ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: "I SHALL TELL A DOUBLE TALE": EMPEDOCLEAN MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM IN THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

Garth Libhart, Doctor of Philosophy, 2022

Dissertation Directed By: Professor Gerard Passannante
Department of English

The Pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles (ca. 484–ca. 424 BCE) is remembered both as an enraged fool who leapt into a volcano to prove he was a god, and as a philosopher who radically suggested everything is made of matter (DK107). In the fragments of his poetry, he admits to telling a "double tale," potentially nodding to the indistinct ontological vision embedded in his work and underscoring the way his poetry shifts between materialist and idealist frames of reference (DK17.1). I argue that Empedocles' perspectival relativism is an alternative entry point into the problem of materialism for early modern thinkers, freeing them from the burden of strict philosophical commitment and enabling them to think in materialist terms with less anxiety about succumbing to physical determinism. For scholars of early modern literature, the Empedoclean double tale helps root the period's tendency for perspectival indeterminacy within a specific humanistic tradition. This dissertation is organized as three long chapters, each offering a unique moment in the reception of Empedocles' blurry ontology. In Chapter One, I argue that Philemon Holland's 1603 translation of Plutarch's *Moralia* represents a watershed moment for Empedoclean influence in English literary history. My analysis demonstrates that, while the discredited story of Empedocles jumping into a volcano to prove he was a god

continues to be an attention-grabbing part of the philosopher's legacy in the Renaissance, the seventeenth century witnesses an increasing interest in his actual philosophy. Specifically, early modern writers draw inspiration from Empedocles' theory of effluence—the idea that the four elements emanate tiny particles of a similar composition—as they contemplate monist possibility (DK89). Illustrating this, in Chapter Two, I read Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607) as an exploration of the world in flux, showing how one of Shakespeare's likely sources for the play, Plutarch's treatise on Isis and Osiris in the *Moralia*, uses the idea of effluence to negotiate between the myth's dualistic and monistic aspects. This enables me to propose that, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare undergirds moments like Cleopatra's elementally framed suicide with the dynamic "double tale" of Empedoclean ontology, portraying her immortal aspiration in simultaneously materialist and transcendent terms. Finally, in Chapter Three, I turn to John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), which directly alludes to Empedocles' volcanic suicide when Satan encounters the ghost of Empedocles, floating in Limbo, during his journey from hell to earth. Showing how Milton draws on key ideas from Empedocles' philosophy in the process of critiquing his immortal longing, I argue that the episode is underwritten by the philosopher's perspectival relativism. The chapter then reconsiders the monist materialism of *Paradise Lost* through an Empedoclean lens, suggesting that the Pre-Socratic philosopher's unusual blend of dualistic and monistic ideation can help negotiate between divergent critical responses to Milton's idiosyncratic materialism. Ultimately, the dissertation reveals how early modern writers take inspiration from Empedocles' fluid movement between materialism and idealism, freed from the limitations of rigid philosophical commitment and binary choice.

“I SHALL TELL A DOUBLE TALE”:

EMPEDOCLEAN MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM IN THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

by

Garth Libhart

Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2022

Advisory Committee:

Professor Gerard Passannante, Chair
Associate Professor Kimberly Coles
Professor Andrea Frisch
Associate Professor David Carroll Simon
Associate Professor Scott Trudell

For Elyse

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the intellectual fellowship and community at the University of Maryland that has supported the development of this dissertation. I especially wish to acknowledge my dissertation advisory committee, whose insights and encouragement informed this project in countless ways. Thank you to my advisor and committee chair Gerard Passannante, whose extraordinary knowledge, warmth, and equanimity were the guiding lights of my graduate school experience. I will continue to learn from your inspiring combination of intellectual rigor and *ataraxia*, which has been an immensely positive influence. Thank you to David Carroll Simon for the insightful, supportive conversations and helpful feedback on chapter drafts. Scott Trudell provided scholarly guidance and moral support throughout my time at the University. Kimberly Coles offered crucial insights about the history of religion and philosophy that are reflected in these pages. I am also grateful to Andrea Frisch for joining the committee as Dean's Representative, and for her willingness to join the defense remotely from overseas. Other faculty have lent me their time and wisdom, adding much to my intellectual life. Kellie Robertson expanded my knowledge of book history and medieval literature, and provided feedback on my early dissertation drafts. I am also indebted to Laura Rosenthal, Amanda Bailey, Theresa Coletti, Donna Hamilton, Tita Chico, Ralph Bauer, Matthew Kirschenbaum, Chanon Adsanatham, Jessica Enoch, Martha Nell Smith, Robert Levine, Vincent Carretta, Karen Nelson, and GerShun Avilez, who all made contributions to my scholarly and pedagogical development.

Beyond the University of Maryland, several scholars have enriched my graduate study. I am grateful to Reid Barbour for his astonishingly educative seminar on Francis Bacon at the Folger Shakespeare Library in 2018—"After the Great Instauration"—which deeply enriched my understanding of early modern science, literature, and philosophy. I am thankful to Owen

Williams and Kathleen Lynch for designing and leading the Folger Shakespeare Institute's orientation course for early career scholars, which significantly improved my archival research and book history skills. The conversations held during the "Shakespeare and the Elements" seminar at the 2021 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, for which I shared an early version of the dissertation's Shakespeare chapter, helped broaden my understanding of early modern elementalism and its relationship to a range of scholarly conversations. Feedback from the seminar's organizer, Katherine B. Attié, as well as my seminar paper readers Michael Schoenfeldt and Hannah Korell, was especially valuable. I wish also to thank Drew Daniel, who shared a portion of his forthcoming monograph with me.

I have learned so much from the conversation and fellowship of my graduate student colleagues at Maryland and beyond, especially Melanie Rio, Hillary Roegelein, Liam Daley, Andy Yeh, April Fuller, Danielle Griffin, Justin Thompson, Tamar Leroy, Sara Faradji, Elizabeth Catchmark, William Gonch, Jeffrey Griswold, Jonathan Williams, Manon Soulet, Tim Bruno, Setsuko Yokoyama, Halla Khalil, Konstantinos Pozoukidis, John MacIntosh, Kristofer Reed, Nancy Vera, Cameron Mozafari, Jeffrey Moro, Adam Neff, and the members of the English Department's fall 2021 dissertation workshop. Thank you to my longtime friend, Jordan Musser, for the countless inspiring conversations. In a similar key, Bill Smith and I have been having perspective-shifting discussions since elementary school, and I am enormously grateful for our interdisciplinary friendship in adulthood. And I especially wish to thank Justine DeCamillis, who was in the English doctoral cohort ahead of mine at Maryland, and who provided incredibly helpful guidance and support as I navigated this process, including offering feedback on the Shakespeare chapter.

I was fortunate to encounter several scholars prior to graduate school who significantly shaped my intellectual experience. For meeting with me as a high school student and encouraging me to pursue literary studies in college, thank you to Michael Anesko. A whole panoply of professors at my undergraduate alma mater, Susquehanna University, provided generous guidance and encouragement during the formative years of my studies. For example, the late Susan Bowers welcomed me to the academic study of literature with a warmth that made me feel immediately supported and inspired. Rachana Sachdev's courses on Shakespeare and early modern literature deepened my interest in Renaissance language and culture and helped lay a foundation for my later research. Drew Hubbell, who also received his doctorate from the University of Maryland's Department of English, provided friendly advice and encouragement as I began my graduate studies. My intellectual experience was further enriched by the courses I took and discussions I had with Lynn Palermo, Laurence Roth, Caroline Wakaba Futamura, Warren Funk, Cymone Fourshey, Karen Mura, Betsy Verhoeven, Karol Weaver, and the late Amy Winans. And thank you especially to my undergraduate advisor, Randy Robertson, for his inspiring teaching and scholarly generosity, and for guiding me toward graduate study with wisdom and warmth.

Several outstanding people from earlier in my educational journey deserve special recognition. Thank you to my high school English teacher, Kristen Wickenheiser, for her inspiring Shakespeare lessons, and for encouraging me to pursue a literature Ph.D. For teaching me four years of Latin, thank you to Joan Johnson. Zahid Virmani instilled a fascination with ancient history and culture that continues to permeate my work. And for substantially shaping my identity as a writer, thank you to Melissa Byers and Dorothy Carpenter.

The process of completing a Ph.D. would have been far less joyful had I not been surrounded by the laughter and companionship of amazing friends, far too many to name in full here. But thank you especially to Andy Prestwich, Toby Schwartzman, Sarah Bentley, Christian Pranitis, Sabah Bhatnagar, Dustin Hilton, Ian Carr, Philip Hacker, Kelly Becker, Dan Prestwich, Joan Prince, and Jennifer Stroh.

And finally, I am grateful to my family. Thank you to my parents, Cynthia Libhart and William Libhart, for steadfastly supporting my education and encouraging my passion for literature. To my parents-in-law, Lisa and Norman Martin, thank you for all the support, meals, and encouragement. The late Henry Libhart and the late Byron Libhart were a profound source of inspiration early in my life, helping me realize my love of language and ideas. I would also like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of Rebecca Cargas, Chip Cargas, Karl Libhart, Aaron Cargas, and my older brothers, Gabe Libhart and Ian Libhart. Most of all, I am grateful for the love and support of my spouse, Elyse Martin, who shares my fascination with literature and delight in the craft of writing. I am so thankful to have you by my side as I realize this lifelong dream.

Table of Contents

Page

Introduction:

Empedocles' Double Tale

The Pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles (ca. 484–ca. 424 BCE) takes on many guises in early modern England. In one moment, he'll appear a bombastic fool who threw himself headlong into a volcano to prove he was a god immortal; in the next, a quasi-materialist sage who insists that "all things," even thoughts, are made only from earth, water, fire, and air. At one turn, he'll emerge as a mystical healer with the power to control the elements; at the next as a transmigrating dæmon, exiled from the elements he elsewhere commandeers. He's a divinely inspired epic poet praised by the Epicurean Lucretius, a stereotypically mad poet lambasted by Horace, and according to another ancient commentator, not a poet at all. He's remembered as both divinely obsessed and committed to political revolution—a materialist prophet who dissolves tyrannies, like his philosophy dissolves elemental hierarchies as it transits between the many and the one. In short, the legacy and reception of Empedocles occasions a jumble of perspectives, often apparently contradictory ones. In fact, one could describe the textual afterlives of Empedocles in the Renaissance the same way John Milton describes the four elements in *Paradise Lost*, as "multiform and mix[ed]."[1]

---

[1] I am quoting from Milton, "Paradise Lost," in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), book five, line 182, hereafter cited parenthetically by book and line number. As I discuss throughout the chapters below, the myth of Empedocles' volcanic suicide was created by the ancient Greek biographer Diogenes Laertius, who is also a source (along with Plutarch) for the philosopher's reputation as a political revolutionary. For Empedocles' claim that everything, including thought, is made of the four elements, see Empedocles, *The Poem of Empedocles,* trans. Brad Inwood (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), DK107. Except when otherwise noted, I quote Inwood's translation of the fragments. However, I always refer to the fragments by the older Diels-Kranz (DK) numbering

While these eclectic images of Empedocles are partially due to his unstable biographic tradition, they also reflect a defining feature of his poetic vision: a perspectival motion between materialist and idealist frames of reference, one that invites readers to hold together notions that are often presented as incompatible.[2] As a result, the fragments create an ontological blur between idealism and materialism, offering Renaissance readers a classical framework for contemplating materialism and divine possibility together. This frees them from the burden of strict philosophical commitment, enabling them to think in materialist terms with less anxiety about succumbing to physical determinism. As I hinted above, in one fragment, Empedocles attributes *everything* to material substance, claiming even the mental activities of thought and perception are elemental phenomena; yet in another fragment, he appears to espouse Pythagorean metempsychosis, declaring himself a reincarnated being who has "already become a boy and a girl / and a bush and a bird and fish…"[3] The two images appear to conflict, one

---

system, rather than Inwood's revised numeration, because the Diels-Kranz model is still the most widely cited. Any quotations of the fragments I make in ancient Greek are taken from the text in the Loeb edition. See André Laks and Glenn W. Most, eds., "Empedocles," in *Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), vol. V. For Empedocles' self-identification as a dæmonic exile from the elements, see DK115. For Lucretius' praise of Empedocles as a sacred poet, see my discussion below. And for the charge that Empedocles was *not* a poet, see Scholiast on Dionysius of Thrace, in *Greek Elegiac Poetry: From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 35–6. I discuss these motley valences of Empedocles' legacy at greater length in the chapters that follow.

[2] By "materialist," I mean views "which hold that all entities and processes are composed of—or are reducible to—matter, material forces or physical processes." In the conventional view, materialism is thus usually "allied with atheism or agnosticism." In contrast, "idealist" philosophies hold that "mind is the most basic reality and that the physical world exists only as an appearance to or expression of mind, or as somehow mental in its inner essence." See T. L. S. Sprigge, "idealism," and George J. Stacke, "materialism," both in *The Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[3] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK107 & DK117. I examine these fragments in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

suggesting that thought has no basis outside the four elements, the other implying that Empedocles' own mind is capable of transcending matter, his subjective identity transmigrating across a whole host of life forms. While it's possible to interpret the "reincarnation" fragment along the lines of a radical materialism—reading Empedocles' claim to past lives as a statement only about the endless swirl of elemental combination, dissolution, and recombination—it nonetheless evokes the possibility of material transcendence, an idea reinforced elsewhere in Empedocles' poetry when he claims to be an incorporeal dæmon in exile from matter.[4] When he claims in one fragment that mind derives from matter, and then claims in another that his own mind has crossed material forms, Empedocles exemplifies the unwieldy union of materialist and idealist perspectives embedded throughout his poetry.

I refer to this unwieldy twofold vision as Empedocles' "double tale," a phrase that Empedocles himself uses to describe the movement of elements in his system which are under the sway of the opposing forces Love and Strife:

> δίπλ᾽ ἐρέω· τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἓν ηὐξήθη μόνον εἶναι
> ἐκ πλεόνων, τοτὲ δ᾽ αὖ διέφυ πλέον᾽ ἐξ ἑνὸς εἶναι.
> δοιὴ δὲ θνητῶν γένεσις, δοιὴ δ᾽ ἀπόλειψις·
> τὴν μὲν γὰρ πάντων ξύνοδος τίκτει τ᾽ ὀλέκει τε,
> ἡ δὲ πάλιν διαφυομένων θρεφθεῖσα διέπτη.
> καὶ ταῦτ᾽ ἀλλάσσοντα διαμπερὲς οὐδαμὰ λήγει,
> ἄλλοτε μὲν Φιλότητι συνερχόμεν᾽ εἰς ἓν ἅπαντα,
> ἄλλοτε δ᾽ αὖ δίχ᾽ ἕκαστα φορεύμενα Νείκεος ἔχθει.

---

[4] See DK115, which I discuss at length in Chapter One.

> [I shall tell a double tale. For at one time [they] grew to be one alone
> from many, and at another, again, [they] grew apart to be many from one.
> And there is a double coming to be of mortals and a double waning;
> for the coming together of [them] all gives birth to and destroys the one,
> while the other, as [they] again grow apart, was nurtured and flew away.
> And these things never cease from constantly alternating,
> at one time all coming together by love into one,
> and at another time again all being borne apart separately by the hostility of strife.][5]

When Empedocles refers to his "double tale," he's specifically describing how the four elements move between a state of being many and a state of being one, dependent on whether Strife or Love, respectively, is dominant. However, I also interpret Empedocles' claim about the elements' "double tale" as an analogy for the movement between idealism and materialism in his verse. In other words, Empedocles' proclamation of a "double tale" may gesture toward the ontological indeterminacy inscribed in his work, which entertains materialism and divinity together without insisting that one cancels out the other. It can be tempting to reduce Empedocles' ontology to either idealism or materialism, and his analogies can be interpreted in such a way to emphasize one or the other side of the problem. Yet to regard Empedocles as either a materialist *or* an idealist threatens to drown out the dynamic motion created by his analogic mode of expression, which ultimately remains suspended between the domains of matter and mind. For instance, one might insist that, when Empedocles analogizes the gods to

---

[5] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK17.1–8, and Laks and Most, V.410. Laks and Most translate the first line of this fragment, "Twofold is what I shall say."

elements in DK6, he is allegorizing the deities out of existence; but this would be to superimpose a directional movement to the analogy not necessarily implied by the text itself.[6] To put it another way, Empedocles' analogies don't move unidirectionally from one possibility to the other in an affirmation of secular modernity's clear boundary line between sacred and materialist contemplation.

The central thesis of this study is that early modern writers including Shakespeare and Milton take poetic inspiration from this indeterminacy in the Empedoclean tradition, offering them an avenue for exploring materialism without wholly discarding the possibility of material transcendence. Specifically, I argue that the unusual, self-professed "double tale" of Empedocles' poetry creates a generative ontological ambiguity that appeals to the dualistic tendencies of the period's sacred framework—through its profession of ideas like dæmonic transcendence—even as it gestures toward an emergent interest in materialism in which everything, even the mind, reduces to an elemental foundation.[7] By extension, I suggest that attending to literary reworkings of Empedocles' double vision in early modern England can help mediate between contrasting scholarly accounts of the period's ontological mindset, helping to complicate the relationship between the humoral, psychological materialism that is the focus of Gail Kern Paster's work, and the Renaissance belief in incorporeal substance, which has been the

---

[6] I discuss DK6 in greater detail in Chapters One and Three.

[7] Empedocles mentions his "double tale" in fragment DK17, as I noted above. In that fragment, the "double tale" specifically refers to the double formations of material forms within Empedocles' cycle of Love and Strife, a process I discuss further in Chapter One. But I suggest throughout this dissertation that this double tale broadens out into other aspects of the fragments, beyond its specific connotation referring to the elemental cycle, that is reflected in Empedocles' simultaneous interest in dualistic and monistic frames of reference. One might also conceptualize the double tale in terms of Empedocles' reliance on analogy, which pairs different objects and substances in order illuminate an underlying similarity in structure or function.

focus of countless studies, for instance the work of Jennifer Rust, Earl Miner, James Knapp, and Kathleen R. Sands, to name only a few examples.[8] In other words, I propose that Empedoclean thought enables scholars of early modern culture to better understand the relationship between materialism and religion in the period, which is a not mutually exclusive one.

I aim to show that Empedocles' influence in the Renaissance is not so much centered around any one given idea of his work than it is in the dialectical or perspectival technique of his philosophy. Drew Daniel has argued that the thoroughgoing influence of Empedocles' four elements on later philosophers, as well as the highly fractured, incomplete nature of the extant fragments, represent substantial obstacles to the prospect of an "Empedoclean Renaissance" in early modern studies. As Daniel writes, "Empedoclean combinatorial ontology saturates the intellectual history of medieval and early modern Europe with such quotidian omnipresence that it becomes curiously difficult to localize and think about clearly."[9] This is an important point, as the four elements are undoubtedly widespread in early modern philosophy and literature. Bearing this in mind, I shift my analysis away from a direct focus on Empedocles' four elements, centering instead the unique perspectival blur he creates by moving across and beyond them. I suggest that we might locate Empedocles' influence less in the pervasive idea of the four

---

[8] See Paster, *Humoring the Body*: *Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), esp. 11–19; Rust, *The Body in Mystery: The Political Theology of the Corpus Mysticum in the Literature of the English Reformation* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013); Miner, *The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); Knapp, *Immateriality and Early Modern English Literature: Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert, and Milton* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020); and Sands, *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004).

[9] See Drew Daniel, "The Empedoclean Renaissance," in *The Return of Theory in Early Modern English Studies, Volume II*, ed. Paul Cefalu, Gary Kuchar, and Bryan Reynolds (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), but esp. 279 & 297.

elements than in the way his influence and reception help bring into focus a uniquely Empedoclean perspectival kinesis between monism and dualism—one that becomes a distinctive influence on the ecosystem of early modern materialism.

Moreover, the double tale of Empedoclean ontology helps to contextualize an early modern tendency for perspectival relativism that scholars have already identified in the period's literature, crystallizing this mental motion within a humanist tradition whose distinctly Empedoclean contours have not yet been fully recognized as such. Gordon Teskey, for example, writes in *Delirious Milton* that *Paradise Lost* generates a "delirium [that] works by a kind of oscillation, a flickering on and off of hallucinatory moments in rapid succession, driven by some underlying contradiction," one that allows Milton to "oscillate between two incompatible perspectives, at once affirming and denying the presence of spirit in what he creates."[10] Teskey describes precisely the kind of ontological flux that I suggest is a core aspect of Empedoclean thought, though he is interested in the way this perspectival dynamic functions as a figure of "poetic production," one that shifts between an attitude of "retrospective theory" and "prophetic poetry." For Teskey, this movement creates a sense that Milton "is divided within by a sort of invisible rift," one he crosses over endlessly in order to make the experience of reading *Paradise Lost* evoke a sense of disorienting mystery.[11] I focus, in contrast, on how Milton's perspectivism speaks to longstanding debates about the ontology of *Paradise Lost,* particularly when reevaluated as an Empedoclean phenomenon.

---

[10] Teskey, *Delirious Milton: The Fate of the Poet in Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 4–5. I read Teskey's "spirit" in the commonplace sense of immaterial substance or incorporeal inner life, rather than in the early modern medical context that places spirit as a bodily interlocutor with (and corporeal counterpart to) soul or incorporeal substance.

[11] Ibid., 9.

In a related way, I aim to show how an Empedoclean interpretive approach offers scholars an alternative entry point into the problem of early modern philosophy and materialism, one that avoids the anxiety that sometimes attends the reception of a more categorically materialist philosopher like Lucretius. This is illustrated by the two philosophers' divergent attitude toward religion. Lucretius' poem contains a widely cited condemnation of *religio* (or superstition)—though Lucretius is not an atheist, holding that Epicurean gods do exist, but they are removed from human concerns and non-threatening.[12] In Lucretius' view, the gods thus become a model for human tranquility, despite having nothing at all to do with human affairs. Empedocles' viewpoint is quite different, as he draws the gods into the very fabric of the material world when he analogizes elements to divine beings, implying that not only are gods wrapped up in human affairs—they are dispersed within human bodies, corresponding as they do with the elemental substances that all bodies are made from.[13] Moreover, Empedocles explicitly fashions his verse as an homage to the gods:

> εἰ γὰρ ἐφημερίων ἕνεκέν τινος, ἄμβροτε Μοῦσα,
> ἡμετέρας μελέτας <μέλε τοι> διὰ φροντίδος ἐλθεῖν,
> εὐχομένῳ νῦν αὖτε παρίστασο, Καλλιόπεια,
> ἀμφὶ θεῶν μακάρων ἀγαθὸν λόγον ἐμφαίνοντι.
>
> [For it, immortal muse, for the sake of any ephemeral creature,
> <it has pleased you> to let our concerns pass through your thought,

---

[12] See Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 1.62–101, 1.44–9, and 2.646–51.

[13] See DK6.

Answer my prayers again now, Calliopeia,

as I reveal a good discourse about the blessed gods.][14]

Praying to his muse Calliope, Empedocles frames his poetry as a celebration of the gods, showing how its vision of divine elementalism might be appealing to a classically obsessed writer like Milton, who articulates in *Paradise Lost* a materialist theodicy of his own.

In another fragment, Empedocles outright defends the gods. Notice his reverential attitude:

ὄλβιος, ὃς θείων πραπίδων ἐκτήσατο πλοῦτον,

δειλὸς δ' ᾧ σκοτόεσσα θεῶν πέρι δόξα μέμηλεν.

[Blessed is he who has obtained wealth in his divine thinking organs,

and wretched is he to whom belongs a darkling opinion about the gods.][15]

Whereas Lucretius holds the Epicurean deities in a positive light by keeping them totally separate from human affairs, Empedocles writes the gods into the mind's material grounding ("divine thinking organs"), uniting divine and bodily experience even as he puts the gods center stage in his work. But Empedocles' divine apologetics do not reduce to a simplistic dualism, especially when one considers Empedocles' claim, in another fragment, that he become a dæmon when he was banished from matter, as a punishment for speaking poorly of the gods (DK115). Thus, even if Empedocles insists on a laudatory regard for divine figures, it's a much more idiosyncratic religiosity than one finds in Augustine's neat division of body from soul. Unlike in Christian orthodoxy, where being too involved with the body risks God's punishment of one's transcendent

---

[14] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK131, and Laks and Most, V.364.

[15] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK132, and Laks and Most, V.366.

and incorporeal subjectivity (the soul), in Empedocles' system, the gods level punishment by taking one further away from material experience.[16]

These comparisons help show the unique role that an Empedoclean hermeneutics can play in the scholarly understanding of early modern philosophy and literature. The recent turn to materialism, while illuminating, has tended to emphasize one side of early modern materialism's complex story. Empedocles, with his intermingling of religious and materialist ideas, offers something to the scholarly discussion of early modern philosophy that a focus on Lucretius alone cannot provide: namely, Empedocles emerges as highly influential on the landscape of Renaissance materialism, but not easily assimilable to a modern epistemological divide between sacred and philosophical contemplation.

Yet despite their important differences, Lucretius and Empedocles also converge throughout the histories of their textual reception in a way that further complicates the image of both philosophers and their relationship to modernity. To begin with, Lucretius praises Empedocles' poetic style, and the Empedoclean idea of effluence is inscribed in the development of atomism, as I discuss later in these pages at greater length. For some early modern writers, like Milton, Empedocles functions as a bridge to Lucretian atomism, shuttling them between a transcendent, dæmonic elementalism and an atomistic, vitalist materialism on the basis of effluence. In other words, Milton analogizes the breakdown of elemental difference in Empedoclean ontology to a collapse between body and soul. However, I do not suggest that this is a one-way bridge that moves its passengers neatly from one philosophical idea to another. Instead, it invites people into a philosophical movement, where they might cross freely from

---

[16] I discuss Augustine, and fragment DK115, in much more detail in Chapter One.

materialist to idealist viewpoints of the world and back again, unburdened by the demands of philosophical commitment.

The biographical tradition of Empedocles is another important, though secondary, focus of this study. When Lucretius praises Empedocles, he doesn't mention his infamous jump into Mount Etna, instead using the volcano to analogize Empedocles' illustrious and influential reputation.[17] However, this sets Lucretius apart from many ancient writers, like Horace, Diogenes Laertius, and Lucian, who draw on the philosopher's alleged volcanic suicide in a mocking or satirical way. In the chapters that unfold below, I trace the emergence and evolution of the volcano myth, showing how its narrative transformations are inseparable from Empedocles' provocative and ambivalent metaphysics.

The blurriness created by Empedocles' perspectival relativism is partly rooted in the material conditions of the fragments themselves. In early modern Europe, Empedocles' poetry was highly fragmented but widely dispersed, meaning that early modern readers could develop multivalent impressions of the philosopher depending on which slivers of his poetry or legacy they happened to encounter in their reading. At the same time, it would be faulty to attribute Empedocles' perspectival flux solely to the material reception of the fragments, as Empedocles makes perspectival motion a defining feature of his work, and not only in his description of the elemental cycle as a "double tale."[18] To put it differently, the Empedoclean blur may be a somewhat self-conscious feature of his work, not simply the result of a complicated doxography.

---

[17] I quote and discuss Lucretius' praise of Empedocles in Chapter Three.

[18] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK17.1. Empedocles' use of analogy throughout the fragments helps show his broader embrace of perspectival motion as a poetic and natural philosophic technique.

The experimentalist Renaissance philosopher Francis Bacon registers awareness of Empedocles' blurry legacy, admiring the way he resists the Scholastic penchant for neat categorization. Although Empedocles had a significant influence on later thinkers like Aristotle—who would turn to aspects of Empedocles' elementalism to help articulate his own physical philosophy—Bacon puts Empedocles in opposition to Aristotle. In *The Wisdome of the Ancients* (1609), Bacon writes,

> Atque magis probandus est, & *Empedocles*, qui tanquam furens, & *Democritus* qui magna cum verecundia, queruntur, omnia abstruse esse, nihil nos scire, nil cernere, veritatem in profundis puteis immersam, veris falsa miris modis adjuncta, atque intorta esse…quam *Aristotelis* schola fidens & pronunciatrix.
>
> [I approve rather of *Empedocles* his Opinion, (who like a Mad-man, and of Democritus his Judgment, who with great moderation complained how that all things were involved in a Mist) that we knew nothing, that we discerned nothing, that Truth was drowned in the depths of Obscurity, and that false things were wonderfully joined and intermix'd with true…than of the confident and pronunciative School of Aristotle.][19]

Bacon pits Empedocles' and Democritus' inscrutable representations of truth against the ethic of of categorical clarity and deduction inscribed in the Aristotelian tradition. Notice Bacon's delight in epistemological blending, his admiration for the way "false things were wonderfully joined

---

[19] See Bacon, *Francisci Baconi equitis aurati, procuratoris secundi, Iacobi Regis Magnæ Britanniæ, De sapientia veterum liber ad inclytam Academiam Cantabrigiensem (London, 1609), 98–9, and Bacon, The Wisdome of the Ancients, written in Latine by the Right Honourable Sir Francis Bacon Knight, Baron of Verulam and Lord Chancelour of England. Done into English by Sir Arthur Gorges Knight* (London, 1619), 130–1.

and intermix'd with true." When he links Empedocles and Democritus, Bacon implicitly nods to the deep connection between Empedocles' elemental philosophy and the history of materialism, the way these philosophers teach that the true nature of reality lies submerged beneath the level of superficial appearances. Empedocles writes in a highly decomposed fragment that "γνούς ὅτι πάντων εἰσὶν ἀπορροαί, ὅσσ' ἐγένοντο" [.....there are effluences from all things that have come to be].[20] This fragment puts the whole world in flux, suggesting that matter exists in a state of ooze and flow. For many of the writers included in this study, I will show, Empedocles' notion of effluence becomes an entry point for thinking about atomist materialism, shuttling them from a world made of many kinds of substance to a world made of one.

At the same time, Bacon's allusion exemplifies his approval of Empedocles' and Democritus' philosophical skepticism, one grounded in how the depths of this submerged particulate reality occlude people's ability to understand it.[21] Bacon thus implies that rather than distorting truth, these philosophers' impure definitions of knowledge actually point to a deeper realization—one clouded over by the deceptive appearances of the immediately perceptible world. In other words, Bacon paradoxically contends that the mental experience afforded by

---

[20] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK89, and Laks and Most, V.540. I return to this fragment throughout the dissertation, as the idea of effluence is a core part of my analysis.

[21] See Empedocles, DK17.1–2, and DK9. On Democritus' representation of truth as obscurely submerged, see Democritus. "Testimonia, Part 2: Doctrine (D)." In *Early Greek Philosophy, Volume VII: Later Ionian and Athenian Thinkers, Part 2*, translated by André Laks and Glenn W. Most, 60–347. Loeb Classical Library 530. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), esp. D17–21. Gerard Passannante points out that "depending on how and where you read of the philosopher's 'abyss' or 'pit,' these 'depths' have at least two (seemingly contradictory) meanings. One is that we cannot know anything at all—that certain knowledge is impossible…The second possible interpretation is more optimistic: truth lies in hidden things that can be known by reason through the senses—things such as atoms and the void." See Passannante, *Catastrophizing: Materialism and the Making of Disaster* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 16–17.

epistemological "obscurity" might unexpectedly unveil hidden truths about the physical world, and points to Empedocles as one potential avenue to this way of thinking. But the passage also registers Bacon's skepticism toward Empedocles' alleged immortal longing, implying that he demonstrated his search for "Truth" by drowning himself, "like a Mad-man," in the "depths of Obscurity"—perhaps a reference to his dive into the volcano. Bacon sees Democritus as tempering Empedocles' overzealous search for knowledge in a move "of great moderation." His simultaneous commendation and suspicion of Empedocles' longing for truth therefore exemplifies the way the Sicilian philosopher's biographical tradition reflects the ontological indeterminacy embedded in his fragments, a correlation that I will explore at length later in the dissertation.

Beyond Bacon's nuanced treatment of Empedocles in early modern England, Empedocles' movement between materialism and idealism speaks to other philosophical periods and conversations, particularly the far-reaching debates about the nature of the soul and its relationship to the body. The temporal scale of the body/soul problem is vast: for example, in antiquity it arises in debates between Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, and later, it sits at the heart of Augustine's isolation of the immortal soul from flesh in the *Confessions* (ca. 400 CE).[22] In the Renaissance, the idealism/materialism problem underlies major conversations, such as Pietro Pomponazzi's controversial claim in the early sixteenth century that the soul is the highest material form of the body, and the later divide between philosophers like Descartes and Hobbes

[22] I am speaking in general terms about the split between Plato and Aristotle, but the nuances of their respective idealism and materialism are complex.

in the seventeenth century.[23] I show how Empedocles' distinctive perspectivism would be a welcome resource for this debate, as it mediates between the body and mind in a way that moves between the contrasting philosophical innovations of Pomponazzi and Descartes. The soul in Pomponazzi's model can interface with an immaterial domain, but is in essence material. Contrast this with Descartes' later perspective, commonly known as the *cogito*, which insists on a fundamental division between body (*res extensa*) and mind (*res cogitans*). If Pomponazzi encapsulates the materializing impulse of early modern studies of the soul, Descartes exemplifies a competing viewpoint, broadly updating Platonic and Augustinian dualisms for a different philosophical age, even while simultaneously developing a mechanical philosophy to describe the physical part of reality. Attending to Renaissance representations of Empedoclean materialism, however, can complicate this picture by putting Pomponazzi and Descartes' philosophical maneuvers into closer proximity, offering an ancient mode of thought where the mind is brought into matter, even as it avoids the pitfalls of materialist determinism.

The dissertation is organized into three long chapters that show three separate moments in Empedocles' literary reception. The first occurs in 1603, when an English translation of Plutarch's *Moralia* by Philemon Holland introduces an influx of Empedoclean fragments to the English literary scene. The second moment occurs a few years later, when Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607) dramatizes Empedoclean effluence, representing Cleopatra's death in both

---

[23] Eckhard Kessler explains how Pomponazzi identified the soul as a bodily substance: "Pomponazzi—referring to the principle that the intellectual soul cannot operate without imagination and is therefore dependent upon matter *ut obiecto* (as its object) even if it is independent from it *ut subiecto* (as its subject) in terms of natural philosophy—chose the material solution and maintained that the human soul was the highest material form, attaining in its most elevated operations something beyond materiality." See Kessler, "The Intellective Soul," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy*, 503, and Pomponazzi, *Corsi inedita dell'insegnamento Padovano*, ed. Antonino Poppi (Padua: Antenore, 1966–70), II.14–18.

material and transcendent terms as she is self-consciously sublimated into "fire and air."[24] The third moment is from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), a work which, unlike Shakespeare's play, alludes to Empedocles by name. I have selected these three moments because they reveal a story about the way early modern writers make use of Empedocles' double vision to grapple with philosophical and political change, from debates about monarchy and republicanism in the years around *Antony and Cleopatra* to the later English Revolution and killing of Charles I—an act that Milton wrote in support of two weeks after it happened. What emerges from these moments is an understanding of how Empedocles' legacy as a political reformer is revitalized, if in the background, through literary experimentations with his elemental materialism.[25]

Chapter One explores representations of Empedocles in the age of Shakespeare, showing how Philemon Holland's 1603 translation of Plutarch's *Moralia* amounts to a watershed moment for the renaissance of Empedoclean thought that would unfold in seventeenth-century England. The chapter begins with the "double tale" told by Empedocles' fragments, demonstrating how the philosopher's analogy of the elements to gods encapsulates the movement between materialist and idealist viewpoints within his poetry. I then explore this idea further by considering additional fragments that illustrate a perspectival movement between monist and dualist possibility, suggesting that Holland's translation only augments a sense of ontological

---

[24] See Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. John Wilders (New York: The Arden Shakespeare, 1995), act five, scene two, line 288. Hereafter, I cite the play parenthetically by act, scene, and line number.

[25] As Nicholas McDowell explains in his recent biography, "Milton's first vernacular defence of the execution of Charles I, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649), published within two weeks of the regicide…secured Milton his position as Latin Secretary and, in effect, chief propagandist for the new republican government—a position that Milton retained throughout the decade of kingless rule of the 1650s." See McDowell, *Poet of Revolution: The Making of John Milton* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 3.

flux already inscribed in Empedocles' poetic imagination. To this point, I focus particular attention on the Empedoclean idea of effluence, or the proto-atomic notion that all elemental substances give off tiny, similar particles, ultimately enabling the four elements to merge into one. I suggest that effluence analogically expresses Empedocles' movement between materialist and idealist viewpoints, an idea that will later find fuller expression in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

As my analysis of Plutarch and Holland unfolds, I show how even though Empedocles' poetry partially gravitates toward a materialist frame of reference, certain fragments lend themselves to the early modern period's sacred culture by resonating with Christian ideas like sin and repentance. These fragments find themselves, in Holland's translation, appropriated into visions of angelic transcendence. Moreover, I argue that Holland's fashioning of Plutarch imposes an Augustinian prioritization of incorporeal substance over matter that is not actually present in Empedocles' thinking. In fact, I show how Empedocles presents a departure from matter as a movement away from the divine, in a much more complicated vision than the one suggested by Augustine's insistent division of body and soul. I also consider two other aspects of Empedocles' legacy that permeated early modern culture in significant ways: the story of his apocryphal volcanic suicide, which appears in English print going back to at least the fifteenth century, and his reputation as an anti-monarchical, political revolutionary. The chapter concludes by observing how Ben Jonson directly alludes to Empedocles' death in his masque *New from the New World Discovered in the Moon* (1620), and how Shakespeare likely alludes to it in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602). The picture of Empedocles that emerges from the early seventeenth-century accounts I consider throughout the chapter is simultaneously one of fiery spiritual foolishness, materialist contemplation, and Christian ventriloquism.

Having established the saturation of Empedocles' double tale in the textual atmosphere of the early seventeenth century, Chapter Two turns to Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, first performed a few years after Holland's translation appeared. I argue that Empedocles' unusual mixture of dualistic and monistic ideas functions as a chrysalis of the ontological flexibility that is reflected throughout the play's psychodrama, helping Shakespeare hold together an emergent materialism and a thoroughgoing fascination with immortality. Within this theoretical framework, I propose that *Antony and Cleopatra* draws on the Empedoclean idea of elemental effluence to represent the world in flux—ontologically, politically, theatrically, and affectively. I then contextualize Shakespeare's representation of flux by returning to Holland's translation of Plutarch's *Moralia*, which was a probable source for Shakespeare's representation of Egypt in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In particular, I show how in the essay "Of Isis and Osiris," Plutarch/Holland turn to the notion of Empedoclean effluence to mediate between the dualistic and monistic aspects of the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris' deaths. This enables me to suggest that key passages in *Antony and Cleopatra*—such as Cleopatra's association with the flux of the Nile and the elemental, "immortal longings" she expresses as a transmutation to fire and air in the moments before her suicide—take on the distinctive perspectival movement of the Empedoclean mood.

Extending the picture of Shakespeare's potential Empedoclean encounters, I then consider another Plutarch text, the edition of *Lives* translated into English by Thomas North in 1579. I point out that North's translation, long recognized as one of Shakespeare's major sources for the characterization within *Antony and Cleopatra*, contains a direct reference to Empedocles in the biography of Demetrius, in a passage that analogizes the four elements to the warring parties of the Roman civil wars. However, I show that while Shakespeare's echoes of this

combative Plutarchan analogy underscore the political and interpersonal divisions between the triumvirs, he also uses the idea of effluence to weaken such divisions, developing a world so based in the mutability of flux that the hierarchies of imperial power melt away. This, I suggest, recalls the democratic legacy of Empedocles as a dissolver of oppressive political powers.

Finally, Chapter Three turns to Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), arguing that the poem embodies an Empedoclean materialism that complicates Milton's seeming dismissal of Empedocles in a direct allusion to the philosopher during Satan's voyage from hell to earth in book three. In other words, I show how even though *Paradise Lost* invokes the embarrassment of Empedocles' rumored volcanic death, depicting the philosopher as an airy ghost in a "Paradise of Fools," Milton slyly voices the critique in a way that pays homage to Empedocles' actual philosophy, subtly continuing an alternative biographical tradition that counterbalances the sensationalism of Empedocles' volcanic legacy with an appreciation for his philosophical contributions to materialism. Broadening out from the poem's direct allusion, I then propose that the blurry ontology of Empedocles' poetic vision is a heretofore unacknowledged key to unlocking the complexity of Milton's labile materialism in *Paradise Lost*. By attending to how Milton frames his materialism in Empedoclean language, that is, scholars can better negotiate the seeming gap between Fallon's influential claim that Milton was a monist materialist, and N. K. Sugimura's counterpoint view that Milton maintains a Platonic dualism at odds with a strictly materialist philosophic commitment. To support the diplomatic potential of Empedocles' thought in relation to disagreements about the ontology of *Paradise Lost*, the chapter reinterprets Raphael's famous "one first matter all" speech with an eye toward Empedocles' materialism. I show how Milton's vitalist materialism, which posits a continuum of material and spiritual substance, may rely on Empedoclean imagery of elemental homogenization and sprouting to

express its spiritual mechanics. Moreover, this reading illustrates how for Milton, Empedocles is a bridge to Lucretian atomism, ushering him between poles of philosophical possibility. Empedoclean poetry, with all its perspectival movement, helps explain the seeming incongruities of *Paradise Lost*. Milton, like Empedocles, invites readers to find a coherent vision from an incoherent onslaught.

Taking inspiration from Empedocles' perspectival weave, my methodology in this study moves between philosophical consideration and literary close reading, aiming to blur the boundaries between the two epistemological modes. In doing this, I show that for many ancient and early modern readers, poetry was philosophy, and vice versa. Indeed, Empedocles is particularly attuned to this literary and philosophical synthesis, with a reputation for being the "last" ancient Greek philosopher to use verse rather than prose as the medium his thought, not to mention his pervasive use of analogy to explain the natural world, an approach he explicitly defends as valid natural philosophy in one of his fragments.[26] Furthermore, I tend to move outward from individual moments of resonance toward larger philosophical questions and literary contexts, developing close readings around smaller details before broadening out to identify larger patterns or traditions. For example, I show how Cleopatra's articulation of her death as a transmutation into "fire and air" encapsulates a perspectival flux between materialist and transcendent visions of the afterlife, a moment which, on its own, might be merely incidental. However, when I then move on to consider Milton's direct allusion to Empedocles' death, which similarly produces a double vision both materialist and idealist, I hope it becomes

[26] See Empedocles, DK9, and my discussions below, especially in Chapters One and Three.

easier to discern the constellation of an Empedoclean tradition emerging in Renaissance England, centered around the philosopher's kaleidoscopic perspectivism.

Moreover, given the far-reaching nature of Empedocles' reception history, I have attempted to be as meticulous as possible when suggesting that a particular fragment or idea resonates with an early modern text. To this end, I carefully track not only these potential resonances, but also the textual circumstances under which these writers might have encountered a given fragment. Thus, my analysis of *Antony and Cleopatra* is driven by the panoply of Empedoclean quotation and allusion in Plutarch, whose significance to Shakespeare's dramatic imagination has long been established. Similarly, when it comes to the even richer and more complex matter of Milton's exposure to Empedocles, I have cross-referenced the doxographic history of the extant Empedoclean fragments with scholarly data about Milton's library and reading material. The results of this analysis are captured in a table I have included as an Appendix to the dissertation, to which I refer in footnotes whenever I consider a given fragment's relationship to *Paradise Lost*.[27]

Taken together, these chapters contribute to the way scholars understand literary representations of materialism in Renaissance England, demonstrating that these writers' flexible ontological moods have ties to a specific humanistic tradition that insists on holding together seemingly incompatible visions. Thus, Empedocles helps underline the way early modern thinkers could contemplate materialist ideas with less concern about the burden of philosophic commitment and epistemological oppositions. By extension, an Empedoclean framework can

---

[27] Although I have been thorough in my analysis of the fragments, I have excluded certain new fragments identified by Inwood, as they would have been unavailable to the early modern writers included in this study.

help scholars resist the hermeneutics of trial advocated by Stanley Fish's work on seventeenth-century literature. First articulated in studies like *Surprised by Sin* and *Self-Consuming Artifacts*, Fish deduces an ethos of calculated deception in the period that aims to morally edify readers by subjecting them to perceptive examination. Thus, for Fish, the ontological vacillations of *Paradise Lost* are carefully designed to assess readers' righteousness, their ability to spot and reject the disordered thinking of a Satanic worldview. "Milton's poetry," Fish claims, "not only exercises one's intelligence and perception, but *tests* it."[28] Fish thus writes of Milton's "strategy" in the poem, one "where he plays God to us readers and invites us down the paths of error in the hope that by resisting them we may become wiser by the experience he has provided."[29] However, Fish's interpretive approach assumes a dualistic perspective that is undermined by early modern culture's attraction to the blurry edges of Empedoclean philosophy. In other words, Fish's analysis itself becomes ontologically charged, taking for granted a dualistic view that flattens out the challenging nuances of the period's complex expressions of materialism.

Rather than subjecting early modern literature to an ontological litmus test, in which materialist and idealist attitudes are defined as mutually exclusive positions that must be regulated by the enforcement of a strict opposition, reading for Empedocles' "double tale" helps illuminate an unusual interplay between ways of understanding the world that appear radically at odds from later epistemological vantages. Moreover, it highlights a triangular movement between materialist, religious, and political contemplation that emerges at key moments in

---

[28] Stanley Fish, *Versions of Antihumanism: Milton and Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 24.

[29] Ibid., 33.

English history, as writers draw on the ancient legacy of Empedocles to think about the world in new ways.

A Note on Terminology

Throughout the study, I will be referring to the binary opposition between materialism and idealism as I attempt to show how Empedocles weakens or distorts that opposition. By "materialism," I mean ontological materialism, or the view that the world is made only of material substances, and that all phenomena, including thought, are fundamentally material. Conversely, "idealism" describes perspectives that prioritize mind over matter, viewing thought as separate from bodily substance.

I will also be referring to additional sets of binary oppositions as the argument unfolds, and in the interest of clarity, I want to explain upfront how these binary pairs relate to each other in my thinking. Sometimes I will refer to the opposition between ontological monism and dualism. In the most basic terms, monism sees the world as made of only one type of substance (for example, matter), while dualism sees the world as made of two kinds of substance (for example, material and immaterial substance). While the monism/dualism opposition has a slightly different focus than the materialism/idealism problem, the two issues are closely connected, and my analytical framework aligns materialism to monism, and idealism to dualism.

Additionally, I will invoke the contrast between the many and the one in Empedocles' philosophy, because it moves between discussing the elements as four essentially distinct substances, and as fundamentally one substance. This is the bedrock of Empedocles' "double tale" that I discussed above. At times, I suggest that the movement between the many and one emblematizes the broader transit between materialism and idealism in Empedocles' philosophy,

though this correspondence is less stable than the one between materialism/monism and idealism/dualism, and functions only at the level of analogy. That is, the idea of the four elements merging into one can serve to analogize the breakdown of the materialist/idealist opposition, as I show it does for Milton in *Paradise Lost*, but the two problems don't correspond to each other as directly as materialism/monism and idealism/dualism do.

Finally, I will occasionally refer to the divide between social constructionism and essentialism along the lines of the ontological split between materialism and idealism, suggesting that some correspondence between these ideas can be found in Empedocles' own writing. For example, in a fragment (DK8) I discuss in detail later, Empedocles dilutes the idea of human nature on the basis of material mixture. From this view, the materialism of Empedocles' system helps him dissolve the idea of an essential human nature. At other times, Empedocles claims to be a reincarnated dæmon, drawing on an idealist frame of material transcendence to imagine an autonomous, essential subjectivity that crosses corporeal forms. It's thus possible to think about Empedocles' materialism as corresponding to social constructionism, and his idealism as aligned to social essentialism; indeed, at one point I consider the ramifications of Empedocles' ontological flux for the way Shakespeare moves between essentialist and constructionist representations of gender and race in *Antony and Cleopatra*. However, I want to caution that this relationship between Empedocles' ontology and his view of human subjectivity is tenuous, and nowhere near close to fully articulated as a social theory in the extant fragments. Yet I explore the connection to think about how Empedocles' ontological movements might speak not just to philosophical problems, but also to social ones. In other words, I attempt to consider how Empedocles' ontological blur between materialism and idealism might register a parallel phenomenon in the early modern social imagination, without being a proximal cause of it. This

teleological distance is crucial, for a core provocation of this study is that due to Empedocles' dialectical flux, idealist ontology can be made to dismantle, rather than inflate, the socially destructive affliction of essentialist logic, social or otherwise.

Chapter One:

Echoes of Empedocles in the Age of Shakespeare

"I shall tell a double tale": Empedocles as a Materialist Mystic

Empedoclean thought in England experienced a watershed moment in 1603, when the physician and scholar Philemon Holland published an English translation of Plutarch's *Moralia*. The work, packed with citations of Empedocles' philosophy, introduced into the English literary scene a much fuller representation of Empedocles' poetic and philosophic contributions than had been in the air previously. Whereas the memorable story of Empedocles' jump into the volcano had been an esoteric but persistent trope in English literature for many years, the early seventeenth century saw an influx of Empedoclean thought that expanded his reputation as a materialist philosopher embedded in the history of atomism. In this chapter, I survey representations of Empedocles' biographical tradition in the years before the publication of Holland's translation, before turning to Holland's treatment of Empedocles. With the appearance of Holland's work, I argue, seventeenth-century English readers began to encounter a more complex depiction of Empedocles than had previously been available, one that captured his reputation as a mystical sage, political revolutionary, and materialist philosopher.

The four elements are central to Empedocles' vision, and it's tempting to selectively read the fragments to produce a wholly materialist Empedocles. The fragments do, after all, describe the elements as "the four roots of all things," language that grants an all-encompassing power to

the elemental plane: *all things* as elementally radical.[30] Yet, as I discuss below, Empedocles paints himself as an incorporeal δαίμον (dæmon) in exile from the elements, traversing the cosmos through a series of trans-subjective manifestations.[31] Taken as a whole, Empedocles' fragments refuse easy reduction to categories like materialism and idealism, monism and dualism. Instead, they put on display a complex vision that undermines the modern binary between these distinctions, generating a perspective at once materialist and dualist.

A passage about Empedocles in Holland's 1603 translation illustrates the ontological flux I have been discussing. It occurs in the essay "Against Colotes," in which Plutarch defends Empedocles against the attacks of the Epicurean writer Colotes of Lampsacus. Plutarch focuses on Empedocles' fragment about generation and death as a particular point of contention:

> *Colotes* verily, as if hee dealt with some king that was ignorant and unlettered, falleth againe upon *Empedocles,* breathing out these verses:
>
> One thing will I say more to thee: there is no true nature
>
> Of mortall wights: of grisly death, no seed nor geniture.
>
> A mixture onely first there is of things, then after all,
>
> The same grow to disunion: and this men Nature call.[32]

---

[30] Empedocles, DK6. I discuss this fragment, which Shakespeare likely encountered in Plutarch, in more detail below.

[31] See Empedocles, DK115, and discussion below. On Empedocles' trans-subjective experiences, see also fragment DK117.

[32] Philemon Holland, trans., *The Philosophie, Commonlie Called, the Morals* (London, 1603), 1114. The verse in this passage is a translation of Empedocles' fragment DK8: "ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω· φύσις οὐδενός ἐστιν ἁπάντων / θνητῶν, οὐδέ τις οὐλομένου θανάτοιο τελευτή, / ἀλλὰ μόνον μῖξίς τε διάλλαξίς τε μιγέντων / ἐστί, φύσις δὲ βροτοῖς ὀνομάζεται ἀνθρώποισιν" ["I shall tell you something else. There is no growth of any of all mortal things / nor any end in destructive death, /

After criticizing Colotes' belittling view of Empedocles as "some king that was ignorant and unlettered"—which nods to Empedocles' posthumous reputation as a political reformer who once refused an offer of kingship—Plutarch cites Empedocles' fragment DK8, which denies that mortal beings experience either birth or death.[33] How can this be? It is because the world is defined by "mixture onely," and particular bodies in time are the mere products of this flux, rather than wholly discrete entities with essential, differentiated selves. Putting it differently, all individuated beings are churned from a perpetual mixture, dissolution, and recombination of elemental substance. Thus, in the most radical terms, nothing really new is created at birth, and nothing is annihilated at death. This is a kind of early constructionism that, by emphasizing the Anaxagorean swirl of things, goes beyond denying birth and death to denying any real human nature or essence whatsoever ("there is no true nature / Of mortall wights"). Plutarch goes on to explain that, far from being "repugnant and contrary unto life," as Colotes views it, Empedocles' idea simply gives priority to mixture: it is the basis of all phenomena.[34] Plutarch elaborates on the disagreement:

> And yet I say my selfe, that *Colotes* having alledged thus much, knew not that *Empedocles* did not abolish men, beasts shrubs or birds in as much as he saith that all these are composed and finished of the elements mixed together: But teaching and shewing them how they were deceived, who finde fault with naming this composition a

---

but only mixture and interchange of what is mixed / exist, and growth is the name given to them by men"]. See Laks and Most, V.396, and Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK8.

[33] I explore Empedocles' political legacy and refusal of kingship in the conclusion of this section, and again in the chapter on *Paradise Lost*.

[34] Holland, *Morals*, 1114.

> certaine nature or life: and the dissolution unhappy fortune and death to be avoided, he annulled not the ordinary and usuall use of words in that behalfe.[35]

Railing against Colotes' rush to judgment, Plutarch zeroes in on the claim to essence as the true target of Empedocles' rejection of "nature." In other words, Empedocles is not denying that different life forms exist, but rather rejecting the idea that any particular life form has an essential nature, because everything is a composite of the elements. Plutarch concludes this passage by reminding readers that Empedocles "annulled not" the conventional use of language in the human pursuit of reasoning about life and death, a nod to fragment DK9, in which he approves the use of conventional manners of speech, namely analogy, to describe the natural world.[36]

On the one hand, Empedocles' denial of inherent nature (or essence) might unsettle committed dualists, as it suggests that there is no immutable aspect of the human being, and thus leaves little room for entertaining any Augustinian view of the soul, in which an accountable, individuated subjectivity is poised against the life of the body. In basing reality on the evolutions of material mixture, that is, Empedocles prioritizes matter in motion. On the other hand, Empedocles' insistence that there is no "grisly death" invites speculation about the afterlife, making the passage amenable to the religious cultures of early modern England. Reformulating

---

[35] Ibid., 1115.

[36] DK9: "οἱ δ' ὅτε μὲν κατὰ φῶτα μιγὲν φῶς αἰθέρι – – / ἢ κατὰ θηρῶν ἀγροτέρων γένος ἢ κατὰ θάμνων / ἠὲ κατ' οἰωνῶν, τότε μὲν τὸν – ⏑ γενέσθαι· / εὖτε δ' ἀποκρινθῶσι, τὰ δ' αὖ δυσδαίμονα πότμον, / ἦ <γε> θέμις, καλέουσιν, ὁμῶς δ' ἐπίφημι καὶ αὐτός" ["And they [men], when the things mixed [to make up] a man arrive in the aither, / or [the things mixed] [to make up] the race of wild beasts or bushes / or birds, then they say that this is coming to be; but when they are / separated, this again [they call] miserable fate. / It is not right, the way they speak, but I myself also assent to their convention." See Laks and Most, V.398, and Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK9.

this slightly, Empedocles is a materialist with a flirtatious relationship to religious speculation. This blurry religio-materialism only deepens as Plutarch continues to discuss Empedocles' opinion on life and death:

> For mine owne part I thinke verily that *Empedocles* doth not alter in these places the common maner of pronouncing and using the said words: but as before it was related, did really as of a different minde as touching the generation of things that had no being, which some call nature. Which he especially declareth in these verses.
>
> Fooles as they be of small conceit, for farre they cannot see,
> Who hope that things which never were, may once engendred be,
> Or feare that those which are shall die, and perish utterly.[37]

Here, Holland quotes Empedocles' fragment DK11, whose lines claim it's foolish to think that death leads to total annihilation, and nods again to Empedocles' liberality with respect to the "common maner" of using "words."[38] The fragment is still broadly materialist, as it expounds on the primacy of material mixture to reiterate that life and death are merely momentary stages in an endless process of combinatorial change. However, it's easy to see the religious appeal of Empedocles' denial of death in the context of early modern England's widespread religiosity. Holland heightens Empedocles' religious appeal in his translation of the words immediately following this fragment. Plutarch declares,

---

[37] Ibid.

[38] DK11: "νήπιοι· οὐ γάρ σφιν δολιχόφρονές εἰσι μέριμναι, / οἳ δὴ γίγνεσθαι πάρος οὐκ ἐὸν ἐλπίζουσιν / ἤ τι καταθνῄσκειν τε καὶ ἐξόλλυσθαι ἁπάντῃ" [Inwood: "Fools—for their meditations are not long-lasting— / are those who expect that what previously was not comes to be / or that anything dies and is utterly destroyed"]. See Laks and Most, V.396, and Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK11.

> these verses are thundred out and do sound aloud in their hearing who have any eares at all, that he [Empedocles] doth not abolish generation absolutely, but that alone which is of nothing; nor yet corruption simply, but that which is a total destruction, that is to say, a reduction to nothing.[39]

Holland's admonition that the truth of Empedocles' claim will be "sound[ed] aloud" for those "who have any eares at all" might remind seventeenth-century readers of similar imagery in the Bible. A common refrain of Christ in the Gospels, for instance, is "hee that hath eares to heare, let him heare."[40] From a certain vantage, Holland's translation intensifies the prophetic disposition of Empedocles, whom it identifies as a revealer of fundamental truths: in the case of fragment DK11, the material truth that death is not absolute destruction, when one considers the material mixture into which all life dissolves, and through which the body's material constituents persist after death, however diffuse and dispersed such continuance must be.

Just after this, Plutarch gestures toward the vacillating, elusive quality of Empedocles' claims. Having cemented his point that Empedocles denies destruction at death, Plutarch introduces a twist:

> For unto a man who were not willing, after such a savage, rude and brutish maner [of Colotes] but more gently to cavil, the verses following after might give a collourable occasion to charge *Empedocles* with the contrary, when he saith thus:
>
> No man of sense and judgement sound, would once conceive in minde

---

[39] Ibid.

[40] See *The Holy Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), Matthew 13:9. See also Matthew 11:15, as well as Mark 4:9, 4:23, & 7:16. Holland did not invent the ear imagery in this passage; it appears in Plutarch's original language.

That whiles we living here on earth, both good and bad doe finde,

So long onely we being have: (yet this, men life doe call)

And birth before, or after death, we nothing are at all.[41]

After once again condemning the "rude and brutish" style of Colotes' objections, Plutarch quotes Empedocles' fragment DK15 to show how one might accuse Empedocles of having just the opposite opinion about death: that is, of believing that death equals total destruction. The words that appear after the colon are particularly equivocal, as it becomes unclear who believes "we nothing are at all" before birth or after death. Is this a faulty opinion of the "men" whom the lines condemn for unsound judgment, or is it Empedocles' rejoinder to such opinions? Holland's readers in early seventeenth-century England might regard the last line of the quoted fragment as an expression of mortalism, the belief that the soul (or in its Cartesian form, *res cogitans*) perishes along with the body at the time of death. Plutarch hints at this ambiguity when he writes that treating the verse more "gently" than Colotes might reveal "contrary" perspectives. In so doing, Plutarch reveals his sensitivity to Empedocles' elusive posture about the nature of life and death, and to how his verse generates a movement of perspectives attuned to the vibrancy of mental experience. Moreover, the fragment impels readers to interrogate what constitutes their

---

[41] Holland, *Morals,* 1115–6. The Empedoclean verse translated in this passage is DK15: "οὐκ ἂν ἀνὴρ τοιαῦτα σοφὸς φρεσὶ μαντεύσαιτο, / ὡς ὄφρα μέν τε βιῶσι, τὸ δὴ βίοτον καλέουσι, / τόφρα μὲν οὖν εἰσίν, καί σφιν πάρα δειλὰ καὶ ἐσθλά, / πρὶν δὲ πάγεν τε βροτοὶ καὶ <ἐπεὶ> λύθεν, οὐδὲν ἄρ' εἰσίν" [Inwood: "A wise man in his thoughts would not divine such things: / that while they live what they call life / for so long they are, and have good and evil things, / but before they are formed as mortals and <when> they are dissolved, they are nothing"]. See Laks and Most, V.396, and Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK15.

human subjectivity—is it mind or matter? Their elemental fabric or their cognitive experience? And are these things separable? Modern translations of the passage tend to make it more straightforwardly consistent with Empedocles' outright denial of generation and destruction in other fragments. Consider Inwood's translation, for example:

> A man wise in his thoughts would not divine such things:
>
> that while they live what they call life,
>
> for so long they are, and have good and evil things,
>
> but before they are formed as mortals and <when> they are dissolved, they are nothing.[42]

Wise people, aware of their status as elemental compounds, realize that the matter of their bodies has always existed and will always persist, scattered across space and time in perpetual remixture. Even here, the verses invite ambiguity, an inescapable effect of Empedocles' choice to frame the last three lines in negative terms. But this ambiguity, as Plutarch recognizes, is a feature of Empedocles' style rather than a flaw, one that reflects the competing roles of the elements and the forces that act upon them (Love and Strife) in Empedocles' cosmic system.

In Empedocles' poetry, there is often a tension between the many and the one. First, there is tension between the primacy of the four elements and of the extra-elemental forces that work upon them. One can think of this as a separation of matter and mind, or in a Cartesian hue, *res extensa* and *res cogitans*. Do Love and Strife exist wholly independently of earth, water, fire, and air, or are these forces immanently constituted therein? Secondly, a tension between the many and the one asserts itself among the four elements because these substances are susceptible to homogenization, according to Empedocles. Ultimately, I want to demonstrate how Empedocles

---

[42] See Inwood, pp. 223.

implies a connection between these two levels of struggle between the many and the one, a connection he facilitates through analogy. In other words, Empedocles' four elements can merge into one, and this process analogizes his poetry's representation of the relationship of matter to mind, of elements to forces, of essence to construction.

The potential for Empedocles' four elements to experience total interfusion over time is explained by another key concept, the idea of effluence, which is the process that brings the elements into flux. Empedocles envisions the four elements as only distinct from each other in superficial ways; at their core, he suggests, the four elements are built of similar tiny particles that stream off them constantly. The best encapsulation of this is the fragment DK89, which reads: ".....there are effluences from all things that have come to be."[43] When Plutarch/Holland introduce this fragment, they offer useful examples:

> Weigh and consider what Empedocles writeth:
>
> Wot well, all mortall things that be,
>
> Defluxions have in some degree.
>
> For there passe away continually, many defluxions, not onely from living creatures, plants, earth and sea, but also from stones, brasse and iron: for all things perish and yeeld a smell, in that there runneth something alwaies from them, and they weare continually.[44]

In this passage, Holland/Plutarch/Empedocles declare that things give off "defluxions" or

---

[43] Empedocles, DK89. As I discuss below, Shakespeare may have encountered this fragment in his reading of Holland's edition of Plutarch's *Moralia*.

[44] Holland, "Natural Question 19: 'Why doth the Polyp change his colour?," in *Morals,* 1009. The passage translates Empedocles, DK89: "γνούς ὅτι πάντων εἰσὶν ἀπορροαί, ὅσσ' ἐγένοντο" [Inwood: ".....there are effluences from all things that have come to be"]. See Laks and Most, V.540, and Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK89.

effluences, which "passe away continually" from all substances. The text then points to the phenomenon of smell to support this claim, reasoning that it proves an invisible transference of particles across elemental domains, as does the natural wearing away of objects in time. But more importantly, these tiny particles, whether they flow from earth, water, fire, or air, share a common structure.

This proto-atomic idea enables the four elements to exist in a state of interoperability with one another, linked by an invisible substratum of similitude. One knows these particles exist because of phenomena like vision, which would be impossible without miniscule particulate bodies that act upon the senses.[45] Notice how, even as Empedocles attempts to describe a substance beneath the level of elemental differentiation, he reaches for an elemental analogy. That is, he describes these emissions of miniscule particles in terms of fluid movement, of "effluence." Myrto Garani explains that Empedocles creates a "metaphorical conceptualization of the ubiquitous and unremitting emission of roots out of matter in terms of 'flowing water,' what he calls 'effluences.' "[46] In short, Empedocles uses an elemental analogy to deemphasize elemental difference, a stylistic choice that illustrates his point about the elements' potential to, in a way, transcend themselves.

Elsewhere in the same section of *Morals*, Plutarch bolsters the monist aspect of Empedocles with the memorable image of Empedocles as a cosmic welder who fuses together the building blocks of the universe. "*Empedocles*," Holland translates, "sodering [soldering] as it

---

[45] On Empedocles' theory of vision and its connection to effluence, see Mark Eli Kalderon, *Form without Matter: Empedocles and Aristotle on Color Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), esp. 6–7.

[46] Myrto Garani, *Empedocles Redivivus*: *Poetry and Analogy in Lucretius* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 114.

were and conjoining the elements by heats, softness and humidities, giveth them in some sort a mixtion and composition unitive."[47] The effluence of tiny, similar particles from the elements is what enables Plutarch to see a "composition unitive" in Empedocles' vision, one born of Empedocles "sodering" the elements into a single unified substance. Plutarch's analogy of Empedocles as cosmic welder lucidly conveys how, although he is closely associated with a division of physical reality into four, Empedocles' philosophy equally prioritizes the power of oneness: a precarious monism. This monistic potential of Empedocles' elements surfaces elsewhere in the *Moralia*, like when Plutarch explains how "Empedocles composeth the Elements of smaller masses, which he supposeth to be the least bodies, and as a man would say, the Elements of Elements."[48] Even in spite of Plutarch's anti-Epicurean reputation, Empedocles' tiny particles take on an atomic glow in this analogy, underscoring the philosopher's appeal to materialist understandings of reality.

The idea of flux leads Empedocles to the related notion of elemental transmutation, or the elements' potential to transform into each other. As Holland puts it, "Empedocles is of opinion, that the places of the elements are not alwaies steadie and certeine, but that they all interchange mutually one with another."[49] This principle is reflected in Empedocles' description of how the elements were formed, which also appears in Holland's translation. He explains how the world once existed as a single unified substance, from which the elements separated under the influence of Strife. According to Empedocles/Holland, fire and earth first separated from this

---

[47] Holland, *Morals*, 1114.

[48] Ibid., 814.

[49] Ibid., 819.

homogenous mass. Then, from this separated earth, "being thrust close and pressed together by the violence of revolution, sprang Water, from which Aire did evaporate."[50] Originating from a common substance, the elements are connected by their ability to flow into one another. One might think of effluence as the link between Empedocles' monist and dualist tendencies, the point where his system of four elements flows into one. In short, effluential flux, enabled by streams of similar tiny particles across elemental categories, is the bedrock of Empedocles' pluralism. It is the mechanism that allows his force of Love to hold the elements together.

The blurry ontology I've been describing is not the result of overreading or a refusal to make up my mind about an accurate interpretation of Empedocles. Instead, it is a fundamental aspect of the philosopher's style, and one related to his preference for analogy as a tool for understanding the world. Indeed, Empedocles is possibly self-aware about the dual nature of his elemental vision:

> δίπλ᾽ ἐρέω· τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἓν ηὐξήθη μόνον εἶναι
> ἐκ πλεόνων, τοτὲ δ᾽ αὖ διέφυ πλέον᾽ ἐξ ἑνὸς εἶναι.[51]
>
> [I shall tell a double tale. For at one time [they] [the elements] grew to be one alone from many, and at another, again, [they] grew apart to be many from one.][52]

---

[50] Ibid. Note that Empedocles identifies a fifth substance, æther or sky, which is the first to separate from the homogenous globe of Love. I have omitted æther from the discussion above because this detail is not directly relevant to my argument. But see Michael M. Shaw, "Aither and the Four Roots in Empedocles," *Research in Phenomenology* 44, no. 2 (2014): esp. 173–8.

[51] See Laks and Most, V.410.

[52] Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK 17.1–2. This is part of a lengthy and widely cited fragment, which was often quoted piecemeal in ancient texts. For instance, two lines from later in the fragment appear in Plutarch's "Dialogue on Love" in the *Moralia*, at 756d. Aristotle's *Physics*

In these lines, Empedocles illustrates the movement of the universe between states of elemental isolation and interfusion. Sometimes the elements are four, and sometimes they are one. But the shifting of the four elements between isolated and interspersed states also analogizes the pluralism of Empedocles' broader cosmic system, which simultaneously entertains materialist and idealist viewpoints, insisting on the cohesion of viewpoints that later thinkers would demand to separate. The very beginning of this fragment, "I shall tell a double tale," in addition to registering the four elements' uniqueness and compatibility, hints at the way Empedocles' poetry insists on gathering together thoughts that are difficult to entertain concurrently. The movement of Empedocles' interlocking imagery calls attention to the traffic between the many and the one, in a cycle of elemental unification and isolation that determines the material constitution of the world in any given moment.

Later, in the same fragment DK17, Empedocles includes lines that relate the tension between the many and the one within his four elements to the tension between mortal and immortal potential in his broader vision:

⌊ἀλλ᾽ αὖτ᾽ ἐστιν ταῦτα, δι᾽ ἀλλήλων⌋ γε θέοντα

⌊γίγνεται ἄλλοτε ἄλλα καὶ ἠνεκὲ⌋ς αἰὲν ὁμοῖα.

[– ◡ ◡ | – ◡ ◡ | – ◡ συνερχό]μεθ᾽ εἰς ἕνα κόσμον,

[– ◡ ◡ | – ◡ ◡ | – διέφυ πλέ]ον᾽ ἐξ ἑνὸς εἶναι,

⌊ἐξ ὧν πάνθ᾽ ὅσα τ᾽ ἦν ὅσα τ᾽ ἐσθ᾽ ὅ⌋σα τ᾽ ἔσσετ᾽ ὀπίσσω·

⌊δένδρεά τ᾽ ἐβλάστησε καὶ ἀνέρες⌋ ἠδὲ γυναῖκες,

---

also cites portions of the fragment, at A28b. The two lines I cite here, which exemplify the "double" quality of Empedocles' system, are cited in Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*.

[θ]ῆρές τ᾽ οἰωνο̣ί [τε καὶ] ὑ̣δατοθρ[έμμονες ἰχθῦς]

[κ]αί τε θεοὶ δολιχα[ίων]ες τιμῆισ[ι φέριστοι.

[But these very things [the four elements] are, and running through each other
they become different at different times and are always perpetually alike.
…….. we come together into one cosmos,
…….. to be many from one,
from which all things that were, that are, and will be in the future
have sprung: trees and men and women
and beasts and birds and water-nourished fish,
and long-lived gods first in their prerogative.][53]

Empedocles uses watery imagery ("running," as a stream) to signify the elements' underlying interoperability, the particulate effluence that links them in a continuum of transmutability. I say "underlying," because the elements still function in distinct ways, too; they are "different at different times" and yet "always perpetually alike." The fragment adopts a materialist timbre in the lines that follow, when Empedocles claims that "all things that were, that are, and will be in the future / have sprung" from these same elements. But when he lists examples to support his claim of elemental primacy, Empedocles obliterates any hope of articulating a simple materialism, for he concludes this list with "long-lived gods, first in their prerogative." Not only can these elements produce gods, but such a process is a leading "prerogative" of elemental substance. But more generally, the passage exemplifies Empedocles' commitment to blurring the

[53] See Laks and Most, V.415–16, and Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK17.34–41.

relationship between divine and material speculation. From one vantage, the passage implies that "gods" are, in truth, just material substances which wield great power over the experience of living things. From another angle, though, the lines suggest a spiritual apotheosis that results from the progressive sequence of a material process: the gods as the rarified outcomes of an elemental metamorphosis.

The ambivalent status of the "gods" in the passage marks a central trope in Empedocles' poetry, the analogy of the elements to gods. Consider fragment DK6:

τέσσαρα τῶν πάντων ῥιζώματα πρῶτον ἄκουε·
Ζεὺς ἀργὴς Ἥρη τε φερέσβιος ἠδ' Ἀϊδωνεύς
Νῆστίς θ', ἣ δακρύοις τέγγει κρούνωμα βρότειον.[54]

[First, hear of the four roots of all things,
gleaming Zeus and life-bringing Hera and Aidoneus
and Nestis, who moistens with tears the spring of mortals.][55]

"Roots" ("ῥιζώματα") is another word for "elements" in this context, so Empedocles is drawing a parallel between fire, air, earth, and water and the Greek gods Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus, and Nestis, respectively. Shakespeare may have encountered a translation of this fragment in Holland's edition of the *Moralia*, which Romanizes the deities in the analogy and provides an interpretative gloss, as follows:

Foure seeds and rootes of all things that you see,

---

[54] See Laks and Most, V.400.

[55] Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK6. "Nestis" is an alternative name of Persephone.

Now listen first, and hearken what they be:

Lord *Jupiter* with his ignipotence,[56]

And lady *Junoes* vitall *influence*,

Rich *Pluto*, and dame *Nestis* weeping ay,

Who with her teares, our seed-sourse weets alway.

By *Jupiter* hee meaneth fierie heat, and ardent skie; by *Juno* giving life, the aire; by *Pluto,* the earth; by *Nestis* and this humane fountaine of naturall seed, water.[57]

Holland's choice to translate the fragment into rhyming couplets reflects the correspondence between elements and gods that is described in the passage. By analogizing the elements as gods, Empedocles only increases the ambiguity of his metaphysics, and the analogy begs the question: is he undermining the gods, essentially materializing them and suggesting that the gods are human inventions for organizing the powerful forces of a material reality, meaning that the four elements and the forces that shape them are the only truly immortal substances? Or does the vector of his analogy work in the opposite direction, infusing the material world with an immanent divinity? The allegorical unpacking provided by Holland's gloss weakens the ontological ambiguity of the fragment, giving the analogy a sense of straightforward resolution that is external to Empedocles' lines. Holland's translation may somewhat simplify the fragment, but it still captures the unique proximity of elemental and divine substance in Empedocles' analogy. Because of its sympathetic pairing of material and divine substance, Empedoclean

---

[56] "Ignipotent": "Ruling or having power over fire." See "Ignipotent, adj." in *The Oxford English Dictionary Online* (cited hereafter as *OED* in footnotes).

[57] Holland, *Morals*, 808. The passage appears in the section "Of principles or first beginnings, what they be."

thought provides a useful framework for early modern thinkers attempting to reconcile materialist philosophy with religious faith.

Empedocles' desire to bring together seemingly opposed visions is even reflected in the reception history of his verse, its fragmentation and gradual reconstruction. Traditionally, editors divided Empedocles' poetry into two separate works, which they called the "Purifications" and the "Physics." Although, as Inwood observes, "no two independent editors have assigned the same set of fragments to each," they tended to assign more mystical fragments to the "Purifications," while including the more scientific (from a modern standpoint) fragments in the "Physics."[58] However, in Inwood's opinion, "we have no good reason to believe that there ever were two distinct poems by Empedocles," which is why Inwood's edition reorganizes the fragments into a single poem and encourages a "unitary interpretation of Empedocles' theories."[59] This tendency of editors to divide the fragments into two groups reveals itself as a strategy for managing the unwieldy ideas they contain, their "double tale" of Empedocles' materialist and idealist intimations.[60] The textual history of Empedocles' poetry therefore reflects the very process of elemental stratification and reunion that forms the basis of his physical and metaphysical universe. Like his four elements, Empedocles' fragments have moved between states of division and wholeness.

In Shakespeare's day, Empedocles was known not only for his theory of the four elements, but also for the sensational myth of his death by leaping into a volcano. The story of

---

[58] Inwood, "Introduction," 9.

[59] Ibid., 9–10.

[60] See Empedocles, DK17.1.

Empedocles' volcanic suicide, notwithstanding its status as fiction, reflects the unusual blend of materialist and idealist vantages in his poetry. As Diogenes Laertius tells it, Empedocles died by suicide after jumping headfirst into the volcano of Mount Etna in an attempt to prove he was a god.[61] Laertius' mocking account ends with the volcano emitting one of the philosopher's bronze sandals in his wake, a regurgitation that is viewed as a kind of punchline, serving to prove that Empedocles did not in fact become a god. Laertius' invention of Empedocles' suicide should be understood in the context of ancient Greek biographical tradition, which was usually less concerned with creating a realistic account of the subject's life than it was of building a narrative that exemplifies important aspects of his or her philosophy or teachings. In fact, a careful reading of Laertius' account of Empedocles reveals that he kills Empedocles in multiple ways, giving several different descriptions of his death. Empedocles' leap in Etna is the most famous of these, but Laertius also writes that Empedocles died by drowning in the sea, and by hanging himself on a noose in a tree, deaths which nod to a fragment in which Empedocles claims to have been a fish and a bird in past lives.[62] In her book *Death by Philosophy*, Ava Chitwood explains it like this:

> It is not unusual for a philosopher to have more than one death; death was a favorite topic for the biographers and entire collections were devoted to famous or unusual deaths.

---

[61] Diogenes Laertius writes: "He [Empedocles] set out on his way to Etna; then, when he had reached it, he plunged into the fiery craters and disappeared, his intention being to confirm the report that he had become a god. Afterwards the truth was known, because one of his slippers was thrown up in the flames; it had been his custom to wear slippers of bronze." See Diogenes Laertius, "Empedocles" in *Lives,* trans. R.D. Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 8.2.69.

[62] For Diogenes Laertius' account of Empedocles' death by drowning and hanging, see *Lives*, 8.2.74–5. For Empedocles' claim that he has been a fish, a bird, a bush, a boy, and a girl, see Empedocles, DK117, and my discussion below.

> Biographical death, however, is always telling, because it is always drawn from the subject's work, and indicative of the biographers' reaction to that work…rarely does death glorify its subject.[63]

In Empedocles' case, the story of his volcanic descent hearkens back to his emphasis on elemental flux and on the volcano as an important site of elemental transformation. For Empedocles, the volcano is a site of elemental mixture and emergence, a deep well in which the elements experience dynamic change and interfusion, as crystallized by the substance of lava. As earthen stone transformed to liquid fire, lava encapsulates the power of elemental transmutation and flux. Empedocles even claims that life itself emerged from the volcano.[64] Thus, when people imagine Empedocles falling into Etna, they implicitly celebrate a key feature of his elemental system, returning the philosopher to the material flux that is the centerpiece of his philosophical teaching. As he jumps into the volcano, Empedocles is absorbed into the elements he regards as eternal gods, drawn into a divine flux and dispersed back into the fabric of the cosmos.

At the same time, the story of Empedocles' dive into lava places him among a group of materially minded philosophers, like Democritus and Lucretius, to whom ancient biographers attribute a suicidal end. For instance, St. Jerome wrote that Lucretius took his own life after becoming insane from consuming a love potion.[65] The story of Lucretius' suicide, especially

---

[63] Chitwood, *Death by Philosophy: The Biographical Tradition in the Life and Death of the Archaic Philosophers Empedocles, Heraclitus, and Democritus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 49.

[64] On the volcano as a source of life, see Empedocles, DK31, DK35, DK57, and DK62. And see Waterfield, "Empedocles of Acragas," 140.

[65] On Jerome's account of Lucretius' death, see Martin F. Smith, "Introduction," in *Lucretius: On the Nature of Things*, Loeb Classical Library 181 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

considering its Christian author, is a case of a religious person slandering Lucretius as insane, implying that materialism is madness. But how does Empedocles' reputed death compare to this? On the one hand, one might read the myth along similar lines as Jerome's narrative about Lucretius, that is, as an attempt to mock the proto-materialism of Empedocles' elemental system as an invitation to madness. On the other hand, though, the story embodies a much different ideology, actually criticizing Empedocles for his implied belief in incorporeal substance and his own ascension to a divine pitch, as Laertius has it.

Although an extensive English translation of Diogenes' *Lives* would not appear until the late seventeenth century, the story of Empedocles' volcanic plunge had already been dispersed into English writing secondhand by the early late fifteenth century, at which point it had become a persistent feature of English writing.[66] In fact, the incendiary tabloid myth had already been Shakespeare's day. An English translation of Tommaso Garzoni's *L'Hospidale de' Pazzi Incurabili* [*The Hospital of Incurable Fools*] (1586), for instance, highlights how "*Empedocles Agrigentine* being a Foole, one degree above all others, threw himselfe headlong into the flames of mount Aetna, to the end that men might undoubtedly thinke, how he was flowen up into heaven."[67] In an even earlier example from a book of manners, which is one of the first printed

---

Press, 1992), x, & xviii–xxii. On Democritus' purported suicide, see Chitwood, *Death by Philosophy*, esp. 134–140, & 189fn6.

[66] See Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives, Opinions, and Remarkable Sayings of the Most Famous Ancient Philosophers. Written in Greek*, *by Diogenes Laertius. Made English by Several Hands. The First Volume* (London, 1688) and *The Second Volume* (London, 1696).

[67] See Tommaso Garzoni, *The Hospital of Incurable Fools*, *Erected into English* (London, 1600), 69. English references to Empedocles as an exemplar of divine zealotry and foolishness reach back at least to the fifteenth century. See for example Jacques Legrand, *Here Begynneth the Table of a Book Entytled the Book of Good Maners* (London, 1487), EEBO image #59 (unnumbered page). And see, EEBO image #73 (unnumbered page).

references to Empedocles in English, Empedocles' death is cast as a moral lesson, namely: "he that entē[n]deth to haue heuene, ought lytyl to preyse his lyf."[68] This sarcastic aphorism implicitly chastises Empedocles, suggesting that his volcanic suicide and emphasis on divinity may lead others to disregard their own lives. More broadly, these passages from Garzoni and Legrand reveal that early moderns understood Empedocles not only as a materially minded thinker, but also as a figure of fiery religious passion, and sometimes primarily as such.

Although he may never have leapt into lava, Empedocles does appear to declare himself a god in his poetry, as in this fragment:

> ὦ φίλοι, οἳ μέγα ἄστυ κατὰ ξανθοῦ Ἀκράγαντος
> ναίετ' ἀν' ἄκρα πόλεος, ἀγαθῶν μελεδήμονες ἔργων,
> ξείνων αἰδοῖοι λιμένες, κακότητος ἄπειροι,
> χαίρετ'· ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός
> πωλεῦμαι μετὰ πᾶσι τετιμένος, ὥσπερ ἔοικα,
> ταινίαις τε περίστεπτος στέφεσίν τε θαλείοις·
> τοῖσιν ἅμ' εὖτ' ἂν ἵκωμαι ἐς ἄστεα τηλεθάοντα,
> ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξὶ σεβίζομαι· οἱ δ' ἅμ' ἕπονται
> μυρίοι ἐξερέοντες ὅπῃ πρὸς κέρδος ἀταρπός,
> οἱ μὲν μαντοσυνέων κεχρημένοι, οἱ δ' ἐπὶ νούσων
> παντοίων ἐπύθοντο κλύειν εὐηκέα βάξιν
> δηρὸν δὴ χαλεπῇσι πεπαρμένοι <ἀμφ' ὀδύνῃσι>.

[68] Jacques Legrand, *The Book of Good Maners* (London, 1487): EEBO images 59–60.

[O friends, who dwell in the great city of the yellow Acragas,
up in the high parts of the city, concerned with good deeds
<respectful harbours for strangers, untried by evil,>
hail! I, in your eyes a deathless god, no longer mortal,
go among all, honoured, just as I seem:
wreathed with ribbons and festive garlands.
As soon as I arrive in flourishing cities I am revered
by all, men and women. And they follow at once,
in their ten thousands, asking where is the path to gain,
some in need of divinations, others in all sorts of diseases
sought to hear a healing oracle,
having been pierced <about by harsh pains> for too long a time.][69]

Witness Empedocles' divine self-image as he describes the hordes of people who follow him for wisdom and healing. At the same time, notice how he hedges his claim to divinity by saying he is a god "in your eyes," rather than a god in truth.[70] He could be describing how people revere him *as* a god, rather than fully identifying with such a status. While some, like Diogenes Laertius, do not appreciate this nuance and accuse Empedocles of being egotistical, others have attempted to

---

[69] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood DK112, and Laks and Most, V.362. Diogenes Laertius cites this fragment in *Lives* at 8.61–2 and elsewhere. The fragment is also found in Sextus Empiricus' *Adversus Mathematicos* at 1.302–3 and in the entry for "Empedocles" in *The Suda*. See *Suidae Lexicon,* 358.

[70] The Laks and Most translation also captures this ambiguity by translating the line, "I greet you! I, who *for you* am an immortal god, no longer mortal" (emphasis mine). Similarly to the Inwood translation I cite above, this version emphasizes the second-person framing of Empedocles' statement: he is a god "for you." See Laks and Most, V.363.

reconcile Empedocles' statement with his proto-materialist, elemental philosophy. The Byzantine poet Joannes Tzetzes, for example, glosses Empedocles' claim of being a god with the paraphrase, "i.e. 'I shall be dissolved into the impassible and immortal elements themselves, from which I was compounded.'"[71] As Inwood explains, "it is clear that Tzetzes wants to reconcile Empedocles' claim of personal immortality with the doctrine that only the elements, love, and strife are immortal."[72] This ambiguously divine self-regard surfaces elsewhere in Empedocles' poetry, for example when he claims to be an exiled god enduring a cycle of purification or repentance for some act committed in a past life, but only after explaining that process of moral purification in terms of elemental movement and recombination (as opposed to incorporeal substance).[73] What these examples and reactions to Empedocles' legacy illustrate is his blurry status in the histories of materialism and religion. Like the rumor of his leap into the volcano, Empedocles' claim to divinity in DK112 can be read as an earnest declaration of a divine self-regard, or as a dramatic analogy for his teachings about death and material flux.

---

[71] See Tzetzes, *Exegesis in Homeri Iliadem*, 29.21–7, and Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 8.66.

[72] See Inwood, 82fn2. Inwood points out that Philostratus interprets Empedocles' claim similarly to Tzetzes in his *Life of Apollonius* at 8.76, qtd. in Inwood, *The Poem of Empedocles*, pp. 166.

[73] See Empedocles, DK115, quoted below. Shakespeare may have encountered this fragment in Plutarch's *On Exile*, which cites it at 607c–d, or his "Isis and Osiris," which cites it at 361c. Plutarch also refers to the fragment in the "Obsolescence of Oracles" at 418e and 420d. Beyond this, the passage was cited heavily throughout antiquity, in works like Plotinus' *Enneads* (at 4.8.1, 17–22), Origen's *Contra Celsum* (at 8.53), and Hippolytus' *Refutatio* (at 7.29.9–7.30.4).

Into the Volcano & Up to the Moon: Erupting the Ghost of Empedocles

Shakespeare appears to be thinking of Empedocles' infamous death in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* (written ca. 1599) when Falstaff hyperbolically compares his plunge into the Thames to a fall into Mount Etna, declaring, "I will be thrown into Etna, as I have been into Thames, ere I will leave her thus."[74] Transforming the fire and ash of Empedocles' plummet into river water, Falstaff's plunge into the Thames exploits the hyperbolic nature of Empedocles' volcanic death and translates Empedocles' overzealous confidence in his own divinity into Falstaff's overblown self-image as a worthwhile lover. I introduce this allusion because it may signal Shakespeare's engagement with the afterlife of Empedocles at an earlier moment in his career, even before the publication of Holland's 1603 translation of Plutarch, that watershed of Empedoclean thought in English literary history.

Jonson, too, alludes to Empedocles' volcanic death in his masque *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon* (performed in 1620). The masque centers around a conversation between several characters, in which they discuss supposed new findings about the moon. At one point, a herald explains that one way to reach the moon is

> old Empedocles' way, who when he leaped into Aetna,
> having a dry, sere body and light, the smoke took him and
> whift him up into the moon, where he lives yet, waving up
> and down like a feather, all soot and embers coming out of

---

[74] Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. Giorgio Melchiori (New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2000), act three, scene five, lines 117–18.

that coal pit. Our poet met him and talked with him.[75]

Reduced to "soot and embers," Empedocles floats among a "coal pit" on the moon, transmuted into fire and ash but still able to hold a conversation as he wafts up and down "like a feather"—an image that probably gestures to a fragment in which Empedocles claims to have been a bird in a past life.[76] The passage from *News*, like Empedocles' writing, registers a complex engagement with materialism: Jonson's lunar Empedocles is able to talk, seemingly in possession of a post-mortem personality, but also described as essentially material, "all soot and embers" following his plunge into Etna. Jonson was not the first early modern writer to invoke the image of Empedocles on the moon; Rabelais includes a similar image in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532), for example.[77] Jonson and Rabelais' placement of Empedocles on the moon—whose orbit traditionally marks the boundary between the celestial and the earthly or sublunar—speaks to Empedocles' liminal relationship to materialism and idealism, to elemental commitment and transcendence.

Jonson and Rabelais' depiction of a moon-bound Empedocles hearkens back to Lucian's *Icaromenippus* (ca. 165 CE), a text in which a departed Empedocles explains that, after he threw himself into the volcano, "the smoke snatched me up here, and now I

---

[75] Ben Jonson, "News from the New World Discovered in the Moon" in *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), lines 167–74.

[76] See Empedocles, DK117, and below. Diogenes Laertius quotes the fragment in *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* at 8.77. It is a key moment in Empedocles' transcorporeal ideation, and one I revisit later in the context of *Antony and Cleopatra* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

[77] See Francois Rabelais, *The Complete Works of Francois Rabelais*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 178–9. And see Sacvan Bercovitch, "Empedocles in the English Renaissance," in *Studies in Philology* 65, no. 1 (Jan. 1968): 72fn19.

dwell in the moon, although I walk the air a great deal, and I live on dew."[78] Lucian's lunar treatment of Empedocles humors the Presocratic philosopher's belief in intersubjective dæmons but subjects him to the material conditions of Empedocles' own philosophy, describing the philosopher's posthumous body as a fundamentally elemental being, composed of airy, appetitive ash that feeds on "dew." By making Empedocles into a man on the moon, Lucian suggests a transition to fire and air at death that occurs as a material process, even as he depicts Empedocles as an ashen ghost with an intact psyche.

One inspiration for later figurations of Empedocles' afterlife comes in his own poetry, in fragment DK117. I have already referred to this fragment in passing, but I want now to examine it more closely:

> ἤδη γάρ ποτ' ἐγὼ γενόμην κοῦρός τε κόρη τε
> θάμνος τ' οἰωνός τε καὶ ἔξαλος ἔμπορος ἰχθύς.[79]
>
> [For I have already become a boy and a girl
> and a bush and a bird and a fish [——] from the sea.][80]

Empedocles' presentation of his past incarnations illustrates a movement across genders and elements. Empedocles follows his claim of sexual metamorphosis in the first line with a

---

[78] See Lucian, "Icaromenippus, or the Sky-Man," in *Lucian II*, translated by A. M. Harmon, edited by Jeffrey Henderson, Loeb Classical Library 54 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1915), 288–91.

[79] Laks and Most, V.370.

[80] Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK117. The fragment is not quoted directly in Plutarch. However, it appears in the entry on "Empedocles" in *The Suda*, and is also quoted in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, at 8.5.77, as well as in Hippolytus' *Refutatio* at 1.3. For the entry in *The Suda*, see *Suidae*, 358.

progression from earth to air to water in the second. The images in the second line, that is, are each strongly associated with a different elemental environment. The "bush" is anchored to the earth, while the "bird" soars through air and the "fish" swims through "the sea." The fragment shows Empedocles meditating on his material composition, and how it connects him to other living creatures in other times and elemental domains. In a way, this is another illustration of Anaxagorean intermixture, where elemental substances ultimately become so interspersed, across vast spans of time, as to blend into oneness. The fragment unsettles the binaries between masculine and feminine, humans and animals, and plants and animals, as these various distinctions collapse into one another. Furthermore, one can find Empedocles' denial of generation and destruction underlying these lines: he intuits that his material fabric existed in other combinations, other manifestations before he was born, undermining the idea that any of these forms held any true nature or essence, aside from their shared elemental roots. That is one interpretation. But at the same time, the fragment can be read as an expression of Pythagorean reincarnation. From this view, Empedocles is playing the role of an incorporeal dæmon who has inhabited several material forms, animal, human, and plant, male and female.[81] This ambiguous blending of perspectives (one of Anaxagorean combination and the other of incorporeal

---

[81] Valentino Gasparini offers a helpful summary of the dæmon's origins: "The concept of the demon, born in Mesopotamia and developed in the Babylonian and Egyptian era, is attested in Greece since Homer (who conceives of it generically as 'divine') and Hesiod (the first person to distinguish demons from gods, also dividing demons into good and evil ones). Plato thought of demons as ministers of the gods and interpreters of humans: lower divinities, souls of the deceased, intermediate and guardian spirits. Demons share both the divine status (they are superior and eternal beings) and the human one (they have corporeal, or semi-corporeal, intellectual and emotional characteristics)." See Gasparini, "Isis and Osiris: Demonology vs. Henotheism?," *Numen* 58, no. 5/6 (2011): 703.

transmigration) is part of Empedocles' self-presentation "as a kind of poetic *vates*—a prophet who could read the past and future of matter," as Passannante writes.[82]

Empedocles' prophetic self-fashioning is perhaps most direct in fragment DK115, in which he claims to be one of the incorporeal dæmons ("δαίμονες") in exile from the gods. In ancient Greek religion, dæmons are incorporeal entities that can occupy different bodily subjects; they are the imagined helpers by whom vatic poets longed to be possessed in the name of poetic inspiration. And yet, even here, attentive readers will see how Empedocles obscures the precise quality of his dæmonic composition:

> ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,
> ἀίδιον, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὅρκοις·
> εὖτέ τις ἀμπλακίῃσι φόνῳ φίλα γυῖα μιήνῃ
> – ˘ ˘ ὅς κ' ἐπίορκον ἁμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσῃ,
> δαίμονες οἵτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο,
> τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
> φυομένους παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἴδεα θνητῶν
> ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
> αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
> πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὖδας ἀπέπτυσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγάς
> ἠελίου φαέθοντος, ὁ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·
> ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.
> τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,

[82] Passannante is referring to how both Empedocles and Lucretius adopt a vatic persona as they describe their visions of matter. See *Catastrophizing*, 203.

Νείκεϊ μαινομένῳ πίσυνος. ˘ ˘ | – ˘ ˘ | – –

[There is an oracle of necessity, an ancient decree of the gods,
eternal, sealed with broad oaths:
whenever one, in his sins, stains his dear limbs with blood
… [the text is corrupt here] by misdeed swears falsely,
[of] the daimons [that is] who have won long-lasting life,
he wanders for thrice ten thousand seasons away from the blessed ones,
growing to be all sorts of forms of mortal things through time,
interchanging the hard paths of life.
For the strength of aither pursues him into the sea,
and the sea spits [him] onto the surface of the earth and earth into the beams
of the blazing sun, and it throws him into the eddies of the air;
and one after another receives [him], but all hate [him].
I too am now one of these, an exile from the gods and a wanderer,
trusting in mad strife.][83]

This fragment, resonating with the Christian doctrines of sin and repentance, claims that an ancient decree of the gods lays out a rule of conduct for divine beings: causing bloodshed amounts to "sin," for which they are punished with exile from the "blessed ones," forced into

[83] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK115, and Laks and Most, V.368. Plutarch quotes the fragment, as I discuss immediately below. Other doxographic moments include Plotinus, *Enneads*, at 4.8.1, 17–22, Celsus' *Contra Celsum*, at 8.53, Porphyry in Stobaeus at 2.8.42, and Hierocles' commentary on the *Carmen Aureum*, at 24.2–3.

mortal incarnations. This prohibition against bloodshed reflects Empedocles' vegetarianism, which, like his apparent belief in reincarnation, he absorbs from Pythagoras' influence.[84] But notice how the fragment unfolds this description of divine exile. To be banished from the gods is to be shunned by element after element, as the exiled entity is passed off from æther to the sea, which "spits" him onto the "earth." The earth ejects the exile into the sun's hot "beams," which hurls him into "air." The movement of Empedocles' imagery therefore represents exile from the gods as an exile from the elements. Empedocles concludes by claiming that he, the singer of these verses, is such an exile, a "wanderer" who "trust[s] in mad strife" as he is shuffled from one bodily incarnation to another. It's helpful here to recall Empedocles' analogy of the gods to elements in DK6, which I discussed above. The further one moves away from elemental substance, the further from gods she wanders. In Empedocles' view, to depart from matter is to depart from the divine. Nevertheless, Empedocles doesn't reject incorporeal experience altogether; he instead defines it as the inverse of divine substance, in another example of his nimble ontological attitude.

Holland's translation of Empedocles' fragment on elemental exile (DK115) emphasizes its appeal to a largely Christian early modern audience:

> *Empedocles* in the very beginning of his philosophie maketh this praeface:
>
> > An auncient law there stands in force, decreed by gods above,
> > Grounded upon necessitie, and never to remoove:
> > That after men hath stein'd his hands in bloudshed horrible,
> > And in remorse of sinne is vext with horrour terrible.

---

[84] On Empedocles' prohibition against eating meat, see fragments DK136 & DK137.

> The long liv'd angels which attend in heaven, shall chase him quite,
> For many thousand yeeres from view of every blessed wight:
> By vertue of this law, am I from gods exiled now,
> And wander heere and there throughout the world I know not how.[85]

Holland significantly alters the meaning of Empedocles' description of exile. Whereas the Inwood translation (quoted in the prior paragraph) makes clear that elemental substances banish the exiled god, in Holland's version, it is "the long liv'd *angels* which attend in heaven" who shun or "chase" the exile, bringing the fragment firmly into a Christological mode (emphasis mine). Moreover, by swapping Empedocles' shunning elements for a clique of socially exclusive heavenly "angels," Holland reverses the fragment's point about incorporeal substance, bringing the image into line with an Augustinian worldview in which fallen experience is decidedly earthbound.[86] Instead of being exiled from the elements, as Empedocles has it, Holland makes this divine exile into a more typical description of a fallen state. Finally, observe how Holland ends the fragment with the statement, "I…wander…throughout the world *I know not how*" (emphasis mine). Holland's translation makes Empedocles a lot less confident in his own cosmic transcendence, registering the indeterminate status of the Sicilian philosopher's true opinion of immortality, as well as his assimilation to a later Christocentric worldview.

---

[85] Holland, "Of Exile," in *Morals*, 281. And see Plutarch, *Moralia*, 607c–d, 361c, & 418e.

[86] See Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. II.ii.2–4 & V.ix.16.

Like Holland, Shakespeare invokes the dæmon in the language of "angels" in *Antony and Cleopatra.* When Antony asks the Soothsayer whether Caesar or he will have a better fortune, the Soothsayer resorts to dæmonology:

ANTONY:

Say to me,

whose fortunes shall rise higher, Caesar's or mine?

SOOTHSAYER:

Caesar's.

Therefore, O Antony, stay not by his side.

Thy daemon—that thy spirit which keeps thee—is

Noble, courageous, high unmatchable,

Where Caesar's is not. But near him, thy angel

Becomes afeard, as being o'erpowered; therefore

Make space enough between you. (2.3.14–22)

The Soothsayer explains the discord between Antony and Caesar as a friction of dæmonic disagreement. Notice how Antony's "dæmon" becomes "thy angel" after two lines, jostling Empedoclean and Christian frames of reference. Yet as Shakespeare introduces a sacred register through the Soothsayer's esoteric knowledge, he brings it into material focus, describing the dæmonic relationship between Caesar and Antony in terms of "space": "stay not by his side," he warns Antony, and "make space enough between you." In the Soothsayer, Shakespeare offers us a glimpse of Empedoclean dæmonology, giving us a character who contemplates divine experience in terms of physical reality.

As I've been showing, Empedocles' fragments paint him as a dæmon in exile from the gods. But in addition to this confession of spiritual banishment, Empedocles developed a posthumous reputation as a political exile. This is thanks to Diogenes Laertius, who implies that Empedocles was exiled from his homeland in Acragas late in life after becoming unpopular.[87] As Chitwood explains, "the story of exile…is…[a] standard theme in the life of the poet or philosopher, and, in Empedocles' case, could easily be read into those fragments which speak metaphorically about exile."[88] In other words, Laertius may have felt the need to create a biographical detail about political exile that would align with Empedocles' statements about the subject.[89] Laertius' claim about Empedocles' exile comes just after he describes Empedocles as a leader of anti-oligarchical political reforms, implying that those reforms may have led to his banishment. Laertius writes that Empedocles "broke up the assembly of the Thousand three years after it had been set up, which proves not only that he was wealthy but that he favoured the popular cause."[90] Empedocles begins to look like a veritable political reformer in Laertius' account, which goes so far as to cast him as a champion of democracy. Laertius claims that Empedocles "declined the kingship when it was offered to him, obviously because he preferred a

---

[87] See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives,* 8.67.

[88] Ava Chitwood, "The Death of Empedocles," *The American Journal of Philology* 107, no. 2 (Summer 1986), 179.

[89] Chitwood points out that Laertius' desire to portray Empedocles as a political reformer is also an attempt to reflect fragment DK146, in which Empedocles claims that noble civic and political leaders possess the capacity to "ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῇσι φέριστοι" ["sprout up as gods"]. See Chitwood, "The Death of Empedocles," 179, Laks and Most, V.384, and Emepdocles, trans. Inwood, DK146.

[90] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 8.66.

frugal life. With this Timaeus agrees, at the same time giving the reason why Empedocles favoured democracy…"[91] These stories are almost certainly untrue according to Chitwood, although "there undoubtedly was some sort of political change in Acragas at or around Empedocles' time, with which he later became associated."[92] Although "none of the stories can be substantiated," it is clear that Laertius wants to find "evidence of Empedocles' hatred of tyranny" around every corner.[93]

Chitwood recognizes that, despite its dubious biographical accuracy, Laertius' account of a democratic, populist, and anti-monarchical Empedocles had a lasting effect on the philosopher's reputation. "Once these stories become part of the legend," she writes, "it is hard to escape their influence, and modern writers as well as ancient ones tend to fall into the trap."[94] Montaigne is one example of this. In his essay "Of Pedantry," Montaigne writes that "*Empedocles* refused the royaltie, which the *Agrigentines* offered him," as he "found the seat of justice, and the throne of Kings, to be but base and vile."[95] The tradition continues in Holland's translation of Plutarch, which combines the story of Empedocles' dissolution of the Thousand with his legacy as a healer and controller of the elements:

---

[91] Ibid., 8.64.

[92] Chitwood, "The Death of Empedocles," 179.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Michel de Montaigne, "Of Pedantisme," in *Florio's Montaigne, Volume I*, trans. John Florio, ed. J. I. M. Stewart (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1931), 128.

> And *Empedocles* not onely judicially convented and condemned the principall persons of the city wherein he dwelt, for their insolent behaviour and for distracting or embeselling the publicke treasure, but also delivered all the territorie about it from sterility and pestilence, whereunto before time it was subject, by emmuring and stopping up the open passages of a certaine mountaine, through which the southern winde blew and overspred all the plaine country underneath.[96]

Empedocles is fashioned as a civic leader who can protect Acragas against sickness and oligarchy alike. He punishes the corrupt rulers of Acragas, and uses his elemental wisdom to avoid a plague by diverting an infected wind that was blowing through a mountain passage into the city. He has become a figure of populist appeal who saves lives and corrects injustice. The political dimension of Empedocles' afterlife developed in part from Laertius' response to Empedocles' claims about being an exiled dæmon, illustrating how the Agrigentine philosopher's metaphysical claims are broken apart, reimagined, and rebirthed as political wisdom for later ages. But how does Empedocles' blurry status in relation to materialism and idealism relate to his appeal as a figure of political reform? This is a question I hope to answer by turning next to the Empedoclean mood of *Antony and Cleopatra*, one of Shakespeare's most politically and philosophically elemental dramatic works.

---

[96] Holland, *Morals*, 1128.

Chapter Two:

Empedoclean Effluence and Analogy in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

Introduction

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607) dramatizes the relationship between gods and elements. The parting vows of Antony, Octavia, and Caesar in act three suggest an analogy between divine and elemental fortune:

> ANTONY:
>
> So the gods keep you,
>
> And make the hearts of Romans serve your ends.
>
> We will here part.
>
> CAESAR:
>
> Farewell, my dearest sister [to Octavia], fare thee well.
>
> The elements be kind to thee and make
>
> Thy spirits all of comfort! Fare thee well. (3.2.36–41)

Notice how the dialogue moves between a religious and a material focus: "the gods keep you" is met with "the elements be kind to thee," placing divine and elemental invocations on the same plane while also perhaps suggesting a difference of perspective between Antony and Caesar. Reminding readers of the play's vast geography—and its characters' reliance on the contingencies of wind, sea, land, and sun—Shakespeare calls up a Homeric image of divine interference in human affairs, and then immediately recasts the gods in this scenario as elements. While at first blush, Caesar's blessing, "the elements be kind to thee," might seem like an insignificant commonplace, in fact it is the only example of the phrase printed in any extant

English book before 1700.[97] This suggests that Shakespeare is thinking in a very specific way about the flux between elements and gods in this passage, as he does throughout the play. Such a movement between elemental and divine thinking exemplifies how *Antony and Cleopatra* derives poetic inspiration from Empedocles, who makes an analogy between the gods and the elements (DK6).

I argue that Shakespeare draws on an Empedoclean framework of elemental analogy and flux to construct the dramatic universe of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare uses the imagery of elemental flux, that is, to undergird the political and romantic transformations of the play's characters. As I will show, *Antony and Cleopatra* takes inspiration from Empedocles' pluralism, using elemental flux to ponder the relationship between body and mind as the play's titular figures confront death. What emerges from my analysis is a picture of how Shakespeare's play draws poetic inspiration from Empedocles' motley ontology. As I will show, Empedocles' movement between materialist and idealist frames of reference underwrites the perspectival blur of *Antony and Cleopatra*. On one level, Empedoclean poetry offers Shakespeare the opportunity to ponder materialist possibility while still entertaining the possibility of transcendence. On another level, it provides him with a rich analogic palette for exploring political and imperial power.

In recent decades, scholars have shown how attention to Shakespeare's elementalism in *Antony and Cleopatra* reveals insights about the play's relationship to humoral subjectivity,

---

[97] *Antony and Cleopatra* in the First Folio is the only text in the entire Early English Books Online (EEBO) database to contain the phrase "elements be kind," with the qualifier that this statement does not consider texts that may be un-transcribed, mis-transcribed, or excluded from EEBO. See William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies Published According to the True Originall Copies* (London, 1623). The EEBO database covers roughly the years 1473–1700.

climatological theory, geography, and gender.[98] Gail Kern Paster shows how for writers including Shakespeare, "humoral subjectivity becomes recognizable as a fluid form of consciousness inhabited by, even as it inhabits, a universe composed of analogous elements."[99] I want to build on this work by interrogating whether *Antony and Cleopatra* could be relying, in key ways, on a specifically Empedoclean understanding of the four elements. As the chapter unfolds, I aim to show how the nuances of Empedocles' particular brand of elementalism offer important considerations about Shakespeare's representation of human subjectivity, ones that have not yet been fully explored.

A bit of caution is warranted in this undertaking, however. Since the notion of *concordia discors* was influential on Aristotle—whose intellectual frameworks remained predominant, if increasingly challenged, in the early seventeenth century—it is easy to start finding Empedoclean influence under every stone, when in reality one is merely encountering a broader

---

[98] For example, Paster has shown how Cleopatra's intersubjective draw to Antony's horse illustrates "that the passions shared by humans and animals were elemental in their nature" and thus make "affective regulation an early modern aspect of basic bodily management in ways that we may find difficult to recognize." See Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 187. For a discussion of the play's elementalism in the context of climatological theories of human development, see Mary Floyd-Wilson, "Transmigrations: Crossing Regional and Gender Boundaries in *Antony and Cleopatra*, in *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage*, edited by Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russel (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 73–96. On the relationship between the play's elementalism and geography, see Mary Thomas Crane, "Roman World, Egyptian Earth: Cognitive Difference and Empire in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*," in *Comparative Drama*, vol. 43, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 1–17. For discussions of Shakespeare's elementalism and gender, see Paster, esp. 65, 114fn45, and 175, and Katherine B. Attié, "Regendering the Sublime and the Beautiful: Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Feminist Formalism," in *The Routledge Companion to Women, Sex, and Gender in the Early British Colonial World*, eds. Kimberly Anne Coles and Eve Keller (London: Routledge, 2019), 46–8.

[99] Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 137.

epistemological tradition that is not Empedoclean *per se*.[100] Moreover, there are other sources that likely influenced Shakespeare's elementalism—book 15 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for example—so one should resist the temptation to conflate any discrete reference to the four elements as evidence of "direct" Empedoclean influence.[101] With these potential pitfalls in mind, my approach in these pages is to focus on moments that resonate in a more particular way with Empedocles and his legacy, rooting the discussion in a consideration of Shakespeare's potential exposure to specific fragments through his reading of Plutarch, who "had a profound influence on the way Shakespeare dramatized human character," as Colin Burrow writes.[102] In a word, I have attempted in my analysis to hew closely to the details of Empedocles' actual writings, considering them through the particular translations that made the fragments available to Shakespeare.

Another objection some readers may raise is Shakespeare's supposedly limited classical knowledge. Ben Jonson's remark that Shakespeare "hadst small Latine, and lesse Greeke" might sound particularly damning for an exploration of Empedoclean influence.[103] However, Burrow

---

[100] I discuss Daniel's point about the pervasiveness of the four elements in the Introduction. See Daniel, "The Empedoclean Renaissance," 279. On Aristotelian epistemology and *Antony and Cleopatra*, see Crane, "Roman World, Egyptian Earth: Cognitive Difference and Empire in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra," *Comparative Drama* 43, No. 1 (Spring 2009), esp. 2–5.

[101] See Ovid, "Book XV," in *Metamorphoses Volume II*, LCL 43, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 363–428.

[102] See Burrow, *Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 13. And see Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare's Reading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. 99–108.

[103] See Jonson, "To the memory of my beloved the author Mr. William Shakespeare and what he hath left us," in the *Digital Facsimile of the Bodleian First Folio of Shakespeare's Plays*, Arch. G c.7, https://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk (London, 1623), A4 recto.

claims that Jonson's remark would also apply to Jonson himself, as well as most other seventeenth-century English readers. As Burrow sees it, the view that Shakespeare's classical learning was inferior compared to Jonson's has been somewhat overemphasized.[104] Moreover, if one allows that Shakespeare's reading of Plutarch might have extended beyond *Lives* to include the *Moralia*, as Burrow posits, then the matter of Shakespeare's potential exposure to Empedocles is clearer, for the *Moralia* mentions Empedocles over 100 times, in a range of contexts, as opposed to a single allusion within all of the *Lives*. Even if he read no Greek, Shakespeare likely would have encountered Empedocles in English translations of Plutarch circulating in the years leading up to his composition of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Moreover, of all the Pre-Socratic philosophers, Empedocles has enjoyed the most extensive textual afterlife. Although Empedocles' capacious poetry exists only in fragments, Inwood points out that "for no other Presocratic thinker is there so much evidence," referring both to the number of fragments and the forests of doxography and testimonia that surround them.[105] Inwood explains how "the literal quotations of Empedocles' own poetry are extensive, the biographical tradition generous (if eccentric), and the volume of ancient discussion of his thought staggering."[106] Thus, while considering the influence of Pre-Socratic philosophers on

---

[104] See Burrow, esp. 12–14. And see Plutarch, *Plutarch: Moralia*, edited by Jeffrey Henderson, 17 vols., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927–2004).

[105] Inwood, "Introduction," 3. In addition to Empedocles' transmission through doxographic sources such as Plato, Aristotle, and Plutarch, the appearance of Henri Estienne's *Poesis Philosophica* (1573) marked the first printing of gathered Pre-Socratic fragments in early modern Europe.

[106] Ibid. Inwood's reminder about the extensiveness of Empedocles' work and legacy helps establish that, while the matter of Presocratic influence on early modern texts is a thorny undertaking, Empedocles is a more promising and less obscure figure than, say, Thales or Heraclitus.

Shakespeare warrants some caution—not least because of the millennia that separate them—the sheer volume of Empedocles' writings, as well as his enduring influence throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period, make this a promising investigation, particularly when I attune to the distinctive ontological movement that emerges as a central aspect of Empedocles' influence in the Renaissance, rather than any one particular and widely disseminated idea.

I then turn more directly to *Antony and Cleopatra* to demonstrate how Shakespeare represents the play's heroine as an Empedoclean deity, developing this interpretation from my examination of Plutarch's repeated Empedoclean emphases. In the subsequent section, I show how Shakespeare draws on two details of Empedocles' philosophy to underwrite the imaginative world of *Antony and Cleopatra*: an analogy of the four elements as warriors with civil strife between them, and the idea of elemental effluence or flux. By portraying the world in flux, I go on to suggest, Shakespeare experiments with dissolving the hierarchies underlying imperial power. My analysis is supported by two key sources of Shakespeare's access to Empedoclean fragments, Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, and Philemon Holland's 1603 translation of Plutarch's *Moralia*. I demonstrate how North's translation influences Shakespeare's characterization of political strife in *Antony and Cleopatra*, while Holland's book contributes to Shakespeare's fascination with the idea of flux—a concept Plutarch and Holland frame as an Empedoclean teaching.

Cleopatra as an Empedoclean God

Like Empedocles' poetry, Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* expresses its own kind of pluralism, its own "double tale" that weaves together an analogic elemental perspective and a preoccupation with elemental transcendence.[107] Cleopatra is the most striking example of this thematic mixture in the play. As Anna Brownwell Jameson recognized over a century ago, "Cleopatra is a brilliant antithesis, a compound of contradictions."[108] In this section, I want to show how Cleopatra can be read as an Empedoclean construction who holds together Shakespeare's emergent materialism with his longstanding interest in immortality.[109] The world organizes itself around Cleopatra at the elemental level, and she reaches for incorporeal transcendence through the language of elemental transmutation and flux.

Throughout the play, Shakespeare turns to elemental language to evoke Cleopatra's transfixing aura. Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra in her barge captures the heroine's material power. He waxes elemental to Maecenas and Agrippa:

ENOBARBUS:

I will tell you.

---

[107] Empedocles, DK 17.1–2.

[108] Anna Brownell Jameson, *Shakespeare's Heroines* (London: J.M. Dent, 1905), 241.

[109] Shakespeare's interest in immortality is expressed throughout much of his other work, but perhaps most poignantly in the first part of the *Sonnets*. I am grateful to Michael Schoenfeldt for bringing the elemental imagery of "Sonnet 44" and "Sonnet 45" to my attention in a conversation we held during the "Shakespeare and the Elements" seminar at the 2021 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America. I presented an early iteration of this chapter as part of the seminar. I am also indebted to Hannah Korell, who participated in the same seminar, for helping me consider the political possibilities of elemental philosophy. See Shakespeare, "Sonnet 44" and "Sonnet 45," in *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Poems*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 107–9.

> The barge she sat in like a burnished throne
> Burned on the water. The poop was beaten gold,
> Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
> The winds were lovesick with them; the oars were silver,
> Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
> The water which they beat to follow faster,
> As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
> It beggared all description: she did lie
> In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold of tissue—
> O'erpicturing that Venus where we see
> The fancy outwork nature. On each side her
> Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
> With divers-colored fans, whose wind did seem
> To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
> And what they undid did. (2.2.200–14)

Cleopatra sets off a series of elemental reactions that steer the imagery of Enobarbus' dazzled account of the moments just before the play's central figures meet for the first time. Notice how Cleopatra's barge "burned on the water" with its deck of shimmering golden hue and seductive, aromatic purple sails. The queen occupies a throne of floating fire, its flames unhindered by the water that surrounds them. Moreover, through these elemental reactions, Enobarbus depicts Cleopatra as both lovely and Lovely: that is, as both an individual person charged with a "supremely sexual" presence, as Harold Bloom puts it, and as an emblem of Love in the way Empedocles and Lucretius use the concept, namely, as a natural force responsible for the world's

material cohesion.[110] When Enobarbus, therefore, goes on to compare Cleopatra to "Venus," he's alluding not only to her seductive affective power but also portraying her as a force of cosmic Love.

What is more, Cleopatra's embodiment of Venus analogizes the political dimension of Cleopatra's sexuality: that is, how the relationship between Egypt and Rome, and between the Roman triumvirates, hangs in the balance of her physical entanglements with Antony. As Jonathan Dollimore writes, "*Antony and Cleopatra* dramatizes the connections between desire and power; more exactly, sexual love and political struggle."[111] To say it differently: Shakespeare portrays erotic energy as element-binding, cosmic Love, a move which makes Cleopatra responsible for holding the world together, politically and materially. Maynard Mack reads Enobarbus' speech as "a kind of absolute oxymoron: Cleopatra is glimpsed here as a force like the Lucretian Venus, whose vitality resists both definition and regulation."[112] Indeed, the elements are both captivated and disordered by Cleopatra's presence. For example, the oars of her barge make the water "amorous of their strokes," lovesick after the most fleeting and indirect contact with the Queen of Egypt. Along similar lines, the fans of Cleopatra's attendant Cupids don't simply "cool" her, but produce a wind that makes her cheeks "glow...And what they undid did." In other words, the winds themselves grow lusty as they cool Cleopatra's lust. She can't so

---

[110] Bloom, *Cleopatra: I Am Fire and Air* (New York: Scribner, 2017), 8. And see Empedocles, DK17.7–8 and DK26.5. As I described above, Empedocles envisions Love and Strife exerting control over the elements in an alternating cycle.

[111] Dollimore, "Shakespeare Understudies: The Sodomite, the Prostitute, the Transvestite and their Critics," in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, 2nd ed., ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Allan Sinfield (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 144–5.

[112] Mack, "Introduction," in *Antony and Cleopatra* (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), 17.

much as lounge in the breeze without inflaming elemental passions. Her love is multidimensional: she is *Venus Physica* and *Venus Pandemos* incarnate.

Even as Shakespeare characterizes Cleopatra as a Venus who holds the world together, he also renders her a force of strife who threatens to disorder nature. Later in Enobarbus' account, Cleopatra's effect on the air around Cydnus becomes so strong that it threatens to create a void in nature:

> …The city cast
> Her people out upon her, and Antony,
> Enthroned i'th' market-place, did sit alone,
> Whistling to th'air, which, but for vacancy,
> Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too
> And made a gap in nature. (2.2.251–6)

The residents of Cydnus flock to Cleopatra, leaving Antony behind to "whistl[e] to th' air"—air which longs to "gaze" on Cleopatra like the people. The image of an ineffectual, aloof Antony provides an immediate contrast to the element-attracting power of Cleopatra. Whereas the wind and water around Cleopatra's barge are attracted to the queen's every inconsequential move, Antony's "whistling" seems to have little effect on the air, which wishes to flee his sight and "make a gap in nature." However, note how the air doesn't actually drift away to Cleopatra. The air wants to move toward Cleopatra, the lines imply, except that doing so would create a vacuum in space ("but for vacancy"). In denying the existence of void, Enobarbus exhibits a common

Aristotelian teaching of Shakespeare's day, the old saw that nature abhors a vacuum.[113] Empedocles held a view similar to Aristotle's, as fragment DK13 reveals.[114] Empedocles' denial of the void marks one of the "key points" of disagreement between his philosophy and the later theories of Lucretius.[115] Shakespeare's depiction of Antony's whistle is thus situated within an Aristotelian and Empedoclean framework for imagining the limits of nature, even as he makes the air desirous of subverting that framework.

At the same time as Shakespeare emphasizes the elemental transactions of Cleopatra's material surroundings to emblematize her erotic and political power, he gestures toward her immortal aspiration and longing for transcendence. Enobarbus' scene of Cleopatra on the barge in the River Cydnus—the queen seducing elements and eventually, Antony—establishes an image to which Cleopatra's immortally longing psyche later returns in Act Five. Having seen Antony "melt" before her (4.15.73), Cleopatra's mind revisits the scene as she decides to follow her lover in death:

> …I am again for Cydnus
>
> To meet Mark Antony. (5.2.227–8)

Cleopatra's announcement recasts the River Cydnus in a Stygian hue. Janet Adelman writes of this moment, "Cleopatra herself asserts that she is exempt from the natural limitation of death.

---

[113] For Aristotle's arguments against the existence of void, see *The Physics, Books I–IV*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Cornford, LCL 228 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), IV.VI (213a–b).

[114] DK13: "οὐδέ τι τοῦ παντὸς κενεὸν πέλει οὐδὲ περισσόν" ["Nor is any of the totality empty or in excess."]. See Laks and Most, V.394, and Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK13. This fragment does not appear in Plutarch; its doxographic provenance includes Theophrastus, *De Sensibus*, at 13, and Pseudo-Aristotle, *De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia,* at 976b22-7.

[115] Garani, *Empedocles Redivivus*, 6.

She is again for Cydnus to meet Mark Antony: and she returns to no literary Cydnus but to the Cydnus of Enobarbus's description, where the limitations of nature itself were defied."[116] To put it differently, Cleopatra is intent upon meeting her dead lover in the afterlife, by way of recalling their elementally dynamic first encounter, marking an intersection of elementalism and immortality. The scene of Cleopatra on the barge becomes an elementally charged touchstone for Cleopatra's transcendent imagination: an elemental scene that she later refashions as an avenue to immortality.

Cleopatra's alignment to Venus is complemented by Antony's associations, as a military icon, with Mars. Scholars have read Cleopatra and Antony's relationship as symbolic of the myth of Venus' seduction of Mars, and on solid ground: Cleopatra's attendant eunuch Mardian, after all, mentions the story early on in the play. When asked by the queen if he maintains a libido in spite of his castration, Mardian replies,

> Not in deed, madam, for I can do nothing
> But what indeed is honest to be done.
> Yet have I fierce affections, and think
> What Venus did with Mars. (1.5.16–19)

Though ostensibly invoking the reference to illustrate his own erotic desire (despite that he can "do nothing"), the image of the gods of love and war united also gestures toward Antony and Cleopatra's pairing, analogizing her seductive elemental allure and his (former) military accomplishments. Describing Venus' seduction of Mars, Adelman points out that "the union of these divine adulterers was one of the ruling mythological commonplaces of the English

---

[116] Adelman, *The Common Liar: An Essay on "Antony and Cleopatra"* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 150.

Renaissance."[117] One can view the conjunction of love and war as analogues for Love and Strife in the Empedoclean sense. In such a reading, Antony and Cleopatra are a pairing of opposites whose affair develops both a moralistic and ontological meaning. Adelman recognizes this when she observes that the myth of Venus' seduction of Mars has been "subject to a dizzying variety of interpretations, from the simplest moralizing to the most abstruse Neoplatonic explication of Harmonia as that *discordia concors* which proceeds from the union of a very Empedoclean Mars and Venus."[118] Adelman may find certain "very Empedoclean" interpretations of the myth "abstruse," but her reading of *Antony and Cleopatra*'s divergent perspectives takes on an Empedoclean resonance of its own. For example, when Adelman describes the blurry mortality of Cleopatra and Antony, her words could apply equally well to the apparent contradictions of Empedoclean thought: "But what do we make of a play in which our modes of vision lead us to several contradictory meanings? *Antony and Cleopatra* insists that we take the lovers simultaneously as very mortal characters and as gigantic semidivine figures."[119]

In other words, Shakespeare crafts a play which presents the audience with concurrent visions of mortal and transcendent experience, ones mediated by the contingencies of unreliable messengers and expansive geography. Adelman views the "movement of perspectives" within

---

[117] Adelman, *The Common Liar*, 83.

[118] Ibid., 84. Specifically, Adelman is interested in Lucretius' and Ovid's divergent responses to the myth of Mars and Venus united. Whereas Lucretius "treats the fable with philosophic high seriousness" by envisioning the two divine lovers as emblematic of Empedoclean Love and Strife, Ovid deduces a moral conclusion from the myth. Adelman explores how *Antony and Cleopatra* unfolds in relation to these two responses, but does not further consider the matter of the play's more direct Empedoclean resonances. See Adelman, *Common Liar*, esp. 83–5.

[119] Adelman, 11. Bloom also regards these characters in semidivine terms; he sees Antony, for instance, as "a Herculean hero." See Bloom, 7. On Plutarch's association of Antony with Bacchus, see Adelman, 175.

Antony and Cleopatra" as a central concern of the play.[120] An important inspiration for Shakespeare's perspectival movement is Empedoclean pluralism, in which a world constituted by material elements nevertheless offers the possibility of transcending them. The play is like Empedocles' fragments: they point at once toward a materializing worldview, even as they entertain the existence of divinity and put on display an aspiration to godliness. Thus, in addition to *Venus Pandemos* and *Venus Physica*, one can count *Venus Urania* among the specific Venusian resonances that accrue in Cleopatra's character.

But Cleopatra's divine associations aren't limited to the Roman Venus, for Shakespeare also links her to the Egyptian god Isis.[121] Like the historical Cleopatra, the heroine embraces Isis, swearing oaths by her name and aligning herself politically to the figure.[122] Isis was a major deity of ancient Egyptian religion, a figure associated with magic and maternal protection. She married her brother, Osiris, and gave birth to the sky god Horus. When Osiris was murdered by his brother Set, Isis helped resurrect Osiris' body, and her tears became the Nile River. Isis isn't merely a name Cleopatra invokes for protection; she is a god who is interwoven, bodily, with the landscape of Egypt. And moreover, she is a popular religious figure whose significant following could be politically useful to Cleopatra, leading her to embrace the god to the point of

---

[120] Adelman, *The Common Liar*, 30.

[121] Mack captures these associations when he writes of Antony and Cleopatra, "he descends from the god Hercules, she from the moon-goddess Isis." See Mack, "Introduction," 15.

[122] Cleopatra, like her attendants Charmian and Isis, swears "by Isis." (1.5.83). On the historical Cleopatra VII's embrace of Isis, see D. Plantzos, "The Iconography of Assimilation: Isis and Royal Imagery on Ptolemaic Seal Impressions," in *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship. Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School of Athens, November 1–2, 2007*, ed. P. P. Iossif, A. S. Chankowski, and C. C. Lorber, (Leuven, 2011), 389–416, and Bricault, Laurent and Miguel John Versluys, "Isis and Empires," in *Power, Politics and the Cults of Isis* (Brill, 2014), esp. 9–12.

embodying her. For example, in Act 3, Octavian Caesar recounts how Cleopatra would appear dressed as Isis in public displays:

> …She
> In th'habiliments of the goddess Isis
> That day appeared, and oft before gave audience,
> As 'tis reported, so. (3.6.16–19)

Although Caesar recalls this scene with a tone of derision—highlighting the queen's use of Egyptian iconography in the Roman sphere during her relationship with Julius Caesar—Isis was already a transnational figure well before Cleopatra's day, and there was a Greco-Roman cult of Isis that developed an anti-imperial political reputation. Moreover, Isis' entanglement in both Roman and Egyptian culture makes her a useful character study for Shakespeare's play, and helps to challenge dualistic reductions of the play's thematic atmosphere to a simplistic Roman/Egyptian binary. Indeed, Léonie Hayne notes that it was in imperial Rome that Isis "achieved official recognition and approval."[123] There is even evidence that "in 43 the newly established triumvirs [Caesar, Lepidus, and Antony] decided to erect a temple [to Isis], obviously in a bid for popular support," a project that was ultimately abandoned.[124] More specifically, though, Isis was "identified with the Pompeian rather than the Caesarian cause," and the deity was predominantly a figure of *popularis* politics who was especially venerated "among ex-slaves, who were a majority of Rome's population."[125] Thus, as a political and religious referent,

---

[123] Hayne, "Isis and Republican Politics," *Acta Classica* 35 (1992): 143.

[124] Ibid., 146–7.

[125] Ibid., 146 & 143.

Isis speaks to Shakespeare's interest in the flux between Rome and Egypt, and to the internal dynamics of Rome's transition from Republic to empire, a shift that forms the historical backdrop of *Antony and Cleopatra*'s dramatic universe.

As a divine analogue of Cleopatra, Isis therefore exemplifies the cross-cultural flux that the play dramatizes. To say it differently, Cleopatra and Isis speak to the play's resistance to social and political polarity. As Katherine Eggert claims,

> *Antony and Cleopatra* is configured not as a set of imperial decisions and their repercussions, but as a set of Cleopatran displays and Roman reactions, as if the entire Roman empire is compelled to fix its eyes upon Egypt and its queen. On grounds that are the very basis of theatrical presentation, the grounds of the ocular, the traditional division of the play into two realms is shown to be spurious, only a red herring. The play has really only one sphere, composed both of the Cleopatran enigma and of those who are, to a more or less complete degree, attracted to her. The play's two apparently discrete points of view join in a single, theatrical arena.[126]

Isis is part of this polarity breaking, a figure whose political and religious adherents crossed boundaries, a phenomenon of culture in flux.

At the same time, Cleopatra's association with Isis also participates in the play's Empedoclean experimentation, as it keys into the play's dual interest in materialist and idealist perspectives. The story of Isis and Osiris encapsulates both vantages, as I want to show now. The following passage from Bloom helps unfold this idea:

---

[126] Eggert, *Showing Like a Queen: Female Authority and Literary Experiment in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 140.

> Cleopatra's identification with the goddess Isis, whose name meant 'throne,' is crucial for understanding the mythic aspects of her personality. Isis gathered up the remnant of her brother and husband, Osiris, and thus aided his resurrection. The annual rising of the Nile was attributed to the tears of Isis lamenting Osiris.[127]

On the one hand, the Isis myth advances an idea of incorporeality by suggesting an afterlife in which bodily death is overcome. On the other hand, it imagines this process in material terms, with Isis collecting her husband and brother's physical remains and translating her tears into the flow of the Nile. After Isis' successful intervention, the myth holds that Osiris was embodied as a principle of goodness, in opposition to Typhon, who embodied evil. Like the principle of effluence in Empedocles' system, Isis holds together a duality which is comparable to Love and Strife. As Gasparini explains, "the role of Isis (the feminine principle of nature and matter) consists of recomposing this dualism, generating order (the cosmos), which is embodied in the myth by Horus."[128] As in Empedocles' system, two opposing forces exert themselves through a material extension that is analogized to a divine power: the tears of Isis and the immortal elements. The confluence between Egyptian myth and an Empedoclean ontological framework may seem surprising, but Empedocles' Pythagorean roots help explain the similarities. Pythagoras supposedly spent time studying in Egypt, among other places, absorbing the influence of other cultural, religious, and philosophical traditions.[129]

---

[127] Bloom, 4.

[128] See Gasparini, "Isis and Osiris," 707.

[129] As Leonid Zhmud explains, "apart from his teachings, wonders and scientific discoveries, Pythagoras was also known for his wide-ranging journeys. Ancient authors alleged that he visited many countries and nations from Egypt to India, stayed with the Phoenicians and the Ethiopians and talked to the Persian Magi and Gallic Druids." See Zhmud, "Pythagoras'

To be sure, Egyptian mythology and Empedoclean metaphysics are distinct, with their own histories and nuances. But there are points of convergence. Plutarch, for instance, turns to an Empedoclean frame at key points in "Isis and Osiris," showing that Shakespeare could have encountered the mixture of these two traditions in a work he likely read before writing *Antony and Cleopatra*.[130] To show this, it's helpful to return to Holland's translation of Plutarch, because the essay "Of Isis and Osiris" represents the myth in an Empedoclean light, discussing the story partially in terms of effluence, and partially in relation to Empedocles' exiled demons.

For example, in the following passage, Holland/Plutarch express the flow of the Nile in terms of effluence:

> Those who serve and worship Osiris are streightly forbidden and charged, not to destroy any fruitfull tree, nor to stop the head of any fountaine. And not onely the river Nilus, but all water and moisture whatsoever in generall, they call the effluence of Osiris: by reason whereof, before their sacrifices they cary alwaies in procession a pot or pitcher of water, in honour of the said god.[131]

Plutarch emphasizes the elemental devotion of Osiris' followers, who are committed to the perpetuation of the flow state and use water to sanctify their offerings. Like one of Empedocles' immortally inflected elements, water is presented here as a material substance that embodies a divine entity. At the same time, notice how Plutarch relies on the language of "effluence" to

---

Northern Connections: Zalmoxis, Abaris, Aristeas," *The Classical Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (December 2016): 446.

[130] I discuss Shakespeare's reading of Plutarch in the introduction to this chapter, above.

[131] Holland, "Of Isis and Osiris," in *Morals*, 1301.

highlight a natural philosophical interpretation of the story, suggesting a movement of perspectives between divine myth and its potential to analogize the material world. Plutarch heightens this natural philosophical attitude slightly later in the same work, again turning to effluence as a coupling link between divine and material ideation:

> And as they [followers of Isis and Osiris] both hold and affirme, Nilus to be the effluence of Osiris; even so they are of opinion, that the body of Isis is the earth or land of Aegypt; and yet not all of it, but so much as Nilus oversloweth, and by commixtion maketh fertile and fruitfull: of which conjunction, they say, that Orus [Horus] was engendred, which is nothing else but the temperature and disposition of the aire, nourishing and maintaining all things.[132]

Again, it's hard not to think of Empedocles' analogized god-elements here, as Plutarch describes the Nile as the "effluence of Osiris," and the land of its floodplain as "the body of Isis," while analogizing the god Horus to the air. In the prior section, I discussed how Empedocles positions effluence as a central facet of his ontology, and one that helps move between his interest in the many and the one, and between dualism and monism. Plutarch is relying on effluence for a similar reason in these passages. Bearing this in mind, consider the following moment from a few pages later in Holland's translation:

> Now then, in the soule, reason and understanding, which is the guide, and mistresse of all the best things, is Osiris. Also in the earth, in the windes, in water, skie and the starres, that which is well ordained, staied, disposed and digested in good sort, by temperate

---

[132] Ibid., 1302.

> seasons and revolutions, the same is called the defluxion of Osiris, and the very apparent image of him.[133]

Observe how Holland and Plutarch first assign a divine role to Osiris, correlating him to "reason and understanding" within "the soule." But then Plutarch recasts Osiris in elemental terms when he describes the "earth…windes…water, skie and the starres" as "the defluxion [or effluence] of Osiris." Moreover, by making these elements "the very apparent image of" Osiris, Plutarch and Holland end the passage on a materializing note. They turn to an analogizing view of Empedocles' four elements (plus æther or "skie") in order to transmute Osiris into a primarily elemental being.[134]

It's easy to see how Shakespeare might take dramatic inspiration from Plutarch's presentation of Egyptian mythology in the language of Empedoclean effluence and "defluxion" in *Antony and Cleopatra*.[135] From the play's earliest moments, Shakespeare constructs a vision of a world in flux, from Philo's comment that Antony's lovesickness "o'erflows the measure" of masculine conduct, to the "winds and waters" of Cleopatra's passionate temperament, which swell beyond the limits of "sighs and tears" (1.1.2 & 1.2.155). As Mack writes, Shakespeare

---

[133] Holland, "Of Isis and Osiris," in *Morals*, 1307.

[134] I am reading Holland/Plutarch's "starres" and "skie" as corresponding to Empedocles' fire and æther, respectively. While I have been emphasizing the materialist possibilities of the passage, Plutarch's desire to bring Osiris down to earth may be due to an ideological aim that represents the Egyptian religious tradition as inferior to the Greek tradition. As Daniel S. Richter sees it, "the *de Iside* is an appropriative text that has as one of its central aims the demonstration of the priority of Greek philosophy over Egyptian cult." See Richter, "Plutarch on Isis and Osiris: Text, Cult, and Cultural Appropriation," *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974–2014)*, vol. 131 (2001): 194.

[135] Holland, "Of Isis and Osiris," in *Morals*, 1307.

creates "a world in which nothing stays to scale because everything overflows its own boundaries."[136] Amplifying this sense of flux, the play associates Cleopatra with the Nile as much as Egyptian mythology associates Isis with it. For example, we learn that Antony calls Cleopatra his "serpent of old Nile," an unusual endearment that is both unflattering and elevating, linking the queen with the earthly embodiment of Isis (1.5.26). And in the middle of the play, Cleopatra imagines her death as the disintegration of her body into the Nile's mud (3.13.164–72). Elsewhere, Antony declares his commitment to Cleopatra, swearing

> By the fire
>
> That quickens Nilus' slime, I go from hence
>
> Thy soldier, servant, making peace or war
>
> As thou affects. (1.3.69–72)

Here, Antony expresses his devotion by invoking the interaction of the sun ("fire") upon the mud of the Nile, which "quickens" it, bringing it to life.[137] Antony invokes the animating power of the sun upon the Nile before describing how he himself is enlivened by his love for Cleopatra. Thus, the structure of the oath suggests an analogy: Cleopatra as the vitalizing "fire" that stirs Antony/the Nile to action.

In a related passage, Antony and Lepidus refer to the Nile's flux as a source of life. The passage is a torrent of ebbs and flows, a landscape of slime and ooze:

> ANTONY:
>
> Thus do they, sir: they take the flow o'th' Nile

---

[136] Adelman, *Common Liar,* 144.

[137] "Quicken, verb," sense 1: "To come or bring to life," in the *OED.*

By certain scales i'th' Pyramid. They know

By th'height, the lowness, or the mean, if dearth

Or foison follow. The higher Nilus swells,

The more it promises. As it ebbs, the seedsman

Upon the slime and ooze scatters his grain,

And shortly comes to harvest.

LEPIDUS:

You've strange serpents there?

ANTONY:

Ay, Lepidus.

LEPIDUS:

Your serpent of Egypt is bred, now, of your

mud by the operation of your sun; so is your crocodile.

ANTONY:

They are so. (2.7.17–28)

Helping to create "the sense of an enormous and mingled fertility" that is "everywhere in the play," Antony describes how Egyptian farmers monitor and work with the Nile's changing conditions to produce a harvest, sowing grain "upon the slime and ooze."[138] Lepidus introduces

---

[138] See Adelman, 127. Barbara C. Vincent makes a similar point, explaining that "as well as imaging a beneficent and intriguingly polymorphous sexuality in Egypt, overflowing Nilus also offers an analogue for the vitalizing effect of experiencing the swollen torrents of magnified human passions projected by the histrionically gifted queen. In contrast to the busily temporal world of Rome, Egypt is an eternal realm, which transfixes Romans in the endlessly recurrent and fertilizing experience of love." See Vincent, "Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and the Rise of Comedy," *English Literary Renaissance* 12 (1982), 57.

the possibility that the Nile gives birth to more than grains when he suggests that snakes and crocodiles also emerge from its fecundity. According to Wilders, Lepidus' lines reflect a common belief "that organic life, such as snakes and flies, could be created out of vegetable matter."[139] Moreover, Lepidus' mention of a "serpent" is ironic, foreshadowing the moment when Cleopatra commits suicide by clasping a venomous snake to her breast at the end of the play (5.2.303–5). Thus, while in Antony's oath, Cleopatra is figured as the sun which heats the Nile, in this moment the Nile gives birth to the entity that will destroy her, placing Cleopatra within a cyclical chain of material interactions that center on the river's role as a facilitator of flux.

I've been exploring how Shakespeare takes inspiration from Plutarch's depiction of Empedoclean flux, allegorizing gods and queens to the cycles of the Nile. As I demonstrated above, Plutarch relies on the notion of effluence in "Isis and Osiris" to explore divine figures in a material register. But elsewhere in the text, Plutarch—in alignment with his own Middle Platonism—invokes Empedocles as an expert dæmonologist. It is unsurprising that Empedocles is among the experts Plutarch turns to as he considers this subject, considering Empedocles identified himself as one of these beings, as I discussed in the previous section.[140] The allusion comes during a lengthy digression in which Plutarch explains that he considers the mythological figures he's been discussing to be "dæmons."[141] When Plutarch casts Isis and Osiris in a

---

[139] John Wilders, ed., *Antony and Cleopatra*, The Arden Shakespeare (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 164fn26–7.

[140] See Empedocles, DK115, and above.

[141] Plutarch/Holland write: "I hold better with them who thinke that the things which be written of *Typhon, Osiris,* and *Isis,* were no accidents or passions incident to gods or to men; but rather to some great Daemons." See Holland, "Of Isis and Osiris," in *Morals*, 1296.

dæmonic light, his earlier description of these gods in both elemental and divine language comes into sharper focus, because the dæmon is an intermediate being composed of divine and material associations. As Plutarch explains,

> that divinitie which they [dæmons] had, was not pure and simple; but they were compounded of a nature corporall and spirituall, capable of pleasure, of griefe, and other passions and affections, which accompanying these mutations, trouble some more, others lesse.[142]

The dæmon encapsulates the pluralistic attitude I have been highlighting in Empedoclean thought—both "'corporall and spirituall," the category of the dæmon is oriented to a mixture of divine and bodily ideation. In other words, Plutarch understands the dæmon as susceptible to error, a point he reinforces by directly citing the volcanic philosopher. "As for *Empedocles*," Plutarch writes,

> he saith, that these Daemons or fiends, are punished and tormented for their sinnes and offences which they have committed, as may appeere by these his verses:
>
> For why? the power of aire and skie, did to the sea them chace:
> The sea them cast up, of the earth, even to the outward face:
> The earth them sends unto the beames, of never-tyred Sunne,
> The Sunne to aire, whence first they came, doth fling them downe anon:
> Thus posted to and fro, twixt seas beneath, and heav'ns aboue,
> From one they to another passe: not one yet doth them love.

---

[142] Holland, "Of Isis and Osiris," in *Morals*, 1297.

untill such time as being thus in this purgatory chastised and clensed, they recover againe that place estate and degree which is meet for them and according to their nature.[143]

Holland's translation of this passage is an example of how Empedocles poetry occasions a blend of dæmonic, elemental, and Christian imagery: Holland interprets Empedocles' description of the dæmons' journey as a "purgatory" in which they are "chastised and cleansed" for their "sinnes and offences." And yet, even as these Christian inflections introduce a heightened severity to Empedocles' description of the outcast dæmon, their orientation to an Empedoclean fragment produces an unusual admixture: Christian sin and punishment are recast as an elementally driven affair. More to the point, this compound of religious and materialist contemplation helps show why writers like Shakespeare, creating art in an age of enforced Christian orthodoxy, are drawn to Empedocles as a source of inspiration for thinking in material terms without wholly discarding key tenets of the culture's sacred beliefs. In Shakespeare's dramatic imagination, Empedocles is fuel for contemplating immortality and materialism, for envisioning "new heaven, new / earth" (1.1.17).[144] Like Empedocles, Cleopatra and Antony are at once mortally bound and immortally poised.

Against this backdrop, I want to turn to a moment when Cleopatra envisions her own kind of intersubjective journey. Distressed about the consequences of her and Antony's defeat by Caesar, Cleopatra worries about what would happen to her body if she were to be killed by Caesar's forces and taken into possession by Rome. She worries that her corpse will be made

---

[143] Ibid., 1297. The passage cites Empedocles, DK115.9–12. In the prior section, I explored how Plutarch cites this same fragment in "Of Exile."

[144] These are Antony's lines to Cleopatra after she asks him to explain how much he loves her, and they speak the play's commingling of material and divine concern.

into a political "puppet" and displayed around Rome (5.2.207), and she laments that future generations will experience her as a character acted out on the stage:

> …The quick comedians
> Extemporally will stage us and present
> Our Alexandrian revels; Antony
> Shall be brought drunken forth; and I shall see
> Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
> I'th' posture of a whore. (5.2.215–19)

Cleopatra's lines create a metatheatrical flux between audience, actor, and history. Due to the all-male casting of Shakespeare's day, the play's original audiences would have seen Cleopatra—played by a male actor—contemplate her future representation in the body of a boy actor. It's as if Shakespeare makes Cleopatra cognizant of the very theatrical culture that gives voice to her lines, functioning "primarily as a reminder of the theatrical being that Cleopatra is becoming."[145] In other words, Shakespeare puts on display a version of the theatrical remediation Cleopatra fears will influence her legacy. To be clear, I'm not suggesting Cleopatra thinks she will transmigrate metaphysically into the boy actor's body; instead, she is imagining how future bodies will come to be associated with her. But by calling attention to the boy's body that would be performing the lines, Shakespeare gives Cleopatra's contemplation a sense of movement, a telescoping effect expanding outward from the Roman theatrical depictions she immediately

---

[145] Vincent, 85. This histrionic metafictional experimentation is a recurring phenomenon in Shakespeare's plays. Consider, for instance, the play within the play of *Hamlet* (see act three, scene two), or the use of crossdressing as dramatic and comedic fodder throughout *Twelfth Night*.

imagines, and then centuries into the future with a nod to the specific norms of early modern theater. If it is true, as Bloom holds, that "Shakespeare would have known that women performed upon the Roman stage," then Shakespeare's investment in a temporally expansive metatheatrical scale is even more clear, as it shows him deliberately giving Cleopatra consciousness of her future early modern theatrical remediation.[146]

Stanley Cavell notices the scene's metatheatrical experimentation and Cleopatra's self-consciousness. He writes:

> Cleopatra's specification of her consciousness of herself as actress shows Shakespeare at I imagine his most daring in his always daring us to become conscious of his theater: '...and I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / In the posture of a whore'…[5.2.217–19]—daring us to see the boy here and now squeaking *this* Cleopatra, in *that* line, to challenge us to ask and specify in what (other) position she is here and now presented, presents herself.[147]

To put it another way, Shakespeare creates the sense that Cleopatra is aware of her own histrionic depiction, even in the very moment the lines are performed; yet the way Shakespeare does this, by calling attention to the actor's gender and the theatrical environment, he simultaneously breaks the illusion of transtemporal subjectivity. Dramatically, this self-defeating illusion supports Shakespeare's attempt to show how, as Floyd-Wilson puts it, "Cleopatra's indecipherable quality can transmigrate over time and place, to be appropriated by the impolitic

---

[146] Bloom, *Cleopatra: I Am Fire and Air*, 145.

[147] Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare: Updated Edition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 31.

northerner."[148] Floyd-Wilson's phrasing reflects the dual vision that Shakespeare constructs: he creates the experience of Cleopatra subjectively moving through time to critique the theatrical performance that gives her voice, as if she had an immortal, "transmigrat[ing]" and "indecipherable quality," while undercutting this illusion of transcendence by deliberately spotlighting the means of its status as "appropriation."[149]

Cleopatra's seeming awareness of her future appropriation by early modern theatrical spaces also occurs in an earlier passage from the same scene. When she imagines the Roman theater that will portray her, Cleopatra could just as well be describing an early modern venue like the Globe. She says to Iras,

> … Mechanic slaves
>
> With greasy aprons, rules and hammers shall
>
> Uplift us to the view. In their thick breaths,
>
> Rank of gross diet, shall we be enclouded
>
> And forced to drink their vapour. (5.2.208–12)

The queen is disturbed by the material processes that will envelop future representations of her. Notice how Cleopatra describes her disgust in the language of elemental flux. She cringes at the "thick breaths" of the playgoers, in which she will be "enclouded." At the end of the passage, Cleopatra's repulsion seems to liquefy the exhalations of the onlookers, whose breaths she

---

[148] Floyd-Wilson, "Transmigrations," 90.

[149] Floyd-Wilson elaborates on her reading of Cleopatra's fear of appropriation: "Cleopatra insists that in representation, her greatness will be 'boyed' or reduced to the mere' posture' of a woman defined by carnality; in other words, the spirit of Cleopatra's greatness, which encompasses her unreadability and 'infinite variety,' will necessarily be lost in the translation of Egyptian culture." See Floyd-Wilson, "Transmigrations," 89.

imagines "drink[ing]."[150] But who is the future "we" whom Cleopatra imagines being "forced" to "drink…vapour"? It's as if she ponders sharing some subjectivity with the future actors who will depict her, disgusted by the way that in the future, "Cleopatra and her women would be all but suffocated by the rank vapors of coarseness and grossness."[151] As she grapples with her future legacy in the language of elemental mixture and transformation, Cleopatra calls attention to the way that, throughout the play, she is identified as a product of material origin and flux, even in future manifestations of her character that extend outside the historical timeline of the play. Moreover, by introducing a metatheatrical sheen to these lines (calling attention, that is, to the very theatrical spaces that will produce the lines), Shakespeare creates an illusion of transcorporeal transcendence, presenting to theatergoers an ancient ruler who seems to be cognizant of the theatrical remediation happening before their eyes. Thus, the moment nods to Cleopatra's longing for incorporeal transcendence, even as it generates this illusion through images of elemental interaction.

---

[150] The treatment of air as liquid is not limited to Cleopatra's lines in this scene. Consider Enobarbus' description of how Cleopatra, when she was in Rome with Julius Caesar, would "hop" through the "public square," speaking and panting, even after she had "lost her breath." In so doing, "she did make defect perfection / And, breathless, pour breath forth" (2.2.270–3). In the image of Cleopatra "pour[ing] breath forth," Shakespeare calls attention to elemental transformation, describing air as a watery substance. Perhaps this contradictory sounding description helps express the paradoxical act being described—exuding breath even when out of breath. Admittedly, this interpretation is hindered by one possible reading of the First Folio's spelling in this line, which reads "powre breath forth," which could be understood as "power breath forth" rather than "pour." However, as Wilders explains, understanding the word as "pour" (as most modern editions do) is the more plausible interpretation, "consistent as it is with Cleopatra's other paradoxical qualities." See Wilders, ed., *Antony and Cleopatra*, 141fn242.

[151] Bloom, *Cleopatra: I Am Fire and Air*, 145.

We might think back to Empedocles' own intersubjective journey as Cleopatra imagines her future reincarnations in terms of gender changes and elemental repulsion. Recall Empedocles' claim,

> ἤδη γάρ ποτ' ἐγὼ γενόμην κοῦρός τε κόρη τε
> θάμνος τ' οἰωνός τε καὶ ἔξαλος ἔμπορος ἰχθύς.
>
> ["for I have already become a boy and girl
> and a bush and a bird and a fish…from the sea"].[152]

Although Empedocles envisions the past, and Cleopatra the future, they both reflect on their reincarnations in materially ambiguous terms, at once evoking a sense of widescale material recombination and a potential claim to trans-subjective experience. Empedocles has been a "girl" as well as a fish, and Cleopatra will be a "squeaking boy" who, fishlike, occupies a liquid reality, "forced to drink their vapour" (5.2.218, 5.2.208). She is an elemental wanderer who contemplates immortality through elemental recombination.

Shakespeare's Empedoclean framework is useful for highlighting how this scene posits gender difference in terms that are both essentializing and constructionist, simultaneously challenging the gender construct even as it reinforces it. To put it differently, I'm suggesting a parallel between Empedocles' view of the elements (which he regards as both distinct but ultimately homogeneous) and Shakespeare's representation of gender in the scene I've been discussing. Critics of the play have tended to respond to this scene by emphasizing either its

---

[152] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK117, and Laks and Most, V.370. In Chapter One, I showed how Jonson likely alludes to this fragment in his masque *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon* (1620).

constructionist or essentializing ideological implications. Alan Sinfield reflects on this ambivalent gender politics and its divergent critical responses:

> Femininity and boyishness coincide, personifying the gender identities and erotic opportunities that have enthralled and tantalized the characters. Whether this enacts an audacious triumph of womanhood, or a teasing breakdown of theatrical allusion, is disputed. Poststructuralist critics have believed that this is one of the moments at which illusion collapses and the sex/gender system is revealed as an ideological expedient.[153]

To reframe this in Empedoclean terms, Shakespeare's depiction of a transmigrating, transgender Cleopatra has led some critics to see the moment as reifying a rigid gender essentialism—viewing differences of gender as distinct and immutable—and led others to regard it as just the opposite, as a denial of any distinct feminine nature and in which categories of gender difference dissolve into each other as they are brought into flux. To indulge an elemental analogy, Shakespeare's representation of gender is like seeing a double vision of fire and water as essentially incompatible and as sympathetically linked, as participants in both the many and the one. The unwieldy pluralism of the Empedoclean perspective helps to explain this disagreement in the scene's reception, to explain why Shakespeare's view of gender holds together viewpoints that seem opposed.

A moment in Anne Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass' book, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, speaks to Shakespeare's interest in moving between divergent perspectives of gender. Writing about the scene when Cleopatra sticks the asp onto her breast,

---

[153] Sinfield, *Shakespeare, Authority, Sexuality: Unfinished Business in Cultural Materialism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 122.

Jones and Stallybrass perceive Shakespeare's attempt to create "a radical oscillation between a sense of the absolute difference of the boy from his role and the total absorption of the boy into the role," which is also true of Cleopatra's self-projection of herself into the body of a "squeaking Cleopatra" (5.2.218). The dramatic effect of this oscillation is "an eroticism which depends upon the total absorption of male into female, female into male."[154] This sounds a lot like a world under the power of Love and Strife, one that moves between states of material fragmentation and inter-absorption. The dynamism of Empedoclean ontology helps undergird the play's isolation and deconstruction of rigid gender categories.

Some responses to the play's depiction of race have also registered Shakespeare's tendency to move between essentialist and constructionist modes of representation. As Joyce Green MacDonald writes, the play betrays "a certain indecision about the color of Cleopatra's skin, about this color's relationship to her race, and even about what her race might actually be."[155] MacDonald points out that the play presents the heroine as "tawny," and "with Phoebus' amorous pinches black" (1.1.6, 1.5.29), emphasizing "that whatever the color of her skin, it is different from that of the Romans."[156] At the same time, MacDonald continues, "Cleopatra refers to the 'bluest veins' (2.5.29) in the hand she offers the messenger who brings her news of Antony's marriage to kiss."[157] Shakespeare both emphasizes and undermines the ways in which

---

[154] Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 215.

[155] MacDonald, *Women and Race in Early Modern Texts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 45.

[156] Ibid., 45.

[157] Ibid.

Cleopatra is racially different from the play's Roman characters. "The play," MacDonald suggests, "is finally so convinced of the cosmic import of Cleopatra's racial difference from the Romans that it cannot be bothered to be consistent about her skin color."[158] Simultaneously isolating and dispersing markers of Cleopatra's racial difference, the play unsettles racial boundaries by removing any possibility of complexional fixity. For MacDonald, this is tied to the play's ambiguous depiction of gender. She explains, "just as the question of Cleopatra's skin color remains open, on two occasions observers confuse her with Antony."[159] Shakespeare vacillates between reifying and shattering hierarchies of gender and race until these constructs are brought into flux.

The critical opinions I've been considering here (of MacDonald, Jones and Stallybrass, and Sinfield) offer readings of Shakespeare's representation of race and/or gender that correspond to the broader Empedoclean mindset that informs the play, moving between materialist and idealist visions of the world. More often, though, critics tend to characterize the Shakespeare's attitude toward gender in more fixed terms, as either constructionist or essentialist. Exemplifying the view that the play sees gender as a construct, Arthur J. Little, Jr. remarks that Cleopatra's imagination of herself performed by a boy is "arguably the most celebrated scene of transvestism on the early modern English stage, a kind of transvestic *coup de théâtre*," implying that the play delights in its gender bending metatheatricality.[160] In contrast,

---

[158] Ibid., 60.

[159] Ibid., 53.

[160] Little, Jr., *Shakespeare Jungle Fever: National-Imperial Re-Visions of Race, Rape, and Sacrifice* (Stanford: Stanford Unversity Press, 2000), 173.

Sujata Iyengar claims that "Cleopatra rejects cross-gender impersonation as she attempts to turn herself into the transcendental or unearthly, into 'fire and air' " (5.2.288).[161] Iyengar is referring to Cleopatra's transcendent proclamation on the cusp of death, "I am fire and air," arguing that this elemental aspiration overrides the spirit of gender fluidity Cleopatra exhibits in other moments of the play. While both Little, Jr. and Iyengar offer insight into Cleopatra's attitude toward her future representation through gender bending performances, I would suggest that Little, Jr.'s reading somewhat overemphasizes the scene's commitment to transvestic boundary crossing, whereas Iyengar's interpretation may overstate Cleopatra's aversion to it. To be sure, Cleopatra is unenthusiastic about being played by a boy actor; but this refusal to appreciate gender dissolution is not reinforced by her elemental self-description at death. It might be true that the heroine's embrace of fire and air speaks to a spiritual aspiration that longs to leave behind the baser elements of earth and water. Yet bearing in mind the Empedoclean view of these elements as substantially interconnected, Cleopatra's sublimation into flames and air can also mark a celebration of intermixture, of material flux, and of spiritual apotheosis as elemental dispersion and reintegration. The transcendent view of fire and air is only one side of the coin, and to read Cleopatra's elemental declaration as a wholesale rejection of constructionism risks glossing over Shakespeare's Empedoclean double vision.

This double vision, and Cleopatra's proximity to an Empedoclean immortality, is perhaps no more pronounced than when Cleopatra processes her own death as an elemental transformation:

---

[161] Iyengar, "Shakespeare's Embodied Ontology of Gender, Air, and Health," in *Disability, Health, and Happiness in the Shakespearean Body*, ed. Sujata Iyengar (New York: Routledge, 2015), 186.

Husband, I come!

Now to that name my courage prove my title!

I am fire and air; my other elements

I give to baser life. So, have you done?

Come then, and take the last warmth of my lips. (5.2.286–90).

The passage encapsulates a materialist and idealist view of death, relying on the flux of the "fire and air" analogy, which on the one hand metaphorizes Cleopatra's ghostly refashioning as an incorporeal entity, and on the other, gives voice to the queen's awareness of her impending elemental breakdown and dispersion after death. Shakespeare's use of elemental imagery at the moment of Cleopatra's death helps blur the line between sacred and secular, putting Cleopatra's immortal aspiration in material terms. As William D. Wolf describes the effect, "however sure we are of what they [Antony and Cleopatra] escape *from*, we cannot know what they escape *to*; thus the play maintains its worldly, pagan tone, only hinting at transcendence in Cleopatra's visions."[162] The play's Empedoclean framing of death is one important contributor to this "pagan" tone that "hint[s] at transcendence," oscillating between idealist and materialist poles of possibility. The idealist interpretation is perhaps the more transparent one. After all, Cleopatra does address her dead husband in the same speech, as if headed for the underworld. And, as Iyengar points out, Cleopatra's embrace of fire and air over the sublunar elements of "baser life" (water and earth) can be read as a grasping for the "transcendental or unearthly."[163] Similarly,

---

[162] William D. Wolf, "'New Heaven, New Earth': The Escape from Mutability in *Antony and Cleopatra*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (Autumn 1982), 335.

[163] Iyengar, 186. Iyengar also provides a helpful overview of the central role of air in early modern physiology: "Air fueled and fired the early modern body and bonded body and soul through the medium of 'spirit.'...air turned nutritive blood into 'pure blood,' the sanguine humor,

Jan H. Blits contends that "Cleopatra repudiates her bodily elements. In the end, she rejects the living world in its entirety...Formerly the incarnation of bodily pleasure, she now sees herself as the decarnation of bodily life."[164] Bloom, too, produces a transcendent reading of this scene, writing that "Cleopatra chooses to die upward in an audacious venture into the Elysian Fields."[165] Indeed, the scene dramatizes Cleopatra's aspiration to a divine status, one heightened by Shakespeare's choice of the phrase "I am" to describe Cleopatra's immortal sublimation, which might resonate for early modern audiences with the Old Testament "I AM" identified as the name of God in the Book of Exodus.[166] Like Empedocles in the myth of his suicide, declaring himself a god as he's poised over the flames and smoke of Etna, Cleopatra announces, while "aloft," that "I have / immortal longings in me," and figuratively leaps into elemental oblivion (5.2.279–80, 88).[167]

---

in the right ventricle of the heart, and 'spirituous blood' in the left ventricle. Authorities differed on whether this aerated, spirituous blood required an additional purification, this time in the brain, in order to render it into the animal spirit that served as the vehicle of the soul, or whether spirituous blood itself united body and soul in this way." See Iyengar, 177.

[164] Blits, *New Heaven, New Earth: Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra* (New York: Lexington Books, 2009), 212.

[165] Bloom, 128.

[166] See *The Holy Bible*, Exodus 3:13–14.

[167] Cleopatra's positioning "aloft" is made clear in the stage directions at the beginning of 4.15. While she does not, like the mythic Empedocles, jump to her death from this elevated positioning, the mechanics of the scene are similar in a general way, in the sense that both Empedocles and Cleopatra occupy elevated spaces as they announce their sublimation into elemental immortality. As David Bevington notes, Shakespeare largely follows the lead of Plutarch in describing the visual mechanics of Cleopatra's death. Moreover, the vertical staging places Cleopatra "and her women…above, Antony and his guard below, at first; the vertical relationship is particularly vivid and essential to the story." See David Bevington, " 'Above the element they lived in': The Visual Language of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Acts 4 and 5," in *Antony and Cleopatra: New Critical Essays* (Routledge: New York, 2005), 99, 101. I am grateful to

Although typically not included in modern editions of the fragments, some ancient texts ascribe a definition of the soul as fire and air to Empedocles, as a recent article by Simon Trépanier points out.[168] While Trépanier is primarily concerned with the question of what Empedocles actually wrote in antiquity, he observes that Theodoret (393–458/66 CE) included the fire/air definition of soul and attributed it to Empedocles in his work *Graecarum affectionum curatio*.[169] This licenses Trépanier to argue that the mixture of fire and air is a "viable candidate for the transmigrating soul" within Empedoclean philosophy.[170] I've been unable to determine if Shakespeare had direct exposure to the writings of Theodoret, but Cleopatra's expression of her immortal aspiration as a reformulation into fire and air could suggest that he had some awareness of the idea, at least in the context of the additional Empedoclean resonances of Cleopatra's death. While the question warrants further investigation, then, it is not untrue to say that Cleopatra recites a textbook Empedoclean definition of the soul in the moment of her death.

Justine DeCamillis for encouraging me to explore Cleopatra's positioning in the monument at the end of the play in relation to Empedocles' volcanic leap.

[168] See Trépanier, "From Hades to the Stars: Empedocles on the Cosmic Habitats of Soul," *Classical Antiquity* 36, No. 1 (Aprl 2017): esp. 150.

[169] See Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio*, 5.16.10–19. According to Trépanier, the mixture of fire and air is "a viable candidate for the transmigrating soul" in Empedoclean philosophy. See Trépanier, "From Hades to the Stars," 144. Trépanier is attempting to revise Diels' decision to reject Theodoret's testimonium on this issue as invalid. The fragment in question is Empedocles, DK9, the first line of which contains a *lacuna* that is the source of the ambiguity ("οἱ δ' ὅτε μὲν κατὰ φῶτα μιγὲν φῶς αἰθέρι – – "). See Laks and Most, V.398.

[170] Trépanier: "the closeness of B9.1 to the doxographic account of soul offers us a good reason to think that Empedocles did in fact identify the transmigrating soul as a mixture of fire and air." See Trépanier, "From Hades to the Stars," 144–5.

Cleopatra's "immortal longings," therefore, can be seen as an elemental statement, especially if one considers Empedocles' definition of the elements as immortal entities (5.2.280).[171] This perspective opens up an alternative reading of Cleopatra's elemental death sequence, the materialist view I alluded to above. It's helpful to return for a moment to Holland's translation of Plutarch, which emphasizes the mortalist ramifications of Empedocles' philosophy:

> EMPEDOCLES saith, that Death is a separation of those elements whereof mans Bodie is compounded: according to which position, Death is common to Soule and Bodie: and Sleep a certaine dissipation of that which is of the nature of fire.[172]

From this vantage, when she clings to "fire and air," Cleopatra is materially schematizing her elemental "separation" at death, which includes the dissolution of the "Soule."[173] This is a kind of transcendence, but distinct from the vision of a transmigrating soul that Cleopatra's speech also conjures. It's a transcendence rooted in the persistence of matter after death, in a vision of

---

[171] Earlier, I discussed how Empedocles analogizes the four elements to immortal gods in fragment DK6, available to Shakespeare through Holland's translation of the *Moralia*. Empedocles also refers to the elements' immortality in a fragment less likely to have reached Shakespeare, DK21, where he claims, "ἐκ τούτων γὰρ πάνθ' ὅσα τ' ἦν ὅσα τ' ἔστι καὶ ἔσται" ["From these [the elements] all things that were, that are, and will be in the future / have sprung"]. See Laks and Most, V.432, and Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK21.9–10.

[172] Holland, "Whether of the twain it is, that sleepeth or dieth, the Soule or the Bodie," in *Morals*, 848.

[173] Daniel suggests that Cleopatra's self-identification with fire and air draws on an "Empedoclean framework that ultimately diminishes the material threat of death by insisting upon the resilient presence of the four elemental 'roots' of earth, air, fire and water beneath the rippling surface of change." See Daniel, *The Joy of the Worm* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, forthcoming June 2022), 74.

bodily beings as innately eternal by virtue of their physicality. Early in the play, speaking to Antony, Cleopatra finds "eternity" in the material details of her lover's embrace:

> Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
> Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor
> But was a race of heaven. (1.3.36–8)

Cleopatra thus already regards carnal experience as capable of evoking "heaven." This diminishes the view of her death scene as an illustration of bodily transcendence alone, because it shows how the queen already placed immortal meaning inside the body, rather than beyond it. To put it another way, since Cleopatra had already found "heaven" in embodied experience, her later "immortal longings" in death shouldn't be read as an absolute rejection of material experience, as critics including Iyengar and Little, Jr. have tended to do.

A final example will help concretize Shakespeare's Empedoclean portrait of Cleopatra. It comes from the discussion in Act Two between Antony and Lepidus about the Nile that I discussed above in this section, when I considered how Shakespeare associates Cleopatra with the river's generative capabilities. Recall that Antony casts the Nile as a site of ooze and generative flux (2.7.17–28). Lepidus grows fascinated with the crocodile, supposedly born from the Nile's muddy incubation, and asks Antony, "What manner o' thing is your crocodile?" (2.7.41). Antony's reply takes on an Empedoclean luster:

> ANTONY It is shaped, sir, like itself, and it is as broad as
> it hath breadth. It is just so high as it is, and moves
> with it own organs. It lives by that which nourisheth
> it, and the elements once out of it, it
> Transmigrates. (2.7.42–6)

After three lines of tautology, Antony claims that once "the elements" are "out of" the crocodile, "it / Transmigrates." Like an Empedoclean dæmon, the crocodile exceeds the elements that constitute it—is defined by them, but supersedes them; takes form from them, but experiences repulsion out of elemental states as transmigratory.[174] Although she is not speaking directly of the passage's Empedoclean resonances, Floyd-Wilson offers a helpful gloss of these lines, writing that "Antony describes the crocodile as a creature that is bred by its environment; however, in a mysterious metamorphosis, it seems to transcend that which produces it."[175] The image helps gives voice to Shakespeare's persistent interest throughout the play in the relationship between matter and transcendence.

More to the point, Antony's element-transcending crocodile might help foreshadow Cleopatra's elemental transformation into immortality at the play's conclusion. Some critics, like Daniel Stempel, claim that Lepidus and Antony are referring to the crocodile as a derogatory metaphor for Cleopatra, similar to Antony's "serpent" nickname for her (2.7.26 and 1.5.30).[176] If one follows Stempel's reading, then Antony's description of the elementally transmigrating crocodile helps to prefigure the later destruction of Cleopatra, who abandons half her elements in the moment of her death, leaving them to "baser life" (5.2.342–6). In other words, she "transmigrates" toward immortality as the "elements" leave her. Cleopatra—elemental and transcendent, ambivalently immortal—is Shakespeare's dramatization of an Empedoclean god.

---

[174] See Empedocles, DK115, and discussion above.

[175] Floyd-Wilson, "Transmigrations," 84.

[176] See Stempel, "The Transmigration of the Crocodile," in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 7, no. 1 (1956): 68. And see Jennifer Bates, "Phenomenology and Life: Hegel's Inverted World, Cleopatra and the Logic of the Crocodile," in *Criticism*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Summer 2012): esp. 428–32.

Civil Strife as Elemental Change in Antony and Cleopatra

Shakespeare underwrites his play about holding the world together with the drama of elemental sympathy and discord. For instance, an Empedoclean analogy buried in the pages of Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* (1579) may inform Shakespeare's representation of military strife and political realignment in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In the entry on Demetrius (whose name Shakespeare borrows for a minor character in *Antony and Cleopatra*), Plutarch directly invokes Empedoclean physics to capture the turbulence of internecine conflict among the successors of Alexander the Great:

> For like as the elements (according to *Empedocles* opinion) are euer at strife together, but specially those that are nearest eache to other: euen so, though all the successors of *Alexander* were at continuall warres together, yet was it soonest kindled, and most cruell betweene them which bordered nearest vnto eche other.[177]

North's translation expresses the drama of political strife as an analogy of elemental discord. The passage, in other words, encourages readers to think about the Empedoclean elements and their relentless reconfigurations as an analogy for the strategic maneuvering of military actors operating in the historical-geographical shadow of Alexander's imperial conquest, as the characters of *Antony and Cleopatra* do. The dramatic world of the play is grounded in the tension of political and romantic attraction, repulsion, and realignment, from Antony's alignment with Cleopatra and Egypt, to the political marriage of Octavia and Antony, to the internecine division and confrontations within the triumvirate. This is why Shakespeare draws on

---

[177] Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, trans. Thomas North (London, 1579), 943. And see Plutarch, *Lives, Volume IX*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 890.V (pp. 12–13).

Empedocles' analogic view of the elements to represent civil war, creating an elemental drama that translates the human tragedy into a contest of cosmic scale.[178]

Indeed, Shakespeare persistently turns to elemental imagery to describe the play's military actors and their complex maneuvers. Throughout the play, characters negotiate their engagements in the language of elemental contingency. Pompey, for example, is known for his formidable oceanic agility from early in the play: "Pompey is strong at sea," a Messenger reports to Lepidus and Caesar (1.4.36). In Robin Lough's 2018 revival for the Royal Shakespeare Company, this conversation is staged inside a sauna, steam wafting around the actors as they make their plans.[179] Setting the actors amidst vaporized water emphasizes the elementally informed decisions they are making, and the way seawater mediates their encounters. "By sea he is an absolute master," Caesar later says of Pompey, who himself declares, "the people love me, and the sea is mine" (2.2.172–3 & 2.1.9). Pompey claims possession of the ocean, and others regard his military prowess in terms of his ability to wield water to his will. Pompey's claim of dominion over the sea almost elevates him to a Poseidon or Proteus, holding all the sea's changeable volatility at his command. Pompey's soldierly identity rests on water.

---

[178] It is likely that Shakespeare encountered Plutarch's Empedoclean analogy, because in North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, the description of Demetrius (where the Empedoclean analogy occurs) immediately precedes the account of Mark Antony, and Plutarch comments on similarities between the two figures. Plutarch: "This treaty conteineth the liues of *Demetrius,* surnamed the Fortgainer, & *M. Antony* the Triumuir, & great examples to confirme the saying of *Plato:* That from great minds, both great vertues & great vices do procede." See North, *Lives*, 941. At the very least, Plutarch's allusion to Empedocles provides some evidence that the figure may have been on Shakespeare's mind during the composition of *Antony and Cleopatra*, since it occurs in the context of biographical entries (Demetrius and Antony) that Shakespeare almost certainly consulted whilst composing the play.

[179] *Antony and Cleopatra*, directed by Robin Lough, Royal Shakespeare Company (BBC, 2018), Blu-ray Disc, 195 min.

But the play's elemental militarism extends beyond Pompey. In the play's world of violent conflict, characters make decisions based on their ability to negotiate elemental domains. Consider the triumvir Lepidus, who explains,

> Tomorrow, Caesar,
> I shall be furnished to inform you rightly
> Both what by sea and land I can be able
> To front this present time. (1.4.78–81)

Lepidus visualizes his future military encounters as intimately connected to the elemental venues that will host them. He announces his plan to calculate what he can do "by sea and land," equating his soldierly competence to his ability to manipulate earth and water to strategic advantage. Moreover, Lepidus' elemental language envisions this global conflict as operating at the level of the world's material building blocks, as if the whole universe has been brought into the play's tragic swirl of strife.

Throughout the play, Shakespeare creates dramatic tension around the question of where future battles will occur, emphasizing military maneuvers in elemental terminology. For example, in this exchange, Caesar is insistent that the forces finish their battle at sea before they fight by land:

> CAESAR:
> Taurus!
> TAURUS:
> My lord?
> CAESAR:
> Strike not by land; keep whole; Provoke not battle

Till we have done at sea. Do not exceed

The prescript of this scroll. [*Gives him a scroll*]. Our fortune lies

Upon this jump. (3.8.3–7)

Similarly to Lepidus, Caesar asserts his military prowess through a mastery of elemental calculation and manipulation. He insists to Taurus that the infantry "keep whole" on land until the naval battle is over, making decisions of formation as a coordination of elemental encounters, and deliberating about when to stick together and when to break apart. As he gives Taurus a scroll of instructions, which presumably contains additional commands, Caesar verbalizes elemental acumen as the most important order, emphasizing that "Our fortune lies / Upon this jump"—that is, upon the risk of waging battle in two domains at once and risking chaos.[180] Caesar's expression of elemental control extends beyond the land and the sea to the air. For example, having turned against Antony, Caesar claims that

I have eyes upon him [Antony],

And his affairs come to me on the wind. (3.6.65–6)

Touting his powers of espionage, Caesar says that news of Antony's maneuvers "come to me on the wind" (delivered by seafaring messengers). Caesar uses the air to suggest a rapid delivery of intelligence that overcomes the geographical boundaries between Antony and him: one element, air, mitigating the limitations of others (land and water).[181]

---

[180] "Jump, n. 1": "Venture, hazard, risk." See "jump, n. 1," sense 6.b, in the *OED*.

[181] In a related image, Enobarbus expresses his doubts about remaining loyal to Antony by saying, "my reason / Sits in the wind against me" (3.10.44–5). In contrast to Caesar's confident use of the wind as a stream of intelligence, Enobarbus' metaphor positions the wind as a force of his rational doubts. And since the winds will literally influence the success or failure of Antony at sea, the metaphor moves between literal and figurative poles of meaning.

On the other side of the conflict, Antony's forces are divided about where to wage war, and his attraction to a naval battle is a deciding factor in his defeat. Antony always seems to be out of his element. In this passage, Enobarbus attempts to convince an adamant Antony to fight Caesar on land rather than water:

ENOBARBUS:

Your ships are not well manned,

Your mariners are muleteers, reapers, people

Engrossed by swift impress. In Caesar's fleet

Are those that often have 'gainst Pompey fought.

Their ships are yare, yours heavy. No disgrace

Shall fall you for refusing him at sea,

Being prepared for land.

ANTONY:

By sea, by sea. (3.7.34–40)

Enobarbus offers several reasons why Antony should avoid a naval conflict, including an inadequate number of seafaring troops and ill preparation in comparison to Caesar's forces, who have experience fighting against Pompey. These well-reasoned objections have little effect on Antony, whose response, "By sea, by sea," uses stichomythia to complete Enobarbus' line, producing a metrical union of sea and land. No matter what his counselors advise him, Antony is determined to fight at sea. Later in the same scene, Antony's general Canidius—who like Enobarbus, warned Antony against fighting at sea—explains to another soldier how

Marcus Octavius, Marcus Justeius,

Publicola, and Caelius are for sea,

But we keep whole by land (3.7.71–3).

The strategic disagreements among Antony's troops are expressed in the language of elemental difference: those who are "for sea" prefer to battle on water, while others desire to fight on earth. The way the leaders balance their energies across these elemental domains is a central factor in their success or failure.

When Antony's battle at sea with Caesar unfolds, the warnings of Enobarbus and Canidius are born out. As Scarus relates in Act 3, just as Antony's naval troops were slated for victory against Caesar, they retreated from the conflict by following the ship bearing Cleopatra away from the battle. Antony follows suit, turning away from Caesar's navy to sail after Cleopatra (3.10.25–37). Even after this humiliation, Antony soon determines to continue the fight against Caesar. When he makes this decision, he imagines the fracture and regrouping of his navy through a watery analogy, finding hope in how the pieces of

our sever'd navy too

Have knit again, and fleet, threat'ning most sea-like. (3.13.175–6)

Reading these lines, it is hard not to think back to Plutarch's analogy of warring factions as the Empedoclean elements. Shakespeare is not merely emphasizing the material reliance of Antony's forces upon the sea; he is also analogizing the navy to the sea itself, as it is "threatening most sea-like." In other words, Antony draws on the changeable nature of the ocean, with all its ebbs and flows, to signify the setback and recovery of his forces.

Antony's attraction to the sea is interspersed with his love for Cleopatra, who is herself a figure of oceanic associations. Observe how Enobarbus describes the heroine in act two:

Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,

So many mermaids, tended her i'th' eyes,

And made their bends adornings. At the helm

A seeming mermaid steers. (2.2.216–19)

By comparing Cleopatra's "gentlewomen" to "the Nereides," Enobarbus elevates Cleopatra to a sea god: like Nereus or Poseidon, she is attended by a consort of aquatic nymphs whose "bends" mark a sign of devotion. Antony's determination to engage at sea, therefore, is partly driven by his love for Cleopatra, whom Shakespeare presents as an Empedoclean element: an analogized god of the water.

Cleopatra and Antony may not be as masterful as Pompey at sea, but their identification with the ocean runs deep. Consider Cleopatra's remembrance of Antony after he dies near the end of the play:

His delights

Were dolphin-like; they showed his back above

The element they lived in. (5.2.87–9)

Antony's charisma and charm pull him into a higher elemental domain than he primarily occupies. Actually an inhabitant of cold, sublunar water, Antony's attractive body and demeanor fleetingly elevate him from base liquid to refined air. Like a dolphin, he breaches the surface of his aquatic habitat in rapid bursts, partaking of the air before diving back into his native element. Rosalie Colie contends that a "suggestion of Antony's being more than a man lies in the implications of this simile, in which a creature 'transcends' its element: so he, a man, becomes (at least in Cleopatra's imagination) a god."[182] Colie's very Empedoclean interpretation highlights another instance of Shakespeare exploiting elemental transitions to gesture at

---

[182] Colie, *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 192.

transcendence. Yet as the tragedy unfolds, Antony is ultimately assigned a watery (as opposed to aerial) fate, his confidence and power melting away.

Cleopatra's image of Antony as a dolphin captures his tendency to leap the bounds of his elemental limitations. In Act Four, he desires to confront his enemies

> i' the fire or i' the air;
>
> We'd fight there too. (4.10.3–4)

On the one hand, Antony's longing to fight in fire and air amounts to braggadocio, as he proclaims a wish to engage in every material domain, not just land and sea. On the other hand, it analogizes a spiritual contest between the combatants by calling attention to the celestial elements of fire and air, conventionally understood as more spiritually consequential than water and earth—a detail I considered earlier in relation to Cleopatra's death. This hierarchy of elements is registered in Holland's translation of Plutarch's *Moralia*, which describes "these foure bare Elements that Empedocles writeth of" in the following couplet:

> Hot Fire, cold Water, sheere and soft:
>
> Grosse Earth, pure Aire that spreads aloft.[183]

Here, "grosse earth" and "cold water" are contrasted to the "Hot Fire" and "pure Aire" which rise above them. When he aspires to fight in fire or air, he reaches beyond the limits of what is possible, exceeding the domains of land and sea to which ancient military conflict is usually confined, and reaching analogously for elevation to impossible regions. Furthermore, as Iyengar observes, Antony's desire "to fight 'i'th' fire or i'th' air,' rather than at sea," is "a formulation

---

[183] Holland, *Morals*, 109.

that prefigures Cleopatra's dying 'I am fire and air'" (4.10.3, 5.2.288).[184] The two lovers are united in their mutual aspiration to fire and air, which analogizes their longing for an immortal influence on the world.

Even as Antony unsuccessfully aspires to the celestial elements of fire and air, the lower terrestrial elements of water and earth reject him over the course of the play. Following this embarrassment at sea, Antony expresses his damaged reputation as elemental rejection:

> Hark, the land bids me tread no more upon't.
>
> It is ashamed to bear me… (3.11.1–2)

As if the land holds agency, it "bids" Antony to get off it, "ashamed to bear" him. This exemplifies how Shakespeare develops a transactional relationship between elemental and human affairs. The land externalizes Antony's shame, encapsulating the disappointment of his followers. Like the earth that "spits" Empedocles "into the beams / of the blazing sun," the earth rejects Antony and leaves him elementally exiled.[185] Shakespeare therefore uses elemental language not only to analogize the play's various military figures and their clashes; he also uses it to dissolve Antony's political power over the course of the play. To put it another way, Shakespeare doesn't simply create simple elemental correspondences to emblematize the strengths and strife of the play's various military actors—he develops an atmosphere of elemental flux that threatens to dissolve imperial might altogether.

For instance, when a lovesick Antony relinquishes concern for Rome in deference to Cleopatra, he dissolves the empire into fluvial oblivion. He tells his lover:

---

[184] Iyengar, 188.

[185] See Empedocles, DK115, and above.

> Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch
> Of the ranged empire fall. Here is my space.
> Kingdoms are clay. Our dungy earth alike
> Feeds beast as man. (1.1.34–7)

Antony imagines Rome—with all its land, power, and possessions—disintegrating into the Tiber. This melting away of the imperial state opens a new terrain of possibility for Antony, redefining human experience at the level of appetitive material reality. The lines emphasize the malleability of states by reducing them to "clay," constituted by the same "dungy earth" that provides food for all creatures. Shakespeare brings Rome's imperial superstructure down to its base of "dungy earth," an image which, ouroboros-like, blurs the boundary between consumption and excretion. Antony realizes his imbrication in a global process of elemental flux, one that knocks the wind out of imperial culture's hierarchies and exploitation.

Antony's melting of Rome into the Tiber shifts his attention from imperial concerns to basic material ones. He transforms the "clay" of empires into the base "dungy earth" that underlies them, highlighting how that earth provides sustenance for all life forms. Later in the play, Cleopatra mimics Antony's image of a melting Rome when she declares, "Melt Egypt into Nile" (2.5.78). Whereas other moments in the play emphasize the Nile's flow as a source of life and generation, in these passages, the Nile and the Tiber become sites of imperial dissolution, where the power of empire, and the contortions of human affairs it requires, are brought into a boundary-destroying environment of flux, and so dismantled.[186] The imagery weakens claims of

---

[186] This is particularly interesting in light of the way the Isis and Osiris myth, in Plutarch/Holland's account, draws on Empedoclean effluence to describe the murder, dissolution, and monistic afterlife of royal figures.

imperial identity and greatness by exposing imperial might as a construct—one formed by the same material environment that all rely upon.

Cleopatra and Antony's visions of melting authority in the first half of the play are realized in the second half, as their personal and political defeats accumulate. However, it is not empire that melts, but Antony and Cleopatra's empowerment by empire. Melting—a flux of solid into liquid—is a change of state that captures the way Antony's failures transform his former reputation as a military icon into an embarrassing image of an unprepared and inconsistent leader. Humiliated in battle, for example, Antony laments how "authority melts from me" (3.13.95). As the play unfolds, Antony finds himself increasingly identified with the unstable conditions of elemental transformation, his clout as changeable as the elements. In the moments leading up to his unsuccessful suicide, for example, Antony fixates on the clouds' protean metamorphoses:

> Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,
> A vapor sometime like a bear or lion,
> A towered citadel, a pendent rock,
> A forkèd mountain, or blue promontory
> With trees upon 't that nod unto the world
> And mock our eyes with air. (4.14.2–7)

The air's mockery of Antony extends his portrayal as an elemental exile toward the end of the play, as I noted above of the moment when Antony feels rejected by the land (3.11.1–2). Antony is concentrated on how the clouds resemble objects like "a bear" or "citadel," a "rock" or "mountain," while really being nothing but "vapor"—they are not what they are, to put it another

way. The lines signal Antony's recognition of his warped reputation, of how his greatness was mutable, an illusion that now mocks him. Antony continues to ruminate on cloudy mutability:

> That which is now a horse, even with a thought
> The rack dislimns and makes it indistinct
> As water is in water. (4.14.9–11)

Here, "rack" means "a mass of cloud moving quickly," implying that Antony continues to gaze at the sky as he speaks these lines.[187] He observes how a cloud can look like a horse—a figure with which Cleopatra earlier associates Antony in the same breath as she calls him "the demi-Atlas of this Earth" (1.5.19–25)—and then blow apart into unrecognizable mist. Notice how Antony resorts to elemental language as he describes this "dislimn[ing]": the horse disperses into billows, becoming as "indistinct / As water is in water." Tragically, this scene of whimsical cloud gazing analogizes Antony's own dissolving dignity in the trenches of geopolitical flux, his own melting away. Cleopatra returns to the image of a melting Antony when he eventually does die, crying out, "the crown o'th' earth doth melt" (4.15.65). She uses the imagery of melting to capture Antony's political defeat, even as she suggests that the earth itself is melting away into something totally different, never to be the same without the presence of her love.[188] Moreover, Antony's melting in the second half of the play marks a culmination of the water imagery that defines the character in other moments. At the end of his life, Antony finds himself figuratively

---

[187] See "rack, n.2," sense 3a in the *OED*, and Wilders, ed., *Antony and Cleopatra*, The Arden Shakespeare (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 255fn10.

[188] The melting away of Antony's political authority parallels the dissolution of his Roman masculine identity. As Little, Jr. puts it, "Antony seems almost to mock the rigidity and seriousness of Roman masculinity: for him, it is, or at least it becomes, transmutable and theatrical." See Little, Jr., 107.

liquefied, transmuted into the water that Cleopatra earlier identified as the element he "lived in" (5.2.89). In some ways, Antony's melting subjectivity serves to create a contrast between his death and Cleopatra's. While they both aspire to fire and air, only Cleopatra reaches these elemental domains at the end of the play, whereas Antony's melting persona suggests a failure to escape the "other elements" that Cleopatra claims to leave to "baser life" (5.2.288–9).

At the same time, despite Cleopatra's "fire and air" declaration, she too, like Antony, is enveloped in imagery of destructive flux at the end of the play. When she contemplates her fate, Cleopatra embraces the flux of the Nile as her preferred grave:

> ...Shall they hoist me up
> And show me to the shouting varletry
> Of censuring Rome? Rather a ditch in Egypt
> Be gentle grave unto me! Rather on Nilus' mud
> Lay me stark naked, and let the water-flies
> Blow me into abhorring!… (5.2.54–9)[189]

Revolted at the idea of her corpse being taken by Caesar and displayed as a trophy to the Roman masses, a defiant Cleopatra prefers to be strewn in "a ditch" or "on Nilus' mud" and bitten into decomposition by scavenging flies. These lines make a spectacle of Cleopatra's disintegration back into the earth, and they illustrate how she imagines her death as a process of elemental mixture and flux, brought down into the most graphic material terms. They also provide a stark reminder to readers that political rulers are just as susceptible to the ravages of time and material

---

[189] The speech continues after these lines, and Cleopatra changes her mind again, deciding she would rather be strung from a pyramid on chains.

obliteration as anyone else. The power of queens and kings can't transcend the elements that form its basis, nor their eventual flow back into one another and the world.

The flux in *Antony and Cleopatra*, therefore, informs the play's political dimension in significant ways, because it undermines notions of subjectivity as stable and firm. As Adelman explains, "by its merging and blending of all things, the play questions the very concept of identity…our lovers lose their boundaries and absorb everything into themselves."[190] For many critics, this dissolution of identity within the play's universe is accompanied by an elevation of feeling over order and a particular emphasis on the disruption of gender boundaries. Marilyn French writes that

> both the masculine and feminine world share the characteristics of flux, uncontrollable shift and alteration. Although a masculine structure like the Roman Empire may outlast generations, the single permanency that exists within the play is one of feeling.[191]

In other words, Shakespeare calls on flux in order to emphasize the mercurial quality of human feeling and subjectivity over the rigidity of Rome's hierarchies. Similarly, Mack writes that the play's movement between perspectives "reveals itself as flux, the restless waxing and waning of tides, of moons, of human feeling. Especially of human feeling."[192] As Shakespeare puts the world in flux, he destabilizes the ruling order and rejects the coldness of imperial calculation. An Empedoclean view of the elements as interpenetrating substances, on view in *Antony and*

---

[190] Adelman, *Common Liar,* 145.

[191] Marilyn French, *Shakespeare's Division of Experience* (New York: Summit Books, 1981), 336.

[192] Mack, "Introduction," 18.

Cleopatra, provides a foundational energy for the play's dissolution of boundaries imperial and sexual.

Shakespeare's depiction of the world in flux is part of what makes *Antony and Cleopatra*, as Carla Mazzio writes, "Shakespeare's most defiant critique of the logic of the square."[193] Drawing on "early modern commentaries on the relationship between squares, cubes, and men," Mazzio explains how "the square, perfect in the classical sense of 'whole and complete,' offered a model of consistent, self-contained masculinity, with entry and exit restricted, that could easily offset concerns about the dependent, fluid, permeable, or changeable aspects of selfhood."[194] The interpenetration of Empedocles' four elements helps explain why Shakespeare finds elemental imagery, such as the figure of Antony as a dolphin cresting the water's surface, a valuable analogic framework for exploring, dissolving, and reconstituting a character's identity. In other words, despite the four elements' status as a four-part system, the ability of the elements to melt into one another prevents the elemental framework from advancing what Mazzio calls "the quadratic measure of man."[195] At the same time, Mazzio suggests, Shakespeare represents Antony's fluid identity in a way that fortifies, rather than weakens, his masculine status. He is a "god-like figure in a world marked by imagery of circles, spheres, curves, and elemental fluidity" whose exposure to "liquid curves" makes him "become more[,] not less, a man."[196] This

---

[193] Mazzio, "Circling the Square: Geometry, Masculinity, and the Norms of *Antony and Cleopatra*," in *Staged Normality in Shakespeare's England*, ed. Rory Loughnane and Edel Semple (N.p.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 39.

[194] Ibid., 36.

[195] Ibid., 56.

[196] Ibid.

is indicative of the play's Empedoclean mood: Shakespeare moves between a view of gender as both fluid and distinct, analogous to the motion of the elements under Love and Strife. Elemental flux captures Antony's movement between a firm and dissolved identity. At the end of the play, his political identity has been destabilized, leaving the sense that all that remains is his status as a human being, in love with Cleopatra. Shakespeare puts imperial identity into flux, while highlighting human emotion, and particularly love, as a more significant and lasting form of subjectivity.

It is telling that Shakespeare gives such prominence to boundary-dissolving flux in a play about Rome's transition from a republic to an empire. As Andrew Hadfield points out, while other dramatists produced plays centering around the story of Antony and Cleopatra, "Shakespeare was the only English dramatist who staged the complete story of the end of the Roman republic from the triumph of Julius Caesar to the victory of Augustus, the first proper Roman emperor."[197] On the one hand, the play's background of flux analogizes this transition, using imagery of material effluence to underwrite the ceaseless flow of history. On the other hand, Shakespeare's reliance on images of flux suggests a more incisive political critique, a questioning of imperial pageantry and might that interrogates the trappings of privilege and power against the backdrop of a world in perpetual change and intermixture. While the play dissolves imperial might into the dung of the earth, it centers human emotion and love as qualities worth preserving. Recall the analogy from Plutarch that I considered at the beginning of this section, which says that imperial rulers are, "like as the elements (according to *Empedocles*

---

[197] Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 221.

opinion)...euer at strife together."[198] While the play's battle scenes put this analogy into action, the frame of its larger setting works in just the opposite direction, evaporating distinctions of rank and gender to put empire's reliance on rigid identity in high relief. In short, Shakespeare puts elemental flux on display to undermine imperial strife with the boundary-weakening effect of Empedoclean Love.

Shakespeare's use of elemental flux in *Antony and Cleopatra* thus performs a significant political function. It is an avenue for disintegrating the grandeur of imperialism in a story about the rise of imperialist Rome. In other words, Shakespeare senses the political value of Empedoclean materialism, which he uses to explore what it means that great empires are merely elaborate constructions, built of the same elemental fabric as the rest of the world. In *Coriolanus* (premiered ca. 1610), one of his other Roman plays, Shakespeare calls attention to class concerns by opening the drama with a food riot staged by a group of starving plebeians, people who are more willing to die by revolt than to die from lack of food.[199] According to James Holstun, "the desperate resolve of Shakespeare's plebians announces the economically motivated movement of previously voiceless persons out of the crisis-wracked private sphere of customary labor into the public sphere of political debate and revolutionary struggle."[200] Holstun is not writing in relation to Shakespeare's elementalism, but his observation about *Coriolanus* shows how Shakespeare does not hold an idealistic view of Roman history, and found it to be fertile soil for staging

---

[198] North, trans., *Lives,* 943.

[199] See Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. Peter Holland (New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016), 1.1.1-23.

[200] Holstun, *Ehud's Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2000), 372.

questions of social inequality, class conflict, and political revolution.[201] *Antony and Cleopatra*, if less obviously than *Coriolanus*, also reveals the revolutionary side of Shakespeare's politics, melting imperial hierarchies back into the "clay" that forms the common sustenance of all things.

Of course, the elemental flux of *Antony and Cleopatra* also speaks to the political conditions of Shakespeare's own environment. Andrew Hadfield reminds readers that "English literature—especially drama—emerged as a discipline in the late sixteenth century within a culture of political argument."[202] English theater, in other words, infiltrated an environment of intense disagreement over who held the right to rule others. "The over-riding political issue of the time," Hadfield explains elsewhere, "was the question of sovereignty and the legitimacy of the monarch."[203] The urgency of this question was exacerbated by the fact that the two major royal dynasties of Renaissance England—the Tudors and the Stuarts—each "had no undisputed right to rule, and there were numerous other claimants to the throne."[204] Moreover, the transition between these two houses occurred in 1603, around the time Shakespeare was writing *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare's political environment, that is, was undergoing a major shift in state of its own as he developed his theatrical representation of the fall of Rome's republic into imperialism.

The political turbulence of Shakespeare's day has led scholars to look for parallels between the rulers in *Antony and Cleopatra* and English monarchs. For instance, Hadfield notes

---

[201] Perhaps Shakespeare's greatest deconstruction of an idealistic perspective of Rome occurs in *Titus Andronicus*.

[202] Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 7.

[203] Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 1.

[204] Ibid.

that Cleopatra shares certain characteristics with Elizabeth, namely a mutual "androgyny" and "love of regal display."[205] In contrast, while Gary Willis recognizes that "the one real thing that is shared by Elizabeth and Cleopatra is a dominant motive of love," he argues that these "loves are of a very different kind." Whereas Elizabeth upheld an "ideal of sprezzatura," Willis continues, Cleopatra "was a continuous volcano of excess."[206] It's telling that Willis reaches for the volcano in his characterization of Cleopatra. His elemental language continues when he adds that "Elizabeth's love was a reassuringly steady (if stylized) rain, by contrast with the dramatic thunderstorm of Cleopatra's love."[207] Pitting Elizabeth's "rain" against Cleopatra's eruptions and "thunderstorm[s]" allows Willis to express the differing degree and manner of the two queens' affective demeanors. Ultimately for Willis, the comparison of Cleopatra to Elizabeth is "misguided," but he finds Mary I to be a more fitting analogue for the Egyptian queen.[208] For me, these comparisons are interesting not for their potential to reveal one of the play's characters as a hidden portrait of a Renaissance monarch, but for the way they more broadly suggest

---

[205] Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 227.

[206] Gary Willis, *Making Make–Believe Real* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 66–7.

[207] Ibid., 67.

[208] Willis observes that both Mary and Cleopatra were "princesses of royal blood who reached a throne over opposition from their subjects. Both made alliances with menacing foreign powers, Cleopatra with Rome, Mary with Spain. Both were famous for their sexual charm, which made them dangerous to men and destructive of themselves. Both were active centers of intrigue. Both were defeated along with their troops, Cleopatra fleeing from Actium and Mary from Langside. Both ended up as captives, Cleopatra of Octavian, Mary of Elizabeth, and both died in that captivity. See Willis, 150.

Shakespeare was imaginatively drawing English royals into *Antony and Cleopatra*'s world of elemental flux and imperial dissolution.

This is not to say *Antony and Cleopatra* reveals Shakespeare to be calling for the overthrow of the English monarchy, but rather that he develops a narrative that destabilizes imperial power by emphasizing its imbrication in the shifting flux of elemental change. To put it in another way, Shakespeare's play becomes a potential philosophical avenue toward reconciling Jacobean absolutism with shifting gravities of power and influence. According to Hadfield, Shakespeare appears "to have recognized the stability James brought," though he nevertheless remained "interested in republican issues throughout his writing career," particularly in its final years.[209] "His later plays," Hadfield adds, "all show an absorbing interest in the question of the prerogative of the monarch and the problem of creeping tyranny, an issue central to republican thought."[210] But if, as Hadfield claims, republicanism "is one of the key problems that defined" Shakespeare's career, and, as I have shown, elemental analogy is one of Shakespeare's preferred methods for imagining political transformation, how might these two things relate more specifically?

Empedoclean elementalism, with its movement between the one and the many, can analogize the relationship between elevated political rulers and the subjects they amass. Should

---

[209] Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 206 & 205. Within *Antony and Cleopatra*, "the representative of the republic is the son of its great warrior hero, Pompey, the defeated opponent of Julius Caesar in the *Pharsalia*." See Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 228.

[210] Ibid., 205. Hadfield's description of early modern republicanism is helpful here: "Republicanism took many forms in early modern Europe. The Latin term *res publica* literally meant 'the public thing,' but was most frequently translated as the 'common weal' or 'commonwealth.' Accordingly, 'republicanism' was either directly or indirectly a central feature of English political life from the early sixteenth century onwards." See Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 8.

rulers' dominion, in order words, be based on their categorical distinction from other human beings, as the doctrine of divine ordination has it, or alternatively, upon their dedication to the common good? This latter, republican emphasis on commonwealth is grounded in a sense of universal material needs that fuses various social interests into political priority. The simultaneous constructionism and essentialism afforded by Empedoclean thought provides a basis for Shakespeare to think about this question in foundational terms, to move between visions of monarchy as the elevation of innately distinct people over everyone else, and as a political artifice erected atop an elemental substructure that both constitutes and disintegrates the right to sovereign rule.

Admittedly, this connection between republicanism and elemental mutability is a rather abstract formulation. However, it shows how Empedocles' mixed ontology resonates outward to influence questions of political import, especially ones about the ability of sovereign rulers to claim hierarchical distinction from the broader populace. That Shakespeare probes such questions through images of elemental melting and flux in *Antony and Cleopatra* demonstrates that Empedocles' reputation as an anti-tyrannical political reformer, while an obscure biographical detail, is nonetheless reflected in early modern instantiations of his materialist philosophy. And as I noted at the end of Chapter One, Montaigne refers to Empedocles' reputation as a refuser of the crown in his essay "Of Pedantry," demonstrating that the political legacy of Empedocles, while not a major aspect of his biography, was certainly in the air during Shakespeare's day.[211]

Finally, acknowledging Shakespeare's Empedoclean dimension also illustrates that

---

[211] See Montaigne, "Of Pedantisme," in *Florio's Montaigne, Volume I*, 128.

the blurry ontology of plays like *Antony and Cleopatra* isn't necessarily the result of indecision on the part of Shakespeare or his critics, but the product of a specific humanistic influence that prioritizes multivalent epistemology as a feature, not a defect. And it emblematizes the way Shakespeare is invested in putting opposed perspectives in flux with each other, refusing to resolve them with an either/or reductivity. As Adelman holds, "it is this movement of perspectives, rather than the revelations of a psychodrama or the certainties of a morality, which is most characteristic of *Antony and Cleopatra*."[212] Empedoclean poetry and its resurgences in early modern culture are part of a generative perspectival flux, one that helps give voice to the play's materialist consideration of imperial power and immortal longing.

[212] Adelman, 30.

Chapter Three:

Milton's Empedoclean Materialism in *Paradise Lost*

Introduction

The French Huguenot Guillaume de Salluste, Sieur Du Bartas published a set of serialized poems describing the creation of the world, collectively titled the *Sepmaines*, in the late 1570s and 80s. Translated into English by Joshua Sylvester as *Du Bartas His Divine Weekes and Workes* (1590–1608), Du Bartas' cosmological poetry is often cited as an early influence on Milton, who would go on to write his own poetic cosmogony in *Paradise Lost* (1667).[213] A moment in the *Sepmaines* paints Empedocles as a foremost sage, and illustrates his significance in the history of materialism, the flux between his notion of effluence and the atomist theories of Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius. Encapsulating a proximity of Empedocles and Lucretius that will reemerge in the poetic ontology of *Paradise Lost* decades later, the passage comes when the narrator directly addresses Lucretius, asking him to explain the invisible magnetic power of the compass:

> Mais Lucrece, di-moy, quelle vertu caché
> Tourne tousjours vers l'ourse une aiguille touchee
> Par l'eymant tire-fer ? Vray'ment si tu le peux,
> D'un laurier tousjours-verd je ceindray tes cheveux,
> Te confessant plus docte es secrets de nature,
> Et que ton Empedocles, et que ton Epicure.

---

[213] Teskey refers to Du Bartas' *Sepmaines* as Milton's "immediate predecessor on the theme" of divine creation, but one defined by a "quaint encyclopedism" that *Paradise Lost* far surpasses. See Teskey, 25.

> [But say (*Lucretius*) what's the hidden cause
>
> That toward the *North-Star* still the needle draw's, [sic]
>
> Whose point is toucht with Load-stone? loose this knot,
>
> And still-green *Laurell* shall be still thy Lot:
>
> Yea, Thee more learned will I then confess,
>
> Then *Epicurus*, or *Empedocles*.][214]

Du Bartas invites Lucretius to say more about how the magnet works, presenting it as a knotty problem whose resolution promises poetic acclaim. Specifically, Du Bartas wants to know why the magnetic compass points toward Polaris in the night sky, fascinated by the seemingly invisible sympathy between the needle's point and the astral north. If Lucretius can untangle this problem, Du Bartas would offer him the "Laurell" of literary renown, and make him more wise than even his predecessors Epicurus and Empedocles. The promise of the laurel crown illustrates Rapin's assumption that solving a scientific problem would bring literary prestige, highlighting an ancient marriage of philosophical and poetic expression that is inseparable from the Epicurean

---

[214] Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, *Les Œuvres de Guillaume de Saluste seigneur du Bartas* (Geneva, 1582), pp. 101–2, and Du Bartas, *Du Bartas his Deuine Weekes and Workes translated: and dedicated to the Kings most excellent Maiestie by Iosuah Syluester* (London, 1611), 85. On the reception of Du Bartas in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, see Anne Lake Prescott, "The Reception of Du Bartas in England," *Studies in the Renaissance* 15 (1968), esp. 144–8. Prescott observes how, though later seventeenth-century critics were unimpressed by Du Bartas, for a time he was admired in England as a model of the divine poet. Stephen M. Fallon notes that "the young Milton prized Joshua Sylvester's du Bartas." See Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 146. According to Boswell's study Milton's reading material, *Milton's Library*, there is high certainty that Milton read Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas. See Boswell, #512. I will be referring to Boswell's catalogue throughout the chapter, as I describe further when discussing my methodology below.

tradition after Lucretius. Du Bartas' French version emphasizes Empedocles' understanding of the *secrets de nature*. The sense that Empedocles can unlock secrets might be echoed, for French readers, in the "cles" of "Empedocles" name, which textually resembles the word *clés* (keys).[215] In any case, the association of Empedocles, Lucretius, and poetic preeminence alludes to their shared tradition of using verse to explore materialist understandings of reality, a tradition in which Milton later participates. It also gestures toward Lucretius' praise of Empedocles' style, a theme I will exfoliate below when discussing the biographical reception of Empedocles.

When Du Bartas poses the magnetic problem to Lucretius in light of Empedocles' wisdom, he also refers to both poets' philosophical contributions to the topic. For example, Passannante points out that, "as Lucretius himself reminds us, the magnet only looks as if it works without touching, and what might appear at first as an unmediated phenomenon unlocks a story that is all about mediation (i.e., the mediation of atoms)."[216] Lucretius' attention to the magnet as an object whose mysterious operations reveal a submerged atomic reality is interwoven with the history of Empedoclean and Democritean teachings on effluence, for as Derek Collins explains, "Empedocles elaborates a theory of effluences (ἀπορροαί) to explain the magnet…which is then taken over by Democritus and integrated into his explanation of the evil eye."[217] In other words, Democritus applies the Empedoclean theory of effluence to the

---

[215] See "clef, clé, subst. fém.," I.A in *TLFi : Trésor de la langue Française informatisé*, ATILF-CNRS & Université de Lorraine, http://www.atilf.fr/tlfi.

[216] Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance: Philology and the Afterlife of Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 7. Lucretius recalls seeing a magnet in Samothrace in *De Rerum Natura*, VI.1042–55. And see Richard Wallace, " 'Amaze Your Friends!' Lucretius on Magnets," *Greece & Rome* 43, no. 2 (Oct., 1996): esp. 178–80.

[217] Derek Collins, "Nature, Cause, and Agency in Greek Magic," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 133, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 37fn89.

superstitious concept of the evil eye in order to materialize it. Collins refers to a fragment in which Empedocles asserts that ".....there are effluences from all things that have come to be" ("γνούς ὅτι πάντων εἰσὶν ἀπορροαί, ὅσσ' ἐγένοντο"), which helps sets the stage for the atomist insights articulated by later thinkers including Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius.[218]

It's challenging to say exactly how Du Bartas is approaching Lucretius when he poses his question about the compass in the *Sepmaines*, his attitude falling somewhere between one of smug self-assurance that Lucretius won't be able to adequately answer his request, and philosophical admiration for the movement of ideas between Lucretius and Empedocles as masters of capturing the extraordinary scale and dynamism of matter's history in verse. As Jean-Claude Mühlethaler puts it, "Du Bartas…refuse la philosophie atomiste en la personne de Démocrite. Mais son attitude à l'égard de Lucrèce est beaucoup plus nuancée."[219] Du Bartas' apparently high regard for Empedocles in the passage from *Sepmaines* I cited above helps to draw out the contours of his nuanced attitude toward Lucretius. In other words, even if Du Bartas rejects the atomism at the heart of Lucretius' poem, he appreciates his Empedoclean poetic acumen for using language to probe the limits of material knowledge, as well as the inchoate atomism at the heart of Empedocles' theory of effluence.

This chapter proposes that Milton was poetically inspired by the interplay of Empedoclean and Lucretian poetry and physics that the preceding example reveals, and that

---

[218] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK89, and Laks and Most, V.540. I discussed this fragment at length in Chapter One. Milton was almost certainly familiar with this fragment through his reading of Plutarch's *Moralia*, as my analysis in the Appendix shows.

[219] Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, "Poésie et Savoir au XV^{e} Siècle," in *Poétiques de la Renaissance: Le modèle italien, le monde franco-bourguignon et leur hèritage en France au XVIe siècle*, edited by Perrine Galand-Hallyn and Fernand Hallyn (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2001), 208.

Paradise Lost turns to Empedoclean imagery and philosophy to help voice a Lucretian vision of monist materialism. Specifically, I suggest that Milton finds philosophic value in the blur created by an Empedoclean perspectival motion that moves between images of dualistic and monistic possibility. Empedoclean visions of dualistic transcendence are attractive to Milton, for they offer a common ground between the sacred perspectives of early modern England, even as Empedocles' broader philosophy provides an avenue for absorbing these dualistic digressions into a materialist register. To put it differently, Empedocles functions as a philosophical and poetic bridge to Lucretian materialism, and Milton finds his poetry useful for jostling the reader between dualistic and monistic perspectives—conventionally oppositional viewpoints that the poem sets out to collapse into one. Milton's reliance on Empedoclean and Lucretian imagery is perhaps most succinctly expressed in the poem's description of the four elements and their "embryon atoms," which points to a unifying reality that brings elemental difference into harmony.[220] Ultimately, the chapter suggests that the poetry of Empedocles affords a significant intervention in the long debates about the poem's materialism, lessening the seemingly wide chasm between Stephen Fallon and N. K. Sugimura's conflicting accounts of Milton's metaphysical orientations.[221]

Finally, I hope to show how Milton's Empedoclean imagination underlines the value of a flexible ontological framework when reading *Paradise Lost*. Empedocles and Milton speak to

---

[220] I discuss this phrase and the larger passage at length later in this chapter. See Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 2.890–907, and below.

[221] See Stephen M. Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), and N. K. Sugimura, "*Matter of Glorious Trial": Spiritual and Material Substance in "Paradise Lost"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). I engage with both of these studies in detail as the chapter unfolds.

the philosophical conundrum of body's relation to mind, but they are also both poets—alive to the power of ambiguity and the fluid experience of embodying thought in words. Keeping this poetic identity in view helps show the limitation of thinking about Empedocles and Milton in the framework of a rigid ontology, which can flatten out the nuances of the spiritual-philosophic visions the two writers achieve. In this vein, I also suggest in the chapter's conclusion that Milton's Empedoclean materialism can complicate Stanley Fish's contention that Milton's central purpose is to subject readers to a series of perceptive examinations, testing their ability to recognize and reject Satanic manipulations of reality as uncomplicatedly, dualistically evil.[222] In contrast, the flexible ontology brought into view by an Empedoclean perspective plays a crucial role in Milton's labile articulation of materialism, which invites readers toward a monism so all-encompassing that even expressions of dualistic contradiction become assimilable within the embrace of materialism's monistic orbit. In other words, Milton's vitalist monism is so radical that it accommodates images of dualistic transgression within its materialist vision. It's as if Milton recognizes that the dualistic imagination, itself an ontologically material phenomenon, is fundamentally composed of the same substance as everything else under the sun and beyond. In a word, contemplations of material transcendence and incongruity are themselves materially grounded phenomena, and thus they cannot, as Fish insists, be discarded or dualistically sidelined along the lines of a perfectly airtight moral, interpretive, or philosophical schema. To do that, in fact, would violate the radical spirit of monism's revolutionary potential.

---

[222] Fish advances this argument in his classic monograph, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in "Paradise Lost"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1967), at 153, for instance, and more recently, in *Versions of Antihumanism*, esp. at 24.

As the argument below unfolds, I will orient my discussion of Milton's Empedoclean materialism to contemporary accounts of Cartesian dualism, showing how even as early modern writers frequently speak of Empedocles and Descartes in the same breath, Empedocles offers something to Milton that Descartes does not: a materialist philosophy with flashes of dualism-in-motion, one that absorbs even thought itself back into a monistic frame of reference. Rather than using dualistic declarations to drive home the divide between matter and mind, as Descartes does, Empedocles deploys dualism to express his feeling of alienation from matter's innate divinity. Empedocles thus offers Milton an alternative to Cartesian dualism that entertains dualistic possibility while resolving toward materialism, an inspiration that provides significant poetic value to Milton as he delivers his own materialist theodicy in *Paradise Lost*. Moreover, disagreements over the precise nature of Milton's metaphysics are bound up with the way readers of Empedocles' work are still debating whether he should be properly regarded as a materialist, pluralist, or dualist.[223] The central thesis of the chapter is that Empedocles' ambivalent metaphysics is reflected in the idiosyncratic materialism of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

As I've been suggesting, a crucial part of Milton's attraction to Empedoclean philosophy is its emphasis on oneness, the way it moves between two visions by way of elemental inter-sympathy. To illustrate this, let's return to the beginning of the "double tale" fragment:

δίπλ᾽ ἐρέω· τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἓν ηὐξήθη μόνον εἶναι

ἐκ πλεόνων, τοτὲ δ᾽ αὖ διέφυ πλέον᾽ ἐξ ἑνὸς εἶναι.

---

[223] The most conventional view of Empedocles today is as a pluralist, though Simon Trépanier argues that even Empedocles' notion of the δαίμων can be assimilated into a monistic reading of his poetry. See Trépanier, "From Wandering Limbs to Gods: δαίμων as Substance in Empedocles," *Apeiron* 47, no. 2 (2014): 172–210.

> [I shall tell a double tale. For at one time [they] [the elements] grew to be one alone from many, and at another, again, [they] grew apart to be many from one.][224]

The interpretation of *Paradise Lost* that unfolds below suggests that Milton takes inspiration from this movement between the one and the many, analogizing the unifying potential among the four elements to the collapse between body and soul that becomes possible through the lens of his monistic spirituality. This point will become more evident when I exfoliate the Empedoclean imagery within Raphael's materialist manifesto in book five of the poem. The central value of Empedocles' poetry to Milton is its invitation to turn difference into similarity, its insistence on making unlike things appear the same by fluidly alternating between them.

This insistence is crystallized in Empedocles' principle of like-to-like (and the related like-*by*-like), which Milton mentions by name in *Paradise Lost* during the conversation between Sin and Death in book ten. The well-known episode has garnered much attention for its ontological inconsistencies. Sin is jealous of her father Satan's freedom of movement, and she tells Death, her son, that she feels a growing power within her, an extension into a wider domain that elevates her to a semi-angelic status and operates on the principle of like-to-like. Sin flexes her wings, finding a newfound sense of freedom in

> whatever drawes me on,
> Or sympathie, or som connatural force
> Powerful at greatest distance to unite
> With secret amity things of like kinde

---

[224] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK 17.1–2, and Laks and Most, V.410. The two lines I cite here are quoted in Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. The doxography of DK17 is complex, as this is the longest extant fragment. For a fuller analysis of the fragment's ancient transmission and Miltonic reception, see Appendix, DK17.

By secretest conveyance. (10.245–9)

The potential Empedoclean resonance of the lines is pronounced, from the direct reference to the idea of like-to-like through the image of a powerful "sympathie" that unites "things of like kinde," to the way this sympathy operates by a "secret amity," evoking the Empedoclean idea of Love (or Friendship) and its explanation of invisible phenomena like the magnet.[225]

Simply put, the idea of like-to-like suggests that similar substances are attracted to one another, based on "the inner tendency of the roots [or elements] for like to join with like," as Myrto Garani explains it.[226] Empedocles puts the idea of like-to-like on display in fragment DK109. In the most precise terms, this fragment describes the principle of like-*by*-like, a theory of perception. But it shows the principle of like-to-like at work, for it encapsulates the way like substance drives Empedocles' thought:

γαίῃ μὲν γὰρ γαῖαν ὀπώπαμεν, ὕδατι δ' ὕδωρ,

αἰθέρι δ' αἰθέρα δῖον, ἀτὰρ πυρὶ πῦρ ἀίδηλον,

στοργὴν δὲ στοργῇ, νεῖκος δέ τε νείκεϊ λυγρῷ.

["By earth we see earth; by water, water;

---

[225] Seth Lobis provides a reading of Sin's magical sympathy through the lens of action at a distance. See Seth Lobis, *The Virtue of Sympathy: Magic Philosophy, and Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), esp. 141–9. As I show later in this chapter, the idea of like-to-like returns in Milton's account of the Genesis creation story, making it challenging to neatly deduce Milton's disapproval of sympathetic philosophy on the grounds that Sin embraces the idea.

[226] Garani, 49. For a further example of Empedocles' association with like-to-like, see Aristotle, "Eudemian Ethics," in *Aristotle: Athenian Constitution, Eudemian Ethics, Virtues and Vices,* trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 1235a10–12 [198–478], and Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 1155a32–b8. Milton knew these texts—see Boswell, #77.

by aither, shining aither; but by fire, blazing fire;

love by love and strife by baneful strife"].[227]

The lines describe perception as a process of elemental sympathy, in which our ability to see fire is activated by the fire or heat contained within us, and so on for water, earth, æther, Love, and Strife. The first part of the fragment leans toward a monistic perspective, attributing the mental activity of perception to material mechanisms like earth, water, and fire; but the latter part suggests that extra-elemental substances like Love and Strife also exist within us, guiding our perceptions of these forces we encounter outside ourselves. Moreover, like-to-like operates by the power of Love, which can transform erstwhile elemental combatants into sympathetic companions, until Strife takes over and tears them apart. As Garani explains, "only under Love's impact are dissimilar roots [elements] made more alike and mutual desire is born within them."[228] In other words, Empedocles' system posits not only a general principle that like substances attract, but also that substantially different matter can be coaxed into a homogenizing sympathy.[229]

---

[227] See Laks and Most, V.540, and Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK109. Milton likely came across this fragment through his reading of Aristotle, who cites it in *On the Soul,* at 404b8–15, and in *Metaphysics*, at 1000a18–b20. See Boswell, #72 & #81.

[228] Garani, 48. Garani cites fragments DK21, line 8 and DK22, lines 4–5, to substantiate this point. It's hard to say whether Milton would have encountered these fragments, which are cited by Simplicius in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* and in Theophrastus' *De Sensibus* (see Appendix). These texts do not appear in Boswell's study. However, as I noted above, Milton almost certainly encountered fragment DK109, which shows like-to-like at work.

[229] Jessica Wolfe has shown how early modern thinkers including Angelo Poliziano saw Homer as "anticipat[ing] Empedocles's philosophy of concord and discord." Wolfe's work reveals how these Pre-Socratic concepts, and particularly the idea Strife, were developed as a Homeric inheritance, one that had already been at work in literary texts before Empedocles' time. As Wolfe explains, "the allegorical interpretation that proved most compelling to Homer's Renaissance readers is the one that regards various episodes in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as

Though it might seem like an obscure concept, the notion of like-to-like appears in other early modern poetry, notably in Du Bartas' *Sepmaines*. Du Bartas imagines the principle of like-to-like at work in his description of the creation of the world. He writes that anyone who has seen a blacksmith use fire to separate alloyed bars of metal into their constituent parts will understand how the elements behaved at the beginning of the world:

> Il comprend qu'aussi tost que la bouche de Dieu
> S'ouvre pour assigner à chasque corps son lieu,
> Le feu contre le feu, l'eau contre l'eau se serre,
> L'air se va joindre à l'air, & la terre à la terre.
>
> […when the mouth Diuine
> Op'ned, (to each its proper Place t'assigne,)
> Fire flew to Fire, Water to Water slid,
> Aire clung to aire, and Earth with Earth abid].

Du Bartas' and Sylvester's lines evoke the movement of elemental substances according to a principle of likeness, illustrating an Empedoclean motion of matter that pairs divine agency with

---

illustrations of the contrary yet complementary forces of *philia* and *eris* (or *neikos*), a concept central to the pre-Socratic cosmology of Heraclitus and Empedocles. This interpretation was commonplace in antiquity: Plato, Aristotle, and Plutarch all discuss episodes from Homeric epic that illustrate, allegorically, pre-Socratic cosmological principles." Wolfe's study identifies a key link between Empedoclean cosmology and Homer that was recognized by ancient and Renaissance writers alike. But whereas Wolfe focuses specifically on the force of Strife and its deep entanglement with ancient and early modern literary history, I'm attempting to show how early moderns also developed an appreciation for a perspectival movement between dualistic and monistic viewpoints that can be characterized as distinctively Empedoclean. See Wolfe, *Homer and the Question of Strife from Erasmus to Hobbes* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2015), 21.

the operation of materially centered forces. Moreover, the passage is another important artifact in Milton's youthful exposure to poetic representations of Empedoclean philosophy.

Despite the importance of Empedocles in Milton's childhood reading, as Du Bartas' writing makes clear, and the palpable presence of Empedoclean physics throughout *Paradise Lost*, the critical opportunities of an Empedoclean Milton have received surprisingly little attention. The first reader to comment on the poem's Empedoclean allusion appears to be the editor Patrick Hume, who in 1695 annotated Milton's reference to the philosopher with a summary of Empedocles' life, thought, and legacy as a volcanic fool.[230] Ettore Bignone's study *Empedocles* (1910) mentions Milton's allusion, but only in passing.[231] Moving to the more recent past, Sacvan Bercovitch briefly addresses Milton's Empedoclean allusion in a 1968 article that is one of the only pieces of mid twentieth-century scholarship to directly consider the question of Empedocles' relationship to the English Renaissance I can locate.[232] In the twenty-first century, Drew Daniel reintroduced the question of an Empedoclean Milton in a 2014 essay that considers Milton's allusion to the philosopher's death alongside the spirit of Empedocles'

---

[230] Hume's annotation follows the trend of associating Empedocles with Lucretius. It reads: *"Empedocles;* The Scholar of *Pythagoras,* a Philosopher and a Poet, born at *Agrigentum* in *Sicily:* He wrote of the nature of Things in Greek, as *Lucretius* did in Latin Verse. He stealing one night from his Followers, threw himself into the flaming *Ætna,* that being no where to be found, he might be esteemed a God, and to be taken up amongst them into Heaven; but his Iron Pattens being thrown out by the fury of the burning Mountain, discovered his defeated Ambition, and ridiculed his Folly." See Hume, *Annotations on Milton's "Paradise Lost"* (London, 1695), 117.

[231] See Ettore Bignone, *Empedocles* (Milan: Torino, 1916), 495.

[232] See Bercovitch, "Empedocles in the English Renaissance," 67–80.

combinatorial ontology.[233] While these rare studies have offered invaluable starting points for the inquiry, none have given sustained attention to the relationship between Milton and Empedocles' unusual materialisms, or the potential for Empedocles to mediate between the dualistic and monistic moods that inform the elaborate analogic performance of *Paradise Lost*.

Milton's marginalia in his copy of the Greek poet Aratus indicates that he read Henri Estienne's *Poetae Graeci Principes* (1566) and *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* (1572), books that each make numerous references to Empedocles and his poetic approach.[234] From Milton's engagement with these texts alone, not to mention his prolific knowledge of classical languages, scholars can be fairly confident that Milton would have had a good picture of Empedocles' relevance to a range of philosophical and poetic questions.[235] Estienne not only quotes some Empedoclean fragments but points Milton to the ancient sources which transmitted them. Yet Empedocles' presence in the English Renaissance, as I've already shown in the preceding chapters, was far more extensive than a relegation to one or two esoteric volumes. To the contrary, Empedocles was one of the earliest and most widely redistributed Pre-Socratic thinkers

---

[233] See Daniel, "The Empedoclean Renaissance,", esp. 292–5.

[234] See for instance Estienne [Henrico Stephanus], *Poetae Graeci Principes Heroici Carminis* (Geneva, 1566), 115 & 487, and *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* (Geneva, 1572), 143, 236, 351, 400, 426, 450, 521, 607, 712, 735, 828, 945, 1019, 1414, and 1624. For Milton's marginalia on Estienne, see Maurice Kelley and Samuel D. Atkins, "Milton's Annotations of Aratus," *PMLA* LXX (1955), 1090–1106, and Kelley, "Additions to: *Milton's Library*," *Milton Quarterly* 10.3 (October 1976): 93–4.

[235] Nicholas McDowell's recent biography covering Milton's youth explains the young poet's virtuosic classical knowledge: "Milton's 1645 *Poems* display his ability to write verse in four languages (English Latin, Greek, and Italian) and translate from a fifth (Hebrew). There is a Greek epigram in the 1645 *Poems,* with the Latin title *Philosophus ad regem*, which is another example of a moral theme put into verse, probably done towards the end of Milton's school career, perhaps when he was in the eighth and final form at St. Paul's and had been translating out of, and into, Greek for several years." See McDowell, *Poet of Revolution,* 55.

in European intellectual history, persistently appearing in texts across antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Renaissance.

Both the doxography of Empedocles and the contents of Milton's personal library are subjects that have garnered attention on their own, but to my knowledge, almost no work has been done to integrate the two bodies of knowledge. When I first began this study of *Paradise Lost*, I realized that any serious investigation of the poem's Empedoclean potential would need to be built on a precise understanding of Milton's specific philological avenues to Empedocles. Therefore, I developed a table that cross-references every doxographic transmission point of Empedocles' fragments (as documented by Inwood) with the catalogue of Milton's reading material offered in Jackson Campbell Boswell's *Milton's Library* (1975), which contains a list of about 1500 literary works that Milton likely read or owned, based on evidence throughout his writings. The results of this analysis, included as an Appendix, form a useful visual "map" of Milton's Empedoclean reading, along with indications of how much confidence one can place in each part of the fragments' unique reception history. In other words, the table provides a useful reference for quickly assessing Milton's potential relationship to any given fragment, as well as a visual snapshot of the big picture. The analysis in this appended table, to which I refer in the footnotes throughout the chapter, scaffolds my interpretative decisions with philological clarity and rigor: each time I mention an Empedoclean fragment, I will indicate the likelihood of Milton's exposure to it, as well as the probable circumstances. Of course, no list like Boswell's could achieve a perfect picture of Milton's reading, and thus the same is true of my efforts to chart Milton's view of Empedocles. But, as I hope this chapter shows, Milton's repeated glimpses of Empedocles came to influence *Paradise Lost* in surprisingly significant ways, ones that speak directly to ongoing debates at the center of the poem's critical reception.

The argument that unfolds below begins by briefly outlining the thematic resonance between three myths: Empedocles' divinely inspired leap into Etna, Satan's self-deifying rebellion and plummet into hell, and Adam and Eve's original sin of longing for divine knowledge, which instigates their own Fall. I then consider the broader biographical tradition surrounding Empedocles' volcanic suicide before turning to Milton's direct allusion to the fable in the Limbo of Vanity episode of *Paradise Lost*. I show how even as the passage parodies the apocryphal, suicidal Empedocles who leaps into the volcano, Milton turns to aspects of Empedocles' actual philosophy to give voice to the critique, particularly the principle of like-to-like. Thus, I suggest that Milton's presentation of Empedocles tells a kind of double tale, lampooning the fictive idiot invented by Diogenes Laertius, but in a way that implicitly illustrates core aspects of Empedoclean thought—in turn rendering a subtle poetic justice to the Sicilian philosopher. Moreover, I argue that Milton's depiction of Empedocles in Limbo encapsulates the blurry ontological contours of the poem's ultimately materialist vision, as it impels readers to think dualistically and monistically at once. Readers will come to see how Milton's allusion to Empedocles in *Paradise Lost*, far from being just an antiquated oddity amidst the great heap of the poem's allusive eruptions, is an aspect that courses throughout its entire ethos, melding with the poem's very material texture and making a potent fuel for Milton's metaphysical and stylistic transits. In the following section, I engage more directly with the Empedoclean ramifications of the debate between Sugimura and Fallon by providing a fresh interpretation of Raphael's materialist analogies as expressions grounded in the transformative power of Empedoclean effluence. The chapter concludes by arguing against the rigid dualism of Fish's hermeneutics of trial, which threatens to drown out the aesthetic innovation of Milton's Empedoclean double vision.

Falling for Divine Longing

Empedocles and Milton share a status as epic poets whose verse combines visions of materialist philosophy with divine contemplation. A few years after Milton's death, the French Jesuit scholar René Rapin penned a description of Empedocles that captures both his mystical and materialist appeal:

> Empedocle composa une Physique en vers, selon les principes de Pythagore, dont Lucrece parle comme d'un miracle, & dont Aristote & Diogene Laërce font mention.
>
> [*Empedocles* composed a Natural Philosophy in Verse, according to the Principles of *Pythagoras*, of which *Lucretius* speaks as of a miracle, and whereof *Aristotle* and *Diogenes Laertius* make mention.][236]

Rapin represents Empedocles as a Pythagorean philosopher-poet beloved by Lucretius. Empedocles' Pythagorean associations, which I explored in Chapter One in my discussion of Plutarch's "Isis and Osiris," assist Rapin in drawing out Empedocles' religious appeal. Moreover, as Rapin sees it, Empedocles' poetry doesn't merely accord with Pythagorean doctrine; it can make Lucretius see miracles, an ironic presentation of a poet who created a damning vignette of brutal religious sacrifice, and who wrote, *tantum religio potuit suadere*

---

[236] See René Rapin, *Reflexions sur la philosophie ancienne et moderne, et sur l'usage qu'on en doit faire pour la Religion* (Paris, 1676), 184, and *Reflexions upon ancient and modern philosophy, moral and natural. Treating of the Aegyptians, Arabians, Gretians, Romans, &c. philosophers; as Thales, Zeno, Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Epicurus, &c. Also of the English, Germans, French, Spanish, Italian, &c. As Bacon, Boyle, Descartes, Hobbes, Vanhelmont, Gassendus, Galilens, Harvey, Paracelsus, Marsennus, Digby, &c. Together with the use that is to be made thereof* (London, 1678), 180.

malorum [So potent was Superstition in persuading to evil deeds].[237] For Rapin, Empedocles' materialist versifying is an avenue to spiritual apotheosis, exemplifying an ancient tradition, admired by the young Milton, that aimed for divine transformation through the utterance of poetry.

In other words, Empedocles' decision to express his natural philosophy in verse is bound up with his reputed longing for immortality. Nevertheless, Empedocles' writing is a key part of the materialist poetic tradition, for "no Epicurean had used verse" before Lucretius, and there is a tradition of regarding Empedocles as the "last significant Greek thinker" to use poetry rather than prose.[238] When he chooses to put his thought into hexameters rather than prose, Empedocles both partakes in a philosophical poetic practice later extended by Lucretius, and betrays his longing for deification through the transformative power of divine *poiesis*.[239] The unwieldy convergence of materialist and dæmonic contemplation that finds expression in Empedocles' poetic identity is crucial for understanding the punitive framing of the discredited story of his suicide, in which the

---

[237] See Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, I.62–101. Empedocles' own poem includes an image of ritual sacrifice in DK137, in a moment that illustrates Empedocles' Pythagorean vegetarianism by analogizing the slaughter of an animal for human consumption to the dreadful scene of Iphigenia's murder of Agamemnon. Rapin's figuration of Lucretius as charmed by Empedocles' verse nods to a passage in *De Rerum Natura* that praises Empedocles as "an illustrious" man, "sacred and wonderful and dear," who "seems hardly to be born of mortal stock." See discussion below, and Lucretius, I.727–33. But see also I.734-829, which critique aspects of Empedocles' poem.

[238] See Jackson P. Hershbell, "Empedocles' Oral Style," 351. On Epicurus' opinion of poetry and Lucretius' response to it, see Martin Ferguson Smith, "Introduction," in *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), xlix.

[239] Despite his poetic approach, commentators don't always consider Empedocles a poet. See for instance Douglas E. Gerber, trans., "Scholiast on Dionysius of Thrace," qtd. in *Greek Elegiac Poetry: From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 35–6.

philosopher takes a fall for his desire for immortal status. Thus, when Milton invokes Empedocles in *Paradise Lost*, he pithily nods to the sins of Lucifer and of Adam and Eve, whose moral shortcomings are answered with retributive falls.

In the prose "Argument" that opens book three of *Paradise Lost*, Milton summarizes the sin of Adam and Eve like this: "Man hath offended the majesty of God by aspiring to God-head."[240] Here and throughout the entire work, Milton characterizes Adam and Eve's transgression as a sin of ambition to divine status, one they absorb from Satan's influence as they come to regard the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge as material "of Divine effect / To open Eyes, and make them Gods who taste," as Eve tells Adam of the Tree's "sciential sap" (9.865–6; 9.837). The sin of aspiring to divine rank is a central theme in *Paradise Lost*, and the nature of this offense thematically unites the Fall of humankind from prelapsarian ease and the fall of Lucifer and the rebel angels from heaven. In other words, the fallen angels' revolution against the vertical hierarchy of heaven prefigures the original sin of humankind. As David Quint puts it,

> *Paradise Lost* tells the story of two falls, which its reader is asked to compare and contrast. There is the unending fall of Satan and his followers, and there is the Fall—and spiritual regeneration—of Adam and Eve.[241]

Against this backdrop, Milton's direct allusion to the legendary volcanic plunge of Empedocles in book three appears as a microcosm of the poem's preoccupation with divine longing and its

---

[240] Milton, "Paradise Lost," pp. 415.

[241] David Quint, *Inside Paradise Lost: Reading the Designs of Milton's Epic* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014), 6.

consequences, and affords Milton a comparative example, from the deep history of philosophy, of overleaping ambition rewarded with an experience of descent.

Quint shows how Milton's depiction of the two central falls in *Paradise Lost*—of the rebel angels and of humankind—draws on the ancient myths of Phaethon and Icarus. Both these figures hold an ambitious heliotropism that is rewarded with a punitive fall. The climactic plunges of these tales signal a moral logic in which forbidden upward striving resolves symmetrically to its opposite, to crestfallen humiliation. When Phaethon and Icarus aspire to the sun, the gods punish them by striking down their soaring flights and bringing them literally down to earth, an illustration of the risks of hubris and unbridled intensity. I propose that Empedocles' death, understood as a fiction invented by ancient biographers that serves to undermine specific tenets of his philosophy, is an important addition to these ancient downcast figures that help animate *Paradise Lost*, "a poem in which falling is depicted as the failure of aspired flight."[242] But unlike the myths of Phaethon and Icarus, Milton invokes Empedocles' fall by name.[243] In other words, the myth of Empedocles leaping headfirst into the volcano to prove his immortality encapsulates, on a miniature scale, the transgressions of divine aspiration committed by Lucifer, Adam, and Eve in *Paradise Lost*. The resonance comes to the fore in the way Lucifer finds himself "Hurld headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Skie / With hideous ruins and combustion,"

---

[242] Quint, *Inside Paradise Lost,* 63.

[243] As Quint acknowledges, "Milton mentions neither Icarus nor Phaethon by name" (63). I am illuminating the narrative synthesis of Milton's allusion to Empedocles with the broader trope of descent as punishment for divine longing that Quint traces to Icarus and Phaethon. The trope of divine longing is as old as literature itself, occurring not only in Greco-Roman stories of Phaethon and Icarus, but reaching back even further to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. *Gilgamesh i*s a source that, while it did influence key narratives in the Hebrew Bible, was a text unavailable to Milton. See *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, trans. Benjamin R. Foster (New York: Norton, 2019): tablet XI.

lines that might just as well describe Empedocles' mythic suicidal plunge into Mount Etna (1.45–6).

Going Down in Flames

In this section, I set the scene for Milton's allusion to Empedocles in the Limbo of Vanity episode of *Paradise Lost* by considering its literary predecessors in works such as Horace's *Ars Poetica* (ca. 15 BCE) and Dante's *Inferno* (ca. 1314). This will equip us for the following section, where I explore Milton's version as an intervention within Empedocles' biographical tradition. The literary genealogy I trace reveals how, though he invokes the myth of Empedocles' volcanic death, Milton pulls Empedocles out of Dante's hell. In so doing, Milton relies partially on Horace's account, yet introduces a significant revision that pays tribute to Empedocles' actual philosophy. Ultimately, I demonstrate how Milton's depiction of Empedocles partakes in a tradition—initiated by Lucretius and extended by seventeenth-century writers such as Athanasius Kircher and the Rapin—of reevaluating Empedocles' relationship to Mount Etna, resisting the volcanic entrapment of Diogenes Laertius' infamous account. In Laertius' account, readers will recall, the volcano spews out one of Empedocles' bronze sandals after he dives inside, exposing the ignorance of his self-deification in a grand debunking.[244] In other words, while a cursory reading of the Limbo of Vanity scene might suggest a dismissive attitude toward Empedocles on

[244] See Chapter One, where I also discuss Laertius' account, and Laertius, *Lives*, 8.2.69.

Milton's part, my analysis demonstrates that he hedges on the matter of the Sicilian philosopher's guilt, implying that Empedocles is not quite as damnable a figure as the myth of his volcanic suicide had led many to believe.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton gestures toward Empedocles' hazy legacy and ontology by placing him in "Limbo," in a "Paradise of Fools" (3.495–6). When he labels Empedocles a fool, Milton participates in a longstanding tradition of invoking Empedocles' fictional suicide as an exemplary act of idiocy, of immortal grandeur denied—a tradition I examined in my discussion of Legrand and Garzoni in Chapter One.[245] While the Legrand and Garzoni texts were published well before Milton's birth, allusions to Empedocles' unreal volcanic death continued during and after Milton's lifetime, in works such as Jonson's *News from the New World* (1620) and Rapin's *Reflexions* (1676).[246] As these examples will demonstrate, Empedocles' leap into Etna is usually stewing with implicit commentary on his relationship to materialism: while some assert that an overabundance of natural philosophy drove Empedocles mad, others blame the suicide on his divine ambition. This range of responses reflects the protean quality of Empedocles' textual afterlife, the motley moods and perspectives he comes to embody across the long arc of his reception history. Depending upon the context in which early modern readers learned of Empedocles, they might encounter radically different versions of the Sicilian poet. Some writers, like Dante, emphasize Empedocles' materialist leanings, while others, like Horace, satirically cackle at his infamous longing for material transcendence.

---

[245] I considered the tradition of the foolish Empedocles in Chapter One in my discussion of Tomaso Garzoni's *The Hospital of Incurable Fools, Erected into* English (1600), and Jacques Legrand's *The Book of Good Maners* (1487).

[246] I discussed Jonson's masque in Chapter One. Rapin's *Reflexions* was translated into English in 1678.

The ancient Greek "biographer" Diogenes Laertius is the major progenitor of the myth of Empedocles' jump into Etna, as I noted previously in Chapter One.[247] But the Roman poet Horace later crafts his own account, one that became an influential contributor to Empedocles' reputation in early modern Europe. In his *Ars Poetica*, Horace riffs on Laertius' outrageous image of Empedocles' volcanic embarrassment, using it to exemplify the figure of the mad poet. Horace writes:

> …Siculique poetae
> narrabo interitum. Deus immortalis haberi
> dum cupit Empedocles, ardentem frigidus Aetnam
> insiluit.
>
> [I'll tell the tale of the Sicilian poet's end. Empedocles, eager to be thought a god immortal, coolly leapt into burning Aetna.][248]

Horace plays on dual senses of *frigidus* as both "cold" and "lacking in ardour or passion" to portray Empedocles as insanely nonchalant about his inflammatory downfall, dramatizing the legendary poet's detachment from the material result of his volcanic plunge.[249] To put it in more

---

[247] Here I've resorted to scare quotes because, as Chitwood's illuminating work showed us previously in these pages, ancient biographical practices have a much different standard of accuracy than the modern term "biography" usually connotes. See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives,* 8.2.69, and Chapter One.

[248] See Horace, "Ars Poetica" in *Horace: Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), lines 465–6 (pp. 488–9). It's clear Milton read the *Ars Poetica*, as he mentions it directly in "Of Education" and "The Second Defense," among other texts. See Boswell entry #789.

[249] See "frigidus, *a*.," senses 1 & 8d in *The Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 808. See also sense 1c, which reveals that "frigidus" was sometimes used to

playful terms, Horace's caricature depicts Empedocles as cool with his own burning: paradoxical human folly expressed in the language of elemental difference. Furthermore, Horace's syntactic juxtaposition of hot and cold (*ardentem frigidus*) enacts a pairing of opposites that inverts Empedocles' principle of like-to-like, or the idea that similar substances are attracted to one another. In other words, when Horace shows readers a figuratively cool Empedocles pulled into Etna's heat, he abstractly illustrates an attraction of opposites that undermines a core principle of the philosopher's work. The lines deliver a double sting, mocking Empedocles' divine pretension and manipulating his death into a contradiction of his philosophy.[250] As we will see later, this passage from *Ars Poetica* lies just beneath the surface of Milton's allusion in *Paradise Lost*, which is partially a translation of Horace's lines. Aside from the intricacies of Horace's ontologically inspired wordplay, the heart of the passage is its mocking attitude toward Empedocles' longing for immortality, its portrait of the philosopher as a mad poet going down in flames on account of his supernaturally supercharged ego.

Another Roman writer who charges Empedocles with supernatural stupidity is the natural historian Pliny the Elder, who genuinely died from a volcano, inhaling the toxic fumes of Mount Vesuvius' eruption in 79 CE after sailing closer to get a better look in the name of science.[251]

---

describe "the supposed composition of the body or soul out of cold elements," as in Lucretius, 3.299.

[250] I discuss like-to-like in more detail when I examine Milton's version of the story, later in this section.

[251] Pliny the Elder had been stationed nearby on naval duty at the time of the eruption. Pliny the Younger recalls his uncle's death in a letter to Cornelius Tacitus, in the hope that it will bring the elder Pliny "immortal fame" (*immortalem gloriam*). See Pliny the Younger, *Letters, Volume I: Books 1–7*, trans. Betty Radice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), VI.xvi. And see Robert M. Wilhelm, "Pliny and Vergil," in *The Classical Outlook* 53, no. 4 (Dec. 1975): 40–1.

When Pliny alludes to Empedocles in his *Natural History* (*Naturalis Historia*) (ca. 79 CE), he doesn't mention Empedocles' volcanic death. But he critiques the philosopher for his metaphysical teachings, grouping him with several other Greek thinkers he accuses of seeking esoteric, occult teachings abroad:

> certe Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, Plato ad hanc discendam navigavere exiliis verius quam peregrinationibus susceptis, hanc reversi praedicavere, hanc in arcanis habuere.
>
> [Certainly Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus and Plato went overseas to learn it [magic], going into exile rather than on a journey, taught it openly on their return, and considered it one of their most treasured secrets.][252]

The passage goes on to suggest that these philosophers accepted a ridiculous "magic" that embarrasses even fans of their other writings. Thus, even as Pliny's critique provides further evidence of Empedocles' imbrication in the history of materialism, associating him with the seminal atomist Democritus, it also reveals how this association does not equate to an assumption of uncomplicated skeptical rationality; despite their materialist tendencies, Empedocles and Democritus find themselves lumped together with the idealist philosophers Plato and Pythagoras.[253] Clearly, Like Horace, Pliny emphasizes Empedocles' flirtations with material transcendence, writing it off as superstitious flim-flam.

---

[252] The passage calls out Democritus especially strongly for fetishizing magic. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History: Books 28–32*, trans. W. H. S. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), XXX.9–11.

[253] Ibid., XXX.10–11. The passage also hearkens back to the international influences on Empedocles' writings, a topic I explored in my discussion of Empedoclean effluence and

While Horace and Pliny ridicule Empedocles as an attention seeker obsessed with divinity and magic, in the Middle Ages, Dante regards Empedocles as a near materialist in the *Divine Comedy*, in an episode that has long been recognized as an influence on Milton's Limbo of Vanity. Empedocles shows up in a cluster of Pre-Socratic philosophers whom Dante witnesses in the First Circle of Hell (Limbo):

> Democrito che 'l mondo a caso pone,
>
> Dïogenès, Anassagora e Tale,
>
> Empedoclès, Eraclito e Zenone.
>
> [Democritus, who assigns the world to chance,
>
> Diogenes, Anaxagoras, and Thales, Empedocles,
>
> Heraclitus, and Zeno.][254]

The company Dante surrounds Empedocles with further demonstrates Empedocles' connection to ancient philosophers interested in understanding the world through the possibilities of material intermixture. As Pliny does in *Natural History*, Dante yokes Empedocles to the atomist Democritus, who submits "the world to chance" (*'l mondo a caso pone*).[255] At the same time,

---

Egyptian mythology in Plutarch's "Of Isis and Osiris" in Chapter One. For an illuminating discussion of Pliny's condemnation of *magi*, see Bernd-Christian Otto, "Towards Historicizing 'Magic' in Antiquity," *Numen* 60, no. 2/3 (2013): esp. 327–8.

[254] Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Robert M. Durling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 4.136–8.

[255] Dante's charge about Democritus leaving the world to chance reflects a distortion of the philosopher's teachings on fortune. As Lowell Edmunds explains, "fortune, which Democritus so disparaged, had the last laugh on the laughing philosopher" when the fragmentation of his work obfuscated his emphasis on necessity. See Lowell Edmunds, "Necessity, Chance, and Freedom in the Early Atomists," *Phoenix* 26, no. 4 (Winter 1972): 342. In contrast to Dante, Cicero's *De*

observe how Dante leaves the volcano out of this vignette, even though the fiery imagery associated with Empedocles' mythic leap might be a fitting addition to the literary tour of hell Dante envisions in the *Inferno*. In addition, consider the difference between Dante's representation of Empedocles as a quasi-atomist and Horace's lambasting of the philosopher's divine coolness. It's another moment in this study that highlights Empedocles' nuanced position at the intersection of materialism and idealism. Horace and Pliny invite readers to laugh along at Empedocles as an example of the dæmonic poet gone mad, skewering the idealism inherent in Empedocles' desire to prove his immortality; in contrast, Dante implies a materialist outlook to Empedocles by way of association.

If Horace and Pliny emphasize Empedocles' idealist longings, and Dante his materialist leanings, the seventeenth-century Rapin does both at the same time when he reflects on Empedocles' connection to Lucretius. For instance, consider how Rapin describes Empedocles in his *Reflexions,* published four years after Milton's death:

> Empedocle eut le genie profonde & élevé, Lucrece le compare aux plus grands hommes de l'antiquité: mais les fumées de sa bile jointes à une application trop forcée, & à une étude trop opiniâtre, & luy noircirent si fort l'imagination, & luy altererent tellement le cerveau, qu'il devint furieux: & dans l'accés de sa fureur, il se jetta dans le Mont-

---

Fato (*On Fate*) makes the opposite association—viz., when the character Chrysippo groups Democritus and Empedocles under that category of philosopher "who deemed that everything takes place by fate in the sense that this fate exercises the force of necessity—the opinion to which Democritus, Heraclitus, Empedocles and Aristotle adhered" ("qui censerent omni ita fato fieri ut id fatum vim necessitatis afferret, in qua sententia Democrtius, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Aristoteles fuit"). See Cicero, "De Fato," in *Cicero: De Oratore, Book III: De Fato, Paradoxa Stoicorum, De Partitione Oratoria* [*Cicero IV*], trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), XVII.

> Vesuve, dont les flammes le devorerent. Horace pretend qu'il chercha à s'immortaliser par une si belle hardiesse.
>
> [*Empedocles* had a lofty and high genius; *Lucretius* compares him to the greatest of the Ancients; but the vapours of Melancholy meeting with an overstrained Application, and a too headstrong study, so sullied his imagination and altered his brain, that he became mad; and in the fit of his rage threw himself into Mount *Aetna,* where he was devoured by flames. *Horace* pretends that he endeavoured to render himself immortal by such a fair piece of boldness.][256]

Rapin's characterization immediately registers Empedocles' liminal ontological status, for it cites the Epicurean poet Lucretius' praise for Empedocles as evidence of his possessing "a lofty and high genius" (*le genie profonde & élevé*)—a phrase that gestures toward Empedocles' reputation as a wise philosopher of encyclopedic learning and his poetic exploration of supernatural phenomena like the dæmon. It's helpful here to recall that, while for today's readers, "genius" usually connotes "an exceptionally intelligent or talented person," this modern meaning is largely a product of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[257] It's more likely that Rapin and his 1678 English translator mean "genius" (*le genie*) in its primary sense, as "a supernatural being," or similarly, "a quasi-mythological personification of something

---

[256] See Rapin, *Reflexions,* 81, and *Reflexions upon ancient and modern philosophy,* 80–1. Note that Rapin mistakes Mount Vesuvius for Mount Etna in the French text I quote above, an error that the English translator emends. It's as if Rapin confused the myth of Empedocles' death in Etna with the story of Pliny's death in Vesuvius.

[257] "Genius, n." in the *OED*, sense 8b. The earliest usage of this sense cited by the *OED* is in 1711.

immaterial."[258] Thus, for Rapin to speak of Empedocles' "genius" would conjure up images of attendant spirits, dæmonic transmigration, and supernatural possibility for seventeenth-century readers, even as the moment centers this divine aura as an object of praise by one of the most famous materialists in history.[259] Moreover, Rapin's remark that Empedocles possessed a genius that was "lofty and high" (*profonde & élevé*) winks at the philosopher's climb up Etna, one that becomes more obvious at the end of the passage, when "he was devoured by flames" (*les flames le devorerent*). However, the English translator's "lofty and high" doesn't fully capture Rapin's witty *profonde & élevé*, for while "lofty and high" conveys Empedocles' longing for spiritual ascension and his scaling of Etna, *profonde & élevé* registers both the philosopher's upward longing (*élevé*) and the material consequences of it, his entombment deep (*profonde*) within Etna.[260]

Ultimately, Rapin's association of Empedocles with Lucretius may be something of a backhanded compliment, for he implicitly draws on Lucretius' reputation as a mad materialist driven to suicide, a fiction propounded by St. Jerome, as I discussed in Chapter One. Rapin, in

---

[258] "Genius, n." in the *OED*, senses I & 4 respectively. The French historical dictionary *Trésor de la langue Française* confirms that "le genie" follows a similar etymological development as "genius" does in English, with a primary meaning of "divinité, être surnaturel ou allégorique" (sense I), and only later accruing the meaning "aptitude, faculté" (sense II). See "génie, subst. masc.," in *TLFi : Trésor de la langue Française informatisé*, ATILF-CNRS & Université de Lorraine, http://www.atilf.fr/tlfi.

[259] Rapin's sketch of Empedocles' "genie" might also allude to Lucretius' and Empedocles' self-fashioning as vatic poets with prophecies about matter—a point I referred to in Chapter One. And see Passannante, *Catastrophizing* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019), 203.

[260] I am gesturing toward the triple meanings of "profound" (*profonde*) as describing "non-physical depth," "physical depth," and "intellectual depth." See "profound, adj." in the *OED,* senses A.I, II.3.a, and A.I.1.a, respectively. And see "profonde, adj." in the *TLFI*, senses A.1.d, B.1, and C.1, and "élevé, senses 2.B and 2.C.

other words, creates a portrait of Empedocles as inspired to investigate matter to the point of insanity. The result is a sketch of Empedocles akin to a mad scientist—his brain is "altered," his imagination "sullied" from "too headstrong study." In Rapin's telling, Empedocles landed himself in the volcano from studious overexertion, not the claim that he was a god. This is a key difference that distinguishes Rapin's description from Diogenes Laertius' account. Rapin imagines Etna devouring Empedocles to reflect on the risks of being consumed by the quest for knowledge, not divinity. This becomes clear at the end of the passage, when Rapin chides Horace for "pretend[ing]" that Empedocles' suicide was motivated by "immortal" longing, instead of excessive philosophizing, as Rapin sees it. Rejecting the accusations of Diogenes Laertius and Horace, Rapin wants to interpret Empedocles' purported suicide as the cause of bad philosophy rather than bad religion.

In other words, Rapin only acknowledges Empedocles' divine reputation through the filter of Lucretius' praise, refusing to see the jump into the volcano as an act of inspired spirituality. When he notes that Lucretius holds Empedocles in high regard, Rapin is gesturing toward a moment about halfway through book one of *De Rerum Natura*, when Lucretius writes:

> carmina quin etiam divini pectoris eius
> vociferantur et exponunt praeclara reperta,
> ut vix humana videatur stirpe creatus.
>
> [Moreover, the poems of his [Empedocles'] divine mind
> utter a loud voice and declare illustrious discoveries, so that

he seems hardly to be born of mortal stock].[261]

The passage reveals how Rapin is not exaggerating when he refers to Lucretius' divine regard for the Sicilian poet. Notice how Lucretius' divine representation of Empedocles is tied to his status as a poet—it's "the poems of his divine mind" that push him to the limits of mortality, emblematic of the dæmonic poetic tradition of antiquity that Milton is known to have found inspirational in his youth. Beyond the playfulness of Lucretius' "divine" portrait of Empedocles, the celebration of Empedocles' poetic imagination it accompanies is reflected throughout the rest of Lucretius' poem, which uses analogy to represent various aspects of its Epicurean atomism. Lucretius is thus acknowledging Empedocles' role in bringing literary analogy into the domain of natural philosophy. Analogy is everywhere in Empedocles, whether he's likening seeds to eggs, elements to gods, eyeballs to lanterns, or the sea to the sweat of the earth, to name a few examples.[262] And Empedocles' love for analogy surfaces not only as practice but also as theory, for he directly endorses it as a means to discuss natural philosophy in fragment DK9.[263] It's not difficult to see how the interplay of Empedoclean and Lucretian analogy inspires Milton in *Paradise Lost*, a poem that repeatedly turns to elemental imagery to articulate its materialism.[264]

In the same part of *De Rerum Natura* that I've been considering, Lucretius refers to the violence of Etna, but not in reference to the well-worn myth about Empedocles jumping into the

---

[261] Lucretius, trans. Rouse, I.731–3.

[262] See, respectively, DK79, DK6, DK84, & DK55.

[263] I discuss this fragment (DK9) briefly in Chapters One & Two. The fragment was available to Milton through Holland's translation of Plutarch's *Moralia*, a text I discuss in detail in Chapter One.

[264] I discuss Milton's use of Empedoclean imagery in Raphael's explanation of materialism later in this chapter.

volcano. Instead, Lucretius takes Empedocles outside of Etna, using the gurgling might of the mountain's eruptions as a metaphor for Empedocles' cultural reputation. Describing Empedocles' native home of Sicily, Lucretius writes:

> hic est vasta Charybdis et hic Aetnaea minantur
> murmura flammarum rursum se colligere iras,
> faucibus eruptos iterum vis ut vomat ignis
> ad caelumque ferat flammai fulgura rursum.
> quae cum magna modis multis miranda videtur
> gentibus humanis regio visendaque fertur,
> rebus opima bonis, multa munita virum vi,
> nil tamen hoc habuisse viro praeclarius in se
> nec sanctum magis et mirum carumque videtur.
>
> [Here is wasteful Charybdis, and
> here Etna's rumblings threaten that the angry flames are gathering
> again, that once more its violence may belch fires bursting forth
> from its throat, and once more shoot to the sky the lightnings of its
> flame: which mighty region, while it seems wonderful in many ways
> to the nations of mankind and is famed as a place to see, fat with
> good things, fortified with mighty store of men, yet it seems to have
> contained in it nothing more illustrious than this man, nor more

sacred and wonderful and dear.][265]

Divorced from its broader context in *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius' tribute to Empedocles reads like an ancient travel brochure for Sicily, highlighting the renown of the "famed" island, "fat with good things" and a "mighty store of men." Sicily may have the dramatic, personified pyrotechnics of towering Etna, whose "throat" bursts with star bound fire—but Empedocles was the island's main attraction, "nothing more illustrious" than him.[266] Notice how, even as Lucretius takes Empedocles outside of the volcano, he virtually sanctifies him, acknowledging the poet's esteemed status by deeming him superlatively "sacred and wonderful and dear." In so doing, Lucretius both pays homage to Empedocles' physical model of the universe and alludes to the philosopher's own suggestion of a divine self-image, his self-professed reputation as an immortal god (θεὸς ἄμβροτος). In part, Lucretius' commendation is a way to acknowledge Empedocles' influence on his own materialism; despite key differences on topics such as the void, which Lucretius goes on to explain, Lucretius' monist vision of atomic mixture draws partly on Empedocles' conception of effluence, a proto-atomic idea that posits tiny, similar particles streaming off all things, regardless of their differing elemental compositions.[267]

---

[265] Lucretius, trans. Rouse, I.722–30.

[266] In part, Lucretius' reference to Empedocles' "illustrious[ness]" nods to a moment in Laertius' *Lives*, when Empedocles is described as a splashy dresser who "don[s] a purple robe and over it a golden girdle…and again slippers of bronze and Delphic laurel-wreath. He had thick hair, and a train of boy attendants." Even here, we see Empedocles taking on a godly aura, attended by Cupid-like figures in the tradition of Venus—a perhaps unsurprising way for Laertius to depict a philosopher who devoted such poetic and philosophic weight to the power of Love (Φιλότης). See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, trans. Hicks, 8.2.73.

[267] Of course, Lucretius' main inspiration is the writing of Epicurus. But, as I have been demonstrating throughout this dissertation, Empedoclean effluence serves as something of a bridge to atomic thinking for many early moderns, including Milton. On effluence, see Empedocles, DK89. On Lucretius' use of effluence, see Garani, esp. 18–19 &114–15. I discuss

Beyond Lucretius' use of Empedoclean analogy and the idea of effluence, his praise of the Sicilian philosopher in *De Rerum Natura* establishes a divergent biographical tradition from the one initiated by Diogenes Laertius and echoed by Horace and other ancient writers.[268] He rescues Empedocles from the volcano, turning the tables on the moral logic embedded in the standard account. Whereas Laertius and Horace use Etna's material greatness as a foil for the flimsy claims of Empedocles' divine status, Lucretius regards even magnificent Etna as beneath the "sacred" heights of the illustrious Sicilian poet. The volcano devours Empedocles' divine credibility in the hands of Laertius and Horace; but for Lucretius, the volcano helps support, rather than deny, the existence of Empedocles' "divine mind," if only figuratively speaking, and with a bit of irony thrown into the mix.[269]

In the seventeenth century, the German Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher similarly works to dismantle the legacy of Empedocles as a fool. In *Mundus Subterraneus* (1665), first printed in a partial English translation in 1669, Kircher refashions Empedocles' volcanic death as a martyrdom for natural explorers. Kircher—"a polymath who invented a type of calculating machine, explained a form of symbolic logic, constructed an early *camera obscura* and calculated the speed of a swallow's flight"—was himself drawn to Etna's flames, travelling to the famous mountain in the 1630s, directly witnessing the volcano erupt whilst conducting

---

effluence at length in Chapters One and Two, and in the next section of the present chapter. For Lucretius' "refutation" of Empedocles, see *De Rerum Natura*, I.734–829.

[268] I discussed Lucian's representation of a post-mortem Empedocles in *Icaromenippus*, and Jonson's engagement with it, in Chapter One.

[269] Lucretius, trans. Rouse, I.731

research he would later publish in *Mundus*.[270] Notice how Kircher attempts to restore some dignity to the legacy of Empedocles:

> And here [at Mount Etna] some report, or rather fable, that *Empedocles* affecting Divine Honour, departing from his company secretly by night, leapt in at the mouth of this Mountain, that he might be reputed an Immortal God; as *Horrace* witnesses…But wiser men more rightly relate him, to have perished only; as a curious and ventrous Observator; going about to search out this Fiery Lake, and thereby to have fallen into some pit, or ditch, and consumed in the Burning.[271]

Kircher revises the account of Empedocles' demise, accepting that the philosopher died in Etna, but rejecting the assertion that he did so to prove his divinity. Kircher's intervention occasions readers to think of Empedocles' death like Pliny the Elder's: as an unfortunate consequence of fieldwork, as a marker of commitment to study of the natural world. He wants to give Empedocles the benefit of the doubt as a fellow natural explorer, converting a tale of self-important suicide into a mark of scientific dedication. Intriguingly, the cited passage appears to be added by Kircher's English translator, as I cannot locate the Latin equivalent of this passage

---

[270] Gillian Furlong, *Treasures from UCL* (UCL Press, 2015), 119. On Kircher's witnessing of the eruptions of Etna and Vesuvius in the 1630s, see Paula Findlen, "Introduction," in *Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything*, ed. Paula Findlen (New York: Routledge, 2004), esp. 20–1.

[271] See Kircher, *The vulcano's, or, Burning and fire-vomiting mountains, famous in the world, with their remarkables collected for the most part out of Kircher's Subterraneous world, and exposed to more general view in English : upon the relation of the late wonderful and prodigious eruptions of Ætna, thereby to occasion greater admirations of the wonders of nature (and of the God of nature) in the mighty element of fire* (London, 1669), 40.

in Kircher's original.[272] Therefore, while staying very much within the spirit of Kircher's work, the English translator augments the description of Etna and Empedocles found in the original Latin, suggesting that the topic of Etna was of particular interest for the translator and his prospective readers in seventeenth-century England.

The English translation of *Mundus* elaborates on its claim that Empedocles was merely an observer of Etna by proposing that, based on Kircher's account of the violence at the mountain's summit, Empedocles would never have been able to jump inside the volcano to begin with. The translator writes that

> the story of *Empedocles* the Sicilian Philosopher's throwing himself down head-long [into Etna]…is by some call'd into question. For it is impossible to be approach'd, by reason of the violent Wind, the suffocating Smoak, and the consuming Fervour (yet he might approach too near, and perish).[273]

The passage applies rational scrutiny to the story of Empedocles' volcanic suicide, using natural observations about Etna to debunk the fantasy that the Sicilian philosopher dove into it. It's more likely, this moment suggests, that Empedocles died of smoke inhalation after approaching "too near" as an observer. In other words, Kircher's translator uses the material details of Etna's fiery peak to erase the immaterial longing embedded in the story of Empedocles' suicide, locating it

---

[272] The only commentary on Empedocles' death I can find in Kircher's Latin version occurs in a passing remark, when Kircher notes, "tum tempore *Heronis*, quo & *Empedoclem* montis observatorem periisse historriæ tradunt" ("also in the time of *Hero,* when Histories deliver, that even *Empedocles,* an observer of the Mountain, then perished"). This still revises the myth, calling Empedocles an "observer" of the mountain, but is far less extensive than the version in the English translation. See Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus* (Amsterdam, 1665), 4.188.

[273] See Kircher, *The Vulcano's*, 41–2. On the reception of *Mundus Subterraneous* by seventeenth-century natural philosophers, see Passannante, *Catastrophizing,* 149–54.

more firmly within the language of natural philosophy and making the whole affair just a bit less incendiary.

As I've shown, the transformations of Empedocles' volcanic legacy reflect his unstable ontology, his "double tale" that fuses together materialist and idealist contemplation.[274] Since his poetry slides freely between visions of ontological materialism and dualism, the way writers treat his death speaks to their own philosophic and religious ideologies, with some blaming his death on immortal longing, others describing it as a symptom of natural philosophy and too much materialist education. For this reason, Milton's treatment of Empedocles in *Paradise Lost* can contribute significantly to the centuries-long debates about the poem's high tolerance for ontological ambiguity, and its passionate but complicated articulation of vitalist materialism. Having described the backdrop of Empedocles' biographical tradition within Milton's literary universe, I turn now to Milton's intervention in this tradition in *Paradise Lost*, and the way its ontological poetics speaks to recent debates about the poem's materialism.

Empedocles in Limbo

Milton's depiction of Empedocles in Limbo emblematizes the interplay of dualistic and monistic ideation of *Paradise Lost*. On the one hand, the allusion implies a critique of dualism as it mocks Empedocles for believing he had transcended mortality, and it subtly submits his ghost to the quasi-materialistic terms of his own philosophy, specifically the principle of like-to-like.

---

[274] Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK17.1–2. Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* cites these lines, at 1257.25–161.20. It's unclear if Milton read this work, though Simplicius is mentioned in other works Milton read. See Boswell, entry 1311.

On the other hand, the critique is communicated by depicting Empedocles as a ghost in Limbo, which relies on a dualistic frame, as it imagines Empedocles outside of history, time, and matter; after all, Satan encounters Empedocles before the Fall, when Adam and Eve are the only humans on earth. Consider how strange the scenario is: Satan, on his way to ensnare the first human beings—who are not yet parents—encounters the ghost of their offspring (Empedocles), confined to Limbo for an act supposedly committed in the fifth century BCE, long after the days of the Old Testament. This represents Milton's conviction that God is immortal and atemporal, meaning that he has already understood and intervened in all of human history. At the same time, it playfully gestures to Empedocles' interest in immortality, portraying him as autonomous in relation to time and matter, even retrospectively it would seem. Thus, I will show, even as Milton's allusion castigates Empedocles for the idiocy of his fabled jump into the volcano, it renders him a kind of poetic justice by way of a clever philosophical joke.

The myth of a suicidal Empedocles is a convenient trope for underscoring the rebellion of Satan and the rebel angels, for these characters suffer from delusions of divine grandeur and are portrayed as casting themselves into hellfire to prove it. In fact, Milton implies in *Paradise Lost* that the rebel angels live inside a volcano after their descent from heaven, one of many occasions when he uses analogy to temporarily reframe mythological settings in earthly terms. The volcanic dwelling of Satan and his followers comes into focus in book one, when Milton's epic voice describes Satan as enormous,

> in bulk as huge
> As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,
> Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,
> Briareos or Typhon, who the Den

By ancient Tarsus held… (1.196–200)

Milton compares Satan's body to "Briareos or Typhon," both Titans who were rumored to be buried under Mount Etna after threatening a divine hierarchy. As Roy Flannagan glosses these lines, "the implication is that the rebel angels are monstrous and distorted beings and that they live in a fiery, chaotic, disruptive place like a volcano."[275] Moreover, the passage's nod to "Typhon" and "Titanian" evokes a fragment in which Empedocles analogizes a special kind of air to "Titan" (Τιτὰν), in a further example of Empedocles' comparison of elemental substances to immortal gods.[276] Milton's emphasis on Satan's volcanic abode thus invites readers to ponder Empedocles' legacy in the background, considering that Milton's allusive choices here point directly to Etna, that mythic tomb of Satan, Titans, and Empedocles. The image conveys a flaming subterranean image of hell, and the volcano's sporadic, devastating, and unpredictable destructive power metaphorizes evil itself, bringing mythology and theology down to earth.

Satan deepens the impression of hell's volcanic setting when he declares that his journey to the Garden will mark the fallen angels' "first eruption" from hell (1.655–6).[277] Like the dormant volcano, its lava simmering deep within the earth, Satan broods below until he achieves a violent eruption. The image is particularly effective within the context of seventeenth-century

---

[275] Roy Flannagan, ed., *The Riverside Milton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998): 360fn74. Literary representations of Briareos and Typhon, as Flannagan points out, reach back to Hesiod.

[276] See fragment DK38 in Laks and Most, V.475, and Empedocles, trans. Inwood. It's likely Milton encountered this fragment in his reading of Clement's *Stromateis*, which cites it at 5.48.2–3. See Boswell #414. The resonance between the lines from book one of *Paradise Lost* quoted above and fragment DK38 are further heightened by the fact that some scholars have read Empedocles "Titan" (Τιτὰν) as referring specifically to "Typhon" (Τυφῶν). See W. Drummond, "On the Science of the Egyptians and Chaldeans," in *The Classical Journal for March and June, 1820: Volume XXI*, 35–56 (London: A. J. Valpy, 1820), 44.

[277] "Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps / Our first eruption, thither or elsewhere" (1.655–6).

Europe, an age interested in the destructive power of volcanoes, not least because of Mount Etna's eruptive activity in the 1630s and the many violent eruptions of Mount Vesuvius throughout the century.[278] Milton lends all the destructive force of the volcano to Satan as he launches himself out of hell and into Limbo on his journey to earth, equipping him with volcanic power in a scenario that leads to his rendezvous with Empedocles.

Before he reaches earth, Satan traverses "the bare Convex of this Worlds outermost Orb," and he witnesses Empedocles amidst an array of ill-fated characters from the history of philosophy and the Bible.[279] Milton's Limbo—a "sterile void of false theology and philosophy," as Catherine Gimelli Martin writes—contains people judged by God as unworthy of heaven, but also as too foolish or naive in their wrongdoing to be consigned to the racks and wheels of hell's eternal torments.[280] In other words, the Limbo of Vanity is a space of moral liminality, a quality reinforced by its placement within the structure of Milton's poem. Satan traverses Limbo in between the two major falls central to the plot of *Paradise Lost*, the fall of the rebel angels and the Fall of humankind. In other words, Empedocles sits at a crossroads of moral and ontological experience within the poem.

As Satan propels himself *out of* the volcano, Milton remembers Empedocles' fall *into* the volcano. The fallen angel, erupting (as it were) into Limbo, encounters the ghost of Empedocles

---

[278] For a discussion of seventeenth-century academic interest in Etna and Vesuvius, see Jane E. Everson, "The Melting Pot of Science and Belief: Studying Vesuvius in Seventeenth-Century Naples," in *Renaissance Studies* 26.5 (Nov. 2010), esp. 691-8.

[279] The quoted phrase is from the opening prose argument to book three. See Milton, "Paradise Lost," pp. 415.

[280] See Martin, *The Ruins of Allegory: Paradise Lost and the Metamorphosis of Epic Convention* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 23.

drifting across a "windie Sea of Land," a phrase whose pithy elemental mixture already begins to hint at the Empedoclean composition of the region (3.440). He sits among a paradise of blunderers:

> Others came single; he who to be deemd
> A God, leap'd fondly into *Ætna* flames,
> *Empedocles*, and hee who to enjoy *Plato's Elysium*, leap'd into the Sea,
> *Cleombrotus*, and many more too long,
> Embryo's and Idiots, Eremits and Friers
> White, Black and Grey, with all thir trumperie. (3.469–75)

Notice how Milton points to Empedocles' divine posturing as the specific violation that determined his conscription to this Limbo—he fell into Etna "to be deemd / A God." This emphasis on Empedocles' ambition to godhead and its attendant plunge is a pithy allusion within the thematic universe of *Paradise Lost*, as it broadly encapsulates Satan's aspiration to supersede God, and the rebel angels' subsequent fall from heaven; and it foreshadows the Fall of Adam and Eve, whose longing for divine knowledge entices them to ingest the forbidden fruit. Unlike Rapin, who attributes Empedocles' purported madness to an overcommitment to study of the natural world, Milton hews closer to Laertius' original charge that Empedocles' desire to prove his divinity inspired his jump. Yet the fact that Milton moves Empedocles out of hell (à la Dante) and into Limbo might betray his knowledge that the suicidal Empedocles was fiction. In other words, Milton relocates Empedocles out of hell, and in so doing impels the reader to ask if he was so guilty of divine self-regard as others had made him out to be.

Milton's winking adverbial qualifier suggesting that Empedocles jumped "fondly" into the volcano portrays the philosopher as foolishly infatuated, pulled toward Etna's boiling depths

at the level of appetitive attraction. "Fond"—which can mean desirous, foolish, or mad—etymologically embodies the elision of infatuation and foolishness central to the myth of Empedocles' suicide.[281] From this angle, the old philosopher is drawn by cosmic Love to fire, as if the fever of his divine enthusiasm drives him to the calefaction of Etna's flames. This detail hints at how, rather than simplistically condemning Empedocles, Milton's allusion processes the myth by gesturing toward material conditions that underlie it, and ones that operate by principles Empedocles himself articulated. As Milton does this, he moves between dualistic and monistic frames, presenting Empedocles as an unextended ghost, punished for fetishizing material transcendence, only to soften Empedocles' crime by describing it as an effect of material circumstances. Therefore, one can see how even as Milton critiques the foolishness implicit in Empedocles' legendary death, he also subjects Empedocles to the conditions of the philosophical system he created, suggesting a redemptive attitude toward the philosophy.

In a similar vein, a religious tract by Thomas Pierce published a decade before *Paradise Lost* imagines a suicidal Empedocles filled with lusty fire:

> But do ye not seriously think your Friend Empedocles was a fool, for having thrown himself headlong into burning Aetna? should not the terrible report of that scorching mountain have cool'd his lust of ambition, and have flatted his appetite to the imaginary fame of an *Apotheosis*?[282]

Empedocles is charged with a hot "lust of ambition" and an "appetite" for public recognition. While these terms may call to mind the appetitive physics of Empedocles' system, they are much

---

[281] See "fond, noun," in the *OED*, senses A.1.a, 2, and 4.

[282] See Thomas Pierce, *The Sinner Impleaded in his Own Court* (London, 1656), 324–5.

less forgiving of the philosopher than Milton. Whereas Milton portrays Empedocles as madly and appetitively drawn into Etna, Pierce makes Empedocles more individually responsible for his actions, asserting that he should have "cool'd his lust" to overcome any pull he felt toward that "scorching mountain." In other words, Pierce thinks Empedocles should have put mind over matter, whereas Milton's "fondly" leaping Empedocles somewhat relinquishes the philosopher from personal condemnation by casting his jump, at least partially, as an outcome of a material process.

In his depiction of a floating, ethereal Empedocles suspended in Limbo, Milton tells a double tale, skewering the philosopher for his supposed plunge into Etna—inspired by immortal aspiration, self-infatuated, and foolish—and at the same time drawing on Empedocles' natural philosophy for poetic inspiration as he gives voice to the critique. This cameo of Empedocles in book three of *Paradise Lost* embodies in miniature the poem's elaborate ontological vision, a moment that captures the text's alternating representation of a monist and dualist universe. Empedocles floats into the poem, a disembodied entity whose appearance in the æther of Limbo impels readers to imagine incorporeal substance, even while that belief is highlighted, in the same moment, as foolish. True, it is not Empedocles' belief in the soul that Milton's epic voice specifically castigates, but rather his Satanic declaration of divinity: "he who *to be deemd* / *A God*, leap'd fondly into Ætna flames…" (3.470, emphasis mine). Nonetheless, the moment carries an implicit critique of the mythic Empedocles' belief in incorporeal substance, since that belief is a central aspect of the legendary suicide: the tale of his fiery death parodies the idea that Empedocles thought he could transcend the limits of matter, a notion inscribed in his otherwise

materially inclined philosophy through references to dæmons in exile from the elements and expressions of Pythagorean metempsychosis.[283]

In the passage from the Limbo of Vanity I cited above, note how Milton pairs the reference to Empedocles' fiery descent with an allusion to Cleombrotus, another figure from classical antiquity believed to have taken a fall in pursuit of incorporeal bliss. Milton's charge that Cleombrotus, "to enjoy *Plato's Elysium*, leap'd into the Sea" takes inspiration from the Greek scholar-poet Callimachus, who claims that Cleombrotus threw himself into the ocean after reading Plato (3.472). In his *Epigrams*, Callimachus writes,

> Εἶπας "Ἥλιε χαῖρε" Κλεόμβροτος Ὠμβρακιώτης
> ἅλατ᾽ ἀφ᾽ ὑψηλοῦ τείχεος εἰς Ἀίδην,
> ἄξιον οὐδὲν ἰδὼν θανάτου κακόν, ἀλλὰ Πλάτωνος
> ἓν τὸ περὶ ψυχῆς γράμμ᾽ ἀναλεξάμενος.
>
> [Farewell, O Sun, said Cleombrotus of Ambracia and leapt from
> a lofty wall into Hades. No evil

---

[283] For Empedocles on the transmigration of souls, see fragments DK112, DK117, and DK146, all fragments to which Milton had at least some access, through Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Vol. 2 (at 8.54, 8.61–2, 8.66, and 8.77, for example). For Empedocles on dæmons, see DK115. This fragment was likely available to Milton because of its relatively widespread doxographic footprint. Plutarch, for instance, refers to DK115 in three separate essays within the *Moralia*, a text Milton refers to in his own work (see Boswell #1153). Plotinus also refers to this fragment in his *Enneads* as confirming Empedocles' belief in a "law for souls." See Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.8.1, 17–22, qtd. in Inwood, *The Poem of Empedocles*, CTXT-10 (d). While for the Cambridge Platonists Plotinus was as much a founding figure as Plato, there is no direct evidence Milton read the founder of Neoplatonism. Nevertheless, Kurt Spellmeyer argues that Milton's writing shows elements that "arise from a demonstrably Plotinian tradition." See Spellmeyer, "Plotinus and Seventeenth-Century Literature: A Prolegomenon to Further Study," in *Pacific Coast Philology* 17, No. 1–2 (Nov. 1982), 50–8. On the Cambridge Platonists and Plotinus, see Patrides, " 'The High and Aiery Hills,' " esp. 2–4.

had he seen worthy of death, but he had read one writing of Plato's,

On the Soul].[284]

Callimachus renders Plato a bad influence whose writings led Cleombrotus to his own kind of Empedoclean madness. As for Plato himself, he mentions Cleombrotus only briefly, in the *Phaedo*, to note his absence at the death of Socrates.[285] Both Cleombrotus and Empedocles serve as ancient fools seduced to death by the idea of incorporeal substance and its promises, and in this way, Milton's pairing of the two figures creates a further embodiment of the Empedoclean principle of like-to-like. The passage offers Cleombrotus and Empedocles in proximity, two entities coupled by the posthumous tales of their philosophically motivated suicides leaping into elements.[286]

When one takes into account the philosophical subtleties of Milton's allusion to Empedocles—the way it suggests two views of reality, one in which Empedocles appears as a

---

[284] Callimachus, "Epigrams," in *Callimachus: Hymns and Epigrams, Lycophron, Aratus*, trans. A. W. Mair (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), XXV. Pseudo-Lucian, too, draws on the suicide of Cleombrotus as an example of the dangers of superstition, in his dialogue *Philopatris* (ca. 360 BCE). The character Critias admits to Triepho: ἀλλὰ [καὶ] κατὰ κρημνῶν ὠθούμην ἂν ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς σκοτοδινήσας, εἰ μὴ ἐπέκραξάς μοι, ὦ τάν, καὶ τὸ τοῦ Κλεομβρότου πήδημα τοῦ Ἀμβρακιώτου ἐμυθεύθη ἐπ᾽ ἐμοί ["But I would have cast myself headlong over a precipice in my dizziness, if you hadn't called out to me, my good fellow, and stories would have credited me with the leap of Cleombrotus"]. See Lucian, "The Patriot," in *Lucian VIII*, M.D. MacLeod, ed. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 1.

[285] See Plato, "Phaedo," in *Plato I: Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus*, trans. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 59C.

[286] On Milton's pairing of Cleombrotus and Empedocles, see Joseph Horrell, "Milton, Limbo, and Suicide," *The Review of English Studies* 18, no. 72 (Oct. 1942): esp. 418–24. Horrell notices how the pair of figures "took the ultimate leap, one into one element, one into another, [and] are the only persons to appear by name in Milton's Limbo." Horrell briefly refers to Empedocles' philosophy, but in a general way, and does not comment on the passage's literary enactment of the principle of like-to-like.

foolish, chided ghost, the other in which materially oriented aspects of his philosophy underwrite the critique, winking at Milton's greater awareness of Empedocles' philosophical contributions—it becomes possible to read his apparent dismissal of Empedocles as a quite different move, as participating in the long project, begun by Lucretius, of emending the Sicilian philosopher's volcanic legacy.

This emendation becomes even clearer in view of the considerable intertextuality the Limbo of Vanity shares with other works, which reveals the uniqueness of Milton's treatment of Empedocles. The episode is suspended in a rich web of textual interplay, as Quint points out, noting that Milton's version parodies a similar scene in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516), which itself parodies the section of Dante's *Inferno* I discussed above.[287] Martin notes Milton's "inversion of Dante's epic schema" through his placement of Limbo outside rather than inside hell.[288] This inversion is particularly significant with respect to Empedocles, because he is the only one of the Pre-Socratic figures that Milton retains from Dante's poem: we don't find Democritus and Zeno, Heraclitus or Thales hanging out in Milton's Limbo. In fact, Empedocles

---

[287] See Quint, 112. Kendrick sees Milton's Limbo of Vanity as "Ariostan parody redone in a more popular carnivalesque vein than was typical of *Orlando Furioso*." See Kendrick, 234. Ariosto's version does not include Empedocles. See Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso: A New Verse Translation*, trans. David R. Slavitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), XXXIV.70–91. On Milton's limbo in comparison with Dante and Ariosto's limbo, see Catherine Gimelli Martin, *Ruins of Allegory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), esp. 23 and 359–60fn25. Eighteenth-century writers like Alexander Pope, who creates his own mock version of Milton's Limbo of Vanity in "The Rape of the Lock," further expand the episode's intertextual web. See Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock. An heroi-comical poem. In five canto's* (London, 1714): V, and Flannagan, ed., *The Riverside Milton*, 429fn123. In addition, Dryden alludes to the Limbo of Vanity in *Mac Flecknoe* (1682). On this point, see King, esp. 208. Note that Empedocles does not appear in Dryden's or Pope's treatment of the Limbo of Vanity.

[288] Martin, *Ruins*, 23. Dante places limbo in the first circle of hell. Milton places Limbo between hell and earth, somewhere in celestial space.

is the only Pre-Socratic philosopher mentioned by name anywhere in all of *Paradise Lost*.[289] Milton leaves these other figures to drift in Dante's hellish Limbo, but goes out of his way to relocate Empedocles into a higher cosmic habitat, even if it is populated by so-called "Idiots" (3.474).

Another reason Milton may decide to preserve Empedocles out of all Dante's chided Pre-Socratics for his version of Limbo is that one Renaissance interpretation of Empedocles' philosophy assigned saw it being assimilated to the Christian idea of purgatory, as I showed in Chapter One. Recall the passage from Holland's translation of Plutarch's *Moralia* that claims Empedocles' dæmonic transmigration was a process of moral restoration, an exile imposed "untill such time as being thus in this purgatory chastised and clensed, they recover againe that place estate and degree which is meet for them and according to their nature.[290] Thus, Empedocles' own poetry lends itself to ideas of purgatorial improvement that make him a fitting occupant of Limbo.

I am not the first reader to suggest that Milton's Limbo of fools is as much about forgiving or restoring its ill-fated occupants as it is about condemning them. The cantankerous eighteenth-century editor Richard Bentley, for instance, complains about Milton's suggestion that the Limbo of Vanity is currently empty, "now unpeopl'd, and untrod" (3.467). Bentley finds this ridiculous. He annotates the line: "*Now unpeopled?*," comfortable news indeed. He has made

---

[289] But don't take this to mean that Milton had no awareness of non-Empedoclean Pre-Socratic materialisms: despite this erasure of Democritus, Heraclitus, and other materialists from Limbo, Milton seems to translate Lucretius in places, for example at 2.910–11, as Flannagan and Quint observe. See Flannagan, 407fn231, and Quint, esp. 125–6. See also Philip Hardie, "The Presence of Lucretius in 'Paradise Lost," in *Milton Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Mar. 1995): esp. 13–17.

[290] Holland, "Of Isis and Osiris," in *Morals*, 1297. The passage cites Empedocles, DK115.9–12. In the prior section, I explored how Plutarch cites this same fragment in "Of Exile."

full Amends for all the Stuff foregoing. No Fools in this Age: even the present *Eremites and Friars* have better Quarters than their Predecessors."[291] Bentley pushes against what he sees as the progress narrative of Milton's representation of Limbo, its apparent success, and thus dissolution, as a purgatorial operation. To be fair to Bentley, Milton's assertion that Limbo is currently uninhabited is a puzzling detail, for it seems to contradict the otherwise atemporal, immortalized quality he gives to the region— a quality I've already discussed when noting how Satan meets distant descendants of Adam and Eve, like Empedocles, Cleombrotus, and all the other occupants of Limbo for that matter, during a journey that occurs before the two original lovers have children. In other words, Milton's assertion that Limbo is now "unpeopl'd" seems to contradict the temporal logic he otherwise constructs around the region, exemplifying one of the poem's most compelling and challenging traits, its movement between perspectives that appear contradictory—its insistence that the reader hold together viewpoints that seem opposed. For instance, by suggesting that these figures *once* occupied a now vacant Limbo, Milton shows us two contrasting ethical judgments. Bentley's bristling at Milton's leniency registers his distaste at the poem's persistent perspectival turbulence. Bentley simply won't tolerate Milton's Empedoclean double tale, and describes his editorial burden in another footnote to the same section as the need to "tack together the broken Passage," referring to a line he adds in an attempt to manipulate the temporality of Satan's journey into a more orderly and sequential presentation.[292]

---

[291] Richard Bentley, ed., *Milton's "Paradise Lost": A New Edition* (London, 1732), 97fn496.

[292] Ibid., 97fn498.

Similarly to Bentley, Samuel Johnson and Joseph Addison both decry Milton's ontological audacity in the Limbo of Vanity. Johnson remarks that Milton's "desire for imitating Ariosto's levity has disgraced his work with the Paradise of Fools, a fiction not in itself ill-imagined, but too ludicrous for its place."[293] Where Johnson finds the episode "ludicrous," Addison deems it "astonishing but not credible," a "Description of Dreams and Shadows, not of Things or Persons."[294] For these eighteenth-century critics, the Limbo of Vanity emblematizes the frustrating ontology of *Paradise Lost*.

The experience might aggravate some readers, but I think this defamiliarization of reality is precisely the point—to jostle the reader between dualist and monist viewpoints until the boundary line separating noetic and bodily experience fades entirely, flesh and soul brought into such flux that it becomes difficult to tell one apart from the other. This has two advantages for Milton. First, it allows him to portray the body as inherently spiritual, far different from the orthodox Augustinian view, which makes matter moribund. At the same time, this movement between perspectives helps express the vitalist aspect of Milton's materialism. Putting it differently, the poem's oscillation between dualist and monist visions of reality is a way for Milton to preserve the experience of thought as autonomous and unbounded within a materialist universe. The shuttling between perspectives that drives the poem allows Milton to sustain the feeling of unpredictable, protean liquidity that accompanies thought's unrestrained movement. *Paradise Lost*, that is, develops an Empedoclean double tale, deploying visions of materialist and

---

[293] Samuel Johnson, "Milton," in *The Lives of the Poets: A Selection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 111.

[294] Joseph Addison, *The Spectator, Volume IV* (London, 1712), #315.

dualist possibility whose interpenetrating flux allows him to imagine materialism without determinism.[295]

The appearance of Empedocles in Limbo surfaces a classic tension in *Paradise Lost*, one that lies between the poem's occasional nods to a dualist ontology and its predominantly monist outlook. Milton's movement between dualist and monist vantages embodies his challenge to "the divide between matter and spirit [or soul]," which Fallon points out was "a tenet of orthodoxy" in early modern culture.[296] As Fallon argues, Milton makes Satan into a parody of Cartesian philosophy and its belief in a separated, nonextended plane of cognition (*res cogitans*) alongside the material world (*res extensa*).[297] Satan's exposure to Empedocles in Limbo broadly accords with Fallon's interpretation of Satan as a parody of Descartes, as the passage critiques Empedocles' desire to transcend the physical, and Satan experiences Empedocles as a dualistic entity, even while Milton's literary experimentation undermines belief in incorporeal substance by ornamenting the passage with subtle references to Empedocles' own philosophy. The scene offers a window into Satan's dualistic perspective, which sees Empedocles as an immaterial ghost, and then begins to shatter that window using the principle of like-to-like, one of the most monistic aspects of Empedocles' thought. In so doing, the encounter with Empedocles in

---

[295] On Milton's use of vitalism to preserve free will within a materialist framework, see Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers*, esp. 81, a passage I take up directly later in this chapter.

[296] John Rumrich and Stephen M. Fallon, "Introduction" in *Immortality and the Body in the Age of Milton*, ed. John Rumrich and Stephen M. Fallon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 2.

[297] Fallon writes that "Satan's first impulse is to deny the connection of inner and outer, the connection affirmed by Neoplatonist poets such as Spenser and dismantled by Descartes...In Cartesian terms, Satan admits alteration in his *res extensa*, but denies it in his *res cogitans*." See Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers*, 203–5.

Paradise Lost reflects the traffic between dualist and monist visions in the broader poem, its "oscillation" or "flicking on and off of hallucinatory moments in rapid succession, driven by some underlying contradiction," as Gordon Teskey writes.[298] The Empedoclean reading of *Paradise Lost* I have been developing helps illuminate the formal structure Teskey observes as a central feature of the poem.

When one considers the dualistic digressions of Empedocles' poetry, it's not hard to see why he is an attractive figure for Milton to position within a part of *Paradise Lost* that Fallon argues is a parody of Cartesian philosophy. Empedocles, with his self-identification as a dæmon, shares with Descartes the use of dæmonic imagery when making philosophical inquiries about the relationship between matter and mind. Readers will recall from Chapter One my discussion of fragment DK115 (and Plutarch/Holland's quotation of it) in which Empedocles claims to be a dæmonic exile, banished from matter as punishment for some transgression committed in a past life.[299] As I suggested, in Empedocles' poetry, a dæmonic departure from elemental substance is represented as a banishment from divinity—as a retributive slog through time and matter that leads him to the rather self-pitying conclusion,

> τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
>
> Νείκεϊ μαινομένῳ πίσυνος. ˘ ˘ | – ˘ ˘ | – –

---

[298] Teskey, 4.

[299] See Chapter One, and Empedocles, DK115. Milton certainly read DK115, given its appearance in Plutarch's *Moralia* and Hierocles' writings. See Appendix, DK115, and Boswell, #762, #1048, and #1153. This is not the only fragment that mentions dæmons; see also fragment DK59, which there is less likelihood Milton read, as it appears only in Simplicius' Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, at 586.5–26.

> [I too am now one of these, an exile from the gods and a wanderer,
>
> trusting in mad strife.][300]

Of course, this is distinct from Descartes' own dæmonic inquiry. In his *Meditations de Prima Philosophia* (1641), Descartes begins his investigation of the mind by asking how he can be sure an evil demon (*genium…malignum*) isn't controlling his perception of everything, convincing him he exists when he does not.[301] Descartes' solution to the eerie question is his famous argument in which he ventures that his very experience of thought proves his existence:

> Adeo ut, omnibus satis superque pensitatis, Denique statuendum sit hoc pronuntiatum, *Ego sum, ego existo*, quoties a me profertur, vel mente concipitur, necessario esse verum.
>
> [I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind.][302]

For Descartes, the articulation of one's cognitive identity proves one's existence, marking off a self from the great heap matter in which the mind is realized. In other words, Descartes begins to assert his freedom from a malicious demon by articulating his own consciousness, which he

---

[300] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK115.13–14, and Laks and Most, V.368. Plutarch quotes the fragment, as I discuss immediately below. Other doxographic moments include Plotinus, *Enneads*, at 4.8.1, 17–22, Celsus' *Contra Celsum*, at 8.53, Porphyry in Stobaeus at 2.8.42, and Hierocles' commentary on the *Carmen Aureum*, at 24.2–3. For a full analysis of Milton's exposure to DK115, see Appendix, DK115.

[301] Descartes asks how he can know for certain that "sed genium aliquem malignum, eundemque summe potentem & callidum, omnem suam industriam in eo posuisse, ut me falleret" ("some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me"). See Descartes, *Meditations de Prima Philosophia*, 1.23, in Adam, VII.22, and Cottingham, II.15.

[302] See Descartes, *Meditations de Prima Philosophia*, 2.25, in Adam, VII.25, and Cottingham, II.17.

regards as autonomous from the matter that gives it voice. Thinking, Descartes reasons, is the first step to freedom from his hypothetical dæmon.[303]

Both Empedoclean and Cartesian dæmonology share the dualistic possibility of materially transcendent experience, but with a significant difference. Descartes defeats the power of an evil dæmon by asserting the free movement of his thought against the threat of nonexistence. In contrast, Empedocles views his dæmonic transmigration out of and across material forms as its own kind of imprisonment, a retributive exile from the material-elemental plane he regards with sacral reverence as the basis of everything, even thought.[304] Thus, one could say that Descartes attempts to pull the mind outside of matter to assert his freedom against the threat of an imaginary dæmon, while Empedocles claims he has himself become a dæmon by way of his exile from matter, the way every element in turn leaves him on its doorstep. For Descartes, incorporeal ideation sets the mind free of matter's deterministic threat; for Empedocles, incorporeal experience represents a departure from spiritual wholeness. Both philosophers therefore posit the dualistic experience of transcending matter, but develop contrasting attitudes about the value of incorporeal experience in relation to freedom. This is

---

[303] "Ego sum, ego existo; certum est. Quandiu autem? Nempe quandiu cogito" ("I am, I exist—that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking"). See Descartes, *Meditations,* 2.27, in Adam, VII.27, and Cottingham, II.18. I say perception is the "first step" of Descartes' escape from the dæmon because the argument that unfolds over the course of the *Meditations* is multifaceted: the argument "I think, therefore I am" claims that the thinking self exists, but to gain full autonomy from the hypothetical dæmon's possible distortions of perception, Descartes argues later, he must possess the knowledge that God exists. This highlights an even greater resonance between Cartesian and Empedoclean dæmonism, as both philosophers position divine entities in flux with material mechanism. See Descartes, "Third Meditation" and "Fifth Meditation," in Cottingham, II.24–36 & II.44–9.

[304] For Empedocles' analogy of the elements to gods, see esp. DK6, a fragment I discuss throughout these pages. I discuss Empedocles' attribution of thought to the four elements (DK107) in the following paragraphs and the introduction.

why Empedocles might give something to Milton that Descartes can't quite offer, namely: dualistic ideation that longs for monistic reintegration, that asserts the mind's desire for reabsorption into material substance as an avenue for augmenting, rather than destroying, free will.[305]

However, despite the dæmonic digressions and incorporeal ideations of Empedocles and Descartes, both philosophers are ultimately too materialist minded for the seventeenth-century clergyman and philosopher Joseph Glanvill. According to Glanvill, both Descartes and Empedocles exemplify the failure to explain the soul's relationship to the body, which he describes as an "utterly unconceivable problem."[306] For him, both thinkers are too mechanistic

---

[305] Despite their very different conceptions of dæmonic dualism in relation to matter and noetic experience, Descartes nonetheless shares Empedocles' emphasis on the potential for elemental sympathy and unification. As he writes in *Le Monde* (*The World*) (written ca. 1633), "…les forms des Elemens doivent estre simples, n'avoir aucunes qualitez qui ne s'accordent ensemble si parfaitement, que chacune tende à la conservation de toutes les autres ("…the forms of the elements must be simple and must not have any qualities which do not accord so perfectly with one another that each contributes to the preservation of all the others"). See Descartes, *The World,* V.24–5, in Adam, XI.26, and Cottingham, I.89. For a useful summary of Cartesian dualism that compares and contrasts it with the thought of Plato and Aristotle, see Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers*, 22.

[306] Joseph Glanvill, *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion by Joseph Glanvill, Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty, and Fellow of the R. S.* (London, 1676), 4. A further example of a seventeenth-century text that compares Empedocles' and Descartes' understandings of the soul is found in a treatise by Robert Midgley, who writes: "But if the Soul were not by its own substance extended through the whole body, and had its seat only in the Heart, as *Empedocles* would have it, or in the Speen and the Stomach, as *Van Helmont* places it, or in the *Glaudula Pinealis* of the Brain, according to *Cartesius*…it is certain, that all these parts which are taken to be the seat of the Soul, are divisible, and that they have distinct parts and figures; so the Soul, as it is indivisible, occupies a space or place which is divisible, whence I conclude, that the indivisibility does not hinder, but that a substance may have a certain indivisible extension, but divisible as to the place which it possesses, or that it may have Angles and figures, in respect of place, though its substance essentially remain one, simple, and indivisible." See Midgley, *A New Treatise of Natural Philosophy, Free'd from the Intricacies of the Schools Adorned With Many Curious Experiments both Medicinal and Chymical: As Also with Several Observations Useful for the Health of the Body* (London, 1687), 113–15.

with respect to this issue, and he includes them in a long list of philosophical opinions on the matter he finds inadequate. Glanvill observes that Empedocles defines the soul as blood, a position frequently attributed to Empedocles in the early modern period. It's grounded in a fragment which locates cognition in the heart:

> αἵματος ἐν πελάγεσσι τεθραμμένη ἀντιθορόντος,
>
> τῇ τε νόημα μάλιστα κικλήσκεται ἀνθρώποισιν·
>
> αἷμα γὰρ ἀνθρώποις περικάρδιόν ἐστι νόημα.
>
> [[the heart] nourished in the seas of blood which leaps back and forth
>
> and there especially it is called understanding by men;
>
> for men's understanding is blood around the heart].[307]

The fragment is another example of the materialist minded Empedocles, as it equates mental activity to a bodily substance. It might remind readers of a related fragment, DK107, in which Empedocles claims that the four elements are the material substructure of everything in the universe, including thought and feeling.[308] Moreover, the fragment's striking "seas of blood"

---

[307] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK105, and Laks and Most, V.566. Milton may have come across this fragment in his reading of Porphyry's *On Styx*, which appears in Stobaeus' *Eclogae* and cites the fragment at 1.49.53. See Boswell entry #1350, which lists Stobaeus' works as a likely candidate for inclusion in Milton's library. On the doxographic tradition of this fragment, and of attributing the definition of the soul as blood to Empedocles, see Trépanier, esp. 144–5. As I noted in Chapter Two, there is a separate tradition of claiming Empedocles defined the soul as a mixture of fire and air.

[308] I discuss fragment DK107 in the Introduction. Raymond B. Waddington offers a reading of blood as a representing of soul in *Paradise Lost*. See Waddington, *Looking into Providences: Designs and Trials in "Paradise Lost"* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 151–68. Waddington does not directly comment on the idea's resonance with Empedoclean philosophy.

remind readers of the human body's imbrication in the larger material world, as it implicitly analogizes the steady pumping of blood through the heart to the endless cycles of the oceans' currents. But the comparison is multilayered, as the image of blood-as-seawater itself comes to analogize the experience of thought by the end of the passage. Even while aligning thought to natural substances, the choice of seawater helps Empedocles to capture the protean feeling of noetic experience. In other words, while the analogy of thought as oceanic blood attributes cognition to a bodily process, it maintains the sense that thought is powerful, dynamic, unpredictable, and free, and that despite its material causes within us, thought can feel like it comes from without us, like the steady beat of waves washing upon the shore of our embodied phenomenological experience.

Glanvill does not appreciate this nuance, however. For him, the claim that the mind (or soul) is in the blood is just another attempt to provide a material mechanism for the soul, no better in his eyes than Descartes' claim that the soul is a "Thinking Substance" that acts upon a specific part of the brain.[309] Along with all the other philosophers he includes, Glanvill says Empedocles and Descartes both run into the same problem when they try to schematize body and soul: they fail to explain how the soul "gives motion to unactive matter."[310] For Glanvill, the attempts of Descartes and Empedocles to define the nature of the soul only illustrate the intractability of the problem. Despite these two philosophers' associations with immaterial experience through concepts like *res cogitans* and the dæmon respectively, Glanvill nevertheless critiques them for parts of their thought he regards as overly materialist in tone, viewing them as

---

[309] Glanvill, *Essays*, 4.

[310] Ibid.

threats to the demarcation line between matter and soul. In contrast to Milton, Glanvill is reluctant to think about soul and body together, and certainly doesn't want to entertain any perspectival blur:

> what the *Cement* should be that unites *Heaven* and *Earth, Light* and *Darkness, viz.* Natures of so diverse a make, and such disagreeing Attributes, is beyond the reach of any of our Faculties: We can as easily conceive how a thought should be united to a Statue, or a Sun-beam to a piece of Clay: how words should be frozen in the Air, (as some say they are in the remote North) or how Light should be kept in a Box; as we can apprehend the *manner* of this *strange Vnion.*[311]

The passage scorns the idea of any middle ground between matter and soul, reinscribing the Augustinian division that had become a centerpiece of dualist Christian orthodoxy. Glanvill draws on the inert imagery of clay and statues to emphasize matter's spiritual alienation from limitless immortality. His distaste for Descartes' definition of the soul exemplifies how Descartes was not always, as Fallon puts it, "allied…with perennial Christian attacks on materialism."[312] To the contrary, Glanvill's essay shows that Descartes was sometimes accused of an Empedoclean blurring of boundaries that threatened rather than reinforced a divine hierarchy of matter and spirit.

Perhaps at its most radical, the poetically and philosophically generative blur created by Milton's oscillation between dualist and monist viewpoints in *Paradise Lost* threatens to collapse

---

[311] Ibid.

[312] Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers*, 24. To be fair, elsewhere in *Essays*, Glanvill is more positive about other aspects of Descartes' philosophy. But he does not automatically find Descartes' explanation of *res cogitans* to be an adequate explanation of the soul.

even the boundary that delimits these two categories—that is, between dualism and monism as mutually exclusive modes of contemplating the world. In other words, the poem ultimately aims to bring readers into a monist vision of the cosmos, but has no qualms about occasionally turning to dualistic images of material transcendence in order to help them experience this viewpoint. In fact, as they do in Empedocles' poetry, these dualistic digressions help move the reader between different ways of knowing the world, making monism available by going through, rather than around, familiar fantasies of material transcendence. In the universe of *Paradise Lost*, Empedocles is not truly the airy spirit that a parodic Satan encounters in the Limbo of Vanity—he's a bodily presence that exerts itself against the myth of his dualistic immortal fervor as conveyed by an incendiary biographical tradition.

From Elements to Atoms: Milton's Empedoclean Materialism

A convergence exists between the ontological ruptures of *Paradise Lost* and the "double tale" of Empedocles' fragments. Both Milton and Empedocles seem to delight in confronting the reader with incongruities and insisting on their perspectival cohesion. As Empedocles tells readers,

> | – ˘ ˘ | – ˘ ˘ | – μία γίγνεται ἀμφοτέρων ὄψ
>
> […….from both there was one vision].[313]

---

[313] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK88, and Laks and Most, V.546. Milton may have read this fragment in Aristotle's *Poetics*, which quotes it at 1458a4–5. And see Boswell, #85.

Fragments like this, paired with the self-admission to a "double tale" in DK17 that I have been building on throughout these pages, point to Empedocles' potential self-consciousness about his pluralistic viewpoint of reality, the way he flashes between the material and immaterial in an ontological dialectic that insists on cohesion, on "one vision" from a two-fold tale. The resonance of this model with Milton's materialist perspectivism is striking, particularly considering the emphasis on oneness shared by the two poets, and the centrality of the analogic mode to both writers' work.[314]

I already began to suggest this in the prior section, when I argued that Milton's depiction of Empedocles in Limbo relies on both dualistic and monistic imagery as it subjects the philosopher to a clever joke, evoking Empedocles' own metaphysical system in the process of mocking his biography. In the remainder of the chapter, I broaden out to other moments in the poem where Empedocles' double vision flickers into view, where his inscrutability on matters of ontology helps lend expression to Milton's own materialist vision. As I will show, Empedoclean perspectivism offers a powerful intervention in the stark critical divide over Milton's fluctuating materialism, especially since Milton recognizes Empedocles' movement between the many and the one as a powerful analogy for bringing soul into corporeal form. Moreover, I reevaluate Raphael's "one first matter all" speech—often regarded as the central stalk of the poem's materialist vision—demonstrating how Raphael's words draw on Empedoclean poetry when they invoke "springing" roots to describe a continuum of spiritual and material substance. Ultimately, I suggest that Milton's materialist poetics generates an Empedoclean perspectival haziness whose fluid movement takes readers between elements and atoms, flesh and soul, dissolving

---

[314] I've already shown how Empedocles embraces the use of analogy for natural philosophy in fragment DK9.

these distinctions through the disorientation afforded by the blur. In so doing, Milton's Empedoclean mode offers Adam and Eve an escape route from the stark binary choice represented by the forbidden Tree.

Empedocles' philosophy of a material world composed of elements that cycle between states of unitive cohesion and fragmented heterogeneity helps to inspire Milton's poetic vacillations between descriptions of the physical and immaterial. *Paradise Lost* is Milton's attempt to blend together the duality of materiality and cognition that prevailed in the Cartesian intellectual milieu he inhabited, and Empedocles' pluralism helps Milton navigate and overcome this duality. Like the poem of Empedocles, Milton's epic masterpiece urges readers toward a vision of ontological oneness, even while it occasionally indulges the language of dualistic speculation, as if to illustrate poetically a cognitive shift from a fragmented dualistic perspective to the cohesion of vitalist monism. Although Empedocles may only appear by name in the Limbo of Vanity episode, poetic vestiges of his philosophy are woven throughout *Paradise Lost*. For Milton, Empedoclean physics inspires a noetic malleability that blinks into visibility in the poem's repeated shifts and vacillations. One way to understand Milton's Empedoclean habit is as a bridge between the text's seemingly oppositional representations of dualist and monist speculation. This Empedoclean bridge helps Milton and his readers move between the two perspectives without resolving categorically to either one. Milton puts spiritual and material phenomena into an Empedoclean dialectic that softens the boundary between the two, moving readers away from a binary logic that insists materialist philosophy must be purged of all soul—and also away from its dualistic counterpart, the insistence on a hard and fast division between a luminous incorporeality and a dead, spiritless matter. Moreover, I propose that the Empedoclean perspectivism in *Paradise Lost* speaks in critical ways to divergent readings of the poem's

ontologies, as captured in the variant interpretations of scholars such as Fallon and N.K. Sugimura.

Fallon's influential interpretation of *Paradise Lost* offers an illuminating account of Milton's vitalist materialism, although I affirm that the Empedoclean perspectivism that informs this materialism can help further refine the philosophical picture of the poem. Fallon convincingly argues that "Milton's materialist monism treats spirit and matter as manifestations, differing in degree and not qualitatively, of the one corporeal substance. Milton's spirit does not coexist with an alien matter; it contains matter." Similarly, Fallon observes,

> the attempt to separate body from spirit is absurd from a monist point of view; it results paradoxically in the despiritualization of the one substance. If there is only one substance, and if body is conceived as separate from spirit, then the body must be dead and spiritless.[315]

Fallon's shows how from Milton's materialist perspective, dualism actually threatens to dilute the spiritual experience of living in the material world, evacuating corporeal substance of inner vitality. Moreover, Fallon suggests that "Milton's animist materialism allows him to forgo making a case for incorporealism without admitting a mechanism threatening to his conception of freedom of the will."[316] Empedoclean materialism, I suggest, can offer a parallel avenue to the preservation of free will within a materialist worldview, one that comes into view as Milton moves fluidly between materialist and dualist perspectives. Taking into account that Empedocles entertains the possibility of incorporeal experience while defining it as a departure from matter's

---

[315] See Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers*, 102 & 92.

[316] Ibid., 107.

innate divinity (DK115), it's possible to think in new ways about Milton's ontological incongruities, which provide visions of material transcendence while circumscribing them within the limits of a spiritually charged materialist manifesto.

Empedoclean perspectivism also speaks to Sugimura's interpretation of *Paradise Lost*, which offers a counterpoint to Fallon's materialist reading. Sugimura emphasizes the dualistic aspects of the poem, drawing on Milton's youthful interest in Platonism to suggest that his inclusion of figures like Chaos and Night undermines a strictly materialist reading of the poem.[317] Sugimura resists what she sees as the "orthodox picture of him [Milton] as a monist materialist," arguing that the glimmers of material transcendence sprinkled throughout *Paradise Lost* should play a more central role in understandings of the poem's ontology. Sugimura contends:

> Against the bleached backdrop of the story of Milton's monist materialism, there are brilliant moments of opposition, such as when the intellect shimmers with immateriality like the 'radiant forms' of Milton's angels (*PL* V.457). These ethereal and liminal substances emit a light that at times blazes but at other times softens to a mere flicker.[318]

The differences here from Fallon are pronounced. Whereas Fallon suggests that Milton's philosophy regards dualism as a threat to matter's vitality, Sugimura regards monist materialism as a "bleached" description of the poem's ontology, occasionally obscuring Fallon's own subtlety on this point. Furthermore, notice how Sugimura surfaces the language of "flicker[ing]," picking up on the perspectival movement that Teskey defines as a cornerstone of Milton's poetic

---

[317] See N. K. Sugimura, *"Matter of Glorious Trial": Spiritual and Material Substance in "Paradise Lost"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), xxiii.

[318] Ibid., xxiv.

approach, as I discussed in the Introduction, and to which I return below. Although Teskey and Sugimura do not consider the Empedoclean quality of this flickering, it's interesting that their descriptions take on Empedoclean resonances of their own, even while not being about Empedocles *per se*. For example, putting aside Sugimura's elemental language in the passage above ("ethereal," "blazes," "flicker"), she frames her interpretation of *Paradise Lost*'s ontological inconsistency in terms highly evocative of Empedoclean effluence: Sugimura argues that "fluid intermediaries are present in Milton's poetry and that these substances move respectively between poles of materiality and immateriality."[319] This could just as aptly describe the way Empedocles deploys the notion of material flux (or effluence) to suggest the elements' liquid mutability, analogizing a more fundamental transit between dualist and monist conceptions of reality. Thus, while I ultimately disagree with Sugimura that the poem's "fluid intermediaries" subtract from the idea of Milton's materialism, her unintentionally Empedoclean critical vocabulary helps illustrate how the present critical stalemate reaches for Empedocles' distinctive perspectival motion as a potential solution.

Recall that in Empedoclean ontology, Φιλότης (Love) is a force that draws the elements into a state of homogeneous unity, while its counterpart, Νεῖκός (Strife), tears them apart.[320] These two forces occur within a cycle of alternating dominance over the world. Sometimes the world is a mass of unitive cohesion, and sometimes it is heterogeneous, fragmented. Empedocles explains it like this:

> καὶ ταῦτ᾽ ἀλλάσσοντα διαμπερὲς οὐδαμὰ λήγει,

---

[319] Ibid., xvii.

[320] Empedocles, DK17.18–20.

ἄλλοτε μὲν Φιλότητι συνερχόμεν᾽ εἰς ἓν ἅπαντα,

ἄλλοτε δ᾽ αὖ δίχ᾽ ἕκαστα φορεύμενα Νείκεος ἔχθει.

[And these things [the elements] never cease from constantly alternating,

at one time all coming together by love into one,

and at another time again all being borne apart separately by the hostility of strife.][321]

According to these lines, the interplay of competitive Φιλότης and Νεῖκός during a given moment in history determines the particular material makeup of the world at that time.[322] One might think of Φιλότης in Empedoclean cosmography as an inconstant gravity between the elements, and Strife as its inverse, a force that repels. The interplay of these forces is not random but occurs in an alternating cycle. As Denis O'Brien puts it, "these two forces rule in turn. Νεῖκός makes the elements many, and so long as the elements are many they are moving. Love makes the elements into a single whole, the Sphere."[323] Empedocles' description of this sphere marks another moment in the fragments—like his analogy of the elements to the immortal gods

---

[321] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK17, lines 6–8, and Laks and Most, V.410. For a helpful introduction to Empedocles' system, see O'Brien, *Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle*. And see Waterfield, "Empedocles of Acragas," esp. 134–9, as well as Laks and Most, esp. V.319.

[322] Milton probably came across discussion and quotation of this fragment DK17 (which is more extensive than the three lines I have quoted above) in his reading of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* at III.IV.1000a18–b20, Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* at 5.15.4; Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers* at 8.76; Plutarch's "Isis and Osiris" at 370e, and "Dialogue on Love" at 756d (both in the *Moralia*). According to Boswell, it is very likely that Milton owned copies of or read all these works. There is less certainty, though still some possibility, that Milton read Aristotle's *Physics* and Stobaeus's *Eclogae*, both of which discuss the fragment (at 250b23–251a5 and 1.10.11b, respectively). See Boswell, *Milton's Library*, entries 81, 414, 493, 1153, 84, and 1350.

[323] O'Brien, *Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle,* 1.

in DK6—when an anthropomorphic view of matter rears its head. Indeed, the sway of Φιλότης eventually coaxes matter into euphoria, blends it into bliss:

> ἔνθ' οὔτ' Ἠελίοιο διείδεται ὠκέα γυῖα
>
> …
>
> οὕτως Ἁρμονίης πυκινῷ κρύφῳ ἐστήρικται
>
> Σφαῖρος κυκλοτερὴς μονίῃ περιγηθέι γαίων.
>
> [There the swift limbs of the sun are not discerned, [nor]
>
> …….
>
> Thus it is fixed in the dense cover of harmony,
>
> a rounded sphere, rejoicing in its solitude.][324]

The fragment illustrates the homogenizing effect of Love by stressing how when Love dominates the elements, even the "swift limbs of the sun" are indistinguishable within the exultant sphere that results from Love's conglobing sympathy. Subjecting the mighty sun to Love's dominance emphasizes Love's all-encompassing power, which disperses the sun into the whole world.[325] Recalling the principle of like-to-like in his broader system, this happy globe reveals that in Empedocles' vision, not only do like substances attract, but also that unlike substances can ultimately become similar. In other words the sun, with all its concentrated, life-giving power, is

---

[324] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK27, and Laks and Most, V.448. Empedocles discusses the sphere created by Φιλότης in other fragments too, such as DK28. It is unclear whether DK27 & DK28 were readily available to Milton, though his knowledge of the concept becomes self-evident in book seven of *Paradise Lost*, as I discuss immediately below.

[325] Empedocles writes in a different fragment that the happy glove of Love's making is "equal to itself on all sides and totally unbounded" [ἀλλ ὅ γε πάντοθεν ἶσος <ἔην> καὶ πάμπαν ἀπείρων]. I'm quoting from Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK28.1. And see Laks and Most, V.448.

collapsed into the material forms that usually depend it for energy and the rhythm of time; the image implies that rocks and sunlight might be fused into one, illustrating Empedocles' belief that all elemental substances are fundamentally similar.[326] Moreover, the sun, a cosmic force whose movements generate the cycle of night and day, is circumscribed by this broader cycle of Love. This ability for the sun to be brought down to earth in Empedocles' system exemplifies his perspectival movement, his vacillation between thinking of the world as constituted by four elements, and by one substance. While this fusion into elemental similitude therefore gestures toward the possibility of monism, Empedocles tempers this through his personification of the sphere, which "rejoic[es] in its solitude," not to mention the way Love acts *upon* the elements as a seemingly external force. Matter itself is made indistinguishable, except perhaps for mental activity (joy), which appears to maintain some separation from the homogenized mass that expresses it.[327] The image is therefore another moment that highlights Empedocles' "double tale," his ambivalent vacillation between materialist and idealist possibility.[328]

Milton draws on the Lovely sphere of Empedoclean physics during Raphael's description of creation in book seven of *Paradise Lost*. Raphael explains how God

…founded, then conglob'd[329]

---

[326] See Empedocles, DK89, and Chapter One, where I discuss in detail the movement between the many and the one in Empedocles' physics.

[327] The personification present in the sphere's "rejoicing" has a counterpart in Empedocles' description of the world under Νεῖκός, which he casts as a condition of cosmic "hostility." See Empedocles, "Fragments," in *The Poem of Empedocles,* trans. Brad Inwood (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2010), DK17.8.

[328] Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK17.1.

[329] The *OED* defines "conglobe" as "to gather or form into a ball or globe, or a rounded compact mass." About 50 lines later, Raphael again returns to the image of conglobing matter, but this

Like things to like, the rest to several place

Disparted, and between spun out the Air,

And Earth self-ballanc't on her Center hung. (7.239–42)

Citing the Empedoclean (and Democritean) principle of "like-to-like" by name, Raphael depicts God transforming the divided fecundity of chaos into a spherical whole, conceptualizing the process of creation as an elemental fusion followed by a process of division.[330] Notice how Milton underwrites his description of divine creation in the terms of Empedoclean elemental gathering: God as a "conglobing" Love. Although not as exultant as Empedocles' "rejoicing" sphere, the detail that the Earth was "*self*-ballanc't on her Center" lends a subtle personification to the image (emphasis mine).

As the account of creation in book seven progresses, its Empedoclean characteristics come into fuller view, particularly when the image of a joyful globe resurfaces a bit later. Milton describes how the young

earth in her rich attire

Consummate lovly smil'd; Aire, Water, Earth,

By Fowl, Fish, Beast, was flown, was swum, was walkt

---

time at a smaller scale, analogizing the formation of watery regions "as drops on dust conglobing from the drie," one element gathering spherically out of its dry antithesis. See Milton, "Paradise Lost," 7.292.

[330] On the principle of like-to-like, see Empedocles, DK109, and previous discussion in this chapter. Milton likely came across Aristotle's quotation and critique of this fragment in *Metaphysics* at III.IV.1000a18–b20. It's probable, though less certain, that Milton also read Aristotle's *On the Soul*, which quotes this fragment at 404b8–15. See Boswell, *Milton's Library*, entries #72 and #81. On the principle of like-to-like in Democritus and Leucippus, see Andrew Gregory, "Leucippus and Democritus on Like to Like and *Ou Mallon*," in *Apeiron* 46, no. 4 (2013), esp. 447–52.

Frequent. (7.501–4)

The passage personifies the earth into a smiling globe, a macrocosmic human delighted in its abundance of intermingling elements. The forms of the earth are distinct, but this is a vision of oneness nonetheless: the earth as a holistic entity that derives joy from the teeming voyages of its multiform inhabitants. Milton's attention to these elemental conjunctions prior to the Fall reframes the imminent event as an experience of cosmic proportions. Far from being a simple breach of God's dietary restrictions, this serves to preemptively reframe the Fall into a drama of universal scale, one that extends beyond the domain of human ethics and into the elemental fabric of Empedocles' cosmic cycle.

True, images of sympathetic convergence and spherical formations of matter can be found in other, non-Empedoclean accounts of cosmic creation.[331] Yet the proximity of the reference to like-to-like and the personified earth puts Milton's account of creation in a particularly Empedoclean key. It would be reductive to say that Milton's representation of Genesis is solely or categorically Empedoclean, but given that it marks another occasion when Milton directly mentions the idea of like-to-like, it's possible to see the contours of an Empedoclean mindset emerging in Milton's description of divine events like the Genesis story

---

[331] Consider for instance the related and controversial idea of action at a distance, another system of magical sympathy that was influential in early modern England. On action at a distance, see Lobis, *The Virtue of Sympathy*, esp. 4–6. Plato's description of the creation of marrow in the *Timaeus* involves an idealized sphere. See Plato, "Timaeus," trans. Robin Waterfield, in *Timaeus and Critias* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 73d. On Empedocles' associations with magical sympathy in the early modern period, see Lobis, 208–9; Mary Floyd-Wilson, *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 8–9, and Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

or, as I discussed earlier in the chapter, the movement of Sin from hell to earth.[332] In other words, while there are alternative systems of magical sympathy that could be used to describe this moment in *Paradise Lost*, a distinctively Empedoclean sense of attraction by likeness cuts across Milton's depiction of God and Sin, making it an especially apt philosophical hermeneutic lens for discussing the unusual ontology of Milton's poem.

Moreover, other seventeenth-century writers draw on Empedoclean physics to describe the Biblical account of creation, which helps contextualize Milton's version. Consider this passage from Du Bartas' *Sepmaines*:

> Ce premier mõde estoit une forme sans forme,
>
> Une pile confuse, un meslange difforme,
>
> D'abismes un abisme, un corps mal compasse,
>
> Un Chaos de Chaos, un tas mal entases:
>
> Où tous les elemens se logeoyent pesle-mesle:
>
> Où le liquid avoit avec le sec querelle,
>
> Le rond avec l'aigu, le froid avec le chaud.
>
> Le dur avec le mol, le bas avec le haut.

---

[332] See "The Book of Genesis," in *The Holy Bible*, 1:3. Compare these lines with Empedocles' fragment DK90, which invoke imagery of sweetness and bitterness to describe the effects of Love. A further example of a seventeenth-century text that draws on the idea of the primordial sphere is Thomas Burnet's *Sacred Theory of the Earth*. As H. G. Cocks explains, "for Burnet, whose *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1681–89) has long been considered one of the founding texts of sublime theorizing, the earth, as created by God, had originally been a perfect sphere that reflected its designer's own perfection, and had only assumed its rugged appearance after the Deluge had carved out seas, mountains, and other mementos of human wickedness. The result, Burnet suggested, was that the earth, though productive of feelings of infinity, or in his terms, 'greatness,' was no more than a wreck, its mountain ranges little more than 'great Ruins.'" See H.G. Cocks, "The Discovery of Sodom, 1851," *Representations* 112, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 5.

[The first World (yet) was a most formless *Form*,
A confus'd Heap, a *Chaos* most deform,
A Gulf of Gulfs, a Body ill compact,
An vgly medly, where all difference lackt:
Where th' Elements lay jumbled all together,
Where hot and colde were jarring each with either,
The blunt with sharp, the dank against the drie,
The hard with soft, the base against the high;
Bitter with sweet.][333]

The lines present an image related to Milton and Empedocles' happy, homogeneous sphere, but Du Bartas' version isn't so joyful. For him, the undivided mass of primordial matter amounts to "an vgly medly, where all difference lackt," and rather than casting this as a harmonious wedding of unlike substances, Du Bartas imagines a discordant and confused mess, the elements "jumbled all together" as hot and cold are "jarring each with either." The difference from Milton's elegantly "self-ballanc't" globe is pronounced. This underscores how, whereas the monistic Milton views the globular similitude of God's primordial matter in a positive light, Du Bartas is far more dualistic, viewing this undistinguished heap as confused and discordant, as severely in need of God's dividing power. In Milton's version, God infuses the "fluid Mass" with "vital virtue...and vital warmth," even before he begins dividing up matter into elemental

---

[333] See Du Bartas, *Les Œuvres de Guillaume de Saluste seigneur du Bartas* (Geneva, 1582), pp. 8, and Du Bartas, *Du Bartas his deuine weekes and workes translated: and dedicated to the Kings most excellent Maiestie by Iosuah Syluester* (London, 1611), 8.

categories, reflecting his vitalist materialism in which "all corporeal substance is animate, self-active, and free" (7.236–7).[334] Still, God's apparent subjective separation from the material mass that he infuses with "vital warmth" prevents the scene from reducing totally to an airtight materialism. The passage reveals Milton's mind in motion, as he moves between visions of a separated, incorporeal, immortal God and a sympathetic, materialist universe that is infused with an innate spiritual energy. Empedocles provides Milton a perspectival flux that puts material and theological contemplation into a consubstantial, electric dynamic.

In other words, Empedocles' perspectival oscillation between incorporeal and elemental visions of reality helps animate his materialist theodicy. Empedocles muses on the possibilities of a universe constituted by elemental matter, while also implicating these material components within larger structures of potentially non-elemental constitution. However, because of Empedocles' frequently analogic style, it is hermeneutically challenging to determine the precise relationship of materialist and incorporeal ideation within the fragments as a whole, to determine whether Empedocles ultimately subjects his elements to incorporeal forces, or his incorporeal forces to elements. Instead, he puts them into a dynamic tension where neither seems to have primacy. This generates the ontological blurriness I've been describing throughout these pages, which becomes especially attractive for Milton's poetic treatment of materialism in *Paradise Lost*.

The useful blurriness I'm describing is perhaps best exemplified when Empedocles analogizes the four elements to the gods Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus and Nestis in fragment DK6, a fragment I have discussed throughout these chapters:

---

[334] Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 81.

τέσσαρα τῶν πάντων ῥιζώματα πρῶτον ἄκουε·

Ζεὺς ἀργὴς Ἥρη τε φερέσβιος ἠδ' Ἀϊδωνεύς

Νῆστίς θ', ἣ δακρύοις τέγγει κρούνωμα βρότειον.

[First, hear of the four roots of all things,

gleaming Zeus and life-bringing Hera and Aidoneus

and Nestis, who moistens with tears the spring of mortals.][335]

Is Empedocles suggesting that these mythological figures amount to an allegory for humankind's subjugation to material forces, that the real "gods" are the four elements? Or does Empedocles' analogy move in the other direction, implying an innate divinity or vitality circumscribed by the material building blocks of nature? To put it differently, is Empedocles ultimately referring to elemental gods, or godly elements? My wish to assign a "direction" to the analogy arises from a modern epistemology not in place during Empedocles' time, one that feels pressure to extract either an exclusively materialist or theological position from the comparison. According to Kathryn A. Morgan, DK6 is not a suggestion of "anthropomorphic gods," pointing out that in fragment DK134, "Empedocles declares that god has no head, legs, or genitals, but is an ineffable 'holy mind,' which rushes through the entire cosmos with swift thoughts."[336] Here is DK134:

---

[335] See Laks and Most, V.400, and Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK6. "Nestis" is an alternative name of Persephone. Milton surely encountered this fragment in his reading of Plutarch's *Lives*, a text Milton mentions in several of his own works, and which quotes the fragment at 8.76. See Boswell entry 493.

[336] Kathryn. A. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy: From the Presocratics to Plato* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 60–1.

οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀνδρομέῃ κεφαλῇ κατὰ γυῖα κέκασται,

οὐ <μὲν> ἀπαὶ νώτοιο δύο κλάδοι ἀίσσονται,

οὐ πόδες, οὐ θοὰ γοῦν', οὐ μήδεα λαχνήεντα,

ἀλλὰ φρὴν ἱερὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος ἔπλετο μοῦνον,

φροντίσι κόσμον ἅπαντα καταΐσσουσα θοῇσιν.

[For [it/he] is not fitted out in [its/his] limbs with a human head,

nor do two branches dart from [its/his] back

nor feet, nor swift knees nor shaggy genitals;

but it/he is only a sacred and ineffable thought organ

darting through the entire cosmos with swift thoughts.][337]

Like DK6, the fragment creates an indeterminate relationship between matter and divine substance. To Morgan's point, the lines present god as a nonhuman entity who courses throughout the material world, a thought-substance "sacred and ineffable" (ἱερὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος) that moves at lightning speed. These details lend Empedocles' description of god an incorporeal, impersonal feel, and yet notice how the lines also corporealize divine substance, describing it as an "organ" (φρὴν). Yet the ambivalence persists even in the etymology of φρὴν—which carries anatomical meanings such as the heart or the area where the liver meets the diaphragm in the

[337] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK134, and Laks and Most, V.450. Milton may not have encountered fragment DK134, as there is little direct evidence that he read either Tzetzes' *Chiliades* or Ammonius' commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. Neither of these two texts, which are the main doxographic works for fragment DK134, appear in Boswell's *Milton's Library*.

chest, as well as idealist connotations depicting φρὴν as "mind or soul."[338] Thus, while Empedocles may sustain elements of incorporeal speculation, his representation of gods is not merely anthropocentric, depicting divinity as interspersed with and moving throughout matter, as opposed to being straightforwardly separated from it. The fragment is yet another example of the dialectical motion that is endemic to the Empedoclean mood. And it displays how when Empedocles invokes sacred possibility, he dialectically conjures visions of a world made only of elemental materials.

Milton appears to have been interested in Empedoclean elementalism's pithy perspectivism long before he wrote *Paradise Lost*, as a moment in "Il Penseroso" (1645) demonstrates. The speaker implores Melancholy and Contemplation to guide him in thought, and to

...unsphear

The spirit of *Plato*, to unfold

What Worlds, or what vast Regions hold

The immortal mind that hath forsook

Her mansion in this fleshly nook:

And of those *Dæmons* that are found

In fire, air, flood, or under ground,

Whose power hath a true consent

---

[338] See "φρὴν, φρενός, ἡ," senses A & B, in Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Boston: Brill, 2015, pp. 2306, column 1. And it's interesting to think back to Empedocles' definition of the heart as mind in fragment DK105, which I discussed earlier in this chapter.

With Planet, or with Element.[339]

While the first part of this passage invokes Plato as a guide to "the immortal mind," the latter portion shifts to Empedoclean language as Milton imagines "*Dæmons*" lurking in the four elements, also gesturing toward their celestial, zodiacal correspondences.[340] For those of us familiar with the Empedoclean tradition, how can these lines not recall the Sicilian poet's analogy comparing elements to divine substance in fragment DK6, or his philosophically innovative fragment DK115, where he declares himself an elemental dæmon banished from the inner sanctity of matter? This snapshot from "Il Penseroso" is an example of Milton thinking about the relationship between matter and incorporeal substance much earlier in his career, and how he turned to Empedoclean terminology ("dæmons," the four elements, the idea of magical "consent" or sympathy) to navigate the problem.

But while this example from "Il Penseroso" provides evidence for Milton's Empedoclean resonances earlier in his poetic career, it doesn't go very far to advance my claim that the later *Paradise Lost* espouses an Empedoclean materialism; for, as McDowell points out, Milton's youthful attraction to dualistic ideation can be understood as an early phase in the poet's philosophical journey, against which his later philosophy stands in relief. McDowell's biography articulates a contrast between an "enraptured, Platonic, and daemonic young Milton" and the "later Milton, who checked his early pagan energies with an increasingly sharp sense of human fallenness."[341] Similarly, Fallon notes that

---

[339] Milton, "Il Penseroso," in *The Riverside Milton*, lines 88–96.

[340] On elementalism's zodiacal correspondences, see Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (New York: Routledge, 1979), 12.

[341] McDowell, *Poet of Revolution,* 156.

> by the time he came to write the Latin prose *Christian Doctrine* and *Paradise Lost* in the late 1650s and after, Milton had unequivocally repudiated the dualism of the early poems and thus separated himself from the Neoplatonism then reigning at Christ's, his undergraduate college at Cambridge. Instead of being trapped in an ontologically alien body, the soul is one with the body. Spirit and matter become for Milton two modes of the same substance: spirit is rarefied matter, and matter is dense spirit. All things, from insensate objects through souls, are manifestations of this one substance.[342]

While I do not dispute the broad outlines of the stadial view of Milton's philosophy that Fallon and McDowell describe, I aim to recast the evolution of Milton's mindset from youth to maturity in a less stark light, deemphasizing the "sharp sense of human fallenness" and "unequivocal[…] repudiat[ion]" that McDowell and Fallon detect in the older Milton's turn to materialism. To do this, I will now show how key passages expressing the vitalist materialism of *Paradise Lost* are informed by the Empedoclean perspectival blur.

A good place to observe Milton's preoccupation with Empedoclean mixture and effluence in is in book five after Eve's bad dream foreshadowing the Fall. In response to the nightmare, Adam and Eve vocalize a prayer that "*Flowd* from their lips" (5.150, emphasis mine). The prayer centers the four elements and their cyclical transformations as divine intermediaries, reminiscent of the Empedoclean analogy of gods to elements I explored at the beginning of this chapter. Observe how Adam and Eve's words imagine divine transaction through elemental movement and intermixture:

> Aire, and ye Elements the eldest birth

---

[342] Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers,* 80.

Of Natures Womb, that in quaternion run

Perpetual Circle, multiform; and mix

And nourish all things, let your ceasless change

Varie to our great Maker still new praise.[343]

Adam and Eve regard the flux of elemental change as a process of divine importance: the elements cyclically "run" into a spherical whole, a "multiform" unity. Adam and Eve recognize this process of mixture and "ceasless" change as an avenue of communion with God. In general terms, their prayer can be read as an Empedoclean fusing of divine and elemental contemplation. Yet the potential resonance is stronger than this when one considers how Milton describes the elements running in a "Perpetual Circle." Empedocles uses the image of the circle (κύκλον) repeatedly throughout his poetry to describe the elemental cycle produced by Love and Strife.[344]

As their prayer unfolds, Adam and Eve progress from this abstract consideration of the four elements as divine to a more vivid meditation on specific elemental phenomena:

His praise ye Winds, that from four Quarters blow,

Breathe soft or loud; and wave your tops, ye Pines,

With every Plant, in sign of Worship wave.

Fountains and yee, that warble, as ye flow,

Melodious murmurs, warbling tune his praise.

Joyne voices all ye living Souls, ye Birds,

---

[343] Ibid., 5.180–4.

[344] For example, see Empedocles, DK17.13, and DK35.10. Direct evidence of Milton's exposure to these specific fragments is somewhat limited, but see Appendix for an analysis of where he may have encountered them.

That singing up to Heaven Gate ascend,

Bear on your wings and in your notes his praise;

Ye that in Waters glide, and yee that walk

The Earth, and stately tread, or lowly creep. (5.192–9)

In these lines, Milton details how wind, water, and earth operate in unison as a response to divine inspiration. Observe how the passage's elemental images seem to flow out of each other, beginning with the movement of breath from Adam and Eve's mouths. They describe how winds cause trees to "wave" their branches, a verb that signals a movement to watery description that continues with the image of "Fountains" that "flow."[345] Milton is clearly delighting in the poetic possibility of elemental plasticity. Flowing fountains take Milton for a moment back to breath as he imagines the airy effluence of birdsong, which serves as a unifying anthem for the joyful synchronization of elemental expression. Like the word "wave," the word "glide" to describe the motion of fish in the penultimate line works as an elemental switch plate that draws the mind toward the analogous operations of water and air. In Adam and Eve's vision, elemental effluences are a bridge to the divine, hinted at in the image of singing birds "ascending" to heaven.[346] The image captures Milton's interest in a stepwise understanding of material-spiritual progress—which is an Empedoclean trope in its own right[347]—one that recurs later in book five during Raphael's famous "one first matter all" speech, a moment I take up in detail below.

---

[345] Ibid.

[346] Ibid., 5.196.

[347] On the gradual ascension of humans to gods, see Empedocles, fragment DK146 and DK147. Milton may have encountered these fragments in his reading of Clement's *Stromateis*, which cites them at 4.150.1 and 5.122.3, respectively. See Boswell entry #414.

In their spontaneous prayer before the Fall, it's as if Adam and Eve are describing a world under the power of an Empedoclean Love that is increasing its material dominance, one that has continued from the creation of the world, and which represented the reversal of the Strife cycle that culminated in the War in Heaven. In Adam and Eve's prayer, Love is gaining momentum, yoking the elements into a synchronized movement, and yet it is not fully dominant, as the forms of nature it describes still possess individuated bodies. This is not Love at the peak of its cycle, which would in strictly Empedoclean terms amount to a total homogenization (as in Milton's account of the conglobed matter that existed prior to God's division of various forms that I discussed earlier). But the prayer gestures at a cosmic movement of these proportions.

If Milton's account of creation and the spontaneous prayer of Adam and Eve gives readers of *Paradise Lost* an experience of the world under the increasing power of Love, the Fall itself represents the volta of the Empedoclean cycle, the point when Strife takes over in the poem's self-acknowledged turn into tragedy and the period of "alienation" that continues to the present in conventional representations of the myth.[348] In other words, the typical understanding of the Fall presents the forbidden act as a stark and brutal transformation; Adam and Eve's eating of the prohibited fruit marks a shift from a state of unitary pleasure to a world of separation, when nature fractures along with humanity's relationship to it. But this is a view of the Fall more appropriately attributed to the character of Satan than to Milton, for *Paradise Lost* frames this dualistic interpretation of the Fall as a product of the Archfiend's fractured vision. This is evident in Satan's fetishization of the Tree's scintillating, clashing chromatics:

I was at first as other Beasts that graze

---

[348] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 9.9. Milton acknowledges the turn in the book's opening lines, viz. 1–13.

> The trodden Herb, of abject thoughts and low,
> As was my food, nor aught but food discern'd
> Or Sex, and apprehended nothing high:
> Till on a day roaving the field, I chanc'd
> A goodly Tree farr distant to behold
> Loaden with fruit of fairest colours mixt,
> Ruddie and Gold: I nearer drew to gaze. (9.571–8)

Satan's vision is inflected by Strife, beginning with his dualistic stratification of his lowly creaturely state from the idealistic promises of the Tree of Knowledge. This is a far cry from the vision of Adam and Eve's prayer I looked at above, which places a divine charge in all who "walk / The Earth," both those who "stately tread," and those who "lowly creep." Satan is challenging a plastic view of matter and introducing a separation between base and refined substance, between matter and soul. And note how Satan's adoration of the Tree's fruit lies in its motley presentation of "fairest colours mixt, / Ruddie and Gold." Satan delights in the Tree for its enticing, fractured assortment. The word "mixt" here doesn't mean "blended together,"[349] but rather, "consisting of different or dissimilar elements or qualities; not of one kind."[350] In other words, Satan is emphasizing the Tree's divisions, along with its separation from the rest of nature.

---

[349] "Mixed, adj.2," sense 2.b. in the *OED.*

[350] Ibid., sense 1.

Although there is little direct evidence Milton read Empedocles' fragment DK23, it carries some resonance with Satan's description of the variegated Tree. Empedocles offers an analogy to explain the mixture of elements, saying they blend together in different ways,

ὡς δ' ὁπόταν γραφέες ἀναθήματα ποικίλλωσιν
ἀνέρες ἀμφὶ τέχνης ὑπὸ μήτιος εὖ δεδαῶτε,
οἵτ' ἐπεὶ οὖν μάρψωσι πολύχροα φάρμακα χερσίν,
ἁρμονίῃ μείξαντε τὰ μὲν πλέω, ἄλλα δ' ἐλάσσω,
ἐκ τῶν εἴδεα πᾶσιν ἀλίγκια πορσύνουσι,
δένδρεά τε κτίζοντε καὶ ἀνέρας ἠδὲ γυναῖκας
θῆράς τ' οἰωνούς τε καὶ ὑδατοθρέμμονας ἰχθῦς
καί τε θεοὺς δολιχαίωνας τιμῇσι φερίστους·
οὕτω μή σ' ἀπάτη φρένα καινύτω ἄλλοθεν εἶναι
θνητῶν, ὅσσα γε δῆλα γεγάασιν ἄσπετα, πηγήν,
ἀλλὰ τορῶς ταῦτ' ἴσθι, θεοῦ πάρα μῦθον ἀκούσας.

[As when painters adorn votive offerings,
men well-learned in their craft because of cunning,
and so when they take in their hands many-colored pigments,
mixing them in harmony, some more, others less,
from them they prepare forms resembling all things,
making trees and men and women
and beasts and birds and water-nourished fish
and long-lived gods, first in their prerogatives.

> In this way let not deception overcome your thought organ
> [by convincing you] that the source of mortal things, as many as have become
> obvious—countless—is anything else,
> but know these things clearly, having heard the story from a god.][351]

Like Milton's Satan does, Empedocles points out the many pigments of nature, including trees, and emphasizes his own access to divine knowledge. In Empedocles' case, the gesture to his own divinity serves to preserve a belief in incorporeality within his cosmic system. Empedocles tells readers not to foolishly believe that anything in nature has a cause outside of the material mixture of the elements, and says they should believe him on the basis of his own immortality. Empedocles is claiming that the blending of the elements—the palette of nature—explains all natural phenomena, including the possibility of immortality that links all the elements at a subterranean, atomic level. His lesson is therefore more ambiguous, more plastic than Satan's, insisting on the paradox of a simultaneous dualism and materialism, as opposed to Satan's clearly dualistic vision. Empedocles sees divine expression in the flux of all the elements; Satan hierarchizes matter with a hard line between the base and the rarified, a split that broadens out to a larger division between matter and soul in a parody of Cartesian dualism, as Fallon contends.[352]

---

[351] Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK23, and Laks and Most, V.402. There is little evidence Milton read Simplicius' *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, which quotes these lines. See Inwood, *The Poem of Empedocles*, pp. 98. The Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth, however, did read Simplicius, as he attests repeatedly in *The True Intellectual System*, for example on pp. 5, 25, 152, 170, 385, 558, 806, and 837. Thus, even if Boswell did not find direct evidence of Milton's exposure to Simplicius' writing, the ancient writer was clearly in Milton's intellectual orbit, given his familiarity with the work of the Cambridge Platonists through his time at the University.

[352] See Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers*, esp. 203–5. To be sure, the connection between this fragment and Milton's description of Satan's dualistic vision is rather tenuous. But the comparison helps further highlight the perspectival relativism shared by Empedocles and Milton.

The parody lies in the contrast between Satan's self-assurance of his own dualistic separation from matter and his actual embodiment as an elementally fragmented being. Not only is Satan not an incorporeal dæmon as he believes, he's an entity defined by the destructive power of Strife, which divorces even the parts of his body from cohering. Although Satan thinks of himself as an airy spirit, he is in fact the opposite of rarefied; he's refracted. The best illustration of this occurs in the Lake of Fire episode renders Satan an elementally discordant entity, with

eyes

> That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides
> Prone on the Flood, extended long and large
> Lay floating many a rood. (1.193–6)

Satan's fiery eyes sit inside his towering head, which levitates above the Lake of Fire, to which domain the rest of his prone body remains confined. Milton amplifies the striking disjuncture of Satan's head and body in this scene by emphasizing their differences as elemental distinctions: it's as if Satan's flaming eyes are repelled by the aquatic behavior of "his other Parts" that "lay floating" below.[353] The picture of hell Milton creates for readers is a world under Strife, wherein Satan has been split into fractured segments of unlike substances.

To readers of Empedocles' poetry, Milton's description of Satan's stratified body parts might recall a fragment that describes a primordial moment on earth ruled by Strife, a time when inchoate human forms shot forth from the ground as fragmented beings:

> ᾗ πολλαὶ μὲν κόρσαι ἀναύχενες ἐβλάστησαν,

---

[353] The description of Satan's eyes may also take inspiration from Plato's *Timaeus*, which posits that eyesight results from an inner fire that interacts with outward light with the pupils as the intersection points. See Plato, "Timaeus," 45b–c.

γυμνοὶ δ’ ἐπλάζοντο βραχίονες εὔνιδες ὤμων,

ὄμματά τ’ οἶ’ ἐπλανᾶτο πενητεύοντα μετώπων.

[as many heads without necks sprouted up

and arms wandered naked, bereft of shoulders,

and eyes roamed alone, impoverished of foreheads.][354]

Somewhat similar to Aristophanes’ description of human development in Plato’s *Symposium*, Empedocles paints an image in which human body parts must find their counterparts through the power of Love.[355] Empedocles’ image of disembodied heads, arms, and eyes is a vision of a divided world, but progressing toward unity under the gradual increase of Love’s dominance. Milton’s depiction of Satan’s fragmentary body in *Paradise Lost* runs in the opposite direction, portraying the material degradation of a once rarified celestial being (Lucifer) into an apotheosis of incoherent fracture.

Images of material effluence heighten the dramatic effect of Satan’s bodily discordance by way of contrast, surrounding his isolated body parts with elements working in sympathetic flux with one another. Elemental effluence is an idea inscribed into the very name of the “Lake of Fire” or “burning lake,” an ancient Tartarean trope that Milton uses as the backdrop of Satan’s bodily partitioning. The lake swells with “fiery waves” and is fed by “veins of liquid fire” that

---

[354] Empedocles, “Fragments,” in The Poem of Empedocles, trans. Brad Inwood (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2010), DK57. Milton may have encountered this fragment through Aristotle’s discussion of it in *On the Soul* (at 430a28–30) and in *De Caelo* (at 300b25–31). See Boswell, *Milton’s Library*, entries #72 and #73.

[355] For Aristophanes’ speech in the *Symposium*, see Plato, “Symposium,” in *Plato III: Lysis. Symposium. Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 73–246 [189C–194E].

transfer its wet flames into the earthy "Plain" (1.184, 1.701, and 1.700). Terrifying as these images are, they remind readers of the consubstantial makeup of fire and water. Even these two oppositional elements can work in tandem. United by a similar material substructure, the Lake's water exudes fire. The striking image of hot, dry fire streaming from cold, wet water illustrates an inter-elemental sympathy in contrast to Satan's bodily fracture. Moreover, it registers Milton's perspectival movement, making even hell itself into a representation of amicable flux, while Satan literally embodies fracture.

When I say that Milton's depiction of elemental effluence in the Lake of Fire speaks to his understanding of a consubstantial atomic reality beneath the four elements, I am not merely speculating. In book two, Milton represents the expanse of Chaos as populated by warring elements equipped with "embryon atoms":

> Before thir [Satan's and Sin's] eyes in sudden view appear
> The secrets of the hoarie deep, a dark
> Illimitable Ocean without bound,
> Without dimension, where length, breadth, & highth,
> And time and place are lost; where eldest Night
> And *Chaos*, Ancestors of Nature, hold
> Eternal *Anarchie*, amidst the noise
> Of endless Warrs, and by confusion stand.
> And time and place are lost; where
> For hot, cold, moist, and dry, four Champions fierce
> Strive here for Maistrie, and to Battel bring
> Thir embryon Atoms; they around the flag

Of each his Faction, in thir several Clanns,
Light-arm'd or heavy, sharp, smooth, swift, or slow,
Swarm populous, unnumber'd as the Sands
Of *Barca* or *Cyrene's* torrid soil,
Levied to side with warring Winds, and poise
Thir lighter wings. (2.890–907)

These lines depict Chaos as an infinite expanse, populated by the four elements at war, who "strive...for Maistrie" in "Battel." This image of striving elements might remind us of the Plutarchan analogy of the Empedoclean elements as warriors that I considered in Chapter Two through my discussion of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

But Milton's addition of "embryon atoms" as the elements' means of engagement with each other illustrates a rise in Lucretian understandings of matter over the course of the seventeenth century. The phrase generates a Lucretian and Empedoclean image of atomic elements: though the elements are the agents of war, they send their atoms to battle. The word "embryon" reaches back to Anaxagoras, whose embryology influenced materialism but nevertheless maintained a belief in the soul under the control of *νόος* (*nous*).[356] The passage is thus a mixture of ancient influences Plutarchan, Anaxagorean, Lucretian, and Empedoclean. But it begins to appear distinctively Empedoclean when one remembers Nietzsche's claim that Empedocles "*prepared the conditions for* rigorous atomism: he went far beyond Anaxagoras."[357]

---

[356] See Anaxagoras' fragment B4a, and Curd, *Anaxagoras of Clazomenae*, 225.

[357] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Empedocles," in *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, trans. Greg Whitlock (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 118.

Thus, this passage describing the four elements contesting each other with embryonic atoms captures in miniature the development of materialism from elements to atoms, a shift partially initiated by the theory of Empedoclean effluence I've explored repeatedly throughout these pages. To be brief, Empedoclean physics is the backbone of Milton's monism, while Lucretian atomism is its flesh.

Thinking back to Shakespeare's use of Plutarch's militaristic elementalism in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the view of Milton's Empedoclean elemental atomism I have been discussing illuminates the deepening importance of Empedoclean thought to the intermingled histories of science and literature in seventeenth-century England. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare's analogic play on the battle of the elements is dramatically fecund, but does not point readers to a Lucretian atomism like Milton's—in spite of Shakespeare's general atomic awareness elsewhere, as in Mercutio's "Queen Mab" speech for instance.[358] By the latter part of the seventeenth century, Empedoclean Strife was no longer just a convenient metaphor for war, but a noetic stepping stone providing a crucial avenue to Lucretian atomism in the aftermath of England's own civil strife.

Keeping an eye on Shakespeare, consider Adam's description in *Paradise Lost* of his waking up into consciousness after exuding from the earth:

> As new wak't from soundest sleep
>
> Soft on the flourie herb I found me laid
>
> In Balmie Sweat, which with his Beames the Sun

---

[358] Queen Mab's chariot is driven by a "team of little atomi." See Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet," in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. Baker et al., 1104–45. Second edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 1.4.57.

Soon dri'd, and on the reaking moisture fed. (8.253–6)

The "Balmie Sweat" on Adam might remind readers of Cleopatra's own elemental birth as an effluence of the mud of the Nile in *Antony and Cleopatra*, as I discussed in Chapter Two. Adam himself exudes from the earth, and then a process of appetitive elemental exchange and transformation aids in his full realization. The sun (fire) dries the "Balmie Sweat" that covers him. The image shows the effluence of one element (sunbeams) interacting with the effluence of other elements (the sweat of the herb and earth) to bring Adam into being.[359]

This last example highlights how Milton's characterization of Adam's creation may in some small way take inspiration from Shakespeare's depiction of Cleopatra's earthly emergence. But Milton's Satan is another figure worth comparing to Shakespeare's Cleopatra, and not only because of their shared Empedoclean aspiration to an exalted immortality.[360] Milton's Satan, like Cleopatra, expresses a fear of debasement in the language of unwanted material mixture:

O foul descent! That I who erst contended
With Gods to sit the highest, am now constraind
Into a Beast, and mixt with bestial slime,
This essence to incarnate and imbrute,
That to the hight of Deitie aspir'd;
But what will not Ambition and Revenge
Descend to? Who aspires must down as low

---

[359] As Flannagan puts it, "the sun helps creation by drying Adam." See Flannagan, *The Riverside Milton*, 569fn72.

[360] One may hear the echo of Empedocles' upward ambition and plummeting suicide in Satan's lament, "But what will not Ambition...Descend to?" at 9.168–9 in the long quote immediately below.

As high he soard, obnoxious first or last

To basest things.[361]

Note Satan's displeasure at how he is "mixt with bestial slime." This is close in sentiment to what Cleopatra expresses near the end of Shakespeare's play during her own expression of "immortal longings."[362] Cleopatra laments the idea of a future version of herself portrayed by an actor who would share space with the unsophisticated, "enclouded" in their "thick breaths… / And forced to drink their vapour."[363] Both Satan and Cleopatra fancy themselves beyond the material plane, assumed to be too base for their egoic spiritual aspirations. Satan's aversion to "bestial slime" aligns to his dualistic ethos, warning readers against the temptations of such a view. Whereas effluence and elemental transmutation are associated with divinity, Milton portrays resistance to elemental blending as Satanic.

The Fall is the moment that Adam and Eve stop being able to see the possibilities of elemental sympathy and transmutation. After the Fall, Milton emphasizes Eve's aversion to elemental mixture, newly developed following Satan's persuasive reframing of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Whereas in her earlier spontaneous prayer with Adam, Eve saw a plastic divinity in *all* of the material world, after the Fall, Eve exhibits a Cleopatra-like fear of elemental mixture when she asks of the angel Michael

From thee

How shall I part, and whither wander down

---

[361] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 9.163–71.

[362] See Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 5.2.279–80.

[363] Ibid., 5.2.208–12. I discuss these Shakespeare passages at length in Chapter One.

Into a lower World, to this obscure
And wilde, how shall we breathe in other Aire
Less pure, accustomd to immortal Fruits.[364]

Eve has lost the liberated vision afforded by her prelapsarian monism, which would not have found such resistance to experiencing air. In other words, without Satan's intervention, Eve might have seen the whole world as the Garden and sensed no threat from foreign vapors. Instead, her vision of the present overleaps itself into an aspiration for purity and immortality.

An additional elemental juncture between *Paradise Lost* and my exploration of *Antony and Cleopatra* in Chapter Two relates to how both texts personify the air. I discussed how even the air around Cleopatra's barge in the River Cydnus is mesmerized by her Love, how she makes the very winds "love-sick." Prior to the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, Adam notes how, when he consummates his marriage to Eve,

the Earth
Gave sign of gratulation, and each Hill;
Joyous the Birds; fresh Gales and gentle Aires
Whisper'd it to the Woods, and from thir wings
Flung Rose, flung Odours from the spicie Shrub. (8.513–17)

Just like it does for Cleopatra and Antony, the air holds erotic tension for Adam and Eve. "Gentle Aires"—which refers simultaneously to birdsong and wind—emanate from the birds, and agitate an effluence of floral scent from the trees. Again, Milton gives us an image of elemental effluence as an expression of spiritual exaltation as he wafts the air throughout his

---

[364] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 11.281–85.

verse. The air is enmeshed in a sympathetic relationship with music and scent, the three flowing amongst each other. This is precisely the sympathetic view of matter that Adam and Eve lose when they experience the Fall.

Moving away from these connections between Milton and Shakespeare's representations of elemental drama, I want to consider how Raphael's monist teachings in *Paradise Lost* rely on elemental effluence to make their point. Consider when Eve asks Raphael whether angels like him eat food, digesting it from "corporeal to incorporeal" form (5.407–13). Raphael's response draws on the four elements and their "feeding" upon one another to explain how matter can rarify itself into increasingly ethereal substance:

> For know, whatever was created, needs
> To be sustaind and fed; of Elements
> The grosser feeds the purer, Earth the Sea,
> Earth and the Sea feed Air, the Air those Fires
> Ethereal, and as lowest first the Moon;
> Whence in her visage round those spots, unpurg'd
> Vapours not yet into her substance turnd. (5.414–20)

The elements feed into one another, working their way up to lunar glow. In Raphael's vision, an elemental spectrum emerges from base to rare as the earth exudes water and earth, which both in turn secrete air, sublimating into the celestial "Fires" of heaven, or stars. The lines resonate with Empedocles' fragment DK38, which describes elemental interoperability in the language of

flux.[365] Furthermore, notice how Milton's passage points to the spots on the moon as an illustration of elemental rarefaction: these spots are "Vapours" (air) from the earth that have not yet been incorporated into the "substance" of moonshine. The image resonates with Jonson's depiction of "old Empedocles" wafting up and down on the surface of the moon as smoke and ash that I discussed in Chapter One.

Raphael's gesture to Empedoclean philosophy and myth happens just beneath the level of direct allusion. Moreover, Raphael's monistic representation of the ghost of Empedocles as spots on the moon is a kinder interpretation of his infamous suicide, at least framing his afterlife within the material terms of Empedocles' own cosmic philosophy rather than within the moralizing, non-elemental vacuum of Christian Limbo. These contrasting views of Empedocles' ghost make sense in their respective contexts: while the perspective of severe Christian dualism parodied by Milton's Satan might treat Empedocles as a pagan mystic to be excluded from the realms of heaven, Raphael's unitary, monist viewpoint takes a less punishing attitude, weaving the ghost of Empedocles into the material fabric of a divine continuum. Raphael and Milton's monism enable them to see spiritual value in all things, even the airy ashes of a pagan.

Raphael's illumination of a materially fluid continuum stretching from the lowly slime of earth all the way up to star fire represents one of the poem's most coherent explanations of Milton's materialism, but his speech in book five is not the only place where Raphael resorts to Empedoclean imagery to make his case. In book eight, Adam asks Raphael a question similar to

---

[365] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK38, and Laks and Most, V.474. I discussed DK38 earlier in this chapter. Milton is likely to have read the fragment in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*, which quotes it at 5.48.2–3 (II.358.15–23). See Boswell entry #414.

Eve's inquiry about angelic digestion I discussed above. Adam wants to know about the angels' sex lives, asking

> how thir Love
>
> Express they, by looks onely, or do they mix
>
> Irradiance, virtual or immediate touch? (8.615–17)

Boiling it down to its core terms, Adam is asking whether the angels have sex corporeally or incorporeally, or through some mixture of the two. Adam uses mixture to frame a complicated question that hinges on the dualist/monist divide. Raphael's answer defers again to elemental synthesis, this time with a nod to the Empedoclean idea of like-to-like:

> Easier then Air with Air, if Spirits embrace,
>
> Total they mix, Union of Pure with Pure
>
> Desiring. (8.626–8)

The effortless mixture of air with air, drawn together through elemental kinship, analogizes angelic intercourse. Their "Total" mixture gives these angels a fusion on the scale of Empedocles' elemental cycles, suggesting that their "desire" leads to a homogeneous "Union." In short, Raphael challenges the duality of flesh and soul by linking the base carnality of human love to the cosmic force of Empedoclean Love.[366]

In the famous "one first matter all" speech, Raphael analogizes a material continuum in Empedoclean language, explaining that matter rarefies

---

[366] Joad Raymond provides helpful context here, pointing out that "in the 1640s and 1650s, "there was a surge of interest in angels. More people wrote about and spoke with them. Anxieties about religious and social fragmentation, political conflict, widespread apocalypticism, the breakdown of the Church, interest in the occult, and the growth in antinomian theology created a culture in which angels seemed to be more immediately present." See Raymond, *Milton's Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10.

Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
Proportioned to each kind. So from the root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More aerie, last the bright consummate floure
Spirits odorous breathes. (5.478–82)

This passage is elemental in the way it invokes the word "root," which is another translation of the term Empedocles' uses for "elements" (ῥιζώματα). And here, the emergence of spirit from matter is likened to the bursting growth of a tree, which amounts to a chain of effluence from root to stalk to leaf to flower. All of these substances differ "but in degree, in kind the same," gesturing back to the notion of elements united at the deepest level by a submerged atomic reality, a world built of tiny corpuscles that stream from all things. Moreover, Raphael's use of a vegetative analogy to explain the innate spiritual vitalism of all matter creates a monistic counterpart to Satan's dim dualism and the stark binary choice it foists onto the Tree.

Several passages from Empedocles' long fragment DK17 beg to be paired with Raphael's speech. The first explains how the elements are united by an underlying sameness:

⌊ἀλλ᾽ αὖτ᾽ ἐστιν ταῦτα, δι᾽ ἀλλήλων⌋ γε θέοντα
⌊γίγνεται ἄλλοτε ἄλλα καὶ ἠνεκὲ⌋ς αἰὲν ὁμοῖα.

[But these very things [the elements] are, and running through each other
they become different at different times and are always, perpetually alike.][367]

---

[367] See Empedocles, trans. Inwood, DK17.34–5, and Laks and Most, V. For Milton's exposure to DK17, see Appendix, and Boswell, entries #81, 84, 414, 882, 1153, & 1350.

Like the continuum of vegetative rarefaction in Raphael's speech, these lines posit the interdependence of seemingly distinct material bodies. The elements are implicated in a plastic interoperability, so that they while they might be "different at different times," they are nonetheless "perpetually alike." Later in the same fragment, Empedocles explores this idea in terms that are more specific to Milton's imagery in Raphael's speech, drawing on the springing, shooting growth of plant life to analogize a unifying spiritual reality:

.....συνερχό]μεθ᾽ εἰς ἕνα κόσμον

……..διέφυ πλέ]ον᾽ ἐξ ἑνὸς εἶναι,

ἐξ ὧν πάνθ᾽ ὅσα τ᾽ ἦν ὅσα τ᾽ ἐσθ᾽ ὅσα τ᾽ ἔσσετ᾽ ὀπίσσω·

δένδρεά τ᾽ ἐβλάστησε καὶ ἀνέρες ἠδὲ γυναῖκες

θῆρές τ᾽ οἰωνοί τε καὶ ὑδατοθρέμμονες ἰχθῦς

καί τε θεοὶ δολιχαίωνες τιμῆισι φέριστοι.

[.....we come together into one cosmos,

……..to be many from one,

From which all things that were, that are, and will be in the future

Have sprung: trees and men and women

and beasts and birds and water-nourished fish,

and long-lived gods first in their prerogatives.][368]

[368] Empedocles, DK17.36–41.

All matter has "sprung" from the "one," including "trees"(δένδρεά).[369] Similarly to Raphael, Empedocles goes on to invoke "root bearing" and "vine-mounting" imagery to explain how the elements comprise all of the cosmos, urging the reader, "from these stories carry to your thought organ proofs that are not false."[370] Empedocles and Raphael thus use the same method to convince listeners of monistic possibility: an analogy of vegetative growth as a depiction of effluence, designed to create a perception of matter as primary and homogeneous.

After the Fall, one can see Adam reaching back to Raphael's monist wisdom as he attempts to resist the effects of Strife, and when he does so, he recalls the Empedoclean image of the elements working their way up to celestial fire. This comes in book ten, when Adam expresses to Eve the headstrong wish that

> No more be mention'd then of violence
> Against our selves, and wilful barrenness,
> That cuts us off from hope. (10.1041–3)

Adam resolves to avoid a personalization of Strife and ponders how the requirement to work for sustenance may not be so bad after all. To illustrate this, Adam imagines a plastic power that unites his future acts of labor to the Empedoclean elemental ladder he learned from Raphael. This restores some of the hope that appeared to vanish as Adam and Eve assimilated to the conditions of their expulsion. Adam actually seems to find joy thinking about the labor that will sustain and protect them from the cold,

> Which bids us seek

---

[369] Ibid., DK17.39.

[370] See Empedocles, DK17.65–9.

Som better shroud, som better warmth to cherish
Our Limbs benumm'd, ere this diurnal Starr
Leave cold the Night, how we his gather'd beams
Reflected, may with matter sere foment,
Or by collision of two bodies grinde
The Air attrite to Fire, as late the Clouds
Justling or pusht with winds rude in thir shock
Tine the slant Lightning, whose thwart flame driv'n down
Kindles the gummie bark of Firr or Pine
And sends a comfortable heat from farr,
Which might supplie the sun: such Fire to use… (10.1067–78)

As Flannagan helpfully glosses these lines, Adam is reflecting on the "newly necessary technology of producing fire [new because of the Fall], either by focusing sunlight with a parabolic mirror or magnifying glass on tinder or by friction—the rubbing of sticks together or the striking of flint on steel."[371] Notice how the lines suggest a cycle that informs the movement of energy between the sun (or "diurnal Starr") and earth. One can harness the fire of the sun by concentrating sunbeams or striking flint, Adam intuits, and he analogizes these elemental processes to the emergence of lightning from the clashing winds of the sky. In turn, lightning strikes fire onto earth, blazes whose heat "might supplie the sun: such Fire to use." Milton's analogy helps illustrate the plastic process of elemental change he describes. And these processes of fire emerging from air, which cause "the Air [to] attrite to Fire," yield ethical wisdom, too;

---

[371] Flannagan, *The Riverside Milton*, 656fn340.

Flannagan suggests that one should "perhaps keep in mind the moral process of attrition,"[372] suggesting again Milton's investment in the idea of elemental effluence as a useful figure for spiritual experience. And more broadly, Adam's recollection of Raphael's monist perspective helps him to soothe the sting of work.[373]

Milton's possible suggestion, in the long passage I cited in the last paragraph, of the attrition of air into fire as an analogy for the spiritual act of attrition, is unsurprising given the importance of these two elements to Biblical expressions of divine power. The Bible is brimming with figurative uses of fire and wind as representations of divine power, but a few highlights stand out. For instance, the "Book of Job" relates how Job's flock was "burnt vp," when "the fire of God is fallen from heauen...consum[ing] them."[374] And there is the line in the Book of Acts, mocked by Chaucer in "The Pardoner's Tale," in which "suddenly there came a sound from heauen as of a rushing mighty wind," where the wind is figured as a pneumatic messenger of the deity.[375]

These Biblical images show how the figurative use of the elements isn't necessarily enough, on its own, to suggest a specifically "Empedoclean" mindset. But the cyclical nature of Milton's representation of elemental change—in the above example, air births lightning, igniting a forest, whose flames "supplie the sun"—alongside the way both Milton and Empedocles use

---

[372] Ibid.

[373] Adam acknowledges that "with labour I must earne / My bread," but asks, "what harm?" (10.1054–5).

[374] "The Book of Job," in *The Holy Bible*, 1:16.

[375] "The Book of Acts," in *The Holy Bible,* 2:2. And one should keep in mind the dual sense of the Greek word *pneuma*, which can mean both breath and spirit.

analogy as a vehicle for exploring ontological flux, allow one to see Milton's elemental experimentation as at least partially Empedoclean and not merely Biblical or Aristotelian.[376]

Another helpful piece of context lies in contemporaneous theological debates about the constitution of the soul, particularly a disagreement between the Cambridge Platonist Henry More and the Puritan theologian Richard Baxter. A provocateur, Baxter had identified the soul with fire in ways that upset More's Platonic dualism. According to David S. Sytsma, Baxter thought that More's "Platonist speculations…were the result of overconfidence in rational speculation beyond supernatural revelation, and contained 'a mixture of *Platonisme*, *Origenisme* & *Arrianisme*, not having *all* of any of these, but somewhat of *all*.' "[377] Note Baxter's frustration with More's "mixture" of philosophical traditions, which illustrates the boldness of the Cambridge Platonists' intellectual concoctions. The debate between Baxter and More shows how Milton's depiction of fiery attrition in *Paradise Lost* appears in a philosophical context that was raising questions about the relationship between divine and elemental substance. For Baxter, Biblical metaphors linking fire to divine power become fuel for bold philosophical ideas—leading him to the radical notion that fire is the substantial form of the soul. Baxter's proposal, like Empedocles' analogy of the gods to elements in DK6, puts spiritual and material substance into dynamic interplay.

Having seen how Raphael and Adam rely on Empedoclean cosmopoetics to explain their monist philosophy, and the potent metaphorics of fire in particular, I want now to look at some

---

[376] See Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 10.1073–78, quoted in full in the preceding pages.

[377] Sytsma*, Richard Baxter and the Mechanical Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 127. Sytsma is quoting from Baxter's Treatises (MS 61) (London: Dr. Williams's Trust, 1959), IV.87, fol. 228r. On More and Baxter's debate about the soul as fire, see Sytsma, esp. 65–6.

more examples of elemental transformation in *Paradise Lost*. I already explored the Lake of Fire episode, which amounts to the poem's most dramatic illustration of elemental mixture and fragmentation. But just as significant to Milton's materialist theodicy is the blending of water and air.

Consider, for instance, the pneumatic explanation for the healing of Satan's wounds following the War in Heaven offered by Milton's epic voice in these lines:

> ...for Spirits that live throughout
> Vital in every part, not as frail man
> In Entrailes, Heart or Head, Liver or Reines,
> Cannot but by annihilating die;
> Nor in thir liquid texture mortal wound
> Receive, no more then can the fluid Aire. (4.344–9)

Milton describes how Satan, as a plastic "Spirit" who inhabits the texture of all creation, is immune to death, saving total annihilation. Moreover, Satan and similar entities are incarnated in a "liquid texture" that is impervious to "mortal wound[s]." Milton analogizes the protection afforded by Satan's aqueous constitution to the invulnerability of the "fluid Aire" to injury.[378] But note that this invulnerability does not equate to total autonomy from material entanglement, a point Milton emphasizes through the monistic description of Satan as a spiritually interwoven entity, one of those "Spirits that live throughout / Vital in every part." Liquid air is not a holder

---

[378] Empedocles explores the interplay of water and air in fragment DK111, which describes "ῥεύματα δενδρεόθρεπτα, τά τ' αἰθέρι ναιήσονται" ["tree-nourishing streams which dwell in the air"]. Milton almost certainly would have encountered this fragment in his reading of Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers*, which quotes the fragment in full at 8.59. Milton may also have come across Clement of Alexandria's much briefer discussion of this fragment in the *Stromateis* at 6.30.1–3, another text Milton almost certainly read. See Appendix, DK111.

of the soul for Milton: it is a material substance which illustrates Satan's status as a cosmic force, a dispersed being who, like any Empedoclean mixture, will never truly die.[379]

In another example, taken from Adam's recollection to Raphael of his earliest memories, a divine presence whisks up Adam, spiriting him away to Eden over "Fields and Waters, as in Aire / Smooth sliding without Step" (8.301–2). Here, Milton expresses God's smooth conveyance of Adam over a landscape's wet and dry features by analogizing his movement to a frictionless passage through air. This calls to mind Raphael's earlier description of birds' easy passage through the sky, in which "the Aire / Floats, as they pass, fann'd with unnumber'd plumes" (7.430–1). The language of floating air shows how the idea of effluence subtly allegorizes the motion of God, in a further instance of Milton's Empedoclean double vision.

The mixture of air and water opens a rich imaginal terrain for Milton, as it taps into the history of pneumatic speculation about the relation between breath, blood, and spirit. This is a sweeping tradition in its own right, but Plotinus is a key figure. As John Dillon explains, Plotinus developed the idea of the " 'pneumatic vehicle' (*pneumatikon okhêma*) of the soul." This concept "seems…to be an attempt to address the problem which Descartes is addressing later with the pineal gland."[380] What makes Plotinus' pneumatic medium of the soul so attractive to the Cambridge Platonists is its importance in "establish[ing] a radical break between soul and body," though this is of course the antithesis of Milton's goal in *Paradise Lost*, which is why, in the examples cited in the preceding paragraphs, Milton invokes liquid air not as a substance of

---

[379] Cf. Empedocles, DK8, which I discuss in detail in Chapter One and at other points throughout these pages.

[380] John Dillon, "Plotinus, the First Cartesian?," in *Hermathena* 149 (Winter 1990): 26–7. For Plotinus on Empedocles, see esp. *Enneads* IV.8.35, I.9.5–10, VI.1, VI.7.20, and II.4.7.

incorporeal conveyance, but rather as an illustration of bodily change.[381] Milton's fluid images of Satan's airy healing and God's effortless conveyance of Adam over the landscape thus inverts many longstanding dualistic associations absorbed by pneumatic ideation.

Arguing in the severest terms for Milton's monism *or* dualism is somewhat reductive, as Milton designs the text to appeal to dualistic thinkers, subtly moving them toward monistic possibility. Sugimura reflects on the need for nuance when interpreting Milton's ontology, pointing out that "no one philosophic system can be said to dictate the movement of Milton's mind," taking into account the dualism of his early writings and the Platonic digressions of *Paradise Lost*.[382] And when Sugimura says that "it is an error to say that Milton believes in either monism or dualism," she could be describing an openness to pluralism he inherited in part from Empedocles.[383] In my view, Milton's true posture toward materialism is like that of Empedocles: deeply rooted in Pythagorean dualism but drifting toward monistic possibility. Thus, in the final analysis, Fallon's reading of *Paradise Lost* as an expression of materialism holds true. But the text's Empedoclean aspects help add to the story of how Milton arrived at monism from an initially dualistic mindset, and, odd as it might sound beyond the remit of the Empedoclean tradition, how Milton could be thinking about material transcendence as a partner to materialist contemplation rather than as an enemy to it.

Finally, the Empedoclean perspectivism of *Paradise Lost* can help scholars fortify interpretations of the poem that resist the rigid ontological program of Fish's approach.

---

[381] Ibid., 27.

[382] Sugimura, *"Matter of Glorious Trial,"* xvi.

[383] Ibid.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter and in the dissertation's general introduction, Fish develops a hermeneutics of trial in response to Milton's Empedoclean ontological flux in *Paradise Lost*, a reaction that reproduces the very materialism/idealism opposition that I've argued Milton uses Empedoclean contemplation to distort. As Fish sees it, the poem's perspectival vacillations are carefully designed to assess readers' Christian righteousness, judging their ability to spot and reject the disordered thinking of a Satanic worldview. "Milton's poetry," Fish claims, "not only exercises one's intelligence and perception, but *tests* it."[384] Fish writes of Milton's "strategy" in the poem, one "where he plays God to us readers and invites us down the paths of error in the hope that by resisting them we may become wiser by the experience he has provided."[385] While Fish fashions his reading as self-evident from the moral logic of Milton's Christianity, this rhetorical move obscures how his response to the poem's Empedoclean perspectivism is itself an ontological statement, one that Fish doesn't take into account when he neatly divides the poem's good experience from bad. Thus, Empedocles can remain critically useful even when we broaden out from the philosophical debates of Milton's time, influencing not only how we understand early modern forays into materialist philosophy, but also how readers navigate the fraught waters between materialism and idealism today.

---

[384] Fish, *Versions of Antihumanism,* 34.

[385] Ibid., 33.

Conclusion

Even though the importance of Empedoclean perspectivism to Milton's monism has received little attention, the link is unsurprising when one considers Milton's fluency with classical Greek and the centrality of oneness to Empedocles' philosophy. Nietzsche's description of Empedocles helps illustrate the connection. He writes that "Empedocles' entire pathos comes back to this point, that *all living things are one;* in this respect the gods, human beings, and animals are one."[386] Empedocles is an important factor in Milton's urging that "Earth be changed to Heaven, and Heaven to Earth, One Kingdom, Joy and Union without end" (7.160–1).[387] The blur of Empedocles' poetry, with its insistence on the free movement of thought within a materialist framework, offers Milton an alternative model for negotiating the spiritual ramifications of his monist apologetic. And the interpretation of Empedocles' philosophy as an incoherent system is an important contributor to Milton's famously incongruous poetic approach, which has intrigued critics for centuries.[388] I explore in this final section some additional confluences between Empedocles' and Milton's materialist dialectic, beginning with their shared vulnerability of being anachronistically cast as shamans.

Indeed, to many readers, Milton's great poem seems to tangle a dualistic and monistic viewpoint into a Gordian knot of philosophical contradiction, but this emblematizes the poem's liminal posture across a series of dualities. Milton negotiates these dualities in a work that, like

---

[386] Nietzsche, "Empedocles," 109.

[387] God is the speaker of this line.

[388] Beyond the recent divergence between Fallon and Sugimura's readings of the poem, I'm thinking back to Samuel Johnson, Richard Bentley, and Joseph Addison, whose criticism of *Paradise Lost*'s incongruous ontologies I discussed earlier in this chapter.

the poetry of Empedocles, vacillates between the concerns of heaven and earth, soul and matter, religion and science. Teskey argues that Milton acts as a shaman-like figure who mediates between a forgotten order of divine creation and a modern vision of the poet as creator. According to Teskey, the twists and turns of *Paradise Lost* highlight Milton's role as a landmark poet for a newly secularizing age, one that positions creativity "as something consecrated, magical, and sublime, something shamanistic."[389] It is this tension that explains the poem's vacillation between seemingly incompatible modes. Teskey characterizes the experience of *Paradise Lost* as a "delirium [that] works by a kind of oscillation, a flickering on and off of hallucinatory moments in rapid succession, driven by some underlying contradiction," one that "oscillate[s] between two incompatible perspectives, at once affirming and denying the presence of spirit [incorporeal substance] in what he creates."[390] Similarly, Catherine Gimelli Martin sees in Milton's metaphysical mixtures "an equivocation that allows the figure ceaselessly to oscillate between both poles of meaning," one depicting the world as both "organic and as immanently numinous remnants of a divine hierarchy."[391] Highlighting the Empedoclean contours of this oscillation, however, can help show how the very slipperiness of Milton's ontological poetics helps gives voice to his materialist vision.

---

[389] Teskey, 20.

[390] Ibid., 4–5.

[391] Martin, *The Ruins of Allegory: Paradise Lost and the Metamorphosis of Epic Convention* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 4. Martin is commenting on Milton's question, "What if Earth / Be but the shadow of Heav'n, and things therein / Each to other like, more then on earth is thought?" (5.574–6), an inquiry whose shadowy association of heaven and earth reveals the Empedoclean blur in action, as does its self-conscious insistence that the two domains might be more alike "then on earth is thought."

Much like Milton, readers have regarded Empedocles as a "shaman" who jumps between the domains of mundane experience and cosmic transcendence.[392] James Warren, for instance, links Empedocles' self-identification as a *dæmon* with the reputation of Pythagoras as "a kind of shaman."[393] And Whitlock suggests that Empedocles' work "clearly shows[s] the continued historical connection between philosophy and shamanism."[394] David Macauley likewise writes that one "can think of Empedocles as engaged in the multiple—but at that time undistinguished—roles of naturalist, poet, religious prophet, philosopher, and perhaps even shaman-healer," terms that could be applied to Milton as well, to varying degrees.[395] In a related way, Passannante characterizes Empedocles as inspiring Lucretius to present himself as "a kind of poetic *vates*...a prophet who could read the past and future of matter," and I have tried to illustrate in this chapter how Empedocles plays a similar role for Milton, a materialist prophet in his own right.[396] Clearly, readers are finding a similar impulse in the spiritual dimensions of

---

[392] Applying the word "shaman" to writers like Milton and Empedocles is technically anachronistic, since the *OED* records the date of the word's first usage as 1698. Its etymological roots include the German *schamane* and Russian *šaman*, and it originally referred to "a priest or priest-doctor among various northern peoples of Asia," and later broadened to apply to figures in other global cultures. Eventually, the world developed the more general connotation of "a man or woman who is regarded as having direct access to, and influence in, the spirit world, which is usually manifested during a trance and empowers them to guide souls, cure illness, etc." See "shaman, n. and adj.," in the *OED*.

[393] James Warren, *Presocratics* (Stocksfield, England: Acumen Publishing, 2007), 191fn32.

[394] Greg Whitlock, "Translator's Commentary," in *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 153–264 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 237.

[395] David Macauley, "The Flowering of Environmental Roots and the Four Elements in Presocratic Philosophy: From Empedocles to Delezue and Guattari" in *Worldviews* 9.3 (2005): 283. Camille Paglia refers to Empedocles as a "transsexual shaman." See *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 382.

[396] Passannante, *Catastrophizing*, 203. I referred to this same passage in Chapter One.

Empedocles and Milton, both regarded by recent critics as shamanic forces who help people negotiate periods of radical transition, such as the Fall or political revolution. The powerful similarities between Milton and Empedocles as mediators of the transcendent and mundane is captured in Deleuze and Guattari's comment that "the shaman draws lines between all the points or spirits, outlines a constellation, a radiating set of *roots* tied to a central *tree*" [emphasis mine].[397] Deleuze and Guattari are speaking neither of Empedocles nor Milton in this passage, although their metaphor of shamanic work connecting "roots" to "tree" illustrates the intermingled terminology of Empedoclean and Miltonic shamanism.[398]

Finally, I want to suggest that Milton's attraction to Empedoclean philosophy is bound up with the two poets' revolutionary reputations. I've already referred to Milton's public, written support of the killing of Charles I within weeks of its occurrence, and to Empedocles' textual afterlife as a democratic dissolver of oligarchical and monarchic power.[399] I suggest that the publication of *Paradise Lost*, with its radical materialism that moves toward monism by way of

---

[397] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 211.

[398] Deleuze and Guattari implicitly ground *A Thousand Plateaus* in Empedoclean terms in a broader sense, considering the root imagery of the "rhizome" with its "root" and "radicle," and the theory's focus on the relationship between the one and multiplicity. See Deleuze and Guattari, esp. 5–6. Macaulay spotlights the arc between Empedoclean philosophy and Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic project. And see also David Macauley, "The Flowering of Environmental Roots and the Four Elements in Presocratic Philosophy: From Empedocles to Delezue and Guattari" in *Worldviews* 9.3 (2005): esp. 283.

[399] For Milton's view on regicide, see especially Milton, "The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates," which I also cite earlier in this chapter. For Empedocles' (probably historically groundless) reputation as anti-monarchical, see my discussions earlier in the dissertation, especially in Chapter One. From these prior discussions, it should be clear that this strand of Empedocles' legacy would have likely been readily available to Milton, through its emergence in texts such as, *inter alia*, Plutarch's *Moralia*.

ontological flux, symbolically amounts to an early modern culmination of Empedocles' revolutionary spirit.

True, skeptical readers might accuse my characterization of Milton's Empedoclean politics of overreaching, arguing that I've leapt foolishly from fleeting resonances into a much larger claim about Milton's political materialism. But recall how we've already seen the way Milton animates his materialist analogies using the dynamic terms of Empedoclean physics. In its own right, this speaks to how Empedoclean perspectivism undergirds Milton's dissolution of incorporeal substance, an idea closely tied to the medieval political-religious fiction of the divine right of kings.[400] This alone, in my opinion, makes it hermeneutically plausible to propose that *Paradise Lost* puts Empedocles' radical materialism to political use.

The claim is further substantiated, albeit indirectly, by the traces of Empedocles' democratic legacy in a text that I've already discussed, Rapin's *Reflexions*, published in French and English about a decade after *Paradise Lost*. Despite his occasional skepticism about the value of philosophy, the Jesuit Rapin emphasizes its political and moral worth by citing the old legend that Empedocles turned down an offer to become king:

> Il est vray que la Philosophie enseigna à Pythagore l'integrité de mœurs & l'austerité de vie, qui luy attirerent tant de Sectateurs. Ce fut elle qui fit refuser à Empedocle une couronne, & preferer une vie particuliere & paisible à tout le faste de grandeurs. Democrite s'éleva par elle à la contemplation des choses naturelles, & renonça aux plaisirs du corps, pour joüir plus tranquillement des plaisirs de l'ame.

---

[400] On the connection between incorporeal substance and divine ordination, see generally Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), but esp. 193–4.

> [It is true Philosophy taught *Pythagoras* the integrity of manners and austerity of life, which gained him so many Followers. It was Philosophy that made *Empedocles* refuse a Crown, and prefer a private and quiet life to all the magnificence of Grandeur. By Philosophy *Democritus* was raised to the contemplation of Nature, and renounced bodily pleasures, that he might more peaceably enjoy the delights of the Soul.][401]

Quite at odds with the tradition of declaring materialist philosophers prone to suicidal insanity, Rapin actually makes Empedocles out to be the practitioner of a quiet and equanimous lifestyle (*une vie particuliere & paisible*). The passage illustrates the point I made in the dissertation's introduction, namely, that Empedocles offers Renaissance thinkers an alternative avenue into the consideration of early modern materialism, one less immediately threatening to the period's sacred view of reality than the Lucretian route. Rapin's apparent approval of Empedocles' philosophically induced tranquility illustrates this point dramatically. It reveals how Empedocles sits at a crossroads of philosophical and political resonance, perhaps helping make materialist tranquility and anti-monarchical sentiment equally appealing perspectives, even for a religious writer like Rapin working in France over 100 years before the culmination of the French Revolution.

---

[401] See René Rapin, *Reflexions sur la philosophie ancienne et moderne, et sur l'usage qu'on en doit faire pour la Religion* (Paris, 1676), 2, and *Reflexions upon ancient and modern philosophy, moral and natural. Treating of the Aegyptians, Arabians, Gretians, Romans, &c. philosophers; as Thales, Zeno, Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Epicurus, &c. Also of the English, Germans, French, Spanish, Italian, &c. As Bacon, Boyle, Descartes, Hobbes, Vanhelmont, Gassendus, Galilens, Harvey, Paracelsus, Marsennus, Digby, &c. Together with the use that is to be made thereof* (London, 1678), 2.

Therefore, against the backdrop of Rapin's allusion, Milton's Empedoclean championing of the *demos* comes into clearer view, enveloped within a cultural-historical moment when Empedocles' perspectival blurriness is assisting Europeans on the Continent to question the hegemony of monarchical rule. The arc of this story is further concretized when one revisits Shakespeare's political use of Empedoclean elementalism in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), which I explored in Chapter Two. Milton's reading of Shakespeare' elemental drama could represent a key moment in the development of his Empedoclean politics, particularly in light of the recent discovery of a First Folio in the Philadelphia Free Library that has been plausibly identified as containing annotations by Milton. As McDowell explains,

> The recent identification of Milton's copy of the First Folio, with the careful annotations likely dating for the most part from the early 1640s, should prompt a reconsideration of arguments for Milton's suspicion of the Shakespearean dramatic imagination. The presence of Shakespeare in Milton's political prose, in particular *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and *Eikonoklastes*, suggests less a politically motivated rejection of Shakespeare as a royalist author than an appreciation of Shakespearean versions of British history as offering vivid lessons in the nature and consequences of tyranny.[402]

McDowell's claim that Milton and Shakespeare's political imaginations are sympathetic can be further buffered by the connection I'm making between both authors' poetic use of Empedoclean materialism. Moreover, in the Philadelphia Free Library's First Folio, Milton's hand has marked up some of the moments from *Antony and Cleopatra* that I explored in Chapter Two along the lines of a radical elemental materialism, such as Enobarbus' speech about Cleopatra on the

---

[402] McDowell, *Poet of Revolution*, 137.

barge.[403] Incidental as the markings may seem, they provide material traces of Milton's attention to, and concern for, the dialectic between Shakespeare's political and elemental imagination. Milton's traces of potential encounter with the Empedoclean materialism of *Antony and Cleopatra* thus form part of a broader story fueled by thousands of years' worth of Empedoclean reception. Ultimately, for the early modern writers I've explored in this study, Empedocles' double tale holds together a vision of material, spiritual, and political transformation.

---

[403] Milton scribbled a lengthy bracket annotation along the right side of Enobarbus' entire speech in his copy of the Folio, crossing out the misprinted word "gloue" and adding the elementally adjacent word "glow" in the margins of the line about how the "winde" of Cleopatra's "Fannes…did gloue [sic] the delicate cheeks which they did coole," a passage I considered in Chapter Two. The tiny detail of Milton's emendation to the First Folio's "gloue" with "glow" may be a small moment, but it keys into his elemental imagination. See Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies Published According to the True Originall Copies,* annotated copy in Free Library of Philadelphia, skh00001, https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/67237 (London, 1623), pp. 347. And see also McDowell, "Reading Milton Reading Shakespeare Politically: What the Identification of Milton's First Folio Does and Does Not Tell Us." *The Seventeenth Century*, vol. 36, no. 4 (July-August 2021): 509-25.

Appendix: A Map of Milton's Empedocles

(Analysis of Milton's Exposure to Empedoclean Doxography)

Description

The table below offers a snapshot of Milton's Empedoclean reading. I have cross-referenced the doxography of the fragments, per Inwood's analysis in *The Poem of Empedocles*, with Boswell's study of Milton's reading in *Milton's Library*. The table displays the results of this cross-referencing. The first column provides the fragment number per Diels-Kranz. The "Sources" column lists the texts that transmitted each fragment, with any texts likely to have been owned or read by Milton marked with asterisks and set in blue type. For all starred sources, the relevant entry from Boswell is provided in brackets. Sources set in gray type are not found in Boswell's study, meaning Milton was unlikely to have read them. The final column shows where the doxographic information is taken from in Inwood.

The number of asterisks for each source indicate Boswell's level of confidence that Milton read that text. While Boswell uses three different symbol types (?, *, and V), I have simplified this by using only asterisks, with more asterisks conveying higher confidence. Here is precisely how my system concords with Boswell's semiotics:

* it's possible Milton read the source, but questionable [Boswell uses "?" for this]

** a good probability Milton read the source [Boswell uses "*" for this]

*** high confidence Milton read or owned the source [Boswell uses "V" for this]

No asterisks and grayed out: Not in Boswell's study, and unlikely to have been read by Milton

With this schema, it is possible to see exactly how a given fragment may have been transmitted to Milton, along with a baseline level of certainty for each source. I offer this analysis in the hope of providing additional avenues for investigations of Empedoclean resonance in Milton.

However, let me emphasize that this should be regarded as a starting point for understanding the complexities of Milton's Empedoclean reading, not as an absolute or definitive picture, for the map of Milton's reading is a topic that scholars continue to refine. In other words, the table that follows is defined by the same limitations and affordances of Inwood and Boswell's analyses, whose work it replicates and synthesizes. Finally, note that not every source transmitted "complete" fragments; some sources quote only a line or two of a particular fragment. This means that one must think not only in fragments, but in fragments of fragments (see for instance DK17). Thus, it's important to refer to the doxography information included in Inwood when scrutinizing Milton's exposure to a particular fragment. In other words, one should not assume that asterisks below immediately indicate Milton's exposure to every single line within that fragment. Often, these sources *do* transmit "full" fragments, but this cannot be taken for granted.

DK #	Sources	Dox. Ref.
1	***Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 8.60 [Boswell #882]	Inwood, pp. 91
2	Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, 7.122–5	Inwood, pp. 84–5
3	Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, 7.122–5	Inwood, pp. 84–5
4	***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 5.18.4 (II.338.1–5) [Boswell #414]	Inwood, pp. 82
B5	***Plutarch, "Table Talk," in *Moralia*, 728d–f [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 149
6	***Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 8.76 [Boswell #882] Aëtius, 1.3.20 (in *Doxographi Graeci*, 286–7)	Inwood, pp. 160 & 173
B7	Hesychius, s. v. ἀγέννητα	Inwood, pp. 96
8	Pseudo-Aristotle, *De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia,* 975a36–b8 ***Plutarch, "Reply to Colotes," in *Moralia* 1111f–1112a [Boswell #1153] ***Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1014b35–1015a3 [Boswell #81] Aëtius, 1.30.1 (in *Doxographia Graeci*, 326.10–21) Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* v9, 157.25–161.20	Inwood, pp. 92–4, 99
9	***Plutarch, "Reply to Colotes," 1113a–d [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 95
B10	***Plutarch, "Reply to Colotes," in *Moralia*, 1113a–d [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 95–6
11	***Plutarch, "Reply to Colotes," in *Moralia*, 1113a–d [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 95
12	Pseudo-Aristotle, *De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia*, 975a36–b8 Pseudo-Philo, *The Eternity of the World*, 5	Inwood, pp. 92–3
13	Pseudo-Aristotle, *De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia*, 976b22–27 Theophrastus, *De Sensibus*, 13	Inwood, pp. 93, 198–9
B14	Pseudo-Aristotle, *De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia*, 976b22–7	Inwood, pp. 93
15	***Plutarch, "Reply to Colotes," *in Moralia,* 1113a–d [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 95–6

DK #	Sources	Dox. Ref.
16	Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, 7.29.9–7.30.4 (211.17–215.12)	Inwood, pp. 88
17	***Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1000a18–b20 [Boswell #81] **Aristotle, *Physics*, 250b23–251a5 [Boswell #84] ***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 5.15.4 (II.335.20–2) [Boswell #414] ***Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 8.76 [Boswell #882] ***Plutarch, "Dialogue on Love," in *Moralia*, 756d [Boswell #1153] ***Plutarch, "On Isis and Osiris," in *Moralia*, 370e [Boswell #1153] Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* v7, 93.18–294.3, and 528.3–530.26 Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* v9, 25.21–26.4, 157.25–161.20, and v10, 1183.21–1184.18 **Stobaeus, *Eclogae*, 1.10.11b [Boswell #1350]	Inwood, pp. 96–101, 104–5, 113–14, 144–5, 160, 173–4
18	***Plutarch, "On Isis and Osiris," in *Moralia*, 370e [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 144–5
B19	***Plutarch, "The Principle of Cold," in *Moralia*, 952b [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 118–19
20	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v10, 1123.25–1125.6	Inwood, pp. 102–3
21	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* v9, 31.18–34.8 & 157.25–161.20	Inwood, pp. 96–8, 116–18
22	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v9, 157.25–161.20 Theophrastus, *De Sensibus*, 16	Inwood, pp. 96–9, 195–200
23	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* v9, 157.25–161.20	Inwood, pp. 99–100
24	***Plutarch, "The Obsolescence of Oracles," in *Moralia,* 418c [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 103
25	Scholiast on Plato's *Gorgias*, 498e, in *Scholia Platonica*	Inwood, pp. 103
26	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* v9, 31.18–34.8 & 157.25–161.20, and v10, 1123.25–1125.6	Inwood, pp. 99–100, 102–3, 116–18

DK #	Sources	Dox. Ref.
27	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v10, 1183.21–1184.18 ***Plutarch, "The Face on the Moon," in *Moralia*, 926d–927a [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 101–2, 104
27a	***Plutarch, "Philosophers and Men in Power," in *Moralia*, 777c [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 83
28	Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, 7.29.9–7.30.4 (211.17–215.12)	Inwood, pp. 88–90
29	Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, 7.29.9–7.30.4 (211.17–215.12)	Inwood, pp. 88–90
30	***Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1000a18–b20 [Boswell #81] Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v10, 1183.21–1184.18	Inwood, pp. 101–2, 104–5
31	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v10, 1183.21–1184.18	Inwood, pp. 101–2
B32	Pseudo-Aristotle, *On Indivisible Lines*, 972b29–30	Inwood, pp. 123
33	***Plutarch, "On Having Many Friends," in *Moralia,* 95a–b [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 129
34	**Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, 381b31–382a2 [Boswell #82]	Inwood, pp. 120
35	**Aristotle, *De Caelo*, 295a29–b9 [Boswell #73] **Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1461a23–5 [Boswell #85] **Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 423f [Boswell #107] ***Plutarch, "Table Talk," in *Moralia*, 677d [Boswell #1153] Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v7, 528.3–530.26, and 586.5–587.26 Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v9, 31.18–24.8	Inwood, pp. 112–18, 120–1
36	***Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1000a18–b20 [Boswell #81] **Stobaeus, *Eclogae*, 1.10.11a [Boswell #1350]	Inwood, pp. 104–5
37	Aristotle, *De Generatione et Corruptione*, 333a35–b3	Inwood, pp. 108
38	***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 5.48.2–3 (II.358.15–23) [Boswell #414]	Inwood, pp. 106
39	**Aristotle, *De Caelo*, 294a21–8 [Boswell #73]	Inwood, pp. 109

DK #	Sources	Dox. Ref.
40	***Plutarch, "The Face of the Moon," in *Moralia*, 920c [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 109
41	***Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1.17.46 [Boswell #944] *The Suda, s. v. Helios [Boswell #1358]	Inwood, pp. 109–10
42	***Plutarch, "The Face on the Moon," in *Moralia,* 929c–e [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 110–11
43	***Plutarch, "The Face on the Moon," in *Moralia*, 929c–e [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 110–11
44	***Plutarch, "The Oracles at Delphi," in *Moralia*, 400b [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 110
45	Achilles Tatius, *Introduction to Aratus* v16, 43.2–6	Inwood, pp. 111
46	***Plutarch, "The Face on the Moon," in *Moralia*, 925b–c [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 111
47	*Anecdota Graeca*, ed. Bekker (1814), 1.337.13-15	Inwood, pp. 110
48	***Plutarch, "Platonic Questions," in *Moralia*, 1006e [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 111
49	***Plutarch, "Table Talk," in *Moralia*, 720e [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 112
A49a	Philo of Alexandria, *On Providence*, Armenian prose translation, 2.60–1	Inwood, pp. 106–7
50	Tzetzes, *Allegories of the Iliad*, 15.85–6	Inwood, pp. 112
51	*Eustathius, Commentary on the *Odyssey*, 1.321 [Boswell #578] Scholiast on *Odyssey,* 1.320	Inwood, pp. 107
52	Proclus, Commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, 8.26–9.4	Inwood, pp. 109
53	Aristotle, *De Generatione et Corruptione*, 334a1–7 **Aristotle, *Physics*, 196a17–24 [Boswell #84] Philoponus, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v16, 261.17–25 Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's Physics, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v9, 330.31–331.17	Inwood, pp. 107–8, 135

DK #	Sources	Dox. Ref.
54	Aristotle, *De Generatione et Corruptione*, 334a1–7	Inwood, pp. 108
55	Aëtius, 3.8.1, in *Doxographi Graeci*, 381 **Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, 2.3, 357a24–8 [Boswell #82]	Inwood, pp. 112, 184
56	Hephaestion, *Handbook*, 1.3	Inwood, pp. 112
57	**Aristotle, *De Anima*, 400a28–30 [Boswell #72] **Aristotle, *De Caelo*, 300b25–31 [Boswell #73] *Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, 722b3–28 [Boswell #74] Philoponus, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v15, 545.17–20 Philoponus, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Generatione Animalium*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca,* 14.3, 27.31–28.14 Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v7, 586.5–587.26	Inwood, pp. 120–3, 126
B58	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v7, 586.5–587.26	Inwood, pp. 120–1
59	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca,* v7, 586.5–586.26	Inwood, pp. 120–1
B60	***Plutarch, "Reply to Colotes," in *Moralia*, 1123b [Boswell #1153]	Inwwod, pp. 123
61	Aelian, *On Animals*, 16.29 **Aristotle, *Physics*, 198b29–32 [Boswell #84] ***Plutarch, "Reply to Colotes," in *Moralia*, 1123b [Boswell #1153] Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v9, 371.33–372.9	Inwood, pp. 123–4
62	**Aristotle, *Physics*, 199b7–13 [Boswell #84] Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v9. 381.29–382.18	Inwood, pp. 124–5
63	*Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, 722b3–28, and 764b15–18 [Boswell #74]	Inwood, pp. 126
64	***Plutarch, "Natural Phenomena," in *Moralia*, 917c [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 125–6
65	*Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, 723a23–6 [Boswell #74] Philoponus, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Generatione Animalium*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, 14.3, 30.1–7	Inwood, pp. 127
66	Scholion to Euripides, *Phoenissae*, 18, in *Scholia in Euripidem* (1887), v1, 249–50	Inwood, pp. 125–6

DK #	Sources	Dox. Ref.
A66a	Philo of Alexandria, *On Providence*, Armenian prose translation, 2.60–1	Inwood, pp. 106–7
67	***Galen, Commentary on Hippocrates' *Epidemics* 6, 2.46, in *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia* [Boswell #631]	Inwood, pp. 127
68	*Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, 777a7–12 [Boswell #74]	Inwood, pp. 128
B69	Proclus, Commentary on Plato's *Republic*, v2, pp. 34.25–8	Inwood, pp. 128
B70	Rufus of Ephesus, *On Naming of the Parts of Man*, 229 (pp. 166.12–13)	Inwood, pp. 128
71	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca,* v7, 586.3–530.26	Inwood, pp. 113–16
72	**Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 334b [Boswell #107]	Inwood, pp. 129
73	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca,* v7, 586.3–530.26	Inwood, pp. 113–16
74	***Plutarch, "Table Talk," in *Moralia*, 685f [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 132
75	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v7, 586.3–530.26 Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* v9, 330.31–331.17	Inwood, pp. 113–16, and 135
76	***Plutarch, "Table Talk," in *Moralia*, 618b [Boswell #1153] ***Plutarch, "The Face on the Moon," in *Moralia*, 927f [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 132
77	***Plutarch, "Table Talk," in *Moralia,* 649c–d [Boswell #1153] ***Theophrastus, *De Causis Plantarum*, 1.13.2, 1–8 [Boswell #1407]	Inwood, pp. 129–30
78	***Plutarch, "Table Talk," in *Moralia*, 649c–d [Boswell #1153] ***Theophrastus, *De Causis Plantarum*, 1.13.2, 1–8 [Boswell #1407]	Inwood, pp. 129–30
79	*Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, 731a1-9 [Boswell #74] ***Theophrastus, *De Causis Plantarum*, 1.7.1, 1–5 [Boswell #1407]	Inwood, pp. 130
80	***Plutarch, "Table Talk," in *Moralia*, 683d–f [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 131
81	***Aristotle, *Topics*, 127a17–19 [Boswell #90] ***Plutarch, "Natural Phenomena," in *Moralia*, 912b-c, and 919c-d [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 131–2

DK #	Sources	Dox. Ref.
82	**Aristotle, *Meteorologica,* 387b1–6 [Boswell #82]	Inwood, pp. 132–3
83	***Plutarch, "On Chance," in *Moralia*, 98d [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 133
84	Aristotle, *De Sensu*, 437b23–438a5 Alexander of Aphrodisias, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Sensu*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, 3.1, 23.8–24.9	Inwood, pp. 136–7
85	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca,* v9, 330.30–331.17	Inwood, pp. 135
86	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca,* v7, 586.3–530.26	Inwood, pp. 113–16
87	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's De Caelo, in Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, v7, 586.3–530.26	Inwood, pp. 113–16
88	**Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1458a4–5 [Boswell #85]	Inwood, pp. 137
89	***Plutarch, "Natural Phenomena," in *Moralia*, 916d [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 133
90	***Plutarch, "Table Talk," in *Moralia*, 663a [Boswell #1153] ***Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 7.5.17–18 [Boswell #944]	
91	Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Quaestiones*, 2.23, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, Supp. 2.2.72.9–27 Philoponus, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Generatione Animalium*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, 14.3, 123.16–21 Theophrastus, *De Sensibus,* 12	Inwood, pp. 133, 198, 203–4
92	*Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, 747a24–b3 [Boswell #74]	Inwood, pp. 194
93	***Plutarch, "The Obsolescence of Oracles," in *Moralia*, 433b [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 134
94	***Plutarch, "Natural Phenomena," in *Moralia*, 39 [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 137–8
95	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca,* v7, 586.3–530.26	Inwood, pp. 113–16

DK #	Sources	Dox. Ref.
96	**Aristotle, *De Anima*, 410a1–6 [Boswell #72] Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v9, 300.19–26 Paraphrased by Simplicius in his Commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v11, 68.2–14	Inwood, pp. 119
B97	***Aristotle, *De Partibus Animalium*, 640a19–22 [Boswell #76]	Inwood, pp. 128
98	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v9, 31.18–34.8, and 330.30–331.17	Inwood, pp. 116–18, 135
B99	Theophrastus, *De Sensibus*, 9	Inwood, pp. 197
100	Aristotle, *De Respiratione*, 473a15–474a6	Inwood, pp. 138–9
101	Anonymous, Commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*, col. 70.43–71.6 ***Plutarch, "Natural Phenomena," in *Moralia*, 917e [Boswell #1153] ***Plutarch, "On Being a Busybody," in *Moralia*, 520e [Boswell #1153] Pseudo-Alexander, *Problemata*, 3.102	Inwood, pp. 139–40
102	Theophrastus, *De Sensibus,* 22	Inwood, pp. 201–2
103	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca,* v9, 330.30–331.17	Inwood, pp. 135
104	Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca,* v9, 330.30–331.17	Inwood, pp. 135
105	Porphyry, *On Styx*, in **Stobaeus, *Eclogae*, 1.49.53	Inwood, pp. 136
106	**Aristotle, *De Anima*, 427a21–5 [Boswell #72] ***Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1009b17–20 [Boswell #81]	Inwood, pp. 134
107	Theophrastus, *De Sensibus*, 10	Inwood, pp. 197–8
108	*Aristotle, *De Anima*, 427a21–5 [Boswell #72] ***Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1009b17–20 [Boswell #81]	Inwood, pp. 134
109	**Aristotle, *De Anima*, 404b8–15 [Boswell #72] ***Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1000a18–b20 [Boswell #81] Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, 6.11–12 (138.3–9) Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, 1.302–3	Inwood, pp. 83–4, 92, 104–5
110	Hippolytus, Refutatio, 7.29.9–7.30.4 (211.17–215.12)	Inwood, pp. 90

DK #	Sources	Dox. Ref.
111	***Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 8.59 [Boswell #882] ***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 6.30.1–3 (II.445.11–20) [Boswell #414]	Inwood, pp. 91–2
112	***Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotecha Historica*, 13.83.2 [Boswell #492] ***Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 8.54, 8.61–2, 8.66 [Boswell #882] Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, 1.302–3 *The Suda, s. v. Empedocles [Boswell #1358] Tzetzes, *Exegesis of the Iliad*, 29.21–7	Inwood, pp. 81–4, 157–8, 161–2
113	Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, 1.302–3	Inwood, pp. 83–4
114	***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 5.9.1 (II.331.12–16) [Boswell #414]	Inwood, pp. 82
115	**Celsus, in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 8.53 [Boswell #1048] ***Hierocles of Alexandria, Commentary on the *Carmen Aureum*, ed. Koehler, 24.2–3 [Boswell #762] Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, 7.29.9–7.30.4 (211.17–215.12, 216.7–13) Plotinus, *Enneads*, 4.8.1, 17–22 ***Plutarch, "On Exile, in *Moralia*, 607c–d [Boswell #1153] ***Plutarch, "On Isis and Osiris," in *Moralia*, 361c [Boswell #1153] ***Plutarch, "Obsolescence of Oracles," in *Moralia*, 418e, 420d [Boswell #1153] Porphyry, in Stobaeus, ed. Wachsmuth, 2.8.42 (pp. 169, 3–8) Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* v10, 1183.21–1184.18	Inwood, pp. 86–91, 101–2, & 142–3
116	***Plutarch, "Table Talk," in *Moralia*, 745c–d [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 141
117	***Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 8.77 [Boswell #882] Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, 1.3 *The Suda, s. v. "Empedocles" [Boswell #1358]	Inwood, pp. 161, and 172
118	***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 3.14.1–2 (II.201.23–202.3) [Boswell #414] Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, 11.96	Inwood, pp. 142
119	***Plutarch, "On Exile," in *Moralia*, 607c–d [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 86
120	Plotinus, *Enneads*, 4.8.1.33–6 Porphyry, *De Antro Nympharum*, 8, in *Porphyrii Philosophi Platonici Opuscula Selecta*, pp. 61.17–21	Inwood, pp. 144
121	***Hierocles, Commentary on the *Carmen Aureum*, 24.2–3 [Boswell #762] Proclus, Commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*, 103 Proclus, Commentary on Plato's *Republic*, 614d–e, vol. 2, 157.24–8 Synesius, *On Providence*, 1	Inwood, pp. 142–3

DK #	Sources	Dox. Ref.
122	***Plutarch, "On Isis and Osiris," in *Moralia,* 370e [Boswell #1153] ***Plutarch, "On Tranquility of Mind," in *Moralia*, 474b–c [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 144–5
123	Cornutus, *Theologiae Graecae Compendium*, v17, pp. 30.2–8	Inwood, pp. 145
124	***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 3.14.1–2 (II.201.23–202.3) [Boswell #414]	Inwood, pp. 142
125	***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 3.14.1–2 [Boswell #414]	Inwood, pp. 142
126	***Plutarch, "On the Eating of Flesh," in *Moralia*, 998c [Boswell #1153] Porphyry, in **Stobaeus *Eclogae*, 1.49.60 [Boswell #1350]	Inwood, pp. 141–2
127	Aelian, *On Animals*, 12.7	Inwood, pp. 151
128	Porphyry, *De Abstinentia*, 2.20–2, in *Porphyrii Philosophi Platonici Opuscula Selecta*, pp. 150.9–151.13	Inwood, pp. 145–6
129	***Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 8.54 [Boswell #882] Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras*, 30–1, in *Porphyrii Philosophi Platonici Opuscula Selecta*	Inwood, pp. 83 & 154
130	Scholion to Nicander's *Theriaca*, line 452	Inwood, pp. 146
131	Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, 7.31.3–4 (216.21–217.4)	Inwood, pp. 85–6
132	***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 5.140.5 (II.420.28–421.4) [Boswell #414]	Inwood, pp. 82–3
133	***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 5.81.2 (II.380.5–9) [Boswell #414]	Inwood, pp. 140
134	Ammonius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, 4.5, 249.1–11 Tzetzes, *Chiliades*, 7.522–26	Inwood, pp. 140–1
135	***Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1373b6–17 [Boswell #89] *Cicero, *De Republica*, 3.11.19 [Boswell #364] Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, 108	Inwood, pp. 146–7
136	Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, 9.126–30	Inwood, pp. 147–8
137	**Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 5.49, pp. 54.1–4 [Boswell #1048] ***Plutarch, "On Superstition," in *Moralia,* 171c [Boswell #1153] Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, 108	Inwood, pp. 147–8
138	**Aristotle, *Poetics,* 1457b13–16 [Boswell #85]	Inwood, pp. 149

DK #	Sources	Dox. Ref.
139	Porphyry, *De Abstinentia*, 2.31, in *Porphyrii Philosophi Platonici Opuscula Selecta*, pp. 161.13–20	Inwood, pp. 146
140	***Plutarch, "Table Talk," in *Moralia*, 646d [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 150
141	***Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 4.11.1–2 [Boswell #115]	Inwood, pp. 150–1
142	Voll. Herc. N. 1012, col. 18	Inwood, pp. 152
143	**Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1457b13–16 [Boswell #85] Theo Smyrnaeus, 15.7–11	Inwood, pp. 149
144	***Plutarch, "On the Control of Anger," in *Moralia*, 464b [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 150
145	***Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, 2.27.2 (I.20.13–18) [Boswell #411]	Inwood, pp. 148
146	***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 4.150.1 (II.314.25–9) [Boswell #414]	Inwood, pp. 151
147	***Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 5.122.3 (II.409.8–13), qtd. in **Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 13.13.49 (684d–685a) [Boswell 414 & 576]	Inwood, pp. 151–2
B148	***Plutarch, "Natural Phenomena," in *Moralia*, 912b–c [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 131
B149	***Plutarch, "Natural Phenomena," in *Moralia*, 912b–c [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 131
B150	***Plutarch, "Natural Phenomena," in *Moralia*, 912b–c [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 131
B151	***Plutarch, "Dialogue on Love," in *Moralia*, 756e [Boswell #1153]	Inwood, pp. 128
B152	**Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1457b22–5 [Boswell #85]	Inwood, pp. 129
B153	Hesychius, s. v. βαυβώ	Inwood, pp. 129
153a	Theo Smyrnaeus, pp. 104.1–3	Inwood, pp. 127
B158	***Hierocles, Commentary on the *Carmen Aureum*, 24.2–3 [Boswell #762]	Inwood, pp. 142–3
N/A	Herodian, *General Accentuation,* in *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, 1–33; N.B. According to Inwood, "this is a new fragment, recovered from a palimpsest and published by H. Hunger" in 1967	Inwood, pp. 135

Bibliography

Primary Works

Adam, Charles and Paul Tannery, editors. *Œuvres de Descartes*. 12 vols. Paris, 1897–1910.

Addison, Joseph. *The Spectator: Vol. IV*. Second edition. London, 1712.

Aelian. *De Natura Animalium* [*On Animals*] *Libri XVII: Varia Historia, Epistolae Fragmenta*. Edited by Rudolph Hercher. 2 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1864–66.

Aëtius. In *Doxographi Graeci*, edited by Hermann Diels, 273–444. Berlin, 1879.

Alexander of Aphrodisias. Commentary on Aristotle's *De Sensu*. In *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, edited by Hermann Diels, volume 3, part 1. Berlin, 1882–1909.

———. *Quaestiones.* In *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, edited by Hermann Diels, Supp. 2.2.72.9–27. Berlin, 1882–1909.

Ammonius. Commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. In *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, edited by Hermann Diels, volume 4, part 5. Berlin, 1882–1909.

Anaxagoras. "The Fragments and Their Contexts." In *Anaxagoras of Clazomenae: Fragments and Testimonia*, translated by Patricia Curd, 13–30. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.

Anonymous. "In Theaetetum, PBerol inv. 9782" [Commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*]. In *Corpus Dei Papyri Filosofici Greci e Latini Parte III: Commentari*, edited by G. Bastianini, 227–562. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1995.

Aratus of Soli. *Commentariorum in Aratum Reliquiae*. Edited by Ernst Maass. Berlin: Apud Weidmannos, 1898.

Ariosto, Ludovico. *Orlando Furioso: A New Verse Translation*. Translated by David R. Slavitt. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Aristotle. *Art of Rhetoric*. Translated by John Henry Freese. Revised by Gisela Striker. Loeb Classical Library 193. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020.

———. "De Anima" ["On the Soul"]. In *On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, On Breath*, translated by W. S. Hett, 8–206. Loeb Classical Library 288. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.

———. *De Caelo*. Translated by W. K. C. Guthrie. Loeb Classical Library 338. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939.

———. *Generation of Animals* [*De Generatione Animalium*]. Translated by A. L. Peck. Loeb Classical Library 366. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942.

———. *Metaphysics*. Translated by Hugh Tredennick. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library 271 and 287. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933–5.

———. "Meteorologica." In *Aristotle VII,* translated by H. D. P. Lee, 2–366. Loeb Classical Library 397. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952.

———. "On Coming-to-Be and Passing-Away" ["De Generatione et Corruptione"]. In *Aristotle III*, translated by E. S. Forster, 162–332. Loeb Classical Library 400. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955.

———. "On Respiration" ["De Respiratione"]. In *Aristotle VIII*, translated by W. S. Hett, 430–83. Loeb Classical Library 288. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.

———. “On Sense and Sensible Objects” [“De Sensu”]. In *Aristotle VIII*, translated by W. S. Hett, 214–86. Loeb Classical Library 288. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.
———. “Parts of Animals” [“De Partibus Animalium”]. In *Aristotle XII*, translated by A. L. Peck, 8–435. Loeb Classical Library 323. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961.
———. *Physics.* Translated by Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Cornford. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library 228 and 255. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–1957.
———. “Poetics.” In *Aristotle XXIII*, edited and translated by Stephen Halliwell, 28–141. Loeb Classical Library 199. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
———. “Topica” [“Topics”]. In *Aristotle II*, translated by E. S. Forster, 272–740. Loeb Classical Library 391. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960.
Athenaeus of Naucratis. *The Learned Banqueters* [*Deipnosophists*]. 8 vols. Translated by S. Douglas Olson. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006–2012.
Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
Aulus Gellius. *Noctes Atticae*. Edited by P. K. Marshall. 2 vols. Oxford Classical Texts. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.
Baxter, Richard. *Baxter Treatises* (MS 59 and MS 61). London: Dr. Williams’s Trust, 1959.
Bekker, Immanuel, editor. *Anecdota Graeca*. Berlin, 1814.
Bentley, Richard, editor. *Milton’s “Paradise Lost”: A New Edition*. London, 1732.
Brant, Sebastian. *The Shyppe of Fooles*. London, 1509.
Burnet, John, translator. *Early Greek Philosophy*. London: A&C Black, 1920.
Callimachus. “Epigrams.” In *Callimachus: Hymns and Epigrams, Lycophron, Aratus,* translated by A. W. Mair, 136–84. Loeb Classical Library 129. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955.
Cicero. “De Fato.” In *Cicero: De Oratore, Book III: De Fato, Paradoxa Stoicorum, De Partitione Oratoria* [*Cicero IV*], translated by H. Rackham, 192–249. Loeb Classical Library 349. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942.
———. “De Re Publica.” In *Cicero XVI*, translated by Clinton Walker Keyes, 12–286. Loeb Classical Library 213. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928.
Clement of Alexandria. “Protrepticus.” In *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*, vol. 12. Edited by Otto Stählin. Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1905.
———. “Stromateis.” In *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*, edited by Otto Stählin, vol. 52. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1906.
Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca. Edited by Hermann Diels. 23 vols. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1891–1909.
Cornutus. *Theologiae Graecae Compendium*. Edited by Carl Lang. Leipzig: Teubner, 1881.
Cottingham, John, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny, translators. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. 3 vols. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985–91.
Cudworth, Ralph. *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*. London, 1678.
Dante Alighieri. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Volume 1, Inferno*. Translated by Robert M. Durling. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Democritus. “Testimonia, Part 2: Doctrine (D).” In *Early Greek Philosophy, Volume VII: Later Ionian and Athenian Thinkers, Part 2*, translated by André Laks and Glenn W. Most, 60–347. Loeb Classical Library 530. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Diodorus Siculus. *The Library of History* [*Bibliotheca Historica*], *Volume V: Books XII.41–XIII*. Translated by C. H. Oldfather. Loeb Classical Library 384. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950.

Diogenes Laertius. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers.* 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library 184 and 185. Translated by R.D. Hicks. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925–72.

——— . *The Lives, Opinions, and Remarkable Sayings of the Most Famous Ancient Philosophers. Written in Greek, by Diogenes Laertius. Made English by Several Hands*. 2 vols. London, 1688–96.

Doxographi Graeci. Edited by Hermann Diels. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1879.

Dryden, John. *Mac Flecknoe, or, A satyr upon the true-blew-Protestant poet, T. S. by the author of Absalom & Achitophel*. London, 1682.

Du Bartas, Guillaume de Salluste. *Du Bartas his deuine weekes and workes translated: and dedicated to the Kings most excellent Maiestie by Iosuah Syluester*. Translated by Josuah Sylvester. London, 1611.

———. *Les Œuvres de Guillaume de Saluste seigneur du Bartas : reveues et augmentées par l’auteur.* Geneva, 1582.

Empedocles. *The Poem of Empedocles*. Translated by Brad Inwood. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2010.

Epic of Gilgamesh, The. Translated by Benjamin R. Foster. New York: Norton, 2019.

Estienne, Henri [Henrico Stephanus]. *Poesis Philosophica*. Geneva, 1573.

———. *Poetae Graeci Principes Heroici Carminis.* Geneva, 1566.

———. *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*. Geneva, 1572.

Eusebius. *La Préparation Évangélique* [*Praeparatio Evangelica*]. Edited by Jean Sirinelli and Édouard des Places. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1974.

Eustathius. *Comentarii ad Homeri Iliadem et Odysseam*. 4 vols. Edited by Gottfried Stallbaum. Hildesheim: Olms, 1960.

Galen of Pergamum. *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia*. 22 vols. Edited by Karl Gottlob Kühn. Leipzig, 1821–33.

Garzoni, Tommaso. *L’Hospidale de Pazzi Incurabili*. Venice, 1586.

———. *The Hospital of Incurable Fools*, *Erected into English.* London, 1600.

Gentian, Hervet, trans. *Sexti Empirici Adversvs mathematicos, hoc est aduersus qui prositentur disciplinas, Opvs eruditissimum, complectens vniuersam Pyrrhoniorum acutissimorum Philosophorum disputandi de quibuslibet disciplinis & artibus rationem, Græcè nunquam, Latinè nunc primùm editum, Gentiano Herveto Avrelio interprete. Eivsdem Sexti Pyrrhoniarvm Hypotys[o]se[o]n libri tres: Qvibvs in tres Philosophiæpartes seuerissimè inquiritur. Libri magno ingenij acumine scripti, veriaque doctrina referti: Græce nunquam, Latinè nunc primùm editi, interpretate Henrico Stephano. Accessit & Pyrrhonis vita, ex Diogene Laërtio: ex vulgata interpretatione, sed multis in locis castigata. Item, Claudij Galeni Pergameni contra Academico & Pyrrhonios, D. Erasmo Roterodamo interprete.* Antwerp, 1569.

Glanvill, Joseph. *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion by Joseph Glanvill, Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty, and Fellow of the R. S.* London, 1676.
Hephaestion. *Handbook*. Edited by M. Consbruch. Leipzig: Teubner, 1906.
Herodian. *General Accentuation*. In *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, edited by H. Hunger, vol. 16. Vienna: H. Böhlaus, 1951–68.
Hesiod. *Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia* [*Hesiod I*]. Edited and translated by Glenn W. Most. Loeb Classical Library 57. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018.
Hesychius of Alexandria. *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon*. Edited by M. Schmidt. Amsterdam, 1965.
Hierocles. *Hieroclis in Aureum Pythagoreorum Carmen Commentarius* [Commentary on the *Carmen Aureum*]. Edited by F. G. Koehler. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1974.
Hippolytus. "Refutatio." In *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller*, edited by P. Wendland, 3:551–76. Leipzig, 1916.
Holland, Philemon, trans. *The Philosophie, Commonlie Called, The Morals Written by the Learned Philosopher PLUTARCH of Chaeronea. Translated out of Greeke into English, and conferred with the Latine translations and the French, by Philemon Holland of Coventrie, Doctor in Physicke*. London, 1603.
Holy Bible, The. King James Version. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
Horace. "Ars Poetica." In *Horace: Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica*, translated by H. Rushton Fairclough, 442–90. Loeb Classical Library 194. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929.
Horrell, Joseph. "Milton, Limbo, and Suicide." *The Review of English Studies* 18, no. 72 (Oct. 1942): 413–27.
Hume, Patrick. *Annotations on Milton's "Paradise Lost."* London, 1695.
Iamblichus. *Life of Pythagoras*. Edited by L. Deubner and U. Klein. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1975.
Johnson, Samuel. "Milton." In *The Lives of the Poets: A Selection*, edited by Roger Lonsdale, 54–114. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
Jonson, Ben. "News from the New World Discovered in the Moon." In *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, edited by Stephen Orgel, 292–305. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969.
———— . "To the memory of my beloved the author Mr. William Shakespeare and what he hath left us." In the *Digital Facsimile of the Bodleian First Folio of Shakespeare's Plays*, Arch. G c.7, A4 recto. London, 1623.
————. *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson*. London, 1641.
Kircher, Athanasius. *Mundus Subterraneus, In XII libros digestus; quo divinum subterrestris mundi opificium, mira ergasteriorum naturæ in eo distributio, verbo pantámorphou Protei regnum, universæ denique naturæ majestas*. Amsterdam, 1665.
————. *The vulcano's, or, Burning and fire-vomiting mountains, famous in the world, with their remarkables collected for the most part out of Kircher's Subterraneous world, and exposed to more general view in English: upon the relation of the late wonderful and prodigious eruptions of Ætna, thereby to occasion greater admirations of the wonders of nature (and of the God of nature) in the mighty element of fire*. London, 1669.
Laks, André and Glenn W. Most, editors and translators. *Early Greek Philosophy*. 9 vols. Loeb Classical Library 524–32. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.
Legrand, Jacques. *Here Begynneth the Table of a Book Entytled the Book of Good Maners*. London, 1487.

———. *Le Livre De Bonnes Meurs*. Burgundy, ca. 1450.
Lough, Robin, director. *Antony and Cleopatra*. Royal Shakespeare Company. BBC, 2018. Blu-ray Disc, 195 mins.
Lucian. "The Patriot" ["Philopatris"]. In *Lucian Volume VIII*, translated by M. D. MacLeod, 413–68. Loeb Classical Library 432. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.
———. "Icaromenippus, or the Sky-Man." In *Lucian II*, translated by A. M. Harmon, edited by Jeffrey Henderson, 267–324. Loeb Classical Library 54. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1915.
Lucretius. *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura*. Translated by W.H.D. Rouse. Loeb Classical Library 181. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
Macrobius. *Saturnalia.* Edited by J. A. Willis. Leipzig: Teubner, 1963.
Midgley, Robert. *A New Treatise of Natural Philosophy, Free'd from the Intricacies of the Schools Adorned With Many Curious Experiments both Medicinal and Chymical: As Also with Several Observations Useful for the Health of the Body.* London, 1687.
Milton, John. *Commonplace Book of John Milton*. Add MS 36354. British Library, London, ca. 1630–50.
———. "From *On Christian Doctrine*." In *The Riverside Milton*, edited by Roy Flannagan, 1158–1201. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
———. "From *The Second Defence of the English People*." In *The Riverside Milton*, edited by Roy Flannagan, 1096–1118. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
———. "Of Education." In *The Riverside Milton*, edited by Roy Flannagan, 977–86. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
———. "Of Prelatical Episcopacy." In *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*. Edited by Don M. Wolfe. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953–82.
———. "Paradise Lost." In *The Riverside Milton*, edited by Roy Flannagan, 297–710. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
———. "Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, The." In *The Riverside Milton*, edited by Roy Flannagan, 1057–75. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
Montaigne, Michel de. *Florio's Montaigne, Volume I*, translated by John Florio. Edited by J. I. M. Stewart. London: The Nonesuch Press, 1931.
Nicander. See Scholiast on Nicander's *Theriaca.*
Origen. *Contra Celsum*. In *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller*, edited by P. Koetschau, Origen vol. 2. Leipzig, 1899.
Ovid. "Book XV." In *Metamorphoses Volume II*, translated by Frank Justus Miller, 363–428. Loeb Classical Library 43. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.
Philo of Alexandria. *De Providentia* [*On Providence*]. Edited by M. Hadas-Lebel. Paris, 1973.
Philoponus. "Ioannis Philiponi in Aristotelis Physicorum" [Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*]. In *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 16. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1887.
Philostratus. *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. 3 vols. Edited and translated by Christopher P. Jones. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005–6.
Pierce, Thomas. *The Sinner Impleaded in his Own Court*. London, 1656.
Plato. "Cratylus." In *Plato IV*, translated by H. N. Fowler, 1–192. Loeb Classical Library 167. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939.
———. "Phaedo." In *Plato I: Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus*, translated by Harold North Fowler, 266–406. Loeb Classical Library 36. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

———. *Republic*. 2 vols. Edited and translated by Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
———. "Symposium." In *Plato III: Lysis. Symposium. Gorgias*, translated by W. R. M. Lamb, 73–246. Loeb Classical Library 166. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925.
———. "Timaeus." In *Timaeus and Critias*, translated by Robin Waterfield, 1–100. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
Pliny the Elder. *Natural History, Books 28–32*. Translated by W. H. S. Jones. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963.
Pliny the Younger. *Letters, Volume I: Books 1–7*. Translated by Betty Radice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.
Plotinus. *Enneads*. Translated by A. H. Armstrong. 6 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966–1988.
Plutarch. *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes, The*. Translated by Thomas North. London, 1579.
———. *Moralia*. Edited by Jeffrey Henderson. 17 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927–2004.
Pomponazzi, Pietro. *Corsi inedita dell'insegnamento padovano*. 2 vols. Edited by Antonino Poppi. Padua: Antenore, 1966–70.
Pope, Alexander. *The Rape of the Lock. An heroi-comical poem. In five canto's*. London, 1714.
Porphyry. *Porphyrii Philosophi Platonici Opuscula Selecta*. Edited by August Nauck. Leipzig: Teubner, 1886.
Proclus. *Ex Procli Scholiis in Cratylum Platonis Excerpta* [Commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*]. Edited by F. Boissonade. Leipzig, 1820.
———. *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Rem Publicam Commentarii*. [Commentary on Plato's *Republic*]. 2 vols. Edited by G. Kroll. Leipzig: Teubner, 1899–1901.
———. *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum Commentaria* [Commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*]. 3 vols. Edited by Ernst Diehl. Leipzig, 1903–6.
Pseudo-Aristotle. *De lineis insecabilibus* [*On Indivisible Lines*]. Edited by M. Timpanaro Cardini. Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1970.
———. "De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia." In *Anecdota Graeca*. Edited by Immanuel Bekker. Berlin, 1814.
Quintilian. *The Orator's Education, Volume I: Books 1-2*. Translated by Donald A. Russell. Loeb Classical Library 124. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.
Rabelais, Francois. *The Complete Works of Francois Rabelais*. Translated by Donald M. Frame Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
Rapin, René. *Reflexions sur la philosophie ancienne et moderne, et sur l'usage qu'on en doit faire pour la Religion.* Paris, 1676.
———. *Reflexions upon ancient and modern philosophy, moral and natural. Treating of the Aegyptians, Arabians, Gretians, Romans, &c. philosophers; as Thales, Zeno, Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Epicurus, &c. Also of the English, Germans, French, Spanish, Italian, &c. As Bacon, Boyle, Descartes, Hobbes, Vanhelmont, Gassendus, Galilens, Harvey, Paracelsus, Marsennus, Digby, &c. Together with the use that is to be made thereof*. London, 1678.
Rufus of Ephesus. "On Naming of the Parts of Man." In *Œuvres de Rufus D'Éphèse, Texte Collationné sur Les Manuscrits, Traduit Pour La Première Fois en Français*, edited by C. Daremberg and C. E. Ruelle, 133–85. Paris, 1879.

Scholiast on Dionysius of Thrace. In *Greek Elegiac Poetry from the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC*, translated by D. Gerber, 36–7. Loeb Classical Library 258. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Scholiast on Euripides' *Phoenissae*. In *Scholia in Euripidem*, edited by E. Schwartz, 1:249–50. Berlin: Reimer, 1887.

Scholiast on Homer's *Odyssey*. In *Etymologicum Graeca Linguae Gudianum*, edited by F. W. Sturz, 745–6. Leipzig: Olms, 1073.

Scholiast on Nicander's *Theriaca.* In *Scholia in Nicandri Theriaka: Cum Glossis*, edited by Annunciata Crugnola. Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1971.

Scholiast on Plato's *Gorgias*. In *Scholia Platonica*, edited by William Chase Greene, 128–69. Haverford, PA: American Philological Association, 1938.

Sextus Empiricus. *Opera*. Edited by H. Mutschmann and J. Mau. Leipzig: Teubner, 1914–54.

Shakespeare, William. *Antony and Cleopatra*. Edited by John Wilders. New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2018.

———— . *Coriolanus*. Edited by Peter Holland. New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016.

———— . *Hamlet*. In *The Riverside Shakespeare*, edited by Herschel Baker, Anne Barton, Frank Kermode, Harry Levin, Hallett Smith, and Marie Edel, 1183–1245. Second Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

————. *Merry Wives of Windsor, The*. Edited by Giorgio Melchiori. New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2000.

———— . *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies Published According to the True Originall Copies*. London, 1623. Annotated copy in Free Library of Philadelphia, skh00001. https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/67237.

———— . "Sonnet 44." In *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Poems*, edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, 107. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009.

———— . "Sonnet 45." In *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Poems*, edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, 109. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009.

————. *Romeo and Juliet*. In *The Riverside Shakespeare*, edited by Herschel Baker, Anne Barton, Frank Kermode, Harry Levin, Hallett Smith, and Marie Edel, 1104–45. Second Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

———— . *Titus Andronicus*. Edited by Jonathan Bate. New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2013.

———— . *Twelfth Night*. In *The Riverside Shakespeare*, edited by Herschel Baker, Anne Barton, Frank Kermode, Harry Levin, Hallett Smith, and Marie Edel, 437–76. Second Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

Simplicius. "In Aristotelis *De Caelo* Commentaria" [Commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*]. In *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, edited by I. L. Heiberg, vol. 7. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1894.

————. "In Aristotelis *Physica* Commentaria" ["Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*]. In *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vols. 9–10. Berlin, 1882–1895.

————. "Simplicii In Libros Aristotelis *De Anima* Commentaria" [Commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*]. In *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, ed. Michael Hayduck, vol. 11. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1882.

Stobaeus, Joannes. *Anthologium*. Edited by Curt Wachsmuth and Otto Hense. 5 vols. Berlin: Apud Weidmannos, 1884–1912.

Suidae Lexicon [*The Suda*]. Edited by Ada Adler. Leipzig, 1928–1938.
Synesius of Cyrene. "On Providence." In *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, edited by Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 66. Paris: Apud Garnier Fratres, 1857.
Theodoret, *Graecarum Affectionum Curatio*. Edited by Joannes Raeder. Leipzig: Teubner, 1904.
Theo of Smyrna. *Theonis Smyrnaei Philosophi Platonici*. Edited by Eduard Hiller. Leipzig: Teubner, 1878.
Theophrastus. *De Causis Plantarum*. 3 vols. Edited and translated by Benedict Einarson and George K. K. Link. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976–90.
———. "De Sensibus" ["On Sense"]. In *Doxographi Graeci*, edited by Hermann Diels, 497–527. Berlin, 1897.
Tzetzes, Joannes. "Exegesis of the *Iliad*." In *Draconis Stratonicensis Liber de Metris Poeticis, Ioannis Tzetzes Exegesis in Homeri Iliadem.* Edited by G. Hermann. Leipzig, 1812.
———. *Historiarum Variorum Chiliades*. Edited by Th. Kiessling. Leipzig, 1826.
———. *Tzetzae Allegoriae Iliadis* [*Allegories of the Iliad*]. Paris: Apud Dumont, 1851.

Secondary Works

Adelman, Janet. *The Common Liar: An Essay on "Antony and Cleopatra."* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973.
Attié, Katherine B. "Regendering the Sublime and the Beautiful: Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Feminist Formalism," in *The Routledge Companion to Women, Sex, and Gender in the Early British Colonial World*, edited by Kimberly Anne Coles and Eve Keller, 46–58. London: Routledge, 2019.
Bates, Jennifer. "Phenomenology and Life: Hegel's Inverted World, Cleopatra, and the Logic of the Crocodile." *Criticism* 54, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 427–43.
Bercovitch, Sacvan. "Empedocles in the English Renaissance." *Studies in Philology* 65, no. 1 (Jan. 1968): 67–80.
Bevington, David. " 'Above the element they lived in': The Visual Language of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Acts 4 and 5." In *Antony and Cleopatra: New Critical Essays*, edited by Sara Munson Deats, 95–110. New York: Routledge, 2005.
Bignone, Ettore. *Empedocle.* Turin, 1916.
Blits, Jan H. *New Heaven, New Earth: Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra*. New York: Lexington Books, 2009.
Bloom, Harold. *Cleopatra: I Am Fire and Air*. New York: Scribner, 2017.
Blumenberg, Hans. *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997.

Boswell, Jackson Campbell. *Milton's Library: A Catalogue of the Remains of John Milton's Library and an Annotated Reconstruction of Milton's Library and Ancillary Readings*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1975.

Bricault, Laurent and Miguel John Versluys. "Isis and Empires." In *Power, Politics and the Cults of Isis*, 3–35. Brill, 2014.

Burrow, Colin. *Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Cavell, Stanley. *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare: Updated Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Chitwood, Ava. *Death by Philosophy: The Biographical Tradition in the Life and Death of the Archaic Philosophers Empedocles, Heraclitus, and Democritus*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004.

——— . "The Death of Empedocles." *The American Journal of Philology* 107, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 175–91.

Cocks, H.G. "The Discovery of Sodom, 1851." *Representations* 112, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 1–26.

Colie, Rosalie L. *Shakespeare's Living Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Collins, Derek. "Nature, Cause, and Agency in Greek Magic." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 133, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 17–49.

Crane, Mary Thomas. "Roman World, Egyptian Earth: Cognitive Difference and Empire in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*." *Comparative Drama* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 1–17.

Curd, Patricia, editor and translator. *Anaxagoras of Clazomenae: Fragments and Testimonia*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.

Daniel, Drew. "The Empedoclean Renaissance." In *The Return of Theory in Early Modern English Studies, Volume II*, edited by Paul Cefalu, Gary Kuchar, and Bryan Reynolds, 277–300. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

——— . *The Joy of the Worm*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, forthcoming June 2022.

Deats, Sara Munson. "Shakespeare's Anamorphic Drama: A Survey of *Antony and Cleopatra* in Criticism, on Stage, and on Screen." In *Antony and Cleopatra: New Critical Essays*, edited by Sara Munson Deats, 1–94. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Diels, Hermann. *Doxographi Graeci.* Berlin, 1879.

Dillon, John. "Plotinus, the First Cartesian?" *Hermathena* 149 (Winter 1990): 19–31.

Dollimore, Jonathan, and Alan Sinfield, editors. *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*. Second edition. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Drummond, W. "On the Science of the Egyptians and Chaldeans." In *The Classical Journal for March and June, 1820: Volume XXI*, 35–56. London: A. J. Valpy, 1820.

Edmunds, Lowell. "Necessity, Chance, and Freedom in the Early Atomists." *Phoenix* 26, no. 4 (Winter 1972): 342–57.

Everson, Jane E. "The Melting Pot of Science and Belief: Studying Vesuvius in Seventeenth-Century Naples." *Renaissance Studies* 26, no. 5 (Nov. 2010): 691–727.

Fallon, Stephen. *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Findlen, Paula. "Introduction." In *Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything*, edited by Paula Findlen, 1–48. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Fish, Stanley. *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.
———. *Surprised by Sin: the Reader in "Paradise Lost*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1967.
———. *Versions of Antihumanism: Milton and Others*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
Flannagan, Roy, editor. *The Riverside Milton.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
Floyd-Wilson, Mary. *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
———. "Transmigrations: Crossing Regional and Gender Boundaries in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage*, edited by Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russel, 73–96. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
French, Marilyn. *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*. New York: Ballantine, 1983.
Furlong, Gillian. *Treasures from UCL*. London: UCL Press, 2015.
Garani, Myrto. *Empedocles* Redivivus: *Poetry and Analogy in Lucretius*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
Gasparini, Valentino. "Isis and Osiris: Demonology vs. Henotheism?" *Numen* 58, no. 5/6 (2011): 697–728.
Gregory, Andrew. "Leucippus and Democritus on Like to Like and *ou mallon*." *Apeiron* 46, no. 4 (2013): 446–68.
Hadfield, Andrew. *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004.
——— . *Shakespeare and Republicanism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
Hardie, Philip. "The Presence of Lucretius in 'Paradise Lost." *Milton Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Mar. 1995): 13–24.
Hayne, Léonie. "Isis and Republican Politics." *Acta Classica* 35 (1992): 143–9.
Hershbell, Jackson P. "Empedocles' Oral Style." *The Classical Journal* 63, no. 8 (May 1968): 351–7.
Holstun, James. *Ehud's Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution*. New York: Verso, 2000.
Inwood, Brad. "Introduction." In *The Poem of Empedocles*, 3–79. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
Iyengar, Sujata. "Shakespeare's Embodied Ontology of Gender, Air, and Health." In *Disability, Health, and Happiness in the Shakespearean Body*, edited by Sujata Iyengar, 176–92. New York: Routledge, 2015.
Jones, Ann Rosalind and Peter Stallybrass. *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
Kalderon, Mark Eli. *Form Without Matter: Empedocles and Aristotle on Color Perception*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
Kantorowicz, Ernst H. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.
Kelley, Maurice. "Additions to: *Milton's Library*." *Milton Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (October 1976): 93–4.
Kelley, Maurice, and Samuel D. Atkins. "Milton's Annotations of Aratus." *PMLA* LXX (1955): 1090–1106.
Kendrick, Christopher. "Satire and Speculation in Milton's Limbo." *Milton Studies* 54 (2013): 229–58.

Kessler, Eckhard. “The Intellective Soul.” In *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, edited by Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Kessler, and Jill Kraye, 485–534. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Kingsley, Peter. *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

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

Knoll, Gillian. “Binding The Void: The Erotics of Place in *Antony and Cleopatra*.” *Criticism* 58, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 281–304.

Laks, André and Glenn W. Most, editors and translators. *Early Greek Philosophy*. 9 vols. Loeb Classical Library volumes 524–532. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Little, Arthur L., Jr. *Shakespeare Jungle Fever: National-Imperial Re-Visions of Race, Rape, and Sacrifice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Lobis, Seth. *The Virtue of Sympathy: Magic, Philosophy, and Literature in Seventeenth-Century England*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015.

Mack, Maynard. *Everybody’s Shakespeare: Reflections Chiefly on the Tragedies*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993.

Macauley, David. “The Flowering of Environmental Roots and the Four Elements in Presocratic Philosophy: From Empedocles to Delezue and Guattari.” *Worldviews* 9, no. 3 (2005): 281–314.

Martin, Catherine Gimelli. *The Ruins of Allegory: “Paradise Lost” and the Metamorphosis of Epic Convention*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998.

Mazzio, Carla. “Circling the Square: Geometry, Masculinity, and the Norms of *Antony and Cleopatra*.” In *Staged Normality in Shakespeare’s England*, edited by Rory Loughnane and Edel Semple, 33–68. N.p.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

McDowell, Nicholas. “Reading Milton Reading Shakespeare Politically: What the Identification of Milton’s First Folio Does and Does Not Tell Us.” *The Seventeenth Century*, vol. 36, no. 4 (July-August 2021): 509-25.

Miner, Earl. *The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Miola, Robert S. *Shakespeare’s Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

McDowell, Nicholas. *Poet of Revolution: The Making of John Milton*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020.

Montanari, Franco. *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*. Edited by Madeleine Goh and Chad Schroeder. Boston: Brill, 2015.

Morgan, Kathryn. A. *Myth and Philosophy: From the Presocratics to Plato*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Mühlethaler, Jean-Claude. “Poésie et Savoir au XV^{e} Siècle.” In *Poétiques de la Renaissance: Le modèle italien, le monde franco-bourguignon et leur hèritage en France au XVI^{e} siècle*, edited by Perrine Galand-Hallyn and Fernand Hallyn, 159–217. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2001.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. “Empedocles,” in *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, translated and edited by Greg Whitlock, 106–119. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

O’Brien, D. *Empedocles’ Cosmic Cycle: A Reconstruction from the Fragments and Secondary Sources*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

Otto, Bernd-Christian. “Towards Historicizing ‘Magic’ in Antiquity,” *Numen* 60, no. 2/3 (2013): 309–47.

Oxford English Dictionary Online. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. www.oed.com.

Oxford Latin Dictionary. Edited by P. G. W. Glare. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Paglia, Camille. *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Passannante, Gerard. *Catastrophizing: Materialism and the Making of Disaster.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019.

———. *The Lucretian Renaissance: Philology and the Afterlife of Tradition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Paster, Gail Kern. *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004.

Patrides, C.A. “ ‘The High and Aiery Hills of Platonisme’: An Introduction to the Cambridge Platonists.” In *The Cambridge Platonists*, 1–41. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.

Picciotto, Joanna. *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Plantzos, D. “The Iconography of Assimilation. Isis and Royal Imagery on Ptolemaic Seal Impressions.” In *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship. Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School of Athens, November 1–2, 2007*, edited by P. P. Iossif, A. S. Chankowski, and C. C. Lorber, 389–416. Leuven, 2011.

Prescott, Anne Lake. “The Reception of Du Bartas in England.” *Studies in the Renaissance* 15 (1968): 144–73.

Quint, David. *Inside Paradise Lost: Reading the Designs of Milton’s Epic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Raymond, Joad. *Milton’s Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Richter, Daniel S. “Plutarch on Isis and Osiris: Text, Cult, and Cultural Appropriation.” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 131 (2001): 191–216.

Rumrich, John, and Stephen M. Fallon. “Introduction.” In *Immortality and the Body in the Age of Milton*, 1–22. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Rust, Jennifer. *The Body in Mystery: The Political Theology of the Corpus Mysticum in the Literature of the English Reformation.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013.

Sands, Kathleen R. *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England.* Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004.

Shaw, Michael M. “Aither and the Four Roots in Empedocles.” *Research in Phenomenology* 44, no. 2 (2014): 170–193.

Sinfield, Alan. Shakespeare, *Authority, Sexuality: Unfinished Business in Cultural Materialism*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Smith, Martin Ferguson. “Introduction.” In *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura*, translated by W. H. D. Rouse, ix–lxv. Loeb Classical Library 181. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Spellmeyer, Kurt. “Plotinus and Seventeenth-Century Literature: A Prolegomenon to Further Study.” *Pacific Coast Philology* 17, no. 1–2 (Nov. 1982): 50–8.

Sprigge, T. L. S. “Idealism.” In *The Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Stack, George J. “Materialism.” In *The Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Stempel, Daniel. “The Transmigration of the Crocodile.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1956): 59–72.

Sugimura, N. K. *“Matter of Glorious Trial”: Spiritual and Material Substance in “Paradise Lost.”* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Sytsma, David S. *Richard Baxter and the Mechanical Philosophers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Trépanier, Simon. “From Hades to the Stars: Empedocles on the Cosmic Habitats of Soul.” *Classical Antiquity* 36, no. 1 (April 2017): 130–182.

———. “From Wandering Limbs to Gods: δαίμων as Substance in Empedocles.” *Apeiron* 47, no. 2 (2014): 172–210.

Wallace, Richard. “ ‘Amaze Your Friends!’ Lucretius on Magnets.” *Greece & Rome* 43, no. 2 (Oct., 1996): 178–87.

Warren, James. *Presocratics.* Stocksfield, England: Acumen Publishing, 2007.

Waterfield, Robin. “Empedocles of Acragas.” In *The First Philosophers: The Presocratics and Sophists*, 133–63. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Whitlock, Greg. “Translator’s Commentary.” In *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 153–264. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Wilders, John, editor. *Antony and Cleopatra*. New York: The Arden Shakespeare, 2018.

Wilhelm, Robert M. “Pliny and Vergil.” *The Classical Outlook* 53, no. 4 (Dec. 1975): 40–1.

Willis, Gary. *Making Make-Believe Real*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014.

Wolfe, Jessica. *Homer and the Question of Strife from Erasmus to Hobbes*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2015.

Wolf, William D. “ ‘New Heaven, New Earth’: The Escape from Mutability in *Antony and Cleopatra*.” Shakespeare Quarterly 33 (1982): 328–35.

Vincent, Barbara C. “Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* and the Rise of Comedy.” *English Literary Renaissance* 12 (1982): 53–86**.**

Yates, Frances. *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*. New York: Routledge, 1979.

Zhmud, Leonid. “Pythagoras’ Northern Connections: Zalmoxis, Abaris, Aristeas.” *The Classical Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (December 2016): 446–62.