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Esoteric Design in Premodern Texts

William E. Engel

By arranging narrative elements symmetrically and chiasmically, a poet can present a digressive episode in the highly visible (and audible) form of concentric “rings,” or “envelopes,” which frame a medial point, or “kernel.” Relationships between ideas and events gain emphasis through the balanced repetition and pairing, either as verbal echo or as idea echo . . . and a crucial idea or critical incident is in this way centralized in the foreground of the narrative.

-Portnoy 289-90

It has been several years since the *South Atlantic Review* sponsored a special issue on Medieval and Renaissance studies with “Memory and Forgetting in the Early Modern Era,” *SAR* vol. 83, no. 4 (Winter 2018). The time seemed right for looking once again into the formal elements and critical concerns of premodern literary history that precede, underpin, and in a variety of subtle ways inform recent work on the limits and liberties of new media platforms and contemporary approaches to cultural production. Martin Heidegger, in *Identity and Difference*, speaks to this presupposition in his acknowledgment that the advancement of thought depends on what previously has been considered and yet still might yield fresh results: “Whatever and however we may try to think, we think within the sphere of tradition. Tradition prevails when it frees us from thinking back to a thinking forward, which is no longer a planning. Only when we turn thoughtfully toward what has already been thought, will we be turned to use for what must still be thought” (41). And so, recalling two enormously influential books published in 1970, Alastair Fowler’s *Silent Poetry: Essays in Numerological Analysis* and Christopher Butler’s *Number Symbolism*, we have gathered together eight essays for a new generation of readers alert to the New Formalism and other forms of critical theory that have emerged since the 1970s. Committed to evidence-based hermeneutic analysis of specific texts with the aim of recovering and exploring the implications of the horizon of possibilities associated with submerged principles of

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organizational design, these eight essays bring readers of this journal back into contact with what can be understood as the metapoetics of premodern literary architectonics.

While “architectonic” simply means having an organized and unified structure that suggests some sort of underlying design, Philip Sidney in *The Defence of Poesy* (1595) famously calls upon this constructivist theme in reference to the “serving sciences” which, although they have private ends in themselves, also are “all directed to the highest end of the mistress-knowledge, by the Greeks called *architectonike*, which stands for (as I think) in the knowledge of a man’s self, in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well-doing and not of well-knowing only” (104).¹ Hence our focus in this special issue on “Esoteric Design in Premodern Texts.” Nothing abstruse or recondite is intended by nominating “esoteric design” as the unifying backdrop to the essays presented here; rather, we use this term in its most rudimentary lexical sense as that which is intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a specialized knowledge or interest. On the other side of this binary categorization, the term “exoteric” denotes that which is intended for or likely to be understood by the general public. Playwrights typically in the Tudor-Stuart period esoterically allude to contemporary socio-political conditions whilst setting plays in classical times as a way of distancing themselves from charges of sedition. However, the esoteric quickly might slide into the exoteric, especially during times of regnal transition. As Jonas Barish argues, such was the case with Ben Jonson’s 1603 *Sejanus*, which “dealt with the downfall and execution of a powerful favorite, a favorite who aspired to unseat the monarch,” resulting in Jonson’s “being cited before the Privy Council on charges of treason” most likely for the play’s allusions “however distantly to the career of the Earl of Essex, which had followed a roughly analogous course two years earlier, and was still one of the delicate issues of the day” (16).

Insofar as this special issue, grounded in English literary history, is rational in its findings and philosophical in its overall orientation, the contributors are not concerned with esoteric design in the traditions of Orphic and Hermetic mystery cults and writings, or the epistemological impasse encountered with the hidden God (*Deus absconditus*), or beholden to a model of analogical obfuscations exemplified in alchemical treatises aiming to record yet also to safeguard the secrets of hard-won experimental discoveries of the truth. Instead, as this preface outlines, our point of departure consists in two essentially Platonic motifs concerning the character and nature of truth in the Western metaphysical tradition consonant with the tenor of the “mistress-knowledge” personification allegory in Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy*.² The

first is that Truth, being modest and circumspect about discovery, prefers to hide from prying eyes. The immemorial commonplace of Truth being drawn out from her place of concealment by Time figured prominently in early modern visual culture as an allegorical theme, emblem, and well-circulated printer's device (see fig. 1).³ The second Platonic



Fig. 1

Time reveals hidden Truth. Frontispiece, *The poesies of George Gascoigne*. H[enry] Byneman for Richard Smith, 1575. Image used courtesy of the Newberry Library.

motif, ascribed to Socrates during his trial, is that no one is more hated than one who speaks the truth.⁴ And in literary works, although meaning can at times be obscured intentionally by design, as with Edmund Spenser's statement in his letter to Raleigh prefixed to *The Faerie Queene* describing his poem as "a continued Allegory, or darke conceit" (15), attention to the architectonic principles underlying and guiding

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what might be termed recovery readings, aimed at finding and shining light on dark or hidden conceits, will help bring them back to our attention and thereby open the way for further critical discussion.

For example, the “SATAN” acrostic running “oblique” and “sidelong” down the right margin of *Paradise Lost* (IX.510-14) visually echoes and textually replicates the subtle serpent’s movement as described in the 1674 twelve-book version of the poem (Klemp 91-92)—a camouflaged *jeu d’esprit* clearly part of the poet’s original plan insofar as it appears as well in the earlier 1667 ten-book version of the epic (VIII.510-514):

. . . this with her who bore
Scipio the height of Rome. With tract *oblique*
At first, as one who sought access, but feared
To interrupt, *sidelong* he works his way.
As when a ship by skilful steersman wrought
Nigh river’s mouth or foreland, where the wind. . . . [emphasis added]⁵

This subtly cached message in the text coincides with and metapoetically parallels the Arch-Fiend’s subversive tactic of concealing himself within the body of a serpent. John Leonard has interpreted the unlooked-for acrostic as “affixing the unacknowledged name of *Satan* as he hardens his heart to revenge” (136). This particular disclosure which unmistakably signals the operative presence of an esoteric design has led some readers to continue looking for—and some even to find—other comparable markers of superadded meaning embedded within Milton’s epic (Vaughan 6-8). Such refined, encoded designs once recovered and taken to heart in the context of the section of the work within which they are concealed tend to call attention to some larger message. And with vertically running acrostics, that message often broadly concerns how easy it is not to see something potentially surprising and jarring that literally is right before one’s eyes, “in counterpoint to the explicit text that couches it, foreshadowing that all is not as it seems” (Phaal 67). Where ideas of the hiddenness of truth are concerned, Martin Heidegger, in his recursive uncovering of the place of poesy in the hermeneutics of human thought, speaks of this recovery enterprise ontologically in terms of the “unconcealedness” of truth [*Unverborgenheit*].⁶

The unconcealing brought forward in the eight chronologically arranged essays of this special issue will enable readers to see what is being brought to presence—and once again to prominence—through critical examination and close reading, detection and analysis, and careful and attentive listening to what *poesis* has to say and reveal about

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itself. In line with this, Heidegger glosses just such a requisite attentiveness in his lecture on *The Way to Language*: “All reflective thinking is poetic, and all poetry in turn is a kind of thinking. The two belong together by virtue of that Saying which has already bespoken itself to what is unspoken” (136). Moreover, the language of *poesis*, which is to say the interactive exercise of “thinking and poetizing,”⁷ is understood as already having imported the truth of “the beings of beings” waiting for us to catch up to it. Heidegger develops this notion further in *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*: “The essence of language essences where it happens as world-forming power, that is, where it in advance preforms and brings into jointure the beings of beings. True poetry is the language of that being [*Sein*] that was foreshadowed to us a long time ago already and that we have never before caught up with” (141-42). And so it need not be poetry as such (metrical or otherwise) that is under investigation in these essays, but rather what is drawn up in the net of literary instantiations of *poesis*, which in the classical tradition—and distinct from *praxis*—describes the activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before, usually associated with poetry, art, and other forms of cultural “making” (Agamben 68-74).⁸

Formal considerations, especially where esoteric designs are concerned, often become inseparable from the meaning of a work of poetry, drama, art, or some other form of cultural production. For example, in his assessment of Ben Jonson’s use of classical scene divisions for his plays such as *Sejanus*, Jonas Barish opines “the fact of form is part of the meaning of his plays” (ix). Moreover, he argues, if “the academic Senecans carried their interest in ‘form’ to a pedantic extreme, ending in a sterile pseudo-formalism, the popular playwrights often seemed to be successfully imitating the shape of chaos. *Sejanus* attempts valiantly to mediate between these extremes” (2). So too with the eight contributions to this special collection concerned with esoteric design, where “the fact of form is part of the meaning” in “Chiastic Patterns, Number Symbolism, and Marian Echoes in Chaucer” by William E. Engel; “Tales of Simonides: Architectural Mnemonics and Literary Architectonics” by Rebeca Helfer; “Suspended Animation: Reading the Correlative Verse Tradition in Sidney’s *Arcadia*” by Stephanie L. Batkie; “The Christological Number 33 in Works by King James, Raleigh, Byrd and Spenser” by Thomas Herron; “Macrocosmic Proportionality and Commemorative Design in Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*” by Grant Williams; “Through a Glass Darkly: Elvish Numbers in Ben Jonson’s 1623 First Folio Poems” by Roger Stritmatter; “Poet as Priest: Chiasmus, George Herbert, and the Sign of the Cross” by Andrew James Harvey; and “Thomas Browne and the Mystery of Number” by Jessica Wolfe.

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Collectively these essays, albeit each in its own way as befits the content and context of the work or works under scrutiny, invite readers to engage with and to consider with fresh eyes a rich sampling of literary documents thoughtfully culled from the premodern English archive.

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Notes

1. On literary architectonics in the Renaissance drawn from the epistemological principles undergirding Sidney’s personification of “Mistress-Knowledge,” see Doherty (xxi-xxiii).
2. As Doherty has demonstrated, the first half of the *Defence* “confirms the mistress-knowledge in Sidney’s speaking-picture of Plato’s statesman-architect. . . . A Platonic philosophy dominates the *Defence* as Sidney weaves his twofold Aristotelian argument” (94). And on Platonic “formal personification” from the classical age to its medieval inheritance and with reference to twentieth-century critical treatments of “Platonic realism as the condition for all personification allegory,” see Breen (111-32), especially as regards Socrates’s use of “metaphors of paradigm and example, model and copy, original and image, with the particular in each case striving and yet failing to fully instantiate the universal” (115).
3. See McKerrow (entry 186). The emblem bearing the motto “*Tempore patet occulta veritas*” was used by Conrad Badius in Geneva in 1554, and in London first by the bookseller Richard Smith in 1575, and later reappears in works produced by others in the printing trade, most notably in George Chapman’s *Ovid’s Banquet of Sense* (1595) and Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* (1628); it also is reported in Camden’s *Remains* “to have been the badge or impressa of Queen Mary, with the motto *Veritas temporis filia*” (McKerrow 69).
4. The *locus classicus* of this adage is Plato’s *Apology*: “And this, O men of Athens, is the truth [*alēthēs*]; I have concealed nothing, I have dissembled

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nothing. And yet I know that this plainness of speech makes them hate me, and what is their hatred but a proof that I am speaking the truth?—Hence has arisen the prejudice against me” (116, §24a).

5. The quotation from *Paradise Lost* follows the edition by Alastair Fowler (500), in which IX.510-14 is glossed: “The initial lines form a *sidelong* acrostic, SATAN” [original emphasis].

6. As regards Heideggerian *Unverborgenheit*, Mark Wrathall points out that “the being of truth resides in uncovering,” namely a “lifting into salience” as the ontological function of truth, thus making the through-thread of Heidegger’s thought early and late a “gradual recognition of the implications of pursuing an ontology of unconcealment” (4).

7. In Heidegger’s last academic lecture as an official tenured professor (announced for the 1944-1945 Winter Semester in Freiburg), *Introduction to Philosophy—Thinking and Poetizing* (xi), the section headed “The Consideration of Thinking in its Relation to Poetizing as One of the Ways for a Guide to Genuine Thinking. Nietzsche and Hölderlin,” poses interlinking questions that set a trajectory for his ensuing lecture: “Are poets actually thinkers? Are thinkers fundamentally poets? By what right do we like to name them, thinkers and poets, in the same breath? Is there a distinct yet still concealed relationship between both of them in their essence? Does the relation of both consist in the fact that thinking is a meditation [*Sinnen*] just as poetizing?” (5).

8. Heidegger’s *Introduction to Philosophy* affirms this classical etymology of *poesis*, derived from a word meaning “to produce, to bring-forth” (41). From here he projects a further question that has special relevance for this present collection of essays on esoteric design in premodern literature: “The fact that, in the ancient names for thinking and poetizing, in the words for philosophy and poetry, two fundamental words of early, incipient Western being resound, namely σοφία and ποιεῖν (cf. Heraclitus, Diels-Kranz B 122), has its own reason that is largely still concealed from us” (41-42).

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Chiastic Patterns, Number Symbolism, and Marian Echoes in Chaucer

William E. Engel

Ricardian Court Culture in Context

As a well-traveled diplomat and keen observer of literary developments of his day, Chaucer was no stranger to number symbolism and chiastic patterning. A sophisticated appreciation of involved artifice, including elaborately interlaced designs, permeated medieval English cultural life (Mann 187). Largely influenced by continental models, these aesthetic inclinations became especially pronounced from 1382 on with Richard's marriage to Anne of Bohemia, eldest daughter of Holy Roman Emperor, Charles IV, who had established trendsetting courts throughout Europe owing to the reach of his dynastic power (Mathew 17; Thomas xv-xvi). The resulting extravagant displays of English court culture are well documented (Mathew 12-38), reflecting the "increasing sacralization of the secular" that characterizes Richard II's personal and political life (Vale 300). Chaucer participated in bolstering the infrastructure of lavish Ricardian entertainments as "clerk of the king's works," which included overseeing construction of scaffolds for tournaments, and as "subforester," maintaining "both metropolitan and regional great houses, palaces, and hunting lodges" (Turner 421).

So enduring was the impression of Richard's courtly excesses that two centuries later Shakespeare could tap into the overdetermined caricature of the precious "skipping King," who "ambled up and down" and

Enfeoff'd himself to popularity;
That, being daily swallowed by men's eyes,
They surfeited with honey, and began
To loathe the taste of sweetness, whereof a little
More than a little is by much too much. (*1 Henry 4*, 3.2.60-73)¹

Undeniably, though, Richard's court was important as a cultural force in generating a richly refined aesthetic sensibility and concomitant literary practices, giving rise to what Gerald Morgan among others has

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referred to as England's first "Golden Age" of poetry (1-14). Michael Bennett further clarifies that "the court was more a cultural construct than an institution" and can perhaps best "be likened to a theater. Material and organizational props are vital, but what is required to bring together the means and the inspiration are shared expectations about what constituted a princely court and shared conventions about how courtly life is to be enacted" (8). It is this attention to self-conscious performativity, with its ingrained appreciation of conspicuous display and deft role-playing, that provides our first clue about how to approach and understand in context Chaucer's application of chiasmic designs and numerical patterning.

Extravagance in artifice rarely is judged favorably by later generations. Hence the more circumspect fabricators of highly refined works of art seek to conceal the seams of the obvious constructedness of their finished products. Accordingly, as this present study demonstrates, Chaucer craftily injects religious (particularly Marian) and ethical (fundamentally Boethian) elements into his most ingeniously wrought poetic endeavors. The works under discussion bring about their desired effects by obfuscating while at the same hinting at the deeper matter to be recovered from embedded patterns so that the reader (or listener) might descry what is awaiting unconcealment and recognition, and thereby experience the attendant—and intended—delight and edification.²

Chaucerian Literary Architectonics

Chaucer's "A.B.C." is a good case in point for launching this excursus on chiasmic patterning and recessed symmetry. Descriptively headed *Incipit carmen secundum ordinem literarum Alphabeti* [*Here begins a poem following the order of the letters of the alphabet*], and aptly called *La Prière de nostre Dame* [*The Prayer of Our Lady*] in surviving manuscripts and early printed editions of Chaucer's works (most notably by Speght and Thynne), it is thought to have been written at the request of Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, wife of John of Gaunt (Richard's uncle and a known patron of Chaucer), which would date the poem sometime before her death in 1362 (*TRC* 1072).³ The "A.B.C." is Chaucer's English take on Guillaume de Deguileville's alphabetically organized mnemonic prayer from the French allegorical poem, *Le pèlerinage de la vie humaine* [*The Pilgrimage of Human Life*] (second redaction 1355). The twelve-line stanzas are changed to eight-line stanzas or ottava rima which, although usually rhyming ABABABCC,⁴ Chaucer chose to rhyme ABABBBCB—the same formal design as his Monk's Tale and the only

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time it is used in *Canterbury Tales*.⁵ Each stanza, in keeping with the genre of abecedarian acrostics, begins with successive letters of the alphabet. Taking advantage of the twenty-three letters used by Chaucer for this poem (omitting *j*, *u*, and *w*), a midmost stanza emerges as deserving special attention. It interlaces the Old Testament theophany of the burning bush seen as a typological or figural preview of the fires of Hell from which the New Testament Virgin Mother might defend us. The pivotal, chiasmically charged hinge stanza, the twelfth out of twenty-three with eleven stanzas before and eleven after, reads as follows:

Moises, that saugh the bush with flawmes rede
Brenninge, of which ther never a stikke brende,
Was signe of thin unwemmed maidenhede.
Thou art the bush on which ther gan descende
The Holi Gost, the which that Moyses wende
Had ben a-fyr, and this was in figure.
Now, ladi, from the fyr thou us defende
Which that in helle eternalli shal dure. (*TRC* 638-39; A.B.C.
ll.89-96)

Proleptically looking both backward, in this case to Moses's bush that burned without being consumed in Exodus 3:1-3, and forward, to Mary's "unwemmed" (unstained) maidenhead in Matthew 1:18-27, the reader (or listener) derives a composite meaning, the significance of each component augmented and enriched by the other. This combinative approach to triggering sustained engagement with the text is typical of premodern chiasmatic patterning and mnemonic literary architecture (Fowler 102-106; Engel 2-5). Chaucer sets up a comparable chiasmically hinged design in the opening thirty-four lines of *Canterbury Tales*, with special attention being drawn to a distinctive midpoint (ll. 17-18) that foregrounds and anticipates the sweep of his expansive poem.

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye

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(So Priketh hem Nature in hir corages),
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially from every shires ende 15
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.
 Bifil that in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay 20
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At nyght was come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle 25
In felawshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed atte beste.
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste, 30
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon
That I was of hir felawshipe anon,
And made forward erly for to ryse,
To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse.
 But natheless. . . . 35
(*TRC* 23; General Prologue, ll.1-35)

Comprised of two sections, each is indicated as such by indentation in the manuscript sources (ll.1, 19), and each consists of eight rhymed couplets (sixteen lines per section) with a standout rime riche couplet at the midpoint (ll.17-18), for a total of thirty-four lines. (The significance of the number seventeen introduced here will be thoroughly fleshed out by the end of this essay). The poetic convention of rime riche involves agreement of sound, “in which rhyme patterns appear identical but diverge in meaning” (Zarins 239). The pivotal couplet thus encourages the reader (or listener) to pause and reflect on the movement from the first section, with its chronologically conditioned “Whan . . . Whan . . . Thanne” rhetorical structure (ll.1, 5, 12) and its involving of the macrocosm of Nature’s forces cosmic and zodiacal, to the second section involving the microcosm of human activities and aspirations. The rime riche couplet strategically is positioned halfway through the poem’s opening salvo, prior to the rationalization for and set-up of the frame tale structure conducting to a stand-alone stanza

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(likewise indented) announcing the forward tug of the principal narration, “But natheless . . .” (l.35). From here readers (or listeners) find themselves swept up in the catalogue of character portraits of the tale tellers.

The two symmetrically balanced sections constituting the opening thirty-four lines chiasmically look back to the motive force underlying the setting off on a pilgrimage and forward to the prefigured destination, emphatically iterated by the unique rime riche couplet: “The hooly blisful martir for to seke, / That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke” (ll.17-18). We do well to recall here Alastair Fowler’s insight that “[i]n the linear form, elaborate symmetries often surround the significant middle point” (23). This midmost couplet, with eight couplets coming before and eight after (for a total of seventeen couplets in all), functions as a narrative turnstile and the focal center of this thirty-four line unit unmistakably signaled by the first use of rime riche in the poem. Frequently deployed in medieval poetry, rime riche is less usually used by Chaucer such that when it is, something of singular significance is portended. Each of the words making the rime riche couplet, “seke” and “seeke” (ll.17-18), have different if subtly linked meanings brought out through the larger implication of what this word pair hinges on and at the same time holds together; namely, the two segments of this two-part framework introducing the cosmic, seasonal, natural, and spiritual rationale for the ensuing frame tales. Both “seke” and “seeke” concern searching and healing—in both physical and spiritual senses. The quest motif is introduced at once subtly and directly, showcasing the difference in sameness concealed in plain sight but revealed through the insistently repeated cues.

This visual and aural play on remediation evokes the common sickness associated with mortal temporality, or *litargye* in Middle English, a recurring feature of Boethius’s *Consolation* (translated by Chaucer into English prose):

“Here nys
no peril,” quod sche; “he is fallen into a
litargye, whiche that is a *comune seknesse*
to hertes that been desceyved. He hath a
litol foryeten hymselfe, but certes he schal
lightly remembren hymself yif so be that he
hath knowen me or now; and that he may so
doon, I will wipe a litil his eien that ben
dirked by *the cloude of mortel thynges*.” [emphasis added]
(TRC 399; *Boece* I.pr.2, ll.18-26)

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In what amounts to a General Prologue of Boethius's text, Lady Philosophy tells Boethius-the-prisoner she will purge him of the false views of life that have enthralled him to things of this world. Only then can she help him remember what he once knew about the *summum bonum*, or highest good, which in English medieval terms (according to Chaucer's translation) comes about through *purveance*, God's providential, omni-perspectival view of the larger scope of the divine plan (TRC 468; *Boece* 5.pr.6, ll.243, 248). The same conceptual and thematic movement likewise is echoed in the achievement of the rime riche "seke" / "seeke" of Chaucer's General Prologue.

Consistent with this view of "devyne sighte" and "foreknowynge" (TRC 469; *Boece* 5.pr.6, ll.266, 271) as transferred into *Canterbury Tales* more broadly, we can descry a chiasitic turn-about in the superstructure of the extant twenty-four tales with (what medievalists refer to as) Fragment VI (Group C). Thus, in the editorial reconstruction of the ten surviving fragments of *Canterbury Tales* left incomplete by Chaucer (TRC 5), the twelfth and thirteenth tales form a central unit in the sweep of the whole. As such they constitute a kind of medial rime riche writ large concerning the Physician and the Pardoner, "preservers of the body and the soul" (Mandel 50). Together they reveal that the only remedy or cure for the sickness of living is death. Notwithstanding there being no definitive indication of the order in which Chaucer intended the fragments to be read (or heard), Jerome Mandel contends that "Chaucer has carefully arranged the sequence of narrative events in a structural pattern that is almost identical in the two tales. . . . No other narrative in the *Canterbury Tales* proceeds and develops in a way at all similar to the way shared by the Physician's and Pardoner's Tales . . . [with a] parallel structural pattern shared by the two tales which creates the backbone of architectural unity within Fragment VI" (51).

But it is only with the final tale that readers (and listeners) finally are primed to learn definitively about the double nature of the pilgrimage. The Parson's Tale, a chiasitic bookend sanctifying the story-telling enterprise hatched in the secular site of the Tabard Inn at the opening of *Canterbury Tales*, is a "penitential manual" to which is added an account of specific remedies for the seven mortal sins (R. P. Miller 34), each duly headed; for example, that concerning Pride is entitled "*Remedium contra peccatum Superbie*" (TRC 302; Parson's Tale, l.474). With an obvious pun on the name of "Mary," the Parson speaks plainly in his own voice as it were, even as his words reveal the extent of Chaucer's overarching plan:

I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose
To knytte up al this feeste and make an ende.

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And Jhesu, for his grace, wit me sende
To shewe you the wey, in this viage,
Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage
That highte Jerusalem celestial. [emphasis added] (*TRC* 287;
Parson's Prologue, ll.46-51)

This way of setting up the conclusion to the frame poem with an ostensibly hopeful tone nonetheless casts a ghostly pall over the merry sport of tale telling as the shadows grow long and the pilgrims approach their final destination: "For ellevne foot, or litel moore or lesse, / My shadwe was at thilke tyme" (*TRC* 287; Parson's Prologue, ll.6-7). The Parson tells his "myrie tale" as the company enters the precincts of Canterbury, which is also the site of the healing afforded by the "hooly blissful martir," Thomas à Becket, a place where those who in former times were "seeke" (sick) and did here "seke" (seek) longed for relief. The sweep of *Canterbury Tales* moreover traces the trajectory of an allegorical "day in the life": beginning with waking up in the morning at the poem's outset, "Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage . . . And made forward erly for to ryse" (*TRC* 23; General Prologue ll.21, 33), and ending up seeing the long shadows of evening's approach in the Parson's Prologue. This itinerary is emblematic of the *homo viator* motif where every mortal is a wayfarer, "on the way" as it were, within a Christologically informed macrocosm governed by God's love (*TRC* 420; *Boece* ll.m.5, ll.13-16).

In the course of the pilgrims' journey to Canterbury, Chaucer is at his most wry when he relates that something just happened, haphazardly or by chance ("Bifil that in that seson on a day" and "by aventure" (*TRC* 23; General Prologue ll.19, 25). In doing so, he slyly replicates by rhetorical sleight of hand the very movement of Fortune's Wheel. This ruse of apparent chance underscores the gaming motif of *Canterbury Tales* from the start, with the drawing of straws to see who will speak first, as well as the rules for winning the free supper "at oure alle cost" at the end of the journey for whoever tells "Tales of best sentence and moost solaas" (*TRC* 36; General Prologue ll.788-89). Such is the criteria for judgment within this microcosm tucked away in the game of chance described by the poem, itself a mirror for the world at large where every mortal is a thrall to fortune, but the wise will seek remission and remedy.

This theme is reinforced with reference to the tavern Host, Harry Bailly, whose self-appointed role is to keep everyone on task, telling tales en route to Canterbury and the holy shrine. The Host's setting the rules of the game for winning a free supper once back at the Tabard Inn plays into an obvious pun wrapped up in the serious theme of "eu-

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charistic poetics” in which Middle English writers frequently engaged (Garrison 2). The Eucharist—or Lord’s Supper—brought with it a number of popular attitudes including, among other things, the communion of the faithful and the reuniting of communities even amidst times of civil strife (Rubin 447-68). Throughout the pilgrimage the Host seeks to keep peace among the testier and mutually antagonistic tale tellers. Hardly a theologian, Chaucer here still shows an appreciation of the stakes of the debates about the eucharistic transformation that ultimately come down to the individual’s hope for redemption (Garrison 182). Alert to the double meanings of “Host” (bread symbolizing the body of Christ and the person entertaining others as guests), Chaucer intermingles the extremely mundane (Harry Bailly) and the absolutely sacred (the eucharistic thanksgiving supper).

Despite the Host’s stated standard for judging the tales in terms of “best sentence and most solaaas,” or substance and comfort (*TRC* 36, 1291), he repeatedly insists on a merry tone:

“My lord the Monk,” quod he, “be myrie of cheere,
For ye shul telle a tale, trewely.
Loo, Rouchestre stant heer faste by!
Ryde forth, myn owene lord, brek nat oure game.” (*TRC* 240;
Monk’s Prologue, ll.1924-27)

If they are coming up on Rochester then they are about thirty miles from Canterbury, and likewise thirty miles from Southwark—making the Monk’s Tale take place at the midmost point in their route. As such, it calls out to be considered by readers (and listeners) as a significant point of focus in the larger metaphysical design of the overarching pilgrimage motif. The open-ended structure of his mini-tales mitigates against closure and thus threatens the integrity of the tale telling game and its timely conclusion by the time they reach Canterbury. As already observed, *ottava rima* is Chaucer’s main poetic model for the Monk’s Tale which, as with his “A.B.C.,” is adjusted to rhyme ABABBCBC, thus making it more of a double quatrain (a formal scheme later known as the “Monk’s stanza,” the same way English pentameter rhyme royale came to be labelled the “Troilus stanza”). It therefore echoes itself internally without the relief of a terminal couplet, a form well suited to the redundant subject matter described by the Monk, spinning like the Wheel of Fortune without remission and with only unremitting tragedy in sight.

Boethian Formulations

Having established a case for Chaucer's thoughtful application of chiasmic patterning, recessed symmetry, mirror-analogues, and rimes riches, we turn now to see how all this complements and deftly informs his more involved Boethian formulations, especially as regards Dame Fortune's wheel (see fig. 1). The Monk's Tale, as a kind of literary

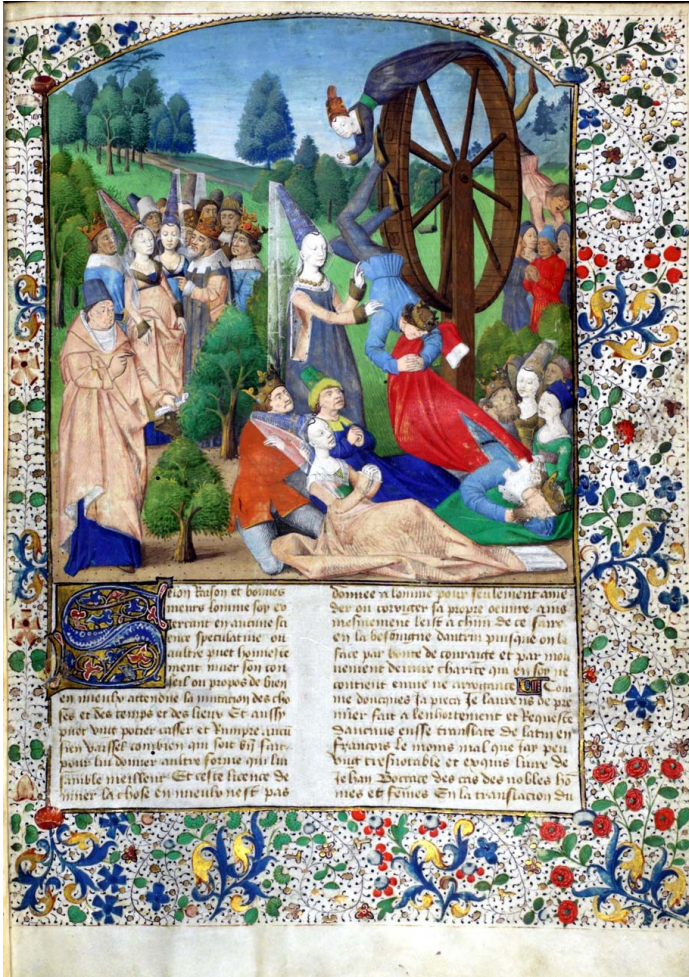


Fig. 1

Boethian Wheel of Fortune, from Giovanni Boccaccio, *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (Paris, 1467) MSS Hunter 371-372 (V.1.8-9). Image (vol. 1: folio 1r). Public Domain. [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fortune_wheel_\(15c.,_French\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fortune_wheel_(15c.,_French).jpg).

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mise en abyme, reflects an inverse image of the diversity and polyphony of *Canterbury Tales* as a whole. The literal meaning of this trope is “placed in the abyss,” referring originally to the heraldic term for a shield-enclosed symbolic image put at the center (*abyme*) of a coat of arms (Van Duzer 88). With reference to other art forms and cultural expressions, a double-mirroring effect is evoked by the reduplication in miniature that reflects the larger whole of which it is part, calling attention to the conditions of its representational status. Each of the seventeen mini-tales is a reiteration of the same tragic theme without any proffered remedy; whereas *Canterbury Tales* includes a variety of voices, points of view, and literary forms and genres that offer remission from the malaise of wearying sameness.

The Monk’s Tale is a monotonous recitation of calamity, and this approach to telling the tale of human frailty through exempla becomes itself a exemplum of the opposite of a fully developed understanding of the Boethian resolution of the human condition, like that glimpsed in the *Consolation* (III.m.9) at its chiasmic midpoint (Scarry 91-140), and also by Chaucer’s Troilus, transported to the eighth sphere after his fall from Fortune’s wheel and who now, with “ful avysement” and subject to apotheosis, sees it for what it is—laughable (Steadman 2-18):

And whan that he was slayn in this manere,
His lighte goost ful blisfully is went
Up to the holownesse of the eighth spere,
In convers letinge every element;
And ther he saugh, with ful avysement,
The erratik sterres, herkeninge armonye
With sownes fulle of hevenish melodye.

And doun from thennes faste he gan avyse
This litel spot of erthe, that with the see
Embraced is, and fully gan despise
This wrecched world, and held al vanitee
To respect of the pleyn felicitee
That is in hevene above; and at the laste,
Ther he was slayn, his loking doun he caste;

And in himself he lough right at the wo
Of hem that wepten for his deeth so faste;
And dampned al our werk that folweth so
The blinde lust, the which that may not laste,
And sholden al our herte on hevene caste.

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And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,
Ther as Mercurie sorted him to dwelle. (*TRC* 584; *Troilus*
V.1807-27)

An uncomfortable kind of pathetic laughter likewise underlies the Monk's saying he has about a hundred of these tales in his "celle," or memory, where they are stowed away, ready to trundle out though in no particular order.

This worthy Monk took al in pacience,
And seyde, "I wol doon al my diligence,
As fer as sowneth into honestee,
To telle yow a tale, or two, or three.
And if yow list to herkne hyderward
I wol yow seyn the lyf of Seint Edward;
Or ellis first tragedies wol I telle
Of whiche I have an hundred in my celle.
Tragedie is to seyn, a certeyn storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee
And is yfallen out of heigh degree
Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly,
And they ben versified communely
Of six feet, which men clepen exametron.
In prose eek been endited many oon,
And eek in meetre, in many a sondry wyse.
Lo, this declaryng oghte ynogh suffise;
Now herkneth, if yow liketh for to heere.
But first, I yow biseeke in this mateere,
Though I by ordre telle nat this thynges,
Be it of popes, emperours, or kynges,
After hir ages, as men writen fynde,
But tellen hem, som bifore and som bihynde,
As it now comth unto my remembraunce;
Have me excused of myn ignoraunce." (*TRC* 241; Monk's
Prologue ll.1965-3180)

After seventeen redundant *de casibus* mini-tales, the Knight calls a halt to the Monk's Tale. Has he simply heard "one too many stories about fallen aristocrats" (Cowdery 42), or is there something about the seventeenth mini-tale concerning "Cresus" (Croesus, last king of Lydia) in particular that gets to him? "Cresus" is mentioned by Boethius in his *Consolation* as translated by Chaucer (*TRC* 409; *Boece* II.pr.2, ll.58-

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63), and in the Monk's Tale is described as being so committed to conquest that he "kan nat stente / For to bigynne a newe werre agyan. / He wende wel, for that Fortune him sente / Swich hap" (*TRC* 251; Monk's Tale ll.2735-38). Perhaps for Chaucer's Knight this cuts too close to the bone, reminding him of what he is trying to make amends for and why he is on this pilgrimage. Chaucer's character sketch of the Knight (*TRC* 24; General Prologue ll.43-78) recounts his extensive, even hyperbolic, campaigning throughout Europe, North Africa, and Asia Minor, plus his slaying foes "in lystes" (l.63) or formal duels (*TRC* 24). Whatever the reason, he emphatically cuts off the Monk: "Hoo! . . . namoore of this!" (*TRC* 252; Nun's Priest's Prologue l.*3957). "Hoo" is the same ex-postulation used by Theseus in the Knight's own tale; the first time, it is accompanied by pulling out his sword, to stop the rival cousins from dueling in the grove (*TRC* 48; l.1706) and the second time to keep Palamon from receiving the *coup de grace* from Arcite in the arena: "Hoo! Namooore, for it is doon! I wol be trewe juge, and no partie" (*TRC* 60; l.2656). "Hoo" is an appropriate verbal tic for a war veteran as it is a curt martial expression associated with halting precipitate carnage—like the Monk's Tale which quite literally is a butchering and doing to death of the monk's of storytelling and the relief it affords.

Fortune, in the Boethian formulation, "makes every form of earthly happiness a theme for a tragedy, since each form of earthly happiness is of itself transient" (Mathew 67), insofar as "tragedye is . . . a dite [literary work] of a prosperite for a tyme that endeth in wrecchidnesse" (*TRC* 409-410; *Boece* II.pr.2, ll.70-72). As Lee Patterson has pointed out about the medieval "tragic curve from 'wele to wo,'" tragedy "deals with the world of public events—of history—in which the socially exalted enact their inevitable fate: according to Donatus, 'tragedy aspires to historical truth,' and as the Monk succinctly says, 'tragedie is . . . a certain storie,' that is, a history" (242). Also, this eight-line stanzaic form chimes with the superstructure of the Monk's Tale with its eight and eight series of exempla on either side of the midpoint exemplum (see Chart 1). Moreover, the Monk's Tale, "under the umbrella of a framing fiction" becomes a metapoetic mirror in miniature of *Canterbury Tales* itself but held up as "a negative example . . . of what not to do" owing to the "identical, repetitive structure of each tale" (Turner 358). By virtue of this *mise en abyme* effect, as well as the other formal features mentioned above, Chaucer's reader (or listener) is alerted that something deeper here remains to be unconcealed and factored into the hermeneutics of the larger, encompassing design.

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Chiastic Design of The Monk's Tale (with midmost mini-tale on Peter of Cyprus)

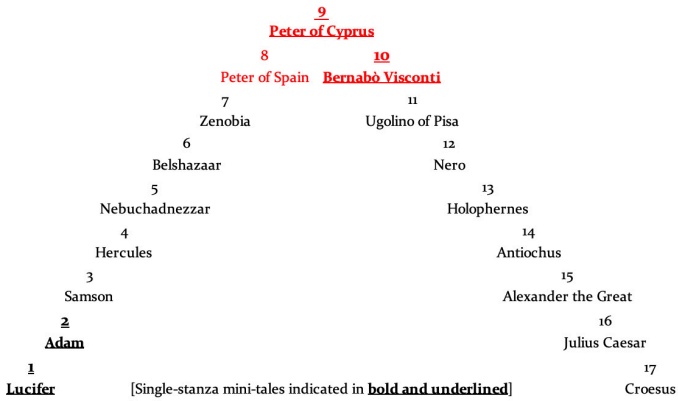


Chart 1

Chiastic Design of The Monk's Tale. © William E. Engel

Significance of the Number Seventeen

Chaucer's master plan for the Monk's Tale requires a total of seventeen *de casibus* exempla (moral lessons concerning the fall of illustrious people)—a decisively extradiegetic element, for none of the storytellers within the fictive world of the pilgrimage could have known or predicted the Monk's mini-tales would be abruptly halted after the seventeenth. Chart 1 shows at a glance that these mini-tales move, in the first section, from ordinary and original sin with Lucifer and Adam (#1 and #2), to quasi-divine mortals, Sampson and Hercules (#3 and #4), to ancient conqueror-monarchs (#5, #6, and #7), and on up to three figures of very special interest to Chaucer and the extended English court. Bespeaking contemporary political concerns, this triad of linked exempla (#8, #9, and #10) is situated at the center of the seventeen mini-tales. Again, Fowler's *Triumphal Forms* is instructive: "Poets developed the habit of distributing matter through the metrical structure with careful regard to the center's sovereignty. Almost as a regular practice, they would devote the central place to some principal figure or event, or make it coincide with a structural division of the poem" (62).

The triangulated midsection of the Monk's Tale involves, first, Peter of Spain (King of Castile and Leon), assassinated by his half-brother in 1369; three years earlier Chaucer was on an embassy to his court (*TRC* 932). Peter's daughter, Constance, was married to John of Gaunt, one of Chaucer's main patrons in the royal family; and moreover, Chaucer's wife, Philippa, served Constance for several years (Turner 117-18). The

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ninth mini-tale concerns Peter of Cyprus (also the titular King of Jerusalem), who was murdered in his bed by three of his own knights in 1369. He had been at the court of Edward III in 1363 when Chaucer was that English king's esquire (*TRC* 933). Completing the triad at the center of the Monk's Tale is Bernabò Visconti, Lord of Milan, who was Chaucer's host when he was in Italy on embassies, especially in 1378 (*TRC* 932-33). One of Bernabò's daughters, Caterina, had been offered in marriage to Richard II; and Chaucer's on-site diplomatic skills would have played a part in the betrothal of Violante Visconti, daughter of Galeazzo II Visconti (the older brother of Bernabò), Lord of Pavia and sponsor of Petrarch (Wilkins 32-46), to Lionel of Antwerp, second son of Edward III, in whose first wife's household Chaucer began his career as a page in 1357 (Turner 56-57). The historical record also shows that Chaucer was among the guests at this lavish wedding in Milan, as were Petrarch, Froissart, and the celebrated English knight John Hawkwood who was married to Bernabò's daughter Dominia (*TRC* 933). Apropos of which, we can glean further insight into Chaucer's favoring of this structuring principle for the Monk's Tale in light of Alastair Fowler's contention that "conventions of naturalized symmetry naturally carried over from political protocol into poetry, as they did into architecture" (62). As shown on Chart 1, the midmost tale (with eight mini-tales coming before and eight after) is a one-stanza account of Peter of Cyprus that pointedly mentions the Boethian theme of Fortune's wheel guiding the slide from joy to sorrow:

O worthy Petro, kyng of Cypre, also,
That Alisandre wan by heigh maistrie,
Ful many an hethen wroghtestow ful wo,
Of which thyne owene liges hadde envye,
And for no thyng but for thy chivalrie
They in thy bed han slayn thee by the morwe.
Thus kan Fortune hir wheel governe and gye,
And out of joye brynge men to sorwe. (*TRC* 247; Monk's Tale
ll. *3581-2398).

Both its placement in the string of mini-tales and its single-stanza status are significant within the framework of the Monk's recounted *de casibus* exempla. Exactly four are one-stanza exempla (see Chart 1, highlighted mini-tales): the first and second (Lucifer and Adam), kicking off the first, rising subunit of the diptych design; and the ninth and tenth (Peter of Cyprus and Bernabò Visconti), launching the second, declining subunit of the chastically conceived whole. If nothing else, this alerts us to the Monk's Tale being craftily arranged so as to have sev-

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enteen mini-tales. For, as Chaucer would have known from the mathematical texts he used when composing his *Treatise on the Astrolabe* (TRC 662-83), the number seventeen has some very special qualities.

In Late Antiquity numbers were assigned a range of mystical significations following principally from writings attributed to the Syrian Neoplatonist Iamblichus (c.242-c.325).⁶ For millennia mathematicians have been aware that seventeen, itself a prime number (a whole number greater than one that cannot be exactly divided by any whole number other than itself) is the sum of the first four prime numbers and further is the only prime number made up of four consecutive primes. As the seventh prime, it was associatively linked to the heptameral tradition concerning the seven days of creation outlined in Genesis, and which later commentators balanced against the last seven days prophesied in the Book of Revelation. Additionally, according to *The Book of Balances* by Jabir ibn Hayyan (died c.806-16 CE), the number seventeen was considered the foundation of everything in the natural world.⁷ Jabir or more properly the voluminous corpus attributed to him is considered the systematic beginnings of chemistry by way of alchemy. One need only look to Chaucer's "Canon's Yeoman's Tale" to see the extent of Chaucer's knowledge of books on the subject, whatever his actual interest.⁸

While the special qualities of this number had a range of mathematical, symbolic, mystical, and scientific echoes in the medieval world, Chaucer also takes advantage of the ancient belief that seventeen was the number of death. The Roman numeral XVII, by an anagrammatic shift (a favorite intellectual exercise among biblical exegetes, classical grammarians, and Ricardian court poets alike), results in VIXI, the Latin word meaning "I have lived," with the implication that from birth one is destined for death. (*Vixi* is the first-person singular perfect active indicative of *vivo*, from the verb *vivere*, to live.) As an idiom, *vixi* euphemistically means "my life is over," perhaps uttered in response to some catastrophic event or failure to complete a mission. In some parts of Europe seventeen still is considered the unluckiest number.⁹ Above all though—and this speaks to Chaucer's self-conscious appropriation and supersession of the whole array of significations of seventeen relating to death and the essence of everything in the natural world—it is also a number associated with the Virgin Mary.

Marian Echoes and the Short Form Rosary

As a way of bringing a sense of order and balance, of remediation and cure, to the lopsided tragic view of human life presented by the Monk,

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Chaucer taps into the intercessionary power associated with the short form seventeen-bead rosary (from the Latin “rosarium,” meaning a garden or garland of roses) linked to Mary. Recalling Chaucer’s “A.B.C.” the Blessed Virgin was seen as a conduit to remediate the effects of our fallen human condition.¹⁰ Such a gesture is consistent with Chaucer’s tendency in his writings to make a show of recalling and retracting his wrong-doings so as to make amends, exemplarily in his declaration appended to *Canterbury Tales* in which he pleads to be forgiven for that work as well as his previous “translatiouns and enditynges of worldly vanitees,” seeking absolution from and giving thanks for “oure Lord Jhesu Christ and his blissful Mooder” who might grant him “grace of verray penitence, confessioun and satisfaccioun” (*TRC* 328). Paralleling this pietistic show of contrition, the earliest portrait of Chaucer (see fig. 2) shows him handling a short form rosary (Pearsall 285-305).

The short form rosary of the period consisted of seventeen beads: two sets of eight Ave Maria [Hail Mary] prayer beads with a larger dividing Paternoster [Our Father], and often on either end uncouncted stop beads.¹¹ This is the same bead pattern depicted in the woodcut



Fig. 2

Chaucer Holding Short Form Rosary, from Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes* (c.1411-20). Harley MS 4866, f.88. The British Library. Public Domain. www.bl.uk/collection-items/miniatuure-of-chaucer-from-thomas-hoccleves-the-regiment-of-princes.

of Chaucer’s Prioress (see fig. 3) in Caxton’s *Canterbury Tales* above the section beginning “there was also a nonne a proyoressse” (1483, sig. a5^v; STC 5083).¹² Whatever one’s reasons for wanting to be seen (or shown) holding a rosary, whether to affirm being a devotee of this mnemonic aid to private devotion or simply to appear pious in the public eye, the short form regularly was used in portraits and tomb effigies of the fourteenth century (J. D. Miller x). The visual record is full of seventeen-bead rosaries, whether because of their popularity at the time or because, when working with paint, marble, or metal, they were easier to represent than the longer Dominican type. (According to “The Legend of St. Dominic,” compiled by Gerard de Frachet around 1255, the Blessed Virgin gave Dominic a five-decade rosary for convert-



Fig. 3

Prioress Wearing Short Form Rosary. William Caxton's printing of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (Westminster 1483), sig. a5v (STC 5083). Useable image identifier: AKG1043950, credit line: akg-images / British Library.

in *The Magdalene Reading* (see fig. 7). The seventeen-bead short form rosary was sufficient in and of itself to suggest piety with special reference to Mary. The widespread popularity of this mode of "extralitururgical piety" gave "a new source of spiritual guarantees, mediated by lay associations and dispensed outside of the corporate liturgical offices of the church" (Winston-Allen 4). Whatever Chaucer thought of Lollards at the English court and the streamlining of devotional practices (McCormack 12), the rosary he is portrayed holding is of the seventeen-bead short form, like that in Rogier's painting, consisting of a medial Paternoster bead separating two sets of eight Ave Maria beads with stop beads visible at either end.

Seventeen beads, seventeen exempla in the Monk's Tale with the midmost triad suggesting the poet's authentic reflection on the tragic

ing the Cathars.) For example, among the nearly two-hundred illustrations in Costello's much-reprinted *Rosario*, Mary appears to Alanus de Rupe with a short form rosary (see fig. 4). There also are many surviving well-thumbed religious medals struck during the period showing Mary with a short form rosary, and some even include the infant Jesus with a rosary as well, reinforcing the efficacy of Marian prayer beads (see figs. 5 and fig. 6).

Rogier van der Weyden saw fit to include a short form rosary as a focal point



Fig. 4

Mary and Alanus de Rupe with Short Form Rosaries. Alberto de Costello, *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* (Venice: Melchior Sessa and Piero Ravani, 1521), n.p. Private Collection. Photo credit: William E. Engel.



Fig. 5
Mary and Infant Jesus with Short Form Rosaries. Image used courtesy of Photographic Collection of the Warburg Institute, University of London.



Fig. 6
Mary and Infant Jesus with Short Form Rosaries. Image used courtesy of Photographic Collection of the Warburg Institute, University of London.



Fig. 7
Domestic Rosary. Rogier van der Weyden, *The Magdalen Reading* (c.1435). National Gallery, London. This image is licensed for non-commercial use under a Creative Commons Agreement.

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ends of people he knew. Moreover, key members of the English court had worked quite closely with them, some even fighting by their side for a common cause—most notably Richard’s father, The Black Prince, who campaigned with Peter of Spain in 1367. Each of the seventeen figures provides a valid station or place to pause and reflect before passing on to the next stop in this wide-ranging thematic sequence. Each bead evokes a kind of momentary psychodrama summing the substance of a life in light of this admonitory take on mortal temporality. As such, the Monk’s mini-tales—like beads on a rosary—are psychostatic places to reflect on one’s soul’s status, as if standing before God at Judgment Day. In doing so, one would focus on striving to learn from the lessons being told—in a double sense, for counting out beads was referred to as “telling” (from the Anglo Saxon *tellan*; Old High German *zellen*, meaning to reckon, enumerate, narrate, or otherwise say). The midmost exempla in the sequence are not distant figures, but fellow pilgrims with whom Chaucer and the flower of English chivalry had traveled for a time.

Beyond the commonplace *de casibus* motif and attendant *memento mori* signification though, seventeen had a very important Marian association for Chaucer as offering an antidote or alternative to the turning of Fortune’s Wheel. *Troilus* ends with an initially chiasmic hymn to the Holy Trinity that moves into a supplication and fervent prayer depending on and giving the final thought-image of the poem to the holy maid and mother:

Thou oon, and two, and three, eterne on-lyve,
That regnest ay in three and two and oon,
Uncircumscrip, and al mayst circumscryve,
Us from visible and invisible foon
Defende; and to thy mercy, everichoon,
So make us, Iesus, for thy grace digne,
For love of mayde and moder thyn benigne! Amen. (*TRC* 585;
Troilus V.1863-1869)

In the end, here explicitly and in the seventeen mini-tales comprising the Monk’s Tale implicitly, Mary is brought to mind. Readers (and listeners) thereby are in a position to be made more cognizant of their place in the divine scheme, with “ful avysement,” of the larger cosmic scale of mortal matters. The salvific, experiential knowledge made possible through her grace can be enlisted and taken to heart using the mnemonically charged allegorical rosary that is the Monk’s Tale. Recalling that this design is only visible outside the diegesis of the Canterbury pilgrimage narrative, each exemplum can be seen as

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a requisite part of Chaucer's deliberately staged process for counting out—or telling—seventeen beads.

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Notes

1. Quotations from Shakespeare follow *The New Oxford Shakespeare*. Regarding Richard's “perpetual youthfulness,” the historical record shows that “Richard was in his eleventh year when he became king in 1377, possessing a youthfulness from whose vulnerability he never escaped. The *Record and Process* of his deposition in 1399, for example, consistently describes Richard as an impetuous and willful child” (Simpson 116).
2. On Chaucer's “original audience,” see Mehl (173-74); on his handling of “*auctoritees*” and audience expectations, Reiss (394); and on Chaucer's “actual audience,” Strohm (142-44). The rapidity and frequency with which the first English printers produced Chaucer's texts suggest there was a reliable market for his works among the increasingly literate mercantile and clerical sectors of society (Edwards 3-5).
3. Quotations from Chaucer follow *The Riverside Chaucer*, identified by work and line number; explanatory notes are referenced parenthetically as well (*TRC* with page number). On the poem's formulaic similarity to prayer beads with its orderly, circular pattern of meditation (a point developed in the last section of this present essay), see Quinn (113-21).
4. The earliest known use of ottava rima is by Giovanni Boccaccio in his minor poems and, with special relevance to Chaucer, in two of his major works, *Teseide* (1340) and *Filostrato* (c. 1335)—the former being the source for the Knight's Tale and the latter *Troilus*. On Chaucer's indebtedness to Boccaccio, including the frame tale structure of *Decameron*, see Biggs (11-52, 106-25).
5. Significantly in this regard, the Monk's Tale “has usually been taken to be one of Chaucer's earlier works, written, perhaps, shortly after his first Italian journey and adapted at a later stage for its position in the Tales” (*TRC* 929). On the association of the Monk's Tale with the *trecento* revival of the “poetic triumph”

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(a written account of the procession that memorialized a Roman triumph, exemplarily by Ovid and Virgil), see Schwebel (197, 201). Moreover, in addition to the unique formal considerations, there is also a thematic affinity between these two early works by Chaucer, “An A.B.C.” being “the only completely devotional work among Chaucer’s short poems” (TRC 1076). The same stanzaic pattern also appears in “The Former Age,” “The Complaint of Venus” and “Lenvoy de Chaucer a Bukton” and nowhere else in his oeuvre (TRC 1076)—a consideration worthy of further study.

6. Although Iamblichus treats only the first ten numbers in *Theology of Arithmetic*, his approach to mystical, mathematical, and cosmological symbolism became a kind of *locus classicus* for later writers pursuing this mode of analytical hermeneutics.

7. Haq (1990) points out that according to Jabir’s *Kutub al-Mawazm* [*Book of Balances*], “the number 17 is declared as the foundation of everything in the natural world” (14); and further, the number seventeen is equated to form [*sura*]: “the form of all things is 17.” The method of this treatise reflects Jabir’s attempt “to discover how the number 17 determines the qualitative and quantitative structure of all things” (111). Also see Haq (1994) on Jabir’s quantification of qualities (62-68) and the metaphysics underlying his theory of language (195-96).

8. On the alchemical connection in other tales by Chaucer, see Runstedler (116-25); on the medieval literature of alchemy, Duncan (633-56); and, more particularly with reference to Chaucer’s Boethian interest “in the performance of the Yeoman, who, still addicted to alchemy, vacillates between hope and despair,” and who is portrayed emotionally and intellectually “as ‘slidyng’, as unstable, as the stone he pursues,” see Dickson (10).

9. As late as 2005 Alitalia airplanes did not number the seventeenth row; some modern Italian hotels do not have a seventeenth floor indicated on elevator buttons, paralleling the Anglo-American superstition about the number thirteen. Moreover, as late as 2023 Lufthansa airlines skips numbering what would be rows thirteen and seventeen.

10. Mary also figures significantly in the proem to Book III of *Troilus*; see Ferris (256).

11. On the evolution of the rosary, involving a wide range of bead sequences, see J. D. Miller (7-32); and on bead materials being “chosen for their beauty and mystical properties,” Gottschall (17). Traditionally (but not always, as there were many decadal variations—and still are to this day) rosaries consist of sixteen Paternoster [Our Father] beads with a stop bead for reflection (making seventeen), plus 153 Ave Maria [Hail Mary] beads, which is the sum of the first seventeen numbers and thus imbues an additional mystical luster to the numerological sequencing of the prayer beads, again highlighting the number seventeen. It was not until 1569 that the rosary was standardized by Pius V’s Papal Bull, *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices*, giving the Dominican Master General exclusive control over the rosary confraternities. On the relationship

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between Marian devotion and the rosary in Chaucer's poetics, see Donavin (25-40).

12. On the description the Prioress, "Of small coral aboute hire arm she bar / A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene" (*TRC* 26, General Prologue ll.158-59), see Hourigan (38-46); on her self-presentation in light of her tale, Frank (177-88); and on her "Amor vincit omnia" [Love conquers all] brooch attached to her rosary in violation of sumptuary statutes, Vitz (603). And, apropos of the argument of this final section of the present essay, with reference to the Prioress's Tale as a continuation of Chaucer's "assumption of a reader's direct engagement with a Marian narrative and interest in maternal teaching," see Long (8, 212-13).

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Tales of Simonides: Architectural Mnemonics and Literary Architectonics

Rebeca Helfer

At a banquet given by a nobleman of Thessaly named Scopas, the poet Simonides of Ceos chanted a lyric poem in honour of his host but including a passage in praise of Castor and Pollux. Scopas meanly told the poet that he would only pay him half the sum agreed upon for the panegyric and that he must obtain the balance from the twin gods to whom he had devoted half the poem. A little later, a message was brought in to Simonides that two young men were waiting outside who wished to see him. He rose from the banquet and went out but could find no one. During his absence the roof of the banquet hall fell in, crushing Scopas and all the guests to death beneath the ruins; the corpses were so mangled that the relatives who came to take them away for burial were unable to identify them. But Simonides remembered the places at which they had been sitting at the table and was therefore able to indicate to the relatives which were their dead. The invisible callers, Castor and Pollux, had handsomely paid for their share in the panegyric by drawing Simonides away from the banquet just before the crash. And this experience suggested to the poet the principles of the art of memory of which he is said to have been the inventor. Noting that it was through his memory of the places at which the guests had been sitting that he had been able to identify the bodies, he realised that orderly arrangement is essential for good memory. (Yates 1-2)¹

Thus begins Frances Yates's magisterial study *The Art of Memory*, with "the vivid story of how Simonides invented the art of memory [as] told by Cicero in his *De oratore* when he is discussing memory as one of the five parts of rhetoric" (2). From this starting point and premise—that the art of memory was originally a technique used by orators to create an architectural mnemonic using the basic principles of places and images, the strategies of locational memory that give structure and order to memory but also creative flexibility and freedom—Yates traces

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the highly intricate development of the art of memory from a humanist art to a hermetic one. In the Renaissance, she argues, the rhetorical art of memory primarily became an esoteric and eccentric art practiced by figures such as Giordano Bruno and Giulio Camillo, who created arcane, quasi-magical memory systems in the pursuit of universal, occult, and even divine knowledge: a hidden art with the potential for ultimate revelation.

This narrative has changed substantially since the publication of Yates's work more than half a century ago, as scholars such as William Engel have revealed the widespread influence and multifaceted expression of the art of memory in rhetoric and poetics, philosophy and pedagogy, history and theology, science and technology, as well as the arts broadly construed.² We now recognize just how deeply entwined the art of memory was in the aesthetic, intellectual, and social framework of early modernity, such that its significance, far from occluded or consigned to the occult, seems perfectly clear. Yet, I will argue, an important element of the art of memory's past and purpose remains largely unnoticed and unseen, in effect hidden in plain sight, and for good reason. Despite Yates's emphasis on rhetorical method, the art of memory was first and foremost an art form, built upon the principle (as much philosophical and political as poetic) that all art must partially conceal the means and method of its own making—a principle neatly encapsulated in the phrase *ars celare artem*, which links artificial memory with artifice. As the origin story suggests, the art of memory began as the art of the poet.³ Simonides memorially reconstructs the place of his poetic performance and remembers the dead, much as immortalizing poetry seeks to do. The story dramatizes the ostensible discovery of a method in fact drawn from his poetics-in-practice, and it teaches others how to do the same: that is, how to memorially reconstruct Simonides's own memorial reconstruction of the past. More than a demonstration of a simple mnemonic poetics, though, the story of Simonides reflects upon the relationship between art and memory, story and history, and its subtexts—especially concerning the poet's relationship to power and the capacity of any form of art to memorialize, let alone to immortalize—become part of an ongoing dialogue and debate about the role of stories in the edification of both the self and society.

This essay will explore how and why the art of memory was also an art of concealing art. Paradoxically, this seemingly secret history of the art of memory was actually an open secret, and its origin story finds a rich afterlife in new tales of Simonides across time and place: new stories of ruin and recollection that serve as teaching tales about the art of memory, adapted for new forms and purposes. Philip Sidney's influ-

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ential work of early modern poetics, *An Apology for Poetry*, is centrally important here. Sidney defines and defends the art of poetry as an art of memory, directed to the Greek ideal of “*architectonike*”: the “mistress knowledge” half-hidden under the veil of stories but waiting to be discovered (23).⁴ This personification reflects a philosophical “idea of poesie as self-knowledge,” as M.J. Doherty explains, one foundational to Sidney’s “literary architectonics” and to his role as “poet-architector” (xi, xiii, 12).⁵ Building upon this insight, as well as my own previous work, I will explore how Sidney represents the architectural mnemonic as a literary architectonic, at once poetic and pedagogical.⁶ In so doing, Sidney remembers an art of memory tradition that spans from Cicero’s *De oratore* to Castiglione’s *The Courtier*, a tradition grounded in Plato’s philosophical poetics-as-poesis.⁷

These writers represent the art of memory as the method of a literary “maker”—the name that the Greeks gave for a poet, drawn from the “word *poiein*,” which Sidney adopts for himself (12). Their new tales of Simonides are metafictional teaching tales, at once heuristic and hermeneutic, which model the layered construction and deconstruction of meaning through the use of dissimulation and disguise, irony and indirection, performance and persona: artifice used paradoxically to simulate an ideal of native wit and natural ability. More than a game of hide-and-seek, however, these authors represent their mnemonic poetics as a form of *paideia*: as the expression of a philosophical ideal of education-as-edification, as a simultaneous concealing and unconcealing of knowledge as self-discovery, told and taught through stories about remembering. This essay begins with the art of memory tradition outlined here, before turning to Sidney’s seminal *Apology*, and it concludes with a contemporary reinterpretation of this tradition: Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall*, a novel about the origins of the Reformation in Tudor England, in which she represents the art of memory as her own art of storytelling, and herself as a new Simonides.

Tales of Simonides: Premodern to Early Modern

In Cicero’s dialogue on the ideal orator, *De oratore*, Antonius introduces the tale of Simonides with another story: according to legend, the ancient Greek general Themistocles, blessed with an extraordinary natural memory and cursed with a life of regrets, refused to be taught the art of memory (perhaps by the poet Simonides himself, Cicero elsewhere suggests), and quipped that he would rather be taught an art of forgetting whatever he chose. “I am not possessed of such intellectual power as Themistocles had,” Antonius wittily admits, and so

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"I am grateful to the famous Simonides of Ceos" (186). Antonius then tells the tale of Simonides, teaching the art of memory—how to construct an architecture for memory by imagining images and places for them—by demonstration. Antonius also playfully emphasizes the art of memory as a performance art, a tool used to create the illusion of speaking naturally and effortlessly, concealing the preparatory labor of delivery. His interlocutor Crassus applauds this performance, highlighting the link between artificial memory and artifice: "I feel pleasure in seeing you appear as a professed artist, stripped of the disguises of dissimulation and fairly exposed to view," tells Antonius appreciatively, as a master of the orator's *ars celare artem* himself (185). Cicero himself further reveals what the orators artfully conceal: despite hiding their "learning" for the purpose of politics and persuasion, feigning to forget about or disregard the past, both Antonius and Crassus had a deep knowledge of Greek antiquity, which they remember obliquely (82).

Yet this emphasis on the usefulness of the art of memory to oratorical *ars celare artem* is itself a kind of misdirection on Cicero's part, partially concealing the art's importance to *De oratore*. Following the discussion of the art of memory, Cicero introduces the final day by implicitly rewriting the tale of Simonides as the frame tale for his story of Rome's ruin and recollection. With "bitter remembrance," he recounts the deaths of the speakers amidst Rome's civil war, promising to "deliver" this dialogue as "a memorial to posterity" by remembering the dead, buried in the "ruins" of their country (195). Cicero thus plays the part of a new Simonides, fashioning his book-cum-building of memory as a retelling of this origin story, rewriting it as a story about Rome's history. He thus dramatizes and demonstrates the architectural mnemonic as a literary architectonic—but also as an art of concealing art, for what seems to be historical fact turns out to be historical fiction twice-over. Cicero admits that he "was not present at this dialogue," which ostensibly took place a generation before, and was only told "the topics and heads" of the discussion, much like the heads of the dead in the tale of Simonides, of which he reconstructs a second-hand report (196). Such verisimilitude in the guise of verity is part of the framing fiction of *De oratore*, with which Cicero underscores the inextricability of art and memory built into the art of memory—how remembering the past is always a creative act, and how story and history inevitably intertwine.

This same art of concealing art applies to the remembrance of the art of memory itself. *De oratore* is explicitly a playful reenactment of Plato's dialogue on rhetoric, the *Phaedrus*: "Why should not we, Crassus, imitate Socrates in the *Phaedrus* of Plato?" a speaker asks at the start, "for this plane-tree of yours has put me in mind of it" (12-13).

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On a deeper level, Cicero's imitation of Plato reveals the role of the art of memory therein and its relationship to the art of concealing art exemplified by "the character of Socrates" who, "for irony and dissimulation, far excelled all other men in the wit and genius which he displayed" (144). Throughout Plato's dialogues, Socrates's legendary indirection relates to the art of storytelling: the allegorical tales by which Socrates both veils and unveils his true meaning, for reasons at once philosophical and political as well as poetic. In the *Apology*, Socrates defends himself against the charges of making up stories by swearing that his testimony is entirely "true" and without "concealment or suppression, great or small" (10). As Margaret Ferguson explains, "the example of Socrates" illuminates "a special conceptual link between the Greek terms *apologos* and *apologia*"—as a "story" or "fable," and as a "speech in defense"—which Plato brings together in Book 10 of the *Republic* "to illuminate the philosopher's role . . . in a complex scene of trial" about poetry (2-3). Significantly, this trial begins with Socrates criticizing Simonides for currying favor with the powerful, a prelude to a charge against the poet's "false stories"—which leads to poetry's expulsion from their imagined republic (624). However, the real lesson lies in how to recognize the uses of storytelling, especially in disguise. When poetry is returned to their ideal republic on the condition that it be defended "by lovers of poetry," and reformed by philosophy, this homecoming hinges on memory (832). The dialogue ends with Socrates's telling of the "myth of Er": rescued from oblivion in the underworld because he is unable to drink from the "River of Lethe," Er's soul is saved through *anamnesis*, and he lives to tell the tale, as it were, which Socrates in turn remembers (844). Against such forgetting is a philosophical art of memory, which uses storytelling to tell the truth.

Plato's most extended engagement with Simonides's poetry is in the *Protagoras*, which recalls the origin story of the art of memory in its framing. Socrates seemingly defends "Simonides [for] one of his poems for Scopas"—his patron in the tale of Simonides—against Protagoras's argument that poets are really sophists in disguise: "some used poetry as a screen for sophistry," he asserts, citing Simonides as an example (315). If Protagoras purports to reveal a concealed truth, Socrates veils his true meaning in his mock defense of Simonides's poetry about the difficulty of being, or becoming, a good person. Nevertheless, Socrates's clear irony indirectly illuminates the central subtext of the tale of Simonides and the role of Scopas therein, as the patron who demands praise from the poet and refuses to pay him without it: "No doubt Simonides had in mind that he himself had often eulogized a tyrant or someone of that stamp not of his own free will but under compulsion" (339). Socrates's harsh judgement accords with how Simonides gener-

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ally was “remembered,” as Peter Agócs and Lucia Prauscello describe him: Simonides had a reputation as “a courtier and master-craftsman of social memory,” who was “consistently associated with the poetics of praise, commemoration and mourning,” and as a poet known for his willingness to praise tyrannical patrons for payment—a legacy reflected in the legendary story of how Simonides invented the art of memory (3-4).

Plato’s direct engagement with Simonides in these dialogues helps to illuminate his indirect engagement with the art of memory in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, which transform a simple mnemonic poetics into a form of philosophical *poiesis*. In structural terms, *De oratore* clearly is modeled on the *Symposium* as well as the *Phaedrus*; together, these twin dialogues form the basis of Cicero’s complex, covert remembrance of the art of memory. His tale of Themistocles offers a witty rejoinder to the tale of Theuth, as an alternative origin story about artificial memory for which the *Phaedrus* is best remembered. Socrates coyly claims to remember and retell the story of an ancient Egyptian king who rejects the “gift” of writing from the god Theuth on the grounds that it would “implant forgetfulness in souls,” calling it “a recipe not for memory, but for reminder” that will create only the “semblance of wisdom” (520). In a witty inversion of Simonides’s saying that painting is silent poetry, and poetry a speaking picture (Plutarch 47), Socrates asserts that what makes writing “truly analogous to painting” is their mutual silence: in the face of questioning, both are mute, unable to speak in their own defense (521). The irony that writing is a crucial reminder and aid-to-memory within the *Phaedrus*, as the means by which Plato memorializes his teacher, need hardly be said, but Plato’s use of mnemonic poetics is less obvious. Socrates collapses rhetoric and poetics, suggesting that poets and orators tell the same sort of seductive and destructive love stories, as he mocks the “inventor” of “covert allusion . . . and indirect censure in mnemonic verse” as forms of “rhetorical artifice” (512). Nevertheless, Socrates takes the mnemonic methods of the poet and remakes them for philosophy: he plays the part of a poet, remembering a story about the soul’s journey from *amnesia* to *anamnesis*, from forgetfulness to remembrance, when reminded by love—the love of wisdom. Socrates’s story reimagines all knowledge as a form of self-knowledge, discovered through an art of recollection.

With the *Symposium*, Plato tacitly rewrites the tale of Simonides, reconstructing this fabled banquet party from the ruins of the past, and remembering the dead therein through multiple frames of storytelling. Through the conceit that the dialogue is a true story remembered, Plato highlights the inextricability of art and memory in this

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historical fiction and in his own mnemonic poetics. Plato constructs the *Symposium* as an architectural mnemonic that doubles as a literary architectonic, a poetics that he dramatizes through metatheater. As the speakers celebrate the famous poet Agathon, taking turns delivering their own love stories, Socrates himself plays the part of a poet when he recalls his education by “the famous Diotima,” who taught him that love is a desire for “immortality,” to keep one’s “memory green through time and eternity” (559-60). Socrates’s education is the origin story for philosophy, in which Diotima proposes that philosophers are poets too: for the “procreancy of the spirit rather than the flesh” belongs to “wisdom and all her sister virtues,” and “it is the office of every poet to beget them, and of every artist whom we may call creative” (560). Poetry and *poiesis* come together in Diotima’s divine revelation of the concealed “mysteries of love,” as she describes the soul’s journey to ascend the “heavenly ladder” in pursuit of immortality. Socrates’s performance art, his witty and ironic method of teaching, is unveiled by Alcibiades, who remembers his teacher’s role in the ruinous Peloponnesian War, the political implications of which returns readers to the *Apology* and its defense of storytelling therein. Framing the *Symposium* is Plato’s own performance as a poet and a new Simonides: his indirect remembrance and renovation of the art of memory for philosophy, in which writing serves as a reminder that leads to self-knowledge.

The quintessential work of *ars celare artem* in the early modern period, Castiglione’s *The Courtier*, rewrites the tale of Simonides in imitation of Cicero and Plato. Castiglione acknowledges his debt to both, arguing that just as “there exists the Idea of the perfect Republic . . . and the perfect Orator, so there exists that of the perfect Courtier” (35-6). But he gestures towards his true model for imitation when he defines the ideal courtier’s art of concealing art through an allusion to *De oratore*:

So we can truthfully say that true art is what does not seem to be art; and the most important thing is to conceal it. . . . I remember once having read of certain outstanding orators of the ancient world who, among the other things they did, tried hard to make everyone believe that they were ignorant of letters . . . So you see that to reveal intense application and skill robs everything of grace. (67)

This oblique allusion to Cicero not only draws a parallel between the ideal orator and the ideal courtier but also tacitly gestures towards the framing context of *De oratore* and to Cicero’s linking of the *ars memorativa* and *ars celare artem*. Like Cicero, Castiglione introduces the final

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day of his dialogue by announcing the deaths of the speakers: “I recall that not long after these discussions took place, untimely death” took many of these courtiers, leaving him with “sad and bitter memories” (282). Emulating Cicero by casting himself as another new Simonides, Castiglione remembers the dead and memorially reconstructs the court of Urbino from the ruins of the past—“the turmoils into which Italy was plunged by war”—as a memorial (40). Like Cicero and Plato, Castiglione represents his work as a true history which he remembers, only to puncture this illusion. Saying that he is “following many writers of the ancient world,” Castiglione proposes to “recount some discussions which once took place . . . Even though I did not take part in them in person (being in England when they were held), they were faithfully reported to me soon after my return by someone who was present, and I shall endeavour to reproduce them as accurately as my memory allows” (40). Castiglione’s conceit that he reconstructs the dialogue from second-hand report echoes Cicero’s similar confession and Plato’s complex framing of the *Symposium* as passing through a series of imperfect recollections. Castiglione artfully conceals, and reveals, allusions to the art of memory through irony. Though he memorializes the Court of Urbino, he also expresses a desire to be like Themistocles out of a longing to forget painful memories (108). Castiglione thus recalls how Antonius teaches the art of memory in *De oratore*, itself a response to Plato’s tale of Theuth in the *Phaedrus*. Such irony is at the heart of *ars celare artem*, which Castiglione, like Cicero, associates with Socrates as “the most witty” of men (178). Through such artful concealment and indirection, the ideal courtier would direct a prince “to the path of virtue,” thus becoming “his prince’s instructor” (313, 320). In this context, the courtiers claim that Plato himself was a courtier, if not an ideal one, but his failure “to educate Dion of Syracuse” proves exemplary nevertheless. Plato’s refusal to teach this “tyrant” is held up as a model for the courtier who would refuse to serve an “evil” prince (322).

The Courtier concludes with a recollection of Plato’s art of memory in the *Symposium*, as the courtier Peter Bembo reenacts Socrates’s remembrance of his education in the Ladder of Love by “the famous Diotima,” albeit in disguise (344). The courtier’s Platonic love is a playful courtly performance, but more importantly it serves as a metapoetic reminder of how the *Symposium* shapes *The Courtier*: Castiglione reconstructs the Court of Urbino through a mingling of art and memory, producing an historical fiction that allows the dead to live again. Like the orator and the philosopher, the courtier is reimagined as a poet, for whom the architectural mnemonic represents a literary architectonic: a model of edification through art.

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The Courtier's Art of Memory: Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*

In the *Apology for Poetry*, Sidney represents the art of poetry as an art of memory, and both as the art of concealing art. Sidney remembers the *ars memorativa* tradition through *The Courtier*, emulating Castiglione's remembrance of Cicero and their mutual imitation of Plato's poetics. In an ironic evocation of Castiglione's work, the famously witty Sidney begins the *Apology* with a story of his stay at the "Emperor's Court" and his encounter with a courtier of "Italian wit," who so persuasively argued in sophistic fashion that the "horse was the only serviceable courtier without flattery" that, Sidney concludes, "he would have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse" (3-5). Sidney plays upon his name—Philip, derived from the Greek "Philippos," means "horse-loving" or "fond of horses"—to mock the Italian courtier but also in mock imitation of him, making a sophistic argument about his own "unelected vocation" as "poet," which "from almost the highest estimation of learning is fallen to the laughing-stock of children" (5). Throughout his rhetorical defense, Sidney paradoxically plays the part of a failed courtier-poet, adopting a persona—in imitation of Castiglione and Cicero—with which he both conceals and reveals his art. And like Plato's *Apology*, Sidney treats his *apologos* as a form of storytelling: as a story about himself and as a history of mnemonic poetics.

Sidney partially unveils his use of *ars celare artem* toward the end of the *Apology*, where he criticizes "diligent imitators of Tully" who studiously copy his elaborate style:

For my part, I do not doubt, when Antonius and Crassus, the great forefathers of Cicero in eloquence, the one (as Cicero testifieth of them) pretended not to know art, the other not to set by it, because with plain sensibleness they might win credit of popular ears . . . which persuasion is the chief mark of oratory; I do not doubt (I say) but that they used these knacks very sparingly . . .

Undoubtedly (at least to my opinion undoubtedly) I have found in diverse smally learned courtiers a more sound style than in some professors of learning; of which I can guess no other cause but that the courtier, following that which by practice he findeth fittest to nature, therein (though he know it not) doth according to art, though not by art: where the other,

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using art to show art, and not to hide art (as in these cases he should do), flieth from nature, and indeed abuseth art. (84)

In this complex chain, Sidney remembers Castiglione remembering Cicero, paraphrasing the revelation of Antonius's and Crassus's personae and their use of art to conceal art. Yet this remembrance is also a renovation, as Sidney continues by shifting from courtesy to poetry:

But what? Methinks I deserve to be pounded for straying from poetry to oratory, but both have such an affinity in this wordish consideration, that I think this digression will make my meaning receive the fuller understanding; which is not to take upon me to teach poets how they should do, but only, finding myself among the rest, to show one or two spots of the common infection grown among the most part of writers. (84-85)

Sidney feigns wonder and dismay as he ironically links the art of the orator to the art of the courtier, and both to that of the poet—even a supposedly artless one like himself. Drawing attention to his use of *ars celare artem*, Sidney emulates Cicero's and Castiglione's method of teaching the art of memory indirectly: like them, he refuses "to teach poets how they should do" directly or didactically, instead professing to "show" rather than tell his own method of making art (85).

A similar braiding of poetry, oratory, courtesy, and philosophy through *ars celare artem* informs Sidney's direct discussion of the art of memory, which is casual and brief, in a manner reminiscent of Antonius's deceptively indifferent description of the art, belying its true significance to the *Apology*. Reversing the usual order of things, Sidney gives poetry pride of place: "Even they that have taught the art of memory have showed nothing so apt for it as a certain room divided into many places, well and thoroughly known," he says off-handedly, a model which describes "verse in effect perfectly, every word having his natural seat, which seat must needs make the words remembered" (54). The naturally memorable and mnemonic "verse" spurs the "remembrance" of readers by virtue of its edifying and delightful design, which leads Sidney to ask rhetorically, "But what needeth more in a thing so known to all men?":

For who is it that ever was a scholar that doth not carry away some verses of Virgil, Horace, or Cato, which in his youth he learned, and even to his old age serve him for hourly lessons? . . . But the fitness it hath for memory is notably proved by all

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delivery of arts: wherein for the most part, from grammar to logic, mathematic, physic, and the rest, the rules chiefly necessary to be borne away are compiled in verses. So that verse, being in itself sweet and orderly, and being best for memory, the only handle of knowledge, it must be in jest that any man can speak against it. (54-55)

This seemingly straightforward illustration of poetry as an aid to memory would seem to end here. However, Sidney offers a far more complex lesson than it seems, which he teaches in truth as well as “in jest.”⁸ The art of memory implicitly joins with the art of poetry in Sidney’s “speaking picture” of readers who carry away verses of Virgil from “youth” to “old age,” like Aeneas carrying the remains of a fallen Troy to build a new home in Rome, using these symbolic ruins as the foundation for continued edification. Evoking common mnemonic metaphors, the “tablet” or book of memory that doubles for a building, Sidney creates a picture of art as an edifice that is perpetually recollected and renovated from the ruins of the past.

Like the tale of Simonides, Sidney’s teaching tale models a process of education-as-edification, with its “speaking picture” of *translatio imperii et studii*, illustrating how verse is a vehicle for “all delivery of arts” over time and across fields. “Sweet and orderly” verse is “best for memory, the only handle of knowledge,” he boldly asserts, for it transports the past for the present, in the mind and memory, both individually and collectively. But to what end? Sidney gives all fields and forms of knowledge a superstructure and a common goal:

All these are but serving sciences, which, as they have each a private end in themselves, so yet are they all directed to the highest end of the mistress-knowledge, by the Greeks called *architectonike*, which stands (as I think) in the knowledge of a man’s self, in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well doing and not of well knowing only . . . So that, the ending end of all earthly learning, being virtuous action, those skills that most serve to bring forth that have a most just title to be princes over all the rest. (23)

Poetry is a “prince” to other “serving sciences” because its method is most able to “bring forth” the Platonic ideal of self-knowledge and wisdom-in-action. In describing poetics as philosophical *poiesis*, Sidney evokes the *Symposium*, which models the simultaneous concealing and unconcealing of truth through storytelling, framed by its retelling of the story of Simonides. Crucially, here as throughout the *Apology*,

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Sidney likens this ideal “architectonic” to the architectural mnemonic: although one might hear described “a gorgeous palace, the architecture, with declaring the full beauties, [which] might well make the hearer able to repeat, as it were by rote, all he had heard, yet should never satisfy his inward conceits with being witness itself of a true lively knowledge” unless the hearer can “see” the image of “the house well in model” in his mind’s eye (28). As an art of memory, poetry provides a structure for such self-knowledge.

Sidney thus implicitly follows “those that have taught the art of memory”—most obviously Cicero, but also Plato and Castiglione—by teaching *like* them, imitating their method of edification through storytelling. These teachers of the art of memory are really poets in disguise, as Sidney suggests through another mnemonic emblem of Virgil’s verse: “if the saying of Plato and Tully be true, that who could see virtue would be wonderfully ravished with the love of her beauty . . . as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind,” then “only let Aeneas be worn in the ruin of your memory, how he governeth himself in the ruin of his country; in the preserving his old father and carrying away his religious ceremonies; in obeying the god’s commandment” (49). Although Sidney asserts that “verse far exceedeth prose in the knitting up of the memory,” he ironizes this by first arguing that “there have been many most excellent poets that never versified,” and that “it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by” (21). Cicero and Plato are poets too, he contends, even though they attempt to hide it. Of course, as Sidney demonstrates, such “feigning” or concealment is at the heart of all art. “Tully taketh much pains and many times not without poetical helps to make us know the force love of our country hath in us,” Sidney explains, evoking Plato when he claims that the teachings of the “philosopher . . . [would] lie dark before the imaginative and judging power if they be not illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy” (28).

This lesson on the art of memory leads directly to his defense of poetry against the charge that it is “mother of all lies,” presumably the reason for its expulsion from Plato’s ideal Republic. Sidney charges that “the philosophers of Greece” had long “appear[ed] to the world but under the mask of poets”—which Sidney himself unmasks—but that after “the philosophers had picked out the sweet mysteries of poetry the right discerning true points of knowledge,” they sought to “discredit their masters” (5, 64). Significantly, in Sidney’s only direct reference to Simonides, he compares the poet with Plato as teachers of virtue and educators of princes, in ways that recall Castiglione’s reframing of Plato as a failed courtier: “Certain poets, as Simonides . . . had so pre-

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vailed with Hiero the First, that of a tyrant they made him a just king, where Plato could do so little with Dionysius, that he himself of a philosopher was made a slave" (64). Yet "of all philosophers he is the most poetical," Sidney concludes, claiming Plato as "our patron, and not our adversary," and that poetry was "not banished, but honored by Plato" (63, 68). Through Socrates's storytelling, Plato teaches by example: his *poiesis* shows readers how to look "under the veil of fables" that poets create "to give us all knowledge" in hidden forms, and how "clearly to see through them" when disguised (88, 29). This art of both concealing and revealing art is at the heart of Sidney's poetry lesson, which he explains to readers directly: "Stories . . . will never give the lie to things not affirmatively but allegorically and figuratively written," and therefore "the poet is the least liar" because "the poet never maketh circles about your imagination to conjure you to believe for true what he writes" (57). After all, Sidney asks with exasperation, "what child is there that believes" or mistakes fiction for truth? (57). He remembers a poetics of recollection directed toward philosophical *poiesis*: the ideal of storytelling as a vehicle of knowledge, which conceals truth and also aids in its revelation.

In the end, Sidney returns to *The Courtier* and the framing fiction of the *Apology for Poetry*, bringing his remembrance of the *ars memorativa* tradition full circle. Ironically doing the very thing he swore poets never do, Sidney challenges the reader's ability to tell the truth:

I conjure you all that have the evil luck to read this ink-wasting toy of mine, even in the name of the nine Muses, no more to scorn the sacred mysteries of poesy, no more to laugh at the name of poets, as though they were the next inheritors to fools, no more to jest at the reverent title of a rhymer; but to believe . . . with Bembo that they were the first bringer-in of all civility . . . [and] that it pleased the heavenly Deity, by Hesiod and Homer, under the veil of fables, to give us all knowledge, logic, rhetoric, philosophy natural and moral, and . . . many mysteries contained in poetry. (87-88)

In his witty allusion to the "mysteries" of poetry and his revelation of them, Sidney reenacts Bembo's role performance of the Platonic Ladder of Love at the end of *The Courtier*: an allusion to Castiglione's framing of the work as a retelling of the *Symposium*, as well to Cicero's reconstruction of Plato's dialogue as a model for *De oratore*, a memorial structure. As these new tales of Simonides, metapoetic tales about literary architectonics, reform the art of poetry, so Sidney's defense of his poetics promises to do the same for Renaissance England.

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With a final jest, Sidney asserts that if “you cannot hear the planet-like music of poetry,” then “thus much curse I must send you in the behalf of all poets, that while you live, you live in love, and never get favor for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph” (89). Sidney thus concludes with a reminder of Castiglione’s introductory epistle to *The Courtier*, where he describes the memory of his work through readerly reception: those whom I “shall displease, I will count him naught, and believe that the memorye of him shall soon perish,” Castiglione writes, for only “the judgement of time” can “pronounce true sentence of the life or death of writynges” (Castiglione, trans. Hoby 18). This witty allusion to *The Courtier* returns to the start of the *Apology*, framing it, for it is through Castiglione’s work that Sidney remembers the art of memory as a history of poetry, but also as the story of himself: his rise and fall as a courtier. Indirectly, Sidney’s *Apology* offers an apology to Queen Elizabeth, in the persona of her less-than-ideal courtier who artlessly advised her about virtuous action.⁹ Yet, in this way, Sidney plays the part of the ideal courtier, who performs the art of memory as an art of concealing art.

The Tale of Simonides and the Art of Memory in *Wolf Hall*

To conclude, I will turn briefly to a contemporary representation of this art of memory tradition in historical fiction: Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall*, the first novel in her trilogy about the origins of the English Reformation and Thomas Cromwell’s role as architect of the new Tudor state. I want to suggest that Mantel remembers the Reformation anew through the art of memory, as a history of ruin and recollection both personal and political. She both recalls its significant place in premodern historical fiction and revives it, giving this seemingly dead and forgotten art a new life—a “renaissance” that reflects her remembrance of the Renaissance in metafictional fashion. In the middle of *Wolf Hall*, Mantel interrupts the narrative to tell the tale of Simonides. Drawing on Yates’s retelling of this story, Mantel recounts how Simonides angered the stingy Scopas by praising the twin gods, and how, when the poet was called away from the hall by two young men, the banquet hall then collapsed into ruins, killing those inside:

The bodies were so broken and disfigured that the relatives of the dead could not identify them. But Simonides was a remarkable man. Whatever he saw was imprinted on his mind.

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He led each of the relatives through the ruins; and pointing to the crushed remains, he said, there is your man. In linking the dead to their names, he worked from the seating plan in his head.

It is Cicero who tells us this story. He tells us how, on that day, Simonides invented the art of memory. He remembered the names, the faces, some sour and bloated, some blithe, some bored. He remembered exactly where everyone was sitting, at the moment the roof fell in. (145-46)

Mantel tells the tale of Simonides anew, teaching the art of memory through its origin story about the fall of this banquet hall and the poet's discovery of how to recollect the ruins of the past as a memory theater. Yet Mantel's retelling of this tale has a deeper function in her novel. Imitating Cicero, Mantel rewrites the tale of Simonides as a frame tale for *Wolf Hall*, for her own story of ruin and recollection, suggesting that the poet's art of memory—and the *ars memorativa* tradition writ large—represents her own art.

Following the interjection of the tale of Simonides, Cromwell attends a banquet in which he is warned about the dangers of Henry VIII's desire to marry Anne Boleyn at all costs. "The king is an inconstant lover . . . it must all end soon," Cromwell is cautioned; he "looks around the room" and imagines it as a banquet in which "ghostly places [are] set," as in a memory theater:

Here, Thomas Cromwell . . . There is a place set the king, and . . . a place set for Lady Anne, glancing around with her restless black eyes . . . a place for William Tyndale, and one for the Pope . . . And there sits Brother Martin Luther, greasy and fat: glowering at them all, and spitting out his fish bones.

A servant comes in. "Two young gentlemen are outside, master, asking for you by name" . . .

He understands that the whole purpose of the evening has been to warn him: to warn him off. He will remember it, the fatal *placement*: if it proves fatal. That soft hiss and whisper, of stone destroying itself; that distant sound of walls sliding, of plaster crumbling, of rubble crashing onto fragile human skulls? That is the sound of the roof of Christendom, falling on the people below. (180-82, original emphasis)

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The history of the Reformation is reimagined here as a version of the story of Simonides. Cromwell learned Simonides's art of memory in Italy, readers are reminded throughout the novel, and he plays the part of the poet, constructing a memory theater at once prospective and retrospective: a banquet hall filled with the future ghosts of the past, including Cromwell himself, a mnemonic edifice in which "the roof of Christendom" collapses upon the country, its ruins "falling on the people below." Yet the central story of *Wolf Hall* is less the Reformation per se than that of Cromwell's rise and fall as Henry VIII's courtier, from lowly origins to the height of power, and his role as architect of a new Tudor state, built upon the ruins of the Catholic Church and, symbolically, the victims of the monarch.¹⁰ In this revisionist history, Mantel remembers Cromwell not simply as a ruthless, amoral Machiavel—a role in which historians often have cast him—but rather as an ideal courtier of sorts: an artist-cum-architect who seeks to please his erratic patron much as Simonides does, and who learns the art of memory primarily as an art of concealing art. The reconstructed hall, and *Wolf Hall* writ large, is a representation of Cromwell's mind and memory, a portrait of his ability "to remember everything," which both affords him extraordinary power and also humanizes him.

As a new Simonides, Cromwell constructs a memory theater in which he can remember the past for the present, and make the dead live again—an art that makes him a mirror for Mantel as an author, who depicts *Wolf Hall* as a memory theater and morality play enacted by a "Cast of Characters." Mantel remembers Cromwell through his use of the art of memory, a reflection of her own. She thereby draws attention to her use of the art of memory as an art of concealing art, concealing and revealing the structure of *Wolf Hall* as a book-cum-building of memory, the architectural mnemonic serving as a literary architectural. Superficially, Mantel represents the art of memory as a hermetic one, which for Frances Yates defined the Renaissance memory arts. The novel returns repeatedly to the Italian memory artist "Guido Camillo," who attempted to build a wooden memory "theater . . . in which you yourself are the play" and "around you there is arrayed a system of human knowledge" (569, 438). This hermetic memory theater, discussed extensively by Yates, is directed toward the remembrance of all human knowledge, and even divine revelation; a structure similar to the humanist Erasmus's creation of a wooden filing system, with "drawers, one inside another," "a memory system for the speeches of Cicero" (437). In the end, though, Mantel exposes the fantasy of a "memory machine" as just that (459). The novel concludes with Cromwell wittily asking, "You know what I need? . . . the memory machine" (599). But

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no such machine exists, and Camillo “left the device half built,” having “gone mad . . . fallen into the abyss of the divine”:

[Cromwell] reaches for his pen. He yawns and puts it down and picks it up again. I shall be found dead at my desk, he thinks, like the poet Petrarch. The poet wrote many unsent letters: he wrote to Cicero, who died twelve hundred years before he was born . . . Between one dip of the pen, Petrarch writes, “between one dip of the pen and the next, the time passes: and I hurry, I drive myself, and I speed toward death. We are always dying—I while I write, you while you read, and others while they listen or block their ears; they are all dying.” (600-601)

Mantel thus reveals that the early modern art of memory was always a poetic one, and she does so by remembering Petrarch, who himself remembered the past by imaginatively speaking with the dead in imagined letters to posterity—that is, in historical fiction like Mantel’s own.¹¹ Crucially, Cromwell is aligned with Petrarch’s discovery of Cicero’s letters to his brother, to whom he addresses *De oratore*, often cited as the origin story of the Renaissance as an historical period. This reminder of Petrarch’s art of memory, inherited from Cicero and through Christian Neoplatonism, ultimately serves as a reminder that Mantel writes herself into a male tradition of mnemonic poetics through metafiction.¹² Constructing the memory theater that is *Wolf Hall* from the ruins of history, playing the part of a new Simonides, Mantel remembers the story of England’s Renaissance and Reformation as the history of art of memory: from Cicero to Castiglione, from Plato to Petrarch, and, in the end, for herself.

Notes

1. On the complex premodern history of the art of memory, see Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*; Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*; and Lina Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory*.

2. From “Mnemonic Criticism and Renaissance Literature: A Manifesto,” to the recent collection *Memory and Mortality in Renaissance England*, William Engel has helped to pioneer the field of early modern “mnemology.” On the breadth and depth of the mnemonic arts in the period, see *The Memory Arts in Renaissance England*.

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3. I understand the tale of Simonides to be an allegory of the poet's art-in-practice. My thinking on allegory builds upon Michael Murrin's work, which views allegory in relation to the art of memory: "the allegorical poets constantly practiced Simonides' memory techniques," as described by Frances Yates and others, and the "allegorical poet of the Renaissance . . . was practicing the same oral art his predecessors had used two thousand years before" (78-9, 84).
4. Cf. the discussion of this important passage in the Preface to this volume.
5. See Doherty's *The Mistress-Knowledge* on the complex philosophical traditions underlying Sidney's architectonic art and its widespread influence. Yates suggests that Sidney's treatment of the art of memory may have been influenced by Bruno and the hermetic tradition as well as a humanist one: Bruno "dedicat[ed] to [Sidney] two of the works which he published in England," and Sidney may have been writing his defense of poetry "during the time that Bruno was in England" (263-64).
6. This essay builds upon my earlier work on Sidney in *Spenser's Ruins and the Art of Recollection* and, more recently, in "The Art of Poetry and the Art of Memory: Philip Sidney's Mnemonic Poetics."
7. In the first English translation of *The Courtier* (1561), Thomas Hoby evokes the art of memory in his introductory epistle by comparing himself, ironically and in imitation of Castiglione, to Themistocles (3). See Spenser's *Ruins* 66.
8. Sidney "adopts the voice of the serious jester" throughout the *Apology*, Alan Hager argues, as a method of teaching indirectly and ironically (40).
9. Sidney's *Apology* is partly directed to Queen Elizabeth: the Protestant Sidney angers the queen by advising her as an artless courtier against a potential marriage to the French Catholic Duke D'Alençon. On Sidney's "quasi-autobiographical allegory" of himself, see Ferguson 138.
10. As Siobhan O'Connor argues, "Cromwell is synonymous with Simonides" (40).
11. Mantel adds another memorializing frame to the novel in the concluding "Author's Note," where she highlights a key source: George Cavendish's "not always accurate, but . . . very touching, immediate and readable account of Wolsey's career and Thomas Cromwell's part in it" (604). Throughout *Wolf Hall*, a fictionalized George Cavendish repeatedly remarks upon Cromwell's extraordinary memory, and knowledge of the art of memory, as if preparing to write his future biography. Mantel-as-author extends Cavendish's project, in effect, by remembering Cromwell through the art of memory and as historical fiction.
12. Petrarch's relationship to the *ars memorativa* tradition is largely indirect: he is frequently cited by others as "an important authority on artificial memory" (Yates 101). See also Carruthers 7.

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Suspended Animation: Reading the Correlative Verse Tradition in Sidney's *Arcadia*

Stephanie L. Batkie

In Book Three of Sidney's *Arcadia*, the hapless Philoclea, in the midst of her "guiltless punishment and helpless misfortune," sings a song "which she had lately with some art curiously written to enwrap her secret and resolute woes" (681). The verses she produces are heard by the equally hapless Pyrocles, listening at the door to her chamber:

Virtue, beauty, and speech, did strike, wound, charm,
My heart, eyes, ears, with wonder, love, delight:
First, second, last, did bind, enforce, and arm,
His works, shows, suits, with wit, grace, and vows' might.
Thus honor, liking, trust, much, far, and deep,
Held, pierc'd, possess'd, my judgment, sense, and will,
Till wrong, contempt, deceit did grow, steal, creep,
Bands, favour, faith, to break, defile, and kill.
Then grief, unkindness, proof, took, kindled, taught,
Well-grounded, noble, due, spite, rage, disdain:
But ah, alas, (in vain) my mind, sight, thought,
Doth him, his face, his words, leave, shun, refrain;
For no thing, time, nor place, can loose, quench, ease,
Mine own, embraced, sought, knot, fire, disease. (681-82)

At first glance, the poem feels haphazard—on the brink of disintegrating into riotous asyndeton. We can follow Philoclea's thoughts, perhaps, for the initial lines, but the further in we go the more demanding the weight of her poetical invention becomes. By the time we reach the final couplet, exhausted, it is a significant challenge to orient ourselves within her song in any constructive way.

But, of course, that is precisely what we are asked to do: to construct and thereby construe her meaning. Editors as far back as the initial 1593 printing anticipate our syntactic difficulty and seek to lay bare the logic behind Philoclea's expression by helpfully labelling the elements of her verses to chaperone us on our way:

V ¹Er²ue, ³bea⁴utie, and ⁵spea⁶ch, ⁷did ⁸strike, ⁹wound, ¹⁰char¹¹me,
My ¹²harte, ¹³eyes, ¹⁴ea¹⁵res, ¹⁶with ¹⁷wonder, ¹⁸loue, ¹⁹deli²⁰ght:
First, ²¹second, ²²last, ²³did ²⁴binde, ²⁵enforce, ²⁶and ²⁷arme,
His ²⁸workes, ²⁹showes, ³⁰suites, ³¹with ³²wit, ³³grace, ³⁴and ³⁵vow's ³⁶migh³⁷t.

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...and so on for the rest of the poem.¹ The notation clarifies just what it is that we are looking at: a figure that earlier periods term *versus rapportati* and what is sometimes referred to as “correlative verse” or *singula singulis*.² It is a rhetorical form that Ernst Robert Curtius describes as “verse-filling asyndeton,” and he classifies it under his collection of “formal mannerisms” (285-87). The form requires the grouping of syntactic elements (nouns, verbs, prepositional phrases, etc.) in such way that asks the reader to realign the various elements to form complete clauses. The aid of the extra notation in Sidney’s case (above) helps us to sustain Philoclea’s meaning, drawing it out of her lines like so:

1. Virtue did strike my heart with wonder;
2. Beauty did wound my eyes with love;
3. Speech did charm my ears with delight.
1. The first did bind his works with wit;
2. The second did enforce his shows with grace;
3. The third did arm his suits with vows’ might...

Much clearer now, but even this reassembly requires readers to mentally link the first and fourth lines, then the second and fifth, and finally the third and sixth before they might come to the full meaning of Philoclea’s “pitiful accusing” to her absent lover (683). The labor and attention required is considerable. And to add an additional burden, the poem is not just correlative verse but a sonnet as well: three quatrains and a couplet, providing another level of intricacy that becomes so intense it threatens to collapse the poem (and the moment) under its own virtuosic weight. Upon encountering this rhetorical tangle, we might be slightly mollified that the *Arcadia*’s author clearly recognizes and addresses the interpretive complexities we are facing. Immediately after the lines appear, Sidney is careful to mitigate their impact on the reader (if not on Pyrocles) by reminding us that,

The force of love to those poor folk that feel it is many ways
very strange, but no way stranger than that it doth so enchain
the lover’s judgment upon her that holds the reins of his mind,

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that whatsoever she doth is ever in his eyes best . . . If she be silent, that without comparison is best, since by that means the untroubled eye most freely may devour the sweetness of his object. But if she speak, he will take it upon his death that is best, the quintessence of each word being distilled down into his affected soul. (682)

It seems we are to forgive Philoclea's impulse for excessive rhetorical ornament because we hear her words along with Pyrocles, whose judgment is clearly (and amorously) impaired.

My contention in this essay is that we should read into Philoclea's correlative sonnet something beyond its "curiously written" form by placing it within a far longer Latin tradition of *versus rapportati*. In the poetry of the Middle Ages, *versus rapportati* most often appear either as small iterations within a larger poem or as epigrammatic and often marginal fragments. Because of this, they can come across as deceptively ornamental, or perhaps playful—a verbal puzzle or game generating small moments of interpretive delay within a manuscript's longer, more stately pieces. I would like to suggest that the form does more than this. The relational reading practice required by the medieval *versus rapportati*, which consistently ask readers to map out displaced poetic sense, generates a hermeneutic that animates both the interpretative function of the reader and the compiled meaning of the text. In the case of the former, correlative verse asks readers to construct the sense of the lines on a local level by arranging the fragmented syntactical elements in meaningful clauses. In the latter, it positions each poem as an outward-facing whole that deliberately works to shape the world around it. In this second, summative function, medieval correlative verse demonstrates three distinct effects: 1) it works to articulate social and moral conditions through an interplay of construction and confirmation; 2) it generates affective responses that disrupt narrative temporality in favor of lyric suspension; and 3) it carries an approach to literary history that bridges the shift between medieval authorial culture and humanistic compilation. I contend all three are present in Sidney's use of the form, and that attending to the longer history of poetic correlation can shift our estimation of Philoclea's song from the condemnation of artful, amorous (and feminine) speech to a careful example of the affective power at the limits of literary language.

Moral World-Building

The medieval history of the *versus rapportati* form is, as mentioned above, one of manuscript marginalia and *artes poeticae*. Curtius tells us that we can find later examples in Shakespeare: “Oh what a noble mind is here o’erthrown! / The courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s eye, tongue, sword . . .” (*Hamlet* III.1.164-65); and in Milton:

Now Heav’n in all her Glorie shon, and rowld
Her motions, as the great first-Movers hand
First wheeled thir course; Earth in her rich attire
Consummate lovly smil’d; Aire, Water, Earth
By Fowl, Fish, Beast, was flown, was swum, was walkt . . .
(*Paradise Lost* VII, 499-503)

Before this, however, he finds the form to originate in ancient Greece, offers references to examples in French, Spanish, German (and of course English, as above), and notes its presence in ancient India. But Curtius’s primary examples come from the Latin rhetorical treatises of the 12th and 13th centuries.³ He finds that “in medieval Latin, *versus rapportati* (also called ‘applicati’ or ‘singula singulis’) are extraordinarily frequent” (286-87), and the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* makes a similar claim: “Medieval Latin poets were very fond of the device, as were the Occitan troubadours, and early Renaissance Poets made use of it” (307).⁴ Hans Walther lists thirty examples of the figure in his *Proverbia Sententiaeque Latinitas*, most of which take the place of moral aphorisms, designed to be memorable and witty in their compact, intricate construction.⁵ This early categorization of the figure as either rhetorical flourish or moralizing *bon mot* is one that persists throughout the period, and the same is true of the Continental examples offered.

The moralizing tone and the experience of reading these examples are mutually reinforcing. Most *versus* that survive are fairly straightforward aphorisms that make the reading process a relatively simple one. For example, we might consider the following: “In fide, dente, pede—mulieris, equi, canis est fraus” (“In faith, teeth, and foot—women, horses, and dogs are deceit itself”). It is not terribly difficult to suss out what is afoot here (so to speak), and do so with relative ease (Walther no. 11775).⁶ The formal pattern gives readers a memorable cadence that makes it easy to recall the phrase and (presumably) to enjoy its misogyny. Moreover, we delight in its wit but also in the familiar sense of confirmation, borne out of countless other texts expressing a similar sentiment. (Of course women and dogs aren’t to be trusted! I knew

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it!) In fact, it is this sense of repeated confirmation that sustains our constructive labor as we rearrange the elements of each line to produce meaningful clause-structures. Each time it happens, we become more ingrained in the moral contexts the verses depend upon because we are not just recognizing them, we are building them anew as we go.

As the *versus* expand in length, this confirmation-requirement increases, and so does the feeling of moral world-building:

Miles	mercator	vates	parasitus	amator
Prelia	raptores	dictamina	fercula	mores
Horrida	terrificos	subtilia	lata	pudicos
Hortatur	metuit	componit	diligit	odit

The Soldier	the merchant	the poet	the guest	the lover
Battles	robbers	verses	dishes	morals
Grim	terrifying	fine	lavish	virtuous
Cheers	dreads	arranges	esteems	loathes

(Walther no. 14843)

In this longer example, the scheme is much more demanding than in the shorter *In fide* above, asking readers to sustain their syntactic attention from the nominative to the accusative, to the adjectival accusative, and finally to the verbs over a sequence of five iterations. We sense the pattern forming as we move through the first lines, but it is the confirmation of the sense of each clause—a sense that readers will have encountered many times before—that let us know we are on the right track. In this way, the localized labor required on the level of the line or the phrase becomes entangled with the larger social and moral structures that expand beyond the boundaries of the text. Social categorization in this case is directly aligned with judgment: we are to recognize the soldier's love of battles and the guest's of fine food. The poet's labor is bound up with his ability to arrange his terms well (a bit on the nose here, perhaps), whereas the lover is comically disappointed by the restrictive fetters of virtue. As we build meaning, we continually reconstruct the conditions that we expect to find.

The longer and more complex the *versus* become, moreover, the more and more they both require and reinforce this effect. It is one thing to encounter the form in a two-line maxim, another entirely to see it extended across a wider range of lines, and another yet again when it is combined with other rhetorical figures that also deal in modes of repetition, like polyptoton or alliteration. Suddenly, some-

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thing that starts out as a witty but tidy poetic assemblage sprawls into something far more disorienting:

Dives mendicus deus infernus paradisus
 Pascit mendicat compensat torquet honorat
 Esuriem vitam meritum ditem patientem
 Divitiis precibus mercede labore quiete
 Largus avarus hiems aestas juvenis veteranus
 Spargit multiplicat spoliat teget obtinet odit
 Res quaestus nemora terram praeconia ludos
 Dando retentum frondibus herbis viribus aevo
 Patria plebs censura comes comitissa creator
 Nutrit arat cohibet foederat intrat emit
 Indigenas vitam servos jus sceptrata fideles
 Fruge labore metu numine stirpe fide

The rich person	The beggar	God	Hell	Heaven	
Feeds	Begs	Rewards	Torments	Honors	
Their hunger	For life	Service	The wealthy	The suffering	
With riches	With prayers	With a gift	With labor	With rest	
The generous	The greedy	Winter	Summer	The youth	The elder
Scatters	Increases	Deprives	Covers	Gains	Hates
Possessions	Gains	The groves	The earth	Praises	Amusements
In giving	By withholding	Of their leaves	With growth	For his strength	In old age
The country	The commoner	The magistrate	A lord	A lady	The Creator
Nourishes	Cultivates	Restrains	Establishes	Comes to	Collects
Its native people	Life	Peasants	Law	Her powers	The faithful
With fruit	With labor	Through fear	By divine will	By birth	Through faith

This example comes from John Allen Giles’s 1851 edition of “inedited tracts” from Bede, Lanfranc, and others, and he adds the lines to the rest of his edition under the heading “*Carmina*,” titling them simply as “*versus varii*” (J.A. Giles 96).⁷

As in other *versus rapportati*, sequential reading determines the pattern, and we must sustain the logic of sequence (nominative, verb, accusative, ablative) across four parallel lines of text to assemble each complete clause. There are seventeen in all—presumably too many to hold equally active in the mind at once. As a result, we must either parse the lines out as in the translation-grid above, reading each cluster vertically rather than horizontally, or we must continually range back and forth across the page, searching out the next component in the sequence. As an additional challenge, the poet includes the use of other modes of repetitive polyptoton in “*mendicus . . . mendicat*” (1-2), “*meritum . . . mercede*” (3-4), or “*fideles . . . fide*” (11-12). These emphasize the vertical-reading option by moving us between vertically-arranged

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clause-clusters, but other moments invite us to read across the page in a more familiar, lateral motion, as in the alliterative “*Patria plebs*” (9) and “*censura comes comitissa creator*” (9), or in the oppositions between neighboring clauses dealing with the rich and the poor, hell and heaven, the generous and the greedy, winter and summer, the young and the old. As the subject of the poetic puzzle becomes clear, we begin to realize that we are building the shape of the world in all directions as we read, bringing categories into gradual focus, generating relationships between concepts, anticipating verbs and objects, and fashioning a means for interpreting our surroundings on a social and cosmic level. The assemblage that emerges is both construction and confirmation: each individual clause expresses a familiar maxim and we are reassured of our successful reading by recognizing its “truth” even as the experience of watching these *dictamina* coalesce through our readerly labor gives the sensation of something coming into being—being actively created. The act of readerly making echoes with that of the Creator in the final clause, and in this syntegmatic sense the lines become an act of participatory faith as our understanding brings the various pieces into their appropriate alignment.⁸

The matrix of sense the poem generates produces a reading praxis that is visual, sonorous, dialectic, sequential, and capacious. The process of unraveling seems to offer a glimpse of order emerging from syntactic chaos, but upon further reflection we find that it truly functions by showing us that what appeared chaotic was always part of a larger, carefully ordered divine structure that simply took effort and skill to uncover—*vates dictamini subtilia componit*. In the *versus*, we track across and down, we count clauses as they build, and we calculate meaning, but all of this labor is predicated on the appropriate fit between the summative sense that emerges and what is commonly known of the world’s condition, ordained by God. Moralizing *versus* thus becomes both construction and confirmation: the muddle of the world becomes clear as the sequential structures emerge within the appropriate perspective. The labor of these moral aphorisms is all about making that perspective as felt as possible by asking readers to build the recognizable world they describe.

Philoclea accesses this same constructive sense as her sonnet builds the world around her. For all that this is an intimate, lyric moment in the *Arcadia* and for all she thinks herself sequestered in the privacy of her chamber, Philoclea’s language entangles her in affects both local and abstract. She too reads (or rather, sings) in all directions, and her confirmation comes from her certainty that the object of her affection is worthy of her desire:

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Virtue, beauty, and speech, did strike, wound, charm,
 My heart, eyes, ears, with wonder, love, delight:
 First, second, last, did bind, enforce, and arm,
 His works, shows, suits, with wit, grace, and vows' might. (1-4)

The mechanism is more or less the same as the example given above, and the lines are subject to the same recognizable, commonplace sentiments. Beauty matches up with eyes; hearts are struck; speech delightfully charms ears. The familiarity of these combinations allows us not only to proceed in terms of comprehension but also to enter into the erotic space Philoclea is constructing for herself. But just as polyptoton and alliteration in the *Carmina* above add additional layers to the hermeneutic matrix, correlation in the opening of Philomela's sonnet does more than simply set up a singular pattern that pairs verbs with subjects and objects. In her case, the looping syntactic patterns go farther, in that they use the abstract affects (virtue, beauty, speech) not just as an organizing principle for one clause, but for two. This doubles the effect each grammatical subject has and binds multiple objects and effects together: the virtue Philoclea sings of not only strikes her heart but also binds up Pyrocles's works; beauty wounds her eyes but also enforces his appearance; speech charms her ears but also arms his peti-

Virtue...	...strikes <i>my heart</i> with wonder;	heart/works
	...binds <i>his works</i> with wit;	
Beauty...	...wounds <i>my eyes</i> with love;	eyes/shows
	...enforces <i>his shows</i> with grace;	
Speech...	...charms <i>my ears</i> with delight;	ears/suits
	...arms <i>his suits</i> with vows' might.	

tions to her. If we follow the syntactic parities in this way, her heart and his works align, as do her eyes and his shows, her ears and his suits, joined together through the abstract entities of virtue, beauty, and speech. In her perception, the two lovers are united through these universal abstractions and become joined in their common denominators.

Thus, the recognition-pattern of erotic commonplaces becomes something more, in that the power of the familiar allows Philoclea to not only draw on the structures legible to herself (and to Sidney's

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reader) but also to redeploy them, interrogating how grammatical (and now logical) elements bind the lovers together. It is an intensely powerful use of the *rapportati* form through which she not only recognizes but reconstitutes. As a result, while the reader (and Philoclea) sort out the lines' polyvalent correlation, they trace outlines of influence that unite her not only to the physical, desired form of her beloved but also to the tropological universals that move through the human condition. Her place within this network is confirmed by and in her verse, just as the schematic social positions or vices were evoked by and in her medieval antecedents. She is caught, captured by her own senses and defined by her inability to break free—circumscribed within the trope of the lovesick woman. At the same time, however, Philoclea also manages to interrogate the manner of that connection and to register for herself how deeply her desire rewrites the world around her—even to the point of troubling the limits of her ability to sense the boundaries of her own experience and identity. She is herself, but there is no “herself” without “himself.” Not anymore. The boundaries of her own subjectivity no longer stop at her own body or even her own sensation; they extend out to Pyrocles in a way that makes it impossible for her to withdraw back into a unified, independent whole.

Affective Fragmentation

Of course, the primary thing this sonnet confirms is Philoclea's hopeless misery. She cannot escape her fate and, indeed, as the song progresses, she realizes she does not even wish to. Now, it must be said that lovesickness is in no way a startling topic for literary expression, and it seems safe to assume Sidney's readers would (as above) find themselves here in familiar territory. We cannot congratulate Philoclea, therefore, on her originality regarding her choice of subject. What we can (and are asked to) attend to, however, is the manner of her treatment. Such a move brings us very clearly into the realm of rhetoric and poetics, and here too the medieval commentators weigh in regarding the proper uses of the *versus* as a mode of ornament. Moving beyond the aphoristic mode, poetic examples of correlation are also commonly considered in terms of their decorative potential. Evrard L'Allemande notes that such verses are *modulana* (balanced or measured), using a term Augustine associates with well-produced music.⁹ Gervais of Melkley is less complimentary, expressing concern that while the device might be beautifully used on occasion, on the whole it “does not justify but decorates.”¹⁰ Either way, when we come to Philoclea's second stanza, we

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can see how the line between tropological expectation and rhetorical effect come into focus:

Thus honor, liking, trust, much, far, and deep,
Held, pierc'd, possess'd, my judgment, sense, and will,
Till wrong, contempt, deceit did grow, steal, creep,
Bands, favour, faith, to break, defile, and kill. (5-8)

If the difficulty of the first quatrain, with its shift into correlation and the doubling of its verb-usage, required the safety net of confirmation, the second stanza moves us into a space in which those expectations are abruptly broken. The first two lines behave as they should, with four syntactical units correlating into three clauses that follow a subject/modifier/verb/object pattern. All well and good. But the "Till" in line seven introduces a shift. In terms of the logic of the sonnet, this is the point at which Philoclea's desire becomes not just powerful, but problematic and painful. The first six lines are grouped together in detailing how and why she feels, the last eight in lamenting that fact—an inversion of the Italian octave/sestet division. Philoclea's *volta* comes too soon, and she (and we) are caught off-guard. To add insult to injury, the syntactical construction of lines seven and eight displays an unexpected inversion of units that takes a moment to put to logical rights. Rather than a subject/verb/object structure as above, these lines follow a subject/verb/object/infinite pattern in which the object is the object of the infinitive rather than the conjugated verb, as we might otherwise expect. Thus, "wrong" grows until it breaks bonds, "contempt" steals in to defile favor, and "deceit" creeps in to kill faith. Correlation here is preserved, but our relation to it becomes more uncomfortable.

This is, presumably, the precise effect Sidney aims for. Medieval rhetorical training encourages poetic intervention to produce emotional effects that familiar stories might otherwise have difficulty eliciting. We see this discussed time and time again in *artes poeticae*, and we find examples of it in school-texts, both studied and produced. For example, MS Hunterian V.8.14 contains two different treatments of the Pyramus and Thisbe story, both of which contain instances of *versus rapportati*. Gervais of Melkley is responsible for one (f.136r-138r), and the other (f.139v-140v) is uncredited.¹¹ In the latter example, there are two instances of correlation. The first describes the plight of the anxious lovers: "Sollicitos corrodit amor, nox, cura: triforme / uulnus, amor uehemens, nox pigra, cura uigil" ("Love, night, and pain gnaw away at the troubled pair—a triple / Wound: violent love, weary night, wakeful pain") (13-14) and the second occurs after Thisbe discovers Pyramus' body: "Prebet ei meroris iter cruor, ensis, amicus: / rore cruor, plagis

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ensis, et ille nece” (“The path sorrow took clears before her: blood, a sword, a love— / Blood in a shower, a sword in a wound, and him in death”) (63-64). Both couplets share the same basic construction: three terms in the first line aligned by a single word (*corrodit* and *iter*), which are then augmented through modification in the line below. But both also participate in the poem’s broader interest in how love powerfully redraws, and even erases, the differences between individuals. Thisbe, for example, has a passage in which she worries over if it is possible for her to be present anywhere if Pyramus is absent. Alternatively, she is uncertain if Pyramus can ever be truly gone if she herself is there:

“Alter” abest, sed “neuter” adest, quia cum sit uterque
quod reliquum, neuter solus abesse potest.
Cum sit idem “Tysbe” quod “Pyramus,” “illa” quod “ille,”
non habet hunc numerus, non habet ordo locum.
Sed quid hic faciunt hec nomina, “neuter” et “alter,”
“primus” et “extremus”? fas sibi uerba petunt.

“Another” is absent, but “neither” is here, for both are
Each other, and neither alone can be absent.
Though “Tysbe” is the same as “Pyramus,” “she” and “he”
Are not counted the same—there is no order or place for them.
But what do these words mean, “neither” and “another,”
“First” and “last”? Right words seek themselves. (29-34)¹²

Thisbe’s grammatical musings fit well into the poem’s pedagogical milieu, but they also set the affective stakes for how we should read the presence of correlative verse within it. *Versus rapportati* also, after all, deal in absent presences and distanced relationships, and when we encounter them we move between the lines and consider what goes with what. Love is love, but also violence; night is night, but also anxiety; pain is pain, but also wakefulness. Pairings of adjectives and nouns open up questions of modification and definition—once the noun is modified, is it the same as it was before, or has the relationship between modifier and subject altered something more fundamental? Is night really night, or does the weariness make it into something new? When *amicus* becomes *nex*, if the *amicus* and the *ego* are the same, what does that leave? Thisbe (and we) are uncertain, and the *versus* mirror that sense of fragmentation.

The inability to grasp the larger implications of love (or death) creates a cumulative effect of disorientation, which is (one surmises) what the student of rhetoric is meant to take away from these examples. Now rather than relying on confirmed categorization of social elements, as

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in the moralized verses, suddenly these affective *versus* set to work breaking down boundaries and muddling distinctions. Philoclea's recognition of the pain of love is not quite so severe as that of Thisbe, but it walks a similar path: "For no thing, time, nor place, can loose, quench, ease, / Mine own, embraced, sought, knot, fire, disease"(13-14). Correlation itself starts to fragment here, as the pattern feels like it hits a snag with "Mine own" in the last line. We are by now well acclimated to the triple-clause structure, and can feel secure anticipating a trio of objects that follow thing/loose, time/quench, and place/ease. "Mine own," however, draws us up short. After some reflection, we can make the clauses work by arranging them as so:

- 1) For nothing can loose the knot that is mine;
- 2) Nor can time quench the fire I embrace;
- 3) Nor can a change of place ease the disease I sought.

But these groupings feel far less stable than those we found earlier in the song. This too has a precedent, as it happens, in the other Pyramus and Thisbe example from Hunterian V.8.14. In this version, Gervais of Melkely includes a moment of correlation when describing the area around Ninus's tomb, at which the lovers are to meet: "Lascivit radio dulcedine, murmure, fructu, / Flos ibi, gramen ibi, fons ibi, morus ibi" ("So played within the sun's beam, with sweetness, with murmuring, with flowering / There the blossom, there the grass, there the fountain, there the mulberry tree") (167-68, in Faral 331-35). Once again, we find the sequential, correlative reading we expect and successfully match each subject (flower, grass, fountain, and tree) with the manner of its playful movement (within the beam, with sweetness, with murmuring, with flowering). But like in Philoclea's couplet, the arrangement of sunbeam/blossom, grass/sweetness, fountain/murmuring, and tree/flowering is less stable than might be expected. We could, for example, engage in some poetic license and entertain a chiasmic structure in which the correlative sequence is inverted: the tree might sway in the sunshine, the fountain might flow sweetly, the grass might murmur in the breeze, and (of course) the bloom might flower—a possibility made a bit more visible by the *fructu/flos* alliteration across the line break. While *fructus* is usually reserved for trees and fruit (rather than blossoms), a wider and less delineated range of possibility nevertheless emerges of motion, actors, and manner overlapping. Our reading can play between the different possibilities, and as we construct the scene, the scented, fluttering, whispering, and flowering space around the tomb comes vividly alive.

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Philoclea's distress has a similar cumulative effect within her closing lines. Nothing can alleviate any of her symptoms, and no amount of rearranging of terms could provide comfort. She has been inextricably bound to Pyrocles in lines that are multifaceted and all-consuming, and her world-building correlation has given way to disoriented fragmentation. All that remains is the overarching sense of hopeless lovesickness as embodied not just in her flesh (which will be described in all its glory when Pyrocles shortly musters the courage to enter her chamber) but in her poetic form as well. And as readers, while we cannot partake of the one, we are certainly invited to experience the other. We are entangled in a poetic structure that seems to operate primarily through categorization and a set sequence of progression, but the further in we go the more unreliable that becomes. Suddenly, everything affects everything else and we feel Philoclea succumb to a kind of despairing, erotic fatigue that no longer allows her to delineate between different kinds of pain. She threatens to dissolve into the knot, the fire, and the disease, which are all the same in the end. With her, in this way, we fall into affective fragmentation that works against the ability to confirm anything except her prolonged and hopeless suffering.

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When Sidney places these various affects into Philoclea's mouth, he does so as an example of how the intimate, lyric form of the sonnet comes up against the powerful (and intricate) possibilities of correlative verse. This choice goes beyond a desire to display his skill at poetic ornamentation and, I argue, it does more than display Philomela to our gaze as an object subjected to the throes of feminine, erotic desire. She, and the poem, move beyond ornament.

The third quatrain of the poem is, perhaps, the most straightforward. Once we have become acclimatized within the *versus rapportati* structure, its plain application of the form is almost a relief after the complications of the first eight lines:

Then grief, unkindness, proof, took, kindled, taught,
Well-grounded, noble, due, spite, rage, disdain:
But ah, alas, (in vain) my mind, sight, thought,
Doth him, his face, his words, leave, shun, refrain . . . (9-12)

The first two lines here confirm her wretched state: grief takes well-grounded spite, unkindness kindles noble rage, and proof teaches her due disdain. However, (but ah, alas!) there is nothing she can do. Her

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mind cannot leave him, her sight cannot shun him, and her thought cannot refrain from dwelling on his words. Poor girl! Poor, conventional, love-sick girl. Out of the entire poem, this quatrain feels closest to the medieval usage of the figure, and it feels the most familiar in terms of its Petrarchan, erotic content. But it is also the most productive—in unexpected ways.

Philoclea in the *Arcadia* feels, in many ways, tropological. She is offered to the reader and to those around her as distinctly legible, available for interpretative inscription because of how she embodies her various affective and social states. It should be said that the object of her desire, Pyrocles, has for some time been disguised as Zelmane, an Amazon warrior, and seems to present much greater problems of readability as relates to gender, identity, and desire. But Philoclea's apparent familiarity as the love-sick woman is both part of a confirmation-structure and one that extends beyond it. As Jacqueline Miller reminds us, hers is not an unpracticed or unthinking position, particularly when it comes to what love looks like. Philoclea's experience of desire is one she must come to, deliberately imitating the bodies, gestures, and voices she has seen elsewhere:

Philoclea first feels a “friendly affection” for Zelmane because s/he is both a noble and attentive stranger. From this follows “that most natural effect of conforming herself to that which she did like, and not only wishing to be herself such another in all things, but to ground an imitation upon so much an esteemed authority.” Hence, “mark[ing] all Zelmane's doings, speeches, and fashions,” Philoclea did not only “imitate the soberness of her countenance, the gracefulness of her speech, but even their particular gestures.” The description emphasizes that Philoclea's imitations are initially empty of feeling . . . (Miller 409)

But imitation is not the end product, and it does not necessarily lead to something that is untrue or unfelt:

The genuine love that we are told Philoclea ultimately feels for Pyrocles is constituted by an act of imitation. Copying the gestures and speech of someone in love, Philoclea comes to feel love; imitation of the conventional signs of a passion is the source of the passion itself. The cosmetically applied signs of love “painted” on the external body elicit an inward passion that in turn animates and is manifest in the body. (409)

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Imitatio obviously has a long history in Sidney's attention, and in the *Defense of Poetry* he makes clear how imitation's function is not to repeat but to embody and internalize forms and affects, not in slavish mimicry but rather to make them one's own.¹³ In this way, Philoclea's "Dear me, I'm suffering in love!" and "Dear me, there's nothing I can do about it!" has the ability not only to be truly expressive of what unrequited desire feels like, but it also offers Sidney himself the opportunity to embody affective forms of poetry in order to make them his own.

For the most part, medieval *versus rapportati*, in their aphoristic or rhetorical mode, do not take on the position of a first-person speaker—they are not lyric poems. The *Arcadia* example, however, very much is. Sidney is ostensibly taking two poetic traditions, continental correlative verse coming from the medieval tradition and the Petrarchan erotic sonnet form, to do something new. Like Philoclea, he imitates, but the effect becomes something that goes beyond the limits of literary language. We see something similar in two unusual antecedents of the *versus* structure that do employ a first-person perspective. The first returns us to Curtius's discussion of the form and is the one Latin example of the figure he reproduces in full:

Pastor arator eques, pavi colui superavi
Capras rus hostes, fronde ligone manu

As a shepherd, farmer, and knight,
I pastured, tended, and conquered
The goats, the soil, and my foes,
With branch, mattock, and hand. (Curtius 286)¹⁴

The lines are also included in Riese's *Anthologia Latina* under the heading "*Epitaphium super Vergiliam*" and are given several manuscript attributions. Below them, Riese adds another, similar verse as part of the same entry (although they are not necessarily found together in the manuscripts he cites):

De capris pastis, de rure sato, hoste subacto,
Nec lac, nec segetes, nec spolia, ulla tuli

From the pastured goat,
from the cultivated farm,
From the conquered enemy,
I brought neither milk,
nor crop,
nor spoils. (Reise and Buecheler no. 800)

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The heading guides our interpretation here, and we enjoy a moment of recognition as both sets of epigrams trace out Virgil's famous progression from the *Eclogues*, to the *Georgics*, and finally the *Aeneid*, compiling the literary career of the celebrated classical poet into a comfortable set of lines. We can see the sequence of clauses build chronologically across Virgil's life even as we remain conscious of how the summative product of the whole becomes the touchstone sense of the passage: Virgil's lasting fame and value is not just iterative, it is cumulative.

And even more importantly, it is emulative. This is not to say that everyone can become a Virgil (although, we must imagine Sidney wouldn't object), but rather by imitating a given literary mode one might begin to participate in how it structures a sense of literary value. In this case, both verses emphasize poetic labor rather than product: what Virgil takes away from pasture, farm, and battlefield are not the spoils of the land or of war, but more lasting fruits. What is more, the correlative form becomes essential to what these lines argue for: rather than articulate what Virgil accomplishes with his work, they offer interstitial spaces. Neither poem defines literary value embodied in the Virgilian corpus for us; it is present only in its absence. We must thus arrive at the summative conclusion after first building the framework that surrounds it—a shape suspended in negative space. Sidney is not likely to have known these two small epigrams, but he nevertheless reaches out for their formal affect when he employs how they locate value in the in-between or the absent in order to gesture towards something greater than local meaning-making. Just as Virgil is more than his individual works and, indeed, more than the sum of his parts, so too is Philoclea—and so too is Sidney. The frustration expressed in the third stanza of Philoclea's song is controlled and evocative in what it cannot say and cannot do. Thomas Ward reminds us that Early Modern rhetorical study has a history of seeing the inability to articulate as powerful in its own right, and Philoclea's struggle (as conventional as her "alas!" might be) is its own form of eloquence (289-95). We can experience the strength of her passion and distress only through an inability to speak, presented here (in typical and delightful Sidneian irony) within ornate and elaborate poetic form. While this effect certainly carries many resonances over from medieval apophatic concerns (theological and rhetorical alike), here at the end Sidney's embodiment looks as much forward as it does backward. The emulative or imitative function of Philoclea's song brings her into existing tropes that build and confirm her as a familiar character in a familiar world; it also participates in the ineloquent eloquence that erotic distress requires and that her language fragments in sensible and affective ways.

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But moving the sonnet from her mouth to Sidney's pen, we begin to glimpse its position within the longer literary tradition.

The correlative sonnet, resting as it does between moralizing truth and poetic ornament, exceeds the structures of both. What we find in Sidney's application of the form is an experiment in the limits of literary language. Rather than being willing to dismiss Philoclea's song as a critique of overwrought erotic poetics that transform her into a caricature of a silly girl overcome by her own silly feelings, we should rather see in her formal excess an important moment in which she (and Sidney) reach for the very limits of what poetic structure can do. Here, ornament itself becomes meaningful in a way only the literary is capable of, *enforming* sense and meaning within the excesses of language.¹⁵ Surplus meaning, meaning that goes beyond informative content, in this form becomes for Sidney part of what it means to produce language within the emerging humanistic landscape of Early Modern manuscript and print circulation. Just as we see the literary value suspended within the summative body of his work, so too does the local effort required by the *versus rapportati* become the animating force carving out a space for something greater. In this way, both Philoclea and Sidney can move into imitation that draws from the literary past and end up someplace different, enlivened, and full of meaning that goes beyond both content and form.

Notes

1. As printed in the 1583 edition, preserved in the *Early English Books Online database*.
2. The form known as *reddendo singula singulis* comes from a legal rather than poetic context and indicates that a clause should be read in a distributive manner. A common example is: "If anyone shall draw or load a sword or gun..." The meaning clearly requires we associate "draw" with "sword" and "load" with "gun," following correlative sense.
3. In particular, he cites instances from the *Ars versificatoria* of Matthew of Vendome and the *Laborintus* of Evrard L'Allemand, both found in Faral's edition.
4. For more on the classical tradition, with several additional examples from Tacitus, Horace, Catullus, Sallust, and Cicero, see Adams 188-91.
5. These selections are indexed under *singula singulis*, with a note indicating the use of *versus rapportati* as an identifying term.

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6. All translations from Latin throughout are my own, unless otherwise indicated.
7. In his introductory material, J.A. Giles notes the text appears in the binding of Douai BM 0329 (a twelfth-century collection of Bede's *On the Temple* and commentary on the Book of Tobit), but offers no additional context or explanation.
8. For medieval and Early Modern rebus-reading and other spatial-linguistic puzzles as an act of faith, see Brantley.
9. "Sunt quae praemissis reddunt sua singula verba / Carmina, quae tali sunt modulanda modo" ("There are words that deliver their individual meanings according to those preceding; / And there are poems which also must be balanced out in such a manner") (L'Allemand 361). For Augustine, see vol. 32, 1084-85 in Migne's *Patrologia Latina*.
10. "This device creates *synthesis*, which I would certainly not call a color, but a figure, which save for the approval of Donatus, I would indeed hardly dare to call a figure either. For it even defiles the clause, which does not seem justifiable. I would say that one ought to eliminate such from authoritative works . . ." (trans. C. Y. Giles [68-70]).
11. Both are reprinted as a modern edition (although without translation) by Harbert. For the attribution of the first to Gervais, see Glendinning 54.
12. Pyramus has a similar moment of confusion, but using logic rather than grammar. When he discovers Thisbe's bloodied scarf, he has a Hamlet-like *disputatio* with himself whether he, too, should seek death (45-58).
13. See Miller's persuasive argument to this effect, 410-14.
14. For the use of this couplet in manuscript contexts and how it speaks to larger concerns about poetic composition within early humanistic compilations of political history, see Batkie, "Compositum in Compedibus."
15. See Rancière and Panagia: ". . . *literarity* refers at once to the excess of words available in relation to the thing named; to that excess relating to the requirements of the production of life, and finally, to the excess of words vis-à-vis the modes of communication that function to legitimate 'the proper' itself" (115).

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The Christological Number 33 in Works by King James, Raleigh, Byrd, and Spenser

Thomas Herron

Wise wordes taught in numbers for to runne,

Recorded by the Muses, live for ay

-Edmund Spenser, "The Ruines of Time" 402-03¹

We must be skeptical of esoteric interpretations of literature based on numbers: the least convincing numerological readings of literature tend to be the most complex ones, given their convoluted calculations. Lingering skepticism is one reason why the method of numerological and/or topomorphic reading of poetry has been relatively neglected in the last thirty or so years.² New and convincing numerological readings of literary works can still occur, however, especially those based on solid, easily traceable or countable patterns. Significant patterns include those emphasizing a poem's central line (whose discovery reinforces the poem's spiritual or mystical purport) and those involving important numbers in the biblical tradition, including 1, 3, 7, 12, 33, and 40.³

As this paper will argue, Edmund Spenser exploited the symbolic value of 33 in various works, including his poetic volume *Complaints* (1591), which highlights the martyred status of his hero, Sir Philip Sidney, a key subject of the work. Simultaneously, Spenser's martyrological message helps clarify the overall structural unity of the *Complaints* volume, which can otherwise appear to be a random miscellany. Spenser makes a similar affirmation of Christological sacrifice and heroism elsewhere in his oeuvre, notably in *The Faerie Queene*, "Astrophel," and in the biblical and Neoplatonic *Fowre Hymnes*. This recurring pattern may help explain why Spenser focuses on the mutual sacrifice of friendship in the thirty-third sonnet of *Amoretti and Epithalamion* as well. Spenser's patterning based on 33 parallels the holy number's use in an earlier work by King James VI of Scotland,

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“Ane Metaphoricall Inuentioun of a Tragedie, callit Phoenix,” which is explored here for basis of comparison. The religious significance of 33 is also exploited in relation to Sir Philip Sidney’s death in poems by Sir Walter Raleigh and in a compilation of songs by composer William Byrd (also examined below), and the number features prominently in later devotional poetry. Overall, Spenser’s use of 33 highlights the pious heroism of his subject and demonstrates the micro-to-macrocosmic, “divinely ordered,” Christian backbone of his art.

33, 40, and James VI’s “Phoenix”

33 is a key Christian number because it is the age of Jesus at his crucifixion (although in some less common cases it is 35). 33 also appears on the page as 3+3, which visually repeats the number of the Holy Trinity, and 3 is the number of days from Easter Friday to Sunday, when the Resurrection occurred, as commemorated every week in church services. The number 33 has various symbolic resonances in church architecture and practice (for example, a cardinal’s cassock has thirty-three red buttons on it, in memory of the crucifixion). In medieval literature, 33 is best known in association with Dante, who divides his 100-canto *Divine Comedy* into a trinity of 1+33, 33, and 33 cantos.⁴ Dante’s numerical influence resonates in later Continental and English literature.⁵

As noted by Sibyl Lutz Severance, 33 as a Christological structural device is found repeatedly in mixed-form sequences of religious English poetry in the seventeenth century, both Catholic and Protestant. For example, the Catholic Richard Crashaw uses thirty-three poems in his sequence *Carmen Deo Nostro* (1652), and the Anglican William Drummond’s sequence, *Flowers of Sion* (1623), has thirty-three poems divided into three parts, including groups of seven and twelve: according to Severance, “while thirty-three means Christ’s mortal life, it also reminds us of man’s promised immortality, secured through Christ’s death.”⁶ Drummond has five crucifixion poems and the central sonnet, which is also the seventeenth sonnet (half of 33 or 34) in the “major section” of the sequence, is “of particular interest because it serves as a paradigm of the Renaissance numerological practice of devoting the center of a work to a figure of triumph.”⁷

33 as a symbolic marker for martyrdom was used in Tudor English literature as well. Shakespeare employed the number in the narrative structure of a key passage in *Richard II* (1595) as a way to emphasize the doomed king’s piety.⁸ 33 and its visual equivalent, 3+3, are also crucial structural elements in an earlier poem focused on the fall of a prominent figure at court, “Ane Metaphoricall Inuentioun of a Tragedie,

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callit Phoenix” (1584), by James VI, King of Scotland. James’s work laments the fate of his favorite Esme Stuart (1542-83), aka the allegorized Phoenix of the poem, who was banished from Scotland in 1582 and traveled back to France, the place of his birth, where he died in 1583. The mythical phoenix, by analogy, wanders the globe before returning to its original nest to die in flames and be reborn. The poem, which was probably known to Spenser,⁹ is comprised of structural gimmicks: for example, Stuart’s name is written in acrostics in the opening pages, and James (and/or his printer) divides each of the poem’s subsequent pages into three stanzas of seven lines each, in rime royal, for a total of forty stanzas (37+ a 3-stanza “L’envoy”). The reader therefore sees a pattern of 3+3 facing stanzas on nearly every page (see fig. 1). As the

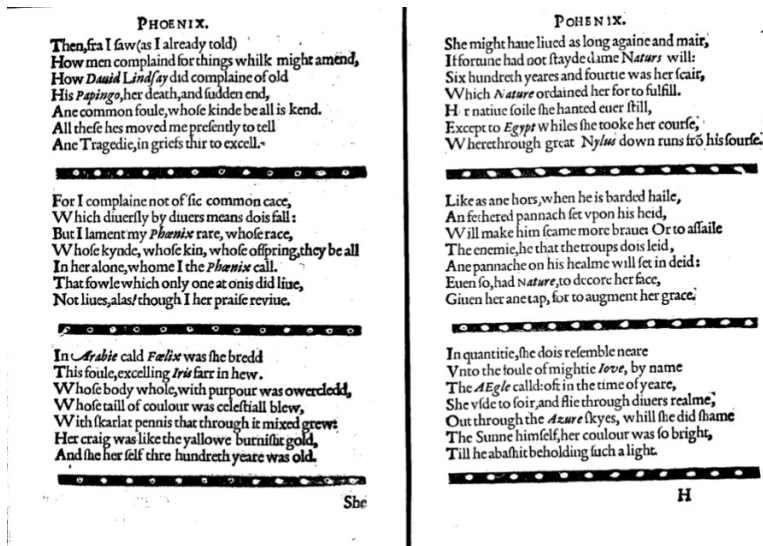


Fig. 1

James VI, “An Metaphoricall Tragedie . . .” (1584) G4^v-Hr. Lines referencing the “Phoenix” (31 and 33) appear framing the middle line of the central stanza on the left. Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited.

phoenix was a common symbol of Christ and his resurrection, the pattern reinforces the ongoing Christian symbolism of the narrative that it contains.

Counting lines also reveals patterning focused on 33. The thirty-first line of the poem introduces the “Phoenix rare,” which is described in line 33 as “her alone, whome I the Phoenix call” (G4^v). Between these two is line 32, which is lengthier than the two surrounding it, and which appears at the center of the central stanza of the G4 verso

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page (fig. 1). That line contains a trinity of references to the Phoenix's family, which is summed up in the bird "Whose kynde, whose kin, whose offspring, they be all." (Family connections were important to the author: Esme was the first cousin of James's father.) The mystical singularity of the Phoenix, its "all"-in-"one" nature, is further emphasized by the phrase "her *alone*" in line 33 (emphasis added) and in the trinity of "on[es]" that follows in line 34: "That fowle which *only one* at *onis* [i.e., "once"] did liue" (emphasis added). The various trinities and ones in these three lines (32-35) at the center of three stanzas aligned vertically on the page all point towards James's effort at heightening the Christological significance of the Phoenix. The thirty-fifth line of the poem then alludes to the power of James's poem to "reviue" the Phoenix (and hence the memory of Stuart) through his poem: "Not liues, alas! though I her praise reviuē." James is here evangelizing on behalf of Stuart while praising his own art.

In a parallel fashion, the thirty-first stanza of James's poem describes the arrival of the Phoenix on her funeral pyre (her nest), the thirty-second her burning, and in the thirty-third stanza, the narrator curses the "devils of darkness" that "went into that fowle."¹⁰ The bird's "hart" is finally pierced by Death in the thirty-fifth stanza. We can hardly lose hope, however, since we are reminded three times in the same stanza that the bird is "*Phoebus* fowle," i.e., belonging to the sun, a phoenix made eternally "bright" in God's glory and in song. The images of mortality that begin in stanza 31 thus continue in 33, with a reference to "devils," or hellish evil, and they culminate in 35, which contains an image of God's glory. Stanzas 37-40, which conclude the poem, then promise new life, thanks to the "worm" that rises from the ashes of the Phoenix and thanks to the power of Apollo, or poetry, to send the Phoenix "longer lyfe."¹¹

In the poem, the structural components based on the numbers 3, 33, and 3+3 are therefore woven into the framework of 40, the total number of stanzas. Appropriately, 40 is a biblical number associated with exile, wandering, and hardship. It rained for forty days during the Flood in Genesis; Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai for forty days in Exodus, and the Israelites wandered the desert for forty years; Christ's forty days in the wilderness dramatized in the New Testament are commemorated in the forty days of Lent preceding the Resurrection (Spenser uses the same number symbolism in Book II of *The Faerie Queene* when his hero of Temperance, Sir Guyon, resists the clutches of Mammon over the length of forty stanzas).¹² The resurrected Christ preached on earth for forty days (including Easter Sunday) before his Ascension. The message of James's poem, like that of the Bible, is that the core of faith can endure hardship, including

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spiritual and physical wandering, which actually makes that faith more meaningful.

The poem's play on numbers contributes to the Christian significance of the mystical phoenix. A similar numerical emphasis occurs at the "textual center" of Shakespeare's heavily Neoplatonic *The Phoenix and the Turtle* (1601), lines 33-35, where "the outgoing impulse of love that kindles the turtle occur[s]," according to Roy T. Eriksen.¹³ Love, in this case, is to be associated with the holy spirit of new life investing itself in the subject matter of the poem, as well as in the poet. Another, later poem, Andrew Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress," turns in a sacrilegious direction in lines 33-36, when the speaker imagines the beloved's "youthful hue" on her skin "like morning glew" while her "willing soul transpires / At every pore with instant fires" (33-36). This passage immediately follows the poem's famous reference to the cold grave, a "fine and private place" where none embrace (lines 31-32). In a well-known editorial crux, many editors emend "glew" in line 34 to "dew," but "glew" may be preferred by virtue that "glew" is (skin-burning) bird-lime, and hence has associations with trapping (and burning) birds.¹⁴ "Glew" evokes a phoenix, and vice-versa, an association that is bolstered by the numbers that parody Christian symbolism: it is Marvell's mistress, not Christ, who attracts in order to trap the speaker (and reader) into lustful burning in lines 33-36.

Spenser, Raleigh, Byrd, and Sidney

If we focus on Spenser's works, including his epic, we notice that the poet blends Christian numerology with both personal and political purpose when he adapts the number 33 to his complex allegorical schemes. In most of these cases, Spenser accompanies images of militant sacrifice with promising signs of resurrection, including references to birds, including the phoenix.

In Stanza 33 of Book I, canto i of *The Faerie Queene* (1590), for example, night is falling and Una admonishes her hero, Red Crosse Knight, to do "new worke" with the "new day" (33.2). Later in the Book, the first day of the conclusive battle between Red Cross Knight and the Dragon in Canto xi ends in stanza 32, when the Christ-like knight falls for the first time. Luckily, or by fate, Red Crosse falls into "*The well of life*" (29.9), and after day breaks in stanza 33, he rises to fight again in stanza 34.¹⁵ In an epic simile, the hero resembles an eagle that resembles a young hawk taking flight:

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At last she saw, where he vpstarted braue
Out of the well, wherein he drenched lay;
As Eagle fresh out of the Ocean waue,
Where he hath lefte his plumes all hory gray,
And dectt himself with feathers youthly gay,
Like Eyas hauke vp mounts vnto the skies
His newly budded pinions to assay,
And merueiles at him selfe, stil as he flies:
So *new* this *new*-borne knight to battell *new* did *rise*. (I.xi.34;
emphasis added)

Here Spenser weds Protestant militarism with the typology of Christian sacrifice and resurrection, as the knight's Christological character is emphasized by his three-fold "new"-ness and "rise." Similarly, in *FQ* III.v, a different hero, Timias, who allegorizes Sir Walter Raleigh as a young soldier, bleeds out his "heartbloud" from his wounded thigh in stanza 32, receives an herbal remedy in stanza 33, and in stanza 34 "up gan lift toward the azure skies" his eyes, a similar pattern of wounds, healing, and thoughts of Heaven as in *FQ* I.xi.32-4.

In a similar vein to *The Faerie Queene*, the number 33 functions as a structural device in "Astrophel," Spenser's eulogistic allegorical poem on Sir Philip Sidney's death that is appended to the volume *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (1595). The narrative proper has thirty-three stanzas (lines 19-198), which discounts the six framing stanzas, three at the beginning and three at the end (33 is thus framed by 3 and 3). In the thirty-third narrative stanza (the thirty-sixth overall), the transfiguration of the dead Sidney is completed as the flower "*Astrophel*" (196) is named: the seed of Sidney is thereby found blooming in Spenser's heart and poetic memory.¹⁶

Sidney's sacrifice was lamented by other poets in Christological terms. For example, Sir Walter Raleigh's "An Elegie, or friends passion, for his Astrophill. Written vpon the death of the right Honorable sir Philip Sidney knight, Lord gouernor of Flushing," is the first poem placed in the aptly named *Phoenix Nest* anthology (pub. 1593) (not counting a stanza in honor of the Earl of Leicester, which is placed at the end of a lengthy memorial to Leicester in prose that opens the volume). The elegy has thirty-nine stanzas of six lines each, and the phoenix is introduced in the seventh stanza, in a catalog of birds; it then re-appears in greater glory mourning the lost hero in stanza 35:

The generall sorrow that was made,
Among the creatures of kinde,
Fired the *Phoenix* where she laide,

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Hir ashes flying with the winde,
So as I might with reason see,
That such a *Phoenix* nere should bee.¹⁷

The Phoenix is stirred by the sacrifice of Sir Philip, who dies a martyr-like death (Sidney is killed in stanza 30 of the poem).

Raleigh makes a more direct correlation with the number 33 and Sidney in the following poem in the collection, "Epitaph upon . . . Phil. Sidney Knight." Lines 33-36 of the poem allude to the immortality that Sidney found in death:

Whence to sharpe wars sweete honor did thee call,
Thy countries loue, religion, and thy friends:
Of woorthy men, the marks, the liues and ends,
And her defence, for whom we labor all.

*There didst thou vanquish shame and tedious age,
Griefe, sorow, sicknes, and base fortunes might:
Thy rising day, saw neuer wofull night,
But past with praise, from of this worldly stage.*

Backe to the campe, by thee that day was brought,
First thine owne death, and after thy long fame;
Teares to the soldiers, the proud Castilians shame;
Vertue exprest, and honor truly taught. (29-40; emphasis added)¹⁸

In lines 33-34, Philip "vanquish[ed] shame and tedious age, / Griefe, sorow, sicknes, and base fortunes might" by sacrificing himself on the battlefield, in a stanza (#9) that stresses his death and lasting fame. In line 35, Sidney's "rising day," or virtuous youth and manhood, is immortalized when he "pas[sed] with praise, from off[f] this worldly stage" (36). Having reached his thirty-second year—or roughly half the Grand Climacteric of 63¹⁹—Sidney avoids the declining phase of life described by Raleigh as "tedious age" (33) and "woeful night" (35). His death and oblivion are simultaneously vanquished for us, the readers, by his "long fame" (38) that keeps alive his "rising day" in our minds: a life made more glorious by the echo of Christian resurrection in that phrase. Sidney's "death" in "campe" is referred to explicitly in lines 37-38 (Sidney was wounded in the field and died nearly a month later), but his wounding, death, and eternal life are encapsulated in lines 33-36 as well.

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We also find the number 33 used in relation to Sidney in a structural-symbolic way in a musical compilation by the Catholic English composer William Byrd. Byrd's multi-generic *Psalms, Sonnets and Songs of Sadness and Pietie* (1588) places his musical setting of Henry Walpole's martyrological poem on the Jesuit Edmund Campion, "Why do I use my paper, ink and pen?" as #33 in its sequence, as clearly marked in the header. It faces #34, "Come to me grieffe," which is the first of two "funeral Songs of that honorable Gent. *Syr Phillip Sidney, Knight*" (see fig. 2): a remarkable juxtaposition of Catholic and Protestant martyrs

XXXIIII The first singing part. MEDIVS.

Hy do I vse ¶ my paper inck & pen, and call my
wits to counsell what to say, such memories were made for mortall men, I
speake of Saints, whose names can- not decaye, an Angels trump an Angels
trump, were fitter far to found, their glorious death, ¶ if such on earth were
found, an Angels trump, ¶ were fitter far to found, their glorious death,
their glorious death; if such on earth were found, if such on earth were found,

XXXIIIIII MEDIVS.

¶ The funerrall Songs of that honorable Gent.
Syr Phillip Sidney, Knight.

Come to me grieffe for euer, ¶ Come to me teeres,
daie & night, daie & night, come to me plaint, ¶ helps, plaint all helps,
Iust griefe, Iust griefe, heart teares, plaint worthe, Iust griefe, heart teares, plaint
worthe, Iust griefe, heart teares, plaint worthe.

2 Go fro me dead to die now, 4 *Sidney* the hope of land strange,
Go fro me care to liue more, *Sidney* the flower of England,
Go fro me ioye all on earth, *Sidney* the spirit of honor,
Sidney, O *Sidney* is dead. *Sidney* is dead, O dead, dead,
3 He whom the Court adorned, 5 Dead I no more remembred,
He whom the country courted, With the anointed ones,
He who made happie his frendes, Honor on earth at his feete,
He that did good to all men. Blisse euerlasting his feate,
Come to me grieffe &c.

FINIS.

G.

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Fig. 2

Byrd, *Psalms . . .* (1588) F4^v-G1^r. Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited.

in songs that help blur the two.²⁰ The collection has thirty-five songs overall, and the second of the two funeral songs, #35, "O that most rare brest," laments Sidney's death while praising his still-living spirit: it "bewaile[s] the daie that crost thy famous race" and ends with a prolonged refrain of mourning, wherein Sidney is repeatedly (in a three-fold repetition of "doest liue") declared dead but living, while his living "friend" dies of grief: "thou dead doest liue, doest liue, thou dead doest liue, thy friend here liuing, dieth" (see fig. 3).²¹ Sidney's sacrifice has made his fame eternal to other mortals. Byrd's volume employs the nu-

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merical symbolism of 33-35 to associate that sacrifice with the martyrdom of Edmund Campion and, ultimately, with that of Jesus Christ.

XXXV. MEDIVS.

¶ The Table for the Psalmes, and the rest of the songs.

○ God giue eare & do apply.	I Who likes to loue.	XIII Songs of sadness & pietie.
Mine eies with teerenucie.	II My minde to me &c.	XIIII Prostat O Lord.
My soule opprest with care.	III Where fancie foand.	XV All as a Sea.
How shall a young man prone.	IIII O you that heere this voyce.	XVI Sufanna faire.
O Lord how long wilt thou.	V If weemen could be faire.	XVII If that a sinners sighes.
O Lord who in thy sacred tē.	VI Ambitious loue.	XVIII Care for thy soule.
Help Lord forwasted are &c.	VII What pleasure haue great Prin-	XIX Lulla, Lullaby.
Blessed is he that feares &c.	VIII ces.	XX Why doe I we.
Lord in thy wrath.	IX As I beheld.	XXI The funerall songs of that ho-
Euen from the depth.	X Although the heathen poets.	XXII norable Gent. Syr Phillip
	In fields abroad.	XXIII Sidney Knight.
<i>The Sonets and Pastorals</i>	Constant Penelope.	XXIIII Come to me grieue &c.
	La Virginella.	XXV O that most rare breift.
Ioy not in no earthly blisse.	XI Farewell false loue.	XXVI ¶ FINIS.
Though Amatiilus.	XII The match that's made.	

Fig. 3

Byrd, *Psalms* . . . (1588) G2^{r-v}. Note the thirty-five items listed in the table of contents at bottom, including Walpole's on Campion ("XXXIII") and two "funerall songs" for Sir Philip Sidney ("XXXIII" and "XXXV"). Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited.

Spenser's *Complaints* (1591)

As we have seen, Sidney's martyred stance was amplified in poetry and song of the 1580s and '90s, including in Raleigh's poetry and in Spenser's "Astrophel." The latter poem's martyrological use of numbers is reminiscent in turn of heroic Christological patterning in *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser's poetic miscellany *Complaints* also idolizes Sidney in such a way and thus strengthens the volume's memorial purpose as being, at least in part, a tribute to Sidney and his extended family.²² The collection is composed of nine main poems or poem-sequences that are divided into four parts, each part with a separate title page.²³ Different poems in the second, third, and fourth parts are dedicated to a different Spencer of Althorp sister, who were among Spenser's patrons. Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke and the sister of Sir Philip, is the most prominent dedicatee in the volume, as Spenser invokes her ahead of the first poem, "The Ruines of Time." She is also a likely candidate for "ye faire Ladie" praised in line 680 of that poem, as well as for "ye faire Ladie" praised the final sonnet of "The Visions of Petrarch" (93), which is the final sequence of poems in the volume.²⁴ If so, then Mary Sidney sees her own reflection in the alpha and the omega that binds the volume together under her gaze, or tearful pieta: Spenser asks in "Ruines of Time" for her to read his rhymes and cry "silver dropping teares" over them (this may double as an appeal for patronage, or "silver," from on high), for they not only lament the misery of the world but double as a "moniment" for her dead brother, Philip ("Ruines of Time" 680-84).²⁵

"The Ruines of Time" is about the decay of the world, including the dissolution of imperial (Roman) civilization. It is also about fallen heroes, such as Sir Philip. The poem compensates for the "Ruines of Time" that destroyed Sidney's life (and will our own) by celebrating his inspiring legacy. Philip, like Christ, was a "spotless sacrificer" who "power[d] forth th'offring of his guiltless blood: / So life exchanging for his countries good" (298, 300-01). Philip's death, his hearse-ship, and floating harp are the main subject of the dream sequence found in the last seven poems of "Ruines of Time," which comprise the second of two seven-sonnet sequences at the end of that poem. Sidney's floating harp on a river, like his floating hearse come sailing back from Zutphen in the Netherlands, where he had been killed, continues his allegorical journey into Orphic apotheosis and stellification. Sidney's "streams of blood" (651) send him, like a cygnet, on his watery way to celestial bliss. His sacrifice for the welfare of others ensures his immortality: as stated in a triumphal tone in the central line of the 646-line poem, Sidney is

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now “immortal” and is known “everie where through [his] excellent desart,” or deserving (342-43).

The heroism of Sidney’s life finds its inspiration in his family roots, and indeed seems to be born out of them (Byrd also celebrates his “famous race,” above). Unnoticed so far is that “The Ruines of Time” appears to play on the Christological numerology of the Passion in its worship of both Sidney and of deceased members of his extended family who crucially shared his support for militant Protestant policies and Spenser’s own poetry. For example, the poem concludes its long lament for Sidney’s uncle Robert, the Earl of Leicester, in its thirty-second stanza (he “now is dead,” line 218) and the poem tells Colin, i.e., Spenser himself, to “wake” in the thirty-third stanza: “at length awake for shame” (231). In the subsequent, thirty-fourth stanza, the speaker Verulamium, the genius of the town, calls for collective action in a waking “song”: “Awake, and to his song a part applie” (236). The immediate pronoun referent for “his” is Colin Clout, *aka* Spenser, but a secondary candidate would be the dead Earl of Leicester: Verulamium appeals to the readers to add their voices to “his” (i.e., Colin’s) voice to sing songs in praise of Leicester, i.e., “his” (Leicester’s) song. In this grammatical confusion, Leicester’s spirit infuses “his,” i.e., Colin’s, own living song in stanzas 33-34.

That song then continues in stanzas 35-37 to praise the Earl of Leicester’s brother, the deceased Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, for the sake of his widow, Anne Russell, who was a patron of Spenser’s. The poem’s praise of her and her husband makes it clear that Spenser’s art ensures their immortality, and it does so with an exaggerated flourish of praise for the interrelated “liuing” and the “dead” in Leicester’s extended family:

He [i.e., Robert] dyde, and after him his brother noble Peere
[i.e., Ambrose],
His brother Prince, his brother noble Peere,
That whilst he liued, was of none enuyde,
And dead is now, as liuing, counted deare,
Deare vnto all that true affection beare:
But vnto thee most deare, ô dearest Dame,
His noble Spouse [i.e., Anne Russell], and Paragon of fame.

He whilst he liued, happie was through thee,
And being dead is happie now much more;
Liuing, that lincked chaunst with thee to bee,
And dead, because him dead thou dost adore
As liuing, and thy lost deare loue deplore.

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So whilst that thou, faire flower of chastitie,
Dost liue, by thee thy Lord shall neuer die.

Thy Lord shall neuer die, the whiles this verse
Shall live, and surely it shall liue for euer:
For euer it shall liue, and shall rehearse
His worthie praise, and vertues dying neuer,
Though death his soule doo from his bodie seuer.
And thou thy selfe herein shalt also liue;
Such grace the heauens doo to my verses giue. (239-59)

The zig-zagged mirroring of the living and the dead in these stanzas serves to blur their identities into one collective family whose dead are still alive, as if resurrected, in heaven (Ambrose “being dead is happie now much more”) and in the poet’s immortal memorial verse (“Thy Lord shall neuer die, the whiles this verse / Shall live, and surely it shall liue for euer”). Spenser himself is “awake” to this process (236) of renewal through memorial verse emphasized in stanza 35 and following. The effect of reading stanzas 35-37 is akin to admiring a memorial garden laid out in knots. The garden attests to the noble family’s “lincked” roots and ongoing generations on their estate, one reflecting the other. Every branch and leaf contributes to the complex and repetitive symmetrical whole, found also in the poet’s art, which figuratively “awakes” to praise the Leicester family in stanza 33.

Turning to the volume’s sonnet sequences, we find familiar structural and numerological patterns that also point towards a Christianized renewal at the ruinous heart of *Complaints*. The fifth, or central, major poem or cluster of poems in the volume is “The Ruines of Rome.” A translation of a sonnet sequence by Jean Du Bellay, the sequence is composed of thirty-three poems. The center of that number, #17 in the sequence, features a complicated phoenix-like image wherein “Jove’s great bird” (17.1), or the Roman eagle, is scorched by the sun and split in half by “the German Raven in disguise” (233), which is seen “towards heaven freshly to arise” (235). The raven represents the invading Goths tearing down the Roman empire, while simultaneously allowing a new dawn to arise under the Holy Roman Empire of the Hapsburgs;²⁶ the image clearly recalls the concept of a phoenix, with one bird being born out of another.

The sequence is a translation of Du Bellay’s *Antiquitez de Rome* (1558), with one exception: Du Bellay’s opening, dedicatory sonnet to his monarch is removed and Spenser replaces it with an envoy (“L’Envoy”) in the position of the thirty-third sonnet, the one poem in the sequence completely original to Spenser. According to the editors

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of the *Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, Spenser thus “restores the numerological potential of the thirty-two translated sonnets.”²⁷ Since “Ruines of Rome” lies at the nominal numerical center of the entire *Complaints* volume (the fifth of nine titled poems overall), this makes the number 33 central to the entire volume as well. According to the final, 33rd sonnet, poetry will allow “Old Rome out of her ashes to revive, / And give a second life to dead decays” (353-54). “Ruines of Rome” therefore ends, appropriately, with a phoenix-like image of a revived “Rome”—an eagle rising back out of the German destruction, as it were—but with the French Protestant poet Guillaume Du Bartas “rayse[d]” up in replacement of the Catholic poet Du Bellay in Spenser’s vision.²⁸ “Ruines of Rome” thus laments the fate of both Roman empires, temporal and spiritual, but they are optimistically superseded in the *translatio imperii* by a new Protestant hegemony led by the poets of France and England.

Adding to the religious glow of the volume are three concluding “Visions” that form a triptych. Like the concluding vision-sequence to “Ruines of Time,” they are composed only of sonnets, and they have a total of thirty-three or thirty-four poems between them (“Vision of the Worlds Vanitie” twelve, “The Visions of Bellay” fifteen, and “Visions of Petrarch” six or seven): it’s impossible to tell exactly which number because, in the 1591 *Complaints*, unlike the other sonnets that are numbered sequentially, the last two sonnets of “Visions of Petrarch” have no number header between them, although a page break does divide them.²⁹ The sequence also has martyrological imagery keyed to its numbers: the thirty-second poem (or fifth poem in “Visions of Petrarch”) narrates the bleak death of a “Phoenix” but not its resurrection. The thirty-fourth poem overall (the seventh in “Visions of Petrarch”), which functions as an envoy for the first thirty-three visions, offers a vision of bliss in the form of the “faire” Mary Sidney, sister of Philip (9). It warns her of her impending death but also emphasizes her “bounteous brest” where “All heauenly grace and vertue shrined is” (9-10). This poem, the third of a final trinity (#32-34), thus literally describes Mary as a shrine or, perhaps, a living relic with heavenly allure. If simply counting the printed numbers, 33 appears as yet another device indicating the Christological importance of the Sidney brother, sister, and uncle (Leicester) as a family bound together in a familial holiness. Hence Spenser’s *Complaints*, despite being a miscellany of many genres, takes on a religious, contemplative, quasi-mystical purpose overall for the Sidney readership in particular, once its numerological patterning of 33 is discovered in its central sonnet sequence and in those following.

Spenser's *Fowre Hymnes* (1596) and *Amoretti* (1595)

Spenser blends images of Christian martyrdom and Neoplatonic philosophy explicitly in *Fowre Hymnes*, where patterns of darkness and wounding, followed by love, grace, and resurrection, correspond with 33. Each of the first three Hymns has a clearly delineated opening invocation composed of a varying number of stanzas, followed by a narrative portion. The invocations of the first three hymns ("Hymn to Love," "Hymn to Beauty," and the "Hymn to Heavenly Love") are demonstratively set off from their narratives by virtue of capitalization of initial letters at the beginning of each narration. The fourth hymn, "Hymn to Heavenly Beauty," has no such typeset marker (its narrative proper appears to begin in stanza 4, however).

The two hymns that focus on Love, the first and third, use Christological motifs, including play on the number 33, when alluding to sacrifice. When counting forward from the point where the narrative proper begins in the first hymn, the thirty-third stanza (the thirty-ninth overall) describes how Jealousy "eates the hart" (268); in the next stanza, Love makes its entrance into the same heart, and "The Sunne more bright and glorious doth appeare" (276), while "heauens glorie" will appear out of "paines of Purgatorie" (278-79). This leads to the appearance of "Paradize" (280) in the thirty-fifth stanza. A similar transcendence from cardiac pain to heavenly bliss occurs in "Hymn to Heavenly Love": after a clearly delineated prefatory invocation that is three stanzas long, the thirty-second and thirty-third stanzas of the narrative proper relate the crucifixion of Jesus, with the piercing of the reader's "flinty heart" (246) occurring in the thirty-third stanza (the thirty-sixth overall). Stanza 34 then calls for the reader to "lift up thy mind . . . and in thy brest his blessed image beare" (256). Not only does this numbering in both poems evoke the Christian faith, but the latter poem in particular attests to the love of the Divine Creator, who sacrificed his Son on behalf of humankind and who works harmoniously through His poet on earth. Angus Fletcher argues that Spenser's numerology in his wedding poem, "Epithalamion," can be read from an Augustinian point of view, for "where fertility is a theme of some importance, number symbolism evokes the craving of Christians for the order of *rationes seminales*" or "seminal reason of things."³⁰ Similarly, numerology in *Fowre Hymnes* signifies not only God's love for man, i.e., that "colony" on earth that replaced the fallen angels ("Hymn to Heavenly Love" 104), but the creative process itself as a loving act, which Spenser in his own poetry participates in.

With this pattern in mind, we can consider the number 33 in relation to Spenser's best known sonnet sequence, the *Amoretti*, which

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also has a Sidney connection. We know from the work of A. Kent Hieatt about the numerical structuring, including centering, as well as the image patterning of *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*; the sonnet sequence *Amoretti* follows a pattern based on the Church of England's liturgical calendar, with sonnet #68 announcing Easter. Thus, the spiritual heart of the sequence connects the love of the engaged couple with the promised resurrection and eternal love of Christ.³¹

We hear an echo of the Resurrection in the thirty-third sonnet of *Amoretti* as well. Spenser implores Lodowick Bryskett, who was a poet, Sir Philip Sidney's close friend and elegist, and Spenser's fellow Irish administrator, to "lend you me another living breast" so that Spenser can continue writing *The Faerie Queene* and "enlarge her living praises dead," i.e., the praise of his "sacred Empresse," Queen Elizabeth I. The poem refers to the power of fame, through poetry, to revivify the living and the dead; Spenser places this idea in sonnet 33 in the context of deifying worship of the Queen-emperor, who is Spenser's ultimate patron. According to an Elizabethan proverb, "a faithful friend is like a Phoenix."³² *Amoretti* 33, like "Ruines of Rome," emphasizes the community between authors whose work was mutually inspired by the deceased Sidney and by the queen. Spenser imagines Bryskett's influence as literally resurrected inside himself in the name of imperial letters.

Conclusion

Artistic exploitation of the number 33 lives on in the modern era, including in the Broadway rock musical *Dude: The Highway Life* (1972), which focuses on a young couple who, believing they have been cast in a production of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, instead find themselves experimenting with everything in the Garden of Eden, at great peril to their souls. The character #33, who is God, then shows them the way to happiness. A hundred butterflies were released at the beginning of every performance, and the show was a flop.³³

Against such silliness, we ought to agree with Spenser in his "Ruines of Time" that "Wise wordes taught in numbers for to runne, / Recorded by the Muses, live for ay" (402-03). Christian numerology amplifies and unifies a poem's optimistic message and can thematically bind together disparate poems, such as those in Spenser's varied collection, *Complaints*. Devotional poetry and long, multi-stanza poems, such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, exploit the significance of 33, as does King James VI's "Phoenix," which was devoted to the king's exiled kinsman and favorite Esme Stuart. Both Raleigh and Spenser show a similar numerical devotion to Sir Philip Sidney

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in their poems. Additional Biblical numbers, such as 40, also factor into early modern poems in meaningful ways. There is no one way to read or manipulate every potential symbolic number in a sequence for religious effect, but astute readers can look for shifting signposts of spiritual significance planted by an author and be guided by their own interpretations. The effort spent in discerning these numbers can contribute to conscious meditation on the life and meaning of Christ or on the Christian heroism of others. Through such holy numbers, poets also advertise their own worthy artistry.

Notes

1. Spenser, "The Ruines of Time." All citations from *Complaints* in this paper are taken from Oram et al, and all other primary sources are cited from *EEBO*, unless otherwise indicated. Parts of this paper were first presented at a session of the Sidney Society at the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, MI in 2013 and at the Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference in Bruges, Belgium in 2016. Both Bill Engel and Elisabeth Chaghafi also presented at Bruges, and I would like to thank them for their support and extensive suggestions when revising this paper for publication. All faults are my own.
2. Numerological studies bloomed in the 1960s and early '70s and again in the 1990s. Parker (1-34) provides an invaluable introduction to the field of number studies and warns against "the ingenuity of the critic" as well as readings that focus on numbers "beyond our usual frame of reference" (9, 10). See also Heninger. Classic works of numerological criticism include Fowler (ed.); Fowler; Hieatt; Røstvig. For skepticism of the approach, see Hunter.
3. Hunt 228; Curtius 505. Among various possibilities (see examples in this paper), number 1 attests to the singularity of God and unity of all things in God; 3 attests to the Holy Trinity, and 40 is a number of exile. 7, 12, and 40 are symbolic "typical numbers" of the Old Testament (Curtius 503), and 12 can refer to the number of Christ's disciples in the New Testament.
4. Fukuda 35; Fowler 131-32; Hunt 228-29. Hunt offers a useful overview of the number's historical literary significance. In Dante's *Inferno*, Satan, the anti-Christ, appropriately dominates the very bottom or thirty-third Canto (not counting the prefatory canto to the book) of Hell. He has three heads, a parody of the Trinity and perhaps the Last Supper as well, when he is shown devouring not only Cassius and Brutus but also Judas, the man at the Supper who betrayed Christ to crucifixion. Crucifixion leads to salvation in the narrative, including the welcome relief of *Purgatorio*, a kind of narrative rebirth into a more blessed light at the liminal, marshy fringes of the poem, where life is germinated rather than consumed (Nohrnberg 102). These thirty-three cantos are followed in turn by the beatific vision of *Paradiso*.

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5. Curtius 505, cited by Hunt, who notes that “Curtius . . . cites fifteen works in which the number symbolically alludes in one way or another to Christ’s lifetime” (228).
6. Severance 219-20.
7. *Ibid* 220, 222. Severance also discusses numerology in Barnes’s *A Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets* (1595) and Henry Lok’s *Sundry Christian Passions* (1593).
8. Hunt. Richard is a Christ-like figure in many regards (including parodic), and his final soliloquy of sixty-six lines contains a chiasmic figure of speech at its center, thus calling attention to its half-number of lines = 33. Hunt’s method mainly focuses on counting line numbers in the First Folio (1623). It should be noted in this regard that *The Tempest*, imbued with white magic, mentions the “one Tree, the Phoenix throne, one Phoenix” in Act 3, scene 3. If you count the lines in the First Folio that indicate stage directions as well as dialogue, the “phoenix” appears on line 33 of the page. Shakespeare, *The Tempest* 31.
9. The Phoenix in James’s poem appears to have influenced Spenser’s description of the doomed butterfly Clarion in his mock-epic “Muiopotmos,” included in his *Complaints* volume: see Herron, “Plucking” 89-90.
10. *Ibid* 11^{r-v}.
11. *Ibid* 12^{r-v}.
12. Hieatt, “Three Fearful Symmetries” 51.
13. Eriksen 199. Cf. also line 28 of Shakespeare’s poem: “number there in love was slain.”
14. Marvell 20. Cf. *Isaiah* 33:12 in the Coverdale Bible (1535): “The people shall be burnt like lime.” textusreceptusbibles.com/Coverdale/23/33. Accessed 20 Sept. 2023.
15. Røstvig 288, 290, whose chart on 290 is not quite accurate as regards the beginning of “Day two,” which begins in stanza 33, not stanza 34. Røstvig notes that the battle and the town response to Red Crosse Knight’s victory (I.xi-xii.11) form a unit that can be divided into two sets of thirty-three stanzas each. Røstvig also discusses the significance of 33 to the narration of *Britons monuments*, which are revealed to Guyon inside the House of Temperance in *The Faerie Queene* (II.x.4-69). That episode is told in two halves of thirty-three stanzas each, and each segment of 33 can be divided into portions of 11+22, itself reflective of the heavenly/philosophical ratio of 2:1, i.e., the Golden Mean (Røstvig 347-53, 547). All references to the poem in this paper are from Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*.
16. Spenser, “Astrophel.” In an intriguing coincidence, in the prose dedication of Spenser’s poem “The Ruines of Time” to Mary Sidney, Philip’s sister, the thirty-second word of the dedication states that her brother is “deceased,” followed by the clause, “which taking roote began in his life time somewhat to bud forth.” Sidney died age 32 (see note 19, below). Spenser also refers in this dedication to the “seede of most entire love” “sowed” in his own “brest” by

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Sidney (Spenser, "The Ruines" 230-31). A pun on "seed" is evident in the Sidney name (as it would be in the contraction of the name Philip to "pip"). Sidney admired Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579), and Spenser clearly admired Sidney's poetic and political legacy. For a defense of Sidney and Spenser's "logocentric" use of structural forms and harmonies that counteracts a deconstructive manner of writing (and reading) both poets, see Heninger, "Spenser, Sidney, and Poetic Form." For a discussion of Sidney's influence on the Gardens of Adonis episode in *The Faerie Queene* III, see Quitslund chs. 6 and 7.

17. Raleigh, "An Elegie" 7. It is possible that Raleigh uses the number 35 as a structural signifier here in his stanzas, so as to highlight the Christological symbolism of the Phoenix's resurrection. The Phoenix first appears in the seventh stanza, a number evocative of the holy day of mass, and the thirty-fifth stanza could evoke the Passion of Christ: 35 is three numbers after 33 (including 33), and the Passion played out over three days, from Good Friday to Easter Sunday.

18. Raleigh, "An Epitaph" 9.

19. Sidney was 32, or in his thirty-third year, when he was martyred for the militant Protestant cause fighting against the Spanish at Zutphen in the Netherlands, in 1586. Is Sidney's age of expiration the reason why *Certaine Sonets*, a posthumous collection of his poetry collected by his sister Mary and published in 1598, has thirty-two poems? As noted by Paul A. Marquis, the thirty-second poem is where "the lover announces the *commiato*, and turns towards the heavenly world. It was a gesture that Sidney himself was to make in the final days of his life" (74). See also Parker 82-83, who interprets the choice of thirty-two poems for the collection as related to Sidney's use of the same number in *Astrophil and Stella*, it being "the half-way point of 63," the number of the Grand Climacteric. The posthumous celebration of Sidney as a type of great Protestant hope, an enduring Phoenix of militaristic, poetic inspiration in England's verse, has been explored in many places, including Hannay; Kay; Alexander; Brown. James VI published a eulogizing sonnet for Sir Philip Sidney, "In Philippi Sidnaei interitum, Illustrisimi Scotorum Regis Carmen" (1587), which shares the same spirit, although it does not refer to Philip as a Phoenix. For a transcription and discussion of the poem, see Herman 165-70.

20. Byrd F4^v-G1^r.

21. Byrd G2^{r-v}.

22. For analysis of Spenser's praise of Sir Philip Sidney and his extended family in *Complaints* and especially "The Ruines of Time," see Brown ch. 3; Shortsleff. Crucially, Brown (118-19) highlights Sidney's role as a Christ/Orpheus figure in Spenser's verse, and Shortsleff (85) argues that the poem "holds open the possibility that the political commitments of the dead might be revived and re-embodied in another collection of subjects, and that poetry might play a vital role in shaping this future collectivity." The religiously inspired numbers 3 and 7 have been discussed in relation to individual poems in Spenser's *Complaints*, but more can be said regarding underlying numerical structuring of the sequences in the collection and of the collection as a whole (as I try to do here in

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connection with 33). For example, Schell (229) comments on the importance of the ubiquitous number 7 as imbuing “Ruins of Time” with divine direction and heavenly consolation. All of its concluding sonnets are divided into two parts of seven lines each, and the seven-sonnet sequence lamenting the pride and vanity of the world adds to the holy aura of heavenly purpose imbuing the second set of seven poems especially: they point heavenwards and with ritual significance celebrate Sir Philip Sidney’s life and poetry forevermore. MacLean (180-81) argues that *Complaints* demonstrates Spenser’s mature artistic abilities, including “the mysteries of number.”

23. The order is:

- 1) Title Page 1, “Ruines of Time”
- 2) Title Page 2, “Teares of the Muses” and “Virgils Gnat”
- 3) Title Page 3, “Mother Hubberds Tale” and “The Ruines of Rome”
- 4) Title Page 4, “Muiopotmos” and “Visions [etc.]”

24. As noted by MacLean (179), the line “Loath this base world, and thinke of heavens blis” (“Visions of Petrarch” 96) echoes the final line of “Ruines of Time,” “loath this drosse of sinfull worlds desire” (686), thus further binding those two poems together.

25. Oram et al. (457n) state that Mary is “presumabl[y]” the lady referred to here (note also the “faire Ladie” of “Visions of the Worlds Vanitie” 13), and also that she is the dedicatee to the entire *Complaints* volume, but the volume as a whole does not have a declared dedicatee; Mary Sidney is instead the dedicatee of the volume’s first poem, “The Ruines of Time.”

26. Melehy 17.

27. Oram et al. 404n.

28. Coincidentally, the sonnet ends with a line thirty-three letters long and pregnant with immortal hope: “And fill the world with never dying fame.” The meaning of the line, like the placement of the poem as #33 in the collection’s central sequence, reinforces the entire volume’s repeated emphasis on poetic fame and Protestant purpose via Christological symbolism.

29. The seventh (unnumbered) sonnet appears to be intended as a backward reflection or envoy: Oram et al. 456n. If so, then it would stand apart from the entire prior sequence of thirty-three poems in the “Visions” group. Oram et al. number “Visions of Petrarch” consecutively as 1-7; Renwick does so as 1-6, with the 6th being the double-sonnet at the end.

30. Fletcher 121 (n.73), citing Knowles.

31. See Hieatt, *Short Time’s Endless Monument*; Herron, “Endlesse Monument.”

32. Merritt Hughes in Milton 308-9n. See for example Shakespeare, *All’s Well* 249 and Clarke 26. I am grateful to Elisabeth Chaghafi for these last two references.

33. Ragni.

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About the Author

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Macrocosmic Proportionality and Commemorative Design in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*

Grant Williams

Part of the irreducible experience of reading Shakespeare's *Sonnets* includes, for better or for worse, its proportional design. Most modern scholars of Shakespeare's sonnets avoid questions of the sequence's overall order in favor of contextual readings of a few individual poems or a short strand of them. Readers may thus receive the impression that a small grouping here and there can form a Rubik's Cube of random possibilities capable of endless recombination. Implicit in a scholarly production focused narrowly on cultural interconnections, this relativistic, haphazard attitude to arrangement does not, however, tally with Shakespeare's age, when numerical order contributed to poetic semiosis. The work of Alastair Fowler and S. K. Heninger, Jr. corrects the strong disciplinary bias of ignoring or minimizing the interpretive implications of number for the design of poetry, especially sonnet sequences. That said, numerology does suffer from bad academic press.

The phrase "architectonic hermeneutics" helps to redeem scholarly inquiries into numerology from associations with univocal truth-claims about cabalistic cryptograms and esoteric conspiracies. We need not fear number as rendering a monological interpretation but can tap its potential for contributing to the polyvalent and dialogical structures of poetry. My interest in the architectonics of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* stems from my contention that the sonnets are designed to be commemorative and that experiencing their commemorative design depends upon taking into account the entirety of the collection. Fowler made a similar case for *Sonnets*, although my perspective diverges widely from the more geometric contours of his analysis. Whereas he postulated that the sequence coalesces into a monumental pyramid, I argue instead that it forms a megasonnet for the purposes of monumentalization. Architectonic hermeneutics makes us aware of the complexities and possibilities of proportionality for experiencing the commemoration of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, not only interpretively but

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also cognitively, while enriching our engagement with and appreciation of the collection's overall design.

In the years following the publication of *Triumphal Forms*, Alastair Fowler's methodology came under fire from prominent names in English studies. Fowler was definitely the main lightning rod for hostile skepticism directed at numerological scholars who used arithmetic to reveal "the particular significance of poetic structures" (Colie 77). Notwithstanding the nuances of the many attacks, the basic argument against numerology was that it was not a poetic practice that Renaissance authors would have plausibly bothered themselves with, nor is it a credible method by which readers can yield verifiable, exoteric interpretations. For Rosalie Colie (79), the arithmetic demonstrations conducted by Fowler are fudged to fit the poem under scrutiny and thus fail to measure up to Karl Popper's theory of falsifiability. Conversely, numerological structures are, as Stanley Fish argues, not like regular rhetorical and metrical patterns because they are "only possible in the context of a conscious intention consciously recognized" (197). And according to Douglas Bush, who could ever really believe that "early readers counted lines, even up to thousands" (169) or that "great poets in deeply serious or religious poems would have played numerological games" (170)? These three critics, influenced as they are by disciplinary bias, do not want to broach the possibility that "numerological games" play an illuminating role in interpreting Renaissance poetry. *Pace* Colie, poetic numerals should not be anachronistically equated with the inflexible precision of modern scientific number, and, *pace* Fish and Bush, they do belong unconditionally to the habits of humanist culture. What these critics particularly fail to understand is that engaging with numerals in poetry makes possible the reader's experience of proportion and symmetry, which are foundational to grasping a poem's peculiar design. As Heninger explains, number in Pythagorean discourse is an abstraction of geometric form itself, since form was determined by a precise arrangement of points: a square, for example, being identified by four points (*Touches of Sweet Harmony* 71). The enduring legacy of numerological scholarship conducted by Fowler, Heninger, and others is a matter not so much of unlocking secret meanings as of opening up the dimension of poetic design to reveal its interpretive and experiential potential. In its longstanding alliance with phenomenology, the method that distinguishes the lifeworld from the scientific attitude, "hermeneutics" tacitly argues that there is an experience of architectonics worthy to be articulated and not subject to reductionism, objectivism, and scientism.¹ We can recognize a personal, cultural, and historical perception of numerals beyond the instrumentality of rigorous and perfunctory calculation.

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Despite humming away in the argumentative background of Renaissance English poetics, proportionality holds an importance that cannot be overstated when it comes to poetic form. This analytic concept is used with special flexibility by virtue of it applying efficaciously to words, numbers, and things. The term *proportion* stands out most apparently in discussions of prosody—the theory and practice of versification—where it numerically describes the rhythmical and sound patterns exhibited by verse.² But it also appertains during the period to many other aspects of poetry. George Puttenham, by far the chief English explicator of poetic proportionality, avers that it derives from music because “poesy is a skill to speak and write harmonically; and verses or rhyme be a kind of musical utterance, by reason of a certain congruity in sounds pleasing the ear” (154). Puttenham then goes on to devote the entire middle book of his tripartite treatise to “proportion poetical,” examining seriatim five main points: stanza, meter, rhyme, location (rhyme schemes), and visible shape. And when he supposedly finishes this topic and turns to ornament, that is, figures of speech, the application of such figures, he stresses, still depends upon thinking through proportion (222, 227). Should it surprise us then that William Scott’s recently discovered 1599 manuscript treatise *The Model of Poesy* defines the sonnet as “a proportion of fourteen verses” as though the very concept revealed this genre’s essence (81)? And truly, Scott elsewhere explains at length “proportionableness,” one of four virtues borrowed from Julius Scaliger, for understanding both the matter and style of a poem’s beauty (lxxi). In poetics, proportion was not restricted to its “commonly recognized” usage as “as a technical term designating a special relationship between two numbers” (Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony* 73); it also named a type of relationship between conceits, or between parts of style, or between textual part and textual whole, and generally speaking this due relation could be visually pleasing or aurally harmonious. Renaissance poetry was an art of proportion, and so readers could presumably experience that proportionality from numerous phenomenological angles.

My brief advocacy for the deeply poetic relevance of proportionality sheds light on the significance of numerical design in Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*. The aliquot of the collection is fourteen, the number of lines in a typical sonnet. The 154 sonnets are divisible by fourteen eleven times, with each grouping of eleven poems equaling one line. Whoever—and that who is most likely Shakespeare—has assembled the poems for the collection has selected 154, no more, no less, thereby conveying the idea of a megasonnet.³ An immediate reaction one may have to such a claim concerns the likelihood of Shakespeare ever settling deliberately on an aliquot of fourteen. Of the thirty-four sonnet sequences pub-

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lished between 1560 and 1634, none is divisible by this number.⁴ It was, then, in practice at least, easy to miss the mark of 14, 28, 42, 56, 70, 84, 98, 112, 126, 140, and 154. Would Shakespeare and other major poets have arrived by chance at a meaningful sum, when “[t]he most subtle and conceited of all numerological patterns,” according to Fowler, “are those in the sonnet sequences of the late sixteenth century” (174)? We should not expect anything less from sonneteers, who according to manuscript evidence carefully revised their poetry.⁵ The compositional method suggested the imperative of design, the outcome of the second canon of rhetoric, whereby students were taught to value the skill of rearranging and reordering text for maximum readerly effect.⁶ Shakespeare was not simply gathering all the sonnets he had written up until that time, since, as Edmondson and Wells’s comprehensive edition attests, he could have easily included the various sonnets from his plays. In other words, he could have easily added more or left out others.

This basic choice makes one question why Shakespeare did not opt for 140 sonnets if he were composing a megasonnet with fourteen lines. As Roy Graves noticed a few decades ago, “Had Shakespeare stopped his cycle at No. 140, readers before now would surely have detected the glaring association not only with the number 14 but also with the conventional ‘sonnet dimensions,’ which can be expressed as an easy equation: 14 lines x 10 syllables = 140 syllables per ‘normal’ sonnet.” And as Graves continues, 154 sonnets still convey—though more covertly—“a perfectly regular Shakespearean sonnet with ‘weak’ or ‘feminine’ line-endings” (119).⁷ For the most part, the proportion of feminine endings in Shakespeare’s plays increases over his career, suggesting his interest in and commitment to deviant verse lines.⁸ It appears, then, that given his skillful versification, he deliberately prefers a megasonnet of feminine endings rather than masculine endings, likely placing special emphasis on poems such as Sonnet 20 that stray significantly from idealized iambic pentameter. Choosing the divisor of eleven over ten also leaves a notable symbolic difference. Plato and others considered ten to be the number of perfection and completeness for many reasons, not the least of which was that it signified after Pythagoras “the harmonic constitution of the world soul” since ten was the number of the tetractys, “which embraced the whole nature of number” (Hendrix 14; Heninger 84). Eleven, however, takes a decidedly sinister swerve, intervening between the two biblical numbers, ten (the decalogue) and twelve (tribes of Israel and the disciples). In *Numerorum mysteria*, Pietro Bongo, the most prominent sixteenth-century Catholic numerologist, asserted that eleven “has no connection with divine things, no ladder reaching up to things above, nor any merit” (Schimmel 189).

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Does Shakespeare choose then eleven over ten to convey incompleteness, imperfection, transgression?

I will return to this issue later, but there is little doubt for now that Shakespeare's design, compared with those of his peers, indicates another instance of Shakespearean innovation, sparked by the self-reflexivity and meta-textuality with which he continually experimented in his plays. Just as he routinely inserts a play within a play, he encloses his sonnets within a frame sonnet, much like, anachronistically speaking, a photographic mosaic in which single pictures have been turned into tiles or pixels to make up an overall photograph. But because of the carefully measured spaces of the sonnet form, a dizzying set of interpretive consequences seems to multiply. These constraints are quite different from Fowler's intriguing guideline that "we should regard every Elizabethan sonnet sequence as a long poem in fourteen-line stanzas" (174). Potentially, in the *Sonnets* there is a doubleness to each locus, whereby an individual poem posits its own meaning, while simultaneously occupying a syllabic unit in the greater meaning of the megasonnet. The design urges readers to seek out the sonnet's transitional breaks on a mega scale. Forty-four sonnets correspond to a quatrain and the last twenty-two to a couplet. The megasonnet might also cleave along the grain of an Italian sonnet, with the volta occurring at Sonnet 89. Finding the turning points—which admittedly, in Shakespeare do not always take place where one would expect them to appear—permits us to read the entire sequence as unfolding the rhythmical argumentation of the poetic form. The design's spatial proportionality suggests the possibility of working out a finely calibrated mega-interpretation, the realization of which requires much more scope than I have and, even more significantly, would stretch not only readers' patience but also their credulity.⁹ I want to follow a simpler route that does not reduce the design to a tyrannical imposition on interpretation but opens up the experience of architectonics. The overarching design has a bearing on our temporal awareness of each sonnet. A sonnet is a little time-piece and so when the form of that time-piece is transposed onto the entire collection, it affects our awareness of time's passage as we make our way through the poems.

The riddle of the megasonnet may be deciphered by pondering the way in which Shakespeare and his culture cognitively interacted with a poem's proportioned design. Inherent to a Renaissance poem is the act of remembrance. Unlike prose, poetry was meant to be committed to memory, as Sidney argues, for verse along with the delight it stimulates reinforces memorization, and both quantitative and accentual-syllabic verse assist the reciter by prodding them to guess what word comes next (32). The period's debate over rhyme between

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Campion and Daniel drew heavily, too, upon issues of memorability and forgettability; Campion contends that quantitative verse memorializes Greco-Roman poets, while Daniel goes so far as to argue that his defense of rhyme is in the service of preserving England's national past.¹⁰ If prosody were not enough for his argument, Sidney puns on the Italian stanza to contend that a poem, consistent with the art of memory, allocates a natural seat to every word and thereby facilitates remembrance in its actual syntax. Rebeca Helfer has pursued further the memorial implications of Sidney's poetics to claim that poetry in the period is itself an art of memory. From the procreation sonnets to the sonnets about time, remembering, and monuments, Shakespeare appears thematically committed to a commemorative agenda and so he could have very well chosen the proportions of the short yet challenging form of the sonnet for its capacity to memorialize his love. Whatever the case, given his repeated desire to enshrine his beloved for posterity, Shakespeare may have constructed a megasonnet to amplify what the sonnet's native properties do on a small scale. For all intents and purposes, he has built a grand monument out of smaller ones. But how, might we ask, do the proportions between the megasonnet and its component poems measure up? How do they provide readers with a commemorative experience?

The answer to that question lies in the proportions of sonnet-design itself. Heninger's intriguing account of the sonnet's origin in *The Subtext of Form in the English Renaissance: Proportion Poetical* explains the symbolism behind the numerical relationship between the octave and the sestet. Added together, the numbers of the ratio 4:3 (8:6 reduced to its simplest expression), of course, make the significant sum of seven, whose numerological significance, he continues, is aptly illuminated by Agrippa: "The *Pythagoreans* call it the Vehiculum of mans life . . . for the body consists of four elements, and is endowed with four qualities. Also the number three respects the soul." Heninger concludes "The proportion 4/3, then, encapsulates the relation of body to soul, reflecting the relation between the mundane and the celestial in the macrocosm" (77).¹¹ His analysis, which feeds into a larger and, for my purposes less relevant, agenda about the subtext of form, identifies what I want to call the "macrocosmic proportionality" of the sonnet's design. A little sonnet reaches beyond itself through positing its inherent relationship to larger realms.

Excavating all the verbal connections of the microcosm in a poem to the macrocosm, though, can quickly grow unmanageable, for, as Leonard Barkan cautions, many systems and hierarchies during the Renaissance proliferated the correspondences between the human body and the world (39). Where sonnets are concerned, macrocosmic

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proportionality, appropriately enough, captures the ideal manifestation of lyric as song. Thomas Campion clearly shows the linkage in his culture's thought: "The world is made by Simmetry and proportion, and is in that respect compared to Musick, and Musick to Poetry. . . . What musick can there be where there is no proportion obserued?" (329). Puttenham appeals to similar metaphors of music, the Creator, and the world, when justifying the importance of proportion (153-54). In Pythagorean numerology, proportions are strongly associated with music insofar as Pythagoras was said to have first discovered the correlation between numbers and sound, when observing that the various weights of blacksmiths' hammers produced different pitches, and from these observations, "[h]e and his followers maintained that the entire universe was ordered and governed by number, and that music was the audible manifestation of number" (Bonds 23). Pythagorean musical proportions would be integrated into Platonism, with, for instance, the idea of the "world-soul as a composite of numerical ratios" (Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony* 101), and they would be transmitted widely by the works of Boethius, who, putting medieval music theory on a firm footing, classified the discipline "as one of the arts of number in the quadrivium, along with arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy" (Bonds 8). By the time of the Renaissance, the formulation of the human soul's attunement to the *musica mundana*, the music of the spheres, would provide the basis for the prevalent analogy between microcosm and macrocosm (Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony* 102-03). Shakespeare conveyed this attunement in *A Merchant of Venice*, in which Lorenzo, extolling the choric motions of the heavens, tells Jessica, "[S]uch harmony is in immortal souls," except for those who, "stockish, hard, and full of rage," "[are] not moved with concord of sweet sounds" (5.1.62, 80, 83). As Leo Spitzer comments on the passage, "To 'have music in oneself' is to be in harmony with the world, tempered and temperate. . . ." (99).

When exploited in poetry, macrocosmic proportionality scales up the musicality of a single song to a greater harmony. It elevates the insignificant, the moment, the voice into the consequential, the momentous, the choral. Encoding the metaphysics of Pythagorean-Platonic numbers, the sonnets' notoriously elaborate proportions of rhetoric, stanzaic form, rhyme, and meter resonate with cosmic diapasons.¹² As one reads through a sequence, the underlying proportions give readers the overriding sense that a sonnet participates in an ultimate order, which guarantees it harmony, stability, and longevity.

A sonnet by itself, though, measures out the transitory. Its short form enacts the *locus classicus* "vitae summa brevis," the Horatian topos (1.4.15) that J. B. Leishman identifies with the question of tran-

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sience in Shakespeare's sonnets: "how can what Time threatens be preserved and perpetuated?" (101). Inspiring my approach to proportion, albeit from a geometrical or spatial rather than a musical or temporal orientation, Fowler's numerological sensibility offers design as the paramount answer to Leishman's question of transience. Fowler notes that Shakespeare's collection encompasses 153 sonnets (minus the aberration of Sonnet 126, which is a twelve-line stanza in couplets), the number of which possesses the mathematical feature of triangularity. And within the collection's macro-triangle, micro-triangles with shorter bases confer special meaning on the number of sonnets in each of these smaller groupings. From his analysis, Fowler hypothesizes, "The pyramidal numbers imply, most obviously, that Shakespeare designed the sequence to function as a monument" (188). To drive home his point, he invokes the opening line of another apposite Horatian ode, "exegi monumentum aere perennius," since this ode's next line specifies that his poem will outlive the pyramids (3.30.1-2). Horatian memorialization overcomes Horatian brevity by appealing to Pythagorean-Platonic numerology. Although Fowler does not tease out further the pyramid's geometric significance, it should be noted that the tetrahedron is one of the five regular solids, a three-dimensional form, all the faces and angles of which are equal to one another (Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony* 107). The regular solids correspond to the four elements plus the heavens and were the archetypal numbers in the mind of Plato's creator in the *Timaeus* (110). Whether geometric or musical, macrocosmic proportionality does the work of commemoration, for it preserves the concerns of the mortal world by connecting them to eternal forms.

The greatest example of an English Renaissance poetic work whose numerological design captures long time within short time is Spenser's marriage poem *Epithalamion*, appended to his *Amoretti*. According to A. Kent Hieatt's groundbreaking study, "it is the 'endlesse monument' which the poem is adjured to be: i.e., as many another Renaissance poem promises to be (others of Shakespeare's sonnets, and Spenser's, for instance), this one is an eternal and eternizing, monument" (17), because of its elaborate symbolism of numbers: it totals twenty-four stanzas, sixteen and a fraction of which correspond to the daylight hours of the summer solstice and the rest to the nighttime, while its long lines correspond to the year's 365 days. Although Hieatt does not contextualize his findings within Pythagoreanism, he realizes that Spenser's poem "is one of the last great literary monuments of microcosmic-macrocosmic vision" (81). Alexander Dunlop has demonstrated too that the *Amoretti*, Spenser's sonnet cycle, also has a calendrical design comparable to what Hieatt discovers in the *Epithalamion*.¹⁴ Another sonnet

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cycle organized around temporal symbolism is Michael Drayton's *Idea*, which consists of sixty-three sonnets, their number alluding to the grand climacteric age, when a person—both body and soul—was said to face their most critical stage of development (Fowler 176). The 108 sonnets in Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, though, do not add up to a sum reminiscent of temporal symbolism, but, according to Adrian Benjamin, symbolize the game waged by the suitors of Penelope in the *Odyssey* (Fowler 175). And yet not unlike the aforementioned works, *Astrophil and Stella*'s numerological design still situates Sidney's love within a macrocosmic time, a Homeric, rather than a Pythagorean, temporality—the hallowed antiquity of heroes whom epic commemorates in its monumental verse.¹⁵

The proportionality of these numerological symbols would have incited in readers a deeply subject-oriented experience. During the Renaissance, numbers were not just representational and semiotic but ontological because they were the means by which the world came into being. When introducing Euclid's mathematical treatise, John Dee accordingly declares, "All things (which from the very first originall being of things, have bene framed and made) and do appear to be Formed by the reason of Numbers. For this was the principall example or patterne in the minde of the Creator" (* i^r). Later in the seventeenth century, Thomas Stanley would say that Pythagoras "used the Mathematical Sciences" because numbers "are intermediate betwixt Corporeals and Incorporeals" and thus, in Heninger's words, were "the means of bridging the physical and the conceptual," having "existence in both worlds" (*Touches of Sweet Harmony* 78). Numbers, far from being empty tokens or socially prescribed symbols, assumed a metaphysical and epistemological weight. Apprehending them meant entering into a higher state of self-awareness. Because of the reciprocal relationship between macrocosm and microcosm, knowledge of the universe led back to self-knowledge and self-knowledge fanned out to knowledge of the universe.¹⁶ Through their study of the intellectual or eternal forms expressed by proportion, the two Pythagorean-Platonic disciplines of music and geometry could lift the mind above mundane sensory reality, bringing students into contact with ultimate truths that would transform them intellectually and spiritually.¹⁷ As Leo Spitzer's exhaustive lexicographical analysis of world harmony has demonstrated, the Latin root "cord" sustains the two denotations of "heart" (*cor*, *cordis*) and "string" (*chorda*), and so "*concordia* could suggest either 'an agreement of hearts, peace, order' (*concord-ia*) or 'a harmony of strings, world harmony' (*con-chord-ia*)" (84). This long-standing poetic ambivalence, Spitzer claims, allowed for considerable metaphysical punning between psychological and musical harmony.

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Consider, for instance, Shakespeare's Sonnets 8 and 128, where "concord" probes the inner states of those listening to music.

Spitzer's articulation of what amounts to macrocosmic word-play succinctly captures the mental synchronicity that Renaissance poetry attempted to achieve through an attention to appropriate proportionality. When reviewing the various linguistic iterations of the Latin word *decorum*, Puttenham opts for his own colloquial rendering "pleasant approach," whose principle of visual comeliness may be applied "the same to all good, comely, pleasant, and honest things, even to the spiritual objects of the mind, which stand no less in the due proportion of reason and discourse than any other material thing doth in his sensible beauty, proportion, and comeliness" (348).¹⁸ There exists a congruence between objects of thought and thought itself so much so that Nature in all her works, he goes on to claim, has "grafted" into the appetites of every creature, especially above all, humanity, what the Greeks call analogy, "this lovely conformity, or proportion, or convenience between the sense and the sensible" (348). Puttenham invites us to ponder the *decorum* of the mental faculties as he begins his disquisition on the complexities of rhetorical and poetic *decorum*.

Sidney's poetics also implies that poetry brings the reader's interiority into a fitting relationship with a macrocosmic vision. For Sidney, even more so than Puttenham, the poem is designed to ennoble the reader's mind: "This purifying of wit, this enriching of memory, enabling of judgement, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we call learning, under what name soever it come forth, or to what immediate end soever it be directed, the final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of" (12). Sidney's project tracks with the process of cognitive sublimation, whereby the mind receives from the world a sensible tainted as it is with materiality and sensuality and purifies it into an ideal and intellectual abstraction, no longer subject to the mortal world's vicissitudes. The poem, we are given to understand, enlarges the reader's conceit with not only its own metrical proportions and *decorum* (12, 32) but also the poet's macrocosmic knowledge. The poet, after all, ranges "within the zodiac of his own wit" to present not a brazen, but a golden world (9). In the epilogue, which curses puritanical haters, Sidney specifies those who have not benefited from the intellectual edification that comes from reading poems: they cannot "hear the planet-like music of poetry" and their "earth-creeping" mind "cannot lift itself up to look to the sky of poetry" (34).

Considering the poetic congruence between cognitive sublimation and macrocosmic knowledge, a compelling argument can be made for the numerological design of sonnet sequences aspiring to similar psy-

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chological effects. Numbers were deemed abstractions, which in the period signified “an object of intellect or understanding” that could only be apprehended by this higher faculty alone and not the senses (*OED* “abstraction, n.”). The abstract arithmetic in Pythagorean-Platonic geometry and music mirrored and facilitated cognitive sublimation. Metaphysical and epistemological proportions enhanced thinking insofar as an individual who grasped how the microcosm related to the macrocosm raised his consciousness from an animal perception of mortal matter, the realm of sensibles, to an angelic understanding of universals, the intelligible abstractions structuring ultimate reality. The experience of cognitive sublimation induced by the poem’s numerological design contributes directly to the poem’s commemorative ends. With its macroscopic vision, the design urges readers to remember the beloved and the poet not as sensibles but intelligibles, so that their images will outlast the memory of the inner senses, which dies with the corruptible body. They will be enshrined in the intellectual memory, which, belonging to the intellect, will live on with the eternal soul.¹⁹ The macrocosmic proportionality of poetic design elevates the cognition of posterity, thereby preserving an everlasting spiritual locus for the poet and his beloved.

With respect to proportion, readers should ask themselves whether or not Shakespeare’s megasonnet is actually a macrocosmic sonnet. Or to view the problematic from the reverse vantage point, readers should consider whether or not Shakespeare wants us to regard his individual poems as microcosmic sonnets so to speak. When we read his collection, are we meant to hear the music of the spheres in each little poem? Pericles seems to hear them (5.1.211-22). Finally, we should ask ourselves whether or not Shakespeare’s megasonnet aspires to macrocosmic commemoration. Although I agree with Fowler’s hermeneutic sensitivity to Pythagorean-Platonic numerology, his interpretation, in my opinion, blows out of proportion the monumentality of Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*—and not just on the grounds of the pyramidal. As every modern reader knows since the eighteenth-century editor Edmond Malone separated the sonnets into two gendered groups (De Grazia 40-41), the collection’s first 126 poems address a male beloved, while the last twenty-eight sonnets address a female beloved. What, however, is noteworthy about this well-accepted division is that the two sections preserve the aliquot of fourteen. The megasonnet splits along the seam of the two beloveds, effectively making two gendered megasonnets, one for the fair youth and one for the dark lady. To my knowledge, no one has commented upon these strange proportions. Shakespeare could have easily retained the overall megasonnet without having two sections also divisible by fourteen, but he clearly opts

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for a double-perspective. When we read each sonnet, the proportions do not let us forget that each sonnet potentially fits into two overarching schemes, not just one. It can fit into either the megasonnet devoted to the fair youth or the megasonnet devoted to the dark lady and, at the same time, it fits into the overall megasonnet.

Is Shakespeare's design, then, commemorating each beloved separately and at the same time commemorating their union? The proportions would lead us to believe that there are three monuments or, rather, two in one. Bringing the significance of numbers down to a practical level, the love-triangle sonnets offer an incisive commentary on Shakespeare's overarching memorial ends. On the one hand, the entire collection affirms his triumphant counting in Sonnet 42, where he can possess both beloveds at once. On the other hand, the discordance between the two gendered megasonnets underscores the lingering feelings of double betrayal expressed in Sonnet 41. Shakespeare foregrounds the irreconcilable difference at the core of his love—espousing divided loyalties and duplicitous hearts—and conveys this doubleness in his poetic monument's structure. The Christian Church negatively viewed the number two, which as seen, for instance, throughout book one of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, marks the divergence from unity; this number is associated with heretics, "those who, in the words of Gregory the Great, are *duplex cor*, having two hearts, and thus do not follow the Gospel wholeheartedly" (Schimmel 53). Might Shakespeare be investigating this ethical ambivalence in *Hamlet* Q1, in which he calls the Polonius-figure "Corambis," which means "two-hearted" (Johnson 140)?

Shakespeare does not attempt to cancel out the difference between the two and the one: he wants to remember his love but pulls no punches when showing its fallibility, contingency, and shame as embodied by his two beloveds and his conflicts with them. As the sonnets advance, the sequence becomes more and more exposed to the fortuitous, undergoing a kind of memorial decay, which can most readily be perceived in the transition from the fair-youth to the dark-lady megasonnet. In the words of Dymphna Callaghan, the "poet is not at all interested in the woman's biological clock, despite his obsession with the young man's" (89). The Horatian problematic of "*vita summa brevis*" drops out of the picture altogether as though Shakespeare could not care less about monumentalizing her. Corresponding to the lunar month, this section's twenty-eight sonnets, Katherine Duncan-Jones rightly points out, invokes "the negative connotations of menstruation" (49), "woman's time," with all its biblical stigma of pollution. Consequently, Callaghan judges that one of the ironies about the work is that these twenty-eight sonnets have withstood the test of time as well as those to

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the fair youth (99). Nevertheless, if we take into consideration the proportion of two in one, then there might be no irony at all, for the Dark Lady's megasonnet was designed to be part of the entire monument. The actual irony may reside, instead, in memorializing the aristocratic fair youth alongside a disreputable woman. However Shakespeare would finally resolve the tensions generated by the juxtaposition, his design doubtlessly yields considerable commemorative dissonance.

Clearly, Shakespeare's megasonnet cannot be called a macrosonnet, if what we mean by the latter is an ideal form. As already mentioned, Shakespeare elects to have his megasonnet exhibit eleven-syllable lines or feminine endings and thus deviates from regular iambic pentameter. Even more significantly, the megasonnet is, curiously enough, divided further into two megasonnets, and their break does not retain the proportionality of the Italian form's volta, nor do they match up to the breaks of a quatrain and couplet. This seam of the overarching megasonnet makes little sense in terms of stanzaic structure. And so when we peruse each sonnet under the proportions established by Shakespeare, we are not given to understand that above our reading activity looms the sonnet as a Pythagorean-Platonic form, an ideal paradigm to which each individual poem gestures and from which each poem acquires higher purpose and sublime meaning.

Neither does the design permit us to experience the number fourteen as a transcendent abstraction representing a cosmic harmony. If we turn to Sonnet 14, a poem whose numbering we might expect to shed some light on the numerological significance of the form and thus the collection, we can see how Shakespeare resists transcendence. The speaker tells the beloved that he does not guide his life by the motions of astronomy but determines his knowledge from the fair youth's eyes, which predict whether or not the ideas of truth and beauty will prosper. Neither truth nor beauty depends upon a Platonic *eidos* located in the heavens; the survival of each is determined by the youth's sexual reproduction. In the same way, the collection's design treats the aliquot of fourteen as though it were a practical, earthbound figure. Shakespeare's arithmetic attitude may reflect changing cultural trends, since modes of pragmatic mathematics were becoming increasingly relevant during the period for those who had numeracy, and as recent scholars argue, early modern literature was heavily influenced by this trend away from "the mystical potential of numbers" (Hunt and Tomlin).

The design's proportions do not affirm that an ideal sonnet resides on a plane over and above earth-bound sonneteering. There is no single song to bring all other singing together under a promise of eternal harmony. On the contrary, the design asserts rather overwhelmingly the

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immanence of sonneteering and sonnets. They can be found everywhere and occur throughout time, not outside it. The megasonnet's two-in-one proportions gesture to the unavoidable limitation of mortality that sonneteering never arrives at final completion. A sonnet begins and ends with the contingency of form as though the collection could have continued on to further multiples of fourteen—as though the megasonnet could also be subdivided into further sets of fourteen: 28, 42, 56, 70, etc. Sonnets can be endlessly reproduced but each has its momentary time and place—much like the image of the fair youth in the procreation section. A sonnet can only ever posit its own peculiar and fleeting music, for it is bound by temporal finitude and, consequently, in jeopardy of being forgotten.

Macrocosmic proportions in poetry contest the waste that time visits upon mortals. Just as a tomb's marble materiality lends a sense of permanence to the act of commemoration, the poetic monument can encode grand proportions in its fabric to buttress remembrance with the gravity of transcendent harmonies and truths. Even though the beloved has died, the macrocosm still exists, providing the ground from which to memorialize him or her. Such monuments mourn the finitude of mortality while taking the time of commemoration to be stable and reliable. Temporality's transcendence occurs through scaling up the poem's significance to Pythagorean-Platonic proportions. Commenting upon Shakespeare and Milton, Spitzer describes this experience of poetic concordance: "We are lifted, as is done by sublime music, from the oppression of time into timelessness, from the burden of sin toward communion with God; and our battle with time (once we lost paradise, once again we shall regain it) results in everlasting triumph" (105). For the period, the reader's experience of a macrocosmic poem involves mentally reaching toward abstraction, that is, undergoing a cognitive sublimation whereby the image of the poet and/or beloved are raised from the sensitive to the intellectual memory. The numerological analyses of Heatt, Fowler, and Heninger, which render the Renaissance poem abstract by connecting it to eternal recurrences and patterns, seem to corroborate that experience.

The proportions of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* do not refer to the macrocosm but remain in the here and now as if readers had access to only one horizon. The beloveds along with the sonnets of which he and she are a part find their significance exclusively in a phenomenal world, a world of senses and sensibles. With reference to the Dark Lady, the speaker in Sonnet 130 asserts that he does not need to belie his love with "false compare" (l.14) —mendacious congruences and correspondences—in order to affirm her rarity. The poet vouches for the authenticity of his deep attachment by refusing to falsely sublimate his be-

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loved's attributes into idealizations. He loves her not in spite of her concrete particularity, but because of it. Unlike the Dark Lady, who receives relatively modest praise, the adored fair youth holds a more convoluted relationship to the sensible. Sonnets 98, 99, and 106 depict the youth's beauty as a Platonic *eidos* with which to explain the appearances of spring's livery, the perfume and colors of flowers, and the comely ladies and knights of ancient times. Keep in mind, however, that Shakespeare is not advocating Neoplatonism here, for Sonnets 113 and 114 resolutely bring us back down to earth by suggesting that the speaker's mind is playing tricks on his vision. The mortal beauty of the youth appears as a universal pattern for understanding reality only because the speaker's lovesickness has led him to cognitively overestimate his beloved's image during a period of long separation. What he earlier takes to be a marvelous abstraction is just a sense impression distorted by desire and magnified by overpowering sensuality and pleasure. Transcendence is a self-delusion.

In this regard, Shakespeare's *Sonnets* cannot be said to advance Sidney's poetics, where the poet elevates cognition from the vegetative and sensitive souls to the rational soul. Shakespeare does not use poetry to purify readers' wits, enrich their memories, and enable their judgments—if, as Sidney seems to imply, all these faculties reside in the incorporeal intellect. When Sidney harnesses Horatian delight, it is manipulated in the name of instruction, luring readers into pursuing intellectual growth consistent with Aristotelian and Thomist interiority. Shakespeare's sonnets, instead, follow more closely the cognitive agenda of Puttenham. Puttenham does not subordinate the sensorium's pleasure to higher faculties: "Poetry is a pleasant manner of utterance varying from the ordinary purpose to refresh the mind by the ear's delight" (113). His relabeling and scrupulous description orient numerous figures of speech around the reader's sensory apprehension. Figures and metrical proportion, the groundwork of poetic language, are valued according to the physical and mental senses that they will delight. If poetry's creation of pleasure has a beneficial impact on the reader's interiority, it is not to promote cognitive elevation but to provide a balm of mental refreshment. In Puttenham's words, "it offers the consolation and repose of temperate minds" (114); it is "used for man's solace and recreation" (113). It brings moderation and tranquility to troubled interiority.

Similarly, Shakespeare's readers are meant to take pleasure in the specificity and particularity of poetry's proportions. Shakespeare, of course, does not abandon himself to hedonism. The likely lesson he imparts concerns the ineluctable confinement of our experience to the sensorium of the outer and inner senses, for he is not willing to

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grant that cognitive sublimation can open up the mind to the heavens. Shakespeare's design plays off, if not teases us with the possibility of, Pythagorean proportionality, which, thanks to the work of Fowler and Heninger, can be traced throughout the architectonics of Renaissance poetry. But Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, through its own design, allows us to experience another kind of commemoration that resists a macro-cosmic vision. Memorials of all sorts, Horatian and Spenserian, poetic or marble, grieve over the finitude of mortality while positing a place for eternal remembrance and avoiding thereby the confrontation of a deeper mourning; in an immanent world without transcendence, commemoration itself must come to an end. We always mourn for the dead but Shakespeare also reminds us to mourn the monument.

Notes

1. For an introduction to the distinction between lifeworld and science, see the chapter "Science and the Lifeworld" in Zahavi's *Phenomenology: The Basics*.
2. For examples of the use of "proportion" to conceptualize aspects of prosody, see Campion (328-29), Daniel (360), Puttenham (160), Scott (13), Sidney (23, 32), and Webbe (266).
3. It is unlikely that a printer or a publisher, who put such little effort into the quarto's craftsmanship, would have spent the time collecting 154 sonnets and conceiving of the collection as a megasonnet.
4. I am using Spiller's appendix of publication dates of sonnet sequences (198-99) and do not delve into the issue of multiple editions, nor the strict definition of what a sequence is. I don't include the twenty-eight sonnets published by others in the first edition of *Astrophil and Stella*. Of the six "important" collections and sequences that remained in MS during this period, two have the aliquot of fourteen: Alexander Montgomerie (1578-85) has seventy and John Stewart (1580-1585) has twenty-eight. Spiller calls them important, but the question of their circulation and their impact on Shakespeare still needs to be determined.
5. See Duncan-Jones (14) on the revision of sonnets.
6. See Peter Mack for the importance of structure (38-39) and arrangement and method in rhetoric (69-70).
7. Graves seems to have first seized upon the sequence's divisibility into eleven sets of fourteen to argue for the sequence forming a megasonnet. However, he is more concerned with hypothesizing an Ur-manuscript in which Shakespeare arranged fourteen sonnets on each double-page spread to visually represent a single sonnet's structure of three quatrains and a couplet. Speculative typography and page arrangement, not numerology, dominate Graves's analysis.

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8. See Thomas Merriam's table on the plays (280).
9. One could, for example, work out possible rhyme schemes coded into the end of the mega-sonnet's lines.
10. See Watson for a discussion of memory and forgetting in Campion and Daniel's debate over rhyme.
11. His account rings sharper than Wells and Edmundson's invocation of the golden ratio, 1.68, another relevant ancient proportion, but one that only approximates $4/3$ (52).
12. Upon this proportion, Heninger bases his argument that Petrarch and his followers generated meaning through the tension between the subtext of form—in this case, the septimal design—and the verbal system, finding it “wondrously suited to the conflict between body and soul” (*The Subtext of Form* 80).
13. I use Pythagoreanism here as a shorthand for many overlapping influences on numerology. See Butler's caveat that Renaissance numerological texts are products of multiple traditions woven together (51).
14. In addition, Fowler conjectures that the work's eighty-nine sonnets can represent the days of winter and, with the four anacreontics, the ninety-three days of spring (181).
15. We can expect the smaller “sonnet corona” to play on a significant number's relationship to circularity. Donne's “La Corona” has seven; George Chapman's “A Coronet for His Mistressse Philosophie” has ten, the perfect number; and Lady Mary Wroth's “A Crown of Sonnets Dedicated to Love” has fourteen.
16. See Barkan for the microcosm and macrocosm helping a person to know themselves (46).
17. Heninger indicates the intellectual benefits of both music (93) and geometry (114).
18. Puttenham claims to have written *De decoro*, a treatise on the topic (360).
19. See Park on how the intellective memory as part of the intellectual soul is to be distinguished from the memory of the inner senses (467). Aquinas, for example, carefully identifies the intellective memory with the intellect, not with the senses (1a. 79, 6).

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Through a Glass Darkly: Elvish Numbers in Ben Jonson's 1623 First Folio Poems¹

Roger Stritmatter

There is a more secret *Cause*: and the power of liberall studies lyes more hid, than that it can bee wrought out by profane wits. It is not every mans way to hit. They are men (I confesse) that set the *Caract* and *Value* upon things, as they love them; but *Science* is not every mans *Mistresse*. It is as great a spite to be praised in the wrong place, and by a wrong person, as can be done to a noble nature.

– Ben Jonson, *Discoveries* (Herford, Simpson & Simpson VIII: 568)

But thou hast squared thy rules, by what is good;
And art, three ages yet, from understood:
And (I dare say) in it there lies much wit
Lost, till thy readers can grow up to it.

– Francis Beaumont, “Upon [Jonson’s] *Catiline*” (Jonson, *Cambridge Edition* 4: 27)

In his detailed study of Ben Jonson’s eighty-line First Folio encomium, “To the Memory of My Beloved, the AUTHOR, Mr. William Shakespeare” (1623), Richard S. Peterson acknowledges that the poem has “long posed problems of tone and interpretation,” problems which oscillate about the mystery of Jonson’s attitude toward Shakespeare, with “some readers emphasizing the generous and unequivocal nature of the tribute” and others sensing in it a “decisive lack of sympathy thinly veiled by a respect for the public occasion” (158). This interpretive schism points toward larger, equally unresolved doubts about the entire volume and, therefore, Jonson’s ambiguous role in its production,² doubts which are widely mirrored in Jonson’s own longstanding problematic relationships with his critics.

Jonson begins his encomium by promising to deflect envy from his deceased colleague, yet in his own defense in his *Discoveries* he declares that he “lov’d the man, and doe honour his memory (on *this side Idolatry*)” (HS&S VIII: 583-84; my emphasis).³ Envy and Idolatry, the Janus-faced antagonists in Jonson’s complicated relationship with Shakespeare, have, it seems, proven obstacles to a better interpreta-

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tion of Jonson's First Folio contributions. Jonas Barish's 1963 account of Jonson's critical fate over the ensuing centuries since the Folio makes for sobering reading. Until T. S. Eliot began Jonson's recovery in his essential 1932 essay, Shakespeare had been typecast as a "Christ figure" with Jonson, "both Judas and the Mob," giving his "Judas kiss" in the "famous dedicatory epistle to the 1623 Folio" (Barish 4). Jonson, Barish argued, had suffered "a catastrophic decline in popularity since his own day," becoming a man "dragged captive behind the triumphal chariot of Shakespeare worship" (1). The received tradition, Barish insisted, has told us "much . . . about Jonson's peevishness," and it has given us scant justification for the "affection and regard in which he was held, throughout his life, by so many fellow authors and noble patrons" (12). The influence of Barish's salutary efforts to recuperate Jonson's reputation are visible in the work of many subsequent scholars, including Richard Peterson, David Riggs, Ian Donaldson, Richard Dutton, Lynne Meskill, Katherine Maus, Victoria Moul, Steven Hrdlicka, A. W. Johnson, and Stephen Orgel (among others), who have labored to restore Jonson's legacy. Yet Robert Giroux, writing in *The New York Times* in 2000, continues to assure us of Jonson's "obvious . . . envy and resentment of the only poet and playwright he knew to be his superior."

As Lynne Meskill has persuasively shown, the "envious Jonson" trope is inextricably bound up in the problem of Shakespeare. Jonson's envy was employed as a "cornerstone in the literary sanctification of Shakespeare" (2). The trope of the envious Jonson marches on, and Jonson's First Folio paratexts continue to resist satisfactory exegesis. In *Jonsonus Virbius* (1638), a collection of posthumous elegies, Jonson is hailed as the "most proportioned poet," a poetic "prince of numbers," and "architect of wit."⁴ Such contemporaneous testimony may provide a better assessment of Jonson's fraught relationship with Shakespeare and consequently to Jonson's own place in literary history than pathos-drenched assumptions about envious Ben. In Jonson's poetics, "the power of liberall studies lyes more hid" (HS&S VIII: 568) in Jonson's skill at arranging "numbers" (Duppa 29, 39). Long before 1623, Jonson had initiated a poetic inquest in search of number and architectonic design. Already in his 1605 marriage masque *Hymenaei*, number is the constitutive element of reason (fig. 1).

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The foure vntempred *Humors* are broke out,
And, with their wild *affections*, goe about
To rauish all Religion. If there be
A Power, like R E A S O N, left in that huge Bodie,
Or little *world of Man*, from whence these came,
Looke forth, and with thy bright and ^a numerous flame
Instruct their darknesse, make them know, and see,
In wronging these, they haue rebell'd 'gainst thee.

^a Alluding to that opinion of Pythagoras; who held, all Reason, all Knowledge, all Discourse of the Soule to be mere Number. See *Plut. de Plat. Phil.*

Fig. 1

Jonson's explanation from Pythagoras (sidenote a): "all Reason, all Knowledge, and all Discourse of the Soul [is] mere number" (HS&S VII: 214).

The glossed phrase in *Hymenaei*—"numerous flame"—anticipates the closely tied "Reasons flame," in Jonson's "Epistle to One Who Asked to be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben" (1623), in which he characterizes his valued friendships as

. . . square, wel-tagde, and permanent,
Not built with Canvasse, paper, and false lights
As are the Glorious Scenes, at the great sights;
. . .
But all so cleare, and led by reasons flame,
As but to stumble in her sight were shame;
These I will honour, love, embrace, and serve:
And free it from all question to preserve. (HS&S VIII: 220)

Here *reason's flame*, the light of *logos*, rewords the "numerous flame" of *Hymenai*; the initiate to Jonson's "Tribe of Ben" is expected to seek reason embodied in number; led by it, he will not "stumble" in reason's sight—where "stumble" recalls at once a metrical defect, a "miscounting," and a potentially awkward ascent to Jonson's Apollo Room at the top of the stairs in the Devil Tavern. The notoriously obscure Jonson ironically assures the initiate that he "has not many steps to climb" to reach the sanctum. Together the two allusions to *flame* corroborate Jonson's underlying, essential point, as expressed in his 1605 sidenote: "all Reason, all Knowledge, and all Discourse of the Soul [is] mere number" (HS&S VII: 214). To illuminate the point, in *Hymenai*, Jonson brings on REASON to illustrate Hymen's argument:

REASON, seated in the top of the Globe (as in the braine, or highest part of Man), figur'd in a venerable personage, her

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haire white, and trayling to her waste, crowned with lights,
her garments blue, and semined with stares, girded unto her
with a white bend, fill'd with Arithmetical figures, in one hand
bearing a Lampe, in the other a bright Sword, descended, and
spake. (HS&S VII: 214)

In emphasizing number and “arithmetical figures” as factors of *logos*, Jonson is following the prevailing neo-Pythagorean ethos of sixteenth and seventeenth century European thought, in which number was the key to creation; God had “disposed all things by *measure* and *number* and *weight*” (Wisdom 11.17);⁵ exploring the organizational and symbolic properties of number, the early modern poet was rediscovering and imitating God’s creation:

Number was not only cultivated in the pedagogical quadrivium and fundamental to renaissance ontology and metaphysics, but also enjoyed as philosophical sport.⁶ In such gaming, number functioned “as a vehicle for moral education, by reminding players of *the mathematical harmony of creation*.” (Sepkoski 698; my emphasis)

As Alastair Fowler explains, “numerical organization in works of literature, especially English poetry” involved the “composition of substantive and formal elements into special patterns” at a time when “all art was thought of spatially” (ix). Utilizing such structural concepts as *number*, *order*, and *position*, the poetry of Jonson’s age displays an “uncommon ability” to “transmute metaphysical wit into proportioned and habitable dwellings” (Stanwood and Johnson 41). As a “great soul of numbers,”⁷ Jonson pursued this “mathematical harmony of creation” with exacting attention to detail. In Jonson’s lexicon, “number” was thus not only a synonym for poetry but also a subliminal method or *logos* of design rooted in nature and reinforced through scripture and literary precedent. For Jonson, as Steven Hrdlicka further explains, proportion (theory of comparative numbers) was the key to imitating creation. He

was known primarily as a poet who carefully composed his lines, laboring to give, as one anonymous writer said, “number, weight, and measure to each word.” . . . A work which demanded “labor” from readers to be understood was, especially for Jonson, the mark of poetry that endured to live on beyond the age in which it was produced since “things wrote with labor deserve to be so read and will last their age.” (147)

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Precision and enduring relevance walked hand in hand in Jonson's praxis; poems written with precision would "last their age."

Complementing the early modern emphasis on number was the more "structuralist" approach of Rabanus Maurus (780-856), whom Maren-Sofie Røstvig identifies as a "key figure" in the medieval traditions of figurate inscription, his work "foreshadow[ing] not only the Renaissance emblem but also the invisible structures of Renaissance poetics as seen, for example, in the Country House poems of both Jonson and Marvell." In this tradition, "each poem or *Figura* is a complex memory house. . . . as we pass from one part to another we are reminded of [the house's] cosmic, social, and religious structures, at the same time that the poem itself displays some of these structures" (Røstvig 173).

For over thirty years Jonson developed this analogy of architecture to poetry, employing "the metalanguages of architecture and mathematics" to advocate that "poems should be constructed like buildings" and already "strew[ing] the early masques with the flowers of assimilated number theory which hints at underlying structural patterns" (Johnson 3). Memorializing the recently deceased Jonson in *Jonsonus Virbius*, Richard West declares,

'Twas the wisdom of thy Muse to sit
And weigh each syllable; suffering nought to passe,
But what could be no better than it was. (Duppa 57)

Jonson's focus on numeration, on "weighing each syllable," is a critical and still under-studied dimension of his work considering his reputation as a formidably obscure and bookish poet. Considering Jonson's circumstances and practices, Annabel Patterson, like Richard Dutton, finds Jonson a canny practitioner of elliptical literary evasions. Reflecting on his own frequent clashes with political authority, Jonson incorporated his experiences into a "political and social theory of literature, a poetics of censorship," in which attempts at suppression "ensure[d] the survival of censored texts" but also "justified authorial suppressions or obliquities" (Patterson 57). William Slights concurs that "the driving social force, distinctive dramatic techniques, and persistent interpretive puzzles" of Jonson's later plays and poems "are related in one way or another to the topic of secrecy" (13).

By far the most consequential mode of Jonson's various "obliquities," his strategies for constructing "interpretative puzzles," was his sustained and deliberate focus on the theory of formal design through numeration, his practice of the "poet as architect." A. W. Johnson reports that in Jonson's copy of Vitruvius's classic *De Architectura*, he

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annotated a series of key terms in English: “order, distribution, quantity, the ground plot, the upright, and the module.” In architecture, an “upright” is a weight-bearing member set at intervals in a wall, such as a pillar; in cryptography, the term designates characters which, having been distributed at intervals, must be abstracted from the larger context for the purpose of decryption. Later Jonson glosses *Eurythemia* (“proportion”) with the words “A Fayre habit” (Johnson 12). Thus, Jonson equates proportion with style (*decor*), since Lady Eurythemia requires an elegant and discreet style.

Numerical Order in Jonson’s “To the Memory of My Beloved”: Superstructure

Jonson’s eighty-line encomium “to the Memory of my Beloved, the AUTHOR, Mr. William Shakespeare and what he hath left us” follows the two dedicatory essays subscribed with the names of Hemings and Condell. Comprised of 400 feet of iambic pentameter arrayed in lines of five feet, it may be divided into four (or, alternatively, three) sections:

- A sixteen-line *exordium* (introduction) takes the form of a *recusatio*, a classical topos widely imitated in the Renaissance, in which the poet denies his ability to write. Jonson harps on the dangers of envious misreading of Shakespeare, and enacts what Lynne Meskill terms a “ritual denial” and “apotropaic gesture against the evil eye,” before announcing paradoxically that “these ways / were not the paths I meant unto thy praise” (ll. 5-6).
- A forty-eight line two-part *narratio*, commencing on the resumptive line seventeen: “I, therefore, will begin. Soul of the Age!” It is composed of two symmetrical twenty-four line segments, with the second segment commencing “triumph my Britain” (l. 41). This structure is a textbook example of the role of the “privileged center” (Fowler 23) in triumphal forms.
- A sixteen-line *peroration* (conclusion). This commences with line sixty-five: “And such wert thou. / Look how the father’s face lives in his issue.” The caesura in the line marks a transition between the climax of the preceding section with a direct second-person address to Shakespeare (“thou”), and the next seven lines which are

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third-person address. In line seventy-two the speaker then returns the second-person direct address to Shakespeare before ending with the stellification of the author as the constellation Cygnus, appealing to an ancient trope, going back to Pindar and Horace, of the poet-as-swan (fig. 2).

To the memory of my beloued,

The AVTHOR

MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE:

AND

what he hath left vs.

DO draw no enuy (Shakespeare) on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy Booke, and Fame:
While I confesse thy writings to be such,
As neither Man, nor Muck, can praise too much.
'Tis true, and all mens suffrage. But these wayes
were not the paths I meant vnto thy praise:
For seelcest Ignorance on these may light,
Which, when it sounds at best, but eccho's right;
Or blinde Affection, which doth ne're aduance
The truth, but gropes, and wrgeth all by chance;
Or crafty Malice, might pretend this praise,
And thinke to ruine, where it seem'd to raise.
These are, as some infamous Baud, or whore,
Should praise a Matron. What could hurt her more?
But thou art prooffe against them, and indeed
Abooue th' ill fortune of them, or the need.
I, therefore will begin. Soule of the Age!
The applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage!
My Shakespeare, rise; I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye
A little further, to make thee a roome:
Thou art a Monument, without a tombe,
And art al'ue still, while thy Booke doth liue.
And we haue wits to read, and praise to giue.
That I not mixe thee so, my braiue excuses;
I meane with great, but disproportion'd Muses:
For, if I thought my iudgement were of yeeres,
I should commit thee surely with thy peeres,
And tell, how farre thou didst beat our Lily out-shine,
Or sporting Kid, or Marlowes mighty line.
And though thou hadst small Latine, and lesse Greeke,
From thence to honour thee, I would not seeke
For names; but call forth thund'ring Aeschilus,
Euripides, and Sophocles to vs,
Paccuius, Accius, him of Cordoua dead,
To life againe, to heare thy Buskin tread,
And shake a Stage: Or, when thy Sockes were on,
Loaue thee alone, for the comparison

Entablature: "That part of an order which is above the column; including the architrave, the frieze, and the cornice" (OED).

Exordium of sixteen lines (1-16). Reiterated emphasis on "ignorance," "blind affection," and "crafty malice" – in short, misunderstanding and malevolence

1st Narratio of 24 lines (17-40), commencing "I, therefore, will begin." Contains Jonson's famous lines "and though thou hadst small Latin and lesse Greeke, from thence to praise you I would not seek."

*Of all, that insolent Greece, or haughtie Roma
sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britaine, thou hast one to showe,
To whom all Scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time!
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
when like Apollo he came forth to warme
Our eares, or like a Mercury to charme!
Nature her selfe was proud of his designs,
And joy'd to weare the dressing of his lines!
which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit.
The merry Greeke, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please,
But antiquated, and deserted lye
As they were not of Natures family.
Yet must I not giue Nature all: Thy Art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enioy a part.
For though the Poets matter, Nature be,
His Art doth giue the fashion. And, that he,
Who casts to write a liuing line, must sweate,
(such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Vpon the Muses anuile: turne the same,
(And himselſe with it) that he thinkes to frame;
Or for the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne,
For a good Poet's made, as well as borne.
And such wert thou: Looke how the fathers face
Lives in his issue, euen so, the race
Of Shakespeares minde, and manners brightly shines |
In his well torned, and true filed lines:
In each of which, he seemes to shake a Lance,
As brandisht at the eyes of Ignorance.
Sweet Swan of Auon! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appeare,
And make those flights vpon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza, and our Iames!
But stay, I see thee in the Hemisphere
Aduanc'd, and made a Constellation there!
Shine forth, thou Starre of Poets, and with rage,
Or influence, chide, or cheere the drooping Stage;
Which, since thy flight fro hence, hath worn'd like night,
And despaires day, but for thy Volumes light.*

Line 40—the triumphal center of Johnson's encomium

2nd Narratio of 24 lines (41-65.5), commencing "Triumph, my Britaine," and ending "and such wert thou."

Peroration of sixteen lines (65.5-80), commencing "Looke how the father's face lives in his issue," i.e., returning to the iconoclastic message that the true Shakespeare is to be discovered in the works.

BEN: IONSON.

Fig. 2

Structural Analysis of Ben Jonson's 80-line encomium to Shakespeare. Reprinted with permission from *The Oxfordian* 20.

In addition to these four main segments, the poem follows the ring structure characteristic of many early modern (and ancient) poems and narrative structures, as analyzed not only by Alastair Fowler, but also Mary Douglas (2007), and Røstvig (to mention only two of the

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most influential scholars of this form) in which concentric lines pair with one another around a triumphal center (fig. 3).

A	Noah and his sons (6:10)
B	All life on earth (6:13a)
C	Curse on earth (6:13b)
D	Ark (6:14-16)
E	All living creatures (6:17-20)
F	Food (6:21)
G	Animals in human hands (7:2-3)
H	Entry into the Ark (7:13-16)
I	Waters increase (7:17-19)
J	Mountains covered (7:20)
X	God remembers Noah (8:1)
J'	Mountains visible (8:5)
I'	Waters decrease (8:13-14)
H'	Exit from Ark (8:15-19)
G'	Animals in human hands (9:2)
F'	Food (9:3-4)
E'	All living creatures (9:10a)
D'	Ark (9:10b)
C'	Blessing on earth (9:13-16)
B'	All life on earth (9:17)
A'	Noah and his sons (9:19)

Fig. 3

Chiastic structure of the flood story in Genesis, showing “God remembers Noah” (8:1) as the central feature. Based on the original research of Anderson and Wenham.

Ring structure implements a special type of “framing device” in which “the linking up of starting point and end creates an envelope . . . and the whole series . . . from the beginning to the middle should be in parallel with the other series going from the middle back to the start. Each section from the second side of the ring corresponds to a matching section on the first side” (Douglas 2). As the example from Genesis shows, the relevant units in such ring structures could be narrative episodes as easily as they could be lines—or, as in Jonson’s usual practice, couplets.

Numerical Order and Ring Structure in Jonson's "To the Memory of My Beloved"

Jonson's First Folio encomium exhibits many signs of elaborate and delicately calibrated ring design; examining the couplets as juxtaposed in the structure may draw Jonson's paradoxical emphases into focus. The poem begins and ends with the image of a book, but while the book of the first couplet requires the protection of Jonson's "ample" rhetoric, by the final couplet, Shakespeare, by means of his book and Jonson's poetic agency, has been transmogrified into a stellified swan taking flight to become a constellation (fig. 4).

To Draw No Envy (Shakespeare) on thy name	since thy flight from hence [the stage], hath mourn'd like night
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame. (1-2)	And despaire day, but for thy Volumes light." (79-80)

Fig. 4

First and final couplets both focus on the idea of a book.

The first couplet announces the general theme of Jonson's argument; he himself is "ample" (l. 2) to deflect envy from Shakespeare. The *OED* cites Jonson's usage to illustrate the definition, "treating of matters at full length," but Barbara DeStefano insists the *OED* mistakenly "assumes that 'ample' modifies the eulogy, not the personal pronoun." She argues that Jonson means *ample* in its "plain English use" (235), that it applies to Jonson's body and his ethical stance, but not his rhetoric of amplification in the encomium. Yet "ample," as the *OED* recognizes, nods towards the rhetorical concept of *amplification*, strategies for the extended development of a poetic idea or "invention." Jonson's "amplification," paradoxically, is designed to shield Shakespeare from envy, not to attract it. In antiquity and early modern Europe, "praising something in public inevitably risked drawing any eye toward the subject of praise. It was for this reason that the Roman victor returning in triumph would wear a *fascin* or countercharm to protect himself from the public's gaze" (Meskill 36). Jonson's poem is a triumph with "countercharm" included in the form of the poet's amplification.

The next set of pairings are united by their consideration of the common topic of the anxiety of influence (see Bloom). In the first couplet, Jonson "confesses" that Shakespeare's writings are beyond compare, impossible to overpraise. In the paired couplet, Jonson will reiterate the problem of influence via a benediction summoning Shakespeare to "shine forth" and through "influence, chide, or cheer" tomorrow's stage (fig. 5). Envy, it seems, may also be a measure of influence.

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While I confess <i>thy writings to be such</i> ,	Shine forth, thou star of poets, and with rage
As neither man nor muse can praise too much (3-4)	Or <i>influence</i> , chide, or cheere the drooping Stage (77-78)

Fig. 5

Thus, the second pair of couplets in the ring structure deals with the “anxiety of influence.”

In the third set of paired couplets, Jonson begins by qualifying his own “confession,” insisting now that Shakespeare’s genius is “all men’s suffrage,” before diverging into the self-referential doubts of the unwanted “paths” of line six, but by the concluding lines, these doubtful means have charted a progress to “the hemisphere” to become a crowning “constellation” (fig. 6). The doubling of doubtful “ways” (l. 5)

’Tis true, and all men’s suffrage. But these ways	But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere
were not the paths I meant unto thy praise. (5-6)	Advanc’d and made a constellation there. (75-76)

Fig. 6

The first mention of “paths” is paired with a couplet of ascent to the “hemisphere.”

and “paths” (l. 6) points towards ethical challenges or moral choices; the abstract *ways* puns on *weighs*, while *paths* yields a concrete image culminating in the “hemisphere” of the corresponding couplet. Jonson certainly seems “ample,” at least to the preliminary task of warding off envy. While he evidently can imagine other, preferable, paths, in the corresponding final section, Shakespeare’s ascent follows a direct upward flight. The doubts of Jonson’s *recusatio* seem forgotten. How Jonson got the reader from point A to point B, however, remains embedded in the famously elliptical turn of his own winding rhetoric.

Having acknowledged his own temptation to envy, Jonson in the next lines of the *recusatio* (7-17) identifies three sources of error (the three heads of the hydra of envy) that Jonson will protect Shakespeare against: *seeliest ignorance*, *blind affection*, and *crafty malice*. First comes “seeliest ignorance,” which may “light on” Jonson’s lines and produce a mere “echo” of his words by failing to delve to the root. In the corresponding lines from the concluding epiphany, triumphant spectacle has conquered the field (fig. 7). The couplets not only contain

<i>Seeliest ignorance</i> on these may light,	And take those flights upon the banks of Thames,
which, when it sounds at best, but echo’s right (7-8)	That so did take Eliza and our James (73-74)

Fig. 7

Seeliest ignorance yoked to the Swan.

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contrasting imagery of darkness and illumination, of occlusion and insight, but are further united by their bird imagery. The bird of Jonson's *recusatio* is introduced in the periphrasis of "seeliest ignorance," where the superlative comes from "seel," "to close the eyes (of a hawk or other bird) by stitching up the eyelids with thread tied behind the head" (*OED* "Seel" 390). While "seeling" refers to taming a hawk by artificially blinding it, in Jonson's poem the avian epithet is directed at Jonson and Shakespeare's mis-readers, a theme resumed in ll. 69-70 (fig. 9). By contrast, the bird of the concluding couplet is Shakespeare himself, metamorphosed into a swan (proverbially singing only at death), rising skyward toward the apotheosis of line eighty.

The next pair of couplets extends the iconoclastic emphasis on the conflict between truth and error, now called "blind affection." To the reader having already been hoodwinked in line seven, the unproblematic "sight" of the "Sweet swan" must raise an eyebrow. Jonson opposes this "blind affection" because it "urges all by chance" (fig. 8).

Or <i>blind Affection</i> , that doth ne'er advance The truth but gropes, and urgeth all by chance. (9-10)	<i>Sweet swan of Avon!</i> What a sight it were To see thee in our waters yet appear. (71-72)
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Fig. 8

Blind affection, continuing the imagery of occlusion, is reduced to argument by chance when Jonson's swan appears.

The phrase "sweet swan of Avon" is, of course, one of the most vexed lines in Jonson's encomium.⁸ Just as troubling, the negative contingencies of the first couplet jar against the extended, graceful ascent of the author as swan invoked in Jonson's conclusion. But only having passed through captive ignorance and blind affection are we met by the most disturbing complication of all: *crafty malice*, which only "pretends" praise and "thinks to ruin, / where it seemed to raise" (fig. 9).

Or crafty malice, might pretend his praise And thinke to ruine, where it seem'd to raise (11-12)	In each of which he seems to shake a lance As brandish't in the eyes of ignorance (69-70)
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Fig. 9

The third of Jonson's errors, crafty malice, is juxtaposed here with Jonson's return to iconoclastic warning, where he imagines Shakespeare "brandish[ing]" a lance in the "eyes of ignorance."

Extending the "seeliest ignorance" of the previous lines with "eyes of ignorance" (69), this time it is Shakespeare who is "shaking a lance" against the crafty malice of misreaders. Jonson pictures Shakespeare fencing off false praise, which "thinks to ruin, where it seem'd to raise."

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Only after having promised in sixteen lines to protect Shakespeare from this inventory of the types of envious misrecognition does Jonson resume his praise in line seventeen (fig. 10). Again, the comparison

I, therefore, will begin. Soule of the age!	Or for the lawrell, he may gain a scorne,
The applause! Delight! The wonder of our stage! (17-18)	For a good poet's made, as well as borne (63-64)

Fig. 10

Jonson's resumption on line 17, where Shakespeare is the "Soule of the age," shadowed by its paired couple where the poet may receive a "scorn" from his audience.

emphasizes paradox or contradiction in two couplets that are precisely balanced one against the other. Could the "soul of the age. . . . The applause! Delight! The wonder of our stage!" run the risk of gaining a "scorn" in place of the lawrell? Apparently so! The first couplet is about "show" (as both the imagery and the vigorously iterated exclamation points confirm) and the second about truth, risk, and hard work. Arguing that a good poet is made as well as born, Jonson introduces the concept of literary labor, of the inevitably messy, provisional, unstable process of actual composition. Shakespeare, he will go on to assert, was "made" as well as "born," precisely because he struck the "second heat" (l. 60) (and many more) on the anvil. In his *Discoveries*, Jonson criticizes the actor-managers John Heminges and Henry Condell for reporting in the Folio epistle to the two noble patrons, with their names subscribed to it that, "(whatsoever he penned) he never blotted a line. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted" (HS&S VIII: 647-68).⁹

Space does not permit consideration of all the pairs of couplets in their ring-structure comparisons. Enough has been shown, one hopes, to establish the fruitful character of such a structural analysis. Two final examples will complete a rough survey. A primary means of amplification is Jonson's extended equipage of seventeen English and ancient playwrights and poets to whom he compares Shakespeare. The first of several passages developing his comparison of English and Classical writers to Shakespeare illustrates another type of interlacement in Jonson's structure. The three English writers are first outshone by Shakespeare and in the corresponding couplet three—or is it four?—ancient playwrights "now not please" due to Shakespeare's overwhelming influence (fig. 11). If Jonson was trying to avoid envy by any conventional means, this seems destined to fail by design. The evaluative comparisons accentuate the tension in the original paradox of how to praise Shakespeare without inflaming envy. Is "Merry Greek" an appetitive metonymy for Aristophanes, or does the periphrasis conceal

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And tell how far thou didst our Lily outshine, Or sporting Kid, or Marlowes mighty line. (29-30)	The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes, neat Terence, witty Plautus now not please (51-52)
---	---

Fig. 11

another name? Only a more detailed examination of the numeric and figurative structures of Jonson’s poem can supply a defensible answer, but let’s first consider one further essential aspect of Jonson’s design.

The use in ring structure of organization around a central feature is especially pronounced in triumphs, for “an outstanding feature of triumphal motifs is their emphasis of the center.” The center “once carried a generally recognized iconological significance: it was the place, if not for an image of sovereignty, at least for a ‘central feature’” (Fowler 23). Jonson frequently followed this design in his poetic praxis (see Johnson 79-111); throughout his oeuvre, central lines not only confer emphasis on a “central feature” but can “act as focal points in terms of ‘invention’ and ‘disposition’” (Fowler 79). By the sixteenth century, moreover, the triumph had come to share the court masque’s dramatic emphasis on the “unmasking” of a disguised aristocratic participant. John G. Demaray elaborates:

By introducing the 1623 Folio of Shakespeare’s plays, [Jonson] paid tribute to Shakespeare using a curious and generally neglected metaphor . . . [He] presents Shakespeare as a participant in a Triumph, a theatrical form characterized by the surprise entry and revelatory unmasking of disguised aristocrats:

Triumph my Britaine, Thou hast one to shoue,
 To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.

As the leading author of English court masques in the early sixteen hundreds, Jonson would have known that Shakespeare himself presented such Triumphs in masque-like sequences in his plays. Now Jonson imaginatively transforms Shakespeare into the main performer in just such an unmasking. (1)

Jonson’s image of a triumphant Britain with “one to show” falls in the first line of the second couplet defining the poem’s center (fig. 12).

Of all, that insolent Greece, or <u>haughtie</u> Rome sent forth, or since did from their ashes come (39-40)	Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to <u>show</u> To whom all Scenes of Europe Homage owe (41-42)
---	--

Fig. 12

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In these two central couplets, first the ancients are damned as “insolent” upstarts in Shakespeare’s shadow, and then Britain triumphs in a “show.” But what does “show” mean? Jonson uses the word in his encomium for the Lady Susan Montgomery (VIII: 67), wife of First Folio patron Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and daughter of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford:

Judge they, that can: Here I have rais’d to show
A Picture, which the World for yours must know. (ll. 13-14)

Jonson’s encomium to Lady Montgomery makes an instructive contrast to the “central feature” of his First Folio encomium. Both poems use the infinitive *to show*, otherwise not a common construction in Jonson. The rhetoric of Jonson’s address to Susan Montgomery, published in 1616, anticipates Jonson’s First Folio encomium, seeing her as

More than borne *for the comparison*
Of former age, or glorie of our one. (ll. 9-10)

And she is pictured as “advanced . . . to be the light, and marke unto posteritie” (l. 12).

But the difference in context as well as connotation is striking. In the Folio encomium, Jonson has just devoted sixteen lines to all the ways he fears that Shakespeare, and consequently he himself, will be misread. This is not an encouraging auspice. By contrast, in Jonson’s *show/know* rhyme in the poem to Lady Montgomery, the acoustic echo corroborates the speaker’s sincerity, enhancing the reader’s appreciation for the dedicatee’s ethos. The poem questions the world for misjudging the Lady; Jonson writes to vouch for her. In Jonson’s Folio poem it is quite different. The Folio’s *show/owe* rhyme lacks the reassuring agreement between sense and sound. The juxtaposition has logic, since shows cost money, and therefore, someone must “owe.” But as characteristically used in Jonson’s own neo-Platonic world of tricksters, informants, and shallow gamblers, “show” does not in Jonson’s Folio encomium reflect the urbane, public values to which it is applied in Lady Montgomery’s encomium; instead it evokes the world of *The Alchemist*, of “deceptions of vision, optical illusions, and failures of perception” (Hibbard 67). Thus, in his “Expostulation Against Inigo Jones” *shows* are “spectacles of state,” ephemeral illusions, gone as soon as they are produced, and in his 1623 “Epistle Answering to One Who Asked to Be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben,” they are things made of “canvas, paper, and false lights / As are the glorious Scenes at the great sights” (HS&S VIII: 220, l. 65-66).

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Reinforcing this interpretation, the insistent iconoclasm of Jonson's *recusatio* resurfaces in the second half of the poem in such worrisome images as Shakespeare seeming to "shake a lance / as brandish't in the eyes of ignorance" (l. 70). In short, the context radically undermines a prosaic reading of "show." Throughout his work, Jonson warns against such alluring distractions and instead places his confidence in lines—in relationships—that are "squared, well-tagged, and permanent" (l. 64), expressing enduring truths and values through the medium of number.

The problem of what "shows" and what does not "show," so prominent in several of the paired couplets examined above, is variously evident in Jonson's poem. Along with ring structure's chiastic design around a privileged center, a second strategy of amplification used by Jonson is an extended comparison (in an "equipage") of Shakespeare to seventeen ancient and contemporary writers, including Jonson himself. In line thirty-eight, in direct address to the author, Jonson refuses: "When thy socks were on / To leave thee alone for the comparison" (ll. 37-38). The lines imply that when "Shakespeare" acted in a comedy ("when thy socks were on"), Jonson would not leave him "alone for the comparison" (l. 38). They should, instead, be compared together. This assurance is premeditated, for Jonson's status in his own equipage is anomalous; of the other implicated authors, only he is not part of a pairing or a triad (fig. 13). Ambiguity in Jonson is more likely to be an intentional element of precise design than an incidental byproduct of error. While it is tempting to take the phrase "Merry Greek" as in apposition to Aristophanes, the evidence of the poem contradicts this surface reading. There is, first, the pairing of the "Merry Greek" and Aristophanes in the total array. Jonson has declared that he will not mix Shakespeare with "disproportioned" muses. With Menander brought forward from behind the placeholder of "The Merry Greek," the Greek and Roman playwrights in Group 2 balance (2-2), as do the totals of the Greek and Roman playwrights (5-5). They are, thus, "proportioned." Jonson has already anticipated the crux by applying the sobriquet of "him of Cordoba dead" to Seneca (l. 35). George Puttenham clarifies that while the antonymy ("The Surnamer") represents a variation of a name "used by convenient difference, and such as is true-esteemed and likely to be true" (265-66), the figure's mischievous fraternal twin metonymy ("The Misnamer") involves an "understanding or secret conceit" implemented by "the wrong name, or otherwise naming of them than is due," requiring figurative application (266).

Jonson evidently considered the phrase "Merry Greek" as an essential semantic crux, one designed to provoke inquiry and discovery. The name recalls a character from Nicholas Udall's early English comedy

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Category	English	Roman	Greek
Group 1 persons	Chaucer, Spenser, and Beaumont (l. 20).	Paccuvius, Accius, and “him of Cordoba dead” (l. 35), i.e. Seneca.	Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles (l. 34).
Group 1 totals	3	3	3
Group 2 persons	Lyly, Kid, and Marlowe (ll. 29-30)	Terence, Plautus (l. 29)	The “Merry Greek” i.e., Menander, Aristophanes (l. 30)
Group 2 totals	3	2	2
Group 3 persons	Jonson (l. 2, 38)	X	X
Group 3 totals	1	0	0 i.e., Jonson is the only one, who like Shakespeare, is “alone.”
Cum total	7	5	5

Fig. 13

Playwrights compared to William Shakespeare in Jonson’s First Folio encomium total seventeen: seven including Jonson are English, with Latin and Greek traditions each contributing five more. Both Seneca and Menander are occluded by periphrasis.

Ralph Roister Doister, in which the trickster figure is named “Matthew Merry Greek.” The play is provocatively described in the 1553 third edition of Thomas Wilson’s *Rule of Reason* as “an example of soche doubtful writing, whiche by reason of poincting maie haue double sense, and contrarie meaning” (Cooper v-vi)—surely a concept relevant to a writer so attracted by the idea of variant senses of meaning that he drew extensively from “the discourses of cipher in order to construct hidden forms of meaning” (Crawforth 139).

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While all of Menander's plays were lost by the Middle Ages, he remained a figure of imposing reputation in early modern literary studies. Multiple sixteenth-century sources call him "famous"; Gabriel Harvey in 1580 foreshadows Jonson's construction, linking Menander and Aristophanes as Greek comedic playwrights paired with "Plautus and Terence in Latin" (50); to William Webbe in 1586, he was "the most famous comedic writer of antiquity" (k.ii'). His Jacobean reception would have been especially influenced by Philemon Holland's first English translation of the *Moralia* (1603), which reprints Plutarch's "Breviarie of the Comparison between Aristophanes and Menander" (fig. 14). According to Plutarch, Menander "has made his poetry, of all

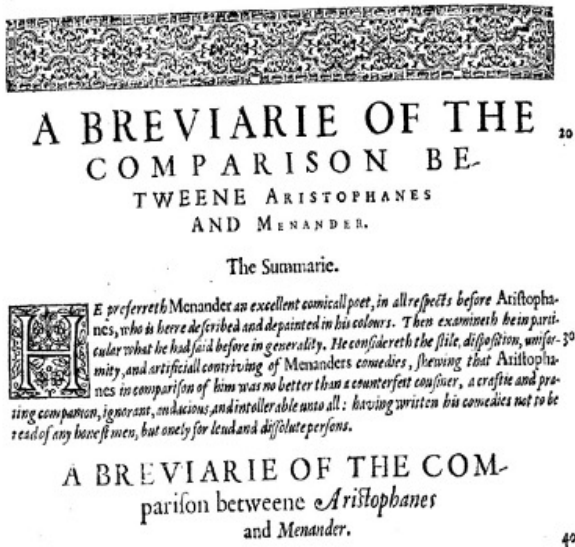


Fig. 14

Plutarch's "Breviarie of the Comparison between Aristophanes and Menander," translated by Philemon Holland (1603).

the beautiful works Greece has produced, the most generally accepted subject in theatres, in discussions and at banquets, for reading, for instruction, and for dramatic competitions" (HS&S XI: 214). On the first page of his *Discoveries*, Jonson quotes Menander through Plutarch, "Οὐδέν πέπονθας δεινὸν ἄν μὴ προσποιῆ" ("that which happens to any man, may to every man") (l. 11), and in his "Ode to Ben Jonson upon his Ode to himself" (Jonson, ed. Gifford 5: 453-55) J. Cleveland calls Jonson another Menander.

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The Numerical Structure of the Folio Paratexts

Printed facing Martin Droeshout’s ungainly engraving on the first verso page of the volume, Jonson’s evasive ten-line tetrameter epigram, the first textual element in the folio’s multimodal design, supplies an intriguing confirmation of Jonson’s numerical architectonics. The forty feet emphasize solidity, permanence, and Biblical authority.¹⁰ Printed in a clean Dutch type employed in the Folio paratexts, the epigram also imitates the Spanish *Decimá*, a form often used—especially, it would seem, in 1623—to express satiric purpose (fig. 2).¹¹ Jonson’s eighty lines of iambic pentameter in the encomium comprise another four hundred feet, exactly ten times the number of feet in the epigram (fig. 15).

	Lines	Feet/Line	Total Feet
Epi.	10	tetrameter	40
Enc.	80	pentameter	400
Totals	90		440

Fig. 15

Total feet in Ben Jonson’s poems in the Folio paratexts.

Jonson’s declaration that he is “ample” to ward off envy from Shakespeare thus signals his awareness of this proportional relationship, and hints at the larger system of numeric design on which the Folio is based. Any number multiplied by a factor of ten when added to itself becomes a factor of eleven, Jonson surely knew. Jonson’s encomium is both a triumph and a key piece in the Folio’s “Magic House” (Donaldson 1997), a “proportioned and habitable” building (Stanwood and Johnson 41), built with the numbers four, ten, and eleven. Confirmation of Jonson’s design lies embedded in the structure of the whole of the Folio paratexts.¹² Jonson having initiated the formula, his three First Folio associates—Hugh Holland, Leonard Digges, and I.M., usually identified as James Mabbe—followed the template.¹³ Hugh Holland contributes 110 feet in twenty-two lines, and together Leonard Digges and I.M. another 110 feet in twenty-two lines (fig. 16).

The *I.M.* abbreviation of the name of James Mabbe rhymes with both *iamb* and “I am,” perhaps pointing in an underlying jest embodied in the carefully coordinated “elvish” iambic feet of the paratexts. Jonson and his First Folio collaborators might have prepared their First Folio “temple” in the mode of eleven for several reasons. The word has cognates in every Germanic language, including the German/

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	Lines	Feet/line	Total feet
Holland	22	pentameter	110
Digges/Mabbe	22	pentameter	110
Totals	44		220

Fig. 16

Total feet in poems of Holland, Digges, and M[abbe] in the folio paratexts

English *elf*, as in “the elf did it.” Bede’s influential late ninth-century *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* derives the number from the Old English *ĕndleofon*.¹⁴ Due to this “elvish” quality, multiples of eleven have often acquired ambiguous symbolic values in diverse traditions, even being implicated in dispute between Christian and pagan number doctrines: in Pietro Bongo’s influential theology, eleven “has no connection with divine things’ and in fact measures the handspan of bastards” (Butler 75-76); in all, Bongo records ten pages, primarily invective, against eleven, thereby confirming the number’s disruptive influence for the conventional Platonist or Christian numerologist. In Tarot eleven is the number of Justice, and the twenty-two cards of the major arcana allegedly derived their number from the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, with which any reader of Psalm 119 was familiar; thirty-three is the number of greatest mysteries in the pan-European esoteric traditions of the day; seventy-seven multiplied by itself is 3003, with both being triangular numbers in the Pythagorean sequence (Stritmatter 2013). In Germany, Nov. 11 (11-11) is celebrated as St. Martin’s Day, an inversion festival marking the ending of harvest and coming of Winter (see Bladey). Yet in an apparent concession to pagan doctrine, “the sinful structural number eleven” may for the Christian be “counterpointed by God’s secret action within man” (Røstvig 428).

At least by the time of his 1616 *Christmas his Masque*, where Father Christmas in the prologue welcomes the newly appointed Lord Chamberlain, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, who would seven years later become a public patron of the Folio (Ogburn 216-19), Jonson had been alerted to the symbolic potentialities of the number. The masque features a brisk performance by ten of Father Christmas’s Sons —“Mis-rule,” “Gamboll,” “Mumming,” and “Babie-cake” et al., who are led onstage “in a string” by “Cupid” (ll. 30-69). Cupid’s mother, Venus, has crashed the performance to see her son play the eleventh (ll. 100-142). While the ten “sons” (eight sons and two daughters) are identified as being children of Father Christmas, Cupid is identified

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only as the son of Venus, i.e., he becomes an eleventh, fatherless child. Fundamentally, then, the masque oscillates around the problem of that pesky eleventh, as Father Christmas explains in one of his songs:

There should have beene and a dozen I wene,
But I could find but one more
Childe of Christmas, and a Logge it was,
When I them all had gone ore (ll. 238-42)

While he falls short of making a “fair dozen,” Cupid is surplus to the iconic, stable ten—occupying an oddball numerical position, a characteristically impish figure, embodying excess and irony.

The “elvish” choice of eleven as a structural feature of the Folio paratexts is mirrored by the curious juxtapositions of form and content in Jonson’s own eighty-line encomium. Jonson’s encomium, especially with the elaborate entablature, could easily be mistaken for a “column” or “pillar” poem, a form identified in *The Arte of English Poesie* as signifying “stay, support, rest, state and magnificence” (Puttenham 186). Written in a design imitating a Greek “column,” his ten times longer poem, which strives to exemplify a *classical* form, undermines its own stateliness with elvish numbers. Jonson’s calculated and persistent undermining of the superficial messaging of the 1623 folio requires better justification. In the Folio paratexts, triumphalist nationalism is persistently contested by iconoclastic ambiguity. Jonson’s encroachment on the reader’s assumptions and aggressive stance toward superficial readings, rooted in unexamined premises of his own difficult texts—whatever they *are*—cannot be dismissed as “envy.” Why construct a superstructure for a poem of such public consequence as this one, rooted in a number like eleven with such an impish reputation?

While we have considered Jonson’s poem as an encomium or triumph, perhaps it is better read as a mock encomium/triumph, a form closely allied in the Renaissance to the idea of paradox but traceable back to the fifth century BCE, in which ironic praise is heaped on an unworthy object. In the words of Peter G. Platt, the genre is designed to “bring readers astonishment, surprise, and shock, as they experience a deviation from the norm, and must re-evaluate conventionally held opinions and beliefs” (20). We might say, then, that the “mock encomium” employs comic ambush to disarm assumption, aiming to provoke a transformation of conscience or consciousness.

In connecting the mock encomium’s radical wit to numerical play in his First Folio, as we have seen, Jonson pursued a strategy familiar to the Renaissance *cognoscenti* but lost to most modern readers. Yet the result of this local knowledge on the alert modern reader fails to

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diminish the bizarre appearance of the entire design or bring clarity to the intrinsic ambiguity of the Folio paratexts. Surely Jonson's First Folio preliminaries are not designed to assure readers of a complacent acceptance of "things as they seem." On the contrary, as Leah Marcus observes, "[The Folio] makes high claims for 'The Author' while simultaneously dispersing authorial identity, so that 'Mr. William Shakespeare' becomes almost an abstraction, a generic category, while remaining an unstable composite" (24-25). When read within the context of the Folio's elvish paratexts, Jonson's mocking stance compounds reasonable doubt about his true intentions in the Folio, and, therefore, the enigma of his ambiguous relationship to Shakespeare. The oddity is compounded by the Folio's intricate numeric design, which is too consistent and coordinated to be explained by chance. Jonson himself in the encomium warns against "blind affection, / which doth ne'er advance / The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance" (ll. 9-10). When all is said and done, perhaps Jonson's poem is indeed better thought of as a "mock" encomium in which Jonson's stance toward the reader is one of elliptical irony, as if to say, "figure me out, if you can."

Notes

1. Thanks are due to Michelle Maycock and Gabriel Ready for their inspiration and insight.
2. E.g., Leah Marcus's 1988 analysis of the "iconoclastic" character of the Folio paratexts, or the several essays assembled in Stritmatter, *The Shakespeare First Folio: A Shakespearean Enigma. The 1623 First Folio and the Authorship Question*.
3. Henceforward HS&S. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to Jonson texts are from HS&S.
4. Cleveland, Mayne, and Cartwright in Duppa 27, 29, and 39.
5. In the Septuagint, Wis.11.20, but in the Geneva—the most widely translated printing of the apocrypha in England—11.17.
6. The Philosopher's Game, also known as Rhythmomachia, or "The Battle of Numbers," remained a testament to the broad influence of neo-Pythagorean thought for over five hundred years.
7. Cartwright in Duppa 39.
8. See, e.g., Alexander Waugh, "Jonson's Sweet Swan of Avon" 271-79 in Stritmatter, *The Shakespeare First Folio: A Shakespearean Enigma*.
9. "Wee have scarce received from him a blot in his papers" (First Folio, sig. A3).

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10. Augustine cited in Røstvig 7. See also Røstvig 133-34, where Augustine is quoted as saying that forty is the “knot, as it were, of this figurative action (of the fasting of the patriarchs)” and “cannot be untied without a knowledge and consideration of this number.”
11. Ready, “Knotty Wrong Side” 119-49, focusing specifically on the literary forms in vogue in Spain in 1623, finds that “satiric decimas . . . were used as vehicles for attacking other persons” (128).
12. To make “the whole . . . absolute, is requir’d not only the parts, but such parts as are true. For a part of the whole was true; which if you take away, you either change the whole, or it is not the whole” (*Discoveries* in HS&S VIII: 648).
13. In Mabbe’s 1622 translation of the Spanish picaresque novel *The Rogue* (to which Jonson prefaced dedicatory verses), Mabbe’s name is comically translated “*Don Diego Puede-Ser*” (“Lord Diego Maybe”). On the contemporary geopolitics surrounding the Folio’s editing by Hispanophiles like Mabbe, see Cogswell (1989) and Samson (2006).
14. Bede, *Eccl. Hist.*, Bk. V, Ch. xviii., “jjvjv ðæt rice hæfde endleofan wintra.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1st ed., “eleven, adj. and n.” Oxford UP, 1891.
15. A forthcoming article analyzes how Jonson’s poetic enumeration identifies an author of the plays and how this solution to Jonson’s enigma relates to the erudite mathematical design of the Folio paratexts as explained here. See Stritmatter, “Elvish Numbers Continued.”

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Poet as Priest: Chiasmus, George Herbert, and the Sign of the Cross

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Since Christ embraced the Cross itself, dare I
His image, th' image of his Cross deny?

-Donne, "The Cross" ll. 1-2

Blessed be God alone,
Thrice blessed Three in One.

-Herbert, "L'Envoy" ll. 17-18

So Donne begins one poem and so Herbert ends the whole of his poetic sequence *The Temple* with a suitably elegant and chiasmic couplet. Chiasmus always involves a criss-crossing, and often spells Christ's cross. Alone-thrice-three-one affirms the one-ness of God's nature or essence and the three-ness in personhood of the consubstantial Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And if one focuses on the repetition of "blessed," a subtler chiasmus in the syntax emerges: at first "blessed" is modified by alone and then thrice modifies "blessed" to further conjoin oneness and threeness. To borrow a phrase from Herbert's *The Country Parson*, it is as if Herbert is "willfully and cheerfully" making the sign of the cross over the poem and reader as a sort of benediction here at the closing of his great work (232). At the very beginning of *The Temple* Herbert initiates the reader with a different sort of chiasmus. The prayer at the end of "The Dedication" calls on God to: "[t]urn their eyes hither, who shall make a gain; / Theirs, who shall hurt themselves or me, refrain." The chiasmic sequence is not one of verbal repetition but of syntax—imperative verb "Turn," direct object "their eyes," direct object "theirs," and imperative verb "refrain." Thus Herbert enjoins his reader to join him through his poems in, as Donne says, embracing the cross. Herbert begins, ends, and in dozens of places in between employs chiasmus in stunning variety throughout *The Temple*. In so doing chiasmus acts as a signing of the cross, blessing and sanctifying

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Herbert's *Temple*—and all who enter it (we its readers)—through the power of the cross. Before I highlight as many of those chiasmic places as space permits, let me first quickly summarize the story of chiasmus itself.

We are all now accustomed to, if not comfortable with, the naming of any ab-ba structure as a chiasmus. When I started my research on chiasmus in Herbert during the 1990s, I was surprised to see that decades of excellent close readings of Herbert hardly mentioned chiasmus—a rhetorical term I learned as a Latin “poetic device” while studying Virgil. Virtually all the scholars who taught us all to read *The Temple* and seemed to know all about tropes and figures— F. E. Hutchinson, Joseph Summers, Arnold Stein, Rosemond Tuve, Mary Ellen Riskey, John Mulder—never mentioned “chiasmus.” For two reasons, I now understand: 1) the *OED* identifies the first instance of chiasmus as an English word as occurring in the nineteenth century, and 2) in all the rhetorical manuals of the sixteenth century chiasmus never appears as a rhetorical term in English. In fact a long tradition of rhetorical manuals carefully distinguish it from antimetabole which precisely involves only verbal repetition. Thus proper historicists by and large avoided the term chiasmus in discussing metaphysical poetry. And there was the fear of over-precise scholars of Renaissance rhetoric who might chide, “you are not talking about chiasmus, you mean antimetabole or antimetathesis.”

But when C.S. Lewis quipped about sixteenth-century schoolboys and their rhetoric-centric curriculum, he was more correct than the *OED* imagined:

Your father, your grown-up brother, your admired elder schoolfellow all loved rhetoric. Therefore you loved it too. You adored sweet Tully and were as concerned about asyndeton and chiasmus as a modern schoolboy is about county cricketers or types of aeroplane. (61)

It turns out that “chiasmus” as a rhetorical term in Greek goes back to Hermogenes’s “chiasmus” which was widely incorporated in the early modern curriculum. According to rhetorical historian Donald Clark, “sixteenth and seventeenth century Latin translations of the *De Arte Rhetorica* of Hermogenes include his *De statibus*, *De inventione*, *De formis orationis* and the *De methodo gravitates*. The translations are by Antonio Bonfine (1538), Natale Conti (c.1550), Johann Sturm (1570-71), and Gaspar Laurentius (1614)” (259). Often in these manuals, “chiasmus” was simply transliterated into the Latin nominative, “chiasmus,” as Byzantine émigré George Trebizond did in his 1433 *Five Books of*

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Rhetoric, which had a sizable currency in England in the sixteenth century. The Italian humanist Julius Caesar Scaliger drew heavily from Trebizond and identified chiasmus as creating a scissor-like pattern of clauses (204). So “chiasmus” was current as both a Greek and Latin rhetorical term throughout the Renaissance. In the vast array of lists of figures of diction, tropes, and schemes in these manuals chiasmus becomes interchangeable with antimetabole, commutatio, counter-change, antimetathesis, metathesis, and reciprocal change. It remains the case, it should be noted, that “chiasmus” does not seem to appear as an English rhetorical term until the nineteenth century even though anyone trained in rhetoric could have known of it.

“Chiasmus” as an English word, however, does appear in early modern England but not as a rhetorical term. In 1658 in his *The Garden of Cyrus* Thomas Browne observes “chiasmus and larger decussations” throughout nature, and this phrase occurs in the exact mid-point of his lengthy prose discourse (356). Browne has in mind the etymological sense of chiasmus: to mark with the Greek letter X, which for him is synonymous with any cruciform or crucigerous pattern, e.g. decussation or decussis, quincunx, criss-cross, reticulate pattern or net-work, rhomboidal decussation, the helix, Mercury’s caduceus, Moses’s serpent-staff, the Platonic world-soul, and the five on a die. That Browne structures his five-chapter essay according to chiasmic patterns suggests he is well aware of its rhetorical connotation. In conclusion, when we embrace chiasmus as a term for any pairing of inverse parallels on any level of language or narrative, current literary scholarship is not being sloppy or ahistorical but rather just catching up with Renaissance wit.

“So much wit,” as Herbert puts it (“Man” l. 52). And the streams of chiasmic wit flow into Herbert’s verse from biblical, classical, and patristic traditions. Together what emerges in the lyric poetry of the age is what Brian Vickers calls an “organic style” that develops a rich array of thematic and “emotional-psychological” applications (94). In Herbert we see this in both the structuring of whole poems or narrative sequences and in the more Mannerist patterning of poetic lines and phrases where he often signals a chiasmus with a pun on cross or some other word play.

A quick example showing how Herbert precedes a chiasmus with an explicit reference to the cross occurs in the “Church Militant”:

Plato and Aristotle were at a loss,
And wheeled about again to spell Christ-Cross.
Prayers *chased* syllogisms into their den
And Ergo was *transformed* into Amen. (ll. 53-56, my emphasis)

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Herbert sums up the conversion of the Hellenic world historically into the Christian world of late antiquity with a thematic ab-ba chiasmus: (a) Prayers, the Christian activity, (b) syllogisms, the pagan form of reasoning, (b) ergo, the pagan word associated with reasoning, and (a) Amen, the untranslatable sigh that concludes any Christian prayer in every language. The verbs *chasing* and *transforming* heighten the grammatical parallelism to emphasize the triumph of Christianity whose terminology (prayers and Amen) here begins and ends the sentence. But they also remind us of St. Paul's preaching Christ crucified to the Greeks who could only see such an idea as the death of God as foolishness. To Herbert it is as if the reality of Christ's cross would require them to re-learn their alphabet in order to become fluent in the grammar of salvation.

Specifically in "The Church Militant," his summary of Church history in verse, Herbert is referencing the ante-Nicene period when Church fathers such as Justin Martyr were finding traces of Christian doctrine in pagan texts to explain and defend the Christian faith. In terms of Plato "spelling Christ-Cross," Browne explains in chapter four of his *The Garden of Cyrus* how Justin Martyr's gloss of Plato's *Timaeus* reads Christ typologically: Plato's cosmic X that explains sameness and difference, eternity and time, is read as the union of divine and human natures in Christ. The cosmic cross idea is then extended accordingly: the incarnate Christ is a microcosm, the crucifixion occurs in the geographical center of the world, Calvary had been so placed that the cross is raised on the very spot where had been the Tree of Knowledge in the center of the garden of Eden, and, of course, that X, being the Greek letter chi, is Christ's initial. The Logos, called the second god by Plato, creates all things and all things have their being in Him: for "*decussavit eum in universo*" or "He placed him crosswise in the universe," as Justin renders Plato (Browne 378). While the cross is associated with Christ creating the cosmos and ultimately man in his image by Justin via Plato, Herbert of course focuses more on the life in Christ in the Church.

Not surprisingly in Herbert's language of salvation we see chiasmus dramatizing sacramental life at every step but especially with reference to the eucharist. Here is an example of what I call the chiasmic correlative as Herbert describes what happens during the liturgy as Christian priests serve communion: "Their hands convey him, who conveys their hands" ("The Priesthood" l. 28). The word order itself conveys the image: in presenting the bread and wine of the eucharist as body and blood of Christ and holding up the chalice and the paten, the hands of priests, "their hands," it can be said, carry and hold Christ himself, who in turn as creator and sustainer of the universe is the one in whom

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“we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). With “him, who” is Christ at the center of the line precisely contained by “hands” on either side, the syntax visually recapitulates the eucharistic moment being enacted liturgically and described poetically. Punctuated into perfectly balanced five-syllable halves, the line sustains a perfectly symmetrical iambic rhythm. Nowhere in the Psalms or the entire Bible, despite copious instances of chiasmus on various levels of narrative, is poetic language demonstrating this level of chiastic artistry. But such deployment of rhetorical figures was the goal of Renaissance rhetorical training. The decorous achievement of linear balance, compact syntax, metrical precision, and iconic function was primarily learned from Virgil.

Syntax mimes sense in a chiasmus of Virgil’s that acts as a spatial representation and a visual correlative: “Speluncam Dido dux et Trojanus eandem” (*Aeneid* Bk. 4, l. 124). The accusatives are the cave walls which enclose the nominatives that are the lovers, Dido and the “Trojan leader,” thus reflecting the meaning—Dido is with Aeneas alone within the same cave. For Virgil this is a sex scene and the beginning of the end of Dido’s tragic love. The hexameter’s slow spondees reflect the gravity of this moment within the *Aeneid*. Likewise, Herbert slows us down to understand the gravity of the eucharist. Incorporating every syllable of his pentameter line into the chiastic parallelism, Herbert carefully places a caesura in the midst of the line so that the central foot, “him, who,” becomes a spondee. Once the reader’s focus is on the crux of the line, of course, one sees that Herbert has made Christ the end and the beginning, the Alpha and the Omega, of each respective half-line.

Herbert not surprisingly achieves similar effects with chiasmus in his Latin verse, but it is there and deliberately not in *The Temple* that Herbert shows his more polemical side. Herbert found common cause with his older friend and Anglican priest and kindred spirit John Donne against Puritan iconoclasm that went so far as to ban crosses from churches lest they be worshipped as an idol. One Puritan reformer, Andrew Melville, denied the propriety of the priest making the sign of the cross over an infant at baptism (Miller xiv-xv). While Donne’s epigraph above states his opposition more baldly, Herbert was not far behind in his prophetic indignation. In a more vituperative tone Herbert composes one of his most golden of golden lines. In “De Auctorem Enumeratione,” Herbert mentions the Roman Emperor Constantine and says: “Invisamque tuis erigit hasta Crucem” (“and he raises up / The cross your men despise” [ll. 17-18]). The four-part chiasmus is accusative singular, *invisam*; ablative plural, *tuis*; ablative plural, *hasta*; and accusative singular, *Crucem*. The ab-ba pattern is established not through any verbal repetition but the grammatical cases

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of the nouns and adjectives. This is precisely what Hermogenes termed “chiasmus,” and why in distinguishing chiasmus from antimetabole, which involves only verbal or semantic inversion, Scaliger and certain other Renaissance rhetoricians thought that uninflected languages or languages that did not operate by declensions of nouns and adjectives such as English could not actually do chiasmus. And indeed one cannot translate into English Herbert’s chiastic Latin here and convey the chiasmus. The power of the cross vanquishes pagan foes, and the chiasmus mimes the sense of the line. The verb is the turning point at center. The unacknowledged Cross syntactically surrounds its enemies—in Constantine’s case pagans, in Herbert’s case Melville and the Puritans. The cross is a chiasmus. No more explicit a connection can be made between chiasmus and the cross, and Herbert adopts this connection elsewhere in the *Temple*.

Such chiseling of a single line into a monument of wit is a hallmark of Virgilian aesthetics and an effect to which early modern rhetorical training deliberately aspired through the use of poetic figures including chiasmus. John Tobin speaks for generations of Herbert scholarship that has seen a connection between his training in rhetoric and poetic style: in Herbert’s “most subtle creative imagination” one can see “the secular rhetorician at Cambridge as Public Orator . . . become the religious rhetorician who uses subtle rhetorical tactics” (xiv-xvi). His poetry does not stop at achieving such isolated effects, however. Such golden lines engage a single verse horizontally. It is not difficult to see how Herbert also extends cross structures vertically throughout the length of poems. In various ways Herbert crucifies poems: just as there were three crosses on Calvary, I will treat the cross in three poems—“Man,” “The Cross,” and “The Call.”

Treating the man as microcosm topos, Herbert structures the entire poem “Man” chiastically. The central conceit pictures man and his body as a microcosm of the world, which is God’s own stately “Palace.” The final stanza includes the chiastic prayer, “O dwell in it, / That it may dwell with thee at last” (“Man” ll. 50-51). The prayer helps reconcile formerly wayward man and the world as servants of God (ll. 53-54). This chiasmus points to a greater chiastic structure at work in the poem’s argument. The last stanza thematically echoes the first and signals the stanzaic mirroring that occurs in the poem as a whole. As Jonquil Bevan and Alastair Fowler assert, “The whole of the subject matter, indeed, is symmetrical about the poem’s center” (157). “Symmetrical” in this case is also chiastic. The argument that God should dwell in man progresses thematically through the nine stanzas in an abcd-e-dcba order.

The center is stanza five, from which the other stanzas mirror each other. Stanzas one and nine discuss “God’s dwelling in man” (Bevan

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and Fowler 157). Stanzas two and eight deal with humanity's relationship to nature. The third and seventh stanzas talk about the human body as a world. Herbert maintains the chiasmic rhetoric, or argument, by consistently paralleling stanzaic content. The fourth and sixth stanzas relate humanity to the stars. Herbert perfectly balances the subject matter and imagery in the first four and last four stanzas upon the fulcrum of stanza five. The fifth stanza provides the key to the disposition or arrangement of the poem's argument: "The whole is, either our cupboard . . . or cabinet" (ll. 29-30). With this homely metaphor, the crux of the poem turns the poem into a cabinet and each stanza is likewise a series of parallel shelves creating the whole cupboard that is man. The chiasmic argumentation gives "Man," the poem, a perfect symmetry.

Adding to the symmetry is the meter, which may seem simple but supplies a layering of chiasmic structure that heightens the overall effect. The meter of the lines in each stanza moves from three to five to four feet and back again from four to five to three. The meter, like the rhetoric of the poem, remains perfectly chiasmic throughout each stanza. Reinforcing the chiasmic nature of the poem are the two instances of syntactical chiasmus that punctuate the last stanza:

Since then, my God, *Thou* hast
So brave a palace built, O *dwell in it,*
That *it may dwell with Thee* at last!
Till then, afford us so much wit,
That as the *world serves us, we may serve Thee,*
And both Thy servants be. ("Man" ll. 49-54, my emphasis)

The first chiasmus runs abc-cba: Thou-dwell-it-it-dwell-Thee. "It" refers to the palace that is man. As the turning point of the chiasmus, "it" brings together God's movement toward man on earth and man's movement toward God in heaven. This chiasmus is a prayer for personal union, and this union occurs spatially at the syntactical center, which is "it," or man himself, the meeting place of divine grace and human assent. The second chiasmus also places man in the middle, but this time in the chain of being between the world and God. Man's unique position in the chain of being makes him the mediator between heaven and earth. Herbert develops this thought further in another chiasmus from "Man's Medley" that also manages to prove Scaliger wrong by rendering a Latinate syntactical pattern into English by pairing the two adjectives after their antecedents:

Man ties *them both alone,*
And makes them one,

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With th'one hand touching heaven, with th'other earth.
("Man's Medley" ll. 10-12, my emphasis)

Heaven and earth, "them both," are contained within the pairing of "Man" and the adjective modifying him "alone." Man is the subject and them (heaven and earth) is the direct object, and the adjective modifying the direct object, them, is both; this is followed by the adjective, alone, which can only be modifying the subject man. (In Latin this would be more obvious by the sequence of grammatical endings: nominative-accusative-accusative-nominative.) Man's role as mediator and unifier of the created world with the divine is clearly established, and chiasmus iconically symbolizes this role. Form recapitulates content throughout the poem; chiasmus provides a balanced symmetry to the poem "Man" who also as priest of the created order "is symmetric" ("Man" l.13). The beginning and end of the poem show the perfection, or completion, of man as the image of the Alpha and Omega Himself, that is, Christ. Herbert builds his poetic palace "Man" by structuring it chiastically because this is how God built his palace, man—as the crossroads between heaven and earth. The purpose of both palaces, the poem and man himself, is that God may dwell in them. "Man"—symmetrically balanced by rhetorical chiasmus and chiastic metrical pattern—unites heaven and earth, thus fulfilling his priestly function with the created order.

As "Man" comes to a chiastic conclusion after its whole "cupboard" was arranged in a chiastic sequence, so does "The Cross." Here, the content of the stanzas does not mirror one another. Instead the chiastic matrix is established near the beginning: "To make me sigh, and seek, and faint, and die" (l. 2). The content of the ensuing stanzas takes up those verbs in inverse order. Stanza two takes up death, as in to die to self or the call to crucify oneself daily. The speaker's power is "confounded" and his "threat'nings," his stubborn sense of self, "bleeding on the ground" (l.12). The third stanza takes up faintness: "I am in all a weak disabled thing" (l. 17). Stanzas four and five address the speaker's earnest expectation to seek and to find that as yet ends only in frustration: "my hopes my torture" (l. 27). The last stanza conveys sighing with "Ah," then follows with the lack of any verb of speaking and the speechlessness of the narrator. He appropriates Christ's groan, "Thy will be done," as his own ("The Cross" ll. 31, 36). The poem is not so much about Christ's cross as it is about the cross the believer must bear. The denouement of the chiastic rhetoric draws together the paradoxes of the believer with the suffering of Christ:

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These contrarities crush me: these cross actions
Do wind a rope about and cut my heart
 And yet since these Thy contradictions
Are properly a Cross felt by Thy Son,
With but four words, my words, "Thy will be done."
("The Cross" ll. 32-36)

The key phrase is "since these Thy contradictions / are properly a Cross felt by Thy Son"; Christ's cross unites all suffering.

An aspect of note about the chiasmic structure in "The Cross" is its manipulation of space. Herbert lists the four elements of the chiasmus horizontally and then discusses them in turn vertically down the page. Thus chiasmic rhetoric forms the shape of the cross over the width and length of the poem. This is the beginning of seeing chiasmus on a different level. On a linear, horizontal level, chiasmus acts as a visual correlative for things that are inside or outside, surrounded by something, or emanating from something, but always in "The Cross," chiasmus retains its basic definition of inverse parallelism. "The Call," however, takes a step further in the evolution of chiasmus in a uniquely Christian sense.

"The Call" is one of Herbert's more creative innovations with chiasmic structure. The rhyme scheme in "The Call" is a tight formula, given to diagrams and charts, but it reveals the significance of chiasmic structures in Herbert's poetry. It illustrates the cross as a visual hieroglyph. Though Summers does not discuss chiasmus or the cross in particular, his explanation of Herbert's use of other hieroglyphs pertains: "Herbert seems to have believed that it was more pleasant and profitable to make the poem itself a hieroglyph. To construct the poem so that its form imaged the subject" (135). In "The Call," Herbert does not utilize inverse parallels—there are no ab-ba patterns—but he applies to the form of this lyric poem by the repetition of key words and their rhymes a cumulative criss-crossing effect, an elaborate decussation, the root meaning of chiasmus. As the poem develops from stanza to stanza, it becomes evident that Herbert is marking "The Call" with a C of rhymes.

The poem begins with an adaptation of a saying of Christ. Helen Vendler cites John 14:6 and says, "Jesus' words are the unchangeable matrix here, and the rest of the stanza has to be tailored to fit them" (205). The stanza reads:

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Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
Such a Way, as gives us breath:
Such a Truth, as ends all strife:
And such a Life, as killeth death. ("The Call" ll. 1-4)

The nouns of the first line are repeated vertically in each of the following lines. These horizontal and vertical axes not only establish another poetic skeleton, but themselves allude to the cross. With the abab rhyme scheme and the repetition of nouns, Herbert creates an internal rhyme between "strife" and "Life" in line four. This internal rhyme is repeated in every stanza and forms the first slash of the C.

As Vendler notes, in stanza two Herbert departs from the actual words of Jesus (206). But the abstract nouns are still biblically consonant; it is as if the tripartite structure itself is generative:

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:
Such a Light, as shows a feast:
Such a Feast, as mends in length:
Such a Strength, as makes his guest.
("The Call" ll. 5-8)

Here "the form is further tightened, since 'feast' is used as a rhyme" (Stein 146). This creates another internal rhyme that connects lines seven and eight and completes Herbert's C of rhyme. As the mark of the cross continues to develop with this stanza Herbert praises the sacrament of Communion. The "feast" that "mends" is the Eucharist, and the sacramental presence of Christ enters the poem. Herbert centers the entire poem that he is marking with a C on this grace-bestowing event.

Herbert punctuates his X in the third stanza by using the last possible variation of his matrix. In stanza two, "feast" is repeated in lines six and seven, but in the third stanza this repetition forms part of the C with "love" in lines eleven and twelve:

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
Such a Joy, as none can *move*:
Such a *Love*, as none can part:
Such a *Heart*, as joys in *love*. ("The Call" ll. 9-12)

The premise of Herbert using chiasmus in its etymological sense might seem far-fetched if he did not relate form and content. In "The Call" the crossing rhymes yoke form and content. Stein attributes this to the repetition of "love," and the last line which "by converting one of

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the abstract nouns into a verb manages to draw together the key terms of the stanza” (146). Vendler states, “there really is no inequality between the two partners in the last stanza” (207). The “two partners” are God and man who are distinct in stanza one and related as guest and host in stanza two as they celebrate the Eucharist, and now are together in stanza three. Subject and object have become one in a kind of hypostatic union just as the “nouns and verbs are indistinguishable” (Vendler 208). She refers to Herbert’s manipulations of the words “joy” and “love.” This idea of union with Christ inspires Vendler to cite Galatians 2:20, “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (208). But she omits the most crucial part that begins that verse: “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless . . .” (Gal. 2:20). Herbert has crucified his poem with chiasmic rhyme. In the first stanza, Christ is asked to “come,” and by the third stanza the rhymes assert His presence.

Christ’s triumphant suffering challenges any Christian poet who seeks to fitly praise his Savior. To communicate the mystical paradox of Christ’s salvific work becomes a sort of cross to bear for the poet. This is the stance the speaker of “A Wreath” takes. As Terry Sherwood observes, the “poem’s ironies” derive from the speaker’s “compulsively sinful nature” and his “sincere desire to praise God” (133). “A Wreath” attempts to praise God in an entirely chiasmic framework, Herbert’s innovative juxtaposition of syntactical chiasmus and chiasmic rhyme. He uses it over the line breaks initially in an attempt to weave the whole poem, line by line, into a wreath. As this poem/wreath alludes to the passion, however, “A Wreath” becomes the Christian poet’s symbolic replacement of Christ’s crown of thorns. I quote the poem in its entirety for ease of reference:

*A wreathed garland of deserved praise,
Of praise deserved, unto thee I give,
I give to thee, who knowest all my ways,
My crooked winding ways, wherein I live,
Wherein I die, not live: for life is straight,
Straight as a line, and ever tends to thee,
To thee, who art more far above deceit,
Than deceit seems above simplicity.
Give me simplicity, that I may live,
So live and like, that I may know thy ways,
Know them and practice them: then shall I give
For this poor wreath, give thee a crown of praise.
 (“A Wreath” ll. 1-12, my emphasis)*

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Herbert often imposes a strict formal scheme on entire poems: line length, acrostic, anagram, shaped verse, to name a few. The experienced reader of Herbert, therefore, anticipates the successful completion of whatever matrix he establishes. Poems with such strict formal patterns include "Easter-wings," "Prayer (1)," "Col. 3.3 Our Life is Hid with Christ in God," "Paradise," "Longing," and "Heaven." The first three lines of "A Wreath" suggest syntactical chiasmus to be its structural principle: "deserved praise" and "to thee I give" are conspicuously inverted. Chiasmus usually stabilizes a line by giving it syntactical symmetry, but by using it over the line break it shifts the focus away from the center. This destabilizing effect is the first sign of something awry in these instances of chiasmus. Indeed, one cannot imagine Herbert capable of the dull, mechanical exercise of sustaining this pattern for a whole poem. For Herbert, moreover, the danger is greater. To sustain such a pattern without any sense of decorum or any apparent Christian value would be formalism for its own sake or concupiscence of wit.

Mercifully but significantly line four breaks the chiasmic pattern. There only "ways" is repeated from line three. Herbert reduces the ab-ba chiasmic pattern to that of anadiplosis or ab-bx; the inverted parallelism is reduced to a repetition over the line break. It is anadiplosis that continues in every line and becomes the governing syntactical figure of the poem, but anadiplosis in this context is clearly an imperfect chiasmus, half a chiasmus. In terms of the readability of the poem the reduction to anadiplosis could be a good thing: the lines and diction appear more loose, simple, and "life"-like. But thematically the breakdown of chiasmus occurs precisely at the first admission of sin, "My crooked winding ways." Immediately the syntactical repetition becomes "crooked" and "winding." The syntax itself acts as a metaphor for sin and its effect on versifying. Here for the only time in Herbert's poetry chiasmus is associated with sin and the abuse of language. The first three lines and their two instances of syntactical chiasmus are a prime example of poetic hubris, as when Herbert suspects that he did "weave myself into the sense" ("Jordan (2)" 1.14).

The reduction of chiasmus, therefore, to anadiplosis is a form of chastening the poem's syntax, a means by which the speaker demonstrates humility. The diction also reflects this: what begins as a "wreathed garland" is merely a "poor wreath" by the last line. Ironically this humiliation of chiasmus into anadiplosis unites form and content. Anadiplosis is the primary means by which Herbert weaves the wreath; it semantically ties the lines together end-to-end (Mulder 42). Though she does not use the term, Barbara Lewalski states the effect of this figure and the central paradox at work in Herbert's poetics: "he can create a wreath of intricate praise while praying for the simplicity

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of life" (228). The word order itself parallels the image. Stein explains how he does this: "Herbert succeeds in making some of the repetitions rhetorical and syntactical" (228). Lines five and six contain an example of the above: "for life is straight, / Straight as a line." The chiasmus is once again resisted as "line" is substituted for "life." But now the tone has shifted from confession of sin to the speaker's resolve for upright action. Line nine completes this penitent resolution, "that I may live, / So live and like." Mulder believes that "the 'live and like' [should] be read as adjectives so that the sentence becomes 'so quickened and Christ-like'" (42). And it is with this prayer that chiasmus returns to the poem.

The humility of anadiplosis is reinforced by its occasional delay. The first instance of the figure takes three iambic feet to complete the phrase, but this delay, in its own way, parallels the content and could be called "crooked winding" chiasmus (l. 4). Similarly, line thirteen's "shall I give" is interrupted by "For this poore wreath" before being completed by "give thee" in line fourteen. In this case, Herbert uses the delay to demonstrate humility; the modest assertion that this intricate poem is a "poor wreath" subverts its complex structure. Just as the breakdown of chiasmus reflects imperfection, the delays of anadiplosis also indicate a formal humility. The irregularities lend a rough-hewn, organic texture that corresponds to that of a wreath or perhaps a crown of thorns.

With Herbert's use of syntactical chiasmus and anadiplosis, I have demonstrated only that he has successfully woven a sort of braid. The chiasmus of rhyme ties the braided lines into a wreath of a poem, and this rhyming as I have mentioned starts with the resolution to "live" morally. Mary Carpenter argues that in "A Wreath," "it is the rhyme scheme which provides Herbert with his most effective device" (58). Stein notes that "The rhyme words of the last four lines are the same as those of the first four, in reversed order" (144). "Reversed order" is chiasitic order. Herbert weaves the wreath, but does not connect its ends until the chiasitic rhymes of the last stanza are complete. "Live," "wayes," "give," and "praise" of the last stanza are the mirror image of "praise," "give," "wayes," and "live" of the first stanza. Chiasitic order, therefore, that had failed in the semantics and syntax is restored by the sequence of rhyme words. Chiasmus provides the structure of "A Wreath" after all and closes the poem into its circular shape. Once again, chiasmus enables a poem's form to visually recapitulate the meaning: other poems with chiasitic rhyme schemes ("The Temper (2)," four-part abba stanzas; "Jordan (1)," five-part ababa stanzas; and "Ungratefulness," six-part abccba stanzas) do not further develop the metaphoric potential of their respective titles as here. The circularity

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of the chiasmic structures brings their ends back to their beginnings, painting a picture of a wreath. Herbert, of course, is presenting this wreath in praise of He who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Thus chiasmus becomes a speaking picture for Christ. This iconic function of chiasmus—to represent Christ—is even more evident in Herbert's association of chiasmus with the cross.

T.S. Eliot observes "exquisite variations of form" in Herbert's *Temple* that "show a resourcefulness of innovation which seems inexhaustible, and for which I know no parallel in English poetry" (33). With application to the art of chiasmus, "English" is the key modifier here. Dante certainly shows comparable chiasmic virtuosity. The significance of chiasmus as a cruciform is a means of establishing order. This order is primarily psychic, or referring to the soul, and is dramatized by the speaker of many of Herbert's lyrics who must overcome sin and receive grace to experience any sense of redemption. This dramatic process restores the proper relation between the soul and God, especially as dramatized throughout *The Temple*. In his Latin poetry, on the other hand, chiasmus also establishes political and ecclesiastical order, refuting-Puritan arguments that threaten both the royal crown and the bishop's mitre. Chiasmus in this vein is an engine of "Anglican *via media*" polemics (Tobin xv). Tobin extrapolates from Herbert's religious moderation a concomitant "aesthetic middle way" that negotiates between his high neo-classical rhetorical training and "the quintessential Herbertian virtue of tact" (xxi).

This aspect of chiasmus as a harmonizing figure, a scheme of *concordia discors*, provides order in the arena of language. Chiasmus as a unifying symbol of the Logos Himself is more in the forefront of Herbert's poetic enterprise. Herbert's motive is essential to understanding his use of chiasmus. He strove to subject the worldly poetic art to the lordship of Christ. The narrative voice of his poems, especially in the *Temple*, constantly struggles with submitting to Christ. If his pattern poems, as Rickey claims, "were motivated in part by his wish to Christianize a patently classical genre," so was his use of chiasmus (121). I am eager to clarify that even with this essay and my earlier work on chiasmus in Herbert, I cannot see any chiasmic superstructure to Herbert's *Temple* as a whole or in the chief body of lyric poems within it, "The Church." Rather Herbert's chiasmic art remains an occasional aesthetic achievement that occurs less frequently than this collection of examples might suggest.

Herbert's excellence or success as a poet can be measured up to his aesthetic as described in one of his "Love" poems: "Wit fancies beauty, beauty raiseth wit" ("Love (1)" l. 9). Beauty for Herbert is chiefly two things: the beauty of holiness and the beauty of language. The former

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is straightforward in concept if not in practice: life lived according to moral virtues in cooperation with divine grace. But beauty in language is more contentious—in Herbert’s day as in ours. If we recall the quotation from Lewis about asyndeton and chiasmus and Renaissance pedagogy in rhetoric, however, beauty in language becomes more explicit: the skillful invention and arrangement of rhetorical figures. A good chiasmus can make a poem good. At times a verbal icon, a means for creating symmetry, a narrative frame, or an eschatological mirror of spiritual union: no doubt Herbert has a chiastic touch. Herbert as poet-priest so blesses his readers with signs of the cross that he makes it seem effortless.

A good poem can make a reader good, which, if we recall, was Herbert’s stated goal all along. In the first part of the chiasmus from “The Dedication” that I cited at the beginning of this paper, the priest-poet of *The Temple* prays, “turn their eyes hither, who shall make a gain” (l. 5). One cannot help but recognize now over the centuries since how famously often readers have gained from turning to Herbert and how often famous readers too—Coleridge, Eliot, Elizabeth Bishop, Philip Larkin, Seamus Heaney. Perhaps that is the point of grace as Herbert conveys it priest-like through his poetry. This is poetry as benediction: an efficacy experienced by the reader when “beauty and beauteous words go together” (“The Forerunners” l. 30). To borrow from his famous sonnet “Prayer (1),” poetry could be as efficacious as prayer by being ultimately only and at most “something understood” (l. 14).

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Thomas Browne and the Mystery of Number

Jessica Wolfe

The Secret Magic of Numbers

The seventeenth-century English writer Thomas Browne fluctuates throughout his works between fascination with and contempt for numerology. In *Religio Medici* (1643), Browne claims to admire the “mysticall way of *Pythagoras*, and the secret Magicke of numbers” but in subsequent works, including *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646; 1672) and *The Garden of Cyrus* (1658), he attacks the idea that numbers possess any secret magic at all. In the last of these works, despite its preoccupation with the latent existence of numerical patterns throughout the book of nature, Browne nonetheless strives to distance himself from the “inexcusable Pythagorisme” of scholars who pretend to uncover “all the mysteries and secrets accommodable unto number” (Browne, *RM* 1.12:24; *PE* 4.12:250; *GC* 189, 194).

Although prior scholars, including Kathryn Murphy, Marshelle Woodward, Frank Huntley, and Jeremiah Finch, have all analyzed Browne’s attitudes toward numerology in light of his broader theological and philosophical outlook, no study has examined Browne’s shifting stance toward the corpus of Renaissance texts that address the “mystery of number,” a loosely-affiliated genre derived from Pythagorean tradition and filtered through the works of Macrobius and Martianus Capella (Murphy 242-45; Woodward 315-16; Huntley 353-56; Finch 276; Singer; Croce 115-23; Hunt and Tomlin; Brach; Agrippa 170-221). This article provides a three-fold explanation of Browne’s conflicted attitude toward numerology, taking into account his concerns over the origin and spread of numerical error, his deliberations over the ontological status and theological significance of numbers, and his reflections on the relationship between numbers and other kinds of characters, including letters.

Browne repeatedly observes in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* that one of the problems inherent in disciplines reliant upon the computation of numbers, and in quantitative disciplines of knowledge more generally, is that one meets with frequent disagreement in the results. In a chapter devoted to magnetism, Browne complains that no two tables of

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declination he has examined “punctually agree,” even though some of them, such as those produced by Henry Briggs, “have been thought exactly calculated” (*PE* 2.2:65). His discussions of calendrical reform and of biblical chronology are full of similar observations: Browne notes the “lapses and false deductions of ordinary accountants” in the field of calendrical studies, and he comments on the “manifest disagreement” over early Christian and seventeenth-century attempts to calculate the age of the world (*PE* 4.12:257-58; *PE* 6.1:325). This problem helps to explain why Browne approaches the discipline of biblical chronology with equal parts curiosity and suspicion, especially when addressing efforts to fix the date or season of Creation, or to pinpoint the precise day of the Last Judgment, or to attach typological undermeanings to the numerical landscape of the scriptures (Patrides 315-22). In *Religio Medici*, Browne dismisses as pointless the question of “whether the world was created in Autumn, Summer, or the Spring, because it was created in them all,” and yet a decade later, he devotes two long chapters of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* to an investigation of this very question, ultimately concluding that it is “unreasonable and erroneous” to attempt to date the Creation of the world, which remains “controvertible” until the “Arithmetick of the last day determine” (*RM* 1.21:49; *PE* 6.1:321; *PE* 6.6:353).

Like many of his contemporaries, Browne is concerned with the obvious discrepancies among different calendrical systems that yield what he describes as a “wide dissent of mens opinions” (*PE* 6.1:326). His skepticism, which echoes that of Isaac Vossius, Dionysius Petavius, and Hugo Grotius, derives from three distinct positions: first, the relative and variable systems of time measurement; second, the corruptive influence of human error upon computational practices; and third, the idea that mathematics is a dark conceit, a discipline whose mysteries are not to be revealed save to God alone.¹

Condemnations of an excessive confidence in the stability and calculability of biblical dates and numbers were common in the first half of the seventeenth century. One of the reasons for this distrust becomes apparent within the pages of Browne’s own *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, which contains several errors in transcription such as the one made at *Pseudodoxia* 6.1, page 325, where Browne’s attempt to copy a series of dates from a chart from Petavius’s 1627 *Doctrina Temporum*, counting the number of years elapsed between the birth of Adam and the birth of Christ, results in a transposition error that in turn generates a second numerical error. While Petavius, following Clement of Alexandria, counts 5818 years from Adam to the Emperor Commodus, and thus (subtracting 194) 5624 years from Adam to Christ, Browne’s text has 5858 and 5664 years, respectively, suggesting that he mis-trans-

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scribed the first figure and then silently corrected the second one accordingly, generating a second error out of the original one.

As both Keith Thomas and Katherine Hunt demonstrate, numerical errors were perceived during the Renaissance as “easy to create and transmit but difficult to catch” (Thomas 116; Hunt, n.pag.; cf. Feingold; Raphael; Wilde). As Browne wrote, and repeatedly revised, his encyclopedic work on the origin and spread of error, he appears to have become keenly alert to what Harriet Phillips has called the “hereditary” nature of textual error, or the way that “mistakes multiply themselves down generations” of scholarship (Phillips 8-9; cf. Raphael; Blair). One piece of evidence for this is the hand-corrected copy of the 1672 *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* that Browne gave to his city library (now the Norwich Millennium Library), in which the author devoted a great deal of attention to correcting errors in the most densely mathematical chapters of Books 4 and 6: one such correction appears at *Pseudodoxia* 4.12, p. 253 (see fig. 1), in which Browne emends the numerical transposition error “he was slain in the year of 46” to 64, the age at which Cicero was slain, and there is a similar error in Book 6, this one undetected by

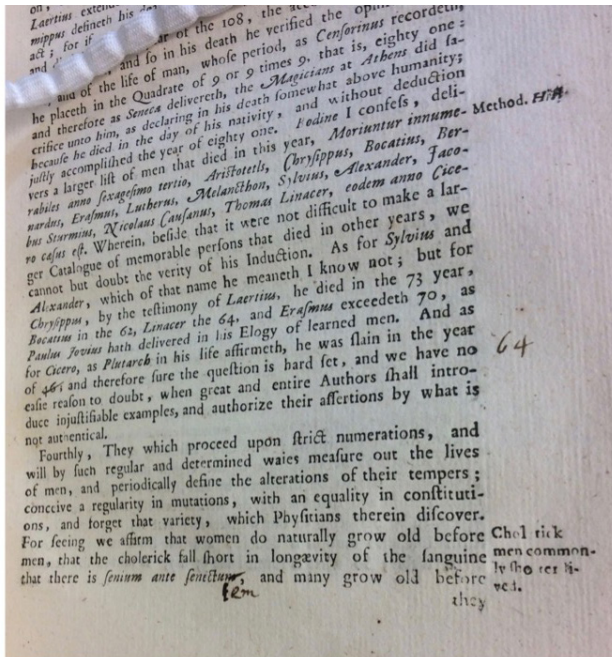


Fig. 1

Norwich Millennium Center Library, old shelfmark A e 23, hand-corrected copy of Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (London, 1672), p. 253. Author's photograph.

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Browne (see fig. 2), in which the number “46,000,000” appears in place of the correct number, 64 million.

348		<i>Enquiries into Vulgar</i> Book VI.	
Century	{	1	20.
		2	400.
		3	8000.
		4	160,000.
		5	3,200,000.
		6	46,000,000.
		7	1,280,000,000.
Product	}	11347368420.	

Fig. 2

Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* 6.6 (London, 1672), p. 348, with error in chart. Early English Books Online.

If Browne was troubled about the possibility that printed texts, including his own *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, might generate mathematical errors that could then spread to other works, he was equally uneasy about other aspects of the unreliability of numbers, dates, and sums, especially those found in scripture. In a discussion of how the Old Testament identifies Noah as five hundred years old when he begat Sem, Browne observes that “perhaps hee might be somewhat above or below that round and complete number,” since it is “not unreasonable to make doubt” that “Moses doth not sometime account by full and round numbers,” such that Noah might actually have been 498 years old, or perhaps a ripe old 503, at the birth of his son (*PE* 6.1:328). It is for similar reasons, Browne comments, that it is “said that Christ was three dayes in the grave,” when in fact he “remained but two nights in the grave,” since he was buried on the afternoon of his crucifixion and then rose “very early in the morning” on the third day (*PE* 6.1:328). Although the scriptural practice of rounding off numbers may seem inconsequential, to many seventeenth-century minds the habit is central to establishing which kinds of subject matter the Bible treats with exactitude, and which it treats with hazy approximation.

Early modern arguments aimed at undermining the legitimacy of chronological and arithmological studies of the Bible were routinely strengthened during the Renaissance with scriptural testimonies such as Acts 1:7 and Matthew 24:36, the latter verse alluding to the concealed date of the Second Coming. For Browne, the puzzle that some num-

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bers, ages, or dates in the Bible are not legible or calculable—they are, in a sense, mathematical *adiaphora*—is intricately with a related problem of accommodation: biblical chronologers, according to Browne, erroneously conflate divine and human temporality when they “examine the verity of Scripture by the concordance of humane history” (*RM* 1.29:66).

Browne faults such misreadings of scripture as arising out of a misapprehension of the character and behavior of numbers in the book of nature itself. He repeatedly takes aim at treatises on arithmology, or treatises on the mystery of number, works by Pico della Mirandola, Josse van Clichtove, Guillaume Postel, and their many imitators, such as Pietro Bongo (*De Numerorum mysteria*, 1591), William Ingpen (*The Secrets of Numbers*, 1624), and John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*, which from the 1576 edition onwards contains a section entitled “The Mystical Numbers of the Apocalypse Opened.” Such works, according to Browne, err in rendering the Bible “unjustly laden with mysticall Expositions,” interpretations that promise to crack a numerical code concealed in the scriptures, often by means of an odd combination of mathematical acuity and mystical revelation (*GC* 5:194). Browne’s distaste for “mysticall” explications of biblical numerology may seem like a surprising attitude for him to strike in the very work—his 1658 *Garden of Cyrus*—that delights in uncovering quincuncial patterns, “founded upon fives,” throughout nature, celebrating the numerical “consent and coordination . . . in the leaves and parts of flowers” and in the patterned skin of snakes (*GC* 2:106; 3:139; Zimmer). How, then, do we make sense of Browne’s admiration for “the secret Magick of numbers” in light of his skepticism about interpreting numbers as “types and shadows”? (*RM* 1.12:24; *PE* 6.1:326).²

To do this, we must figure out what Browne thinks numbers are, and how he understands them to behave. In *Pseudodoxia* 4.12, preparing to disparage various misconceptions about the “Climacterical year” of sixty-three, Browne writes that “number . . . though wonderful in it self, and sufficiently magnifiable from its demonstrable affections, hath yet received adjections from the multiplying conceits of men, and stands laden with additions, which its equity will not admit,” an interpretive error similar to the one applied to the stars and constellations, whose natural “endowments” are falsely amplified by the practice of astrology (*PE* 4.12:244). Informing Browne’s assault against this “adjection”—that is, the erroneous addition of or false magnification of a power that numbers do not possess—is his adherence to the Aristotelian principle (as articulated in the *Metaphysics*) that numbers are “not separable from sensible things, as some say, and that they are not first principles,” nor are they essential properties of things but rather accidents;

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number is a “quantity, and no quality” (Aristotle 1092b15-1093b20). As Helkiah Crooke summarizes Aristotle’s position, “Number of it selfe hath no operative power,” an assertion likewise borne out by Browne’s repeated attacks against the ways that numbers have been “mystically applauded” or “extolled” for their purportedly occult properties (Crooke 341; *PE* 4.12:245). At times, Browne’s position approaches that of Francis Bacon, who complains that natural philosophy was corrupted with mathematics in the “second Platonic school,” namely the neo-Platonic (or neo-Pythagorean) philosophers Proclus and Iamblichus (Bacon, *NO* 1.96:106).³ But at other times, his position anticipates the position of the later seventeenth-century mathematician and theologian Isaac Barrow, who held that there is no such thing as quantity (or number) in nature “different from what is called Magnitude or continued Quantity” (Barrow 20).

Browne may have been especially sensitive to the threat of numerical error and discrepancy in the wake of the controversy between Thomas Hobbes and John Wallis, which began in 1655 with the publication of Hobbes’s *De Corpore*, a work riddled with computational errors that exposed the author to widespread censure, including Wallis’s attack in his *Elenchus geometriæ Hobbianæ* (1655). Although Hobbes had upheld his nominalist model of geometrical demonstration as offering certain knowledge, Wallis’s criticisms obliged Hobbes to distinguish between “errors of negligence” and “errors of principle,” a concession to the problem that while mathematical demonstration might offer the highest level of certainty in theory, it most certainly does not do so in practice (Parkin 149; Jesseph; Mancosu 86-87). Yet Hobbes could not bring himself to admit that numerical errors, even those rooted in carelessness or in typographical negligence, were either inevitable or epistemologically significant, writing in his 1656 *Six Lessons to the professors of the mathematices* that “in the adding together of many and great Numbers, he cannot fail, that knoweth the Rules of Addition, and is also all the way so carefull, as not to mistake one number, or one place for another” (Hobbes 9). Hobbes believed that truth and falsehood were attributes of words, and not things, a position that led him in turn to assert the epistemological primacy of geometrical reasoning because that field of mathematics is conducted through signs that carry “full evidence” with them. But Hobbes’s adversaries, including Wallis and Ward, grasped the problem that numbers vacate the realm of pure form as soon as they acquire physicality and appear on the page (Jesseph 192, 216; Heninger 78). Browne’s various concerns about numerical error, as well as his concern to correct his own mathematical errors in his copy-text of *Pseudodoxia*, suggest that he was partial to the latter point of view.

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Browne's confusion over the status of numbers recapitulates but also translates into humanistic, often specifically philological, terms a widespread early modern set of mathematical concerns over the relationship between discrete number and continuous magnitude, the former the province of arithmetic and the latter the province of geometry, the former held in most cases to be immaterial and accessed only by the intellect, the latter held to be apprehended by the senses. Jacob Klein, Brian Rotman, and James Beaver, among others, have argued that a new conception of number emerged in the Renaissance as mathematicians turned away from the classical Greek preoccupation with the ontological status of numbers and instead began to view mathematics as a "semiotic discipline" concerned above all with notation, yet a discipline whose "ontological presuppositions [were] left unclarified" (Klein 184). Browne's considerations of the status of numbers repeatedly treat them not as pure, abstracted forms but rather as material marks on the page, helping him to formulate a philological qualification to Bacon's distinction between pure and "mixt" mathematics. This approach treats quantity as inseparable from magnitude and regards number, like Barrow after him, as "interwoven in the Nature of Bodies, blended with all corporeal Accidents" (Bacon, *Advancement* 3.6:173; Barrow 27).

Uncorrected Computations

Pseudodoxia Epidemica is a book about how falsehoods originate and spread, not simply in its contents, which offer a catalogue of "vulgar errors" and debunked myths about subjects ranging from gypsies to magnets and unicorns, but also in its own textual history. Over the course of five editions, Browne added, removed, and modified material, adding new references, removing assertions he no longer believed, and adjusting his prose style. The 1672 edition optimistically advertises itself on its title page as the "Sixth and Last Edition," and in a certain sense, it was. But if Browne's labors on the hand-corrected Norwich copy suggest that he knew the work was not entirely error-free at the 1672 printing, they also register his attunement to the peculiarly error-prone, and equally error-perpetuating, nature of numbers. In his preface to the reader, first printed in 1646, Browne imagines *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* as a work that attempts to expurgate errors that might otherwise proliferate like "uncorrected computations," suggesting that mathematics provides an especially compelling model for the spread and tenacity of error more generally:

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. . . if the course of truth bee permitted unto its selfe, like that of Time and uncorrected computations, it cannot escape many errors, which duration still enlargeth. (*PE*, To the Reader, n.pag.)

Although the most obvious generic models for *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* are the learned medical works on popular errors composed by Laurent Joubert, James Primerose, and Girolamo Mercuriale, among others, Browne's preface also glances at mathematics, a deeply adversarial Renaissance discipline in which printed works were often quickly and vehemently refuted through exposure of their errors. For instance, the French mathematician Oronce Fine's 1544 treatise on the quadrature of the circle was swiftly attacked after its publication by Jean Borrel, Pedro Nuñez, and others (Oosterhoof; Leitão). The problem of time enlarging "uncorrected computations" in mathematics is, for Browne, also a model for thinking more expansively and complexly about the origin and progress of all forms of error, and this is partly because it can be so difficult to isolate how, when, and why mathematical errors arise: the transposition of two numbers in transcription or printing, instrumental or observational errors, approximation or rounding off, or a combination of these.

To examine individual chapters of *Pseudodoxia* is to discover that the myths and legends Browne strives to discredit may often be chalked up, at least in part, to computational errors. In a chapter on the phoenix, Browne explains that the implausible belief that each phoenix lives for a thousand years is probably a "mistake in the compute" attributable to the fact that "the *Greeks* who dispersed the Fable, might summ up the account by their own numeration of years; whereas the conceit might have its origin in times of shorter compute"—in short, another instance of incommensurability between profoundly different calendrical systems (*PE* 3.12:147). A similar "mistake in the compute of death, and term of disanimation" concerning the glow-worm yields the vulgar error that the insect continues to glow after death (*PE* 3.27:204). In some of these passages, Browne seems eager to convict not just the production of numerical error but also the underlying impulse to quantify at all: mistakes in computation are often accompanied by the *mistake of computing*, since as Browne is fond of pointing out, numerical calculations are so variable and inconsistent that the act of quantification yields little reliable knowledge. In *Religio Medici*, for instance, Browne argues that humans are not even capable of calculating our correct age, since we begin counting at birth rather than at ensoulment or quickening: "we are all out of the computation of our age, and every man is some months elder than he bethinks him" (*RM* 1.38:88-9). Returning

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to the same observation in *Pseudodoxia*, Browne adds that because of the “imperfect accounts that Men have kept of time,” our reckonings of duration and age diverge “several waies from the true and just compute” (*PE* 4.12:254).

Even outside the domain of scripture, the spread of mathematical error was recognized by Renaissance scholars to be a stubborn problem, and one with multiple, obscure causes. In his commentary on Plato’s *Republic*, printed in 1496, Marsilio Ficino grapples with the problem that classical and late antique estimates for Plato’s “fatal number” range from 216 to a whopping 12,960,000, a discrepancy that makes a great deal of difference when one is trying to calculate at what point a republic might decay into a tyranny (Allen 21). And Renaissance mathematicians, even those who adhere to a Platonic theory of mathematical objects, which holds that number exists as pure form, uncreated, unchanging, atemporal, and incorporeal, are still often obliged to admit that numbers and other mathematical entities are “nonetheless . . . susceptible to temporary extension into the physical realm of space,” a position that sometimes leads to the claim that mathematics delivers far less certain conclusions than it promises (Heninger 75). Take, for example, the fifteenth-century German mathematician Johannes Regiomontanus, who in a treatise on plane geometry first printed in 1533 explains why what he terms a “known quantity” in geometry may be known precisely or just approximately:

. . . it often happens that the numbers by which we measure our squares are not square; therefore, in order that we will not remain ignorant of the near truth (as are all things knowable by man), we will henceforth use the term “known quantity” [*quantitatis notæ*] in a looser sense than we defined it at the beginning. So we will by the same term call any quantity known if it is either precisely known or almost equal [*notæ præcise fuerit, aut notæ quantitati fermè æqualis*] to a known quantity; for in my opinion it is more beautiful to know what is near the truth than to ignore the truth itself completely. There is virtue not only in hitting the mark but also in coming close to it. (Regiomontanus 34)

Assertions like these helped to fuel the *Quæstio de certitudine mathematicarum*, or the debate over the certainty of mathematics, a series of disputes over the epistemological status of mathematics relative to other scientific disciplines that revolved around the question of whether mathematics satisfies the Aristotelian definition of science as demonstration from the fact, whether the deductive method of mathemati-

cal proof could attain to a higher level of certainty than induction, and whether nature (or physical matter) could ever conform to the exactness of mathematics, for if it could not, then mathematics was severely limited in its ability to explain causal relationships between natural bodies. Regiomontanus's admission that it is worthwhile to approach mathematical exactness even if one cannot attain it is an early articulation of a problem that would become more widespread by the middle of the seventeenth century, by which time the mathematization of natural philosophy was being countered with increasing skepticism on the part of natural philosophers partial to Aristotelian demonstration, and also by a wider range of scholars attuned to the problem that "the epistemology of mathematization is fundamentally linked to the epistemology of language" (Sepkoski 2).

One consequence of this link will be familiar to many scholars of early modern intellectual culture, namely the various seventeenth-century efforts to establish a universal language or real character, which took place alongside and sometimes in collaboration with the development of a reliable, univocal language of mathematical symbols or notations. In a 1647 letter to Samuel Hartlib, Robert Boyle proposes to design a "Real Character" akin to our "arithmetical characters," an enterprise whose efficacy depends upon the trans-linguistic, or possibly the non-linguistic, nature of mathematical symbols (Rossi 152; Halley 102-03, 115; Lewis; Lodwick). Some mathematicians were, of course, convinced that mathematical symbols were extra-linguistic: Pierre Hérigone boasts in the preface to his 1644 *Cursus Mathematicus* that "I have invented a new method of making demonstrations, without the use of any language" ["j'ay inventé une nouvelle methode de faire les demonstrations . . . sans l'usage d'aucune langue"] (Hérigone qtd. in Cajori, "Notation" 1:426). But not all seventeenth-century thinkers understood mathematical notations as ontologically real, holding instead that what notations and symbols signify, they signify by arbitrary convention, much like words. This would have been an especially logical position to assume in an era when there was as yet little standardization of mathematical notation beyond the most rudimentary symbols such as plus and minus signs. There are no fewer than four different ways to represent a square root symbolically in texts composed during the first half of the seventeenth century; mathematicians of the period speak not just of "surd" numbers and irrational numbers but also of male and female numbers and of "confused" and "promiscuous" numbers, to cite some of the more unusual examples of early modern mathematical terminology (T. Gibson 75-81; Ingpen 69-71; Katz and Parshall 248). When William Oughtred translates Euclid's tenth book into a largely ideographic language for his *Clavis Mathematica*, he invents

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around forty new mathematical symbols, almost none of them still in use today (Oughtred, *Clavis*; Cajori, *Mathematics* 157; cf. Johnson 67; Hull; Chan).

It is partly for these reasons—the contemporary enthusiasm for *naming* numbers and for devising new symbols to represent their operations—that mathematics does not universally present itself as the best solution to Bacon’s idols of the marketplace. Some scholars of the era, Browne apparently included, seem to recognize that mathematical “language” may breed the same “innumerable empty controversies and fictions” as other kinds of language, because it is subject to similar vagaries of interpretation, translation, and transmission through manuscript and print (Bacon, *NO* 1.43:55). This is partly due to the fact that, at least as Browne sees it, the *history* of mathematical notation (if not also its future) is inescapably rooted in philology, and hence subject to figuration: thus the Greeks, who after all used alphabetical numerals in their Milesian numbering system, might mean seventy-two when they write seventy, or use the same word for “lots and lots” and for 10,000, such that the Gospel account of Christ remaining three days in his grave must, according to Browne, “be taken Synecdochically; or by understanding a part for an whole day” (*PE* 6.1:328).

If we contemplate Browne’s claim that at least some scriptural numbers are meant *synecdochically*, rather than literally, it will quickly become clear how such a claim undermines any meaningful epistemological or semiotic distinction between numbers and words. Students of literature who traffic in tropes and figures may easily grasp how a throne is a synecdoche for a kingdom, or wheels for a whole car, but how can the number three (or, rather, a cluster of letters that form the number-word three, which in turn denotes the numeral 3, which in turn stands for the idea or form of three-ness) be a synecdoche for another number that is not three? As disturbing a prospect as this might seem to anyone wedded to the idea that mathematical truth claims are immune to the error, flux, and relativism inherent in other disciplines or ways of knowing, it also demonstrates how insistently Browne thinks about number as instantiated in language—and in a language subject to figuration, approximation, and ambiguity such that three might mean the Trinity, or two and a half, or just a couple.

The dilemma that both numerals and number-words are vulnerable to figuration is nicely captured in Browne’s discussion of “numerical Characters or characteristic Numbers” in one of his *Miscellany Tracts*. And although the passage is principally aimed at mocking Robert Fludd’s “Pythagorean arithmetic,” the chiasmic structure of Browne’s phrasing implicitly raises the question: in what way do numbers behave, or not behave, like letters? (*MT* 7:127, discussing Fludd

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2.1.1-9). Is it possible to conceive of number as an abstraction in the pure space of mathematical idea or form, or may numbers only be apprehended by us once clothed in matter: as number-words, as notations or symbols, as things numbered, or as unstable physical marks on the surface of the page? Despite Browne's apparent contempt for *gematria*, the cabalistic practice of assigning to each letter in a name or word a numerical value, in order (for example) to "decipher" the number of the beast at Revelation 13:18 as the Emperor Nero, he was well aware that ancient cultures used alphabetical letters to form both words and numbers, and he was likewise attuned to the semiotic troubles and the scribal and typographical problems that arise within such a system.⁴ One of the numerical errors in Book 6 of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* occurs when Browne, following his errant source, the German biblical scholar Martin Crusius, claims that "in his Turcogrecian history he delivers, the city of Constantinople was taken by the Turks in the year Ϛζα; that is 6961," but both Crusius and Browne mistakenly use the symbol for the Greek koppa (Ϛ), or 90, rather than the one for sampi (Ϡ), or 900 (*PE* 6.1:326).⁵

Browne's interpretation of the number three as a "synecdoche" is aimed less at destabilizing the certainty or fixity of mathematics, of course, than at undermining the idea that the Bible might reliably be mined for quantitative data. But for Browne, the book of nature, too, resists some attempts at quantification, and *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* abounds with examples of things that either cannot be counted at all or that tend to be counted differently by different people at different times: the number of biblical wise men, which may or may not be three (*PE* 7.8); the number of ancient Sibyls (*PE* 5.11), which range in various accounts from two to twelve; the number of eyes possessed by the lamprey, which depends upon what counts as an eye (*PE* 3.19); the number of estuaries of the Nile river, which vary according to authorial report, cartographic whim, and topographical fluctuation and erosion (*PE* 6.8). As Browne explains in his discussion of the lack of consensus about the Nile, "by process of time, the face of places is altered" such that it is not reasonable to "draw continual and durable deductions from alterable and uncertain foundations" (*PE* 6.8:361-2). So too, in a discussion of the *fluctus Decumanus*—the ancient belief that every tenth wave is stronger and more dangerous than the nine preceding ones—Browne scoffs, "surely in vain we expect a regularity in the waves of the Sea, or in the particular motions thereof," and he then proceeds to trace the origin of the phrase to the deadening of a metaphor: "the conceit is numeral," Browne explains, since the number ten is the largest of the "simple numbers or Digits . . . whatsoever was the greatest in every kind, might in some sense be named from this number,"

and by extension came “metaphorically” to be called Decumanus (*PE* 7.17.2:430-31; Thomas 126).

Amphibious Numbers

Browne’s meditations on the irregularity of ocean waves and the difficulty of counting the estuaries of a river delta help to illustrate his resistance to several dominant assumptions of early modern mathematical thought. The neo-Platonic theories of number that shaped Renaissance mathematics, in particular Proclus’s commentary on Euclid, describe numbers as existing at once in a realm of pure form and in a world of matter. As Thomas Stanley explains in his *Life of Pythagoras*, numbers are “intermediate betwixt corporealls and incorporealls,” and they help not just to mediate between these two states and but also to permit interaction between them (Plato 34c-37c; Stanley 3.1:52; Heninger 78). Stanley’s account echoes the conception of number invoked by John Dee in his preface to Henry Billingsley’s 1570 translation of Euclid’s *Elements*: “Thynges Mathematicall,” Dee argues, occupy an intermediate position between matter and form: number is at once material, compounded, divisible, and corruptible, and also immaterial, simple, indivisible, incorruptible, and “of the minde onely,” such that numbers possess a “mervaylous newtralitie” between these two realms and also allow for a “straunge participation” between them, serving like fingers that knit the subtle knot between matter and form (Dee, before sig. *ir; Brach, *Symbolisme* 25; Malet “Renaissance Notions,” 72-73; Ficino 13; Zorach 359). When S.K. Heninger searched for the right metaphor to explain the idea that numbers occupy an indeterminate midpoint between form and matter, he ended up writing that “number. . . leads an amphibious existence,” echoing a famous passage from Browne’s *Religio Medici* which defines humankind as “that amphibious piece between a corporall and spiritual essence, that middle forme that linkes those two together” (Heninger 77; *RM* 1.34:76).

Like Dee, Browne perceives number as having a “middle and participating” nature, but he has a different grasp than Dee of the implications of such a claim, partly (I suspect) because Browne was not a mathematician and instead approaches questions about the nature and behavior of number through the vantage of other disciplines, particularly those such as medicine, biblical hermeneutics, and the philosophy of language, all preoccupied with the status of signs, notations, and figures (*RM* 1.34:77). Philosophers since Plato had acknowledged that mathematics relies upon visible figures, such as symbols and diagrams, which are ontologically distinct from the things those

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figures represent, and as we have already seen, some Renaissance mathematicians concede that figures are a necessary but imperfect accommodation in that they render visible “objects which cannot be seen otherwise than by thought” (Heninger 77; Malet “Renaissance Notions,” 63-81; Neal; Zorach 349-51). But the reliance on figures and symbols carries the risk that one might confuse the symbol for the incorporeal idea being symbolized by it. Hobbes accordingly complains that Wallis “mistook the study of Symboles for the study of Geometry,” adding that “Symboles are poor unhandsome (though necessary) scaffolds of demonstration; and ought no more to appear in publique, then the most deformed necessary business which you do in your chambers” (Hobbes 23; cf. Bacon, *Advancement* 3.6.1:173). Such an attitude helps to explain why seventeenth-century mathematicians are keen to point out that the mathematical symbols upon which they rely are not the same as words: Oughtred’s *Clavis Mathematica*, here quoted from the 1647 English translation, states that the work proceeds “not . . . in the usuall synthetical manner, nor with verbous expression, but in the inventive way of Analitice, and with Symboles or notes of things instead of words” (Oughtred, sigs. B4r-v).

Of particular interest here is Oughtred’s use of the word “notes,” since the word, which can mean sign, symbol, character, a mark used to represent a sound, letter, or word, a brief written record, or a musical notation, leaves open the question of what kind of relationship inheres between a note and what it notes: an exact correspondence, a symbolic relation, a nominal relation, or an epitome or abbreviation. Like previous scholars such as Joachim Camerarius (in his 1569 *De græcis latinisque Numerorum Notis*), Browne also favors the word note, often using the term to describe marks or signs whose ontological status or whose semiotic relationship to the thing signified is ambiguous, unstable, or confused. When Barrow, for instance, writes that numbers are “notes or signs of magnitude,” the claim carries with it the implication that numbers possess no efficacy, and perform no action, but instead merely provide a symbolic shorthand for describing the actions of physical bodies (Barrow 27; Neal 17, 156; Hill 13-22; Malet “Barrow”). In a similar vein, Browne qualifies the oft-cited verse, Wisdom 11:20, by complicating and undercutting the commonplace idea that God writes the world in mathematical letters: “True it is, that God made all things in number, weight and measure,” Browne writes, “yet nothing by them or through the efficacy of either,” a claim likewise borne out by Browne’s preference for imagery that compares God’s handiwork to embroidery, weaving, and other material arts that render mathematical patterns and ratios in material form (*PE* 4.12:250).

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Particularly for Platonizing Renaissance mathematicians eager to prove that number does not exist “except only by the intellect,” created nature can present itself as a species of mathematical diagram. According to the Italian Jesuit mathematician Giuseppe Biancani, for example, both art and nature imitate mathematical forms or ideas, but imperfectly: “because of the grossness and imperfection of sensible matter [*propter materiæ sensibilis ruditatem, & imperfectionem*], which is incapable of receiving perfect figures, they do not achieve their end. For nature in the trunks of trees strives after the figure of cylinder, in apples or grapes after spherical or spheroid figure” (Biancani 6; Malet “Renaissance Notions”). Browne persistently reverses this formula. In his *Garden of Cyrus*, when he writes of the “Cylindrical figure of Trees,” or of the similarly “Cylindrical Figure” of the beehive, there is no sense that trees or beehives aspire to but fall short of the perfect *idea* of a cylinder. Rather, Browne sees number, embodied in created nature, as *prior* to the discipline of mathematics, whether the “Mathematicks of the neatest Retiary Spider” weaving the forty-four circles of her web, or the “five-cornered” figure of the Oak that grows into “circular branches” as it ages, “Which practice of nature is become a point of art,” Browne adds, “and makes two Problemes in *Euclide*” (GC 3:142; Swan 333–40).

Browne is referring above to two propositions in book four of Euclid’s *Elements* that describe a pentagon within a circle (see fig. 3), a mathematical operation whose diagram creates a five-pointed star just like the “signature of a Starre” that is seen, according to Browne, when

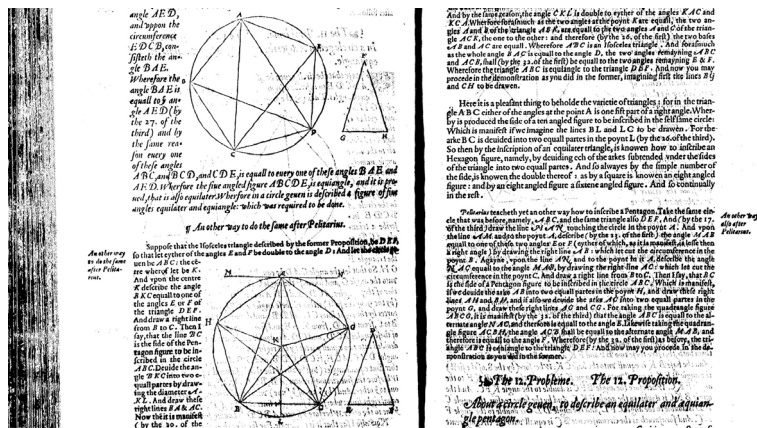


Fig. 3

Browne’s “two problemes in Euclid,” from *Euclid’s Elements*, translated by Henry Billingsley (London, 1570), Book 4, fols. 118v–119r. Early English Books Online.

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an incision is made into a circular oak branch. For Browne, ordination in created nature takes priority over pure number partly because it is more reliably legible, but also because it is less artful. In *Pseudodoxia*, Browne entertains the possibility that there are “authentick notations” in the bodies of certain animals, such as the “characters of years” marked in the horns of cattle or the antlers of deer, and his interest in dactylonomy, the practice of finger-counting or what in *Urn-Buriall* he calls the “ancient Arithmetick of the hand,” involves a similar commitment to the belief that number, as well as the act of numbering, is ingrained in and arises out of physical bodies, rather than descending to physical bodies from intangible mathematical forms (*PE* 3.17:166; *UB* 70; cf. *PE* 4.4:186). This idea is partly embedded in the linguistic ambiguity and equivocality of a series of words whose range of meanings in Browne’s writings are difficult to disentangle: note and notation, figure, character, and digit, each of which *can* mean number, or the symbolic representation of number, but can also mean alphabetical letter, non-numerical symbol, image or impression, distinguishing mark, or (in the case of digit) finger, our natural and embodied abacus. Browne appreciates that some notations, figures, or notes are “nominal,” meaning that they are assigned arbitrarily, like words, to things, while others are authentic, or real; the trick, of course, is how to tell the difference. According to Browne, the “native notes” or moles upon the body of the Emperor Augustus, which mimic the pattern of stars in a constellation, may be as authentic as the marks on the horns of deer, but the “common Notation by Sexes” in plants less so, in part because naturalists are misled in their study of plants by false etymologies of their names, etymologies that Browne terms “nominal Notations” (*PE* 2.6.1:101-02).

Browne’s use of the word “notation” to mean etymology, a usage typical of the period, carries the implication that certain notes—marks, symbols, numerals, letters—bear the same relationship to the things they signify that a word might bear to its etymon, or linguistic root: an intimate relationship but also one that changes, and perhaps decays or grows remote, over time. This would make numerals neither arbitrary symbols, nor entirely tethered to the numbers they represent, but rather vestiges or footsteps—the traces of numbers to which they were once firmly linked but now, perhaps, are less so. This is perhaps why Margaret Cavendish’s Empress, in her attempt to debunk the discipline of arithmology, argues that there is no “other mystery in Numbers, but what Man’s fancy make[s]” and then quips that “Numbers are onely marks of remembrance,” a deeply Platonic image that comes close to Browne’s own appraisal of numbers as “notes” (Cavendish 74-75).

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Recent scholarship by Robert Goulding and Nicholas Popper, among others, has examined the ways in which the discipline of mathematics, during the Renaissance, acquired a history. As they inquire into the ancient origins of mathematics, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century humanists begin to see mathematics as “conditioned and limited by historical contingencies” and they also begin to see their discipline as one both shaped and vexed by textual and philological errors and problems (Goulding xviii, 6; Popper). The Renaissance interest in the historical origin of numbers—as evidenced, for instance, by the creation of “polyglot” lexicons for ancient numbering systems like the one that appears in Athanasius Kircher’s 1665 *Arithmologia, sive de Abditis Numerorum Mysteriis*—is often accompanied by a zealous search for a *prisca mathematica*, a primitive and pristine numbering system, one presumed immune to error and ambiguity, perhaps a pictogrammatic alphabet like cuneiform or hieroglyphics, or perhaps an embodied practice anchored in our fingers and hands, or in the rings of trees.

This search for a pristine mathematics, in turn, was often yoked to a decayist narrative of mathematics as a discipline, one that, according to Popper, makes questions about the nature of number and the ontological status of numerals and number-symbols “a problem of recovery rather than invention, of cleansing rather than expansion” (Popper 106; cf. Goulding 66). Browne’s concern that numbers cannot fully be trusted to denote what they appear to denote stems in part from his appreciation that mathematics is a discipline that has degenerated from its pristine, and perfect, form, even as its traces or notes remain, a mysterious and divine arithmetic that is curiously embroidered on the body.⁶

Notes

1. On the problem of discrepant calendrical models in antiquity, see Nisbet 1; the view of Petavius, *Doctrina Temporum* 9.6:17 is paraphrased by Ussher, sig. A3^v.
2. For other seventeenth-century discussions of the mystery of number, see More 82; Cavendish 74-75.
3. Bacon here echoes Aristotle’s complaint (*Metaphysics* 2, 995a15-18) that Pythagoras and Plato conflated the abstract realm of mathematics with the study of nature.
4. The *locus classicus* for these questions, cited by Browne in “Of the answers of the Oracle of Apollo (*MT* 11:167-79), is Plutarch’s “On the E at Delphi”

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(*Moralia*). On this dialogue and its influence, see Plutarch, “On the E at Delphi” 389F-390; Lamberton 156-58; Kalvesmaki; Brach, *Symbolisme* 78 and Brach, “Mystical Arithmetic.”

5. It was well known that the ancient Hebrews also used an alphabetical numbering system; on this custom, see Martinus 10.

6. My conclusion echoes Browne’s elaboration of Psalm 139:15 at GC 3:149, claiming that God “hast curiously embroidered me, thou has wrought me up after the finest way of texture,” as well as Goulding’s assessment (66) of Peter Ramus finding in Pythagoras a kind of “earthy” primitivism, a sort of “mathematics in the body.”

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Class War: A Literary History, by Mark Steven, Verso Books, 2023. \$9.99 (Ebook).

At *Financial Review's* 2023 "Property Summit," real-estate mogul Tim Gurner observed that workers feel empowered since COVID and no longer consider themselves "lucky" to have a job. "We've got to kill that attitude," Gurner argued, "and that has to come through hurting the economy." "Governments around the world are trying to increase unemployment," Gurner explained, and with recent layoffs, "we're starting to see less arrogance in the employment market." Although they rarely admit it, capitalists have always been at war with workers. They win battles by instigating scarcity and precarity, while their rhetoric usually conjures an impartial relationship between labor and profit to justify social disparities in terms of individual investments. Mark Steven would approve of Gurner's exceptional candor. Steven's *Class War: A Literary History*, a wide review of class struggles, advocates for this rhetoric of hostility.

Classes are relations and formations of social power premised on contention. Steven quickly drops the tired reduction of class to economics and recognizes how class identities are, quoting the Endnotes collective, "calibrated by a multitude of variables," a constellation of demographic categories that affirm identity politics as a form of class politics. Steven names antagonism the key for mobilizing these variables into a "discovery of commonality"; "class is forged not only through exploitation and dispossession . . . but also through antagonism— and . . . through antagonism, class is made and remade into something revolutionary." Here, class war represents social conflict, social consciousness, and social transformation, necessarily in that order.

Steven begins with Haitian freedom slogans, the "narrative form of the revolutionary act . . . rendering absolute the ideals of liberty and equality, not as assumed universal rights but as contested resources." Steven unconventionally reads the Haitian revolution as a class war, which helps clarify the era's racist contradictions obscured by lofty ideals. More conventionally, Romanticism "served as an expressive mode for common cause and revolutionary antagonism . . . envisioning the demolition of class hierarchies while at the same time figuring the commons as a potential utopia." The "condition of England" novel, a nineteenth-century precursor to the social novel and the radical novel, "enshrine[d] these struggles," and Steven reads Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854) as a prototypical example. Steven's study of early class war literature also features often neglected pre-Marx arguments about class such as Feargus O'Connor's Chartist newspaper,

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Northern Star, where the phrase “class warfare” first appeared in 1840, and Colonel Francis Maceroni’s pamphlet on martial tactics, *Defensive Instructions to the People* (1832). Steven’s astute close reading of the “Marseillaise,” which had become a conservative anthem of obsequious nationalism, adds to *Class War’s* many genres. Rewritten for the Paris Commune in 1871, the song’s revised version refigures freedom “as social instead of a political or national problem” and antagonism “as relative to the means of subsistence for working men and women.”

Steven continues to link literary artifacts with the histories that produced them in the twentieth century, highlighting lessons learned from mass strikes, revolutions, civil wars, postcolonial revolts, and domestic social movements. During this period, reactionary forces crystalized into the tenets of fascism, which then mutated and proliferated after WWII. Steven illustrates one of Gramsci’s imperatives—class war remains the “essential task” for antifascist programs—with such disparate examples as Leon Trotsky’s treatise on literature and revolution (1923), Mao’s foundational essay “On Contradiction” (1937), the “red classics” novels written in postwar China, guerilla field manuals, Amílcar Cabral’s poetry, Huey Newton’s appropriation of African proverbs, and the British 1975 television series *Days of Hope*. Perhaps most succinctly aligned with Steven’s project are the writers of Italy’s *Autonomia Operaia*, a movement based on “a reading of class composition at a time of transformation,” a self-described “science of class hatred,” and a “refusal to compromise.”

Steven’s discussion of autobiographical prison narratives like Assata Shakur’s delivers *Class War’s* most cogent combination of literary analysis and political theory. Read in the context of American Black radicalism specifically and the prison-industrial complex generally, these exemplars of class war literature, with their “emphasis on the radicalizing force of literature, when the written word becomes the ephiphany catalyst for liberatory action,” epitomize what I take as Steven’s main thesis: representations of class war reveal an intrinsic dynamic of antagonism that structures social relations. Considering Steven’s expansive definition of class, this review would be strengthened with a greater emphasis on feminist and queer productions, which acutely describe the most personal of class conflicts. When individuals reject social assignments defined by naturalized categories of gender, sexuality, and ability, they articulate unique and essential perspectives on how classes are structured.

Literature generated by and for class war provides inspirational models of unity and struggle, but Steven aptly concludes with Marx’s warning against nostalgia: “social revolution . . . cannot take its poetry from the past but only from the future.” One of Chantal Mouffe’s

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recent interventions in political theory, *Towards a Green Democratic Revolution: Left Populism and the Power of Affects* (2022), rhymes with Steven's argument about the unifying power of antagonism and furnishes an outline of what this might look like tomorrow. Mouffe centers conflict in conceptions of the political, where a "a transversal 'collective will'" can be instigated by a "diversity of democratic struggles around issues concerning exploitation, domination, and discrimination." Mouffe posits a "Green Democratic Revolution" as a "hegemonic signifier that could activate the political and ecological affects" of a global class, mobilizing a movement and clarifying mutual antagonisms across a broad spectrum of identities. Now centuries into the Plantationocene—a moniker that correctly frames our ecological disaster as the fault of a class, not a species—Mouffe and Steven offer notes for our last hope: actualizing a global revolutionary immanence that has existed since this long class war began.

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Criticism and Politics: A Polemical Introduction, by Bruce Robbins, Stanford University Press, 2022, 265 pp. \$24.00 (print).

Post-critique of the "limits of criticism" movement pushes for the privileging of celebrating literature in terms of surface reading over politicizing it in the sense of reading it for its representation of power, identity, or injustice. Thanks to this movement, scholars of literature stud-

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ies today are re-witnessing the compulsion to make a choice: should their work as (literary) critics focus on art and pleasure in their readings of texts or should they take embrace criticism as a task they do not have to apologize for and even embrace as a political act necessary to the functioning of just societies? In *Criticism and Politics: A Polemical Introduction*, Bruce Robbins makes a compelling case for the latter. His erudite discussion of different literary theorists and cultural critics (from Matthew Arnold to Judith Butler) makes the book an *introduction* of a unique kind: it is a history of criticism very unlike the ones that merely summarize arguments about different modes of reading texts as made by the theorists from the angle of political standpoints. It is polemical in the sense that it does not shy away from taking sides with critics or positions, even demonstrating intelligent ways of reading them that show tremendous courage in raising difficult questions of literature and criticism, not subscribing to the idea that criticism-as-fault-finding is a less than noble activity.

Politics is divisive, Bruce Robbins asserts, and it would be foolish to hide from its divisiveness. It involves taking sides but it also includes other things: “Cultivating the habit of observing and reflecting on interesting things that don’t immediately fit into a pre-existing political category . . . need not interfere with that political sense of the critical vocation and might even be required by it” (5). Therefore, depoliticizing literature or criticism in favor of uncontroversial or seemingly universal themes of beauty and aesthetics amounts to “carry[ing] forward the right wing culture’s war on the humanities” (7) and even a “corporate restructuring of criticism” (8).

The book has two aims: to flesh out a history of criticism that attends to the different ways in which it has and has not been politically engaged, and to nudge the ones aspiring to enter the profession toward thinking about the choices that lie ahead and how their orientation to politics will impact the commitments they make in their profession. On both counts, Robbins has penned an eye-opening narrative of how literature has been read and how to make sense of these ways of reading. The idea critics must bear in mind is: “academic work had and has a larger and more important goal than merely reproducing culture, and reproducing *academic* culture, which is to say making careers for academics” (222, italics original). Otherwise, one is merely writing a critique of the market that sells well on the market: that is, it’s a softer or garden-variety criticism that says nothing much at all. Robbins’s voice is at its most hard-hitting when it exposes the delusion that many critics live under: even when they claim to be political, a lot of self-interest is involved:

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It would be silly to claim that criticism is somehow disinterested or altruistic by nature. Like everyone else, critics want jobs, if possible jobs with security, benefits, and a decent salary. They also want personal recognition. But . . . the claim to represent common interests is merely camouflage for personal or professional self-aggrandizement. (217)

These words are enough to horrify anyone, especially an early career researcher, who needs to pause about the publish-or-perish culture in academia. He is also very blunt when it comes to theorists like Rita Felski who think of historicist or contextualist criticism as an attack on aesthetics itself. For Robbins, this is a very dangerous move:

. . . the echoes of political correctness-baiting are unmistakable—as is, more surprisingly, her inclination to align herself with actual “family values” positions, beginning with “love.” Tell the folks that love, country, and religion are being spat upon, and a taxpayer revolt against the funding of the humanities is already stirring The moral of this sociological sketch is clear: it would be better if academic critics stopped thinking of themselves as leftists and left ordinary readers alone (172).

Passages such as these make Robbins’s voice very urgent and clear to those who are confused or undecided about what their work is supposed to stand for, especially if they think all kinds of critiques are gospel truths. To be clear, his scathing attacks on the champions of timelessness who also see experts as “killjoys” are complemented by discussions of role models. Here is why he thinks Stuart Hall is one:

. . . he did not think of himself first as a writer or scholar but as a member of a movement What scholars and critics get from Stuart Hall, arguably the most complete and accomplished example of the organic intellectual that the 60s movements produced, is a reminder that . . . being scholars and critics is not the only thing we are, that whether or not we feel we are members of a movement, we can be committed to having an impact beyond the world of scholarship, and we don’t have the luxury of not thinking about what we collectively have to gain. (213)

Reading *Criticism and Politics* is likely to stir a lot of discomfort within oneself but it is meaningful discomfort to have. In this discomfort, one will have to let go of several ideals: Walter Benjamin’s angel of his-

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tory will come across as an expression of a naive view of history that requires a messiah-like figure to redeem it, thus discouraging one from acting toward changing history. Antonio Gramsci's idea of the organic intellectual—that one has to come from the working class to speak about/for the working class would also need to be unlearned. For instance, Robbins reminds fellow and younger scholars, identity should not matter when it comes to raising questions about inequalities). But one also emerges clear headed and inspired from the book because Robbins sets clear benchmarks for the task of criticism. In his wise words, criticism means judging and “judging is essential to the job description [of the cultural critic]—judging not literature and art but the larger social and cultural worlds in which they are produced and received” (52). Or that “we need critique in order to decide which beliefs and commitments to support and which to hesitate about” (65). And finally, that “it is not a mistake to have thought in advance about what is wrong with the world” (83).

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