Interfictional Identities: Transformation and Dissimulation in the Early Modern Period

Yael Nezer Lavender-Smith
Graduate Center, City University of New York
INTERFICTIONAL IDENTITIES:
TRANSFORMATION AND DISSIMULATION IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

by

YAEL NEZER LAVENDER-SMITH

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2016
INTERFICTIONAL IDENTITIES: TRANSFORMATION AND DISSIMULATION IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

by

YAEI NEZER LAVENDER-SMITH

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature to satisfy the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Monica Calabritto

_____________________________________

Date

Chair of Examining Committee

Giancarlo Lombardi

_____________________________________

Date

Executive Officer

André Aciman

_____________________________________

Clare Carroll

_____________________________________

Richard C. McCoy

_____________________________________

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

Interfictional Identities:
Transformation and Dissimulation in the Early Modern Period

by

Yael Nezer Lavender-Smith

Advisor: Monica Calabritto

Interfictional Identities develops the concept of interfictional transformations. In these transformations, characters in early modern texts adopt new identities rooted in previous literature. Specifically, Interfictional Identities explores how four early modern moments of interfictional transformation—of Nick Bottom in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, of Pyrocles in Sidney’s *New Arcadia*, of Uriel da Costa in *A Specimen of Human Life*, and of Don Quixote in Cervantes’ novel—produce both literary and literal hybridity. One wonders why, in these works, writers and playwrights such as Shakespeare, Sidney, Da Costa, and Cervantes favor interfictional transformations over mere allusions to classical literature, or, for that matter, disguises that do not allude to previous literature. A time of religious and ideological crisis, the early modern period called for dissimulation and self-fashioning in order to conceal one’s true beliefs and identity. Interfictional Identities explores how interfictional transformations encourage a confrontation with “the other within.” Though scholars have studied early modern transformations and hybridity as representations of national and cultural encounters with “the other,” little has been written on intertextual transformations as images of dissimulation and as representations of the necessity to negotiate identity during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The nonhuman-human hybrid, the cross-dresser, the converso, and the madman become distinctive literary images of the period,
representing the fear of confronting the unfamiliar-familiar other. Taken together, these transformation narratives reflect the social anxiety of dissimulation, through which early modern readers and audiences encounter their own radically hybrid identities.
Acknowledgments

My deepest intellectual debt is to my advisory committee, who supported me throughout the writing process. From the early stages of my doctoral studies the committee has taught, challenged, and encouraged me. I am grateful for their support. Throughout this project my advisor, Prof. Monica Calabritto, has generously provided me with attentive reading and support. I would like to thank her for her challenging and engaging insights, but also for her kindness and friendship. Prof. André Aciman mentored me throughout my graduate studies. Prof. Aciman’s guidance has inspired me every step of the way. Prof. Clare Carroll, whose advice and encouragement I truly appreciate, supported this project from its early stages. I owe a great deal of gratitude to Prof. Richard McCoy, whose careful and considerable feedback enhanced this project greatly. I would also like to thank Prof. Vered Lev Kenaan, who was my mentor and advisor during my graduate studies at the University of Haifa, and whose voice and words have provided guidance and inspiration.

I would like to thank Profs. Ronnie Ancona, Martin Elsky, Giancarlo Lombardi, James Saslow, and Jacob Stern, with whom I shared conversations about earlier versions of my work and whose advice and support I truly appreciate. The Graduate Center at the City University of New York awarded me an incredibly helpful Dissertation-Year Fellowship for 2014–2015 that allowed me to concentrate solely on the completion of the dissertation. Several friends and colleagues read portions of this dissertation and graciously provided encouragement and feedback: Anick Boyd, Abraham Rubin, and Anna Finkelstern. I am grateful for their advice and friendship.
My mother and father, Miriam and Hertzel Nezer did everything to make this period of writing possible (thanks for the shoes). They are my foundation. The strong bond and deep love I share with my sister Gail Haimson and my brother Omri Nezer provide a grounding and sense of belonging, not to mention laughs. I would also like to thank my in-laws Barry Smith, Gail Lavender, and Mark Whitehead for their unconditional love, encouragement, and support.

This work reflects the enchanting intellectual conversations I have shared with my husband, Jordan Lavender-Smith, while we were exploring the streets of New York City. Jordan informed and inspired my views of transformation and hybridity in many ways. He read and reread the manuscript and provided illuminating suggestions. He has been my intellectual and emotional support and my home. I dedicate this dissertation to our daughter, Ariel, who was born in New York four years ago in the midst of my graduate studies. Her sensibility, beauty, curiosity, and imagination have made her a constant source of wonder, learning, and transformations.
# Table of Contents

Introduction: Interfictional Transformations

Chapter 1: Uncanny Metamorphoses: Bottom’s Hybridity in A Midsummer Night’s Dream

1. A Time of Hybridity
2. Theories of the Uncanny
3. “Thou art translated!”: The Uncanny Effect of the Metamorphosis
4. Bottom’s Counterparts: Pyrocles and Don Quixote
5. Counter-Transformation, the Failure of Language, and the Play’s Theory of Metamorphosis
6. Metamorphosis’ Uncanny Reflexivity

Chapter 2: “Transform’d in show, but more transform’d in mind”: Pyrocles’ Interfictional Transformation and Dissimulation in the New Arcadia

1. Fixed and Unfixed Texts: The Arcadias’ Publication History
2. “thou woman, or boy, or both”: Transformation and Interpretation
3. Hercules’ Impresa and Pyrocles’ Interfictional Transformation
4. Absent Achilles
5. “under that mask”: Dissimulation in the Early Modern Period and in Basilius’ Court
6. Conclusion: Reading Pyrocles

Chapter 3: A Conversion Narrative in Disguise: Uriel da Costa’s Religious Transformation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The Alboraique</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The Fictional Elements of Autobiography</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>A Conversion Narrative in Disguise</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The Others Within</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Nomen meum: Da Costa’s Interfictionality</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Quixotic Da Costa</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 4: Conclusion  188

Bibliography  201

1. Primary Sources  201
2. Secondary Sources  204
Introduction:

Interfictional Transformations

Outside the walls of Athens, a group of six men meet to rehearse a play for the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. Their rehearsal takes place near Titania’s private chambers. Nick Bottom, the weaver, plays the role of Pyramus. When he steps onto the stage, he is spotted by Puck, who exclaims, “A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here!” (III.1.88). A little later offstage, Puck transforms Bottom’s head into that of an ass. Not far from there, in Arcadia, Pyrocles explains to his cousin Musidorus that he is determined to “bear the countenance of an Amazon” (142) so he can get close to Philocleia and win her love. “Somewhere in La Mancha,” Alonso Quixano decides “to become a knight errant and travel the world” (19, 20).¹ He changes his name to Don Quixote de La Mancha, dons his armor, and crosses the boundaries of class, reason, and sanity. In Oporto, Portugal, Uriel da Costa undergoes a religious transformation into Judaism, based on his individual reading of the Bible. These four accounts describe moments of transformation in four different early modern literary works: Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1594-6), Sidney’s *New Arcadia* (1593), Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1605 and 1615), and Uriel da Costa’s *Exemplar Humanae Vitae* (1640).²

¹ My citations from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are from the Norton edition (Greenblatt et al.); citations from the *New Arcadia* are from Evans’ edition; citations from *Don Quixote* are from Grossman’s edition.

² Though transformation and metamorphosis are used interchangeably, I emphasize the former to differentiate it from Ovidian supernatural metamorphoses. Supernatural transformation narratives by external force do take place in the early modern period (as the case of Bottom’s transformation by Puck’s magic shows), but there are other forms of transformation as well, like self-transformation and conversion.
These transformations are both textual and intertextual: in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Bottom’s hybridity is clearly influenced by classical literature, recalling Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*. He is not, though, a mere replica of such transformation narratives, but William Shakespeare’s invention. In Sir Philip Sidney’s *New Arcadia*, Pyrocles cross-dresses as an Amazon, a mythological female figure from Greek and Roman traditions; in Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, Quixote transforms into a knight errant, a figure from chivalric romances; drawing on Augustine’s *Confessions*, Da Costa’s *Exemplar* depicts not his successful conversion, but rather his doubts, reservations, and challenges. Each of these characters goes through an *interfictional transformation*: characters adopt new identities that are rooted in previous literature. These early modern moments of interfictional transformation result in both literal and literary hybridity. One wonders why, in these works, writers and playwrights such as Shakespeare, Sidney, Cervantes, and Da Costa favor *interfictional transformations* over mere allusions to classical literature, or, for that matter, disguises that do not allude to previous literature.

An age of religious crisis and reformation, the early modern period was a time during which conversion, dissimulation, and self-fashioning offered a means to express one’s oppressed self. During the Reformation and Counter-Reformation there existed well-chronicled turmoil and debate among Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans, and other religious sects that were hostile toward religious practices they did not share, a time that

---

Though Da Costa’s work is autobiographical, and therefore “non-fiction,” I nevertheless include it here because of the inherently *textual* properties of his transformation, as I show in chapter 3.
Christopher Haigh calls the “English Reformation.” For both sixteenth-century English Protestants and Catholics the practice of religious concealment was pervasive. In 1533-1534, Henry VIII defied Rome and nationalized Catholicism; later, Edward VI turned to violent Protestantism. Mary Tudor revived the Hersey Acts and brought back an aggressive version of Roman Catholicism that exiled, threatened, and forced many Protestants to convert. Finally, in 1558, Elizabeth I, reinstating the Act of Supremacy, settled on the reformed church and demanded conformity to the national church by all subjects. England turned into “a Protestant nation, but not to a nation of Protestants” (Haigh 280). In other words, though England adopted Protestantism and defined itself in Protestant terms, not all the people were Protestants. As a result, English Catholics were forced to conform to the state church (structurally similar to the oppression of Protestant subjects under Catholic rulers on the continent). The conflict between Protestant England and Catholic Europe, along with the danger of treason and assassination at home, made Catholics in England constantly suspicious of and subject to persecution. Accordingly, under these circumstances different practices of dissimulation were common.

---

4 Haigh describes the Reformation not as a singular event but rather as a process that includes many of those events that had religious and political conditions and consequences. He distinguishes between the Reformation in England and the Reformation on the continent. While in Germany and Switzerland, for example, the Reformation involved violence and the destruction of altars, in England “altars and images were carefully removed on government orders, by masons and carpenters paid by churchwardens, and the altars and images were often kept safe, in case of future need” (13).

5 Haigh writes that there were different responses and reactions to the Reformation in England because the people “lived in confused and dangerous times, when ideas and power structures were unstable” (14).

6 See Perez Zagorin, The Historical Significance of Lying and Dissimulation, pp. 884-885.
Various practices of dissimulation were also prevalent among conversos (Jewish converts) in Spain and Portugal. In 1478 in Spain, the Catholic monarchs Isabella and Ferdinand established the Spanish Inquisition to maintain Catholic orthodoxy and suppress heresy. Barbara Fuchs notes that three events that took place all in 1492—the fall of Granada, the expulsion of the Jews, and the arrival of Columbus to the Americas—mark Spain’s realization of its national unity and the monarchy’s choice of religious orthodoxy and expansion (1). But, as Fuchs argues,

this sense of early modern Spain as a homogeneous nation reunited through the Reconquista was a myth, challenged not only by the prominence of hybrid subjects, especially conversos, in many areas of public life but also by the many tensions between local allegiances and centralizing forces. (ibid.)

The battle against heretics expanded, as both Crown and Inquisition erased Jewish and Moorish identities to create what Fuchs calls a “fictive ethnicity” based on pure Christian genealogy. The number of conversos in Spain prior to the expulsion of the Jews reached some hundred of thousands. Some of them were sincere in their conversion,7 “but the vast majority had accepted Christianity only to escape death, and remained at heart as completely Jewish as they had ever been” (Roth 19). For all intents and purposes these Jews lived as Christians: they were baptized, went to Church, and participated in holiday services. But inwardly they maintained their Jewish identity and Jewish life, following traditional ceremonies and keeping the Shabbat.

After their expulsion from Spain, a large number of Jews crossed the border to the

---

7 Cecil Roth gives the example of Rabbi Solomon ha-Levi who converted to Christianity, changed his name to Pablo de Santa Maria, and became a Bishop of Burgos and a member of the Council of Regency of Castile (19).
more hospitable Portugal, only to face further hostility. Though the Inquisition in Portugal was not established until 1536, in 1497 every Jewish child from the age of four to fourteen was forced to convert to Christianity, a decree that was intended to motivate Jewish parents to convert as well. Only a small number converted, though, and many children were ripped away from their Jewish families to be raised in a Christian setting. Along with the Edict of Expulsion in Spain, this act obviously increased the number of conversos, and from the fifteenth century on the public practice of Judaism in the Iberian Peninsula was outlawed completely (Bodian 10). Consequently, conversos who practiced Judaism in secret were separated from traditional rabbinic Judaism, and on occasions when Jewish figures visited communities in the Peninsula they had to be in disguise (Bodian 10).

My dissertation explores how four early modern moments of interfictional transformation result in both literary and literal hybridity. Though scholars have studied early modern transformations and hybridity as representations of national and cultural encounters with “the other,” little has been written on intertextual transformations as images of dissimulation and the pressing social necessity to negotiate (and renegotiate) identity during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. This project pays special attention to how these transformations encourage a confrontation with “the other within.” I explain how the animal-human hybrid, the cross-dresser, the converso, and the madman

---

8 Though the majority of the Jews settled in Portugal, a large number went to Italy and to Muslim countries as well (Roth 54).

9 See, for instance, *Tpuna Al Hazman (Complaint Against Time* 1503), in which Judah Abravanel (Leon Ebreo) laments the loss of his son Isaac, taken away from him by Christian authorities: “My darling boy was taken, and his good name, / the name of the rock from which I was hewn, / changed! / He's twelve years old; I haven't seen him since” (Raymond P. Scheindlin 195).
act as striking literary images of the period, representing the fear of confronting the unfamiliar-familiar other. Accordingly, I examine a range of material from literary, philosophical, secular, religious, and polemical works. I argue that taken together these transformation narratives reflect the social anxiety of dissimulation through which early modern readers and audiences encounter their own radically hybrid identities.

What advantages, then, does a study of interfictional transformations into forms of hybridity offer? This study is instrumental for our understanding of the social and historical context for creating these literary characters. Crucial to this study is the social and religious “culture of secrecy”\(^\text{10}\) of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, which provides the context for forming and transforming interfictional characters. Deep anxieties about dissimulation were in the air, and for obvious reasons: how can you measure the authenticity of an individual’s conversion? How do you know if someone who conforms externally continues to harbor doubt? Treatises against dissimulation highlight these anxieties. John Calvin, in *Excuse à Messieurs les Nicodémites* (Apology of John Calvin, to Messrs the Nicodemites, 1544), questions the authenticity of Protestants who conform to Catholicism:

Thus, when I require that a faithful man should carefully guard himself from committing idolatry to please men and from pretending outwardly to accept things that he knows to be evil and against God, it is evident that this is more than reasonable. (347)

\(^{10}\) This term is drawn from Jon Snyder’s title page *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (2009).
For Calvin, this is no light vice. The public suspicion of and objection to dissimulation, though, was not exclusive to religious treatises. Michel de Montaigne takes a stand against practices of concealment when he writes the following in “On Presumption”:

As for that novel virtue of deceit and dissimulation that is now much honoured I hate it unto death, and among all the vices I can find none which bears better testimony to cowardice and to baseness of mind. It is an abject and a slave-like humour to go disguising and hiding yourself behind a mask and not to dare to let yourself be seen as you are. (735-736)

Montaigne’s sharp objections to dissimulation and pretense are motivated by what he sees as their pervasiveness in court; specifically, he is responding to the art of concealment, or “sprezzatura,” articulated by Baldassare Castiglione in The Book of the Courtier. According to Count Ludovico da Canossa, the Courtier should “practice in all things a certain sprezzatura, so to conceal all art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it” (1.26). Sprezzatura allows the courtier to dissimulate, to fashion himself and his identity in relation to the

---

11 “Now I ask them in their conscience whether it is a small vice or something to conceal, when a man who goes up into the pulpit to represent the person of Jesus Christ, to speak in his name and with his authority as an ambassador sent by him, and yet pretends to consent to an abomination that directly contravenes to the main doctrine of the Gospel. Thus, every time they will put forward to me the intention that moves them, I shall promptly answer them that it is not permitted to do bad in order to see good come out of it” (354). For an extensive discussion of Calvin and his response to the Nicodemites, see Zagorin, Ways of Lying, especially Ch. 4, “Calvin and Nicodemism,” pp. 63-82.

12 Montaigne’s Essays were published in several editions. In 1580 Montaigne published the earliest edition (marked A). Montaigne commented on and revised that edition, and added new essays. The revised edition (marked B) was published in 1588. Montaigne further elaborated on and added to the second edition. The last version (marked C) was published posthumously in 1595. Screech’s translation follows the distinction of the different editions. The quote from “On Presumption” is part of the earliest publication (A).
situation he finds himself in. It is the ability to conceal what one feels and thinks behind a mask, characterized by what Daniel Javitch calls “apparent reticence and nonchalance” (325).

These anxieties about dissimulation highlight the fluidity and uncertainty of identity and its construction during this volatile time. In his groundbreaking study *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Stephen Greenblatt argues that Renaissance identities are in constant flux, as people perform for and respond to contradicting forces and profound instabilities. Katherine Maus explores the discrepancy between a hidden interiority and a theatricalized exteriority, as they are represented in early modern English culture and drama. Maus explains how in the Reformation there was an ongoing debate between and within members of different religions and sects about religious identity and the question of appearances and of dissimulation:

… thus Protestants typically describe themselves as cultivating internal truths while accusing Catholics of attending only to outward ‘shows.’ Sixteenth-and early seventeenth-century Catholics themselves, however, hardly perceive their devotional lives as empty formalities. (15)

---

13 Greenblatt writes, “[self-fashioning] invariably crosses the boundaries between the creation of literary characters, the shaping of one’s own identity, the experience of being molded by forces outside one's control, the attempt to fashion other selves” (3).

14 Though she draws on New Historicism, Maus attempts to refine the new historicist approach to the self as socially constructed: “The new-historicist critique insists, correctly in my view, that the ‘self’ is not independent of or prior to its social context. Yet the critique often seems to assume that once this dependence is pointed out, inwardness simply vaporizes, like the Wicked Witch of the West under Dorothy’s bucket of water” (28).
Interfictional characters reflect these conflicted times. In their transformations into hybrids—the cross-dresser, the ass-headed-man, the converso, and the madman—these figures cannot be reduced to the either/or binaries articulated in the passage above, or to those identities forced on people from religious and political authorities. By undermining binaries these figures expand the possibilities of identity. They are hybrids, heteroglossic. Drawing primarily on the work of M.M. Bakhtin and Ferdinand de Saussure, Julia Kristeva understands *intertextuality* as the assimilation of one system of signs into another.\(^{15}\) This assimilation does not restore the old textual units, but transforms them and creates new ones. For Kristeva, meaning is never fixed or finished, but in a constant state of production. My study of interfictional transformations into hybrid forms is directly influenced by this view of intertextuality. My reading draws on Kristeva’s sense of a text’s openness and fluidity but keeps an eye on the fluctuating social realities of the period, the continual installations of new identity regimes.

In *Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics* Bakhtin writes:

The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation. In this process the word does not forget its own path and cannot completely free itself from the power of these concrete contexts into which it has entered.

When a member of a speaking collective comes upon a word, it is not as a neutral word of language, not as a word free from the aspirations and evaluations

---

\(^{15}\) Kristeva coins the term *intertextuality* and uses it for the first time in “Word, Dialogue, and Novel” (1966).
of others, uninhabited by others’ voices. No, he receives the word from another’s voice and filled with that other voice. The word enters his context from another context, permeated with the interpretations of others. His own thought finds the word already inhabited. (202)

Interfictional characters are images of such otherness. In the process of their intertextual transformation they assimilate the old, often classical, identities, transforming and altering them to adjust to the early modern present. By doing so, they undermine the hegemonic religious and political forced binaries and point to broader possibilities for early modern identities.

Interfictional characters transform into already “inhabited” hybrids. My reading contributes to the interdisciplinary study of hybridity that has flourished since the publication of Homi K. Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994). Contemporary scholarly interest in the study of hybridity in early modern texts emerges mostly from postcolonial and feminist studies. The term ‘hybrid’ comes from the Latin noun *hybrida* (or *hibrida*) and denotes unbridled and unnatural animals produced of two different species. The Romans refer to one born of a Roman father and a foreign mother or of a free man and a slave as a hybrid (Lewis and Short). Thus, already in classical literature the term is associated with a tendency to preserve purity of class and culture by excluding those who cross over and mix class and race. But even in ancient Rome the perception of hybridity was not that simple. After all, Aeneas, Virgil’s epic hero, is a hybrid, an offspring of a love affair between the goddess Venus and the mortal Anchises. Providing a historical overview of hybridity, Amar Acheraïou argues that the depiction of the union
between the Trojans and the Romans maintains the supremacy of the Latins. Though the offspring are biologically mixed they remain Latin culturally and linguistically (52).

Postcolonial approaches investigate the cultural functions of hybridity in registering anxiety and curiosity about other cultures. Thus the term hybridity undergoes a change from the biological and racial mixing to forms of cultural and semiotic crossover. For postcolonial critics the term hybridity becomes crucial in understanding the cultural crossovers and assimilations of colonialism. Linda Anderson explains how one of the original ethics of colonialism—to preserve the purity of the colonizers—ultimately failed; instead, colonialism acted as a catalyst for genetic, intellectual, cultural, and linguistic encounters (114-115). Hybridity, for Bhabha, “is posited as a site of subversion, displacement, newness, renegotiation of cultures and identities, and multiple positionality” (Acheraïou 91). Thus, it is the “transnational and translational sense of hybridity” (Bhabah 5) that is the focus of postcolonial studies, as the critical emphasis expands to include not only the biological and racial components of colonialism, but also the subtle cultural components and the micropolitics of power.

Feminist approaches to hybridity examine female or male cross-dressers in early modern literature, highlighting the ways in which they represent the interplay between gender and narrative.16 In Passing for Spain, Barbara Fuchs studies scenes of passing in Cervantes’ works, or scenes of “deliberate impersonation” in which characters perform as another gender. These cross-dressing episodes, Fuchs argues, illustrate more than gender confusion, signaling “not only gender indeterminacy but a far more territorial crossover

16 On cross-dressing as hybridity in the Middle Ages and modern narratives see Erika E. Hess.
between self and other, underscoring the porosity of national boundaries and the fragility of an identity predicated on masculinity and blood purity” (4). Though dissimulation plays a role both in scenes of passing and in interfictional transformations, as characters conceal their identity in both cases, the transformed characters that I focus on do not cross national boundaries. Though each of the interfictional characters is away from home (Pyrocles leaves Macedonia, Da Costa leaves Portugal, Bottom leaves the world of Theseus, and Don Quixote leaves his home and family), they remain in the realm of their original culture and society. Their transformation turns them into others within their society.

Interfictional transformations highlight the fundamentally political nature of reading and interpretation. Textual interpretation is integral to the religious turmoil of the early modern period. Interfictional transformations allow writers to respond and react to those concerns while dissimulating their own political intentions by deploying the early modern cultural traditions of imitation and adaptation. Thomas Greene argues that imitation (imitatio) was a “constitutive element” in the Renaissance not only in literature, but also in grammar school, rhetoric, politics, visual arts, and music (1). Imitation in the Renaissance, Greene claims, is a way to cope with the cultural anxiety of a discontinuity from the past (10-11). It allows Renaissance writers to come to terms with their differences from the classical writers they imitate. Clare Carroll describes three types of imitation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: “following,” “emulating,” and “transformative” (255-256). The follower imitates the style and form of the precedent text or writer; the emulator attempts to exceed someone else. The transformative imitator draws on different sources (classical, humanist, and popular), which are “fully
reinterpreted and so well integrated into the end product that [the source] is almost unrecognizable” (255). My reading rethinks early modern hybridity in terms of interfictional transformations, suggesting that these forms of change represent the textual character of early modern religious clashes. These were new sorts of hybrids that were influenced by classical sources, but that also reinterpreted, re-circulated, transformed, and in various ways undermined the traditional literary texts, while figuratively addressing the period’s pressing social anxieties about dissimulation and the “other within.”

In early modern texts interfictional transformations do not simply allude to or preserve identities from older texts; rather, these moments undermine or complicate the very notion of identity for the early modern audience.17 That is, they showcase the possibility of crossing over and the radically fluid contexts of early modern identities. In this respect, interfictional identities differ from postmodern “transfictional” (or “transworld”) identities.18 Transfictionality indicates the incorporation of an already existing reality in a work. Though not written by the same author, the Iliad and the Odyssey, and later the Aeneid, might be said to share a transfictional world. Though transfictionality is connected to intertextuality, “it usually conceals this intertextual link because it neither quotes nor acknowledges its sources. Instead, it uses the source text’s

17 The term ‘interfictional’ appears in David Lewis’ article “Truth in Fiction” (1978), in which he refers to “inter-fictional carry-overs” (43). Lewis’ use of “inter-fictional carry-overs” differs from mine; he uses the term primarily as a way to explain the characteristics of figures that appear in more than one fictional text. For instance, the representation of a dragon in a story necessarily entails a sort of “inter-fictional carry-over”: whether or not the dragon is depicted as breathing fire, readers assume that the dragon has this capacity. Lewis essentially uses the term the way Russian Formalists deploy the concept of “generic motivation.”

18 Transworld identities, or retour de personnages, are characters that reappear in different texts by the same author. See Brian McHale (57).
setting and/or inhabitants as if they existed independently” (Herman, Jahn, and Rayn 785). Interfictional transformations emphasize intertextual links assimilated into the early modern texts, but do not necessarily assume a shared reality with their sources. Though Bottom’s transformation into an ass is influenced by Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*, Shakespeare differentiates Bottom from the classical story of Apuleius: while Apuleius’ protagonist is transformed into the figure of an ass and loses not only his human form but also his ability to speak, Bottom turns into a hybrid but maintains his capacity to speak, to socialize. Thus, Shakespeare highlights the effects of the transformation not only on the hybrid, but also on those who encounter and respond to the transformed character.

An analysis of the intertextual relations, reflections, and allusions between works of literature makes it possible to consider the *uncanny* as an effect and product of these relations. In his well-known essay, Sigmund Freud theorizes the uncanny effect by identifying the phenomenon and explaining its principles: “the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (220). There is a tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar, by which the unfamiliar contains something familiar, both senses existing simultaneously. Freud highlights how such images and phenomena like the double, telepathy, the relationships between the living and dead, and the fear of castration might all provoke an uncanny experience. Nicholas Royle suggests that the uncanny is an experience that is not so much in the texts we are reading but in how we read, interpret, and transform them. “[T]he uncanny,” maintains Freud, “is something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimisch*], which has undergone repression and then returned from it” (245). Intertextual reading is fundamentally uncanny when it leads the reader back to literary works with which they
are familiar (whether they are alluded to by the author or not), provoking the reader to produce her/his own meaning that incorporates the familiar into the new.

Metamorphosis is uncanny. It constitutes the alteration of what is most familiar—the self—into something unfamiliar and strange, and as such it contains the unfamiliar within the familiar; the other becomes part of one’s identity and body. The body moves beyond the form and across forms (transformed), its boundaries and limits crossed (metamorphosed), creating a new, hybrid body. The uncanny effect emerges from the duality between the unfamiliar form and the familiar identity, an identity that now redefines itself as it adjusts to its new form. The metamorphosis is a transgression of the limits of the body and identity. It is an experience of doubling, division, an exchange of the self. Metamorphoses are also uncanny intertextually, for they operate on two levels: that of the foreground narrative and that of the background texts, i.e., the stories evoked by the transformation but not directly tied to the main narratives. Interfictional transformations are already “inhabited,” haunted by other transformation narratives. Jacques Derrida proposes a philosophy of what he calls hauntology. “This new philosophy” writes Anneleen Masschelein in The Unconcept: The Freudian Uncanny in Late-Twentieth-Century Theory, “wants to examine the intermediate or suspended state of the ghost and of fiction—neither dead nor alive, neither here nor there—as exemplary for the omnipresence of the immaterial, the virtual, and the unspeakable in our society” (139). Thus, an uncanny effect occurs when earlier stories of transformation are assimilated into the new transformation, when a former body, allusion, or sign re-emerges in the reading process to haunt the early modern present.
Criticism has long been preoccupied with the connections between metamorphosis, language, and social change. In his book *The Gaping Pig: Literature and Metamorphosis* (1976), Irving Massey cites Homer, Ovid, Mary Shelly, Lewis Carol, and Franz Kafka, among others, to analyze the motif of metamorphosis, interpreting it as a reaction to the problems of language. For Massey, metamorphosis takes place in a moment of crisis; it represents a conflict within language, and it resists language. In *Posthuman Metamorphosis: Narrative and Systems* (2008), Bruce Clarke combines second-order cybernetics system theory with narratology, interpreting science fiction narratives of bodily transformation “as allegories of the reality of system distinctions” (194). Clarke interprets science fiction narratives that depict communication with aliens and animal-machine hybrids as allegories for the interaction between various life forms and systems of communication, often highlighting humans’ troubled relationships with technology, the environment, national borders, animals, and so on. As in his previous study on metamorphosis, *Allegories of Writing*, Clarke does not focus exclusively on the early modern period, but analyzes pre-modern and postmodern systems of transformation narratives.

Leonard Barkan’s seminal work *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (1986) traces the history of the idea of metamorphosis and its significance to the Renaissance imagination, and examines the malleable nature of magical transformation. For Barkan, metamorphosis has a different function in each period. Classical metamorphoses act as mediums through which characters traffic between different levels of existence—the human, the animal, and the divine. These metamorphoses, Barkan writes, both challenge and reestablish the boundaries between
the different levels. At the same time, magical metamorphosis is “the moment when the
divine enters the familiar” (18). The belief in metamorphosis, therefore, embodies the
belief in a world of flux and indeterminacy, which undermines the “masculine-dominated
world of stability” (18). Further, the reinterpretation of metamorphic myths acts as a
vehicle for post-classical authors, writers, and artists to reinterpret antiquity itself (ibid.).
In the Middle Ages, the time during which Christianity defines itself, classical
metamorphoses were perceived, for the most part, as contradicting the Judeo-Christian
tradition. Consequently, they were analyzed allegorically. Renaissance writers use the
image of metamorphosis to bridge the gaps between classical and medieval perceptions.
Metamorphoses were thought of as an image of love (for example, the myth of Apollo
and Daphne in the classical period, or Bottom and Titania in Shakespeare’s comedy) and
could exist in harmony with the universe (in the philosophy of Marsilio Ficino or in the
poetry of Francesco Petrarch). Barkan focuses on historicizing the idea of
metamorphosis, analyzing post-classical civilizations that look back at antiquity through
the lens of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. My study moves beyond a diachronic approach to
metamorphosis and explores its intertextual significance and its function as a medium for
interpretative reading in the early modern period.

Unlike classical metamorphoses, which are, for the most part, etiological, early
modern transformations do not function as part of the mythical development of the world,
but rather transgress or deviate from a unified vision of the cosmos. Transformations, in
my study, are not exclusively enforced by an external, magical power; they also entail
self-transformations, transformations of gender, and conversion. In his seminal study, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England*, Keith Thomas associates the decline of the popular belief in magic and witchcraft to the religious conflicts between Protestants and Catholics. Thomas argues that the Protestant reformers criticized and rejected the magical power of the medieval Church, including miracle healing and transubstantiation. The reformers thus differentiated magic of the medieval Church from religion (88). But when it comes to supernatural powers both Catholics and Protestants rejected popular magic, witches, and the mythology of the fairies (274). For them, supernatural activities were possible only if they originated from God or the Devil (303). That denouncement only increased during the seventeenth century, contributing to the decline in the belief in popular magic, witchcraft, the occult, superstitions, and metamorphoses.

In *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), Reginald Scot writes:

> What a beastlie assertion is it, that a man, whom GOD hath made according to his owne similitude and likeness, should be by a witch turned into a beast? What an

---

19 In the early modern period there was an increasing interest in what Thomas Greene names “the flexibility of the self.” In his article “The Flexibility of the Self in Renaissance Literature,” Greene distinguishes between the “formation” of the self through pedagogical practices and the “transformation” of the self through spiritual practices. He argues that the writers of the Renaissance offer a wide range of self-transformation, and that that flexibility is in direct contrast with the fixity of character in the Middle Ages.

20 The Reformation was not the only process that led to the waning of a belief in magic, according to Thomas. Other developments that influenced this process are the philosophical and scientific revolutions of the seventeenth century (see Thomas, Ch. 22).

21 Thomas was criticized for privileging in his analysis the educated point of view and for presenting religion and magic as part of the same “cognitive system, at least in relation to anxiety, misfortune and guilt” (Barry, Hester, and Roberts 5-6, 7).
impietie is it to affirm, that an asses bodie is the temple of the Holy-ghost? Or an asse to be the childe of God, and God to be his father; as it is said of man. (100)

We can identify in Scot’s words a criticism of the belief in magic, a decidedly un-Christian form of magic that might transform a man into a beast. Scot provides a rationalization for transformation narratives, arguing that even in the Bible, transformations, like that of Nebuchadnezzar into a beast had a metaphorical rather than literal function. In the case of Nebuchadnezzar, Scot believes that he “lived as if he were a beast, rather than having been transformed into one” (Almond 104). Thus, with the decline of magic in the early modern period, transformations were not necessarily associated with the supernatural or with the magical world of fairies, but were rather bestowed with rational and metaphorical explanations.

In her study *Metamorphosis and Identity* (2001), Caroline Walker Bynum examines the nature of change and identity in various works of theology, literature, visual art, and philosophy of the twelfth and thirteen centuries. Bynum discusses the particular

---

22 In a recent book, *Writing Metamorphosis in the English Renaissance 1550-1700* (2014), Susan Wiseman opens her investigation of fantastic creatures with an analysis of the reception and impact of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* for early modern texts. She explores ideas of change, and specifically the place of metamorphosis, from the Reformation to the seventeenth century. As Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* was read across various fields of study, Wiseman’s approach is also interdisciplinary, ranging from the secular, sacred, philosophical, physiological, folkloric, and ethnographic. By “taking a horizontal slice of textual evidence on metamorphosis” (12), Wiseman seeks to engage with and undermine “the dispersion of metamorphosis amongst the disciplines” (13). Other full-length studies on metamorphosis in literature in the early modern period include William C. Carroll’s *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy*, which examines metamorphoses as a central device in the comedies of Shakespeare, and their relationship to identity, love, and marriage. For Carroll, metamorphosis in Shakespeare represents both the transgression and establishment of boundaries. Clark Hulse’s *Metamorphic Verse* explores the minor epic as a significant medium of expression in Elizabethan England, and the theme of metamorphosis as a central shaping device of the genre. Alison Keith and Stephen James Rupp’s collection of articles continues the works of Jonathan Bate, Charles Martindale,
case of *The History and Topography of Ireland* by Gerald of Wales’ (1146-1223), which included an account of a werewolf. Bynum explores what this creature represents, whether it is a change (metamorphosis) or some mixed combination (hybrid). She conceptualizes change and at the same time defines what about an entity changes and what does not. Bynum’s focus is the historical moment when the interest in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* revived, when werewolves figured in literary texts and travelers’ tales, and hybrids began to decorate both the literary imagination and churches’ walls. Bynum discusses two forms of boundary crossing—metamorphosis and hybridity—and argues that behind the apparent twelfth-century fascination with change lurked a deep resistance to the notion of radical change. The hybrid is static, a union of two different forms, in which neither form is actually altered; metamorphosis is dynamic and processual, it breaks down categories and boundaries. Similar to Barkan, Bynum asserts that while ancients and moderns alike have embraced the shape-shifting motif, twelfth century Orthodox Christian theologians resisted the notion of metamorphosis, even seeing it as heretical. Hybridity allows writers to avoid the notion of a complete metamorphosis, maintaining basic identities. Bynum understands metamorphosis in the Middle Ages as a

and A. B. Tylor on the reception of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, focusing on the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Raphael Lyne focuses on two translations of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (Golding [1567] and Sandy [1632]), and on Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* and Drayton’s poetry (1597). Drawing on Greene’s study of imitation and on modern theories of translations, Lyne examines “the ways in which English writers reconciled their debt to Ovid with their interests in the independence and indigenous worth of their own language and culture” (17). Harold Skulsky studies what happens to identity, or “personhood,” in the midst of metamorphosis in the works of Ovid, Apuleius, Kafka, and Woolf. Marina Warner studies metamorphoses as a means of “telling the self” in different periods, suggesting that metamorphoses stand as representations of personal transformation in literature and art. Beginning with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Warner explores fantastic stories of transformation “in spaces (temporal, geographical, and mental) that were crossroads, cross-cultural zones, points of interchange on the intricate connective tissue of communication between cultures” (17).
development, one that is more radical than the hybrid. While Bynum sees metamorphosis and hybridity as representing two different categories on the spectrum of identity and the anxiety of change, I see transformation and hybridity as constituent elements of the same process: as transformation initiates identity change, hybridity is the consequence. In interfictional transformations in early modern texts, the transformation is an event that results in the creation of a continuous state of hybridity. This type of hybridity is not static, but allows constant crossovers, feedback, and redefinitions of the possibilities of identity.

Transformations into familiar-unfamiliar hybrids place the encounter between society and “the other within” at center stage, as they depend for their effects on the uncanny realization that the other might become part of the familiar and on the fear that an oppressed interiority might suddenly become visible to the public eye. In works like Discipline and Punish and Madness and Civilization, Michel Foucault shows how the structures of discourse enable society to subjugate and marginalize others: “the individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces” (73-74). Discursive regimes (of madness or punishment), define the position of an individual in society, and it is through these discourses that individual identity is formed and at the same time controlled. In order to represent social and religious hybridity, early modern writers often depicted figures that transgress traditional conceptions of the fixed human form and of human identity. These characters experience a transformation into, and a counter-transformation out of, various forms of hybridity. Their changed body becomes a familiar-unfamiliar
image, both a literal crossbreed between different forms, as well as a literary border-crossing between the well-known texts of the past and the new literary characters of the present. This hybridity has a vital textual and social function: it represents a textual image of religious war, of warring discursive regimes within society and within individuals, showcasing the effects that the interpretation and reinterpretation of sacred texts has on real bodies and identities.

The first chapter of my work considers the manner in which Bottom’s transformation into a familiar-unfamiliar hybrid produces an uncanny effect, an effect lying at the heart of the reading experience of “others within” in early modern literature. Drawing on Sigmund Freud’s concept of the uncanny, as well as on recent scholarship of the uncanny and of hybridity by Homi Bhabha, this chapter uncovers the uncanny dimension of the image of Bottom’s transformation into a hybrid, the failure of Bottom’s language to adequately describe his transformation, and the inability of other characters within the play to interpret his transformation. These failures reflect the social anxiety of dissimulation, of an oppressed interiority that suddenly manifests in public.

The second chapter offers a new reading of Pyrocles’ cross-dressing episode in the New Arcadia by focusing on its interfictional features and on the readers’ responses to Pyrocles’ hybridity. Pyrocles’ hybridity is uncanny because of the text’s dynamic relation to former texts. The uncanny effect occurs when allusions to classical cross-dressing episodes of Achilles and Hercules are assimilated into and undermined by the new transformation. Sidney complicates Pyrocles’ transformation by portraying it as an “honest dissimulation” (Sidney, Defense), rather than as an intentional act of dishonesty and hypocrisy. Unlike Bottom’s hybridity, characters within the text that encounter the
disguised Pyrocles produce different interpretations; these interpretations within the text are met by the external audience’s encounters with Pyrocles, an implied audience that recognizes Sidney’s literary allusions. These readings complete one another and reflect a wide range of attitudes towards and fears about dissimulation and disguise, underscoring the uncanny effects of such practices.

The third chapter focuses on Uriel da Costa’s religious transformation, re-reading it as an interfictional hybrid narrative in its own right and not only as a historical autobiography. This chapter suggests that Da Costa’s religious conversion to Judaism produces interfictional hybridity because it stems from his individual and idiosyncratic interpretation of the Bible. During that process of religious transformation, Da Costa becomes “the other within” and a critic of the Jewish society. Drawing on Augustine’s *Confessions*, Da Costa structures his *Exemplar* as a conversion narrative in disguise, and shows us not only the failures of society and religion, but also the social anxieties about “dissimulating others” and the warring textual interpretations at the heart of early modern religious turmoil.

The fourth chapter ties together ideas developed in the previous chapters by analyzing the counter-transformation of Don Quixote as a conversion. When Don Quixote returns to his village for the last time he falls ill and goes through a religious conversion to Christianity. Why does Quixote go through a conversion and, more importantly, is this conversion authentic? Quixote understands his initial interfictional transformation into a knight-errant in religious terms. His return from the metamorphic condition, or his counter-transformation, functions as a public display of conversion to Christianity. Dissimulating for a greater good (in this case, for the sake of his friends and
family), the hidalgo Quixano cannot continue to live without the figure of Don Quixote, who made his life so rich and colorful. Interfictional transformations into forms of hybridity, though complicating tidy interpretations, allow individuals to adapt and adjust to a new, often radical religious reality while holding fast to their hidden beliefs and identity.

Interfictional transformations into textual and bodily hybrids in the early modern period are literary manifestations of society’s encounters with and fears of “the other within.” Interfictional characters experience transformations into, and counter-transformations out of, forms of hybridity that are shaped by earlier literature. In the following pages I intend to show that these forms of hybridity are also intensely reflective of the religious turmoil that characterizes these writers’ historical contexts.
Chapter 1:

Uncanny Metamorphoses: Bottom’s Hybridity in A Midsummer Night’s Dream

“O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!” cries Quince in the third act of Shakespeare’s, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, upon seeing Nick Bottom’s transformation into an ass-headed man.\(^1\) The uncanny, Freud writes, “is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (220). This “class of the terrifying” could be the result of a transformation of a familiar human into hybrid. Bottom’s metamorphosis into a hybrid is an unexpected event that took his fellows by surprise. His metamorphosis is uncanny precisely because of its immediate effect: it defamiliarizes the human body and turns it into something that is both known and strange. Scholars often identify Bottom’s metamorphosis into a hybrid as connected to his role as an actor. Stanley Wells shows that the ass-head prop enabled the actor to continue and recite his lines: “Bottom needs to look enough like an ass for us to sympathize with those who believe him to have been transformed, but at the same time the actor has to be perceptible enough for us to register facial expression” (101). René Girard holds that the metamorphosis signifies not only Bottom’s desire to play all the parts, but also the “humanlike lion” creation of the mechanicals’ rehearsal (14). Is Bottom’s hybridity simply a consequence of dramaturgical constraints, that is, of the impracticality of staging a complete physical metamorphosis on-stage? Is his hybridity a matter of Bottom’s aspirations as an actor—to play multiple parts, put on multiple disguises? What is the significance of a metamorphosis into a hybrid form in

Shakespeare’s play? How is this particular encounter with the unfamiliar-familiar hybrid relevant more generally to our understanding of early modern dissimulations?

In this chapter I will discuss the manner in which Bottom’s metamorphosis into a hybrid produces an uncanny effect. The interfictional features of his metamorphosis and their ties to the uncanny will be discussed in the next chapter.\(^2\) Drawing on Sigmund Freud’s concept of the uncanny, as well as on recent scholarship on the uncanny by Royle and on hybridity by Bhabha, this chapter seeks to uncover the uncanny dimension of the image of Bottom’s metamorphosis into a hybrid. Through a comparative analysis of this metamorphosis to classical stories of transformation such as Io’s in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Lucius’ in Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*, and to early modern transformation narratives, especially Pyrocles’ in Sidney’s *The New Arcadia* and Don Quixote’s in Cervantes’ work, I intend to highlight the uncanny effects of Bottom’s metamorphosis on multiple bodies—on Bottom, on the audience within the play, and on Shakespeare’s audience. Such a comparative approach offers insights into the different ways Bottom’s metamorphosis imitates and challenges classical literature’s conventions of transformation. At the same time, it illustrates the connections between early modern metamorphoses, hybrid identity, and metamorphoses’ uncanny effects within specific social-religious circumstances. Though decidedly humorous, Bottom’s transformation into a hybrid is not just a comic image. Rather, his hybridity is a vital dramatic force: he functions not only as a mirror image for the lovers’ romantic transformation, but as an

---

\(^2\) The focal point of my research is inter-fictional transformation, as I like to call it—the metamorphosis of literary figures of the early modern period into *fictional* characters from preceding literature. In the next chapter, I discuss the uncanny features of Bottom’s interfictional transformations along with Pyrocles’ in Sidney’s *New Arcadia* and Don Quixote’s in Cervantes’ work.
uncanny expression of the social anxieties of dissimulation, through which the early modern English audience encounters its own radical hybridity. The metamorphosis to and from a hybrid condition in the midst of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* shapes the interpretative possibilities of the play, in the process reflecting hybridity back to early modern spectators.

### 1. A Time of Hybridity

The early modern period was a time of religious and ideological crisis that called for dissimulation and self-fashioning to conceal one’s true beliefs and identity. While drawing on the classics, early modern writers were not just using the *topos* of metamorphosis as it appeared in the literature of antiquity, but they were also fashioning their own understanding of transformation that influenced and was influenced by the circumstances during which they were writing. Metamorphoses into familiar-unfamiliar hybrids place the encounter between society and the other at center stage, as it depends on the uncanny realization that the other becomes part of the familiar, and on the fear that an oppressed interiority is suddenly manifested. Katharine E. Maus tries to understand why early modern writers were so occupied with inwardness, and studies the effects of the dissonance between the “unexpressed interior and a theatricalized exterior” (2) as they manifest in the culture and theater of the English Renaissance. Maus shows that during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation there was an ongoing debate among Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans, and other religious sects who were hostile toward religious practices they did not share. In sixteenth-century England, for example, the

---

3 On Bottom’s metamorphosis as a mirror for the lovers’ degradation see Leonard Barkan (261).
practice of religious concealment is apparent: in 1530 Henry VIII defied Rome and nationalized Catholicism; later, Edward VI turned to violent Protestantism. Mary Tudor brought back an aggressive version of Roman Catholicism that exiled, threatened, and forced many Protestants to convert. Finally, in 1558, Elizabeth I settled on the reformed church. Perez Zagorin argues that in England there was a close resemblance between Catholics and their Protestant counterparts in the combat against Nicodemists, that is, believers who dissimulated their true faith under the threat of persecution. Zagorin shows that Nicodemism is not limited exclusively to Protestantism, but was a characteristic feature of English Catholicism as well. With Elizabeth I’s accession in England in 1558, Catholicism was once more banned and Protestantism based upon a state church was reestablished. Elizabeth’s government demanded conformity to the national church by all subjects through the 1559 Act of Supremacy. As a result, English Catholics were forced to conform to the state church (similar to the oppression of Protestant subjects under Catholic rulers on the continent). Those who refused were accused of the crime of recusancy. The conflict between Protestant England and Catholic Europe, together with the danger of treason and assassination at home, made Catholics in England constantly suspect and subject to persecution. Both Maus, from a literary perspective, and Perez Zagorin, from an historical one, demonstrate that different practices of dissimulation were a common feature under these circumstances.

In his essay “Of Simulation and Dissimulation,” (1625) Francis Bacon differentiates between the two terms, suggesting that dissimulation is an act of concealing who one is, whereas simulation is pretending to be who one is not. Though concealment functions in both simulation and in dissimulation, only simulation points to an intentional
act of disguise. Through the distinction between dissimulation and simulation, Bacon stresses the tension at play between being and seeming; “between who one is and who one is perceived to be; between the experience of one's self and the perceptions or suspicions of others” (Zimmerman 557). Bacon’s focus on the difference between dissimulation and simulation testifies to their common practice in early modern culture, and a need for definition and distinction. A major theme in the era’s literature, the early modern preoccupation with dissimulation and concealment in the face of religious transformation and persecution encourages a reading of the classically inspired motif of metamorphosis as staging a variety of cultural dynamics surrounding such issues as disguise, metamorphosis, hybridity, and the uncanny.

2. Theories of the Uncanny

This study initiates its investigation of the connections between the uncanny and metamorphosis from what is thought of as the beginning—Sigmund Freud’s essay “The Uncanny” (1919). Freud theorizes and identifies the phenomenon by explaining its principles: “The uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (220). The uncanny undermines the distinction between the familiar and the unfamiliar: it is the effect of an encounter between the new and well known, between the other and the self. Freud highlights how such images and phenomena as the double, telepathy, ghosts, and the fear of castration might all provoke an uncanny experience. It might be strange to think of the literary motif that Freud excludes from his definition—the metamorphosis—as uncanny: “And we should hardly call it uncanny when Pygmalion’s beautiful statue comes to life” (246). Nevertheless, the metamorphosis of Bottom is uncanny, for it embodies the change of that which is most familiar—the
self—into something unfamiliar and strange, creating a hybrid other. Metamorphoses into hybrids are uncanny for they contain the unfamiliar within the familiar; the other becomes part of one’s body. The body moves beyond the form and across forms (transformed), while its own boundaries and limits are crossed (metamorphosed), creating nova corpora (to use an Ovidian term). The uncanny effect emerges from the tension between the unfamiliar form and the familiar identity. The metamorphosis is a transgression of the limits of the body, an experience of doubling, division, and exchange of the self. As we shall see, the metamorphosis defamiliarizes the reading experience itself for those who “read” the transformation, that is, the other characters that react and respond to the metamorph,⁴ as well as for the implied and real receivers of the play.

In his essay, Freud applies his theory of the uncanny to E.T.A. Hoffmann’s short story “The Sandman.” Theorists, such as Hélène Cixous, Sarah Kofman, Neil Hertz, and Jane Marie Todd dispute Freud’s reading of Hoffmanns’ story, and by doing so extended the uncanny to other disciplines while redefining the concept.⁵ The uncanny was no longer perceived as limited to a specific genre (as argued by Todorov in his study of the fantastic), or field of study (such as psychoanalysis), but rather became a new, flexible concept, interdisciplinary in nature and still in flux. In the field of literary studies, critics such as Jack Zipes and Marjorie Garber tackle certain elements in Freud’s essay in order to undermine his exclusion of a specific literary genre or a field of study from the discussion of the uncanny. Negating fairy-tales as uncanny, Freud argues that “[f]airy tales quite frankly adopt the animistic standpoint of the omnipotence of thoughts and

⁴ Here I adopt Bruce Clarke’s terminology (2008, 2).
wishes, and yet I cannot think of any genuine fairy story which has anything uncanny about it” (246). Zipes refutes Freud’s position and writes that “the very act of reading a fairytale is an uncanny experience in that it separates the reader from the restrictions of reality from the outset and makes the repressed unfamiliar familiar once again” (1). For Garber, “if the ghost breaks or oversteps the frame, violating the implicit contract with reader or audience, then it becomes—or might become—uncanny” (62). Both Garber and Zipes understand the uncanny as an effect of the confusion of the boundaries between fiction and reality. In Zipes’ case it is a dissonance between the two realms that produces the uncanny effect, while in Garber’s case it is the effect of breaking the frame of fiction. In other words, according to Zipes and Garber the uncanny is connected to the question of reading and emerges when the reader’s worldview and reality are radically confronted by the fictional world of the text or the play.

These studies bring us closer to my reading of the uncanny as a concept that has a pressing, direct connection to metamorphosis in early modern literary texts. It is not only a means though which to think about the familiar and the everyday, but it is a concept that encourages interdisciplinary encounters. In The Uncanny (2003), Nicholas Royle defines this concept and discusses its associations with other terms and fields:

“The uncanny has to do with a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality… It may thus be construed as a foreign body within oneself… Above all, the uncanny is intimately entwined in language, with how we conceive and represent what is happening within ourselves, to ourselves, to the world.”

(2003, 1-2)
Royle’s deconstructive reading enables us to consider the uncanny as a concept that has a
direct connection to the everyday, the usual, and the familiar. The uncanny is connected
deeply to language; with written and spoken words; and with the ways language presents
and shapes situations, the world, and life. In other words, the uncanny is tied with
literature. As this and the following chapter show, the uncanny is an effective concept
through which we can analyze transgression within and between literary texts. In
Shakespeare’s comedy, the attempt of the external audience and the failure of the diegetic
audience to make sense of Bottom’s bodily transgression result in conflicting responses
of fear and laughter that intensify the discrepancy between the familiar identity and the
unfamiliar form. Not only is the uncanny an interpretive approach; as we shall see it
might also indicate an inability to interpret.

Reading Bottom’s textual and bodily hybridity in light of Bhabha’s understanding
of the uncanny and Gary A. Schmidt’s application of Bhabha’s paradigm of hybridity to
eyearl modern culture enriches my interpretation of the uncanny effects of Bottom’s
hybridity. Such a reading highlights the ways in which Bottom’s metamorphosis merges
and undermines classical narratives of transformation, as well as of the self and the other.
Bhabha uses the term ‘uncanny’ when characterizing the hybrid postcolonial experience.
For Bhabha, the experience of migration displaces old perceptions of identity and
belonging. The migrant hybrid identity is one that has “an uncanny ability to be at home
anywhere, an ability that always might become the burden of having no home
whatsoever” (Huddart 53). The uncanny is not only a product of the process of migration
but also of the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonized
hybridity “shifts the forces and fixity” by the reversal of the process of domination.
Undermining the colonizer’s desires by applying repetition with a difference, the colonized subverts “the gaze of discrimination back upon the eye of power” (*The Location of Culture* 112), and in doing so does not remain completely compliant. Postcolonial identities are hybrid constructions that deconstruct the binaries of the colonizer and the colonized, the self and the other. The uncanny also subverts distinctions between self and the other and consequently troubles any sense of self. Drawing on Bhabha’s work, Schmidt applies the postmodern paradigm of hybridity to early modern culture. Schmidt explores the intersections between literary genres and cultural history in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, and traces the increasing presence of hybrid creatures in English literature, suggesting they function as “vehicles both of containing anxiety and of registering wonder about other cultures, as efforts to mediate between competing forms of political organization, as avenues for managing social dissent, and as mechanisms for reconceptualizing the history of England itself to accommodate differing visions of the island’s present and future” (1). Schmidt’s focus on the presence of hybrid creatures in English literature differs from mine: Bottom’s unfamiliar-familiar hybridity is a result of metamorphosis, which incorporates and challenges classical literature’s conventions of transformation, and therefore it is an image not so much of xenophobia, but of “the other within.”

3. **“Thou art translated!”: The Uncanny Effect of the Metamorphosis**

   Bottom’s transformation is part of the mechanicals’ subplot. A group of six workingmen come to the forest to rehearse a play they wish to perform at the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. During the rehearsal Bottom steps onto the stage in the role of Pyramus, and he is spotted by Puck, who says, “A stranger Pyramus than e'er play'd
here!” (3.1.77). Offstage, Puck transforms Bottom’s head into the head of an ass. When Bottom enters the stage with the head of an ass, the mechanicals react in fear: “O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted. / Pray, masters! Fly, masters! Help” (3.1.90-91). Quince first describes the situation as one that breaks the laws of nature, understanding it as an image of an external otherness, “monstrous”. Then, he explains it as something that has a direct effect on the perceivers of the metamorphosis, “we are hunted.” This interpretation immediately manifests into action—the mechanicals run away in fear and leave the stage. Facing the monstrous, the mechanicals remove themselves from the situation they interpret as dangerous—the encounter with the other. But then, something unexpected happens. First Snout then Quince returns to stage:

   Snout:    O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?

   Bottom:  What do you see? You see an ass-head of your own, do you?

   Quince:   Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated! (3.1.102-105)

Snout and Quince both recognize the man behind the ass. Drawing on Royle’s concept of the “foreign body,” David Punter sees ‘recognition’ as an important image of uncertainty: “to recognize and yet not to recognize the other; to recognize a foreign body at the heart of the self” (269). In this short exchange both Snout and Quince mention Bottom’s name.

---

6 In early modern writings, desires and passions are often intertwined with the human’s deterioration into the status of an animal. In her study of animal rationality, Erica Fudge explains the role that reason play in understanding the human, the animal, and their distinctions. Looking at a wide range of texts, philosophical, religious, literary, and medical, Fudge explore what being human and being animal meant and how humans could lose their humanity. When referring to erotic desires Fudge writes: “the descent to the status of an animal is an utterly logical one” (60). Passions and desire can blind the reason, transform people, and reduce them to the status of animal.
Why do they call him by his name? The condition of “to recognize and yet not to recognize” stages uncertainty concerning what Bottom is because, to use Derrida’s words, “the name calls beyond presence” (qtd. in Royle 124). Quince and Snout call Bottom by name because they are not certain of what they see.

What made Snout and Quince come back in the first place? The first encounter with the transformed weaver was a coincidence, an unexpected and frightening event. Stanley Wells explains: as “the bolder of the mechanicals recover their nerve, they lurk back to test the evidence of their eyes” (101). Their need to re-view, re-read, re-examine the evidence suggests a desire to make sense, to make the unfamiliar familiar, to interpret. In his influential reading of Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* John Winkler examines the gaps between the narrator, or *auctor*, telling the story, and the character, or the actor, who experiences the events. Studying the differences between the first and second readings, Winkler argues that the complex relationship of the auctor/actor “exhibit[s] un-resolvably different meanings for first- and second-readers” (140). For Winkler, “what Apuleius tells us about the narrating I in the AA [Asinus Aureus] is exactly gauged to maximize the immediate, dramatic effectiveness of each episode for the first-reader and to be an uncanny torment about the end for the second-reader” (142). Though no narrating I exists in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the mechanicals’ return stages a similar gap as between first- and second-readers. The mechanicals’ first reaction to Bottom’s metamorphosis fixes the frightening effect of the change. They make no

---

7 In *Shakespeare’s Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom*, Cesar L. Barber traces the ways in which the holidays during the Elizabethan period contributed to the dramatic form of Shakespeare’s comedies. Barber holds that, “like children,” the mechanicals “do not discriminate between imaginary and real events, they are literal about fiction” (150-151).
reference to the nature of Bottom’s metamorphosis or to his identity. As first readers, the mechanicals are surprised by Bottom’s metamorphosis; as a threatening image of presented hybridity, it has an immediate effect on them and they run away in fear. But only as second-readers can they participate in interpretation, the uncanny torment of attempting to unravel the mystery, to try and solve the puzzle named Bottom.

Thus, returning to the stage, Snout and Quince turn from first- to second-time readers, and are able to identify Bottom. If they acknowledge Bottom in his hybrid form, why do they run away again? This question is connected to another enigma in the exchange between Snout, Quince, and Bottom. Bottom answers Snout’s question, but Snout does not reply back to Bottom. Quince makes a statement but does not wait for a response either. Is Bottom’s speech intelligible to Snout and Quince? Or is it possible that in transforming Bottom, Puck took away Bottom’s capacity to produce ordinary language? In this sense, the verb “translated” refers both to Bottom’s form and to his language. The scene might not provide quite enough evidence to confirm or refute this interpretation. Rather, Bottom’s translation remains indeterminable, if potentially over-determined.8 Whether or not Snout and Quince understand Bottom’s language, they become part of the process of extracting meaning and interpretation. They try to fill the gaps in their understanding by transforming the unfamiliar into the familiar, “O Bottom, thou art changed” (3.1.115), and ask questions that might help them decipher the situation (“what do I see on thee?”) (3.1.118). Bottom’s metamorphosis actively requires the diegetic audience to fill in the gaps, to explain the supernatural occurrence, to transform

---

8 While William C. Carroll holds that Puck transformed Bottom into an ass, other critics such as Wells and Boehrer point to the transformation as one that has both human and bestial elements.
the unfamiliar into something immanently familiar, but they fail to do so. Bottom’s metamorphosis into a hybrid is uncanny not only due to the coexistence of the familiar and the unfamiliar, but also due to the failure of the mechanicals to extract concrete meaning from the event. He is untranslatable, an image they can read but cannot understand. “The uncanny” writes Royle, “involves feeling of uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced” (1). The uncanny effect of the metamorphosis on the second-reader involves uncertainty regarding who Bottom is and what to make of it. Failing to interpret the event, the mechanicals leave the stage.

Additionally, Snout and Quince’s return makes them not only participants in an uncanny interpretation, but also harbingers of the uncanny. Though Bottom is oblivious to his metamorphosis, the reaction of his friends, which leaves him confused and frightened, is reflective – he becomes aware of the effect of his bodily change looking at the way they suddenly change. Bottom’s uncanny feeling is evoked by his uncertainty of what is being experienced. He cannot make sense of the situation, and is left alone on stage to wonder, “why do they run away?” (100) Snout and Quince’s compulsion to return to the stage haunts Bottom. He is forced to experience again the condition that frightened him in the first place—the mechanicals’ radical change of behavior. Now they become the unfamiliar-familiar image that comes back to pursue Bottom, and he can provide no explanation for their bizarre escape or recurrence.

4. Bottom’s Counterparts: Pyrocles and Don Quixote

Though stories of supernatural transformation appear in early modern literature—Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Alcina in *Orlando Furioso*, and Malbecco in
The Faerie Queene are just a few examples— they are not as common as they were in previous and even subsequent periods. In Deformed Discourse, David Williams noticed that the representation of monsters substantially decreased in early modern texts, and that the images of marvels and the monstrous were replaced by images of the dissected body (324). The latter image prevails on the early modern page and on stage, but metamorphosed bodies still figure in early modern texts. Early modern writers expanded the definition of metamorphosis (to include disguise, for example) in order to reflect the circumstances during which they were writing—that is, a period of transformation, conversion, dissimulation, and cross-cultural encounters. Thus, some metamorphoses in early modern texts such as Bottom’s might be supernatural, but others, like Pyrocles or Don Quixote’s, are physically possible. The transformations of literary characters such as Bottom, Pyrocles in Sidney’s New Arcadia, and Don Quixote in Cervantes’ work are different in language, genre, and even in type—Bottom goes through a physical metamorphosis, Pyrocles disguises himself and Don Quixote loses his sanity. Their self-awareness of their own transformation is varied: Bottom is completely ignorant of his metamorphosis, Pyrocles attempts to conceal his true self, and Don Quixote wishes to alter his identity. Despite these differences, they share two common features. First, their metamorphoses are interfictional, for each is transformed into or takes the form of yet another literary character: Puck transforms Bottom into an ass-headed-man, much like Lucius in Apuleius’ ancient novel The Golden Ass; Pyrocles puts on the attire of an Amazon, a mythological female warrior; and, captivated by books of chivalry, Alonso Quixano decides to become a knight. Second, Bottom, Pyrocles, and Don Quixote do not go through a complete metamorphosis; rather, they turn into unfamiliar-familiar hybrids.
The cross-dressing episode in Sidney’s *New Arcadia* demonstrates the uncanny features of transformation into a hybrid by unsettling the cross-dressing hybrid’s self-identified gender, defamiliarizing the reading experience, and undermining the spectator’s sensorial experience. Pyrocles enters into the domain of the pastoral and disguises himself as an Amazon to approach his beloved Philoclea and win her love.\(^9\) Pyrocles’ identity is now defined not by being a prince and a cousin and having a sense of belonging, but rather by being disguised, alone, and displaced. To gain access to Philoclea, Pyrocles must leave his prince’s attire and connections behind and turn himself completely into the figure of the Amazon. In the cross-dressing episode, Pyrocles describes his disguise to his cousin Mosidorus in a few and therefore significant words.

The disguise includes preparing the costume, renaming himself, dressing up, and adopting certain gestures, such as singing:\(^{10}\)

> Therefore, in the closest manner I could, naming myself Zelmane for the dear lady’s sake to whose memory I am so much bound, I caused this apparel to be made, and bringing it near the lodges which are hard at hand, by night thus dressed myself, […] and I gave myself to sing a little, which, as you know, I ever delighted, so now especially – whether it be the nature of this clime to stir up poetical fancies, or rather as I think, of love (142).

---

\(^9\) Philoclea’s father Basilius had consulted an oracle that probably (although we are not informed clearly) predicted he would be ruined by the marriage of one of his daughters. To escape the prophecy, he and his family withdrew to a private and isolated residence, where he prevented his daughters any contact with potential suitors.

\(^{10}\) Pyrocles’ transformation alludes to Hercules and Achilles disguises and is the focus of the next chapter. On the disguise of Achilles see Ovid *Metamorphoses* 13.162 ff, Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* iii.13.8, and *Statius*, *Achilleid*, ii.167ff.
It is the singing I wish to focus on here, for the gestures constitute the dualism of Pyrocles. When he begins to sing, he describes it as a performance he “ever delighted.” Pyrocles provides two reasons to justify his singing as an Amazon. First, the nature of his disguise (“the nature of this clime”) has changed his sense of self. Second, love has the power to transform potential dreams into reality. The disguise enables him to implement certain aspects of his own identity and express himself in singing. Consequently, his own sense of self is constructed through a structure of opposites: he is an active agent who causes “this apparel to be made” and who carries off his disguise skillfully and gracefully, and he is a passive subject, influenced by the nature of the disguise and by love, which change his “clime”.

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), John Locke writes about personal identity in a way that sheds light on Pyrocles’ identity:

> For, since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes every one to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being: and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done. (2.27.9)  

Pyrocles’ retrospective account of “his past action” undermines any sense that he is a “rational being” at the time of the transformation (“my very reason was, you will say,”

---

11 As mentioned by E. C. Riley “when Locke said “consciousness” he should have said “memory” (123).
corrupted – I must confess, conquered"). His first person account reveals that he surrenders to the “nature of this clime,” and by the end of the narrative “he” becomes “she.” For Pyrocles, the purpose of the disguise is functional, to counterfeit the appearance of an Amazon and so gain access to Philoclea. As such, he views the assimilation of the other as incomplete or partial. However, rather than being merely functional, the disguise becomes part of Pyrocles, changing Pyrocles and enabling him/her to self-express in ways impossible prior to the physical change. The debate and the first-person narrative constitute a hybrid self, each part fashioning different facets of Pyrocles’ identity. The disguise’s doubling quality produces an uncanny feeling that something long denied was gradually making itself felt. Neither the narrator nor the reader is able to determine whether it is Pyrocles’ masculine or feminine voice that narrates the story.

The metamorphosis defamiliarizes the reading experience itself for those who “read” the transformation, that is, other characters who react and respond to the metamorph, and the implied and real readers. Pyrocles’ uncanny perspective unsettles his unchanged self-identified gender, exactly because he imagines himself to be separated from the other. Sidney plays with personal identity not only in Pyrocles’ first person narrative, but also by emphasizing the narrator’s use of pronouns. At the beginning of Pyrocles’ autobiographical narrative, the narrator describes him with masculine pronouns (“he”) (140). Then, Pyrocles takes over the role of narrator and recounts his tale in the first person singular (“I”). Pyrocles tells his story retrospectively, after he has transformed himself and distanced himself from his past experiences to reconstitute

12 Here I adopt Bruce Clarke’s terminology (2008, 2).
himself (Gusdorf in Anderson 5). Thus, the “I” points to “the question of the feminine as a challenge to the masculine position of the subject” (Anderson 102). Pyrocles’ duality is acknowledged by the narrator, as can be seen at the end of his narrative. When the third-person narrator takes over the narration again (151), he intensifies Pyrocles’ double-voiced discourse by referring to Pyrocles-Zelmane both as a female (“said she”) and as a male (“said he”). Pyrocles and the third-person narrator blur the boundary lines of gender distinction. It is not the absent masculine that defines Pyrocles’ disguise, but rather the presence of both the feminine and the masculine pronouns. Consequently, the “I” that has narrated the story cannot be distinguished in terms of gender. Furthermore, the transformation creates an uncanny sensorial experience, especially through sight and sound. When he sees the Amazon for the first time, Musidorus studies her bodily appearance without at first recognizing her as his disguised cousin. When Musidorus gazes at the Amazon in the woods, he listens to her song (“Transform’d in show, but more transforme’d in mind”) (131). It is Pyrocles’ voice (and not his appearance, expression, or mindset) that reveals his identity to Musidorus: “This ditty gave him some suspicion, but the voice gave him almost assurance who the singer was” (132). The familiar voice deepens the tension between Pyrocles’ identity and his appearance. The unfamiliar form has a negative effect on Musidorus’ own voice—he is unable to speak: “wherewith not receiving so much joy to have found [Pyrocles] as grief so to have found him…he was not able to bring forth a word” (132). From Musidorus’ point of view, the voice is the only familiar aspect through which he can identify his transformed cousin.

---

13 This analysis is based on Georg Gusdorf’s characterization of the conditions and limits of autobiography in Anderson, 5.
14 In the New Arcadia, the narrator deliberately refers to the disguised Pyrocles as “he” and “she,” interchangeably.
One’s voice can be dominant or repressed; it can be sanctioned or subversive; and it can be politically, socially, or gender-inflected. In the cross-dressing episode, sight is misleading and the voice constitutes identity.

Whereas Bottom is unaware of the physical change he goes through, and only experiences its uncanny effects as reflected back to him by Snout and Quince, Don Quixote, like Pyrocles, produces the change himself, and consequently the uncanny effect of witnessing a metamorphosis happens only to the reader, as she/he uncovers Don Quixote’s hybridity through his first monologue. Since Don Quixote’s reading brings about his metamorphosis, Cervantes plays with the ideas of metamorphosis and self-knowledge and their connection to reading (or the transformative power of reading) in Quixote’s alteration, emphasizing the process of imitation. In Book 1.1, Don Quixote names himself and his horse, and he cleans his armor; then, out of a desire to find a lady to love, he says:

If I, because of my evil sins, or my good fortune, meet with a giant somewhere, as ordinarily befalls knights errant, and I unseat him with a single blow […] or, in short, conquer and defeat him, would it not be good to have someone to whom I could send him so that he might enter and fall to his knees before my sweet lady, and say in the humble voice of surrender: ‘I, lady, am the giant Caraculiambro, lord of the island Malindrania, defeated in single combat by the never sufficiently praised knight Don Quixote of La Mancha, who commanded me to appear before your ladyship, so that your highness might dispose of me as you chose’? (23)
Before this speech, the narrator describes the transformation: “he too, like a good knight, wanted to add the name of his birthplace” (23). At this point, Quixote resembles a knight, but he has yet to become one himself, and he has yet to cross the boundary lines of his reason. After the speech, however, the narrator immediately mentions, “Oh, how pleased our good knight was” (23). Thus, this speech marks the midpoint between Quixano’s sanity and Quixote’s madness.

Some scholars see Quixote’s madness as central to the novel and interpret his psychology through the Renaissance humoral theory. According to this approach, Don Quixote’s madness was evoked by his choleric temperament, excess of yellow bile that is oftentimes connected to melancholia, dehydrates the body, causes imbalance and affects his mental state: mood changes, anger attacks, and passion. In Quixote’s case, he developed a passion for reading. His excessive actions (excessive reading, lack of sleep) and the imbalance of the humors in his body affected his madness. Another group of modern scholars, such as L.A. Murillo, and early modern writers, such as Richard Brathwaite, consider Quixote’s behavior an act of transformation. Excluding Cervantes’ Don Quixote and Beaumont’s The Knight of the Burning Pestle as “frutilesse inventions, moulded onely for delight without profite” Brathwaite writes in his Schollers Medley (1614), “And last of all (which in my judgement is worst of all) others with the phantasticke writings of some supposed Knights, (Don Quixotte transformed into a Knight)” (99). Murillo writes that “while retaining certain features of age-old

15 “como buen caballero” (Cervantes 1998, 43), The emphasis is mine.
16 “Oh, cómo se holgo’ nuestro buen caballero” (Cervantes 44).
17 See Dale Shuger 3-4.
18 See also Randall and Boswell 2009, 22.
mythological ‘tales of metamorphosis,’ [Quixote] is itself a marvelous transformation of such narratives into a story of great psychological and moral complexity” (1). Thus, though madness is central to the novel, and though humoral theory can provide an explanation for Quixote’s behavior, *Don Quixote* can also be read as a transformation narrative in itself: it is a novel that focuses on the metamorphosis of the self, as well as on the metamorphosis of the text.

Why, then, does Don Quixote’s speech play such a significant part in his transformation? This is the first time in the narrative in which Don Quixote speaks. The narrator allows us to enter a unique place—the hero’s illusion. Alonso Quixano’s imagination and flawed logic create a world in which Don Quixote can exist. Before the speech, in his own mind he has yet to become a knight-errant. In this speech, he plays a double role: the knight Quixote who identifies himself with the fictional situation (“if I … meet with a giant somewhere”), and the defeated giant (“I, lady, am the giant Carcauliambro). While Pyrocles’ first narrative unsettles gender identity to the extent that the narrator and the reader cannot determine whether it is his masculine or feminine voice that recounted the story, Don Quixote incorporates more than one other. He is both conqueror and conquered; both self and the other. Here the blurring between self and other points to metamorphosis as a process of creating identity. It is not the disappearance of Quixano that defines Quixote’s identity, but rather the presence of Quixano, Quixote, and the giant, that is, the coexistence of the real and the imaginary. The “I” that has narrated the illusionary speech is a mixture of different selves. Don Quixote’s hybridity is polarized by assuming oppositions: the knight and the giant, the conqueror and the conquered, the real and imaginary. He establishes a division between the familiar knight
and the unfamiliar giant, not realizing that the knight Don Quixote is the uncanny double of Quixano as well.

Crossing the boundary lines of reason, Quixote has now completed his physical and mental transformation. Moreover, the speech is significant in that it initiates an action: on the next day Don Quixote will arm himself and embark on a journey. Cervantes also invites the reader on a journey, one that depicts the world in an unfamiliar way. Through Quixote’s eyes, the world is in a constant transformation, but it does not go through a processual development of the cosmos from creation to its current state in a Hesiodian or an Ovidan sense; rather the reader sees images of radical transformation: giants turn to windmills (I.8) and ladies to prostitutes (I.2); all the fabulous images of Quixote’s imagination unravel as familiar, mundane, and even grotesque. The reader is invited, like Hermia in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, to see double: to see the world as divided, to look at it from Don Quixote’s point of view and to recognize its absurdity at the same time.

5. Counter-Transformation, the Failure of Language, and the Play’s Theory of Metamorphosis

Pyrocles’ hybridity underlines the uncanny effect of his transformation in relation to self-identity, to the spectator’s sensorial experience, and to the reading experience. Don Quixote’s speech focuses readers’ attention on the quixotic process of creation and metamorphosis, and, at the same time, serves to distance the reader from that process. The metamorphoses of literary characters into fictional ones that are already embedded in the literary tradition represent both the function of the transformed characters as hybrids and the uncanny effect of “reading” such images. Similarly, Bottom’s physical and
lingual “translation” becomes an uncanny image that mirrors the play’s major theme of metamorphosis and the metamorphosis’ uncanny reflexivity upon the audience. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is a play about transformations. Each of the characters transforms in one way or another: the actors who play Theseus and Hippolyta also play the role of the king and queen of the Fairies (Calderwood 410-411), and thus Oberon and Titania become an uncanny echo of Thesues and Hippolyta; the lovers go through moral degradation; the mechanicals transform the Ovidian myth into a comedy and are transformed themselves into different parts in the “tragical mirth”; the queen of the fairies falls in love with an ass; and even Puck describes his protean nature (3.1.96-97). *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* also occupies itself with the language of metamorphosis. The words ‘translate,’ ‘transpose,’ ‘transform,’ and ‘transfigure’ appear throughout the play, often as synonyms. Translation has a direct connection to the body: when Helena wishes she could resemble Hermia in her physical features she uses the word ‘translate,’ “The rest I’d give to be translated” (1.1.191). She is also the one to define love in terms of transformation: “Things base and vile, holding no quantity, / Love can transpose to form and dignity” (1.1.232-3). Hippolyta uses the word ‘transfigure’ as an umbrella term for all the transformations in the play (5.1.24). Finally, the word ‘transform’ appears once, when Oberon asks Puck to change Bottom’s form back.

The return from the metamorphic condition, or the counter-transformation, is an experience that defies language. Falling asleep at the beginning of Act 4, Bottom is still a hybrid, and Titania’s arms “[g]ently entwist” him (4.1.40). Waking up, Bottom regains
his human form and finds himself alone on stage. While critics link the intertextual ties of Bottom’s initial metamorphosis to other stories of transformation, they do not describe Bottom’s return from the metamorphic condition in such terms. When analyzing Bottom’s second transformation scholars tend to focus merely on Bottom’s awakening and “rare vision,” not on the metamorphosis itself. Dennis J. Huston, for example, writes, “when he wakens Bottom from charmed sleep…[Shakespeare] is bringing [him] back from the diffusive world of sleep and dream” (221). Barkan also focuses on Bottom’s awakening (“Bottom, who awakens moments after the young lovers, defines his experience differently”) and in doing so passes over the metamorphosis to study Bottom’s soliloquy and its connections to St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians. As we shall see, the analysis of Bottom’s awakening is often associated with the Biblical reference to St. Paul. But the counter-transformation has a long literary tradition. I argue that thinking of Bottom’s counter transformation in light of the rich history of literary metamorphosis produces a fuller reading of Bottom’s famous soliloquy.

The counter-transformation is itself an uncanny experience. In the Odyssey, Circe turns Odysseus’s men into pigs. Though the men are eventually transformed back into humans, they don’t regain their original shapes; rather, they become younger, taller, and more handsome: “And they turned men again: younger than ever, taller by far, more handsome to the eye . . . and a terrible sobbing echoed through the house” (Homer

---

19 Linda Perkins Wilder argues that the changing speech prefixes in the 1600 Quarto, the 1619 Quarto, and the 1623 Folio show that Bottom’s identity is divided throughout the play between different names, “Clown,” “Pyramus,” and “Bottom”; and that his character does not represent “a firm allegiance to a single, imperturbable identity but of a willingness to accept and finally transform, numerous identities” (58). Waking up and regaining his human shape, Bottom also returns to his own name and “reconstructs himself” (57).
10.436-40). In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Io is transformed into a cow.²⁰ Nothing from her original human form remains, and Io is locked inside the beast, voiceless. Io wanders around the world in her metamorphosed form until she arrives in Egypt, where she regains her human form: “Io at once began regaining her lost looks, . . . / nothing remained of her bovine nature . . . / and for a time feared speaking, lest she moo / and so quite timidly regained her speech” (I.1020-1031). Ovid’s double voice, the comic and the grave, figures prominently in the text, and especially in this episode.²¹ The metamorphic experience is traumatic for Io. Her own voice becomes strange to her to the point that she fears “lest she moo,” and this anxiety remains even after she regains her human form. Lucius’s moment of counter-transformation in *The Golden Ass* has neither physical nor psychological effects, but rather spiritual. Lucius regains his human form only to go through a spiritual metamorphosis and join the cult of Isis:

As for me, I stood transfixed in silent stupefaction. My mind could not take in this sudden overwhelming joy, and I did not know what I ought to say first, how I should begin to use my new gift of speech, which would be the most auspicious expression with which to celebrate the rebirth of my tongue, what were the most suitable words in which to utter my thanks to so great a goddess (11.14).

---

²⁰ Critics are still divided on how to classify Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*—as a comprehensive epic, like Virgil’s, or as a mock epic, a parody of the form. Karl Galinsky highlights Ovid’s poem as an epic whole. He argues that the poem’s unity and coherence do not depend on being Augustan and anti-Augustan, epic and anti-epic, Virgilian and anti-Virgilian, but rather on love. Galinsky understands the metamorphoses in Ovid’s work as meaningful, because they allow us to focus on the character of the person who goes through the change. Though the physical characteristics of Io “are subject to change,” her “quintessential substance lives on” (45).

²¹ Andrew Feldherr suggests that Ovid challenges the Roman readers’ conventional ways of reading, providing new interpretive strategies and modes of identification—in this case, identifying with the metamorphosed victims rather than the gods (343).
Lucius’ spiritual experience is a result of the vision of the goddess, of regaining his human form and his ability to speak.\textsuperscript{22}

Interestingly, all three instances of counter-transformation involve the inadequacy of language. As soon as Odysseus’s men recognize him, they utter no words; the sound of their sobbing replaces language, filling Circe’s palace with a terrible echo—the only vocal representation of their suffering and trauma. Io, frightened of her own \textit{mugium} (mooing) fearfully tests her ability to speak. Finally, Lucius declares that he was so overwhelmed by the joy of regaining his “gift of speech” that he became transfixed to the point of silence. The counter-transformation is a bodily experience of such intensity that even when it is not remembered, it has a significant effect on the senses, the mind, and language. Accordingly, Bottom’s soliloquy points to the failure of language to express the experience: “I have had a most rare / vision. I have had a dream past the wit of man to say what / dream it was” (4.1.200–201). The metamorphosis from human to beast and back to human is an experience that surpasses words as well—“methought I was, and methought I had”; Bottom is unable to fill in the blanks. Several commentators maintain that Bottom’s inability to describe the experience is a result of his folly.\textsuperscript{23} I would like to argue that Bottom’s counter-transformation is an overwhelming experience, one that defies language and leaves the protagonist confused and bewildered. Regaining their human form, Odysseus’s men weep; Io keeps her silence in fear; Lucius, transfixed,

\textsuperscript{22} Vered Lev Kenaan shows that in Apuleius’s work the language of dreams is closely connected to the fictional language of the novel, and suggests that “the literary conception of a metamorphosis is intrinsically tied to the world of dreams” (262).

\textsuperscript{23} See especially Barkan 263–64 and Greenfield 244.
stands voiceless; and Bottom tries to express what he was and what he had, but, like the rest, he fails.

Bottom is not the only one whose language is inadequate. Different characters try to explain transformative experiences, but they provide deficient interpretation: the mechanicals fail to understand Bottom’s metamorphosis; waking up, the lovers try to distinguish their experiences, but decide to abandon this attempt, and putting the experience behind them they leave the forest. Denouncing everything within the play as illusory, Theseus’ meta-critical approach strips the metamorphosis from its meaning:

And as imagination bodies forth

The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen

Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing

A local habitation and a name (5.1.14-17)

This speech is commonly understood as a rejection of the lovers’ experience, reframing and dismissing it as a fantasy. Shakespeare includes Theseus’ perspective as a representation of a critical detachment from the play within the play. Through negation, Theseus characterizes the imagination’s ability to create, to transform, and to give name. Though the mechanicals exclude Bottom and run away in fear, and Theseus negates the hybrid’s very existence, Shakespeare invites Hippolyta to portray an inclusive theory of art and imagination, one that gives hybridity and transformation a central place. For Hippolyta art is not autonomous, or self-sufficient; rather, its fantastical aspects have considerable symbolic ramifications, shared by all:
But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together,
More witnesseth than fancy’s images,
And grows to something of great constancy
But howsoever, strange and admirable (5.1.23-27)

Hippolyta’s inclusive theory bestows the “minds transfigured so together” with
“something of great constancy” but does not fill the blanks of what that “great constancy”
is.

These views suggest different approaches to metamorphosis: Hippolyta provides a
more religious explanation, while Theseus provides a rationalized approach; both the
lovers and the mechanicals are unable to interpret the metamorphosis, but they have
different responses: the lovers reject the whole experience, and the mechanicals, the only
human characters that encountered Bottom’s hybridity face-to-face, represent the
inability to find meaning and as a result develop intense emotions and fear. Though
varied explanations are suggested, there remains a sense of enigma, of the unexplained.
Metamorphosis into a state of hybridity is a visual image, an uncanny experience whose
mystery cannot be explained within the world of the play. The presence of Bottom as a
“translated” image points to both his visual and textual faculties. The difficulty to explain
the visual (Bottom: “Methought I was, and methought I had”; Demetrius: “These things
seem small and undistinguishable”; Hermia: “Methink I see these things with parted eye,
when everything seems double”), leads to an attempt to find the explanation in the textual
plain of rereading and interpretation; that is, in the uncanny gap between the response of
the diegetic audience and of the external audience.
6. Metamorphosis’ Uncanny Reflexivity

Bottom’s metamorphosis into a hybrid becomes an uncanny “object of reflection” through which viewers encounter their own hybridity and interpret (or fail to interpret) meaning.²⁴ It is this reflection, however, that creates a gap between the audience and the mechanical’s reaction to Bottom’s metamorphosis. The diegetic and external viewers react to the visual representation of Bottom’s hybridity in two opposite ways, fear and laughter, which intensifies both Bottom’s uncanny reflective response to the mechanicals’ return and the comic nature of the situation. The mechanicals fail to interpret; they are unable to understand the transformation. The audience laughs at more than the grotesque appearance of Bottom. Bottom’s metamorphosis is the first and only image in the play to impress on the audience the understanding that what it perceives mirrors its own anxieties. With the metamorphosis of Bottom, the world of the play changes radically; the audience no longer shares the lovers’ and the mechanicals’ points of view, but, like Bottom, can see what other characters cannot see—the world of the fairies. Once Bottom’s hybridity takes place, he leads the external audience deep into the forest. Sharing Bottom’s point of view and language (assuming Bottom was “translated” both in body and speech), the audience is denied their status as objective viewers, as they begin to perceive the world as Bottom does. Bottom’s hybridity produces in the audience the ability to see doubles: the lovers’ degraded selves and Titania and Oberon as doubles of Theseus and Hippolyta. The mechanicals, surprised by the metamorphosis, cannot

²⁴ The term “object of reflection” is drawn from Vered Lev Kenaan’s analysis of Pandora as an “object of reflection” (23) in Hesiod’s work. The response and reaction of the diegetic audience to the appearance of Pandora reveals the spectators’ aesthetic appreciation of the world. Lev Kenaan’s reading informs mine. However, in my reading Bottom’s function as an “object of reflection” is not so much for the diegetic spectators but rather for the external audience.
understand it, and run away in fear. It is when the diegetic audience escapes that the external audience begins to see with “parted eye” without realizing it. Bottom’s comic behavior familiarizes the unfamiliar, making the eerie environs of the forest more welcoming. As he moves deeper into the forest audiences become Bottom’s double, for they too are part of a social-religious transformation, and, though Bottom is unaware of his physical change, he reflects their own hybridity.

If Bottom’s physical metamorphosis into a hybrid reflects the audience’s uncanny blindness, what, then, is the significance of the return from the metamorphic state? In the world of the play, Bottom’s hybridity enables him to expand his sensorium beyond the human experience, and the soliloquy that follows his counter-transformation reveals a return to a more limited perception, thus undermining the stability and supremacy of the human. Upon his transformation back into human form, Bottom experiences a “rare vision”:

Methought I was—there is no man can tell what.
Methought I was, and methought I had—but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. (4.1.202–7)

As several scholars have noted, Bottom’s words echo St. Paul’s in the New Testament: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things
which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

This speech has been interpreted in a number of ways: as a synesthetic experience (Garber 232); as a fusion between flesh and spirit (Bloom 3); as an enigmatic vision of high importance (Kermode 219); and as “a revaluation of those ‘unpresentable’ members of society (Patterson 69).” After several attempts to play all the parts, Bottom is finally at center stage, and he uses this opportunity in a striking way—his rhetoric defines the limits of the human.

Though Bottom is not aware of his transformation, the bodily change had an influence on his sensory apparatus. Regaining his human form, Bottom first finds it difficult to speak; language fails him. But as soon as he is able to use words correctly again, Bottom becomes the voice that describes man’s deficiencies, thus expressing the fundamental characteristics of the human: our eyes are unable to hear, our ears indeed are unable to see, our tongue is unable to conceive, and our hearts cannot report. On an empty stage, he voices the human’s inabilities, limitations, and inadequacies rather than its capacities to learn and create. The transformation of Bottom into a hybrid marks a change in each of his human senses: touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight; he has experienced both natures, the man and the beast, and that experience of becoming animal bestows him with the ability to look at the human from the point of view of “an other”.

---

25 1 Corinthians 2.9–10. Frank Kermode illustrates that Lucius, St. Paul, and Bottom all share “transformation and experience of divine love.” However, Bottom’s vision differs from that of the others, for his is an enigmatic dream of high importance, while the others’ blind love for a god is considered a phantasma (209). On the allusions of Bottom’s soliloquy to St. Paul’s words see also Barkan 263 and Greenblatt 843. On the connections between Bottom’s synesthesia, St. Paul’s text, and theatrical phenomenology see Jennifer Waldron 413-414.

26 Patterson argues that Bottom’s dream gives voice to those who are at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

27 Bottom’s animalistic apparatus and hybrid perspective brings to mind Ludwig Wittgenstein’s passage: “If a lion could talk, we could not understand him” (223).
From this point of view, he describes the human in terms of negation, defining our condition as an uncanny state of lack.

The encounter with Titania subsequent to the metamorphosis presents a transition to a divine authority and provides a setting in which Bottom is forced to conform. The world of the fairies is a place of enchantments. The play differentiates between Theseus’s day world of the court and Oberon’s fairy world of the night. In Northrop Frye’s words, the woods constitutes “a fairyland with its own laws of time and space” (43), a place where desires, dreams, and supernatural metamorphoses can take shape. The fairies’ supernatural environment provides the setting for what Sarah Carter calls a “communion of the divine with the mortal.”28 The metamorphosis enables Bottom to see and understand the language of the fairies, and therefore he tries to accommodate himself to the new situation. At first, Bottom expresses his desire to leave the forest “But if I had wit enough to get out of / this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn” (3.1.132-3). But when Titania rejects his request and forces him to stay “Out of this wood do not desire to go. Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no” (3.1.134-135), his hybrid identity is marked by an uncanny ability to be at home anywhere. Bottom’s physical hybridity also attests to his adaptability: he is able to acquire a new language and to find a place for himself and a sense of belonging. After his banishment by the mechanicals, he must conform to a religious affiliation. Not only is he forced to stay outside the city walls of Athens, but also to adapt to new customs, a new language, and a new figure of

28 Focusing on Neo-platonic imagery in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Sarah Carter shows that “[t]he fairies represent the divine aspect of the play” and that the encounter between Bottom and Titania reflects both Neoplatonic and Christian imagery of ascent and descent, whereas “[t]he aim of humanity should be to ascend to the divine and leave behind the sensual appetites associated with animals, and this is facilitated through love.”
religious authority who wishes to purify him of his mortality (“purge thy mortal
grossness so” 3.1.142). Under these circumstances, much like practices of dissimulation
and self-fashioning during the reformation and counter-reformation, Bottom conforms to
a new way of life.

While the encounter with the divine represents Bottom’s ability to conform, his
jumbled language during his transformation back into human form attests to the
difficulties of transforming from one state to another and of reintegrating into human
language and perception. Bottom’s hybridity, therefore, represents two aspects of the
English Reformation. His physical hybridity could be read as an image of the social
anxiety of dissimulation, of the encounter with the unfamiliar-familiar, and his
adaptability testifies to the need to conform under changes of religious authorities. The
counter-transformation, therefore, is a process of regaining not only his human form, but
also the language and the terminology of the human society he left. After being banned
from society due to his hybridity and having adapted to a situation of forced conformity,
Bottom must regain the language to re-conform, again, to the authority of Theseus’
world. As we can see, Bottom’s language upon regaining his human form also attests to
his double hybridity, the bodily and the linguistic. The physical hybridity produces a
synesthetic experience that expands his senses and as such he describes the human state
from the point of view of “the other” as a state of lack. The linguistic hybridity is a
compound of ordinary human language prior and subsequent to the metamorphosis and
the language of the fairies; using human bodily imagery to express his spiritual encounter
with the divine (Titania), Bottom, who adapted the language of the senses to conform to
Titania’s authority, now needs to regain his former human language and terminology.
Misquoting St. Paul’s aphorism serves to establish Bottom’s inner transformation by adopting a new language, one that is separate from the language of the fairies, and at the same time quite familiar to Shakespeare’s audience. Though Bottom does not present any sort of religious affiliation prior to his transformation or after his counter-transformation, he describes his metamorphic experience using religious aphorisms that are well known to the audience. The misrepresentation of St. Paul’s words stages the assimilation of one system of terms (physical) into another (religious) and the real problems of language as people move from one religious authority to another. In addition, it represents a textual image of religious conflict, whether it occurs in a society or an individual, and thus of the effects that different uses and misuses of sacred texts can have on real bodies and identities.

Repeating the familiar ideas of St. Paul with differences, the scene produces comic and uncanny effects, exemplifying the differences between the character, first-readers, and second-readers. For Bottom, language becomes uncanny, familiar but altogether insufficient and alien to his experiences. The first-reader (or first-time viewer) will enjoy and laugh at Bottom’s expense. But this innocent pleasure is misleading. Bottom’s perversion of St. Paul’s aphorism crystallizes the Elizabethan social circumstances of a culture moving from one religion to another, each religious sect seeing the other as misreading the Bible. Thus, coupled with the laughter that Bottom’s hybridity and the failure of language produce is the uncanny expression of his transformation, an uncanniness that could reflect back to the audience their own hybrid time of religious upheaval. This uncanny realization cannot find an explanation within the play’s theory of transformation, but only during the process of interpretation and
rereading. With the decline of magic and fairy-beliefs during the century after the Reformation, the haunting persistence of the uncanny is a trace of socio-religious conflicts rather than fairy-mythology.\textsuperscript{29} After the Reformation, religious authorities in Tudor and Stuart England favored what Keith Thomas terms “the ideology of self-help” over “supernatural aid” which undermined the more primitive explanations provided by magic, fairies, and ghosts.\textsuperscript{30} By staging Bottom’s uncanny hybridity and the failures of both interpretation and language, the play points to the fear of disguised otherness as a result of religious conflicts within society, and of the difficulties of identity formation under volatile religious circumstances.

\textsuperscript{29} Keith Thomas has argued that by the late sixteenth century Protestants, especially Puritans, thought of fairies and ghosts as the invention of the Catholic Middle Ages “devised by Popish priests to cover up their knaveries” (610). Despite the medieval church’s hostility towards fairy mythology, this view was common in the century after the Reformation.

\textsuperscript{30} Reginald Scot opens \textit{The Discoverie of Witchcraft} (1584) and writes: “The fables of witchcraft have taken so fast hold and deepe root in the heart of man, that few or none can indure with patience the hand and correction of God” (1). In his book, Scot criticizes the belief in witchcraft and magic, and instead favors reason and the belief in God. Though banned by King James VI, Scot’s book influenced early modern writers and playwrights, including Shakespeare. On Scot’s skepticism and on his influence see Philip C. Almond.
Chapter 2:

“Transform’d in show, but more transform’d in mind”: Pyrocles’ Interfictional Transformation and Dissimulation in the *New Arcadia*

1. Fixed and Unfixed Texts: The Arcadias’ Publication History

   In 1584, Sir Philip Sidney wrote the last words of the *Revised Arcadia*, ending the text in mid-battle, where the transformed Pyrocles (now Zelmane) fights the brutal Anaxius:

   But Zelmane strongly putting it by with his right-hand sword, coming in with her left foot and hand, would have given a sharp visitation to his right side, but that he was fain to leap away. Whereat ashamed, as having never done so much before in his life. *(NA 595)*

   It is a battle for life, during which the reader’s attention moves from one hero to the other. At the same time, we witness the transformation of Zelmane from an Amazon to a man, as the narrator uses both the name “Pyrocles” and “Zelmane” interchangeably. But Sidney leaves the battle, the text, and the transformation unfinished—forever in progress, in the process of becoming.

   The previous chapter considered the manner in which Bottom’s transformation into a familiar-unfamiliar hybrid produces an uncanny effect, an effect lying at the heart of the reading experience of “the others within” in early modern literature. This chapter offers a new reading of Pyrocles’ cross-dressing episode in the *New Arcadia* by

---

1 See Katherine Duncan-Jones 256.
interpreting it as a transformation, and focusing on its interfictional features and on readers’ responses to Pyrocles’ textual and intertextual hybridity.

The _Countess of Pembroke Arcadia_ is a text about transformations. It is a multilayered work both in terms of meaning and of its publication history. The first version, the _Old Arcadia_, was written between 1577 and 1580. This version was only circulated in manuscript form and was not published until the beginning of the twentieth century. Before his death in 1586, Sidney began to rewrite the _Arcadia_, but he never finished it. The revisions include additions to the first three books (he added the adventures of the heroes before they reach Arcadia, and created a much more complicated plot). Sidney’s revisions were substantial, as Duncan-Jones explains:

The 'New' Arcadia is much more than a revision of the 'Old'. Though there are many passages in the first two books of 'revision' in the narrow sense, where sentences have been rearranged, images added, adjectives changed and comments expanded, much of what is most memorable in it is wholly new. Not only is the 'New' version in every sense larger than the 'Old', it has a quite different imaginative climate, in which the problems and dilemmas faced by the characters are often insoluble; there is no 'right' course of action. (260)

The _New Arcadia_ (published posthumously in 1593) includes the three revised books written before Sidney’s death, and the unrevised two books of the _Old Arcadia_.

---

2 In 1590, after Sidney’s death, his friend Fulke Greville published the three unfinished revised books. In 1593, Sidney’s sister added books four and five of the _Old Arcadia_ (OA), and made some alterations (especially filling gaps in the narrative, as the revised _Arcadia_ ends in mid sentence), and published her own version, now known as the _New Arcadia_ (NA), the hybrid text that is the focus of my work. For the publication history of the _Old_ and the _New Arcadia_ see Skretkowicz 1986, 111-124. Skertkowicz’ version of
Arcadia left a gap in the narrative (between the princes’ imprisonment and their return home safely)\(^3\) that different translators and editors have tried to bridge. Thus, the text we read today is a transformed text, a hybrid text of mixed origins and compositions.

But the New Arcadia is also a transformed text because of how it “compromises” (to use Dennis Looney’s terminology) both classical models and the Old Arcadia itself. Sidney was interested in the use of different genres, as we see in The Defence of Poesy, where he discusses the advantages of mixing genres, prose and verse, and subject matters. Sidney writes, “Some [poesies] have mingled matters heroical and pastoral. But that cometh all to one in this question, for, if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful” (229).\(^4\) Regina Schneider points out that this statement should not be taken as a dismissal of generic distinctions. Rather, she writes, “[Sidney] sees a proper understanding of the specific forms and functions of these genres and their relation to each other as essential for any poet who is serious about his craft” (xviii). In comparison to the Old Arcadia, the revised text expands the use of epic features (heroic endeavors, the use of retrospective narratives) and contains direct allusions and reworking of specific episodes one can find in Virgil’s Aeneid.\(^5\) By drawing on and incorporating classical generic features and combining them in new ways, Sidney reactivates those sources, as Thomas Greene understands it, while also undermining them. Though this technique

\(^{3}\) New Arcadia 12.

\(^{4}\) Citations from the Defence of Poesy are from Duncan-Jones edition.

\(^{5}\) On Sidney’s use of heroic and pastoral features see Margaret Dana; on the New Arcadia’s allusions to Virgil’s Aeneid see Donald Stump, especially pp. 6-14.
draws attention to the similarities, it especially highlights the differences between the New Arcadia and its sources. Consequently, this chapter explores Pyrocles’ interfictional transformation, highlighting the points of deviation from and innovation in relation to its sources.

While the Old Arcadia is written according to the tradition of the romance, the genre of the New Arcadia has received much critical attention, mainly due to how difficult it is to categorize and classify the work as belonging to one genre or another. Scholars continue to scrutinize and try to identify the genre of the New Arcadia. This chapter focuses on the similarities and differences between the Arcadia and Classical works such as the epics of Homer and Virgil, Virgil’s Eclogues, and Greek Romance, especially the works of Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus. In the introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of the New Arcadia, Maurice Evans writes that “[i]t has been called a pastoral romance, an Arcadian epic, a Greek romance, an heroic epic, an heroic romance; and this is not merely a matter of label, for each of these literary ‘kinds’ had its own body of theory and its own set of conventions” (20). Thus, from the very beginning, the New Arcadia’s hybrid state poses questions of closure, form, and especially genre, because it models itself according to disparate, even contradictory, literary forms.

Not only is Old Arcadia’s generic affiliation apparent, but it is also a complete text, and as such it is easier for scholars to discuss its features: narrative structure, character development, generic tropes, and so on. The New Arcadia, on the other hand, is not a fixed text, as Kathryn Schwartz describes it: “Concluding in midsentence, in midbattle, and on the note of a contested pronoun, the revised Arcadia suggests that the plot has become intractable, its teleology hard to imagine” (180). Sidney’s altered and
more complex plot produces complications rather than resolutions, and the interlaced narratives ultimately produce unresolved conflicts. In his innovative study *Sir Philip Sidney: Rebellion in Arcadia*, Richard C. McCoy explores the political implication of the ‘Old’ and ‘New’ *Arcadia* through the theme of rebellion (a theme that Sidney expands in the *New Arcadia*). McCoy writes that “all of these narrative tendencies suggest difficulties with the material that frustrate comprehension and closure” (163). Consequently, narrative ambivalence originates in Sidney’s text and reflects his own conflict with authority (163). McCoy’s insightful reading of Sidney’s unfinished work as one that mirrors an ongoing conflict between authority and autonomy pervades Sidney’s political and social life and sheds light on the paradox of Pyrocles’ transformation, one that has sparked the critical imagination of many scholars. Pyrocles’ interfictional transformation into an Amazon, I argue, reflects the complications and conflicts in Sidney’s work.

2. “thou woman, or boy, or both”: Transformation and Interpretation

When Sidney revised his *Arcadia*, along with his elaboration of the narrative of the two princes, Musidorus and Pyrocles, he made two significant changes that are directly connected to Pyrocles’ transformation. On a structural level, Pyrocles in the *New Arcadia* replaces the narrator of the *Old Arcadia* and tells the story of his cross-dressing from a retrospective, first-person point of view. Such a change in structure calls attention to Sidney’s emphasis on the effect of Pyrocles’ transformation for the individual, private subject. Sidney also changed the pin Pyrocles carries with him from a pin of a dove and an eagle in the *Old Arcadia* to a pin of a cross-dressed Hercules, alluding to the story of

---

6 On readings of the *NA* as unfinished and conflicted see also Hunt.
Omphale enslaving the Classical hero,⁷ which invites intertextual interpretations of similar episodes from classical mythology and literature.⁸ These two changes function as the starting point for my discussion of Pyrocles’ transformation’s interfictional nature and effect.

In “a fine close arbour” (131) that serves as his “melancholy retiring place” (140), Pyrocles tells his cousin Musidorus the story of his transformation. Through first-person narration, Pyrocles recounts the suffering, confusion, and love that led to his transformation into an Amazon (NA 140-141). For Pyrocles, this account of his own experiences is an important aspect of recreating his identity. Studying the revisions of Sidney’s work, Regina Schneider points out that “the structural device of retrospective narrative was at the heart of Sidney’s revisions” (17). The retrospective narrative, Schneider suggests, enables the characters to recount past actions and thus incorporate necessary information; and by doing so they “become semi-omniscient narrators themselves” (116). Though the retrospective narrative places the hero as the narrator of his own life, Pyrocles’ retrospective narrative can be considered autobiographical.

Autobiography is an individual’s retrospective narrative concerning his or her own existence and focusing on his or her individual life, in particular on personality development (Philippe Lejeune qtd. in Linda Anderson 2). Autobiography is distinguished from autobiographical narrative. Autobiography is usually produced by a

---

⁷ According to the myth of Hercules (which appears in Ovid’s Heroides and Fasti), the hero was sold to Omphale, Queen of Lydia, as a slave to purify himself from the consequences of Iphitus’ murder. Omphale dresses him in her cloths and asks him to perform some stereotypically feminine work, such as spinning (Heroides, “Deianira to Hercules” 80 and Fasti 2.305-357).

⁸ See Elizabeth B. Bearden 87.
real person and is in written form. The tale told by Pyrocles is an oral narrative told by a fictional character. Therefore, although his account is not an autobiography, we can think of it as containing autobiographical features. Pyrocles’ account of his own experiences is an important aspect in constructing his identity through self-narration.\(^9\) When he relates his story, his awareness of himself is removed in time from the events themselves. It is a remembered and represented self that enables him to redefine his identity in the present.\(^10\)

When Musidorus sees the Amazon in the woods, he listens to her song “Transform’d in show, but more transforme’d in mind” (131). Pyrocles’ transformation is a process that includes both mental and physical changes. In the cross-dressing episode, Pyrocles describes the course of events that led him to become an Amazon. He begins his story by saying the following to Musidorus: “then began the fatal overthrow of all my liberty when, walking among the pictures in Kalander’s house, you yourself delivered unto me what you had understood of Philoclea […] ; there were mine eyes infected, and at your mouth did I drink my poison” (140). In his exposition, Pyrocles describes his love as a deadly experience. His passion for Philoclea manifests itself in two phases: first he

---

\(^9\) When referring to self-narration, narratology distinguishes between the “narrated self” and the “narrating self,” the “self that can reflect upon itself” (Michael Bamberg 137). Monika Fludernik writes, “Identity, moreover, is (re)constituted continuously in our self-narrations. We do not merely tell stories about our recent experience in which we try to make ourselves look good; we also narrate and retell our lives to ourselves. In order to create continuity between past and present, in order to lend meaning to the experiences that we have undergone, we construct a story of our life” (262).

\(^10\) Musidorus, Pyrocles’ cousin, disguises himself as well as a shepherd. His disguise, however, lacks a direct intertextual connection, and therefore it is not the focus of this chapter.
hears about Philoclea from Musidorus, and later he sees her portrait with his own eyes.\textsuperscript{11} Though Philoclea is not a ghost, at this stage of the narrative she is spectral, a “non-present present” to quote Derrida (5). It is her absence and intangibility that haunt Pyrocles. Desire is a poison with both visual and verbal effects. Once he falls in love with Philoclea, Pyrocles’ sense of self begins to destabilize (140-1). He highlights his misery (“poor wretch”), sees himself as a victim (“the fatal overthrow of all my liberty”), and describes himself as divided (“arguing with myself”). At this point in the narrative, Sidney emphasizes that the prince has been subdued by a power stronger than reason—love.

Pyrocles’ language of love brings to mind Kristeva’s assertion that “in the rapture of love the limits of one’s own identity vanish” (\textit{Tales of Love} 2). By falling in love, Pyrocles’ former arguments regarding his self-identified gender are undermined, and his sense of \textit{self} is destabilized: “But, alas, what resistance was there, when ere long my very reason was, you will say, corrupted – I must confess, conquered” (141). This change enables the lover to incorporate the “other” so to achieve closeness with his beloved: “love… had put in my head thus to disguise myself that under that mask I might, if it were possible, get access; and what access could bring forth commit to fortune and industry, determining to bear the countenance of an Amazon” (142). Failing to resist,

\textsuperscript{11} Voice and gaze are two important aspects of Pyrocles’ alteration, both in initiating love and in revealing his true identity. See chapter 1, “Bottom’s Counterparts: Pyrocles and Don Quixote.”
Pyrocles yields to Eros, and taking on the form of an Amazon, he renames himself Zelmane and crosses the boundary lines of his own nobility, gender, and reason.\textsuperscript{12}

The act of renaming Pyrocles/Zelmane accomplishes more than accommodation. As E. C. Riley notes, identity is related to “the epistemological status” of names (114); that is, the problem of naming and renaming is connected to the problem “of identifying things” (115). Pyrocles/Zelmane recreates his own identity so he is able to act according to (what he perceives to be) behavior typical of an Amazon. The act of naming and renaming is associated not with material reality but rather with literary existence. Yet in the text naming and transformation do not belong to the same literary tradition. While the name Zelmane is associated with Pyrocles’ diegetic past, the transformation itself is connected to the text’s literary past. It is both intertextual and intratextual, both a public display and a private memory. The original Zelmane disguised herself as a boy to stay close to her beloved, Pyrocles. But she paid a price for her proximity, and sacrificed herself in Pyrocles’ service. Though she is already dead, the original Zelmane relives in Pyrocles/Zelmane’s new identity. This reanimation of the dead also gives Zelmane of the past a spectral voice, one that is inevitably connected to the notion of the uncanny and the unfamiliar-familiar. Though he takes her name, Pyrocles cannot serve as a substitute for Zelmane. Yet, she is assimilated into Pyrocles/Zelmane’s identity. At the same time that Pyrocles/Zelmane bestows her with a voice, he also silences her. The original Zelmane disguised as a man to be close to Pyrocles, the man she loved; Pyrocles imitates Zelmane’s subterfuge, and directs it towards the object of his love, Philoclea. Zelmane’s

\textsuperscript{12} From this point on, I use “Pyrocles/Zelmane” when referring to the transformed Pyrocles to underline his hybridity. When discussing the character prior to the transformation, I use “Pyrocles.” I usually use masculine pronouns when referring to Pyrocles/Zelmane to highlight his underground masculine identity.
voice is present and absent simultaneously. Though he remembers her by taking her name and using her cross-dressing tactic, Pyrocles/Zelmane speaks in a double voice, expressing the love she once felt for him and directing it to someone else.

The double-voiced discourse also manifests itself in Pyrocles/Zelmane’s rhetoric. From his speech to Musidorus one clearly understands that Pyrocles/Zelmane considers himself a man (“there is nothing I desire more than fully to prove myself a man in this enterprise” *NA* 136) and is only impersonating the character of an Amazon (“even this estate of Amazons, which I now for my greatest honor do seek to counterfeit” 135). At the same time, the grammatical structure “we men” (“and truly we men and praisers of men” 135) is a pun on *women*, suggesting he is “speaking in tongues.” Pyrocles/Zelmane’s double-voiced discourse represents his hetetroglossic identity—he contains within himself two voices, and as such undermines his claim for a fixed gender identity. Furthermore, at the end of his retrospective narrative he says:

“Now farewell, dear cousin,” said he, “from me—no more Pyrocles, nor Daiphantus now, but Zelmane. Zelmane is my name; Zelmane is my tide; Zelmane is the only hope of my advancement.” (*NA* 151)

Pyrocles/Zelmane and the third-person narrator blur the boundary lines of gender distinction. It is not the absent masculine that defines Pyrocles’ transformation, but rather the presence of both the feminine and the masculine pronouns. Consequently, the “I” that has narrated the story cannot be distinguished in terms of gender. Thus, this speech marks the midpoint where Pyrocles transforms into Pyrocles/Zelmane.

Why does the retrospective narrative play such a significant part in Pyrocles/Zelmane’s transformation? This is the first time in the narrative in which
Pyrocles speaks as Zelmane. The narrator allows us to enter a unique place—

Pyrocles/Zelmane’s recent past, a series of events that provoked the curiosity of both
Musidorus and the readers, from the time Pyrocles disappeared from Kalander’s house
without a trail. Pyrocles/Zelmane’s heteroglossic language creates the circumstances in
which he fashioned Zelmane, who will coexist with Pyrocles until book three. He is both
Pyrocles and Zelmane, both self and other. Here the blurring between self and other
points to metamorphosis as a process of identity creation. It is not the disappearance of
Pyrocles that defines Zelmane’s identity, but rather the presence of Pyrocles, Zelmane of
the past, and Zelmane the Amazon (Pyrocles’ creation), that is, the coexistence of the real
and the imaginary. The “I” that has narrated the speech is a mixture of different selves.13

Crossing the boundary lines of gender, Pyrocles has now completed his physical and
internal transformation into a hybrid.

Moreover, the speech is significant in that it prepares the reader for

Pyrocles/Zelmane’s interactions with other characters in Basilius’ lodge. The
retrospective narrative establishes both Pyrocles/Zelmane’s double-voiced discourse and
the effect of that discourse on the way others read him. Dametas is the first character that
meets Pyrocles/Zelmane. Thus Pyrocles/Zelmane tells Musidorus: “standing upon his
tiptoes, and staring as if he would have had a mote pulled out of his eyes, ‘Why,’ said he,
‘thou woman, or boy, or both, whatsoever thou be” (1.13, p. 143). Dametas identifies the
duality in Pyrocles/Zelmane’s appearance as soon as he sees him/her. First he identifies

13 In Astrophil and Stella 45, Sidney portrays a similar ambiguity when Astrophil laments
“I am not I, pity the tale of me” (The Major Works 14). McCoy explains: “the tension
between genuine feelings and artful shows is fraught because true love can only be
communicated through conventional romantic expressions and feigned poetic devices”
(see McCoy 2013, Ch. 3).
him/her as a woman, then as a boy, then mentions both, and finally opens it to interpretation ("whatsoever thou be"). Interestingly, the way characters in Basilius’ lodge interpret Pyrocles/Zelmane falls under one of the categories that Dametas ("the most arrant doltish clown" 77) just described. Basilius, who is introduced to Pyrocles/Zelmane immediately after Dametas, is convinced that Zelmane is a woman and becomes infatuated with her; Gynecia, who can see through Pyrocles/Zelmane’s appearance, identifies the masculine underground identity, and, like her husband, falls in love with him; finally, Philoclea, Pyrocles’ object of desire, first admires the Amazon’s behavior and “desire[d] to imitate the Amazon as a model for womanly behavior and sisterly affection” (Bearden 92), but then her affection changes and turns into desire. Thus, her interpretation of Pyrocles/Zelmane changes from friendship to one that is sexual in nature (ibid).

Pyrocles/Zelmane’s personal narrative makes the discrepancy between authorial intention and reader response very clear. As the authority of his own masking, Pyrocles wishes to gain access to Philoclea. He dresses up in a way that enables him to achieve his goal. However, the transformation is not complete, for Gynecia can see through Pyrocles/Zelmane’s appearance. The transformation functions as if it were a text necessitating interpretation. Pyrocles/Zelmane has two models: an inner, dynamic self and an external, transformed self. When Gynecia “reads” Pyrocles, she penetrates below the external surface. For her, Pyrocles’ identity is a fixed thing—a man. His identity, however, is established by the readers who analyze him (Basilius, Musidorus, etc.). In accordance with Monika Fludernik’s perception of the self, Pyrocles’ identity is
constituted by his interaction with others. His self “is projected… to answer the glance of
the other.” It is because his identity is unfixed that interpretation is needed.\(^{14}\)

When revising the *Arcadia*, Sidney incorporated another telling passage that was
absent from the old version: Musidorus’ first encounter with Pyrocles/Zelmane. In the
*Old Arcadia*, dressed as a man, Pyrocles explains to Musidorus his plan to put on the
disguise of an Amazon. After Musidorus fails to persuade his cousin to abandon this idea,
Musidorus recants and takes an active role in the transformation itself (“let us go put on
your transforming apparel” \textit{OA} 1.23-24). The encounter between the two takes a different
turn in the *New Arcadia*. Musidorus has come to this forest to look for his friend. Like in
the myth of Apollo and Daphne, he is confronted by a sight that “persuaded” his eyes
(130). The readers now follow the penetrating gaze of Musidorus, as it moves from the
woman’s hair to the rest of her body. After describing the woman’s appearance,
Musidorus follows the woman “into a fine close arbour,” that is, into a more intimate and
private setting. It is only when the girl begins to sing that Musidorus realizes that the
singer is no other than his beloved cousin, Pyrocles, disguised as an Amazon. Only then,
the erotic (or homoerotic)\(^{15}\) situation is transformed at once into a social criticism of the
transgression Pyrocles committed by crossing gender boundaries.

Revising the *Arcadia*, Sidney emphasizes the effect of Pyrocles/Zelmane’s
autobiographical account through which he reconstitutes his identity. It is not only the
narrator and external readers who are unable to distinguish the gender of the “I” telling

\(^{14}\) On interpretation as constituting meaning and intention, see Fish 1980.

\(^{15}\) In his essay, Benjamin Scott Grossberg examines how the *New Arcadia* represents
male-male desire and outlines the connection between homoerotic bonds and the court of
Queen Elizabeth (63-83).
the story; every character that meets Pyrocles/Zelma produces a different interpretation. Pyrocles’ transformation into Pyrocles/Zelma places reading and interpretation at center stage. By adding the first person narrative of Pyrocles/Zelma, Sidney accentuates the self-reflexive quality of the transformation, which points to a connection between reading the transformation and reading the text.\textsuperscript{16}

3. Hercules’ Impresa and Pyrocles’ Interfictional Transformation

Pyrocles/Zelma transformation, however, does not take place only on the diegetic level. Intertextually, Pyrocles’ transformation into an Amazon invokes classical stories of metamorphosis that are interwoven with the early modern transformation narrative. In the \textit{Old Arcadia}, the narrator describes Pyrocles’ attire and the pin that decorated his clothes: “an eagle covered with the feathers of a dove, and yet lying under another dove, in such sort as it seemed the dove preyed upon the eagle, the eagle casting up such a look as though the state he was in liked him, though the pain grieved him” (1.24). This pin represents Pyrocles’ subjugation to female power.\textsuperscript{17} Bearden shows that emblems and \textit{imprese} were part of the courtly culture in the early modern period, and that \textit{imprese} especially “communicate specific intentions or states of mind” (41). Each \textit{imprese} has two parts, the image and the text. While the image represents the body, the

\textsuperscript{16} A similar self-reflexivity also exists in \textit{Astropil and Stella} 45. See note 13.

\textsuperscript{17} An emblem is typically a combination of an image and words, which has an allegorical function. The emblem’s three parts, motto (\textit{inscriptio}), picture (\textit{pictura}), and explanatory poem (\textit{subscriptio}), offer a general moral for readers, as Peter M. Daly writes: “The emblem can be regarded as a mode of thought combining thing or word with meaning and as an art form combining visual image and textual components (383, emphasis in original). Though the emblem is connected to the \textit{imprese}, the later is a personal device that bears significance to its owner. This device, then, functions as “a projection of the self” (65) to use Monica Calabritto’s words, and its meaning lies in the interplay between the image and the motto.
text represents the soul. Pyrocles’ *impresa* in the *Old Arcadia* signifies the hero’s state of mind, but it lacks a text.

Rewriting the *Arcadia*, Sidney changes Pyrocles’ *impresa* both in image and text. When Musidorus arrives to the forest of Ithonia in search of Pyrocles, he sees a woman (the disguised Pyrocles) and notes a pin that decorates her garment:

> The device whereof, as he [Musidorus] after saw, was this: a Hercules made in little form, but set with a distaff in his hand, as he once was by Omphale’s commandment, with a word in Greek but thus to be interpreted, ‘Never more valiant.’ (NA 131)

When Musidorus stumbles upon Pyrocles/Zelmane in the *New Arcadia*, the *impresa* he sees is one of Hercules who holds a distaff, a spindle for spinning, rather than a club. The reference to Hercules’ enslavement by Omphale is also stated (“as he once was by Omphale’s commandment”). To this Sidney adds text, ‘Never more valiant.’ Bearden argues that since the *impresa* represents the character’s intentions, in this case there is a clear connection to Hercules’ cross-dressing episode: “The pin can be viewed as a *mise-en-abyme*. Just as the cross-dressed Hercules has relinquished his club in favour of doing women’s needlework, the once valiant sword that Pyrocles had ‘held aloft’ has become a ‘needles weapon.’” (87). While Elizabeth Dipple argues that the *impresa* and the motto show that Pyrocles models himself according to Hercules (“Pyrocles, by this *impresa*, estimates his martial life in terms of a remarkable crescendo which reaches its fortissimo

---

18 Cross-dressed Achilles in Statius’ *Achilleid* holds a *thyrsus*, a decorated spear with a pinecone on its top that was carried by women during the celebrations for Bacchus (1.285-289), thus symbolizing a “potential weapon and harmless toy for women” (Heslin 239). I discuss the intertextual connections between Pyrocles and Achilles in section 4, “Absent Achilles.”
here in Arcadia” 341), Bearden directs our attention to the connection between Pyrocles’ gender-ambiguity and the impresa’s motto: “Should the motto 'never more valiant,' whose Greek original is omitted, be interpreted as valiant nevermore, or never had he been more valiant?” (87). The ambiguity is never resolved.

When Musidorus sees Pyrocles/Zelmane for the first time in the New Arcadia, he immediately assumes that Pyrocles has changed not only his bodily appearance but also his mind: “O sweet Pyrocles, separate yourself a little, if it be possible, from yourself, and let your own mind look upon your own proceedings” (132). That is, Musidorus believes that Pyrocles is not disguised but rather transformed. He asks Pyrocles to remember his achievements, his past, his family, and his native country, assuming that his transformation into an Amazon has broken these ties (132). Musidorus assumes that the cause of this transformation is love. Only love “transform[s] the very essence of the lover into the thing loved” (133-134). That is, love effeminates the male lover, “making reason give place to sense, and man to woman” (133). According to the classical dichotomy, man represents reason, logic, and civilized behavior, while woman represents the senses, the wild, and the demonic. Hence, love for a woman can effeminize a man and turn him into a woman. But Pyrocles' transformation in the New Arcadia does not indicate a transformation into the object of love, as in the Old Arcadia, where he cross-dresses and inverts Philoclea's name by taking the name Cleophila. Rather, here the transformation is intertextual and intratextual in nature. As mentioned earlier, Pyrocles’ transformation into Pyrocles/Zelmane points to the connection between reading the transformation and reading the text; this is even more so the case as the impresa invites a direct intertextual allusion to the figure of Hercules.
Hercules, the most popular hero of antiquity, was known in the early modern period for his glorious deeds. In emblems and schoolbooks he is represented as an infant strangling Juno’s serpents, as an adult destroying the Hydra, and as a symbolic figure choosing virtue over vice.\(^\text{19}\) In John A. Comenius’ *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (first published in 1657), Hercules, at a crossroads, appears with the text “Imitate Hercules.” Comenius was not the only one who preached to imitate the classical hero’s moral behavior. Sidney himself urged early modern writers to use the figure of Hercules, among other classical characters, as aspirational figures for learning and imitation. In the *Defence of Poesy*, Sidney mentions the classical hero as a model, through which poets can deliver philosophical messages in the disguise of amusing fiction:

> glad will they be to hear the tales of Hercules, Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas; and, hearing them, must needs hear the right description of wisdom, valour, and justice; which, if they had been barely, that is to say philosophically, set out, they would swear they be brought to school again. (*Defence* 227)

Philosophical meaning disguised in the tales of Hercules, Aeneas and other heroes is both enjoyable and educational. Here Sidney mentions Hercules, along with other Classical heroes, with regard to their heroic acts, and as such Hercules functions as a role model for readers. Sidney uses Hercules’ model again, this time in relation to Omphale’s episode:\(^\text{20}\)

\(^\text{19}\) Ayers Bagley discusses the figure of Hercules in sixteenth and seventeenth-century emblems and schoolbooks, and he argues that for early modern educators, Hercules was a “multipurpose figure” (83). They used some of his adventures as models for virtue and disregarded others, which did not fit their ethical programs (69-95).

\(^\text{20}\) On the influence of Italian painters (especially Titian) on Sidney’s image of Hercules in the *Defence*, see Duncan-Jones 1980.
So in Hercules, painted with his great beard and furious countenance, in a woman’s attire, spinning at Omphale’s commandment, it breedeth both delight and laughter: for the representing of so strange a power in love procureth delight, and the scornfulness of the action stirreth laughter. (*Defence* 245)

It is the act of spinning that I would like to focus on here. In *Defending Literature in Early Modern England*, Robert Matz connects the image of the effeminized Hercules to Sidney’s writing: “[j]ust as Hercules works at the feminine activity of spinning cloth and wears feminine attire, so Sidney compares his writing to the delicate embroidery of the thread-spinning spider” (74). Matz refers to Sidney’s dedication of the *Old Arcadia* to his sister, where Sidney compares his work to “a spider’s web.” In the dedication Sidney declares that he wrote the work for the pleasure of his sister and that “your desire to my heart is an absolute commandment” (3). In the *New Arcadia*, Sidney uses the image of an effeminized Hercules himself, “with a distaff in his hand” rather than with a club, as in Pyrocles/Zelmane’s *impresa*. The *impresa* of a cross-dressed Hercules can be viewed as “a speaking picture” (*Defence* 217), a model of imitation “that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth” (ibid).

What are we to learn from this model of imitation? To answer this question, let us first consult Pyrocles/Zelmane himself and listen to his words about the nature of his transformation. Next, we will turn to the myth of the cross-dressed Hercules, comparing it to Pyrocles/Zelmane’s transformation. In the debate between Pyrocles/Zelmane and his cousin, Musidorus asserts that if Pyrocles were to remember “what you are, what you have been, or what you must be,” he would be able to control his senses. In this respect, Musidorus’ assertion is similar to the Delphic aphorism, “know yourself.” For him, this
aphorism, associated with reason, should be Pyrocles’ main concern. Dressed as an Amazon, Pyrocles/Zelmane replies to Musidorus using a well-constructed argument that seems to undercut the assumptions of Musidorus’ speech. When he argues, Pyrocles/Zelmane assumes a double role: he rejects Musidorus’ negative argument toward gender distinctions while at the same time reinforcing his unchanged gender affiliation. He speaks in the name of the women whose figure he imitates (“even this estate of Amazons, which I now for my greatest honor do seek to counterfeit” 135). In Sidney’s *Defence*, imitation is used “to teach and delight” (217). But Pyrocles/Zelmane counterfeits the Amazon’s ways not to teach and delight others; rather he transforms himself “that under that mask I might, if it were possible, get access” to Philoclea (*NA* 142). That is, imitation for Pyrocles/Zelmane is not a means for learning, but rather deceiving. He counterfeits the estate and “bear[s] the countenance of an Amazon” (ibid) to avoid Basilius’ restrictions; undermining the king’s authority, he successfully enters the king’s lodge.

In *Ovidian Myth and Sexual Deviance in Early Modern English Literature*, Sarah Carter explains how there is a strong link between estate and countenance in the trope of cross-dressing:

> Behaviour and appearance are represented as inseparable, for example, a woman wearing articles of masculine dress is never represented as being conventionally ‘feminine’ in all other ways. She is confident, vocal, and independent.

---

21 Emphasis is mine.
Correspondingly, the effeminate man, the ‘fop’, overly concerned with extravagant clothes and his appearance, is seen as thoroughly weak. (134)²²

Pyrocles’ transformation into Pyrocles/Zelmane, then, is not complete. His imitation is well calculated: he imitates the Amazon’s countenance (that is, appearance and expressions) and counterfeits her estate (ways, or behavior). However, he does not cross-dress as a woman; rather he is disguised as an Amazon, which complicates the mimetic element. In the early modern period, the Amazon is associated more with a domesticated figure (Shakespeare’s Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*) than with the female warrior of classical literature. Mark Rose asserts that though some early modern critics saw Pyrocles’ transvestitism as an exemplar of passionate love, others were embarrassed by it. Rose further develops this idea arguing that Sidney uses Pyrocles’ disguise as “criticism of Pyrocles’ failings” (354), and for the domination of passion over reason.

The debate over the significance of Pyrocles’ change continues. Constance Jordan, for example, highlights that the disguise brings about Pyrocles’ sensitivity and thus is perceived as positive (222); Steven Mentz identifies its ambiguous nature (94-95).²³ What I would like to argue here is that Pyrocles’ transformation functions as a text that requires interpretation. Like the diegetic readers/characters, early modern and modern readers provide a range of interpretations of Pyrocles/Zelmane’s gender identity.

²² Carter argues that these widespread imageries indicate a cultural change in relation to the differences between the sexes.

²³ For additional critical voices on the cross-dressing episode and the significance of Pyrocles’ alteration see also Margaret Sullivan, who emphasizes Pyrocles’ ambiguous gender identity in the *New Arcadia*; and Mary Ellen Lamb, who analyzes Pyrocles’ gender ambiguity through his adapted names (especially p.108).
3.1. The Text’ Hybridity

The mythological framework of the *New Arcadia* is an aspect of the text’s hybridity. In *Allegories of Writing: The Subject of Metamorphosis*, Bruce Clarke notes that “Mythic typicality places an allegorical frame around any literary metamorphic episode. For instance, although the precise significance of Gregor Samsa’s transformation may be in doubt, we remain confident about the ultimate profundity of Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, just because it recalls the fate of so many other epic or Ovidian protagonists. In this sense alone, the *Metamorphosis* is an allegory of writing.” (1) Clarke holds that as part of the metamorphic typology, the transformation is inextricably involved with former literary transformations and as such represents the most human issues: gender construction, sexual conflict, and class identities.

I believe that Pyrocles’ transformation into Pyrocles/Zelmane shares similarities with Clarke’s perception of metamorphosis, and that it incorporates rich cultural and mythological traditions. The Amazon has symbolic associations ranging from the female warrior of antiquity (Virgil’s Camilla) to the more domesticated figure of the early-modern period (Shakespeare’s Hippolyta). According to Maryanne Cline Horowitz, authors and artists in the Renaissance “enjoy playing with Amazons and other ancient figures who transcend accepted gender stereotypes” (ix). Celeste Turner Wright describes some texts that make use of the Amazon character and mentions the works of Shakespeare, Spenser, Heale, and Rich, among others. The Amazon serves as a model

---

24 In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Shakespeare portrays the Amazon Hippolyta as King Theseus’ wife; Penthesilea appears, among others, in the works of Spenser (*Faerie Queene*), Heale (*Apologie for Women*, 1609) and Rich (*Excellency of Good Women*, 1613).
for female courage and nobility, and Wright notes that Amazons are an ancient example of feminism. In Sidney’s *New Arcadia*, the Amazon does not appear in her traditional character but is actually a man in disguise, and the cross-dressing serves as “a vehicle for exploring the cultural construction of both femininity and masculinity” (Sullivan 71).

In *Tough Love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance*, Kathryn Schwarz argues, contrary to the common view, that the feminine and the Amazon are not direct oppositions. Schwartz writes,

> At once masculine and female, mistaken for men and looked at as women, Amazons generate desire between men, between women, between women and men. Their constant eroticism precludes hierarchical distinctions between substance and spirit, matter and idea, object and agent, other and self, revealing instead the extent to which identities and relations overlap. (10)

As the Amazon undermines Western culture’s hierarchies and dualisms, Pyrocles/Zelmane destabilizes them further, as we are never completely sure where Pyrocles’ identity begins and Zelmane’s ends. It is not only through the communication with others that Western culture’s hierarchies are destabilized, but also through definitions of different possibilities of the self.

---

25 Pyrocles’ alteration, however, has a bisexual nature. Thelma N. Greenfield writes that “Queen Elizabeth’s subjects identified her with such male figures as King Arthur and St. George,” (59-60) and therefore royalty itself can be perceived as having bisexual status. Thus, Pyrocles’ Amazonian disguise challenges the gender boundary line not only in the narrative but also in the court of Queen Elizabeth.

26 In shaping the figure of Pyrocles, Sidney was influenced by *Amadis de Gaule*, a French translation of a famous Spanish romance written by Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo (first edition, Zaragoza, 1508).
Unlike monsters in classical antiquity, which define the limits of society, the Amazons dwell on the borderlines. They were unwilling to live among men and within culture, and they reject social institutions like marriage. Yet the Amazons figure prominently in classical mythology (as active participants in the Trojan War for example), and their mythology is coupled with the major myths of society, from Hercules, to Theseus, Achilles, and Aeneas. Sidney uses the myth of the Amazon subversively. His contemporaries depict Amazon encounters as symbols of domesticity (Shakespeare’s Hippolyta, for example), always insisting “on the integrity of categories and hierarchies, taking amazonian domestication as proof that those structures work” (Schwartz 10). The Amazon is not a barbarian invader. She does not represent the “other” who belongs on the outskirts. Rather, she is invited right into the heart of society by the king himself: In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Theseus prepares for his marriage with Hippolyta, and in the *New Arcadia*, Basilius invites Pyrocles/Zelmane into his lodge. However, instead of depicting the Amazon as the conquered “other,” Sidney complicates the hierarchies by incorporating another dimension: the transformation into a hybrid.

The Amazon Zelmane is an image of sexual eroticism, which complicates sexual identity in the narrative. This aspect of Pyrocles and of the text has been studied and explored by scholars. My concern here is the device itself, namely, the choice of the figure of the Amazon as a form of transformation, and the intertextual implications of such a transformation. Pyrocles does not go through a complete transformation from one form into another in an Ovidian sense. Rather he goes through self-transformation during which he assumes the figure of the Amazon, a figure that blurs the boundary lines of his

---

27 On the disguise’s eroticism see Lamb (especially pages 108-9), Schwartz’s Ch. 3, and White.
gender identity. Why, then, does Sidney make a direct reference to Hercules? What does the *impresa* of Hercules provide his readers with that the Amazon disguise does not? In *Tough Love*, Schwartz suggests that the Amazon disguise not only undermines gender categories, but also creates a variety of gender possibilities. Pyrocles’ self-transformation, like *Haec Vir*’s pamphlet, confuses performances and identities. The direct reference to the cross-dressed Hercules complicates Pyrocles’ transformation further, highlighting how Pyrocles/Zelmane is not only *Haec Vir* but also *Hic Mulier*: the transformation assimilates his identity. The *impresa* of Hercules, which Musidorus sees before Pyrocles/Zelmane begins to sing, confuses the reader’s perception and opens the encounter with an enigma, an enigma in which the paradoxical resolution is affiliated with a different culture and a different text. Transforming into an image of hybrid identities, an image that simultaneously represents conquered love and heroic endeavors, Pyrocles/Zelmane becomes a text that requires interpretation.

Pyrocles’ transformation into Zelmane recalls myths in which well-known heroes masked themselves as women (Achilles and Hercules), myths that represent the androgynous union of male and female natures (Plato’s *Symposium*), and classical narratives of transformation (Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*). Achilles disguised himself as a woman to escape participation in the Trojan War; Hercules was dressed as a woman after he was sold to Omphale, as a punishment for the murder of Iphitus. Monica Silveira Cyrino contends that Hercules and Achilles’ disguises highlight a transition from the

---

28 *Hic Mulier*, published in 1620, is an attack on cross-dressed women; *Haec Vir*, published in the same year, is a response to that denouncement. The titles reflect duality: *Hic Mulier* combines the Latin masculine demonstrative pronoun (hic) with the feminine noun pointing to a masculine woman, and *Haec Vir* combines the feminine demonstrative pronoun (haec) with the masculine noun emphasizing the feminine man.
instability “between the poles of power and powerlessness” into “secure positions of masculine dominance” (238). Neither Achilles nor Hercules is perceived as a lesser hero as a result of cross-dressing. Plato’ Symposium portrays three initial sexes: man, woman, and man-woman, whom the gods cut in two so that men and women will be destined to search for their other half to create one united whole. Finally, the myths of Ovid bind together concepts of change, self-knowledge, and identity into different metamorphoses (Io is one example among many others).

Accordingly, Sidney’s work, though an independent creation, is connected to and emerges from these mythological, historical, and literary frameworks. Its power and originality lie in the attempt to integrate and internalize the cultural world of myths and fiction into a new work. The character that best represents this integration is Pyrocles’ transformation into a hybrid. To understand this self-transformation, the reader must have some degree of knowledge of earlier myths and must engage in an intertextual reading of the traditional forms, topics, and themes from earlier texts that have been shaped into a new format—prose fiction. The reader becomes an inseparable part of the textual dialogue between the New Arcadia, literary works from the past, and Elizabethan literature. These intertextual relations are rooted both in the under-text (the use of myths, Greek names, and allusions) and in the reader’s ability to identify this textual dialogue.

The text is always marked by inextricable links to earlier texts—it is always a hybrid.

---

29 Although generic and historical aspects of Sidney’s New Arcadia are not discussed here, they contribute to my characterization of the text’s hybridity. For example, in Sir Philip Sidney: Rebellion in Arcadia, Richard McCoy claims that Sidney’s narratives reflect his conflict with Queen Elizabeth and her authority. McCoy asserts that the actions of some of Sidney’s characters represent the tension in Sidney’s own life. In line with McCoy’s argument, the disguises of Pyrocles and Musidorus can be viewed as representing Sidney’s own confusion and divided self. On the generic ties between Sidney’s New Arcadia and other genres, see Dolven 173-184, Roberts, and Roche.
3.2. Interfictional Transformations: The Case of Bottom and Don Quixote

The abundant scholarship that focuses on early modern hybrids as representations of national and cultural encounters with the “other” points to postcolonial theory’s valuable influence on early modern studies, a discipline which now regularly interrogates the relationship between identity formation and a culture’s internal and external power dynamics. Feminist studies interpret these images of hybridity as emblematic of the instability of gender identity in the early modern period by reading these figures via the motifs of cross-dressing and disguise. Though I draw on these important accounts, I would like to offer here a new model for thinking of hybrids in the early modern period. In addition to Sidney, who models Pyrocles’ cross-dressing in the New Arcadia on Greek and Roman traditions, there are other early modern writers who use a similar model. In A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Bottom goes through a physical transformation into an ass-headed man, a humorously monstrous hybrid. His hybridity is influenced by classical literature, recalling Apuleius’ The Golden Ass. He is not, though, a mere replica of such transformation narratives, but William Shakespeare’s invention. Don Quixote transforms into a knight errant from Romance novels in Miguel de Cervantes’ Don Quixote. These images of early modern hybridity, I suggest, are embedded in literary tradition, as each character takes on the persona of a fictional figure. This section explores why, in these works, literary artists such as Shakespeare and Cervantes favor interfictional transformations over mere allusions to classical literature or disguises that do not allude to previous literature.

At the beginning of Act II of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, the two pairs of lovers and the mechanicals leave Athens and enter the woods. In fact, they walk along the
mythological path marked by the footsteps of Socrates and Phaedrus, pointing the way towards an intertextual reading of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Both Shakespeare’s play and Plato’s *Phaedrus* focus on the interrelations between love, the soul, madness, and desire.⁴⁰ In Plato’s dialogue, Socrates and Phaedrus pass the place where Boreas is said to have abducted Orithyia on the way to their destination, a pastoral spot not far from the city. At this point, Socrates alludes to different mythological figures, among them the Centaur (a creature composed of human and horse parts), Chimera (a vicious monster with the head of a lion, a goat’s body, and a snake’s tale), and Typhon (a monster with one hundred heads). Thus, prior to the dialogue on Eros, we encounter the most horrifying monsters in mythology.

Why do we enter the realm of the language of love through the gates of hybrids and monsters? These creatures form the introduction to Plato’s theory of the soul, which is divided into three parts: a charioteer and two winged horses. The hybrid creatures embody many of the dialogue’s major themes: myth, the contradictory characteristics of the soul, and polyphony. They are designed to precede Plato’s new myth so that its features become rooted in traditional mythology. In this way, Plato integrates his new philosophical myth into the already existing language of myths. The multiple functions of the hybrids at the beginning of *Phaedrus* help us interpret Bottom’s hybridity in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

---

⁴⁰ H. P. Rickman writes about whether or not Shakespeare was familiar with Plato’s writing: “As no translations of Plato into English had been published by that time […], it suggests that Shakespeare could read Greek, though it is possible that he read Latin translations which were available […] and had attentively read Plato.” (378). On the influence of Plato on Shakespeare see John Vyvyan and also Richard Cody. On the influence of literary works from ancient Greece on Shakespeare, see Tanya Pollard 2008, 34-53. For a more general overview of the influence of Greek dramatic forms in early modern England, see Pollard 2013, 99-123.
Bottom’s metamorphosis incorporates rich cultural and mythological traditions. In mythology, the ass is associated with Ovid’s tale of King Midas, who was given an ass’s ears for preferring Pan’s singing over Apollo’s. Another important source for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is Lucius Apuleius’s romance, *The Golden Ass* (170-180 AD). In this story, the narrator Lucius is transformed into an ass because he uses the wrong magical oil. He has numerous adventures in his asinine form, including a love affair with an upper-class woman, until he returns to his human shape. This unlikely romance is the intertextual source for Titania’s erotic love for Bottom. In addition, both Lucius and Bottom are transformed into asses by magical forces. The myth of the Minotaur is also reflected in Bottom’s new form. The bull-headed monster that was killed by Theseus was the product of the forbidden love between Pasiphaë and the bull. This illicit desire is an implicit aspect in Titania’s intense passion for Bottom. I believe that by replacing the bull’s head with the head of an ass, Shakespeare adds a new component to the myth: parody. Bottom does not correspond to the Minotaur but rather is a parody of the creature. According to Linda Hutcheon, “parody is repetition, but repetition that includes difference; it is imitation with critical ironic distance” (37). Bottom’s asinine

---

31 Jonathan Bate traces the connections, influences, and allusions between Ovid and Shakespeare. He finds Ovid’s work, especially the *Metamorphoses*, a significant source for Shakespeare’s work. His work is a valuable resource for intertextual connections between the two writers, as it historicizes and contextualizes Shakespeare’s deployment of Ovid. For further studies that examine the influence of classical literature, and especially Ovid, on Shakespeare, see the works of Douglas Bush and A. B. Taylor.

32 Studies about the intertextual connections between *The Golden Ass* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* include Wyrick, Carroll, and Carver. For the connection between ‘The Story of Cupid and Psyche’ and the play see McPeek. On the influence of Apuleius’s work on Shakespearean drama see Tobin.

figure imitates that of the Minotaur, but “with critical ironic distance”, because Bottom is in no way brutal. In essence, Bottom’s metamorphosis is nothing like that of the mythical monster, for despite his transformation he remains the fool he was before.

Bottom’s transformation is part of the mechanicals’ subplot. A group of six men come to the forest to rehearse a play they wish to perform at the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. During the rehearsal Bottom steps onto the stage in the role of Pyramus, and he is spotted by Puck, who says, “A stranger Pyramus than e'er play'd here!” (3.1.77). Offstage, Puck transforms Bottom’s head into the head of an ass. When he comes back onstage for his next lines, Bottom’s friends see him as a monster and run away in fear: “O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!” (3.1.92-93). Quince’s exclaimations of dismay upon seeing Bottom with the head of an ass are in response to the change Bottom has undergone: “Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated” (3.1.118-119). From Quince’s point of view, seeing his familiar friend transformed into a monster is shocking, but for the audience, this situation is an occasion for laughter. Still, Bottom’s transfiguration is grotesque, frightening, and dangerous, in part because Bottom is so oblivious: “Why do they run away? This is a knavery of them to make me afeard” (3.1.105-106).

In the Renaissance, the ass was “a symbol of stupidity” (Wyrick 433), as well as an image of human irrationality.\footnote{34} After the metamorphosis Snout tells Bottom, “O

\footnote{34 Greenfield asserts that A Midsummer Night’s Dream presents folly as inherent to human experiences, and that both Shakespeare and Erasmus place human irrationality at the center of their works. In the early modern period, however, the ass motif has symbolic associations ranging from the sacred to the slanderous (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream and the Praise of Folly” 236-244). It was most commonly known as a symbol of stupidity as well as an image of humility, piety, and holiness when associated “with the ass who bore Christ into Jerusalem” (Ormerod 45).}
Bottom, thou are changed. What do I see on thee?” and Bottom replies, “What do you see? You see an ass-head of your own, do you?” (III.i.109-112). While Bottom uses figurative language to accuse Snout of being irrational, Bottom is unaware of his own change. Of course, this irony only further suggests that Bottom has transformed into the literal figure that best represents him.

Indeed, Bottom is a hybrid, and like the creatures in Plato’s dialogue he signifies the double textual structure of A Midsummer Night’s Dream. As in Sidney’s New Arcadia, Shakespeare’s play operates on two levels. The first is what we might label the surface level, or even just the play’s story—Theseus and Hippolyta, the two pairs of lovers, Oberon and Titania, Bottom’s metamorphosis, and the mechanicals’ theatrics. The second, implied level, establishes the background texts, or those stories that are evoked by the play but not directly tied to the main action of diegesis. This level is constituted by those intertextual allusions mentioned above: the metamorphosis of Lucius, the myths of Midas and the Minotaur, and the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. These allusions fashion the play’s background text, a theatrical palimpsest that draws our attention to the ways in which A Midsummer Night’s Dream is connected to and emerges from the very mythological framework it establishes through allusion. Not only are mythological sources tied to Bottom’s transfiguration within the narrative, his hybridity is woven into the very essence of the text itself.

While Bottom is physically transformed into a hybrid, Quixote’s transformation into a knight-errant can be regarded as an attempt to become part of fiction. His transformative power is inclusive—not only does Quixote transform himself, but he also influences others. He attracts those who communicate with him to his “labyrinth of
fictions” and turns them into characters in his narrative. Robert Alter notes that like the epic hero who desires his glory to be sung after him, Don Quixote wants to become a character that authors praise in their books (a task he achieves in the second part). Quixote, however, is different from the preliterate epic hero in that he “actually wants to become a book” (Alter 9). Whether the people Quixote encounters along the way are aware of his madness or not, all become part of the fiction itself in the second part, when Quixote confronts his self-image on the written page.

In the third chapter of the second part, Don Quixote meets the bachelor Sansón Carrasco, who informs Don Quixote of the existence of Cide Hamete’s text, a printed version of Don Quixote’s adventures. Carrasco tells him that this history was written and circulated in “Portugal, Barcelona, and Valencia” (474); that is, Don Quixote’s kleos (or glory) is acknowledged by others. Realizing that his actions and his defeat are now well-known, Don Quixote says:

[The authors] also could have kept quiet about them for the sake of fairness […], because the actions that do not change or alter the truth of the history do not need to be written if they belittle the hero. By my faith, Aeneas was not as pious as Virgil depicts him, or Ulysses as prudent as Homer describes him (476).  

35 This passage echoes Ariosto’s. In canto 35 of the *Orlando furioso*, Saint John says similar things to Astolfo who journeys to the moon to bring back Orlando’s wit: “Aeneas was not as devoted, not Achilles as strong, nor Hector as ferocious as their reputations suggest. There have existed men in their thousands who could claim preference over them. What has brought them their sublime renown have been the writers honoured with gifts of palaces and great estates donated by these heroes’ descendants” (425). Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*. Trans Guido Waldman, 2008. (“Non sì pietoso Enea, nè forte Achille / Fu, come è fama, nè sì fiero Ettorre; / E ne son stati e mille e mille / Che lor si puon con verità anteporre: / Ma I donate palazzo e le gran ville / Dai descendenti lor, gli ha fatto pore / In questi senza fin sublimi onori Dall’ onorate man degli scrittori,” 35.25).
In addition to the implied criticism of literary works and the manner in which they forge their heroic persona, this episode describes the hero coming face to face with his own self-image as it is depicted by others.

The mirror image is a recurrent theme in literature. The heroes mentioned by Quixote are those to whom the literary character compares himself. When Odysseus arrives to the island of the Phaeacians towards the end of his journey, he listens to the songs of the bard Demodocus (Book 8). Demodocus’ third song portrays the story of the Trojan horse, an incident in which Odysseus played a significant role. Concealing his identity, Odysseus “can only hear of the man he was but cannot openly be the man he is” (Vered Lev Kenaan 173). Odysseus is affected by the words he hears and weeps. The song is evidence of his *kleos*, for it demonstrates that his deeds have not been forgotten. Lev Kenaan notes that “Odysseus’ response provides instructions for how to listen to poetry: crying is the mark of a listener who has the capacity to be personally affected by it” (176). Odysseus’ encounter with his self-image through poetry leads to the revelation of his identity in his first person narrative. It enables Odysseus “to bridge the gap between his past and his future, between action and passivity, between glorious hero of the Trojan War, and the fugitive and survivor” (176).

Another hero Quixote mentions is the protagonist of the *Aeneid*. In the first book of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas sees a series of wall paintings describing events from the Trojan War. Page duBois notes that this is the first time in which an epic hero sees himself represented in a work of art.\(^\text{36}\) Aeneas looks at his own image, but the image he sees is

---

\(^{36}\) DuBois studies the ekphrasis in the epic tradition. The ekphrasis is a rhetorical device that can be used by the author for various purposes, such as representation of the past, the change in the hero, etc.
one that emerges from and belongs to a separate text—Homer's *Iliad*. The Trojan War, in which Aeneas fought, appears before him as a fixed object. This reflection reaches its peak when Aeneas stands before it and stares at his own image in the sixth painting. Virgil’s Aeneas is confronted by his Homeric image. He observes himself through the mediation of an artistic work, and directs his glance at his double that belongs to a different text. The visualization of the retrospective look generates an uncanny tension between the static image and the living hero, between the hero’s past and present, as well as between the Greek work and the Latin text.37

In the second part, Cervantes is interested in examining the role of literary works in mediating between the fixed image and the self. When Don Quixote “becomes a book” in the second part of Cervantes’ text, the author takes the self-reflective gaze one step further, placing Don Quixote not in front of a visual or oral representation of the self, but facing his literary self-image. Quixote, thus, becomes a reader of his own fictional figure. He confronts a self-image that belongs to a text written by Cide Hamete (a text which we recognize as the first part of the novel). The second part of *Don Quixote* assimilates the first part as a written account of Quixote’s past experiences.38 By placing Don Quixote in

37 Michael D. McGaha compares the scene of Aeneas in the Temple of Juno in Carthage (which foreshadows Aeneas’ future exploits as well as alludes to his past), to the parodic imitation of that scene in *Quixote* II.71. McGaha argues that in the inn Cervantes uses Virgil’s technique of multiple allusions (37-39).

38 We can identify a similar method in Montaigne’s essays. In *The Dialectic of Selfhood in Montaigne*, Fredrick Rider follows the changes Montaigne makes in the different editions known to us as A, B, and C. Rider demonstrates the problems faced by Montaigne, the alterations in his approach to different ideas in the essays, and the development of his style. His subject is “the distance between the author, his Self, and the literary image that reflects them both” (31). Cervantes is not interested in his own self-image, but rather in Quixote’s.
front of his self-image fixed on the printed page, Cervantes creates a distinction between self-image and the self, between fiction and reality.

The discourse with his self-image on the printed page could have made Quixote aware of the “fictionality of his fiction” had he acknowledged his parodic figure and estranged himself from the fixed-image. However, Quixote strongly believes that his chronicler is one of his persecutors. He becomes a critic who establishes his criticism on the imaginary logic he himself had created in the first part. Even after looking in a mirror through which he sees his own fictional image, Quixote is unable (or unwilling) to leave his labyrinth. The representation of Don Quixote’s self-image casts a shadow on his life and precedes his death. Quixote is unable to leave his fantastic past behind; rather, fiction becomes part of his reality. His failure to recognize “the fictionality of his fiction” especially when confronted with his self-image reflects the inextricable ties between the fictional image and Quixote’s identity. From the moment he entered the world of chivalry physically (by donning the armor) and mentally (by believing he is a knight), he is unable to separate them.

The interwoven relations between fiction and reality form the basis of Cervantes’ text. The word “text” originates in the Latin word *textum*, which denotes a cloth or woven material composed of horizontally and vertically interwoven threads in a warp and woof.

---

39 I borrow this term from Alter, who notes that Cervantes was the first novelist “to see in the mere fictionality of fictions the key to the predicament of a whole culture, and to use this awareness centrally in creating new fictions of [his] own.” (3) Sidney exemplifies a comparable self-consciousness regarding the fictionality of his characters’ fiction. In *Astrophil and Stella* 45, Astrophil clearly prefers the use of poetic device “because fictive tales prove more moving than real ones” (McCoy 2013, Ch. 3), and in the *New Arcadia*, the first person narrative allows Pyrocles/Zelmane to reconstruct his fictional identity (see section 2 of this chapter).
pattern. The original meaning of the word *textum* can shed light on the fabric of relations between Quixote’s imaginative and real worlds, for these two realms are interwoven like threads that cannot be separated. Just as unraveling a woven fabric would render it formless, separating the knight from the hidalgo would change Quixote’s identity and mental ability to function in the world.

Similarly, Quixote’s identity as a hidalgo is part of his interaction and position in society. His madness displaces him from his known role in culture. He is no longer Alonso Quixano but rather a knight-errant. He is rejected by society as a madman, and willingly wanders from place to place looking for adventures. The dichotomy between the self and the other is further expressed by his transformation. Quixote’s sense of self is part of a dialectic process he engages in with the fictional others, that is, with the representations of knights in books of chivalry. In this sense, Don Quixote’s identity is constituted by his inability to separate his fictional self from his real self. In his “imagining of the self as other” (Fludernik 264), Quixote projects the fictional knight-errant onto himself, and incorporates the other as an essential part of his identity. In other words, as soon as Don Quixote dons the armor and the helmet, the hidalgo and the knight no longer function as separated parts of the self. They can no longer be distinguished from one another.

In the *New Arcadia, A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *Don Quixote*, interfictional transformations into hybrids mirror the texts’ hybridity. To understand Pyrocles, Bottom, and Quixote’s transformations audiences must have some degree of knowledge about earlier myths, and they must engage in an intertextual reading of the traditional forms, topics, and themes from earlier texts that have been shaped into a new
dramatic format. Interfictional transformations, then, turn readers and audiences into active agents, as they become an inseparable part of the textual dialogue between the texts and works from the past. Furthermore, the texts of the past are not only reenacted and reactivated (to use Greene’s terminology), but, as we shall see in the next section, highlight the deviation from the sources and the early modern text’s (and writer’s) innovation and distance from the past.

4. Absent Achilles

Scholars have been fascinated by the social, cultural, and political implications of Pyrocles’ cross-dressing episode, but very little attention has been given to the intertextual implications of the cross-dressing as a means of concealment of one’s identity and intentions. The myth of Hercules and Omphale has a few versions; one of the most colorful appears in Ovid’s *Heroides* and *Fasti*. According to the myth, Hercules was sold to Omphale, Queen of Lydia, as a slave to purify himself from the consequences of his madness that resulted in the murder of Iphitus. Hercules performs physical tasks, but in addition Omphale dresses him in female clothes and asks him to perform some stereotypically feminine work, such as spinning. In *Heroides*, Ovid depicts the ridiculed situation when the betrayed Deianira (Hercules’ second wife) asks Hercules, “How often have your hands crushed the spindle while / your fingers twisted the wool to thread?” (“Deianira to Hercules” 80). The myth, however, does not depict Hercules disguising himself; rather, it is Omphale who dresses him in female clothes:

she arrayed Alcides in her own garb. She gave him gauzy tunics in Gaetulian purple dipped; she gave him the dainty girdle, which but now had girt her waist.

For his belly the girdle was too small; he undid the claps of the tunics to thrust out
his big hands. The bracelets he had broken, not made to fit those arms; his big feet split the little shoes. (*Fasti* 2.319-324)\(^{40}\)

Omphale is an active agent as she dresses Hercules in her own clothes. Yet the luxurious clothes do not conceal Hercules’ masculinity: the girdle is too small, his hands are too big for the clasps of the tunics, and the bracelets break under his arms. Cyrino shows that “[b]y representing Hercules as a total failure at being *mollis*, Ovid confirms that the power of the male super-hero cannot be weakened by the imposition of a layer of feminized costume” (225). Thus, Hercules’ cross-dressing episode differs from Pyrocles’ both in terms of gender ambiguity and in terms of the disguise. Unlike Pyrocles, the garments ridicule Hercules and cannot undermine his masculinity. Furthermore, initiating the disguise, Pyrocles actively attempts to conceal his identity, while Hercules’ passivity, as Omphale dresses him up, is apparent.

While these characteristics are absent from the myth of Hercules, both figure prominently in the myth of the cross-dressed Achilles. Pyrocles/Zelmane’s transformation and the events that take place in Basilius’ lodge bear a striking resemblance to the experiences of Achilles as Statius portrays them in the *Achilleid*.\(^{41}\) Statius wrote the *Achilleid*, the epic describing Achilles from his childhood to his death, near the time of his death (96 AD). The work, left unfinished, is often referred to as a fragment, but P.J. Heslin notes that this is a misleading title (58). Statius completed Book

\(^{40}\) “dat tenuis tunicas Gaetulo murice tinctas, / dat teretem zonam, qua modo cincta fuit. / ventre minor zona est ; tunicarum vincla relaxat, / ut posset magnas exseruisse manus. / fregerat armillae non illa ad bracchia factas, / scindebant magni vincula parva pedes.” The translation is based on Ovid 1989.

\(^{41}\) Statius’ *Opera* is found in the catalogue of the Sidney family’s Library at Penshurst (180r07). See Warkentin et al.
1, which depicts Achilles’ adventures at Scyros, and wrote part of Book 2. The version in its present form is probably the same version Statius was working on.

In *Ars amatoria*, Ovid describes the narrative of Achilles in Scyros; his version, however, is much shorter and lacks the details and the character development of Statius’ work. The outline of Achilles’ cross-dressing in the *Achilleid* begins when Thetis, Achilles’ mother, discovers that Achilles is going to die if he fights in the Trojan War. After she disguises Achilles in her clothes, she asks king Lycomedes to conceal Achilles among the maidens in his court (Lycomedes, like Basilius, is unaware that Achilles is a man). Achilles agrees to this scam since he is in love with Deidamia, Lycomedes’ daughter, and wants to be close to her. Like Pyrocles/Zelmane, Achilles remains in disguise at Lycomedes’ court. He unveils the disguise only when he rapes Deidamia. Eventually, the two become lovers and produce a son. Achilles is exposed only when Odysseus and Diomedes arrive at Scyros and present the maidens with gifts to trap the cross-dressed Achilles so he will join them in the Trojan War. Among the gifts of dresses, ribbons, and fabric are a spear and a shield. As Achilles sees the armor and grabs it, his disguise is unveiled, and he is able to fulfill his role in the Trojan War.\(^4^2\) The following section focuses on the ground for comparison between the disguised Achilles in *Achilleid* and Pyrocles/Zelmane’s transformation in the *New Arcadia*, in order to

\(^4^2\) For a more detailed account of the sources see Cyrino 228-235. Though Homer does not describe the events at Lycomedes’ court, other sources, both Greek and Latin, elaborate on Achilles’ cross-dressing episode. Among them are a few fragments from Bion of Smyrna describing duality in Achilles’ disguise; in *Metamorphoses*, Ovid describes the role of Odysseus/Ulysses in unveiling Achilles’ disguise (13.162-170); in *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid provides further details concerning the myth, describing Deidamia’s rape by Achilles. According to this version, it is the rape that revealed Achilles’ masculinity; finally, Statius’ *Achilleid* is the most detailed account that explores Achilles’ ambiguous gender identity.
further explore the enigmatic absence of Achilles from Pyrocles’ transformation narrative.

4.1. “a Mars’ heart in a Cupid’s body”: The Hero’s Uncertain Identity

Both Statius’ Achilles and Sidney’s Pyrocles are liminal figures whose position in the world is uncertain. The strongest expression of this liminality is the gender ambiguity of the disguise. Yet, even prior to the cross-dressing episode, first time readers encounter the heroes in ambiguous terms. Statius writes, “Tell, O goddess, of the great-souled grandson of Aeacus, a child feared by the Thunderer and forbidden to succeed to his father’s heaven” (1.1-3).43 Aeacus is Achilles’ human grandfather; the Thunderer refers to Jupiter, who, fearing a prophecy that his son would overthrow him, marries Thetis to a mortal man. The first few lines of Statius’ epic depict Achilles’ divided existence. Heslin highlights that Achilles’ genealogy is of special interest: “the phrase describes what Achilles might have become had circumstances been different, if his father had been Jupiter instead of Peleus: Achilles in the subjunctive mood” (158). When readers encounter Pyrocles for the first time, at the beginning of the work, he is holding to the ship’s mast after a wreck,

…upon the mast they saw a young man – at least if he were a man – bearing show of about eighteen years of age, who sat as on horse back, having nothing upon him but his shirt which, being wrought with blue silk and gold, had a kind of resemblance to the sea on which the sun (then near his western home) did shoot

43 magnanimum Aeaciden formidatamque Tonanti / progeniem et patrio vetitam succedere caelo, / diva, refer. Unless otherwise mentioned, citations are from Statius 2003; the translation is from Statius 2007, volumes I and II. Book and lines refer to the Latin text.
some of his beams. His hair (which the young men of Greece used to wear very long) was stirred up and down with the wind, which seemed to have a sport to play with it as the sea had to kiss his feet; himself full of admirable beauty, set forth by the strangeness both of his seat and gesture. (NA 66)

The shepherds, Musidorus, and the readers see a beautiful young man who, despite the destruction, shows nobility and eagerness. But the expression “at least if he were a man” that appears between the dashes immediately draws our attention to Pyrocles’ ambiguous identity. Sidney draws on the Achilleid, and places Pyrocles in the improbable conditional: between a boy and a man, between a man and a woman, and between a mortal and a god. Bearden elaborates that “the clause, paired with the beauty of the young man, his long hair, and lack of britches, also indicates that he might be a woman and serves as a peek ahead to his Amazon disguise” (75). In the Old Arcadia, the narrator does not describe Pyrocles’ physical appearance when we first read about the princes’ narrative, but rather provides information about Pyrocles’ lineage, adventures, and friendship with Musidorus; in the revised work, Sidney directs our attention to Pyrocles’ liminal figure when readers first encounter his image. In addition, Sidney differentiates Pyrocles from Achilles: he does not describe what could have been, but rather what exists; that is, Sidney directs readers’ attention to Pyrocles’ ambiguous identity.

The reaction of the diegetic readers to such an appearance is of admiration and amazement:

But the fishermen, when they came so near him that it was time to throw out a rope by which hold they might draw him, their simplicity bred such amazement and their amazement such a superstition that (assuredly thinking it was some God
begotten between Neptune and Venus that had made all this terrible slaughter), as
they went under sail by him, held up their hands and made their prayers. (NA 67)
The sight of Pyrocles evokes amazement and reverence. It is the inability to define
Pyrocles’ nature that evokes such a reaction. The fishermen are uncertain about what they
see, and therefore turn to superstition. In his essay, “On the Psychology of the Uncanny”
(1906), Ernst Jentsch gives a significant place to the sense of uncertainty and uneasiness
in literature, arguing that “[i]n storytelling one of the most reliable artistic devices for
producing uncanny effects easily is to leave the reader in uncertainty as to whether he has
a human person or rather an automaton before him in the case of a particular character”
(13).  

The fishermen’ uncertainty as to whether or not they see a god leads them to
assume that Pyrocles is a divine mixture between Neptune, the god of the sea, and Venus,
the goddess of love.  
Pyrocles’ mortality is entangled with an image of immortality, and
his masculinity with an image of femininity. Furthermore, Pyrocles’ beauty is
emphasized by the proximity to the destruction caused by the shipwreck. He is beautiful
and at the same time frightening, exactly because he is strangely beautiful. The fishermen
turn to prayer because Pyrocles’ appearance involves an uncanny feeling of uncertainty
regarding who he is and what exactly it is that they encounter.

---

44 Freud was reluctant to accept Jentsch’s concept of “intellectual uncertainty.” While
Jentsch emphasized the present, Freud emphasizes the past, and while Jentsch highlighted
the unfamiliar and the undecidable, Freud focuses on the familiar and the repressed.
Despite Freud’s reservations, it is Jentsch’s understanding of the uncanny that I refer to in
this section.

45 On superstition and the uncanny, see Freud 238-240.
The dashes that frame the phrase “at least if he were a man” function like parentheses, and are directed towards us.\(^{46}\) Jonathan P. Lamb suggests that the separation through parentheses in Sidney’s work points to a “voice that speaks at two separated levels,” the one within the parentheses being more private and personal than the other (310).\(^{47}\) The text within the dashes, then, is directed to the external readers, and not to the diegetic audience. It is not surprising then that modern readers of Pyrocles’ conditional mode are also attuned to his ambiguous identity and to his portrayal as one that evokes uncertainty and the uncanny. Bearden points to the text’s double-voiced discourse when describing Pyrocles (“The description of Pyrocles, who has just survived a fire at sea only to be shortly picked up by pirates, sylleptically tenders his pulchritude and pugnacity” 75); Dipple highlights that Pyrocles’ description brings about a sense of \textit{déjà vu} (“The primary sense one has here is that of \textit{déjà vu},” 337); Finally, Casey Charles writes:

Pyrocles in his heroic portrayal as a demigod, also functions symbolically as a descendent and representative of erotic attraction: his excellence points to, lures, and \textit{makes us desire something beyond ourselves}. He is the figure of eros, one who will inspire love in all its most fantastic and self-deceptive forms from religious worship to sexual arousal. (493n5)\(^{48}\)

Thus, reading Pyrocles’ description is uncanny not only for the diegetic readers. External readers also describe Pyrocles’ portrayal in terms of double discourse, \textit{déjà vu}, and as evoking something beyond themselves. Reading Pyrocles involves a sense of repetition, of something that already existed beyond the text itself—it is uncanny intertextually.

\(^{46}\) In the 1590 \textit{Arcadia}, the phrase appears in parenthesis.

\(^{47}\) Lamb notes that dashes acquire a similar function in the late seventeenth century (318).

\(^{48}\) Emphasis is mine.
Heslin shows that Achilles’ subjunctive mode indicates Achilles’ provisional and temporary existence: “Achilles not only failed to inherit anything from Jupiter, he also was prevented by his early death from coming into his actual patrimony in Phthia” (159). Pyrocles’ conditional mode opens the text for interpretations. It suggests that Pyrocles’ identity is provisional and conditional rather than temporary—it depends on the reader’s point of view. Such a reading becomes even more apparent when Pyrocles arrives at Kalander’s house, disguised as Daiphantus. The narrator describes Pyrocles’ appearance:

For being now well viewed to have no hair of his face to witness him a man, who had done acts beyond the degree of a man, and to look with a certain almost bashful kind of modesty as if he feared the eyes of men, who was unmoved with sight of the most horrible countenances of death, and, as if nature had mistaken her work, to have a Mars’ heart in a Cupid’s body; all that beheld him …made their eyes quick messengers to their minds that there they had seen the uttermost that is mankind might be seen. (NA 103)

Even as a man, Pyrocles looks anomalous and his appearance causes astonishment. His bodily appearance is associated with Cupid and as such represents youth (in the Renaissance, Cupid was thought of as a putto, a young boy). His gestures, especially the expression of his eyes, emphasize his modesty to the extent that he is too shy to look into the eyes of men. The description of Pyrocles’ humility and his bodily image creates the impression of someone who is neither a man nor a woman, neither a child nor an adult—but rather a mixture of origins and species. Here the narrator uses allusions to two other deities, Mars and Cupid, to link the mortal and the divine features in Pyrocles’ appearance and gestures. While Statius frames Achilles’ liminal state in time, Sidney,
drawing on Achilles’ description, fashions Pyrocles’ ambiguity as a determining
classification. Such a portrayal suggests that reading Pyrocles is conditional; it is a
process of interpretation that depends more on reader response than on authorial
intention.

4.2. Reading Pyrocles’ Hybridity

We have seen that the diegetic and external readers interpret Pyrocles sometimes
as both a man and a woman, a god and a human, a boy and a man, and sometimes as in-
between these categories. Sidney underlines this ambiguity when describing Pyrocles at
Kalendar’s house as having “a Mars’ heart in a Cupid’s body” (103).49 Directing the
reader to Pyrocles’ intermediate state, this description draws upon Achilles’ portrayal in
the Achilleid.

Statius describes Achilles in an ambiguous way: “seeming older because of much
sweat and dust” (159), while “[h]is first youth has not yet been changed by any new
down” (163).50 Heslin writes that Statius’ Achilles is portrayed “as a liminal figure,
cought between child and adult, male and female, divine and human, nature and culture”
(181). Likewise, Sidney meditates on Pyrocles’ equivocal appearance: “For being now
well viewed to have no hair of his face to witness a man, who had done acts beyond the
degree of a man” (103). Both men have no facial hair. However, Pyrocles experienced

49 In her study on Cupid in early modern literature, Jane Kingsley-Smith suggests that
Sidney, alluding to Cupid’s beauty in Ovid’s Metamorphoses, uses this description to
highlight Pyrocles’ beauty (135). Benjamin Scott Grossberg analyzes it as a
representation of the desire of the narrator and other male spectators for Pyrocles
(83n18).
50 Ille aderat multo sudore et pulvere maiore... necum prima nova lanugine vertitur
aetas.
war, and Achilles has yet to fight in Troy’s battlefield. Though Sidney draws on the liminal description of Achilles, this analogy defines the distinction between the two men: Statius places us at the moment of Achilles’ transition. Achilles’ identity is ambiguous because he is in an impermanent stage; he is on the threshold, and as soon as he joins Odysseus and the rest of the Achaeans he will move from boyhood to manhood. Pyrocles’ identity is ambiguous not as a result of a lack of experience, but because it is formed by a mixture of different elements that cannot be separated. The comparison to Achilles emphasizes that, despite the similar depictions of the two heroes, Pyrocles is not in a transitional state of his development; rather, his identity is already ambiguous.

4.3. “unused metamorphosis”: Identity Unveiled

As mentioned in the previous chapter, counter-transformation—or the return from the metamorphic condition—is a transformative experience in and of itself. While Bottom’s counter-transformation in Shakespeare’s comedy takes place while he is alone onstage, Pyrocles’ counter-transformation materializes in front of Philoclea’s astonished eyes, and evokes intertextual connections. Unveiling his true identity, Pyrocles says to Philoclea,

O only princess, attend here a miserable miracle of affection. Behold here before your eyes, Pyrocles, prince of Macedon, whom you only have brought to this game of fortune and unused metamorphosis, whom you only have made neglect his country, forget his father and lastly, forsake to be Pyrocles. (NA 328)

Pyrocles defines his experience as an “unused metamorphosis.” The adjective “unused” (meaning unusual) may imply that the Amazon disguise is an uncommon stratagem to
gain a woman’s love; but coupled with the consequences Pyrocles alludes to it also indicates that it might be unusual because it is different from other forms of transformation, like magical transformations. Pyrocles’ metamorphosis, unlike the transformation of Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* or Ovid’s transformation narratives, is an act of self-transformation.

Pyrocles declares that the unusual metamorphosis has serious consequences in terms of his identity. Like characters in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, such as Io, Pyrocles’ transformation forced him out of his political responsibilities and his familial connections. Unveiling his mask, Pyrocles recalls his true identity first by name (“Pyrocles”) and then by political and familial connections (“prince of Macedon”). In Statius’ work, Achilles goes through a similar process of revealing his true identity, but here the context is far more violent, as he reveals himself after he rapes Deidamia:

‘I am he – why are you afraid? – whom my sea-nymph mother bore almost to Jove and sent to be brought up in the woods and snows of Thessaly. Nor would I have submitted myself to this array, this shameful dress, had I not seen you on the edge of the shore: it was on your account that I gave way, for you I carry wool in my hand, for you the womanish timbrel. (*Achilleid* 1.649-655)

Though Achilles is unable to empathize with Deidamia’s feelings, it is not difficult for us to understand the reasons for her cries and fear. I would like to focus here on Achilles’ words since they echo Pyrocles’, but with a difference. Like Pyrocles, Achilles reveals

---

51 'Ille ego (quid trepidas?) genitum quem caerula mater / paene Iovi silvis nivibusque immisit alendum Thessalicis. nec ego hos cultus aut foeda subissem / tegmina, ni primo tu visa in litore: cessi / te propter, tibi pensa manu, tibi mollia gesto / tympana.
his identity through his lineage. But he does not refer to his attire as a metamorphosis, but rather as “shameful clothes.” Moreover, both men put the blame for the change they have gone through on their beloved (Achilles: “it was on your account that I gave way”; Pyrocles: “you only have brought [me] to this game of fortune and unused metamorphosis”). More than anything this echo reveals the differences between the men and serves to highlight Pyrocles’ perception of the change he experienced. For Achilles, a woman’s attire is shameful; for Pyrocles it is a source of pride (“which I now for my greatest honour do seek to counterfeit” NA 135). Pyrocles describes his experiences in terms of metamorphosis, changes of the self that affect the body, identity, and social status. These have not changed for Achilles; rather, the major change he experiences is participating in woman’s work (“for you I handle wool”).

Yet we can find an intertextual source for Pyrocles’ experience. Ovid’s metamorphosed heroes and heroines go through similar experiences, especially those who go through a metamorphosis not as a result of punishment and maintain their inner identity. In Metamorphoses Book 1, Jupiter transforms Io into a heifer to conceal her rape from his wife Juno. As a heifer, Io is forced to leave the plains she once called home; she is isolated from her family, and is strange to herself (“when she beheld her own slack jaws and newly sprouted horns in the clear water, she fled, terrified!” 1. 887-889). Sidney, who draws on Achilles’ (and Hercules’) cross-dressing narrative, distinguishes his hero from them. For Pyrocles, cross-dressing is not a demeaning endeavor that he takes upon himself to gain access to his beloved (as in the narrative of Achilles) or as a result of a punishment (as in the myth of Hercules). His metamorphosis is uncanny. It

52 On Achilles’ speech as expressing his awareness of his loss of immortality see Heslin 165-166.
constitutes the change of what is most familiar—the self—into something unfamiliar and strange, and as such it contains the unfamiliar within the familiar; the other becomes part of one’s body. It involves the feeling of estrangement, as his body moves not only beyond the form and across forms (transformed), but its boundaries and limits are also crossed (metamorphosed), creating a new hybrid identity. The uncanny effect emerges from the duality between the unfamiliar yet familiar identity (“Transform’d in show, but more transfom’d in mind” 131). The metamorphosis is a transgression of the limits of the body, but especially of identity. It is an experience of doubling, division, and exchange of the self. Though he goes through self-transformation, Pyrocles does not experience a complete transformation from one form into another. As we have seen in the former section, Pyrocles’ identity is already ambiguous. Therefore, his transformation is not complete, as it is for the characters in Ovid’s poem; rather, he becomes a hybrid through a self-transformation. Such a transformation is an uncanny experience both for the one who goes through it and for all witnesses.

4.4. “as Achilles showed to the pale walls of Troy”: Pyrocles’ Literary Double

Sidney’s engagement with Statius’ work is apparent in the description of Pyrocles’ liminal state, the ways by which others read the characters’ duality, and the manner by which both heroes reveal their identities. But unlike other Classical heroes (such as Hercules and Aeneas), Achilles is mentioned only twice in the New Arcadia. Achilles’ experiences form the textual source for Pyrocles’, yet Sidney chooses to exclude him from the paintings in Kalander’s house, depicting instead Hercules’ love affairs with Iole and Omphale. Achilles is also absent from the cross-dressing episode, and rather than a reference to Achilles we find yet another direct allusion to Hercules.
Though Achilles-in-Scyros directly influences Pyrocles/Zelmane’s adventures in Basilius’ lodge, the diegetic audience and external readers alike find similarities between Pyrocles/Zelmane and Hercules, rather than Pyrocles/Zelmane and Achilles. When Zelmane kills the lion, “Gynecia sware she saw the very face of the young Hercules killing the Nemean lion” (NA 180). When Sidney’s critics study Pyrocles’ transformation, Achilles is mentioned briefly, if at all. The allusion to Hercules, however, has received enormous critical attention. Schwartz focuses on specific allusions to Hercules throughout the cross-dressing episode in the *Old Arcadia*, and shows that for early modern readers “Hercules represents not absolute maleness but sexual confusion” (188). Bearden argues that the picture of Hercules in Kalander's house, which depicts the hero’s enslavement by a woman, foreshadows Pyrocles' fate, but he is unable to understand the hidden message (81). Bearden also offers a fascinating analysis of Hercules’ *impresa* as a mirror for Pyrocles’ gender shift (87). Steve Mentz analyzes Hercules’ pin in light of his image in the *Defence*, arguing that, “Sidney designs the emblem to be ambiguous and provocative. Delight and scorn work together ironically, and the emblem reveals both vulnerability and instability” (95). These critics provide valuable insights about the intertextual connections between Hercules and Pyrocles and their significance, but none of these scholars mentions Achilles in relation to Pyrocles’ gender shift.

Sidney does mention Achilles in the third book of the *New Arcadia*, which the author himself revised. In the final duel in his cross-dressing disguise Pyrocles/Zelmane fights against Anaxius. Here Sidney links Anaxius, not Pyrocles, to Achilles. Anaxius enters the battle with “a huge shield, such, perchance, as Achilles showed to the pale
walls of Troy” (NA 594). As Anaxius’ shield recalls Achilles’, Anaxius himself evokes the Homeric hero who threatened Troy.

Pyrocles/Zelmane is not the first hero to face the phantom of Achilles in the battlefield. The final battle between Aeneas and Turnus in Virgil’s Aeneid clearly resembles the battle between Hector and Achilles in the Iliad. In the Aeneid, Turnus, like Hector before him, begs Aeneas to remember his father and spare his life, or at least hand his body over to his father. This episode echoes both Hector’s supplication (Iliad 22.398-405) and Priam’s pleading with Achilles for the body of Hector (Iliad 24. 570-589). In the final moments of the epic, Aeneas goes through a textual metamorphosis into Achilles, and, like Achilles before him, he kills his “Hector.”

Pyrocles/Zelmane also faces the textual phantom of Achilles. In the passage from the New Arcadia quoted above it is Pyrocles/Zelmane’s textual enemy, Anaxius, who is associated with Achilles of the Iliad, while Pyrocles/Zelmane is associated with the cross-dressed Achilles of the Achilleid. Sidney places one Achilles against the other—the epic hero versus the cross-dressed. During the battle, the narrator describes the process of Pyrocles/Zelmane’s counter-transformation using “Pyrocles” and “Zelmane” interchangeably and placing the possessions “his” and “her” in the same sentence (“But Zelmane strongly putting it by with his right-hand sword, coming in with her left foot and hand” NA 595). Once again, the use of pronouns captures Pyrocles in the process of transformation from a hybrid to a man. The transformation takes place while the cross-dressed Achilles faces his Homeric double. These two characters represent two different

53 On the ways in which Sidney differentiates himself from Virgil despite the similarities see Stump 6-14. On the ways in which Virgil repeats and alters scenes from the Iliad see David Quint Chapter 2.
texts that put Achilles at their center (Homer’s *Iliad* and Statius’ *Achilleid*) and two different cultures (Greek and Roman). But the battle between Pyrocles/Zelmane and Anaxius ends in mid-sentence; and as traditions and characters merge and transform, the text remains hybrid. Mentz suggests that “Sidney broke the text here so as not to upstage a moment that is both Zelmane's triumph and her fall, her acceptance of a mutually intertwined male and female nature” (102). I suggest that as Pyrocles/Zelmane reflects Sidney’s text, both the text and the character remain fixed in their hybridity. Like Sidney’s text (and Statius’), Pyrocles/Zelmane is depicted in the midst of his transformation, a literary and literal crossbreed that is left open for interpretation.

Pyrocles’ transformation into a hybrid mirrors Sidney’s *New Arcadia*. In this respect the transformation is truly emblematic of the text itself. It operates on two levels: that of the foreground narrative and that of the background texts that are evoked by the transformation but not directly tied to the main narrative. At the level of the foreground narrative, the uncanny effect occurs when diegetic and external readers who know Pyrocles (or Sidney’s *Old Arcadia*) encounter his hybridity, and the unfamiliar transforms into the familiar in front of their reading eyes. But Pyrocles’ transformation (and the text’s) is also interfictional, as he takes the form of an Amazon, a character that belongs to the traditions of Greece and Rome. Interfictional transformations become fertile ground for intertextual associations, because they allow authors to incorporate other narratives into the central one. Pyrocles’ interfictional transformation assimilates not only the myth of the Amazon, but also myths of cross-dressed heroes such as Hercules and Achilles. Sidney directly alludes to Hercules’ cross-dressing episode in Pyrocles’ narrative in disguise, but Achilles, whose depiction in Statius’ work echoes
Pyrocles’, is absent from the text. Though absent, Achilles leaves traces throughout the narrative, as Sidney draws on Statius’ Achilles when describing Pyrocles/Zelmane’s ambiguity, all while highlighting the differences between the two. In the final episode of the hybrid text, Achilles reappears and is assimilated into the disguised hero and into his double.

5. “under that mask”: Dissimulation in the Early Modern Period and in Basilius’ Court

Drawing on Statius’ Achilles, Sidney was not just imitating Achilles’ cross-dressing episode as it appeared in the *Achilleid*, but rather fashioned his own understanding of transformation that corresponded to the circumstances during which he was writing. The intertextual links to the *Achilleid* highlight Sidney’s choices when developing the character of Pyrocles. Along with specific similarities between the depiction of Statius’ Achilles and Sidney’s Pyrocles that underline Pyrocles’ metamorphosis and ambiguous identity, there are other additions and exclusions between these two narratives of disguise. First, Achilles does not initiate this subterfuge. Rather, Thetis, his loving mother, devises the disguise to prevent her son from joining the Achaean fleet in an attempt to save his life. In Sidney’s work, Pyrocles/Zelmane takes the roles of both the son and the mother, devising the disguise and dissimulating himself in Basilius’ court. Another important addition that Sidney incorporates to distinguish Pyrocles/Zelmane’s narrative from Achilles’ is the role of Gynecia. In the *Achilleid*, Deidamia is motherless, which helps her deceive her father when she discovers Achilles’ true identity. In Sidney’s work, Philoclea does have a mother. Falling in love with Pyrocles, Sidney’s Gynecia not only complicates the narrative, but also forces
Pyrocles/Zelmane to conceal his masculine identity in creative ways that are absent from Statius’ narrative of Achilles. Incorporating Gynecia and Basilius into the narrative, Sidney emphasizes the manners and rhetoric that Pyrocles/Zelmane must use when dissimulating and evading their courtship while maintaining closeness to his beloved Philoclea.

After his transformation, Pyrocles/Zelmane aims to conceal his hybrid identity as well as influence and deceive others to gain access to Philoclea and win her love. Such a strategy requires great control over passions and thoughts, the masterful use of language and rhetoric (such as the use of equivocacy and obscurity), and other subterfuges that are aimed at concealing one’s inner state from others. Thus, in addition to imitating the state and appearance of an Amazon, Pyrocles/Zelmane turns to measures of dissimulation to maintain the disguise and to gain control over the situation, since each of the characters at Basilius’ lodge reads her differently.

Before analyzing Pyrocles/Zelmane’s use of dissimulation and the connections between the two seemingly opposite terms, dissimulation and transformation, I would like to provide an overview of dissimulation in the early modern period.\textsuperscript{54} Dissimulation, 

\textsuperscript{54} There are several recent studies on dissimulation: Dzelzainis analyzes Bacon’s “Of Simulation and Dissimulation” and recontextualizes the essay as one that does not necessarily focus on the pairing of “simulation and dissimulation” as the title suggests, but rather on dissimulation. Johnson studies masking and dissimulation in early modern Venice. Lobsien, who focuses mainly on the way literary works present ideas and less on social implication of dissimulation, understands dissimulation (hiddenness or obscurity) as the counterpart of transparency (or clarity) and analyzes the ways Neo-Platonism prefigures in early modern thought in England, and especially in Marvell. Snyder gives an account on moral and political dissimulation alongside dissimulation at court. Zagorin offers an inclusive study on religious dissimulation in the early modern period. Zimmerman explores the role dissimulation played in Milton’s dramatic form as interplay between speech and silence. On the connection between Pyrocles and Musidrous’
especially its religious version, was often associated with heresy. In his *Excuse*, written in 1545, John Calvin attacks the Nicodemites—true Protestants who conform to Catholic worship to avoid persecution—and requires “that a faithful man should carefully guard himself from committing idolatry to please men and from pretending outwardly to accept things that he knows to be evil and against God” (347). Calvin was responding to a specific situation that had developed in Catholic France, which was hostile towards Protestants. For Calvin, dissimulation is blasphemous no matter the circumstances. Calvin’s uncompromised approach rejects the Nicodemites’ excuses and “miserable subterfuge, namely, that the inner affection belongs to God, whatever they do before men” (347). Calvin’s approach against Nicodemites attests to his mercilessness toward Protestants’ conformity. But as Perez Zagorin points out, his *Excuse* offers an “insight into the realities of religious choice during the Reformation,” and the difficulty to practice one’s belief publicly (82). In his illuminating study, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe*, Zagorin shows that Nicodemism is not limited to Protestantism but is a characteristic feature of English Catholicism as well, especially with the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558 and the establishment of the state church. As a result, it was now the turn of English Catholics to dissimulate and conform to the state church. Thus Catholics used the same methods of dissimulation at court and *sprezzatura* see also Dana. Davidson explores the place of dissimulation in the politics of politeness and connects it to such terms as hypocrisy (especially in the second chapter). Runciman also associates dissimulation to hypocrisy: “Hypocrisy is not about a mismatch between intentions and outcomes. Rather, hypocrisy is an ill-intended act dressed up to look like a well-intended one” (21). For the purpose of this study, Pyrocles’ dissimulation is not regarded as hypocrisy, for it is not “an ill-intended” act disguised as “well intended one.” I further develop this idea in the next section.
concealment that the Protestants, Moriscos, and the Jewish conversos adopted before them.

In *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, John Jeffries Martin holds that dissimulation is not exclusive to religious oppression. Rather, “self-presentation” at court, especially during a time when the authority of the king is absolute, involved “questions of language, silence, decorum, and dissimulation” (34). Dissimulation, hence, was a common practice in the early modern period, both inside the court and out. In England in the years of the Reformation, it was a means to survive under oppressing absolutism. In *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, Jon R. Snyder examines the discourse on dissimulation as it appeared in social, political, and moral accounts of the time. Snyder holds that though dissimulation was debated, and only a few were willing to acknowledge its use, “we may consider it a central component of the early modern social and cultural technology of secrecy, which was of paramount importance to those who lived in that period” (5). Sidney himself attempted an open approach, objecting to Queen Elizabeth’s engagement to the French Catholic Francis, Duke of Anjou (Alençon) in *A Letter to the Queen* (1580):

I will, in simple and direct terms (as hoping they shall only come to your merciful eyes), set down the overflowing of my mind in this most important matter, importing, as I think, the continuance of your safety; and, as I know, the joys of my life. And because my words (I confess shallow, but coming from the deep well-spring of most loyal affection) have delivered to your most gracious ear, what is the general sum of my travelling thoughts therein; I will now but only declare, what be the reasons that make me think, that the marriage with Monsieur
will be unprofitable unto you; then will I answer the objection of those fears, which might procure so violent a refuge. (89-90)

The consequence of such honesty was exile from court life and service. This act of banishment suggests that under certain circumstances dissimulation was a preferred practice. In the New Arcadia, Sidney depicts political instability, during which the king abandons his role as a sovereign, and order itself is undermined. In such circumstances, subjects are forced to turn to means of dissimulation to cope with social and political turmoil (rather than necessarily religious turmoil).

The debate between Pyrocles and Musidorus, in which Pyrocles defends his choice to disguise himself as the Amazon Zelmane, provides us a glimpse into Pyrocles/Zelmane’s motivation and the aim of this dissimulation. His retrospective narrative adds to that debate by revealing the thoughts and passions Pyrocles/Zelmane tries to hide during his interactions with other characters at Basilius’ lodge. Through this narrative device we receive a deeper understanding of Pyrocles/Zelmane’s dissimulation practices. Transformed into the hybrid, Pyrocles/Zelmane cannot reveal his true thoughts and passions to Philocela. At the same time, Gynecia sees through his transformation and falls in love with him. Thus, he is forced to dissimulate his thoughts and passions towards Philoclea while in conversation with others.

The debate between Musidorus and Pyrocles underlines Pyrocles’ divided identity. Explaining his intentions to Musidorus, Pyrocles says: “Neither doubt you because I wear a woman’s apparel I will be more womanish, since I assure you, for all

55 A year earlier, John Stubbs published The Gapping Gulf, a public document arguing against the proposed marriage between Queen Elizabeth and Anjou. This public assault cost Stubbs his hand.
my apparel, there is nothing I desire more than fully to prove myself a man in this enterprise” (NA 136). In this argument, we can identify a clear distinction between Pyrocles’ internal intentions and external appearance. Pyrocles deliberately imitates both the appearance and the character of an Amazon to “prove” himself as a man. Though unwilling (due to political constraints) to articulate his true passions and thoughts publicly and openly, Pyrocles is, to the best of his ability, honest with himself about those passions and thoughts. Once again, the Delphic aphorism “know yourself” that requires self-transparency and self-awareness plays a crucial role, this time in dissimulation. Snyder writes, “[dissimulation] could function successfully only through the establishment of a critical relationship to oneself as well as to others. To put it another way, in dissimulating with others one had to be extremely careful not to dissimulate with oneself” (48). Though Pyrocles counterfeits the Amazon, he does not dissimulate with himself.

We can find Pyrocles’ moral justification for this “enterprise” a few pages later, when he explains:

For remembering by Philanax’s letter and Kalander’s speech how obstinately Basilius was determined not to marry his daughters, and therefore fearing lest any public dealing should rather increase her captivity than further my love, love (the refiner of invention) had put in my head thus to disguise myself that under that mask I might, if it were possible, get access. (NA 142)

Both Kalander and Philanax (Basilius’ adviser) express their criticism of Basilius’ choice to leave his role as a king to “deprive [himself] of government for fear of losing [his] government” (NA 81) and isolate himself and his daughters as a consequence of the
oracles. In *Rebellion in Arcadia*, McCoy shows that in the *New Arcadia* the traditional opposions between love and the authority of the father and the ruler “achieve an intriguing complexity and intensity that can best be explained by their relevance to [Sidney’s] life and situation. This happens,” McCoy continues, “because the work’s crucial issues do not remain simply romantic or fictive; they become political and even biographical, and in some instances historically specific” (38). Pyrocles understands the complexity of the political situation and worries that the public and open expression of his thoughts and passions towards Philoclea will achieve an undesired reaction (“increase her captivity”). As mentioned earlier, Sidney himself attempted an open approach in the letter to Queen Elizabeth, in which he expressed his objection to her marriage to the Catholic Duke of Alençon. As a result, Sidney was out of the Queen’s favor. In light of Kalander and Philanax’ criticism, the absolute authority of the king is reexamined and called into question as a result of his decision to leave his role as king. Pyrocles realizes that he has no way of approaching Philoclea other than to hide his true intentions (“that under that mask I might, if it were possible, get access”).

In his essay “On Simulation and Dissimulation” (1625), Bacon differentiates between “three degrees of hiding and veiling of a man’s self” (350): secrecy, dissimulation, and simulation. Secrecy for Bacon is not a defensive mode but rather a political one, through which “secret men” who keep secrets are exposed to the thoughts and knowledge of others. Dissimulation, on the other hand, is a necessary means that aims to protect one’s own secret. Though Bacon categorizes simulation as a “vice” (351), he also explains that both dissimulation and simulation have their virtues. Among the

---

56 On Bacon’s “On Simulation and Dissimulation” see Martin Dzelzainis, Jon R. Snyder 56-58; and Zagorin 1999, especially 143-147.
advantages are the element of surprise, “faire retreat” (that is, the ability to back down from an action), and the ability to reveal “the minde of another” (ibid). But simulation and dissimulation have disadvantages as well. Though they help one to reveal others’ thoughts, by using these subterfuges one exposes his/her own fears and anxieties. Also, those who use simulation and dissimulation find themselves “almost alone,” isolated socially from those around them, unable to express their true intentions. This reflection leads Bacon to the final disadvantage, the loss of “trust and beleefe” in others one develops as a result of practicing dissimulation and simulation (ibid). Though dissimulation and simulation entail significant disadvantages, neither is completely denounced. Zagorin argues that “[w]hile secrecy is strongly recommended, dissimulation is not totally endorsed nor simulation completely reprehended. The reader is instructed that all of them are resources and that the latter two are permissible or necessary in certain circumstances” (145).57

In fact, Pyrocles sees “no remedy” but “to feign” (Bacon 351) in order to gain access to his beloved. His love for Philoclea is so great that it affects his judgment, as he states “my very reason was, you will say, corrupted – I must confess, conquered” (NA 141). Social isolation, as Bacon observes, is one of the consequences of simulation and dissimulation. Pyrocles/Zelmane’s identity is, in part, the product of his interactions with, and roles in, society: he is a prince, a nobleman, and a cousin. His desire displaces him from his known cultural roles. Now estranged from the man he once considered his closest companion, Pyrocles/Zelman can no longer find a comforting friend in Musidorus (“I fear, more than any assault, to break it to you” 141). He decides to leave Kalander’s

57 I further delve into the distinction between simulation and dissimulation in section 5.2 “Pyrocles’ Paradoxical Identity: Dissimulation and Transformation.”
house, and fleeing Musidorus’ “well-known chiding,” he reaches the pastoral landscape of Ithonia.

In his retrospective narrative, Pyrocles/Zelmane recalls his encounter with Basilius. In the first conversation between the king and Pyrocles/Zelmane, Pyrocles takes the role of Zelmane and acts as an Amazon: “I, that now knew it was my part to play, looking with a grave majesty upon him, as if I found in myself cause to be reverenced” (NA 144). Pyrocles/Zelmane adjusts his facial expression to show “grave majesty,” a quality he sees as apt for a revered Amazon. This type of dissimulation requires strict self-control over gestures, words, and countenance, but it also requires, as we see here, a measurable expression of passions. Here, in order to pass as an Amazon, Pyrocles/Zelmane displays a quality he does not really have (“as if I found in myself cause to be reverenced”). In this type of dissimulation, Pyrocles/Zelmane “interweaves truths with halftruths to create seeming falsehood” (Johnson 89).

Pyrocles/Zelmane’s dissimulation expresses not only “seeming falsehood,” but also his control over passions and thoughts. When Basilius reveals his identity to Pyrocles/Zelmane, the disguised Amazon says, “I that from the beginning assured myself it was he, but would not seem I did so, to keep my gravity the better” (145). Not only does this passage clearly establish Pyrocles/Zelmane’s practices of intentional concealment, but it also highlights the calculated manner through which he withholds information to gain a crucial advantage. Pyrocles/Zelmane was well aware of Basilius’ identity, but he conceals that he knows Basilius to control the situation, lulling Basilius with witty conversation.
Nevertheless, when he is introduced to Philoclea for the first time, Pyrocles/Zelmane finds it difficult to control his thoughts and passions: “and my sight, then more clear and forcible than ever, was so fixed there that, I imagine, I stood like a well-wrought image with some life in show but none in practice” (146). Pyrocles/Zelmane is so captured by Philoclea that he is unable to move. He falls on his knees and kisses Philoclea’s hand: “I must confess, with more than womanly ardency” (146). These performances unveil the disguise to a scrutinizing eye.58 As Pyrocles/Zelmane testifies, Gynecia identifies the man underneath the dress,

For she, being a woman of excellent wit and of strong-working thoughts, whether she suspected me by my over-vehement shows of affection to Philoclea (which love forced me unwisely to utter, while hope of my mask foolishly encouraged me) or that she hath taken some other mark of me that I am not a woman, or what devil it is hath revealed it unto her, I know not; but so it is, that all her countenances, words, and gestures are even miserable portraiture of a desperate affection. (NA 150)

According to Bacon, one of the disadvantages of simulation and dissimulation is the potential revelation of one’s own secrets. Pyrocles/Zelmane’s inability to fully control his passions places him at a great danger, since his secret is exposed to Gynecia. While dissimulation emerges from Pyrocles’ own desire to gain access to Philocea, it is always in direct relation with the gaze of the other. Luckily for Pyrocles/Zelmane, Gynecia’s love for him “keeps her from betraying me to Basilius” (150). Pyrocles/Zelmane must

58 Sidney explores the “struggle between truthful feelings and outward shows” in *Astrophil and Stella* as well (McCoy 2013, Ch. 3).
adjust to the new situation, simulating to Basilius and Philoclea, waiting for the opportunity to reveal his true identity to Philoclea ("that under that disguisement I should find opportunity to reveal myself to the owner of my hear" 149), and dissimulating with Gynecia.

5.1. “not counterfeit so far”: Pyrocles’ Honest Dissimulation

Sidney justifies Pyrocles/Zelmane’s dissimulation to readers as the necessary practice of a hero conquered by honest love. However, dissimulation was debated in the early modern period, and many considered it an inherently negative practice of dishonesty, as we clearly see in Montaigne’s objection:

As for this new virtue of pretence and dissimulation which is so highly thought of at present, I hate it mortally. Of all the vices, I know none that testifies to such a mean and craven spirit. It is a cowardly and servile characteristic, to go about in disguise, concealed behind a mask, without the courage to show oneself as one is. (“On Presumption” 208-207)

Montaigne rejects dissimulation because it enables immorality: it allows one to conceal true intentions behind a mask, hiding one’s true nature. But there were other voices as well. Alongside the discourse on the immorality of dissimulation, there was a parallel discourse on honest dissimulation. In On Honest Dissimulation (Della dissimulazione onesta, 1641), Torquato Accetto understands dissimulation not as act of deceit; rather, dissimulation and masking are necessary acts of defense. Honest dissimulation for Accetto occupies itself with “[withholding] the truth, relying instead on silence and
Based on this conception, Snyder defines honest dissimulation in the early modern period as the ability “to know how to express carefully or to disguise deliberately the passions and emotions, according to the place, the time, and the setting in which they made themselves felt” (43). That is, honest dissimulation entails controlling one’s passion in particular settings and contexts. Accetto’s book, however, was published about sixty years after Sidney’s Arcadias. Interestingly, in the Defence, Sidney himself refers to, and defines, honest dissimulation in a way that foreshadows Accetto’s view and sheds light on Pyrocles’ actions. In a passage that distinguishes history from fiction, Sidney points to the examples of Herodotus and Xenophon, both of whom portray servants that disgrace their kings in order to serve them. Herodotus describes Zopyrus, who “caused his own nose and ears to be cut off” (224) so that those who resist the king would accept him; consequently, he was able to secretly gain information for the king. Xenophon mentions Abradatas, who uses pretense, but in a way that does not involve physical disfigurement. Sidney then writes:

Now would I fain know, if occasion be presented unto you to serve your prince by such an honest dissimulation, why you do not as well learn it of Xenophon’s fiction as of the other’s verity; and truly so much the better, as you shall save your nose by the bargain: for Abradatas did not counterfeit so far. (225)

Derek B. Alwes argues that in this passage Sidney not only distinguishes historical truth from fiction, but also two forms of service, “one requiring considerable self-sacrifice and

59 Torquato Accetto was one of the major early modern theorists of honest dissimulation. See Johnson 88-91.
60 Sidney writes Abradatas but actually means Araspas. Though he does not clearly mention it, Araspas was rumored to be out of the King’s graces so he can spy after the king’s enemies, but it did not result in physical disfigurement.
another requiring only fiction” (92). Alwes holds that “honest dissimulation” in this context refers to writing as a form of service. I would like to suggest that honest dissimulation here refers to the purpose of the disguise: dissimulation is considered honest when there is a greater good at stake, in these cases the king’s.

Though both servants dissimulate honestly, Sidney prefers the fictional figure to the historical one, and, therefore, pretense over self-sacrifice. Convincingly, Margaret Ferguson and Alwes identify similarities between this passage and Sidney’s own life. Ferguson writes, “a courtly reader would have found this passage serio ludere” (67), and Alwes explains how Sidney warns his readers away from “excessive self-sacrifice” based on his own experience with the Queen: “When he left the court to retire to Wilton after circulating his Letter to the Queen, he may have done so in disgrace, or at least perceived disgrace, and he may even have felt that he had metaphorically cut his own nose off by sticking it into the queen's business” (92). I would like to add that Sidney allows his character Pyrocles/Zelmane to choose an “honest dissimulation” that does not require self-sacrifice. In a world where the king abandons his role as a king and isolates his daughters out of fear of prophecy, Pyrocles/Zelmane’s dissimulation is inevitable: revealing his true intentions would have resulted in fruitless self-sacrifice (like Sidney’s own fate). Therefore, Sidney creates an alternative for his prince: Pyrocles/Zelmane turns to honest dissimulation, counterfeiting for a greater good, namely, love.

5.2. Pyrocles’ Paradoxical Identity: Dissimulation and Transformation

If he “only” dissimulates, how can Pyrocles go through a transformation? Before answering this question directly, I would like to briefly analyze the manner by which first Achilles and then Pyrocles unveil their true identities. In the Achilleid, Achilles reveals
his identity twice: once when he rapes Deidamia, and a second time when he is exposed by Odysseus and thus goes through a social transformation. Pyrocles/Zelmane reveals his identity three times: first to Musidorus, next to Philoclea, and finally as he goes through a social transformation publically, revealing his masculine identity and exposing his real name during the trial. That final transformation, however, takes place in Book 5; it originates in the *Old Arcadia* and is part of the hybrid text. We are not completely sure how Sidney would have devised that final moment of social transformation in the *New Arcadia*. Unlike Bottom’s counter-transformation in Shakespeare’s comedy, Sidney differentiates between private and public counter-transformations. Bottom’s counter-transformation takes place when he is alone onstage. Sidney shows that one can unveil the disguise privately while maintaining it publically.

Zagorin distinguishes between two types of dissimulation: one that is “common to all human affairs” and involves the tendency to lie and deceive for fear or personal interest, and dissimulation that is associated with religious or intellectual intolerance and therefore also involves the “maintenance of an underground existence” (2). Pyrocles/Zelmane’s dissimulation is the result of a choice and an intention to deceive. But as his private unveilings reveal to us, throughout his transformation he maintains “an underground existence.” Zagorin points out that the terms dissimulation and simulation denote similar meanings: “dissimulation is pretending not to be what one actually is, whereas simulation is pretending to be what one actually is not” (3). Accetto clearly differentiates the two, as Johnson explains: “Simulation cannot be called honest, nor can circumstances make it legitimate. It injures both the deceiver and the deceived. Dissimulation, by contrast, is defensive, a shield and not a sword, a way of avoiding
rather than provoking harm. Instead of circulating untruths, it ‘grants some repose to truth, which can be revealed in its proper time’” (89). According to this definition, Pyrocles/Zelmane does not pretend to be a woman; rather, as the episodes at Kalander’s house and after the shipwreck show, his identity was always already ambiguous. Indeed, self-transformation into Pyrocles/Zelmane allows him to express his identity to its fullest. Yet, he still dissimulates because he pretends not to be a man. “One simulates what one is not. One dissembles what one is,” writes Johnson (89). In a similar vein, Pyrocles’ transformation is of a special nature: he goes through a self-transformation that enables him to express his duality and at the same time forces him to dissimulate and conceal part of his identity.

Pyrocles/Zelmane’s retrospective narrative takes place after his transformation and therefore plays a central role in shaping the perception of his divided identity. This private, personal narrative stands in contrast to the public debate with Musidorus, who understands the disguise as a transformation, one that reflects Pyrocles’ desire to identify himself with the object of his love. As I noted above, this view more closely corresponds with Pyrocles’ transformation in the Old Arcadia than in the New Arcadia. The autobiographical narrative and the poem enable us to enter Pyrocles/Zelmane’s retrospective perception of disguise and transformation.

Pyrocles/Zelmane’s poem “Transform’d in show, but more transform’d in mind” serves to consolidate his/her inner and external transformation:

---

61 See section 3 of this chapter, “Hercules’ Impresa and Pyrocles’ Interfictional Transformation.”
Transform’d in show, but more transform’d in mind,
I cease to strive, with double conquest foil’d:
For, woe is me, my powers all I find
With outward force and inward treason spoil’d.

For from without came to mine eyes the blow,
whereto my inward thoughts did faintly yield:
both these conspir’d poor reason’s overthrow;
False in myself, thus have I lost the field.

Thus are my eyes still captive to one sight,
Thus all my thoughts are slaves to one thought sill,
Thus reason to his servants yields his right,
Thus is my power transformed to your will:

What marvel then I take a woman’s hue,
since what I see, think, know, is all but you? (NA 131)

The poem (much like the retrospective autobiographical narrative) functions as a private medium of expression through which Pyrocles reflects on his transformation. As Pyrocles testifies in his poem, he has gone through a double transformation of both appearance and identity. The first two stanzas portray the process. Pyrocles/Zelmane states that his will was conquered, and that he had no physical strength or internal power to object to the power of love. He did not have control over the events (“For from without came to mine
eyes the blow”); looking at Philoclea’s painting, love came unexpectedly, and affected his eyes; immediately afterwards his mind was transformed.\(^{62}\)

The transformation is described as a battle that ends with the surrender of thoughts and reason to the sight of the beloved, and with the estrangement of the self (“false in myself”). Pyrocles/Zelmane uses a series of verbs drawn from the battlefield and thus his language reveals his suffering and confused state (“double conquest foil’d,” “from without came… the blow,” “inward thoughts… yield,” “reason’s overthrow”), confirming that the transformation was a complete surprise and that he could not resist.

The first-person transformation narrative supplements Pyrocles/Zelmane’s poem by adopting the language and metaphors of both the new and former identities. It enables Pyrocles/Zelmane to recount the significant change he has gone through, to review his past, and to reconstitute his identity. Thus, Pyrocles/Zelmane’s transformation narrative serves as a means of recreating his/her identity through self-narration. Though his transformation was an event, a sudden change that led to an immediate break from his past, the retrospective narrative enables Pyrocles/Zelmane to reflect on the change he experienced. Pyrocles/Zelmane’s account of his transformation begins with an event that explains his sudden transformation (“there were mine eyes infected, and at your mouth did I drink my poison”). Falling in love with Philoclea’s painting leads to a break from his past and to taking on a new identity. This change accounts for the paradox that

---

\(^{62}\) The transformation brings to mind Anchises’ love affair with Aphrodite in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (181-190). Anchises is well aware that after seeing the goddess’ true form he is at risk to live a “palsied life among men” that is, to be castrated, incapable sexually, and thus suffer effeminacy, “for he who lies with a deathless goddess is no hale man afterwards.” Pyrocles experiences what Anchises fears—the sight of a woman transforms both his “show” and his “mind”.
characterizes Pyrocles’ transformation: he affirms the central place of his former identity (“we men” 135) within his new life as the Amazon Zelmane (“no more Pyrocles, nor Daiphantus now, but Zelmane” 151), creating a hybrid identity in which the two selves coexist.

It is Pyrocles/Zelmane’s hybridity that enables the seemingly contradicting terms, transformation and dissimulation, to coexist. In his transformation into the Amazon Zelmane, Pyrocles becomes a hybrid: Pyrocles/Zelmane, man/woman, and textual/intertextual. As Pyrocles/Zelmane, he maintains a private, underground, masculine identity that exists alongside the public figure. Pyrocles’ underground identity and past as a man are valuable assets for Pyrocles/Zelmane, who is forced to dissimulate in order to conceal his masculinity. Pyrocles/Zelmane understands his ambiguous position, and is assimilated into the life of an Amazon. She maintains her disguise while in Basilius’ court and even in captivity, and reveals her underground identity only in private.

6. Conclusion: Reading Pyrocles

In the New Arcadia, Sidney constructs complex notions of transformation and dissimulation that coexist in the hybrid figure of Pyrocles/Zelmane. It might be helpful to reconsider Pyrocles/Zelmane’s counter-transformation, this time from Philoclea’s point of view as a reader. When Pyrocles/Zelmane unveils his underground identity to his beloved, the narrator describes Philoclea’s emotional reaction at length:

The joy which wrought into Pygmalion’s mind, while he found his beloved image was softer and warmer in his folded arms till at length it accomplished his
gladness with a perfect woman’s shape (still beautified with the former perfections) was even such as, by each degree of Zelmane’s words, creepingly entered into Philoclea, till her pleasure was fully made up with the manifesting of his being, which was such as in hope did overcome hope. (NA 329)

The narrator compares Philoclea’s joy to Pygmalion’s. In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Pygmalion discovers that the statue comes to life through his touch, but, like Philoclea’s, his initial reaction is not joy: “Dum stupet et dubie gaudet fallique veretur, / rursus amans rursusque manu sua vota retractat” (10.287-288). Pygmalion is amazed and stunned. Though he rejoices, the foreign touch leaves him dumbfounded and doubtful, so he touches her again and again. His brief immobility stands in opposition to the statue’s animation. The two characters face one another, and each mirrors the other: life and immobility. The uncanny creeps in when Galatea moves from a lifeless world to the world of living. This transgression crosses the border between life and death and between the real and fictional.

“The joy which wrought into Pygmalion’s mind… creepingly entered into Philoclea.” It is a joy entangled with dread that enters her mind. In the *Old Arcadia*, Sidney describes the same episode but uses the words “stealingly entered” instead (*OA* 2.106), a change that might suggest that, in the *New Arcadia*, Sidney designs a darker and more threatening situation. Next, “doubt” enters Philoclea’s mind as she is uncertain

---

63 Citations from the Latin text are taken from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses Books 6-10* 1972.

64 In her study on allusion and the uncanny, Sarah Annes Brown analyses the episode’s in the *Old Arcadia* and its uncanny intertextual references to the myths of Pygmalion through the lens of homoerotic desire, arguing that, “a reader who did not know the story of Pygmalion might well imagine that it was about a man who fell hopelessly in love with one of his own sex, and whose beloved was transformed into a woman by divine intervention” (125).
whether to believe that Zelmane is indeed Pyrocles; and she “[fears] to be alone with him with whom alone she desired to be” (NA 329). Philoclea’s mind is “divided” (NA 329), and, like Pygmalion, she finds it difficult to speak and “to make a well-joined answer” (NA 330). Zelmane’s underground identity is suddenly manifested in front of Philoclea’s amazed eyes; her counter-transformation is uncanny because Zelmane’s familiar presence turns into and contains the unfamiliar identity: both exist simultaneously. Such an experience is tantalizing not only for Pyrocles/Zelmane, but also for her reader, Philoclea. In her song, Pyrocles/Zelmane describes his estrangement from himself (“False in myself”); now Philoclea’s mind is divided as well.

Pyrocles/Zelmane’s counter-transformation is a transformative experience for the metamorph and for all witnesses. As Pyrocles/Zelmane transforms back into Pyrocles he maintains his disguise in public, and Philoclea’s words highlight her confusion: “Shall I say, “O Zelmane”? Alas, your words be against it. Shall I say “Prince Pyrocles”? Wretch that I am, your show is manifest against it” (NA 330). There is a discrepancy between dissimulating words and misleading appearance, as each directs the reader to a different character. Philoclea is baffled because there is no clear distinction between Pyrocles/Zelmane’s identities; it is because he is a hybrid, both a man and a woman, that dissimulation and transformation can coexist.

Philoclea expresses her difficulty interpreting Pyrocles/Zelmane, a challenge that evokes fear:

I fear, indeed, the weakness of my government before, made you think such a mask would be grateful unto me; and my weaker government since, makes you to pull off the visor. (ibid)
Philoclea is afraid that her inability to have control over her feelings and thoughts is what led Pyrocles to don and unveil the mask. In other words, her inability to dissimulate allows for both Pyrocles’ transformation and Zelmane’s dissimulation. Unveiling the mask while maintaining both identities increases Philoclea’s and the readers’ confusion and uncanny feeling, since we do not fully know if it is Pyrocles or Zelmane that we read.

Pyrocles’ transformation into Zelmane is not a complete transformation, but rather one that maintains his underground identity as Pyrocles. Reading Pyrocles, whether transformed or not, is always uncanny. His self-transformation into Pyrocles/Zelmane expresses his former innate ambiguity. He becomes a hybrid and as such preserves traces of the old self. Pyrocles/Zelmane at once is transformed and dissimulates. But the transformation is also uncanny intertextually, as other stories of cross-dressing heroes are assimilated into Pyrocles’ transformation, undermining his gender identity, and defining it as an act of honest dissimulation. As the text ends in mid-sentence, so does Pyrocles/Zelmane’s counter-transformation. Sidney leaves the text unresolved in both form and content. His Galatea does not fully transform from stone to life; it remains in both worlds—a textual and intertextual hybrid.
**Chapter 3:**

**A Conversion Narrative in Disguise: Uriel da Costa’s Religious Transformation**

Readers are inspired and moved by the confession: “De Profundis” by Oscar Wilde is a sea of poison and tears! Acosta’s confession is as profound... (Nahum Sokolov, *On Gutzkow’s Uriel Acosta*)

1. **The Alboraique**

I know that these adversaries, in order to blacken my reputation and traduce me

before the illiterate vulgar, would frequently say: ‘This man is neither Jew, Christian

nor Mahometan; he believes no religion at all’ (*Exemplar 561*).

In this passage from *Exemplar of Human Life*, Uriel da Costa (or Acosta) presents readers

with the Jewish community of Amsterdam’s view of him. He is the other within. Da

Costa depicts the way his persecutors within the Jewish community perceive him: a man

without religion, neither a Jew, nor a Christian, nor a Muslim. A confused, hybrid

representation of one’s beliefs was a well known imagery among conversos (forced

converts to Christianity and their families). The *Libro del Alboraique*, written around

1480 by an anonymous author, is a polemical treatise against Jewish conversos and their

ambivalent nature, namely maintaining the Jewish tradition secretly, while publically

---

1 Unless otherwise mentioned, translations from Hebrew are mine.

2 Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations from *Exemplar of Human Life* (*Exemplar humanae vitae*) are John Whiston’s (1740) in Salomon and Sassoon’s edition of Da Costa’s *Examination of Pharisaic Traditions*. In places in which the English version significantly varies from the original Latin text, I provide the translation and indicate it in a footnote. Citations from the Latin text are from the Gebhardt edition (1922). “Scio adversarios istos, ut nomen meum coram indocta plebe dilanient, solitos esse dicere, iste nullam habet religionem, Judaeus non est, non Christianus, non Mahometanus” (Gebhardt 117).

3 Matt Goldish discusses this rhetorical aspect in Da Costa’s *Exemplar* (12-13).
adhering to Christianity.⁴ The Alboraique (Al-Burak in Arabic) is Mohammed’s mythical horse that took him to Mecca and back to Jerusalem in one night. The Alboraique was a hybrid beast consisting of about twenty different parts, each belonging to a different animal: a mouth of a wolf, the face of a horse, the eyes of a human, and so on.⁵ The anonymous author of Libro del Alboraique writes from a Christian perspective. In the early modern period, the hybrid animal functions as an allegory for the ambivalent nature of conversos, who were often suspected of dissimulation, of public conformity with Christianity while secretly practicing Judaism. Thus, despite their conversion they were perceived as neither fully Jews, nor Muslims, nor Christians, but rather hybrids.⁶ Whether Da Costa reflects actual accusations of the rabbis in the Jewish community or his perception of what he believes they think of him, the hybrid nature of belief corresponds with many Christians’ negative views of Judaizers—Christians who practice Judaism (most, but not all of them, belonged to converso families).

Why does Da Costa incorporate an image of hybrid identity that originates in Christian polemics against conversos? How should readers interpret this type of hybridity? Before exploring these questions we might ask, who is the Exemplar’s intended audience? This chapter answers these questions while analyzing the connections between interpretation and interfictional transformation. The image of the Alboraique initiates this conversation. The Alboraique belongs to myth, and as part of the nature of

---

⁴ In his essay dedicated to this pamphlet, David Gitlitz mentions that The Alboraique was written after the establishment of the inquisition in Valencia (1484) and prior to the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 (p.1n1).

⁵ The word Burak probably indicates lightning. For more on the Alboraique as a representation of conversos, see Cecil Roth 27 and José Faur 50.

⁶ This might suggest that Da Costa accuses the Jewish leaders of placing him back in the role of a converso, persecuted by authorities and forced to conceal his true belief.
myth, its qualities and different parts change from one text to another. In early commentaries on the Koran, Alboraique was a swift beast in the size of a mule with ‘wings on its shanks’ (Gitliz 7). In later commentaries and legends, “this metaphoric reference to swiftness was taken literally and the beast became a flying steed” (7). By the eleventh century Alboraique received a human face. In the early modern period, the hybrid beast, drawn from Muslim, and not Jewish theology, came to represent Jewish conversos. Consequently, we can think of the image of the Alboraique both in its metaphorical and textual roles: a reflection of Da Costa’s hybrid belief and of his hybrid narrative.

2. *Habetis vitae meae historiam veram:* Da Costa’s *Exemplar,* A True History?

An age of religious crisis and reformation, the early modern period was a time during which conversion and dissimulation offered a means of expressing the oppressed self. Historians have identified Da Costa’s *Exemplar* (written in 1639, a year before Da Costa committed suicide) as an important document that encapsulates the final development of his thought and as one that represents heretical trends in the Jewish community of Amsterdam. Consequently, historical studies of Da Costa explore the connections and discrepancies between what Da Costa wrote and the documents of the Inquisition, while philosophical studies focus on the conflict between reason and faith in *Exemplar,* as well as on the work’s theological positions. Very little scholarly work has treated Da Costa’s *Exemplar* as a literary text. Rather than re-emphasizing the inconsistencies between what Da Costa writes and the historical record, I focus on the

---

7 See Paret, R. “al-Burāḳ.”
8 Matt Goldish’s work is a notable exception.
manners by which Da Costa dissimulates his intentions and the significance and effects of such dissimulation on readers. Furthermore, comparing Da Costa’s narrative to Augustine’s Confessions, I read the Exemplar as a narrative of conversion in disguise, one that highlights the doubts, skepticism, and failure to convert to Judaism rather than a path to a successful conversion.

Who was Uriel da Costa, and what did he conceal?9 Da Costa was born as Gabriel da Costa in Porto, Portugal in 1583 or 1584. He begins the Exemplar by describing his family’s relation to Judaism: “My parents were of the nobility and originally descended from those Jews who were constrained to embrace the Christian religion in that kingdom” (556).10 He then describes his youthful, fearful devotion to Christianity: “I was educated according to the custom of that country in the popish religion, and when I was but a young man the dread of eternal damnation made me desirous to keep all its doctrines with the utmost exactness” (557).11

However, Da Costa omits all references to his mother’s family. Recent studies reveal that his maternal great grandparents were baptized in 1497 during the General Conversion in Portugal and that the Inquisition (established in Portugal in 1536)

---

9 The following summary of Da Costa’s life is based on the Exemplar with additions from Salomon and Sassoon’s introduction to Da Costa’s Examination 1-24 and Goldish’s review of Da Costa’s life.

10 “Parentes habui ex ordine nobilium, qui a Judæis originem trahebant, ad Christianam religionem, in illo regno, quondam per vim coactis. Pater meus vere erat Christianus” (Gebhardt 105).

11 “Institutus fui, quemadmodum mos est illius regni in religione Christiana Pontificia; et cum jam essem adolescens ac valde timerem damnationem æternam, cupiebam exacte omnia observare” (105).
questioned a few members of Da Costa’s family for Judaizing.\footnote{See Israel Salvator Révah. In 2014 and 2015 Spain and Portugal respectively granted citizenship rights to descendants of Sephardic Jews who were forced to leave during the expulsion of Jews and the establishment of the Inquisition in 1492 (Spain) and 1536 (Portugal).} Thus, his mother’s family belongs to a converso family who continued to practice Judaism secretly for five generations. Some of his family members escaped Portugal and joined the Jewish community in Italy and the Ottoman Empire. In Exemplar, Da Costa insists that he had discovered Judaism solely from reading the Bible. But Porto (or Oporto) was a city known for its converso community, and many of its members were practicing Judaism in secret; Da Costa must have known some of them (Faur 116-119).\footnote{The research of Israel Salvator Révah reveals that Da Costa was exposed to rabbinic practices while in Portugal (45-76).} Faur suggests that Da Costa conceals his family involvement with Judaism to maintain his claims against rabbinic authority. Faur points to the following passage from I.S. Révah:

> What Uriel da Costa did not say in the Exemplar humanae vitae is that upon abandoning Catholicism, he adhered, not to a personal biblical Judaism, or to a traditional rabbinic Judaism, but to the normative marranism of the beginning of the seventeenth century, enriched by a period of penitence that the accident of a clandestine oral tradition had transmitted to him. He had practiced that secret religion for at least four years (74 qtd. in Faur 125).


Marranos is another name given to Jewish conversos in the Iberian Peninsula during the later medieval and early modern periods. The term is derived from either the Hebrew
Ma’reh Eyin (מראה עין) (appearance of the eye), suggesting that these converts were Christians only by appearance; or from the Spanish Marrano, meaning swine and often used as an insult (28). The terms Marranos, conversos, anusim (אנוסים), and New Christians—all are names given to Jews who converted to Christianity. In this chapter, I use the terms ‘conversos’, ‘ex-conversos’ and ‘conversos family’ throughout to emphasize Da Costa’s lineal connection to members of his family that were forced to convert to Christianity in former generations. The conversos’ families who practiced Judaism in secret are also known as crypto-Jews.14

Until the sixteenth-century the influence of Judaism on the Marranos was still strong. Roth notes that “[t]he Marranos of this period retained some knowledge of the Hebrew language. They continued to possess Hebrew books. They observed the dietary laws in full, when it was possible” (168). But from the sixteenth-century on Marranos were no longer familiar with official Judaism. André A. Aciman explains:

By the beginning of the 17th century [the Marranos] were so isolated from the rest of world Jewry, and the pressures to conform were so overwhelming, that their clandestine religion, when they practiced it, had become stripped to its bare

14 Roth explains the confusing terminology: “[a]mongst the Jews, these recent converts to Christianity, or even their remoter descendants, were known by the name of Anusim—the ‘Forced Ones,’ who had adopted the dominant religion under duress. The general population, on the other hand, used a variety of terms to describe them. They were called conversos—a term which could properly be applied only to the actual converts themselves. More strictly, they were denominated New Christians (Nuevos Christianos) to distinguish them from the general population of ‘Old Christians.’ Satirically, they were sometimes termed Alboraycos, from al-Burak, the marvelous steed of Mohammed, which was neither horse nor mule, male nor female—much like the persons to whom the name was applied, who were neither Jews nor Christians. However, they were popularly known, more generally, as Marranos.” (27)
essentials. Without Hebrew, without books, without even a proper recollection of ritual, the Marranos observed a rudimentary, garbled form of Judaism. (41)

That was the Marranism of Uriel da Costa. Not completely divorced from tradition, as he claims it was in the *Exemplar*, but lacking the unifying tradition of Judaism.

In 1600 Uriel da Costa began his studies in Canon Law at the University of Coimbra. He attended classes until 1608. At the age of twenty-five, Da Costa was granted an ecclesiastical benefice as the treasurer of the Collegiate Church. A prestigious position, this is the first step in an ecclesiastical career. Though a success, “doubts and difficulties” with Christianity began to “overwhelm” Da Costa. He decides to read “the books of Moses and the Prophets,” spotting contradictions between the Old and the New Testaments. Da Costa decides “to become a convert to the law of Moses, and as he declared himself only to be a deliverer of what was revealed by God himself” (557). That is, Da Costa decides to convert to a form of Judaism based on his own interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, as Leo Strauss indicates in his chapter on Da Costa in *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion*: “[i]t is thus by [Da Costa’s] own reflection and not through considerations influenced by revelation that he comes to give his faith to Moses rather than to the Catholic Church, and to recognize as revealed the Law given to Moses” (54).

Da Costa tells us that following this resolution he and his family escape Portugal and arrive to Amsterdam in 1615. Archival research reveals that his financial debt in Portugal might have been another motivation for the escape. In Amsterdam Da Costa and the rest of the men in his family get circumcised, thus formally converting to Judaism. Da Costa assumes a new name, Uriel. It is in Amsterdam that Da Costa’s

---

15 See Salomon and Sassoon 7-8.
perception of Judaism, based on the literal Biblical doctrine, clashes with the oral
tradition, based on rabbinical interpretation and Talmudic tradition. Da Costa challenges
the rabbis by sending a polemical catalogue of the discrepancies between the Torah and
the Oral Law to the leaders of the Jewish community in Venice (1616). Leon Modena
refutes Da Costa’s claims and recommends that Da Costa be excommunicated. By 1618
Da Costa was excommunicated by the Jewish communities of Hamburg and Venice.

“A prison without bars,” excommunication (or herem) was a form of punishment
that excluded and isolated a person from a community (Kaplan 1984, 115). The length
and extent of isolation depended on the individual’s convicted act. In his study on the
function of the herem in the Jewish community of seventeenth-century Amsterdam
Yoseph Kaplan explains how excommunication was not always an act of isolation; at
times an individual was denied only a certain right, such as the right to hold a position in
the Jewish community or participate in religious rituals (ibid). When the allotted time
elapsed, the individual may return to the community, as long as he repented for his

16 In the meantime, Da Costa, his elder brother, their wives and their mother leave
Amsterdam and arrive at Hamburg to pursue commercial options.

17 *Propostas contra a Tradigao* (Propositions against Tradition). There are two versions
for this work, one in Hebrew and one in Portuguese. The Hebrew version, which is more
elaborated, appears with Leon Modena’s refute of Da Costa’s criticism. Since Da Costa
did not know Hebrew, this is not his original work but a translation. The Portuguese work
is a later version that was probably re-written by Da Costa upon his return to Amsterdam.
See Faur 256 n51.

18 Modena was a well-known scholar and rabbi in Venice; refuting Da Costa’s arguments
was not a challenging task. Unlike Spinoza’s criticism, which reflects the author’s
excellent Jewish education, experience with classical Jewish sources, and mastery of
Hebrew, Da Costa’s criticism was unoriginal, as the author was not familiar with
classical Jewish sources and never studied Hebrew. On Spinoza’s criticism see André A.
Aciman 39; on Da Costas’s criticism see José Faur 42.

19 The text that was used to excommunicate Da Costa in Venice was used 38 years later
in Spinoza’s excommunication (*Examination* 10, n. 22).
actions. Kaplan also points out that many of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam “had extensive contacts with non-Jews both in Amsterdam and elsewhere” (119); therefore, herem did not completely deny a person from social contact.

In 1623, Da Costa returned to Amsterdam. A year later he published his book *Examination of Pharisaic Traditions Compared with the Written Law*, where he rejects the divine origin of the oral law and immortality of the soul. Da Costa recounts the events following the book’s publication in the *Exemplar*:

No sooner had this appeared in print, than the senators and rulers of the Jews agreed to lay an information against me before the public magistrate, setting forth that I had published a book to disprove the immortality of the soul, and that with a view to subvert not only the Jewish, but also the Christian religion. Upon this information I was apprehended and sent to prison, whence after a confinement of eight or ten days, I was discharged upon giving security. For I was fined by the magistrate in the penalty of three hundred florins, beside the forfeiture of my books lately published.

(558)

---

20 The right of excommunication is a privilege granted to the Jewish community by the city government of Amsterdam. See Kaplan 1984, 113.

21 On herem in other Jewish communities, such as Hamburg, see Kaplan 2000, 168-195.

22 Contradicting rabbinic view, Da Costa believed that the soul resides in the blood and therefore is mortal. See Alessandro Guetta 103.
All copies of Da Costa’s book (excluding two) were publically burnt. Da Costa was banished from Amsterdam, his two brothers broke off all communication with him, and his mother alone accompanied him to Utrecht in 1627.

A year later Da Costa returned to Amsterdam, where he was not formally excommunicated. Probably at the urging of his brothers, Da Costa repented and rejoined the Jewish community. However, events soon took a turn for the worse. In 1632 or 1633, the Amsterdam community excommunicated Da Costa for not conforming to dietary laws and for dissuading two men from converting to Judaism. Thus, the community endorsed Venice and Hamburg’s herem of Da Costa. In the Exemplar, Da Costa describes the price he had to pay as a result of the herem:

Many of them spit upon me as they passed by me in the streets and encouraged their children to do the same… If I was sick, nobody would attend me; if I labored under any misfortune, it was a matter of triumph and joy to them. (559-560)

Though the herem excludes and isolates, Da Costa does not literally leave. He is cut off from society but remains to be mocked and scorned. As long as he is under the ban, his connection to society is defined by negation and exclusion. He is a present absence—the

---

23 Segments of Da Costa’s Examination are found in doctor Samuel da Silva’s refutation of it. In 1990, H. P. Salomon, Adri Offenberg, and Harm den Boer discovered a well-preserved copy of the Examination in the Royal Library of Copenhagen. This copy was published in 1993 in a facsimile edition by Salomon and Sassoon, with an English translation. This edition also includes Samuel da Silva’s response to Da Costa’s Examination.

24 Yovel explains that unity was necessary for the Jewish community of Amsterdam because many of its members were ex-conversos. The leaders of that community attempted “to restore the daily pattern of Jewish life in accordance with the ancient customs of Israel” (12). Therefore, any act of challenging the customs or rabbinic authority was treated harshly. On the struggle to retain Jewish identity and religious discipline in other Jewish communities see Kaplan 2000, 174.
other within. Da Costa was excommunicated for seven years, and in 1639 he was forced into a public and humiliating acquiescence:

> When I had finished my lesson I came down from the desk…I stripped myself naked down to the waist, tied a napkin about my head, pulled of my shoes and, holding up my arms above my head, clasped a sort of pillar in my hands to which the door-keeper tied them with a band. Having thus prepared myself for my punishment, the verger came to me and with a scourge of leather tongues gave me nine and thirty stripes according to the custom of the Jews…After this I put on my clothes and went to the door of the synagogue, where I prostrated myself, the door-keeper holding up my head whilst all both old and young passed over me, stepping with one foot on the lower part of my legs and behaving with ridiculous and foolish gestures, more like monkeys that human creatures. (560)

In 1640, as a result of this public trauma, Da Costa committed suicide. The Exemplar was found next to his body.

> This history is hazy, though. According to Salomon and Sassoon, there is no record of Da Costa’s reconciliation ceremony, nor any record of his death. Details of Da Costa’s depression, melancholy, and suicide appear in Johann Müller book Judaismus.

---

25 In *The Jews of Europe After the Black Death*, Anna Foa explains how “anti-Jewish stereotypes” develop. Though early Christianity differentiates itself from Judaism and criticized it, “the new society nonetheless demanded that the Jews remain within it, as the inverted mirror image of the emerging Christian identity” (24). Thus, the role of the other within becomes central for defining a community’s identity through negation.

26 Kaplan mentions that though no record of Da Costa’s excommunication or re-conformity has been discovered, there is no reason to believe that his description is false: “we are justified in assuming that in certain cases excommunications were listed neither in the community registers nor in the Book of Admonitions, perhaps because the matter was sensitive, or for other personal reasons” (1984, 135).
oder Judenthumb (1644); Müler, who owned a copy of Da Costa’s *Exemplar*, is also the one who describes the *Examplar*’s proximity to Da Costa’s corpse. Philip van Limborch, a Remonstrant theologian, also owned a copy of the *Exemplar*, which he published in 1687 in Gouda. In the introduction to Da Costa’s autobiography, Limborch writes:

He seems to have finished it a few days before his death and after he had determined to put an end to his life. For burning with a desire of being revenged on his brother (others say his cousin) by whom he thought himself injured, he came to a resolution to shoot him and then himself. Accordingly, as this relative was going by his house one day, he levelled a pistol at him, but missing fire and feeling himself discovered, he immediately clapt too (= clapped shut) the door and, taking up another pistol which lay ready for that purpose, he shot himself and died in a terrible manner. In the house of the deceased this manuscript was found. A copy of it was communicated by a very eminent citizen to my great-uncle Simon Episcopius, amongst whose papers I found it. (qtd. in *Examination* 23)

In the absence of documental evidence, readers of the *Exemplar* should remain suspicious. As José Faur points out, there is no autographed manuscript of the work. Therefore, Limborch might have edited parts of the work to “libel Judaism” (114). Furthermore, the Latin manuscript preserved in the University Library of Amsterdam is

---

27 See Salomon and Sassoon, 23.
29 Kaplan also points out reliability issues of the version that has come down to us, see Kaplan 1984, 142.
not in Da Costa’s hand. It was probably copied while in Limbroch’s possession. Nevertheless, even with Limbroch’s edition and Da Costa’s fabrication of a few facts, the Exemplar remains an important account in the history of the Amsterdam Portuguese Jewish community and illustrative of an individual’s quixotic battles with religious authority.

3. The Fictional Elements of Autobiography

How then should we approach Da Costa’s text? As an autobiography? A conversion narrative? Do the textual inconsistencies completely undermine the text’s credibility? Analyzing Abner/Alfonso’s narrative of conversion to Christianity (1320), Ryan Szpiech writes: “the process of that conversion is available only through the account by the author himself written after the fact. Perhaps the author Abner/Alfonso did indeed ‘wrestle in spirit’ (whatever this might mean) just as his character did, but his autobiographical testimony can only tell us about the struggles of his fictional counterpart” (3). While historians perform invaluable work identifying the historical consistencies and inconsistencies of Da Costa’s narrative, I deploy the historical model outlined by Szpiech: I approach Da Costa’s autobiographical account as the representation of a literary, if not fictional, character. This approach differentiates the narrative from the historical experience; or, to use Karl Morrison’s terminology, “the thing made” from “the thing felt” (xiii). It also understands narrative as always existing

30 See Examination 23n53 and Faur 113-114

31 Abner of Burgos was a Jewish philosopher who, upon converting to Christianity, changed his name to Alfonso of Valladolid and wrote an exceedingly polemical text in Hebrew attacking Judaism entitled Moreh Tzedek (Teacher of Righteousness, ca. 1320). Only a Spanish translation of the work has survived.
on two levels: story and discourse. As H. Porter Abbott defines it, “narrative is the
representation of events, consisting of story and narrative discourse, story is an event or
sequence of events (the action), and narrative discourse is those events as represented”
(19). My focus then is not only on the events described (story), but also on the manner
through which the writer describes them (discourse).

This approach, however, is not blind to the historical context in which Da Costa’s
Exemplar was written. After all, the narrative was written when Da Costa attempts to
reintegrate into Jewish society, an experience that clearly influences him both physically
and emotionally. There is a thin line between approaching the Exemplar as fact or fiction.
My attempt here to distinguish between experience and the narrative of that experience
produces another set of questions about the conversion narrative: Is Da Costa’s
conversion itself fact or fiction? Da Costa harbored doubts about the immortality of the
soul at least four years prior to his formal conversion and circumcision in Amsterdam.
Was Da Costa converted to Judaism when he decided to follow the laws of Moses or
when he formally converted upon his arrival to Amsterdam? Is conversion an event or a
process?

Like Szpiech, who attempted to answer similar questions, I “look at” Da Costa’s
narrative and “around it” (19). In this type of reading, I understand the text as part of the
social-historical context. At the same time, the narrative is a story, a crafting, one
mediated by language—discourse as much as story. In this chapter, then, I study the
space between the “thing made” and the “thing felt,” between the represented, fictional
self that lies somewhere in between the narrating and the experiencing selves.
Understanding Da Costa's description of his conversion through the lens of “subsequent
events” (Szpiech 22) marks the difference between the event and the real experience. (For example, Da Costa incorporates parenthetical asides that belong to the narrating self as he recounts the events retrospectively and expresses his regrets about doing one thing or another.) The event in Da Costa's narrative is a textual product, and as such is different from the real experience. The real experience transforms into a crafted performance. Any attempt to understand the text as a “faithful picture of the way in which things happened” (A.D. Nock 254) not only mixes the real figure with its narrative protagonist, but also disregards the significant role of language and narrative structure (story and context) in influencing the design of the narrative and the characters.

The word exemplar in the title of Da Costa’s work signifies example, as in a representation of one’s life that stands for other lives, but also as an image or likeness, an artistic depiction, one that stands as an object for reflection. Faur adds that “[i]n Latin, exemplar, ‘example,’ stands also for ‘mirror.’ As a ‘mirror’ da Costa's Exemplar not only had the function of ‘reflecting,’ but, more importantly, ‘deflecting’ and ‘distorting’” (114). The multivalence of exemplar (example, image, mirror, distortion) helps illustrate the discrepancy between Da Costa’s narrating and experiencing selves: the narrating self reports the events from a retrospective point of view.32 As the narrative of Da Costa progresses, we get closer to the narrating self’s present. The Exemplar, however, contains one more voice created by the narrating self that blurs the distinction between the one who tells the story and the one that experienced the events: a represented self, whose history was altered to accommodate the Latin reading audience. This represented self functions as an exemplar, a fixed self on the written page. Different from the narrating

32 See Monika Fludernik 90.
self and the experiencing self, the represented self is composed of fictional elements, and as such is a literary creation. The represented self is the self Da Costa (or his editor) consciously created for the public. This *persona* is tormented, wronged by the Jewish community, forced into isolation to finally commit suicide. It is a literary, constructed heroic figure, created by the imaginative power of the writer. It is the represented self that I focus on here, rather than the historical figure. I’m interested in the literary creation of Da Costa as much as the historical currency of the events.

4. A Conversion Narrative in Disguise

4.1. Introduction

*Exemplar* represents a fascinating instance of an early modern conversion narrative, but one in disguise. Excommunicated by rabbinic authorities as the result of his idiosyncratic interpretations of the Bible, and then re-conforming to Judaism once more, Da Costa occupies a unique position: “the other within.” Da Costa’s narrative depicts not his successful conversion, like Augustine’s *Confessions*, but rather his disbeliefs, doubts, and reservations. *Exemplar* establishes Da Costa’s inner transformation by adopting the language and metaphors of the new religious tradition, while presenting a failed transformation.33 Thus, *Exemplar*, undermining the genre itself, functions as a conversion-inversion—a narrative of conversion in disguise.

---

33 In the nineteen-century, Da Costa and Barukh Spinoza sparked the imagination of artists and were appropriated as images of “counter-heroes,” challenging rabbinic authority, and representing non-traditional forms of thought (see Richard I. Cohen 46-47). For example, Karl Gutzkow’s historical drama *Der Sadduzäer von Amsterdam* (The Sadducee of Amsterdam, 1834) depicts Da Costa’s battle against Judaism and Christianity. The drama was translated into several languages and was performed and read widely (see Cohen, 47-48).
As we have seen in earlier chapters, dissimulation was a necessary practice during a time of religious turmoil. Within the field of early modern Jewish studies, José Faur, Yirmiyahu Yovel, and Elisheva Carlebach focus on converts to and from Judaism, especially those who continually modified their conflicting identities. Faur provides a convincing analysis of Da Costa’s implied Christian audience; Yovel’s term “the other within” offers a theoretical, but nevertheless concrete way to think about religious hybridity, “both belonging and not belonging […] mixing Jewish and Christian notions” (xi); finally, Carlebach’s study focuses on “divided souls,” the ambiguous identities of Jews who converted to Christianity.

However, no scholarship has yet addressed the central question of Da Costa’s narrative as a conversion narrative, one that undermines the very genre from which it is drawn. Despite much excellent work on Da Costa’s theological writings and his historical position among other Jewish heretics, scholars who study conversos’ narratives have not yet fully explored the importance of Christian conversion narratives for Da Costa’s Exemplar. Yet without such an understanding we are left with an inadequate analysis that excludes Da Costa’s own Christian education, as well as his complicated incorporation and subversion of the conversion narrative tradition.

In Fictions of Conversion: Jews, Christians, and Cultures of Change in Early Modern England, Jeffery Shoulson studies the interest early modern English writers had in the figure of the Jewish converso. Shoulson argues that in England the figure of the converso represents a “religious chameleon” whose conversion, conformity, and counterfeiting are forced by political, social, and economical circumstances (5). Such circumstances were especially prevalent in England, which had already expelled Jews in
1290, and which undergoes four radical transformations of its national religious identity in the sixteenth century. The figure of the Jewish converso, and especially “the specter of false Jewish conversion” (3), Shoulson argues, becomes a means through which English writers discuss their own culture of change. But not only English writers. Through a comparative analysis of Da Costa’s Exemplar and Augustine’s Confessions, my reading seeks to bridge the gap in scholarship in order to elucidate the unrecognized influence of the conversion narrative on Da Costa’s narrative, and simultaneously to address the ways in which Da Costa undermines the genre itself. Incorporating and challenging the traditional conventions of conversion narratives, Da Costa offers a unique understanding of conversion, utilizing the very genre of the conversion narrative to express not so much a “false Jewish conversion” as his own failure to convert.

Da Costa’s excommunication by Jewish leaders as the result of his individual interpretation of the Bible reflects widespread social anxieties about “dissimulating others” and disruptive textual interpretations—concepts at the very heart of early modern religious turmoil. While drawing on Christian conversion narratives, Da Costa was not just imitating the narrative of conversion as it appeared in the literature of antiquity, but also fashioning his own understanding of conversion and dissimulation that influenced and was influenced by the circumstances during which he was writing. A comparative analysis of Da Costa and Augustine’s narratives offers insights into the different ways early modern conversos imitate and challenge classical literature’s conventions of religious transformation. At the same time, the approach illustrates the connections between early modern transformations, divided identity, and these transformations’ uncanny effects within specific social-religious circumstances.
4.2. Imitation and Conversion

Conversion narratives belong to the traditions of autobiography and confession, forms available to early modern conversos who, like Uriel da Costa, lived as Christians for a few generations. In Divided Souls, Elisheva Carlebach chronicles this tradition: “Impelled by a heightened awareness of the role of confession in Christianity, early modern converts cast their own past as a secret now revealed, using the process of writing to assert control over the past and expiate for it” (89). Narratives of conversion function as a process through which the convert learns to accept the past and leave it behind, heading towards a new future. Carlebach identifies autobiography as another form of writing that shaped conversion narratives in the early modern period.34 Belonging to this tradition are two different models: Augustine’s processual conversion and St. Paul’s depiction of conversion as an event: an epiphanic, mystical experience that initiates the conversion (90). Studying Leon Modena’s Life of Judah as an autobiography, Natalie Zemon Davis points out that alongside Augustine’s form of autobiography as a “religious exploration of the self” (103-104), there is yet another form that focuses on the description of one’s family, “its history, its triumphs and disasters and its recipes for living, and for passing this on with the patrimony to the next generation” (104). This section explores the ways in which Da Costa uses the form of autobiography to present his family’s history, while at the same time drawing on and transforming Augustine’s “religious exploration of the self.”

The second paragraph of the Exemplar relates one of the most important elements

34 Excluding Da Costa’s work and a few extracts in Hebrew, Jewish autobiographies remained a genre for family and friends until the eighteenth-century and were rarely published (see Davis 118).
that led Da Costa to convert to Judaism: his objection to the immortality of the soul. Da Costa uses terms that point to the gravity with which he views his doubts: the doubts concerning the soul's immortality “overwhelmed me with grief and melancholy” (557).

The inner conflict between reason and faith was so great that Da Costa decides to turn to the Hebrew Bible (available to him in Latin). He finds truth in reading the Hebrew Bible, and the laws of Moses, but he does not explain to us in what way the Hebrew Bible resolved his doubts concerning the immortality of the soul. He does write that he wanted to imitate Moses, who was the deliverer of what was revealed by God himself:

   Hence I was induced to become a convert to the law of Moses, and as he declared himself only to be a deliverer of what was revealed by God himself, being called by him to that office or, rather constrained to accept it (so easily are the ignorant imposed on), I thought it my duty to make the law the rule of my obedience. (557)

Da Costa wants to practice the Torah as delivered by God himself, that is, based on the Hebrew Bible.35

   Though we know that Da Costa was familiar with marranism, in the Exemplar he portrays a different picture. According to the Exemplar, reading initiates Da Costa’s doubts. Da Costa distinguishes between reading the Gospel and reading the books of the confessors (“Vacabam lectioni Evangelii, et aliorum librorum spiritualium summas confessariorum percurrrebam”); he reads the former during his leisure time, diligently, but only running through the latter. The confessoria, or the books of the confessors,

---

35 Though Da Costa does not see himself as part of this group, in this he takes the position of the Karaites: “Karaite Judaism is characterized by its denial of the authority of the Oral Law of the rabbis as represented in the Talmud and Rabbinic codes” (“Karaite Judaism” The Encyclopedia of Judaism 1495).
probably refer to Augustine’s *Confessions*, in which Augustine discusses the immortality of the soul.\footnote{Summae Confessorum was a genre developed in the thirteenth-century that included manuals for the confessors. According to Thomas N. Tentler, these manuals invoke the authority of St. Augustine (321). See also Jacques Le Goff’s *The Birth of Purgatory*. 175. S. Berenstein who translated the *Exemplar* to Hebrew also writes: “these books could refer to ‘The Confessions of Saint Augustinus’ (see 49 note 1).}

Reading, however, was not a passive process. Da Costa adds: “and the more time I bestowed upon them, the greater difficulties still rose upon me” (557).\footnote{et quo magis istis incumbebam, eo major difficultas mihi oriebatur (106).} Da Costa depicts here the transformative power of reading: reading religious and spiritual books initiates his process of religious transformation. Such a process figures prominently in conversion narratives, and especially in Augustine’s *Confessions*, as Lewis R. Rambo suggests:

> Autobiography, perhaps better than any other genre, engages people on a very personal level. Conversion autobiographies stimulate imitation and provide reinforcement. Conversion stories touch the lives of people in ways that theological reflection rarely does [...]. Every story of conversion calls for a conversion, confirms the validity of conversion, and shapes a person’s experience of conversion. (159)

Da Costa does not imitate the *Confessions*’ structure or book numbering as other early modern converts to Christianity had,\footnote{For example, Murray shows the direct influence of Augustine’s *Confessions* on both the form and content of William Alabaster’s conversion narrative (see p. 43-51).} but his familiarity with elements of Christian conversion narratives is clear and present throughout the *Exemplar*. Both narratives begin by portraying religious doubts, the transformative power of reading, and conversion as a
culmination of a personal struggle. In Book 8 of the *Confessions*, Augustine portrays his life prior to the conversion in terms of confusion, uncertainty and doubts (“in my temporal life everything was in a state of uncertainty,” 133). At the end of this struggle all his doubts are removed as he acknowledges the spiritual substance of God (“All doubt had been taken from me that there is indestructible substance from which comes all substance,” ibid). Similarly, Da Costa presents his conversion as one that originates in an intense personal struggle: “when I was but a young man the dread of eternal damnation made me desirous to keep all its doctrines with the outmost exactness” (*Exemplar* 557). But reading the scriptures created problems for Da Costa: “[they] by degrees threw me into such inextricable perplexities, doubts and difficulties as overwhelmed me with grief and melancholy” (ibid). Questioning the immortality of the soul troubles Da Costa to such an extent that he decides to turn to “the books of Moses and the Prophets” (ibid). Augustine goes through a similar process through reading, but moves towards Christianity and not away from it.

Augustine provides the readers with a detailed account of his move toward Christianity. His theological search leads him first to the Manicheans, but when his questions are left unanswered he continues his search, mainly through reading. Da Costa simply writes that “under this doubt I continued some time” (557). We know that during this time of doubt he studied Canon Law. Hence, the period of uncertainty continued for a few years. Nonetheless, the process of conversion in the *Exemplar* shares several intertextual links with the *Confessions*. In book 8 of the *Confessions*, Augustine reads Christian theology and writes: “In this way I understood through my own experience

---

39 The English translation is based on Chadwick’s edition.
what I had read” (140). Da Costa too uses his own idiosyncratic reading of the book of Moses and the Prophets and arrives to an understanding about the immortality of the soul (Exemplar 557). Da Costa’s reading of the Hebrew Bible is not mediated by rabbis’ interpretations; rather, he reads the Bible and interprets God’s words to Moses by himself. Reading the books through their own understanding, both men undergo a religious experience that directly leads to their conversion. Though he realizes that Christianity is the true and right path for him, earthly desires still hold Augustine back. The moment of conversion takes place when Augustine “chances” on a book. Jeffrey Shoulson points out that Augustine’s conversion “proposes an important connection between textual encounter and religious transformation” (82). As Augustine is sitting outside contemplating the issue of will, he hears a child's voice "from a nearby house" repeating the words tolle, lege (“pick up and read”) (152). Augustine understands this voice as a form of divine intervention that directs him to open the New Testament. He does so and reads a command to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts” (153). This was Augustine’s moment of conversion. A close friend of Augustine converts immediately thereafter. The conversion leads to his baptism, when he is immersed into the Christian community.

Da Costa goes through a similar process. Immediately after reading the books of Moses and the Prophets, Da Costa “was induced to become a convert to the laws of Moses, and as he [Moses] declared himself only to be a deliverer of what was revealed by God himself” (Exemplar 557). Though Da Costa thought it is his “duty to make the law the rule of my obedience” (ibid), he doesn’t yet formally convert to Judaism. According to the Exemplar, Da Costa decides to leave Portugal to be able to practice Judaism freely,
but not before he encourages his own family to escape Portugal with him. Upon their arrival in Amsterdam, Da Costa and the other men in his family fulfill “the precept concerning circumcision” (557). Like Augustine’s, Da Costa’s decision to convert takes place as a result of reading, it initiates other conversions, and the formal conversion in Amsterdam, which involves circumcision, marks the assimilation into the Jewish community.

In Book 8, Augustine models his conversion after other conversion narratives: Victorious the teacher of rhetoric, St. Paul, and St. Antony of the Desert (who converted by reading the Scripture). These narratives prepare the way for Augustine’s conversion, and help the reader understand the cultural ramifications of the act of conversion—leaving one’s position to publicly practice faith. As Rambo points out, “[e]very story of conversion calls for a conversion” (159). Augustine’s own conversion is influenced by other conversion narratives and at the same time influences future readers/converts. Da Costa clearly shows that his narrative of conversion influences others, his mother and his brothers: “I had communicated to them my sentiments on the falsity of our religion” (Exemplar 557). Da Costa depicts himself as the one who initiates his family’s conversion. According to the Exemplar, his conversion functions like Augustine’s narrative of conversion: it influences others and shapes their process of conversion.

But it is not only reading the Scriptures that leads Augustine to his religious transformation. Other narratives of conversion directly influence Augustine’s path towards conversion. In Da Costa’s narrative, however, there are no direct references to such narratives; or are there? According to Jewish tradition, Abraham is the first convert to Judaism. Rodney Mariner indicates that Abraham (Abram prior to the conversion)
converted “in that he chooses God and through both belief and reason, seeks sanctuary tachat kanfei hashechinah (beneath the wings of the divine presence)” (90). In order to practice Judaism, Abraham leaves Haran and follows God’s instructions: “And the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you’” (12.1). Though Da Costa does not mention Abraham by name, he structures his narrative in similar terms: “leaving my native home… I also left a handsome house… that my father had built” (557). In order to practice Judaism, Da Costa, like Abraham before him, leaves his birthplace and his father’s house. He chooses to leave his past behind and to go towards an uncertain future, in order to practice Judaism freely. The native land and his father’s house constitute, for Da Costa, his basic education and value system, especially as his father was “a true Christian” (556). Da Costa’s process of conversion necessarily entails that he leave the house of his father, who practiced Christianity, as well as his native land, one that does not allow him to practice Judaism. In doing so, like Abraham, Da Costa leaves his country, and like Moses (who converted Jethro, the priest of Midian and his father-in-law), he actively influences his own family to convert.

Da Costa has two models of imitation: the conversion of Augustine, as well as the Biblical stories of conversion of two of the most important figures in Judaism, Abraham and Moses. Like in Augustine’s conversion, reading is transformative and leads directly to Da Costa’s conversion. It also provides Da Costa with Biblical figures who become models according to which he structures his narrative of conversion: leaving his homeland and the house of his father and converting his family.
4.3. The Failed Conversion and the Divided Self

Augustine’s conversion to Catholicism in the *tolle, lege* episode represents the dramatic culmination of Augustine’s long journey towards God. In his book *Character and Conversion in Autobiography: Augustine, Montaigne, Descartes, Rousseau, and Sartre*, Patrick Riley identifies the necessarily complicated position in which Augustine finds himself as he tries to narrate his life prior to his conversion from a time after his conversion: “[a]s conversion approaches, Augustine will try to show that the preconversional self had been inauthentic all along and had been contrary to the true self that can only be realized in conversion” (41). Riley distinguishes here between the self before and after conversion, what he calls the preconversional and postconversional selves. These terms are similar, but not identical to the narrating and experiencing selves; the pre- and postconversional selves are defined by a specific event within the temporal development of the narrative, rather than by the narrative perspective from which the story is presented. Conversion narratives belong to a religious genre in which the convert portrays the process of his/her spiritual journey. Augustine’s narrative serves as a model for future converts to Christianity who describe in their writings a sudden conversion, a complete change from one religion to another.⁴⁰ *The Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* explains that “[t]he conversion narrative always includes a wide gap between the past and the present, between corruption and redemption. The power of transformation through enlightenment is proven through this gap” (*Conversion* 179).

---

⁴⁰ Though Jews who converted to Christianity in the early modern period do not necessarily describe their conversion as an inner illumination, it is often described as a sudden change (see Carlebach 92).
Conversion to Judaism, for example, requires one to change dietary habits, follow new sets of rituals, and break ties with one’s past (Rambo 145). Men were also required to go through circumcision. Conversion to Judaism, then, affected many aspects of one’s life. Readers familiar with conversion narratives seem to expect that Da Costa’s conversion will have a dramatic culmination, like in Augustine’s narrative, in which the moment of conversion takes place after eight books of doubt and, when it finally materializes, involves mystic and mysterious elements. But the formal conversion and assimilation into the Jewish society are described in passing: “having finished our voyage and being arrived at Amsterdam, where we found the jews professing their religion with great freedom, as the Law directs them, we immediately fulfilled the precept concerning circumcision” (557). It is also the moment in which the narrative changes its function, as Da Costa continues: “I had not been there many days before I observed that the customs and ordinances of the modern Jews were very different from those commanded by Moses” (ibid). Da Costa's narrative is a conversion narrative inside out: it models its first paragraphs on familiar conversion narratives from both Judeo-Christian traditions. But as the moment of assimilation into Jewish society arrives, its function is transformed into a narrative that depicts a failed process of conversion, the conversion’s empty promises and unmet expectation. Rather than finding the answers in religion, Da Costa shows the inability of religion to provide answers; rather than finding a source of comfort in the religious community, Da Costa shows its failings, and instead of a narrative that dramatizes an inner transformation, Da Costa presents a narrative of failed transformation, one that breaks off in the middle, leaving the convert detached and fragmented. Da Costa’s religious identity is hybrid: stuck somewhere between Judaism
and Christianity, associated with both, though belonging to neither. Flipping the genre inside out, Da Costa himself ends up an inversion, a shadow, the other within.

Augustine spends the first 8 books of his narrative portraying his doubts and challenges before converting to Christianity, richly describing his journey towards Christianity until the moment of conversion. His conversion functions as a moment of epiphany in which all doubts disappear and reservations are resolved. Instead, Da Costa’s moment of religious transformation is the moment when his doubts concerning the new religion begin. As soon as Da Costa converts, there is a break, not so much between the pre-converted and the post-converted selves as in the case of Augustine, as much as between Da Costa’s perception of religion as he created it in his mind and the religion he was asked to practice.

Converts usually describe the process of conversion as a transformative experience, during which the old self dies and a new converted self is reborn. Riley notes that the narrative part of the *Confessions* ends with the death of Augustine’s mother and son, and thus there is a connection between narrative and biological dimension. The end of the narrative of the self marks the beginning of the philosophical books of the *Confessions* (80-81). For Da Costa, the self is not defined through conversion. Rather than marking a break from the old, pre-converted, self, conversion marks an initial stage that will culminate in a break from Judaism and religion. Throughout the process, Da Costa engages in a constant search for authenticity. When comparing Da Costa’s text to Augustine, we can see that the latter characterizes the pre-converted self as “inauthentic, abject, and confused” (Riley 25). At the moment of Augustine’s conversion, the post-converted self leaves the pre-converted self behind. In Da Costa’s narrative, the
conversional moment does not function as a division between an inauthentic self and an authentic self. Da Costa continues to constantly pursue certitude about the world, first testing Christianity, then Judaism, only to ultimately find each lacking.

We can see an example of the difference between the two conversion narratives by exploring their use of the word *aegrotabam*. Augustine uses the word *aegrotabam* only once in the *Confessions*, when describing his conversion process in Book VIII:41

\[
\text{Sic ægrotaba et excruciabar accusans memetipsum solito acerbius nimis, ac volvens et versans me in vinculo meo, donec abrumperetur totum quo jam exiguo tenebar, sed tenebar tamen. (8.25)}^{42}
\]

Such was my sickness and my torture, as I accused myself even more bitterly than usual. I was twisting and turning in my chain until it would break completely: I was now only a little bit held by it, but I was still held. (150)

Augustine describes his pre-conversion as a state of sickness and torment, imprisonment and violent emotions. This section precedes his final conversion. The word *aegrotabam* is significant here, since it renders the difference between Catholic and Protestant English translations. While Catholic translations understand it as a “sickness of the mind,” Protestants texts translate it as a “sickness of the soul.” The difference points to the function of reason in the process of conversion.43 Da Costa also uses the verb *aegrotabam*

---

41 The verb appears several times in other tenses; but it appears only once in the first person imperfect tense, in a moment in which Augustine defines his preconversion state.

42 The Latin text is from O’Donnell’s edition in the Stoa Online Consortium.

43 See Shoulson 196n16.
once in his *Exemplar* when describing the consequences of his *herem* or excommunication:

> Si ægrotabam, solus ægrotabam. Si aliquod aliud onus incumbebat, hoc inter sibi valdè optata expetebant. (112)

If I was sick, nobody would attend me; if I laboured under any misfortune, it was a matter of joy and triumph for them. (560)

Da Costa’s sickness is neither of the mind nor the soul; rather it is a physical sickness that leaves him isolated. Yet it points to the sickness of a society that would expel a person in such a way. In Augustine’s work *aegrotabam* marks the individual pre-conversion stage as a state of confusion and torment. In Da Costa’ text the term defines his post-conversion state in similar terms, but instead of pointing towards his own interiority, the narrator points the finger at Jewish society itself.

Da Costa’s process of conversion emphasizes the alienation from society rather than the errant, sick self. Ryan Szpiech identifies *conversion* as an elusive term that marks a variety of processes. *Conversion* can point to an internal belief or social affiliation; it can be studied from different disciplinary points of view (psychological, sociological, theological); as each point of view explains conversion differently, each is thus limited, leaving out elements that other disciplines cover. Nevertheless, nearly every definition of *conversion* points to a fundamental change and the production of an “otherness,” as articulated by Szpiech in the following passage:

> In each of its ‘ill-matched’ shapes, [conversion] implies a change, a distinction between two things: one religion and another, one culture and another, one
practice and another, one understanding and another, one time and another, even
one self and another. As a marker of change, it is a marker of otherness, a
borderline that implies both an identity and a difference. (17)

One of the main challenges for Da Costa is that he goes through a change from one
religion to another, moves from one place to another, but he neither fully affirms his faith
nor denies the differences between himself and Jewish society. On the contrary, as soon
as he converts he realizes that there are far more differences between his perception of
Judaism and the religion’s demands, differences he cannot accommodate.

4.4. “If I had kept my silence”: Da Costa’s Inability to Dissimulate

Da Costa decides to rebel against the Jewish community and publically express
his disagreements with the Oral tradition, actions that directly lead to his herem. “I
confess,” writes Da Costa, “if I had kept my silence from the beginning, and
acknowledged the order of the world, it would have been more to my advantage.”
44 Here, Da Costa recognizes the consequences of defying the Jewish community’s leaders. If I
were a different man, says Da Costa, I would have accepted the oppression of tyranny,
but I cannot. Da Costa identifies the advantages of honest dissimulation and writes:
“[t]his way is better for those who would live among men, free of the persecution of
many ignorant or from the unjust oppression of tyrants” (ibid). 45 He clearly understands
the paradox of dissimulation, of a controlled self-expression that conveys a choice of
avoiding voicing one’s true feelings and thoughts. This approach brings Accetto to mind.

44 Fateor magis ex re mea fuisse, si a principio tacuissem, et agnoscens ea, quæ in mundo
fiunt, potius silerem (116, translation is mine).
45 Translation is mine.
Accetto, who published his treatise on dissimulation in 1641, a year after Da Costa’s death, writes about the advantages of honest dissimulation, which benefits the dissimulator.\textsuperscript{46} Though Da Costa is well aware of the benefits of such a strategy, he also acknowledges his inability to follow this path, his inability to dissimulate and to conceal the truth for his own self-interest.

Da Costa presents us with two models. The first is the man he wishes he were: one who accepts the burden of society; one who dissimulates and does not have to pay such a high price for it. It is a role Da Costa admits he could not perform. The second model is the man he is: one who does not hide the truth for self-interest; who thinks “it more honourable to die bravely than to have those mortifying reflections, which must necessarily attend a base submission” (\textit{Exemplar} 561). Da Costa moves from faith to reason, and in the process both Judaism and Christianity fail him.\textsuperscript{47} Returning to the Jewish community is an attempt to dissimulate, but Da Costa is unable to follow through. He is left in a foreign place, isolated, and lacking any sense of belonging:

For everyone that is intent on self-interest is industrious to suppress truth, to lay traps for the ignorant and unwary and to trample justice underfoot. But after I was unwarily drawn into and deceived by a false religion and had gone so far as to enter the list with these champions, I thought it more honourable to die bravely.

\textsuperscript{46} See chapter 2, section 5.1, “not counterfeit so far”: Pyrocles’ Honest Dissimulation.

\textsuperscript{47} Leo Strauss comments on the common denominator in Da Costa’s criticism of religion: “Da Costa's critique of religion as it has come down to us in a developed form has two parts: it is directed against the Jewish tradition and against the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The critique of the Jewish tradition is basically identical with the biographically earlier critique of Christianity, on the motives for which da Costa reports in his autobiography, \textit{Exemplar humanae vitae}” (54). According to Strauss, Da Costa’s rational critique of Christianity that leads him to Judaism, also leads him away from Judaism to natural law.
than to have those mortifying reflections which must necessarily attend a base submission. (*Exemplar* 561)

The self that is represented here through time is a tortured one, refusing to dissimulate, divided between its loyalty to its internal truth and its social needs. Da Costa’s choice to remain true to his belief and world-view becomes clear in light of his past. In Portugal he and his family had to dissimulate, maintaining an inner Judaism, while outwardly conforming to Catholic worship for fear of the Inquisition. He prefers to die an honorable death than to be deprived of his sense of honor.

Da Costa also declares that he was deceived “by a false religion” (*vana religione*) which revealed itself to be fabricated and man-made. Yet, the creator of that religion is Da Costa himself. When he creates his private Judaism in Portugal, it is a literary creation based on some aspects of Judaism that he knows, but it is divorced from the oral tradition, made mostly from his imagination. Since there is no secular alternative to religious life in Da Costa’s time, he thus becomes, to society at least, a fictional Jew, a character of and in his own narrative.48 When reality and fiction clash, Da Costa transforms into “the other within.” Unable to dissimulate, he transforms into a critic of the Jewish society he belongs to and as such provokes the fear of others. This process places him in complete isolation. He becomes a hybrid, part of society and at the same time excluded from it. Even though he re-conforms, Da Costa never goes through a counter-transformation; that is, he is never fully able to reintegrate into society. He remains a hybrid.

48 See Karen Armstrong (20). Faur writes: “Uriel da Costa initiated a role that would serve as a paradigm for secular Jews in generations to come” (140). In this sense, his *Exemplar* achieves its purpose.
5. The Others Within

Associated with both religions, but belonging to none, Da Costa resolves to end his life. He writes the *Exemplar* to tell the truth before he dies (“saltem in morte vera enarrare,” 110). Consequently, he is not as interested in understanding himself as he is in using the autobiographical narrative as a form of confession (“testamentum conficit,” 109) that recounts his way of life (“relinquat vitæ rationem,” 109) and mirrors others’ life (“et humanarum calamitatum Exemplum verum,” 109-110). But who are these “others”? Who is the *Exemplar’s* audience? What is the rhetorical situation here? A careful reader can delineate the intended reader of Da Costa’s text by zeroing in on direct references to individuals or groups in the position of the addressee, and by the ways in which Da Costa approaches specific themes and ideas that interest certain sorts of readers.

As noted earlier, Da Costa conceals his mother’s familial connection to a converso family. In other words, it was probably Da Costa’s mother who influenced her children to practice Judaism, and not Uriel. In addition, Da Costa states that he only wants “to be a deliverer of what was revealed by God himself,” that is, to follow Judaism based on the Scriptures alone. But as a Marrano, Da Costa was aware of at least some aspects of the Oral tradition, even if he was distant from it and did not practice it publically. Why then does Da Costa use the familiar structure and function of conversion narratives to Christianity, such as Augustine’s *Confessions*, where a personal struggle, an

49 In the final paragraph of the *Exemplar*, Da Costa addresses his readers: “Acknowledge and lament the misery of the human condition, which you also share” (“miseram hominum conditionem agnoscite et deplorate, cujus et ipsi participes estis,” 123). The translation here is mine.
individual search, and a reading that unravels a hidden truth in the scriptures initiate the conversion? Furthermore, for what reason does he falsely depict his decision to convert as influencing other members of his family (his mothers and brothers)? For what reason does he emphasize that his mother and brothers discover the failings of the old belief system and the truth of the new one through him?

The answer to these questions lies in the manner by which Da Costa intended the audience of the *Exemplar* to interpret the text. Conversion into Christianity often involved writing a narrative, in the Augustinian tradition, which enables converts “to give concrete testimony to the momentous changes they had experienced” (Carlebach 88). Conversion to Judaism, however, did not involve such a process, and therefore narratives of conversion to Judaism are not as common as those to Christianity. Though writing about religious experience was not common in Judaic conversion, Miriam Bodian explains how narratives that recount Old Christians’ Judaizing, such as Lope de Vera’s, figured prominently in the literature of the Portuguese-Jewish diaspora (180). Bodian notes that many of these narratives share particular elements:

The protagonist, typically, was a pious Old Christian who underwent a crisis as a result of reading the Gospels critically. The Gospels, this person discovered, were full of contradictions. He was forced to conclude that they were nothing but a set of fables of human origin. Crisis gave way to despair. He was rescued from this

---

50 See also Carsten Wilke, 57. ‘Old Christians’ are distinguished from ‘New Christians,’ baptized Jews in the Iberian lands. Lope de Vera was an Old Christian who was burned alive in 1644 for Judaizing; that is, developing doubts concerning the principles of the Church, associating himself with Jews, and following (to a certain extent) the Law of Moses (for example, he ceased eating meat, refused to violate Shabbat, etc.). For a detailed account on Lope de Vera’s life and Judaizing based on Inquisition documents see Bodian 2007, chapter 6.
condition, however, by turning to the Hebrew Bible, a revelatory experience that led him to conclude that the Law of Moses was the one eternal law of God. (180)

Da Costa’s narrative describes a surprisingly similar process: he was a pious Christian (“the dread of eternal damnation made me desirous to keep all its doctrines with the outmost exactness,” 557); after reading the Gospel, however, he developed doubts (Da Costa questions “whether a belief of them was consistent with reason forasmuch as my reason did perpetually suggest to me things that were directly contrary,” ibid). As a result, he arrived at the conclusion that “those things which were related of another life [are] forgeries” (ibid). This process led him to great despair and melancholy (“doubts and difficulties . . . overwhelmed me with grief and melancholy,” ibid). He turns to the Hebrew Bible and experiences a revelation (“I was induced to become a convert to the law of Moses,” ibid).

During conditions of religious oppression (which are not exclusive to the Jewish experience in the Iberian lands), narratives such as Lope de Vera’s existed to reassure ex-conversos that even non-Jews who turned to the Scriptures identified with Judaism. Da Costa draws on a familiar outline and terminology, not so much to offer reassurance to ex-conversos, as to lull his readers, conversos and ex-conversos, into his narrative. Faur shows that Da Costa distorts his own past to accommodate his readers. If Da Costa indeed wrote the text in Latin, his intended audience, according to Faur, was not the Jewish community, but rather the Christian one. Faur writes, “[t]here are several lacunae in this account, the result of either van Limbroch's editing or da Costa's desire

---

51 See Bodian 2007, 180.

52 Goldish also notes that by choosing to write in Latin Da Costa had a Christian audience in mind, and “perhaps a secondary Jewish audience” (9).
not to offend his Christian audience” (120). Though Limborch might have tempered the text here, it is more likely that Da Costa describes this account himself. As mentioned earlier, Révah directs our attention to the discrepancies between historical evidence concerning Da Costa’s Jewish ancestry and his depiction of conversion as an idiosyncratic process of self-discovery and transformation. Based on Révah’s findings, Faur suggests that these discrepancies are the result of Da Costa’s attempt to accommodate his Christian audience: “There is no mention of the persecutions of new Christians and the terrors of the Inquisition devastating the converso community in Oporto and elsewhere in Portugal” (ibid). Though this might be the case, I would like to add that by drawing on familiar conversion outlines, Da Costa directs his narrative first and foremost to the conversos’ community. Faur himself writes, “What da Costa portrayed as a personal event was a widespread phenomenon: between 1565 and 1618 hundreds of new Christians from Oporto fled Portugal to embrace their ancestral religion” (ibid).

Furthermore, Faur explains how Da Costa misleads the reader when he describes his house in Portugal: “I also left a handsome house situated in the best part of the city, that my father had built” (557). Recent findings reveal that either Da Costa lived in an old house or in a house that went through significant repairs (Faur 114). The misrepresented description of the house and additional archival research\(^{53}\) point to a discrepancy between Da Costa’s financial situation in Portugal and the image he portrays in the *Exemplar*; that is, between the experiencing self and the represented self. Da Costa might have wanted to craft a picture of financial stability that would not undermine the heroic image of

\(^{53}\) See section 2.
escaping Portugal for religious reasons. Christians would surely dismiss the conversion if it were motivated by money. Joining Judaism for financial reasons would certainly look bad to Jewish conversos and ex-conversos who left Christianity and everything they owned to practice Judaism freely.

Within a growing community of conversos and ex-conversos in Amsterdam who, like Da Costa, are familiar with Latin and in search of a sense of belonging, Da Costa addresses “the others within”: conversos and ex-conversos whose loyalty is still divided or sit on the sides of the Jewish community, or suffer disillusionment with Jewish rabbinic authority. Though rabbis understood the “collective submission to rabbinic authority” as fundamental to the survival of the Jewish tradition (Bodian 180), Kaplan argues that, “the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam contained a group of marginal people who lived on the fringes of the community and took no active part in its life. Their connection to the community was based on their origins and on family connections, but not necessarily on religious principles” (1984, 117). Uriel da Costa was one of them, and I would like to suggest that, in addition to Latin-reading Christians, the marginal group of conversos and ex-conversos is the implied audience of Da Costa’s text.

Utilizing the story line of Judaizing figures such as Lope de Vera at the beginning of his narrative, Da Costa provides his readers with a sense of a shared struggle and fate. Judaizers’ storylines are not the only narratives on which Da Costa draws. He also

---

54 Kaplan’s study uncovered documentation about eighty men who, between 1645-1725, transgressed the prohibition of Amsterdam’s community to travel to certain countries. Among them thirty-seven never paid membership dues (that is, they were not active members). See Kaplan 115-117.

55 This pattern foreshadows the concluding sentences of his narrative (which I discuss in the next section), where Da Costa refers to his own text as a mirror image of readers’ prolonged life suffering.
incorporates elements from Augustine’s *Confessions* in a rather subversive way. For an audience who is familiar with Augustine’s text, such an imitation highlights mainly the differences between the two processes of conversion. Rather than writing exclusively for a Christian audience, Da Costa also communicates with conversos and ex-conversos. Subversive in its motives, the *Exemplar* addresses the marginal figures who are already on the fence, those who are hybrids within the Jewish society and constitute an underrepresented group.

6. **Nomen meum: Da Costa’s Interfictionality**

   The last sentence in Da Costa’s *Exemplar* is of special interest. Following the long struggle between himself, his family, and Jewish society, Da Costa finally offers a biographical detail that arrives strangely belated—his name:

   Ne hoc etiam desit, nomen meum, quod habui in Portugallia Christianus, Gabriel a Costa, inter Judæos, quos utinam nunquam accessissem, paucis mutatis, Uriel vocatus sum. (123)

   lest this also be missing, my name, which I had in Portugal as a Christian, was Gabriel Acosta; among the Jews, to which I wish I had never joined, with a little variation, I was called Uriel.56

   The name grounds the narrative to a concrete existence. Though Da Costa’s situation is unique, he wants the narrative to serve as a reflecting mirror to others (“Acknowledge and lament the miserable condition of humankind, which you yourselves share”).57 By

   56 Translation is mine.

   57 “miseram hominum conditionem agnoscite et deplorate, cujus et ipsi participes estis” (123). Translation is mine.
excluding his name from the text until the last line, Da Costa intends the *Exemplar* to serve as a paradigm, thus representing the general human condition. Da Costa explains that his text describing human suffering is an object of reflection, a mirror through which readers look to see themselves, to see the human. It is through the text that readers gain an understanding of their miserable condition. Thus, the text has two roles: it functions as a mirror of the self and a mirror of the other. It is self-reflective and transformative. It serves to represent an individual story and as such it is part of the individual’s historical moment; and at the same time, the text is an artifice, a device that reflects readers’ own condition in the world.

Up to this point, the writer was anonymous. He provides historical details but not biographical information. The attempt to penetrate the individual experience in the world and to reveal the “reality” behind the text is the work of scholars. But it was not Da Costa’s intention. Da Costa aimed at leaving the *narrative* as an exemplar, a representation for others. He could describe his life without attaching a specific name to it, but when the narrative ends, so does the writer's life. He, who was isolated most of his adulthood, does not want to die nameless. But Da Costa also explains that he provides his name so nothing will be missing (“Ne hoc etiam desit”), all the facts will be known to the reader, so the reader will have the impression that the text not only reflects human suffering but also the truth.

When introducing his name, Da Costa incorporates both his known name in Portugal, Gabriel, and his changed name among the Jews, Uriel. By revealing his identity he provides us with his hybridity: the Christian and the Jewish. By presenting his name and religious affiliation Da Costa also presents his dual affiliation: he lived as a Christian
and lived among the Jews. He could present his name in two different cities, Oporto and Amsterdam, but he mentioned his communal connection as well. Though Da Costa rejects both religions from within, his self-identity is presented through a dual religious affiliation.

What does the name change suggest? Da Costa does not say much about his formal conversion upon his arrival to Amsterdam. Other than fulfilling the “precept concerning circumcision” (557), Da Costa leaves the formal religious transformation out of the text. Changing one’s surname when converting and reverting to Judaism or Christianity is a hallmark of religious conversion. In the Bible, Abram changes his name to Abraham, and Yaakov (Jacob) to Yisrael (Israel). In the Christian tradition Saul changes his name to Paul upon conversion. Amsterdam was well known among Sephardim and Ashkenazim converts to Judaism, and there are several examples of conversions marked by a name change. In 1686 a man from Moravia arrived at the city, converted, and changed his name to Moses ben Abraham Avinu Haas. Also in Amsterdam, a Catholic monk changed his name to Israel ben Avraham Avinu or Yisrael Ger.⁵⁸ From the moment of conversion, converts are called by their new name. As we can see from the examples above, some converts took a name with religious significance. Both Gabriel and Uriel are names associated with the Jewish and Christian traditions.

⁵⁸ See Martin Mulsow and Richard H. Popkin, 9. In the Exemplar, Da Costa himself mentions two men who express their desire to convert to Judaism: “I happened one day to be in company with two men who came from London to Amsterdam, the one a Spaniard, the other an Italian – both Christians and not so much as related to the Jews by descent – who, taking an opportunity to declare to me their necessitous condition asked my advice touching their becoming proselytes to Judaism” (559). As a consequence for dissuading these men from converting to Judaism, Da Costa was excommunicated in Amsterdam.
Thus, Da Costa’s name change does not mark a new converted identity immersed in a new tradition.

Yet, if we re-read the names and their grammatical relations, we discover something of interest. *Habui* (first person singular perfect) points to a name Da Costa had in the past as Christian, but no longer retains. This joins to the passive *vocatus sum* that denotes a name he was known by to others, but did not necessarily have. Thus, in the present the writer is nameless. Rather than associating himself with one religion or another, Da Costa presents his nameless identity through the signifiers of belonging he no longer possesses. Once again he defines his identity through negation and absence rather than belonging and inclusion.

During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the Jews occupied a “spectral” presence within Christian thought. Steven Kruger writes:

Jews are important, even central, in mainstream Christian culture not so much because they provide a religious challenge to Christianity and its thought, and not so much because they present a real social and cultural alternative to Christian hegemony, but because–whatever the social reality of Jewish-Christian relations, and despite the complex, “protean” nature of representations of Jews–Jews and Judaism can be quite easily rendered “virtual,” reduced to a nonpresence, even a nonbeing that functions to reconfirm a real, present Christianity. (xx)

---

59 In *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe*, Kruger argues that the textual, virtual Jew was a means through which Christian writers defined their own theology.
Kruger refers here to the spectral, or virtual existence of Jews in Christian thought. In a similar way, by negating both names, Da Costa represents himself in the text as spectral, “reduced to a nonpresence.” Rather than reconfirming a present religion, Jewish or Christian, he denies both. Consequently, Da Costa leaves it to readers to fill the gap.

The act of naming and renaming in literary texts is associated with literary existence. For example, through his transformation into the Amazon Zelmane, Pyrocles recreates his identity. In *Literary Names*, Alastair Fowler notes that “[b]efore title pages came in, writers affirming authorship had to name themselves within the text, openly or in disguise” (75). A common practice is the use of an anagram (a well-known example is the character Philisldes in Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*). Though he does not use an anagram, Da Costa keeps his name hidden until the final line of the text, and by doing so he allows the reader to speculate about the writer’s identity, even to believe that the character could be any man from Oporto. When Da Costa reveals his name at the end of the narrative, he introduces it through the dual affiliation lying at the core of his alienation: Uriel/Gabriel. Though he feels estranged from both traditions, his dual name ties him to Judaism and Christianity, to the Law of Moses and the Gospels, to two traditions he sees as man-made, as fiction. Consequently, his hybridity is defined by negation, by what he rejects, rather than what he is part of. He is neither a Christian, nor a Jew, neither Gabriel nor Uriel.

Da Costa draws on the languages of Judaism and Christianity using the names he had and was called by, and at the same time he defines his identity and his worldview against those traditions. Da Costa’s intertextuality defines not only his identity but also society’s approach to him. Jewish society’s anxieties about the influence of the “other
within” govern its approach to Da Costa and produce his exclusion. It is because the leaders of the Jewish society recognize Da Costa as part of them, and fear his influence on society’s unity, that they excommunicate him in the first place.

In the *Confessions*, Augustine also presents the topic of self-knowledge towards the end of his narrative of the self, posing the question: “Who am I? What kind of man am I?” (9.1.181). Riley writes: “That autobiographical question par excellence underscores the perception of conversion as rebirth. After conversion, the self becomes for the first time a field of inquiry about the truth of all subjects” (49). For Augustine, “Who am I?” points to the post-conversional self in the present, to an existence under the spiritual guidance and sustenance of God. Instead, Da Costa’s dual affiliation points to a provisional existence, which we know is also temporary, as he will kill himself shortly after writing his narrative. At the end of the narrative, left nameless, Da Costa becomes, Οὐτὶς, “no one” (to evoke Odysseus’ ghostly pun). Though he grounds the narrative in the name he once had, and the name he was known by to others, in the present he negates this identity that is man-made and therefore fictional, transforming into an *interfictional* self, that is between religions and beyond one religion, between names and beyond one name, grounded in a concrete historical moment while functioning as an exemplar for the human condition for generations to come.

7. *Quixotic Da Costa*

As we noted earlier, the second paragraph of Da Costa’s narrative provides the rationale for his conversion. What we have skipped over, however, is the narrating self’s

---

60 See section 4.2 Imitation and Conversion
retrospective comment. Allow me to incorporate the passage in full:

Hence I was induced to become a convert to the law of Moses, and as he declared himself only to be a deliverer of what was revealed by God himself, being called by him to that office or, rather constrained to accept it (so easily are the ignorant imposed on), I thought it my duty to make the law the rule of my obedience. (557)

The parenthetical clause, “ita decipiuntur parvuli,” which literally translates to “so the children are deceived,” is directed to the readers and is coined by the narrating self from a retrospective point of view. It points to a later passage where Da Costa explains that he realizes that the Law of Moses was not a divine law: “it was some time after this, I say, that I began to question with myself whether the Law of Moses ought to be accounted the Law of God . . . At last I came to be fully of opinion that it was nothing but a human invention” (558). At a later stage of his life, Da Costa came to the conclusion that the Law of Moses is a human creation, a fiction. But as he reads the Law of Moses for the first time, he too believes it to be the word of God. If his reading of the Hebrew Bible is indeed as idiosyncratic as he claimed it to be, who, then, deceived Da Costa into believing that the Law of Moses was divine? This address to the reader suggests that either Da Costa’s initial reading of the Hebrew Bible was not as idiosyncratic as he wants us to believe it was, or that his criticism of the Jewish leaders here is a bit exaggerated.

But more importantly, it points to the difference between the experiencing self’s understanding of the Hebrew Bible as the word of God, and the narrating self’s

---

61 Translation is mine. Whiston’s translation here is more figurative.
62 Da Costa refers here to the publication of Examination, the forfeiture of his books, and his imprisonment.
perception of the Bible as a human creation. The first reading leads Da Costa to create an individual and unorthodox religion based on the Bible alone, which he believes to be Judaism. Upon his encounter with reality in Amsterdam, the narrating self approaches the same text as fiction. Thus, early in the second paragraph we are introduced to types of readings that produce different literary entities.

Reading the Hebrew Bible for the first time, Da Costa occupies the role of an author in a narrative that creates his own literary-based world, forming an imaginative religious existence based on textual precedents. When he creates his fictional Judaism in Portugal, it is a literary creation based on some aspects of Judaism that he knows, but mainly on his fictional imagination, one that is divorced from oral tradition. He thus becomes a product of his own creation. When reality and fiction clash, Da Costa faces the specter of what he terms a “false religion.” He is alienated from the religious world he created. As giants transform to windmills, Da Costa transforms into “the other within” – unable to dissimulate, he becomes a critic of the Jewish society he belongs to and as such evokes a fear of the social other. Even though he eventually re-conforms, Da Costa never goes through a counter-transformation; that is, he is never fully able to reintegrate into society. Thus, the move from faith to reason also marks a move from author to critic.

Da Costa’s narrative changes abruptly from a narrative of failed conversion to a narrative that depicts an emotional and tormented self. We can identify the moment of alteration when the narrative changes from the first person to the second person. This is also the point in the narrative when the narrating self interferes once more with the account of the experiencing self. After publishing his first book against the rabbis, Da Costa tells us:
Some time after this, as age and experience are apt to occasion new discoveries to the mind of man and, consequently, to alter his judgment of things (let me here declare my mind freely, for what should hinder a man from speaking the truth without reserve, who is just going to make his exit and to leave behind him a sad though true example of human misery?), it was some time after this, I say, that I began to question with myself whether the Law of Moses ought to be accounted the Law of God. (558)

As we have seen, Da Costa’s doubts extend and he arrives at the conclusion that not only is the soul not immortal, but also that the Laws of Moses are not divine. In the middle of this winding sentence, the narrating self intervenes and states that it is his intention to “make his exit”; that is, to commit suicide. The readers understand that the events to come have a significant role in shaping the narrating-self’s decision and state of mind.

Da Costa tells us that despite his recognition that the Laws of Moses are not divine laws, he decides to re-conform and come out from isolation:

Having thus determined this point, I began to reason with myself in the following manner (I wish I had never entertained such a thought!): What can it profit me to spend all my days in this melancholy state, separated from the society of this people and their elders, especially as I am a stranger in this country, destitute of any acquaintance with its inhabitants or even knowledge in its language? How much better will it be for me to return to their communion and to conform to their ways…?

In this passage there is a clear division between Da Costa’s internal truth that rejects both the oral tradition and the inconsistencies between the scriptures and the natural law and
his social need for a sense of community, family, and belonging. He re-conforms not because he is convinced that his arguments are untrue, but for creature comforts. Though the experiencing self decides to end his *herem*, we can identify a discrepancy between the experiencing self and the narrating self, especially when considering the narrating self’s address to the readers in parenthesis, where Da Costa regrets the very thought of returning to the community. We, the readers, are still unaware of the events that lead to the narrating self’s change of heart, but we do know that those events will have fatal consequences.

Da Costa’s submission to the rabbis’ demands comes as a surprise, especially after he describes his sense of honor and his long battle against rabbinic authority. Da Costa's self-description presents details in Da Costa’s story that point to human sinfulness towards the individual, and the individual’s inability to dissimulate when the cost is too high. His narrative is an example of a conversion that does not write off the former, errant, self. The characteristics that lead him to suicide are those that Da Costa presents early in the narrative as significant and admirable:

I was naturally very pious and compassionate, insomuch that I could not hear the story of any person’s misfortunes without melting into tears, and had such an innate sense of modesty that I dreaded nothing so much as to suffer disgrace. Not that I had the least cowardice in my temper or was free from resentment when a just occasion offered, for which reason I always had an aversion to that haughty and insolent race of men who are apt to despise and trample upon others, and

---

63 On Da Costa’s turn to natural law towards the end of his life see Strauss, chapter 2, and Goldish, p. 17ff.
therefore took all opportunities to defend the oppressed and to make their cause
my own. (556)

Da Costa uses the singular “I” that confronts the plural many, and portrays himself as a
hero in an un-heroic world (though he never actually provides examples of his heroic
behavior).

When critics refer to Da Costa’s sense of honor and refusal to submit to Jewish
authorities, some refer to a familiar literary character: Don Quixote. Faur writes that Da
Costa addresses “his imaginary enemies in Quixotesque terms” (137). Henry Méchoulan
alludes to Don Quixote when describing Da Costa’s rebellious acts against Jewish
orthodoxy: “Don-Quixote-like, da Costa described himself as God’s paladin, the only
defender of true Judaism against the rabbis” (365). I would like to extend the metaphor
and further compare Da Costa with Don Quixote from a literary point of view. Though
Don Quixote was an immediate success even after the publication of the first part in
1604, there is no evidence that Da Costa was familiar with this book. I do not argue here
that Da Costa’s Exemplar draws on Don Quixote. Rather, I would like to illustrate how
themes from Don Quixote elucidate certain aspects of Da Costa’s narrative. Specifically,
Don Quixote’s malleable identity allows him to create an imaginary world and to
transform himself into a fictional character. Da Costa’s act of religious transformation
was based not only on the misconception of normative Judaism but also on the creation
of a private version of the Jewish religion, drawn from the Hebrew Bible alone. Reading,
for Da Costa, was transformative. There was no Jewish public life in Portugal, and Da
Costa could not find a rabbi who would teach him the religion of his ancestors. He thus
created Judaism out of his imagination and his individual interpretation of the Bible.
Thus, much like Don Quixote’s interfictional transformation, Da Costa’s conversion illustrates the deep connections that exist between textuality and identity, and between textual interpretation and transformation.

In the third chapter of the second part of *Don Quixote*, Don Quixote is confronted by the “fictionality of his fiction” in the form of a book. When Sansón Carrasco warns Don Quixote of a printed version of Don Quixote’s adventures (which corresponds to the first book of Cervantes’ literary work), Quixote fails to recognize “the fictionality of his fiction,” that is, the fictional aspects of his narrative. This failure reflects the inextricable ties between the fictional image and Quixote’s identity. Similarly, Da Costa confronts “the fictionality of his fiction” as his humiliating acquiescence to Jewish community leads to disillusionment. Riley points out that “[a]s much as autobiography is self-presentation to the reader, it is also an endeavor through which a person tries to make sense of his or her own experience” (1). Reviewing and re-experiencing his re-conformity, Da Costa encounters his own self-image on the written page. The representation of Da Costa’s humiliated self-image casts a shadow on his life and precedes his death. Da Costa recognizes the need for dissimulation, for creating a fiction through which he could live, but he is unable to disguise and to dissimulate.

---

64 Robert Alter (3). For my discussion of Don Quixote’s encounter with the “fictionality of his fiction” see chapter 2.

65 Da Costa’s depiction of himself invites sympathy from readers. Bodian characterizes Da Costa’s actions and qualities in a different manner: “Da Costa entered a protracted struggle with the leaders of the Amsterdam community that entailed two excommunications and two insincere recantations. He was unable to sustain an outward semblance of conformity in part because he was a demanding and aggressive person, a provocateur in spirit” (2007, 182).
Quixote’s narrative comes to an end when he fights the Knight of the White Moon and loses. Prior to the duel, The Knight of the White Moon (the disguised Sansón Carrasco) presents his conditions for battle: “that [Don Quixote] return to his village and not leave it again for a year” (888). After losing the duel, Quixote is forced to return to his village, where he becomes ill. When the narrative and the life of Don Quixote come to an end, he says “I was mad, and now I am sane; I was Don Quixote of La Mancha, and now I am, as I have said, Alonso Quixano the Good” (937). He belongs to two timelines: the Quixotic past and the Quixano of the future. Quixano must face his Quixotic identity to successfully cross the borderlines between the fictionality of his past and the reality of his future. When he faced his literary self-image, Quixote incorporated it into his fantasy instead of leaving his fictional self behind. Quixano also does not reconcile his past, but rather rejects it completely. Now Quixano sees Don Quixote as the “other,” and instead of assimilating the fictional other into the self (as at the beginning of the novel), he becomes estranged from himself. Quixano identifies his fictional self as a monstrous figure that needs to be extinguished (“Now I am the enemy of Amadiś of Gaul and all the infinite horde of his lineage). Since Quixote is part of Amadiś’ horde, Quixano sees him as his enemy.

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator calls attention to the uncertain origin of Quixano’s name: “he undoubtedly must have been named Quixada and not Quexada” (23). E. C. Riley notes that “the confusion […] corresponds to [Don Quixote’s] almost total lack of prehistory” (117). Although Quixano lacks prehistory, Quixote has created a past for him; he is his history. Rejecting Quixote, Quixano denounces his own past. During Quixano’s transition from the imaginary to the real world, he stands with his back
to the future: he is incapable of accepting his past in readiness for the future so as to make
the synthesis final. Quixano cannot move from his fictional past to his real present
without destroying part of himself.

Much like Quixote, Da Costa defends the oppressed and fights for justice. In his
narrative, his offenders are imaginary and nameless. When he writes, Da Costa takes on
the role of both victim and persecutor:

“But”—say these vile scoffers, trusting in the strength of their number more than
that of their cause—“what availeth your contending with us? What can you do
against so many?” I confess it and lament it as my great misfortune that I am
overpowered by your multitude. It is owing to this and your bitter reflections on
me that my heart burns with resentment and indignation and makes me think it
unlawful to use their play towards such wicked, arrogant and abandoned
wretches. All I can say is, I want the power of revenge.

This passage appears after Da Costa’s humiliating reconciliation ceremony and directly
precedes the passage in which Da Costa describes the ambiguous identity of the
conversos.\footnote{See section 1, The Alboraique.} It allows us to enter Da Costa’s tormented mind. Up until his re-conformity,
Da Costa uses first and third person points of view to portray his narrative. But from this
point on, the narrative voice constantly mixes from first (“I confess”), to second (“You
from whom I had nothing dishonourable to fear,” 560), and to third person points of
view. More importantly, in this speech Da Costa plays two roles: the oppressed (“I am
overpowered by your multitude”) and the oppressors (“What can you do against so
many?”). He is both the self and the other, the one and the many. The constant change of
narrative voice and blurring between self and other point to Da Costa’s fragile mental state, and to his dialogic condition. This mixture of voices continues: “But I see everyone of you filled with rage at so insolent a question and justifying his own conduct: ‘What, are we not all pious and merciful and strict adherers to truth and justice?’” (563).

What defines Da Costa’s identity here is the coexistence of the real and imaginary. He sees his persecutors filled with rage and imagines their voices as one. The speech signifies the creation of a literary world. As he takes on both the role of the victim and the oppressor, he incorporates heteroglossic language that points to Da Costa’s divided and tormented self—the other is indeed within.

Describing the scene in the synagogue, Da Costa emphasizes its corporeality and its effect on the body. After removing his shirt, he suffers “nine and thirty stripes” with “a scourge of leather tongue” (560), after which he is stepped upon by members of the Jewish community. The physical aspect of the ritual is heightened, but does not bother Da Costa as much as its effect on the audience:

Now let anyone who has heard my story judge how decent a spectacle it was to see an old man, a person of no mean rank and who was moreover naturally exceedingly modest, stripped before a numerous congregation of men, women, and children and scourged by order of his judges…Let him imagine the confusion and anguish such a one must suffer. (560)

After his flogging, Da Costa becomes fixed to the ground, prevented from movement. Though the confusion and agony of the experiencing self is significant for the narrator,

---

67 Strauss writes “[i]t is a battle not so much against illusory thinking as against enemies, which presupposes and favors all combative emotions” (61).
the audiences’ gaze is of equal importance. He is interested both in the external and internal audiences, both in the readers and the men, women, and children who were present in the synagogue. The gaze of the internal audience in the synagogue highlights the fragility of the old man and the immorality of stripping a modest man in front of others. The gaze of the readers is directed both to the humiliating moment but also to the leaders of the Jewish community who performed the removal of the herem. As Da Costa is fixed to the ground, his image is also fixed in the text and in the imagination of his readers. Da Costa asks the readers to be the judges of his judges, by bestowing them with the power of imagination (“let him imagine”).

Whether or not Da Costa’s sense of honor is unrealistic, it stands in stark contrast to his experiences in the real world. Indeed, isolation, degradation, and dishonor are some of the major themes of Da Costa’s narrative. Though he emphasizes honor, compassion, and bravery, his ideas must confront reality. When Quixano returns to his village, he breaks from the literary figure, the heroic Quixote, who made his life so rich and colorful. By acknowledging his errant old self and denouncing him, Quixano returns to reality. Such a break foreshadows his death. Da Costa’s life narrative ends not with a conversion from fiction to reality, or from one religion to another. By denouncing any sense of belonging to a religious reality (the name “which I had” and “which I was called”), and bestowing the reader with the power of interpretation (“Acknowledge and lament”), Da Costa creates his own fiction, finally transforming into a literary character.

---

68 In Latin, consideret, consider or reflect upon.
8. Conclusion

What is the connection between Da Costa’s interpretation and the notion of interfictional transformation? Throughout his life, Da Costa has two crises. The first is initiated by interfictionality: converting from one religion to another, Da Costa occupies a unique position of a religious hybrid who, like the Alboraique, represents the negation of its parts more clearly than the productive combination of different elements. Creating a fictional Jewish identity out of his idiosyncratic reading of the Hebrew Bible, Da Costa draws his family into his world and leaves his home and homeland. As reality in Amsterdam clashes with his individual reading, Da Costa is forced to separate the two worlds, the real and imaginary, and to break from the fictional Jewish religion he created in his mind. Da Costa’s second crisis takes place after his humiliating re-conformation in the synagogue. As the heroic, honorable figure he created loses the battle with the tyranny of the many and, head hung low, reenters society, Da Costa breaks away from his heroic, fictional self. Stripped from his armor of values and high ideals, from his clever arguments and perceptive readings, completely unarmed and beaten, Da Costa cannot continue to live. The quixotic figure he created—when confronted by a harsh world—forced him into isolation. But the fighting, defiant figure of his creations becomes part of him. As soon as he is beaten and defeated, he realizes that he can no longer live without his alter ego, the heroic Uriel Da Costa: protector of the weak, individualist, skeptic.

Da Costa’s distinctive interpretation initiates a transformation from belief into doubt, from author to critic; this process places him as the “other within.” But, despite his isolation, Da Costa is unable and unwilling to dissimulate. As such, he mirrors the consequences of religious oppression. Structuring his narrative as an exemplar of a failed
conversion, Da Costa shows the failure and lacks of society and religion. At the same time as Da Costa presents us with the peculiarity of his historical identity, he erases that very identity, but not before inviting readers to fill in the gaps, to actively interpret. Though he does not find a physical sense of belonging as an author or a critic within the world, Da Costa finds a textual place as a character within words.
Chapter 4:

Conclusion

Nick Bottom and Uriel da Costa might seem at first to be opposites. If Bottom is a fictional creation in a comedy, Da Costa is a historical figure, whose narrative is anything but comic. If Bottom goes through a magical transformation in an Ovidian sense into the figure that best represents him—an ass-headed-man—Da Costa experiences a real-world transformation via his conversion to Judaism, only to find it lacking. If Bottom is a representation of the lower class in England, Da Costa represents a learned fidalgo in Portugal. If Bottom’s exclusion from society leads to a new adaptability and to his assimilation into the world of the fairies, it is Da Costa’s rebellion against society and persistent adaptability that leads to his exclusion, isolation, and eventual suicide.

Nevertheless, Bottom and Da Costa have a few things in common. Both transformation narratives are interfictional: Puck transforms Bottom into an ass-headed-man, much like Lucius in Apuleius’ ancient novel The Golden Ass; and like St. Augustine before him, Da Costa writes a conversion narrative that explains his transition from one literary tradition to another. By transforming into hybrids they turn into familiar-unfamiliar others, centralizing their unsettling encounters with society. Finally, unlike metamorphosed characters in classical literature, these hybrids consciously reflect on their own hybridity during their counter-transformation, interpreting and criticizing the human society from which they were excluded from the point of view of “the other within.”

My research focuses on interfictional characters who transform into hybrids. As I suggest throughout this work, these characters reflect societal anxieties about dissimulation during the early modern period. My analysis highlights the uncanny effects
of early modern interfictional hybridity on multiple bodies—on the transformed character, on the audience and readers within the play or the text, and on the play or the text’s external audience and readers. These literary and literal hybrids are a vital dramatic and textual force: they reveal dissimulation as a necessary strategy for individuals in early modern society while criticizing society for imposing such pressing requirements. Our understanding of the device of early modern transformation does not only consider it as a literary device, but comes to represent it as a social means through which many people adapted and, in certain cases, survived the oppressing mechanisms of the Crown and the Inquisition during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.

A character has travelled extensively between the pages of these chapters, but has yet to settle into a place of his own. I conclude this dissertation with a discussion of the counter-transformation of Don Quixote that takes place in the last pages of the *Quixote*. Upon his final return to the village, defeated and beaten, Don Quixote becomes ill. He goes through a transformation, regains his sanity and his former name, Alonso Quixano, and breaks away from the colorful figure of Don Quixote. On his deathbed, Quixano addresses God: “Blessed be Almighty God who has done such great good for me!” (II.74). The return from the metamorphic condition, or what I have called throughout this study the counter-transformation, involves a religious experience here, a conversion. As we see in Chapter 1, the counter-transformation is in itself a transformative experience. Waking up from a deep sleep (much like Nick Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*), Quixote regains his former name, Alonso Quixano the Good, and says:
My judgment is restored, free and clear of the dark shadows of ignorance imposed on it by my grievous and constant reading of detestable books of chivalry. I now recognize their absurdities and deceptions. (II.74)

As his “judgment is restored,” Quixote moves from madness to Christian conversion. How did we get here? Why does Quixote’s transformation into Quixano involve a conversion? More importantly, is this conversion authentic?

Quixote’s moment of counter-transformation takes place at his home, while his family and friends listen carefully. It begins with a “great shout” and immediately calls the attention of his niece. Next, he asks his niece to call his “good friends” and upon their arrival Quixote says,

Good news, Señores! I am no longer Don Quixote of La Mancha but Alonso Quixano, once called the Good because of my virtuous life. Now I am the enemy of Amadís of Gaul and all the infinite horde of his lineage; now all the profane histories of knight errantry are hateful to me; now I recognize my foolishness and the danger I was in because I read them; now, by God’s mercy, I have learned from my experience and I despise them. (II.74)

Unlike Bottom’s awakening that takes place on an empty stage, Quixote’s conversion is a public display. He declares that he is now Alonso Quixano and that he is the enemy of the other errant knights. As in the tradition of St. Augustine, he identifies his former self as inauthentic, abject, and confused, and denounces his past actions. In his study on how literary texts in early modern Spain respond to inquisitional pressure, Ryan Prendergast writes:
It is possible to read the ending of *Don Quixote* as forced and Don Quixote's confession as disingenuous. By ending with a seemingly reformed and repentant individual who claims to regret his rebellious actions, Cervantes, at the same time, may ironically critique confessional discourse by showcasing its manipulation while assuring the novel's safe passage through the censorial machine. (4)

Prendergast reads Quixote’s confession and conversion as an ironic criticism of Inquisition practices and, what he terms, the “specters of control.”

Throughout the novel, Quixote articulates a vision of knights-errant as deliverers of God’s will: “[i]n this way we are ministers of God on earth, the arms by which His justice is put into effect on earth” (I.13), and “chivalry is a religion, and there are sainted knights in Glory” (II.8). Richard L. Predmore writes: “[i]f knighthood is a religion, then to be knighted may produce effects similar to those of a religious conversion” (104).

What then is the significance of Don Quixano’s conversion to Christianity at the end of the novel? Frederick A. De Armas holds that the final transformation of Don Quixote to Alonso Quixano represents the “Counter-Reformation emphasis on purgatorial purification” (53). Linda A. Westervelt understands the conversion as a blissful recovery through which Quixano puts “sadness behind him,” recovers from his madness, and sees his new identity as “honorable” (16-17). That is, unlike Prendergast these scholars do not read the conversion ironically but as a genuine recovery from his madness. Quixote’s conversion to Christianity, however, takes place after his illusions are destroyed: Dulcinea remains enchanted forever and thus he is left a knight without a lady, he is defeated by the Knight of the White Moon, and his attempt to substitute chivalric illusions with the pastoral fails. Quixote is stripped of his madness. In light of
Prendergast’s explanation I would like to argue that if knighthood is Quixote’s religion, when he is defeated and forced to return to his village he is forced to convert from a knight-errant to a hidalgo, and thus from fiction to reality. In the process, his attempts to maintain a hidden hybrid identity of an alternative illusion are destroyed as well. Quixote’s only regret on his deathbed is “that this realization has come so late it does not leave me time to compensate by reading other books that can be a light to the soul” (II.74). Ellen M. Anderson notes that Quixote “is first, foremost, and always a reader” (172). But religious texts cannot substitute his chivalric imagination and are not enough of a reason for him to stay alive.

In Chapter 2, I discuss Sidney’s play with personal identity through the narrator’s use of both masculine and feminine pronouns when referring to Pyrocles/Zelmane, undercutting Pyrocles’ public claim of a fixed gender identity. In Quixote’s deathbed episode, the narrator also undercuts Quixano’s conversion to Christianity. Prior to Quixano’s statement to his friends and family, the narrator notes the following: “[a]s soon as Don Quixote saw them, he said.” This casual description clearly indicates that Quixote’s rhetoric of conversion is an unambiguously public display of religious transformation. Furthermore, both the narrator and Cide Hamete continue to refer to him as Don Quixote even after the conversion, defining Quixote’s acceptance of Christianity as an honest dissimulation (that is, for a greater good) to satisfy society, rather than as an honest conversion. For a point of comparison, the protagonist’s transformation into a knight-errant that begins the novel takes place away from the scrutinizing eyes of his family and friends. After this transformation, he leaves the village in secret so as to not be spotted and stopped by the controlling gaze of society. He aspires to practice his new
religion of knighthood freely. As I explain in Chapter 1, during his initial transformation, it is not the disappearance of Quixano that defined Quixote’s identity, but the coexistence of the two, of the real and imaginary. Quixano was always a hidden identity of Don Quixote’s, as E. C. Riley notes: “[t]he final name, Alonso Quijano el Bueno, stands for the ultimate Quixote. A new man is suggested by the new form, yet as ‘Quij-‘ is part of ‘Quijote,’ he was always Quijano in part, even while roaming the country as a knight errant” (119). Quixano's identity is forced to re-emerge, to manifest itself publically, and to acknowledge the fictionality of Quixote's fiction—this is the moment of his death (something Pyrocles/Zelmane is not forced to do in Sidney’s hybrid text which ends abruptly in mid-sentence and in mid-transformation). His counter-transformation and reintegration into society and his former identity as Quixano influence him both physically and mentally, since it involves destroying that part of himself that has made his life rich and colorful, or worth living.

While Quixote’s transformation into a knight-errant is literary, his counter-transformation draws directly from religion. He thus goes through two types of metamorphosis, literary and religious. One type of text replaces the other, as the religious counter-transformation is a direct response to the literary transformation. What are we to make of Quixano's death as soon as he goes through a religious transformation? While Westervelt sees his confession and conversion as representing Quixano’s acceptance of Christianity, I would like to suggest that Quixano dies because he is unable to live as anyone other than Quixote. He dies because the transformation into a hybrid allows him the capacity for self-expression, to interpret the world that surrounds him in more than

1 Alter (3).
one way. But in the inquisitional context, the individual must choose one textual reading over the other, one way of interpretation over another. Cervantes, like Da Costa, shows the consequences of social oppression and forced assimilation on the individual, illustrating the dire effects that the privileging of one interpretive strategy and forced dismantling of another has on the body and identity.

Why do early modern writers such as Shakespeare, Sidney, Cervantes, and Da Costa depict characters that go through interfictional transformations and into various forms of hybridity? What is the significance of this new type of transformation? In the early modern period “the other” was refigured by changes to the hegemonic system and the development of new cultural encounters. Individuals had to adapt to sudden religious and political changes as those shifting figures holding power attempted to install and re-install a fixed definition of the public’s religious and social identity.

Early modern interfictional characters are not necessarily protean in the sense that they go through a complete metamorphosis from one state to another, as characters often do in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Interfictional characters in this study transform to answer social demands and incentives. They are in a constant state of becoming and adjusting. They assimilate old with new facets of their moving identities, producing complexity and indeterminacy, becoming hybrid.

Maintaining aspects of their original identity, these hybrids are uncanny. Bottom’s partial transformation invokes classical myths and stories, even while he maintains his recognizable identity. The mechanicals run away in fear not because they recognize the parody of the Minontaur or an echo of the *Golden Ass*, but because they recognize Bottom by name; the familiar identity becomes unfamiliar. The encounter between
Pyrocles/Zelmane and his cousin Musidorus produces an uncanny effect when Musidorus listens to the Amazon’s song and suddenly identifies the voice of his cousin. Here it is the unfamiliar appearance of the Amazon that uncannily transforms into Pyrocles’ familiar voice.

While for the diegetic audiences the uncanny effect emerges from the encounter with the literal hybridity of the familiar other, for the reader the uncanny effect of the encounter with interfictional characters emerges from their literary hybridity. Innovating on the classics necessarily produces a familiar-unfamiliar dynamic. Interfictional characters are products of imitation, but they also exercise the imitative process themselves; by diluting the original they trouble the sense of a fixed self and a fixed text. Pyrocles’ transformation into an Amazon, for example, challenges the device of classical literary metamorphosis; by bringing into play an “unused metamorphosis” (New Arcadia 328) he maintains his hidden masculine identify along with his public femininity; Da Costa utilizes the familiar structure of the conversion narrative only to turn that narrative upside down, demonstrating its failures.

Encounters with the “other within” produce both anxiety about societal others and uncertainty about personal identity. Fear of dissimulators emerges from the concern that the familiar might turn into the unfamiliar, an anxiety that characterizes the political volatility of the early modern—the result of religious wars and persecutions, reinforced by the establishment of the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal and the revival of the Heresy Act by Mary I and the Acts of Supremacy by Elizabeth I in England. While the persecution of dissimulators and of religious uncertainty characterizes all religious sects,

---

2 This phrase refers to Pyrocles/Zelmane’s unusual metamorphosis, which I discuss at greater length in section 4 of chapter 2.
the various practices of dissimulation that were common in the early modern period represent a rebellion against the controlling mechanisms that strive for certainty, fixed identity, and religious hegemony.

Interfictional characters, then, dissimulate or rebel against dissimulation as a reaction to the circumstances that led to their transformation. While Bottom's transformation (of which he is unaware) is a visual expression of the fear of dissimulation, Pyrocles/Zelmane's transformation involves an honest dissimulation that is a consequence of society's restrictions. Pyrocles experiences a self-transformation that requires him to conceal his hidden masculine identity. Dissimulating honestly (in this case for love), Pyrocles/Zelmane does not sacrifice himself; rather, his transformation and dissimulation enable him to express his duality. His transformation into a hybrid allows the contradicting terms, dissimulation and transformation, to coexist. In Portugal, instead, Da Costa had to dissimulate and maintain his Judaism hidden in fear of the Inquisition. As he leaves Oporto, he refuses to dissimulate and chooses self-sacrifice over dissimulation and assimilation. From the moment he arrives in Amsterdam, Da Costa defies the social requirement to dissimulate, even at the cost of excommunication by the Jewish society. When religious and ideological homogeneity is forced but nevertheless constantly in flux because of religious and political conflicts, individuals become subject to continual and oppressive scrutiny; they adapt and dissimulate simply to survive.

Interfictional transformations complicate interpretative strategies, linking disparate figures such as the early modern Portuguese converso Uriel da Costa, the English authors Sir Philip Sidney and William Shakespeare, as well as the Spaniard Miguel de Cervantes. The works of Da Costa, Sidney, Shakespeare, and Cervantes all
reflect a shared anxiety about fixed identities and limited interpretations forced by the Crown and the Inquisition. While in postcolonial studies hybridity often acts as a means to destabilize power (Anjali Prahbu 1), in this study it offers a way out of binary interpretation. The authors I analyze here deploy hybridity and malleability in their characters in order to destabilize not only the meaning of texts but also the rigidity of identity.

My analysis focuses on transformations, which are based on literary precedents and on interpretations of classical texts, but which take place in a specific historical context, when competing interpretations of texts stimulate religious wars and political turmoil. This interpretive drama affects real bodies and identities, forcing people to adapt and dissimulate, to act as one sort of reader or another. Bottom’s transformation functions as a parodic revision of Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*, and, as the only human able to see the fairies, he demonstrates the adaptability required when moving from one controlling authority to another. While his hybrid form exemplifies the fear of dissimulating others, his adaptability to the world of the fairies represents the uncanniness of dissimulation. Pyrocles’ transformation into an Amazon is comparable to Achilles’ disguise in Statius’s *Achilleid*. Such juxtaposition allows readers to understand and accept the ambiguity of his gender identity and his honest dissimulation. Da Costa’s interfictionality reflects a religious transformation that went awry. Yet, despite rejecting both Christianity and Judaism, Da Costa defines his identity using a terminology that derives from both religions. Each of the transformations defamiliarizes the reading experience for those who “read” the transformation within the play or the text, as well as for the implied audience of the play and the implied readers of the text. Interfictional transformations
into hybrids place conflicting and complementary interpretations at center stage. The interfictional identity is composed of different texts, which integrate other, hidden facets of identity and of meaning into the text.

The transformation also provides the hybrids themselves with the power of interpretation. The reaction of others to the hybrid is reflective, as the interfictional character notices the changes in society’s reactions, and reflects upon and adjusts to its varied responses. Having been both a Christian and a Jew, Da Costa criticizes Jewish religion from within. Though proved destructive, he exposed the anxiety of the society of Jewish members who deny the authority of the Oral Law. Da Costa also illustrates the consequences of defying religious interpretations on individual bodies. Pyrocles/Zelmane’s honest dissimulation exposes the problematic decision of the king to abandon his role out of the fear of a prophecy. And his retrospective narrative uncovers the problems of interpretation and complementary readings by demonstrating how each of the characters in Basilius’ court “reads” his gender identity differently. Bottom’s synesthedic experience defines the limits of the human from the point of view of one who experienced the world as a creature partially non-human. Still, misquoting St. Paul, Bottom represents the problem of moving from one religious authority to another, as each religious sect interprets the Bible differently. Interfictional characters expand individuals’ point of view by allowing access to the “other”. From the point of view of the other, they become interpreters of their own society and underline its lacks and limitations.

Each of these characters has attracted so much critical attention exactly because they complicate tidy interpretations. Both critics and characters provide various interpretations when they “read” interfictional characters. Intertextual in their identity and
textual in their form, interfictional hybrids are the product of language, texts, and call for interpretation. In The Order of Things, Michel Foucault writes on Don Quixote:

“Moreover, he is himself like a sign, a long, thin graphism, a letter that has just escaped from the open pages of a book. His whole being is nothing but language, text, printed pages, stories that have already been written down. He is made up of interwoven words; he is writing itself” (51). Like Quixote, interfictional characters are the products of language; they too are “stories that have already been written down,” “made up of interwoven words.” But with a difference. In Sidney’s New Arcadia the Amazon does not appear in her classical role as a masculine woman, nor as an early modern conquered figure, but rather represents a hybrid-gendered figure that maintains an underground masculine identity. Resembling both the figure of the Minotaur and the transformed Lucius in The Golden Ass, Bottom’s comic hybridity comes to stand for the fear of dissimulation and the limitation of the human. Da Costa’s creation of religious Jewish identity resembles Judaism as he understands it; yet, representing those ideas through the lens of criticism, Da Costa occupies a special position as the other within and as an exemplar for others. The critical adjustments to the traditional stories make these characters products and representations of the early modern period. They are not mere replicas. Writers adjust the traditional stories and change them, emphasizing the interfictional and hybrid nature of these characters—always in between texts and traditions, interweaving the fictional and historical, writing and reading, self and other, identities that have been written and are still in the process of becoming.

It is not my intention to limit the discussion of interfictional characters to the texts analyzed throughout this study. Rather, my work is aimed to function as a model for the
way in which early modern writers portray negotiations of identity during the
Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. My readings also aim to open up new lines of
inquiry into how early modern writers use the literary device of transformation
intertextually in order to manifest the experience of the “others within.” Establishing
alternative fictions of identity, interfictional hybrids resist traditional ideologies of
exclusion, and, like Hermia in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, they invite us to see double.
Bibliography

1. Primary Sources


2. Secondary Sources


