates them. "3) the two are united by that which separates them, etc. And they state this clearly, they formalize it as even a philosopher would not have dared to do." This is also roughly Kottman's conclusion: that the lovers, preemptively "out-Hegel Hegel" by making of the most formidable contrariety an occasion for a defiant and ingenuous ingestion and transformation of the external necessity ("unfree separation") into a means towards achieving individual freedom (enacting the ultimate separation as free election).[31] Between these two conclusions however lies a point which, though it speaks to the sense of singular identity Kottman explores, remains untreated in his account: Romeo and Juliet are essentially constituted by their names, which are on one hand nothing of them, on the other

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[31] Julián Jiménez Heffernan evokes, without developing the idea, Kottman's "urge to outhegel Hegel" in Julián Jiménez Heffernan, *Limited Shakespeare. The Reason of Finitude* (London: Routledge, 2019), 38.

hand that outside of which they are nothing: "2) the name constitutes them but without being anything of themselves, condemning them to be what, beneath the mask, they are not, to being merged with the mask;"[32] In what follows I shall demonstrate how this second conclusion problematizes Kottman's reading of the play as one about individual freedom by questioning specifically his assertion that, in the balcony scene, "no third party mediates."[33]

The import of third-party involvement in *Romeo and Juliet* can be approached in relation to the issue of naming. Kottman strikes the nail squarely on the head when he asks: "Who is Juliet? And who is Romeo? Are they recognizable to themselves or others as individuals?" The answer he proposes is that the lovers come to distinguish between themselves as they see each other and themselves as their family sees them.[34] But as to what they find in this mutual self-recognition, this is less clear, apart from a desire on both parts to "doff their family titles."[35] This definition of individuality remains therefore largely negative, since it draws its significance from an act of denial, and one which applies as well to Juliet as it does to Romeo: "Juliet must subvert her household's authority, . . . must refuse something of this debt if her life is to become hers." It is in this refusal that the protagonists are to recognize each other as free, self-determined individuals. Thus, when it comes to the question of Romeo's name in the balcony scene, Kottman understands it as follows:

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[32] Derrida, "Aphorism," 432. "1) Deux amants se survivent tous deux, l'un à l'autre, chacun voyant mourir l'autre." "3) Les deux sont unis par cela même qui les sépare, etc. Et voilà ce qu'ils énoncent clairement, le formalisent même comme une spéculation philosophique ne l'aurait pas osé." "2) Le nom les constitue sans être rien d'eux-mêmes, les condamnant à être ce qu'ils ne sont pas sous le masque, à se confondre avec le masque." Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 143.

[33] Kottman, 19.

[34] Individual identity as Kottman reads it in *Romeo and Juliet* starts out as something imparted by the familial organization, giving Juliet and Romeo not only the names Capulet and Montague but also their first names, thus recognizing the value of their particularity. Thus, he resorts to the principle of the "ancient Family," "Kojève's gloss of Hegel's discussion of the original or primordial need for familial or kinship organization" (14). This form of recognition is insufficient since the love it bears is not tied to any choice or act. Thus, it fails to recognize the self-determination of which individuals are also capable and therefore honors family members, in Kojève's perspective, as if they were already dead.

[35] Kottman, 21.

> Juliet is not establishing the obvious fact that Romeo's physical singularity is not a name. . . Instead, . . . she asserts the extent to which they can recognize one another, apart from any other membership or belonging: All that is required is that "that dear perfection which he owes / Without that title" adhere not in any "recognition" bestowed by the house of Montague, but in his active self-individuation.[36]

Such active self-individuation seems to occur necessarily as mutual self-recognition: "In this mutual self-recognition, they are not only free 'in themselves' but immediately free 'with one another,'" Kottman states. The immediacy of this freedom is modal rather than temporal. It is opposed to the idea of mediacy or third-party dependency – Romeo and Juliet are not free *qua* anything or anyone other than themselves, in their "nascent 'own-ness,'" distinctly from any process of naming.[37] In contrast to Kottman's insistence on the lovers' difference and departure from names, Derrida's paradoxical assertion of a double relationship to the name seems to resist this move. A clarification appears necessary of the sense in which to take his proposition: "the name constitutes them but without being anything of themselves, condemning them to be what, beneath the mask, they are not, to being merged with the mask."

With the balcony scene already in focus, Derrida opens his essay with an aphorism, the first in a series of thirty-six aphoristic points that make up the essay: "aphorism is the name."[38] Aphorism, he further clarifies, referentially binds a name (rose; Romeo; Montague; love) to a thing or person. This allows for a common ground to be found through language, amid our multiple, separate experiences of the world, but in the case of a proper name it also dooms the referent to a kind of expropriation. "Romeo" is divided into a being and a name "which is no part of thee" (2.2.48), producing a rift in the very notion of self. As Kottman demonstrates, the communal reliance on language, or naming, to single out an individual

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[36] Kottman, 21.

[37] Kottman, 22.

[38] Derrida, "Aphorism," 416. "Aphorisme est le nom." Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 131.

referentially and instate their inviolable, unique identity creates a dependency or debt on that

institution that affords one such a name, hence the desire to abandon the name, which Derrida

acknowledges too:

> And in asking him to abandon his name, she is no doubt asking him to live at last, and
> to live his love (for in order to live oneself truly, it is necessary to elude the law of the
> name, the familial law made for survival and constantly recalling me to death), but
> she is *just as much* asking him to die, since his life *is* his name. . . Romeo is Romeo
> and Romeo is not Romeo.[39]

Kottman's position seems to be roughly summarized in this reading of Juliet's "Deny thy

father and refuse thy name." But the assessment arguably goes a step further when it also

recognizes that Romeo's life is his name, that his name imposes on him from the outset both

to be and not to be Romeo, which would seem to complicate the sense of the act of refusing

one's name. What is more, Derrida also draws attention to the repeated use of the verb "to

be" in Juliet's "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?" and "O be some other

name:" "She does not say to him: why are you called Romeo, why do you bear this name

(like an article of clothing, an ornament, a detachable sign)? She says to him: why *are* you

Romeo?"[40] She also does not tell him to be himself, but "some other name." Deeply

embedded in the lovers' preoccupations here, language, specifically onomastics, plays a

crucial role in forming the stakes, actions and relationships in the balcony scene. The result is

a triangulation between the lovers and what should, I contend, be regarded as a third-party

principle such that it calls for a different ethical description of the lover's relationship and

actions than the one Kottman proposes.

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[39] Derrida, 427. "Et en lui demandant de se départir de son nom, elle lui demande sans doute de vivre enfin, et de vivre son amour (car pour vivre vraiment soi-même, il faut échapper à la loi du nom, à la loi familiale faite pour la survie et me rappelant sans cesse à la mort), mais elle lui demande *aussi bien* de mourir, car sa vie *est* son nom. . . Roméo est Roméo et Roméo n'est pas Roméo." Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 139.This echoes an important theme in *Richard II*, when Richard is forced to grapple with the challenge of having "no name, no title" (4.1.254).

[40] Derrida, "Aphorism," 426. "Elle ne lui dit pas : pourquoi t'appelles-tu Romeo ? Pourquoi portes-tu ce nom ? (comme un vêtement, un ornement, un signe détachable) Elle lui dit : pourquoi *es-tu* Roméo ?" Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 139.

Kottman himself recognizes, in fact, the medial role played by language when he attributes the act of vowing to a fear the lovers have of the absence of a third-party witness to their union that would ensure that they are not dreaming: "if there is truly no mediation here, . . . then there is nothing external, nothing substantial, no 'third party' binding them absolutely to one another." Having doffed the name and weakened reference, "The lovers' next impulse is to grasp some external bearing through solemn vows."[41] Because of its staying power in the face of intense individual experiences, language seems to be seized upon for want of any other third-party power, instance or witness capable of recognizing their union, before the couple decide to rely on the Friar, master reader of life and great speaker of aphorisms, to perform this role. In an almost Derridean statement, Kottman presents the balcony scene as one in which time and space are suddenly subordinated to the speech of the lovers: "[t]he space separating the orchard from the balcony and the time between this night and tomorrow are given over to the lovers' words."[42] Based on Derrida's *L'aphorisme à contretemps*, it would seem these words, themselves given over to separate spaces and sliding timeframes, should be counted among the external forces affecting the lovers' capacity for self-actualization through freely determined mutual election. What does this imply for Kottman's argument? How are we to understand language in relationship to third-party involvement? In what follows, I capitalize on the tension between Kottman's and Derrida's readings of the play to present my own understanding of the relationship between individual agency and the role of the third party in the relationship between lovers.

The specific challenge the couples are faced with might be restated as a problem of reconciling a second-person vocative with a notion of identity that necessarily relies on the incorporation of a third party. When Juliet speaks of "thy name, which is no part of thee," she asserts the incommensurability between "thee" and "Romeo," which is also an opposition

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[41] Kottman, 23.

[42] Kottman, 20.

between "Romeo" in the vocative and "Romeo" in the third person (2.1.91). Her monologue shifts uneasily from one to the other, the "Romeo" she is addressing being, in her perspective (she is unaware of Romeo's presence), an imagined, projected Romeo, a Romeo of the mind. As to the Romeo who is privy to what she says, moreover, it is not as an addressee that he overhears, but as a third-party eavesdropper. This cumulation of second- and third-person roles sets into motion the paradox of "the name" that is no part of "thee" and yet is somehow "lodged" within, as a kind of soul.[43] But who is it Juliet desires then? Who is "thee," the one she is speaking to as "Romeo" where there is no Romeo? Or Romeo whom she cannot address except in his absence to the second-person "thee?"

Must Juliet resign herself to address Romeo ever as a fictional projection, to speak to him in fact as a third-person even in her "thee?" Or can he be addressed, present to her as a full manifestation of the first-person, fully "I" and pure of any trace of the third-person "Romeo?"[44] He tries to make himself available as such. Grafting himself into her monologue, taking the place of the phantomatic vocative "Romeo," he presents himself in the flesh and asks to be designated merely through the vocative "love":[45]

> ROMEO. I take thee at thy word.
>   Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized:
>   Henceforth I never will be Romeo (2.1.92.2).

But at this Juliet recognizes neither Romeo, nor the possibility to call this man "love:" "What man art thou that, thus bescreened in night, / So stumblest on my counsel?" The recognition Kottman calls for to match the act of self-individuation in which Romeo is to become free

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[43] Searching for the bodily seat of his name, Romeo would later "sack the hateful mansion" (3.1.107).

[44] This problem is approached from a psychoanalytic perspective in Julia Kristeva, "Roméo et Juliette : le couple d'amour-haine," in *Histoires d'amour* (Paris: Denoël, 1983), 203-224, in which she addresses the instability of the "we," characterizing the couple as more of a foursome.

[45] Juliet in fact never does call him "love" in this scene, though Romeo does address her as such (2.1.173).

with Juliet is delayed, though the elements of it are arguably here: denial of the name, presentation of a mere self where "Romeo" used to be, and taking Juliet at her word, responding to her "Take all myself" (2.1.95-6). Recognition is put off in the confusion of anonymous voices and crossed exchanges. Any "own-ness" of being, supposing there is such a thing, remains at best "bescreened in night," inaccessible as such to "recognition" and unavailable to any pragmatic-existential act of self-presentation.[46] Juliet's famous "Take all myself" was not knowingly spoken to Romeo and his no less quoted response is not recognized for what it may be. Rather than a deployment of being, a self-individuation, a mutual self-recognition, or an achievement of freedom, the dialogue highlights the difficulties of "recognizing," with its criss-crossing, searching utterances. The pattern of recognition is formally characterized by a syncopation of alternating appeals to the other and to the binding force of "objective" systems of references, which appear given over to aphoristic fragmentation.

When Juliet finally does recognize who she is speaking to, she claims it is at the sound of his voice: "My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words / Of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound. Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?" (2.1.101-3) It is to these lines that Kottman chiefly appeals in order to make his case, as he insists in even greater detail in his chapter on *Romeo and Juliet* in *A Politics of the Scene*, arguing that "the audible manifestation of Romeo's uniqueness through his voice, his active communication of himself to her, hic et nunc" suspends the tragedy of the name.[47] In stressing uniqueness as essence however, Kottman's gesture consists in asserting the importance of individual experience over and above the problem of how that experience perdures, in other words how time and

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[46] See Derrida, "Aphorism," (426). Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 139.

[47] Paul A. Kottman, *A Politics of the Scene* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 175. This argument contradicts other accounts of the role names play in this tragedy, such as that of Catherine Belsey, which claims that "[t]he bodies of the lovers are inscribed and, crucially, tragically, named." Catherine Belsey, "The Name of the Rose in *Romeo and Juliet*," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 23 (1993): 127.

place expose to gaps between now and then, here and there, and most importantly you and I. Uniqueness there may be,[48] but Derrida's perspective on the scene seems to allow for a better appreciation of the way such uniqueness is accommodated in the gap between individual experience and systems of references, which arguably conditions the access to or recognition of the "unique" with demarcation and pluralization, hence the double instances and deferred appeals of the scene).[49]

Granted, Juliet triumphs over time, night, spatial distance, names, semantic content and systems of reference when she recognizes Romeo at the material-acoustic quality of his embodied voice. But to enthrone this recognition as a sovereignly individual and shared determination independently of what comes before and after is also to neglect the material-formal shape of the recognition. The pattern of failed, displaced or interrupted recognition does not end here, the following lines reading as a continued attempt to recognize the other, not merely their voice, but their words. As Romeo seeks ever to reinvest the sovereignty of an individual perspective, "For stony limits cannot hold love out," Juliet is at this point reticent to recognize how this feeling computes with concrete contingencies, and especially what value to give to the feelings of the other. The whole issue of swearing, as I argue in the following section, is an attempt to forestall the possibility that love may turn out to have been

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[48] It should be pointed out however that even Kottman's characterization of this moment of voice recognition as "unique" is challenged by Tybalt's recognition of Romeo's voice behind his mask in 1.4: "This, by his voice, should be a Montague" (1.4.167), and a few lines later: "'Tis he, that villain Romeo" (1.4.177.1). Both Juliet and Tybalt demonstrate an awareness of Romeo's individual as well as social identity upon hearing his voice. Arguing that the later occurrence of voice recognition reaches past all social labels to the essential individual recognized as such seems undermined, or to borrow a Derridean label, "parasité" (contaminated, following the logic of the *pharmacon*) by an earlier recognition event the likes of which Kottman is precisely trying to set it apart from.

[49] Iben Engelhardt Andersen is correct in emphasizing of Kottman's "hic et nunc" that "it is a 'now' or a 'this' that is exactly only temporary; it is not unique in any essential way, but a unique instance of communication." She also underlines the fact that the "enactment of a singular relationship that disturbs the frames of speaking in Verona" on which Kottman insists "does not happen through a strict separation of voice and word; rather, it happens through an excess of words and a disturbance of the circuits of voices, meanings, and places of enunciation that frame the young lovers' interaction." Iben Engelhardt Andersen, "Romeo and Juliet are sexting: consent, countertime, and literary voice," *Textual Practice*, 34, No. 10 (2020): 1705.

time-bound, discovered not to have carried over into the future.[50] By the same token, names attempt to stabilize life through a much-needed notion of referable, answerable identity. But what of a unique name then? If there cannot be a unique vehicle in which to appropriately express vows inevitably hollowed out by Petrarchism, can language at least afford the lovers an exclusive designation of the other?

After he first fails to make himself known to Juliet in reference either to his name or to the designation of "love," but before Juliet finally recognizes Romeo's voice, Romeo adopts a strategy that both sharpens and complicates questions of identification and recognition. Called on to identify himself, Romeo is paralyzed by aporia:

> ROMEO. . . . By a name
> I know not how to tell thee who I am.
> My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
> Because it is an enemy to thee. (2.1.96.2-8)

Robbed suddenly of the power to refer to himself, Romeo is put into a double bind, commanded to identify himself by the very person who has just pleaded for him to lay aside his identity. His attempt to make his individuality accessible to Juliet from the relational horizon of "love" has also fallen short. Slyly, Romeo evades the double-bind and surmounts

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[50] Heffernan refers to it as a "high-romantic luxury—the idealist punctilio of freedom as *unterschiedenes Moment* or *separate moment* (Hegel *Phenomenology* 105)," which, "inside the horizon of significance of an early modern text" he deems "simply unaffordable." Banking on a point made by Derrida in *L'aphorisme à contretemps*, he makes his case by tying in *Romeo and Juliet* to the literary history of the story, problematizing Kottman's appeal to narrative devices used already in previous versions of the story, which, he argues, contributes to flattening the singular shape of Shakespeare's take on the story. To this, it might be added that Kottman's interpretation also cuts out this moment of recognition from the figurative and dramatic patterns that tend to downplay the uniqueness of Juliet's lines as a literary occurrence. Her recognition of Romeo's voice is conspicuously metaphorical, bringing with it a surplus of form that troubles the stoppage of meaning at its sheer expository, revelatory value. To pull but on one loose thread, in making words and utterance a matter of liquidity, tongue and ears, Juliet places recognition within the scope of a vast cultural dynamics of dramatic-pharmaceutical deceit that characterizes not only Shakespearean drama but the period as a whole (see for example Tanya Pollard, *Drugs and Theatre in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 123-143). In keeping with the pattern of exchanges and equivalencies and the scene's language of trade (Romeo even refers to Juliet as "merchandise" in 2.1.127), the term "uttering," though meant in a vocal sense here, is also used in its commercial sense later in the play by the apothecary: "Such mortal drugs I have, but Mantua's law / Is death to any he that utters them." Juliet's use of the term "uttering" to describe the liquid, possibly intoxicating effect of Romeo's words on her thus sits rather uneasily with Kottman's interpretation of the lines as a true recognition of self-individuation beyond language.

the difficulty of reference to their relationship in the present by slipping in an oblique hint, "dear saint," into this vertiginous bilaterality. "Saint" is at the same time an anonymous mask and a reference to a name which has acquired a signification only Juliet and Romeo are aware of, a code name harking back to their ironic investment of a sonnet conceit. Romeo's cataphoric strategy relies on tying back into who he was before becoming "Romeo" to Juliet, appealing to the metaphorical moment they shared earlier that evening through an act of linguistic creativity.[51] As she played the saint, he played the holy palmer. It is to this piece of tongue-in-cheek pretense that Romeo appeals in order to make himself known. But who, then, were the agents of the shared sonnet? And what, from that first encounter, is carried over into the balcony scene, after names have taken hold? More importantly, what does the metaphorical language of the sonnet scene allow or constrain them to in ethical terms and how does this change in the balcony scene? In order to answer these questions in the following section, I evaluate the sonnet scene as an ethical event, examining what system of binds and partings make up that relationship before coming back to the question of where this leaves them in the balcony scene.

2. *The ethics of the shared sonnet*

In the perspective I am defending, the balcony scene plays out ethical concerns that arise from the utterance of the shared sonnet. Romeo and Juliet's dialogue in this scene are the first words they speak to each other outside of the game of shaping speech into a sonnet. Because of the special convention set up in their previous dialogue, there is a question as to the status of the extraordinary moment they shared, to the state of things in the immediate aftermath of this dramatic, metaphorical, and literary historical event. What is peculiar about this

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[51] I have read this earlier act of figuration in lieu of identity in terms of *metaphorization*, an inauguration of fiction, and *quasi-metaphor*, coupling what no longer functions as the mere literal with what can no longer be simply regarded as the metaphorical: the metaphor was not of Juliet as a saint – the metaphor inaugurated an investment and performance of the mask of sainthood by the player Juliet, which created conditions both for personal expression as well as the continuous drone of third-party agencies.

transition from the sonnet can be brought out in relation to J. L. Austin's category of "non-serious" uses of language. In *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin distinguishes between "serious" and "non-serious," "standard" and "non-standard," or "literal" and "non-literal" *uses of language*:

> For example, we may speak of the "use of language" for something, e.g. for joking; and we may use "in" in a way different from the illocutionary "in," as when we say "in saying 'p' I was joking" or "acting a part" or "writing poetry;" or again we may speak of "a poetical use of language" as distinct from "the use of language in poetry." These references to "use of language" have nothing to do with the illocutionary act.[52]

Thus, Austin excludes such uses of language from his investigation of illocutionary acts in virtue of their special instrumentalization of language. This does not mean actors or poets do not use illocutionary acts, merely that what these acts do is considerably modified by their belonging to a non-standard type of enunciation, the description of which calls for another analytical toolset. "Call me Ishmael," for example, certainly has the illocutionary structure of a request but only as a fictional address. Crucially, what this also means is that such acts must not be imputed to their speakers since these are *citing* language rather than using it pragmatically, *staging* standard uses of language or attributing them to fictional speakers. Romeo and Juliet's shared sonnet troubles the distinction between these levels.

Within the fictional world of Verona, the shared sonneteering is on first inspection readable rather as "a poetical use of language," a standard communication situation that makes room for a metaphorical level that does not invalidate straightforward illocutionary analysis. When Romeo says "Then move not while my prayer's effect I take," both Juliet and he understand this as an announcement (that he is going to kiss her) or perhaps a request (not to recoil from the gesture).[53] The illocutionary force of the speech-act is perfectly readable

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[52] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With* Words (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 121.

[53] In his analysis of illocutionary acts in Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, Schalkwyk finds in the shared sonnet illocutionary acts corresponding to the typical sonnet pattern of "the conditional, the question, the

"through" the fictional situation they have co-invested. On the other hand, because of the sonnet structure, the interaction is also a "use of language in poetry." More precisely perhaps, it is a poetical use of language in poetry – it straddles categories. This signals a possible interference of one register with the other. As long as we can be sure that it is first and foremost a poetical use of language, that the use of language for poetry is there only on a metaphorical level, as a strategy which may clearly be read in accordance with standard uses of language, there is no issue. But this not necessarily the case.

This is not to argue that the lovers are somehow busy trying to compose poetry rather than simply flirting, or that their own poetizing has the same status as Melville's authorial utterance, "Call me Ishmael." Nevertheless, it is difficult to keep apart the non-serious from the serious here, for two distinct reasons. First, it goes without saying that a play by definition carries a surplus of form with respect to everyday language. This is what makes it available to literary analysis, a tool arguably dedicated to the analysis of non-standard uses of language. What is more, the shared sonnet has the specificity of threading into the generic fabric of the play a set piece which itself stands out as a surplus of form, doubly complexifying the application of illocutionary analysis and calling into question, as poems do, the distinction between standard and non-standard uses of language. Secondly, intradiegetically, the lovers' metaphorical venture allows, as poems also do, for things to be said and done which would not otherwise be acceptable: these are not youths flirting and kissing, this is a saint and a palmer engaged in the holy act of absolution.

What this implies for the lovers is that there is some wiggle room between their actions and who it is these actions involve. And since their general communicational strategy suspends individual responsibility – "we were only joking, we were only playing a part" –, the question once they come back together later on that night, beyond the issue of the name,

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response and the plea." David Schalkwyk, *Speech and Performance in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 68.

is to find out who was behind the mask and to what extent that person will continue to be whoever they were when masked. Derrida has stated that names are masks with which the lovers are merged. How does this apply to the metaphorical identities of "saint" and "pilgrim?" Given that the metaphorical level prompts rather than arrests enactment, the speech-acts of requesting and granting permission to kiss, for instance, seem to be taken, through conversational implicature, as tokens of love presented in earnest even if in a "non-serious" use of language. Put otherwise, the figurative level of sainthood and pilgrimage paradoxically functions as a rhetorical strategy communicating integrity of intent, already a kind of promise accompanying the perils of the kiss. "Kissing you, I promise to be as faithful in love as a pilgrim to a saint."

What might such a promise be worth? In *Hamlet*, Polonius' answer is unequivocal: "Marry, I'll teach you: think yourself a baby; / That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay, / Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly" (1.3.105-7). Indeed, for a woman to yield too quickly engenders a threat of "lightness" on both parts: in the economic terms of Polonius' conceit, Ophelia's market value drops because the ethical currency Hamlet deals in has not been properly certified. Thus, after the shared sonnet, Juliet fears both Romeo's lightness and her own: ". . . If he be marrièd, / My grave is like to be my wedding bed" and "In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond, / And therefore thou must think my behaviour light," suggesting that the threat of infidelity, however divergently, represents a concern to both parties (2.1.141-2).[54] With understandable apprehension, she demands: "O gentle Romeo / If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully." Yet she also cuts him short at every new attempt to honor the request, as if such vows were inherently bound to infelicity: "At lovers' perjuries / They say Jove laughs" (2.1.135-7). When Romeo attempts to answer to his earlier words and

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[54] The plot of *Much Ado About Nothing* plays out this exact threat in great detail, developing the very different consequences of perceived unfaithfulness both for Hero and for Claudio, as well as for the couple's families and the social community at large.

deeds by attesting to the enduring character of his affection to Juliet, this testimony is rejected, feared even in its very enactment:

> JULIET. Well, do not swear: although I joy in thee,
>   I have no joy of this contract to-night:
>   It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden;
>   Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
>   Ere one can say "It lightens." (2.1.159-63)

Beyond the inconstancy of the moon and the threat of lightness, desire seems bound to a temporality of lightning-fast instantaneousness, condemning speech to a disqualifying lateness. Or is language the lightning bolt, no sooner lighting up our common sky than it has vanished, returning us to the shapeless tempest of unstable affective energy that preceded it? In either case, the language of illocution in which a contractual bind is to be uttered is determined to be non-coincident with the object of its predication. Complicating Austin's distinction between serious and non-serious uses of language, amorous rhetoric in these scenes is first the theatre of a reciprocal commitment in the free and mutual co-investment of a non-serious, metaphorical use of language by masked protagonists, then the compulsive abrogation of literal, serious uses of language appealed to in order to ratify the engagement. Determining the ethical self-presence of subjects to such uses of language suddenly appears a precarious task. What is it that binds, not only in the sense of holding together but of creating an ethical obligation, in the shared sonnet and in what sense do things come apart in the balcony scene?

In light of what has just been said, that which binds a mannerly pilgrim and a dear saint would seem to suggest an ethical responsibility taking hold before one can be said to answer in one's name or as an ethical subject properly speaking.[55] The language of the shared

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[55] In a theological sense in keeping with the religious conceit, that which binds a saint and a pilgrim is God. From a literary critical perspective, a study of early modern religious doctrine as it inheres in the shared sonnet might thus be aligned with postmodern work on the secularity of the function of God. Levinas, for instance, combines Greek and Judaic thought in a philosophy that thematizes God, though not necessarily in a

sonnet allows to a certain extent for the referential orders of the social and political, for responsibilities towards these third-parties to be bracketed while simultaneously enabling a metaphorically modalized social encounter. Suspending the instances through which names, references, illocution, and public powers take hold, the sonnet also tasks the interlocutors to rewrite hierarchies and identities, as in the carnival tradition.[56] This ethical responsibility binds them to each other before any social determination – not that the scene is not socially determined in many ways, but it also showcases a relationship of responsibility that is not exhaustive as a socially determined phenomenon. In *Politiques de l'amitié*, a text on the figure of the friend (as a figure of the other that precedes the distinction between amity and desire), Derrida argues):[57]

> Before even being asked the question of our responsibility, to "speak in one's own name," to countersign such and such affirmation, etc., we are caught, each and other, in a sort of heteronomous and dissymmetrical curvature of the social space, more precisely of the relationship to the other: before any organized *socius*, before any *políteia*, before any determined "government," *before* any "law". . . . Let us be clear: before any determined law, such as natural or positive law, but not before law *in general*. For the heteronomous and dissymmetrical curvature of the law of an original sociality is also a law, perhaps even the essence of the law.[58]

religious sense. Similarly, Derrida's ethical turn lead him into the field of negative theology, in link with the notion of the impossible. He also presents literature as a kind of betrayal of an Abrahamic secret in Jacques Derrida, "La Littérature au Secret," in *Donner la Mort* (Paris: Gaililée, 1999).

[56] See for instance the scene of the masked ball in *Much Ado About Nothing*, in which masks liberate speech and the social accountability for what one says in a way that could be argued to heighten the ethical responsibility towards the other (since it allows them to speak the truth about the other without fear of reprisal or accountability). François Laroque reads *Romeo and Juliet* in light of carnival traditions in François Laroque, *Shakespeare et la fête : essai d'archéologie du spectacle dans l'Angleterre élisabéthaine* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1988).

[57] Allan Bloom briefly compares love in *Romeo and Juliet* with the Aristotelean friendship Derrida is discussing here in Allan Bloom, *Shakespeare on Love and Friendship* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 13-14. David Schalkwyk considers the use of the term "friend" to designate a sexual partner, discussing overlaps and tensions between early modern conceptions of friendship and of heterosexual love in David Schalkwyk, *Shakespeare, Love and Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 52-6.

[58] Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié, suivi de L'oreille de Heidegger* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 258. "[A]vant même de nous être posé la question de la responsabilité, du 'parler en son propre nom,' de contresigner telle ou telle affirmation, etc., nous sommes pris, les uns et les autres, dans une sorte de courbure hétéronomique et dissymétrique de l'espace social, plus précisément du rapport à l'autre : avant tout socius organisé, avant toute *políteia*, avant tout 'gouvernement' déterminé, *avant* toute 'loi'. . . . Entendons bien : avant toute loi déterminée, comme loi naturelle ou comme loi positive, mais non avant la loi *en général*. Car la courbure hétéronomique et dissymétrique d'une loi de socialité originaire, c'est aussi une loi, peut-être l'essence même de la loi."

As to whence this responsibility arises, Derrida specifies:

> It is assigned by the other, before any hope of reappropriation even allows us to assume this responsibility, to assume, as we say, *in the name*, *in one's own name* [*en son nom propre*], within the space of *autonomy*, where the law we give ourselves conspires with the name we receive.[59]

Derrida thus posits that "responding to" the other in the sense of communication (*répondre à*) ethically precedes "responding for," in a judicial sense (*répondre de*), and is also to be distinguished from "responding before" (*répondre devant*), which institutionalizes or universalizes the other.[60] Before the constitution of the subject then, before one receives one's name, there is an ethical relationship to the other in which one is called upon not to identify oneself, as Romeo later is in the balcony scene, but to engage oneself towards the other through speech, to answer not to one's name, nor to any demand for one's name, but merely to answer the other.

The idea of a necessity to respond to answer the other before any other notion of responsibility can take hold seems highly influenced by Emmanuel Levinas' distinction, articulated in *Otherwise Than Being*, between the "saying" and the "said:" beyond the thematic faculty of speech, the ability to predicate and refer in language, to constitute a "said," language is also constituted by an ethicality of "saying." This is why Levinas holds that "apophansis does not exhaust what there is in saying."[61] Though it has a complex philosophical history tying Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* to Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* among other texts, apophansis as Levinas uses it is understandable in its most pared down sense as a

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[59] Derrida, *Politiques,* 258-9. "Elle nous est assignée par l'autre, depuis l'autre, avant même que tout espoir de réappropriation nous permette d'assumer cette responsabilité, de l'assumer, comme on dit, *dans le nom*, *en son nom propre*, dans l'espace de *l'autonomie*, là où conspirent la loi qu'on se donne et le nom qu'on reçoit. "

[60] See Derrida, *Politiques*, 280-2.

[61] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981; 2006), 6.

propositional statement of assertion that discloses something about the way something is. Levinas states:

> Already the tautological predication, A is A, in which an entity is both subject and predicate, does not only signify the inherence of A in itself or the fact that A possesses all the characteristics of A. A is A is to be understood also as 'the sound resounds' or 'the red reddens' - or as 'A As.'[62]

The second sense of the tautology thus destabilizes the first because it temporalizes a thematized relationship. From a Levinassian perspective, Kottman's notion of a recognition of the fully disclosed other in Romeo and Juliet's dialogue at the balcony scene would appear problematic, since the expression of individualization, the predication on identity, and the deictic designation of "you" with a name, would necessarily make a statement such as "thou art Romeo" first imply that "Romeo is Romeo." Not only might this not sit well with Juliet, considering her desire for her lover to "be some other name," but it would also in turn imply that "Romeo romeos," as Levinas says that "Socrates socratizes," which would then complicate her ability to identify Romeo. It does.[63]

In contrast to the phenomenal disclosures of apophansis, Levinas posits that there is an irreducible silent echo to speech, which hints at the reduction that has been effectuated from saying to said: "for the 'listening eye' a silence resounds about what had been muffled, the silence of the parcelling out of being, by which entities in their identities are illuminated and show themselves."[64] In the relationship to being, as something that is phenomenologically disclosed, predicated on through apophansis, such luminous

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[62] Levinas, 38.

[63] "The very individuality of an individual is a way of being. Socrates socratizes, or Socrates is Socrates, is the *way* Socrates is. Predication makes the time of essence be heard." Levinas, 41. Opposing the idea that "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet," Levinas thus contends that "[t]he noun that doubles up the entity it names is necessary for its identity. And so also the verb: not only is it not the name of being, but in the predicative proposition it is the very resonance of being understood as being. Temporalization resounds as essence in the apophansis." Levinas, 40.

[64] Levinas, 38.

manifestations (the words phenomenon and aophansis are both derived from the Greek *phainein*, meaning "bring to light" or "show") are troubled by the *resounding silence* of that which has not been said and is yet part of the expression. Linguistic expression temporalizes being in that, in addition to a system of designation, of nouns doubling up entities in the world, "language can be conceived as the verb in a predicative proposition in which the substances break down into modes of being, modes of temporalization." In this sense, "things and qualities of things, begin to resound with their essence in a predicative proposition. . . out of art."[65]

The discussion of an access to being as temporalized essence through the "listening eye" almost seems a philosophical meditation on Bottom's speech in Scene 1 of Act 4 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:[66] "The eye of man hath not heard. . . ." (4.1.208-9) Bottom poignantly fails to say what it is he has experienced and his sentences trail off. They leave us with a groping "saying" without a "said," in which the character does not know how to thematize or name his "dream:" "I have had a dream past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound on this dream." (4.1.203-5). As Bottom resolves to resort to the medium of poetic song to say the ineffable, Levinas too suggests something of the power of art to make use of the saying: "in poems vocables, material of the said, no longer yield before what they evoke, but sing with their evocative powers and their diverse ways to evoke."[67] This is not, Levinas clarifies, "a frivolous play of syntax.

> It is to measure the pre-ontological weight of language instead of taking it only as a code (which it is also). . . . It is first to awaken in the said the saying which is

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[65] Levinas, 40.

[66] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 21 September 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=4&Act=1&Scene=1#125556. Levinas states in *Time and the Other* that "it sometimes seems to me that the whole of philosophy is only a meditation of Shakespeare." Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other [and additional essays]*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 72.

[67] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 40.

absorbed in it. . . . We must go back to what is prior to this correlation [of being and subject].

Part of Levinas's endeavor in furthering the philosophical project that ethics precedes ontology in *Otherwise than Being* is precisely to draw out what conditions the dream of being.[68]

"Saying" refers then to a level at which subject and being have not yet formed a correlation through thematization. The capital "D" in "Dire" (dropped in the English translation as "saying"), though not always consistent in its usage in the original, is arguably there to signal that we are not talking about the action of speaking as such, but of the conditions of speech, a pre-original dimension to language:

> Antecedent to the verbal signs it conjugates, to the linguistic systems and the semantic glimmerings, a foreword preceding languages, it is the proximity of one to the other, the commitment of an approach, the one for the other, the very signifyingness of signification. . . . The original or pre-original saying, what is put forth in the foreword, weaves an intrigue of responsibility."[69]

Kottman's insistence on essential individuality as self-recognition through the other seems to bypass this dimension of meaning where the saying cannot be understood, read out, shifted out as Latour would put, on the basis of being. Leaving aside this dimension that qualifies being, Kottman charges consciousness with the ability of seeing the other in an essentializing way, such that language is entirely able to express or at least convey, in which the difference between self and other can be contained and revealed. Levinas, on the contrary, emphasizes a kind of blind proximity to the other.

This proximity constitutes a responsibility preceding any capacity to see or shed light through language or the mind's eye: "saying" thus precedes manifestation (and by the same token the phenomenological projects of Husserl and Heidegger). Levinas elaborates:

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[68] See Levinas, *Otherwise*, 163-4.

[69] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 5-6.

Thematizing consciousness in the privileged role of manifestation that belongs to it takes on its meaning in the psyche which it does not exhaust, and which has to be described positively. Otherwise ontology is imposed not only as the beginning of thematizing thought - which is inevitable – and as its term in a writing, but as signifyingness itself."[70]

Hence part of the project (Chapter 3) of Otherwise than Being: "We will then try to show here that signification is sensibility."[71] Levinas argues that sensations condition an access to being that offers an alternative to the opposition of being to non-being, an otherwise than beings that slants, orients being and the intentional consciousness of being in phenomenological philosophical projects: "The notion of access to being, representation, and thematization of a said presuppose sensibility, and thus proximity, vulnerability and signifyingness."[72] This level at which responsibility is a proximity to the other in which language is a pre-original Saying also has a physical incidence that suspends signification to the realm of the sensuous. Moreover, Levinas' description of sensation that precedes the distinction between physical and the mental recalls to some extent the function of *chora* presented in Chapter 2:

This signification in its very signifyingness, outside of every system, before any correlation, is an accord or peace between planes which, as soon as they are thematized, make an irreparable cleavage, like vowels in a dieresis, maintaining a hiatus without elision. They then mark two Cartesian orders, the body and the soul, which have no common space where they can touch, and no logical *topos* where they can form a whole.[73]

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[70] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 67.

[71] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 67.

[72] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 68.

[73] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 79.

If *chora* partakes of materiality to form a space in which idea and matter are joined and inscribed, Levinas reads sensation rather as a primal vulnerability, an orientation to the other in which orders "are in accord prior to thematization."[74]

As to *Romeo and Juliet*, I have argued that metaphor in the shared sonnet offers a kind of chorological site that mediates, through language, the relationship between the physical interaction and the question of the meaning of this interaction. At this level, thematization has already taken hold – if it had not, "metaphor," or any other form of predication for that matter, would be unavailable. But although metaphors thematize in such a way as to raise the issue of *chora* in the shared sonnet (addressing the separation between a material order and an order of signification), the saint-pilgrim conceit also instantiates the setting into motion of language *as* a relationship to the other. This furthers the relevance of my literary analysis of the notion of "metaphorization," set out in Chapters 3 and 4. Indeed, "metaphorization" mediates not only between a thematization of language and a saying that goes beyond a said, but also between a masked physical interaction and the increasingly necessary question, registered through expression, of the meaning of that interaction (including its ethical character). This level is situated at the frontier, therefore, between selfhood and the other, before a subjective order can be circumscribed.

Levinas analyzes meaning as a relationship between significance (the quality or subjective embeddedness of signification) and signification (systems of meaning):

> Far from negating intelligibility, this kind of accord is the very rationality of signification in which the tautological identity, the ego, receives the other, and takes on the meaning of an irreplaceable identity by giving to the other.[75]

Tautology is a crucial term here: in order for meaning not to revert to a tautology, the subject must be understood as an orientation towards the other, a hauntedness or obsession by the

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[74] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 70.

[75] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 70.

other that opens meaning to the very possibility of being tautological in the first place, and therefore also to non-tautological meanings. These meanings do not simply circumscribe the self but assess its constitutive orientation towards the other, its answer to (Derrida's "*répondre à*") the other preceding any question. The relationship between self and other is described as a non-indifference, a concern for the other of the kind that makes Levinas, after *Hamlet*, wonder: "Why does the other concern me? What is Hecuba to me?"[76] His answer:

> The non-indifference to the other as other and as neighbor in which I exist is something beyond any commitment in the voluntary sense of the term, for it extends into my very bearing as an entity, to the point of substitution. It is at the same time prior to commitments, for it disengages in this extreme passivity an undeclinable and unique subject.[77]

The greatest departure, then, that *Otherwise than Being* implies with respect to Kottman's reading of Shakespeare against a Hegelian background lies in the assertion that individuation does not originate in freedom or an acting self. It is not the product of subjecthood, personal agency or volition:

> For the venerable tradition to which Hegel refers, the ego is an equality with itself, and consequently the return of being to itself is a concrete universality, being having separated itself from itself in the universality of the concept and death. But viewed out of the obsession of passivity, of itself anarchical, there is brought out, behind the equality of consciousness, an inequality.[78]

As to the inequality to self that disrupts the Hegelian speculative dialectics of the self-recognition of Spirit, Levinas specifies that is disturbs the reflexivity of identity in virtue of a principle of substitution, an "inequality in the oneself due to substitution."[79] The responsibility that ties me to the other unsettles reflexivity, the relationship to myself ("se

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[76] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 117.

[77] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 138.

[78] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 115.

[79] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 115.

dire" – to say to oneself), with a passivity ("se dire" – to be said),[80] opening the self to a world to which it is not indifferent. What makes me unique is paradoxically a concern for the other, "as though the unity and uniqueness of the ego were already the hold on itself of the gravity of the other."[81]

Even when I say "I," it is in answer to an accusation. "Here I am!" ["me voici !"][82] is the signifiance of "I" without which there could be no I. This is a development of Levinas' conception of a Saying distinct from apophansis: subjecthood cannot be thought of only as a recurrence of A to A – this recurrence is conditioned by a relationship to the other.[83] This is why Levinas speaks of selfhood as a substitution:

> Every accusation and persecution, as all interpersonal praise, recompense, and punishment presuppose the subjectivity of the ego, substitution, the possibility of putting oneself in the place of the other, which refers to the transference from the 'by the other' into a 'for the other,' and in persecution from the outrage inflicted by the other to the expiation for his fault by me."[84]

Levinas' concept of the subject is conceived as a substitution of myself to the other, itself understood as a transfer of that which comes to me from the other to that, in me, which is turned towards the other, the substitution of "I" for another, without alienation or imperialism. Any "selfless" act, before it can be viewed from the perspective of a freely acting self, is therefore conditioned by *sub-jectivity*, as that which must carry a world of others: "The self is a *sub-jectum;* it is under the weight of the universe, responsible for

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[80] See Levinas, *Otherwise*, 43.

[81] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 118.

[82] As in "'Here I am! send me.' Isaiah. 6:8. 'Here I am!' means 'send me.'" Levinas, *Otherwise*, 142 and 199, n. 11.

[83] The self, to Levinas, is thus understandable as an original expiation undergirding the relationships between self and other, active and passive: "The self as an expiation is prior to activity and passivity" (Levinas, *Otherwise*, 116). He insists: "The ego is not an entity 'capable' of expiating for the others: it is this original expiation" (Levinas, *Otherwise*, 118). This why Levinas speaks of the subjective as the condition of being held hostage: "It is through the condition of being hostage that there can be in the world pity, compassion, pardon and proximity," (Levinas, *Otherwise*, 117).

[84] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 117-8.

everything."[85] Indeed, meaning, the meaning of being, of subjectivity, and of language, to Levinas, "signifies *prior to any world,* signifies the proximity of the same and the other, in which the implication of the one in the other signifies the assignation of the one by the other." He continues:

> This assignation is the very signifyingness of signification, or the psyche of the same. Through the psyche proximity is my approaching of the other, the fact that the proximity of the same and the other is never close enough.[86]

Unique individuality stems therefore from the felt proximity of the other, which Levinas interestingly terms "never close enough." The insufficiency is not structural, but tensional. Levinas describes it as a kind of asymptotically increasing closeness of the other within the very recurrency of identity: the closer the recurrency is to collapsing into "A is A", the more intensely the "not enough" is felt. Therein lies is the significance and specificity of subjecthood: "[p]roximity, as the 'closer and closer,' becomes the subject. It attains its *superlative* as *my* incessant restlessness, becomes unique, then one, forgets reciprocity, as in a love that does not expect to be shared."[87] This carries one, then, towards "the trope of lyricism: to love by telling one's love to the beloved - long songs, the possibility of poetry, of art."[88]

The unrest of the self in need of the other and solicited by the unicity of the other – what Philippe Grosos insists on as a "to be required" – is also the possibility for poetry art, and love.[89] Levinas quotes "'I am sick with love.' *The Song of Sangs. 6:8,*"[90] (an affect which

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[85] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 116.

[86] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 137.

[87] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 82.

[88] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 199, n. 10.

[89] See Philippe Grosos, "Chapitre 1: L'art d'être requis," in *Le cinéaste et le philosophe* (Rennes: Pressses Universitaires de Rennes, 2020), 33-86; "être requis."

in Romeo becomes an affectation in the opening of the play, in contrast perhaps, with his anguish at the Friar's in 3.3). This possibility exists because of the risk, through communication, of misunderstanding. Communication with the other is always uncertain, bound to the possibility that the other will not respond or not be there, where I hope for them to be, despair not to find them or hear from them, and have resigned myself to this non-reciprocity:

> at the risk of misunderstanding (like in love, where, unless one does not love with love, one has to resign oneself to not being loved), at the risk of lack of and refusal of communication. The ego that thematizes is also founded in this responsibility and substitution. Regarding communication and transcendence one can indeed only speak of their uncertainty.[91]

This is the possibility, therefore, of love outside of the mutual confirmation of selfhood, as a disruptive force unsettling the self. It is the possibility of the kind of relationship that is at stake in the shared sonnet: in the interaction between subjects singing a love song, in the mutuality of touching and feeling, and in the separate, sensuous, psychic lives this presupposes. Although Levinas is speaking of love mainly from the perspective of a constitution of subjectivity, Derrida crucially develops the theme of love present in *Otherwise than Being* into that of friendship (including the erotic love relationship) in *Politiques de l'Amitié*, in which he dwells on this figure outlined by Levinas: the friend – this is as much the friend in Benvolio's "Not Romeo, Prince, he was Mercutio's friend" (3.1.184), as well as in Romeo's (reported by Benvolio) "Hold, friends, friends part!" (3.1.164) It is both the friend in Juliet's "husband, friend" (3.5.43) and in her "O churl! Drunk all and left no friendly drop / To help me after" (5.3.163). All of these senses are implicated in the dynamics of sensibility, proximity and vulnerability that Levinas attributes to the for-the-otherness of the subject. They are also, as I have argued in Chapter 4, implicated in the verbal transitivity

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[90] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 198, n. 5.

[91] Levinas, *Otherwise*, 120.

of the metaphorical dynamics as they occur in the shared sonnet, connecting erotic love both to the linguistic buildup of the duel and to an ever-present possible turn to death.

Rooting his argument in the pages about love from *Otherwise than Being*, Derrida draws out the erotic modality in the figure of the friend in *Politiques de l'amitié*. Of the lover who is called on to respond to the other before responding for any name, he states:

> They must desire that which makes the essence of desire, that non-assurance [*inassurance*] and that risk of misunderstanding. And not to know who, the substantial identity of who is, before the declaration of love, at the origin of who gives and who receives, *who* has or does not have that which happens to be on offer or in demand.[92]

This makes of the shared sonnet not only the moving, candid encounter audiences recognize and celebrate as young love, nor yet the Shakespearean rewriting of sonnet desire, but confers on the interaction an existential abstraction beyond emotional investment in drama or the critical recognition of a literary-historic event. Neither "realistic" nor "poetic," the encounter reads along a "heteronomous and dissymmetrical curvature:" undetermined by any law regulating the powers and determinations of the self or of the relationship to oneself (autonomy), it marks out a hyperbolic limit in the relationship that occurs within the expression of a desire inherent to the dissymmetric positions of "I" and "you" (heteronomy). I depend on you, desire you, not knowing who you are and whether you desire me – if I did know, I could not desire.[93] This first ethics of erotic love presents the latter, therefore, as a process in which fundamental aspects of the relationship between self and other are rehearsed, where fundamental differences between other and self are nowhere more heightened than in desire. In combination with Derrida's reading of it as impacting *écriture*

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[92] Derrida, *Politiques*, 248. "Il lui faut même désirer ce qui fait l'essence du désir, cette inassurance et ce risque du malentendu. Et de ne pas savoir qui, l'identité substantielle de qui est, avant la déclaration d'amour, à l'origine de qui donne et de qui reçoit, *qui* a ou n'a pas ce qui se trouve offert ou demandé." This passage especially reads as an elaboration on Levinas' understanding of communication in *Otherwise than Being* (…)

[93] See Derrida, *Aphorism*, 420 ; *L'Aphorisme*, 134.

as a participant in the relationship to the other, Levinas' emphasis on the figure the other offers an alternative as such to the deferring process of subjective desire in Lacan as well as to the speculative process of self-discovery in Hegel that furnishes the basis for Kottman's reading of love as personal freedom. Desire and identity can both be read rather as proceeding from a responsibility to the other that has to do with the structures of language deployed in the desire for proximity to the other, to the point where a specific other affects the recurrence of "I to I," changes me in the love song I blindly sing to an other I cannot possibly see as I sing.

Recognizing the other in "you" (or indeed "thee"), that other which Kottman arguably also calls for to be recognized, supposes therefore a preliminary renunciation of the ability to recognize, which demands for lives to be staked not in, through, or as a recognition, but in the radical uncertainty of the presence of the other.[94] A dissymmetry between "I" and "you" is thus shown to be necessary to the symmetrical double deployment of mutual recognition, since the latter occurs as much as a recognition of the other as it does in the recognition that the other recognizes me, at which point third-parties, names and language have been invested. What Derrida's position suggests, then, is that there is no position available (no "as" or qualifying criteria) from which the relationship could be determined as one in which the lovers are "immediately free with" each other. The only relationship to the other that individuates me without resort to the mediation of a third party is in this prime responsibility that binds me to the other, in the love declaration I address them.

This does not foreclose recognition or reciprocation. It conditions them to an iterative, aphoristic structure that makes any "recognition" or "with" occur offbeat: "this heteronomy does not contradict, but opens autonomy to itself, it figures the beating of its heart" (just as

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[94] This belatedness of recognition is also in accordance with the temporal-causal structure of tragedy. Although Kottman takes care to distinguish Shakespearean from Sophoclean tragedy, the retrospective pattern of anagnorisis is arguably maintained in early modern tragedy: "recognition," if it happens at all, can ever only happen after the fact.

selfhood conceived as having the other within me precisely founds both being and unique individuality to Levinas).[95] This is also why there can be no duel unless the commitment to staking lives is uncertain – the duel arises as the experience in which this commitment (my own and the other's) will be put to the test. It is indispensable to founding the relationship to the other and to myself, as I do not know before the duel whether the act of staking my life in the other will be met. Erotic desire affords a different relationship from the duel in that I submit to the other in desiring them, not knowing that my love declaration will not perhaps be answered by a provocation to a duel. The duel is a publicly recognized form of identification; not so the love declaration, which, desperately, comically, whispers secret vows of love into the adversary's ear, slips them a note with a scribbled saucy quatrain.[96]

This situation is explored again, with different parameters, at the opening of the balcony scene, before Romeo makes his presence known to Juliet. When Juliet is surprised in the act of declaring her love to Romeo, to a Romeo she cannot know is there, in the dark, beyond the "Romeo" she addresses in solitude, this is another form of the love declaration as Derrida describes it. This form instantiates a giving/asking beyond any hope of reappropriation, engages an affirmation that precedes the space in which statements can and must be countersigned. It is in itself a form of violence for Romeo to infer transparency from these acts of language, to attribute certain desires to Juliet as if she had requested them of him, as if it were to him she was speaking in the first place.[97] When Romeo brings things

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[95] Derrida, *Politiques*, "[C]ette hétéronomie ne contredit pas, elle ouvre l'autonomie à elle-même, elle figure le battement de son coeur."

[96] Once again, this view is compatible with Kottman's argument about owning external necessity, the crucial difference being that "owning" is saying too much, since one may just as easily speak of a non-strategic "othering" of self. This Derridean determination follows "the principle of a possible resistance to the reduction of the political, even of the ethical, to the onto-phenomenological." Derrida, *Politiques*, 23; "le principe d'une résistance possible à la réduction du politique, voire de l'éthique, à l'ontophénoménologique."

[97] Just as the addressee is unstable in these acts of language, so is the speaker, according to Derrida: "But especially, as bound as it is to hyperbole, the logic of understanding or of hyperbolic consent presupposes a bit hastily that the one who addresses the other means to be heard, read, understood, means to address some *one* – and that this desire, this will, this drive are *simple*, *simply identical* to their supposed essence." Derrida,

back to a space of "satisfaction," requesting "The exchange of love's faithful vows for mine" (2.1.170), he does so on another level of ethical responsibility than this originary heteronomy. Alluding to a giving and a requesting that precede the economy of exchange, Juliet can only respond: "I gave thee mine before thou didst request it: / And yet I would it were to give again" (2.1.171-2). Thinking herself perhaps to be requesting, in the portion of her speech overheard by Romeo, Juliet could not know she was also giving – thinking herself to be giving away her words, giving up her desire, she could not know she was also requesting. Thus, as far as Romeo's request is concerned, she can no longer freely give, since Romeo professedly stands ready to countersign her vows of love with his. Yet, wishing to give is also already a mark of the perdurance of this structure of heteronomy beyond the socially determined space of exchanges and autonomous control. Juliet states: "And yet I wish but for the thing I have" (1.4.169-75).

On the level of the love declaration, there is no telling apart the gift from the request in the renouncement it presupposes: "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, / My love as deep; the more I give to thee, / The more I have" (2.1.176-8), No exchange can be had on this level because there is as of yet no "I," no "you," or rather these identities are, as the sea, boundless: giving to you is having. The satisfaction of the lover is in this way comparable in a limited sense with the sonneteer's Lacanian desire as Bates has read it, the difference being that the love declaration is no more in control of "I" as it is of "you." As a result, what the love declaration implies for a singing of desire is that, in fact, the sonnet not only defers satisfaction, it defers also the desire for satisfaction, denying it the position of a transcendental signifier. In the instability of the positions of "I" and "you," the shared sonnet in *Romeo and Juliet* thus furnishes a compelling model for how, in the lyrical Petrarchan

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Politiques, 246. "Mais surtout, si vouée qu'elle soit à l'hyperbole, la logique de l'entente ou du consentement hyperbolique présuppose un peu vite que celui qui s'adresse à l'autre tient à être entendu, lu, compris, tient d'abord à s'adresser à quelqu'*un* - et que ce désir, cette volonté, cette pulsion sont *simples, simplement identiques* à leur essence supposée."

sonnet, the structure of a love declaration is at work, constantly coupling and uncoupling desire and satisfaction, want and fulfilment, meaninglessness and meaning, syntax and semantics. Whatever desire is, it cannot be brought back to or recognized by a declaring subject any more than it can to an object of desire. No act of language can bound such boundless bounty, reduce the gap between "I" and "you" or tell them apart, nor be decisively brought back to an economy of exchange, control or consciousness. It can at best be qualified as a performance in which the intelligibility of the love declaration as a use of language has not yet been determined, is yet at stake. Even more troubling, the intelligibility of language itself, of its use, is at stake in the "non-serious," metaphorical negotiation of what must be taken to be "serious," "standard," literal, collectively identifiable and therefore binding.

What Derrida suggests and as even this modest consideration of ethical roles in *Romeo and Juliet* demonstrates, is indeed that there can be no such thing as a "serious" illocution without reference to the "non-serious," without the constitutive possibility, therefore, of seriousness not being for real. This ultimately opens up to the metaphysical question of self-presence, which Derrida, after Levinas, offsets with the idea that before I am even present to myself, I must answer the other, necessarily uncertain as to who this other is, both vulnerable and threatening to me (whoever "I" may be).[98] There is thus nothing that ever assures me that I am not dealing with a Iago, crossing his fingers behind his back or muttering under his every breath: "I am not what I am" (1.1.66), which is the metaphorical modality of the language of any and all other. This indeterminacy carves out a set of ethical positions in the bilateral relationship which are heightened by the awareness of duplicity. The

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[98] Derrida is drawing out implications from Levinas' claim – perhaps itself an amendment to Levinas' insistence on the other's "presence" in *Totality and Infinity*, which Derrida criticized as rehearsing a metaphysical privilege of presence in "Violence and Metaphysics" – that the other and a world of others is preceded by a level of Saying and of proximity, characterizing the responsibility of subjecthood in its very constitution: "Being and cognition [Être et connaissance] together signify in the proximity of the other and in a certain modality of my responsibility for the other, this response preceding any question, this saying before the said" (Levinas, *Otherwise*, 26).

possibility of falsity also indicates the role language plays in binding me to the other, in committing myself to the other:

> What would a so-called 'standard' promise or a statement be if it could not be repeated or reproduced? If, for example (an example of iteration in general), it could not be mimed, reproduced on the stage or. . . in a citation?[99]

In this sense, Romeo and Juliet's conceit engages a hyperbolic, limitrophe responsibility towards each other. This responsibility, of answering the other, of uttering a love declaration, provides and conditions a freedom or right to privacy. Furthermore, the psychological, social and political spheres that such declarations suspend are all at play in this ethically elevated interaction.

3. *The ethics of the balcony scene*

Having drawn out with hindsight the ethical positions inherent to the structure of the shared sonnet, I turn now to the third-party role played by language in the lovers' interaction. If a relationship to the other is necessarily built on an aphoristic structure, then in relating to the other, there is a further ethical exigency to invest language with reference, to cement its link to the world even in the lunatic, moonlike inconstancy of this endeavor. This process brings me back to the responsibility of "answering for" and "answering towards," which touches on the question of my lived relationship to the other, and through the other to myself, of the gap between myself and my public, linguistic identity, and to the question of institutions, such as society, ethics, language, all of which are institutionalizations of the relationship to otherness. What then has the cataphoric appearance of names in the interval between the sonnet scene and the balcony scene changed to the initial meeting both of bodies and of figures and what new challenges does this pose to those who came together as "saint" and "pilgrim,"

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[99] Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber (Evanston IL, Northwestern University Press, 1988), 89.

recognized in each other "my life" and "my only love?" What are the ethical stakes of the flickering second- and third-person instances in the balcony scene? What does it signify for Juliet that the access to Romeo is necessarily always forestalled by the interposition of the name "Romeo?"

Even as relationship to names and naming in the balcony ropes the lovers back into the referential world, forcing them to deal with different sets of connections and identities, a certain suspension of the outside world still seems to characterize the interaction. This is arguably what brings Kottman to declare the scene "given over to the lovers' words." After experiencing an interiority and bindingness of aphorism in the shared sonnet, they are relegated to an outer world of utterance, gaps and syncopations in the experience of a radical otherness in language, its isolating and interrupting power. Of course, since isolation and interruption are also part of how one is able to approach and engage the other in this scene, the lovers seem also held together in their own aphoristic set *à contretemps*, afforded a short time to deal with what it means to have a name, for themselves but especially for one another. In this time, they begin to experience something of the timeframe of names, these things that will by necessity stretch on in time after their own deaths, after the other's death: the "Romeo" Juliet addresses in her initial monologue in 2.1 is thus a phantom occurring in a distinct temporality from the Romeo that overhears her. Because of the history of sonneteering, we may conversely be authorized to think the "Juliet" Romeo beholds in the first moments of the balcony scene is also a timeless Juliet, one in whom survive, in that projected angelic light of transcendence through which Romeo sees her, a host of ghostly Juliets, Giulettas, Stellas, Lauras, and Rosalinds. In ethical terms, the recurrence of names confronts the lovers to a certain absence of the other whom they love, which is tantamount to saying it brings them into the horizon of the other's death. Yet, this does not bar either one from the proactive engagement, creativity and passion glimpsed already in the shared sonnet.

From an economy of shared co-investment in the dialogue sonnet, the balcony scene becomes a theatre of exchanges and sought for equivalencies, an arena in which love, desire and the singular, secret relationship to the other are bargained for within the commercial dynamics of Polonius' language of offer and demand. Romeo can give up his name and for it gain Juliet. Juliet offers to become more a part of Romeo than his own name, to become a kind of name to him. Derrida paraphrases the terms of the exchange she proposes:

> In renouncing your name, you renounce nothing, nothing of you, of yourself, nor anything human. In exchange, and without losing anything, you gain me, and not just a part of me, but the whole of myself: "Romeo, doff thy name, / And for thy name, which is no part of thee, / Take all myself." He will have gained everything, he will have lost everything: name and life, and Juliet.[100]

Juliet replaces the name as a means of singling out an individual, offering herself as a more powerful agent of designation, making Romeo at the same time the beneficiary of her whole self while having to give up the human relationship to the proper name, hence a double, mutual and dissymmetrical dispossession through love:[101] Romeo forfeits that which ties him to his father and genealogy, losing also that which marks him out as a human individual, one who bears a name unique to himself, while Juliet takes up her own father's place in promising herself to Romeo, disposing of herself as a commodity as only the third-party paternal instance is authorized to do. What Derrida claims of Romeo applies equally to Juliet:

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[100] Derrida, *Aphorism*, 428. "En renonçant à ton nom, tu ne renonces à rien, rien de toi, de toi-même, ni rien d'humain. En échange, et sans rien perdre, tu me gagnes, et non seulement une partie de moi, mais moi tout entière : *Romeo, doff thy name, / And for thy name, which is no part of thee, / Take all myself.* Il aura tout gagné, il aura tout perdu : le nom et la vie, et Juliette." Derrida, *L'Aphorisme*, 141.

[101] The scene thus furthers the intertextual dynamic with *Doctor Faustus* initiated in the shared sonnet (see Chapter 4). Scene 3 of Marlowe's *Faustus* also features a character who believes he may summon the entity that belongs to the name he utters ("Mephostophilis"). What Faustus in fact learns is that Mephostophilis has appeared to him only in hopes that Faustus might damn himself in the signed contractual exchange of his soul for Mephostophilis: "Had I as many souls as there be stars, / I'd give them all for Mephostophilis." Faustus too utters his desire in a monologue to the open night, heard by Lucifer, in a language Juliet picks up, incidentally, in the soliloquy in which she invokes Romeo and demands for him to be cut out into stars after death (Act 3.2). The intertext enhances the sense in which a renunciation to life for the other is involved in this scene of exchanges. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen 1965; London: Routledge, 2005), 60.

"[h]e simultaneously gains himself and loses himself not only in the common name, but also in the common law of love: *Call me love.* Call me your love."[102] In their exchanges then, the lovers struggle against being carried away by a linguistic principle of substitutability.

In becoming each other's "love," Romeo and Juliet achieve, according to Kottman, their greatest distinction in recognizing the other as their love and as the one of whom they ask to be called "love." But this ultra-singular relationship is also threatened by the indistinction of the designation. In an essay titled *Donner la Mort*, Derrida follows Kierkegaard's Johannes *de silentio* in *Fear and Trembling* in noting (both looking back to Kojève and Hegel and forward to Lacan) that the use of language is in itself an entry point into the ethical order and an abdication of singularity (in exchange for the general ethical relationship to others):*[103]*

> Yet as soon as one speaks, as soon as one enters into the *milieu* of language, one loses singularity. . . . First effect or first destination of language: to deprive me or just as well deliver me of my singularity. . . . Ethics carries me into substitution, as does speech.[104]

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[102] Derrida, *Aphorism*, 429. "Il se gagne et se perd à la fois dans le nom commun, mais aussi dans la loi commune de l'amour. *Call me love.* Appelle-moi ton amour." Derrida, *L'Aphorisme*, 141.

[103] Jacques Derrida. "Donner la mort." *Donner la Mort* (Paris: Galilée, 1999).

[104] Jacques Derrida, "Donner," 87-9. "Or dès qu'on parle, dès qu'on entre dans le milieu du langage, on perd la singularité. . . . Premier effet ou première destination du langage: me priver ou aussi bien me délivrer de ma singularité. . . . L'éthique m'entraîne dans la substitution, comme le fait la parole." See Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling. Dialectical Lyric by Johannes* de silentio, trans. Alistair Hannay (London: Penguin, 1983). Although substitution has a different meaning to Levinas, Kierkegaard's position is not incompatible with Levinas' work on substitution. It forms a point at which the individuality of the "I" is forced to reckon with a world of others who say "I" – the institutionalization of subjecthood as such. If this is an important step taken in order guarantee a certain number of rights for all subjects, indiscriminately, that is without appeal to subjective difference, it will also be left behind in the religious experience Kierkegaard describes, wherein Abraham is called on by God to leave the realm of ethics behind and speech with it, commanded to sacrifice his son: "sacrifice supposes the death of the unique in that it is unique, irreplaceable and most precious. It is also a matter of impossible substitution, of unsubstitutability. . . as if absolute responsibility could not pertain to a *concept* of responsibility and had therefore to remain inconceivable, even unthinkable in order to be what it must be: irresponsible then, in order to be absolutely responsible." Derrida, "Donner," 85-9. "[L]e sacrifice suppose la mise à mort de l'unique en ce qu'il a d'unique, d'irremplaçable et de plus précieux. Il y a donc aussi de la substitution impossible, de l'insubstituable. . . comme si la responsabilité absolue ne devait plus relever d'un *concept* de responsabilité et devait donc rester inconcevable, voire impensable pour être ce qu'elle doit être : irresponsable, donc, pour être absolument responsable." Derrida elaborates : "For responsibility. . . demands both to give accounts, to respond for oneself in general and before generality, therefore substitution, and on the other hand, uniqueness, absolute singularity, therefore non-substitution, non-repetition, silence and the secret." Derrida, "Donner," 88. "Car la responsabilité. . . exige à la fois le compte-rendu, le répondre-de-soi en général et devant la généralité, donc la substitution, et d'autre part, l'unicité, la singularité absolue, donc la non-

In the tripartite division of responsibility examined earlier between "responding to," "responding for" and "responding before," the relationship to language Derrida finds in Kierkegaard's text develops the "responding before," which institutionalizes the relationship to otherness. Where "responding to" implied an ethics of singularity without subjectivity, "responding before" presupposes an ethics of de-singularized subjectivity.[105] To Kierkegaard, ethics and language confer value to individuals not in virtue of their irreducible singularity but in reference to a commonly invested general symmetry among subjects. As we speak, we relate to the collective frame of reference that distributes values equitably without needing to appeal to the particularity of the other. Where "responding to" presupposed dissymmetry and uncertainty in my relationship to the other, "responding before" founds the ethical on the postulate of equality before the other, whose rights are declared commensurate to mine. The peril of uncertainty as to the self-presence of the other in language, their possible inconsistency or duplicity, has faded, leaving in its place a different existential threat in the form of a general substitutability of particular subjects.[106]

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substitution, la non-répétition, le silence et le secret." Derrida understands Kierkegaard's position as a description of what it means to decide to act, who decides and what constitutes a decision. Sometimes, this means resisting the temptation of "ethics" as such – ethics cannot indeed be allowed to turn into a program transparently applicable without reference to the specificity of the "I." Levinas in a sense deepens this paradoxical, aporetic account of responsibility as a tension between the unique and the general in the interplay he describes between an order of ethics, being and language and a pre-ethical "otherwise than being" conditioning ethics, in which there is saying but no said. He changes the concept of substitution however, making instead the significance, not the forfeiture of subjecthood, that which conditions the possibility of sacrifice and the hearing of anything like a voice of God. In *Otherwise than Being*, substitution is described as the way I do not dispose of my*self*, cannot choose to offer the irreplaceable as sacrifice. Being an irreplaceable subject to Levinas means being non-indifferent to the uniqueness of the other.

[105] This recalls Kojève's analysis of the value of individuals as recognized by the State in the Master-Slave dialectic: the State attributes only a universal value to citizens, recognizes only their work at the service of the state; workers and warriors are essentially substitutable subjects, their particularity remaining a matter of private valuation. See Alexander Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel. Lectures on the* Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. James H. Nichols Jr., ed. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 58-60.

[106] Levinas addresses this problem in *Otherwise than Being* as a relationship to the third-party in the relationship between self and other. The presence of a third-party, of those others that are close to the other that is close to me, is the possibility for justice. As soon as there is a third-party, my unique responsibility to the other becomes a question of justice for all, implying operations such as comparison and generalization. There is then a tension between two poles: the proximity of the other and justice for the general. Levinas insists, then,

Here is another of Romeo's double binds. On one hand, his desire to remain suspended, with "love's light wings," in a private language of intimacy is threatened by his name and the all-too real threats he incurs as its wearer in a world that continues to see him as "Romeo." Useful in founding a singular, secret relationship between lovers, the sonnet idiom must however be left behind when subjects are called to appear before a third-party instance that will not be silenced any more than it will recognize the *wanton nicknaming* of lovers, drawing them instead into social and political arenas, reclaiming rights over the designations they use, distributing responsibility and holding them accountable for their names before the law. On the other hand, the investment of language as a common good, while fundamental in political terms and indispensable as a public resource, is not suited to distinguishing irreplaceability. Collectively subscribed, it has rather a functional role in evaluating, sizing up, and contradistinguishing. It stops at linguistic manifestation without asking the question of the singular investment of language by lovers. As Kottman also remarks in noting the inability to recognize singularity in the structure of the "Ancient Family," absolute singularity is incompatible with language.

This is the common law of "love." It suspends language, opens social and political institutions to the original ethical relationships out of which they are constructed. But it does so through citation, borrowing from language, using the same system of aphoristic binds and disjunctions to which all language, all social and political implementations of language, are also subjected. Thus, as a designation of absolute irreplaceability, "love" is nonetheless a common noun in the English language, useable by all, a public resource. In relation to the early modern English sonnet, the vocative "love" echoes some of the same ghostly Petrarchan addresses as "saint" does. Bates argues:

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that " Justice is impossible without the one that renders it finding himself in proximity. His function is not limited to the 'function of judgment,' the subsuming of particular cases under a general rule. The judge is not outside the conflict, but the law is in the midst of proximity." In order for justice to avoid the pitfall of reverting to "a technique of social equilibrium. . . harmonizing antagonistic forces," it must be thought and applied on the basis always of proximity and the responsibility of one for the other. Levinas, *Otherwise*, 159.

> Indeed, for a tradition that is supposedly about a love relation between two – an 'I' and a 'You' – it is striking how often the sonnet sequence's relational field makes room for this third figure, the (usually male) personification of Desire. . . . The love relation in sonnets is thus, in practice, a triangulated one.[107]

Even in its purely relational, private designation of singularity, "love" is split between a second-person and a third-party love figure: the beloved; the god of love (with the latter, more or more often present than the beloved, usually being addressed, often as the main interlocutor of the cycle). Resisting Romeo's love declarations, Juliet would have him swear, if swear he must, "by thy gracious self / Which is the god of my idolatry, / And I'll believe thee." If only there was a way he could be this god without also ushering in the third-party god of love, as which Romeo figures himself at the beginning of the scene when he claims to have overleapt her walls with love's light wings. In any case, he gets no further than "If my heart's dear love–" before she interrupts him, at that word "love" (2.1.156-9). Even "love" is already saying far too much, yet also not nearly enough.

To love the other, then, must be asserted against or beyond public languages, which is Kottman's point about Romeo and Juliet. As Andersen puts it: "Against the 'what' of their names, Kottman reads their communication as an expression of the 'who' of their singular beings." Removed from the codified, institutionalized relationship to others – other subjects with names, identities and rights –, Romeo and Juliet's love relationship relates to Kierkegaard's sphere of the religious, which sacrifices the ethical on the altar of a sacred alliance to an elected, singular Other. In this relationship, there is a wish to do away with the third-party, to suspend ethics and language to the singularity of a relationship to a particular other:

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[107] Catherine Bates, "Desire, Discontent, Parody: The Love Sonnet in Early Modern England," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet,* ed. A. D. Cousins and Peter Howarth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 118.

> You will speak of it [us] to no one, that there may be no third between us, nothing of what Kierkegaard will call the generality of the ethical, political, or juridical. That there may be no third between us, no generality, no calculable knowledge, no conditional deliberation, no hypothesis, no hypothetical imperative, so that the alliance may be absolute and absolutely singular in the act of election.[108]

What Juliet resists, perhaps, in the utterance of Romeo's formal vows, is the attempt to call on the language of equivalency, contracts and public powers to witness, support, host, give form to his love relationship to Juliet. In so doing, he would virtually be signing his name at the bottom of a contract, no longer tied exclusively to Juliet, by Juliet, within the heteronomous relationship where the other figures the juridical instance of language.[109] He would be bound by ethics, names, and institutions, in accordance with Polonius' understanding of what counts as "sterling" and what not – divorced from political instances, Hamlet's vows of love are, in fact, unreceivable regardless of intent or content, not carrying the socially recognizable authority that would entitle him to even begin to speak as a lover. Yet, backed by political powers, speaking in another's name, love is not love. As Juliet herself puts it, in speaking thus, "Thou mayst prove false" (2.1.135), in such a way that would place Romeo's fate out of the scope of *her* ability to determine him fair, even in falsity.[110]

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[108] Derrida, "La Littérature au secret. Une filiation impossible," *Donner la Mort*, 204. "[T]u n'en parleras à personne, pour qu'il n'y ait pas de tiers entre nous, rien de ce que Kierkegaard appellera la généralité de l'éthique, du politique ou du juridique. Qu'il n'y ait aucun tiers entre nous, aucune généralité, aucun savoir calculable, aucune délibération conditionnelle, aucune hypothèse, aucun impératif hypothétique, pour que l'alliance soit absolue et absolument singulière dans l'acte d'élection."

[109] Kottman argues that even in submitting to the institutional bond of marriage, the lovers' performance of the rite is part of their self-determination. In choosing to elope, they own the external, social necessity of marriage. See Kottman, "Defying," 24.

[110] As argued above in the previous section, even when Romeo kills Tybalt, it is still within Juliet's power to determine the maintenance of their alliance as her own, singular responsibility. She seems to reassert their bond in sending him a ring, medieval symbol of alliances, which he receives with great relief. See Joshua A. Smith, "The Ring as an Object Lesson in Temporality and Genre in *Romeo and Juliet*," *English Literary Renaissance* 49, no. 1 (2019): 74-93. The interaction between Miranda and Ferdinand at the end of *The Tempest* stages what must surely be the most economical playing out of this relationship, in all of three and half lines: "Miranda: Sweet lord, you play me false. Ferdinand: No, my dearest love, / I would not for the world. Miranda: Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, / And I would call it, fair play" (5.1.172-175.1) William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed February 15,

Yet, the alliance to one another remains thus at the mercy of aphorism, of the extraordinary, desperate hope that behind the projected "Romeo," the only one to whom Juliet may utter her love declaration, a Romeo will answer from the shadows. No act of linguistic performance can determine, stabilize or insure this singular presence once and for all. Although long, the following quote from *Politiques de l'amitié* is enlightening in that it forms a pertinent description of the transition from the other-obsessed language of the shared sonnet to the ethical triad between other, self, and language that the lovers deal with in the balcony scene:

> How this folly [of the love declaration] then negotiates with what it is not, protects itself and translates itself into the common sense of "things," into proofs, tokens, concepts, symbols, into a *politics*, into *this* politics and not another, is the whole story, what we call history. But it will be singular every time, singularly iterable, as will be the negotiation and the contamination between the singularity and the concept, the exception and the rule. What is more – other side of the same law – the demand or the offer, the promise or the prayer of an "I love you" must remain unilateral and dissymmetrical. Whether the other answers or no, in such and such way, no mutuality, no harmony, no understanding can nor ought to reduce the infinite disproportion. This is the very condition of sharing, in love as in friendship. As in hate and detestation. Thus, the desire of this disproportion that *gives* without expecting anything in return or any recognition, must not count on "good understanding," must not calculate assured, immediate or full comprehension.[111]

When Juliet utters her love declaration to the night, not knowing nor hoping that there may be a Romeo beyond her vocative "Romeo" that will answer her, she borrows the idiom that

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2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=12. This also opens up to the question of bonds and of perjury and mercy, or pardon, which Derrida tackles in an analysis of *The Merchant of Venice*. See Jacques Derrida, "Deuxième Séance. Le 26 novembre 1997," *Le parjure et le pardon, Volume 1. Séminaire (1997-1998)* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), 77-102.

[111] Derrida, *Politiques*, 247-8. "Comment cette folie négocie ensuite avec ce qu'elle n'est pas, se protège et se traduit dans le bon sens des 'choses,' dans des preuves, des gages, des concepts, des symboles, dans une *politique,* dans *cette* politique et non une autre, c'est toute l'histoire, ce qu'on appelle histoire. Mais elle sera chaque fois singulière, singulièrement itérable, comme le seront la négociation et la contamination entre la singularité et le concept, l'exception et la règle. De plus, autre versant de la même loi, la demande ou l'offre, la promesse ou la prière d'un 'je t'aime' doivent rester unilatérales et dissymétriques. Que l'autre y réponde ou non, de telle ou telle façon, aucune mutualité, aucune harmonie, aucune entente ne peut ni ne doit réduire la disproportion infinie. Celle-ci est même la condition du partage, dans l'amour comme dans l'amitié. Comme dans la haine et la détestation. Dès lors le désir de cette disproportion qui *donne* sans retour et sans reconnaissance, il lui faut ne pas compter sur la 'bonne entente,' ne pas calculer la compréhension assurée, immédiate ou pleine."

Derrida describes above, which is the condition at which it may be shared. For Romeo and Juliet to share what they do, their love must remain an aphoristic crossing, two dissymmetrical love declarations that can never quite come to be fully, completely, reciprocally, or symmetrically contained in the shared sonnet – which in fact spills out into a second sonnet, instantly caught in an iterative concatenation. Such symmetry is not only uncontained by theatrical time, but in its enunciative structure, in Juliet's insistent "you" which answers Romeo's "thou" without answering it, leaves as much unsaid as it commits. Each lover is bound to the secret of their own investment of the love relationship. There can only be a shared reciprocity according to a structure of iteration. In other words, only through an aphoristic bind can the couple be held in a shared "now." The fact that a Romeo steps up to respond where no Romeo was expected, together with the fact that each speak to the other *through* the third-party of names and references is what ties them each to the death of the other, each through the other to death. Living always with the indeterminacy of the other, they are nonetheless at each moment reasserting their love declaration, their responsibility to carry the other in death.[112] Yet, it is the way Romeo and Juliet each deal with these conditions that opens to the tragic structure of the enactment of deaths.

In the bargains of the balcony scene, which bargain with names themselves, the lovers' different strategies for dealing with threat of substitutability are registered in the performative grammar of their uses of language. Leaning out from the uttermost limit of her private closet, opening her heart to the discovering night, Juliet's monologue saturates the sphere of "responding before" with that of "responding to," that there may be no room left in Romeo for "Romeo," no other mouth but hers to call on him, instituting love as the horizon of all responsibility.[113] The only way she might do away with "Romeo" (the name) would be

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[112] This departs from Kottman's view who marks out the lovers' relationship as one that rejects the distinction of individuality the "Ancient family" bestows on them as a relationship that cares for the other as if they were dead. What Derrida's view implies is that this responsibility is not dropped so much as rearticulated.

to make Romeo (the being) her own to designate, determine, and address even in the utterance of his name, she who implies that she is more of a part of him than his name, able to say more about Romeo's smell, the sound of his voice, and that "dear perfection which he owes," than his name ever could. She seeks to speak his name singularly then, in a way that no one might recognize it but him, make "Romeo" "my 'Romeo,'" appropriating the name, that he alone might be made consciously present to her private calling of it.

> JULIET. Bondage is hoarse and may not speak aloud.
> Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies
> And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine
> With repetition of my "Romeo."

Juliet's difficulty to reconcile two ethical orders is well illustrated in the obligation she has to call Romeo, to open up to the sphere of all other hearers and ethical subjects, better illustrated still in her speaking of his name in hushed tones, fearing the presence of others in her utterance of the name. Speaking with the keen awareness of being in public, in a world of eavesdropping, nearby third-parties (Romeo is one of them), she is uncertain at every step that he will have heard, distinguished her call rather than be held outside of it: "She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that?" To speak, yet say nothing is the contradiction with which she is beset. Can there perhaps be a speaking in hushed tones, a secret speech within language, that speaks nothing? She wishes she could shout his name, celebrate it as her own, speak it for all to hear without in the same breath losing him. Indeed, out in the open, her calls would not be to him, that secret Romeo, met only with their own echo then, with Romeo's reflection and not Romeo himself. She would thus be able to enact only the common myth of the isolation of Echo and Narcissus and no love of her own.

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[113] Kottman finds "[t]he development of a love affair has an instituting power all its own" in Dante's depiction of Beatrice, subordinating it to "the poetic invention depicting it." Kottman, "Defying," 18.

There is no way for Romeo to answer this desire since he has no position from whence to speak in this Juliet-determined world in lieu of discourse. Juliet's call therefore is unanswerable. Seeking to fill out "Romeo" with Romeo, she can only call for the converse operation, leaving no room in "Romeo" for Romeo within her monologue, which is something he recognizes earlier on in his own isolated parallel monologue: "I am too bold; 'tis not to me she speaks" (2.1.57), and thus, calling for his death in asking him to give up the world, his life and his name. As such, her demand for a being-for-her-alone also foreshadows Romeo's own description of her body at the end of the play, when he wonders whether to believe "That unsubstantial death is amorous, / And that the lean abhorred monster keeps / Thee here in dark to be his paramour" (5.3.103-5), leaving him with the responsibility of bargaining back togetherness in the face of aphoristic separation ("For fear of that, I still will stay with thee" [5.3.106]) by staking his life in the converse aphoristic power to reconcile him, through poetic utterance, to Juliet: "Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips, O you / The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss / A dateless bargain to engrossing death!"[114] (5.3.113-5) As much a lover as a prisoner or a foe in the balcony scene (the distinctions cannot hold within the pure interiority of Juliet's soliloquizing monologue), "he may not have access / To breathe such vows as lovers use to swear" (2.chorus.9-10). Like the "tassel-gentle" (2.1.205), Romeo would not only be virtually at Juliet's beck and call, he should have surrendered to her the power to refer to him, to speak in his name (Juliet wishes for such a voice). Having presented himself to her in lieu of his name, taking Juliet at her word, he has agreed to stake himself in her being rather than in his name, which makes it out of the question for him to later engage himself once again towards a third-party instance by vowing, since at that point he is already spoken for.

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[114] Thus, Mephostophilis reveals to Faustus: "Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it" (3.78). Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen 1965; London: Routledge, 2005), 59.

If Juliet desires to exchange names for being, to make the world its own language, Romeo seems to persist in investing language as a world. Taking Juliet at her word, taking her word then, he acts as if he could invest with the force of necessity the accident of his walking in on her call to "Romeo," to a Romeo beyond "Romeo."[115] He strives to meet her, conversely, in the ideality of her language-world. This is the dream of an entirely hermetic and private idiom that Schalkwyk finds the speaker trying to invest in the "rival poet" sonnets:

> Overwhelmed and fearful of the public space or world that imposes differences of rank, blood and social power, the player-poet hopes to persuade the young man to retreat to a private world in which promising faithfulness, declaring love and commanding trust will not be informed and distorted by the exigencies of such difference.[116]

Similarly to the poetic speaker in the sonnets, Juliet fears the indistinct threat of the third-party attendant on the linguistic performance of swearing to love:

> JULIET. Does thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay',
>   And I will take thy word; yet if thou swearest
>   Thou mast prove false. At lovers' perjuries
>   They say Jove laughs. (2.1.133-6)

Thus, Romeo is constantly spoken over, interrupted, dismissed and called back in this scene. Responding to her from the perspective of his own linguistic ideal, Romeo struggles with finding the means for Juliet to continue to agree to co-invest language with him. She buys neither his Petrarchan evasions of her pragmatic-minded question, nor his desire to upload his love into the structure of the vow. Isolated into his own relationship to language, naming and the institutional, Romeo does not manage to ever quite make it into Juliet's sphere of private designation. He cannot quite replace the "Romeo" of her speech with himself, answer her

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[115] Juliet may well, as Faustus, wonder: "Did not my conjuring speeches raise thee? Speak." And Romeo may have answered, as Mephostophilis: "That was the cause, but yet *per accidens*" (3.47-8).

[116] Schalkwyk, 42.

offer of herself in exchange for his name. Similarly, Juliet cannot ever speak to him directly, access him directly, outside of language, or meet him beyond his name, at least not in any essential or perduring way.

Juliet's unwitting declaration and Romeo's interrupted vows are two modes of the division between name and being that affect the lovers already in their ability to "respond to" each other, which is a position that cannot be attributed to either name or being, since it appears in the very play between name and being which both would, in their own way, do away with. Juliet would either have a pure proper name, something that would express exactly the recognition Kottman speaks of, or have the name be as arbitrarily linked to its carrier as "rose" is to a rose, devoid of singulative pretention. The in-between or straddling category of the human name cannot be reconciled with any form or expression of desire in the balcony scene. In the attempt to fully align it with life or to evacuate it from life entirely, either language is stopped, resisted, suspended, interrupted, delayed and bound to echolalia, declared no part of life, no part of a human life; or, life and language are fully conjunctive, leaving no room for anything unnamable, forming a speech wherein everything can be said without impediment, continuous and uninterrupted, a monologic discourse of pure monadic interiority, in harmony perhaps with other monads but without the possibility of addressing the other, or of reaching the other through an address. The third-party of language does not lend itself fully to public exchange or shared co-investment, but neither does it remain for long a lonely monologue of intimacy or an individual endeavor without being interrupted, walked into. Aphorism binds and aphorism parts.

Using language non-seriously, in performatively closing the gap between private and public, excluding or suspending the generalized third party, the lovers are caught in the

contradiction of resorting to language's power to substitute.[117] In denying that it is precisely the name that allows them to be together, to dwell within a common aphoristic temporality, they threaten to subsume otherness under any one side of the law: in a jealously autonomous idiom, they call for the other's death by institutionalizing an aphoristic net which they themselves throw over the entire shape of the world, over the singular other as their whole world; and in a selfless heteronomy, they give themselves up to the other's law and language, stake their lives in investing the other as the horizon of their being. In either case, their demand, as lovers, is that the aphorism that gives them access to the other be more solid, more lasting, than monadic interiority. If this wish is granted, it also leads to each being entrusted with the other's death as aphorism lives on. The demand is thus granted not as a gift of eternal life but through surviving the other's death, and being survived by the name. "The absolute aphorism: a proper name. Without genealogy, without the least copula. End of drama. Curtain. Tableau (*The Two Lovers United in Death* by Angelo dall'Oca Bianca)."[118]

The "end of drama" here is the end of the dialogical tension that animates the entire play, "the theatre of this 'and'" that creates the gap between language and the world, between desire and the other, bringing lovers together and mediating between them, holding them apart: "Romeo *and* Juliet, the conjunction of two desires which are aphoristic but held together, maintained in the dislocated now of a love or a promise."[119] In so doing, without language or without the world, denying the gap and play between the two even as they negotiate it, they also push to its utter limit the idea that "heteronomy does not contradict, but

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[117] This contradiction is further substantiated in their determination to rely on the Friar's authority to bind them to each other in holy matrimony, "to incorporate two in one."

[118] Derrida, "Aphorism," 433. "L'aphorisme absolu : un nom propre. Sans généalogie, sans la moindre copule. Fin du théâtre. Rideau. Tableau. (*Les deux amants unis dans la mort* d'Angelo dall'Oca Bianca)." Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 144.

[119] Derrida, "Aphorism," 419. "Roméo *et* Juliette. La conjonction de deux désirs aphoristiques mais tenus ensemble, maintenus dans le maintenant disloqué d'un amour ou d'une promesse." Derrida, "L'aphorisme," 133.

opens autonomy to itself, it figures the beating of its heart."[120] Calling for their figurations to be independent of the linguistic materiality that makes them up, Romeo's interrupted vows and Juliet's flowing monologue, as metaphorical-literary events, are finally led to either stop this beating heart or bleed it to death. Each sustains their linguistic strategy in the face of death: Romeo his singular, disjointed world of language; he poisons himself. Juliet her address to her lover in his absence, resisting somewhat the temptation of words; she stabs herself. Each are, impossibly, given the opportunity to respond to the death of the other. They do so through suicide. No speech act can shed light into the singular sense, meaning, "why," or genealogy of this act. Even less so a double suicide "for love" (does this explain anything?). And yet, these dramatized deaths also have the structure of a metaphor, demanding to be received, heard, understood yet receding ever into a dark indeterminacy.

Conclusion

This chapter has undertaken a response to the questions opened up by Chapter 4. In particular, I have explored the role of language in articulating a third-party power and the ethical implications this presupposes. Examining the balcony scene in light of Paul Kottman's and Jacques Derrida' accounts of the scene and play in general, I offered my own reading of the scene as a search for recognition governed by a *contretemps* alternation between second- and third-party persons, following the gaps induced by the structure of aphorism. Observing such a gap between language as it functioned in the shared sonnet of Act 1.4 and language as it played out in the balcony scene, I qualified the ethical stakes of the shared sonnet idiom as self-remitting singular investments in the indeterminacy of the other's presence, with reference to Austin's theory of speech-acts, and in contrast with Derrida's insistence on the notion of "uses of language." Coming back to Act 2.1, I showed how the

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[120] Derrida, *Politiques*, 88. "[C]ette hétéronomie ne contredit pas, elle ouvre l'autonomie à elle-même, elle figure le battement de son coeur."

stakes shift from the threat of the indeterminacy of the other to that of an indiscriminate generality of the other through language. I showed how each lover positioned themselves in reaction to this situation, drawing attention to Juliet's privatization of Romeo's name (owning the general, perceived as alienating), and to Romeo's sustained singular investment otherness (perceiving and seeing the general as extension of self). The meeting of these strategies in the balcony scene forms a syncopated pattern of monologic interiority and disjointed speech turns. This pattern also marks out the beginning of an anticipation of death, which is enacted more fully at the end of the play.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored connections between metaphor and agency in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It has attended to understudied performative aspects of metaphor in the play, anchored them in different Renaissance cultural settings, and situated them in relation to other corpuses of Elizabethan texts and employments of figuration. Finally, it has approached these metaphorical dynamics using the tools provided by deconstructive criticism in ways that challenge common assumptions about metaphor, agency, and deconstruction. Bringing these different intellectual contexts into dialogue through close readings of the play has advanced three under-appreciated ways of understanding of metaphor in theatrical settings: as a textual site for the rearticulation of literary and conceptual inheritance, as a historical-material event performing effects of reading and writing, and as a dramatic gesture enabling and conditioning the agency of locutors.

Chapter 1 framed the discussion in terms of discursive materialisms and Shakespearean tragedy. I began by grounding my argument in recent scholarly debates about materiality and materialism in Shakespeare studies. In particular, I underlined the contribution of deconstruction and its conceptual and methodological descendancies in these discussions. Invoking James Knapp's novel contribution to the field in his study on immateriality and early modern literature, I situated my own approach as an investigation into a materiality of discourse, more precisely into the tension between materiality and immateriality within figurative uses of language. I then turned to the Shakespearean corpus to examine links between speech and materiality. With reference to Keir Elam's notion of *flatus vocis* or "breath of voice," a comedic mechanism resolving tensions between language and world in the comedies, I opposed Matthew Spellberg's view of Shakespeare's Verona as a world in which language is divorced from the material realm. Aligning my argument with Gerard Passannante's analysis of the affective import of early modern images of materialist

theories, I argued instead that *Romeo and Juliet* opens by drawing insistent connections between speech and materiality in the brawl between Capulets and Montagues. I also read this motif as an example of a repetitive metaphorical pattern of material residuality in some of Shakespeare's most celebrated tragedies, notably in speeches that contribute to the buildup of their tragic plots. Next, I provided an overview of Romeo's metaphorical language as it ranges from an Ovidian, Empedoclean sense of amorous conjunction at the opening of the play, to an increasingly upsetting sense of adversity, finally breaking apart in Romeo's emotional collapse at the Friar's, where his metaphors borrow from an alchemical trope of separation and a related Protestant rhetoric of end-times. As a whole, the chapter affiliated the overall approach to metaphor within critical discussions of materiality, drew a connection between metaphor and tragedy, and uncovered early modern conceptions of matter and literary antecedents at play in the metaphorical dynamics of Act 1 of *Romeo and Juliet*. In this text, metaphors were found therefore to work out tensions between speech and the material realm to dramatic effect.

Chapter 2 continued the contextual work initiated in Chapter 1 by considering various Renaissance discourses of desire and their connections to notions of text and materiality. The chapter opened with a close reading of metaphorical constructions occurring in the all-male homosocial interactions of the beginning of the play. Hutson's notion of a textuality of friendship was brought to bear on these dynamics. It was shown to inform anxieties surrounding Romeo's performance of masculinity, especially through a tropology of monetary counterfeit. Carrying on this conversation in the following section, I read some of the figurative language in Romeo's breakdown in the Friar's cell in light of the signet-seal trope, which enacts a gender division in its depiction of minds, bodies and reproductive functions – namely, it was seen to resort to the image of solid, male seal imprinting a female, moldable wax figures to figure interactions between men and women. Accordingly, I argued

that Romeo's misbehaving body concentrated a subversive potential, which I drew out by affiliating it to the Platonic tradition of exploring allegorically the willfulness and metaphysical ambiguity of matter. I pointed in particular to the *Timaeus*, Ficino's translation of which was an important Renaissance text, for its cosmological figuration of matter as *chora*, a third-kind container for the association of the intelligible and the sensible, or soul and body. I leaned on this tropological antecedent to read Romeo's body as a site of metaphorical inscription on which gender norms are challenged and rearticulated in drama. In the next section, I discussed how the notion of a third-kind container appeared within other gender-related discourse and rhetorics of sexual union, namely in Renaissance theories of reproduction, alchemical treaties and sonnet cycles. Finally, I examined the Neoplatonic heritage of a dialectics of desire inhering in sonnet cycles and discussed the role of the sonnet as a kind of *chora* within the rhetoric of poetic speakers concerned with self-perpetuation through poetic elevation as a purer alternative to sexual procreation. Romeo's interactions with Benvolio and Mercutio in the opening scenes of the play were also held to be ironized by the play yet ambiguous in their productivity, striving for poetic diction through typically Petrarchan metaphors while also unraveling and thus undermining the conception of desire as a self-absorbed poetic endeavor. Taken together, these contexts offered a double picture of materiality: as an active, subversive element in the tropic conflation of sexual procreation with technical production; and as a third-kind container whose function is to receive the inscription of spirit and matter combined. Often catchretic, yet also destabilizing the logic of the catachrestic vestiges in interacts with, metaphor was thus understood to combine both an active, subversive role and a function as a kind of third-kind container, according to an argument that received its full theoretical treatment in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 contrasted poststructuralist conceptions of metaphor in Lacanian psychoanalytic criticism and Derridean semiotics, also considering de Man's expansion on a

Derridean connection between materiality and event. I began with a brief presentation of central deconstructive conceptual elements and linked metaphorical functions uncovered so far to Derrida's ideas of *archi-writing* and iterability especially. I also distinguished Derrida's understanding of signification from Lacan's early treatment of this notion, which informs Catherine Bates' comprehension of sonnet desire. In the following section, I discussed the relationship between metonym and metaphor for Lacan and argued that Derrida's own take on metaphor was informed by both these notions, stressing both syntactic and signifying mechanisms at work in metaphor. I also showed how these mechanisms are each found to be constitutive of the other, revealing Lacanian metonym and metaphor, or syntax and signification, to each rely on the other for part of its functioning. I explained why this undermines giving primacy to either syntax or semantics when it comes to qualifying how figurative meaning is generated. In the next section, I further considered how Derrida and Lacan differ in their understanding of the privation of meaning: whereas Lacan was seen to oppose signification with a recessive negativity, for Derrida meaning was found to occupy a mediative, "in-between" status in relationship to the impossible, occurring as a constant coupling and uncoupling of meaning and meaninglessness: metaphor was thus said to be better designated as a *metaphorization*, a process generating *quasi-metaphors*. I then discussed how *Romeo and Juliet* articulates the process of Derridean metaphorization, bringing theoretical notions from the entire chapter to bear on dramatic functions of metaphor in the play. I illustrated how this works in Juliet's dialogue with her mother and nurse in Act 1.3, in which I qualified Juliet's speech turns as a metaphorical response to an impossible demand, answering her mother in a publicly acceptable form while simultaneously founding the possibility of a hidden, singular meaning. Finally, I drew a line from Derridean metaphoricity through to Paul de Man's conception of a materiality of event, which invests the Derridean understanding of writing with a sense of performativity, coupling and

uncoupling singularity (a principle of meaning) and machinic repeatability (a principle of syntax). This section concluded my investigation of how metaphor performs a *writing*, cumulating aspects of syntax and semantics, materiality and event. By the same token, this opened the enquiry to the association of metaphor and agency, which the next chapter took as its focus.

Chapter 4 looked into how metaphor in *Romeo and Juliet* informs plot development, dialogues with early modern ideas of meaning making as it inhered in practices of writing and reading, and presented a reading of metaphor as a material event, underlining the Latourean sense of agency metaphor invites when it is read as a performative figure. I opened with a deconstructive close reading of Capulet's metaphors of land and earth in Act 1.2. I linked this metaphorical subversion of Capulet's rhetoric to the disseminating role Capulet's Serving-man plays in connecting the Capulet marriage plot to the Montague plot of male desire as he seeks out an interpreter for the guestlist with which he has been entrusted. I further identified an intertext with Lyly's *Euphues* and used this as an anchor point for a discussion of the early modern tension between the two opposed authorial strategies of authoritative textual antecedent and textual appropriation. In the following section, I continued this discussion, shifting attention to medieval and Renaissance practices of reading. With reference to Petrarch's *Secretum*, in which an act of writing replaces the ideal of Augustinian conversion through reading, I argued that Romeo's emotional effusion of emotion at the Friar's, in Act 3.3, might correspondingly be read as an act of theatrical, metaphorical writing subverting humanist injunctions to comprehensive reading. The chapter closed with a presentation of the concept of agency in actor-network theory and a reading of Romeo and Juliet's shared sonnet in Act 1.4. Here, metaphor was understood to function as a *mediator* in the Latourean sense, as well as a performance of writing and a material event in the literary history of the sonnet. I then appealed to a religious context of iconoclasm and

idolatry in order to further argue the role of metaphor as a Latourean mediator. This concluded the portion of my argument devoted to working out the "mechanics" of what metaphor does and how it connects to agency. It also paved the way for the last chapter by outlining a tension between character agency and the networks of metaphorical agencies to which characterological agents belong, signaling the ethical concerns that arise from such a tension.

Chapter 5 provided the final step in the connection between metaphor and agency explored in this thesis. On the basis of Romeo and Juliet's exchange in the balcony scene, it investigated some of the ethical questions attendant on the deconstructive view of metaphor as an ongoing process of metaphorization enacting both singularity and machinic repeatability. This discussion put two important philosophical accounts of the balcony scene into dialogue, one by Derrida, the other by Paul Kottman. The arguments of both were presented in detail and contrasted. Kottman's view of love as freedom in *Romeo and Juliet* was found to be problematic on account of its defense of a pattern of individual recognition. Leaning on Derrida's structure of *aphorism countertime*, I showed how metaphorical uses of language tended to demark recognition on one hand, conditioning it to a structure of iterability; on the other hand, this was also found to heighten through *archi-writing* the ethical stakes of acts of linguistic creativity that inform love relationships. Leaning on Levinas as well as texts from Derrida's latter career that bear a Levinassian influence, I analyzed the relationship between metaphorical utterance and ethics in two stages. First, I looked to the shared sonnet and presented this passage as a crossing of singular metaphorical investments of language, in which metaphor mediates between lovers whose self-presence to each other is necessarily always indeterminate. The argument capitalized on an understanding of literature as a non-standard use of language in Austin's speech-act theory. Crucially, it departed from the notion of performativity as it is characterized in this theory, finding in

figurative language an alternative way of thinking about linguistic performativity with respect to studies implementing Austin's analysis of illocution, such as by David Schalkwyk. The second part of my ethical analysis returned to the balcony scene. I showed how the ethical challenge had shifted, after the lovers' discovery of each other's social identity, from the unknowability of the other to the threat of a loss of singularity in a world of public references. I looked closely at Romeo's and Juliet's respective strategies to overcome this challenge. These strategies were argued to place each lover within the horizon of death, through a structure of separation. In contrast to Kottman, for whom togetherness decidedly trumps death, I argued that the lovers' interaction in the balcony scene marked out togetherness as dependent on a metaphorical use of language in such a way that the question of their togetherness or separation through death was left open. The argument made in this chapter therefore brought the overall investigation to a close. It showed how the deconstructive view of metaphor as performative writing, a material event and a mediative agent impacts the ethical articulation of a love relationship between Romeo and Juliet in such a way that the role of linguistic creativity is not closed off or deferred, but substantiated and heightened through a play which itself substantiates and heightens love and metaphorical articulations of love.

Together, these separate investigations into metaphor's relationship to agency in drama present a picture of metaphor as a performative device that constructs agency through material inscriptions of meaning. This holds several larger implications. Firstly, it shows deconstruction to be a mode of enquiry (rather than a method or system) particularly well suited to the literary analysis of a formal device literature shares with other fields such as philosophy and linguistics. Derridean and post-Derridean criticism has also been found to offer a theoretical framework up to the task of appraising the performative and material heterogeneity of literary writing for the stage. Secondly and relatedly, my reading of drama

through the lens of metaphor relates to the dramatic text as a heterogenous, open platform putting into communication various types of actors such as characterological agents and authorial voice on one hand, but also, on the other hand, third-party presences in the shape of figurative agencies, active conceptual and literary sediments, and readerships and audience. Thirdly, this approach provides a new way of thinking about how drama articulates agency through poetic-rhetorical devices: it does so not only in liminal textual *loci* such as prologues and epilogues that address the audience, but through nodes of formal-performative uses of language dispersed throughout the text and in which the receptive function is highlighted. Fourthly, in this mediative function, metaphors have a syntactic, enunciative, performative grammar that enables figuration to participate in the process of fiction building and emplotment. In order to bring this study to a close, and by way of signaling paths for further investigation, I end by showing how my view of metaphor as a performative, nonstandard use of language would also be particularly well suited to an examination of tragic resolution, notably in metaphorical articulations of relationships to death.

This thesis has looked mainly at metaphor as it participates in dramatic action and the articulation of a love relationship. As a result, much of its focus lies on how chains of action are initiated and plotlines opened. A further study might profitably consider metaphor from the reverse perspective, examining the play retrospectively on the basis of the dramatic event of the lovers' deaths and its aftermath. Such a study would have to look into how death is articulated metaphorically and how the titular characters, flanked with third-party presences, each negotiate their relationship to death in the second half of the play, moreover to the act of committing suicide in the final scene. Though there has not been space in the present study for a full exploration of this topic, I wish to conclude by outlining its possible contours and marking out how work done in this thesis might offer a suitable foundation for such an investigation.

Work accomplished in Chapter 5 of this thesis points to figurations of death and articulations of meanings performed in the horizon of death. A full analysis of death as it informs metaphorical constructions in rhetorics of desire uncovered here would involve looking at representations of death in dominant aesthetic discourses, such as the medieval Dance of Death motif, prevalent in the Late Middles-Ages, and its transformations in Renaissance woodblock prints, some of which have been argued to have influenced the composition of *Romeo and Juliet*.[1] It would also have to consider shifts in the social accommodation of death brought on by the Reformation and Protestant humanist valuations of life and death with respect to earlier medieval Catholic conceptualizations of human existence.[2] It would demand an understanding of how early modern tragedy articulates relationships to death on stage, endowing characters with the power to bear witness to the death of another character, or to the imminence of their own death.[3] Finally, it would entail a full treatment of the notion of survival and testimony, or that faculty speech acts have to continue speaking even after the death of their speakers.[4] Such a study would prove a valuable complement to the approach taken here not only to scholarship on *Romeo and Juliet*,

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[1] Adequate groundwork to such an approach is provided for example in Elina Gertsman, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages. Image, Text, Performance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); Dagmar Eichberger, "Close Encounters with Death: Changing Representations of Women in Renaissance Art and Literature" in *Reading Texts and Images: Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Art and Patronage in Honour of Margaret M. Manion* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2002); Sophie Oosterwijk and Stefanie Knöll, ed., *Mixed Metaphors. The* Danse Macabre *in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[2] Erasmus' "De preparatione ad mortem" discusses this at lengeth and Montaigne devotes an essay to the question, called "Que philosopher c'est apprendre à mourir." A classic transhistorical study of conceptions of death may be found in Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (Paris: Seuil, 1977; London: Allen Lane, 1981; New York: Random House, 2008), digital edition.

[3] Useful perspectives in this regard are given in James Calderwood, *Shakespeare and the Denial of Death* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987); Michael Neill, *Issues of Death. Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); James Alsop, *Playing Dead: Living Death in Early Modern Drama*, Phd diss., University of Exeter, 2014.

[4] Jacques Derrida's notion of *survivance* would be of particular relevance, as would Emile Benvéniste's distinction between *superstes*, the survivor of an event (such a war veteran but also a wife who has lost her husband) and a witness to an event (a third-party mediator in an affair between two parties). See Jacques Derrida, *Parages* (Paris: Galilée, 1986); Jacques Derrida, *Apprendre à vivre enfin: Entretien avec Jean Birnbaum* (Paris: Galilée, 2005); Emile Benvéniste, *Le Vocabulaire des Institutions Européennes. Tome 2: Pouvoir, droit religion* (Paris: Minuit, 1969).

but to understanding the larger picture of how Renaissance tragedy associates the performance of language with the event of death, and more specifically how a play about star-crossed lovers relates to tragedies in which a single titular character confronts death. Following the approach to metaphor I have borrowed here, work done in this thesis ends where such an investigation might begin. By way of closure, I offer a final reading of the last lines of *Romeo and Juliet*, showing how their performativity confirms arguments presented here, while calling for a fuller treatment of the metaphorical articulation of death in tragedy.

In the final lines of *Romeo and Juliet*, the Prince signals a continuation in the collective social processing of the lovers' deaths:

> PRINCE. Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things;
> Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished:
> For never was a story of more woe
> Than this of Juliet and her Romeo. (5.3.307-10)[5]

The last line is especially interesting as it reverses the order of the lovers' names from the title of the play, placing Juliet first and qualifying Romeo's status in relation to her. In one sense, this reads as a final act of authorial inversion in gender roles, in continuity with earlier patterns of gender subversion. But just as gender role reversal earlier drew attention to the role played by metaphor and theatrical performance in rescripting gender, the Prince's utterance may also be read as a call to reread the play, in other words for audience and readers to "have more talk of these sad things." The inversion of names would seem to further direct this talk to a prevailing dissymmetry belying the restored social order and the fathers' promises to raise golden effigies of equal worth in honor of the "poor sacrifices" of the young lovers (5.3.303-4). Whatever the "story of woe" is, it is neither contained in the symbolic power of two statues of equal value, nor in the spoken reconciliation of Capulet and Montague, nor yet in the social regulation of the Prince's word of law, nor even in the Friar's

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[5] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

summary of events (5.3.229-269). None of these succeed in restituting the story we have witnessed. None are capable of recognizing Romeo and Juliet as lovers or of conferring a sense of significance to their deaths. The only agents capable of such an utterance, in the absence of Romeo or Juliet, are those who have been there throughout the two-hour traffic of the stage, as third-party presences to the lovers' "misadventured piteous overthrows" (prologue.7). As such, the Prince offers a kind of indirect epilogue, taking on a function metaphor has played elsewhere in the play. Indeed, the performance of recognition in *Romeo and Juliet* was found, especially in Chapter 5, to be both unfinished and materially available to new, third-party perceptions. Not only in the balcony scene, but throughout the play, metaphors have opened the dynamics of address to a third-party instance. The call on the audience to take up the story of "Juliet and her Romeo" in the aftermath of the death of the protagonists thus outlines two relationships to death in connection with metaphorical functions presented in this thesis.

On one hand, death appears undeniable and silent in the final scene of the play. The golden monument, usually read as an instance of dramatic irony, can hardly be considered as an Ovidian metamorphosis or a form of life perpetuation. By extension, no sonneteer's golden monument seems to be achieved here either, none at least that might validate or recuperate death, or provide an allaying sense of narrative closure. Celebrating poetic success in a scene dealing with tragic loss would seem to go decidedly against the grain of the drama. From this perspective, death appears to challenge the idea of dramatic events as continuously engaging interpretation. None of the acts of language following Romeo and Juliet's deaths at the end of the play seem able to make sense of these deaths. As to acts of language preceding death, the fact that Romeo and Juliet are both wholly focused on the death of the other in the moments that precede their deaths (rather than reverting to thoughts of their own imminent death, as later tragic heroes of the canon are) suggests something of the same impenetrable

intimacy that was seen to characterize the act of declaring love. In this respect, it is significant that the third-party Prince should be the one to ask for their story to be reconsidered. This distinguishes the ending of *Romeo and Juliet* from other tragic endings, such as *Hamet*, in which Hamlet directly tasks Horatio with this work (5.2.340-343.1), or *Othello*, where the protagonist asks to be spoken of as "one who loved not wisely, but too well" (5.2.340).[6] No such appeal occurs in either of the lovers' dying moments. They do not ask for anyone to understand their behavior or to see things from their perspective. Romeo sends Balthasar away; Juliet has nothing significant to say to the Friar.

The events of the lovers' deaths thus rehearse a performative function of metaphor brought to light in my introduction. There, I read Juliet's metaphorical utterance in Act 3.2 as a curious appeal for "runaways' eyes" to close during the amorous rites of lovers. I then followed this function through to the structure of love declarations in the play, which I read as bound up in an unknowably singular perspective. This is one way of thinking about death in *Romeo and Juliet*. Nothing can be said about it in a way that might be publicly understood, or metaphorically translated.[7] There is no vantage point from which to perceive, in the protagonists' acts of language preceding their deaths, a reason or singular sense of necessity that might account for their decision to commit suicide. Death is in this sense unreadable, non-transformable, final. And stubborn – no metaphor can deny or frame its necessity as anything else than what it is; no speech act can make it decidedly intelligible, eloquent or

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[6] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 15 March 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=2; William Shakespeare, *Othello*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 15 March, 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=9.

[7] This recalls Levinas' understanding of death in *Totality and Infinity* as "a menace that approaches me as a mystery; its secrecy determines it – it approaches without being able to be assumed, such that the time that separates me from my death dwindles and dwindles without end, involves a sort of last interval which my consciousness cannot traverse, and where a leap will somehow be produced from death to me." 235 Richard Cohen points out that this gesture is "fundamentally important. . . because by treating death as that which is beyond possibility, as a mystery beyond the realm of any sort of comprehension, death transcends rather than confirms the self-understanding of human subjectivity, and in this way heralds the transcending of human subjectivity as understanding." Richard A. Cohen, "Thinking Least about Death: Contra Heidegger," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 60, no. 1/3 (2006): 29.

significant. Like the lovers, readers and audience members are merely confined in this perspective to the untranslatable singularity of their own solipsistic relationship to death. Romeo's suicide; Juliet's suicide: neither are available to the language of transformation and mediation that is metaphor. No speaker may come forth at the end of the play to speak on behalf of Romeo and Juliet's love or their death.

On the other hand, a stage death can obviously only occur as an act of language, a performative articulation of death.[8] As such, Romeo and Juliet's deaths also cannot be separated from a larger question of testimony. Even though the protagonists do not ask for it, the play ends with a signaled necessity for "more talk of these sad things." In this, it calls perhaps for a specific kind of reception however. As Prospero asks for "indulgence" from his audience at the end of *The Tempest* (epilogue.20), one might regard Juliet's metaphorical lovers who "see by their own beauty" as a condition for the inheritance of the "story of woe" – it will depend, she says, on an ability to see through lovers' eyes.[9] Romeo seems to tell as much to the Friar when he exclaims: "Thou canst not speak of that thou dost not feel" (3.3.64). For one to be able to say anything about Romeo and Juliet's love and the event of their tragic deaths, one must have *felt* them. More than this, one must have felt called on to bear witness to this love, these deaths. In this sense, if *Romeo and Juliet* is the "preeminent document of love in the West," this document bears a strange resemblance to the love letter Malvolio picks up in *Twelfth Night*.[10]

In Act 2.5 of this play, Malvolio falls in love after being tricked into recognizing a love declaration in a forged letter. Reading into an ambiguous, cryptic message, Malvolio builds love, beloved and lover into the referentially unexplicit letter. Troublingly, this thesis

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[8] This is to say that the fictional reality of "the deaths of Romeo and Juliet" can only be interpreted from the moment that it is taken as an act of language, as part of a scripted play.

[9] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, "Shakespeare's Words," David Crystal and Ben Crystal, accessed 15 March, 2022, https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=12.

[10] Dympna Callaghan, *Romeo and Juliet: Texts and Contexts* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003), 1.

has shown that there is no telling for sure that this artificially provoked love is *a priori* any different in nature from Hamlet's, Petrucchio's or Romeo's love declarations, since love declarations necessarily engage a radical uncertainty as they are hollowed out by a citationality that conditions their every utterance. What this further implies is that in the indeterminacy of a love letter's origins, parsing a writing of love is the truly loving act, the act only a lover may recognize and undertake. Straining the categorical integrity of the opposition between appropriative versus authoritative authorship and readership, analyzed in Chapter 4, a middle case may thus be found between the two. In a persistent metaphorical alternation between indeterminate singularity and empty mechanical repetition, *Romeo and Juliet* functions therefore as a writing the intelligibility of which is claimed to depend on a kind of alliance formed with a reader, with one who hears oneself called to answer, to read into the surplus of form. Audiences are required to look with that all-consuming "fire sparkling in lovers' eyes," else they will not be up to the task of telling the lovers' story (1.1.187).

This finally points once more to the curiously active, intermediary status third parties were argued to play in *Romeo and Juliet*, both involved in and kept out of its "amorous rites." Readers and audiences may in this respect become survivors of and witnesses to the death of the lovers not only as third-party bystanders or judging princes, but even as Romeo and Juliet are to each other, each in turn: that grieving other that is left behind by every dramatic utterance abandoned to posterity by its late speaker. In his staging of the process of meaning making, Shakespeare repeatedly comes back to this cohabitation of experiential conditions in his dramatic uses of metaphor. For there to be a theatrical performance, and for there to be figurative meaning, two conditions must be present: the uniqueness of live representation, and a nonspecific scripted repeatability. It is because drama works with such a repeatability that readers and audience may participate in its fictions. Yet, as soon as they do, there is a

sense in which they themselves are each bound to the untranslatable singularity of an ethical

engagement towards a love letter from the past.

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