Hobbes, Romance, and the Contract of Mimesis

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It is worthy the observing that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak but it mates and masters the fear of death. ... Revenge triumphs over death, love slights it, honour aspireth to it, grief flieth to it, fear preoccupateth it.

—Francis Bacon, “Of Death”

This fight being the more cruel, since both Love and Hatred conspired to sharpen their humours, that hard it was to say whether Love with one trumpet, or Hatred with another, gave the louder alarum to their courages.

—Philip Sidney, The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia

In 1606, the Earl of Essex married Frances Howard. Yet in 1613, in what became one of the most notorious scandals of the seventeenth century, James had the marriage annulled by impugning Essex’s virility to bestow Frances Howard on his then favorite and her lover, Robert Carr. Frances was required to undergo medical examination to see if she was still a virgin, and though Essex claimed the marriage had been consummated, medical evidence determined otherwise. In 1630, Essex remarried, and here too he proved unfortunate: his second wife also committed adultery. Then, with the outbreak of civil war in 1642, Essex became general of the parliamentary armies and was celebrated in parliamentary broadsides as a chivalric knight, a romance hero who was motivated by honor and virtue. Essex’s real-life opponents were not convinced. On the battlefield, the royalist army carried banners that taunted
Essex with the line, "Cuckold, we come." And in *Behemoth*, his history of the civil war, Hobbes conjectured that Essex was driven to insurrection by his wounded pride or vainglory:

But I believe verily, that the unfortunateness of his marriages had so discountenanced his conversation with the ladies, that the court could not be his proper element, unless he had had some extraordinary favour there, to balance that calamity.

This account of Essex's motives illustrates one of the central problems of *Leviathan*. Although Hobbes famously characterized the state of nature as one in which life is nasty, brutish, and short and in which people fear violent death at the hands of their fellow men, Essex and his bellicose contemporaries obviously felt no such compelling fear. Rather, they were motivated by the pursuit of glory or, more often, vainglory: the restless seeking after power and reputation at the expense of self-interest, even the interest of self-preservation. But Essex's case was more complicated still. Although elsewhere in *Behemoth*, Hobbes wrote respectfully of the commander of the parliamentary armies, here he implied that it was not so much manly valor as the fear of being perceived not to have it that caused Essex to risk violent death on the battlefield. Essex's military role was inescapably tied to his imagination of others' perception of him; his chivalric persona was itself a product of mimetic desire. In the following pages, I argue that for Hobbes and his contemporaries, the problem of Essex is the problem of romance: any account of the fear of violent death in *Leviathan* needs to address the role of the romance imagination in destabilizing this fear—both on the part of those who, like Essex, were misled by secular vainglory and those who were misled by the vainglory of eternal life.

A word about the cultural significance of romance in early modern England is pertinent. Romance was an immensely popular set of literary conventions, which could take the form of court masque, pastoral drama, or prose narrative. The formal elements of romance included idealizing Neoplatonic fictions, the ethical extremes of good and evil, a tendency toward allegory, and a plot often modeled on the quest. As Kevin Sharpe, Lois Potter, and others have argued, these conventions provided an important vehicle of political debate at the Jacobean and Caroline court. The romance themes of love and honor were amenable either to praise or criticism of the monarch, either to the celebration of peace and prosperity or to arguments for military intervention abroad.

In the 1630s and 1640s, both critics and supporters of the crown saw romance as a particularly royalist genre. This was in part because it was the genre favored by court patronage: Charles I was known for his love of chival-
ric romance, as Queen Henrietta Maria was for her love of pastoral romance. Romance was also perceived to be the genre of royal behavior. Judging from contemporary poems, letters, and the masque roles they themselves performed, Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria were perceived as exemplifying the pastoral romance of domestic love instead of the chivalric exploits of foreign affairs. Their subjects, however, appeared to yearn for a romance that was composed equally of love and adventure. In the poems of Edmund Waller and the drama of Sir Walter Montague, Prince Charles’s trip to woo the Spanish Infanta was cast as such a romance adventure; the poet William Davenant similarly used romance conventions in a poem about Prince Rupert’s trip to Madagascar, a venture that Charles opposed.7

Although royalist writers emphasized the idealizing components of romance, the romance plot in this period could also dramatize the theme of delusion. Thus, in the works of Ariosto, Spenser, and the ever-popular Sidney, the poetic narrator refers to the digressive and episodic plot structure of the romance as a kind of narrative wandering that mirrors the moral error of the knight-errant and his succumbing to the temptations of the senses, especially the temptation of erotic love. One crucial consequence of the formal and thematic association of romance with delusion and error was that the term romance began to be used more widely in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England to connote not only errant passion but also fiction, deception, and improbability.

Finally, and most important for our purposes, in this period, the romance plot of love and adventure could also conjure up the dangers of rivalry and imitation.8 In modern terms, such plots often turned on what René Girard has called “mimetic desire.”9 According to the structure of mimetic desire, passion is never spontaneous but always a matter of imitation; the rival in the romance plot is only apparently an obstacle but actually the precondition of the hero’s desire. In fact, what the hero desires is to be like his rival, to take his place, which of course means to kill him (although, if he does, the hero’s desire will be frustrated since it was always a desire for his enemy, a desire to imitate his desire). In this model, imitation could be deadly; at the very least, it was a source of conflict.

With the obvious failure of Stuart cultural politics and the outbreak of civil war in the 1640s, these pejorative connotations of romance appeared increasingly in poems, plays, broadsides, and pamphlets. The word romance began to serve as a kind of shorthand for the delusions of love and the problem of imitation that—in the minds of many contemporaries—had helped precipitate the crisis of political obligation. The old trope of romance error—of the knight-errant as a figure of errant passion and imagination—began to be used to describe Charles I and the future Charles II. Thus, critics of the king
described his 1648 escape from his parliamentary captors as "that late fine Romance of the Isle of Wight, a business that carries as much probability as anything that we read of King Arthur or the Knights of the round table."\(^{10}\) Romance here conjured up not only chivalric love and adventure but also a world of fiction and improbability.

Essex, who had supported the king and later defected, illustrates all three meanings of romance in this period: the idealizing plot of love and adventure, the theme of delusion, and the dangers of imitation. Thus, some contemporaries understood Essex’s fighting on the side of parliament against the king to be motivated and excused by a romance conception of love and honor shared by Charles I. Others clearly viewed Essex as a quixotic figure, misled by the delusions of chivalry. But, as we have seen, Hobbes’s acerbic comment was more pointed, for he suggested that Essex’s charging into battle illustrated not so much his unmediated love of honor as his mimic desire—his desire to prove his virility to the women of the court and perhaps also, or even more, to other men by engaging them in murderous conflict on the battlefield. Essex’s honor, in short, was motivated by his imagination of others’ perceptions rather than by a love of chivalric virtue for its own sake.

In the following pages, I argue that Leviathan appears in a different light once we see that it is in dialogue with the contemporary problem of romance, construed both as the cultural politics of the Stuart court and as an analysis of the workings of the imagination. For the romance emphasis on the passion of love, Hobbes substituted fear. For the romance problems of delusion and rampant imitation, Hobbes substituted contract. But I also want to argue that the problems that Hobbes associated with romance plague Hobbes’s solution to the problem of political obligation as well. For all of the passions as Hobbes described them are implicated in the delusions and fatal imitation that Hobbes associated with romance. In this sense, “the problem of Essex” is not only the problem of vainglory to which Hobbes responded with an argument about fear of violent death;\(^{11}\) “Essex” names the romance structure of the imagination that posed a threat to Hobbes’s own politics of fear as well.

Hobbes scholars have not taken “the problem of Essex” seriously enough. Older scholars such as Strauss and Hirschman argued that the Hobbesian man was a creature of passion and vanity, but fear of violent death would act as the countervailing passion to vainglory. In this reading, fear of violent death was the only passion capable of bringing man to reason.\(^{12}\) More recently, scholars have dealt with the problem of Essex by claiming that Hobbes’s argument about fear of violent death is not so much descriptive as normative. On one hand, there are the rational choice critics such as David Gauthier and Jean Hampton, who argue that people such as Essex may not fear violent death, but rationally they should.\(^{13}\) On the other hand, there are
scholars such as Richard Tuck, Alan Ryan, and Bernard Gert, who, although criticizing the rational choice analysts of Hobbes, also tend to confirm that Hobbes’s argument about violent death is normative. Thus, in a representative essay on Hobbes’s psychology in the recent Cambridge Companion to Hobbes, Bernard Gert quotes Hobbes’s remark that most men would rather die than suffer slander to prove that Hobbes is not a psychological egoist (see Leviathan 15.107), but he then goes on to assert that “Hobbes’s view of rational behavior loosely resembles psychological egoism. He held what may be called ‘rational egoism,’ viz., that the only rationally required desires are those that concern a person’s own long-term benefit, primarily their preservation.”14 According to all of these critics, Hobbesian fear of violent death is no longer a simple passion but a normative argument about reason itself.15 What we should rationally fear is a situation in which there is no overarching authority, no peace, and no commodious living. Our agreement about this fear is the basis of political contract, the ground of political obligation.

Even on their own terms, arguments such as these cry out for some acknowledgement of the way in which a metaphorical understanding of fear intervenes to control what is otherwise a very unpredictable passion. For to interpret fear of violent death normatively is implicitly to acknowledge that such fear is as unstable as the other passions, including vainglory.

Hobbesian fear, I argue, is only a metaphorical fear rather than a literal fear precisely because it is already implicated in the problem of romance. This, in turn, has important consequences for the way we read Leviathan. The widespread characterization of Hobbes’s argument as “people don’t fear violent death but should” does not fully capture the implications of Hobbes’s reflections on the romance structure of the imagination for his argument for political obligation. The motive for political contract is not the fear of violent death, even construed as a normative argument. The motive for contract is the pervasiveness of romance: all passions—including fear of violent death—are implicated in the romance plot. This, in turn, means that the first contract of Leviathan is a literary contract; this literary contract is the precondition of the political contract that founds the Hobbesian commonwealth.

In developing this argument, I first consider Hobbes’s pejorative remarks about romance in some of his earlier work. I then turn to Hobbes’s account of the inextricability of passions and the imagination in Leviathan to show that the features that Hobbes associated with romance are characteristic of all of the passions, including fear. I then suggest that Hobbes’s argument that fear of violent death is “the passion to be reckoned upon” needs to be construed as an argument about imitation. Finally, I propose that the Introduction to Leviathan lays out this contract regarding mimesis—the literary contract that is, according to Hobbes, the precondition of political contract.
As we will see, from his earliest works of political theory through *Leviathan*, Hobbes is concerned to criticize the contemporary politics of romance summed up in the figure of Essex. The Hobbesian state of nature is itself a logical deduction of this analysis of the passions and the imagination, an attempt to constrain the romance imagination by demystifying it, and an argument for a contract based not so much on the fear of violent death as on a fear of mimesis. As Hobbes tells us in *Leviathan*, the state of nature is an "inference . . . from the passions," which are in turn inextricable from the imagination (13.89). Once we attend to this link between passion and the imagination, *Leviathan* emerges as one of the great meditations in the history of political thought on the relation of imitation to politics. Mimesis—the human capacity for imitation, metaphor, and emulation—is in Hobbes's analysis simultaneously a matter for the police and the source of a utopian blueprint for the perfect commonwealth. The Hobbes who emerges from this interpretation is in some ways more traditional and in other ways more radical than one might guess from the scholarly reception of his work: a political philosopher for whom the problem of mimesis is still central, yet one who imagines that the mimetic impulse and the passions can themselves be the object of contractual definition.

**1. Hobbes's Critique of Romance**

A glance at Hobbes's early work shows that he thought of romance both as a genre and as a problem of the imagination. Moreover, these two forms of romance were most often inextricable. Thus, romance referred to narratives of chivalric love and honor but also to the abuse of the imagination (specifically, the problem of mimetic desire) to which these romances gave rise. In *The Elements of Law*, composed in 1640, Hobbes described glory as "that passion which proceedeth from the imagination or conception of our own power, above the power of him that contendeth with us" (50). "Vainglory," in contrast, is an inaccurate imagination or conception of our power, which derives from the "fame and trust of others" rather than from our own actions. In both cases, passion is relative and socially constituted. But in the first case, our passion corresponds to our ability and actions, in the second not. Hobbes linked this second, bad form of mimetic desire to the imitation of romance:

The fiction (which also is imagination) of actions done by ourselves, which never were done, is glorying; but because it begeteth no appetite nor endeavour to any further attempt, it is merely vain and unprofitable; as when a man imagineth himself to do the actions whereof he readeth in some romant, or to be like unto some other man whose
actions he admireth. And this is called VAIN GLORY: and is exemplified in the fable by the fly sitting on the axletree, and saying to himself, What a dust do I raise!16

In this passage, imitation does not so much lead to further rivalry as to a delu-
sional self-satisfaction that is relatively harmless "because it begetteth no appetite nor endeavour to any further attempt." Yet, a slightly different pic-
ture of the link between imitation, vainglory, and romance appears in the next
chapter, in which Hobbes gives Don Quixote as the prime example of the
learned madness that befalls the reader of "romants":

The gallant madness of Don Quixote is nothing else but an expression of such height of vain glory as readings of romants may produce in pusillanimous men. (Elements, 63)

Here, as so often in the history of the genre, romance does not simply narrate the story of emulous desire but also excites the desire for imitation in the reader. In the comments that follow, Hobbes makes it clear that the reading of romance may inspire in the reader both "madness in love" and the mad desire to engage in dueling. Like the politically dangerous humanist imitation of the classics, which Hobbes also mentions in this context and which in Leviathan he condemns as a cause of the civil war (21.150), the reading of romance may contribute to the disregard of one's personal safety, a contempt for violent death.

Hobbes's criticism of the genre and effects of romance also appears in his exchange with the poet William Davenant. As is well known, Davenant dedi-
cated his unfinished epic romance, Gondibert, to Hobbes in 1651. In many
ways a traditional humanist statement about the force of poetry, Davenant's Preface to Gondibert must have seemed as much a symptom of, as a response to, the problems Hobbes was trying to address in his political works. For Davenant argued that poetry could instill political obedience by inspiring the reader with love. Romance was not only a powerful generic influence on Gondibert, but it was also a model for the poet's relation to the reader.17

To Davenant's praise of love, Hobbes responded with a critique of romance. Hobbes clearly saw a connection between the two and it worried him. Thus, he tried to redefine romance, to purge it of its errant fictions. Although he praised Davenant for his chaste representation of love in the female character Birtha, he also cautioned Davenant against the improbabilities and extravagance of the typical romance plot. Less volatile than love or fancy—indeed, a bulwark against them—were the neoclassical criteria of perspicuity, property, and decency. To these Davenant has adhered, avoiding the "exorbitancy of . . . fiction" traditionally associated with romance.
Hobbes then proceeded to criticize less careful poets, those who are seduced by the trappings of chivalric romance:

There are some that are not pleased with fiction, unless it be bold, not onely to exceed the work, but also the possibility of nature: they would have impenetrable Armors, Incanted Castles, invulnerable bodies, Iron Men, flying Horses, and a thousand other such things, which are easily feigned by them that dare. (81)

If Gondibert is a romance, Hobbes implies, it is a properly chastened one—a Hobbesian poem in which the author adheres to the truths of history and philosophy and excludes all supernatural machinery (60).

Given Hobbes's critique of romance in The Elements, Gondibert also appears as a Hobbesian poem because martial deeds are at a minimum, the hero's rival is killed off in the first canto, and the hero himself retreats into a life of contemplation. As Colin Burrow has argued, Gondibert presents "the Spenserian synthesis of love and a quest for glory [as] a pernicious mistake." In drawing this line between love and politics, Davenant signaled his "departure from earlier epic romance." He also seconded—at least thematically—Hobbes's wariness about mixing romantic passion with politics.18

In its celebration of love, however, Gondibert was clearly not Hobbesian. In contrast to a modern critic such as Marcuse, who wanted to liberate our erotic potential for less authoritarian investments, Hobbes obviously felt that love was not authoritarian enough. Against those of his contemporaries who thought that the sovereign needed to appeal to the subject's erotic feeling—to what Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon, called the subject's "affection" for the sovereign—Hobbes believed that the passions were erratic and subversive, not least of all when they took the form of emulous identification. Like romance vainglory, love gives rise to the desire to imitate and master others, and such emulous identification is itself a potential threat to civil order.19 For this reason, Davenant's "Great love" needed to be replaced by "contract... or fear" or both (Elements, 57).

II. ROMANCE IN "LEVIATHAN"

Critics have recognized that the task of Leviathan is to analyze and demystify the fictions of the imagination. Yet when we turn to Leviathan, we see that the problems that Hobbes associates with romance are features of the imagination in general. And since the imagination is inseparable from the passions, this in turn means that the passions are inevitably implicated in a romance structure of imitation and emulation. Whether men in the state of nature are
vainglorious or moderate, they are restless and self-aggrandizing. While the former desire power for its own sake, the latter desire some guarantee of protection. This desire amounts to a passion for self-aggrandizement that, however motivated by bourgeois considerations of security, mimics the aristocratic passion of vainglory. By definition, such restless seeking after power can never be satisfied, for it is socially and linguistically constructed. Construed in this way, the passions become “particular ways of striving after precedence and recognition.” They become, in short, the vehicle of a romance “absorption in the world of [our] imagination.”

We can begin to understand this inextricability of passion and imagination by looking at Hobbes’s analysis of simple and compound imagination. In chapter 6 of Leviathan, Hobbes explains the relation between the passions and the simple imagination. He distinguishes between those vital motions that we share with animals such as “the course of the Blood, the Pulse” and so on—“to which Motions there needs no help of the Imagination”—and voluntary motions such as “to go, to speak, to move any of our limbs, in such manner as is first fancied in our minds.” It is because we can first imagine something that we can intend it. Fancy or “the Imagination is [thus] the first internall beginning of all Voluntary Motion”—of all passions, desires, appetite, or aversion (6.37-38). And while Hobbes has explained that simple imagination is simply decaying perception, he also insists that our perception of particular things as desirable “proceed[s] from Experience, and triall of their effects upon [us], or other men” (6.39). Accordingly, there is “nothing simply or absolutely” desirable or hateful; rather, there are only things that we call good or evil based on our changing perceptions of their relative usefulness to us:

The names of things as affect us, that is, which please, and displease us, because all men be not alike affected with the same thing, nor the same man at all times, are in the common discourses of men, of inconstant signification. For seeing all names are imposed to signify our conceptions; and all our affections are but conceptions; when we conceive the same things differently, we can hardly avoid different naming of them. (4.31; see 6.39)

Even simple imagination, as it turns out, is inseparable from the “tincture of our different passions” and thus the contamination of “inconstant signification” (4.31).21

Passion and imagination are even more tightly linked in the case of compound imagination. Whereas simple imagination, according to Hobbes, is the imagination of something “formerly perceived in sense” (2.16), compound imagination involves the combining of sense perceptions into something
new. It is thus more closely allied to metaphor and the poetic imagination—a not altogether good thing. For, in the example Hobbes gives here, as in *The Elements*, compound imagination is compared to romance:

> So when a man compoundeth the image of his own person, with the image of the actions of an other man; as when a man imagines himself a *Hercules*, or an *Alexander*, (which happeneth often to them that are much taken with reading of Romants) it is a compound imagination, and properly but a Fiction of the mind. (2.16)

In this example of compound imagination, the very use of this faculty is confounded with its abuse: it is natural to combine sense impressions into more complicated representations, but this natural ability may be allied to fiction rather than truth, to the all-too-human desire to imagine oneself other and greater than one is. The danger here is not simply that the reader of romance will imagine himself a lover and knight-errant (like the Don Quixote of *The Elements*) but that the reader of romance will imagine himself a Hercules or Alexander, that is, a military hero of epic proportions. Epic action is the deviant offshoot of romance imagination, rather than the other way around (as it was usually judged to be in Renaissance poetics). Romance vainglory is not simply unprofitable but dangerous, as it is when the parties to the civil war begin to imagine that their honor demands that they engage in violent conflict. Thus, the errant activity of the imagination—and specifically of metaphoric thinking (the perception of a false likeness between oneself and Hercules)—is not simply associated with moral and epistemological error.\(^{22}\) It is also associated with political error—with what Hobbes called “sedition and contempt.”

Romance for Hobbes does not only connote the self-aggrandizing fantasies of parliamentarians and royals, but it also describes the delusions of the “Kingdome of Darknesse” in book 4 of *Leviathan*. Hobbes’s target includes all those preachers, whether Puritan or Presbyterian, who have convinced their auditors to fear damnation more than physical death and thus to construe political disobedience as a matter of conscience. In conjuring up hellfire, the preachers have promoted “the Daemonology of the Heathen Poets”; in combating their errors, Hobbes redescribes the demons as “ghosts” and “faeries,” based on “false, or uncertain Traditions, and faigned, or uncertain History” (44.418)—precisely the charges brought against romance by its critics. Similarly, he describes the pagan images and idols appropriated by the Church as “meer Figment[s], without place, habitation, motion, or existence, but in the motions of the Brain” (45.446), and remarks further that “a man can fancy Shapes he never saw . . . as the Poets make their Centaures, Chimaeras, or other Monsters never seen” (45.448). Such fictions are politi-
cally dangerous when their fictive quality is masked and when claims are made for their validity or efficacy that pose a threat to the absolute authority of the sovereign. In *Leviathan*, the Roman Catholic Church and, closer to home, the English Presbyterians are the chief promulgators of such ideological fictions, and Hobbes’s task is to demystify these fictions as romance and as ideology.23

For all these reasons, it is tempting to read the comparison of romance and compound imagination as a simple illustration of mental error. Yet, as Hobbes makes clear, romance error also illustrates a fundamental principle of Hobbesian psychology: all specifically human desires are mediated by the imaginative activity of comparing ourselves to others. The imagination, in turn, is shaped by our passions. Moreover, this is true not only with respect to objects we desire; it is also true of the very faculty of the imagination. In a kind of metacommentary on the inextricability of passion and imagination, Hobbes even describes superior compound imagination—or the intellectual virtue of wit—in terms of our passionate rivalry with others:

Vertue generally, in all sorts of subjects, is somewhat that is valued for eminence; and consisteth in comparison. For if all things were equally in all men, nothing would be prized. And by Vertues INTELLECTUALL, are alwayes understood such abilityes of the mind, as men praise, value, and desire should be in themselves; and go commonly under the name of good wit; though the same word WIT, be used also, to distinguish one certain ability from the rest. (8.50)

In other words, wit is not an absolute quality but a superiority to others in an ability they admire. We desire wit not simply because of its absolute scarcity but because other people desire it.

In a further illustration of the inextricability of passion and the imagination, Hobbes then tells us both that differences in compound imagination or wit are owing to the passions and that the passions are affected by custom, education, and the desire for power:

The causes of this difference of Witts, are in the Passions: and the difference of Passions, proceedeth partly from the different Constitution of the body, and partly from different Education . . . [and] from their difference of customes. . . .

The Passions that most of all cause the differences of Wit, are principally, the more or lesse Desire of Power, of Riches, of Knowledge, and of Honour. All of which may be reduced to the first, that is Desire of Power. For Riches, Knowledge and Honour are but severall sorts of Power. (8.53)

Just as the intellectual virtue of wit is defined by “comparison” to others, so power is a matter of “eminence,” of having or being thought to have more
than others. What counts as power also is socially determined; it is at least in part a matter of opinion or convention: “the Reputation of Power is Power” (10.62). Thus, by Hobbes’s own account, our passions and imagination are implicated in a romance plot of emulation.

III. FEAR OF VIOLENT DEATH (1)

Leviathan famously singles out the passion of fear as the one passion that will induce us to consent to political contract. And from one perspective, it is easy to see why. For if love and desire are forms of appetite, fear is a kind of aversion—and in fact, Hobbes often uses the two words synonymously (chap. 6). Accordingly, just as love and desire give rise to imitation, fear would appear not to—would appear, that is, to be immune to the contagion of mimetic desire.

And yet, as we see from the very beginning of Leviathan, fear is not immune to the contagion of the imagination. To the contrary, fear is inseparable from an individual’s subjective judgment and often intertwined with other passions, such as vainglory, shame, or aggression. Like other passions, it is socially constituted; like other passions, its signification is “aequivocall” (8.52):

And therefore in reasoning, a man must take heed of words; which besides the signification of what we imagine of their nature, have a signification also of the nature, disposition, and interest of the speaker; such as are the names of Vertues, and Vices; For one man calleth Wisdome, what another calleth feare. . . . And therefore such names can never be true grounds of any ratiocination. (4.31)

As though to provide an example of the problem, in chapter 6 of Leviathan, Hobbes defines fear as “Aversion, with opinion of Hurt from the object,” and courage as “the same, with hope of avoyding that Hurt by resistence” (6.41, emphasis added). The definition of courage suggests that it is just a slightly more optimistic version of fear; it suggests that, in some circumstances, fear might look like—or take the form of—courage.

In the early chapters of Leviathan, Hobbes gives us two examples of how this confusion of fear and courage might work. In discussing how excessive passion gives rise to madness, Hobbes tells us how

there raigned a fit of madness in [a] Grecian City, which seized onely the young Maidens; and caused many of them to hang themselves. This was by most then thought an act of the Divel. But one that suspected, that contemt of life in them, might proceed from some Passion of the mind, and supposing they did not contemne also their honour,
gave counsell to the Magistrates, to strip such as so hang'd themselves, and let them hang out naked. This the story says cured that madnesse. (8.56)

This story is important because it illustrates, among other things, that the fear of violent death has no deterrent power; rather, the prospect of violent death is instead an occasion of aggression against the self, an aggression that—one could argue—requires a considerable degree of courage. (As Bacon observes in the epigraph to this essay, “There is no passion in the mind of man so weak but it mates and masters the fear of death.”) Not surprisingly, Hobbes labels this displacement of fear by courage a kind of madness. But the story also illustrates the curative powers of mimetic desire, the way in which the link between passion and imagination can act as a countervailing influence on the madness of suicide. For it is the imagination or fear of dishonor—the imagination of someone else’s opinion of them—that causes the young women to stop killing themselves or, to put it another way, to begin fearing violent death.

As we know from the example of Essex, however, fear of dishonor is itself an unstable passion: we cannot depend on it to instruct us in the fear of death—to the contrary. Thus, in chapter 10 on “Power, Worth, Dignity, Honour and Worthiness,” Hobbes observes,

At this day, in this part of the world, private Duels are, and alwayes will be Honourable, though unlawfull, till such time as there shall be Honour ordained for them that refuse, and Ignominy for them that make the Challenge. For Duels also are many times effects of Courage; and the ground of Courage is alwayes Strength or Skill, which are Power; though for the most part they be effects of rash speaking, and of the fear of Dishonour, in one, or both the Combatants; who engaged by rashnesse, are driven into the Lists to avoyd disgrace. (10.67)

As in the case of the Grecian maidens, so in this example behavior is affected by the imagination of others’ judgments. Yet, in striking contrast to the Grecian maidens, here fear of dishonor or disgrace leads to the risk rather than the avoidance of violent death. In some cases of dueling, such fear of dishonor may be called courage, the confident evaluation of one’s superior strength or skill that gives rise to “the hope of avoiding that hurt [dishonor] by resistance.” More often, actions that appear courageous are merely the effects of rashness and of a fear of dishonor that would follow from not entering “into the lists.” The romance culture of honor is dangerous, not least of all because even cowardly men feel compelled to imitate the courageous.
IV. FEAR OF VIOLENT DEATH (2)

The Hobbesian state of nature is a logical deduction of Hobbesian psychology I have just sketched, of the inextricability of passion and imagination. But Hobbes makes sure that this state also contains the seeds of its own destruction. For the very representation of the state of nature as nasty, brutish, and short—as one in which everyone fears violent death—is, ironically, both a vivid illustration of the horrific effects of the imagination and an idealistic portrait of a world in which the imagination has been contained. One of the rhetorical functions of the state of nature is, in short, to single out fear of violent death as an exceptional passion, a passion that is not really vulnerable to the contagion of the imagination. How does this argument work in practice?

From the outset, Hobbes portrays the state of nature as one in which the imagination is central. This is true whether the state of nature is characterized as one of scarcity (competition for the same objects), diffidence (the desire to secure what one already has), or vainglory (the desire for recognition and power). Scarcity in Hobbes's account is not a simple empirical matter but a matter of opinion—specifically, the opinion that one has an equal right to the object in question. Then, from the opinion of equality, diffidence or fear of one's fellow men arises—that is, the imagination of some future harm—at the worst, violent death. And this in turn leads to another kind of imagination, which Hobbes calls "Anticipation," by which one seeks to secure what one already has by acquiring ever more.

Passion and imagination are also intimately linked in the state of nature in the case of vainglory, which does not so much seek to secure what one has as what one thinks one is. Vainglorious men take "pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires" (13.88). Here the imagination has a double role: precisely because "the reputation of power is power," the vainglorious man can only imagine himself as powerful if he is recognized or imagined as such by others.

It should be clear from the description I have just given that although Hobbes sometimes distinguishes between "moderate" men who would be satisfied with subsistence were it not for vainglorious men—and vainglorious men who are always seeking "power after power" and thus undermining the security of the moderate—the distinction cannot be maintained. For the irony of the Hobbesian state of nature is that those who are moderate end up imitating the vainglorious in their attempt to escape from them. The fearful
imagination or anticipation of the moderate men leads them to act like their enemies to avoid becoming their victims—it leads them, that is, to want to be as powerful as their enemies. As in the examples analyzed above, here too actions motivated by fear might be redescribed as courageous. The Hobbesian "fool" who says in his heart that there is no God (and therefore no reason to fear, no reason not to break one’s word) is the least of Hobbes’s problems (15.101). The real problem is fear itself. Fear of violent death in the state of nature is not an antidote to vainglory: fear itself imitates vainglory. Clearly, then, it is not enough to fear violent death to get out of the state of nature, for fear perpetuates this state by miming the behavior of those it fears (see 13.87).26

Nevertheless, Hobbes insists that fear is also the solution. Although life in the state of nature is characterized by the “continuall feare, and danger of violent death,” fear of violent death can also be reckoned on to lead men out of the state of nature—for, along with the desire for commodious living, it will “encline men” to keep their contracts and live peacefully (13.89-90):

The force of Words, being (as I have formerly noted) too weak to hold men to the performance of their Covenants; there are in mans nature, but two imaginable helps to strengthen it. And those are either a Feare of the consequence of breaking their word; or a Glory, or Pride in appearing not to need to breake it. This lat[ter] is a Generosity too rarely found to be presumed on, especially in the pursuers of Wealth, Command, or Sensuall Pleasure; which are the greatest part of Mankind. The Passion to be reckoned upon, is Feare; whereof there be two very generall Objects: one, The Power of Spirits Invisible; the other, The Power of those men they shall therein Offend. (14.99)

In other words, in the state of nature, the fear of invisible spirits may be powerful enough to induce men to keep their covenants; fear of one’s fellow men only has this effect in society. For while fear of violent death makes it unwise to perform one’s covenant first in the state of nature, fear of a “common Power” (13.90) induces men to keep their covenants in civil society.

This is at first glance an argument about the rational necessity of force: we are able keep our covenants because there is a sovereign power to enforce them. But, and here’s where I differ from the critics I mentioned at the outset of this essay, it is also an argument about mimesis. Crucially, Hobbes does not simply oppose fear of violent death to vainglory. He opposes fear to fear. That is, Hobbes’s argument depends on distinguishing the fear that is a mimetic passion like any other from the calculable fear that enables the peaceful establishment of the commonwealth. Fear must serve as a countervailing passion, but it must not look anything like the fear it opposes: it must not be implicated in imitation if it is to serve as the basis for political contract. I believe that Hobbes recognized this dilemma and intended for us to construe
this second kind of fear metaphorically. But for this to work, mimesis and metaphor themselves needed to be subjected to a prior contract. To characterize Hobbes's argument as 'people don't fear violent death, but they should' is only half the story. The crucial other half is an argument about mimesis and metaphor.

According to this argument, Hobbes uses the recognition of our mimetic impulse to argue for its expulsion altogether. In his description of the state of nature, Hobbes simultaneously acknowledges that fear of violent death may mimic the effects of vainglory, insofar as it sets off a restless seeking of power after power, and argues from that shared mimetic tendency to the necessity of a "common Power to feare" (13.90). Here, Hobbes's claim is that the recognition of the logic of mimetic desire will persuade you to give up mimesis. Precisely because the fear of violent death can take the form of courage (competition, diffidence, vainglory), you are persuaded it should take the form of obedience, of contracting to obey a higher power. Only in this way will we be able to achieve a state of peaceful and "commodious living" (13.90), something that Hobbes takes as a self-evident good. To "reckon upon" the fear of violent death in the state of nature, then, is to reason about its unreliability, while to reckon upon it in the commonwealth is to count on the sovereign power of the sword to terrify everyone into obedience. But what enables the passage from one to the other is not fear of violent death per se but rather the recognition that even passion that would seem to be most dependable—the passion for life, the fear of violent death—is subject to contamination by vainglory. It is only as a result of this recognition that the passion of fear can be redescribed and contained: such fear is no longer simply a passion like any other but rather the locus of reason.27 Such predictable, calculable fear and diffidence are now not "dishonorable" (as Hobbes had said they were earlier [10.66]) but rather the beginning of wisdom (see 4.31). Paradiastole—the rhetorical redescription of vice as virtue, of fear as wisdom—is not only the problem Hobbes sets out to remedy (as Quentin Skinner has argued); it is also Hobbes's solution.28 To put it another way, the passion of fear is not simply a given from which Hobbes deduces political contract; rather, the passion of fear, as Hobbes comes to define it, and with it political contract are a consequence of a prior contract of mimesis.29

V. THE CONTRACT OF MIMESIS

In The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, Strauss argued that "the antithesis between classical and modern political philosophy, more accurately between
[Plato] and . . . Hobbes, is that the former orientates itself by speech and the latter from the outset refuses to do so" (163).

This refusal arises originally from insight into the problematic nature of ordinary speech, that is, of popular valuations, which one may with a certain justification call natural valuations. This insight leads Hobbes, just as it did Plato, first to the ideal of an exact political science. But while Plato goes back to the truth hidden in natural valuations and therefore seeks to teach nothing new and unheard-of, but to recall what is known to all but not understood, Hobbes, rejecting the natural valuations in principle, goes beyond them, goes forward to a new a priori political philosophy, which is of the future and freely projected. (163)

While from one perspective, it is true that Hobbes rejects orientation by speech, from another he adopts an even more radical linguistic orientation than Plato. This is the orientation of someone for whom the possibility of political contract is founded first and foremost on a verbal contract. In The Elements of Law, Hobbes defines science as

the remembrance of the names and appellations of things, and how every thing is called, which is, in matters of common conversation, a remembrance of the pacts and covenants of men made amongst themselves, concerning how to be understood of one another. And this kind of knowledge is generally called science, and the conclusion thereof truth. (Part 2, chap. 8)

And in De Cive, he refers to science "whose truth is drawn out by natural reason and Syllogisms from human agreements and definitions." In Leviathan as well, political contract depends on our subscribing to the linguistic contract Hobbes extends in the Introduction. This is a contract regarding the passions—but it does not simply stipulate (as Strauss would have it [169]) "the natural right only of the fear of death." A precondition of this stipulation is the contract to "redescribe" the potentially dangerous social construction of the passions as a matter of "fixed similitude."

Hobbes's goal in the Introduction is not only to introduce the reader to the notion of the commonwealth as an "Artificiall man," made by "pacts and covenants," but also to set up a contract with the reader specifying the protocols for interpreting Leviathan. Crucial to this contract is a clarification of the relation of passion to the imagination, a clarification, that is, regarding mimetic desire. Contract in the Introduction is not only a metaphor for the Hobbesian commonwealth but also for the process of analogical reasoning, which checks the errant activity of the imagination. Hobbes invites us to read the experience of others analogically in our own, but this reasoning about "similitude" is severely constrained. In this respect, Hobbesian reading
draws near to (or is an instance of?) the scientific reasoning, which is predicated on "fixed similitudes."

In the opening of the preface, Hobbes compares the "pacts and covenants" of government to the divine fiat by which God created the world. Drawing on a well-worn trope, Hobbes suggests that man is like God by virtue of his ability to create: likeness here licenses mimesis in the sense of making something new.\(^33\) As though in recognition of the danger inherent in this sublime gesture, Hobbes then quickly moves from this metaphorical elaboration of the contract of government to a discussion of what it means to read metaphorically, thus explicitly addressing and limiting his implied contract with the reader:

> There is ... [a] saying not of late understood, by which [men] might learn truly to read one another, if they would take the pains; and that is, *Nosce teipsum, Read thy self*: which was not meant, as it is now used, to countenance, either the barbarous state of men in power, towards their inferiors; or to encourage men of low degree, to a sawcie behaviour towards their betters; But to teach us, that for the similitude of the thoughts, and Passions of one man, to the thoughts, and Passions of another, whosoever looketh into himself, and considereth what he doth, when he doth *think, opine, reason, hope, feare, &c.*, and upon what grounds; he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts and Passions of all other men, upon the like occasions.

In this passage, Hobbes warns against what we might call the romance plot of metaphor, according to which the linguistic transport of meaning serves as a model for political usurpation (something Hobbes worried about elsewhere in *Leviathan*).\(^34\) While using the metaphor of "reading oneself" and recommending that the reader analogize from his self-knowledge to knowledge of others, Hobbes explicitly cautions us against interpreting the metaphorical activity of comparison as emulation since the latter sort of reading threatens social and political hierarchy and thus the peace of the commonwealth. Thus, he contrasts metaphor conceived of as a stable contract between individuals who agree to ignore their differences—to imagine themselves as equal parties to the contract—and metaphor as overreaching and transgressive and as articulating relations of hierarchy and inequality (imagining oneself a Hercules). Bourgeois diffidence—the simple perception of likeness—is proposed as the remedy for aristocratic self-aggrandizement or metaphorical usurpation. Hobbes's goal is to eradicate this danger by subordinating the transgressive activity of emulation to the putatively stable contract of comparison. In so doing, he produces the likeness he asks the reader to recognize.\(^35\)

Hobbes thus makes it clear from the outset that the argument of *Leviathan* depends on a process of metaphorical identification that involves a chaste
revision of the bad mimetic desire he associates with the reading of romance. For the typical romance appeal to eros as a motive of obligation, Hobbes substitutes the desire to “know [in] oneself” the “thoughts and passions” of other men, the desire to recognize oneself as like others. To shore up this perception of likeness in the Introduction, Hobbes eliminates the diverse objects of the passions and, while recommending comparison, also eliminates other human subjects, as though in tacit recognition that mimetic desire feeds on the imagination and perception of others and generates not only rivalry but also dissimulation:

I say the similitude of Passions [he continues from the passage quoted above], which are the same in all men, desire, feare, hope, &c.; not the similitude of the objects of the Passions, which are the things desired, feared, hoped, &c.: for these the constitution individuall, and particular education do so vary, and they are so easie to be kept from our knowledge, that the characters of mans heart, blotted and confounded as they are, with dissembling, lying, counterfeiting, and erroneous doctrines, are legible only to him that searcheth hearts.

Hobbes’s distinction between the similitude of the passions and the objects of the passions is designed to respond to the obvious objection that we do not all desire or fear the same things. According to Hobbes, this is not an obstacle to peace once we see that we are alike in wanting what we individually desire and in disliking the frustration of those desires. And yet, as Leviathan argues at great length, it is not only the objects of our passions but also our passions themselves that vary with our individual constitution and education. (Clarendon was simply repeating Hobbes’s own insight when he observed as much in his Survey of Leviathan.) For this reason, Hobbes’s argument can only work if we consent at the very outset of the text to a contract of mimesis, a contract to specify the limits of mimetic desire.

**CODA: “LEVIATHAN” AS ROMANCE**

As we have seen, Hobbes’s goal in Leviathan was to divorce contract from the false identification and errors of romance. For this reason as well, Hobbes rejected the Stuart political romance with its appeal to love as a motive to political obligation. Yet, for all Hobbes’s vaunted realism in depicting life in the state of nature as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short,” for all his demystifying and secularizing, Hobbes may simply have substituted a romance of his own. This claim may be understood in two ways. The first has to do with the convergence of the world depicted by Hobbes and the royalist
romance of the 1650s. The second has to do with Hobbes's proposed solution.

If prior to the civil war, royalist romance had most often served as a vehicle of Neoplatonic idealization, in the 1650s royalist romance was transformed by the strains of civil war. In the preface to the royalist prose romance *The Princess Cloria* (written in the 1650s), the author defended the choice of genre by alluding to the recent political conflict: "the Ground-work for a Romance was excellent...since by no other way almost, could the multiplicity of strange Actions of the Times be exprest, that exceeded all belief." Royalist romance now conjured up not only the world of aristocratic values, of love and adventure, but also the more mundane realities of passion and interest. The telos of many earlier romances had been to recast fortune as fate, thus retrospectively making romance error the vehicle of a providential conclusion, the romances of the 1650s foregrounded contingency, not least of all by unmasking the power politics that lay behind the Neoplatonic forces of good and evil. The same may be said of *Leviathan* and its depiction of the restless striving of human beings and of the state of nature as nasty, brutish, and short. This too is a world motivated by passion and interest, of rampant imitation and emulation.

But if the world of *Leviathan* is similar to the contingent world of some royalist romance in the 1650s, what about Hobbes's proposed solution? I suggest that although *Leviathan* is presented as a logical argument, it may also be read ironically as a romance of political obligation. Like his literary compatriots, Hobbes's narrative tells the story of an initial broken vow (let's say, the Oath of Allegiance to Charles I), followed by a critique of the errant adventures of the imagination and, finally, the restoration of the bond of subject and sovereign on a more secure basis, that of contract. And like the typical romance plot, the dénouement of *Leviathan* depends on a moment of recognition—here the self-recognition of Hobbes's "Nosce teipsum, Read thy self." Fear is important in this narrative, but equally important is the erotic invitation—in the Platonic sense—to "know oneself" by reading oneself in "the thoughts and passions" of other men. Crucially, however, the addressee of this invitation is not the male hero of chivalric romance. Precisely because manly mimetic desire is synonymous with the state of war, the ideal Hobbesian reader and subject is closer to the female subject of romance or of seventeenth-century domestic manuals, the wife who consents to be bound by her own passions to a hierarchical, inequitable, irrevocable marriage contract. And if the ideal Hobbesian subject is the docile, effeminized political subject of an absolute sovereign, the fear of the sovereign may be construed as a gendered fear—what seventeenth-century manuals called the "fear" of
one's husband that leads to appropriate subordination and reverence rather than insubordination and emulation. In *Leviathan*—the canonical text of rational theories of contractual obligation—lurks a parody of the romance plot that Hobbes's criticism of romance would appear to exclude.

In conclusion, if Hobbes's achievement in *Leviathan* is to subject the contingent world of romance to contract, this contract is perhaps more aptly analogized to the literary contract of genre than to a legal or economic contract, and Hobbes appears not only as a forerunner of modern political science but also of the novel. As Leo Strauss remarked of the centrality of the passions to Hobbes's political theory, "It is thus not a matter of chance that *la volonté générale* and aesthetics were launched at approximately the same time."42

**NOTES**

1. *Mates* means overpowers; *preoccupateth* means anticipates, as in the case of suicide. In the following pages, I cite *Leviathan* from the edition by Richard Tuck (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991); chapter is indicated first, followed by page number.

2. This is, of course, a simplification of an enormously complicated series of political negotiations. The annulment was desired not only by Frances but also by her powerful relatives, the Earl of Northampton and the Earl of Suffolk. See Vernon F. Snow, *Essex the Rebel* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), chap. 3. Snow tells us that Essex owned a copy of "*Amadis de Gaul*, the bible of chivalry-conscious knights and nobles" (187).

3. I owe this information to Sears McGee of the University of California, Santa Barbara. Snow discusses the royalist lampooning of Essex (343) but does not mention this incident.


5. As Hobbes remarked in *Leviathan*, glory "maketh men invade . . . for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other signe of undervalue, either direct in their Persons, or by reflexion in their Kindred, their Friends, their Nation, their Profession, or their Name" (13.88). Although the word Hobbes uses here is *glory*, the examples he gives suggest that it is identical with vainglory or self-love.

6. See, for example, Jeremy Burroughs's sermon, dedicated to Essex, "The Glorious Name of God, The Lord of Hosts, opened in two Sermons . . . with a Postscript, Briefly Answering a Late Treatise by Henry Ferne, D.D." (London, 1643), 93: "Those are fittest to venture their lives in fight, who are able to see beyond life, to see what is on the other side of the shore of this mortality, even eternall life and glory."

enced by the many reprintings of Sidney’s *Arcadia*, which not only provided contemporaries with a gripping narrative of chivalric adventures but also kept the figure of Sidney, the exemplary Protestant poet and military hero, foremost in their minds.

8. *Imitation* is a complex term in this period. It serves as a translation of both Platonic and Aristotelian mimesis, but it also refers in the rhetorical tradition to an author’s imitation of prior texts and the imitative response on the part of the readers.


14. *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 169, my emphasis. In the same volume, Richard Tuck cautions us that passion for Hobbes “is in part a matter of cognition: it involves beliefs about what sort of power we possess and what we can do with it” (184). Yet, because all men understand the claim of self-defense, “self-preservation was . . . an extremely plausible candidate for a universal principle” (188), a plausible starting point for deducing the laws of nature. In short, men do not always fear violent death, they do not always act in rational accordance with the right of self-preservation, and they do not agree at any moment on what constitutes a threat of violent death—but they can recognize the value of acting as though they did. That is, although men are not always motivated by fear of violent death, they should be. For similar reasoning, see the essay in this volume by Alan Ryan (213, 225).


19. See *The Elements of Law*, chap. 9, for Hobbes’s analysis of how love, “the great theme of poets,” is often an expression of the desire to master others (56). In his *Brief View and Survey of . . . Leviathan* (London, 1676), Clarendon criticized Hobbes for neglecting the importance of affectation in generating political allegiance. Unlike Hobbes, kings have learned “that there is a great difference between the subjection that love and discretion paires, and that which results only from fear and force” (70).


knowledge and the nonconventionalist dimension of Hobbes's thought. See also George MacDonald Ross, "Hobbes's Two Theories of Meaning," in The Figural and the Literal, ed. Andrew E. Benjamin, Geoffrey N. Cantor, and John R. R. Christie (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1987), 31-57. Ross argues that in Leviathan, Hobbes presents a positivistic account of language according to which names arbitrarily designate mental images, as well as an "ordinary language theory" according to which meaning is established by common usage.

22. See The Elements, 61, where Hobbes defines "the excellency of FANCY" as "finding unexpected similitudes in things," "from [whence] proceed those grateful similes, metaphors, and other tropes." By metaphorical thinking, I mean this reasoning by analogy or similitude.

23. Thus, in the final chapter of Leviathan, Hobbes compares the papacy to "the Kingdome of Fayries": "The Faeries in what Nation soever they converse, have but one Universall King, which some Poets of ours call King Oberon; but the Scripture calls Beelzebub, Prince of Daemons. The Ecclesiastiques likewise, in whose dominion soever they be found, acknowledge but one Universall King, the Pope" (47.481).

24. In chapter 13, Hobbes describes the state of nature as "this Inference, made from the passions" (89).

25. Men believe themselves equally endowed "in the faculties of body, and mind," and "from this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our Ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies" (13.87). In a classic illustration of mediated desire, desiring the same object is not a simple function of scarcity but of the opinion of equality, and it is precisely this perception of one’s likeness to another (this perception of shared desire) that gives rise to enmity. On the role of opinion in the state of nature, see Tuck, Cambridge Companion to Hobbes, 184-85, and David Johnston, The Rhetoric of Leviathan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 77-78.

26. On Hobbes's use of the term d difference, Gert observes (without commenting on the implications of this observation for Hobbes’s argument), "It may simply be that it is because Hobbes wanted to use the passion of fear as one of the 'passions that incline men to peace' (Lev. ch. 13, EW III, 116) that he decided to use a different word when he wanted a passion that led to war" (161).

27. See Strauss on Hobbes’s belief that reason is impotent, whence the necessity of focusing on the motivating power of fear, but also on Hobbes’ redefinition of fear itself as rational. See also Gert, Cambridge Companion to Hobbes: "All of the premises about human nature, which Hobbes claims are true of all persons and which he uses in arguing for the necessity of an unlimited sovereign, are in fact statements about the rationally required desires, and not, as most commentators have taken them, statements about the passions" (164). As I have been arguing, they are both—which is why Hobbes can use fear to get us out of the state of nature and also why this solution is vexed.

28. In Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Skinner argues that paradiastole is one of the central problems Hobbes wishes to address in his political philosophy but is not Hobbes’s solution. Rather, rhetoric in Leviathan has the function of supplementing Hobbes’s rational arguments and of ridiculing Hobbes’s opponents. Yet an earlier version of his argument is much closer to the point I am making here. See "Thomas Hobbes: Rhetoric and the Construction of Morality," Proceedings of the British Academy 76 (1990): 1-61. After arguing that Hobbes thought it was impossible to gain general agreement about correct evaluative descriptions, whence the necessity of an absolute sovereign, Skinner comments, "The very core of [Hobbes’s] argument, both in De Cive and in Leviathan, takes the form of an appeal to authority. Although Hobbes undoubtedly provides a solution to the problem of paradiastole, he appears to do so only at the expense of sacrificing his own scientific ideal" (56).
29. Once we see Hobbes's argument about fear of violent death as part and parcel of an argument about romance and the imagination, books 3 and 4 of Leviathan appear as the logical extension of Hobbes's analysis in books 1 and 2. For the Church is, as we have seen, one of the chief promulgators of romance fictions. Because the goal of Leviathan is to set up a political authority about which one can say, "upon earth there is not his like" (Job 41:33, the epigraph to the frontispiece of Leviathan, emphasis added)—an authority that escapes the contagion of the imagination and of imitation—it becomes necessary to dismantle the temporal/spiritual distinction of powers that "makes men see double and mistake their lawful sovereign"; cited by S. A. Lloyd, Ideals as Interests in Hobbes's "Leviathan" (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 226.


31. See also the chart of the several kinds of knowledge in chapter 9 of Leviathan, where Hobbes derives "the Science of JUST and UNJUST" from "Contracting," which is in turn one of the "Consequences of Speech" (61).

32. See also Leviathan: "But the most noble and profitable invention of all other, was that of SPEECH, consisting of Names or Appellations, and their Connexion . . . without which, there had been amongst men, neither Common-wealth, nor Society, nor Contract, nor Peace" (4.23). See also Sorell, 39, on fixed similitudes in Hobbes.

33. The locus classicus in the Renaissance is Pico's Oration on the Dignity of Man. See also Sidney's Defence of Poesy, in which the poet is described as a "maker." In his treatise On the Sublime, Longinus quotes God's creative "fiat" as an example of sublime discourse. Note also how Hobbes's comparison of the establishment of the commonwealth to the divine "fiat" complicates his argument about contract, for God is not a party to a contract when he creates the world; he is instead an absolute sovereign. This may be an example (and there are others, as many critics have noted) of the way in which something such as sovereign power—including the sovereign power to define and constrain our interpretation of our passions—is a precondition of the contract of government that is itself a precondition of sovereign power.

34. See Leviathan: "The light of humane minds is Perspicuous Words, but by exact definitions first snuffed, and purged from ambiguity; Reason is the pace; Encrease of Science, the way; and the Benefit of man-kind, the end. And on the contrary, Metaphors, and senslesse and ambiguous words, are like ignes fatui; and reasoning upon them, is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities; and their end, contention, and sedition, or contempt" (5.36). As we saw in Hobbes's discussion of compound imagination, in the Renaissance, metaphor was frequently conceived of as a deviation or wandering from the literal sense and thus an example in the realm of figuration of the kind of wandering or error Renaissance commentators regularly associated with the genre of romance. On romance error, see Patricia Parker, Inescapable Romance (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979); on the romance plot of metaphor, see Parker, "The Metaphorical Plot," in Literary Fat Ladies (New York: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1987), and Terence Cave, Recognitions: A Study in Poetics (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1988). Cave does not limit his study of the plot of metaphor to romance, although the Odyssey and later romances figure prominently in his discussion.

35. See Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 198, citing Aristotle's Poetics 1410b, 1459a: "The same operation that lets us 'see the similar' also 'conveys learning and knowledge through the medium of the genus.' . . . But if it is true that one learns what one does not yet know, then to make the similar visible is to produce the genus within the differences, and not elevated beyond differences, in the transcendence of the concept." See also the discussion of Ricoeur and Aristotle on the productive power of metaphor in Joel Altman,


37. This argument could even be made on the level of syntax. In his introduction to *The Rhetorics of Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Lamy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), John T. Harwood suggests that Hobbes's use of parataxis and asyndeton—for example, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short"—creates the impression of a dangerous, contingent world on the level of sentence—a syntactical state of nature (28). Hobbes thus replicates on the level of syntax the paratactic plot structure of much prose romance.

38. There were precedents for this greater emphasis on contingency and political machinations in popular prose romances of the late sixteenth and earlier seventeenth centuries. In sixteenth-century England, Italian romance in particular symbolized the potentially dangerous connection between romance and artful deception and between the imitation of the passions and rhetorical technique, which was negatively associated with the pursuit of self-interest. This self-interest could take an erotic or political form or sometimes both. Hence the Elizabethan scholar Roger Ascham’s warning against "bawdie books . . . translated out of the Italian tongue." Ascham implied that the reading of romances gives rise to faithlessness in love, and he went on to observe that the rhetorical manipulation of the passions "in Circes court" is closely linked to the pursuit of self-interest and faction at the royal court. Romance, Ascham suggests, does not simply represent the old world of aristocratic relations but the new world of the Italianate rhetorician: the arriviste, the pretender, the seducer, and the fraud. See Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, ed. R. J. Schoek (Ontario: Dent, 1966), 67, 72.

In *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), Fredric Jameson described romance as a kind of magical narrative, one that involves a simplified, polarized world of good and evil. For Jameson, Nietzsche is the philosopher who helps us see that this ethical opposition is itself ideologically motivated, a romantic veiling of more fundamental relationships of power. And tragedy for Jameson is the genre that troubles or exceeds the romance habit of moral dichotomizing, the genre that "rebuke[s] the ideological core of the romance paradigm" (115-16). In contrast to Jameson, prose romance of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries often performs its own Nietzschean critique of ethical values, which is one of the reasons Ascham associated Italian prose romance with Machiavellian conniving (see *The Scholemaster*). Hobbes's own derivation of ethics from interests in chapter 9 of *Leviathan* conforms to this impulse. See the chart on p. 149 in which "Ethiques" is derived from "the passions of Men."

39. Hobbes himself seems at times to have felt that *Leviathan* was a philosophical fantasy or fiction. At the end of book 2 of *Leviathan*, he wrote that he was "at the point of believing this my labour, as uselesse, as the Common-wealth of Plato; for he also is of opinion that it is impossible for the disorders of State, and change of Governments by Civill Warre, ever to be taken away, till Soveraigns be Philosophers" (31.254). And Filmer seconded this view in a sarcastic vein when, in *The Anarchy of a Limited or Mixed Monarchy*, he criticized Hobbes's "platonic monarchy": "The book hath so much of fancy that it is a better piece of poetry than policy"; Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha and Other Writings*, ed. Johann Sommerville (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

40. As Terence Cave has argued in his study, *Recognition*, the recognition (in romance, in particular) often turns on what Aristotle in the Rhetoric called inartistic signs, on paralogism or faulty inference. It is striking in this context that Hobbes explicitly conceives of his "know thyself" as a remedy for faulty inference. In *The Elements*, he writes: "Now, if we consider the power of those deceptions of sense . . . and also how inconstantly names have been settled, and
how subject they are to equivocation, and how diversified by passion . . . I may in a manner con-
clude, [that] nosce te ipsum [is] a precept worthy the reputation it hath gotten" (39).

41. It may be for that reason that in The Elements, Hobbes echoes the contemporary language of marriage contracts. He insists that when political right is transferred, it must be not only de futuro but also de præsenti (83). De præsenti vows referred to marriage vows that were binding in the present; de futuro vows were vows of betrothal, binding the couple to marry at some future time. See Henry Swinburne, A Treatise of Spousals (London, 1686). On the gender dimension of Hobbes's argument, see also Strauss, Political Philosophy of Hobbes, and Stephen Holmes, Passions and Constraint (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Strauss argues that Hobbes, like Plato, criticizes traditional equations of manliness with military valor. Holmes mentions Hobbes's appreciation of the Church's "unmanning" of subjects by inculcating Christian meek-
ness (96). On the effeminacy of the Hobbesian subject, see also Harvey C. Mansfield, "Virilité et libéralisme," Archives de philosophie du droit 41 (1997): 25-42. On the female fear for one's reputation (for chastity), see the example of the Greek maidens discussed above in section III.

42. Strauss, Political Philosophy of Hobbes, 161, n.2.

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