QUANTIFIED LIVES: NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN'S POETRY, MATHEMATICS, AND MARRIAGE

By

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Abstract

Quantified Lives develops an account of social numeracy by which poets deployed the continuities and discontinuities enabled by poetic forms, such as rhyme, meter, and tropes, to work through ideas about singularities and pluralities, intimacy and individuation. In many cases, they aim not so much to describe ways for women to become whole, but to acknowledge and mobilize the separation of self from conventional and socially acceptable modes of totality, such as marriage. Huseby's dissertation shows how nineteenth-century women poets set out to trouble contradictory models of social accounting. Women could certainly be counted when deviant—indeed, there were many attempts to estimate the number of prostitutes and unmarried women in the period—but they were altogether discounted in democratic politics and incorporated into a single male-dominated unity in marriage. Many insisted on a social calculus whereby "two must become one," as the doctrine of coverture subsumed women into their husbands, legally, physically, and politically. Huseby argues that women poets—Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Augusta Webster, and Michael Field (the pen name of Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper)—challenged an easy political accounting by reflecting on women's complex and conflicting experiences of wholeness, connectedness, and fragmentation. Each poet in this study draws on a combination of poetic forms to rethink the normative logic of social collectives. Throughout Huseby's study, no one way or scale of reading suffices to identify the complexity of the forms with which these poets were coming to terms with social counting and aggregations. The work of this dissertation, therefore, is to identify a plurality of ways women poets were creating new models for understanding their lives as quantifiable.

Our teachers teach that one and one make two:
    Later, Love rules that one and one make one:
    Abstruse the problems! neither need we shun,
But skilfully to each should yield its due.
The narrower total seems to suit the few,
    The wider total suits the common run;
    Each obvious in its sphere like moon or sun;
Both provable by me, and both by you…

—Christina Rossetti, #16, "Later Life: A Sonnet of Sonnets"

We are luminous. Neither one nor two. I've never known how to count. Up to you. In calculations, we make two. Really, two? Doesn't that make you laugh? An odd sort of two. And yet not one. Especially not one. Let's leave one to them: their oneness, with its prerogatives, its domination, its solipsism: like the sun's. And the strange way they divide up their couples, with the other as the image of the one. Only an image. So any move toward the other means turning back to the attraction of one's own image. A (scarcely) living mirror, she/it frozen, mute. More lifelike. The ebb and flow of our lives spent in the exhausting labor of copying, miming. Dedicated to reproducing - that sameness in which we have remained for centuries, as the other.

—Luce Irigaray, "When Our Lips Speak Together"

Introduction:
Nineteenth-Century Social Numeracy and Poetry's Mathematical Forms

I. The Numbers of Marriage

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways."—The opening line of sonnet 43 in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* is one of the most recognizable lines of Victorian poetry. Acknowledged in Barrett Browning's time and our own as a consummate love poem, sonnet 43 also evokes the "week diffusiveness" and "feeble wordiness" of the poetess tradition.[1] As critics have noted, the poetess tradition brought with it an expectation that women's poetry would be marked by the "dissociation of sensibility from the affairs of the

[1] Charlotte Bronte complimented her sister Emily's poetry by roundly condemning the poetess tradition in these terms (qtd. in T. J. Wise and J. A. Symington, eds. "The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships, and Correspondence," *The Shakespeare Head Brontë*, 19 vols. [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1931-38], 256).

world."[2] Far too easy to dismiss on such grounds, as sentimental, apolitical, or as mere "spontaneous expressions of strong feeling," sonnet 43 has fallen into the shadows of more recent scholarly work.[3] This project will illustrate, however, that sonnet 43 offers an explicit theory of social numeracy, one derived from poetry and as yet unacknowledged by critics. Scholars have read Barrett Browning's *Sonnets* for their association with her belief system and with the Romantic sublime, identified their influence on other Victorian sonnet sequences, such as Christina Rossetti's *Monna Innominata,* and placed them in a genealogy with Petrarchan sonnets.[4] The poet's thematization of counting in sonnet 43 has drawn less attention, though, even as numbers in the nineteenth century had begun, like women's poetry, to shift from the realm of the ideal to an investment in what social applications and political interventions they might make in "the affairs of the world."[5]

Barrett Browning does not offer to demonstrate the ways that she loves, but to "count" them. And count she does. In fact, she enumerates eight ways that she loves. She also uses the

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[2] Angela Leighton, *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 3.

[3] Eric S. Robertson, *English Poetesses: A Series of Critical Biographies, With Illustrative Extracts* (London, 1883), 313 (qtd. in Leighton, *Writing Against the Hear*t, 109).

[4] On the sublime in the *Sonnets*, see Jerome Mazzaro,"Mapping Sublimity: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*," *Essays in Literature* 18.2 (Fall 1991): 166-79; for more Barrett Browning's influence on Rossetti, see Marjorie Stone, "Monna Innominata" and *Sonnets from the Portuguese*: Sonnet Traditions and Spiritual Trajectories," *The Culture of Christina Rossetti: Female Poetics and Victorian Contexts*, eds. Mary Arseneau, Antony H. Harrison, and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra (Athens: Ohio UP, 1999); and Charles LaPorte links sonnet 43 explicitly to Barrett Browning's religious devotion in *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible* (Charlottesville and London: UVA Press, 2011), 36). By the time of sonnet 43's composition, sonnets had become associated with women's poetry, while the epic fell to male poets as the heroic embodiment of masculine writing (Susan Wolfson, *Romantic Interaction: Social Being and the Turns of Literary Action* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010], 120-21). Isobel Armstrong, however, maintains that the *Sonnets* "chart the struggle of the female subject to take up a new position which is free of dependency," and in so doing, they move "towards language as a self-referring and self-creating act" (*Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics* [New York: Routledge, 1993], 356-57).

[5] Certainly, the bureaucracy and institutional mechanisms of modern life, for some, ran immediately contrary to poetry (Natasha Moore, *Victorian Poetry and Modern Life: The Unpoetical Age* [London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015], 7-8). But for poets like Barrett Browning, the goal was instead to "touch this real everyday life of our age, & hold it in my two hands" (Letter to Mary Russell Mitford, reprinted in Margaret Reynolds (ed.) (1996) *Aurora Leigh* (New York: Norton), 329 (30 Dec. 1844); qtd. in Moore, *Unpoetical Age*, 1). The stuff of bureaucracy, then, was fair game for some poets.

language of geometry: "depth and breadth and heighth" (line 2). What's more, she elects to frame that geometric language in the sonnet, a poetic form recognizable for its geometric relation to Pythagorean methods.[6] True, there are no formulae here and what the speaker counts seems entirely intangible and abstract: the dimensions a "soul can reach," the "level of everyday's / Most quiet need," freedom, praise, and passion (lines 3, 5-6). Yet, her response to the inaugural question "Let me count the ways" is at once imperative ("I will count them in my fashion and you will listen") and submissive ("Permit me to perform an act of counting in the manner of my own choosing"). The speaker's question is, therefore, rhetorical, and her response is an assertion of her right to not only answer that question but to do so by wielding a mathematical logic that was predominately reserved in the nineteenth century for men. In a sense, the speaker performs an arithmetic operation as she describes or relates an enumerative act by way of figuration. Whether she has been trained in "proper" mathematical methods matters little, for the poet will be counting in a way she best understands—in poetry. While Margaret Reynolds has identified the *Sonnets*' tendency to measure love,[7] sonnet 43's overt attention to counting and the ways that counting can manifest as an act of *poiesis*, or making, reveals a tension in nineteenth-century women's poetry between acts of counting, the ways women were counted, and seeking in poetry to exercise a largely male-dominated system of logic——mathematics and associated social applications of numbers, such as vital statistics. This tension emerges not only in Barrett Browning's sonnet but throughout the Victorian era.

In the period, women were often objects of complex and contradictory social counting. From an ontological superfluity to an existential negation, women's lives were defined by their

[6] Janine Rogers, *Unified Fields Fields: Science and Literary Form* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 48-65.
[7] Margaret Reynolds, "Love's Measurement in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*," *Studies in Browning and His Circle* 21 (1997): 53-67.

positionality as social numbers, especially in terms of their marriageability. While some women were "redundant" because there were more women in England than men, others became "non-existent" once married.[8] Marriage is a social condition long recognized as central to the Victorian era by literary critics and historians alike; less often recognized is that marriage was a condition defined in the nineteenth-century by a language of numbers.[9] Companionate marriage relied on a notion of two, while the normative model of oneness "reconciled male authority with the ideal of marital unity."[10] Both an ideal union and a bringing together of two separable bodies into a single unity, marriage became a prime excavation site for women poets seeking to work through their complex and conflicting experiences of wholeness, connectedness, and division. Was marriage a matter of one or two? Or more or less?

The way that countability or numbers played a role in the everyday experience of marriage revealed how the rhetoric of numbers faltered or collapsed.[11] Marriage creates "one

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[8] William Rathbone Greg, "Why Are Women Redundant?" *National Review* 14 (April 1862): 434-60. Caroline Norton's *Letter to the Queen*, in which Norton protests "the grotesque anomaly which ordains that married women shall be 'non-existent' in a country governed by a female Sovereign" is the most famous source of this language (*A Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth's Marriage and Divorce Bill* [London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855], 4; qtd. in Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, 64).

[9] Among many studies on domesticity, marriage, marital reform, and the marriage plot, one might refer to the following: Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007; Kelly Hager, *Dickens and the Rise of Divorce: The Failed-Marriage Plot and the Novel Tradition*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2010; Jennifer Kelsey, *Changing the Rules: Women and Victorian Marriage*, Leicestershire: Matador Press, 2016; Lisa Surridge, *Bleak Houses: Marital Violence in Victorian Fiction*, Athens: Ohio UP, 2005; Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833*, Cambridge and London: Harvard UP, 1990; Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012; Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination*. 2nd ed. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1984; Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989; Rod Edmond, *Affairs of the Hearth: Victorian Poetry and Domestic Narrative*. London and New York: Routledge, 1988; and, Rachel Ablow, *The Marriage of Minds: Reading Sympathy in the Victorian Marriage Plot*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2007.

[10] Griffin, *Politics of Gender*, 46.

[11] I intend "rhetoric" throughout this project not in the sense of what is merely persuasive but instead, as Mary Poovey explains in *The History of the Modern Fact*, that which understands an inherent power structure. Such rhetoric is capable of both generating knowledge and establishing a status hierarchy (*The History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998], 1-12).

person in law"; and so the "legal existence of the woman is suspended during marriage."[12] The wife is effectively zeroed out. Instead of 1+1=2, coverture involved a social math of 1+0=1, and that one was the husband.[13] When Victorians invoked the clichéd "two become one," the "two" referred to was effectively two whole numbers (1 and 0) rather than two instances of a natural number (1 and 1).[14] The doctrine of coverture is perhaps the strongest example of this claim.[15] As many scholars have shown, coverture was a legal ideology that subsumed a woman under her husband. She had no right to hold property, no right to the custody of her children, could not make contracts or purchases independent of her husband's income, and was not recognized by the courts or government as a legal entity in her own right. Once married, any property that a

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[12] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. [1756] 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1770), 442.
[13] Frances Power Cobbe, "Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors." Fraser's Magazine 78 (Dec. 1868): 779.
[14] Many nineteenth-century writers likewise made the point that women were obliterated, consumed, and negated. Frances Power Cobbe famously compared English men who marry to a spider which "forthwith gobbles…up" a smaller spider of the same species, and "in a very literal manner" makes the small spider "bone of his bone…and flesh of his flesh" ("Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors," *Fraser's Magazine* 78 [Dec. 1868]: 789; Ablow discusses this passage in *Marriage of Minds*, 12, as does Nina Auerbach in *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984], 12-13). Even when arguing against it, the language of coverture, of a husband and wife being "one person in law," was repeated not only by women like Cobbe writing against the legal strictures for women but by those in parliament arguing against reforms for women, such as the Divorce Act (1857), Married Women's Property Act (1870, 1882), the Infant Custody Act (1873), and the Matrimonial Causes Act (1878). As Mary Poovey confirms, "representations of gender constituted one of the sites on which ideological systems were simultaneously constructed and contested; as such, the representations of gender I discuss were themselves contested images, the sites at which struggles for authority occurred, as well as the locus of assumptions used to underwrite the very authority that authorized these struggles" (*Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988], 2).
[15] The best extended accounts of coverture can be found in the following texts: Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, 51-52; Ablow, *The Marriage of Minds*, 10-15; Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain*, 45-59. For more on married women's property reform, see Lee Holcombe, *Wives and Property: Reform of the Married Women's Property Law in Nineteenth-Century England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895*; and Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833*. Useful studies of the issue of women's property as it is described in the Victorian novel can be found in Deborah Wynne, *Women and Personal Property in the Victorian Novel* and Dolin, *Mistress of the House: Women of Property in the Victorian Novel* (New York: Routledge, 2010). William Blackstone's passage from his 1756 Commentaries on the Laws of England is most cited by scholars when defining coverture, so I likewise offer it here: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing; and is therefore called in our law-french a *feme-covert* . . . and her condition during her marriage is called her coverture. Upon this principle, of an union of person in husband and wife, depend almost all the legal rights, duties, and disabilities, that either of them acquire by the marriage…. For this reason, a man cannot grant anything to his wife, or enter into covenant with her: for the grant would be to suppose her separate existence; and to covenant with her, would be only to covenant with himself" (emphasis the author's, *Commentaries*, 442).

woman brought to a marriage was ceded to her husband, unless she held an equity trust that permitted her control of some funds separate from the marriage. Only very wealthy women were likely to have an equity trust, or what was called a "restraint on anticipation," which allowed her to dispose of income from a trust, a class distinction that caused the majority of women to be effectively erased as legal and political entities once married.[16]

Debates about women's rights, founded on the ideology of coverture and couched in the language of social counting, constitute one site where the ideological formation of gender was "contested and its instabilities revealed."[17] The question of women's autonomy—their capacity to be "one"—connected marital counting to other ideologies, including nationalism.[18] Ben Griffin's study of the domestic ideology of Victorian patriarchy substantiates that the "the perfect unity" of marriage was asserted as a prophylactic against the discord, separation, and divisiveness that women's rights would allegedly introduce in the public and private spheres.[19] He illustrates how a concern for domestic harmony motivated resistance to women's rights campaigns.[20] The fear was that giving a woman rights to her own property, custody of her children, the ability to divorce, or suffrage would not only introduce the very real likelihood that

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[16] Griffin, *Politics of Gender*, 82-85.

[17] Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, 4. Though Poovey never identifies social counting as one of the "sites" where ideological work occurs, she does devote substantial attention to coverture as one such space of oppositional formations. This project is an effort to suture this gap between the sites of ideology, of which marriage was one, and the language of social counting as it related to marriage.

[18] Any hint of domestic division occasioned anxiety not only about married relations but about the soundness of the English nation. The American War of Independence and French Revolution were recent historical events that were both couched as family disagreements. Each conflict generated a "national effort to set Britain's house in order and re-establish the nation's virtue by enforcing stricter adherence to particular moral codes." When the Preamble to the U. S. Constitution asserted a desire for a "more perfect union," it implied that the prior union between the colonies and England was imperfect. Such divisiveness could not stand and had to be addressed at home to prevent future conflicts, or worse yet, much more personal forms of revolution and civil war (Griffin, *Politics of Gender*, 39). See also, Joanna Innes, "Politics and morals: the reformation of manners movement in later eighteenth-century England," in *Inferior Politics: Social Problems and Social Policies in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 57-118.

[19] Griffin, *Politics of Gender*, 37, 42; William Childe-Pemberton, *The Life of Lord Norton, Statesman and Philanthropist* (London: John Murray, 1909), 43.

[20] Shanley's account of married women's property rights concurs with Griffin's claims about marital unity (*Feminism, Marriage, and the Law*, 46).

a husband and wife would disagree but that "the wife would have a [legally] recognised right to an opinion which might be contrary to that of her husband."[21] As reported in the July 31, 1869 Parliamentary Intelligence report of The *Times*, Lord Penzance opposed the Married Women's Property Bill on the grounds that that "the indirect effect would be to set up two independent authorities in a household; that the proper authority of the husband in his own house would be weakened, and that disunion would be promoted."[22] Overlaps between the language of women's rights, marriage, religion, and the nation were common. The issues were often expressed in mathematical terms.

In nineteenth-century legal conversations, private correspondence, and parliamentary debates regarding women's rights, the language of oneness and unity is particularly conspicuous. As one author put it, if a husband and wife were indeed the biblical "one flesh," then "they constitute one body; hence any injury done by one to the other is a schism within the one body, one part warring against the other."[23] Conservative anti-suffragist Roger Montgomerie argued in an April 19, 1877 *Times* article that women's rights would create a "divided empire" in the home "in which the husband on one side spent his property as he pleased, and the wife on the other spent hers as she pleased."[24] If a husband and wife had "separate interests" or "divided interests," eventually, such authors claimed, the security of the domestic state would

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[21] Griffin, *Politics of Gender*, 48.
[22] [Penzance, Lord James Wilde.] "House Of Lords, Friday, July 30." *The Times* [London, England] 31 July 1869: 6. *The Times Digital Archive*. 12 July 2016; qtd. in Griffin, *Politics of Gender*, 46. Many of the debates about marriage reform played out in the press. It is fair to say that educated readers, like the women poets in my study, would have regularly been exposed to the quantitative rhetoric therein.
[23] John Macpherson, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (New York: Scribner's and Sons, 1892), 404.
[24] "Parliamentary Intelligence, House of Commons, Wednesday, April 18th." *The Times* [London, England] 19 April 1877: 7. *The Times Digital Archive*. URL password protected (accessed 12 July 2016); qtd. in Griffin, *Politics of Gender*, 44.

disintegrate.[25] Consequently, "between man and wife," as another writer put it in 1855, "there must be only one interest and one aim," for a wife is "but another self."[26] The First Viscount Wolverhampton, Henry Fowler wrote to his fiancée that their marriage would be defined by a "oneness of feeling, principle, and action."[27] Alexander Beresford Hope likewise claimed that he and his wife endeavored to "remain one and indivisible in their discharge of duty."[28] And the Presbyterian John Eadie affirmed, "[U]nity of domestic administration was to be secured by oneness of headship."[29] That the language of being "no longer two, but one flesh" in marriage had its foundation in the Bible caused such numerical rhetoric to be especially persistent.[30] The idea that God mandated a woman be subsumed under her husband was deeply ingrained and enduring, as it remains for some people even today.[31]

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[25] George Sargent, *Domestic Happiness: Home Education Politeness and Good Breeding* (London: Groombridge, 1854), 33; qtd. in Griffin, *Politics of Gender,* 44.

[26] The author emphasizes that the "idea of unity is essential to that of matrimony" (H.W. H., "How to Choose a Wife" [London: Patridge, Oakey, and Co., 1855], 37).

[27] Edith Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler,, First Viscount Wolverhampton* (London: Hutchinson, 1912), 31; qtd. in Griffin, *Politics of Gender,* 42.

[28] H. W. Law and I. Law, *The Book of the Beresford Hopes* (London: Heath Cranton, 1925), 230; qtd. in Griffin, *Politics of Gender,* 41-42.

[29] *A commentary on the Greek text of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1884), 252; qtd. in Griffin, *Politics of Gender,* 57.

[30] Genesis 2:22-24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:8; Ephesians 5:22-33 (hereinafter, all references to biblical verses are to *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan [New York: Oxford University Press, 2007]). As Griffin notes, the religious basis of Victorian patriarchy, which ordained that "the head of the woman was the man," was "part of the mental furniture that men had grown up with" (51-52). Men were not alone is reinforcing this rhetoric of oneness, unity, and being indivisible, however. In her response to John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), Margaret Oliphant likewise invokes this social math of domestic union, totality, and wholeness as an ideal threatened by the Victorian debates on women's rights and the potential that coverture would be overturned. She writes, "the man and the woman united in the first of all primitive bonds, the union upon which the world and the race depend, are one person"; husband and wife are "two halves of a complete being.…The two are not rivals, they are not alike. They are different creatures. They are one" (emphasis the author's, Oliphant, "Mill on *The Subjection of Women*," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Review* 130 [Oct. 1869]: 581, 583; qtd. in Ablow, *Marriage of Minds*, 12-13). Yet, even here, we can see Oliphant trying to reconcile the disparate mathematical logics of those on each side of the dispute: the husband and wife "are one" but they are also "not alike" and "different creatures."

[31] I acknowledge that spiritual counting is also a subject worthy of further expansion. For instance, followers of Christian denominations urged that the church be "one body of Christ." The idea of the Church as Christ's "bride" stems from Ephesians 5:25–27, which exhorts husbands to "love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by ithe washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." While this association between marriage, religion, and counting is rich indeed, for the scope of this project I will focus on social counting.

If married women disappeared into the oneness of marriage, unmarried women were worrying supernumeraries. They were excessive in their numbers, an overage or remainder of the social math that ideally constructed pairs. In 1862, William Rathbone Greg wrote:

> [T]here is an enormous and increasing number of single women in the nation, a number quite disproportionate and quite abnormal; a number which, positively and relatively is indicative of an unwholesome social state…By dividing and proportioning the sexes, the instincts which lie deepest, strongest, and most unanimously in the heart of humanity at large in all times and amid all people, by the sentiments which belong to all healthy and unsophisticated organisations even in our own complicated civilization, marriage, the union of one man with one woman, is unmistakably indicated as the despotic law of life. This is the rule… [Those] who remain unmarried constitute the problem to be solved, the event and anomaly to be cured.[32]

In case his audience overlooked the critical character of these quantities, Greg repeats the word "number" three times in a single sentence. For him and for many of his contemporaries, numbers of unmarried women were a harbinger of social dysfunction. Consider the following math: in 1851 there were 204,650 unmarried women in England. By 1921, this number rose to 788,800 unmarried women, an increase of almost 300% in a 70 year period.[33] So many undomesticated women were dangerous and "indicative of an unwholesome social state." Beware! Unmarried, or "odd" to borrow George Gissing's appellation, women did indeed "constitute the problem to be solved" in nineteenth-century England. For many, these unmarried women represented a crisis for the nation.

Some viewed marriage as an ethical duty to take unmarried women off the "market" and place them in stable financial situations. In a discussion between Everard Barfoot and Thomas Mickelthwaite in Gissing's *The Odd Women,* Everard tells Thomas that he will "Probably never" be married. To this Thomas responds: "Then I think you will neglect a grave duty. Yes. It is the

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[32] Greg, "Why Are Women Redundant," *National Review* 14 (April 1862): 436, 438, 440.
[33] Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1994), 27.

duty of every man, who has sufficient means, to maintain a wife. The life of unmarried women is a wretched one; every man who is able ought to save one of them from that fate."[34] If marriage is a philanthropic act designed to "save" women from being impoverished and it is an economic exchange of money for sex, then such logic was a sort of sexual philanthropy—marrying an "odd" woman was a moral obligation. Other authors offered alternative solutions to the "problem" of all those redundant women. In his famous essay, Greg suggests shipping an estimated 440,000 women to Canada, Australia, and the United States, because there were approximately that many unmarried men in those three countries. As for the remaining 310,000 women, they would be left in England in the hopes of making a match wherein their lives would be defined by "completing, sweetening, and embellishing the existence of others."[35]

As an alternative, independent women emphasized the possibilities of redundant women as a massive work force capable of providing much needed service to the country. From an unmarried woman's perspective, marriage could be seen as a potential danger, economically, spiritually, and sexually.[36] Indeed, several famous women, including Christina Rossetti, rejected marriage proposals on such grounds. Gissing's heroine Rhoda Nunn (a name which cleverly puns on her negation as marriage material—her conjugal value equates to "none") is a bluestocking who spends her time training other women for careers. She runs an establishment teaching secretarial skills to young middle-class women remaindered in the marriage equation. When called upon to justify her vocation, Rhoda responds: "So many odd women—no making a pair with them. The pessimists call them useless, lost, futile lives. I naturally—being one of them myself—take another view. I look upon them as a great reserve. When one woman vanishes in

[34] George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 106.
[35] Greg, "Why Women Are Redundant," 436.
[36] Vicinus, *Independent Women*, 16-17. For more on sexual self-sufficiency, see 31-32 in the same text.

matrimony, the reserve offers a substitute for the world's work."[37] In this moment, she offers a different sort of social math: instead of women being "none," "odd," or "redundant," unmarried women represented "a great reserve," a positive surplus from which the country might draw able workers.

Through philanthropic societies and political organizations, women that society largely viewed as redundant could instead form a new unity, one founded on purpose.[38] As a result, women increasingly sought out new models of social being in which, as Amy Levy put it in her "Ballad of Religion and Marriage," "Folk shall be neither pairs nor odd" (line 26). Those born in the latter decades of the nineteenth century were increasingly able to attend college, work in hospitals, and become members of church communities. Christina Rossetti was herself an "Outside Sister" of Highgate Penitentiary, living outside of the convent for many years while retaining the status of a sister connected to that community.[39] Rather than the "perfect unity" of marriage emphasized as a counter claim in debates about women's rights, therefore, unmarried women seemed to understand that they could craft other numerical models.

In response to these heated social debates over counting, Victorian women poets, I claim, developed complex models of numeracy through their poetry. Women poets derived forms of numeracy by at once enumerating and performing arithmetic operations in the language and forms of their work. The distinction between enumeration and arithmetic operations is less fixed than one might expect. The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains that to enumerate is "[t]o count, ascertain the number of; more usually, to mention (a number of things or persons) separately, as

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[37] Gissing, *Odd Women*, 44.
[38] For an extended study of unmarried women's "unity of purpose," see Vicinus, *Independent Women*, 7.
[39] Mary Arseneau, *Recovering Christina Rossetti: Female Community and Incarnational Poetics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 27; Jan Marsh, *Christina Rossetti: Poems and Prose* (London: J. M. Dent, 1994), 221; *Letters of Christina Rossetti*, Vol. 1, 125 (Letter 103); *Letters of Christina Rossetti*, Vol. 1, 151-52 (Letter 145).

if for the purpose of counting; to specify as in a list or catalogue." Arithmetic is "[t]he science of numbers; the art of computation by figures," a definition which imbricates enumeration within its operations. To ascertain the number of something as an act of enumeration is also the art of computation by certain figures and the practice of the science of numbers. Further, I suggest that the "figures" by which arithmetic accomplishes its computations need not only be numerical figures but could just as well be the figures of text: the external forms or shapes of letters as much as the figurative language at work within poetry.[40] The ways in which poetry models counting and mathematical abstractions may not always be explicit in the language, but may exert its force in other organizations of syntax, tropes, modes, meter or rhyme, each of which demand the reader's own faculties of quantitative awareness. It is for this reason that close reading in its many forms is not just appropriate but imperative for studying the quantifying methods and models of poetry.[41] It is through careful, attentive reading that we can recognize the plurality of mathematical models as resources a woman poet might access in order think about forms of lived experience.

Let me give the example of Barrett Browning again, who examines the ways that multiple social relations follow a troubling numerical logic in her antislavery poem, "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point."[42] Throughout, Barrett Browning includes explicit numerical

[40] James Mulholland has likewise asserted that "that literature possesses its own arithmetic" ("Measuring Literature: Digital Humanities, Behavioral Economics, and the Problem of Data in Thomas Piketty's Capital in the Twenty-first Century," *Commonplace* 16.3. n. pag. http://common-place.org/book/measuring-literature-digital-humanities-behavioral-economics-and-the-problem-of-data-in-thomas-pikettys-capital-in-the-twenty-first-century/ [accessed November 8, 2016]).

[41] In a recent pamphlet from the Stanford Literary Lab, Franco Moretti wrote that "since form is the repeatable element of literature, this is also where we turn to in order to set the process of quantification in motion" ("Literature, Measured," 6).

[42] For more on Barrett Browning's "Runaway Slave" as part of a transatlantic poetess tradition that sought to, as Meredith McGill puts it, "convert women's powerlessness and nonbelonging to a form of extranational power," see Tricia Lootens's "States of Exile" (McGill, introduction to *The Traffic in Poems: Nineteenth-century Poetry and Transatlantic Exchange*[Camden: Rutgers University Press, 2008], 6).

references, such as the "seven wounds in Christ's body fair" and the slavers whom the speaker curses, standing "five a-breast" (lines 236, 212). But the formal ways in which Barrett Browning thinks numerically go beyond the literal language of numbers. The poem's very dense patterning, which involves many twos, repetitions, and doubles, casts back and forth between substitutions and replacements, unities and divisions. As it does so, Barrett Browning's "Runaway Slave" becomes meaningful precisely for its quantification: the speaker's race forecloses her ability to unite with one she loves, divides her from him forever, only to unite her with a child of rape, racially separate mother and child, and then unite her once again with the child when it is buried.

The poem shows how political power depends on divisions and unities. Barrett Browning introduces the binary division of race, which groups slaves into the degraded category of "black." It also brutally divides slaves from one another, from their God, and into parts of their own bodies. Barrett Browning presents a speaker who over the course of the poem oscillates between being the singular lyrical "I" of "I am black, I am black," which is nevertheless doubled because repeated, and as plural, one among many, "*we* who are dark, we are dark!" (emphasis in the original, lines 22, 36). Although the speaker is a member of a couple with her enslaved lover, "We were two to love, and two to pray," she points out that God did "nothing" to help them remain a twosome, and so "now I cry who am but one" (lines 86-88, 90). For the lovers are not only separated from one another, they are separated from a white God, who "smiling back /… must have cast his work away / Under the feet of his white creatures, / With a look of scorn" (lines 24-27). Presumably their division from God further compounds their inability to become "one flesh," as the term derives from Christian doctrine and marriage rituals.

Because the couple are slaves, they cannot be married like whites; therefore, they have no access to the social math of "two become one" or of a husband and wife as "one flesh." The

speaker confirms, “We were black, we were black, / We had no claim to love and bliss” (lines 92-93). Instead, the slave owners pry these “two” apart, and as her lover is pulled away from her, she says: “They wrung my cold hands out of his” (line 95). The phrasing here makes it sound like her own flesh was “wrung” from, exuded, or squeezed from the flesh of her lover, as though the two had become “one flesh” despite the white laws forbidding their union. The syntax in this moment performs this separation: an emdash breaks their hands apart, then a line break furthers the division as “They dragged him….where?” (line 96). Two sets of ellipses further divide the couple, as she crawls “to touch / His blood’s mark in the dust!” (lines 95-97). The reference to his “blood’s mark” adds yet another form of division in the moment, as his “mark” separates his blood from his body, his presence from his lover, and the evidence of trauma from the violence itself. In this latter form, his “blood’s mark” behaves like all inscription, acting as a proxy separating the word from the act of speech. Barrett Browning’s conclusion of the paragraph sets this meaning of “blood’s mark” explicitly in parallel with the written mark of her poetry, as the speaker says that though her lover’s blood is “not much,” it is as “plain as this!,” this being the mark on the page of the poem itself (lines 97-98). The poet’s uses of division and counting at work in this single moment are striking in their diversity and illustrate the multiple scales at which a poet could engage with questions of social counting, separation, and combinations.

As she does throughout the poem, Barrett Browning asks us to think in this instance about how we might define separation and union. The lovers themselves count as “two to love, and two to pray,” but also ones who can be violently separated, “wrung” out from another like water from a towel. The effect of each of these doublings is the image of the nation divided in two by racism, a truth which the poet insists on in the poem’s formal relations. The speaker continues, “For in this UNION, you have set / Two kinds of men in adverse rows, / Each

loathing each" (capitalization in original, lines 232-34).[43] Her reference to "men in adverse rows, / Each loathing each" clearly evokes the image of two sides of a battle, while her language of "kinds of men" implies that this war is a racial or philosophical one. What does it mean to form a "UNION," the poet asks, whether of two people in marriage or of many people in a nation? Much as it is difficult to discern when something is singular or doubled (when the speaker says, "I am black, I am black," do we read that as the singular lyrical "I" or is that a double because it is repeated?), the poem also constructs a model of a nation divided by race.

Underpinning this process of assembling models of unity and division is the fundamental division of race. When the speaker is raped, she becomes pregnant with a child who is born "far too white…too white for me" (line 116). Though she laments that he was "My own, own child" (the repetition of "own" emphasizing that he is part of her body, divided from her body, and is a reenactment of the structures of human ownership), she cannot stand to "look in his face, it was so white," because it reminds her of the men who raped her (lines 120-21). Despite these motives, even as she is killing the infant she has an impulse to behave as a mother might, to sing a lullaby and calm it down while she snuffs out its life: "I might have sung and made him mild— / But I dared not sing to the white-faced child / The only song I knew" (lines 131-33). Perhaps the "only song" she knew was a slave hymn and so she assumes it will be inappropriate for "the white-faced child"? The irony of this is painful, though, since she is actively, and violently, killing the child while considering the impropriety of singing to it. Her heart is divided, broken into two, between her hatred for her white rapists and her "white-faced child" that represents the union of their two bodies, black and white.

[43] It should be noted that the emphasis on union was not Barrett Browning's choice but that of the editors of *The Liberty Bell*. It was customary to capitalize union in that publication (*Selected Poems*, ed. by Marjorie Stone and Beverly Taylor [New York: Broadview, 2009], 202fn1).

The speaker is further divided between her impulse as a mother and her desire for revenge. Only when the child is buried can the speaker finally sit beside the grave and sing the "song I learnt in my maidenhood," the same song that she refused to sing when the child was "too white." Ultimately, the speaker cannot become "reconciled" with her "white child" until she buries it in the "black earth" and makes it "A dark child in the dark" (lines 190-91). As Tricia Lootens explains, burial was as much an act of claiming land for a people as it was a mourning process.[44] That the child becomes "nothing white" when buried suggests that his unity with his mother through the tragedy of infanticide also prepares the nation to be claimed by a "dark child" from a dark people. What's more, the poet implies that violence is at times necessary for those on the margins to claim certain rights. Though union does not manifest in the slave world of the speaker as it would in an idealized white world, that is to say it does and cannot involve "one man and one woman," "a perfect unity," or two people becoming "one flesh," it nevertheless exerts a reparative force capable of reconciling divisions because of that violence.

II. Social Numeracy and Mathematical Formalism

This dissertation develops an account of social numeracy in nineteenth-century women's poetry. By numeracy I mean the ability to use numbers. At the same time, I mean the quality of being numerate, which can be divided into competency in basic principles of mathematics and the understanding of numerate in its verb sense. To numerate means the act of numbering or counting.[45] My understanding of social numeracy involves a combination of innate perception of too little or too much, amateur training in numbers, and "gestural mathematics," which summon "mathematical procedures and connotations by gesturing toward mathematics, by invoking a

[44] Lootens, "States of Exile," 21.
[45] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Numerate," def. 3.

topical relation between philosophical analysis and mathematics."[46] It is in some ways akin to what Tobias Dantzig describes as "number sense," or a faculty in nature that allows species to distinguish between too many of something and just enough. He offers the example of birds who somehow know that two eggs have been removed from a nest instead of one, and wasps who can gauge the proper amount of larvae to feed their eggs based on gender.[47] Number sense involves an ability to make use of numbers, even when lacking a particular human mathematical training; it is a type of numeracy. Women poets, I assert, gained number sense from their familiarity with poetic forms. They then applied that number sense to construct a plurality of mathematical models that better represented their complex and conflicting social experiences.

Forms of amateur quantification abound in the Victorian era. Such amateurism marks a sharp change in an epistemological paradigm which had until the start of the nineteenth century maintained that "the task of knowledge production in the rapidly professionalizing sciences" should be turned over to the "so-called experts."[48] The new social science, however, made knowledge production the work of every one. For instance, travel books became "crammed with numerical tid-bits" so that travelers interested in learning about foreign policy could do so. [49] Private diarists also began to keep agricultural statistics, birth and death rates, insurance roles, and census information for their counties, a practice which increasingly blurred the line between amateurs and experts. As Ian Hacking puts it, "Numerical amateurs became public

[46] Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, 172.
[47] Dantzig, *Number: The Language of Science* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1930), 1-3. According to human ecologist Charles Brainerd, children possess the concept of ordination in their thinking long before they grasp cardination ("The Origin of Number Concepts," *Scientific American* 228 (1973): 105). Ordination involves numbers that indicate the position of something in a list, such as first, second, third, although the practice of ordination also includes comparisons, such as lighter/darker, better/worse, older/newer. They involve comparison and a sense of too much or too little, precisely like Dantzig's number sense. Cardination on the other hand is counting that is learned (1, 2, 3). However, such learning need not take place in a formal context.
[48] Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, 3.
[49] Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25-27.

administrators."[50] In order to come to terms with the many ways in which their bodies were counted and discussed as numbers, women poets derived their own amateur interpretive models for numbers in the space of their poetry.

Quantified Lives throws the literariness of numbers in Victorian poetry into relief in an effort to show how Victorian women's poetry developed an understanding of real numbers (e.g., 1, 2, 3), of counting, of additions and divisions and remainders and sequences, by deploying the forms and themes of poetry. Since most Victorian women lacked an education in mathematics beyond basic arithmetic (and if a woman was upper middle class, some Euclidean geometry), how did they decide what constituted a countable unit in the first place? As soon as you try to think one as a quantity, as parts or fractions in relation to a whole number, you are already thinking about counting. In a society with an acknowledged obsession with social math, and specifically with the social math of marriage in which "two become one," how was one to start counting if the difference between one and two remained confusing and abstruse?

The five poets who are the focus of this study received an education focused on languages and the arts, rather than science and mathematics. They were all educated, to a point. Barrett Browning maintained a well-known, long term correspondence with her tutor Hugh Stewart Boyd. Christina Rossetti likewise grew up in a household that deeply valued scholarship and education (her father was a professor of Italian at King's College, London); however, she was largely taught at home by her mother. Katherine Bradley, aunt to Edith Cooper and one half of their pseudonymous collaborative Michael Field, was the daughter of a tobacco manufacturer. She had been primarily educated at home, by private tutors, but in 1868 attended the Collège de France in Paris and later (1874) attended Newnham College, Cambridge, to study the classics.

[50] Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25-27.

When her young niece Edith was born and came to live with the family, Katherine took over her education.

Augusta Webster had a somewhat more formal education, attending art school at both the Cambridge School of Art and South Kensington School of Art. She learned Italian, Spanish, and French, and later taught herself Latin and Greek to help her younger brother with his school work.[51] While not directly associated with her own education, Webster's older sister Louisa married the Cambridge mathematician Isaac Todhunter in 1864, which might have given her access to casual discussions of a mathematical nature. Webster was also an advocate for reforms to women's education, penning articles such as "University Examinations for Women" in which she argued for allowing women the vote as one step toward altering social perceptions of women's intellectual capacities.[52] In each poet's education, there is an emphasis on subjects other than what we would now consider science and math, instruction by tutors, family members, and sometimes more formal institutional settings, but little to no indication that any of these women had mathematical training beyond basic arithmetic and geometry.

I am not, however, claiming that women poets received no education in mathematics or that there were no other avenues to mathematical education.[53] Quite the contrary: Amy Levy attended the Brighton High School for Girls, the mission of which was to provide women with an equivalent education to that of men, and Augusta Webster was trained as a school teacher,

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[51] Petra Bianchi, "Webster , (Julia) Augusta (1837–1894)," *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28940 (accessed April 1, 2016), n. pag.
[52] Patricia Rigg, *Julia Augusta Webster: Victorian Aestheticism and the Woman Writer* (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009), 179.
[53] Household management was one gendered way in which women learned to count and think in units. Texts such as Isabella Beeton's *The Book of Household Management* (published originally by S. O. Beeton in 24 monthly parts 1859-1861) includes more than 100 references to costs, such as the cost of wine, soup, and keeping cows, as well poetic tips for the Lady's Maid on cost of dressing the mistress, "Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, / But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy; / For the apparel oft proclaims the man." The dozens of recipes also contain measures for ingredients, along with "average cost" and cooking time for each dish.

which would have necessitated some degree of mathematics education. In her role as a school board member, Webster also argued vigorously for girls and boys to receive the same level of training in "measuring to scale."[54] There were also vocational schools and mathematical publications available to women. However, mathematical periodicals that flourished in the 18th century, for instance, *The Ladies' Diary*, were by 1840 no longer up-to-date on the rapidly expanding theories of mathematics.[55] Mechanics Institutes, regional schools intended to educate adult clerical workers and manufacturing employees, were one way for some women in the middle and lower classes to gain experience with geometry, algebra, and other methods of mathematics beyond basic arithmetic, though women remained in the minority as students at such institutions until the 1840s and 50s.[56] Indeed, a few women, such as Mary Fairfax Somerville, Florence Nightingale, and Charlotte Angas Scott, became renowned for their mathematical acumen, but extensive, advanced training in abstract mathematical concepts like that received by Ada Lovelace, Lord Byron's daughter, was far more rare.

There has long been, and in fact still exists, a debate about the differences in the male and female brain when it comes to math and science.[57] One reviewer for the *Saturday Review*[58]

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[54] Rigg, *Julia Augusta Webster,* 193. We know that Webster was interested in science, as well, because she attended lectures by W. J. Clark about fossils (Ibid., 193, 18).

[55] John Albree and Scott Brown, "'A valuable monument of mathematical genius': *The Ladies' Diary* (1704-1840)," *Historia Mathematica* (24 Dec. 2008): 10-11.

[56] Jana Sims, "Mechanics' Institutes in Sussex and Hampshire: 1825-1875" (PhD diss., Institute of Education, University of London, 2010), 227-57.

[57] The enduring nature of biological determinism as grounds for limiting women's access to the science and mathematics finds its roots, at least in part, in debates about brain differences between genders in the 1860s and 1870s. As recently as 2005, Harvard President Larry Summers drew criticism for his claims at a conference that men outperform women in math and science because of genetic differences. These differences were what Summers called "issues of intrinsic aptitude" (Scott Jaschik, "What Larry Summers Said," *Inside Higher Ed* [Feb. 18, 2005] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2005/02/18/summers2_18 (accessed 17 July 2016), n. pag.; see also, Daniel Hemel, "Summers' Comments on Women and Science Draw Ire: Remarks at Private Conference Stir Criticism, Media Frenzy," *The Crimson* [Jan. 14, 2005] https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2005/1/14/summers-comments-on-women-and-science/ [accessed 17 July 2016]; and Sam Dillon, "Harvard Chief Defends His Talk on Women," *The New York Times* [Jan. 18, 2005] http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/18/us/harvard-chief-defends-his-talk-on-women.html?_r=0 [accessed 17 July 2016]).

[58] Vicinus points out that the *Saturday Review* was "antifeminist throughout the century" (*Independent Women*, 3).

writes in 1859, "If it could be proved that the intellect of women is equally strong, solid, and large as that of men, it is supposed to follow that they ought to receive the same education"; however, he then immediately reminds his audience:

> The great argument against the existence of this equality of intellect in women is, that it does not exist.…The question is not whether some women have done some things as well as some men, but whether they have ever given proofs of the same height and variety of capacity.

Rather than seeking out equivalent education for women and men, this author recommends that education develop women's "special and peculiar qualities." Since women are patient, "exclusively fitted" to please men, and "endowed with a spirit of resistance" to fraud, any training to improve these allegedly natural gifts is "not to be rejected on the ground that they waste the time that might be given to mathematics."[59]

Edith Simcox famously countered claims about women's intelligence and originality, and she did so by pointing to the experience of a well-known woman mathematician—Mary Fairfax Somerville:

> The extraordinary mathematical power of Mrs. Somerville is sometimes quoted as a proof that women at their best are without originality, since Mrs. Somerville at last had as much knowledge as men who do original work, and yet did none herself. But what are the facts? With ordinary teaching, it will no doubt be admitted that such a born mathematician would have been senior wrangler at Cambridge at the usual age, but poor Miss Fairfax was eighteen before she could get hold of a Euclid, could then only read it in bed at night, and was deprived even of that resource by the confiscation of her candles. She was clever all round at the learning of schools, having taught herself some Greek and Latin as well as algebra, yet, human-like, she was led to go in the groove society prescribed, and submitted to marry, uncongenially, at twenty-four, and to spend her brain power in keeping house and minding babies on a small income. She was over thirty before she obtained possession of such a mathematical library as an undergraduate begins his college course with. When she was over forty she taught herself to stop in the middle of a calculation to receive morning callers, and to take it up where she had left off when they were gone. Can we wonder that no original work was done in a vocation thus cavalierly treated? The young mathematician of genius talks and thinks and dreams of formulae; his very jokes are in their jargon; facility of manipulation reaches its highest point by constant exercise, and the constant familiarity with certain conceptions not only

[59] "The Intellect of Women," *Saturday Review* (8 Oct. 1859), 417.

> makes apprehension easier, but also keeps the whole field of mathematical thought so constantly present to the mind that discoveries, as it were, make themselves, in recognition of new relations, on the suggestion of the known relations embraced in a single glance…. Circumstances determine whether there is room in this or that field for an epoch-making inspiration, and we cannot tell whether women will furnish their due proportion of original discoveries till we have a due proportion of them engaged in lifelong diligent day labour in the service of thought and knowledge.[60]

Why, she asks, must a woman focus her time on marriage, receiving "morning callers," "keeping house and minding babies," rather than devoting that time to "the service of thought and knowledge"? Moreover, how can we judge women by the same standards that we would hold up to an independent male scholar, when his life has been marked by sustained study and hers by unceasing interruptions? Even when a woman has the interest and capacity to pursue mathematics, Simcox declares, social expectations and obligations will delay the progress of her education. When Aurora Leigh describes the "liberal education" she receives while living with her aunt, the subjects she lists and attitude of her aunt toward girl's education largely comport, then, with the attitude of the era toward girl's education: "The true end of education for women," wrote one reviewer in 1866, "is making good wives and mothers."[61] Girls were not taught math because they were expected to become wives, and so subsumed into their husbands.[62] As "two become one," women were paradoxically subjected to a social calculus based on an education foreclosed to them.[63]

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[60] "The Capacity of Women," *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. XXII, ed. by James Knowles. (July-Dec. 1887), 398-99.
[61] Thomas Markby, "The Education of Women," *Contemporary Review* 1 (Apr. 1866), 408.
[62] When Florence Nightingale asked her parents "to let her study mathematics instead of doing worsted work and practicing quadrilles," her mother "did not approve, [because] home duties were not to be neglected for mathematics." Since her daughter's future goal should be marriage, "what use were mathematics to a married woman?" (Cecil Woodham-Smith, *Florence Nightingale* [New York: Avon Books, 1951], 37); qtd. also in Sally Lipsey, "Mathematical Education in the Life of Florence Nightingale," *Newsletter of the Association for Women in Mathematics* 23.4 (July/August 1993), 11.
[63] Even when girls could go to schools where they received mathematical lessons, the majority of the teachers were themselves poorly trained in math (Clements, "Sex Differences in Mathematical Performance: An Historical Perspective," *Educational Studies in Mathematics* 10.3 (Aug. 1979), 305). When a 1912 report in *The Math Gazette* questioned the value of mathematical education for girls, three of the four responding high school teachers emphasized that math held little value for girls. The occasion for *The Math Gazette*'s report was the 50-year anniversary of the University of Cambridge's decision to admit women; the report was intended to reassess how the

Certainly, there was a type of social counting emphasized by the novel's marriage plot, an explicitly economic form of counting for girls in which marriageable young women calculated the worth of a potential partner. An obvious example of this arises with Jane Austen's novels. Consider Mrs. Bennett's opening discussion with her husband in *Pride and Prejudice* over the net worth of Mr. Bingley as a potential marriage prospect for one of their daughters: "Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England: that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place...and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week" (Austen 6). Upon learning of this potential husband, Mrs. Bennett immediately fixes upon his income ("large fortune"), possessions ("a chaise and four"), and style of living ("servants"). She is, in effect, "doing the math," a form of calculation that had the potential to bring a young woman within the social whole of marriage. Franco Moretti has famously argued that marriage in the Bildungsroman is one method by which a wayward character is reclaimed by social norms, a form of social compromise that he identifies as unique to the novel's project. While Moretti has claimed that the work of the Bildungsroman involves social compromise, a search for authenticity by social outliers like *Pride and Prejudice*'s Elizabeth Bennett whose telos in the novel involves

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past 50 years of mathematical education had or had not benefited the women who had passed through England's education system. The writers of the report based their claim predominantly on sexist beliefs about girls becoming "good wives and mothers." There were three reasons that the teachers claimed math should be reduced or eliminated for girls: girls found the subject "uninteresting"; math had little "utilitarian value" for girls who could have no use for skills "closely related to the characteristic industries and activities of men, engineering in all its forms, war, navigation, building, land surveying, finance, and some of the higher forms of commerce," rather than "the characteristic activities of women" (again, "accomplishments"); and studying math was believed to produce "strain" on girls (Clements, "Sex Differences," 305-306). "Strain" coded for the alleged physical enervation caused by the study of difficult concepts. Girls were to be especially "protected against strain during the years of development," the implication being sexual development rather than intellectual development, with end goal that a girl would produce children and be a good wife. The idea that learning mathematics might make one infertile or render one a substandard mother now seems asinine, but to be an educated girl in Victorian England meant that you possessed skills that would improve your ability to serve as a wife and mother. As Sarah Burstall, Headmistress for the Manchester School for Girls, put it, "She has to grow, and she should start adult life with a sound reserve of physical strength," because girls would be called upon to perform labor in all senses of the word (Burstall, "Place of Mathematics," *The Mathematical Gazette* 6.96 [Jan. 1912], 205).

reclamation in comfortable social structures, my project will demonstrate how women poets rejected and problematized even the simple accounting of the marriage plot, whereby two become one.[64] I will argue that poetry handles quantification very differently from the novel.

How did a woman poet, then, get her sense of numeracy and its applications to the world if not from mathematical training? One of the claims of this project is that women poets developed the equivalent to mathematical abstractions from their immersion in poetry. Poetry has always counted beats and lines and has a deep, historical association with numbers. In the absence of sustained formal mathematical education, Victorian women writers used poetic forms to express an awareness of how numbers can work even in the absence of proper mathematical methods. For instance, the Rossetti family used to make a game of *bouts-rimes*, which involved composing sonnets in an impromptu fashion to fit a set sequence of rhymes within a time limit.[65] The poet would then compose a complete sonnet fitting the established stanzaic type and metrical rules within that time frame. The sonnet has long been acknowledged as one of the mathematically obvious poetic forms.[66] The quantifiable structure of the sonnet, the sequencing of rhyme, and the temporal demands of *bouts-rimes* all suggest a sort of mathematical construct within which Rossetti was "trained." Poetry is training in pattern formation: metrical length and stresses, sounds, and macrostructures such as stanzas.[67] Therefore, Rossetti had been receiving a

[64] See Franco Moretti's "The Comfort of Civilization" in *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (New York: Verso, 2000): 15-73.
[65] In the 2012 BBC film adaptation of Ford Maddox Ford's *Parade's End*, there is a wonderful scene in which two soldiers play *bouts-rimes* while in WWI trenches. This moment is especially piquant because Ford's novel is essentially one long adieu to Victorian tradition.
[66] Rogers, *Unified Fields*, 48-65.
[67] Catherine Robson has argued that compulsory recitation of the memorized poem in American and England during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had religious, moral, and national implications, constructed citizens, and became embodied. Verse and oral repetition were part of education for hundreds of years before mass education began in either country. Through verse memorization and recitation, the minds of students became "insensibly nourished" by the form (Matthew Arnold's words) (*Heart Beats: Everyday Life and the Memorized Poem*, [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012], 60).

sort of amateur mathematical education, although it was one that was always tied to language and to social relations.

That women poets would have known something of numbers is not all that surprising, but I contend that what they knew would have derived from their literary training and not only their education, formal, tutored, or self-taught. The five women poets in this study all had a great deal to say in their poetic work about marriage and the ways that social relationships fit people into mathematically complex configurations. What emerges from their work, instead of recognizable mathematics, formulaic characters, or explicit equations, is a plurality of models involving mathematical processes and characteristics, such as addition, multiplication, division, sets, parallels, symmetry, infinity, and remainders. For the most part, these processes involve fairly simple arithmetic, rather than complex calculus, an observation which itself supports the limited formal training women poets tended to receive in mathematics. What I am focusing on here is primarily cardination, what we might consider basic counting of the 1-2-3 variety, that Victorian poetry renders as not at all basic. From Barrett Browning's desire to "count the ways" to Amy Levy's anticipation of a world in which people would become "neither pairs nor odd," it is evident that women poets were counting and thinking in numbers.

I argue here that many Victorian writers recognized numbers as social conventions. Although one can certainly maintain a Platonist model of mathematics as "truth as such," independent of reality and existing separate from human intervention, mathematicians recognize that such an understanding prevents mathematics and numbers from appearing relevant to societies.[68] The alternative is to view mathematical concepts as "cultural products," in which "the structure of the concept depends on the prevailing modes of calculation into which it

[68] David Bloor, "Wittgenstein and Mannheim on the Sociology of Mathematics," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 4.2 (Aug. 1973), 176.

enters."[69] Put another way, it is because of education and training that we learn to count and calculate as we do: as Ludwig Wittgenstein put it, we learn what numbers are "with endless practice, with merciless exactitude; that is why it is inexorably insisted that we shall all say 'two' after 'one,' 'three' after 'two' and so on"; counting, then, is "a convention, or a use."[70] The symbols for numbers—numerals—are unnatural, not occurring in nature or inherently known to humans, and so must be taught.[71] Again, there is a something of a tension between being taught numbers by an expert and receiving alternative forms of training. One could be taught numbers as a convention or use by a parent, for instance, without attending school. In the philosophy of mathematics, this paradigm is called formalism, the early proponents of which (Immanuel Kant, David Hilbert, Giuseppe Peano, and Richard Dedekind) were actively writing and producing work in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Formalism eliminates the "concept of innate 'meaning' in numbers" and accepts that logic and mathematics are semantics.[72] Numbers have to be interpreted before they can attain meaning.

In the nineteenth century, philosophers of mathematics often took a formalist stance toward the nature of math.[73] Immanuel Kant's understanding of mathematical epistemology is a formalist one, in which we assign meaning to the mathematical concept.[74] In *Metaphysics; or*,

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[69] Bloor, "Wittgenstein," 186-87.
[70] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956): 1.4; qtd. in Bloor, "Wittgenstein," 187.
[71] Thomas Crump, *The Anthropology of Numbers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2.
[72] Brainerd, "The Origins of Number Concepts," 103.
[73] For more on the relationship between representation and mathematics, see Andrea Henderson, "Math for Math's Sake: Non-Euclidean Geometry, Aestheticism, and 'Flatland.'" *PMLA* 124.2 (Mar. 2009): 455-71.
[74] Kant, who was a mathematician throughout his career, asserted that mathematical cognition, the coming together of one's intuition with a mathematical concept, is founded on "construction." He writes in the preface to the second (1787) edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "A new light must have flashed on the mind of the first man...who demonstrated the properties of the isosceles triangle. For he found that it was not sufficient to meditate on the figure, as it lay before his eyes, or the conception of it, as it existed in his mind, and thus endeavour to get at the knowledge of its properties, but that it was necessary to produce these properties, as it were, by a positive a priori construction; and that, in order to arrive with certainty at a priori cognition, he must not attribute to the object any other properties than those which necessarily followed from that which he had himself, in accordance with his conception, placed in the object" (19). Mathematics was no longer about trying to "get at the knowledge" of ideal mathematical properties.

The Philosophy of Consciousness (1860), H. L. Mansel too observed that algebra and geometry have meaning only because we assign them meaning:

> Language, like algebra, furnishes a system of signs, which we are able to employ in various relations without at the moment being conscious of the original signification being assigned to each…. Like the bank-note, it is the representative value without having an intrinsic value of its own…[75]

Mansel recognizes that mathematics, like all systems of signs, involve representation and have no "intrinsic value." As a result, numbers, variables, and geometric shapes no longer require a sage to induct learners into the ideal knowledge of mathematics. Humans need not approach scientific and mathematical knowledge "in the character of a pupil who listens to everything that the teacher chooses to say, but of an appointed judge who compels the witnesses to answer questions which he has himself formulated."[76]

In this study, I employ the language of formalism in three senses then: as mathematical social interpretation, in the literary sense to indicate the forms of poetry, and as social forms. Different societies arrive at different understandings of what a number means and how mathematics works. As anthropologist Thomas Crump explains, we need to "recognize that levels of numeracy not only vary greatly from one culture to another, but also that they can do so within any one culture, particularly one that is at all complex. This will often prove to be the result of a traditional pre-literate society having to come to terms with an imposed system of

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Instead, it involved human construction from the outside of those concepts, founded on human cognition beforehand that could then be applied to the forms of those ideas. Construction is valuable for this project because it conveys women poet's ability to take up the materials of mathematics and build them according to their *a priori* cognition, which was solidly founded in poetic forms and methods. Kant is useful here because he articulates an epistemological reorientation that would manifest throughout the Victorian era.

[75] H. L. Mansel, *Metaphysics; or, the Philosophy of Consciousness Phenomenal and Real* (Edinburgh: A. and C. Black, 1860), 188-190. Henderson also cites this passage in her article on non-Euclidean geometry and representation in Edwin Abbott's geometrical novel *Flatland* (1884) ("Math for Math's Sake," 458).

[76] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 20. This paradigm shift departs from the emphasis on "professional expertise as a necessary criterion of knowledge production" articulated by Poovey in *History of the Modern Fact* (16). See also Poovey *The History of the Modern Fact*, xv, 3, 32, 179.

school education based on Western models."[77] Varying levels of numeracy result from ongoing changes to education, and levels of numeracy can vary within any one culture. Therefore, to apply this formalist philosophy of mathematics and numeracy to a historical moment, the Victorian era, in which one group of people (men) had a vastly different education than another (women) stands to reveal one of the ways in which mathematics and literature engaged in mutually productive conversation. When we view mathematics with a formalist lens, as a social convention and mode of usage, rather than as an untouchable, immutable, ideal form that humans can only discover and access from the outside when properly trained by experts, we can begin to appreciate mathematics and numbers as a process of invention.[78] It is this process of numerical invention, and intervention, as it relates to poetry on which my project focuses.

Rather than thinking of mathematical abstractions as something that pre-exist literature, therefore, I would like to suggest that mathematical concepts can develop out of literature.[79] Several scholars have cautioned us against assuming a unidirectional pattern of causation in relation to science and literature.[80] Mathematical education need not be prerequisite to creative work but can instead itself be an outcome of creative production. If, as I am suggesting, one lacked mathematical training, yet was also an extremely intelligent person trained to think in

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[77] Crump, *Anthropology of Numbers*, 3. The way that numeracy develops unevenly from culture to culture and within each culture evokes Poovey's argument in *Uneven Developments* that ideology in Victorian England was always contested and under construction. Poovey describes "two guises" of ideology: "its apparent coherence and authenticity, on the one hand, and its internal instability and artificiality, on the other" (*Uneven Developments*, 3). Understood in this way, ideology itself is a sort of aggregate characterized by totality and internal deconstruction. She says she is using "ideology as a set of beliefs…practices and social institutions that govern people's social relations and that, in so doing, constitute both the experience of social relations and the nature of subjectivity" (Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, 3). It strikes me that numeracy is one form that ideology takes, especially when the language of numbers is used to govern social relations and establish legislation.

[78] Bloor ,"Wittgenstein," 188.

[79] Poovey acknowledges in her own project on quantifiable units that more work needs to be done on the history of abstraction (*History of Modern Fact*, 28). My claim about poetry as a foundation for numerical thought is one such way to take up this call.

[80] See for instance, Gillian Beer, *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 177; N. Katherine Hayles, "Turbulence in Literature and Science: Questions of Influence," In *Science and the American Imagination* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1992), 229; and Rogers, *Unified Fields*, 64.

"numbers" and "measures," it would not be that much of a surprise that such a person might understand the world and their work through numbers, and perhaps even produce proto-mathematical concepts independently. Following this logic, I therefore make a related claim for the role of poets as amateur mathematicians in developing a plurality of mathematical abstractions during a time when such concepts were in formation and remained in doubt.

IV. Statistical culture

Numbers were, after all, in the air. Quantification reached such levels of faddishness in the nineteenth century that the new social science methods were tackled by amateur and professional alike.[81] Indeed, the Victorian era attraction to new methods of social counting resulted in what Ian Hacking calls "an avalanche of numbers."[82] Numbers were part of most debates about politics and social reform. For instance, one form that social counting took was in the institutionalization of vital statistics. Statistical science emerged in newly powerful institutional and public forms specifically during the Victorian period. An understanding that bodies could be controlled by counting was already at work in eighteenth-century Europe, as Michel Foucault demonstrates in *Discipline and Punish*. However, not until the late eighteenth century did Germans first connect "the idea that the nation-state is essentially characterized by statistics, and therefore demands a statistical office in order to define itself and its power."[83] Statistics provided a measure of state power, which involved counting and controlling the bodies of state subjects. Knowing the measure of a state's strength became a measure of the state's people. Though Germany institutionalized the new science of statistics rapidly, England remained more resistant

[81] See Hacking, *Taming of Chance*, esp. chap. 2, "Public Amateurs, Secret Bureaucrats" (16-26). For more on the disjunction between amateur and professional modes of quantification that emerged in the 18th-century, see Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, xv, 3, 16, 32, 179.
[82] Hacking, *Taming of Chance*, 2.

to centralized management.[84] In England vital statistics were initially local, "collected by the agency that needed them," until the formation of the Board of Trade centralized statistical authority in 1837, the same year that Queen Victoria assumed the throne.[85] The institutionalization of statistical science thus coincides perfectly with Victoria's reign, providing a clear historical justification for a focus on Victorian poetry. By 1850, vital statistics had become solidly institutionalized in England, though its position as an emerging science remained in question.

Policy-making in the period increasingly depended on the institutionalization of vital statistics, as historical demographers such as Libby Schweber and Andrea Rusnock have argued.[86] The statistician or "statist" was, by early definitions, "one interested in the objective study of problems of the state," who embraced what John Eyler claims was a Baconian "rationalistic vision of the orderly and progressive construction of society on a scientific basis through the discovery of the operation of social laws."[87] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the use of terms "statistician" and "statist" as synonyms dates from 1796 and continues to the present. One entry from the August 18, 1846 *The Times* (London) reads, "A statist is a student of statistics, i.e. a man who computes and analyses everything that relates to the visible state or condition of man." The word statistics was in fact derived from the German

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[83] Hacking, *Taming of Chance*, 18.
[84] Ibid., 28-29.
[85] Ibid., 28; Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, 281.
[86] Andrea Rusnock, *Vital Accounts: Quantifying Health and Population in Eighteen-century England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002); Libby Schweber, *Disciplining Statistics: Demography and Vital Statistics in France and England, 1830-1885* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006). As Poovey also observes, despite the controversial nature of statistics and the representational character of numbers in the early Victorian period, "Beginning with the Poor Law Commission of 1832...the British government increasingly used the argument that statistics were necessary to avoid 'legislating in the dark' to defend its own growth." When the Poor Law eventually passed, "the machinery of government in Britain was indissolubly tied to the collection of numerical information, even though the methodological problems that persisted in the statistical variant of the modern fact had yet to be solved" (*The History of the Modern Fact*, 316-17).
[87] Eyler, *Victorian Social Medicine: The Ideas and Methods of William Farr* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 19.

word "Staat," with the implication being that statistical practices directly related to the conditions and strength of a society.[88] Prominent nineteenth-century social reformers such as Jeremy Bentham came to believe in the "social calculus" of statistics, by which the utilitarian goal of the "greatest happiness for the greatest number" could be empirically demonstrated.[89]

The political effects of social counting could be at once oppressive and emancipatory, founded in progressive thinking while also containing and controlling people. In other words, progressive reforms depended on statistics, too. With the rapid growth of the social sciences came a generation of social welfare administrators and women's philanthropic organizations bent on new methods to purify the social body.[90] Nineteenth-century women's bodies were controlled in countless ways, sexually, medically, and politically. One of the instruments of control was quantification: an attempt to respond to women's lives by subjecting them to statistical surveys. The state counted prostitutes, married and unmarried women, numbers of women in factories and domestic service, the rate of childbirth, the rate of infant mortality, and the rise of sexually transmitted diseases.[91] But while they were subject to many kinds of accounting, women could not make their own voices count in a democratic sense: they were disenfranchised, lacking the vote and a political voice. Yet, nineteenth-century legislation increasingly relied upon newly codified statistical measures for social regulation and reform in part because numerical representation was associated with objectivity and seen as "a guarantee against the undue

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[88] Eyler, *Victorian Social Medicine*, 18; Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, 308. Poovey points out that many Victorians found it ethically problematic to apply the numerical data from statistics to social issues (*History of the Modern Fact*, 314).
[89] Eyler, *Victorian Social Medicine*, 20.
[90] For more on organizations such as the Ladies Sanitary Society in Manchester and the gendered politics of dirty societies, see Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 185-186, 188-89, 196-97, 224-226.
[91] Hacking, *Taming of Chance*, 18-19. Poovey asserts that "implicitly, at least, the social body was always gendered [female], however gender-blind its analysts claimed to be" (*Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* [Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995], 76).

embellishment associated with fiction, hyperbole, and rhetoric."[92] As Mary Poovey has noted, however, the "uneven and paradoxical application of abstraction to the problems of government and wealth" had the effect of at once drawing the poor and those in marginalized groups under the national wing of protection and establishing new methods by which to mark those within the various strata of socioeconomic hierarchies.[93]

As reformers sought to rectify dangerous labor conditions and provide health care, they collected data.[94] For example, the 1837 Registration Act mandated the registration of all births, marriages, and deaths with the newly-formed General Registration Office. This legislation was a direct result of the previous 1833 Factory Act, which restricted the working hours of women and children. The institutions which would eventually collect, monitor, and disseminate vital statistics (i.e., the Board of Trade, the General Registration Office, and the Statistical Society of London) did not exist until later in that decade, and came into being in part as a response to the demands of such legislation. In order to protect women and children working in factories, it became necessary to institutionalize the developing statistical practices that would ensure employers complied with the new laws.[95]

Another example of the ways that British legislation exerted control by counting arises from the 1848 Public Health Act, which required towns where the death rate exceeded 23 per 1,000 to establish a Board of Health and permitted towns to organize a Board of Health if more

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[92] Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, 313. Thomas Malthus's 1798 *Essay on the Principles of Population* was partly responsible for purging numbers of their "moral dimension" in the nineteenth-century (279-80).
[93] Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 34-35.
[94] Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, In *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 3, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1986), 100-101.
[95] Karl Marx made it clear in *Capital* that capitalists will not provide for their workers and protect their lives, unless they are made to do so, since the pursuit of capital always overrides any human rights (see esp. ch. 10, "The Working Day," 340-416).

than 10% of the population voted for one to be created.[96] Again, while provisions for public healthcare warrant approbation, such reforms also manage, control, and regulate individuals on a day-to-day basis. What's more, the statistical methods used to establish progressive legislation were based in new abstractions that lumped people together into categories, a practice that can be especially worrisome where healthcare is concerned.[97] While a single body could be counted into types of conditions, probabilities and statistics are frequently irrelevant to particular patient cases.[98] Nevertheless, the development of government institutions to track statistics and legislate social change based on that information "brought a new kind of man into being, the man whose essence was plotted by a thousand numbers."[99] One's life became tracked by data; from birth to death one was always on what we now think of as "the grid." Despite the laudatory intentions of public reform, the first half of the nineteenth century had "generated a world of becoming numerical and measured in every corner of its being," measurement that could simultaneously improve and impair life.[100] Consequently, the 1848 Public Health Act's integration of percentages and ratios in its requirements is a manifestation of the evolving institutional mechanisms of vital statistics in England during the decade since the formation of the General Registration Office and Queen Victoria's ascension to the throne.[101]

Though censuses to count populations had been conducted for centuries, the mathematical conceptualization for probabilities and measuring as they applied to social issues

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[96] Bloy, "Victorian Legislation: A Timeline" *The Victorian Web* (28 July 2014), http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/history/legistl.html (accessed Oct. 30, 2014), n. pag.
[97] Poovey's project in *History of the Modern Fact* is to trace how philosophers, mathematicians, and eventual social scientists moved between observed particulars and theoretical generalizations. Ultimately, only a mathematical solution could provide a method for moving from observed particulars to general principles. Even so, human error and the human body itself cause a reliance on quantification to be problematic (Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, 308-22).
[98] Hacking, *Taming of Chance*, 86.
[99] Ibid., 34.
[100] Ibid., 61.

and populations were the work of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century scientists, such as Jacob Bernoulli, Abraham De Moivre, and Pierre Laplace. The idea of a normal, or Gaussian, curve was still groundbreaking work in 1810.[102] And it wasn't until Adolphe Quetelet's three introductory books on probability were published in 1828, 1846, and 1853 that the "application of probability to the measurement of uncertainty in the social sciences" was made a "practical reality."[103] Quetelet's decisive contribution was that he "transformed the theory of measuring unknown physical quantities...into the theory of measuring ideal or abstract properties of a [human] population."[104] While mathematical abstractions had been applied to games of chance and prediction, and censuses had been used both in England and on the continent for several centuries, the two concepts were brought together by Quetelet. His work enabled "statistical laws that were merely descriptive of large scale regularities" to become instead "laws of nature and society that dealt in underlying truths and causes."[105] The idea that probability could be applied to social problems was still, therefore, radically new and hotly contested in the Victorian era.[106]

In fact, how those numbers should be used was still in question even as measures of population began circulating in the public sphere.[107] In 1835, J. R. Mulloch objected to statistics

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[101] For a history of quantitative methods prior to the Victorian era, see Mary Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, esp. Chapter 4 on experimental moral philosophy and the "gestural mathematics" that invoked "a topic relation between philosophical analysis and mathematics" (172).

[102] For more on the development of the mathematical principles of uncertainty and probability, see Stephen Stigler, *History of Statistics: The Measurement of Uncertainty Before 1900* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1986), 62-158.

[103] Stigler, *History of Statistics*,161; Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, 308-17; and Audrey Jaffe, *The Affective Life of the Average man: The Victorian Novel and the Stock-Market Graph* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2010), 10.

[104] Hacking, *Taming of Chance*, 108.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, 314.

[107] "[M]ost Britons did not understand the relation Quetelet drew between numerical data and mathematical formula," Poovey reflects, "nor, judging from the confusion many displayed about how the law of large numbers affected free will, did they grasp the implications of his method" (*History of the Modern Fact*, 308). Furthermore, contemporaries struggled to "delineate the range of objects that statisticians should consider" (Ibid., 382fn4). I would suggest that similar questions about what should constitute data continue to circulate today in debates about what the digital humanities should count (James Mulholland, "Measuring Literature: Digital Humanities, Behavioral Economics, and the Problem of Data in Thomas Piketty's Capital in the Twenty-first Century," *Commonplace* 16.3.

new quantitative methods, calling them "that sort of mongrel science that has sometimes been called political arithmetic" and observing that a "science embracing so great a variety of objects is not easily defined or limited."[108] Quetelet, the preeminent scientist working to surmount the barriers between mathematical probability and its potential usefulness to the social sciences, was himself in doubt about the application of such nascent methods. By 1835, two years before the formation of the Board of Trade centralized statistical authority in England in 1837, Stephen Stigler reports that Quetelet was still "groping towards" the solutions to his synthesis of mathematical principles with social science and that his analysis was still "very crude…incomplete and informal."[109] Quetelet seemed to sense the dangers inherent in the work he was doing because he "insisted that firm inferences could only be based on large amounts of data," so smaller samplings could not provide the kind of social information necessary to draw predictive conclusions.[110]

Despite Quetelet's reluctance to draw inferences from his own data, the Victorian media still circulated such numbers on a regular basis to a population who lacked the education or understanding of their potential mathematical and academic applications. It was common for statistics to be published alongside poetry as lists of death and birth rates in London, Paris, and other parts of England, and Quetelet's work was extensively reviewed in the *Athenaeum* in a three part series in August of 1835.[111] Consequently, the application of mathematical formulae to

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http://common-place.org/book/measuring-literature-digital-humanities-behavioral-economics-and-the-problem-of-data-in-thomas-pikettys-capital-in-the-twenty-first-century/ [accessed November 8, 2016]).

[108] McCulloch, "State and Defects of British Statistics," *Edinburgh Review* 61 (April 1835): 156-57; qtd. in Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, 382fn4.

[109] *History of Statistics* 178-79.

[110] According to Stigler, Quetelet "could not bring himself to treat large regions as homogeneous…and *a fortiori* he could not conceive of measuring the uncertainty of an estimate where the very thing estimated was uncertain and ill-defined" (*History of Statistics*, 166).

[111] Natalie Houston mentions in her article "The Newspaper Poem: Material Texts in the Public Sphere" that poetry would usually be published on page eleven or twelve of a newspaper alongside a lot of other information, including "the total number of deaths in London and twelve other major cities during the previous week, broken down by

social statistics was not only part of the Victorian social context but it was also part of the discursive atmosphere in which poetry circulated. What did Victorians make of these lists of numbers in their newspapers? And how did literary writers absorb and respond to these new ways of counting?

I argue that the five women poets in my project—Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Augusta Webster, and Michael Field—challenged an easy political accounting of ones, twos, and aggregates by constructing mathematical models in their poetry to reflect on women's complex and conflicting experiences of wholeness, connectedness, and fragmentation. *Quantified Lives* takes up the profound ambivalence of these poets toward ways of gathering people into collectives, both traditional and modern, in an effort to achieve social forms of totality. Neither old forms, such as marriage, nor new forms, such as the nation, seemed politically appealing to these writers. Thus, they turned to poetic form to think through alternatives to oppressive forms of both traditional and modern ideals of social aggregation and community.

By thinking about relations between the one and the many, women poets were crafting meditations on social counting, as both measures of a population and as "mattering." As I use it here, mattering refers to the way that norms as a measure of populations' behaviors make individuals socially intelligible to other members of society. Departing from a norm, being outside of a counted group, causes one to become socially illegible or uncountable. Being disenfranchised, women lacked social and political influence, and once married, coverture ensured that women as citizens and individuals were insignificant. In other words, they ceased to

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causes," which made statistical information part of the context in which poetry was published, at least as far as newspapers went (*Victorian Poetry* 50.2, Papers and Responses from the Fifth Annual Conference of the North American Victorian Studies Association, Held Jointly with the Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada [Winter 2008), 235]. For more on the *Athenaeum*'s reviews of Quetelet, see Stigler, *History of Statistics*, 170-71.

count—and therefore to matter.[112] As Judith Butler points out, to ask "who counts" is to ask whose lives count as lives, while to make oneself count is, as Jacques Rancière notes, an act of claiming the rights of a citizen in the absence of such rights.[113]

Although feminists and literary critics have recognized these multiple ways of counting and discounting women, no one has connected women's lived experiences of political and social counting to the ways that they theorized numbers in and through their poetry for political ends. I hope to establish these connections in what follows, and in so doing, make a case for Victorian women's poetry as prefiguring what twentieth-century feminists such as Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva called "l'écriture féminine." *Écriture féminine* is not only woman's writing but writing which recognizes that there is a "new opposition not made between male and female, but between a logic of the One and a logic of heterogeneity and multiplicity."[114] To be sure, French feminisms have been roundly criticized in recent years, especially for their ahistorical mode of argument and implicit focus on white and middle-class women, excluding the voices and experiences of others.[115] Couching such writing in terms of the mathematical, however, enables *l'écriture féminine* to be understood not as depending on an unhistorical,

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[112] I do not claim that voting was the only avenue through which women could exert influence, for in the home they were widely believed to be a husband's moral center in the face of a corrupting modern age (Ablow, *Marriage of Minds*, 1-4; Vicinus, *Independent Women*, 2). Even so, a woman's influence was typically delimited in marriage by the domestic sphere. My point is rather that politically and legally women were discounted by institutional constraints.

[113] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006), 20; Rancière, *The Hatred of Democracy*, trans. by Steve Corcoran (London: Verso, 2006), 60.

[114] Hélène Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa," In *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2001), 2038.

[115] Recent scholarship has placed second-wave feminism in a viable critical genealogy with Victorian women's poetry. For instance, two recent articles in the same issue of *Victorian Poetry* on Augusta Webster's "Mother and Daughter" sonnet sequences identify second wave feminism as the intellectual offspring of nineteenth-century women's poetry (Melissa Gregory, "Augusta Webster Writing Motherhood," 28; Fluhr, "Remaking the Sonnet Cycle," 57-58). Margaret Reynolds also reaches to Julia Kristeva's work on the semiotic to argue that Christina Rossetti's poetry produces "double texts" capable of the uncanny pairing of innocence with "dragon who nonetheless is an Andromeda waiting to be unchained" (Reynolds, "Speaking Likenesses," in The Culture of Christina Rossetti, eds. Mary Areseneau, Antony Harrison, and Lorraine Kooistra, 16). Aligning Victorian women's poetry with second-wave feminism and *l'écriture féminine* is, therefore, more than a convenient anachronism or heuristic.

essentialized "femininity," but as an exploration of an historically-situated plurality of formal models. That is, I am suggesting that through numeracy Victorian women poets anticipate French feminist investigations of twoness and oneness in their responses to cultural models of marriage, education, race, and nationalism.

Second-wave feminists were, like Victorian women poets, deeply interested in thinking about numbers as they related to the body. For instance, Irigaray writes that women are "neither one nor two." Women's bodies involve a plurality of locations for desire, and are genitally divided into a pair of lips, a pair of breasts, while men represent the "one of form, of the individual, of the (male) sexual organ, of the proper name, of the proper meaning."[116] Woman's desire and being is excessive, superfluous, always divided and divisive:

> Always something more and something else besides that one—sexual organ, for example—that you give them, attribute to them…Whereas [woman's desire] really involves a different economy more than anything else, one that upsets the linearity of a project, undermines the goal-object of a desire, diffuses the polarization toward a single pleasure, disconcerts fidelity to a single discourse.[117]

Irigaray's diffusive model runs counter to the type of teleological criticism offered by Peter Brooks, which insists upon the goal-oriented (and implicitly masculine) desire of the novel.[118] But she is also emphasizing the political efficacy of plurality. And it is the kind of unsettling literary techniques she helps us to imagine here—multiple discursive trajectories, nonlinear thinking, fragmentation, heterogeneity—that can be found in Victorian poetry. So when Irigaray asked "how can women analyze their own exploitation, inscribe their own demands, within an

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[116] Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 26.
[117] Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, 29.
[118] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992).

order prescribed by the masculine?," my project shows that Victorian poets had already attempted an answer by way of quantification and mathematical forms.[119]

Mathematical forms are one way that women can analyze their own exploitation, inscribe their own demands, and do so within multiple scales of order—social, legal, biological, numerical—prescribed by the masculine. Math was a decidedly male discipline, and as I hope I have made clear above and in what follows, its language was often used for the exploitation and control of women. Mathematical models become a way for women to define their alienation from a male-ordered society. In other words, numbers can aid women in consciously registering their ontological states as divided and objectified.[120] Numbers then become a mechanism through which women can take control of their relation to objects and things in the world, such as their children or their writing, rather than being defined and controlled by those associations.

My answer to Irigaray's question, then, is polemical: in order for women to actuate mathematical forms in the service of women's politics, first a transformation in the political process had to occur, one which linked bodies to counting to control. That transformation included the new focus on numbers in the nineteenth century—the institutionalization of statistics, the expansion of the franchise, the birth of sociology, and the "avalanche of numbers"

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[119] Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, 81.

[120] Here I have in mind Gyorgy Lukács's description of alienation and reification in "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat." Lukács explains that the phenomenon of alienation has both an objective and subjective side. Alienation is when "a man's own activity, his own labor becomes something objective and independent of him, something that controls him by virtue of an autonomy alien to man" (87). This same line of thinking arises with Marx's assertion of fetishization (or the objective masks for social relations) and the subjectivity of capital (the ways in which capital becomes an autonomous agent in the world). Lukács clarifies that alienation objectively creates "a world of objects and relations between things" and subjectively one in which "a man's activity becomes estranged from himself, [and] turns into a commodity…which must go its own way independently of the man" (87). Victorian women's poetry is often an investigation of such a world of objects and relations between things, and the social responsibilities that arise within those relations and world. Alienation and reification are extreme forms of objectification when human nature is subjugated, deformed, and crippled by the capitalist system, as were women in the nineteenth-century marriage economy. When Lukács points out the worker's estrangement, alienation, and fragmentation, the question naturally arises whether or not those who are objectified can consciously register these ontological states, and if so, what then (89)? Women poets were able to consciously register their

collected by reformers. What my project identifies is a historical moment of political transformation through numbers that conditioned the possibility of women's liberation, and a specifically woman-centered form of writing, one which prefigured and performed what contemporary feminists would term *l'écriture féminine*, writing that is diffuse, fragmentary, and heterogeneous. Taking up numbers and mathematical abstractions in their poetry was one way that the poets in my study made themselves count and disrupted discourses of unification, thereby asserting claims that their experiences and those of other women did, in fact, matter greatly to Victorian society.

IV. How Poetry Counts

Poetry counts. That is to say it both matters and it thinks with numbers. The two claims are, in fact, related. Explaining why numbers are interesting at all in relation to Victorian poetry, and why the focus of this project is specifically the work of Victorian women poets, is the work of this introduction. Making a case for why poetry matters and illustrating how its inherent numeracy enabled Victorian women poets to think their social and political relationships with the world is the work of this project. Numbers matter to questions of democracy and other political forms. More than a decade ago, Poovey observed that "numbers constitute something like the last frontier of representation."[121] Inquiries into that representational horizon seem especially urgent in the face of an increasing demand for the humanities to quantify and think the history of quantification.

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ontological states of alienation, estrangement, and fragmentation as objects in a marriage economy by thinking numerically.

[121] Poovey, *History of Modern Fac*t, xi. Poovey's project in this volume stops at the start of the Victorian era. She also observes that more work remains to be done on questions of gender and how the representation of numbers changed beyond the scope of her project (24). This dissertation contributes to both of those areas.

Poetic forms quantify in a variety of ways: we can, for instance, count metrical feet, lines, stanzas, and cantos. Poetic meter is always a patterning of time that typically invokes numbers—as in hexameters—and rhymes are counted in couplets, tercets, and quatrains. Poets have long recognized and deployed the language of quantity and counting in their work. For example, Paula Blank argues that the language of measurement and numbers in Shakespeare's poetry and plays is an outgrowth of a medieval and Renaissance "near frenzy to measure everything imaginable."[122] She observes that Shakespeare understood measurement less as a science than as an art, one which he mined in all areas of his work.[123] In keeping with this literary genealogy, Tennyson would later call poetry "measured language" in *In Memoriam.* Numbers and poetry are both systems of logic, systems of patterns, and deal with ways of thinking part to whole relations, and as such there is a tacit relationship between these two representational systems.

Critical work drawing connections between mathematics and literature is not wholly absent in scholarship, but has most often focused on twentieth-century literature. Mathematics and poetry, the argument goes, make patterns, use symbols, and share hidden order, an appreciation for beauty, and the ability to construct images of abstractions.[124] Robert Tubbs, for example, has argued that mathematical concepts "guided, assisted, or inspired artists and writers" throughout the twentieth century.[125] Alice Jenkins observes that we need to spend more time

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[122] Blank, *Shakespeare and the Mismeasure of Renaissance Man* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3.
[123] Blank, *Shakespeare*, 4.
[124] Aharoni, Tubbs, and Birken and Coon are three recent examples who have argued for the awareness of poetry and mathematics' near relation. See Ron Aharoni, *Mathematics, Poetry, and Beauty* (Hackensack, NY and London: World Scientific Publishing, 2015)*;* Robert Tubbs, *Mathematics in 20th-Century Literature and Art: Content, Form, Meaning* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); and Marcia Birken and Anne Christine Coon, *Discovering Patterns in Mathematics and Poetry* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008). For such work as it applies to a specific poetic form, see also Janine Rogers chapter, "Beauty Bare: The Sonnet Form, Geometry, and Aesthetics" in *Unified Fields*, 48-65; Daniel J. Cohen, "Heavenly Symbols," in *Equations from God: Pure Mathematics and Victorian Faith* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); and Joel E. Cohen "A Mindful Beauty: What Poetry and Applied Mathematics Have in Common," *The American Scholars* 78.4 (Autumn 2009): 56-64.
[125] Tubbs, *Mathematics*, ix-x.

thinking about the importance of Euclidean geometry to Victorian culture.[126] In the years since Jenkins issued this call, scholars have increasingly turned attention to questions of quantification and literature, though not always explicitly. Although it remains more common in work on the avant-garde's direct engagement with applied mathematics, or in studies that approach the Kantian mathematical sublime or Romanticism's engagement with infinity, literary criticism emphasizing the literariness of numbers is coming to the fore in Victorian studies.

Many projects on political economy, populations, and public health in the novel have given attention to social numbers over the past several decades. Notable instances include Alex Woloch's *The One versus The Many*, which theorizes how minor characters contend for space with protagonists in realism, John Plotz's exposition of how the crowd occasioned revisions of literary portrayals of public and private life, and Audrey Jaffe's *The Affective Life of the Average Man*, which explores how the notion of averageness found its way into realism from stock market graphs and the rise of statistical science. Jesse Rosenthal's article on the law of large numbers and Jenkins's exploration of geometry, both of which draw on George Eliot's work as case studies, likewise offer pertinent examples.[127] Emily Steinlight's work on supernumeraries in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* argues in this vein that the novel generates larger numbers than it can accommodate. Reading the novel as a series of models of population management, Steinlight refuses to take a critical stand on *Bleak House* as either a technology of individuation or comment on mass society's potential absorption of the individual.[128] This scholarship embraces the representational capacity of numbers in literature as a rich and emerging area of critical

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[126] "George Eliot, Geometry, and Gender," *Literature and Science*, ed. by Sharon Ruston and the English Association (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 72.
[127] Jesse Rosenthal, "The Large Novel and the Law of Large Numbers; or, Why George Eliot Hates Gambling," *ELH* 77.3 (Fall 2010): 777-811; Alice Jenkins, "George Eliot, Geometry and Gender," *Literature and Science*, ed. Sharon Ruston and the English Association. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008. 72-89.
[128] Emily Steinlight, "Dickens's 'Supernumeraries' and the Biopolitical Imagination of Victorian Fiction," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 43.2 (Summer 2010): 227-50.

focus. I recognize each of these projects as intimately related to my own reason for thinking about numbers: the intersection between numbers and literature is a potent site of political efficacy. But such work continues to gravitate toward the novel even though poetry is, as I demonstrate, inherently quantitative. Applying such quantitative concepts to poetry reveals how poets were aligning their own knowledge of numbers in poetry with the many new ways that numbers were being assigned to and manipulated by society.

What's more, my own readings here move away from the focus on big data and statistics to take the most basic work of counting by ones seriously. The numbers 0, 1, 2, and 3, which in some ways structure this project, each are odd in their own ways as countable units.[129] These four numbers seem easy, basic, or like the stuff of elementary school knowledge. For instance, zero is halfway between -1 and 1. Although it is neither negative nor positive, it is considered an even number. But if zero is nothing, then how does one count it? We can count apples or oranges, but how do we count empty space? Zero is also interesting because of its additive properties. Add any number to zero and you get the number that you added as the result. This might not seem all that difficult to understand, but from a mathematical perspective, zero is doing much more than representing absence, lack, or nothingness. Mathematicians likewise continue to debate whole numbers, because of their respective ambiguity and special qualities. In the mathematics of combinatorics and number theory, for example, there are five ways of calculating the number four: 1+1+1+1, 2+1+1, 2+2, 3+1, 4+0.[130] It is for this reason, the malleability of numbers and their plurality of representations, that numbers are often only identified with a variable: a letter

[129] There are many scholarly projects in the humanities and STEM disciplines alike that have made a case for the oddness of these cardinal numbers. Consider, for example, Emory Lease, "The Number Three, Mysterious, Magic, Mystic," *Classical Philology* 14.1 (Jan. 1919): 56-73.

[130] This logic is called integer partitions. While this might seem like "basic" math, finding a formula that could calculate partitions to any power (p[n]) was considered an unsolvable mathematical problem until the early twentieth century, when Srinivasa Ramanujan and G. H. Hardy obtained an asymptotic formula for doing so in

that stands in place of the number. A variable is, in effect, a metaphor. It is a symbol that represents another object.

Some might counter, of course, that it is a mistake to align the aesthetic, embodied, pleasurable work of poetry with the empirical, rational, logical work of numbers, despite the ready examples of poet-mathematicians popular in the nineteenth century, such as Erasmus Darwin, Lewis Carroll, and Omar Khayyam, who attempted to think poetry and numbers together. Many critics even in the nineteenth century insisted that poetry should be distinguished from numbers, as well as any processes related to numbers such as mathematics and geometry. Geometry, for Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was a "science" that laid "claim to evidence" and so could be contrasted with the "objects of the inner sense" on which philosophy relied.[131] Mathematics (and Coleridge used the term interchangeably with geometry, though contemporary mathematicians now separate the two terms into discrete sciences—geometry and arithmetic—following Aristotelian logic) did not share philosophy's "first principles" of the "practical or moral, as well as a theoretical or speculative side."[132] Mathematics and geometry were focused on outward things, and "the sum of all that is merely objective" in nature; it provided pragmatic concepts and applications for conflicted philosophical "questions of space, motion, and infinitely small quantities."[133] Coleridge summarizes this assertion later in the *Biographia Literaria*:

> A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as it is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part.[134]

1918. Ramanujan Srinivasa, "Some properties of p(n), number of partitions of n," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society* XIX (1919). 207–210.

[131] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, In *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 289.

[132] Ibid., 290.

[133] Ibid., 309. For Coleridge, mathematics was "the only province of knowledge, which man has succeeded in erecting into pure science," one able to "furnish materials or at least hints for establishing and pacifying the unsettled, warring, and embroiled domain of philosophy (308).

[134] Ibid., 317.

Here, the poet is implicitly setting up poetry and mathematics in contradistinction to one another. Poetry is "opposed to works of science," which use mathematics to communicate. At the same time, Coleridge inadvertently contradicts himself by claiming a "legitimate poem" must be one in which "the parts…mutually support and explain each other." He uses the logic of part-whole thinking, a distinctly mathematical logic, to describe what makes a poem "legitimate." He repeatedly emphasizes that poetry demands "an harmonious whole" and a "spirit of unity" conveyed from the "whole soul" of the poet. The power of poetry, he explains,

> reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order.[135]

In making these claims about poetry's ability to convey "an harmonious whole" and to balance "opposite or discordant qualities," Coleridge's thinking is inflected with mathematical and numerical concepts, such as oneness, symmetry, and inverse or reciprocal relations between fractions.

More recent critics have continued this separation between the objective focus of mathematics and the irrational, somatic, or metaphysical focus of poetry. Susan Stewart, for instance, tries to keep the bodily or sensual reactions to poetry separate from the empirical or rational.[136] She contrasts the "somatic pull of rhythm and song patterns" with the "arithmetical

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[135] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 318-319.

[136] Amittai Aviram likewise associates the bodily with the irrational or "nonsensical," and takes this linkage a step further than Stewart to actually claim that poetry's popularity in the West has declined because of its shift away from affecting the body with rhythm. Literary poetry (his term, for I believe all poetry qualifies as "literary") since "the beginning of the twentieth century… has shifted away from audible rhythms and towards free verse" (2). Aviram defines free verse as "unmetrical poetry." He argues that this shift marks a move away from "nonsensical" pleasure and toward "meaningful…communication or self-expression" (3). Like Stewart and Coleridge, then, Aviram is contrasting reason (nonmetrical) with the nonsensical (metrical). His goal is to keep rhythm and meaning separate; bringing them together as homogeneous will result "in the subordination of rhythm to meaning" (5). But

and geometric patterning of the allomorphic."[137] By the allomorphic, she means the inorganic, such as crystals with distinct structures but the same patterning. However, I understand rhythm and song patterns as also arithmetical and geometrical patterning. The domains are not so neatly separable. Poetry can be broken into isochronous units that can be counted, as can music. Indeed, musicians talk about the "count" of the rhythm, which can be measured in whole, half, quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes. Poetry similarly has arithmetical patterning in metrical feet, which can be counted by pairs of rhythmic beats (feet) as tetrameter, pentameter, and hexameter, among others. In other words, rhythm is a numerical principle, being created by symmetrical repetitions, often in twos. So the field has already begun thinking about the relationship between poetry and numbers, math, and geometry, if not explicitly in those terms. Rather than reflexively disclaiming any possible productive association between mathematics and poetry, making numbers the focus of poetic readings demonstrates how many critical conversations are already taking up these concepts without identifying them as such.

Brief though it might seem, this conceptual history does make two things quite clear. First, critics have for at least two centuries more often separated poetry and mathematics than brought them together. In fairness, there have been attempts to identify what the two fields share, although such attempts have skipped over the Victorian period.[138] Seeking to assign poetry the sphere of the nonsensical, the somatic, the inner senses, or the metaphysical, poets and scholars

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when rhythm and meaning worked together in Victorian poetry, as recent historical formalist projects from Catherine Robson and Jason Rudy illustrate, meaning often became subordinated to rhythm. Aviram is claiming the reverse is true once poetry transitioned to the twenty-first century. He proposes that we "view a poem as a structured relation between knowable—images, ideas, the meaningful aspect of the poem—and the unknowable—the effect of rhythm in relation to the reader's body" (10). But again, this separation seems arbitrary to me, especially for a genre founded on knowable forms, forms that are often numerical. *Telling Rhythm: Body and Meaning in Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[137] Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 229.

[138] See especially Susan Stewart's chapter on numbers and counting in *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, 229. Poovey's *The History of the Modern Fact*, which is deeply invested in numbers and social counting, likewise stops at the Victorian era.

alike have discounted the rich possibilities of exploring how nineteenth-century poets were thinking in and through numbers. Or, as Poovey explains, the controversial nature of numbers, quantities, units, and methods of counting in the nineteenth century, when taken together with the "advent of an entirely new epistemological paradigm" heralded by concepts such as the "average man" and the "law of large numbers," causes the representational capacity of numbers in the Victorian era to warrant substantial additional scholarship.[139] I echo Poovey's sentiment that the critical stories of numerical representation and the disciplinary division of knowledge as it relates to poetry and gender "has yet to be adequately told."[140] My project endeavors to fill in several chapters of those critical narratives.

Second, we often conceptualize poetry by thinking in terms of numbers, even as we seek ways of maintaining a rigid separation between the work of poetry and the work of mathematical abstraction. A major example of this is Isobel Armstrong's idea of the double poem. "What the Victorian poet often achieved," she writes, "was quite literally two concurrent poems in the same words."[141] Armstrong understands the double poem as both epistemological, for its ability to "expose relationships of power," and expressive, situated in the experience of the speaker. The epistemological side can "explore things of which the expressive reading is unaware and go beyond the experience of the lyric speaker."[142] Armstrong clarifies that the double poem is not dialogic in the Bakhtinian sense, nor is it dialectical in the sense where an "opposition between two terms is fixed and settled"; instead, the double poem is "dynamic" because it involves an active turning over of concepts and thinking through the many forms of poetry.[143] So her claim is

[139] Poovey, *History of the Modern Fact*, 28, 309.
[140] Ibid., 24.
[141] Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, 12.
[142] Ibid., 13.
[143] Ibid., 14.

founded on doubleness in order to conceptualize what she understands as an active oscillation between positions or ideologies.

However, to limit our critical framework by doubleness omits the possibilities of other mathematical abstractions as they relate to poetry.[144] As with any binary, Armstrong's double poem at once does powerful work in helping us to understand how Victorian poetry thinks, but it is also totalizing, causing me to seek moments in Victorian poetry where the cultural project is precisely to offer greater complexity than only two opposing poles can address.[145] Instead of a double poem in dialogue with itself or only "two concurrent poems in the same words," my readings illustrate how Victorian poetry frequently involves far more than two poems when we are attentive to the myriad ways that poets mobilize the many parts of poetry. The "dynamic" nature of Victorian poetry that Armstrong rightly identifies, when we free ourselves from the limitation of thinking in only doubles, reveals how poetry is uniquely suited to think social multiplicity within the structures of its diverse forms.

V. Aggregative Poetics

This project will be particularly concerned with the ways that social units are counted and brought together into a collective. I use the term "aggregation" to describe the process of bringing together. Mathematicians define aggregation as collection of separable units while literary critics have often understood aggregation as a kind of fusion. The Victorian poets I examine here are all concerned with the challenge of bringing ones together. I argue that they favor the mathematical model of collection over fusion, which is an alternative form of aggregation.

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[144] Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, 8.
[145] For more on binary oppositions as forms, see Caroline Levine, *Forms*, 5, 9.

Poetry aggregates in a variety of ways: by shifting meter so that stressed or unstressed beats come together in different patterns; by maintaining meter as an oscillation between stressed and unstressed; by dividing the sense of syntax from the sense of meter while using both in the same space; through enjambment which groups lines and caesuras which split lines; with assonance and consonance; and naturally, with rhyme. The relationship between syntax and rhythm is always a complex one because it involves thinking about how the phrasing of a poem aligns with or departs from the meter and what the meaning of such moments of division or alignment might be.

Aggregation is also a political question. Can many become one in a nation or class or movement? Too much complexity stubbornly resists ideological demands for conformity. There is at once strength and weakness in numbers because many individual pieces are harder to address and control than a single, fused population. In this context, the power of poetic forms lies in their ability to help poets and readers to think about aggregates that are at once aesthetic and political. We will see how poets choose to preserve and actuate individual parts within a whole. All of the poets collected here opt for what I call aggregation over fusion—protecting the integrity of individual units that co-exist but do not elide one another. We might think of aggregation as a bunch of M&Ms. All of the colors of the candy remain distinct though aggregated in space. Yet, aggregation does not require a container. It can be unbounded, open to inclusion rather than exclusion. Aggregation enables admixture but retains the particulate. Aggregation can be separated out again, re-divided and aggregated again, indefinitely. The same cannot be said of fusion. One could boil down a mixture to its residue, but the resulting precipitant would never be exactly the same as the initial substances. In the process of merging, form changes irreparably, but aggregation preserves forms together. In short, aggregation as I

intend it in this project preserves separation while enabling change. What I have identified is a tendency in Victorian women's poetry toward collections: aggregations of "multeity into unity" that preserve the component parts without absorption. Thinking in the space of moving parts is always the challenge of poetry. An aggregate is an umbrella term for all such groupings of moving parts, including "set, class, extension, collection."[146] My understanding of aggregation here, then, departs from its common usage in literary studies.

Critics who study political economy and the history of social science have tended to conceptualize aggregation as a consolidation of numerous distinct objects into new social categories.[147] Aggregation can be "smooth," for scholars such as Audrey Jaffe, for whom

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[146] Aggregation has two separate meanings for mathematicians: fusion and collectives. The latter has been the preferred understanding of aggregation since the middle of the nineteenth century. Fusions on the other hand, while experiencing popularity in the early half of the twentieth century among mathematicians, were rapidly overturned by collections as more useful and accurate for applied mathematics. Michael Potter confirms, "Indeed the collection-theoretic way of thinking is so entrenched among mathematicians that it is easy for them to forget how natural it is to think of a line, say, as the sum of its points rather than as a collection of them." Mathematicians would be more concerned with poetry's ability to construct the "particular in the universal," than in the component parts made into a smooth unity of the sort that Coleridge advocates (*Set Theory*, 21-33). Mathematicians recognize aggregated collections as "metaphysically problematic entities," but that condition is precisely what makes them more theoretically interesting and productive than fusions (*Set Theory*, 22).

[147] It might also be suggested that the models constructed by the poets in my study were themselves ideal works of political economy. In *The Logic of the Social Sciences*, John Stuart Mill wrote that political economy is an abstraction fit for application only to general, hypothetical cases. His description of this method is one that "limits political economy to modeling," according to Poovey, and specifically models intended to represent "not particular objects but tendencies" (*History of the Modern Fact*, 323). That is, the work of political economy is to construct models, not unlike the poems in this dissertation. In addition, political economy as a new science, a social science focused on tendencies rather than general laws, could be a science that was at once "hypothetical" and "exact." I would like to suggest that poetry, therefore, is an ideal form of Mill's version of political economy.

Constructing models of social tendencies in their poetry allowed women poets to both hypothesize alternatives and be exact in the numerical forms of their work. Therefore, poetry which employs the inherently quantitative forms of poetry to think about social numbers is poetry uniquely suited to do the work of political economy. Literary critics, as I have shown, instead typically look to the novel to think about questions of political economy. By positioning the work of nineteenth-century women poets in conversation with Mill's understanding of political economy, I would like to suggest that we instead devote more attention to the models that poets constructed when we approach questions of population, democratic counting, statistics, and the language of social counting. Nineteenth-century poets were deeply invested in constructing numerical models that were at once hypothetical and exact. Those models took up arbitrary definitions of humanity, and specifically of the relationships between people, to reason through an assumed premise. I have specifically emphasized marriage as a "two become one" model as the premises that poets were theorizing. They did not assume that this premise was founded in fact, nor did they pretend that all lives were in universal accordance with that model. In this way, the poets in my study deployed their poems as "an analytic instrument designed to investigate hypothetical cases," precisely as Mill details. By engaging with the new social science that attempted to produce general laws, poets were themselves transforming their creative work into a science.

aggregation contrasts with "diverse examples."[148] But in such accounts aggregation usually combines individuals into fluid wholes, masses, or consolidations to prevent or alleviate social chaos. Both statistics and the novel created classifications which "consolidate numerous distinct elements within single categories, [thereby] creating new social objects and new objects of identification."[149] Consolidation involves flattening "distinct elements" in order to create those "single categories." Mary Poovey likewise understands aggregation as fusion; she defines it as "being less individualized or particularized."[150] In her discussion of mass culture, Poovey also presents aggregation as that which erases the individual: "mass culture appears as an aggregate of individuals…individuals seem alike because they are all apparently animated by the same desire."[151] On the other hand, she repeatedly speaks of disaggregation as an explicit alternative to the abstraction of aggregation. Disaggregation, for Poovey, always codes separation, distinction, or "specialization."[152] For example, she discusses the "disaggregation of moral philosophy into political economy and aesthetics."[153] Indeed, her distinction between disaggregation as separation and aggregation as fusion is so emphatic that there is no room to think about separation as a *component* of aggregation—a way to keep parts both integral and together. She sets these terms up as polar opposites rather than states which might mutually inflect one another.

Multiples in whatever form—call them disaggregation, heterogeneity, noise, the mob—can be threatening because they disrupt critical associations between reason and unity. One major critique of disaggregation advanced by theorists is that it is associated with social chaos. In

[148] Jaffe, *Affective Life*, 27.
[149] Ibid., 2.
[150] Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 34.
[151] Ibid., 3.
[152] Ibid., 6.
[153] Ibid., 133.

D. A. Miller's reading of Dickens's *Bleak House*, Chancery's chaotic processes "threaten to reduplicate such chaos in the yet more explicit form of social disaggregation."[154] His stance on disaggregation as chaos is not unusual. We have a tendency to think of multiplicity as chaotic and dangerous. As mathematician Michel Serres puts it, "We are fascinated by the unit; only a unity seems rational to us," because "Chaos is open, it gapes wide, it is not a closed system. In order to code, one has to close, in order to class, one has to define, or shut off with a boundary. Chaos is patent. It is not a system, it is multiplicity. It is multiple, unexpected."[155] Either case is problematic ultimately: unity for the risk for flattening multiplicity within a mass, for conceptualizing aggregates as fused in precisely the way that scholars like Jaffe, Poovey, and Miller suggest; and multiplicity, plurality, or disaggregation, for the chaos and lack of rational ability to get our conceptual arms around the diversity that such readings occasion.

Aggregation, I argue, offers a positive form of chaos, one characterized by complexity and diversity, and powerful because it resists the normalizing gravity produced by the social rhetoric of unity. For Serres, aggregation as collection admits and preserves multiplicity. Aggregation as mathematical collection secures a space of invention and production, one which works against hegemonic drives for unification. Demands for unity, either in marriage, the nation state, or religion, are demands to flatten and normalize granularity and individuation. They are expressions of fear that individuation will result in social chaos. As such, calls for unity are also attempts to exercise control. As I discussed above, the fusion of the wife and husband as a "perfect unity" was repeatedly invoked during parliamentary debates over women's reform. Such calls for "perfect unity" are expressions of fear. If women had rights to property, to divorce, to suffrage, and to the custody of the children, it was said, chaos would result. Unity in the home

[154] D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 73.
[155] *Genesis*, trans. by Genevieve James and James Nielson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 2, 98.

was directly correlated with the unity of the nation. Victorian women poets recognized the infinite possibilities of "multeity in unity," or a collection-theoretic way of thinking aggregation, as powerful social and political potential. Instead of chaos, what these poets frequently offer are choices inside complex systems, choices that seem to restrict the possibility of chaotic outcomes and retain individuation.

To provide a foundation for thinking about how poetry aggregates, let me articulate six ways that poetry counts. I do so to offer aggregative poetics as both a critical mode and a reading practice. Elaborating how poetry counts requires that we think at different scales, from the macrostructures of poetry's stanzas and cantos to the microstructures of meter and syntax. In what follows I offer them from smallest structures to largest:

1. *Poetry counts metrically*. In recent years, scholars interested in reviving attention to nineteenth-century prosody have registered how the Victorian interest in quantification occasioned a return to English traditions of versification. Indeed, a tendency among prosodists to focus on quantitative methods has arisen at several points in history. Specifically, what Yopie Prins terms the "hexameter mania" of Victorian poets found its roots in the quantitative movement of Elizabethan England, which emphasized the "apprehension of durational patterns" in keeping with Latin prosody. Elizabethan poets sought to move away from the vernacular understanding of meter to "an abstract mathematized order," which involved precise counting but often produced phrases that were tough to pronounce.[156] In the nineteenth century, prosodists such as George Saintsbury and Robert Bridges condemned the "English Quantity-Mongers" for

[156] Prins, "Victorian Meters," In *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Joseph Bristow (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 100-101. See also, Derek Attridge, *Well-Weigh'd Syllables: Elizabethan Verse in Classical Metres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 77-78.

sacrificing sound and sense in favor of precision.[157] Bridges blamed the "ridiculous distortion of sense and speech-rhythm" on the Elizabethan choice to imitate Greek quantitative meter in their use of Latin,[158] while Saintsbury advocated a standard English meter "based on a subtle blending of classical and Anglo-Saxon meter."[159] Prins claims that the Victorians attempted to popularize classical meter by using quantitative versification to more closely resemble vernacular speech patterns.[160] What resulted was that "the poetry and prosody of the period are mutually implicated in an ongoing effort to mediate between enunciation and enumeration, between two different ways of 'telling' meter."[161]

Some poets valorized telling meter quantitatively more than others. Tennyson famously claimed that he knew the quantity of every word in the English language, except "scissors," an irony which Prins notes depends on a word meant for cutting and dividing, a word that is nevertheless difficult to measure and divide.[162] Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century connotations for "quantity" involve the "length or duration of a syllable, vowel sound, etc."[163] In describing a school companion named Charles Newton, John Ruskin wrote in his *Praeterita* that the man was a "rightly bred scholar, who knew his grammar and his quantities."[164] That language was understood to have quantities both in terms of syllables and duration of sound contributes yet one more way that poetry and numbers were bound up in each other's methodology.

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[157] Prins, "Victorian Meters," 100-101; Meredith Martin, *The Rise and Fall of Meter: Poetry and English National Culture, 1860-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 94.
[158] Bridges, *Milton's Prosody with a Chapter on Accentual Verse*, Revised final edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), 13; qtd. in Martin, *Rise and Fall*, 94.
[159] Martin, *Rise and Fall*, 95.
[160] Prins, "Victorian Meters," 100. Another attempted to popularize English meter involved the creation of a computer-like device called the Eureka machine, which would randomly select words for each syntactic position to construct lines of Latin verse. See Hall, "Popular Prosody: Spectacle and the Politics of Victorian Versification," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 62.2 (Sept. 2007): 222-49.
[161] Prins, "Victorian Meters," 110.
[162] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1897), 61-62; Prins, "Victorian Meters," 98.
[163] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Quantity," 8b.
[164] Ruskin, *Praeterita*, vol. II (London: George Allen, 1907), 225; *OED* 8b, "Quantity."

Most prominent poets experimented at some point with the relationship between metrical quantity and the themes of their work. The demographic implications of wars, violence, and hostility also became rich fodder for Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Charlotte Smith, and Byron, and later for Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Gerald Massey, and Rudyard Kipling, who then employed the quantities of meter to represent populations. However, meter is not always the best way to think through questions about numbers, and so it does not receive the centrality in my project that one might expect. My argument is that women poets learned to think numbers in part through their immersion in metrical forms, but they often took this thinking in many directions.

2. *Poetry counts with rhyme*. In its simplest forms, rhyme cannot function unless it involves two sounds that echo each other. A type of repetition that poets can wield strategically, rhyme oscillates between difference and correspondence. It is not only that rhyme involves repetition but that the patterns established by rhyme also open a space of non-repetition or failed expectation too. Rhyme is inherently divided between its forward-looking nature to the next rhymed word and its backward glance to the word that rhymed before.[165] Consequently, rhyme as a type of division is especially useful in poems that think about temporality, as it enables poets to think about history while also anticipating the future. The forward-backward listening of rhyme is useful, for instance, in Augusta Webster's dramatic monologue "With the Dead" because the poem's speaker is lost in a labyrinth; consequently, the repetitions can be read as a kind of corresponding rhyme that echoes forward as the speaker continues moving but also echoes backward to remember the acts he committed. That said, not all rhyme operates in the

[165] Peter McDonald, *Sound Intentions: The Workings of Rhyme in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 12.

same way.[166] A null rhyme is nothing more than a repetition of the same word, yet it is still categorized as rhyme. Instead of difference and correspondence, null rhymes give us correspondence, repetition, and exact echoes that hold the potential for an infinite sequence rather than an oscillation between a closed set of sonic resemblances. Rossetti, for example, is especially well known for her use of repetition in poetry.[167] In this project, I consider *Goblin Market*'s repetition as null rhymes, one of many forms of rhyme through which Rossetti's poetry experiments with combining sounds in two or more words or phrases. Since rhyme in the mouth and ear will not always seem as it is on the page, rhyme is a rich formal site of poetry's quantitative possibilities for division and representational relationships.

3. *Poetry counts with syntax*. Syntax often works together with meter to prompt quantitative thinking. For instance, William Baker has read the fractured syntax of *The Ring and The Book* as an example of Browning's fractured mind at work: "the poet has attempted to distort the sentence mold in order to follow the nimble and intricate movements of his mind."[168] Noteworthy for the circularity of the syntactic construction, Browning's *Ring* reiterates through doubling and returns that the ring and the book are one. For we are always aware that "this book" as the subject is also the object in our hands, while the subject of "this book," that being the trial, is also the object of the narrative. Each is single but also a double of the other.

Browning's quantification with syntax is subtle, here, but another more explicit example arises in Rossetti's sonnet "A Triad." The poem describes a pretty woman, a complacent

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[166] McDonald's entire project is to understand rhyme and repetition as "two related formal qualities of verse" (*Sound Intentions*, 9, 11). See also Harrington, *Second Person Singular: Late Victorian Women Poets and the Bonds of Verse* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 13.

[167] Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, 352; McDonald, *Sound Intentions*, 218-220; Michie, *Sororophobia: Differences Among Women in Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 33. See also Suzy Waldman, "'O Wanton Eyes Run Over: Repetition and Fantasy in Christina Rossetti," *Victorian Poetry* 38.4 (Winter 2000): 533-53.

[168] Baker, *Syntax in English Poetry 1870-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 99. See also Donald Hair, *Robert Browning's Language* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1999).

woman, and a snappish woman, all three of whom "sang of love together." The final line concludes that they are "[a]ll on the threshold, yet short of life." Formally, the caesura resulting from the comma following "threshold" evenly divides the line into two sections of five syllables, creating a syntactic, metric, and thematic threshold in the line beyond which "all" three women are "short of," or fail to measure up to, a whole "life." The pyrrhic "all on" places emphasis on "threshold" and "short of life," metrically affirming that these women never pass beyond social expectations into individuation. The line suggests by being at the threshold to marriage, about to pass over into a state in which each will be zeroed out as a wife, none of them will achieve fully realized selves as individuals. They are at once merged into a single collective, "all," and estimated to be insufficient, "short." At the "threshold," they have not yet crossed into married life, while at the same time they are at a point of transition from a lived experience of choice and certainty to one of uncertainty and even death, be it social, physical, or emotional. By placing the comma after "threshold," the poem syntactically positions these women at a threshold of knowledge about themselves and how they are counted in the world, a threshold beyond which they will be unable to recall their prior selves as ones. They can be read as women about to cross over into the knowledge that they are "short of life"; each is about to learn that the certainty she pursued in heteronormative coupling has failed her.

4. *Poetry uses the language of counting*. As I will show throughout this dissertation, poets regularly used the language of counting, for as Tennyson noted, "a use in measured language lies." While Barrett Browning implores her lover to "let me count the ways," Amy Levy will foretell a time when "Folk shall be neither pairs nor odd." Christina Rossetti, not unlike Levy, will muse on social accounting that contradicts itself, writing in the sixteenth sonnet of *Later Life* that: "Our teachers teach that one and one make two: / Later, Love rules that one and one make

one: /Abstruse the problems!" (lines 1-3). In her dramatic monologue "A Castaway," Augusta Webster's outspoken prostitute Eulalie depicts a social system of women who represent a "superfluity" in an "indifferent world" that counts "statistically…by censuses not separate souls" (lines 299, 563-65). Similarly, *Aurora Leigh* contains a moment in which Romney Leigh, Aurora's cousin, objects that the English "talk by aggregates, / And think by systems, and, being used to face / Our evils in statistics" (lines 801-3). Once we begin to pay attention to the language of numbers and counting, we can see that it appears with great frequency in Victorian poetry.[169]

5. *Poetry counts when it tropes*. Tropes are not an obvious way that poetry can count. But "trope" means "to turn," and so involves a doubling back, retracing steps, or duplication. Tropes often deal in twos, as in metaphors which traffic back and forth between tenor and vehicle, and irony, which holds two conflicting perspectives in place through a single utterance. In the second chapter of this study, I focus on Rossetti's use of metaphor and simile to think through the problems of twoness as at once hybrid and divisible.

6. *Poetry counts with its macrostructures*. Narrative long poems of the nineteenth century were regularly broken up into books or cantos (or even Gaelic "duans" in Mathilde Blind's "The Heather on Fire").[170] From Arthur Hugh Clough's *Amours de Voyage*, an epistolary long-poem in five cantos detailing the failed love affair of two tourists, to the nine books of Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, poets were attentive to the formal and thematic possibilities of large scale divisions in their work. One can certainly read the nine books of *Aurora Leigh* as a

[169] The language of counting appears in the poetry of men and women, alike. For example, Tennyson's "St. Simeon Stylites" is deeply invested in making claims about the relationship between religion and counting. I am not suggesting that men did not use poetry to count, but I have chosen to focus on women poets partly to control the scope of this project and partly because women were subjected to the rhetoric of quantification more often than men.
[170] The generic term "narrative long poem of the nineteenth century" was coined by Natasha Moore in *Victorian Poetry and Modern Life: An Unpoetical Age*. Moore acknowledges there is no one way to refer to such poems; she chooses "the long poem of modern life," but Rod Edmond, for instance, accepts Barrett Browning's usages "poetical

reflection of the writer's conception of the text. Nine is the number of the Muses, while also reflecting the number of months a woman is pregnant. For a poem invested in thinking about the quantitative nature of compositional and biological generativity, constructing its macrostructures in such a way becomes part of her explicit reworking of the epic tradition.[171]

Each poet in my study draws on a combination of these ways of counting to think about aggregated collections both thematically and formally. For Barrett Browning, the macrostructures of *Aurora Leigh*'s nine books combine with the language, the meter, and her reworking of epic blank verse as a way for her to express the fractional nature of women. Christina Rossetti, on the other hand, employs meter, rhyme, and tropes in *Goblin Market* to ask questions about what it means to be or have two of something. For Augusta Webster and the Michael Fields, the macrostructures and syntax of their poetry perform the language of numbers to conceptualize intimacy. In each case, no one way or scale of reading will suffice to identify the complexity of the forms with which these poets were coming to terms with social counting and aggregations.

The poems that I examine in this dissertation are concerned with the relation between the gendered and politicized notions of social counting available as they relate to women's lives, bodies, and poetry. They are thus committed to exploring—and to constructing models of—the homologies between political counting, social counting, and gendered language. All of these bear a mathematical valence, and poets used them in order to intervene in the political, social, and literary fields revealed by their intersections. What emerges from their work is a plurality of models involving mathematical processes and characteristics, such as addition, multiplication,

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novel," "novel-poem," or "verse-novel" (12; *Affairs of the Hearth*, 35).

[171] Critics have called *Aurora Leigh* an epic-novel, among other things, in part for its attempt to depict modern life. See, for example, Mary Mullen, "Two Clocks: Aurora Leigh, Poetic Form, and the Politics of Timeliness," *Victorian Poetry* 51.1 (Spring 2013), 65.

division, sets, parallels, triangles, and remainders. For the most part, these processes involve fairly simple arithmetic, rather than complex calculus, which is not surprising, given the slender formal training women poets tended to receive in mathematics. But these poets also show how complex and freighted the most basic arithmetic can be: even the decision to count a body as one rather than two is far from settled.

Separately, mathematics and poetry are arcane and difficult enough. Bringing them together, though, rather than multiplying this difficulty and mysticism, reveals a series of experiments in social quantification that disclose the political and literary implications of such a project. Aligning the empirical capacity of mathematics, geometry, and counting with the rhythmic, subjective, and bodily qualities of poetry is, therefore, not an arbitrary disciplinary marriage. Instead, this project's investment in thinking about numbers and Victorian women's poetry intervenes in a centuries old discourse about how the part and the whole work in poetry, what such numbers accomplish, and how we are to understand their numerical models in contrast to the putatively more legitimate numbers of mathematics as a "pure science."

VI. Mathematical Models

The women poets in my study repeatedly disassemble their poems into pieces and parts in order to reassemble them into different models of wholes.[172] As women poets test the logic of various social numbers, they repeatedly demonstrate how illogical those models are. No one model seems to satisfy these poets' need to respond to the many ways in which women's bodies were

[172] In mathematics, the term "model" implies a logical process rather than a form; to speak of models in mathematics would mean the study of mathematical structures, such as sets, which can have theories tested against them. Such mathematical models will consistently produce the same outcome in response to the problem on which the theory is based. Mathematical models are therefore, perhaps, related to the models I intend when I speak of the models crafted by nineteenth-century women poets; however, the characteristic that marks the numeric models in this study is inconsistency, rather than consistency.

quantified and represented in terms of numbers. They simultaneously reject the social models that say their bodies should be counted in specific ways—as not a legal entity, as "one" with a husband, as superfluous——only to try repeatedly to develop new models that more accurately represent their lived experience and difference. Each of the poems I examine invokes or understands social counting differently, attempting to construct numerical models and arriving at a distinct solution.

Chapter 1 argues that Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* seeks to redress the divisive work of women's democratic political representation by way of poetic form to ask whether women must always be regarded as partial citizens. Women are not counted as integral units—ones—politically or culturally. Barrett Browning connects women's ability to produce writing and children to formulate a corrective political relationship between women's being halves and pieces on the one hand and their capacity for generativity on the other. Constructing a parallel between Aurora's poetic body and the body of a rape victim, Barrett Browning makes the point that for women being counted politically always involves a divided self. Furthermore, writing and reproduction become a form of supplement through which women can engage in political action otherwise foreclosed to them by their lack of rights as citizens. Marian's son and Aurora's writing become vehicles through which the two women attain wholeness again as aggregates that unite and reconstitute, but do not forget or eliminate the fact of women's divisions. Refusing to understand citizenship as either the elimination of individuality or as the fusion of individuals into a mass, Barrett Browning uses poetic form to construct a political wholeness that is at once not satisfying, for it requires the acknowledgement of the inequities that women endure, and preferable to a totalizing democratic citizenship that boils all voices down to the tyrannical majority.

My second chapter, "'Like two blossoms on one stem': Rossetti's Forms of Twoness" asserts that pairs—including sisterhood, hybridity, romantic pairings, and spiritual union—emerge across Christina Rossetti's sonnet sequences and in *Goblin Market*. Rossetti's poetry simultaneously seeks and eschews traditional forms, such as a consistent rhyme scheme, to construct a pervasive model of counting that explores the complexities of creating communities for women. *Later Life* explicitly articulates frustration with paradoxical social math that teaches "one and one make two" but later teaches women to expect "one and one make one." Each form of twoness raises a question about division and subsumption, but Rossetti refuses to reconcile these models. Rather than narrowly understanding her dialectical tendency as distance that conditions intimacy, or as restraint and connection, Rossetti's project involves her realization that subsumption of any ones into one, or "one and one" into a fusion, is unsatisfying. Reading *Goblin Market*'s tropes and rhymes as patterns that double and divide, I contend that Rossetti's poetry discloses its struggle with the social concept of being two. Much as Laura and Lizzie are from the outset "Like two blossoms on one stem," Rossetti's approach recognizes two as a number at once divisible and indivisible. This chapter ultimately illustrates that we need to be able to compare the sisters through tropes and rhyme in order to derive the moral of Rossetti's tale, and so their twoness becomes a condition for the possibility of not only their redemption but the reader's didactic benefit in reading the poem.

Continuing with the 1-2-3 structure of this dissertation, Chapter 3 focuses on Augusta Webster's purported triangulation between lovers. Rather than focusing on Webster's love triangles as geometric as scholars such as Albert Pionke have done, I argue that Webster consistently quantifies in terms of the variable or indeterminate body in marriage, an outlier that must be accounted for in order for social norms to function. Since Isobel Armstrong's recovery

of Webster's work in the early 1990s, scholars have recognized Webster's political engagement and begun to identify the frequency with which she explored competing social, institutional, or aesthetic imperatives. Three dramatic monologues—"The Happiest Girl in the World," "By the Looking-Glass," and "Medea in Athens"—trace the path of a traditional understanding of marital unity in order to make a case for that model as harmful, impossible, and deeply flawed. Instead of reading her poems for love triangles, I take up the repetition and interrogative mode of her poetry as ways of building beyond the two of a married couple. Webster's interests in mirrors, repetition, and questions each involve a logic of +1. In fact, they perform arithmetic operations as they count through many methods of figuration: syntax that repeats, questions that double back and reflect, and the figures of mirrors and reflections which also expand from one into an endless abyss. That is to say, her poems recognize how a married couple posits a +1 in which a point of beginning established the individual as one. Once we admit a +1 is necessary to create a couple, Webster suggests, we are then forced to admit "a rapid process of intellectual knitting" that produces a "series of positive numbers to infinity."[173] Consequently, her poems illustrated that one plus one never only equals two. Instead, Webster's math demands a third by thinking in a logic of n+1 that builds from three to infinity with stunning alacrity.

My fourth chapter might seem like something of a reversal in structure, since Michael Field's poetry gives us a logic of zero, not as negation or absence but as a placeholder for reunion and return. One might argue that zero should come first in this study, as zero does 'belong" between -1 and 1. However, zero is also a place holder that enables all other numbers to expand because it is a multiple of all numbers. Understood in this way, zero can come anywhere in the sequence as a multiplier of 1, 2, or 3, as well as arriving beyond them when serving as a placeholder for tens (10, 20, 30, etc.). Given its fluidity, zero's quality as a placeholder and

[173] Buchanan, *Poetry and Mathematics*, 65.

additive characteristics make it especially useful for thinking about Bradley and Cooper's poetry. Their work represents a marriage in which, as Levy phrased it, those involved are "neither pairs nor odd." Recall that zero is neither negative nor positive, but it is an even number. While Bradley and Cooper's poems depict relationships as forming pairs, they recognize that such unity necessitates separation. In other words, in order to unite or reunite, first "ones" must be separate. In this way, they do not form pairs. At the same time, as we have seen from Barrett Browning, to be whole as a woman was always already an impossibility, so that to be one, alone temporally, is also not to be odd. In the Fields' work, separations come and go, but unity is always on offer through choice and poetic production. Their form of unity presents a fluidity, one which troubles recent critical assertions of their "idealized intimacy" by acknowledging that individuals can leave and return to the wholeness of relationships.[174] Their form of married unity is something of a placeholder, like zero, through which each member of a relationship can transition, separate, return, and transform. The Fields' unity and divisions involve a political and ethical position, or a sort of intimate integrity, in which deciding what constitutes wholeness is relative to their own unique relationships and social conditions.

Quantified Lives does trace a kind of historical trajectory, then, from Barrett Browning's determined efforts to construct ones out of halves at a moment when marriage reform was still on the horizon, through Bradley and Cooper's thoroughly modern and decidedly queer placeholder marriage. But ultimately, I am more interested in examining a series of moments in that trajectory than in offering a definitive history of the development of mathematical knowledge in the nineteenth century. The goals of this dissertation are to begin to map out some of the many ways in which social counting was conceived in Victorian poetry, to think about poetry as a form of numeracy, to foreground the relations between these understandings and contemporary

[174] Harrington, *Second Person Singular*, 5.

notions of marriage, and to demonstrate the difference such poetic counting might make for our critical practices. As Irigaray's work makes clear, we have never known how to count when it comes to women's bodies and their relationship to other bodies. Questions about how to count when it comes to women, as this dissertation will show, are not at all new. Long before Irigaray declared "I never know how to count," Christina Rossetti observed "Our teachers teach that one and one make two: / Later, Love rules that one and one make one: / Abstruse the problems!" The work of this dissertation is to identify some of the ways that women poets were trying to figure out how to count, reacting to their lives as quantifiable, and coming to terms with the political models that swirled around them—models of aggregation, division, and fusion.

CHAPTER ONE:

"Half-Poets" and "Whole Democrats": The Politics of Poetic Aggregation in *Aurora Leigh*

Aurora Leigh asserts her relation to democracy in quantitative terms: "Half-poets even, are still whole democrats" (4.315). Elizabeth Barrett Browning here splits the individual and the citizen in two, and then splits the poet in half. Famously, she makes it clear that the poet's role is a political one.[1] "Poets," Aurora tells Romney in the end, "get directlier at the soul, / Than any of your economists: — for which / You must not overlook the poet's work / When scheming for the world's necessities" (8.540-44). The poet's "sole work is to represent the age, / Their age, not Charlemagne's, - this live, throbbing age" (1.202-203), and this is an age, she tells us, that "calculates" (2.204). How then does Barrett Browning's attention to halfness take part in her interest in contemporary calculation and reveal her commitment to the value of poetic counting? *Aurora Leigh* portrays poetry's methods of counting as more inclusive and accurate than those of

[1] For more on the political work of *Aurora Leigh* as it relates to gender, see Barbara Barrow, "Gender, Language, and the Politics of Disembodiment in Aurora Leigh," *VP* 53, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 243-62; Lynda Chouiten, "Irony and gender politics in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Aurora Leigh," *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 11, no. 3 (December 2012): 1-17; Lana Dalley, "'The least "Angelical" poem in the language': Political Economy, Gender, and the Heritage of *Aurora Leigh*," *VP* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 525-42; Maureen Thum, "Breaking Loose from 'Chin-Bands of the Soul': Barrett Browning's Re-visioning of the Patriarchal Family in *Aurora Leigh*," *Family Matters in the British and American Novel*, ed. Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, Elizabeth Mahn Nollen, and Sheila Reitzel Foor (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State UP, 1997), 79-96. Alison Chapman also situates Barrett Browning in an Italian network of expatriate women poets seeking to craft political poetry ("Poetry, Network, Nation: Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Expatriate Women's Poetry," *Victorian Studies* 55, no. 2 [Winter 2013]: 275–285; "The Expatriate Poetess: Nationhood, Poetics, and Politics." *Victorian Women Poets*. Ed. Alison Chapman. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), and Julia Saville similarly identifies Barrett Browning's membership in a vigorous network of trans-Channel writers doing political work ("'Soul-Talk': Networks of Political Poetry in a Trans-Channel Literary Triangle," *Victorian Studies* 55, no. 2 [Winter 2013]: 299–308). For a reading of *Aurora Leigh* as an "instrument of reform," see Laura Rotunno, "Writings of Reform and Reforming Writings in *Aurora Leigh* and *A Writer of Books*," *Gender and Reform*, ed. Anita Rose (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 59. Still, Deidre David offers a reading of *Aurora Leigh* that assigns the poem's political "service" a role in "a patriarchal vision of the apocalypse," one which enslaves Barrett Browning's project to "a male ideal" ("'Art's a Service': Social Wound, Sexual Politics, and *Aurora Leigh*," *Victorian Women Poets: Emily Bronte, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti*, ed. Joseph Bristow (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 108.

social sciences which emerged in the Victorian era.[2] Fundamentally, and more than other quantifying discourses, poetry captures "the world's necessities" in their variety and sheer number in ways that do not reduce or flatten their value. Nor does poetry's quantitative thinking assimilate these necessities into the prerogatives of the economic.

This chapter argues that *Aurora Leigh* seeks to redress the divisive work of women's democratic political representation by way of poetic form to ask whether women must always be regarded as partial citizens. Victorian society divided women politically in ways that departed from the ways it divided men. Men were counted as units: individual and (if propertied) citizen;[3] by contrast, women not only lacked the rights of citizens but were further split by the very fact of their difference.[4] For Barrett Browning, politics involves claiming for oneself a role as both an individual and a citizen, of aggregating the two, rather than allowing the division to stand uncontested. Through the trope of halfness, Barrett Browning establishes a connection between women's ability to produce writing and produce children, as well as the violent division of women's bodies, in order to formulate a corrective political relationship between women's

[2] The formation of the Registrar-General for England and Wales and the Board of Trade centralized statistical authority in England in 1837, the same year that Queen Victoria assumed the throne (Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005], 28). The institutionalization of statistical science thus coincides perfectly with Victoria's reign, providing a clear historical justification for such a focus in Victorian poetry. The rise of social methods of quantification lead prominent social reformers such as Jeremy Bentham to believe in the "social calculus" of statistics, by which the utilitarian goal of the "greatest happiness for the greatest number" could be empirically demonstrated (John Eyler, *Victorian Social Medicine: The Ideas and Methods of William Farr* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1979], 20).

[3] For more on the application of emergent statistical and social science methods to women's issues, see Hacking, *Taming of Chance*, 18-19. Ben Griffin also acknowledges the ligature between women's property law reform activity and the emerging social sciences in The *Politics of Gender* in *Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2012), 79-80. A detailed account of the relationship between the National Social Science Association and feminists seeking suffrage, marriage reform, and property rights can be found in Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989), esp. 11, 54-56.

[4] As Teresa de Laurentis notes in *Alice Doesn't*: *Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984), there is a "double status of woman as bearer of economic, positive value, and woman as bearer of semiotic, negative value, of difference" (19). However, double status, as I will demonstrate, is too narrow conceptually to accommodate the plurality of ways that women are divided by discourse.

halfness and generativity.[5] This formulation relies upon figurative language of women being divided, fragmented, and fractured to work through a new gendered social arithmetic. Though the fragmentary nature of *Aurora Leigh* is evident in its very form, my investigation of the diverse formal and thematic divisions in *Aurora Leigh* demonstrates the possibility of a different kind of relationship between the fragmentary work of poetic form in Barrett Browning's text and the divisive work of the political in the nineteenth century. As the poem's meter and language performs the halving, splitting, and parting out of women's bodies, Barrett Browning connects the poetic and the political by way of the model of aggregation, a form of poetic counting closely aligned with both social representation and mathematical collection. I am using the term "aggregation" to mean collection rather than fusion; the poetic aggregation I identify in *Aurora Leigh* preserves individual units, allowing parts to co-exist in a unity but not to elide one another.[6] Poetic aggregates always have divisions within them and yet also offer wholes.

I draw here on Jacques Rancière, who notes how this formative division or "splitting in two" between the individual and the citizen, creates an additional bifurcation for women and their participation in the democratic process. For Rancière, politics involves the exercise of citizen's rights by those that are refused such rights under the law—or in other words, the act of claiming rights one does not technically have, thus aggregating the 'have nots' with the 'haves.'[7] In *Aurora Leigh*, Barrett Browning constructs a model of inclusion that integrates women's

[5] There is a long-standing critical thread that associates reproduction with women's political poetry. Susan Brown, for instance, argues that "Reproductive risk is bound up with the difficulty of attaining and sustaining poetic inspiration" ("'A still and mute-born vision': Locating Mathilde Blind's Reproductive Poetics,' *Victorian Women Poets*, ed. Alison Chapman [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003], 126, 131). On the other hand, Isobel Armstrong demurs that we cannot cleanly associated nineteenth-century women's poetry "with the uncovering of particular political positions but rather with a set of strategies or negotiations with conventions and constraints" (*Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics* [London and New York: Routledge, 1993], 332). See also, Tricia Lootens, "Victorian Poetry and Patriotism," *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 255-79.
[6] Michael Potter, *Set Theory and Its Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), 21-24.
[7] Jacques Rancière, *The Hatred of Democracy*, trans. Steve Corcoran. (London: Verso, 2006), 61.

always already fractured social status to mobilize a form of political action. By foregrounding social measurement into her poem's language and prosody, Barrett Browning illustrates how political representation depends upon the identification and inclusion of members of society marked by an inherently fractional nature, such as women. Critics already recognize that this is a political poem, but how it does that political work depends on the poem's investment in social measures? The poem deploys aggregates to make the point that being counted politically has always involved a divided self for men and women alike, but that, unlike their male counterparts, nineteenth-century women have to write or produce children in order to become "whole democrats."

The first part of this chapter makes a theoretical case for understanding Barrett Browning's poetic aggregates as a means of political representation. The second part explores Aurora's and Marian Earle's halfness to illustrate that the shredding women experience from sexual assault, gendered discourse, and marriage need not be a resolution, an ending—it can instead be the beginning of a new way of social counting. Two of the ways that Barrett Browning's verse-novel counts are through the language of halfness and her metrical choices. The end of this essay examines how Barrett Browning's verse novel links its central insight about social counting to the socioeconomic conditions of Marian and Romney's failed marriage plot, expanding outward from the forms of political aggregation affecting individuals to the agglomerations of social class. In this section, I argue that Barrett Browning's violent images of the "crammed mass" work together with the meter as a means of seeing how the poetic directly measures forms of political representation in a modern epic. Despite the epic's association with national narratives, the wedding crowd in *Aurora Leigh* suggests that not all poetry was a democratic form capable of easily constructing a collective English body.

Perhaps more than any other part of *Aurora Leigh*, the wedding scene offers evidence of the poem's attempt to parallel formal models of social counting with the enumerative capacity of epic poetry. The narrative and formal collision of social classes in St. James Church is the poet's meditation on anxieties about the social body as spliced, a process involving both disruption and massing. The social aggregation of rich and poor in the wedding scene at once threatens the "dismembering of society" and a "contract…twixt the extremes," leading the aristocrats in the church to evoke the violent collision of social classes during the French Revolution. While the Chartist uprisings or the Reform Act might offer more immediate historical context for Barrett Browning's concerns about clashes between socioeconomic groups, the poet uses images of decapitated and "disrupted" bodies from the French Revolution to think about social divisions of the body politic.

In its quantitative register, the concept of social counting belongs at once to the statistical imagination that supports the actual counting of bodies and populations, and to how citizens matter. To ask "who counts" is to ask who counts as human, whose lives count as lives, and who is doing the counting, a point made by Judith Butler in *Precarious Life*.[8] Barrett Browning's verse-novel, in allowing women to be repeatedly broken and then aggregated in new collectives, builds on this logic. To ask who counts is also to consider how counting occurs in a democracy, who is divided, and who has the power to divide. Resisting a deceptively easy social math of ones and twos, *Aurora Leigh* investigates fractional forms of self that are assumed to be whole in order to construct alternate political models that more accurately reflect women's lived experience of wholeness and division.

Although it is the ostensible standard, wholeness is never actually the goal, because society—even if not through the kind of sexual assault Marian experiences—is always

splintering women as it perpetuates a discourse of wholeness. Barrett Browning's poetic aggregates are a potential strategy for attaining an alternative kind of composite wholeness—never quite "whole" in an originary sense, but nonetheless an aspirational and positive drive. And, thus, Marian's rape, where divisions are explicitly traumatic, is of interest because, despite its very real violence, new forms of beneficial unity emerge from such ruptures. I am not suggesting that the poem makes rape palatable by asserting motherhood as a salve, to 'fix' this broken woman through reproduction, or to mitigate her trauma through mere biology. Quite the contrary: paralleling the violence of rape to the discursive and identity divisions experienced by women, the poem simultaneously gives voice to a rape victim and, in fact, magnifies and reifies the horror of sexual assault by scaling our awareness of its effects from the whole individual to the atomized self that remains. Non-redemptive forms of divisiveness also emerge in *Aurora Leigh*. Barrett Browning does not resolve this contradiction but instead actuates the logic of aggregation as a series of experiments in gender disparities and violence to disclose the political implications of such a project. Marian's son and Aurora's writing become vehicles through which the two women attain wholeness again as aggregates that unite and reconstitute, but do not forget or eliminate the fact of women's partial divisions.

I. SUPPLEMENT AND AGGREGATE

Romney Leigh, Aurora's cousin, objects that the English "talk by aggregates, / And think by systems, and, being used to face / Our evils in statistics, are inclined / to cap them with unreal remedies / Drawn out in haste on the other side of the slate" (8.801-5). He uses the term "aggregation" to mean political absorption: here English citizens are whole groups instead of individuals. Barrett Browning's poem itself constructs aggregates from loose collections and not

[8] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006), 20.

as a form of fusion. Romney's way of understanding aggregation is decidedly that of the social science he studies and practices. His language further demonstrates how ubiquitous thinking about social counting is in the period and how Barrett Browning makes it imperative that her readers engage with it differently.[9] Romney establishes the "evils in statistics" and the "unreal remedies" of misguided social scientists as something only poetic aggregation can think differently. Barrett Browning's inclusive aggregative model enables her to explore political potential without committing to a solution wedded to a binary or one which fuses individuals into single categories.[10]

Aurora Leigh sets up quantitative divisions between her two major female characters: Aurora's authorial divisions, paper divisions, and language divisions emerge alongside Marian's violent divisions as a way of training the reader to ask who is divided politically and who does the dividing. The pervasive figuration of division in Barrett Browning's text is a product of the historical period, in which women writers in particular were demarcated by "sexual difference and other discursive structures."[11] When Lady Waldemar visits Aurora, she claims that Aurora exceeds other women as a poet only by being a flawed woman. The intelligent woman is "mulcted" or deprived of full womanhood because, Lady Waldemar claims, a woman poet's heart must be "starved to make your heads" (3.409-410). Like all "artist women," Aurora stands

[9] As Hacking explains, the first half of the nineteenth century had "generated a world of becoming numerical and measured in every corner of its being" (*Taming of Chance*, 61). The emergence of new technologies of classifying and enumerating created a faddish "enthusiasm for numerical data" in the nineteenth century (Hacking, *Taming of Chance*, 2).

[10] Marisa Palacios Knox notes: "The critical impulse tends toward imposing some kind of 'solution' upon the problems of *Aurora Leigh*, but *Aurora Leigh* is emphatically not a solution in any sense of the word, and does not believe in a solution-based approach to artistic or social problems" ("Masculine Identification and Marital Dissolution in Aurora Leigh," VP 52, no. 2 [Summer 2014]: 293).

[11] Elsie Michie, *Outside the Pale: Cultural Exclusion, Gender Difference, and the Victorian Woman Writer* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), p. 2. For related studies on women writers, see Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and the Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (London: Macmillan, 1987); Angela Leighton, *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

"outside…of the common sex" composed of other women, most of whom are married (3.406-11). Lady Waldemar's perspective is entirely in keeping with the consensus opinion about women writers in the nineteenth century.

Consider, for example, Robert Southey's famous statement to Charlotte Brontë: "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation."[12] It was not only improper for women to waste time writing, but entering the public sphere was not her "business," as the home was. Women writers were so positioned by a discourse which constructed a "limiting definition of femininity," one reflected by W. E. Aytoun's criticism of Aurora Leigh as not a "genuine woman" in his review of the poem for *Blackwood's* in January 1857.[13] Aytoun identifies Aurora as not "genuine" because she is divided, "one half of her heart seems bounding with the beat of humanity, while the other half is ossified.[14]" Yet, that is precisely Barrett Browning's point; all women are divided, but especially women writers. Barrett Browning's emphasis on halfness and division therefore animates and troubles what Angela Leighton aptly describes as a woman writer "split, not only between woman and poet, life and works, but also, in some ways, between one aspect of the author's psyche and another."[15] To be a woman is to be divided, but to be a woman writer is to be divided yet further.

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[12] Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Bronte*, vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1857), 102. Southey was not alone in his opinion. According to Joan Landes, the Romantic era involved "a highly gendered bourgeois male discourse that depended on women's domesticity and the silencing of 'public' women...a public woman is a prostitute a commoner, a common woman" (*Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* [Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988], 2-3). For instance, Jacqueline Labbe observes how Charlotte Smith's forays into the public sphere involved the "risk that the seling of her body of work may be interpreted as the selling of her body" ("The Exiled Self: Images of war in Charlotte Smith's 'The Emigrants,' *Romantic Wars: Studies in Culture and Conflict, 1793-1822*, ed. Philip Shaw [Burlington: Ashgate, 2000], 38). See also, Jacqueline Labbe, "Selling One's Sorrows: Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, and the Marketing of Poetry," *Wordsworth Circle* 25 (1994): 68-71.
[13] Michie, *Outside the Pale*, 4; William Edmontstoune Aytoun, review of *Aurora Leigh*, by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "Mrs. Barrett Browning—*Aurora Leigh*," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 81 (January 1857), 32.
[14] Aytoun, "Mrs. Barrett Browning," 32-33.
[15] Leighton, *Victorian Women Poets*, 4.

Not only were women writers subjected to a "limiting" definition of femininity upon entering the public sphere, they were separated from it politically because they lacked the right to vote. Rancière affirms that "[w]omen were excluded from the benefits of having citizens' rights in the name of a division between the public and the private spheres."[16] Despite Aurora's success as a writer, she is still "imprisoned within a discourse" which constructed what women were and were not expected to be and do.[17] She has the power to take a discursive position because she writes; nevertheless, she remains divided by gendered discourses about women and women writers. Like rape, there was something shameful about women entering the public sphere (as Southey put it, it was not "proper").[18] At the same time, the act of publishing one's writing dismantles the distinction between domestic life and political life, enabling women to "claim rights as women and as citizens, an identical right that, however, can only be asserted in the form of a supplement."[19] Though Rancière does not define this "supplement," he provides the example of a woman's ability to be sentenced to death, an event which undoes the woman's lack of citizenship. She does not have the rights of a citizen but she does have the right to be held accountable to a citizenry's laws. Politically, then, the supplement involves some outside force or event that erases the boundaries between public and private, creating a bridge between the woman and the citizenship from which she is excluded. Even as a women writer is a "half-poet," writing is a supplement through which she can make herself count as a "whole democrat." At the same time, Barrett Browning is deliberately making us wonder what a "whole democrat" could

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[16] Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, p. 60.
[17] Michie, *Beyond the Pale*, 4.
[18] Feminist criticism of the Habermasian public sphere can be found in Sayla Benhabib, *Democracy and Difference, Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006]; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990), 56-80; and, Iris Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000). Two of their shared primary claims are in keeping with Barrett Browning's models of aggregation. Specifically, each of these scholars argues that the universalizing ideal of the public sphere hides particularity and that the goal of reaching consensus in the public sphere can often exclude minority voices.

possibly be. By crafting halves and wholes in a context where women really cannot be whole citizens, she seems to be frustrating such attempts to count. In these ways, the poet offers a critique of wholeness and of democracy, the first a state of being and the latter a state of belonging, both of which are foreclosed to women. Her emphasize on halfness and her forms of aggregation challenge us to ask whether anyone can be wholly engaged in a democracy when they are not allowed to participate in that democracy as citizens.

One clear value emerges from Rancière's use of the term "supplement": he identifies how a supplement enables political action by bridging the gap between those excluded from citizenship and their ability to participate in democratic processes. In *Aurora Leigh*, writing as a supplement for speech becomes a political supplement for action by those excluded from democratic discourse. While a woman's body may be objectified, rejected, questioned, and even assaulted, her words retain a political efficacy that her body does not have. I am arguing here that Barrett Browning's verse novel actuates both registers of the supplement by constructing poetic aggregates formally and thematically; such aggregates enable political action to ramify through the violence of division and exclusion, as well as the promises of wholeness and inclusion. By offering multiple models of aggregation, focused variously on women, women writers, and the forms of texts, Barrett Browning foregrounds her poem's definition of aggregation as a redemptive political possibility that brings the fragmentary within the whole. She refuses the model of absorption that results in a uniform whole because this would homogenize heterogeneous elements into a single category, which can then become the basis on which incorrect or even dangerous social responses are made; absorption also silences individual

[19] Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, 60.

voices, transforming them into the voice of a collective.[20] Throughout *Aurora Leigh*, Barrett Browning instead preserves the individual, even when fractured into smaller units, so that the particular is not dissolved in the mass.[21]

Barrett Browning's conceptualization of aggregation departs from critical approaches to aggregation by literary critics who study political economy and is closer to a mathematical model of aggregation as "collection" rather than "fusion."[22] As Audrey Jaffe has observed, statisticians and novelists conceived of aggregation as a way to "consolidate numerous distinct elements within single categories, in doing so creating new social objects."[23] However, such an understanding of social aggregates assumes a flattening of distinct elements, producing a "smooth aggregate" in contrast to "diverse examples."[24] The poem recognizes how problematic smooth categories of "woman," "wife," "mother," or "writer" are by offering a profusion of models of how a person in each category might be constituted by division. In this way, *Aurora Leigh*'s aggregative poetics are more closely aligned with one of two modes of mathematical aggregation: collection, as opposed to fusion.

Mathematicians are more concerned with models that construct the "particular in the universal" than in the component parts fused into a smooth unity. Such mathematical thinking

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[20] Fusion also involves absorbing individual gender differences into a male-female binary. As Marisa Knox observes in her reading of the fluid gender roles in Aurora Leigh, Barrett Browning's verse-novel resolutely rejects such dissolution of the self as "fusion" (278-79). Contrary to Knox's reading, Christine Sutphin claims that a "fusion of individuality and care for others" is achieved by Aurora in conclusion ("Revising Old Scripts: The Fusion of Independence and Intimacy in *Aurora Leigh*," *Browning Institute Studies* 15 [Spring 1987], 44).

[21] There are many examples in Barrett Browning's correspondence of her valorization of individuality rather than "the masses." Writing to Mary Mitford from Florence on April 15, 1848, Barrett Browning responded to Mitford's question about whether not she and Robert had become communists, writing: "Liberty and civilisation when married together lawfully rather evolve individuality than tend to generalisation. Is this not true? (*The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, Vols. 1-7, ed. Frederic Kenyon [London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1897]: 359.

[22] See, for instance, Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body*: *British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1995). Poovey's discussion of mass culture also presents aggregation as that which erases the individual within the mass: "mass culture appears as an aggregate of individuals…individuals seem alike because they are all apparently animated by the same desire" (3).

[23] Audrey Jaffe, *The Affective Life of the Average man: The Victorian Novel and the Stock-Market Graph* (Columbus: Ohio UP, 2010), 2.

abounds in *Aurora Leigh* as complex unities are consistently privileged over fusion.[25] By this correlation I am not attempting to establish that the poem was "doing" math or that Barrett Browning was even familiar with such modes of thought. Instead, I offer the mathematical definition of aggregation as a heuristic to illustrate how quantifying discourses have drawn distinctions between types of aggregation. Although the poem's aggregations are akin to those of mathematical aggregates as collection, I want to emphasize that EBB's aggregates formally exploit poetry's inherent ability to quantify in ways that retain plurality and categories without flattening, smoothing, or fusing. Attention to *Aurora Leigh*'s poetic aggregates divulges that the political power of forms resides in their ability to be broken and made whole again.[26]

I am by no means the first scholar to identify a combinatory logic in *Aurora Leigh*, one which unites disparate pieces in order to do its political work. For example, Natasha Moore reads *Aurora Leigh* as a generic experiment that aggregates "autobiography, *Kunstlerroman*, novel, verse-novel, sage discourse, philosophical meditation, political treatise, *Ars Poetica*, prophecy, epic, satire, and slum naturalism… as a means of achieving the breadth and flexibility that modern content seemed to demand."[27] Similarly, Monique Morgan discusses *Aurora Leigh* as a poem that "keeps various generic fragments distinct." By holding "discrete units juxtaposed

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[24] Audrey Jaffe, *Affective Life*, 27.

[25] Like mathematicians, Barrett Browning recognizes aggregative collections as "metaphysically problematic entities," but problematic in a positive way as productive and complex. Since the late nineteenth century, theories of collection have predominated in mathematical theories because collections "can always be characterized determinately by their membership." Fusion on the other hand, while experiencing popularity in the early half of the twentieth century among mathematicians, was rapidly overturned by collection as an influential model for aggregates (Potter, *Set Theory*, 22). Michael Potter confirms, "Indeed the collection-theoretic way of thinking is so entrenched among mathematicians that it is easy for them to forget how natural it is to think of a line, say, as the sum of its points rather than as a collection of them" (*Set Theory*, 21-33).

[26] In *Forms*, Caroline Levine offers a "methodological alternative to breaking forms apart" and says that "the field has been so concerned with breaking forms apart that we have neglected to analyze the major work that forms do in our world" (*Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* [Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015], 29, 9). Yet, in the fact of their brokenness there is also a powerful force for reconciliation, redemption, and recreation.

[27] Natasha Moore, "*Epic and Novel: The Encyclopedic Impulse in Victorian Poetry*," *Nineteenth-century Literature* 68, no. 3 (Dec. 2013): 401.

together," Barrett Browning is able to "expose the conventions and liabilities of each genre when considered separately."[28] My larger claim, then, is that all of the critical work identifying fractures, discrepancies, and hybridity in *Aurora Leigh* has really been pointing us to Barrett Browning's aggregative poetics all along.[29] While the divisions preserved by collections are preferable to fusion in Barrett Browning's verse-novel, the wholeness of the collection is better still. Barrett Browning's aggregates allow for both division and wholeness, thereby offering a solution to the paradox of democratic societies in which everyone wants equality but also wants individual rights.[30] Though a woman might be divided from political engagement by gender norms or divided from what is socially acceptable due to discursive or bodily violence, aggregation is a mechanism through which the supplements of writing and reproduction can gather one back into the social fold. Consequently, *Aurora Leigh* offers a hierarchy of formal models in which to be politically counted women must aspire to wholeness even while acknowledging that division will always condition that possibility.

II. MARIAN'S HALFNESS

In Book 6, Marian tells Aurora that she knows rape is not a subject to be openly discussed, but instead is one at which "we must scrupulously hint / With half-words, delicate reserves, the thing / Which no one scrupled we should feel" (6.1223). To speak in "half-words" is to avoid saying

[28] Monique Morgan, *Narrative Means, Lyric Ends: Temporality in the Nineteenth-Century British Long Poem* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2009): 120-21.
[29] On fluid gender roles in the poem, see Knox, "Masculine Identification," 277-300. Mary Mullen also provides a reading of *Aurora Leigh*'s "discrepant forms and temporalities" (64). Margaret Reynolds likewise identifies the poem's strategies of "diffusion and fragmentation" ("Critical Introduction," *Aurora Leigh*, by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, ed. Margaret Reynolds [Athens: Ohio UP, 1992]: 12). For a reading of disembodiment, where disembodiment involves a division between spiritual and material bodies, as a political and poetic strategy in *Aurora Leigh*, see Barrow, "Gender, Language, and the Politics of Disembodiment."
[30] Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, 66-68; Bruce Thornton, *Democracy's Dangers & Discontents: The Tyranny of the Majority from the Greeks to Obama* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2014), 2-7.

what you want to say or to name an act for what it is—rape. Marian's "half-words" are the result of social silencing about sexual assault. But this is a very different sort of "half-words" from the many images of torn paper elsewhere in the verse novel, each of which represents a deliberate act of self-silencing. Aurora's earlier claim that "Half-poets are whole democrats" implies that her poetry is only half of what a man might produce, qualitatively and presumably quantitatively due to the domestic duties preventing women from focusing time on writing; so, a woman's writing also constitutes "half-words" even when she longs politically to have a "whole" voice. By this logic, the "half-words" that society uses to whisper about sexual assault become aligned with, though are not completely identical to, the "half-words" that a woman poet produces. While one form of violence is metaphorical and the other horrific and very real, both ask readers to consider who has the power to create such divisions and whether each type of division works in precisely the same way. At the same time, Barrett Browning constructs poetic models to investigate whether forms of women's halfness can be redemptive and, if so, by what means.

Marian signals her social and gendered divisions when detailing her sexual assault by repeatedly speaking of herself in halves. When Lady Waldemar chastises Marian for doubting the scheme to send her abroad, Marian obeys her "half in trust, and half in scorn" by writing the letter to Romney to say that she will not marry him (6.1164). She does not say who she trusts and who she scorns; one might assume that both apply to Lady Waldemar. However, another reading is that she only half trusts herself and half scorns herself for not having the strength to resist Lady Waldemar's machinations. Lady Waldemar's judgment that Marian is a "Foolish girl" causes Marian to doubt her own judgment and, accordingly, divides her mentally (6.1161). Furthermore, Marian's sense of being "half alive" when she departs for France echoes the moment after she awakes next to "him who stinks since Friday," realizing she has been sexually

violated; she is also then "half dead, half alive" (6.1202, 6.1200). And the half of Marian that remains alive after this assault divides further in madness, "Half gibbering and half raving on the floor," so that she increasingly shatters into smaller and smaller fractional selves (6.1232). Much as a document can only be honored if it is intact, Marian's body is shredded during rape and is no longer socially accepted.[31] What is whole, or "intact" in the case of a woman's virginity, was honorable in the nineteenth century (and for some, remains so today). Wholeness was always the avowed ideal for a woman's body. Yet, Barrett Browning emphasizes the impossibility of wholeness for women by portraying Marian as an aggregate composed of so many halves.

Marian Erle's tale of poverty, sexual assault, and motherhood illustrates the destructive and redemptive power of aggregation in *Aurora Leigh*. There is obviously a vast difference between the forms of division a woman endures from sexual assault and those that a woman writer experiences. While the raped woman's body can no longer be intact, being physically and psychologically undone by sexual assault, a woman poet and her poetry are not considered whole because, for centuries, men have imprisoned her violently within the discourse that marks her as an outsider. Rape's "half-words" do not function in precisely the same way as the splintering of women's writing, and the bracing reality of that distinction foregrounds how scrupulously the poem maintains focus on the halfness that defines each. Compare Marian's "half gibbering and half raving," for example, to Aurora's earlier flirtations with Romney, which are "half petulant,

[31] For more critical work about virginity in the Victorian era, see the essays in *Virginal Sexuality and Textuality in Victorian Literature*, ed. Lloyd Davis (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993). It is also worth noting that increasingly work such as Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall's edited collection, *Sexuality and Submission: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), has offered a valuable corrective to the notion that all Victorian sexuality was repressed and prudish. Yet, at the same time, "Virginity in women had been valued and continued to be valued for the security it gave to the dynastic transmission of property. Innocence offered a greater security, an internalized security, in a world more vulnerable to political and economic disorder. For upper- and middle-class French and English women, innocence meant knowing nothing about sex: the very etymology of the word— *non-nocere* (not to do harm)—suggests that knowledge of sexuality was harmful" (Mendus and Rendall, 7).

half playful," or to her declaration that the poet has to turn outward "with a sudden wrench, / Half agony, half ecstasy, the thing / He feels inmost" (2.117; 5370-72). To be half mad or half alive is decidedly different from being half petulant and half playful, yet each is still experiencing forms of halfness. Consequently, the trope of halfness at once marks the social positions for each woman while encouraging the reader to think about women as perpetually divided.

Divisions consistently configure Marian's narrative, from her insider-outsider status as Romney's fiancée to the halfness resulting from her sexual assault, or in her part of the quadrilateral relationship that includes Marian, Lady Waldemar, Aurora, and Romney, and ultimately, in the pairing of Marian with her child. Although Marian's rape shatters her into fragments, having her child ultimately enables her redemption as she is made whole through pairing with him. Having her son does not eliminate the halfness, but it holds out hope in uniting her with another in a new composite whole. Indeed, the text suggests that she must, after a fashion, remain fractional in order to be paired with her child. When Aurora first meets the child, he is also described in language of halfness as he wakes up from his dreams and see his mother: "So happy (half with her and half with heaven)" (6.593). The half of him that belongs to the earth is capable of making whole all of the halves that Marian's trauma has produced. Again, this social math remains troubling as a single male infant seems to be equal to the many fractured remainders of his mother. It is not Barrett Browning's goal to satisfy such formulas by reconciling them into tidy wholes. Instead, when Marian introduces her infant son to Aurora, Barrett Browning compounds Marian's divisions by modeling the divisive possibilities of social judgment.

Aurora initially grapples with how to classify Marian, and in so doing, divides her into types that fail to amount to a mother. Much as "wife" is a cohesive whole, unmarked by particularity, the title mother signifies a similar categorical wholeness for Aurora.[32] Assuming Marian has turned to prostitution and become pregnant as a result, Aurora can no longer class her with proper ladies, wives, or mothers: "Small business has a cast-away / Like Marian with that crown of prosperous wives / At which the gentlest she grows arrogant / And says, 'my child'" (6.345-47). Her accusation is that Marian "stole" her child because Aurora believes "a child was given to sanctify / A woman" and be her "crown" (6.632, 6.728-29). Motherhood, as Aurora frames it, is meant to "set [a woman] in the sight of all / The clear-eyed Heavens, a chosen minister / To do their business and lead spirits up / The difficult blue heights" (6.729-32). In other words, a woman becomes a mother in order to make her more mindful of God and embody her as one who trains future generations in faith. Since she understands the role of mother to be a holy office, a woman who becomes pregnant through prostitution—a sin—has stolen a gift "given to sanctify" and so not intended for her. Thus justified in her self-righteousness, Aurora levels the charge of "thief" against Marian, but she does not stop there (6.633).

Aurora wants to correct Marian's categorization of herself as "mother" and her child as her "son," a desire which stems from Aurora's adherence to social math that aggregates and divides based on socially acceptable and unacceptable behavior.[33] Conforming to social expectations allows one to be aggregated into the group, while violating social mores expels the individual from the herd and diminishes one to less than one. Because Aurora's initial method of

[32] For a useful account of the Victorian discourse about husbands and wives as a "perfect unity" and the wife as "one flesh" with the husband, see Griffin's chapter "The Domestic Ideology of Victorian Patriarchy" in *Politics of Gender*, 37-64.

[33] The National Social Science Association (NSSA) also wrestled with such categorical distinctions. Shanley details a meeting of the NSSA (to decide whether physical examinations for contagious diseases should be extended to women's bodies) in which the members "implicitly drew a distinction between 'ladies,' whose ears could not bear hearing of venereal disease, and prostitutes, whose bodies could be apprehended and examined" (82-83).

aggregation is spiritual, Marian cannot be swept under the umbrella of holy or pure women's roles. Spiritual aggregation seems to demand a sort of fusion or flatness of categorization, while poetic thinking enables her to allow for the collections that will reintegrate Marian into society. Her first impulse, though, is that Marian is condemned because of her sexual activity to remain an outlier and "extreme" example unworthy of the spiritual categorization of "wife" and "mother." As readers, we need this gut reaction from Aurora for contrast with the other ways that the poem aggregates. Yet, in trying to categorize Marian, Aurora only succeeds in troubling why one might divide another into specific types at all. Marian's alleged sin leaves her divided as all women are who are not covered by the categorical concentration of "wife" or "mother," categories which imply the wholeness that unmarried and childless women lack. Marian, then, "is no mother but a kidnapper, / And he's a dismal orphan, not a son" (6.637-38). More than mere name-calling, Aurora is grappling with classificatory schemes which social quantification underpins. Marian is not this but that; her son is not this but that. In fact, Marian's sexual assault instantiates the classificatory schism with which Aurora contends. Is she a "thief" or "kidnapper," "woman" or "mother"? Is she "alive" or "dead," sane or "raving"? Barrett Browning deploys the trope of halfness throughout Marian's narrative to reinforce the impossibility of oneness as fusion and to train the reader to think of the plurality of ways a woman's body can be divided. Indeed, Barrett Browning shows that this divisive logic is exponentially much more damaging for women—categorically and physically—than for men.

III. SHREDDING WOMEN

Each divided woman finds her counterpart in torn, incomplete, and aggregated texts. Tearing her poetry links Aurora's inability to produce a 'brain child' to Marian's son, himself the product of

the violence which, in an inversion of Aurora's actions, fragments his mother. Frustrated about Romney's assessment of her poetry, Aurora explains, "I ripped my verses up," but what she describes sounds like a literary abortion: "The heart in them was just an embryo's heart / Which never yet had beat, that it should die; / Just gasps of make-believe galvanic life; / Mere tones, inorganised to any tune" (3.247-50). Unlike Marian, however, whose sexual assault fractures the mother and produces a full son, Aurora's initial literary pregnancy produces nothing but "an embryo's heart / Which never yet had beat," a child destroyed before it can see the light of day. Here, then, Barrett Browning constructs a model of division and generativity, one which suggests that all women navigate an externally-constructed, divided self. Romney's criticism evacuates Aurora's poetic brain child before it can achieve such a "beat," and so "dies" violently in shreds. Paradoxically, what should be a positive act of production (writing), takes on a negative valence and fails to come to "life," while the horrors of rape produce a positive outcome in the form of Marian's son and her experience of motherhood. Though violence is directed at Marian and Aurora, neither woman can control how that violence might break her or whether she will be aggregated into a new whole.

Aurora's tendency to rip paper also evokes Marian's motley childhood peddler's library and Aurora's own hodge-podge education. Lacking access to the full education available to male children, Marian is only exposed to shredded, partial texts. So common is women's faulty education that the peddler has to ask Marian first if she can read:

> And when she answered 'ay,' would toss her down
> Some stray odd volume from his heavy pack,
> A Thomson's Seasons, mulcted of the Spring,
> Or half a play of Shakespeare's, torn across:
> (She had to guess the bottom of a page
> By just the top sometimes,–as difficult,
> As, sitting on the moon, to guess the earth!),
> Or else a sheaf of leaves (for that small Ruth's

> Small gleanings) torn out from the heart of books,
> From Churchyard Elegies and Edens Lost,
> From Burns, and Bunyan, Selkirk, and Tom Jones.
> 'Twas somewhat hard to keep the things distinct,
> And oft the jangling influence jarred the child... (3.977-89).

It was "hard" to keep all of the pieces of texts "distinct." Yet, despite these "small gleanings" and pages "torn across," Marian further expurgates the texts we learn. She "weeded out / Her book-leaves, threw away the leaves that hurt, / (First tore them small, that none should find a word)," thereby acting as her own censor (3.992-94). In addition, we once again see the language of hearts in relation to texts that are partial and divided, while metrically the passage oscillates between anapestic, dactylic, and iambic, not unlike an arrhythmic heart formed of shreds and parts. Much as the outcome of Marian's rape left a fractional woman divided incessantly into halves and halves yet again, Marian's adolescent library begins in parts only to become further partitioned and separated.

Although Aurora has access to whole books, her education is similarly partial: she "learnt a little algebra, a little / of mathematics," but only a little of each (1.404-05).[34] Her aunt's standard Victorian idea of "accomplishments in girls" includes handicrafts, such as "Spun glass, stuffed birds, and modelled flowers in wax" (1.425-26). Aurora likens this girl's version of education to "the water-torture" (1.468). Even when she does learn from her father's books, it is only by following "The path my father's foot / had trod me out" (1.730-31). In other words, she is restricted to reading the materials a man chose and valued, a fact which renders her education

[34] Girl's mathematical education and nineteenth-century women's access to mathematics are areas that need far more critical attention, as Alice Jenkins have observed ("George Eliot, Geometry and Gender," *Literature and Science*, ed. Sharon Ruston and the English Association [Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008], p. 76fn6). However, from a sociological standpoint, one's level of mathematical education is beside the point since all societies develop their own relationships to numbers, counting, and methods of numeracy. As Bloor asserts, "mathematical notions are cultural products" ("Wittgenstein and Mannheim on the Sociology of Mathematics," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 4, no. 2 [Aug. 1973]: 186). Counting is a convention and a use, one which does not require formal training in mathematics to be numerate.

doubly partial for its lack of self-selection. The reference to her "father's foot" also signals Barrett Browning's awareness of how women poets so often were locked into a formal "path" with their poetic forms, one laid down by centuries of prominent male poets. Like Marian's body, Aurora's poetry and identity as a poet are made partial by patriarchy. At the same time, the shredded papers and patchwork of educational materials shape and produce the authorial self.

There are a number of authorial selves in *Aurora Leigh*: Aurora's younger self, the "better self" for which she writes in Book 1, the Aurora of 20 who rejects Romney Leigh's first proposal, the narrator Aurora of 26 or 27 who is becoming a famous poet, and the Aurora of 30 who rescues Marian and eventually accepts her cousin in marriage (1.4). Aurora's writing perpetually divides her and is divided. One of Barrett Browning's projects is to explore each of these prior instantiations of Aurora in order to ultimately present a cohesive individual enriched by aggregation. It is important to bear in mind that while the language of halfness and division describes both Marian and Aurora, Aurora manages that halfness in a different way due to the particular occupation and means of production available to her. Marian achieves a form of mathematical aggregation—again, a single entity comprised of other entities—through the birth of her son. Cohesion is possible for Marian, but it takes a specific form. The two women's divisions and halfness are not precisely the same, yet they are related as models through which Barrett Browning explores the possibilities of wholeness as distinct scenarios of women's lived experience. Indeed, the very fact that their experiences of cohesion and division at once diverge and relate to each other does much to establish the poem's experimentation with metrics of aggregation.

Writing, then, also becomes a self-splintering act which divides the poet ontologically, a fact reflected by the syntax of "I, writing thus," wherein the "I" is spatially divided from the

temporality of “writing thus,” while also joined to it phrasally (1.9). When Aurora launches the third stanza, “I write,” it is at once a statement of defiance, a declaration, a command, an admission, and a factual piece of information identifying the poet with her creative process (1.29). In other words, she writes as much as she is written. Each obtains. Consider the opening passage:

> Of writing many books there is no end;
> And I who have written much in prose and verse
> For others’ uses, will write now for mine,–
> Will write my story for my better self,
> As when you paint your portrait for a friend,
> Who keeps it in a drawer and looks at it
> Long after he has ceased to love you, just
> To hold together what he was and is.
> I, writing thus, am still what men call young;
> I have not so far left the coasts of life
> To travel inland, that I cannot hear
> That murmur of the outer Infinite
> Which unweaned babies smile at in their sleep
> When wondered at for smiling; not so far,
> But still I catch my mother at her post
> Beside the nursery-door… (1.1-16)

There are multiple selves here: Aurora’s “better self” is also the “friend” she speaks of. Although one might read “friend” as a reference to Romney, the multiple Auroras suggest that she is now writing for her own uses, as she states she will, and for the versions of herself in the future that will be an improvement on her current self. Such selves are always divided temporally by the “was and is,” past and present, and the meter reflects this awareness of time. The only line in the introductory passage with 11 beats is the second line: “And I who have written much in prose and verse.” Barrett Browning could have omitted “much,” thereby eliminating the excess of the line both metrically and in its meaning. If the line had read, “And I who have written much in verse,” then it would have been 9 beats, possibly suggesting that verse was not enough to fill a line of iambic pentameter, and also not “much” after all. She could have eliminated the “And,”

since it arrives after a semi-colon and is doubly extraneous both syntactically and metrically. But instead, she retains the excess of the line so that the sense of the line is enacted in the meter itself. The scansion indicates that the extra beat arrives with Barrett Browning's use of past tense, "have written," because "written" breaks the steady iambic with the trochee "written." The addition of the word "much" then returns the trochaic to iambic so that the line resolves itself back into steady iambic at the end. This oscillation between iambic and trochaic imparts additional stress on the act of writing and the temporality of that act as both preceding and about to occur.

The meter suggests the speaker has already, in the past before the book began, written a substantial amount in different genres, but it also accomplishes a stressed beat on "I," thereby establishing a pattern that Barrett Browning pulls throughout the text. That is, from the outset of the text, Barrett Browning valorizes the individual "I," preserving its importance through metrical stress. It is my contention that this is an example of the aggregative political work that poetry can do. When Aurora writes about herself in relation to her mother, her "I" is unstressed. However, when she writes about herself in relation to the act of writing, she stresses the "I," a move which subtly guides the reader to focus on her personhood and her agency. For example, were one to choose to maintain the iambic in the line, "I write. My mother was a Florentine," what would otherwise be a defiant claim, as in "I write in spite of my mother's death" would become instead mere reportage of her heritage and a hobby. If the iambic is maintained with "I write," the tone would express ambivalence rather than crafting a clear connection between the poet and her work. Instead, "I write" asserts her ability, qualifications, and determination to be a poet. The emphatic tone of the spondee "I write" is also evident in other moments in this passage when Aurora mentions writing. When she says, "And I who have written much in prose and

verse" (1.2) or "will write now for mine" (1.3), her pointed metrical choices aggregate "have written" and "will write now." In this way, the metrical and syntactic forms throughout *Aurora Leigh* establish a self characterized by division and wholeness, an aggregative relationship in which self and writing remain distinct but are combined.[35] All syntax aggregates in the way I am suggesting by holding together distinct parts (verbs, nouns, prepositional phrases) within a whole (sentence, clause). However, Barrett Browning employs poetry's ability to combine tortured syntax and meter to place emphasis on that relationship between part and whole, thereby highlighting the quantitative nature of her project.

Syntax often forces the meter to demand a stressed syllable for a word that would typically receive an unstressed syllable; Barrett Browning's use of "I" is the most obvious example. In many places, "I" receives no stress, as in "I have not so far left the coast of life" (1.10), "I cannot hear" (1.11), and "But still I catch my mother at her post" (1.15). Each of these lines is also unbroken iambic pentameter, and each relates to Aurora's relationship with her deceased mother. Later, she says, "I felt a mother-want about the world" (1.40). Aurora suggests her mother's death, described as it is in the stanza that begins with the declaration "I write," began the splintering of her identity. Aurora suspects that having a mother would have "reconciled and fraternised my soul / With the new order," but her mother's death spins her out into the world with "a mother-want" and endless "seeking" (1.38-41). The poet suggests here that to be "reconciled" with one's mother is another way to be made whole. While Aurora cannot be whole without her mother, writing is the supplement that makes her whole. It also enables her to assert her rights as a citizen, to have a voice about the many ways that women are

[35] As E. Warwick Slinn puts it, there is an interplay between subject and language in this moment "through which they constitute each other and without which, conceptually speaking, neither would exist" (*The Discourse of Self in Victorian Poetry* [Charlottesville: U Virginia P, 1991], p. 5).

divided. This claim matters not only for Aurora but for Marian, as her status as a mother enables her traumatic halfness to be reconciled through the birth of her son. The ideal iambic pentameter in which Aurora speaks about her parents is also a reflection of her need for the stability of home. Home was likewise associated with its own "perfect unity" in the Victorian era.[36] Yet, even while the iambic pentameter might be viewed as consistent metrically, and thus a suggestion of stability, it also oscillates between stressed and unstressed, which could be read as a reflection of Aurora's own shifting identity between England and Italy, or her Janus-faced poet's view of past and present.

As Aurora struggles with the connection between her body, which is divided by her Italian mother and her English father, and her role as a poet who represents this "live, throbbing age," the metrical stress on her subjective "I" also oscillates between emphasis and recession, with movement as a third option. One need not be either a poet or a woman, Italian or English. Aggregation as collection rather than fusion allows Aurora to occupy both sides of the split simultaneously, and to see her two national identities not as a division within a singular self, but simply as parts held together. The punctuation of "I, writing thus," for example, forces the "I" to be read as stressed. At the same time, "writing thus" is a nonrestrictive clause that, if removed, would not radically alter the meaning of the phrase "I…am still what men call young." But Barrett Browning includes "writing thus" anyway, which disrupts the iambic at the start of the line. To say she is "writing thus" implies a temporality of composition in which the speaker is actively writing at that moment.[37] We move through time as we read, while we are simultaneously "in time" or in the moment with the speaker.[38] But in addition to signaling the

[36] Griffin, *Politics of Gender*, pp. 37-64.
[37] See Morgan's similar explanation in *Lyrical Means* of how the reader moves through time as Archangeli writes in Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (p. 178).
[38] See also Mullen, "Two Clocks," for a reading of Aurora's and Romney's discrepant temporalities.

multiple temporalities at work in the poem, “I, writing thus” also links the poet and her output, her body and her political role as a poet.

IV. WEDDING MASS

This final section takes my argument about aggregates a step further to move out from the individual to social groups. EBB’s metrical choices in the wedding scene suggest that the masses of the rich are just one more “crammed mass,” who are in reality not all that different from the crowds of the poor. Barrett Browning takes the play on “mass,” as both the rite of marriage and the gathering together of various social groups in this space, to the formal groups in her composition to effectively generate aggregate masses, dynamic collections of mass within mass. The poet’s insertion of the spondee “crammed mass” in the midst of her iambs formally and figuratively becomes another “crammed mass” embedded within so many other masses. Much as one might imagine one of the “Lame, blind, and worse” individuals daring to take a seat on a pew, wedging in between the “noble ladies.. pale for fear” and “red for hate” at the proximity of such a person, so the poet crams the spondee down into the uncomfortable space of the traditional iambs and mashes the sonic elements into an unpleasant mouthful: “that crammed mass.” Furthermore, the line “crushed their delicate rose-lips from the smile” is as crammed metrically as the wedding guests seated next to each other. The final iamb of “delicate” leads into the spondee from “rose-lips” and then into the trochee “from the,” causing four stressed beats arrive in a row: cate rose lips from. The impression of cramped space is further thickened by the consonance of the Ms in both terms, which cause the reader (if reading aloud) to perform the same crushing of “delicate rose-lips” as the “noble ladies.” Each of these forms of and

relationships between masses disclose how the poet was thinking through the complex combinatory logic of social groups.

The epic came to Barrett Browning as the answer to several problems, each of which involved large numbers. First, it was an answer to the problem of how to fit the subject matter of modern life into the conventions of a poem. Second, it was an answer to the problem of how modern life counts people, and specifically women, to control, discipline, and constrain them. Herbert Tucker suggests that the "problem" of the epic for Victorians had to do with its association with national master narratives. But it seems that the epic was also a problem for the Victorians because it at once held out the promise of traditional wholeness that had fled the scene in the modern era. Barrett Browning capitalizes on this tension to illustrate how a modern epic can address the related problem of quantities of people in the world.

At bottom, the project and the problem of the epic is one of numbers. To talk about the relationship of nation to individual hero, whole to the part, large to small, is to think in terms of quantity and scale. Some might dispute this suggestion as reductive, but I contend that Elizabeth Barrett Browning understood the epic's simultaneous totality and heterogeneity as generic elements capable of aligning the "numbers" and "measures" of poetry with the ways that people in the nineteenth century were increasingly numbered and measured as a social body. Traditional epic characteristics were often forms of quantification, such as catalogues, blank verse, and the use of numbered books. Such elements enabled works of great size that also traded in the specificity of detail which allowed a whole world to emerge. Authors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries held a stable theory of epic centered on the "principle of unity of design."[39] With the transition to the nineteenth century, however, retention of unity shifted from "internal

[39] Tucker, "Epic," *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, eds. Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman, and Antony Harrison (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 26.

structure" of the epic to the "ambient culture for and about which epic spoke."[40] In other words, the epic as a unity became less interesting than an epic's representation of its culture.[41] Unity remained an emphasis, though the epic became culturally specific rather than universalizing. Put differently, it offered unities at a local scale, which retained the paradox of part to whole in the genre but also reinforced the epic's nationalist project. Because each culture could have its own epic, in a sense the epic became more rigidly divided. On the other hand, since all cultures had epics, "the new ideal furnished the ground of an enlarged understanding that complex wholeness as such was a property shared by all cultures, no matter how distant in time and space."[42] I argue that Barrett Browning took up the epic's "complex wholeness," which can be understood as a mathematical, collective aggregation, and she did so to develop a politically fecund way of thinking about how social unities or totalities can involve forms of particularity, heterogeneity, and diversity.

In reality, the epic had always involved complex wholeness, as it was from the outset a hybrid genre. The epic can be broken into "tragedy, comedy, lyric, dirge, idyll, all blended in its great furnace into one glorious metal, and one colossal group."[43] Tucker notes that this is a group "into which group he goes on to recruit 'romance' and 'tale' into the bargain."[44] One of the primary means of epic aggrandizement was its "genre-absorption," and poets' awareness that "it takes all kinds to make an epic."[45] In other words, the modern epic itself is an aggregation, which partly accounts for a critical difficulty with how to categorize *Aurora Leigh*. Natasha Moore attempts a list of all of the genres associated with *Aurora Leigh*: "autobiography,

[40] Tucker, "Epic," 26.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Tucker, "Epic," 27.
[43] Andrew Lang, *Homer and the Epic* (London: Longmans, 1893), p. 7; also, qtd. in Tucker, *Epic: Britain's Heroic Muse, 1790-1910* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), p. 17fn25.
[44] Tucker, "Epic," 17fn25.
[45] Tucker, "Epic," 17.

Kunstlerroman, novel, verse-novel, sage discourse, philosophical meditation, political treatise, *Ars Poetica*, prophecy, epic, satire, and slum naturalism."[46] But I would like to suggest that since the epic is itself capacious enough to include so many other genres and subgenres, because the epic is able to depict totality, it can also encompass all of these other genres that have been associated with *Aurora Leigh*. The epic is at once a form with problem of wholeness and nationalism, and it enables the aggregation that Barrett Browning deployed because it is constructed to large swaths of experience. She takes advantage of this paradox.

Aggregation has a political valence as it relates to democracy, one which is useful for understanding how complexity works in *Aurora Leigh*. For Barrett Browning, politics involves claiming for oneself a role as both an individual and a citizen, of aggregating the two, rather than allowing the division to stand uncontested. Aurora's assertion that "Half-poets even, are still whole democrats" marks Barrett Browning's engagement with the problem of democratic political division that splits the individual and the citizen in two. How one reconciles the division, or "splitting in two," between the individual and the citizen constitutes the democratic process, as Jacques Rancière has observed.[47] In his discussion of women's rights, Rancière notes how politics involves the exercise of citizen's rights by those that are refused such rights under the law. The ways that women were politically divided departed from those of men, whose division was that of individual and citizen; women, instead, lacked the rights of citizens, being disenfranchised, but they were also divided by the fact of their difference as women. According to Rancière, politics involve the act of claiming what one has not, of aggregating the "have not" with the "have," a form of political action which Barrett Browning puts in play.[48] Moreover, politics involves the ability to move people to action on issues that require their

[46] Moore, "Epic and Novel," 401.
[47] Rancière, *The Hatred of Democracy*, trans. Steve Corcoran (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 62.

consent. Therefore, part of *Aurora Leigh*'s political work is instigation to take social action that includes rather than excludes members of diverse social groups. In short, Barrett Browning was constructing a political model of inclusion by innovating with the epic's traditional form. In the wedding scene, that model of inclusion extends not only to the bride but to the disparate social classes flooding together to unite two people from two socioeconomic strata.

The association of women with the fragmentary in the nineteenth century arose, in part, from an anxiety about the collapse of social hierarchies, or "a fear that civilization might collapse into fragments" in the wake of the French Revolution, as Elsie Michie has explained.[49] Though the fragmentary nature of *Aurora Leigh* has been well-explored, my investigation of the diverse formal and thematic divisions demonstrates that cohesion of the poetic and politically impactful is Barrett Browning's goal, not fragmentation. The only way that we can critically reconcile her impulse for wholeness with the political value of separation is to understand aggregation as I have suggested, as collections rather than fusions. Instead, as a woman writer committed to reform, and so twice barred from the public sphere, Barrett Browning had to construct a model of inclusion that integrated women's fractured social status into the lineage of the epic.

While a woman is multiple, various, and an individual, a married woman can be covered by a blanket term that elides individual difference under the category of "wife." As Aurora says when Romney proposes to her, "It's always so. /Anything does for a wife" (2.366-67). In other words, it does not matter whether a woman fits a man's categories for her because marriage will recategorize her as "wife." Yet, Barrett Browning makes clear with her fractional descriptions of

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[48] Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, 62.
[49] Elsie Michie, *Outside the Pale*, 142. Michie notes that "Late nineteenth-century anxieties about anarchy could be and were translated in anxieties about literary style" (143).

Aurora as “Witch, scholar, poet, dream, and the rest” and her mother as “Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and sprite” that a woman can never a single type (2.86; 1.154). And Romney’s effort to bring Marian into a single category of wife or aristocrat instead becomes the vehicle for further fracturing, as I have shown. When Marian justifies her decision to marry Romney to Aurora, she says, “I know myself for what I am, / Much fitter for his handmaid than his wife, / I’ll prove the handmaid and the wife at once” (4.226-28). Though Marian will become “wife,” doing away with her individual parts as a woman, no longer the “Ghost, fiend, and angel” of a woman like Aurora or her mother, but only the wife, she will retain the mark of poor social class that enables her to subjugate herself to Romney as his “handmaid,” beneath him physically, socially, and psychologically. The handmaid and wife together still figure Marian in halves.

Added to this, Romney’s marriage to Marian would never be that of one man and one woman, but instead would be the marriage of one group to another group. Marian would, in effect, be assimilated into the aristocratic social class by being divided from her lower-class origins, since here her difference would be absorbed by the aristocratic social group. She is not being divided out of the lower class as a way to emphasize her as a “single soul” but instead is being pushed out of one aggregation into another. As Romney attempts to set Aurora straight about his motivation for marrying Marian, he exclaims, “I take my wife / Directly from the people” (4.368-69). In other words, he will “take” Marian “from the people” and place her with a new people. She cannot escape aggregation by Romney’s methods or be valued as a “single soul,” as he calls her. Romney “thought to take the world on [his] back” by marrying Marian but fails to realize that Marian is “a single soul” and not “the world” (4.1076-80). He is in effect attempting to marry an entire social class and not an individual woman.

To Romney's mind, the biblical story of creation reinforces a social paradigm in which all people can be lumped together into a single mass. When he proposes to Marian, he says, "Dear Marian, of one class God made us all," a reference to Genesis 2:7 in which formed the human race from dust (4.110). He claims that sin ultimately "cleft the world in twain / 'Twixt class and class," and so marrying Marian becomes an act of piety as much as it is a self-sacrifice to reunite what was originally "one class." Since sin has separated their social classes, the "wrong / On both sides," Romney thinks their marriage will heal this division by returning them to "one class" made by God. He suggests that their marriage will create parity between them "each to each" and that this new equivalence will help right the "wrong / On both sides." But Romney fails to see what Teresa de Laurentis calls "the double status of woman as bearer of economic, positive value, and woman as bearer of semiotic, negative value, of difference."[50] Romney is not marrying Marian to make a smart economic match, so she has no "economic, positive value." And Marian's "want" or lack is not only financial; as a woman, she lacks citizenship. Romney, by contrast, is only divided as an individual and a citizen. Therefore, disparities between them, the "wrongs on both sides," have to do with more than money, and predestine his project to failure. His dream of reuniting "class and class" fails to account for the many ways that the poor, and poor women especially, are divided from men in his social tier. There can never be parity between Marian and Romney "each to each" because they will forever be separated by too many forms of social division.

The wedding scene's meter further represents the collision of social groups as they are forced together, but within that massing is also a desire for separation that emerges paradoxically as an anxiety about social disruption. In other words, the social classes want to remain separate because their coming together risks the type of fragmentation that results in

[50] Teresa de Laurentis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984), p. 19.

chaos. There are different types of fragmentation in play for the two social groups in the church: one acceptable and the other dangerous. Scansion of the wedding scene reveals how the traditional, constrained form of iambic pentameter—the lines that reflect the rich, "St. James in cloth of gold"—are gradually overrun by the lines representing the bodies of the poor, "Half St. Giles in frieze" (4.538-39). The prosodic elements perform the social aggregation as the two groups come together in the church. Counting the lines of ideal iambic pentameter in this scene and comparing them to other metrical options throughout the book reveals that the traditional lines of iambic pentameter are less than half of the total. Of the 63 lines in the opening of the wedding scene, only 26 are ideal iambic pentameter. That amounts to roughly 40% of the lines being reserved for traditional, perfect form. By lines 608-54, when the rich begin their discussion of the poor in earnest, the numbers have dropped to 28%, as only 13 of these 46 lines are ideal iambic pentameter. But by lines 658-78, as the rich discuss the "dismembering of society," only four of twenty lines in the entire passage is ideal iambic pentameter, which is 20%. What's more, the iambic lines relate to Romney Leigh's lineage, as the rich observe that he is "His father's uncle's cousin's second son," or to their judgment on his behavior, calling him "stark," as in raving mad, and the wedding of rich with poor "a hideous sight, a most indecent sight." The application of iambic pentameter in these lines implies the metrical form remains appropriate for established tradition, for representing both Romney's genealogy and the poetic genealogy with which the poet engages, as well as for the attitudes of those traditions.

In a sense, reading for aggregative poetics demands critical attention to distant, surface, and close reading, and my reading of the lines of ideal iambic pentameter above is intended to model that scalar method. By stepping my reading at once down to the scale of metrical feet and up to the scale of entire metrical lines, I illustrate the very real ways that the poem was modeling

social confluence, combination, and collection. Although the passage does not offer a substantial decline in traditional form, it is a decline nevertheless, and a measurable one—a 20% bleeding off of traditional forms since the poor streamed into the church and infected it with the "humours of the peccant social wound." EBB's metrical choices imply that the rich can neither avoid increasing interaction with other social classes, nor can they overlook that socialization necessitates such mixing. In order to depict a moment of social aggregation in which many voices come together and overlap, the meter is forced to depart from a regular rhythm. The rich, the meter suggests, will have to mix with the poor, the old with the new; this is a truth of modernity, one which Barrett Browning's readers and the wedding attendants alike must learn to accept.

The aristocrats present for the wedding, nevertheless, express great distress at being forced into the same space as the poor, revealing social and political concerns about what a marriage between the rich and the poor might mean. Consider the description of the poor entering the church:

> …..What an ugly crest
> Of faces, rose upon you everywhere,
> From that crammed mass! you did not usually
> See faces like them in the open day
> They hide in cellars, not to make you mad
> As Romney Leigh is.–Faces?–O my God,
> We call those, faces? (4.569-575)

The poor are not individuals but faces in a "crammed mass," an aggregation too closely crowded together. "[A]ll the aisles" of the church are "alive and black with heads," we are told. Similarly, Lord Howe responds that the "bride has lost her head" when asked why the wedding is taking so long to begin. To lose one's head, as Lord Howe claims Marian has, is at once to lack identity (for being faceless) and to be a subject of social judgment, to lose face, as one's reputation,

honor, or good name. Certainly, he means this in the idiomatic sense that Marian is behaving irrationally, much as Romney has gone "mad" and "turned quite lunatic" in choosing to marry her. But the phrasing also links Marian with the other poor faces and heads in the church. She is both part of the aggregation of the poor and internally partial or divided—a part of a body. Later when Aurora encounters Marian in France, the poor woman is likewise described as only a face in a crowd. Aurora, much like the rich in the church, repeats "What face is that? /...What face is that? What a face, what a look, what a likeness!" (6.231-32). Marian, like the poor in church, is synecdochically reduced to only her face, which rises up from a mass of other faces and heads, as though Aurora is seeing the face of a dead woman in a pond: "When something floats up suddenly, out there, Turns over . . a dead face, known once alive" (6.238-39). Faces and disconnected heads each mark the simultaneous specificity of a single poor individual and the massing that the categorization of "the poor" accomplishes.

At the same time, I would like to suggest there is also a revolutionary association between the heads, faces, or headlessness in play, one aligned with Barrett Browning's commentary on inequality and aggregation of the poor. For instance, the aristocrats present compare the scene in the church explicitly with pre-revolutionary France:

'By heaven, sir, when poor Damiens' trunk and limbs
Were torn by horses, women of the court
Stood by and stared, exactly as to-day
On this dismembering of society,
With pretty troubled faces.' (4.674-78)

Barrett Browning's reference to Damiens, a failed assassin condemned to die by being drawn and quartered (a criminal sentence also called "disruption") for a plot to kill King Louis XV of France in 1757, is a metaphor for the social body in modernity as that which has to be disrupted in order to achieve a new form of integrity. The speakers compare this revolutionary disruption

to the "dismembering of society" that Romney's marriage to Marian constitutes. Although dismemberment is literally the act of dividing limbs from body, it is figuratively the division of pieces or parts from a whole; in this instance, it specifically entails dividing Marian and Romney from their respective social groups. However, in that process, each would become aggregated into a new social body so that as their faces or limbs are dismembered from the social body, they become spliced onto a new form. Much as a body is a complex system of parts that can be separated from the whole, Barrett Browning's innovative epic acknowledges that democracy is a political system demanding both diversity and wholeness, and sometimes disruption in order to accomplish new forms of wholeness. The epic itself, like the democratic social body, also aspires to wholeness, but Barrett Browning here recognizes all of these—body, democracy, epic—as a "complex wholeness" demanding aggregation to preserve individuality within totality. Wholeness can only follow after disruption.

Barrett Browning disaggregates bodies in order to image large-scale social groups. Damiens's "trunk and limbs" evoke Romney's earlier claims that Aurora overlooks the "formless, nameless trunk of every man," another image of social disruption (2.368). The wedding attendants likewise use Damiens's particular case as a metaphor for their collective experience. But Barrett Browning also inverts the assignment of "faces" and "heads" only to the poor, for in this metaphor the rich are akin to the "women of the court" who "stood by and stared," witnessing the event as Damiens was dismembered. The "pretty troubled faces" become the faces of the "noble women" in church, effectively troubling their own "disruption" over the unwashed masses sharing the same holy space. Furthermore, there is an awareness in the text that the wealthy were the ones more often losing their heads in the French Revolution. The meter reveals this parity because faces takes the same trochaic meter regardless of which faces

are being described. Consequently, the church is "alive and black with heads" marks the dangers, violence, and anxieties of the mob, reflects both Victorian anxieties about mobs stemming from the French Revolution, and flips the scrip on the ways that heads and bodies are parceled out and quantified through the verse novel.

The wedding scene is not the only time in *Aurora Leigh* when Barrett Browning suggests the disruption of the social body with the image of decapitated heads. The poet repeatedly offers images of heads perhaps not separated from the body but damaged in a variety of ways. Once a reader is attentive to Barrett Browning's interest in acephaly and head injuries, the trope appears everywhere in *Aurora Leigh*. For example, she mentions St. Peter, who was allegedly "crucified head downward," and Greek tragedian Aeschylus who is said to have died when an eagle dropped a turtle on his "bald head." In Book 2 during his first proposal to Aurora, Romney references the "Judgement-Angel" of Revelations 20:4, before whom the souls of martyrs beheaded for Christ would appear. Immediately prior to this, when Romney proposes to Aurora the first time, he says, "You look down coldly on the arena-heaps / Of headless bodies, shapeless, indistinct!" (2.380-81). He means that Aurora is like an empress in Rome watching gladiators from above in her high position as a poet removed from "such a heap of generalised distress." His reference to disconnected heads, like those of the congregation on his wedding day, seems to do very different work, however. Romney claims he wants to take Aurora where she can

….touch
These victims, one by one! till, one by one,
The formless, nameless trunk of every man
Shall seem to wear a head with hair you know,
And every woman catch your mother's face
To melt you into passion. (2.386-91)

Though he wants her to identify with the poor "one by one," he also contradicts himself with his claim that she will learn to splice poor bodies onto the heads of her parents. Romney at once hopes she will come to recognize and pity the individual, and he wants her to abstract from individual "headless bodies" to those she knows and loves. He is asking Aurora to abstract from one headless victim, headless and so lacking identity, to a specific case, example, or particular—her mother. He wants her to transport her sympathy for the poor to a more recognizable form closer to home. Even so, this is still not generalizing in the way he understands. To say, "This poor person could be anyone" is not at all the same as saying that an unidentifiable poor body is worthy of sympathy because it could be her mother.

In this way, references to the faces in the crowd can be read as a continuation of Romney's claims regarding generalization. Whether the poor are represented by "[t]he formless, nameless trunk of every man" or "faces," those in higher social classes seem to consistently dissect them into such parts, while also viewing them as a "crammed mass." Again, we have a tension between the plurality of parts and the mass of a whole supporting my claim that Barrett Browning is trying to work with aggregation rather than fusion. At the same time, Barrett Browning suggests that the rich conceptualize the poor in a faulty manner on a hyperbolic scale: the poor are either a "crammed mass" or they are Romney's specific individual example. It seems that whenever a combination is in doubt, whether in a love match, social pairing, or the poet's soul from her body, the form of the poem instead reassures us by metrically aggregating options. One does not have to decide, the meter implies; this is not a situation of either/or but of both/and.

I have been arguing that Barrett Browning's modern epic depicts social classes as aggregated to establish how what is politically fractured or incomplete can become whole,

gaining political power from the process. Barrett Browning indicates clearly that an aristocratic version of equality and purity is more "damnable" than the "contract…twixt the extremes" against which they rail in the wedding scene. Recall that Barrett Browning's politics involve claiming a role as both an individual and a citizen, of aggregating the two, rather than allowing the division to stand uncontested. Though the 1832 Reform Act extended the franchise to those men who did not own landed property, it was not until the Second Reform Act of 1867, almost a decade after the publication of *Aurora Leigh*, that the franchise was extended to include most urban working men, and women did not get the vote until 1928, more than 70 years later. Barrett Browning constructs a model in *Aurora Leigh*'s wedding scene of this fragmentary body politic with its uneven citizenry in which some had rights that others did not, some wanted to have equality, and others wanted to maintain separation. She both thematizes and formalizes such aggregations in order to suggest that the sort of "complex wholeness" modeled by her innovative modern epic is required to address the political realities of a modern society.

Aurora Leigh also engages readers in the complex logic of social counting as it pertains to women's bodies and modern democratic society. Barrett Browning's verse novel implicitly links halfness to political divisions of citizens and individuals to suggest that those who lack a voice in a democratic society require a generative supplement to be brought into the political fold. For women, writing and reproduction are supplements that redeem a woman's halfness and make her whole politically and socially. Writing as a supplement for the absence of speech also performs political work as it comes to represent an absent speaker or one whose voice might not otherwise be heard. Barrett Browning develops both senses of a supplement in order to make a case for women's and poetry's political action, while also encouraging her reader to think about how society divides itself and what a reconciliation of such divisions might accomplish. Reading

Aurora Leigh in conversation with the discourse surrounding social counting in the nineteenth century clarifies long-running critical discussions of the poem's hybridity, formal combinations, and apparent discrepancies as productive aggregates, while also reorienting our attention to nineteenth-century poetic quantification as a critical source of social counting and potential statistical commentary.

CHAPTER TWO

"Like two blossoms on one stem": Christina Rossetti's Forms of Twoness

A discussion of social counting in Christina Rossetti's work might begin with her crowns of sonnets, *Monna Innominata* and *Later Life*. Both works are clearly invested in formal counting. Each sequence bases its number of sonnets on the number of sonnet lines. *Later Life* is even subtitled *A Double Sonnet of Sonnets*, multiplying the 14 sonnet lines by two to attain 28 sonnets. Beyond their obvious formal mathematics, however, Rossetti's sonnet sequences involve a speaker coming to terms with the impossibility of two adding up to one in marriage, either through the decision to remain single, as Rossetti herself did, or through the alternative of a relationship with one's god. Sonnet XVI from *Later Life* articulates Rossetti's clearest statement on the relationship between ones and twos. In it, she also works through the many ways that social counting constrained women's lives:

Our teachers teach that one and one make two:
    Later, Love rules that one and one make one:
    Abstruse the problems! neither need we shun,
But skillfully to each should yield its due.
The narrower total seems to suit the few,
    The wider total suits the common run;
    Each obvious in its sphere like moon or sun;
Both provable by me, and both by you. (lines 1-8)

The octave offers two equations—the first mathematical, the second marital—which efficiently, and appropriately in two short lines, state the paradoxical relationship between these two modes of counting. Rossetti's solution to this problem in the octave is that "neither need we shun": both models of counting can apply. Like the "moon or sun," each form of counting makes sense in its context, so Rossetti asserts a formalist philosophy of counting here. Numbers are not immutable, ideal forms, but instead follow multiple logics according to context and framework. Rossetti's

use of the verb “suit” implies that numbers are understood relative to individual attribution of meaning. Whether a person wants to understand one and one as two, or as one, is a social convention.

In these ways, Rossetti draws attention to the learned, cultural production of counting. She makes it clear that learning numbers not only comes from teachers but later on from “Love,” a term in *Later Life* which shifts from a pseudonym for God to a word representing marriage. Since marriage was at the time, and for many remains so today, largely a spiritual commitment between two people, Rossetti’s use of “Love” in this instance can be read with both valences. God and religious teachers would have us believe that “one and one make one,” as in the husband and wife becoming “one flesh,” while the social and legal conventions governing marriage teach us that the love between two people cause “one and one to make one” under the laws of coverture. In either case, the social counting at work contravenes the model that we are taught in school, that one and one make two. Therefore, counting emerges as a product of convention and codification. Rossetti draws attention to the strangeness of quantification in the notion that a man and woman become “one flesh.”

Read another way, what Rossetti supplies in the first octave of this sonnet follows the pattern of a mathematical proof, establishing a problem and then resolving into something “provable.” She asks us to begin with two apparently irreconcilable premises (“Our teachers teach that one and one make two” and “Later, Love rules that one and one make one”). There is nothing easy about this (“Abstruse the problems!”) but the way forward, the poet suggests, is to hold both together: “neither need we shun, /But skillfully to each should yield its due.” The solution will divide between two audiences, distinguished by their own quantities: “the few” and “the common run.” These will remain in separate spheres, but either can prove both premises.

This type of proof generally works best with a string of equalities like those that Rossetti supplies: one or the other, the narrower total and the wider total. It is a method of establishing equivalence of quantities and exploring the implications. The solution she seems to arrive at is that neither one nor the other premise is exclusively correct, but that both are "provable" by either the speaker or the reader, depending on context and social convention.

To arrive at this solution, this sonnet has been inverted from the standard sonnet structure we might expect, in which the octave introduces a problem and then a solution is proffered after the volta, or turn. Rossetti instead troubles the "proof" of the octave. She writes:

Befogged and witless, in a wordy maze
A groping stroll perhaps may do us good;
If cloyed we are with much we have understood,
If tired of half our dusty world and ways,
If sick of fasting, and if sick of food;—
And how about these long still-lengthening days? (lines 9-14)

While the first half of the poem seems clear, this sestet becomes far more opaque. What initially announced itself as a "provable" problem with an "obvious" answer, I would argue, becomes here an epistemological crisis. Though both ways of counting "one and one" are "provable," they leave us "Befogged and witness, in a wordy maze," not more knowledgeable or more certain, but less so. The poet suggests that it might "do us good" to take a "groping stroll" through our thinking about such counting. She then poses another question characterized by three optative "if" clauses. The first condition is that the "much we have understood," that there are two ways of counting "one and one," has "cloyed" us. That is to say, we have surfeited or had enough of social conventions that expect us to count "one and one" in contradictory ways. To have one's understanding "cloyed" in this case is to be fed up with being told that the world has to count in multiple, contradictory ways, or even to have knowledge blocked, clogged, or impeded (to return

to a fundamental definition of “cloy”). So the first “if” suggests that the many ways of counting “one and one” forestall knowledge rather than proving anything. The second condition is that we are “tired of half our dusty world and ways.” Like Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Augusta Webster, Rossetti deploys the language of halfness here. Staying with the logic of impossible twos, our “world” and “ways” of knowing can at once cause us to become fed up, “cloyed,” and also only “half” satisfied with an answer.

These two premises result in the third condition, which is that we can be both “sick of fasting” for knowledge, and understanding of how to count ,and “sick of food” of that knowledge which tries to enforce one way of social counting over another. Unlike the “proof” in the octave, the sestet does not try to prove anything. Instead it concludes with another question, which is how will we reconcile ourselves to the remainder of a life in which we can neither answer the question of how “one and one” counts in this “dusty world,” nor can we accept the forms of counting that that world has already offered? If the poet had been invested in proving a point, she might have followed the sonnet’s standard pattern of establishing an issue or problem and then resolving it after the volta. Instead, asking the question emerges as the point. The goal is not to resolve quantities but to challenge dominant models of “one and one” and reveal them as befuddling and strange.

Therefore, a fundamental question about how numbers allow us to apprehend the link between poetic form and social formations subtends all of the questions that this sonnet raises. In fact, this poetic “proof” might be read as the poet’s hard won “solution” to many of the questions about union and division, about how ones become two, that she raises in her earlier work, *Goblin Market*. Rossetti’s act of asking or positing the two premises in her sonnet, rather than leading us to a positivist solution “provable” to all concerned, illustrates how the condition of having two

questions, or two of anything, leads to a logic of endless division—from two, to one, to a half, and so on. Although two is a single number, it has special qualities that enable it to have relationships to other numbers that ramify infinitely. Two can double or halve: it can divide our knowledge or it can multiply what we think we know indefinitely, like the "long still-lengthening days" that conclude Rossetti's sonnet. The logic of two is at once fractional and exponential. This chapter will argue that Rossetti's models of twoness in *Goblin Market* explore the difficulties and value of creating communities and intimacy for women. Women are supposed to be subsumed into masculine others in marriage, but is each "one" a single unit before marriage? Are women united with or divided from one another? Is the proper way of being one or two or many?

Twoness takes many forms in Rossetti's work, from the pairs necessary to create rhyme to the plurality emerging from repetition. Here I will demonstrate how Rossetti's poetic methods of counting become most clear in the innate repetitions of rhyme and tropes, specifically similes and metaphors. Indeed, critics have substantiated Rossetti's repetition as critically important to our understanding of her poetry. Rossetti's use of repetition has been associated with "sameness and difference," "a system of call and response," and a mode through which to "enact the love formally that can only be desired semantically."[1] There is a clear critical tendency to assign a dialectic relationship as a solution to poetic events in Rossetti's poems, and we see that again with some of these suggestions about repetition.[2] In her discussion of repetition in Rossetti's

[1] Emily Harrington. *Second Person Singular: Late Victorian Women Poets and the Bonds of Verse* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2014), p. 15.

[2] For more on Rossetti's dialectic of economic exchange, see Victor Roman Mendoza, "'Come Buy': The Crossing of Sexual and Consumer Desire in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*," *ELH* 73.4 (Winter 2006): 913-47 (p. 913). Helena Michie suggests that Lizzie represents the discourse of sameness with her association of repetition of words, images and phrases, while Laura represents a discourse of differences, and specifically sexual difference structured as the poem's series of lists (*Sororophobia: Differences Among Women in Literature and Culture* [New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992], p. 33). For other arguments focuses explicitly on Rossetti's repetition, see Suzy Waldman, "'O Wanton Eyes Run Over: Repetition and Fantasy in Christina Rossetti," *Victorian Poetry* 38.4

poem "Echo," for example, Emily Harrington writes, "The repetition of the poem creates a sonorous responsiveness within the poem that its scenario, however ambiguous, can never achieve."[3] In other words, the repetition responds within the space of the poem for a speaker who is unable to emotionally or physically respond to a lover in reality. I am not disagreeing that Rossetti's work relies on repetition, nor am I suggesting that these prior readings are inaccurate. Rather, I am arguing that the separation of two things, which Rossetti's poems "can never achieve," is actually the point. The forms of her poetry use twoness as a model to ask questions about division and subsumption, but answering those questions is not the immediate work of the poems. Resisting a binary or dialectic, the poem employs repetition as an arithmetical operation that enables her to count differently through many levels of figuration and form.

Rather than narrowly understanding her dialectical tendency as distance that conditions intimacy, or as restraint and connection, Rossetti's project expresses her realization that subsumption of any ones into one, or of "one and one" into a fusion, is unsatisfying. While Barrett Browning reconciles the halfness of characters in *Aurora Leigh* in an attempt to think new forms of wholeness as poetic aggregates, Rossetti does not try to resolve the contradictions of social counting. Instead, she asks us to reconsider poetry's formal and epistemological relationship to methods of counting, thereby illustrating that poetry is capable of thinking through the problematic nature of social counting within its structures. My method in what follows necessarily builds upon and disengages from the well-established critical lines focusing on Rossetti's dialectical tendency. Instead, I read her poetry as a series of experiments in division

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(Winter 2000): 533-53; Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 352; Mary Arseneau, *Recovering Christina Rossetti: Female Community and Incarnational Poetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 131, 135; Harrington, *Second Person Singular*, pp. 15, 25, 31-32; Elizabeth Ludlow, *Christina Rossetti and the Bible: Waiting with the Saints* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 161; Peter McDonald, *Sound Intentions: The Workings of Rhyme in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), pp. 45, 218-220; and Angela Leighton's suggestion that we recognize the way that repetition in Rossetti's work "empties rather than fills, baffles rather than informs" ("On 'The Hearing Ear,'" p. 510).

and twoness through which Rossetti attempts to conceptualize new forms of social belonging and to disclose the social implications of what she viewed as flawed numerical rhetoric.

In its quantitative register, Rossetti's interest in how "one and one" become ones, two, or twos enacts the "struggle" that Isobel Armstrong identifies as "structurally necessary" to a "twofold reading" of the Victorian "double poem."[4] Certainly Armstrong's language of twoness and doubling is itself appealing here, but more than this obvious connection, her understanding of how Victorian poetry maintained struggle as an "organising principle" through which a poet might engage in a "systematic exploration of ambiguity" is directly relevant here.[5] Attention to Rossetti's interest in twos, and the number two's special properties of division and combination, reveals the many ways that her poetry was struggling with the ambiguity inherent in social forms of counting. In what follows, I read *Goblin Market*'s lists, tropes, and rhymes as forms of twoness through which Rossetti explored her interest in and confusion about different scales and levels of combination. Ultimately, none of these forms is satisfying, and that is itself an acceptable outcome for the poet. Raising the question of twoness becomes her project rather than introducing an arbitrary or expected "happy ending."

I. GOBLIN MARKET'S TWOS

Goblin Market is another poem, like Sonnet XVI from *Later Life* in which we can see Rossetti puzzling through the complexity of twoness. How does one discern between the sisters, these "ones" that are "Like two pigeons in one nest"? Are they "two pigeons" or "ones" who later produce more "little ones"? Rossetti's most famous poem counts in ways that no scholar has yet addressed. Certainly, many have given attention to economic valences of the poem due to its

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[3] Harrington, *Second Person Singular*, 31.
[4] Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, 16.

titular announcement of being about a "market," which begs for readings of the monetary and financial.[6] In this section, though, I will consider several of the ways that Rossetti uses the forms of her poem to explore problems of social counting, or ways of thinking how bodies are brought together, or forced apart, intimately, politically, or by systems of belief. Throughout this poem, the poet sets up experiments in the problem of being two, a form uniquely suited to capture aggregation as a mathematical collection rather than aggregation as a social fusion.

Aggregates populate the poem. For instance, there are pair of girls (a twosome) and a gaggle of goblins, then there's the piling or heaping of the fruit, and Laura becomes a single girl at the end in the sense that she alone is described in the process of becoming a multiple again through children, the "little ones."[7] The children are still "little ones," single but also "bound up" in Laura's and Lizzie's lives, much as Laura and Lizzie were combined and divisible only by each other. From a mathematical perspective, the children as "little ones" could divide into the twoness of Laura and Lizzie.

The sisters' likeness suggests that they are two individuals doubled, much like single dollar bills in a wallet are called "ones" because they seem fungible. Lizzie and Laura are described throughout Rossetti's poem like identical twins sharing a womb, "Golden head by golden head, / Like two pigeons in one nest"; yet, they are also, at least initially, inseparable,

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[5] Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, 16.

[6] For readings of various types of economy in *Goblin Market*, see especially Richard Menke, "The Political Economy of Fruit: *Goblin Market*," *The Culture of Christina Rossetti: Female Poetics and Victorian Contexts*, eds. Mary Arseneau, Antony Harrison, and Lorraine Kooistra (Athens: Ohio UP, 1999), 104-36; Albert Pionke, "The Spiritual Economy of 'Goblin Market,'" *SEL* 52.4 (Autumn 2012): 897-915; Victor Roman Mendoza, "'Come Buy': The Crossing of Sexual and Consumer Desire in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*," *ELH* 73.4 (Winter 2006): 913-47; and Jill Rappoport, "The Price of Redemption in 'Goblin Market,'" *SEL* 50.4 (Autumn 2010): 853-75.

[7] Laura's language of being in "her early prime" is also tempting as potential numerical language; however, without historical evidence that Rossetti had knowledge of prime number theory such a reading would be only circumstantial. In the poem's closing moments, Laura tells the children of "her early prime," which evokes the idiomatic "prime of life" but also could refer to prime numbers. Two is a prime number, and Laura's "early prime" can refer both to her prime of life and to her twoness with Lizzie, were Rossetti familiar with primes.

more like conjoined twins, "Like two blossoms on one stem" (lines 184-85, 188). Consequently, they are both divisible and indivisible from the outset. Equivalence need not require more than correspondence and is instead to be "virtually identical."[8] It is a condition in which they can be nearly duplicated, doubled but divided. When Laura references "her early prime," then, it is as a pattern, or prefigurement, of both the children as "little ones" and a reference to a time when she and Lizzie were apparently equivalent and identified by their twoness.

The singular nature of the sisters at the poem's conclusion as "ones" marks their ultimate ability to remain divisible as sisters, even once they become "wives / With children of their own": they are one in marriage and ones as corresponding individuals. We do not need to assume that Laura and Lizzie are "wives" with male spouses, since scholars accept that there were many more forms of marriage in the Victorian era than male-female marriage.[9] The only "men" mentioned in the poem are, in fact, the goblins: "The wicked, quaint, fruit-merchant men" (line 553). While the end of the poem does tell us that "Afterwards…both were wives," no husbands ever make an appearance. The women do not need to be joined to each other legally or sexually in order to succeed socially or politically by helping one another. They can remain intimately associated, a form of community, while retaining their separate nature as "ones." The lack of male partners also retains the pairing of two groups: of the sisters and their children instead of the sisters, their spouses, and their children. Their lives are ultimately "bound up in tender lives," bound to each other and their children (547). It is as though a different form of twoness, of "one and one" becoming two in heteronormative marriage, has been implicitly rejected to forestall interference in the relationship between these two sisters, who are bound up in each other's lives and those of their "little ones."

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[8] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Equivalent," B1a.
[9] Marcus, *Between Women*, esp. 76, 193-94, 196-212.

Laura and Lizzie's relationship embraces a type of pairing, one that seems to borrow from the potential of marriage, only to undercut the social counting that joins one man with one woman into a new unity. Rossetti is instead interested in offering other forms of pairing, as she later suggests in Sonnet XVI. Rossetti's repetition of "one"s in *Goblin Market* itself becomes a process of combination and division, wherein one can be ones (aggregated), two (separated or together), or one can be one (indivisible, fused). Helena Michie suggests that we might read the repeated "one"s in the poem's conclusion as the unity of sexual experience, as two bodies literally merging to become one flesh.[10] The ones to which she refers are evident in Laura's concluding moral of the story:

"For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather,
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands." (lines 562-67)

The "ones" here, rather than referring to a sexual merging of two into one, instead imply the very twoness about which Rossetti is concerned. Each line begins with the preposition "to" so that the verbs become "To cheer," "To fetch," "To lift," "To strengthen." This grammatical move reinforces the presence of two in the relationship being describe, for the actor in these phrases is the "sister" of the initial "For there is no friend like a sister." The presence of the sister as the noun portion of the preposition phrase is implied. One needs a sister to cheer, fetch, lift, and strengthen one. The preposition announces what the sister does for "one" rather than what she is. It is not that the ones in these phrases represent the merging of the two, but instead the necessity that the two be separate in order for one to come to one's aid. Ultimately, the poem is not about joining one and one, nor does it ensure that two become one; rather, it is about a violent

[10] Michie, *Sororophobia*, 34.

separation of one and one and the ways that coming back together, of forming, deforming, and reforming women's communities, preserves the "prime" of the two and the "ones" while permitting the alternative social patterns of twoness to emerge.

II. PATTERN RECOGNITION

Rossetti is known for her ability to deploy silence to make a statement, to reserve something or leave a thought incomplete in order to express it.[11] What Rossetti's work knows deeply but does not announce is how to construct patterns, patterns which can be understood as equations and numbers, and it is in those patterns that *Goblin Market* thinks twoness. Patterns may be in plain sight, but that characteristic also enables them to conceal the poet's statement or project beneath the silence granted by their obvious nature. The patterns of tropes, repetition, and rhyme are the forms in which her work is most self-conscious of its own impulses. Patterns entail gaps and intervals, spaces between corresponding elements of the pattern, and it is in those spaces that the poem struggles with its unanswered questions about ones and twos. Rossetti builds *Goblin Market*'s meditation on twoness—formal, literary, gendered, communal—through the patterns that emerge in her lists, tropes, syntax, and rhyme. Indeed, three patterns of combination—resemblance, absorption, and aggregation—emerge formally throughout the poem. Each of these patterns involve twoness: it takes two things to claim a resemblance, two things to absorb one into another, and two to make an aggregate. Two is the bare minimum for accomplishing any of these configurations. Rossetti deploys this numerical characteristic by crafting pairs that establish relational patterns.

[11] Harrington, *Second Person Singular*, 3-4; Constance Hassett, *Christina Rossetti: The Patience of Style* (Charlottesville: University of Virgina Press, 2005), pp. 1, 17

Rossetti's willingness to take up patterns is always at stake in *Goblin Market* because the poem is about a relationship. There is a sort of "math" to patterns that involves basic additions of one and ones, which *Goblin Market* evokes but leaves unsaid. In the ways the sisters resemble and correspond with each other, they are patterns of one another and based on a pattern of matching, equaling, or paralleling that works throughout the poem. Patterns are designs, models, or archetypes. A pattern can also be an image. An antiquated usage of pattern is to make a copy or likeness of something, as Laura and Lizzie seem to be copies of one another; as one might say, they are "the very pattern" of one another. Furthermore, the verb "to pattern" means to make or shape from a model or "likeness," but it also means "to match, parallel or equal," and to compare one thing to another.[12] In constructing models of social counting, Rossetti deploys each of these valences of pattern. She is emphatically comparing things: sister to sister, monsters to monsters, fruit to fruit. Thinking in patterns, then, involves an implicit equation or quantification in which one or more elements correspond or possess equivalency. It takes at least two of something to make a pattern. However, the poet also constructs inconsistent patterns, often of only two things, with corresponding parts that fail to occur when the reader might expect. Moreover, no matter what pattern a critic might choose in *Goblin Market*, be it the meter or rhyme or lists or metaphors, the pattern is unpredictable. Such inconsistency from a poet who scholars know to be perfectly capable of predictable poetic forms should alert us to the work being done by that unpredictability. As the patterns deteriorate (not unlike Laura), they disclose the poet's struggle with the concept of what it is to be united or divided. As the sisters contend with whether they will be "ones" or two or "like two blossoms on one stem," so does the poem's patterns.

Rossetti's patterns likewise construct an aesthetic world that opts for separation over fusion and absorption. The poem thematizes and formalizes in patterns that which fails to add up,

[12] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Pattern," 4 (noun), 1a-c (noun), 2 (trans. verb).

refusing any comforting or nostalgic feeling of totality, fusion, or oneness. If totality is desirable in modernity, as so many thinkers since Hegel claim, and separation is inimical, Rossetti gives us a frightening world in which division into two is necessary for salvation, and being "ones" is valuable for preventing absorption, while being one, subsumed into another, is a condition to be avoided. Indeed, *Goblin Market*'s world is strange, in part, because it reaches for a very traditional world of subsistence living and agriculture, which seems to draw on a nostalgic past. For instance, Laura and Lizzie are said to have

> Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
> Aired and set to rights the house,
> Kneaded cakes of whites wheat
> …Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
> Fed their poultry, sat and sewed. (lines 202-05, 207-08)

It seems as if the desire for that agrarian world, reaching toward a different form of totality, motivates the poem. Through that desire for something traditional, older, slower, and possibly more magical, it seems that Rossetti is mapping the possibilities of a world for women in the extradiegetic world.

I am not suggesting that Rossetti is endorsing a return to an agrarian world. Rather, the poet seems to be establishing that a modern numerical understanding of communities can disclose an older way of being which is beneficial for women in the nineteenth century, one in which women can be separate, productive, but also united in their labors. Importantly, it is a world in which the one man and one woman fruition of the marriage plot is not necessary in order for a woman to be fulfilled and socially valid and care for the children. Offering what seems like a fairy tale enabled Rossetti to construct a "lost world," but I argue that she does so in order to meditate on a modern numerical problem. The ways of being whole for women, the confusing proposition of "one and one make one" or "one and one make two" of Sonnet 16, was

a problem which she took up to grapple with what it is to make one whole in any world. Even though scholars acknowledge that Rossetti was trying to establish intimacy or wholeness, for example, through her religious belief and desire to have a relationship with God, *Goblin Market* seems not to fit with the poet's other work.[13] In fact, the more one reads *Goblin Market*, the more evident it becomes that there is really nothing whole about its worlds.

The poem can be read as offering two worlds within its diegesis, one in which the sisters are accustomed to live and one from which the goblins emerge. Rossetti makes no mystery that the goblins' origins are an open question. As Laura rightly queries, "Who knows upon what soil they fed / Their hungry thirsty roots?" (lines 44-45). The narrative voice muses likewise: "Odorous indeed must be the mead / Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink / With lilies at the brink" (lines 180-82). Each attempts to envision the world from which the goblin fruit derives. The "vine" on which the goblin grapes grow and the warm "wind" that blows around them are open to speculation (lines 60-63). The location of the soil, the vines growing in it, and the atmospheric conditions of that space remain speculative. When Laura breaks down and buys the goblin fruit, the produce she consumes is "Sweeter than honey from the rock. /Stronger than man-rejoicing wine, / Clearer than water… / She had never tasted such before" (lines 129-32). These fruits are not of this earth, not of a biblical, scriptural earth to which each comparison refers. The anaphoric description concludes with "She never tasted such before," but we know that Laura has tasted "honey" from her own world before, because the next morning the narrator reports she "Fetched in honey" (line 203). The simile "than" announces the gap between the honey of Laura's world, a world recognizably akin to the extradiegetic world, and the honey of the goblin world. Laura's error, in this context, is her search for fusion—for oneness with a foreign world. She puts herself in terrible danger by trying to unite with another

[13] Harrington, *Second Person Singular,* 9.

world, to separate from her sister and join a new world, which she literally ingests into her own body. Rather than unities, the poem returns again and again to twos. Amid the heaping of fruit and swarms of goblins, the only numerical construction that seems reliable in this poem is the twoness of Laura and Lizzie. The sisters have learned they can only count on each other. Being two, in this poem, is clearly a safer, more fulfilling proposition.

Though some poems locate fulfillment in narrative fruition, others locate fulfillment in a realization of enoughness, or a relinquishment of hope in favor of "stoic self-sufficiency."[14] *Goblin Market* does neither. Instead, it locates fulfillment in the ability to ask the question: what does "and" give us in terms of joining two together or dividing them? Rossetti is deeply interested in the "and," for it is a political question of who gets to count, who gets space in the text, and how formations of two and more emerge. To get to two, you need "and." The pattern of pairings which begin the poem carry over into the ways that Rossetti uses "and" as a coordinating conjunction, each of which involves a temporal relationship. First, "and" can indicate one idea is chronologically sequential to another, such as "Morning and evening." In addition, the repetition enabled by "and" creates both moments of stalling out, wherein the poem seems to spin against any sense of forward propulsion, and emphasizes the characters' inability to attain satiety.[15] "And" is used for many repetitions in the poem: "She sucked and sucked and sucked the more" or "She pined and pined away" or "I ate and ate my fill" or "She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth" (lines 134, 152, 165, 492). The actions repeat because a single act fails to achieve fulfillment. In these moments, the poem's repetition becomes figuratively

[14] Francoise, *Open Secrets*, xix.
[15] David Milch, *Deadwood: Stories of the Black Hills* (New York: Melcher Media, 2006), 17; also qtd. in O'Sullivan, "Broken on Purpose: Poetry, Serial Television, and the Season," Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies 2 (2010): 59-77 (64-65). O'Sullivan explains the concept of a poem spinning "against the way it drives" comes from a Melville poem "The Conflict of Convictions" (lines 63-64; 64-65).

barren; seeking or asking how to become more complete through addition is the only remaining route to satisfaction. Put differently, the recurrence of "and" in *Goblin Market* syntactically performs the longing to be part of a pair or twosome, but it is a longing that never consciously admits that such longing is fruitless.

If one expects to be sated, the poem instead suggests that single actions cannot be relied upon to achieve that desired end. To suck the fruits once, eat a meal, pine for a day, or kiss a sister in any limited fashion would imply that the action is sufficient to meet the desired outcome in the first instance. By constructing such lines replete with action—sucking, pining, eating, or kissing—Rossetti is creating a sense of what cannot be abundantly supplied, what lacks the ability to satisfy despite addition. While the lines are full, the characters' desire causes them to be perpetually empty. What we can conclude from her use of "and," then, is that it is one form that the poet uses to register the insufficiency of becoming two and the paradoxical requirement of having two of a thing for comparison in order to reach that very conclusion.

In one moment, the repetition of "and" involves literal, temporal stalling, or buying time, on Laura's part. Waiting itself postpones union, insisting on extending time between a desire and its goal. But Laura uses waiting in order to increase her chances of fulfillment. When Lizzie and Laura return to the "reedy brook" to collect water, Laura does not want to leave because she craves the goblin fruit. Rossetti writes:

But Laura loitered still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.
And said the hour was early still,
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill… (lines 226-229)

Her loitering risks another encounter with the goblins. Each "and" represents Laura's excuses to remain in the spot and wait on the goblins' return. Lizzie cautions Laura to "not loiter longer at this brook," yet Laura stalls here with her sequence of "and" excuses— "And said the bank was

steep. / And said the hour was still"—because she hopes to surfeit on the fruit. But, again, like the repetition of action, the coordinating conjunction "and," which also provides the repetition of anaphora, leads to the character's inability to attain that fulfillment. She, like the poem, stalls, only to discover that there is no accretion sufficient to consummate her design or her desire.

Rossetti's form delays and stalls like Laura as it struggles for understanding, trying on new ideas with each iteration, offering one, dumping it out, trying another, upending it again, until she has given a sufficient number of versions for the reader to form a whole image from many possible parts. I am especially convinced by Angela Leighton's suggestion that we recognize the way that Rossetti's repetition "empties rather than fills, baffles rather than informs."[16] Understood in this way, Rossetti's repetition of "and," list-making, and use of anaphora amounts to figuration by accretion, becoming a highly modern technique more akin to Ezra Pound's "imagism" instead of the formal regularity John Ruskin might have appreciated.[17] At the same time, her repetitions feel ancient because they harken back to the hybrid kennings of Anglo-Saxon poetry, wherein multiplicity of description adds enriches texture and reinforces cultural knowledge. Rossetti's repetition, therefore, performs the same forward and backward-looking move recognizable in the sister's agrarian world. Through these poetic forms, Rossetti is making strange our expectation for how lists and repetition behave.

The strangeness of lists arises in part because of the poet's awareness that aggregation is itself a strange and challenging problem, and the difficulties of joining ones rather than turning

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[16] Leighton, "On 'The Hearing Ear,'" 510. Eric Gray agrees that "Each new simile not only fails to add to the previous one, but drives it away," but then he departs from Leighton by suggesting that "Laura, far from becoming clearer to the reader through this series of descriptions, is actually drowned in a surfeit of superimposed images" ("Faithful Likenesses," 292). I do not read Laura as "drowned" in such images. Instead, the images all taken together provide distinct facets to give a more complete understanding of the sisters and their relationship.

[17] On first reading *Goblin Market*, John Ruskin declared in a letter to her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti that Rossetti's 'irregular measures' were the 'calamity of modern poetry' and that she 'should exercise herself in the severest commonplace of metre until she can write as the public like'" (24 January, 1861, Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. by Oswald Doughty and John Robert Wahl, vol. 2 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 391).

many into one is perhaps best expressed by a list that never fuses or comes to a settled conclusion. What she accomplishes is the effect of making a list weird, unsettling, and anxiety-producing. Susan Wolfson's work on form points to Viktor Shklovsky's claim that "the work of formal 'devices' is to 'defamiliarize' and 'estrange' ordinary economies of language, denaturalizing their power and, by extension, the power of ordinary structures of references and modes of perception."[18] Instead of a "poetic list [which] delegates minimal responsibility to the reader," Rossetti's lists are at once constructing conditions of estrangement, within which the reader's confidence in the lists as a form of representation is repeatedly shaken, and adding up optional representations to present a combinatory sequence.[19]

Refusing unity in form, the patterns in the poem constantly come undone (as Laura puts it, "Undone in mine undoing / And ruined in my ruin), so that the sisters, like the reader, cannot navigate what is expected because the next element of the pattern is not guaranteed (lines 482-83). The relationship between patterns, norms, and the world which Laura and Lizzie occupy is insufficient for either the sisters or the reader to navigate in the hopes of attaining wholeness. Yet, the sisters and the reader have to navigate these patterns in order to learn that a world which fails to announce itself as comparative is one in which individuals can become lost because there is no single pattern to follow.

Despite this chariness toward comparison, Rossetti's lists as patterns establish the poem's emphasis on twoness as a positive mechanism of epistemological production and comparative richness. The most obvious patterns in *Goblin Market* are lists, a formal feature to which many scholars have given attention: Rossetti catalogues times of day, animal bodies, the sisters'

[18] Wolfson, *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997), p. 7.
[19] Gray, "Faithful Likenesses," 294.

appearance, and types of fruit, drawing together that which would not coexist in nature.[20] Epic lists have long been pointed to for their ability to achieve the sense of completeness through a catalogue of details, and *Goblin Market*'s lists attempt a similar sort of comprehensiveness.[21] Consider how the introductory stanza is a work of pairing, cataloguing, and list making:

Morning and evening…
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges…
Melons and raspberries…
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In the summer weather… (lines 1, 5, 6, 12-16)

The poet's pairing and list-making foreground that the represented world and the world we occupy can never be identical. Here, Rossetti uses pairs—or the twoness of the "and" construction and the syntax of the lines—to immediately signal that the poem will be working through a series of relations. These correspondences have something intrinsically odd about them, as though they could not work in reality. Many have observed that "Morning and evening" cannot occur at the same time, nor can many of these fruits ripen at the same time "together" or even all "In the summer weather." These varieties of fruit—consider the pineapples—also do not ripen in the same geographic regions, a fact which adds to their inability to actually exist "together" in any place or time that one accepts as real.[22] Once again the reader is left with a sense of questions that cannot be answered: Why these fruits? Why these disparate times and seasons? As the title is *Goblin Market*, one might argue that the market environment of the poem

[20] Mendoza, "Come Buy," 918; Michie, *Sororophobia*, 33; Arseneau, *Recovering*, 123; Gray, "Faithful Likenesses," 291-92.
[21] See, for instance, Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask, introd. by Edward Said (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003), esp. "Odysseus' Scar," pp. 3-23.
[22] Similarly, the description of the goblins also claims they are "Cooing all together" (line 8). The cat, rat, snail, wombat, doves, and ratel (a South African mammal resembling a badger), could also not all exist in the same place any more than the fruits would. Their cooing like the fruits ripening is an impossibility in any place or time.

brings together what would not coexist naturally.[23] Even so, there is no way to know how these pairs of fruit have been brought together, because the goblin world is ultimately incapable of establishing stable links to the world outside of the text or for our expectation of how objects should behave in reality. Therefore, Rossetti offers these odd pairings precisely to raise the question of how two things are divided or brought together.

The poem's anaphoric moments provide another illustrative list-like pattern in which twoness enables comparative work and forecloses subsumption of "one and one" into a fused whole. Anaphoric moments often arrive in the poem when either the goblin men or the sisters are described. When Laura and Lizzie lay together, Rossetti's anaphoric "like" clauses call attention to her use of simile, a figure that announces its relational work and the impossibility of closing the gap between the language and the thing itself:

They lay down in their curtained bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipped with gold for awful kings. (lines 187-91)

The anaphora, simile, and images all perform the work of division and combination in this moment. Each image offers two of the same type which are so close as to be indistinguishable. The "curtained bed" is a contained space, a micro-world enclosing the two together and apart. They are like separate blossoms but on "one stem," and like "two flakes of new fall'n snow." The repetition's work here is also twofold: first, it reveals a single narrator casting between options for a description that will never precisely capture the objects; second, it emphasizes the division of things and the poetry's resistance to subsumption, wholeness, or fusion.

[23] Picked fruit continues to ripen off the vine, and so fruits brought to market from disparate locations can ripen together through the unnatural conditions created by a market economy. Mendoza claims that the lists of fruits cause the fruit to be misrecognized "as social beings all on their own," independent of their production, he explains.

Indeed, Rossetti's resistance to wholeness is so pervasive in *Goblin Market* that it extends to the inconsistency between tropes. Rossetti achieves a similar effect of narrative indecision and formal division to the above example in what Hassett calls "the poem's final litany," in which Laura is purged of the goblin fruit's poison:

Sense failed in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life? (lines 513-23)

However, in this instance, Laura is being compared to inanimate objects and not to her sister. Although the sisters are simultaneously divisible and indivisible, in this list it is as though the poet was seeking ways to further divide and estrange Laura from the images under comparison. This list lacks the element of correspondence that we find in the "two blossoms on one stem." In a move which multiplies the doubling work of simile, the anaphora is now divided by a series of subordinate clauses: "Which an earthquake shatters down," "Spun about," "Cast down headlong in the sea." Laura is compared to several objects, but the objects lack any similarity to her in reality. Whereas the similes comparing sisters achieve the sense of their sameness and difference, here the similes serve to amplify the unrecognizable nature of what Laura endures. In other words, the anaphora has the effect of making this event more strange rather than trying to establish familiarity with the images. This series suggests that no single simile is sufficiently representational, even though the form, itself always insisting on difference, refuses fusion or oneness. Rossetti's patterns of lists, rather than achieving the comprehensive effect of epic

catalogues, construct deficiency and lack. Instead of producing a surplus of information that leads to knowledge, Rossetti's lists, similes, and anaphora emphasize the value of division as a comparative mechanism for questioning the relationship between the subjects of comparison. Put differently, because Rossetti's lists establish a comparative scene between two objects (the girl and nature; the two girls) the reader is left with less knowledge rather than more.

III. TROPES, TURNS, AND TWOS

Goblin Market thinks in twos: it begins with pairs, of times of day, of diverse fruits, of seasons, and it follows the narrative of two corresponding, apparently identical sisters who are constantly objects of comparison. The poem also uses tropes to double and pair forms. The word trope derives from the ancient Greek τρόπος, "to turn," which inherently is a practice of doubling: doubling back, turning from one to another, assuming that there is another option to which one might turn. Trope also means, "A significant or recurrent theme, esp. in a literary or cultural context; a motif."[24] In other words, a trope is a pattern (which repeats as patterns do) that assumes there is more than one instance of representation to that pattern. At minimum, a trope needs two of something to recur or become a motif or pattern. In repeating similes and metaphors in *Goblin Market*, Rossetti's tropes construct patterns of absorption and correspondence to ruminate on the knotty problem of how "one and one" make two.

Both simile and metaphor establish relationships, but simile signals the gap between the tenor and vehicle that metaphor assumes. Similes announce their work in language with "like," "than," or "as," so that the comparison is explicit. A metaphor, on the other hand, conflates two things, collapsing one world into another, and multiplying their possible meanings through that

[24] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Trope," def. 7.

relationship. The comparison in metaphors is implicit; there is no direct comparison at work.[25] Thinking about Rossetti's tropes as quantifying and quantifiable for their ability to multiply, divide, add, and subtract provides both a new way of reading her poem and reinforces the extent to which tropes can theorize abstractions.

On the one hand, Rossetti uses similes as she does lists and anaphora; similes offer another comparative form. Similes work by comparing two things, and usually the things being compared come from different settings or worlds. Put differently, similes attempt to create "a slender yet firm rainbow bridging bottomless depths" between two very different kinds of worlds while maintaining the separation between the thing described and the world of the comparison.[26] For instance, Laura and Lizzie are compared to a natural world of flowers, snow, and ivory, and above as a swan, a tree, and a boat on the river. If the simile maintains separation between the natural world of compared objects, the anaphora suggests that the sisters' world is an unnatural one even as it evokes a traditional world which the reader might recognize. The value of simile in describing the women is also that it maintains separation as I understand poetic aggregation to do; it does not flatten the tenor and vehicle like a metaphor but instead foregrounds the fact of their comparison and separation. As a result, simile is an ideal form for Rossetti because it insists on both comparison and separation. Laura and Lizzie remain women navigating the unnatural dangers of an encounter with goblins, while also being aggregated with each other and with natural images that retain the possibility of their purity: blossoms, snow, ivory. Metaphor instead would have collapsed the purity into the characters' identities, thereby implying that there was no risk of taint from the goblin men. Utilizing simile as a form of aggregation preserves the

[25] M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999), 96-97.
[26] Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, 36.

individual in combination with those images of natural purity, while it also acknowledges that any sort of collapse of one into one is inimical.

Rossetti uses metaphors, on the other hand, to collapse distance into fused combinations, thereby describing the goblins themselves as dangerous. Metaphor tends to bury the qualities or characteristics of one thing in another rather than separating them as simile does. When the goblin men are described, Rossetti has recourse to metaphor and simile:

One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry. (lines 71-76)

Here, the goblin men have the features of the animals described, or they are "like" an animal in appearance and movement. Many qualities are aggregated or combined within one body. We cannot know if the one who "had a cat's face" is also the one who "tumbled hurry skurry," nor can we assume that each one is a discrete creature. The characteristics might combine in many ways to describe a few or half a dozen monstrous goblin men. As she does elsewhere, Rossetti's use of "one"s expresses how the goblins have similarities to each other but also elements that make them distinct. While the passage returns to simile with "One crawled like a snail," it does so to separate the goblin's supernatural being from the natural way of being of the snail, wombat, or rat. Where Rossetti uses simile as a comparative form, here, she uses it to compare that which we would not recognize—goblins—to that which we would—animals. Though the goblins possess the dangerous sensuality of animals, they are also not part of anything truly from nature. The simile maintains separation not of one body from another, as it does with the sisters, but of epistemelogical separation. While the "ones" or "early prime" of the sisters implies a formal

division as the prime number two or as one and one that make two, the goblins are "one" of a large, threatening combinatory and hybrid kind.

Hybridity involves absorption, incorporating many parts into a single entity. The goblins' animal features at once group them as types (a cat, a rat, a snail) and divide them into parts: "One had a cat's face, /One whisked a tail." Not all goblins have all the same parts or features. Their hybridity, though, is also flattened into one massive combination, "wicked, quaint, fruit-merchant men" (line 553). Again, recall that the poem likes twos, it gravitates toward them. The sisters are safer and more likely to find fulfillment in twoness, and the poem's moral insists that they avoid the absorption that would occur from the goblins. The goblins' hybridity, then, represent the sort of absorption inimical to modern intimacy and successful communities. The goblins are monstrous because of this absorption of heterogeneity and the sense that they are pieced together in a *Frankenstein* fashion.

Rossetti's oxymorons and hybrid adjectival similes are formal corollaries to the goblins' monstrosity. They have "Demure grimaces" and move "Snail-paced in a hurry" (lines 339, 342).[27] They are also "Cat-like and rat-like, /Ratel- and wombat-like," and so not exactly those animals but only some version thereof. The words themselves are nouns morphed into adjectives that are also serving as similes. The goblins are at once hybrid creatures, marked by the absorption of animal characteristics into their bodies, and aggregated as a group called "goblins," which are uncountable. The sisters, while also aggregated into a pair, maintain a separation that enables us to compare each to the other. We need to be able to compare the sisters in order to derive the moral of Rossetti's tale, and so their twoness becomes a condition for the possibility of not only their redemption but the reader's didactic benefit in reading the poem. Though the

[27] Angela Leighton also makes this observation about the oxymorons, though she does not use that term. She says Rossetti's "land of nonsense" is capable of "breeding goblins like similes" (*Victorian Women Poets*, 139).

goblins' bodies are hybrids, they are also as a species aggregated, traveling in "herds…/ In groups or single" (lines 238, 240). Unlike the sisters, of whom we know there to be two, the goblins are only ever plural, a grouping that we cannot hope to count.[28] The difference is that the sisters merely resemble or correspond with each other like the similes that describe them, while the goblins' bodies involve the absorption or incorporation of metaphors, a model which is fraught with danger in the poem.

Radical isolation or separation is equally dangerous, however. Following Laura's choice to purchase and eat the goblin fruit, the sisters are depicted as violently separated on the macrolevel of the poem's narrative and structurally in the poem's microlevel of syntax and lineation:

One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for night. (lines 212-14).

The first line divides the sisters with a caesura; the following two lines divide the sisters with a line break and a comma. Instead of resulting in a sense of unity or integration with the goblins' closed, magical world, consuming the fruit ruptures the relationship between the sisters, severing their two into lonely and divided "one"s. This is not a community but a pair sadly separated. Or to put this another way, in seeking to be "one" with the goblins and consume or incorporate into oneself part of their world, Laura becomes "one" in the sense that she is isolated, perilously divided from her kin.

To recap the claim that these examples hope to illustrate: there should be some individuation, Rossetti suggests—but not too much. The sisters are alike but not the same,

[28] Lest we "not remember Jeanie," as Lizzie cautions, I acknowledge there is a third woman in this poem (line 147). There is no way to know what Jeanie's relationship is to the sisters. Jeanie strikes me as beyond the scope of the forms in this poem that think about types of twos.

aggregated but not fused. They survive by simultaneous separation and togetherness: the answer to Laura's suffering is to ingest the fruits separate from the goblins, arrayed on Lizzie's surface but not consumed by her. In this way, through the insistence on connection through separation, the sisters are rejoined. While Rossetti wants to retain the hope that Laura and Lizzie will reject the sexually-charged goblin offerings but suggest that the danger is real by dividing them from pure images of nature, she is simultaneously combining the goblins with natural dangers and separating them from the reality of such things, much as the girls are thrown together with danger and then separated from it. In each case, the poet employs the figures of simile and metaphor to do the work of aggregation, which rejects amassing or restricting her choices.

IV. RHYME

Rhyme is yet another way to locate numerical patterns into Rossetti's poem. By establishing similarity and difference, requiring two words to function, and enabling sounds to echo while not being identical, rhyme is a rich form through which the poet could struggle with the complexity of two. As a meditation on numbers, Rossetti's use of rhyme demonstrates how two can divide into many other numerical forms. Like the tropes and lists, the rhymes reveal the poem working through the impossibility of many ever resolving into one. The intervals between Rossetti's rhyme become the very blanks, gaps, and refusals within which her theorization of numerical addition emerges.

Not unlike the goblins, Rossetti's rhyme marks at the outset of the poem that it cannot be trusted, and that a satisfying result might involve a series of unpredictable turns, imperfect correlations, and compromises. The opening list of the fruit is the moment when the rhyme scheme first derails, formally signaling the unpredictable and unnatural character of the goblin

produce. From the rhyme, we know immediately that neither the poem nor the fruit will behave as one expects. Like the disparate species of fruit and animals that would seldom coexist in the same geographic region, Rossetti's rhyme is an agglomeration of types: masculine rhyme, slant rhyme, null rhymes, assonance, alliteration, and sometimes rime riche. For example, the poem opens with a standard balladic quatrain intermittent rhyme: XAXA, (evening, cry, fruits, buy), but then startles with "quinces" (line 5) and "oranges" (line 6), which are unrhymed. This moment is followed by two lines of null rhyme, repetition that doesn't really rhyme at all: "cherries…raspberries" give us the repetition of the sound "erries." Then, to remind us that we will not be allowed to fall into a comfortable pattern, Rossetti throws us "peaches," which like "quinces" and "oranges" not only do not rhyme with anything else in this section but are difficult words to rhyme in general. Instead, the rhyme for "peaches" is buried in the same line, an internal rhyme and assonance in which "Bloom-down-cheeked peaches" echoes Es.

Rhyme as a form of resemblance extends to the poem's commentary on the relationship between the sisters. The definition of rhyme as "[c]orrespondence in sound, appearance, etc., between two things"[29] enables us to consider rhyming in appearance as another way to think of Lizzie and Laura as corresponding with each other. There are two lines of feminine rhyme describing the fruit, "together" and "weather," which parallel the "together/weather" rhyme in the following stanza as the sisters are described "[c]rouching close together / In the cooling weather" (lines 36-37). In order for there to be no doubt that Rossetti is comparing the ripening fruits from one stanza to the sisters in the next stanza, she uses the same feminine rhyme in both moments. She then returns to this rhyme again in the closing stanza, where Laura speaks to their children. She "[w]ould bid them cling together, / 'For there is no friend like a sister, / In calm or stormy weather" (lines 561-63). That Rossetti repeats this rhyme throughout the poem might

suggest that we can count on the "together/weather" rhyme returning a fourth time, providing two pairs, perhaps. However, in a poem with so many changeable elements, there is a numbers game at work in choosing which elements (the meter? the rhyme? the narrative? the repetition? the similes? the metaphors?) will recur. Some do and some do not, and none offer predictable patterns. Of course, as I have been contending, *Goblin Market* eschews forms of wholeness or completion.

Following the opening, Rossetti continues to deploy rhyme's ability to break patterns as much as establish them. Lest the reader get comfortable or expect that the rhyme will resolve itself back into a stable pattern, Rossetti offers three lines of masculine end rhyme in a row: by, fly, buy (lines 17-19). This section ends or arrives at a pause with a colon, after which one might expect, and here does indeed get, a list. But the colon also enables another subtle rhyme shift, wherein Rossetti maintains two lines of masculine rhyme but does not select words that rhyme with the prior three lines of masculine rhyme. Instead, she rhymes "vine" and "fine," so she partly gives the reader what they might expect but not entirely (lines 20-21). As she does in so many other ways, she splits the difference. It is still a masculine rhyme, but it is not a masculine rhyme that rhymes with the prior masculine rhyme. Put differently, she allows the rhyme to find a pair but it is not a pairing that we can anticipate. Rossetti then shifts gears again and employs a slant rhyme, or a rhyme that is not a true rhyme, with "bullaces" and "greengages" in the next two lines (lines 22-23). The remainder of the opening passage continues to skip among null, masculine, and feminine rhymes without any way to come to rest in a certain rhyme scheme.

Departure from such rhyme schemes in highly formal poetry, like a ballad, can alert readers to a formal change which emphasizes some element of the poem. Rossetti's aggregation of rhymes in *Goblin Market* rejects any generic conventions that would have the poem as ballad

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[29] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Rhyme," def. 1d.

or nursery rhyme follow an expected, normative rhyme scheme. There are many moments throughout the poem where the rhyme unseats one's expectations for a potential rhyme. The null rhymes suggest the multiplicity of goblin voices "Cooing all together," massing but not organized—a kind of goblin form (line 78). Consider, "Evening by evening," "Brother with queer brother," "Brother with sly brother," and "Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie" (lines 38, 94, 96, 54). Repeating a word still constructs a sonic rhyme, a pairing of two, but it is a zero sum rhyme; there is no correspondence, only absorption and homogeneity. To phrase this in mathematical terms, null rhymes would be the same as dividing two of the same numbers by each other, with the result being one.

Another example of Rossetti's use of null rhymes occurs immediately prior to the goblins arrival, when Laura insists that Lizzie "look." The latter line is especially telling because "Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie," follows lines that read

> Lizzie covered up her eyes,
> Covered close lest they should look;
> Laura reached her glossy head,
> And whispered like the restless brook:
> "Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie…" (lines 50-54)

The second invocation of Lizzie's name is wholly unnecessary and unrhymed in the passage. Since Rossetti precedes it with "look" and "brook," the reader is prone to stumble over the second instance of Lizzie's name because it is unexpected. To give the line as "Look, Lizzie, look" would have maintained the rhyme with "look" and "brook," but a predictable rhyme scheme is not the poem's interest here. Rossetti is not only finding another use for the repetition for which her writing is so well known but she is tripping the reader up on Lizzie's name. She does not do so to maintain the meter of the line, since only a few lines later she makes use of iambic dimeter without so much as a backward glance at that decision. Rather, the line doubles

Lizzie's self while maintaining distance from the other. Moreover, Lizzie's name once again leaves the reader with questions about how a poem, one that might otherwise become sing-song or be easily taken up as a nursery rhyme, can and should count. How do we expect such patterns to behave? This inability to predict how something will behave becomes a conceit for the entire poem. Social science can likewise not adequately predict individual behavior, the poet suggests. In fact, as Lizzie opts to save Laura by risking her own neck in an encounter with the goblins, as the goblin fruit acts as both a poison and cure, acting in opposite rather than fused ways, internally divided, turning against itself unexpectedly, like the rhymes across the poem.

Rossetti uses these three forms in her poem—rhyme, tropes, and lists—to establish a series of experiments in twoness. As Rossetti's rhymes unseat the reader's ability to guess how corresponding sounds will occur, her use of the double nature of tropes reflects the sisters' correspondence in simile and the goblins' fraught hybridity in metaphor. From the poet's "ones," we learn that any expectation we might have for the empirical value of a number—that one will be one—is troubled by the realization that one can involve "ones," twos, sameness, and difference. Her lists, rather than merely affirming the many dialectical readings of her work, construct conditions of estrangement which simultaneously make the boring nature of a list perplexing by looking forward to fragmentary aesthetics and backward to traditional models. Because the lists can be understood as moments in which the poet is trying on options and then undoing them to offer others, the lists become an unsettling experimental device rather than a decidedly unpoetic catalogue. All of these patterns suggest a distinction between aggregation into a community in which members maintain integrity and separation and a monstrous collective where bodies are too much fused and mingled. There is an implicit critique of the logic

of marriage here, and of all social forms that demand the subsumption of women into others. Better to remain “ones,” Rossetti suggests, than to subject oneself to such abstruse problems.

CHAPTER THREE:

Augusta Webster's Remainders and the Infinite Divisibility of "I, I, I"

Augusta Webster's "The Happiest Girl in the World" (1870) is one of the most explicit Victorian meditations on marriage, so much so that it is becoming something of a critical darling. Generally construed as an illustration of women's efforts to conform to social expectations, the poem presents a newly engaged woman expressing her uncertainty about what married life will entail.[1] From the outset of the poem, repetition signals the speaker's sense of inevitability, and of her anxiety that time is rapidly moving toward her wedding day:

> A week ago; only a little week:
> It seems so much, much longer, though that day
> Is every morning still my yesterday;
> As all my life 'twill be my yesterday,
> For all my life is morrow to my love.
> Oh fortunate morrow! Oh sweet happy love! (lines 1-6).

In this moment, the poem grapples with divergent desires to move forward toward marriage and to stop time. Webster's repetitions signal the speaker's divided emotional state during a time of social transition.[2] In the first line, she repeats "week," the second line repeats "much," the third and fourth lines repeat "my yesterday," and the fifth and sixth lines repeat "morrow" and "love." It is as though two sides of herself are having a conversation with each other. The first is aghast that one week could feel so long: "A week ago…It seems so much, much longer." The second is

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[1] Harrington, *Second Person*, 57.

[2] As Peter McDonald demonstrates, the repetition of words, such as null rhymes in Tennyson's "The Lotus-Eaters" have a norming function, so that a change in semantic or aural function can be read as a disruption. In his response to John Hollander's reading of "The Lotus-Eaters," he writes, "As the poet is aware, it is not possible to hear (or read) a word in its repetition in exactly the same way as in its initial occurrence. Thus, to encounter 'land' in a rhyming position, with the word 'land' …still audible, is to participate in a state which is at once 'narcoticized' by sameness and alert to the minutest changes (whether in voiced tone or semantic function) which the word in its repetition might bear." Certainly, the speaker in Webster's poem might well be in a "narcoticized" state, numbed by the shock of her newly-engaged condition. Yet, it is not possible to hear these repetitions as identical. McDonald, *Sound Intentions*, 15.

equally stunned that a week can move so swiftly: "only a little week." Webster's poem formally folds into itself two speakers in one body: one woman excited by the prospect of marriage and another who is well aware she "should have answered 'No'" (line 97). Like the speakers in Webster's "By the Looking-Glass" (1866) and "Medea in Athens" (1870), the happiest girl is caught in a transitional social moment that divides her.[3] The speakers in these poems are embroiled in transitional moments: one is about to marry, one has remarried, and one is thinking about others close to her who are newlyweds. When one's social status changes, Webster suggests, it creates identity problems not only for the people in the situation but for those around them. In other words, it does not matter only that the speaker is herself experiencing the transition, as the happiest girl is, or whether the speaker is close to those transitioning to another form of social group, as the looking-glass woman is. What matters to Webster is that marriage necessitates a new accounting for the self, one which includes all individuals connected to the two being united. Her investment is in the relational nature of combination and recombination. Indeed, her methods of quantification emerge in a similarly relational fashion, as her language, syntax, rhyme, and stanzaic structures organize a logic of interconnected moving parts more closely akin to actual human affiliations than the impossible wholeness of an ideal Victorian marriage.

Therefore, "The Happiest Girl in the World" implicitly rejects the idea that wholeness is achieved by marriage. The speaker anticipates being subsumed by her new husband, so that the

[3] However, unlike Medea and the woman by the looking-glass, this speaker is not navigating her position in social sets involving multiple love interests. Rather, she is torn between desires, a claim which plays out in Webster's use of repetition. As Peter McDonald reasons, the "formalization of repetition may speak allegorically of the desire in and 'behind' utterance for a perfect 'iteration', but it will also frustrate the intention that seems to have mastered it, both by its falling-off from self-identity (logically, the next word cannot be, after all, the same word), and by bringing home the very binary opposition which most threatens the idea of a solely intended meaning." In other words, repetition is a marker of "poetic uncertainty" and "opportunity involved in the sounding-over again of words." In order to fulfill her social obligations and become included in her fiancé's social set, the speaker first has to reconcile her divided mind.

poem problematizes the "two become one" model of marriage in order to ask: what are the consequences of new social groups? This chapter argues that these three poems by Augusta Webster trace the path of a traditional understanding of marital unity in order to make a case for that model as harmful, impossible, and deeply flawed. Like "The Happiest Girl," "By the Looking-Glass" involves a speaker who recounts the love she had been developing for a man who eventually married her sister. Having failed to achieve the model of two become one, she attempts to reconcile herself to loving her sister by maintaining her silence about her love for the new brother-in-law. Then, "Medea in Athens" thinks the violent collapse of marriage and its vengeful aftermath through the story of Jason and Medea. In this extreme context of child murder, betrayal, and revenge, Webster constructs a model of marital unity at once failed and characterized by a remaining nearness. While no one could take Webster's "Medea" as an expected model for nineteenth-century marriage, the poet makes use of Jason and Medea's separation to solve the problem of too much sameness and too much difference. The poem has this problem written into it. In each case, Webster accounts for the social remainders of marriage, which in her poetic worlds anticipate the proliferative capacity of +1. Rather than accepting marriage as a closed set of two individuals, she asks us to recognize that adding another person to one's life opens outward into the possibility of infinite social connection.

As detailed in the introduction to this project, such mathematical readings are not about "doing" math, or using formulae. Instead, mathematics provides a way to think about forms that are not purely abstract but also structure poetic forms. There are a plurality of ways to quantify the social, all of which have mathematical corollaries. Webster's work understands that when relationships are in flux everyone in the situation is affected. What's more, the ways that we might talk about couples or families necessarily changes to include new additions and divisions.

Of course, virtually any piece of literature would have people divided into social sets in some fashion, and so it becomes important to distinguish Webster's aggregated models from those of, say, Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

While Barrett Browning endeavors to achieve wholeness for her divided characters through supplements like motherhood and authorship, Webster works through aggregation in ways that both borrow from Barrett Browning and do not.[4] Admittedly, both poets employ the language of halfness to deconstruct and reconstruct new pairs and aggregative wholes. In *Aurora Leigh*, ultimately pairings stabilize. For example, Marian stabilizes through her pairing with her son. As a result, we never have the sense that making women whole excludes others from joining a pairing. For Webster, the pairing that occurs from marriage instead makes it impossible for anyone else to be part of that aggregated social form. Her poems are identifying a plurality of mathematical models to illustrate how those outside of a marital pair also need to be addressed included, and recognized. Furthermore, while Barrett Browning recognizes that women are divided in many ways, wholeness still remains an aspirational drive available through child-bearing and writing. Webster, on the other hand, would have us know that women are and will always be divided, either mentally or through their relationships to others. Despite the relational transitions she depicts, each poem's speaker is marked by fragmentation.

Instead of succeeding in locating a way to be whole, Webster's speakers only accomplish a transition to a revised form of divisibility for the self and in relation to others. Conceptualizing aggregation, in this instance, therefore provides a short hand vocabulary for the divisions, unities, doubling, and remainders with which Webster is concerned. Aggregation becomes a

[4] We know Webster to be a close reader of Barrett Browning. Webster's long poem *Lilian Gray* is similar in its structure and for constructing a love triangle to Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*. The poem includes a character named Phillip Leigh, a clear homage to Barrett Browning's master work (Rigg, *Julia Augusta Webster*, 58-59).

handy model for all the ways that Webster was thinking about women being divided and grouped in relation to marriage and to those outside of the marriage. Webster consistently quantifies in terms of the variable or indeterminate members of marriage, such as family members or former lovers, elements of a social aggregate that must be accounted for in order for social norms to function. In "Medea in Athens," "By the Looking-Glass," and "The Happiest Girl in the World," three poems which can themselves be read as related to and in conversation with one another, Webster's characters meditate on ways to be socially divided and yet still bound to others. In each case, the speaker's investment is in maintaining the integrity of the social aggregate rather than dividing the husband and wife from all of the other social members to whom they are bound.

It is an inclusive gesture that turns to the outside of a couple for the potentially infinite plus ones that a husband and wife might love and know. "Medea in Athens" illustrates how intimacy can bind together two people even long after they cease to be husband and wife or fall under the social "math" of two become one. The speaker in "By the Looking-Glass" struggles with how to divide herself in order to continue loving her sister and brother-in-law, despite the original conditions which brought them together. And, Webster's ironically titled "Happiest Girl" speaks in a divided voice, expressing ambivalence, and fear, about how her divided mind will approach her forthcoming marriage. Read in this way, Webster's poetry positions love as combinatory, exponential, and sustainable because of the possibilities of social aggregation instead of limited, small, or restricted to only the husband and wife in a marriage. Aggregates in Webster's poetry, which emerge both thematically and formally, attempt to construct unions and intersections between individuals outside of the central pair. Consequently, Webster's aggregates illustrate how her poetry was reaching for traditional forms of social belonging, such as large

extended families, while also rejecting such groups to preserve a more modern sense of individuals unrelated by blood who choose their own collectives and social sets.

To make this argument, I build upon and depart from critics such as Emily Harrington and Albert Pionke who have recently turned attention to intimacy and relationships in Webster's work. In a reading of Webster's sonnet sequence *Mother and Daughter*, for instance, Harrington observes how Webster "articulates the startling proposition that love is a limited resource that can be divided, meted out."[5] Webster also attends to the division of love between a mother and her potential children expressed by the speaker in "The Happiest Girl in the World," who is concerned that "children coming 'twixt" her husband and herself would decrease the amount of love and attention she is able to give her husband (line 242). The speaker muses, "What would my heart be halved?," as she considers how her love might be divided between her husband and her children (line 246). Similarly, Pionke has noted the love triangles in Webster's poetry, which repeatedly cast two subjects in competition for a third subject's attention or love.[6]

Both arguments, however, understand love or social relationships as limited in Webster's poetry. While it is true that Webster insistently thematizes love triangles and competitive love relationships, I argue that she constructs models not of limitation but of mandatory inclusion, social obligation, and even exponential relational connections. My thinking, then, is more closely aligned with Glennis Byron's claim that there is no identity for characters in Webster's work without the inclusion of others.[7] Rather than reading her poems as closed systems or limit cases, I contend that Webster's poems can be understood as a meditation on how intimate social aggregates, and specifically marriage, threaten other ways of collecting individuals into groups.

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[5] Harrington, *Second Person Singular*, 9.
[6] Pionke, "Forms of Triangulation," 465-66. See also, Riggs's readings of *Lesley's Guardians* (52-58), *Lilian Gray* (58-62), both of which involve love triangles.
[7] Byron, *Dramatic Monologues*, 24, 64.

The formation of a new aggregate in marriage, she implies, does not eliminate the possibility of including others from prior aggregates. Webster recognizes that the fluidity of intimacy occasions instead a logic by which adding one inaugurates the potential for infinite combinations.

I. "Half Glad Enough": The Engaged Girl and the Divided Mind

In "The Happiest Girl in the World," repetition registers how the speaker is working through her feelings in this transitional time of her life, but also develops repetition into a series of seemingly infinite questions. Along with Webster's implication that multiple selves may coexist in a single person, the entire poem is a work of questions and regret that reinforce the speaker's divided mind. Though the speaker repeats the line, "No questionings, no regrettings, but at rest," to wonder what she should question or regret, this line is itself phrased as a question. In fact, she asks more than thirty questions over the course of the poem: "And did I love him from the day we met?," "And did I love him when he first came here?," "When did I love him? How did it begin?," among others (lines 29, 32, 35). In addition, the stanza immediately prior with its repetition of "oh" sounds belies her claim that she has nothing to regret. What else can one make of "But oh had I but known!" than an expression of regret for being more focused on "looking well"? She was invested in fliration rather than the predictable outcome of such interactions. The question of what she should question or regret and the statement that her fiancé is now her "hope" and "rest" are both disingenuous, in fact, almost sarcastic. Reading the poem as two minds in conflict with each other causes the speaker's vacillation to make more sense. One self might well assert that she has nothing to question or regret now that she has her fiancé, but it is the other self that causes this claim to be a question. In a sense, the happiest girl is divided in

halves which confute the unity of the titular girl's singleness, her status implied by the article "the" as being only one.

Webster often describes states of being as "half," so much so that once you are attentive to it, the halfness is everywhere. One can be "half afraid," live a life that is metaphorically "half a merry morn," or be "half dead." She wonders will she "ever be half glad enough" and admits that she is "half afraid that love is not love" (lines 98, 106). The language of halfness is telling, as it is in *Aurora Leigh*, but so are the tepid "ever" and "enough." One speaks to doubt and the other speaks to compromise. What Webster gives us in "ever be half glad enough" is quite literally a half-hearted choice of words. So while the happiest girl is divided into halves, those halves are also identified by the syntax here. The interesting assumption in the language of halves is that there is always the possibility of the other half: that Webster's happiest girl was living a life that was as much "merry morn" as it was dismal night. Halfness is not a question of a glass half full or half empty in this case, but of both halves of the glass being differently occupied. The happiest girl is, in this sense, more like the speaker in "By the Looking-Glass," who is also portrayed in a moment of encounter with her fractional self.

The happiest girl's division arises, in part, because there is a disconnect between the social narrative of marriage and the feelings of those involved, a disconnect which is at once confusing and terrifying. She is coming to realize that what she has learned from reading is not the reality of her situation: "I know by books but cannot teach my heart" (line 147). While the speaker initially just wanted to be pretty for her suitor and have him notice her, she hadn't counted on the reality of male desire to drive the outcome toward physical consummation of that desire. She chastises herself for not anticipating how he would perceive her attention, and for not realizing that he would only see her as attractive rather than account for her whole identity:

Oh vain and idle poor girl's heart of mine,
Content with that coquettish mean content!
He, with his man's straight purpose, thinking "wife,"
And I but that 'twas pleasant to be fair
And that 'twas pleasant he should count me fair.
But oh to think he should be loving me
And I be no more moved out of myself!
The sunbeams told him, but they told me nought,
Except that maybe I was looking well.
And oh had I but known! (lines 75-84)

The apostrophes and exclamations ("oh!"), which echo each other, cause the passage to have a breathlessness, and a horror, as the speaker processes how being pretty, "looking well," can have very real consequences. She wants him to "count her fair," esteem or regard her for her beauty. However, in finding her so, she awakes to the realization that she will be soon be discounted as his "wife." So she also wants him to "count her fair," or properly evaluate her full worth.

What is unspoken in this passage and the rest of the poem is that to be "wife" is to risk a quantitative loss of self, as a wife must submit sexually and be subsumed legally, politically, and socially into her husband. As detailed in the introduction to this dissertation, such thinking was in keeping with Victorian domestic ideology. In an 1855 pamphlet entitled "How to choose a wife," the author wrote that "A wife is but another self. Between man and wife there must be only one interest and one aim."[8] Men and women had been raised believing that a husband and wife became "one flesh," in keeping with scripture and nineteenth-century gender discourse.[9] Consequently, the happiest girl knows that becoming a "wife" will involve "forgetting all myself in him" and what she calls "That subtle pain of exquisite excess, / That momentary infinite sharp joy" (lines 144-46). Like the speaker in "By the Looking-Glass," this woman is also aware that she will be "Loved as one says it whose life has gone out / Into another's for evermore, / Loved as I know what love might be" (lines 113-16). The act of "forgetting all myself in him" occasions

[8] H. W. H., "How to Choose a Wife," 37.

a double death: the first social as she has "no independent legal identity in the eyes of the law";[10] the second, sexual, as *la petite mort*, that "momentary infinite sharp joy," kills her girlish naiveté with the "subtle pain of exquisite excess." Sexual relations bind a woman and man together into a new "infinite" social set "evermore." Pleasure, or pain, that is "momentary" can be "infinite" when the social consequences of that act last for the remainder of a woman's life.

The poem's repetitions are another expression of Webster's meditation on the radically open, potentially infinite combinations that arise from such social transitions. Much as Webster does in "By the Looking-Glass," replication and sequences, repeating a word too many times, "I, I, I" or "A week ago…A week ago…A week ago" involves an emptiness that marks both a null set and an awareness of infinity. In mathematical terms, between a zero and a one, there are a potentially infinite number of fractions. In terms of the speaker in the poem, between the empty-minded automaton who can "think nothing" and the engaged woman who is "half afraid love is not love," there are an infinite number of possible mind sets regarding this marriage (line 106). For instance, the opening stanza falls into traditional platitudes expected from an engaged girl, all about her "sweet happy love" and how "fortunate" she is. Yet, the repetitions betray this language, as each side of her feelings—what is expected from her, and the truth—get their respective say.

As repetitions continue throughout the poem, they have two notable effects: first, repetition is a self-soothing action that also reflects her doubleness of mind, and second, repetition locates her uncertainty in a lack of satisfactory expression that must be said once again. The speaker repeats the opening phrase "A week ago" at the start of each of the first three stanzas, lending a ruminative quality to the poem from the beginning. She is perseverating. At

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[9] Mark 10:7-9.
[10] Griffin, *Politics of Gender*, 4.

the same time, the repetition is characterized by semantic satiation. In other words, she repeats herself so often as to cause the phrases and words to lose meaning. The happiest girl is torn between desires, a claim which plays out in Webster's use of repetition. As Peter McDonald reasons, the

> formalization of repetition may speak allegorically of the desire in and 'behind' utterance for a perfect 'iteration', but it will also frustrate the intention that seems to have mastered it, both by its falling-off from self-identity (logically, the next word cannot be, after all, the same word), and by bringing home the very binary opposition which most threatens the idea of a solely intended meaning.[11]

Repetition is a marker of "poetic uncertainty" and an "opportunity involved in the sounding-over again of words."[12] Therefore, it is a perfect form for the poet to communicate her speaker's divided desires. The happiest girl is stuck between her anxiety and the opportunity that marriage promised women in the nineteenth century. In order to fulfill her social obligations and become included in her fiancé's social aggregate, the speaker first has to reconcile her divided mind, and the repetitions play out that struggle formally.

Although the poem does not use traditional end rhyme, in which two words echo each other but are different, Webster opts for exact repetitions instead, which can be understood as null rhyme.[13] Most rhymes are like a sequence that produces corresponding elements with a difference (1, 2, 3), but null rhymes, like Webster's repetitions, instead produce a mirroring effect with a qualitative difference. In other forms of rhyme, the corresponding words do not represent a unity, possessing as they do a logic of constantly crossing between the spaces of

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[11] Peter McDonald, *Sound Intentions: The Workings of Rhyme in Ninteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 41.
[12] Ibid., 43.
[13] McDonald understands rhyme and repetition as "two related formal qualities of verse" (*Sound Intentions*, 9, 11).

resemblance. Yet, resemblance is never exact even when the poet gives us precisely the same word or phrase. So even with null rhymes (and again, some might call this repetition) there is a sense of division in which a poet tries again to get the word right, empties out to fill a thought anew, or speaks a word or phrase with an alternate inflection. Null rhymes also echo the sound, as though one is caught in an potentially infinite feedback loop, or as though one voice is reflecting another, one speaker possessing integrity and the other a shadow. While the pair might look the same, the first or second instance of a null rhyme can possess quality that another instance lacks, much as the real person looking into a mirror has an integrity that their reflection can never acquire. At the opening of "The Happiest Girl," the poet produces a litany of repeated, time-oriented words, thereby expressing uncertainty, emphasizing division, and reinforcing the speaker's anxiety over her forthcoming wedding: an event now set in motion which she feels powerless to stop. We get "week/week," "yesterday/yesterday," "life/life," and "morrow/morrow." These exact repetitions give us the sense of two speakers living two lives, expressing two perspectives, at once synchronic and diachronic in their temporal orientation to one another. Rhymes as pairs that aurally correspond with each other might have implied a formal investment in unity, one which would run contrary to Webster's awareness that divisions and remainders are a more accurate representation of social relations.

II. "I, I, I": A Different Sort of Love Triangle

"By the Looking Glass" asserts that accounting for broader social aggregates is often the only way to preserve extramarital love beyond the bonds of marriage. By extramarital love, I do not mean only adultery, but all forms of intimacy in which a husband or wife might be involved, including platonic friendships and extended family. At the beginning of the monologue, the speaker has returned from the "glitter and din" of a party and is sitting before her mirror

meditating on the reasons why she is unmarried. At the mid-point of the poem, she unfolds a back story of a man who had paid her attention as a potential husband but has now married her younger sister. Ending with the woman's candle light fading out in the glass, the work of the poem is how the speaker tries to find a way forward. She is at once full of regret but also deeply conflicted in her divided love for her sister and the unnamed man, who is now her brother-in-law, a man whom she had previously hoped to marry.

All three characters form an aggregate within which pairs are united: the speaker and the man both love the sister, both sisters love the man, and the man is attracted to both sisters. There is something about this relational situation that goes beyond a traditional love triangle of two persons loving one other. Each aggregate multiplies this concept by positioning individual members of the triad as the loved object and simultaneously dividing the members as prospective lovers torn between options. For instance, the speaker is loved by her sister and the new brother-in-law, but her love for them in turn shatters her identity into potentially infinite parts.

While Webster's poem affirms this set of three, it begins with the speaker "Alone" (line 1); yet, not unlike Medea's inability to sever the tie that binds her to Jason, this speaker is never really alone because Webster affects the poem's turning inward to make the woman's reflection in the mirror her audience. She is throughout the poem multiplied by this reflection, this other self, through which the speaker focalizes her disappointment about the unrequited love:

A girl, and so plain a face,
Once more, as I learn by heart every line
In the pitiless mirror night by night,
Let me try to think it is not my own.
Come, stranger with features something like mine,
Let me place close by you the tell-tale light;
Can I find in you now some charm unknown,
Only one softening grace?

Alas! it is I, I, I,
Ungainly, common. The other night
I heard one say 'Why, she is not so plain.
See, the mouth is shapely, the nose not ill.' (lines 17-28)

The image in the mirror is "A girl," one like so many. In another moment, the speaker makes it clear that being one among many enables her to forget who she is, to divide her sense of self from the individual who has failed to be chosen in marriage: "Oh! to forget me a while / Feeling myself but as one in the throng!" (lines 49-50). The representation of herself as "one in a throng" is echoed by the replication of her subjective "I, I, I," in a sequence which makes her literally and figuratively one among many versions of herself. It is not only the mirror that repeats her image but her action of returning to the mirror "Once more...night by night" (lines 18-19). Like the happiest girl, this speaker perseverates through repetition. Parallelism retains the speaker's separation from nightly iterations of herself. She is near to her reflection and separate from it, being the physical counterpart of an image that she wants to "try to think it is not my own" (line 20). Since she has just returned from the "glitter and din" of an evening party, an initial reading of the line "The other night / I heard one say" can easily assume that the speaker means literally she overheard someone speaking about her at a similar event. Yet, registering the poetic scene in which the speaker sits before a class, confronting "I, I, I," also suggests that the "one" she heard "say" such things about her appearance might have been thoughts in her own mind about herself during the nightly rendezvous with her looking-glass. The title reminds us that the speaker is not in front of a mirror but "By the Looking-Glass," a glass that is looking back at her as she is looking at it.[14] In each of these ways, the speaker is separated from herself, so that while she is "Alone" she is always part of an infinite sequence of selves stretching forward and backward in time.

[14] Patricia Riggs also registers how "the verbal imbedded in the noun 'looking-glass' suggests active self-perception

The speaker's exasperated repetition of the lyrical "I" at the start of the next octave performs the infinite regression, recursion, or construction of a mise en abyme. In a sense, what the poet depicts here is an infinite sequence in which the addition of one implies that another one and another one and another one can always be added. Algebraically, this might be expressed as the logic of n + 1. Even as she looks at this face "night by night" and is doing so "[o]nce more," the repetition of each of those encounters involves the speaker's divided self, the different selves that come to the mirror altered by their daily experiences and her integrated "I" that unites all prior instantiations of that image. The speaker further separates herself from her reflection, calling it "stranger." She says she is "close by you" to her reflection, not one with her reflection but next to it. The face has "features something like," but not exactly, her own.

Unlike "The Happiest Girl," which foregoes rhyme to emphasize a lack of unity, Webster elects a rhyme scheme in this poem, a choice which enables her to at once depict the speaker's reflection and to imply that such corresponding representations always come with a difference. Every "I, I, I" is the same "I" and an "I" separate from her: separated by the mirror, separated by instances of regarding herself, separated from what she wants to think of herself. At the same time, the persistent reappearance of such divisions and fractured formulations underscores the problem of living in parallel, of being a social remainder, that the poem is repeatedly compelled to restage. To live in parallel to another, as we will see with Jason and Medea, is to accept a social compromise of nearness but never togetherness, to be separate—always—without resolving the distance conditioned by the form.

This divided, sequenced, replicated "I" is the self the speaker brings to her meditation on her relationships with her sister and new brother-in-law, so that the speaker is able to justify her inclusion in their marital set. Though two have become one, the speaker's fracturing into "I, I, I"

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in a way that the more modern and more passively connotative term 'mirror' does not" (*Julia Augusta Webster,* 93).

leaves separate selves to love her sister, love the man, love the brother-in-law, and each differently. In this way, the first half of the poem in which the speaker contemplates her plainness conditions the possibility of the latter half of the poem in which she comes to terms with where she stands in relation to her sister and brother-in-law's new life. The poem is almost divided in half structurally to reinforce this reading: Webster devotes the first 16 octaves to the speaker's reflection on her reflection (i.e., the reason that plain women wind up spinsters), and then gives over the latter 11 octaves to the speaker's working through of where she stands in relation to her new social set. This large scale formal division can also be read as the speaker accepting why she is divided from the people she loves and then developing a way to be reunited with them, if only in alternately defined interpersonal relationships. Instead of being solely her sister, the bride will now be his wife and Mrs. ____. Instead of being her lover and potential husband, the groom will be her brother-in-law, husband to her sister. Webster's work understands that interpersonal relationships are dynamic systems that change continuously. "By the Looking Glass" constructs a model of a moment in which a relationship is actively in flux, and she does that by thinking in terms of social aggregates.

Specifically, Webster asserts that speech and silence can form aggregates, which divide and double, and can include unities as well as remainders. What the man has spoken or not is central to how the speaker understands him to be variously connected to her and to her sister. She claims "I have not loved" but then qualifies that to explain "Loved as one says it whose life has gone out / Into another's for evermore, / Loved as I know what love might be" (lines 113-16). That this love is distinctly sexual is revealed by her later confirmation that she has retained her "scatheless maidenly pride" (line 130). She aligns the loss of her virginity to the kind of love that forever binds a woman to a man, so that her "life has gone out / Into another's for evermore." A

woman's loss of her own "life" in marriage, a bond expected to be confirmed by sexual congress, is the specific kind of loving that the speaker describes. She is being somewhat disingenuous here by drawing a distinction between marital love, sex, platonic love. As so many Webster characters do, this speaker is also fooling herself by asserting "I have not loved." She has loved, but only in a certain way. Shortly after this moment, she reiterates, "I had not grown to my love, / Though it might have been" (lines 161-62). The repetition of "might have been" reinforces the shared sense of regret and relief that marks the poem. Had she "grown to" her love, she might have embroiled herself in a relationship with this man in ways that would have forced her to break her sister's heart. Her divided mind, split between unrequited love for the man and abiding love for her sibling, recalls the divided minds of Jason and Medea, who grapple with their shared love and hate.

Thinking back to her "I, I, I," this speaker has demonstrated a capacity for justification which emerges here in her ability to distance herself from the sexual desire she seems to have approached consummating. She hints: "It might have been—for did he not speak / With that slow sweet cadence that seemed made deep / by meaning" (lines 131-33). She "might have" lost her "maidenly pride" to him because of his "slow sweet cadence," which wooed her into thinking that she was, as she later says, "something to him" (line 146). Unspoken in this is the potential for binding herself sexually to one who might never have intended to make that bond legal. There is a frisson of realization here in which the speaker is acknowledging how close she came to social disgrace with this man who is now her brother-in-law. What he spoke in "slow sweet cadence" had the power to make the speaker and the man an aggregate in either marriage or social iniquity.

But later, the speaker confirms that she cannot blame him for marrying her sister because "[n]othing was spoken to bind him to me" (line 163). Whatever previously passed between the two, what he did "speak / With slow sweet cadence" was not the right kind of speaking to accomplish a marital bond. Giving over her love, and losing herself in a way that only a wife should, to man who spoke, but spoke the wrong kind of words, not words of binding but only words of "deep…meaning," would have placed her in the wrong sort of social aggregate. She implies that the man's words were only intended to take advantage of her "maidenly pride" and had no intention of making her an offer of marriage. Even as Webster conveys how speech can form social bonds that are both right and wrong, she also suggests that silence can divide social sets.

In the speaker's concern that someone might tell her sister of her husband's prior romance, Webster acknowledges that speaking has the potential to divide social sets, as much as form them. The speaker says, "It is well that no busy tongue / Has vexed [my sister's] heart with those bygone tales" (lines 153-54). She explains that if the brother-in-law had spoken anything to "bind" him to her, she would "speak though I spoke [my sister's] doom, / Though grief had the power to kill" (lines 175-76). In each moment, Webster struggles to reconcile how what we speak and don't speak has the power to form, or destroy, social bonds for good or ill. If gossips told the sister of her new husband's former dalliance, it might upset her and cause a division between husband and wife. And the speaker knows that she, too, has the power to cause such a rift, but her brother-in-law's failure to speak words that had the power to "bind" them together, even as a promise, precludes her from informing her sister of what's passed between them.

Not speaking and only imagining a relational tie to someone is insufficient to actually construct that link. The speaker asks, "And if he *had* loved me, was he not free, / When that

fancy passed, to loose the vague link / That only such fancy wove?" (emphasis Webster's, lines 166-68). As with Webster's Medea, the question here involves a doubleness that evidences the speaker's divided mind, and specifically her uncertainty about whether the man loved her, whether he had the right to move on to her sister, whether it was just a passing "fancy," and whether they only had a "vague link." She has to believe the forms of silence—her own about the prior relationship, the man's about his feelings for her—divide her permanently from the man in order for her sister to be bound to him. Having come to terms with her lack of marriageability and assured herself of her moral position in relation to both her sister and her new brother-in-law, the only path left open to this speaker is to keep her silence and to determine how she fits into their new relationship moving forward.

Rethinking this new social aggregate becomes the work of the final stanzas of the poem. The speaker deeply loves her sister, as Webster makes apparent from terms of endearment and references to the rightness of their marriage. For instance, the speaker says "her beauty's right/ Had made all his soul her own" and describes her "young fair sister bright with her bloom" (lines 151-52, 79). Because the younger sister is beautiful, she has a "right" to claim the man as her own, a right that the speaker has affirmed in the first half of the poem. However, the speaker's love for her sister becomes more ambiguous when she says, "Ah me! I love her so deep in my heart / And worship her beauty as he might do. If I could have but kept her a little time!" (lines 186-88). The expression "Ah me!" lends an emotional component to the statement that might otherwise be read as mere hyperbole. But also, the apostrophe reminds us that she is speaking to herself in the mirror. Instead, the sister feels an intense connection to her sister akin to married love. Then by expressing a desire to keep her sister, in the sense of a lover who is "kept,"

Webster deepens the sisters' bond as its own form of social set with which the intrusion of the husband has to contend.

Further evidence of what verges on a homoerotic love arrives when Webster affirms that the sisters share this bond: "I think she loved me till now / Nay doubtless she loves me quietly yet" (lines 193-94). Certainly, scholars acknowledge that women's relationships with each other were far more complex than the binary of heterosexual or homosexual relations. Webster might be gesturing to a kind of Victorian female relationships for which Sharon Marcus's *Between Women* makes such a compelling case.[15] However, this moment might also signal that the bride's affections have been drawn away by her new husband, for "his lightest fancy is more, far more, / To her than all the love I live" (lines 195-96). It might also be that the husband, in realizing his prior relationship with the speaker and its potential danger for his current bond with his new bride, has discouraged his wife's ardor for her sister in some way. The speaker acknowledges that she "sees him watch me at times, and his cheek / Crimsons a little, a little pales, / If his eye meets mine for a moment long" (lines 156-58). Such a reaction could be shame that he lead the speaker on, or it could be residual attraction to her, or it could be fear that she will tell the bride about their former connection. Consequently, as the speaker is at once working through the transition of her sister from sister to wife, she is also converting her former amorous feelings to feelings of familial regard for the new brother-in-law, while the brother-in-law is presumably likewise grappling with his own division between his wife and her sister, and the new bride is torn between her spouse and her sister. Again, instead of love as the "limited resource" Harrington asserts, Webster offers a social aggregate that becomes unlimited, reflecting infinitely

[15] Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007).

into an unknown abyss, and casting those involved into an exponential space where relationships ramify to the nth degree.

Webster's syntax in two moments reinforces this sense of ambiguity and anxiety about who is divided from whom and who connected in this new family aggregate. The first example arrives immediately after the speaker shares that there had been a love interest. Webster writes:

Hush! he has chosen his bride.
Oh! happy smile on her lips and cheek,
My darling! And I have no cause to weep,
I have now bowed me so low (lines 133-36)

Though the comma after "cheek" could cause the dependent clause to align "her" with "My darling!," Webster's use of enjambment enables "My darling!" to also apply to the man the speaker formerly loved. He has "chosen his bride," and having done so, the bride is smiling. The line, "Oh! happy smile on her lips and cheek, / My darling!" can be read as spoken to the man, then. He has made the bride happy, and so the speaker sees that their marriage is good. Wanting her former lover, her "darling" to be happy, she acknowledges how happy the bride is and says she herself now has "no cause to weep." That both bride and groom are happy together is sufficient cause to stem her tears. In closing, the speaker asks, "And is it not well that a bride should give / All, all her heart with her vow?" (lines 199-200). Again, Webster deploys a question to inject ambiguity and doubleness into the poem's work. The speaker might think it appropriate for the sister to give herself fully to her husband, to have her life go out "into another's forever more" as she says earlier in the poem, or she might be calling that into question. Webster's use of repetition for "All, all her heart" formally doubles the sister's heart and the speaker's wish that there will be enough of the heart to be shared around between herself and the husband. There are two "all her heart"s available: one for the speaker and one for the husband. As a result, it can be right for the bride to give all of herself in marriage, as long as

there is a doubling of her heart to enable her to join either sister or husband in their respective aggregates.

Having thus formally resolved the conundrum of how to share love among these three individuals, Webster concludes the poem by reinforcing that the divided speaker will never be a single united self. The speaker in "By the Looking Glass" is characterized until the final moments by a divided "I," which enables her to reach a resolution for how she will fit into her sister's new married life as a remainder, while also admitting that she will continue to be characterized by division. In closing, she tries to disclaim this divided self, saying,

But I—yes flicker pale light;
Fade into darkness and hide away,
The poor dull face that looks out from the glass,
Oh wearily wearily back to me!
Yes, I will sleep, for my wild thoughts stray
Weakly, selfishly—yes, let them pass,
Let self and this sadness of self leave me free,
Lost in the peace of the night. (lines 209-16).

Webster's use of emdashes to construct an aside in which the speaker encourages the candle to go out, a common poetic trope for one's life being extinguished, also divides the "I" again, much as her syntax does earlier in the poem with "I, I, I." Here, the division embeds the act of the one "I" being snuffed out, fading "into darkness" to "hide away," within the "I" beyond the mirror who decides to allow this division and new unification of self to occur. Read without the candle aside, the lines are, "But I, yes, let them pass, Let self and this sadness of self leave me free." The "self" and "sadness of self" are again doubles, divided from the "I" beyond the mirror. She wants to have these versions of her self "pass" and "leave me free." In order to accept her new position in the social set that includes her sister and her brother-in-law, two prior versions of herself have to "Fade into darkness": the version that loved the man and the version that intensely loved her sister. As those versions of self pass, the "I" divided from them syntactically

endures and is able to be “lost in the peace of the night,” a potentially infinite space stretching into darkness. Webster’s poem, therefore, constructs a model of one element of a social set (the speaker) transitioning between sets in order to preserve and transform her position within social structures that are dynamic and constantly changing.

III. “Am I no happy wife?”: Nearness and separation in “Medea in Athens”

In “Medea in Athens,” Webster thinks about the divisibility and relational nature of aggregates through nearness and separation. The poem’s meditation on traditional family structures and the social rules that formed them is the contrapuntal base note to the higher, lyrical pairing of Jason’s and Medea’s respective stories. Webster’s Medea articulates her anger at the man she loved as she comes to awareness that her attempts to divide herself from him, in marriage, in parenthood, and emotionally, have failed. In Euripides's play *Medea*, Jason leaves the sorceress Medea when Creon, king of Corinth, offers him his daughter, Glauce. Medea avenges her husband's betrayal by slaying their children. Webster sets Medea’s monologue after her escape, when she has married Aegeus, King of Athens, so that Medea’s separation from Jason extends to the geographical distance in the title.

But separations, distances, and divisibility emerge throughout the poem in many other ways, as well. For instance, Medea says “we two so far apart / As dead and living; I an envied wife, / And he alone and childless” (lines 152-54). Here, they are separated by death, at the same time they are separated by reparation. By reparation, I mean that each needs to make amends for a harm done to others: Medea to her children and to Jason, and Jason to Medea. The degree to which each is more or less successful in compensating the social set for a loss (of offspring, of a lover) also separates the two. In other words, by becoming Aegeus’s wife, Medea achieves reintegration into a social whole, while Jason remains divided from a social whole because he is

no longer married and no longer has offspring. Remarrying becomes a mechanism for making reparations accessible to Medea but not to Jason. Despite such divisions, Medea and Jason remain bonded together by the shared force of their former affection and current desire for vengeance. After Jason's ghost speaks to Medea, she rants:

Wrongs! thy wrongs!
Thy vengeance, ghost! What hast though to avenge
As I have? Lo, thy meek-eyed Glauce died,
And thy king kinsman Creon died: but I,
I live what thou has made me. (lines 184-88)

Jason's ghost now takes revenge on Medea for her own revenge on him, so that both characters are separated from each other by that desire for vengeance. At the same time, they are alike, together, and bonded by those same actions. Medea only understands her own right to "avenge" his marriage to Glauce, so she challenges "Thy vengeance, ghost!" as absurd. To her mind, she only acted and took revenge because of Jason's actions. So she says, 'I, / I live what thou has made me," which is to say she is responsible for actions that stem only from his actions. Being indivisible from his actions, Medea defies Jason's claim to vengeance and being wronged by her. And Webster subtly performs this nearness and separation, togetherness and division in the form of the poem, as well. Though it might be considered a dramatic monologue, there are actually two speakers in this poem: Medea and Jason. As a result, the monologue's ability to offer only one point of view is undermined by the togetherness of these two voices that each call and respond to each other.[16]

Throughout the poem, Medea and Jason struggle with their shared love and hate for one another, causing each character to be at once divided in mind and together in shared emotional

[16] Several critics have called into question the generic label "dramatic monologue" for Webster's poems. Patricia Rigg has suggested that they be considered "monodramas," a term used interchangeably with "dramatic monologue" in the 1840s (*Julia Augusta Webster*, 130).

turmoil. She initially feigns apathy about the deaths of their sons and of Jason himself, “And this most strange of all, / That I care nothing,” but she later belies that claim when she chastises herself for crying over Jason’s death: “What, thou, this whimpering fool, / This kind meek coward! Sick for pity, art thou? / Or did the vision scare thee?” (lines 22-23, 131-33). When she hears of Jason’s death at the opening of the poem, Medea says, “The news seemed neither good nor ill to me” (line 12). She repeats this language soon thereafter, asking, “Does it seem either good or ill to me? No; but mere strange” (lines 20-21). In a way, Medea is being disingenuous here. Webster is unconcerned whether or not the reader believes her, however, since in defiance of generic expectations for the dramatic monologue, Medea thinks she is only her own audience. She refuses to acknowledge the news as positive or negative, choosing instead to remain divided in her response. She feels none of what she expected to feel upon Jason’s death, only that it is “mere strange.” Her frequent claims to ambivalence are themselves divisions of options among which Medea refuses to choose. In one camp, she has love for Jason and grief over his death. In the other, she embraces detachment, hatred, and anger. Therefore, folded into Medea’s emotional ambivalence is a formal ambivalence, both of which perform her separation from and nearness to Jason.

When Jason speaks, he similarly shifts between anger and his love for Medea. He claims that marrying Glauce was “subtle policy,” only a political marriage, and he knows she never would have been all Medea was. He bemoans Medea taking away his legacy by killing their sons: “She might have spared the children, left me them— / No sons, no sons to stand by me now” (lines 97-98). By killing their sons, Medea also effectively eliminated one of the social sets to which she and Jason belonged as intersections. It is as if Medea’s goal is to break the bond between herself and Jason by systematically eliminating the social sets to which they both

belong. But this fails because new social sets are perpetually being constructed. Jason actually takes umbrage at Medea's ability to form new social sets when he claims that he is allowed to marry another, but Medea cannot. Jason blames Medea now for being happy with King Aegeus: "She who sits fondling in a husband's arms" (line 114). Their respective vacillation suggests the mental states of both Jason and Medea as they obsess over events that cannot be undone (deaths) or fulfilled (their love, revenge). At the same time, Webster's frequent use of repetition, such as "Am I no happy wife?" (lines 240, 242) emphasizes options being weighed. As McDonald puts it, the effect of heavily repetitive blank verse "is to produce of sense of intricate discrimination."[17] In the first instance when Medea asks, "Am I no happy wife?," she asks herself whether she is happy with Aegus. In the second instance, however, the echo of "Am I no happy wife?" reminds the reader and Medea that she never was Jason's "happy wife." To be Aegus's "happy wife" required her to be "no happy wife" for Jason. The repetition then is a moment of weighing fine distinctions in language that reveal the ruminative character of this poem. Moreover, the repetition reinforces how Jason and Medea belong to the same social sets that groups them with Glauce, Aegus, their sons, and their extended family members. For example, Medea references the "credulous girls," who "slay their father," the daughters of Pelias of Iolkos, and her own "young brother," Apsyrtos, all of whom have been caught up in social sets which Jason and Medea's nearness defines (lines 214-15, 211). Their presence and relationship can be repeated within different social sets because they are the intersection of such groups, the shared presence that defines each collective.

Put differently, there are many possible social sets within Webster's poem, and in each, Jason and Medea are the intersections of the sets, or what the sets share in common. As the intersection of so many social sets, Medea describes her relationship to Jason through nearness,

[17] McDonald, *Sound Intentions*, 90.

which signs for how the two can be divided but will always be part of a set together. Having heard Jason's ghost speak, Medea observes that it is "[a] wondrous thing / To be so separate having been so near— / Near by hate last, and once by so strong love" (lines 162-64). To be "near," then, is to share something in common so intensely as to be conflated with each other. They become "[n]ear by hate last," or most recently, because their shared hatred for each other, their shared desire for revenge on one another, ultimately links them together in vengeance. Medea wonders if they had stayed together, if Jason had not thrown her over to marry Glauce, whether they would have remained "near" instead through their deep love and devotion for one another:

Would love have kept us near if he had died
In the good old days? Tush, I should have died too:
We should have gone together, hand in hand,
And made dark Hades glorious each to each. (lines 165-68)

She asks whether they would have remained "near" if Jason had died back when they still loved one another, "In the good old days." And she concludes that not only would they have maintained their bond but that she would have died in order to preserve her connection to him: "together, hand in hand" they would travel into the underworld and light up the "dark" for one another, "each to each." The parallelism of the syntax here, "hand in hand," "each to each," "he had died…I should have died too," demonstrates the link that binds Jason and Medea together. The two are equidistant, like parallel lines, and will never meet again in this life; they are separated at the same time that their relationship is reinforced by the very fact of their being in parallel. Even as they are divided in this moment by death, by remarriage, by anger, by revenge, by geography, being "so separate," Medea makes it clear that the two will always be "so near."

One of the aspects of Webster's work that can make her project difficult to trace is that she selects profoundly conflicted characters who vacillate between certainty, rhetorical

questions, and answering their own queries; her use of questions as a formal mechanism throughout her work occasions misreadings that assume the questions are statements or assertions, when, in fact, Webster deploys them for their very doubleness. In "Medea in Athens," the questions also reinforce the speakers' divided minds, their nearness and separation from each other. Here's one moment among many in which Medea pelts Jason's ghost with interrogatives:

> Lo, I am
> The wretch thou say'st; but wherefore? by whose work?
> Who, binding me with dreadful marriage oaths
> In the midnight temple, led my treacherous flight
> From home and father? Whose voice when I turned
> Desperate to save thee, on my own young brother,
> My so loved brother, whose voice as I smote
> Nerved me, cried "Brave Medea"? For whose ends
> Did I decoy the credulous girls, poor fools,
> To slay their father? When have I been base,
> When cruel, save for thee, until—Man, man,
> Wilt thou accuse my guilt? Whose is my guilt?
> Mine or thine, Jason? Oh, soul of my crimes,
> How shall I pardon thee for what I am? (lines 210-219)

Medea's point is that any of her actions derived from Jason's desires and choices, so that he should not blame her for the outcome of what she's done. Certainly, Webster is working through a complex stance on shared responsibility here. Yet, each question also formally implies that nearness and separation defines Medea and Jason as elements of a social set. When Medea asks, "Whose is my guilt? / Mine or thine, Jason?," Webster reinforces the difficulty of separating these two characters as individuals. Medea calls Jason the "soul of [her] crimes," so that their nearness previously bonded by love can also be understood as uniting them in wrongdoing. Jason was the spirit, or prime mover, the cause of her decision to commit murder. She asks "whose voice as I smote / Nerved me," which suggests both the separation of a voice next to her goading her into action and the nearness of a voice within her, the "soul" of her violence, which "Nerved me," or quite literally became a part of her psyche and body. "Nerved" might be read not only as

a disconnected voice giving her encouragement but also as her own embodied, physiological nerves responding to his commands. So when Medea concludes, "How shall I pardon thee for what I am?," Webster's syntax again exerts a dizzying twist enabling the line to be read as either Medea damning herself or Medea damning Jason for what she has become. Read in one way, she has become what she is only through his actions and desires, so that pardoning him is impossible. Read in a second way, "How shall I pardon thee" can be understood as saying that she cannot pardon him because her actions and what she has become are not his fault. Placing the emphasis on the first "I" and "thee," the line seems to also set up a hierarchy, as though she does not have the right to pardon him or pardon herself; only he can do that. Each of these readings obtain so that, depending on which perspective one takes—Jason's or Medea's—the line accomplishes the aggregative mechanism operative throughout the poem.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Webster's poetry used repetitions and remainders to show that each aggregation entails separations and loss. When a coupled married, the logic of "two became one" instead forced more complex accounting to include the social remainders that came of such pairings. In-laws, former partners, children from other relationships, and even one's own divided mind entered into that union along with the bodies of the husband and wife. By developing models of social sets in her poetry, Webster registers cultural anxieties about how counting impacted domestic relationships, a couple's wider social sphere, and the nation. Challenging the logic of marital math risked social disruption. When the ideological imperative of marital unity began to collapse, Victorians had to face the untenable "dichotomy between authoritarian and companionate models of marriage."[18] If a family no longer had the husband as the "head" of the

[18] Griffin, *Politics of Gender*, 46.

family, then the home became "a divided empire" with the husband on one side and the wife on the other.[19] Once the marital arithmetic of ones and twos broken down, chaos, discord, and disruption were sure to follow. Webster's poetry contends with such assumptions and endeavors to illustrate that discord was already part of the nineteenth-century's antiquated social calculus.

Webster's poems do not always explicitly address mathematical concepts that relate to social sets. In her dramatic monologue "A Castaway," for instance, Webster's outspoken prostitute Eulalie depicts a social system of women who represent a "superfluity" in an "indifferent world" that counts "statistically…by censuses not separate souls" (lines 299, 563-65). Here, Webster identifies statistics, a vital accounting for lives, as a social problem rather than a solution. Resisting such self-evident language in her work, my procedure in what follows instead approaches forms and language that do the work of mathematical abstraction. Specifically, I give attention to repetition and questions as forms which create divisions, doubles, parallels, and remainders. I read repetition in her dramatic monologues as a series of experiments with mathematical form that disclose the literary, social, and political implications of such a project. Repetition can create a rhythm, inject a sense of urgency, cause obstructions, reflect rumination, or freeze a poem in stasis. Because repetition is formally complex, Webster is able to make use of its plurality to think the social. In aggregate, such mathematical models are all part of sets, which enable social groups to be read in a quantitative register.

As a lifelong advocate for women's rights and education, Webster's work speaks to one of the century's greatest concerns: the math of marriage.[20] Her involvement with women's suffrage exposed to her to debates of the day about the "math" of marriage in which the husband

[19] "Parliamentary Intelligence," *Times* (April 19, 1877), 6.
[20] Rigg, *Julia Augusta Webster,* 186-95.

and wife form a "perfect unity of heart and mind,"[21] about women's "capacity" to serve as voters, and about the numerical issues that were the basis of many enfranchisement claims. How does a society talk about its social structures and the relationships between citizens without thinking in terms of numbers? In a period obsessed with "the Woman Problem" and devoted to the norming function of marriage, Webster uses a plurality of mathematical abstractions, such as divisions, parallels, doubling, and remainders, to rethink social relations.

The fourth and final chapter of this project will turn attention to the work of the Michael Fields (a.k.a., Edith Cooper and Katherine Bradley)—two women writing as one man. Webster actually reviewed the Michael Fields' poetry on several occasions for *Athenaeum*. She found *Sight and Song* "disappointing," calling it "a catalogue—a brilliantly written catalogue, indeed; with careful details as aptly as minutely related; with the masterly poetic diction; with varied rhythm, stiff, but attractive from its quaint prim dignity; with appreciative acumen—yet at its best still a catalogue."[22] When she reviewed the Fields' *Underneath the Bough* six months later, however, her praise was unequivocal:

> The intellectual strength and originality—the acquired mannerism—the rich condensed expression—the fine intensity, planned and dominatingly present, yet skilfully [sic] kept half concealed—the splendid control of metre, coupled with the inability, or more probably the want of wish to fascinate by the melody of balanced cadences and with the preference for the grace of quaint and skilful mingled stiffness—are, while always recognizable in any of Michael Field's songs and brief separate lyrics, brought into still stronger prominence as essential characteristics by the close kindred resemblance apparent when these poems are grouped together.[23]

Her language here touches on the numerical at several moments. The "fine intensity" of the poems is "half concealed," the meter is "coupled" and the rhythm is "balanced." More importantly though is Webster's observation that the quality of the poems is easier to glean when

[21] Palmer, *Memorials*, 467.
[22] Review, *Athenaeum* (January 7, 1893), 14.
[23] Review, *Athenaeum* (September 9, 1893), 345.

they are "grouped together." While not entirely a theme of her review, it is clear that Webster's attention continued to gravitate toward how the poems could be grouped or thought of in collections. She writes: "And while on a first quick perusal one receives the impression of unity—almost as if the poems were irregular stanzas of one work—afterwards, try to find any two poems to pair together as written from exactly the same point of view and you fail."[24] What she describes here hearkens back to my discussion of aggregative poetics in the introduction to this dissertation. There I argue for aggregation in Victorian women's poetry as that which is collected yet remains characterized by distinction. It also evokes the mathematical understanding of aggregation as collection that "keeps things distinct and is a further entity over and above them."[25] In addition, Webster's attention is drawn to "A Girl" out of all of the poems in *Underneath the Bough* because it "is notably interesting for its statement of a strange poetic unison of two." She suspects that for "most readers the peculiar interest of the stanza will lie in the suggestion of the two lives, not twin, but with one heart."[26]

I close with this set of observations in order to suggest that a discourse of aggregative poetics was unspoken but at work in the nineteenth century. Not only were these women poets aware of each other, but they responded to one another's work and were attentive to the ways that it constructed numerical models.[27] As the fourth chapter of this project will demonstrate, the quantification of sexual identity in the Fields' poetry recognizes that unity necessitates separation, precisely as Webster's review suggests. In other words, in order to unite or reunite,

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[24] Review, *Athenaeum*, September 9, 1893, 345.
[25] Potter, *Set Theory*, 22.
[26] Review, *Athenaeum*, September 9, 1893, 346.
[27] Consider, for instance, Barrett Browning's epigraph in Greek from *Medea* to "The Cry of the Children": "Woe, Woe, why do you look upon me with your eyes my children?" (Selected Poems, eds. Marjorie Stone and Beverly Taylor [New York: Broadview, 2009], 150, 150n5). Some women would not have been able to read it, but Webster could, and in fact wrote her own "Medea," as we have seen, and produced a translation from the original Greek. This is but one small way in which we can see Webster engaging with EBB and moving away from her (Riggs, *Julia Augusta Webster*, 22, 62-64).

first “ones” must be separate. In the Fields’ work, separations come and go, but unity is always on offer through choice and poetic production. Their fluid form of unity troubles recent critical assertions of their “idealized intimacy” by acknowledging that individuals can leave and return to the wholeness of relationships. The Fields’ unity and divisions involve a political and ethical position, or a sort of “intimate integrity,” in which deciding what constitutes wholeness is relative to their own unique relationships and social conditions.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Transitions, Queer Social Counting, and Michael Field's Intimate Integrity

Thus far, the preceding chapters have illustrated how nineteenth-century women poets constructed a plurality of models to think through the complexity of social numbers. Elizabeth Barrett Browning offered us a model of political supplementation through which those who lack access to democratic processes, or are socially marginalized in other ways, can see themselves as included even while accepting that they will always be marked by division. Christina Rossetti raised questions about the messiness of what it means to be two of something. Through her use of lists, tropes, and rhymes, Rossetti explored her interest in and perplexity with different scales of combination. The poet experimented with forms of two that try to think past mere binaries or dualities to a place where ambiguity is the acceptable condition for a world. Augusta Webster then provided social models that reject the "two become one model" of marriage to instead think about the proliferative capacity of plus one. For Webster, marriage always needs to account for the social remainders and outliers that are not part of the married couple's twosome. In this final chapter of my project, I turn attention to a queer model of social counting, one in which transition and separation are the fundamental requirement for a new kind of unity.

In this chapter, I argue that a pattern of transitions from unification to division and back again throughout Michael Field's work invokes a reparative move that constructs what I term "intimate integrity." In order to be united, there first has to be a division or separation that draws the loved object away. At the same time, intimate integrity is a distinctly queer aggregate uninterested in attaining or aping the norms of heterosexual marriage.[1] As David Halperin

[1] I employ the term "queer" here in Judith Butler's sense of that which rejects the regulatory practices of gender norms. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*: *On the Discursive Limits of* "*Sex*" (New York: Routledge, 1993) 40-43, 228.

describes, queer "acquires its meaning from its oppositional relation to the norm. Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant."[2] To speak of norms is of course to speak of what is statistically, or numerically, dominant. Queerness as I understand, then, is innately an ontological state concerned with quantification, as it is "an interstitial and transitional figure of gender that is not reducible to the normative insistence of one and two."[3] Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, the poets who wrote as "Michael Field," recognized the need for more complex models of social counting. What they constructed is decidedly queer: intimate integrity is always in transition, "never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes."[4] For queer individuals, one's ability to leave and return to those close relationships is an ethical stance which enables an individual to assert the integrity both of oneself and one's relationship.

Such intimate integrity in Michael Field's work exists in contradistinction to Victorian marriage discourse about "perfect unity"; queer relationships form unities, but not between a husband and wife, not one concerned with futurity through human procreation, and not one in which the individuals are "one flesh."[5] Futurity might instead arrive through intellectual offspring, "a child" born of two minds, or the reciprocity of memories requiring at least two to experience them together, or not at all.[6] Social counting for Cooper and Bradley, therefore, is a queer positionality that "attains its ethical value…[by] accepting its figural status as resistance to the viability of the social while insisting on the inextricability of such resistance from every

[2] Halperin, "How to Do the History of Homosexuality," 62.
[3] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 43.
[4] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 228.
[5] For more on futurity in queer lives, see Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke UP, 2004).
[6] I think here also of Kevin Ohi's discussion of "idea-babies" as a figure of queer knowledge transmission (*Dead Letters Sent: Queer Literary Transmission* [Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota P, 2015], 2).

social structure."[7] In other words, the intimate integrity mobilized by Michael Field's poetry is a queerly reparative, ethical unity of selves necessitating division into those "ones" in order to simultaneously undermine the social and affirm the impossibility of separating their condition as resistant to those same social structures.[8] By addressing how Michael Field's poetry literally, figuratively, and formally counts on the lover's return, thereby emphasizing the dynamic transitional space of leaving and reunion as fundamental to the integrity of intimate relationships, this chapter demonstrates the ways in which these queer poets actuated the complexities of generational transition at the turn of the century. Instead of perseverating over the difficulties of letting go, Bradley and Cooper valorize transitions as a fundamental component of intimacy marked by both unity and separation.

Bradley and Cooper included a sonnet titled "Unity" in their volume *Wild Honey from Various Thyme,* which deploys the form of the Petrarchan sonnet to model a unity that at once admits separation and forecloses it. While the title of the poem promises an image of togetherness, what it constructs is formal and thematic separation embedded within potential and poetic unities:

They twain by Ostia's gardens, being spent
With a long journey, feeling need to win
New strength for a new voyage, far from din
Of the world's turmoil, in a window leant
Together and alone; and, with the scent
And flower of many roses flowing in,
Perceived the rule of the great peace begin
That has its towers beyond the firmament.(lines 1-8)

[7] Edelman 3.
[8] I think here of Eve Sedgwick's definition of the reparative critical condition as one able to "assemble or 'repair' the murderous part-objects into something like a whole—though, I would emphasize, *not necessarily like any preexisting whole*" (Emphasis the author's). Sedgwick goes on to say that "Once assembled to one's own specifications, the more satisfying object is available both to be identified with and to offer one nourishment and comfort in return. Among Klein's names for the reparative process is love" (*Touching Feeling*, 128).

This third-person octave speaks of two, “they twain,” who sit “in a window.” Twain’s double valence connotes the adjectival sense of two, or indicates divide or sunder as a verb. As a verb, “They twain” signifies “They divide” or “They split,” but also “They are made two” through the action of division. Even as both senses of “They twain” suggest separation, the spondee (double stress) “They twain” formally maintains unity in opposition to that potential division. Twain, then, involves both unification and division, mirroring the image of two leaning in a window who are “[t]ogether and alone.” My reading is that the poem is registering the impossibility of counting in this fashion: one cannot be simultaneously together—united as a fused entity with a lover—and alone—separated from that lover as an individual. Yet, if these lovers are united as a single, third person, much as Cooper and Bradley saw themselves as assimilated into Michael Field, then “together and alone” takes on a third register wherein “alone” does not separate the lovers emotionally from each other (the first impulse when reading the phrase), but instead characterizes them as alone because they become singular when together.

The form of the sonnet troubles and affirms this tension of “together and alone” by joining the octave in third person to a sestet in first person. The octave deploys the third person to portray the lovers formally, as well as thematically, as “twain.” But the volta, the “turn” which arrives at line 9, allows the speaker in the sestet to be alone in being allowed to speak. At the same time, the speaker is together with the loved object, “thou and I,” and together with the octave in third person, whose speaker is an unknown, omniscient observer:

Love, were it possible that thou and I,
Being one day together soul to soul,
At the shore of some wide waters, in the flush
Of roses tinging them, might so draw nigh
That we might feel of our accord the hush,
Binding all creatures, of God's pure control! (lines 9-14)

Bradley and Cooper make skilled use of the volta here to double the effect of their sonnet's experimentation with unity and division. Through such formal methods, the poem becomes a working through of how to be together and apart, how to live with conditions of uncertainty marked by nearness and distance. It is not that the poets are making a case for either condition as preferable, but that the somewhat syllogistic casting back and forth between the two options, remaining in transition, is the goal. Again, as I have shown in the preceding chapters, the poets deploy the figures of language and the figuration of literature to enumerate, performing a sort of arithmetic operation that counts the figures of text. I argue that the forms of their poetry ask questions about unity and separation, most often through the optative and moments of return. Yet, similar to Rossetti, answering those questions is not the immediate work of the poems. The fact of being in that questioning space enabled by the optative mode of "what if" phrases, of appreciating transition for its ability to bring about alternatives, is the poets' optimum model for unity.

For instance, the lines syntactically create an interrogative, "were it possible," though the question transforms into a statement or solution, one which implies a wish or desire in keeping with the optative mode. As Susan Wolfson details in her study *The Questioning Presence,* optatives, which express hope, possibility, suppositions, or indirect discourse, are a form of pre- or quasi-interrogative rhetoric.[9] As such, the optative mode inherently involves a plurality of possibility; the optative mode, therefore, becomes a poetic way to count for the Fields. It also suggests a transitional moment in which potential is held out as so many unknowns. One is transitioning from one state to another, and events may or may not fulfill the related desires. The

9 Susan Wolfson, *The Questioning Presence* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1986), p. 28.

optative was a recognized literary mode for Greek texts in Bradley and Cooper's day.[10] Their use of the optative, consequently, has a triple effect of at once multiplying the possible outcomes of the poetic condition, being a structure through which the poets could experiment with transitional states, and reaching backward historically, an ontological position for which they are well recognized.[11] Initially, the speaker asks "were it possible" that the lovers, "thou and I" could "one day" be "together soul to soul." At the same time, they are also "[at] the shore of some wide waters." The pluralized "Waters" implies separate shores, where each is on the opposite side of a body of water, for these are the conditions we must visualize in order for two to need to "draw nigh."

The need to "draw nigh" suggests they are currently not near one another, and the qualifier "might" holds open the alternative that they also might not achieve such unity. They are not currently "together soul to soul," but might "one day" be. The poets assume that incorporeal souls would not need to be in the same space to remain bonded another fashion. The speaker hopes to "draw nigh" with the loved object in order to "feel of our accord the hush, / Binding all creatures" (lines 13-14). Accord means reconciliation, harmony, or correspondence. By drawing together across the space of the "wide waters" that separate them, they "might feel of our accord." In other words, their correspondence of souls brought "together soul to soul" might feel a sense of peace through the transition from separation to reconciliation.

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10 See, for instance, J. B. Sewall, "On the Distinction Between the Subjunctive and Optative Modes in Greek Conditional Sentences", *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1869-1996), Vol. 5 (1874) 77-82; Henry Harman, "The Optative Mode in Hellenistic Greek," *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis*, 6.2 (Dec. 1886) 3-12; Mortimer Lamson Earle, "A Suggestion on the Development of the Greek Optative," *The Classical Review*, 14.2 (Mar. 1900) 122-23.

11 On Bradley and Cooper's conception of their position in history as forward and backward looking, see Kate Thomas, "'What Time We Kiss': Michael Field's Queer Temporalities," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 13.2/3 (2007): 327-51; Krista Lysack, "Aesthetic Consumption and the Cultural Production of Michael Field's Sight and Song," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 45.4 (Autumn 2005): 935-60.

Yet, the optative mode, “were it possible,” “one day,” “might so draw night,” “might feel of our accord,” compounds the potential for each mutually exclusive event to also not occur. It might not be possible that they will draw together across those “wide waters.” They might also not feel the accord that the speaker hopes will enable them to feel “the hush” or peace that “[binds]” all creatures. Although the form of the sonnet achieves the togetherness that the speaker can only hope to attain, as it pulls together the third person omniscient narration of the octave with the first-person point of view of the sestet, the optative mode leaves the possibility of division between the lovers an open question.

By asserting this understanding of queer social counting and transitions in which two have to divide into one and one in order to maintain their unbroken state as “ones,” but also as a pair, Bradley and Cooper take up a position on what it means to form a nontraditional, queer “perfect unity.” In order to generate such queer unions, be they doubles, triples, or more, their poetry marks the necessity of occupying a space of ongoing transition between the intimacy of the self and the intimacy of the relationship. The emphasis on a transitional state between being two, being “ones,” and being one and one in their poetry suggests a more complex and decidedly queer intimacy for its fragmentation and separations. There is no expectation of perfection or an ideal here, no “perfect unity,” no “idealized intimacy.” As a form of queer social counting, intimacy preserves the value of the individual’s deepest internal feelings, as well as the relational intimacy between those in a relationship. Integrity, by the same token, maintains the wholeness of the relationship while also encouraging the individual’s separate ethical and subjective wholeness. The way that Bradley and Cooper thematize and formalize unity and wholeness marks intimate integrity as a reparative gesture, one designed to bring together parts as a whole

but not "necessarily [a whole] like any preexisting whole."[12] As Cooper and Bradley say in their sonnet "The Lone Shepherd," "But we are broken, but we are renewed" (*WH* line 12). They must be "broken" in order to become "renewed." The other as a part of the self is at once "integral" and "other," requiring that transition be eternally on offer as the route of access between each occasion for being "together and alone."

I. Division and Unity, Separation and Return

Transitional relations take many forms in Bradley and Cooper's work, including historical appropriation. Francis O'Gorman, following Yopie Prins's seminal work *Victorian Sappho,* signals how Bradley and Cooper's "ventriloquizing" of Sappho simultaneously involves the "shattered canon" of the Greek poet and a form of "surety in the continuance of her deathless fame."[13] Likewise foregrounding the historical unity and divisions of the poets' work, Krista Lysack observes that their ekphrastic poems in *Sight and Song* bridge the temporal gap separating time periods. Similarly, Emily Harrington's attention to the print context of Bradley and Cooper's lyrics in dramas and manuscript journals leads her to assert that "these multiple incarnations reveal the lyric mode to depend on bonds that must consistently be unformed and reformed with every act of writing and reading."[14] Bradley and Cooper's lyrics display "not only the instability—and the portability—of the lyric 'I,'" but they offer an example of how "processes of detachment and attachment are fundamental to the lyric as a genre."[15] Like

[12] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 128.
[13] O'Gorman 655. See also Prins's chapter on Bradley and Cooper in Yopie Prins, *Victorian Sappho* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999) 74-111.
[14] Harrington, "Michael Field and the Detachable Lyric," *Victorian Studies* 50.2, *Papers and Responses from the Fifth Annual Conference of the North American Victorian Studies Association*, Held Jointly with the Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada (Winter 2008): 221-32 (221).
[15] Harrington, "Detachable Lyric", 221.

O'Gorman, Harrington tunes into Bradley and Cooper's tendency to unite and divide, though in Harrington's article those acts of detachment and attachment apply to print context and genre.[16]

There is a strong critical consensus that Bradley and Cooper concerned themselves with division and unity, though scholars have deployed a variety of terms to address this quality. O'Gorman has identified the ways that "loss will always be followed by attainment, even if attainment is always followed by loss" in Michael Field's *Long Ago*.[17] According to his reading, *Long Ago* is fascinated with "forms of permanence and loss."[18] He recognizes the cyclical nature of this relational dynamic as one in which the loss and attainment perpetually chase each other in an "endless sequence of possession and dispossession, love and departure…as inescapable as the movement from winter to spring."[19] Though he is using the terms "loss" and "attainment," and "loss" and "permanence," what he points to is actually the transitional state I am identifying.

While I do not disagree with these readings, the critical impulse to identify tidy binaries overlooks the ambiguity in Bradley and Cooper's own ways of counting. Although they consistently asserted what Emma Donoghue calls their "intertwined lives," they also crafted many poems that emphasized the complex duality of their nature.[20] Consider these lines in "From Baudelaire": "As two vast torches our two hearts shall flare, / And our two spirits in their double shining / Reflect the double lights enchanted there" (*WH* 39, lines 6-8). Bradley and Cooper's poetry, in allowing the ones and twos to coexist refuse the logic of binaries, and in so

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[16] Detachment is also something of a critical buzzword hovering around the Fields and queer theory alike. See, for instance, Matthew Burroughs Price's article "A Genealogy of Queer Detachment" in which he argues that that Walter Pater's *The Renaissance* reflects a "balancing act between engagement with and withdrawal from history that characterizes queer theory today". He considers Pater the "de facto theorist" of "queer detachment" (649). Matthew Burroughs Price, "A Genealogy of Queer Detachment", *PMLA*, 130.3 (May 2015): 648-65. Krista Lysack also observes how images are "detached" from artistic objects of description in Field's *Sight and Song* (936).
17 Francis O'Gorman, "Michael Field and Sapphic Fame: 'My Dark-Leaved Laurels Will Endure'", *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 34.2, Fin-de-Siecle Literature, Culture, and Women Poets (2006): 649-61 (652).
18 Ibid., 653.
19 Ibid., 651.
[20] Donoghue, *We Are Michael Field* (Bath: Absolute Press, 1997), p. 3.

doing, refuse the logic of the Victorian social calculus that demanded a heteronormative "perfect unity" in marriage.[21] Although each of the above scholars is right to notice the multiple ways that Bradley and Cooper were working through questions of unity and division, they have yet to recognize how the transitions that occur between these ontological states, these messy, nonbinary, middle spaces, do profound ethical and political work by allowing the seemingly impossible state of being "together alone" to stand uncontested. In fairness, Bradley and Cooper's insistence on being "a happy union of two" has lead the most rigorous critics to collapse biographical affirmations of oneness into the divided work of their poetry, a problem which this chapter sets out to address.[22]

While ample biographical evidence exists to make claims (and many have) for the historical association between their poetic investments and the poets' lives, I endeavor in this chapter to prize the two——text and biographies——apart.[23] In other words, I want to table their biographies and the question of whether or not they were sexually involved to ask instead how

[21] For an excellent extended account of the frequency with which the "perfect unity" of marriage was asserted as a counter to women's reform legislation, see Ben Griffin, *Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012).

[22] Bette London claims that the shared pseudonym "sheltered and expressed" Bradley and Cooper's unity. Bette London, *Writing Double: Women's Literary Partnerships* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1999) 67. Angela Leighton also elects to count Cooper and Bradley "as one" poet in her study of Victorian women poets. Angela Leighton, *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) 2. Harrington implies that the Fields were not trying to establish intimacy, or the bonds of verse that she explores in the bulk of her project, because they already had it. Moreover, this was not just any intimacy; it was an intimacy in which each was "mutually absorbed" or aggregated into the other, or what Caroline Baylis-Green has called "Field's constructed, overlapping and merged 'we.'" Emily Harrington, *Second Person Singular: Late Victorian Women Poets and the Bonds of Verse* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2014) 5; Caroline Baylis-Green, "'We Two Are One': Singularity and Duality in the Queer Life Writing of Michael Field and Anne Lister", The Michael Field Centenary Conference: New Directions in Fin de Siècle Studies, University of London, 11-12 July 2014.

[23] Virginia Blain has engaged in a related project when she attempted to read Bradley and Cooper's work as the "palimpsest" of layers that the poets had themselves identified in their poem of the same title. Blain's project, though, was to think of Bradley and Cooper's contributions to their work as separate poets, dialogic within the space of the poems rather than producing a "univocal product," on the grounds that prior readings have detracted from the dynamic nature of their poetry and their lesbian relationship. Virginia Blain, "'Michael Field, the two-headed nightingale': Lesbian Text as Palimpsest", *Women's History Review*, 5.2 (1996): 239-57 (239).

their poems think social counting.[24] The quantification of sexual identity in Michael Field's poetry recognizes that unity necessitates separation. In other words, in order for two to unite, first "ones" must be separate. One of the formal ways in which their poetry accomplishes such unities and divisions is through the optative mode, as explained above. This form of unity troubles recent critical assertions of Michael Field's "idealized intimacy" by acknowledging that the wholeness of relationships demands the fluidity of departure and return.[25] Rather than achieving an ideal, Michael Field's unity is an ethical position involving fracturing and fragmentation, or what I term "intimate integrity," in which one's relationship and social conditions determine what constitutes wholeness.

On the one hand, intimacy is both individual, as "pertaining to the inmost thoughts or feelings; proceeding from, concerning, or affecting one's inmost self," and relational, as closely connected by acquaintance, friendship, or personal knowledge.[26] Therefore, intimate has both the internal and external valences that queer theory values and that are necessary for thinking about the Fields. Integrity, on the other hand, denotes wholeness and asserts an uncorrupted condition, like unity. It means literally "undivided or whole" and the condition of being "unimpaired or

[24] Chris White would have us view Bradley and Cooper's relationship unequivocally as sexual and "exotic eroticism" (26, 29). She strongly counters Lillian Faderman's position that Bradley and Cooper's relationship was only familial, or a "Romantic Friendship". Chris White, "'Poets and lovers evermore': The Poetry and Journals of Michael Field", *Sexual Sameness, Textual Differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing*, ed. Joseph Bristow (New York: Routledge, 1992) 26-43; Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: HarperCollins, 1981).

[25] At the same time, Blain claims that Bradley and Cooper's poems "show how sameness could productively co-exist with difference, and to offer a creative model which posited, above all, the conception of a 'difference-within-similarity". However, she demurs that "it has to be admitted that once this model is transferred to lesbian territory inhabited here by an actual aunt and niece who were in a lifelong partnership, it runs the risk of being re-submerged in the wash of sameness which so commonly glazes over the woman-woman dyad". I respectfully disagree with her. The point of an aggregative model of poetics, like her "difference-with-similarity", is to preserve the individual or particulate within sameness, not to submerge that difference or to absorb it. Poetry is capable of preserving difference because of its plurality of forms in ways that other texts might not be. Blain, "Two-Headed Nightingale", 241.

[26] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Intimate," 1c, 1d.

uncorrupted."[27] Taken together, then, intimate integrity marks how one's innermost thoughts and feelings, while fractured, fragmented, and possibly even including traumatic parts, have a wholeness, completeness, or unbroken state to them because of close relationships with others.[28] Intimacy and integrity are both conditioned by part-whole relations, characterized by unity and division. But intimacy and integrity can also be conceptualized as numerical, as each is concerned with the relationship of the one to the many. Understood in this way, intimate integrity becomes a method of making oneself or one's intimate relations "count," which is to say matter politically, ethically, and in representation.[29]

II. Intimate Integrity

To think about the transitional nature of intimate integrity, the most obvious poems to read from Bradley and Cooper are those poems which have received the lion's share of critical attention: "A Girl" and "A Palimpsest." Although "A Girl" at first offers a somewhat quotidian blazon, describing the love object's "face flowered for heart's ease" with "a mouth, the lips apart," in closing Bradley and Cooper write:

our souls so knit,
I leave a page half-writ—
The work begun
Will be to heaven's conception done,
If she come to it. (lines 10-13)[30]

Here, the loved object is not present for the speaker. She has to "come to" the "page half-writ" in order for "heaven's conception" to be "done." But the optative language "will be" and "If" offers no guarantee that the other half of the page will be written. There is an implied transition from

[27] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Integrity," 1b, 1c.
[28] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003), p. 147.
[29] As Butler points out, to ask "who counts" is to ask whose lives count as lives. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 20.

one state to another through which the lovers must pass in order for the optative to be fulfilled. As in "Unity," the use of the optative enables the poets to construct the transitional conditions of being "together alone" that intimate integrity demands. At the same time, their "souls [are] so knit" that the speaker leaves the "page half-writ," confident that the lover will complete the production if she finds the page. The "If" expresses uncertainty about whether the love object will find the page, not whether she will complete the page when she does.

In a helpful fashion, "A Palimpsest" in *Wild Honey from Various Thyme* appears to start mid-sentence with ellipses as though something more has already been said.[31] The ellipses, in fact, enable a reading of this poem as the other half of "A Girl," as though "A Palimpsest" is the "page half-writ" to which the long-anticipated lover from "A Girl" has now "come." The speaker suggests that in "the parchment hoary" of history there is something special, as their love is special. There are deeper things in their love for each other and knowledge of one another over time than can be viewed on the surface. Their love will add another layer, as feathers lie one over the top of the other, or the way that moonbeams interlace with a cloud; their love is represented as blended with other stories in history and will become part of the "parchment hoary," old in time, but also more "golden" for being something worth preserving. This developmental process demands numerous transitions through which the lovers will arrive at a form of intimacy more accurately representative of their unique relationship.

In these poems, the repeated oscillation between absorption and aggregation, unity and division, through which the individuals are preserved without being assimilated into one another, models a queer process of social production and reproduction, one in which the poets were

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[30] Michael Field, *Underneath the Bough* (Portland, Maine: Thomas B. Mosher, 1898), p. 51.
[31] Blain has already argued that we should read this poem as a heuristic for Bradley and Cooper's poems, as a suggestion that we need to read all of their work "palimpsestically", as the dialogic work of two authors. Blain, "Two-Headed Nightingale", 241.

constantly making and remaking their relationship with each other, their work, and their identities in order to sustain each. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner describe queer worlds as "space[s] of entrances, exits, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projected horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, incommensurate geographies."[32] As liminal, projective, disproportionate, or unreliable spaces, queer worlds demand that one maintain a state of transition and movement in order to navigate between options and the unanticipated. Transitioning, therefore, is a requisite characteristic of queer world-making, which I understand as synonymous with the production of a social life. The power of queer forms lies in their ability to be broken apart, so that they might ultimately come back together in alternative configurations. And it is queer world-making as a transitional process in Bradley and Cooper's poetry that I recognize as an ethical mechanism for lesbian histories. Maintaining a state of constant transition enabled the poets to posit alternative forms of social counting during a historical moment in which queer identities for women remained open secrets.

Turning attention now to the Fields' 1908 volume, *Wild Honey from Various Thyme*, the following section registers their investment in leave-taking and returns as part of this transitional process of queer intimacy. The title of *Wild Honey From Various Thyme* itself expresses part-whole relations, or unity and division, as it aggregates multiple instances and materials into one product—a decadent, pleasurable, sticky substance constructed from historical sources far afield from one another. Wild honey is a single product of "various," or multiple, sources (the pollen of many flowers is required to make one type of honey); it is an image of amalgamation. In a letter to Robert Browning, Cooper similarly called their collaborative writing "the mingled, various product of our two brains."[33] The honey in the title is likewise a "mingled…product" from

[32] Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry*, 24.2 (Winter 1998), 558.
[33] *Works and Days*, 3.

"various" sources. Thyme, on the other hand, is the plant on which the bees feed to produce honey, while also being a pun on historical time. Honey and thyme have each been used for millennia as a preservative, especially in embalming bodies; thyme was used in burials to assure the passage of a spirit into the afterlife, as well. Therefore, various thyme could be many different plants involved during pollination to create the honey, or it could be a gesture to the various historical time frames through which the Fields preserved their work for a future life.

Several scholars have already noted Cooper and Bradley's bi-directional historical investment in thinking past and future simultaneously. The poems in *Wild Honey*, like those in *Sight and Song*, reach to Classical characters for much of their subject matter.[34] As Kate Thomas puts it, "Bradley and Cooper stress the creative effects of looking backward and forward and of locating their poetry in a parenthesis in time."[35] In this way, what might at once be thought only pleasurable becomes instead a substance capable of perserving and uniting seemingly disparate historical sources and ensures the passage of the spirit of the work from era to era by separating it from those origins. For my purposes, the collection's interest in straddling time periods, speaking to Dionysus and Pan while addressing a nineteenth-century reader, marks another form

[34] In a helpful head-note, Marion Thain and Ana Parejo Vadillo persuasively recommend that Bradley and Cooper arranged the poems in *Wild Honey* to reveal the complicated shifts in their lives that took them away from Pan and led them toward pressing their "lips" against "the deep-blood crucifix," as is evident in the final poem in the collection, "Good Friday" (Field 159). In *Wild Honey*, they acknowledge both the breaks and continuities between their earlier pagan yearnings ("Come to us, O Dionysus, / From the Alcyonian water," in "Reveille" (Field 147) and their enduring devotion to each other through their Catholicism: "If she should die," the poetic voice writes of her beloved, she would, if "sorrowing," nonetheless remain "As Christ intact before the infidel" (Field, "Constancy", 156). Brackets and continuities seem helpful for talking about unity and divisions; they separate (bracket) in order to reunite (enable continuity). Just as Christ remained spiritually whole while his body was being deconstructed by physical violence, their work and their relationship will retain wholeness in the face of time and death, bracketing separations in order to remain "intact". As they chart this journey, the coauthors disclose that they fully understand their "life must be a palimpsest: "Let us write it over", the poetic voice declares, "For the far Time to discover" (Field, "A Palimpsest", 156-57). It would not be unreasonable to say that "A Palimpsest" contains a prescient understanding that only in the "far Time" of the early twenty-first century could scholars appreciate more fully why the coauthors chose not to disregard their pre-conversion life together but "write it over" instead. Mario Thain and Ana Parejo Vadillo, *Michael Field, the Poet: Published and Manuscript Materials* (Petersborough, Canada: Broadview Press, 2009).

[35] Thomas, "What Time We Kiss," 348.

of intimate integrity in Bradley and Cooper's work. By the same token, their familiarity and obsession with classical works establishes their use of the optative as itself a gesture to historical forms.[36]

Even a cursory glance at the titles of the poems in *Wild Honey* makes it evident that the Fields were concerned with a variety of divisions and unities in this collection. There is the poem "Unity" with which I opened this chapter, one called "Apart," another entitled "Vale!," which is Latin for "farewell," then "Possession" together with "Parting," "Elsewhere," and two poems entitled "Absence." If only by their titling choices, the poets were signaling an investment in thinking about division and unity in this volume. But, again, this is more than merely a binary way of thinking about separation and togetherness, or restraint and connection as Harrington has it, as components of "idealized intimacy."[37] Instead, the poets are invested in the promise of intimacy's transitional nature from division to unity and back again. My dissertation is interested in the processual mechanisms and models within which such transitional work occurs.

To see this transitional work in action through the optative, I turn here to "But if our love be dying." From the first line of the poem, Bradley and Cooper depict intimacy as precisely such an ongoing transition, a potential doubling conditioned by the first line's optative "if":

But if our love be dying let it die
As the rose shedding secretly,
Or as a noble music's pause;
Let it move rhythmic as the laws
Of the sea's ebb, or the sun's ritual
When sovereignly he dies:
Then let a mourner rise and three times call
Upon our love, and the long echoes fall.

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[36] For example, in 1886 Professor Henry Harman noted that Xenophon's 37-page *Book of Anabasis* used the optative 103 times (3). That's an average of 2.78 times per page ("The Optative Mode," *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis* 6.2 (Dec. 1886): 3-12).

[37] Harrington, *Second Person Singular*, 2, 5. In fairness, Harrington is also interested in forms of separation and division in her project in ways that cause her work to speak to my project quite closely. However, part of the goal of my project is to show how the intimate sphere is never just about intimacy and instead has implications for broader models of politics, such as marriage and democracy.

Each image layers forms of separation and return into the poem, so that the question of their dying love exerts almost an inverse of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's famous sonnet 43. Rather than counting the ways that they love each other, these lovers are constructing a model of perpetual, incessant division and reunion. Love in this poem is cyclical, or even metrical, moving "rhythmic" as the "sea's ebb." As they did in "Unity," the poets employ optative language in "if our love be dying" to offer intimate integrity as an alternative form of intimacy. Instead of death that is an end, they want their love to die as the sun does in his daily "ritual," a repetitive process of leave taking and reunion. Rituals involve habitually repeated actions. If the speaking lovers, and we must assume there are two or more to warrant the pronoun "our love," are in fact separated by death, then they ask that it be a temporary separation. Let them remain ones only so long as it takes the sun to make his daily circuit. We must not assume that "a mourner" is another party in addition to those involved in this love. Instead, it might be whichever lover remains alone during the time of separation. Furthermore, standing watch over a body prior to burial is an ancient custom for loved ones in many societies. The suggestion that the mourner will "three times call / Upon our love" could be a reference to the practice of Calling Back the Soul practiced in some religions. Then, as the "long echoes fall" from the mourner calling to the soul of the dead, there is a sense that within the reverberation, recursion, and temporal gaps of those echoes resides the repetition of love implied by the "sea's ebb" and the "sun's ritual." The "pause" of the music likewise suggests a temporal gap into which the cords of music will continue to resonate just as the mourner's three calls will create "long echoes." It is as though the poets' recognize that gaps are always full, as on a timeline in which between two whole numbers lie infinite fractions.

If this poem of dying love constructs a model of cyclical return and a plurality of natural forms through which to think those acts of unity and division, Bradley and Cooper's "The Beloved" depicts Love as an "infinite Power," uncountable and capable of separating the speaker from the beloved:

Love only comes to me when thou art gone:
Then he draws me in his might,
Sundering with his infinite
Power, as a far, wide space,
Till I cannot see thy face;
    And I wonder
If Love so great will keep us forever asunder. (lines 1-7)

The admission of an additional one that builds from two to three automatically implies a sequence of infinity that becomes uncountable. Here the poets' logic is akin to what Augusta Webster constructs in her poem "By the Looking-Glass." While one lover might be the beginning, the operation of plus one, of adding one to one's self, immediately generates a series of positive numbers to infinity. If you have a single plus one, then 2+1 can just as easily follow, as can 3+1, 4+1, *ad infinitum*. Love's "infinite Power" in this poem is its ability to add one to the self, to generate an infinite series that has no end. Read in this way, the final line is less about a division by distance than it is a division along a number line, "as a far, wide space," in which one and one are constantly pushed further and further apart. Again, as they do above in "But if our love be dying," the poets conceptualize the spaces between events as something with which intimacy still must contend. Theirs is less a focus on two nodes on a number line (1 and 2, for instance) than in the infinite transition of the space on the line between. Their interest is not in the telos of unity or the division, but in the processes that enable each. Instead of Love the god or Love as a human emotional state, this is what the poets' call elsewhere "The terror of a love

immeasurable!"[38] Love, then, rather than being the emotion or another individual, in this moment suggests a sublime mathematical quality: Love is the property of a series that produces either an arbitrary end or a condition which provokes one's reason to acknowledge the inadequacy of idealized intimate connections.

The complexity of the syntactic turns suggest that Bradley and Cooper are once again musing on transitioning to division or unity. While the optative does not take the explicit form of an "if" phrase early in the poem, the poets instead give us the conditional phrases "when thou art gone," "Till I cannot see thy face," "And I wonder," each of which potentially multiplies the outcomes of the amorous scene. They end, however, with a traditional optative—"If Love so great will keep us forever asunder"—so that the entire poem about division and unity is founded on the performance of the optative's power to multiply possibilities. The poem thereby occasions many questions: is the beloved of the title Love, the speaker, or the loved one that is being separated? if Love is a metaphor for the abstraction that is the feeling the speaker has for the loved one, then how does this feeling cause the two to be separated further until the speaker "cannot see thy face"? is this Love, then, for a third individual so that the outcome of the Love triangle is ultimately what will keep the speaker and the loved one "forever asunder"? or is their "Love so great" perhaps akin to the "love that dare not speak its name" of homosexuality, and so therefore contrary to heteronormativity, socially dangerous and, consequently, able to keep them "forever asunder"? Several of the poets' choices multiply the potential meanings for this poem. Love is capitalized and therefore might be either god or abstraction. Bradley and Cooper use a male pronoun to refer to Love, again suggesting the possibility of a god but also leaving the path open to read this as a male lover vying for the speaker's attention. Then, added to the poem's

[38] Field, "Background," *Wild Honey*, 177, line 8.

claim that Love's "infinite power" can tear lovers "forever asunder," the optative mode itself generates a potentially "infinite" number of questions about the outcome of the love affair.

"Parting" presents Bradley and Cooper in their most ontological mood, raising intimate integrity and queer social counting to the explicit theme of the poem. This sonnet amplifies all of the characteristics of cyclical reunion and eternal separation that we see in the poems thus far explored, offering an expansive model of parting which needs division from the past in order to transition to the future and gain a fresh start:

Lo, even memory must give up its dead!
Where he has walked we must not walk again,
Nor pause by garden borders where he led,
Nor seek his flowers; we must unknot the pain.
For, if we look not on our memory's corse,
Sweet sculpture of our memory will abide;
The eyes, the lips will take their human force,
Life's lovely images keep by side.
Anew in the young sunshine we shall meet,
By paths, beloved, where thou has not been;
Thou, being by, shalt make the strangeness sweet
Of the long, silver river and the green;
And all our past grow a child to cling
About the freshness of thy welcoming. (lines 1-14)

Much as they do in "Unity," Bradley and Cooper employ the sonnet form in "Parting" to construct a model of intimacy. Rather than using a sestet to establish the problem of the poem, they open with a quatrain affirming the necessity of letting memories pass away. These four lines ratify the importance of division for a love characterized by eternal freshness. The volta, then, arrives early with the second quatrain that introduces the optative, thereby multiplying the possibilities of their futures together, and the solution to the original division. Positioning the optative as they do effectively divides the sonnet itself into past, present, and future. Like the division of the speaker and the loved object, these divisions are necessary for the transition from one phase of existence to the next. In order to ultimately be united, such divisions work formally

and thematically to enforce the notion that certain separations can actually invigorate the union of two. While they are initially divided, letting go of those (presumably negative) memories of "the pain" of separation will ultimately enable only the "Sweet sculpture of our memory to abide."

The "Sweet sculpture" coming gradually to life, a gesture to the mythical story of Pygmalion, uses prosopopoeia to create another odd mathematical effect, not unlike the "infinite Power" of Love in "But if our love be dying." Prosopopoeia's animation of a figure alone produces one form of doubleness. Here, however, instead of being the potential for infinite separation, the "Sweet sculpture" adds a plus one character of new memories to the scene in the form of a child. The "eyes, the lips" coming to life, unite the two, the "we" that is referenced in the optative "if we look not on memory's corse." At this point, memory's reanimated form becomes a third character as it were in this poem. Rather than tearing the lovers "forever asunder," the sculpture's "human force" sustains the pair as a material proxy. What's more, it creates a fourth member of the group in the form of "a child" produced by their reunion.

Their desire ultimately grows by producing offspring, inaugurating another transitional moment through which love can expand indefinitely. The birth of a child begins a new generation and produces a new form through which Love can exercise its "infinite power." While the poets were thinking through the ways that love can divide two infinitely in "But if our love be dying," "Parting" instead offers a meditation on the possibility that love's divisions can ultimately multiply the conditions of the relationship. In this example, they do so through shared memories and through progeny. Each case demands a transition—a separation, a birth— in order to attain the requisite condition for enduring intimacy. Having established this solution, the sestet depicts a future of unity in which the two "shall meet" but under changed conditions that no

longer retain certain aspects of their prior state. The transitions have at once altered and maintained the integrity of their intimacy.

This passage introduces the conditions for a return to love that will involve "freshness" by demanding an unequivocal release of memories. The opening quatrain is an interdiction of the lovers' past experiences together. They "must not walk again, / Nor pause… / Nor seek" (lines 2-4). The "pain" of parting, itself a division, involves memories which the couple must "unknot." This untangling of a division exerts a sort of double negative force in the poem, which becomes a positive in the subsequent lines. While their separation is negative, the pain is also negative. Letting go of the pain enables the possibility in the second quatrain that they will meet "Anew in the young sunshine." Deploying the optative "if we look not on our memory's corse" or the "dead" aspects of memory—memories of where they had walked, of "garden borders," of "flowers" they enjoyed—the two can only remember the good. By maintaining a division from the "dead" memories, the two can find new "paths, beloved, where thou has not been." When they reunite, having released the memories of prior time together, their new togetherness "shalt make the strangeness sweet." Put differently, it will be pleasurable to reunite for the fact of the "strangeness" of all that is new for the two to share. The return will make the division more "sweet" for their ability to only remember the good of the new times and not "the pain" of memories long past. In a way, what the poets describe is selective memory, or choosing only to retain the positive while negating the cause of the pain. Being divided, therefore, equips them to separate memories selectively so that when they come back together only the positive remains.

This transitional process then enables the two to experience their love "Anew." In this way, their desire will be newborn and "grow like a child." As they do in "But if our love be dying," the poets choose an image inflected by temporality: children will "grow" precisely as the

poem says and become adults and, eventually, wind up in exactly the same place that the poem starts—with death. The optative that conditions the ontological scene, therefore, has extended to something of a paradox, one which will demand that a "corse" will result from the "child" who grows from the "freshness" of their love. While the optative inaugurates the possibility that their love might die, it also holds open the hope of return, in the form of the "child." By the same token, there is an awareness that the "child" will eventually become the "corse" in an endless cycle of divisions and unification. Viewed in this way, it becomes evident that Bradley and Cooper were less invested in the binary of unity and division than they were in thinking through poetic models about the transitional process itself, models that would guarantee the integrity of their intimacy in the face of potential separations. This vigilant awareness that separation of the two into ones is perpetually around the corner structures the ways that the poets use their work to formulate a series of experiments in the social relations between ones and twos.

Coda: Mereological Criticism, Aggregate Reading, and the Digital Humanities

This dissertation has traced the development of poetic models of Victorian social counting across the nineteenth century, showing how women poets theorized numbers to come to terms with the ways that women were understood as parts of social totalities. They explored the calculus by which two were supposed to become "one" in marriage, for example, and they asked why each woman counted as less than one in emerging models of democracy. The poetry I have examined throughout this dissertation revolves around a set of central questions: What was the relationship between poetic counting and social counting in the nineteenth century? And how is poetic form uniquely suited to bridge intervals between part and whole, one collective and another, a citizen and their state? I have argued that nineteenth-century women's poetry demonstrates how women poets were at once reaching back to traditional modes of social belonging (marriage, agrarian communities, religion) and also being tempted to reject such collectives in favor of new forms of social counting. Rather than applying mathematical concepts to their poetry, they invented forms of numeracy from their knowledge of poetic counting (e.g., metrical, lineation, stanzaic). Thinking through relations between the one and the many, I contend that women poets crafted complex meditations on social counting, as both measures of a population and as ways of mattering politically.

This coda briefly considers three implications of this project. The first implication is that quantification is a subject of present scholarly fascination, and it is especially so for the digital humanities. When we ask what the relationship between big data and the scale of the sentence or the paragraph is, we are in essence thinking in the same space as the women poets in my study. Mark Algee-Hewitt, Ryan Heuser, and Franco Moretti's "On Paragraphs, Scale, Themes, and Narrative Form" observes, "By now, this mix of micro and macro has become the signature of

the digital humanities, and of their dramatic impact on the scale at which literature is studied."[1] The Stanford Literary Lab has increasingly turned out products that take into account the many scales of reading digitally. In "Style at the Scale of the Sentence," the research team focused on syntactic units (articles, pronouns, preposition, etc.) to examine what constituted "style."[2] Such projects have begun to suggest the need for new methods, aggregated methods, which are necessary to continually push forward as explorers in the realm of big data. For instance, Moretti acknowledges in "Literature, Measured" that new concepts continually push him and his research team toward "engagement with existing theories." He identifies "Russian Formalists, …[Erich] Auerbach's stylistics, some aspects of structuralism, and recent work in corpus linguistics."[3] Such an aggregation of critical methods suggests that digital humanities is already well aware that "distant reading" alone, or reading on the scale of totalities or wholes, is unsatisfactory. Instead, the most recent work being produced illustrates a commitment in big data to develop precisely the sort of scalar reading method that I have tried to demonstrate in this project.

Quantification itself is actually at stake in such discussions. We tend to think of quantification, enumeration, and arithmetical operations as non-humanistic, the stuff of STEM disciplines, reserved for empirical methods and not the subjective methods of literary criticism. However, the turn to digital humanities and new formalism have both demonstrated that literary criticism can very much involve empirical methods. Not only that, the humanities do empiricism quite expertly. In fact, the humanities is actually about counting in many ways. When we talk about the Other (racial, disabled, gendered, etc.) in relation to any group or individual, we are engaging in part-whole thinking, a fundamentally numerical enterprise. I do not think this claim

[1] "On Paragraphs," 1.
[2] Alison, et al., "Style," 1.

is an overreach for the humanities. Instead, it is a mode of humanistic thinking that has gone unnoticed even as we work within its boundaries. Literary criticism can think numbers in its own ways. As I've argued, counting figures and calculating by them need not assume that the "figure" upon which we focus is always a number. Figures might instead by the figures of letters, words, phrases, or figurative language itself. We also count conceptually when we discuss communities, populations, and identity. Certainly, the digital humanities has shown us how it can think in dozens, hundreds, and even thousands, all of which is fascinating and valuable work. Yet, these excursions into macroscale have a blind spot: the digital humanities has not thought how we count to one. What is the unit? Poetry has been trying to count the unit for hundreds of years, and I want to suggest that turning our attention to the ways that poetry can count will be one way to address the critical blind spot of the digital humanities, while also acknowledging and respecting the empiricism is valorizes.

The discourses surrounding digital humanities, media studies, and Moretti's "distant reading" have resulted in intense reactions by critics, which suggest that methods of quantification and questions of scale are threatening to many in the humanities. In each of these debates about the scale of reading (should it be surface or depth? close or distant?) and the material affordances of text (the codex or new media?), there is a circulating fear that our value as scholars may be undone by quantification.[4] And no wonder, since digital humanities manifestos of Ian Bogost's "The Turtlenecked Hairshirt" ilk abound. Bogost calls for the humanities to "be brutal…invoke wrath…cull…burn away the dead wood to let new growth flourish," all of which is supposed to happen as a direct result of digital humanities. For Bogost,

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[3] Moretti, "Literature, Measured," p. 6.
[4] Love, "Close but not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn," *New Literary History* 41.2 (2010): 371-91; Moretti, *Distant Reading* (New York: Verso, 2013); Marcus, Sharon and Stephen Best, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations* 108 (Fall 2009): 1-21.

humanities scholars who embrace close reading practices and resist big data are clinging to outdated methods and risking the future of the profession.

Yet, critics of digital humanities, big data, and quantification methods raise a variety of objections to quantitative methods that warrant further consideration. Historians of the book such as Robert Darnton feel compelled in an age of big data to make *The Case for Books*. Joseph Dane likewise repeatedly objects to digital humanities and archives in *What is a Book?* on the basis that digital archives perpetually change, which calls into question their reliability and means that "the object of criticism will no longer stay in place."[5] (One wonders, however, whether language ever manages to "stay in place.") Mark Sample adds that "it is safe to say that the work of the digital humanities is ultimately premised upon a simple, practical fact: it requires a digital object, either a born-digital object or an analog object that has been somehow scanned, photographed, mapped, or modeled in a digital environment," and raises the question of texts which cannot be legally digitized because they are under copyright restrictions as another limitation of digital humanities.[6] The same collection of essays, *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, includes work by Tara McPherson, who identifies the racial confines of digital humanities, and George Williams, who interrogates digital humanities through disabilities studies and claims that "many of the otherwise most valuable digital resources are useless for people who are—for example—deaf or hard of hearing, as well as for people who are blind, have low vision, or have difficulty distinguishing particular colors."[7] My project steps into this

[5] Dane, *What is a Book?: The Study of Early Printed Books* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame UP, 2012), 218.
[6] Sample, "Unseen and Unremarked On: Don DeLillo and the Failure of the Digital Humanities," *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012), http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/43 (accessed October 11, 2014).
[7] McPherson, "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation," *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012), http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/29 (accessed October 11, 2014); Williams, "Disability, Universal Design, and the Digital Humanities," *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012), http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/43 (accessed October 11, 2014).

intellectual fray hoping to demonstrate new ways to think about quantification as a historical practice, as a reading method attentive to both surface and depth, and as a perpetually fraught but necessary scene for the humanities. Conceptualizing aggregation as collection is one of these ways.

As recently as the March 2016 issue of *PMLA*, A. R. Bennett has asserted the value of what he calls "aggregate reading," a method that sounds more aligned with my definition of aggregation as collection than prior definitions from political economy and digital humanities of aggregation as fusion or amassment. Bennett's larger argument is about the value of aggregate reading for the ecological digital humanities. He defines the ecological digital humanities as "[n]either strictly an ecocriticism nor a pursuit solely of environmental(ist) concerns." Instead, the ecological digital humanities are an attempt to "think digitally" what Jane Bennett terms "the ecology of things" and Timothy Morton calls "the ecological thought."[8] To do so, the ecological digital humanities "grasps at the totality of an interconnected system…without smoothing over or losing track of the infinitude of actants, environments, microsystems, and processes that exist in and constitute that larger assemblage."[9] If this description sounds strikingly similar to my definition of aggregation as that which maintains the partial within the whole, that is because the two share much in common.

To think the interconnection of separateness and difference within complex systems, masses, and totalities, A. R. Bennett asserts the value of aggregate reading as a practice which makes "room for many different interpretive operations to work in concert to produce meaning."[10] It approaches the literary object as a multiple, material, textual, rhizomatic, emergent

[8] qtd. in Bennett, "Ecology," p. 356.
[9] Bennett, "The Ecology of Art-iculation and Aggregate Reading," 356.
[10] Bennett, "Ecology," 363.

phenomenon."[11] Moretti's "distant" reading fails to satisfy in A. R. Bennett's project because it risks losing the detail that close reading allows. I do not fully agree with this claim because of more recent work by Moretti's own Literary Lab, as detailed above. However, A. R. Bennett is in a sense calling for the same sort of "new strategies, apparatuses, and prostheses," that I have also endeavored to locate in the poetry in my project.[12] Ultimately, it seems that Moretti's Literary Lab, Bennett's call for aggregate reading in ecological digital humanities, and my own project share more in common than they do differences. The work now needs to be for these discourses to intersect with one another and share methods.

Though the novel has more cultural reach for digital humanities like Moretti, this dissertation has demonstrated that poetry is an overlooked source of early quantification in literature, one tactically constructed to mimic the institutionalized forms of statistical practice, to overturn traditional social categories, and to challenge methods of distant social reading that erased individuals in the mass. World literature scholars such as Efraín Kristal have also challenged Moretti's decision to privilege the novel as the most widespread literary form in modernity. Kristal finds the novel unsatisfying as a genre around which to organize literary history, especially when scholars account for world literatures in which poetry was often a dominant literary genre. Though Kristal focuses on twentieth-century Spanish American poetry, he also applies historical pressure to Moretti's generic favoritism, writing, "Even if, for the sake of argument, one were to accept that poetry is socially insignificant in Western Europe in the 20th century [sic], Moretti would still need to explain why prior to this fatal date poetry does not

[11] Bennett, "Ecology," 363.
[12] Much as I have done in this study, Bennett reaches to mathematics, and specifically to fractal geometry, to find models for aggregate reading. He also identifies French feminism's *l'écriture féminine* as a viable hermeneutic counterpart that knew well "that the interpretation of a thing is not a thing" ("Ecology," 363).

appear to fit his model."[13] *Quantified Lives* offers precisely such pre-twentieth century, Western European examples of how poetry does not fit Moretti's model to extend Kristal's challenge from a world literature perspective to one which undermines Moretti's claims about what constitutes a Western morphology of letters.

Fortunately, the digital humanities have begun to turn attention to poetry in the two years since I originally proposed this project. There are now a number of programs available to "read" different aspects of poetry, such as Prism, which enables students to weight "facets" of poems, and Herbert Tucker's website, "For Better For Verse," which offers digital tools for training readers in prosody. But these efforts are early attempts to address the difficulties that separate the digital humanities and poetry. If poetry is an inherently quantifiable form, why is it resistant to so many of the methods currently being used for digital humanities to quantify text? The many ways that poetry counts (such as the six that I detailed in the introduction to this project) offer one answer. Developing a program capable of a scalar reading or an aggregate reading of the nature that Bennett describes presents a major challenge to those who would have to code such a thing. But I would like to suggest that such programs need to be constructed to bring genres other than the novel into the fold of digital humanities.

Currently, the emphasis on digital humanities predominantly runs to projects involving the novel. In part this is because poetry presents numerous formal problems that resist digital methods. But also, poetic quantification offers a form of buried, disqualified, and subversive knowledge, one wrongly confined to the margins by a scholarly emphasis on the realist promise of the novel and the empirical impulse of digital humanities. As a result, some of the questions I would like to raise about the relationship between big data and poetry include: Might the focus on novels in digital humanities constitute a critical blind spot that has implications in the same

[13] Kristal, "'Considering Coldly…': A Response to Franco Moretti," *New Left Review* 15 (May-June 2002), 62.

way that eugenics did for statistical analysis? Are we failing to see what might come of such intense generic focus for the way that our discipline reads, selects canonical material, or understands the political work of reading that data properly or improperly? And in what ways does digital humanities fail to address the singularities offered by poetry in favor of the mass of data generated from novels? In *Graphs, Maps, and Trees*, Moretti embeds a quotation from Roland Barthes's "History of Literature?" in a chart of new novels per year from 1700-2000; that quote reads, "To abolish the individual from literature! It's a laceration clearly, even a paradox. But literary history is only possible at this price."[14] Moretti, at least then, accepted the same sort of loss of particularity in favor of the mass that vital statistics allowed in the nineteenth century. However, Moretti's emphasis on the novel also implies a generic "laceration," one which I believe skews the data by "abolish[ing] the individual [text] from literature," individuals which might include hybrid forms (e.g. the verse novel, prose poetry, historical fiction) and projects like those of the women poets in my study.

Indeed, the digital humanities have been criticized for the ways that quantitative methods such as "distant reading" count. One objection is that quantitative methods make apples to oranges comparisons between texts with vastly different cultural reach, or as David Brewer puts it, "footprints."[15] Although counting reveals patterns and relationships that might have otherwise remained opaque, it also demands that we assume equivalence between texts as "comparable units," which ultimately "risks distorting the massively different place [that each text occupies] in a history of reading."[16] Considering texts as comparable units can be appealing because doing so at once enables comparison between canonical and noncanonical texts, thereby making "the

[14] Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, and Trees* (New York: Verso, 2005), 6.
[15] Brewer, "Counting, Resonance, and Form, a Speculative Manifesto," Eighteenth-Century Fiction 24.2 (Winter 2011-12), 163, 166.
[16] Brewer, "Counting," 162-63.

canon appear more contingent and less inevitable."[17] However, in trying to make a case for a distant reading that aligns texts which might well have been "indiscriminately mingled on a reviewer's table" in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, we also potentially distort and fail to address how a text is received differently over time.[18] Another objection is that counting in the digital humanities has altered the form of literary criticism, shifting what was "continuous prose occasionally interrupted and accented by representational images" to new visual representations that are foreign to many literary critics—" graphs, tables, charts, and numerical figures about word frequency, word proximity, and topic modeling."[19] James Mulholland objects that there are "fundamental differences about what qualifies as evidence in cultural study" and asserts that literary critics need to rethink whether literature constitutes data.[20] Measuring literature, he allows by way of conclusion, could be an affirmation "that literature possesses its own arithmetic, its own data that can be analyzed using tools adapted to its uniqueness.[21] In many ways, I agree with this suggestion, as the entirety of this project has been engaged in thinking about how "literature possesses its own arithmetic."

At the same time, the distinction Mulholland firmly asserts between types of data and what can be counted by literature is problematic. To say that literature should not be (or was not) thinking about economic measures or statistical data in its very forms, and what's more that scholars are in some way trespassing methodologically where they do not belong in identifying such data, strikes me as willful resistance to interdisciplinary inquiry and exchange. While not

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[17] Brewer, "Counting," 163.
[18] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England, 1770–1800* (London: Constable, 1932), viii; Brewer, "Counting," 166-67.
[19] Mulholland, "Measuring Literature: Digital Humanities, Behavioral Economics, and the Problem of Data in Thomas Piketty's Capital in the Twenty-first Century," *Commonplace* 16.3. http://common-place.org/book/measuring-literature-digital-humanities-behavioral-economics-and-the-problem-of-data-in-thomas-pikettys-capital-in-the-twenty-first-century/ (accessed November 8, 2016).
[20] Mulholland, "Measuring," n. pag.
[21] Ibid.

under the auspices of counting or data, literary criticism has always, in some fashion, concerned itself with questions of part to whole relations. Such relations are founded on numbers: the one to the many, or the fraction to the whole. The data representing those relations takes different forms: from a single character in the midst of dozens of supporting characters to the individual citizen in relation to their nation to the "data" that can be gleaned from scansion, literature regularly thinks about numbers. Whether the data has taken the form of prose or graphs, I argue that counting is already at the heart of what we do.

The second implication of my project, therefore, is a conceptual one directed toward our work as literary critics. Specifically, it is a question of how part-whole relations already provide a foundation for so much scholarship. I want to suggest that issues of scale, for example the many debates about scales of reading (close? distant? surface?), are at bottom questions of numbers. Do we look at individual numbers at the scale of the sentence, do we look at mid-level numbers at the scale of seriality, or do we look at macro numbers on the scale of entire corpuses? When literary critics ask questions about the relationship of the one to the many (Alex Woloch), the position of surplus characters in the space of a whole novel (Emily Steinlight), and the ability of a large novel to think the connections between many individuals (Jesse Rosenthal), each project is concerned with the relation of part to whole.[22] While not all texts are concerned with part-whole relations, some lend themselves to that work better than others. As Rosenthal has demonstrated with *Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot's capacious tomes were well suited to offer "a unity which is not apparent" in its focus on "a wide variety of individuals, seemingly detached from one another, and yet moving together under the sway of the novel's narrative."[23] A recent

[22] Emily Steinlight, "Dickens's 'Supernumeraries' and the Biopolitical Imagination in Victorian Fiction," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 43.2 (2010): 227-50; Jesse Rosenthal, "The Large Novel and the Law of Large Numbers; or, Why George Eliot Hates Gambling," *ELH* 77.3 (Fall 2010): 777-811.
[23] Rosenthal, "The Large Novel and the Law of Large Numbers," 778.

collection of essays edited by U. C. Knoepflmacher focusing on hybridity likewise points to the value of thinking in terms of fragmentation, discursive mixtures, and blended forms. Each of the essays in the volume engage "texts that amalgamate contraries" and are therefore invested in part-whole inquiry.[24] Such literary criticism operates in what I have begun to call the "mereological mode": a literary method emphasizing relations between part and whole, be they social, formal, political, gendered, embodied, or even metaphysical. Part to whole relations have a long-standing position in mathematics and philosophy as the field of mereology.[25] Indeed, theories of parthood relations extend back to Classical metaphysics (Presocratics, Plato, Aristotle), constitute a prominent area of study for medieval ontologists (St. Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham), and are further developed in the work of G. W. Leibniz and Immanuel Kant.[26]

What each of these projects has in common is a commitment to thinking about how parts fit within a whole. I argue this commitment continues to arise because wholeness is at once actually very important to literary studies and inimical to much that we regard as valuable.[27] I am not on the side of that wholeness for the very reasons that the women poets in my study found themselves unsatisfied with the totalities offered in their world. By thinking about the relations between parts and wholes, by valorizing the particulate, could literary studies have something else to say to other fields? This question does not presume that literary criticism is in some fashion less than other disciplines; instead, I ask this question because literary critics, like mathematicians and social scientists, have also spent a lot time thinking about the problematic relations between part and whole. Many debates from disability studies to ecocriticism to the

[24] Knoepflmacher, Introduction, 2-3.
[25] Potter, *Set Theory*, 22-23; see also the entirety of mereological theory described in Lewis, *Parts of Classes*, as well as Achille Varzi's *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*'s entry "Mereology" for further sources.
[26] Varzi, "Mereology," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, n. pg.

digital humanities have grappled with part-whole relations. Now, we need to understand that we have other scholars with whom we might exchange thinking about such part-whole relations and what they do in the world. In so doing, we might find new avenues and vocabularies with which to do our work, but also methods for making our work impactful beyond the academy.

Mereology is one such debate that shares much in common with literary criticism. Mereology explores the terrain of fusions, distinctions, and overlaps between the part and whole, and even part and part. Moreover, it rapidly expands outward to include complex questions of classification, uniqueness, transitivity, set theory, aggregation, and the seemingly "innocent business of making many into one" that rapidly transforms into an "ontological extravagance that gives set theory its welcome mathematical power."[28] As a result, mereology enables conversations about a plurality of mathematical abstractions, precisely like those this dissertation identifies and explores. Mereological thinking is also useful for understanding that, while wholeness is itself freighted as an aesthetic term, cohesion is not the only way of thinking.[29] The many forms of parthood relations which mereology addresses afford a wealth of critical ground and terminology with which literary critics might engage. I would like to suggest that any literary criticism invested in exploring the complexities of part-whole relations is conducting mereological work.

Many critical projects have focused on part-whole relations perhaps without realizing that the mathematical philosophy of mereology involves an entire field dedicated to precisely such thinking. For example, Natasha Moore's excellent study of the long narrative poem of the nineteenth century emphasizes part-whole relations as a way in which poetry reconciled the chaos of modern life with the desires for totality and individuation. She wants us to read the long

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[27] Levine, *Forms*, 24-25.
[28] Lewis, *Parts of Classes*, 72-74, 6.

narrative poems of the 1840s and 1850s as "organic wholes" which took up the fragmentary "impenetrable, misshapen, purposeless" reality of everyday life and made from it "a poetic distillation of the age."[30] Ultimately, she claims that such poetry reflects the "tensions between unity and unity" of the Victorian era.[31] Moore's project is one instance in a much deeper critical history of thinking about the particular and the total, the instance and the general, the one and the many, the part and the whole. Arguing that the novel figured character relations "as orbiting celestial systems," Anna Henchman contends that the "contradictory impulses to make sense of the world as a whole on the one hand and to account for the specificity of individual experience on the other can be seen in all areas of nineteenth-century thinking"; consequently, the loss of totality in the modern age left writers "[s]eeking a vantage point from which to see and know the world," causing them to "move restlessly back and forth between self and universe, part and whole."[32] Lastly, Mary Poovey's work on the uneven developments of ideology in the nineteenth century likewise focuses on a form of ideology defined by aggregation as a collection of "competing emphases and interests" (parts) masquerading as a unified, coherent, and complete (whole).[33] Ideology as she understands it is, therefore, a mereological concept defined by its part-whole construction.

Furthermore, Poovey's entire project in *The History of the Modern Fact* is to work through how philosophers, mathematicians, political economists, and early social scientists reconciled an observable, particular instance with a universal law. Whether describing unit and unity, collection and coherence, world and individual, part and whole, each of these scholars is dealing with mereological concepts and has recourse to the language of part-whole. Questions of

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[29] For more on wholeness as a critically fraught concept, see Levine, *Forms*, 24-48.
[30] Moore, *Unpoetical Age*, 3, 9.
[31] Moore, *Unpoetical Age*, 186.
[32] Henchman, *Starry Sky Within*, 2-3.

part-whole bring us back to them again and again. It is time that we recognize such projects as not only related, even when they seem far removed from one another by distinctions of secondary fields such as critical race studies, disability studies, or empire studies. Part-whole questions are one of the foundational fields of inquiry for literary criticism. Indeed, the discourse surrounding "distant," close, and "surface" reading is itself a conversation founded upon disagreements over whether critics should be attentive to the part or to the whole. When we are thinking in scales, we are thinking mereologically.

It is fair to say that mereological thinking is a longstanding preoccupation of theorists of the novel, as well. In his *The Historical Novel*, Geörgy Lukács's concept of specific particularity was an optimal point between the universal and the individual. Woloch cites Lukács on the dialectic relationship between the particular and general but says that Lukács fails to account for the underlying multiplicity of the larger group of people. Even so, Lukács was attempting to mediate between the individual and general, which is why Woloch cites him. Lukács's specific particularity is not merely a tidy one-to-one relationship between the particular and general, but a blend such as Woloch seeks. But at the same time, Woloch is interested in the mass of interstitial characters that lie between the particular individual (or the character-space or focus of attention in a novel) and the general social category, group, or collective. He is ultimately in agreement with Lukács about the particular and general, but he is also pointing to a gap in Lukács's thinking by suggesting that there is a granularity of characterization below this stratified level of characterization, one which accounts for characters in an intermediary category—a level of "quantitative plurality."[34] I would term that kind of granularity or "quantitative plurality" aggregation as collection. Aggregation as collection and quantitative plurality are merely two

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[33] Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, 3.
[34] Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 250.

terms for the same concept. This disjunction of critical terminology, all of which attempts to work through similar part-whole concepts, therefore needs the umbrella of mereological criticism to be pulled together and recognized for their mutual investments.

There is a strong critical consensus, then, that part-whole inquiry matters deeply to literary criticism. In making this claim, I echo Eric Hayot's statement, therefore, that "it seems to me that literary scholarship ought to be able to function at multiple analytic scales, and that producing a theory of truth that would describe relations among information produced by various scalar relations to the history of literature, as well as to the literary text, ought to be one of the profession's major collective projects."[35] I would revise this slightly, however, to say that there is substantial evidence that such investigations already constitute, and have for more than a century, "one of the profession's major collective projects." Mereology is a philosophical concept that enables us to think at multiple analytic scales, and it is capable of describing relations among information produced at those various scalar levels, precisely as Hayot describes. It is all of the methods and mechanisms, as Hayot would have it, "for laddering up from the extremely particular to the extremely broad."[36] But such projects are not at all new; indeed, they constitute a long-standing, but unidentified, discourse in literary studies, which I would call mereological criticism.

But if we are already having these conversations, one might respond, why do we need to acknowledge that part-whole discussions and thinking scales of particular to broad falls under the umbrella of mereology? Is a suggestion that we acknowledge part-whole conversations in literary criticism as mereology mere semantics? To ask that question would be to claim that words do not matter all that much, and we all know they do. Words gain authority when we

[35] Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*, 19.
[36] Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*, 17.

assign them a fixed role, and where part-whole thinking is concerned, a failure to recognize such literary criticism as mereology risks a warped or incomplete understanding of the affiliated concepts and potential misuse by humanist scholars. Furthermore, mereological criticism reaches for the value of interdisciplinary exchange but has thus far failed to adequately identify the work in which we engage as a type of mathematical intervention and collective project.

Identifying mereology as a mathematical critical stance by literary scholars paves to the way for transdisciplinary research that seeks to transcend all affiliated originary disciplinary methods. If each literary form "generates its own, separate logic," then mereology is one of those logics; it is a logic that literary critics repeatedly identify but have not labeled as such.[37] Of course, being unaware of mereology risks overlooking a substantial body of research devoted to such concepts in math, sociology, and anthropology.[38] For example, mathematicians and philosophers continue to debate whether mereology should include discussions of groups and the relation of group membership, such as a quarterback being part of a football team.[39] Yet, literary critics readily apply the logic of part-whole to think about the individual human in relation to larger social groups without accounting for the substantial precedent of scholars already debating the appropriateness of mereology's application to sociological questions. More important, however, mereology as a specific form of logic turns out to be useful not only for theorizing

[37] Levine, *Forms*, 10.

[38] The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* leaves broader uses of "part" an open question and restricts their explanation to eight principles: whether a part is attached as a remainder, detached, cognitively and functionally salient, arbitrarily demarcated, self-connected, disconnected, homogeneous or otherwise well-matched, gerrymandered, material, immaterial, extended, unextended, spatial, temporal, "and so on." Clearly these "principles" leave a great deal of room for interpretation and intervention.

[39] See for example Oppenheim and Putnam, "Unity of Science as a Working Hypothesis," 2 (1958); Quinton, "Social Objects," 76 (1976); Copp, "What Collectives Are," 23 (1984); and Sheehy, "Sharing Space," 36 (2006). There is substantial debate among philosophers of mereology about whether social groups such as teams can be regarded as wholes and membership should be understood as parthood or something distinctly different. See, Sharvy, "Mixtures," 44; Bogen, "Fire in the Belly," 76; Fine, "The Problem of Mixture," 76; and, Needham, "Macroscopic Mixtures," 104.

abstract mathematical principles but for bridging the gap between "poetry's loftier goals" and the active interventions of sociopolitical institutions.[40]

Rather than reducing or essentializing all part-whole critical projects, then, mereology expands the mechanisms by which literature can and does take up numerical concepts in order to mobilize the political potential of apparently disparate formal logics. In that way, it discloses a spectrum of political intervention that emerges at the nexus of mathematics, literature, and society. When we ask questions about classification, categorization, or what work individual characters perform in the scope of a text's form, we are thinking mereologically. Therefore, I want to understand mereological thinking as both a critical practice and a literary mode, one which the poets in this study also employed if not in those terms. To engage in mereological criticism is to enter into the space of a writer's working through, struggling with, disassembling, experimentation, and constructing models. Such readings do not emphasize authorial intent, but eschew it in favor of grappling with the text as evidence of such epistemological encounters and engagements. What's more, mereology was a decidedly Victorian concern. If we seek to read "as the Victorians read," as Garrett Stewart recommends, then reading for part-whole relationships is one step in that direction.[41] For it was "a most Victorian ambition: to make it whole."[42] I have been interested here in doing justice to the dynamic mereological practices that are necessary for Victorian women poet's to construct alternative ontological, discursive, and political models that either attempted to "make it whole" or to disclose how wholeness was problematic.

At the same time, acknowledging that part-whole thinking involves the mathematical concept of mereology enables scholars in disparate disciplines, who might not otherwise have identified the ligatures between their work, to begin entering into conversation with one another.

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[40] Moore, *Unpoetical Age*, 7.
[41] Stewart, *Novel Violence*, 1.

Whenever a scholar asks questions about the relationship of the local to the nation, the body part to the body, the citizen to the demos, the marginalized group to the majority, she is asking mereological questions. Scales of reading engage with other mereological relationships, and the field in which this form of inquiry is currently most vigorous is the digital humanities. Offering mereological criticism now enables us as scholars to begin making connections between discourses that otherwise seem distinct yet are related in their shared mereological thinking. Furthermore, mereological forms are a specific category of forms deserving their own attention because they are portable, fragmentary, and apply to many concepts in which literary critics are already deeply invested. There are many types of mereological relationships: the mathematical model of aggregation emphasized by this dissertation is one.

At the outset of this coda, I promised to address three issues; here's the third, and last. Throughout this project, I have continually asked myself the "so what?" question. That is, why do these poetic models matter? How they mattered to the women constructing them has become clarified as I have developed the chapters here. Yet, I find myself wanting to make this project matter for us as well, call it a utopian hope that literary critics all share, for this work to find a way to make a difference in the world we occupy. That said, I want to raise a series of questions in closing about how the models of social counting developed by these poets might be mobilized in the service of ethical and political projects in our own time. One of the implications of my project has been that the numerical models constructed by these women poets had a political weight. Therefore, I feel compelled to ask how those models can be put to work. What can we do with them, if anything? In what ways can we employ Barrett Browning's model of a political supplement which affects a bridge between those with active citizenship and those on the margins of that politically integrated group? Might Rossetti's understanding that numbers like

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[42] Postlethwaite, *Making It Whole*, xi.

two are more complex than we think allow us to comprehend the problems of electoral processes differently? From Webster's model of inclusive social remainders to the Field's emphasis on transition's value to unification, each poet has provided political structures that enable us, as scholars, teachers, and citizens, to locate, define, and put into practice new methods of political action.

I do not currently have an answer to what these new methods might look like, but I do recognize that the poets in my project were in many ways reaching for alternatives in their models, alternatives that would resonate and work for modern communities. As current events have demonstrated, women, people of color, immigrants, and those in the LGBTQIA community remain at risk. The fear of being discounted in an electoral process is a very real one, one which the citizens of the United States just saw play out in real time as the candidate of the popular vote lost in favor of a candidate who had more Electoral College votes. The questions of numbers raised in the nineteenth century and by the poets in my study are at once prescient and still absolutely with us. How we make use of this knowledge—the ways we count each other, the ways we discount each other, the ways we are marked and numbered—may come to decide the very structures of our society. But I find hope in the implications of my final chapter on the Fields: in order to unite or reunite, first "ones" must be separate. The United States is currently about as separate as a country can be. Yet, the Fields' model of intimate integrity suggests to me that maybe this moment in our history is a necessary pain, a separation that holds out the hope of a new coming together; their intimacy embraces a rupture through which models of unity, at once new and old, might show us the way to learn from and avoid reliving the divisive agonies of the past.

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