Accommodation Fetishism

by

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ABSTRACT

Since their introduction into English in the mid-sixteenth Century, accommodations have registered weighty concepts in religious, economic, and political discourse: they represented the process by which divine principles could be adapted to human understanding, the non-interest property loans that were the bedrock of Christian neighborliness, and a political accord that would satisfy all warring factions. These important ideas, however, give way to misdirection, mutation, and suspicion that can all be traced back to the word accommodation in some way—the word itself suggests ambiguous or shared agency and constitutes a blank form that might be overwritten with questionable values or content. This dissertation examines the semantic range and rhetorical value of the word accommodation, which garnered attention for being a “perfumed term” (Jonson), a “good phrase” (Shakespeare), a stumbling block (Milton), and idolatry (anonymous author). The word itself is acknowledged to have an extra-lingual value, some kind of efficacious appeal or cultural capital that periodically interferes with its meaning. These tendencies align it with different modes of fetishism—idolatry, commodity fetishism, and factishism—which I will explicate and synthesize through an analysis of accommodation’s various careers and explicit commentary evidenced in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts.
DEDICATION

To Dan Fitzgerald. With love and an abiding gratitude for a lifetime of support. I could not have pursued anything so enigmatic if you had not honed my appreciation for infinite variety.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. David Hawkes for encouraging, challenging, and shepherding me through this lengthy dissertation process—I feel “the debt immense of endless gratitude…still paying, still to owe.” To Dr. Bradley Ryner I owe the bulwark of my theoretical framework—he introduced me to commodity fetishism and object-oriented ontology. He gave me language when I did gabble like a thing most brutish and endowed my purposes. Dr. Cora Fox deserves praise and thanks for recognizing the possibilities of this dissertation in its early stages and patiently training me to realize that potential. Dr. Ayanna Thompson is a mentor par excellence; she has expected great things, and I hope that I have not disappointed her. Dr. Ian Moulton regularly offered insight into how this project could be expanded and rendered more significant; I am profoundly thankful for his contributions. Dr. Bradley Irish has been an invaluable supporter and scholarly model. It is my good fortune to be surrounded by scholars of the highest caliber and most generous disposition: the Renaissance cohort of Arizona State University has nourished this project through incisive suggestions and provocative dialogue. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Michael Noschka, Jennifer Downer, and Dr. Devori Kimbro for their valued input on ontology, hospitality, and religious rhetoric—they perused my early drafts and helped me both solidify and expand this project. Dr. Valerie Fazel has been an obliging colleague as well; her scholarship on adaptations and twenty-first-century connections to the English Renaissance have given me much food for thought. Dr. John Henry Adams deserves a mention for offering practical advice and friendship—I needed both in order to bring this dissertation to its full measure. Sheila Luna, a pillar of patience
and compassion, assisted me through the finishing steps of this process—there would have been no April defense without her interventions. Last and never least, Dr. Susan Frye deserves my sincerest thanks and love for spurring on this interminable curiosity in Renaissance history and literature.
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The goal of this dissertation was to delineate one word, *accommodation*, as it took on a litany of different connotations within religion, rhetoric, and economics in the Early Modern Period. This word deserves close and careful parsing because it inherently reflects cultural priorities: its selection indicates what is deemed most apt, most proper among its chosen audience. This is why it describes the method by which God adapted his message to human understanding or the Christian prerogatives of charity and peace; these arrangements speak to what is fundamentally assumed to be good for everyone. But these definitions were challenged as *accommodation* as the public perceived more solipsistic references within accommodations—they were uneven business practices, usury, willful misreadings of the Bible, unfair treaties, and so on. To study this single word is to study a proliferation of contexts, all of which point back to discrepancies within valuation and presumed cultural scripts.

To this end, each chapter brings its own conclusions about how the word accommodation telegraphed shifts in cultural attitudes and occasionally instigated them. The rhetorical chapter considers how the broad patterns of accommodation’s usage—its capacity, synonymous collocations, buzzword status—led to a suspicion that it did not automatically convey the sense of fitness ensured at its root, leaving behind hollow words; this suspicion would prove incendiary when Royalists attempted to broker peace in terms of an accommodation. The economic chapter demonstrates the word’s ethical reorientations within nascent capitalism and the burgeoning hospitality industry as it is defined as the antithesis of usury and a commodity and then converts into both. The
religious section considers how accommodation creates a shorthand logic that explains the mysteries surrounding divine communication, but then faces liabilities as theologians distrust its parameters and connect it with deceptive secular practices. These reformulations within this word speak to a recalibration of priorities and competing systems of valuation that would reshape the landscape of exchange, faith, social architecture, and ethics—it is my objective to track this word’s sprawling semantics so as to give insight into the method and mentality behind these large-scale changes.

In addition to making observations about accommodation’s nuances and antithetical meanings within these discourses, my goal here was to unite the commentary to show how this word defies disciplinary boundaries. The sophistication the word wields in the court impacts its legibility in religious communities, its blackboxing¹ of spiritual intercessors lent a model for blackboxing hybridized processes in the mundane world, the fact that it is a “merchant’s word” interrupts its narrative for peace among warring factions, and so on. The word seems to invite constant comparison to other iterations of fitness. In this way, accommodation is both a specimen of subjective mutation and a connected narrative that builds a foundation for ethics and epistemology. Understanding this paradox and unpacking the word’s resilient expectations for moral, mutually benefitting outcomes are the second, larger objectives of this dissertation.

So how does a person with a twenty-first century mindset begin to understand word embedded in the Renaissance? This is no easy feat, and in the case of accommodation is made particularly challenging because it is discursively promiscuous.

¹ “Blackboxing” refers to hiding the internal complexity of a process so that only input and outcomes are apparent. See pages 128 – 129 for further discussion.
(to borrow William Pietz’s phrasing) and so inscrutable that one dictionarist acknowledged that it was “no usual word.”\(^2\) The only solution was a comprehensive archival investigation that began with its first English use in 1536 and ended in 1651 with the conclusion of the English Civil War, an endpoint determined by the word’s last major conversion in those tumultuous years. Within this frame, I read every single entry of the \textit{accommod-} stem, including variant spellings, and at least a page’s worth of its surrounding text within the Early English Books Online archive so that I might understand the context and tone of its use. Because this project relies so much on the continued trajectory of this word, I also randomly sampled records throughout the rest of the seventeenth century, did a targeted search for results among the more influential writers of the Restoration and early Enlightenment,\(^3\) and looked to the Oxford English Dictionary to approximate the word’s larger patterns in the ensuing eras. This bulk of information has been slimmed down to the present catalogue of the most salient examples and meanings.

Surprisingly, some of the most attentive philological considerations regarding \textit{accommodation} came from the most prominent figures of the Early Modern period: William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, John Donne, and John Milton. Each author on this list has a pattern of use, from Shakespeare’s packaging of complex processes to Jonson’s constant joking about the word’s inscrutability, from Donne’s celebration of its expansive capacity to Milton’s strategic maneuvering of the term to draw limitations on that

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seemingly boundless range. Additionally, these authors all have a moment in which they
directly assess the worth of the word or the validity of its concept, which constitutes an
incisive intervention in the ideological weight invested in this semipermeable piece of
vocabulary. This dissertation does not spend extra time with these authors because of
their canonical importance, but rather because they are the men who are most conscious
of accommodation’s unusual characteristics and how they might be managed in order to
further the authors’ philosophies.

While I might have conducted this inquiry into accommodation’s meanings and
significance purely from a historical semantics approach, from its earliest stage I have
situated my findings into conversation with fetish theory. The original impetus for the
project was to determine whether there were any connections between the words
commodity and accommodation, a supposition based on a shared root that instills a sense
of fulfillment. The privileging of accommodation’s buzzword status at the expense of its
meaning seemed analogous to commodity fetishism’s positing of an empty form that
allowed equivalences to be considered instead of use-value. After immersing myself in
depth of accommodation’s archive and the breadth of fetish theory, I found the two to be
inextricably linked: I was studying an “abominable idol”\(^4\) that conflated physical and
abstract signs, a “merchant’s word”\(^5\) that simultaneously represented non-interest lending
and usury, and a “perfumed term”\(^6\) that reveals no universal sense of fitness or proper


\(^5\) Ibid., 4.

\(^6\) Ben Jonson, *Discoveries*, 71.
place. These glosses called out for variegated modes of fetishism to account for their departures from universally satisfying conditions and the solipsistic logic that spurred them into being. Contemporary writings on idolatry from the likes of Tertullian and St. Augustine allowed me to understand the complex web of spiritual truths tempered by unknowns that formed the boundaries of Renaissance worship. A wealth of Marxist scholarship regarding the hollow commodity form, the competition between use and exchange values, the rise of usury, and the ideological encroachment imbedded in language and socio-economic exigencies gave continuous structure to my arguments regarding how accommodation was maneuvered within rhetoric and economics. Where would this project be without the work of Marc Shell or David Hawkes, who demonstrate the interplay between language, economics, and the greater culture? Accommodation is another example that telegraphs how the “people of the early modern period regarded economics and culture as elements within a greater totality” in which the economic domain was not isolated from “the cultural, aesthetic, or ethical aspects of life.”

And finally, Latour’s theories regarding the indistinct ontology engendered by production resulting from both natural and social involvement, and the conflation between fact and fetish that can be extrapolated from that synthesis, have been instrumental in mapping out how accommodation operated as a system of many actions, some of which were blackboxed as unknowable. No matter what context this word takes on, these theories of fetishism lend their insights on valuation, epistemology, and ethics to help bring this analysis to its full measure.

INTRODUCTION

To condense the project down to brass tacks, this dissertation has two overarching objectives: (1) to analyze the semantic history of an evolving and important word, one that charts ideological shifts within religion, economics, and rhetoric of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and (2) to expand on fetish theory by investigating how accommodation’s signature effects—its exceptional capacity to conflate or join incompatible elements, its appeal that registered independently of context, its proclivity for misdirection, and its fungibility—put it into constant conversation with notions of fetishism (idolatry, commodity fetishism, and factishism) despite the fitness assumed at its root.

The first section, “An Unusual Word” explains how accommodation was regarded with both curiosity and contention in the Renaissance. The basic theme here is that accommodations were standardized as universally good things for the collective population—they were God’s comprehensible message, neighborly sharing, and diplomatic compromises—but these meanings competed with à la carte definitions that privileged certain individuals while leaving others exposed to harm. Such accommodations included willful misreadings of the Bible, equivocations, uneven bargains, usury, and political traps. As a result, to study this word is to encounter discrepancies in valuation and presumed cultural scripts, which puts it into conversation with different modes of fetishism. The second section of this chapter outlines three thematically relevant types of fetish theory: idolatry, which describes cases of “spiritual fraud” from confusing spirit with matter or placing the will of man above the will of God;
commodity fetishism, which concentrates on how commercial logic is irrational with its elevation of exchange value over use value; and factishism, which puts pressure on the dubious distinction between approved facts and fatuous beliefs, a distinction that accommodation actively undermines. The chapter then explains the common ground shared by fetish theory—misdirection, an efficacious power to enact things, and categorical confusion—and traces these tenets in accommodation’s evolution.

The second chapter, “‘This Abominable Idol Accommodation’: What Accommodation Means and What It Does” explores how the word is endowed with weight and worth beyond its semantic import. Since Shakespearean characters argue whether it registers as a word or phrase, Ben Jonson pejoratively calls it a “perfu’m’d term” in his Discoveries, and the anonymous author of Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious to the Commonwealth sets it down as a kind of idolatry in response to its linguistic convertibility and ability to overturn people’s values, the word itself is an object of curiosity and contention. Considering this meta-commentary, the word accommodation possessed a distinct effect—an appeal, a sort of cultural capital, and duplicitous multivalence—that was separate from its proffered meaning. This chapter explains how this disruption began: the first hundred years of the word’s circulation demonstrates a tendency toward synonymous collocations—situations that rendered it irrelevant—and illogical oxymora—situations that contradicted its rooted definition. These patterns indicate a certain destabilization within the word itself and the larger concepts of propriety and perfection associated with it, suggesting that the word operated as a piece of empty rhetoric or stylistic flourish. Many authors—Ben Jonson, William Shakespeare, and Francis Bacon among them—hinged jokes on the ambiguity and
hollowness of the word, while others warned of its mischief. Speculation over the word’s positive associations disguising a duplicitous nature came to a head during the English Civil War, when accommodation was elected as a term to encourage peaceable compromise, and then denounced by the Parliamentarians as a one-sided bargain that neglected the majority of their stipulations.

The third chapter, “A Merchant’s Word: The Economic Trajectory of Accommodation,” illustrates how the accommodations register a double-discourse that telegraphs the competition between collectivist and capitalist attitudes. Accommodations initially appeared in the Renaissance as non-interest property loans and were defined as the antithesis of usury, but soon the word was co-opted in order to describe bilking schemes, high-interest emergency loans, commoditized hospitality, and mercantile credit systems. In some circumstances, the word registered communal thinking and charitable exchanges; in others it seemed to borrow the goodwill that predicated those contexts in order to trick hapless debtors or disguise business practices that slanted in favor of one group or another. This confusion assisted with a proto-capitalist agenda since the vocabulary for noncommercial exchanges became corrupted and the codes of hospitality were reset to protect lenders, hosts, and profits. In the shifting applications of the word and the commentary that accompanied its conversion, we witness the hallmarks of commodity fetishism: exchange-value eclipsing use-value, the triumph of appearance over reality, and social alienation. In addition to key seventeenth-century texts by Shakespeare, Jonson, Hobbes, and Malynes, among others, this chapter tracks the continuing revision of accommodation within the nineteenth century and up to our current moment, with the advent of accommodation taxes and slanted service contracts.
among airlines and hotel chains.

The fourth section, “Imperfect Speech: Donne, Milton, and Divine Translation,” investigates how accommodations signified the method by which God’s divine message was translated to imperfect human understanding. A standard belief among Catholics and Protestants, accommodations explained that God’s anthropomorphisms from the Bible are not a literal truth that reduces eternal spirit to flesh-bound restrictions; rather, they are necessary metaphors that cater to the common experience of mankind. Interestingly, the same term was employed to describe other routes to translation, including how vigilant readers might interpret, personalize, and contemporize the Bible. For example, John Donne championed man’s power to accommodate, using the word to point out multivalences and stating that the robust English language equipped its modern audience to finally capture to true meaning of the Gospels. This second type of accommodation did not sit well across the board: the idea of God’s message being more true the more it was removed from its original language or infused with man’s inventions reminded many of idolatry. John Milton addressed this tension by separating the concept from its language: he contemplates the “sad task and hard”\(^8\) of relating “th’invisible exploits / Of warring spirits”\(^9\) to Adam in \textit{Paradise Lost}, and yet in the few instances in which Milton employed the word itself, it was used in conjunction with failure and limitation, such as when he claimed that anyone familiar with Greek would want “no accommodation to stumble.”\(^10\) In reviewing the religious applications centered on the word \textit{accommodation},


\(^9\) Ibid., 565-566.
this chapter explores how authors attempted to negotiate the degree of collaboration required for communication between heaven and earth—acknowledging how language, time, and culture imposed on the perfection of the Bible—while not upsetting the groundwork of their faith.

The fifth and final chapter, “The Accommodation Factish: Quasi-Objects in Shakespeare and Jonson,” investigates how the word’s capacity for joining different agents demonstrates a theorizing of hybridity that breaks down the divisions between subject and object, human and inhuman. Besides the aforementioned example of Poor Tom as an “unaccommodated man,” consider how Claudio’s accommodations are “nurs’d by baseness” in Measure for Measure. The accusation could refer to his immediate surroundings, the prison cell he occupies as a result of his premarital relations, or his errant faith that misreads laws and values from its limited, earth-bound perspective. It is also unclear whether the conditions are making Claudio ignoble or whether his inherent baseness is preventing his ascension; the directionality of the accommodation is impossible to decide. As an amalgamation of several actants and a site of indeterminacy, accommodation is a vantage point that allowed Early Modern writers to explore agency as shared, splintered, and heterogeneous. Just as accommodation negotiated indistinct convergences between the spiritual and material worlds whenever it was situated in a religious discourse, the secular career of the word demonstrates a similar kind of ontological implosion.

By way of conclusion, this dissertation includes an epilogue, “Re-accommodations,” which considers implications to both the Renaissance and our current

cultural moment. Instances of “accommodation fetishism” detrimentally persist in several forms today as it obscures the greed of hospitality industries, the lack of attention or service to the disabled community, the obligations of caretaking for distressed populations, and the metric by which we assess whether something is deserved, acceptable, or even factual. By looking at Kim Davis’s demand for an accommodation that permits her unconstitutional denial of marriage licenses to gay and transgender populations, or Syrian refugee accommodation programs that require the dispossessed to make full tenancy payments, we can recognize how the word’s loose semantics enable unclear intentions and a reversed directionality, which in turn engender pressing ethical quandaries.

This dissertation’s protracted analysis would not have been possible if other Early Modern scholars were not also interested in delineating accommodation’s many meanings. Thanks to King Lear’s profound musings on the state of an unaccommodated man, many scholars have asked the question of what it means to be accommodated: Laurie Shannon answered that the phrase points to discrepancies in evolutionary design, while Terence Hawkes views it as an “abandonment of reason” that leads man to a more vulnerable and less masculine rebirth, Margreta de Grazia takes the word to be

11 See The Accommodated Animal: “The overarching sense of accommodation is derives from the widely evident bias in favor of animal earthly tenure and cosmic citizenship; it is an attested point of divine intention” (11-12). Shakespeare is borrowing ideas from Montaigne.

12 See William Shakespeare: King Lear, page 40. I am intrigued that he parsed out this passage in his chapter regarding reason and madness while “Masterless Men” and its fuller treatment of Poor Tom as a representative of the damage caused by enclosure, unemployment, and ineffective welfare systems.
another reference to clothing, and Judy Kronenfeld considers its lack as a reminder of the exigencies of charity and the history of Christian communism. This rich scholarship exploring the innate qualities, social networks, and moveable objects imagined as accommodations allowed a shortcut towards showing the systemic layering within the word, which in turn speaks to the play’s larger commentary regarding social, political, and economic upheavals.

In addition to these interlocutors from literary studies, this project also derived structure and insight from a wealth of semantic analyses. Foremost on this list would be Raymond Williams’ seminal *Keywords*, a glossary of cultural vocabulary that traces the evolution and contested meanings of terms that shape our perception of class, work, and identity. Williams demonstrates how several words seem to belong to common usage and variegated disciplines without much consideration of how such overlap or dissonance

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13 De Grazia lends credence to this narrowed interpretation by pointing to the other mentioning of accommodations in Lear, with the King adorning himself with weeds. See footnote 31 of “The Ideology of Superfluous Things,” page 37.

14 See *King Lear and the Naked Truth: Rethinking the Language of Religion and Resistance*, pages 173-184. Her fixation falls on the word “distribution,” a term for both private almsgiving and legislated charity, but she treats the whole passage and our keyword for its references to requisite charity.

15 There are several excellent parsings of the “unaccommodated man speech” and these greater themes. To mention a few, Richard Halpern cites unaccommodation as a consequence of zero-sum capitalism that awakens Lear to the horrors of poverty in *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation*, Hugh Grady’s *Shakespeare’s Universal Wolf* sees it as a stripping of multiple ideological systems as well as material, and Sears Jayne’s “Charity in King Lear” discusses how the pagan setting of the play requires its characters to be unaccommodating as a parable to reinforce the prerogative of Christian charity. Also, this dissertation relied on the elaborate economic mapping of Jean-Christophe Agnew (*World’s Apart*), Craig Muldrew (*The Economy of Obligation*), and Douglas Bruster (*Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare*) in order to characterize the social dynamics and mercantile thought of the period.
might impact the conversations we have, which lead him to develop a collocation of cultural terminology “not in separated disciplines but in general discussion.”\textsuperscript{16} Likewise, my investigation of \textit{accommodation} aims to draw commentary by showing how the process by which this word signifying all-things-fit formulates its meaning across different discourses and with a sense of connected nuances. Further insight into such connections between language and cultural thought was seeded from the research of Marc Shell,\textsuperscript{17} Patricia Parker,\textsuperscript{18} Jonathan Gil Harris,\textsuperscript{19} and, of course, David Hawkes.\textsuperscript{20}

The largest bounty of scholarship regarding \textit{accommodation}, however, pertains to its religious connotations. Since it paradoxically describes both the limitations of God’s message within the finite understanding of man and the sprawling potential of its

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\textsuperscript{16} Raymond Williams, \textit{Keywords}, 14.
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\textsuperscript{17} In \textit{Money, Language, and Thought}, Shell establishes how money metaphors and new forms of economic symbolization were “changing the meaning of meaning itself” (4). Shell deftly lays out the metastasizing philosophies regarding value and equivalence alongside the cultural fears of idolatry and subjective truth.
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\textsuperscript{18} Parker’s Literary \textit{Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, and Property} is an exemplar for parsing vocabulary, understanding the physical residue within abstract metaphors, and drawing connections across disciplines.
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\textsuperscript{19} Jonathan Gil Harris’s \textit{Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease} in Shakespeare’s England organizes each chapter with one economic term and one pathological term, whose interconnections and associated vocabulary were then examined. This was a good model for my own semantic analysis, while his commentary on usury and taint proved useful for my observations on the shaded business practices that were disguised as accommodations.
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\textsuperscript{20} David Hawkes’s \textit{Idols of the Marketplace} has been a formative text as it illustrates how money and language form autonomous representations that coincide with notions of idolatry. Additionally, as the foremost Renaissance scholar of usury, I continually refer to his observations regarding the objectification of money, the depth and degree of ethical reservations set against business practices, and the more particular details that help define an idolatrous mindset.
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extrapolation to various audiences, times, and languages to the point of omniscience, the
word is central to theological debates that seek to determine strategies for exegesis,
insight into Calvinic thought (since the word is branded as his doctrine), or understand
the degrees of mediation between heaven and earth. While this is enough religious
uncertainty for a scholar of any ilk to drown in, I was luckily assisted with clear and
thorough scholarship. For the first concern, Stephen D. Benin’s *The Footprints of God:*
*Divine Accommodation in Jewish and Christian Thought* was a key resource—it
explained how the concept adapted among cultures and eventually became an argument
unto itself for the supremacy of Christianity and the pedagogical importance of Jewish
heritage.\(^21\) Regarding the word’s Calvinic associations, Edward Dowey, Jr.’s *The
Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology* was the most useful; his concise description of
accommodation as a “revealing-concealing”\(^22\) process has been a key to understanding
the conflicting operations within accommodated speech. I also pulled insights from Jon
Balserak’s *Divinity Compromised: A Study of Divine Accommodation in the Thought of
John Calvin*, which meticulously points out all of Calvin’s departures from previous
modes of accommodation, and Arnold Huijgen’s *Divine Accommodation in John
Calvin’s Theology*, a study intent on the roots, attractions, and complexities of the word

\(^{21}\) Benin’s wide history of the concept includes many instances where accommodation is
at once common ground and an accusation against misapplied faith, an important feature
that reinforces its indeterminacy and nearness to idolatry. As he states, “the venerable
theoretical language, rather than being abandoned, was vacated of its contents, retained
and put to new use” (xix).

\(^{22}\) See page 12.
itself as well as its conceptual groundwork.\textsuperscript{23} For the last aspect of religious accommodations, I applied to Joad Raymond’s \textit{Milton’s Angels} for an overview of the period’s expectations for angelic intervention, its position within British Protestantism and as metaphor, and how \textit{Paradise Lost} is a poem “shaped by prophecy and accommodation.”\textsuperscript{24}

Speaking of the other English bard, delineating Milton’s mode of accommodation is its own cottage industry. I am deeply indebted to Victoria Silver for writing \textit{Imperfect Sense}, which reconciles scholarship’s “two Miltons” with a complex reading of irony that allows both figurative and literal readings. She is sensitive to the Calvinic traditions Milton inherits and incorporates, but also sees him as innovating a new method, arguing that “allegory can neatly accommodate the apparent necessity of justifying Milton’s own loss and failure, as it can equally fulfill our expectation that \textit{Paradise Lost} expounds a positive and universal truth about human relations with the divine.”\textsuperscript{25} Additionally, Paul Cefalu complements my work with “Incarnational Apophatic: Rethinking Divine Accommodation in John Donne’s \textit{Paradise Lost},” which argues that Milton eyed the process of divine communication skeptically and took note of its failures, while Neil D. Graves’s “Milton and the Theory of Accommodation” posits that a radical Milton substituted synecdoche for metaphor, focusing on the image of God and closing the chasm between sign and referent. There is a rich vein of criticism that tries to account for

\textsuperscript{23} Huijgen makes a point of marking Calvin’s choice of vocabulary in \textit{accommodare}: he states that it is distinct from the classical Greek rhetoric and deliberately Latinate. See pages 49-52 for further review.

\textsuperscript{24} See page 32.

\textsuperscript{25} Victoria Silver, \textit{Imperfect Sense}, 12.
the relationships between scripture, language, theological precedent, and creative ingenuity interwoven in Milton’s prose and poetry.

To sum up, this project required expertise in so many fields: a sprawling, multi-cultural religious history; the intersecting influences of economics, politics, social obligations, and ethics; and a familiarity with prolific authors and their protean work. I could not have attempted to collate and interrogate the different valences of accommodation were it not for my fellow scholars’ contributions.
CHAPTER 1
An Unusual Word

While compiling his 1572 French-English dictionary, Richard Huloet chose to curtail his entry for the word “accommodate” after listing five possible definitions, stating “I would have spoken more here of this: were it not that accommodate is no usual word.” What could he possibly mean by such a remark, a unique designation never repeated in his extensive lexical catalogue? What characteristic or effect makes a word unusual to the degree that it warrants such an appended disclaimer; does it elude accurate definition or standardized use? What meanings and popular expressions were withheld from the list and why?

This dissertation picks up where Huloet’s dictionary left off, because as it happens, there is a great deal to be said of accommodate and accommodation as the words emerged and evolved in the English Renaissance. The shared stem meaning “towards fitness” or “to full measure” allowed accommodation to transmute itself into many different incarnations that depended on the situation and audience—it could be applied anywhere and everywhere in order to suggest something that was rendered fit, apt, or convenient. However, as flexible and subjective as the word might appear to be, accommodation possessed more hardened, recognizable contexts: it lent its ingrained sense of commodiousness in order to anchor principles that were crucial to religious

26 Richard Huloet, Huloet’s Dictionary (1572), 7.

27 While there are occasional notes appended within the catalogue, “accommodate” is the only one referred to as unusual, not usual, or, as stated in the case, “no usual word.”
doctrine, economic philosophy, and political negotiation. Signifying the process by which God’s message was filtered to human understanding, accommodations explained paradoxes of anthropomorphized, physical descriptions of celestial entities, the inscrutability of vague metaphors within the Bible, and signs by which the hand of God could be detected. In a single word, it compressed a complex set of beliefs about how the spiritual world engaged with the material plane and indicated how scriptures were intended to be read. (Understandably, Huloet did not have room in his dictionary to unpack these epistemological dimensions.) With regard to transactions, *accommodation* first entered in the sixteenth century as non-interest property loans, a staple constituent of an economy shaped by a scarcity of production and Christian attitudes of neighborliness. Through the lens of politics, *accommodation* meant a peaceable accord between combating factions, with a strong presumption that such a solution gratified all parties, which made it a key term for diplomacy, especially when England readied itself for civil war. Across three spheres of discourse—religion, economics, and rhetoric—the word conveyed specific, foundational ideas about what was most appropriate or most beneficial, and these definitions carried the authority of being doctrine, social imperative, and contract, respectively.

In addition to listing these commonly recognized exemplars of accommodation, an updated dictionary from the early seventeenth century would also need to include emergent contexts that competed with these definitions and, more to the point, the philosophies that established their fitness. To list a few examples that will be explored in the following chapters, accommodations appeared as engineered deceptions, self-serving misreadings of religious texts, insincere courtly and politic rhetoric, and uncompromising
usury. These mutations introduced an equivocal, à la carte method of deciphering the word: if some action suited one party’s interests or intentions, regardless of its relationship to truth or the welfare of the community at large, then it could still claim the label of an accommodation. This is why a word that is usually synonymous with perfect conduct is listed among several misbehaviors as actions unbecoming of a Christian man in Richard Younge’s *The Drunkard’s Character* (1638)—the “plain-dealing and religious man” will not “lie, and dissemble, shift, and flatter, temporize, and accommodate, buy promotion, supplant, grow rich, take bribes”[^28]—or mentioned as a contributing factor in Claudio’s degradation in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* (1604): “Thou art not noble, / For all th’ accommodations that thou bear’st / Are nursed by baseness.”[^29] While some might imagine that these new connotations were errant expressions, some mistakes that did not warp the general sense of the more frequent and authoritative contexts, the archive proves that they had substantial careers and, in some cases, grew to be the dominant definition within their discourse. Since the word *accommodation* encapsulates standards of propriety and value, these reassessments telegraph seismic shifts in the bedrock that Early Modern principles and cultural practices were built upon. The majority of this dissertation is reserved for exploring the basis of these changes in meaning, their interconnections, and, ultimately, their consequences.

Both assisting and complicating in this endeavor are a collection of contemporary remarks regarding the exceptional capabilities of the word itself. Occasionally these


comments were a direct response to the antithetical appropriations discussed above; for example, James I’s chaplain George Downname and Parliamentarian gadfly Henry Parker both used the expression “under the color of accommodating”\textsuperscript{30} to call attention to the word’s distorting effect, how it was cunningly employed to disguise disadvantageous business propositions or uncompromising political contracts with its positive register, respectively. On other occasions, such as Huloet’s assignation of it as “no usual word,” accommodation is scrutinized in more subtle maneuvers and with less certain stakes. When William Shakespeare’s Justice Shallow and Bardolph pause in the third act of 2 Henry IV to debate whether the word accommodated is “good phrase” or “a word of exceeding good command,”\textsuperscript{31} they do not have the grand agendas of religion, economy, or government in view. They are in an open street, considering whether a soldier is better accommodated than with his wife, when the urge to argue whether the “commendable” expression is a word or a phrase seizes them—a question of categorization that demonstrates the dual parts meaning and beguiling charm imbued within accommodation.

Speaking towards the same appeal, Ben Jonson listed accommodation as one of three “perfum’d terms” and warned the readers of his Discoveries not to use them too liberally, but rather “use them properly in their place, as others.”\textsuperscript{32} (Jonson unhelpfully

\textsuperscript{30} See George Downname, Lectures on the XV. Psalme read in the cathedrall church of S. Paule, in London. Wherein besides many other very profitable and necessarie matters, the question of vsurie is plainely and fully decided, 1604, p. 174; and Henry Parker, Accommodation cordially desired, and really intended. London: 1643. Early English Books Online, 5.

\textsuperscript{31} William Shakespeare, 2 Henry IV, 3.2.61-71.
does not indicate what the proper places are). To name one final example that serves as the apotheosis of this scrutiny over effect, consider the title of an anonymously issued eight-page tract: *Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious to the Commonwealth*. According to its “five undeniable arguments,” there was no proper place, no safe context for using the word because it was corrupted by its suggestive Latinate origins and malignant associations within economic, religious, and political spheres. From being “a soldier-like word” to “a merchant’s word” to “this abominable idol,” several authors of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries reflected upon what makes accommodation “no usual word,” noting its capaciousness, sophistication, slipperiness, and extra-lingual impressions. This metacommentary explicates another dimension to accommodation’s proliferation and mutation: a propensity to be read for its verbal form instead of its conceptual context.

While the semantic history of *accommodation* seems to be one of deliquescence as the word/phrase picks up variegated meanings and a perplexing reputation, this


33 Anonymous, *Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious to the Commonwealth*, 1643. This tract is fully parsed within Chapter 2, pages 48 – 57, with its criticism regarding accommodation as a “Merchant’s word” getting additional coverage in Chapter 3, pages 74 – 76.

34 Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 3.2.69.


36 Ibid., 8.

dissertation has found one major point of convergence: fetishism. Albeit that fetishism is
given to its own mutations and overuse—William Pietz characterizes the term as
“discursively promiscuous and theoretically suggestive”\textsuperscript{38}—there are certain common
elements that unite it as a framework: confusion between material objects and abstract or
symbolic registers, a tendency to misdirect attention or belief, and an efficacious power
to do things, such as bring luck or enact magic. As I will soon show, accommodations
exhibited these central tenets and thereby forced a conversation about what determined
fetishistic beliefs or behaviors from acceptable conduct. Given their religious, economic,
and rhetorical basis, accommodations occupy various positions within the frameworks of
idolatry, commodity fetishism, and Latourean factishism, which this dissertation seeks to
both illuminate and explore.

Before launching into the common ground shared by accommodations and
fetishism, a brief synopsis of the theory would be helpful. The word “fetish” emerged in
the fifteenth century from the pidgin word “fetisso,” which inherits the stigma of being a
“magical practice” or “witchcraft” from the Portuguese “feitiço,” which in turn derived
its pejorative context from the Latin adjective “facticius,” meaning “manufactured.”\textsuperscript{39}
These early fetishes built upon the groundwork of idolatry, which in its most rigid sense
was defined as “the humanly willed manufacture and worship of artificial varieties of

\textsuperscript{38} William Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, I” \textit{RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics} 9

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 1. This adjective was first used to distinguish crops that were farmed as opposed
to those yielded by nature.
sacramental objects,” which constituted “spiritual fraud.”

Idols and fetishes share many of the same complaints—being an unnatural, artificial, or constructed version of something sacred; concentrating on physical matter instead of a spiritual meaning; beguiling people with their charms or expectations of luck—but fetishes were viewed as more personalized instruments that were frequently worn about the body, while idols were commonly depicted as statues or spectacles that corrupted the large group. The other salient difference is that fetishes emerged in cross-cultural spaces: the word builds on several languages and unfolded in global trade. It is not proper to any culture, which allowed it to mutate.

Fetishes transferred the religious complaint into secular terms: seventeenth-century European merchants criticized their African trade partners for using adulterated “fetiche gold” figurines because they did not understand the implicit supremacy of pure gold. These ornamental totems were condemned for their presumed charms as well as their mistaken evaluation of precious metal, conflating religious and self-interested commercial logic that had before been separate. Thus, the materialistic mindset central to the accusation of fetishism was dislodged, allowing the designation of “fetishism” to shift into any discourse in which it might represent a disparity of values, whether they be

40 William Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, II,” 27. Pietz also explains that idolatry covers a broad list of deviant behaviors because they reject the will of God in order to follow either the invention of man or the devil.


42 William Pietz, The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa,” 110. And this is just one of many cultural practices that earned the pejorative categorization for blocking the merchants’ economic designs: they also cried fetish because the villagers refused to sell their pigs to ready consumers and refused to sell magical objects.
economic, social, sexual, religious, abstract, or physical. As such, the fetish became a flexible allegation against cultural differences, an omnibus term for undermining the arbitrariness or fatuousness beliefs of others while implicitly justifying one’s own motivations or logic as reasonable. According to Willem Bosman’s account, the European merchants could not see how their own rosaries were somewhat analogous to the African amulets, or how labeling the Guineans’ fascination with material objects as “slavish” overlooked their own greed.43 Accommodations and fetishes both thrive under the assumption that there is proper, universal rationality to cite as a standard, but each term is compromised by insulated thinking, which reminds us that systems of valuation can be arbitrary or co-opted.

Where Accommodations Fit within Fetishism

As the one-word explanation for why the Bible describes God as embodied despite God’s eternal and boundless nature, accommodation appeared frequently in conversations that probed the differences between fatuous idolatry and reasonable hypotheses about how divinity worked through material conditions. As one example, an English translation of John Calvin’s Faithfull and Most Godly Treatise describes how God “is willing to accommodate himself to our infirmity” by using the metaphor of bread to demonstrate how spiritual nourishment works, because “it is a general rule among the sacraments: that the signs which we see in them ought to have some similitude with the spiritual thing that they represent.”44 Once the word accommodation justifies why Christ

43 Ibid., 112.
emphasized “material bread” on the table, the treatise then criticizes the material
Eucharist as something that will “decay and perish,” leading to Calvin’s conclusion that
“this transubstantiation is the devil’s interpretation, to deprive the truth of the supper.”
This argument shows an uneasy separation between the excusable accommodations—the
signs joined with matter that are an exception to the normal boundaries between
representations and reality—and the contemptible idolatry that would keep Christians
focused on the “untranscended materiality” instead of the wisdom of God. Such
occasions of God accommodating men were positioned to be outside the parameters of a
fetish without much justification beyond their tautological classification, which forced
tenuous theological comparisons that inevitably defied and redrew the boundaries of
proper worship.

Likewise, economic accommodations were tied to conversations about usury,
which is, as David Hawkes reminds us, “commodity fetishism as applied to money.”
Occupying the obverse end of the lending spectrum as non-interest property loans,
accommodations were regularly juxtaposed to usury in order to demonstrate the evils of
the usurious mindset. However, when the term’s transactional context altered so as to
permit profits, it opened it up to some of the same criticisms as the fetish: according to

44 John Calvin, *A Faithful and most Godly treatise concerning the most Sacred
Sacrament of the blessed body and blood of our savior Christ*, trans. Myles Couerdaule, 1548, 27.

45 Ibid., 27.
46 According to William Pietz, this is the principal tenet of a fetish: “The untranscended
materiality of the fetish: ‘matter,’ or the material object, is viewed as the locus of
religious activity or psychic investment” (5). See Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, I”

47 *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England*, 54.
the anonymous author of *Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious*, it made
“merchandize…of the Souls of men,” drew equivalences between incomparable
objects, privileged hollow forms instead of substantive realities, and alienated community
members from one another, among other faults. To investigate this so-called “merchant
word” is to encounter a culture grappling with an insidious commercial logic and a
transitional socio-economic system.

In addition to its direct participation in such debates about righteous valuation,
accommodations have a propensity to cause misdirection, a defining element of
fetishism. An idolater confuses graven images with the spiritual power they represent, a
commodity fetishist assigns autonomous power to money so that its abstract form is
valued more than the commodities it could acquire, a sexual fetishist fixates on an object
that prevents an acknowledgment of female genitalia and the presumed threat of
castration, and a factishist will not be misled to assume that the difference between facts
and beliefs rests within their construction. Across the different versions of the theory,
fetishes mark a departure from a rightful aim or recognition, a damnable confusion as
priorities or logic is reversed. In the case of an accommodation, this sense of disruption
manifests as the word shifts its meaning from more standardized definitions to deviant
manifestations.

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49 Sigmund Freud, “Fetishism,” in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*,
155.

50 This effect is described in *Pandora’s Hope*: “If we add to the facts their fabrication in
the laboratory, and if we add to the fetishes their explicit and reflexive fabrication by
their makers, the two main resources of the critique disappear…Appearing in their stead
is that which had been broken by iconoclasm, and had always been there; that which
always has to be carved anew and is necessary for acting and arguing. This is what I call
the factish” (274). See Chapter 5, pages 122-129, for further discussion.
ones—from God’s sanctioned messages to deliberately manipulated misreadings, from charitable actions to self-serving usury, from compromises to exploitations, from a tidy collaboration to a sprawling assemblage—exposing a lack of uniformity in assessments of fittingness, or the inability to correctly interpret the situation.

Moreover, the fact that several authors assign a power to the word that operates independently of its meaning—an allure that derails conversation in Shakespeare’s *2 Henry IV* and defrauds the poor in Downname’s sermon—not only creates a beguiling competition between the semantic and rhetorical meanings of the word, but also calls to mind the talismanic nature of fetishes. As Pietz comments, “the identity and power of the fetish consists in its enduring capacity to repeat this singular process of fixation, along with the resultant effect”\(^{51}\); one supplicates to a fetish to work a degree of magic, to create the same outcome as was previously experienced. In expecting this “perfum’d term” to charm in all occasions, fit all expressive needs, and indicate various qualities about those who employed it,\(^ {52}\) Renaissance authors alluded to it being imbued with a performative power tantamount to a fetish.

In pointing out this shared ground, I do not mean to suggest that accommodations are synonymous with fetishes or idols within the Renaissance. Our keyword never made a complete conversion away from the fitness embedded in its roots and into the ignominy that surrounds fetishism; there are far more instances of accommodations being held up as appropriate conduct than condemnations of its problematic over-carryage. My main objective within this dissertation is not to simply deconstruct a word composed of several


\(^{52}\) See Chapter 2, pages 33 - 44, for a fuller account of this rhetorical charm.
antithetical meanings and shifting standards, but rather to indicate how Renaissance thinkers attempted to reconcile the dilemmas of the fetish within a more forgiving framework. Instead of being ideological ammunition against a host of others—iconodulic Catholics, African merchants who refused to sell their gold talismans, usurers who obsessed over profits—accommodations featured as approved maneuvers that authors were willing to claim as their own. John Donne (1622) was not afraid to stake his reputation as a priest by advocating for the “just extensions” of “due accommodations” when he modernized and Anglicized Bible passages, nor was Gerard de Malynes (1622) giving up his contempt for usury when he allowed money lent at interest to be considered an accommodation. Even when the term conveys a degree of taint or opposition, as when it is suggested as a cover-up for unfavorable bargains and political accords, it is almost always characterized as incidental misuse and not endemic of a broken belief system among a faction of people. Even as Edward Bowles (1643) claims that accommodations are desired by “idle, scandalous, superstitious, ignorant persons,” he takes pains to show that there are honorable and godly versions of the term. Since the word considers questions of boundaries and valuation without the automatic denunciation


54 Gerard Malynes, The ancient law-merchant Divided into three parts: according to the essential parts of trafficke, (1622), 335. See Chapter 3, pages 69-71.

55 Edward Bowles, Plaine English, or, A discourse concerning the accommodation, the armie, the association, 17.

56 See Chapter 2, pages 48 - 50.
of its practitioners, it offers a unique vantage point for how fetishistic attitudes or behaviors were negotiated within English Renaissance ideology.

This less judgmental stance accommodations assume of the blurry distinction between an approved extension of belief and a damnable, fatuous overreach calls to mind factishism. Coined by Bruno Latour, this neologism conflates the terms fact and fetish so as to draw attention toward their shared root (facere, “to make or do”) and indicate how both are simultaneously fabricated and perceived as autonomously real. ⁵⁷ Instead of dwelling on the categorization of ideas as either true or irrational, factishism focuses on the composite construction behind phenomena; it “…is intended to take seriously the role of actors in all types of activities and thus do away with the notion of belief.” ⁵⁸ The “actors” Latour speaks of are part of an inclusive grouping that does not differentiate subjects from objects, because part of the misprision between fact and fetish is the assumption that objects lack agency, that they are stationary receptors for the sentient to act upon. Showing how objects can compel, mediate, and act, Latour’s theories consider how assemblages form between humans and nonhuman actants.

This systemic framework suits accommodations well because they are frequently commixtures that never settle into one category, often being a summative joining of different actions or human service, physical conditions, divine assumptions, and limitations or advantages of language. For example, King Lear’s Poor Tom is deemed unaccommodated because he is “poor, bare, forked”: his lack of accommodation stems

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⁵⁷ According to Latour’s Pandora’s Hope, “the fetish has become nothing but an empty stone onto which meaning is mistakenly projected; the fact has become an absolute certainty which can be used as a hammer to break away all the delusions of belief” (272).

from unsuitable social/economic conditions, physical conditions, and a failed evolutionary design. Oftentimes the word encompasses these multiple factors so as to “black-box” them, instead of dilating on all the complex processes and the extensive list of participants that are conjured in its context, accommodations are a tidy shortcut that keeps attention on the output of a system instead of its internal mechanisms. This is how the “sad task and hard” of describing God’s method of communication—with its infinite wisdom, linguistic barriers and interventions, angelic intermediaries, and even their imagined apparatuses (e.g., trumpets, ladders)—gets summarily boiled down to the explanation of being an accommodation. While parsing out what accommodation’s opaque modus operandi entails, Latour’s theories regarding black-boxing and factishism are useful because they circumvent usual divisions of ontology, such as subject and object, or knowable material conditions and mysterious, perhaps divine, factors; they suspend the question of classification in order to examine their parts and methods of

59 Ibid., 304. According to Bruno Latour, black-boxing is “an expression from the sociology of science that refers to the way scientific and technical work is made invisible by its own success. When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on the inputs and outputs and not its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more sciences and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become.” While accommodations are not scientific per se, they are highly systemic processes that attempt to simplify complex spiritual and social enterprises into one summary motion of “being accommodated.” See Chapter 5, pages 128-129 for further discussion.

60 John Milton, Paradise Lost, ed. David Hawkes, p. 164-165, line 564.

61 As Michel Serres’s Angels has shown, Renaissance painters imagined angels travelling to and from heaven via ladder so that they could relay their messages. This establishes a curiosity into the messaging process, an expectation that there were a lot of conditions at work within accommodation. See pages 79 – 97.
construction. As Latour commented (via Porter’s translation), “accommodations are
made behind closed doors,” and my project is to open them up.

To summarize, accommodations are deeply entrenched in the fundament of
fetishism, whether it is seen through the prism of idolatry, commodity fetishism, or
Latourean factishes. By threading the different usages and transformations of our
keyword into one conversation, this dissertation examines how Renaissance authors
grappled with large ontological questions that governed their faith, ethics, and valuation:
what are the different metrics for determining what is proper, and do they operate
implicitly? Can their logic be challenged? What happens when the language designating
universal fitness, supreme Christian conduct, and perfect accord doubles as the descriptor
of inappropriate, deceptive, and damnable actions? To be blunt, the stakes of
investigating accommodation could not be higher: the word is a nexus for understanding
Renaissance culture since it imagines the mechanisms behind each interaction with
scripture or spirit, exchange of goods or services, and diplomatic action. And,
surprisingly, instead of formulating a straightforward binary code that divides what is
proper and what is contemptibly fetishistic, accommodations function as a complex and
dubious system.

There are a few possible criticisms that I would like to preemptively address in
this introduction. The first is that accommodation’s free-floating semantics—its capacity
to represent anything and everything—render it immune to allegations of inconsistency,
contradiction, and evolution. If the word’s subjective definition depends on what is apt,

convenient, and proper, then surely no one can be surprised when it takes on one set of meanings in a pulpit and another in a brothel, or different drifts to match the philosophical perspectives of its speakers. Such a stance would undermine any comparative analysis, including the fourth chapter’s collation of Milton’s religious, political, and philosophical writings, and the third chapter’s charting of how lending and hospitality were reconceptualized to accord with an emergent capitalistic paradigm. In fact, it would level a challenge at this dissertation’s summative project to parse out shared valences between different types of accommodation as the word travels across different communities.

While it is true that the word *accommodation* mutates and draws attention to its own fungibility—this is, in fact, a key point of this analysis since its circulation as a buzzword mimics the empty commodity form that Marx theorized—it also carries more grounded connotations and definitions that are standardized by the authority of dictionaries, religious and political leaders, and widespread recognition. For example, of the nine dictionaries that gloss the word during its first hundred and twenty-five years of circulation, seven mention lending as a key definition. As for the religious connotations, volume justifies the word’s marked meaning: roughly a quarter of sixteenth century

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63 The nine dictionaries or thesauruses include *Huloet’s Dictionary* (1572), The Church of England’s *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae & Britannicae* (1578), John Florio’s *A World of Words* (1598), Richard Perceval’s *A dictionary in Spanish and English* (1599), Robert Cawdry’s *A Table Alphabetical* (1609), John Florio’s *New World of Words* (1611, which features an updated entry that more precisely covers the nature of lending), Edward Phillips’s *The New World of English Words* (1658), and Thomas Blount’s *Glossographia* (1661). Elyot’s dictionary (1538) and Perceval’s Spanish thesaurus are the outliers, although Elyot does gloss “give” as one of accommodation’s meanings. Also, Richard Mulcaster’s dictionary is excluded from the list because it simply does not supply definitions for any of its entries.
English-language applications refer to a transmissive process—interpreting Bible passages and God’s will, most frequently—which is a fairly large stake of everything commodious. In addition to these indicators of tenacious contexts, the fact that so many authors—Ben Jonson, William Shakespeare, John Donne, and Henry Parker, among others—directly offer lexical parameters for the word and remark on its misuse suggests that its application was not so individual and independent.

The second criticism to obviate relates to the dissertation’s reliance on translated texts when it places so much importance on word choice. My archive samples the Renaissance translations from Latin, Greek, French, Italian, German, Dutch, Spanish, and other languages, which means that these patterns I attribute to an Early Modern mindset might instead reflect the original tongue of the author and another culture’s range of meanings for our keywords. Is it logically sound to parse the meaning of accommodation within John Calvin’s doctrine when the word might either carry foreign connotations (or a lack thereof) or constitute a stylistic choice of the translator? First, before defending against the charge, I must acknowledge the irony of addressing this concern when the word accommodation itself justifies figurative interpretations and extended translations.

This percentage reflects 61 mentions of accommodation as translation within 259 mentions total, between the years 1536 and 1599. The statistic is based on a 2015 EEBO search of “accommod*”, alternative spellings included, and excludes reprints and any passages written in a foreign tongue. Given the large number of Latinate religious texts in this excluded set, the percentage would likely rise substantially if they were factored into the sample. If one were to remove a five-volume manual of military strategy that employs the word 36 times as an anomalous result, the rate would be 27%.

To read more about how accommodation both justified and signified translations, see Chapter 4, pages 93-105. On the other hand, to read about how accommodation was criticized for its Latinate origin, making it incapable of representing Biblical ideas
Second, I would argue that whether these translated texts influence the vocabulary or possess alternative dialectic meanings does not prevent them from resonating with their English audience and participating in the steady evolution of this term. Regardless of whoever employed word, it was subject to scrutiny through a prism of religious paradoxes, competing definitions, and calculated rhetorics, and could, in turn, impact those dimensions. As a precaution against assigning undue sentiments while providing a literalist review, I have been careful within the dissertation—most noticeably in the fourth chapter—to acknowledge the translator’s involvement and not assume any unwarranted authorial intention.

Clearly there is a more complete history of accommodation to be tracked—one that accounts for why the word heavily frequents French translations, or whether its Roman ancestry embedded it with its capacity for misrepresentation, or how the large number of Latinate religious texts might be deciphered in order to further explicate how accommodation concretized as a religious concept—but this dissertation keeps its focus on how the word circulated among English-speaking communities through its English publications. While a far-reaching philological review would turn up new discoveries, there is enough heteroglossia among the religious, political, and generational factions of one country so as to keep these pages quite full of ideological synthesizes and social reformations despite the restricted scope.

because it does not reflect a language God was ever known to speak, see Chapter 2, page 50.
CHAPTER 2

“This Abominable Idol Accommodation”: What Accommodation Means and What It Does

“He which hates the name of an Accommodation as it has been used of late to signify a total submission, may love a true Accommodation in itself” – Henry Parker, Accommodation Cordially Desired, and Really Intended

“Thou hast frighted the word out of his right sense, so forcible is thy wit.” – William Shakespeare, Much Ado about Nothing

Despite Shakespeare’s longstanding reputation as a linguistic broker par excellence, it is difficult to fathom why 2 Henry IV protracts an emphatic, nuanced language lesson in the mouths of the drunk Bardolph and the dithering Justice Shallow. In Act 3, scene 2, when Bardolph arrives with a message from Falstaff, Shallow inquires about the state of the old backswordsman and his wife. Bardolph replies: “Sir, pardon; a soldier is better accommodated than with his wife.” Instead of reacting to this unexpectedly saucy response to unremarkable civilities, Shallow rhapsodizes at length about the use of such a commendable expression: “It is well said, in faith, sir; and it is

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66 Henry Parker, Accommodation cordially desired, and really intended. London: 1643. Early English Books Online, 5. This pamphlet was originally published anonymously in 1642.

67 Benedick speaking to Beatrice in 5.2.40-41.

68 William Shakespeare, 2 Henry IV, 3.2.61-62.
said indeed too. Better accommodated! It is good, yea, indeed is it: good phrases are surely, and ever were, very commendable. Accommodated! It comes of ‘accommodo’: very good; a good phrase.”69 The conversation completely breaks away from Falstaff’s domestic life and seedy double entendres as Bardolph adds his own philological commentary about the lexical range of accommodate, its stylistic merits, and its syntactic category:

Pardon me, sir; I have heard the word. Phrase you call it? By this good day, I know not the phrase; but I will maintain the word with my sword to be a soldier-like word, and a word of exceeding good command, by heaven. Accommodated; that is, when a man is, as they say, accommodated; or when a man is being whereby a may be thought to be accommodated; which is an excellent thing.70 Surprisingly, when Bardolph distinguishes accommodate as a word, he demonstrates how it operates as a phrase. By pointing out the word’s association with a distinct discursive community (soldiers) and the fact that it gestures to a more sophisticated manner of expression (the same effect that Shallow reports), the amateur philologist allows accommodate to have the stylistic markers and specialized import that one would expect of an idiomatic expression, although he is unable to define its meaning outside of the tautological “when a man is” or “is being” accommodated (as they say). Perhaps Bardolph, like Richard Huloe in his dictionary, “would have spoken more here of this: were it not that accommodate is no usual word”71: both characters agree that the

69 Ibid, 3.2.63-66.

70 Ibid, 3.2.67-73.
word/phrase has an appeal—as is indicated in the vague appraisals of it being “commendable,” “good,” “of exceeding good command,” and “an excellent thing”—that translates more clearly than its meaning, which neither character seems to know.

Instead of dismissing this as an obscure tangent, let us investigate this discrepancy in definition more carefully so that we might understand what this word means and how it operates. After all, since it carries the weight of this culture’s socioeconomic and scriptural practices, it would be best to map all of its contexts and linguistic parameters. Based on dictionaries, more contemporary metacommentary, and a survey of the word’s first century of use from the Early English Books Online archive, I can attest that accommodation has a colorful range of meanings and a lot of tentative use: writers were testing the word’s ability to signal various standards of commodiousness. While they were exploring the word’s lexical capacity, occasionally they were impressed with its extra-lingual effect—it could charm, deflect, and distort—actions that were sometimes met with rhapsodic enthusiasm (see Shallow) and sometimes decried as idolatry (see page 27). To put it simply, the goal of this chapter is to determine how the word’s flexible meaning and its suggestive effect are linked.

Before I lay out my thesis, allow me to explicate a few examples that demonstrate both the looseness of accommodation’s semantics and these presumed charms. Writing in 1598, roughly the same year that Shakespeare composed 2 Henry IV, Ben Jonson objected to accommodation on the grounds that its capaciousness and popularity posed a

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71 Richard Huloet, Huloet’s Dictionary (London, 1572). Early English Books Online, 7. See the dissertation introduction for further discussion of this curtailed entry. It is worth mentioning here that accommodate is the only word set down as either “unusual” or “not usual” in the dictionary.
threat to eloquence and urged the readers of *Discoveries* not to “cast a ring for the perfumed terms of the time, as *accommodation, complement, spirit &c.*, but use them properly in their place, as others.” Agreeing with Bardolph and Shallow that there was something attractive about the word, some “perfume” that sweetened its reception, Jonson suggests that parameters be established for its proper usage without giving any instruction about what they might be. Whether he wanted the term to remain hardened within the religious or economic discourses that claimed concrete definitions for it, or whether there were certain criteria for the level of fitness that would merit an excellent thing being recognized as an accommodation, Jonson refuses to elaborate. Ironically, this open-endedness points back to the subjectivity undergirding our keyword’s definition: who is to determine what is proper?

This question lingered and then emphatically demonstrated its liability when irritating overuse gave way to deliberate misuse. The off-handed commentary about the word’s imprecision or rhetorical charms continued through the early seventeenth century until it proved to be explosive kindling for the English Civil War. As indicated in the epigraph, polemicist Henry Parker marked a divorce between the concept of accommodation and the word itself, implying that the latter was purposefully employed in peace talks to delude the rebelling Parliamentarians into believing that their demands were being addressed. As he and several others saw it, the king determined what was fair from his own standpoint and did not consult any other principles or perspectives in his offered treaties, which misconstrued the meaning of accommodation. In a more

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comprehensive attack, an anonymous author published *Accommodation discommended as Incommodious to the Commonwealth*, showing that the keyword’s wide capacity could be used by all sorts of antagonists—merchants, the Pope, the devil, and even wayward members of the author’s own faith and movement—in order to corrupt the word in any iteration. Whereas Shallow and Bardolph deemed the expression commendable across its many applications, this petulant author asserted that the word itself supports popery and constitutes an “abominable idol.”

This accusation comes as a surprise—designating a word itself as an idol defies the central tenet of Christian dogma in that idols are supposed to be physical things that divert people’s attention from appropriate subjects of worship. Looking to the Psalms, idols are scorned for being inert objects and the products of human labor: “The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not…They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them.” Whether it be distorting one’s god-given form, assuming that the soul has material basis rooted in the body, worshipping a statue instead of its spiritual referent, or believing that a communion wafer is endowed with the Son of God, accusations of idolatry are grounded in overvaluing materiality, mistaking form for

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74 See William Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish II: The Origin of the Fetish,” *RES: Journal of Anthropology and Aesthetics* 13 (1987): 23-45; or David Hawkes’s *Idols of the Marketplace*: “Idolatry…consists in a confusion of ends and means, which is simultaneously an act of objectification” (4) and “Idolatry is an act, to repeat, of objectification” (25).

75 Psalms, 135:15-18.
substance. Given this cornerstone of its definition, how does a word, and a word synonymous with propriety no less, become an idol? Does the designation extend beyond the tract’s condemnation, subtly explaining the distaste for “perfumed” terms or the emphasis placed on what accommodation does rather than what it means? And, finally, what does this anomaly in classification and its secular setting signal about Renaissance attitudes regarding fetishism?

To answer these questions and make sense of all the observations regarding extra-lingual registers of accommodation, this chapter begins with a broad review of the word, relying on dictionaries, meta-commentary, and aggregated data of the first one hundred years of accommodation’s circulation. I argue that a combination of patterns—synonymous collocations, illogical oxymora, duplicitous equivocations, and rhetorical appropriations—demonstrate how the word detached from the larger concepts of propriety and perfection that were associated with it and assured by its roots.

Accommodation became a blank linguistic form that registered a certain sophistication while emphasizing its unfixed meaning.

In the second section of this chapter, I examine how this history of indeterminacy and suspicion over the word’s rhetorical charms was cited by Parliamentarians to show that accommodation was a loaded term that could not be trusted as the different factions brokered for peace. Instead of only targeting the deal on the table, Henry Parker, Edward Bowles, and their anonymous comrade critiqued accommodation for its deceptive cloaking, irrational fungibility, unwarranted rhetorical efficacy, and cross-category contaminations, among other observations that gesture to elements of fetishism. In demonstrating how a word operates as an “abominable idol,” this chapter explores a
secular and subjective version of a fetish, one that was proximate to the things that were deemed as appropriate, which compelled many Renaissance thinkers to re-think the ways in which they justified their actions.

A Word versus a Phrase

Instead of taking a definition from the tangential conversations of minor characters or partisan propagandists, let’s turn to contemporary dictionaries for a more standardized approximation of accommodation’s meaning. The entries are fairly uniform: *fit, apt, proper,* and *convenient* appear in nearly every sixteenth-century dictionary and thesaurus entry.76 As a verb, the gloss might read “to appropre…to make apt, fit, like, or agreeing,”77 while the adjectival form might be set down as “proper, fit, convenient.”78 These are the English words repeatedly chosen to convey that sense of “full measure” or “appropriateness” that is embedded in the Latin root “commodus.” But strangely, these synonyms were often selected to appear alongside accommodate as a superfluous addition: among several instances, George Puttenham speaks of “apt and accommodate” delights,79 a translation of Montaigne by John Florio urges readers “properly to accommodate and fit” their faith to service,80 and Charles I requests “fit

76 See footnote 63 in Chapter 1 for the list of consulted dictionaries, thesauruses, and “alphabetical lists.”


accommodations” in his distressed state. The compulsion to reiterate the fitness that was literally inherent was evidently so strong that nine percent of instances of the accommodate stem that appeared in print during the first one hundred years of its circulation do so in tandem with a redundant synonym.

Shakespeare’s Othello offers a prime example of belaboring the aptness intrinsic to accommodate through twinomial phrasing. When duty calls the general away to Cyprus, Othello requests that the Duke help him arrange an appropriate situation for his wife, whom he intends to leave behind. Although in earlier speeches he claims to be rude in speech and unable to adequately communicate on matters that do not pertain to war, Othello borrows a few perfumed expressions as he speaks the vague, repetitive language of accommodation:

Most humbly therefore bending to your state,

I crave fit disposition for my wife,

Due reference of place and exhibition,

With such accommodation and besort

80 Essays written in French, 1613.

81 The Kings packet of letters taken by Colonell Rossiter, 1645.

82 Synonyms include variant forms of proper, fit, apt, meet, befit, commodious, convenient, and frame (which has an archaic meaning synonymous with accommodate). To be counted in this statistic, the synonym had to appear as an extraneous, removable element (e.g., “accommodate and fit” was noted as an example; “accommodated with fit words” was not). There were 163 instances of such repetition out of 1,860 hits for the term within the EEBO records from 1536 to 1636. The trend does continue throughout the century, but the abundance of records made it too cumbersome to complete a comprehensive archive for the 17th Century.

83 Shakespeare, Othello, 1.3.84-92.
As levels with her breeding.\textsuperscript{84}

A “fit disposition” is a suitable arrangement; that is, an accommodation. “Besort” is suitable attendance, another asset that falls under the category of an accommodation. The Norton Shakespeare footnotes the phrase “due reference of place and exhibition” as “proper accommodation and maintenance,”\textsuperscript{85} prompting the reader to consider Othello’s next lines as a direct repetition or, perhaps, the continued recital of empty terms of etiquette. The accommodation itself is given a needless qualifier: if the arrangements have been made suitable to her, it would follow automatically that they are level with her breeding. All the fitness implied in the term is protracted and restated as though such underscoring were necessary, or at least fashionably commendable. (Considering Othello’s fluctuating impression of Desdemona’s value and the rhetorical savvy behind his modesty, the likelihood for either interpretation seems justified.)

Even Ben Jonson, the author who discouraged an “excess of terms” and dismissed \textit{accommodation} as a “perfumed term” that should only surface in appropriate circumstances, found himself repeating \textit{accommodate}’s synonyms for comedic effect.\textsuperscript{86} In Act 5, scene 3 of \textit{Cynthia’s Revels}, the foppish Amorphus explains his rationale for equipping himself and his players with gloves: “Besides their receiv’d fitness, at all \textit{prizes}, they are here properly accommodate to the nuptials of my \textit{scholar}’s haviour to the lady \textit{courtship}. Please you apparel your hands.”\textsuperscript{87} On top of gloves’ acknowledged fitness

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 1.3.233-7.\\
\textsuperscript{85} Norton edition footnote, 2112.\\
\textsuperscript{86} See \textit{Discoveries}, 124.
\end{flushright}
for all revels, Amorphus points out an extra degree of suitability they carry for the occasion, and then amplifies that addition with a superfluous adverb that resounds the properness of it all. Much like the arbitrary fashion sense that determines gloves to be fetching apparel for a wedding scene, the notions of propriety and the purpose of speech correspond to style. Amorphus, the aptly named caricature of a courtier who conditions his sycophantic speech in order to reach his personal objectives, seems to think the more he mentions expressions that mean “befitting,” the more his conduct will measure up to that standard. Shakespeare and Johnson seem to use the word as a shibboleth, a distinctive marker employed by aspirant courtiers to grasp at sophistication that is not substantially present.

While some might attribute this pattern of redundancy as a fortifying emphasis, the trend seems to speak against the linguistic import of the word *accommodate*. How can the word signal a fine-tuned fitness when it frequently cannot convey its own meaning independently? If something is already established as apt, extra announcements of that quality would either betray their own needlessness or demonstrate that there was a greater level of fitness to be reached, leaving the word’s claim to a “full measure” looking rather insufficient. The phrase of *accommodation*, the fact that it repeatedly appears as part of a twonomial sequence, delimits the efficacy of the individual word and the concepts of perfection or custom-fit designs that are associated with it. The word gestures to standards and improvements—everything fitting and appropriate—but the phrase undercuts this by circulating as a ready-made utterance that never settles on a concrete meaning.

87 Lines 58-61.
To illustrate how this stylistic flair can preempt context, let us examine the dilemma of complement, a word Ben Jonson listed alongside accommodation as a “perfumed term” and its functional synonym. J. G.’s catalogue of flattering comments for all occasions, The Academy of Complements, promises in its subtitle that “ladies, gentlewomen, scholars, and strangers may accommodate their courtly practice with the most curious ceremonies, complemental, amorous, high expressions, and forms of speaking, or writing.” The assumption is that the book contains phrases for all seasons—expressing enduring loyalty, violent affections, self-effacing compliments, declarations of deep internal design, et cetera—which compel audiences due to their “wit” and “eloquence.” Existing as pre-selected bits of favorable phrasing, complements are valued independently of their antecedents; they are commendable responses before the opportunity for their use arises. This is literally preposterous: legitimate ideas are not born from a contrived script and wit does not exist in a vacuum, free of context. Given its meta-commentary and connection with complement indicated

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88 According to the Oxford English Dictionary, complement means “that which makes perfect or complete,” which strongly resembles accommodation’s action of making fit, apt, proper, or commodious. Both words indicate improvement and a sense of fulfillment, both words were scrutinized for being insincere forms of flattery. Take Twelfth Night Olivia’s critique in Twelfth Night as an example: “Twas never a merry world, / Since lowly feigning was call’d complement” (3.1.97-98).


90 Ibid, 4.

91 Such autonomy of representation would have been considered idolatrous to an Early Modern Protestant audience. See David Hawkes’ Idols of the Marketplace, pages 4-5.
by Ben Jonson, the choice of *accommodate* as the verb that conveys this process seems to reinforce the word’s placement within the realm of hollow rhetoric.

Towards the same end, the word frequently appears, censoriously or approvingly, to describe a courtier’s ability to modify speech and humor in order to charm people of consequence. In J. G.’s camp, consider this 1575 translation of Philibert de Vienne’s *The Philosopher of the Court*, which explains how “such dissembling is not evil”:

> A Gentlemen Courtier hath a mind to be seen or accounted to show himself contrary to that he seemeth: or do anything to that end. But Socrates letteth us not, that having no desire to show ourselves contrary to that we would be esteemed, notwithstanding we dissemble, and *accommodate* ourselves to the imperfections of every one, when the same doth present us danger, and is prejudicial unto us. For such dissembling is not evil, and in it is neither deceit nor fraud: but all good faith, as it were done not of purpose to show ourselves otherwise than we be: but to the end to please the world.92

(My italics)

The ends justify the means in this sophistical claim: offering a better version of oneself is not counted as a misrepresentation because it carries an aspirational expectation, the hope that a person might live up to the lie and thereby make the world a classier place. This stance isn’t a defense of equivocation so much as a preference for appearances above accuracy. Agreeing to the deceptive potential while rejecting this moral prevarication, Richard Younge’s *The Drunkard's Character* (1638) identifies the “plain-dealing and religious man” as one who “declares his meaning by his words” and stipulates that he cannot or will not “lie, and dissemble, shift, and flatter, temporize, and *accommodate*,”

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92 Philibert de Vienne, *The Philosopher of the Court*, translated by George North
buy promotion, supplant, grow rich, take bribes”\(^93\) (My italics). These forms on insincere but pleasing speech demonstrate that fitness at the crux of accommodation’s definition can be relative to situations and intentions rather than fixed to a moral or the objective truth.

In addition to the destabilization the word suffers from appearing with its synonyms and within courtier’s rhetorical playbooks, accommodate also has its semantic value threatened by being paired with its antonyms. Designations such as “unfit accommodations,” “ill-accommodated,” and “evil accommodated” are oxymora that negate the aptness embedded in the word’s root and acknowledged in its definitions.

When a translation of Michel Montaigne (1613) claims that foreigners are “ill-accommodated in our customary manners”\(^94\) or Robert Bolton (1632) rails against those that grow rich and rise by “vile accommodations,”\(^95\) was there ever any fitness assumed within those actions? If the foreigners are poorly trained in the standard etiquette, does this imply that they have made some modicum of improvement that would justify their efforts as being accommodated? Did Bolton refer to horrible versions of things that were designed to be proper, or is there another underlying definition at work in his example that allows a total disregard for the fitness predicated on the “commodus” stem? What is left of the accommodation when its appropriateness is removed or challenged? The word seems to be a blank verbal form that can signal any thing, thought, or relationship,


\(^{94}\) *Essays written in French by Michel Lord of Montaigne*, page 599.

\(^{95}\) *Mr. Bolton’s last and learned worke of the foure last things death, judgement, hell, and heaven*, 8.
independent of quality. It is this capacity that makes the word prone to contradictory, detrimental meanings, signifying insincerity, distorted interpretations, and exploitive or deceptive economic practices, as my later chapters will explore.

**Accommodation Discommended**

In light of this equivocal use, several authors issued warnings about how *accommodation* was divorced from its earlier contexts and a standard of fitness, either eyeing it from a specific discourse or speaking generally. The speculation over the word’s slippage took a political turn in 1642, when the disputes between King Charles I and Parliament finally boiled over into declared civil war. At this time, *accommodation* took the shape of a hypothetical accord that might satisfy all the feuding parties and quell the violence occurring both on battlefields and in the city streets. As the opening of a letter to Parliament (1642), Charles I warned, “[i]f all these present distractions…do not (by the blessing of almighty God) end in a happy and blessed accommodation, his Majesty will then be ready to call heaven and earth, God and man to witness, that it hath not failed on his part.” Unfortunately for those who hoped for reconciliation,

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96 Beyond Jonson’s set-down in *Discoveries*, see George Downname, *Lectures on the XV. Psalme read in the cathedrall church of S. Paule, in London. Wherein besides many other very profitable and necessarie matters, the question of vsurie is plainly and fully decided*, 1604; Thomas Jordan, *Pictures of Passions, Fancies & affections Poetically deciphered*, 1641; and Thomas Jackson, *A treatise of the consecration of the Sonne of God to his everlasting priesthood And the accomplishment of it by his glorious resurrection and ascension*, 1638. For an analysis of Downname’s critique, see Chapter 3, pages 66 – 68. Among the other, milder critiques of the word’s slippage, see Chapter 4, pages 110 – 115 for Milton and Chapter 5, pages 118 – 123 and 144 – 146 for Shakespeare.
accommodation’s suspicious semantics and etymology proved to be as much a point of contention as the King’s high-handed governance.

Henry Parker’s title of Accommodation cordially desired, and really intended gives the impression that the author takes stock in the keyword’s ability to signal peace, but he defends his colleagues who deem it a dubious piece of rhetoric designed to disguise the inequity within the negotiations. Parker first mimics his opponent, “The Replicant,” who claims the Parliament will not hear any talk of accommodation, as its members hate the very word: “But 'tis further said by the Replicant, that even Accommodation itself is not pleasing in Parliament, witness that speech of one, I like not daubing: and that of another, I hate the name of Accommodation.” Since “daub” means to “to cover with a specious exterior; to whitewash, cloak, or gloss” and the other complaint is targets the “name,” we can assume that the problem rests with the word itself, which conceals the (perceived) intention to lure the rebellious Roundheads towards a “breach of public trust” with the language of compromise. Parker’s answer to the Replicant’s accusation is that

He which hates the name of an Accommodation as it has been used of late to signify a total submission, may love a true Accommodation in itself: and he that likes not the daubing of those which under the color of Accommodation aim at

97 Charles I, “His Majesty’s Royal Declaration and Protestation to All his Loving Subjects,” 2.

98 Henry Parker, Accommodation cordially desired, and really intended, 5.


100 Henry Parker, Accommodation cordially desired, and really intended, 2.
nothing but division and dissention amongst the people, may more heartily affect a safe, and honorable agreement, then the Replicant himself.101

The letter killeth but the Spirit gives new life; Parker’s allies oppose the specious phrasing of the proposed treaties and not the concept of peace itself. Defining a true accommodation as a “middle way” in which “both parties by mutual agreement condescend equally to depart from the rigor of their demands on either side, and so comply, accommodate, and meet together upon terms as equal as may be,”102 Parker preserves the integrity of the verb *accommodate* to be an action-word of peaceable compromise, which suggests that he harbors some hope that the stem can still rouse his readership toward an appropriate usage despite the fact that its misuse is his central theme.

Likewise, Edward Bowles contended that safe and honorable accommodations were possible, but the word was serving as a shell to lure people into an easy but untenable agreement. Titling his essay *Plain English, or A Discourse Concerning the Accommodation, the Army, the Association* (1643), this chaplain of Sir John Meldrum’s

101 Ibid., 5.
102 Ibid., 21. And Parker’s sense of accommodation is supposed to represent mutually beneficially scenarios is justified from many sources, notably Francis Bacon’s *The Union of the Two Kingdoms of Scotland and England* (published posthumously in 1670) and the anonymous *A Humble Petition for Accommodation* (1642). The former, a speech believed to be delivered in 1607 in anticipation of the formation of the United Kingdom, illustrates how the word imparted a sense of compromise that harmonized the desires of all parties before it incited suspicion of disguising unequal bargains. He is also backed by the anonymous author of *Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious to the Commonwealth*, who states that “wheresoever then the word Accommodation is pressed…’tis most absurd and contradictory to exclude a yielding and compliance on both sides” (6).
regiment protested the looseness of language that granted latitude for the Royalists and seemed to suggest Parliamentarians were either unclear about or uncommitted to their cause. Remarking that the Prelates would be “accommodated by this accommodation,” Bowles employed repetition that reminded his audience that the word could operate on a subjective basis that only considered one party’s satisfaction as opposed to the common meaning and its commonly held interests. This is a key shift: accommodations were no longer a diplomatic rationing of benefits, but rather a one-sided proposition. And Bowles stressed the dire consequences for the losing side: he insisted that if the Parliament were to give in to a peace, they would surely regret it “when they see their accommodation turned into an Assassination.”¹⁰³

While Parker and Bowles were contented to point out that accommodation’s unclear semantics rendered it inadequate for describing the true nature of the peace negotiations at hand, an anonymous compatriot issued an incendiary eight-page pamphlet that condemned the word regardless of context. Accommodation discommended as incommodious to the Commonwealth (1643) denounces the term accommodation as an instrument of insidious popery for five “undeniable” reasons, including its lexical pedigree, capacity for deception, and illicit circulations, while the political implications receive secondary attention and are buried in esoteric references. Like Tybalt in Romeo and Juliet, this anonymous author hates the word that signals peace.¹⁰⁴

Given its monographic concentration on accommodations, this tract deserves a

¹⁰³ Edward Bowles, Plaine English, 18.

¹⁰⁴ “What, drawn, and talk of peace? I hate the word / As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.” 1.1.60-1.
full parsing of its arguments despite its obscurity and complicated style. The opening claim against our keyword takes issue with its Latin origin. Purportedly, the fact that accommodation is not a “Scripture word” out of the language of Canaan means that “to set up an Accommodation, which is not in Scripture, no, not so much as in the Apocrypha, is to relinquish the word, and follow the inventions of man, which is plain Popery.”\(^{105}\) Endorsing sola scriptura, critiquing the interpretive authority of Catholics, and hinting at idolatry, the anonymous author seems to raise a valid point: the term that explains the process behind explicating God’s will to mankind’s imperfect sense has been taken from a language distanced from the divine source.\(^ {106}\) It would be blasphemous to suggest God’s chosen mode of expression lacks the capability to describe itself and requires a lexical intervention. Ironically, the word that justifies translation is disqualified for springing from the wrong language.

After exposing accommodation for what it is not, the author makes a separate point to vilify its Latin heritage. Its root, “commodus,” means “full measure,” and hence “fit, proper, appropriate, suitable”; the author focuses on nominalized version of this stem—“commodum”—which he translates as “profit”: “Commodum, which signifieth profit, and you know all, the Pope’s Religion is for profit, or else from Commodus, who was a Roman Emperour, and a persecutor of the Church.”\(^ {107}\) This

\(^{105}\) Anonymous, Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious to the Commonwealth, 1643, 3–4.

\(^{106}\) For a longer analysis of how accommodation was both scrutinized and celebrated as the means of religious translation, see Chapter 4.

\(^{107}\) Ibid., 4.
gloss is both deceptively truncated and artificially tinged with underhandedness. The word can suggest all categories of “useful thing,” including favorable conditions, convenience, opportunity, and advantage, as well as financial rewards like profit or payment. To declare *accommodation*’s meaning so conclusively and myopically indicates a willful misreading, as does the assumption that the word *profit* automatically registers avaricious intent. This would stand as an argumentative gaffe were it not for the fact that many authors previously called out accommodations as contrived misinterpretations of the Bible.  

To list one example, in a vivid 1613 account of how false prophets poison doctrine and unleash destruction, the eventual Bishop of Aberdeen Patrick Forbes identifies “forelaid prejudices” which had “forced the wrestling of clear things to wrong accommodations.”  

To defend accommodation’s lexical range, one would have to accuse the author of accommodating, of allowing self-interest to dictate the interpretation. The example and its implications carry the case far better than explicated logic.

While *accommodation* is permitted one application, the anonymous author allows it to have two possible connotations: either this word—working independently of any contextual scaffolding or semantic framework—reveals Catholicism’s blatant greed or it serves as a tribute to the Roman Emperor whom he accuses (somewhat mistakenly) of

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108 See Chapter 4, pages 101-105, for criticisms regarding forced interpretations of the Bible.

109 Patrick Forbes, *An exquisite commentarie upon the Revelation of Saint John Wherein, both the course of the whole booke, as also the more abstruse and hard places thereof not heretofore opened; are now at last most cleerely and evidently explaned*, 1613, EEBO, pp. 83-84.
antagonizing Christians.\footnote{110} Since he combines a genetic fallacy (i.e., the erroneous assumption that a conclusion can be drawn based on the origin of an idea irrespective of its current context or meaning), a false dilemma, and historical inaccuracies in one short sentence, the author fails to prove that the word inherently carries any hostility toward the true professors of the Christian faith. However, these suggested associations highlight the distortion and confusion implicit in the word’s indistinct semantics: revolving between different languages, definitions, contexts, tenors, and competing standards for fitness, this overused word is prone to misinterpretation. Once again, the anonymous author proves his case by example rather than by logical reasoning.

With regard to how its economic dimensions contribute to its classification as “a Merchant word, as is well known to all those who have told twelve on the Exchange,”\footnote{111} the anonymous author does not condemn a practice, but a term: this word is wholly divorced from its socio-centric expectations\footnote{112} it carried in the sixteenth century and assumed to autonomously signal the economic malfeasance that merchants were capable

\footnote{110} Although he was well known for depravity and brutality, Commodus at least did not target Christians as his father, Marcus Aurelius, had done. The occasional exile and martyring notwithstanding, Commodus’s relaxing of persecutions led to an increase of professed Christians in Rome.

\footnote{111} Anonymous, Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious to the Commonwealth, 1643, 4.

\footnote{112} In an economic register, accommodations are regularly defined as non-interest property loans during the sixteenth century. See Nicholas Sander’s A briefe treatise of vsurie (1568), Thomas Wilson’s A discourse uppon usurye by waye of dialogue and oracions (1572), Philipp Caesar’s A general discourse against the damnable sect of vsurers grounded uppon the worde of God (1578), Miles Mosse’s The arraignment and conviction of vsurie (1595), and Gabriel Powel’s Theologicall and scholasticall positions concerning vsurie (1602), available through EEBO. The third chapter will consider the economic contexts of this word at length.
of. The enormity of this word is so manifestly evident that the author does not see the need for a segue between establishing *accommodation* within the vocabulary of merchants and categorizing it as Satanic: he concludes, “Now the Pope and his Priests, are known to make Merchandize, even of the Souls of men, as factors for Beelzebub, and brokers for the Devil.”

The author does not explicitly define what *accommodation* means, nor does he explain how its locus shifts from the marketplace to the Catholic cathedral, nor how it orchestrates this commodification of souls and service to the personifications of evil. These omissions and non-sequiturs make more sense when one reviews his next argument, where accommodation is depicted as an entirely fungible form and the unit of an inexhaustible economy—the word lacks the definition and parameters that would prevent it from falling down a slippery slope of continual transaction.

The last two sections of *Accommodation discommended as incommodious* are markedly different from the previous three: they are longer, refer to particular events, accuse traitorous Cavaliers instead of vilifying the Pope, and, most importantly, collate several duplicitous applications of the contentious keyword together instead of focusing on one discipline-specific complaint. As the concept of *accommodation* adapts to these changes with all due sophistication, the author decries it for its tendency to multiply as both a word and as a capacious concept. In the following example, two unspecified

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114 In Chapter 3 I provide a close reading of “broker” and “make merchandize” in order to give some suggestions of the practices that might be imagined in this vague complaint. See pages 75 – 76.
Archbishops are reported to be accommodated together by sharing lodgings in the Tower. This leads them to develop a friendship, oblige each other’s loose livers with wine, and then sway their political decisions to accord with their new loyalties:

The two Archbishops, though they could never agree with one another, till they were accommodated together in the Tower yet rather than Doctor Layton shall piss in the high-Commission Court at Lambeth house and young Hotham drink healths to Mr. Pym, in his Lordships Sacke, at Cawood-Castle, they desire an Accommodation. Next the Bishops, being most of them have been imprisoned (as all honest men ought to be) and so from loose livers became fast friends do now desire an Accommodation amongst others, as well as themselves; which is without all question as much high-Treason, as that Petition, which they preferred to his Majesty, with a Protestation. Then the Deans, and Prebendaries, foreseeing that their Lands and Revenues, which were misplaced by the ungodly charity of our ancestors, will be in danger to be employed in discharging the godly public faith, (which faith is contrary to hope, and which public, is contrary to all private interest) most unreasonably desire to see an end of these Rents, and a final Conclusion by an Accommodation.\(^\text{115}\)

Accommodations apparently acquaint strange bedfellows. Two ideologically opposed archbishops find themselves within the same physical space, and then they proceed to complement each other’s interests and redirect property rights and political aims based on their newly established accord. As much as the author objects to each of the outcomes, he also seems disgusted by the process that propels it, a strange chain reaction of

\(^{115}\) Ibid., 4–5.
accommodations that beget several different kinds of accommodations (three total, after the initial offering), which intensify in degree and damage. The seemingly innocuous simple hospitality soon prompt selfish manipulations and a deviant cycle of obligation that can interrupt a person’s spiritual and social duties. There is a kind of economy here, where fungible accommodations are traded for other accommodations, each time increasing in magnitude until the system maximizes into a profitable return for the “double-beneficed men.” The author demonstrates the many ways to interpret this keyword, and in his mind they all seemed linked in a strange sequence that would allow for exchanges that permitted incomparable entities to be weighed against one another, such as companionable revelry, religious supremacy, the king’s stifling political demands, and land deals for private gains. The word’s problem is that it moves between different contexts and discourses, retaining this sense that it was fitting, convenient, and beneficial regardless of the nature of what was offered. In short, accommodations lost their individual character and started to blur together, creating illogical or unethical connections and equivalences. Essentially what is presented here is a critique of the empty accommodation form.

The final charge of Accommodation discommended is directed to those who are “truly religious and affected,” a category that includes “Right Reverend Lecturers, the

116 “Double beneficed” is a pejorative term for absentee clergymen who occupied more than one church living and therefore allowed greed to interfere with their spiritual duties.

117 This is a parallel to Marx’s commodity form, which takes issue with how money serves as a universal equivalencer and erases the social conditions of its production: “It is…precisely this finished form of the world of commodities—the money form—which conceals the social character of private labor and the social relations between material objects, instead of revealing them plainly” (168).
Reverend Tubbers, the Holy Sisters, the Devil and his Angels, the Captain and Officers." Apparenty the righteous Protestants and the architect of evil have one common interest: they both oppose a peaceable accord (popularly referred to as an *accommodation*) between Charles I and Parliament. The author applauds his fellow Puritan zealots who “after so many soul-saving, heart-breaking, faith-confirming- sin destroying, State-disturbing, King-reviling, Church-Confounding-sermons resolved not to betray their lives to the Law, and their good names to perpetual infamy by a beggarly *Accommodation*.“ The readers expect this disavowal of King Charles after the previous protestations against Catholicism and backhanded court politics, but why would any Christian ally his stance with demonic forces? According to the anonymous author:

> The Divell having profited very much by the aforesaid persons in accusing and slandering, and finding himself made more an Ass by these, then by those in B. *Johnsons* play, (for as for lying he is so far from being their father that he is but a child to them, as for malice, so far from being their teacher, as he desires to be their scholar, for envy he is fat in respect of them, for the every, he has not so much permission, nor ever went so far in plundering of men’s consciences) desirous these happy days may continue, which promise to make him a glorious and flourishing King, is resolved by all his Angels in Hell, and agents on earth, to fix his cloven foot of dissention against an *Accommodation*. Just like Pug, the incompetent devil of Jonson’s *The Devil is an Ass*, this devil requires

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118 Ibid., 6.

119 Ibid., 7.

120 Ibid., 7.
some training from the fashionable and corrupt Cavaliers. And just as that play featured Satan’s livid censure that Pug has divulged how men might outperform the malignant spirits ("The hurt thou hast done, to let men know their strength. / And that they’re able to outdo a devil…Whom hast thou dealt with, / Woman or man, this day, but have outgone thee / some way, and most have proved the better fiends?"

121), this tract points to men as the more proficient architects of malevolence and deceit. In this imagining, it is in the devil’s best interest to revel in discord because once an accommodation is concluded, he will have no further opportunity to educate himself in the art of empty promises and misleading rhetoric. (Although I could point him in the direction of a tutor adept at hyperboles).

Not only do accommodations acquaint strange bedfellows, but their mutual opposition does as well; how does a Puritan author brazenly ignore any sacrilege that might be alleged from sharing an objective with Satan or unseating the fallen angel as the supernatural master of evil? Since it is unlikely that a zealot would speak facetiously of the devil or even draw upon a dramatic text as a form of supporting evidence, this argument operates as an example of accommodation’s idolatrous effect, which is alleged outright in the next section. The unimaginable synthesis created between the holy, the secular, and the demonic mimics our keyword’s signature action of joining together categorically distinct elements: its most common context is a religious translation that accounts for the mundane metaphors and bodily descriptors attributed to God. Besides

121 Ben Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass*, ed. by Peter Happé, 5.6.57-62.
being a hyperbolic attack on Cavalier culture,¹²² this section’s suturing of incompatible
groups reminds the audience of the exceptional power endowed in an accommodation to
bypass boundaries and simplify logic in order to create paradoxical unions. Allowing this
word’s effect to work independently of context would result in disastrous
misapplications; some compromises are not meant to be reached.

As Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious concludes, it claims to have
“fastened this abominable Idol of Accommodation to the Pope’s chair.”¹²³ The word has
somehow been reified for the purposes of anchoring it to the seat of Catholic authority,
even though it carries no physical form in any of the examples cited in the sweeping
critique. While some might attempt to dismiss the attack as a minor political fuming that
misuses “idol” as an imprecise catch-all for religious transgressions, the accusations here
consistent match the definition. As an “invention of man” that has been distanced from
God’s grace and is erroneously respected, as a fungible form that draws unethical and
illogical equivalences, as a perfumed term that conjures an effect more substantially than
a meaning, and as an assemblage that upsets categorical boundaries, the accommodation
dissected in the anonymous author’s tract exemplifies a common groundwork of
fetishism that cuts across diverse discursive communities and lingers through the
decades.

¹²² As Earl Miner delineates, Cavaliers and Parliamentarians are not so much full
philosophical opposites but differ in their degree of support for order, art, and purity.
Cavaliers find fault with the Puritan mentality of being “too precise,” demand all or
nothing. See 161 – 169.

¹²³ Anonymous, Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious to the
Commonwealth, 1643, 8.
Conclusion

There are two sets of implications to consider in the wake of these observations: what it means for our keyword, and what it means for fetishism. For the former, this acknowledgement of *accommodation*’s extra-lingual value—its appeal, its additional meanings, and its other liabilities—encourage more thorough readings and more connections between those readings. While the majority of cases might seem as though *accommodation* can be uncomplicatedly interpreted as a pleasing arrangement, this history of confused usage and ulterior interests warrants a more critical inspection. To put it in the simplest terms and resolve Shallow and Bardolph’s debate, *accommodation* is both a word and a phrase: it is a single linguistic unit that is determined by the immediate context but it also gestures to a larger network of impressions and associations that may be influencing its meaning.

As for fetishism, this mode of linguistic misdirection disturbs one of the most noticeable features of the fetish: its “irreducible materiality.” The “Idol of Accommodation” that the anonymous author censures has no physical basis: it is an abstract placeholder whose destructive power lies in its inability to take a concrete shape. Peter Stallybrass gave Marx credit for reversing the whole history of fetishism when he introduced commodity fetishism, the notion that the fungible commodity status drives exchanges more than the wants, needs, and labor that bring it to market: “To fetishize commodities is, in one of Marx’s least understood jokes, to reverse the whole history of

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fetishism. For it is to fetishize the invisible, immaterial, the supra-sensible. It seems that an anonymous author noticed a similar kind of fetishism with another derivative of “commodus” two centuries beforehand, asking his generation to consider how language could misrepresent the truth and charm its audience.

While this accommodation fetishism might seem to target only one word and that only occasionally, its implications stretch far and deep. Since accommodation is the one-word explanation for how God’s message is made fit for human understanding and a cornerstone term within economic exchange, exposing how it assumes something to be beneficial and appropriate without any logical backing or definitional stability could jeopardize the foundations of faith and trust. Accommodations are highly important beliefs that depend on people not questioning how they work, whom they serve, where they come from, or what exactly they mean: they are fetishes in plain sight, waiting to be marked.


126 The “doctrine of accommodation” was popularized by Calvinists but present in patristic Christianity; it is the idea that God’s nature is beyond our human comprehension but successful communication can nevertheless be achieved. This attitude is what accounts for the references to God’s body (hands, eyes, etc.) or emotional states.

127 In the sixteenth century, accommodation meant non-interest property loans. In the seventeenth, it mutated to cover a litany of other economic practices, including giving, selling, interest-based lending, accepting i.o.u.s of fellow merchants to avoid exchange rates, and snookering. From this range, one can safely consider the definitional integrity of the word compromised.
CHAPTER 2

“A Merchant Word”: The Economic Trajectory of Accommodation

“There is maybe an accommodation bill discounted now and then, Mr. Touchwood; but men must have accommodation, or the world would stand still—accommodation is the grease that makes the wheels go.”

‘Ay, makes them go down hill to the devil,’ answered Touchwood.” – Walter C. Scott, St. Ronan’s Well

Before delineating the deliquescent economic history of accommodation, I should acknowledge that its linguistic cousin is usually called upon to encapsulate capitalism, if not the Renaissance. Commodities and commoditization explain epochal changes such as new markets that were driven by self-interest and desire, wage-labor that transmuted workers’ time into a saleable entity, and Enclosure Acts that converted communally held lands into profit-bearing private property. As Karl Marx was quick to point out, the benefits of a commodity-based economic system were balanced against societal strain: the metastasizing market spurred conflicts between import merchants and local manufacturers, agricultural purveyors and the starving poor, owners and renters, and several other factions who found their livelihoods or commercial designs at cross purposes. The overarching logic of the reconceptualized commodity-based economy

seemed to be anchored by competition and inequity, by an understanding that transaction yields an advantage to one group and a loss to another.

Consequently, the rise of the commodity, by the estimations of several historians, heralded the decline of a socio-economic model that relied on communal charity, reciprocity, and a sense of obligation. The basic unit of this more collectivist approach was the accommodation—during the Renaissance the word commonly referred to non-interest property loans, hospitable offerings, and exchanges characterized by mutual gratification. Accommodations were initially identified as the opposite of commodities; they signaled that an item was removed from mercantile valuation, either because it belonged to a gift economy or a non-profit lending system. When used in the context of exchange, accommodations epitomized the essence of goodwill and a staple of Christian duty: Thomas Hobbes stated that it was a “Law of Nature” that “every man do help and endeavor to accommodate each other as far as may be” and “that Passion by which we strive mutually to accommodate each other, must be the cause of Peace. And this Passion is that Charity defined.” The word was, and continues to be today, imbued with a thoughtful, benevolent sentiment.

Despite this established context and its importance to a Christian code of ethics,

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the word *accommodation* was steadily co-opted and rebranded as a “Merchant Word”\(^\text{131}\): it applied to bilking schemes, usurious lending, hostile or profitable “hospitality,” and market matters that defied the word’s non-commercial history and harmonious tenor. Such an antithetical range of definitions prompts a few questions: how could this happen? What cultural shifts are either reflected in or negotiated by the transformations of this key term? In explicating the word’s mutations and commentary about how it operated during the late sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries, this dissertation chapter illustrates how the rise of capitalism was assisted by the verbal Trojan Horse of *accommodation*—a word that signifies a gift or friendly gesture, but in actuality its hollow form is filled with a duplicitous and selfish agenda.

**Loans versus Usury**

In the sixteenth century, there was no confusion about what kind of transaction constituted an accommodation: the word applied to property that was borrowed without any expectation of interest, recompense, or advantage. The use of property was lent, so under the conditions of this type of lending, the borrower could only utilize the property responsibly, knowing that the exact item would need to be returned no worse for the wear. According to Miles Mosse, lending money could never be considered an accommodation because there was no way that the borrower could ensure that the exact same coins could be located and returned again to the lender.\(^\text{132}\) Unlike mutuating loans,  

\(^{\text{131}}\) Anonymous, *Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious to the Commonwealth*, 1643.  

\(^{\text{132}}\) Miles Mosse’s *The arraignment and conviction of vsurie* (1595), 39.
where a borrower assumed dominion over the property and could sell it, trade it, or repurpose it, so long as an equivalent sum or property was returned, accommodations were prohibited from entering the market in any capacity. According to Zacharias Ursinus, the contract barred “any price or valuation” (my emphasis), suggesting that the possessor was conditioned to disregard the exchange value and only see the item in terms of its immediate use value. This being the case, an accommodation could not assume commodity status.

Interestingly, the terms of accommodated loans are frequently defined in treatises and sermons that denounce usury, in which they occupy the obverse end of the lending continuum. Usury went against “equity, conscience, and reason,” because the lender feels no compassion for his neighbor’s misfortunes and oftentimes deliberately engineers his poverty through exorbitant interest rates, lies, and (if propaganda is to be believed) the destruction of his property. Luther famously described usurers as being the greatest


134 Karl Marx explains that commodities have a dual nature in that “they are at the same time objects of utility and bearers of value… [items] only appear as commodities, or have the form of commodities, in so far as they possess a double form, i.e. natural form and value-form” (*Das Kapital* v. 1, 138).

135 See Nicholas Sander’s *A briefe treatise of vsurie* (1568), Thomas Wilson’s *A discourse uppon usurye by waye of dialogue and oracion* (1572), Philipp Caesar’s *A general discourse against the damnable sect of vsurers grounded uppon the worde of God* (1578), Miles Mosse’s *The arraignment and conviction of vsurie* (1595), and Gabriel Powel’s *Theological and scholastical positions concerning vsurie* (1602), available through EEBO. Some entries use the alternate spelling of “commodation.”


enemy of men on earth (with the exception of the devil), because they seek a God-like
dominion over their fellow men and do not care if their hoarding and taxing should result
in mass starvation, so long as they possess the financial upper hand. As the antithesis of
usury, accommodations demonstrated universal love and justice by making property
freely available and celebrating a common wealth. Mosse commented that usury was
corrupting the very notion of lending; in his estimation the word was intended to conjure
the accommodated loans that were officium gratium, an office freely offered, and
mirrored the brotherly compassion exemplified in the scriptures.\textsuperscript{138} Philipp Caesar
explained that such negotiations hinged on both benevolence and honesty, stating “This
kind of contract should be without fraud, as well in the lender, as in the receiver, and
should agree with the rule of charity.”\textsuperscript{139} Accommodated loans continually reinforced
communal bonds as they demonstrated that neighbors were willing to share their goods
and respect each other’s property, which discouraged covetousness and selfish
stockpiling. As one would expect, accommodated lending is seen as proper, apt, and
fitting within a Christian code of ethics.

In addition to squaring off philosophically, usury and accommodation opposed
each other in terms of their telos. Usury sought financial growth out of non-generative,
non-material elements, which led to an irrational expectation for gains and an insatiable
greed. Since the purpose of money is solely to broker exchanges—there is nothing useful

\textsuperscript{138} As one example, take Deuteronomy 15:7-8: “If among you, one of your brothers
should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is
giving you, you shall not harden your heart and shut your hand against your poor brother,
but you shall open your hand to him sufficient for his need, whatever it be.”

\textsuperscript{139} Philipp Caesar, \textit{A general discourse against the damnable sect of vsurers grounded
uppon the worde of God}, (1578).
or appealing about the physical cash itself—a usurer loses sight of the symbolic nature and objective aim of it when he focuses on accruing wealth that begets wealth. Such thinking sets up a chain of unrequited greed; a usurer will never have enough money because he deems its value as a capacity to achieve more. On the opposing end of the spectrum, accommodation was grounded in the perspective that use was the key purpose for any material thing. In the words of Miles Mosse,

[T]he end and perfection of things is their vse: the benefit and commodity of things consisteth in their vse: yea and men doe therefore live and dwell together, to the end that by the mutual vse of the things which they severally enjoy, each one might be more commodious and beneficial to another.140

Sharing property multiplies its use and therefore gives it more opportunities to achieve the goal it was designed for, which in turn allows men to live in communal harmony. What’s useful is commodious, and vice versa.

It is important to reinforce here that both usury and accommodation are understood in the Renaissance as attitudes, not just practices. Gabriel Powel differentiated between “actual usury” and “mental usury,” which was to lend and “expecteth and hopeth for increase or gain.” Citing Saint Augustine and the Gospel of Luke, Powel claims that “Sole hope maketh an usurer.”141 To anticipate a profit was to succumb to greed and harden one’s heart against the neighbors who would either take a loss or be denied their fair share of a gain. As David Hawkes has noted, the word usury “frequently designated the pursuit of economic self-interest at the expense of one’s

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140 Miles Mosse’s *The arraignment and conviction of vsurie* (1595), 11.
141 Gabriel Powel, *Theological and Scholastical Positions Concerning Usury* (1602), 8.
neighbors, and in general, it was this desire for self-interested gain, rather than any specific practices. In a similar way but opposite tenor, accommodation imparts a willingness to help that precedes the exchange. Hobbes speaks of it as “a law of nature” and the imperative passion one must feel towards his neighbor, emphasizing a willingness to perform kindness rather than the actual deeds themselves. Likewise, Samuel Rutherford commends Paul for being a “spirit of accommodation,” meaning that he considered himself indebted to serve and love all humanity, no matter how great the personal burden. As a passion, law of nature, and spirit, our keyword signifies an inward attitude that calls for generosity to others and a denial of self-centered indifference.

With obverse objectives, definitions, outcomes, and tones, the divisions between the two terms could not be starker: usury and accommodation are plotted as opposite ends of the same spectrum. One type of lending fortifies communal trust and inspires harmony; the other involves a malicious inequity that raises suspicions of active sabotage against neighbors and disinterest in humanity. However, the stable definitions established in the sixteenth century were increasingly buffeted by rogue antithetical appropriations in the seventeenth century. The first recorded instance marking this shift occurs in a 1604 sermon, when George Downname cautioned his parishioners about how people could usuriously bilk their neighbors under the pretense of accommodation:

142 See David Hawkes, The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England, 22.

143 “That Passion by which we strive mutually to accommodate each other, must be the cause of Peace. And this Passion is that Charity defined,” in De Corpore Politico, 1652.

144 Samuel Rutherford, A Sermon Preached Before the Right Honorable House of Lords (1645), 30. He also mentions that “the spirit of Christ is a spirit of accommodation.”
Likewise, if a man selling a cow, or some other commodity worth forty shillings, to a poor man, shall agree with him, because he is not well able to pay so much together, to take twelve pence a week for a year, under a color of *accommodating* the poor man, and condescending in his sale to his mean ability, he requireth an usury of thirty in the hundred.  

Apparently the seller is doing the impoverished man a favor by “condescending” to do business with someone who cannot make a complete purchase, and this justifies his acquisition of twelve extra shillings. There can be no confusion between an accommodated loan and this piece-meal overpayment for a cow, nor can this exchange claim the goodwill or reciprocal satisfaction that undergirds the accommodations discussed in contemporary anti-usury tracts and sermons. In addition to the deception embedded in the phrase “under a color,” the word “color” carries pejorative associations of taint and corruption in general, and mercantile malfeasance in the arena of international trade. Jonathan Gil Harris details how “‘colouring’ is tantamount to usury” in several cases where it describes how foreign traders used domestic aliases in order to evade taxes and obfuscate how much money might be leaving the country. Harris calls it out as a watchword for indeterminacy and debasement, a word that indicates how blank

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145 George Downname, *Lectures on the XV. Psalme read in the cathedrall church of S. Paule, in London. Wherein besides many other very profitable and necessarie matters, the question of vsurie is plainely and fully decided*, 1604, p. 174.

146 The OED entry for the phrase is “under pretext or pretence of; under the mask or alleged authority of;” it is mostly used in a pejorative sense. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 3rd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

forms such as money might be written over with different, reprehensible purposes. This connotation of shading suits the scenario well in Downname’s account since “the color of accommodation” registers a deliberate misdirection, a semblance of kindness that reflects the more obliging language of interpersonal trade, but actually contains a self-serving agenda.

Just in case this first example did not raise enough suspicions against an unscrupulous application of the word *accommodate* and its accompanying revision of charitable services, Downname invites his audience to “hear a mystery” involving a commodity valued at an inflated rate:

> But will you hear a mystery? A gentleman in his need cometh to an usurer to borrow a hundred pounds, the usurer tells him he hath no money, but (sayth he) to *accommodate* you, I will help you with a commodity worth an hundred pounds: which commodity you may commit to such an one (meaning his broker) and he will sell it for you. (My italics).

The scenario goes on to explain how the gentleman will inevitably sink into debt due to the pre-established pricing between the lender and the broker. The poor debtor will then have eight shillings’ worth of some unusual commodity and a two-pound loan to pay back, another scheme that converts someone’s immediate need for cash into a lucrative yield. Downname’s so-called accommodations—agreeing to a prolonged payment plan that exacts more than the fair price and hinging a loan on a deliberately overvalued commodity—are outright extortions that take advantage of those in desperate financial needs.

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148 Ibid, p. 175.

149 Ibid, page 175.
straits. Downname seems to be warning his contemporaries about the dubious circulation of the word *accommodate* as much as he is bringing these crooked practices to light—the mystery seems to be how this term that had formerly been the antithesis of usury transformed into its ally.

A few years later, Gerard Malynes drew upon the rhetorical charm of *accommodation* in *The Ancient Law Merchant* (1622) to justify the profits of pawnshops. He discounts the idea of lending money without interest as a “pleasing notion” that jars with the economic reality that pawnshops are everywhere, accommodating merchants and men with ready money for which they must pay some recompense:

> The second mean to suppress the biting usury of extortion upon the common people, is by providing a course, that they may have moneys upon pawn without paying any interest or usury for the loan of it, according to the manner of Bridges in Flanders; which is more pleasing, but it is not so universal as the Pawn houses are, where great sums are to be had to accommodate Merchants and all men, to prevent the general abuse: albeit it cannot be denied, but that the extortion upon the meaner sort of people is more heinous and detestable; which was the cause that by the Laws of the Romans, he that took usury of the poor was more punished than he that did steal from the rich, as is before declared.¹⁵⁰

Throughout this rather confusing passage, Malynes uses rosy language and logical omissions to make the pawn business seem less destructive to the commonwealth. Endorsing loans as “great sums of money to be had” neglects the fact that there are

¹⁵⁰ Gerard Malynes, *The ancient law-merchant Diuided into three parts: according to the essentiall parts of trafficke*, (1622).
greater sums of money to be spent in repayment. Likewise, the “universal” status of pawn shops might apply to our current moment since payday loan and check cashing stores outnumber McDonald’s in America, but in the early seventeenth century staunchly held principles of Christian commonwealth and an expanding global market belied such a claim.\textsuperscript{151} In any event, trumping the “pleasing” non-interest loans with the exaggeratedly global existence of pawn houses does not answer the charge of whether they are given to abuse; it just emphatically asserts that the practice is too pervasive to challenge. In the same vein, market relations are not seen as discrete decisions made by human agents; they are rather the consequence of a seemingly autonomous system already in place. This prefigures Marx’s critique of how people see market forces as operating independently of their own influence: “Men are henceforth related to each other in their process of production in a purely atomistic way; they become alienated because of their own relations of production assume a material shape which is independent of their control and their conscious individual action.”\textsuperscript{152} In the midst of all these distortions and veils, the fact that Malynes refers to such usurious loans under the color of \textit{accommodation} deconstructs the polar division between outstretched charity and selfish avarice, introducing the paradoxical concept of advantageous debt.

Usurers were not the only kind of businessmen who discovered the appeal of \textit{accommodation}; merchants adopted it to describe lending practices that made their business more convenient, in particular with the circulation of “accommodation bills” in


\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Das Kapital}, 187.
lieu of cash payment. Thomas Mun explains in *England's Treasure by Foreign Trade* that “the Merchants Exchange by Bills is a means and practice whereby they that have money in one Country may deliver the same to receive it again in another Country at certain times and rates agreed upon, whereby the lender and the borrower are accommodated without transporting of treasure from State to State” (52). While this system is built on mutual convenience rather than outright extortion and trickery, there is still a problematic collapse between the standardized definition of accommodation that eschewed financial dealings and the freer use that approximated cash values and tacked on exchange rates or interest, or, more to the point, the accommodations that recognized use-value and those that functioned as placeholder exchange-values. Mosse reiterates with force that the term was to signify incontrovertible property: accommodations may not be replaced with another item of the same manufacture, they may not enter a market or assume a price, they may not be used in such a way that defies the purpose for which they were created. For Mun, Malynes, and other mercantile supporters, accommodations are the abstract form of conversion itself—promises written on paper that broker exchanges that were better than actual money because they are not tied to physical matter or intrinsic values.

To be fair, there is something of the old spirit of accommodation in its new mercantile use. Since this internal banking system among merchants bound them all in honor and credit, Craig Muldrew points out that “the need to trust as many people as possible who would be able to discount bills of exchange meant that the tangle of
obligation was all-enveloping.”¹⁵³ Merchants could not dominate any market without disturbing the flow of economy, making common success a necessary condition for healthy markets and mitigating the element of competition. Categorizing this system of accommodation as the “the centerpiece of the merchants’ model of good government,”¹⁵⁴ Mary Poovey argues that the interrelationships it fostered allowed merchants to see a mutual respect for the overarching economy while they each pursued their individual fortunes:

Mercantile accommodation, anchored in the specific instrument of the bill of exchange, modeled just such a shared and positional interest, and it also demonstrated that, while the government of this commonality assumed that every individual who participated in the polity shared the same interests, they had to do so in only one sense: every merchant had to have an interest in commerce in general, but each merchant could still pursue his individual interest even when it competed with his rivals’.¹⁵⁵

Merchants agreed that economic growth and stability were beneficial, and this principle helped them maintain a friendlier competition with other merchants rather than attempting to run their businesses into the ground. The term accommodation recommends itself to this system because it depends on trust and shared concessions, suggesting that good turns promote good business.

¹⁵³ Craig Muldrew, The Economy of Obligation, 189.

¹⁵⁴ Mary Poovey, A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society, 88.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 89.
However harmonious a picture this paints for merchants, it still cannot dull the edge of capitalism’s zero-sum game. As Poovey acknowledges, rivalries existed and many businessmen were happier to exploit their vantages instead of thinking of market health, as *The Merchant of Venice* dramatized and William Wheeler reported. And while the merchants might assist each other, they make up the difference through other means. To list a few examples, Malynes asserts that merchants need to accommodate each other by agreeing to pay extra on exchange rates that will be reimbursed by the commodity mark-up.\textsuperscript{156} Thomas Mun explains how foreign countries exploit the accommodation system by driving up the rates of gold and silver,\textsuperscript{157} and Lewes Roberts points out that trade often entails the accommodation of one group at the expense or oppression of another, conceding that it may be thought of as a kind of “permitted usury.”\textsuperscript{158} There is loss and rivalry ingrained in this mercantile system of accommodation; the word ushers in capitalist principles while borrowing the pacifying tenor of the old order of non-interest lending that stood opposed to it, effectively erasing the concept of collectivism by co-opting the language it relied on.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} Thomas Mun, *A Discourse of Trade* (1621): “And for the exchanges of money, used betwixt nations, although the true use thereof, is a very laudable and necessary practice, for the accommodating of merchant’ss affairs…yet is the abuse thereof very prejudicial unto this Kingdom in particular; whilst in the interim the benefit doth arise unto other countries, who diligently observing the prizes whereby the monies be exchanged, may take advantag, to carry away the gold and silver of this realm at those times, when the rate of our sterling money (in Exchange) is under the value of that Standard” (52).
\textsuperscript{158} Lewes Roberts, *The Merchant’s Map of Commerce* (1638), 14. Lewes first indicates that accommodation bills were first practiced without “benefit or loss,” but then amends that the risks taking in lending, plus the time and convenience, often justifies these surcharges.
And some people caught on that the word was becoming a trap. William Wheeler, for example, uses the perfumed term exactly twice in his narration of misfortune, in both cases indicating how he had been tricked by a “fatal traitor” named Robinson. In the first instance, Robinson accommodated Wheeler with money at a time when his funds were low, a gesture that led him to offer a partnership to this undeserving man. Robinson was secretly in league with Wheeler’s competitors, and used the inside knowledge of his business and intimate contact with his client list in order to “discover [his] Art, to practice it himself, to reveal it to others, to grant Licenses without [his] knowledge to [his] prejudice, to compound with defaulters without [his] leave to [his] loss, to impute [Robinson’s] own failings to the imperfection of [his] Works, to combine with [his] greatest Adversaries.”

Wheeler could not fathom why anyone would go through such motions to aid and assist while planning further injury, how the destruction of his business could happen internally, at the hands of someone who had a stake in his success. There was apparently more money in defection than accommodation. In the next instance, Wheeler mentions how, under the pretense of accommodating him with new lodgings, Robinson set him up in an insane asylum where he mentally broke down from his mistreatment. This coincidence of the usually obliging word popping up twice in the space of twelve pages in order to illustrate two types of deceptive kindness reinforces the idea that accommodation was very much under suspicion for disguising malevolent agendas with the attractive language of a collectivism.

As the cornerstone example to this record of duplicity, the anonymous author of *Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious to the Commonwealth* (1643)

\footnote{William Wheeler, *Mr. William Wheeler’s Case from His Own Relation* (1645), 5.}
classified *accommodation* as a “Merchant’s Word,” an assignation he considered tautologically damning. Offering only one sentence as explanation for this conclusion, the Anti-Catholic tract claims “Now the Pope and his Priests, are known to make Merchandize, even of the Souls of men, as factors for *Beelzebub*, and brokers for the Divell.”¹⁶⁰ As I have already argued,¹⁶¹ an overarching theme for this petulant Puritan depends on the word’s fungibility and ability to open up collusions between people and ideas divided by heterodoxy; it does not target any specific market behaviors here because there are too many that might take shape within the ambiguous parameters of *accommodation*.

However, parsing out the economic valences of this claim reveals several hints about what kinds of conduct put mercantilism on par with Satanism. The phrase “making merchandize” echoes the King James version of the Bible—“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not”¹⁶²—which censures both deceit and objectification that stems from greed. Working with the secular definition, the phrase “making merchandize” means to “to deal in, to make money from, to use as a bargaining tool,” which does not sound so severe until one recalls that the Catholic church’s bidding chips are souls and their bargaining tools are guilt and simony.¹⁶³ In any case, the assumption is that making merchandize relies on a manipulation of the truth and a profit


¹⁶¹ See Chapter 2, pages 49-58 for a more comprehensive analysis of this text.

¹⁶² 2 Peter 2.3.

motive, which the anonymous author previously censured. Another malignant word in the sequence is “broker,” which David Hawkes describes as “usury’s closest and most faithful accomplice,” because it frequently signaled extortion and pawnbroker ing. The author does not need an example to justify the part accommodation plays in these swindles; it is enough in his mind to let it stand among vague but unconscionable terms as another unclaimed reference, a word dangerous in and of itself. Given this brief history of how it disguises bilking schemes, defends usury, and misrepresents mercantile exchanges, the blanketed condemnation seems justified.

As caustic as this censure is, later usages of accommodation demonstrate a complete erosion of the word’s original associations of communal obligation and an apathetic response to the welfare of others. As a prime example of its reversal in more modern times, consider The Well of St. Ronan (1823), the epigram that opens this chapter, in which Sir Walter Scott’s Touchwood agrees that accommodations are a destructive force, but for a completely different reason. When he criticizes the bank-issued loans—dubbed the “grease that makes the world go” by his banker friend—for initiating a descent to the devil, his qualms are not based on the immorality of extortion, but rather the security of his own money and the imprudent lifestyle prompted by easy credit. Debt is not seen as a symptom of poverty, but rather irresponsibility; lenders must be

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164 In his second argument against the word, the anonymous author suggests that “commodum,” the basis of Pope Commodus’s name, “signifieth profit,” which is taken as proof of an avaricious disposition.

165 Hawkes, Culture of Usury, 31.

166 Scott, St. Ronan’s Well, 228.

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wary of the undeserving poor and their “froth, foam, and flippancy”\textsuperscript{167} instead of examining their own consciences and their expectations of interest. Such thinking inverts the social obligations and commonwealth perspective that usually saw profit-based lending as a threat to the impecunious, not the privileged. It is this mindset that allows \textit{accommodation} eventually to signify a high-interest loan offered in emergency circumstances in the nineteenth century: according to James E. T. Rogers, “The reason…why persons pay highly for accommodation, is because they have no security, or no good security, to offer.”\textsuperscript{168} The willingness to do business with someone so beleaguered is somehow seen as an act of service despite trebling or quadrupling the person’s debt.

In addition to demonstrating his frustration with the undependable borrowers, Touchwood seems fixated on the empty forms that undermine the lending system. The men who seek loans possess both “foam” and “froth,” synonyms for bubbles containing air, indicating a problematic lack of substance rather than a faulty nature touched by recklessness, idiocy, vanity, or some such inclination. Touchwood comments that the Bank of Ayr, which famously folded after overextending its credit, might be a “Bank of Air,” puffing up people’s pockets with a currency that doesn’t exist in the shape of accommodations.\textsuperscript{169} Bubbles are on his brain with this perfumed term, and rightly so—this unregulated credit system is designed to churn out notes without any leverage, for

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
people without character, under the name of a word divested of stable signification. Everything involved in the exchange—the people, the term, the fiscal promises—is hollow, much like Marx’s commodity form.

**Hospitality versus Hospitality Industry**

While *accommodation*’s terms of lending were being reversed in the early seventeenth century, the word’s ability to describe hospitable encounters maintained a similar tension between representing unconditional generosity and creating lucrative obligations. Like accommodated lending, the word skews more and more toward self-interest, but still manages to retain that initial residue of neighborly benevolence.

One can understand how Hobbes categorized accommodations as the cornerstone of charity when reading John Taylor’s “The Penniless Pilgrimage.” The impoverished speaker finds a “loving, friendly Host” who is willing to

…entertain me freely to his Inn:

And there my friends, and good associates,

Each one to mirth himself accommodates.

*At Well* head both for welcome, and for cheer,

Having a good *New ton*, of good stale Beer:

There did we *Trundle* down health, after health

(Which oftentimes impairs both health and wealth.)

Till every one had fill'd his mortal Trunk,
And only Nobody was three parts drunk.\textsuperscript{170}

Not only does the speaker’s cup runneth over, but the largesse is extended to friends and associates; everyone may partake in this host’s good cheer and abundant supply. Such an encounter exemplifies Derrida’s notion of absolute hospitality, in which unknown foreigners are freely given a place (a resting ground and a status) without the giver expecting any reciprocal returns or even asking for the names of his guests.\textsuperscript{171} The penniless traveler has no method of recompense—no money to pay, no ability to linger within the community to sing the praises of this Christian paragon. There is no calculation, no financial incentive here but rather the promotion of goodwill; a sentiment the word lends since it also describes how luckless travelers are treated to provisions in foreign courts, or how the sick are tended, or how friends might welcome their neighbors after hard times have rendered them homeless—everything endorsed in Matthew 25: 31-40.\textsuperscript{172} Establishing a general code of Christian hospitality, John Prideaux, the Bishop of Worcester, instructed that “no labor (how troublesome soever) is to be refused, which may accommodate our neighbor, and cannot fitly be deferred,”\textsuperscript{173} which marks our key

\textsuperscript{170} John Taylor, \textit{The pennyles pilgrimage}, (1618).


\textsuperscript{172} “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”
term as an action-word of the faith.

In more affluent spheres, accommodations might recognize an alliance wherein each party respects and relies on one another. Accounts of court are full of accommodations: the nobility will magnanimously open up their homes and resources to entertain the guests of their peerage, while traveling gentry will find hosts eager to please their finer tastes. In *Othello*, the subtext behind the request for Desdemona’s accommodations reveals that the titular general perceives a degree of entitlement:

[I] do undertake

These present wars against the Ottomites.

Most humbly therefore bending to your state,

I crave fit disposition for my wife,

Due reference of place and exhibition,

With such accommodation and besort

As levels with her breeding.¹⁷⁴

While the humble supplication seems to announce the deference expected in addressing a political superior, the “therefore” reminds that Othello’s need only arises from his agreement to assist the Duke. Othello’s appeal for accommodation indicates a reciprocal relationship; Othello will risk his life in order to protect the state and the Duke might honor that military service by looking after his wife. As far as exchanges go, this one seems to work out to the benefit of all parties—the Duke’s safety and political

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¹⁷³ John Prideaux, *The doctrine of the Sabbath· Delivered in the Act at Oxon. anno, 1622, (1634).*

¹⁷⁴ *Othello*, 1.3.231-7.
preservation seem to be fair trade for the place and besort Othello requires for
Desdemona. However, the Duke, to whom Othello directly applies, does not seem to feel
the spur of obligation or generosity in this case; his answer to Othello is “If you please, /
Be’t at her father’s.”¹⁷⁵ The Duke either misses or ignores the cues for balanced returns
that pepper Othello’s speech—“due reference,” “fit disposition,” and “as levels with”—
and decides that the responsibility of her upkeep should fall upon her nearest relations.
The Duke does not recognize himself as bound in honor or business by Othello’s service,
so the general’s wife ends up unaccommodated.

In addition to these relationship-based accommodations, sometimes innkeepers
will offer up services—lodgings, food, accoutrement, general assistance—solely on the
condition of payment, dissolving the codes of hospitality that generally fall to hosts. Such
is the case in N. C.’s travel history, where soldiers’ accommodations are described as
bare essentials that have been offered in lieu of payment. The soldiers get no choice in
their lodgings, and know that they are only yielded due to military service rendered. The
text stipulates that if anyone would be “better accommodated,” he “should pay for it out
of his purse, upon pain of exemplary punishment.”¹⁷⁶ Clearly, the hosts do not open their
hearth for the sake of bringing comfort to fellow creatures or preserving national
security; they are in business to turn a profit, and that profit is protected through brutal
force.¹⁷⁷ In this instance and several others, accommodation does not speak to a code of

¹⁷⁵ 238-9.

¹⁷⁶ N.C., The principall passages of Germany, Italy, France, and other places, (1636).

¹⁷⁷ It is worth mentioning here that a new dimension to this concern about hospitality
etiquette has opened up with Donald Trump’s presidency: he insists that the business
etiquette or Christian principles for a host; it gestures to the obligations of a paying consumer.

Just like the accommodated exchanges that advertise a sense of helpfulness and charity where there was none, the mention of accommodation seems to imply hospitality and individualized preferment where there is none. The word has a history of being deliberately circulated in order to cozen customers. In “A Complemental Man,” Thomas Jordan explains how the titular archetype of a flattering schmoozer does not notice how vintners employ the same tactics to unload their vilest wine and claim their rooms fashionably prepared by virtue of “quaint terms of Good Accommodation / And such words squirted through the teeth.” With this vulgar image, we understand how vain men may be flattered into thinking that they are especially provided for and pay extra for that special consideration. The vintner employs terms of accommodation that are shown to be so suggestive, appealing, and efficacious that they override taste and experience to form an erroneous impression. By divorcing appearance from reality and basing value on something false, accommodation once again demonstrates its capacity for fetishistic charms.

The potency of this perfumed term continues to impact our sense of hospitality in our current moment even though it is devoid of any goodwill, satisfaction, or even fair

brought to his hotels does not impact any of his political decisions, while others allege a conflict of interest built upon high-profile patronage, one that might even violate the emoluments clause. Also, allow the irony of how a hospitality-industry billionaire becomes president and then imposes a ban on refugees prove my point: accommodations are business transactions instead of Christian imperatives or social niceties.

service. Consider that airlines and hotel chains, which brand themselves as hospitality industries and proffer their services as accommodations, have cleared profits of $6 billion and $2.1 billion per year, respectively, by charging their clients for basic or blanketed services, oftentimes for amenities that were traditionally provided free of charge. In addition to paying exorbitant rates for luxuries such as Internet access and minibar snacks, hotel guests are expected to pay early departure fees, tourism promotion taxes, and broadly applied charges for services not rendered, such as outdoor pool fees during December vacations. For fliers, extra rates apply for carry-on luggage, priority boarding, sitting with fellow travelers, among a catalogue of other compartmentalized conveniences that used to be considered standard assistance. Just like the soldiers in N.C.’s travel history, he who would be better accommodated will have to pay for it out of his own pocket.

In addition to itemizing their offerings so as to maximize their profits, these inhosiptable industries have flipped the contract of service so that they are unaccountable for any breaches of duty. Several hotels have protective clauses written into their contracts that allow them to sue guests who post unfavorable reviews online. As one example, the Union Street Guest House in New York fines its patrons $500 if any unflattering remarks surface online and can be traced back to either them or someone of their party. The hotel’s website maintained that certain guests might not appreciate the

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historic buildings and their vintage décor, and the policy was meant to insure no business would be lost from the dissatisfied customers who were looking for a “Marriott-type hotel.”181 This statement reveals two things: first, that there are assumptions of a bland, pre-set standard for accommodations rather than the individuated fitness that the word often implies, and second, that contracts of service tend to outline punishments for consumers rather than offerings to please them. As it was in N. C.’s tract, the obligations are reversed and guests are responsible for making the lives of their accommodators more convenient and commodious, for appreciating what is offered even though their limited agency is recognized in the transaction.

In a similar vein, an airline can charge up to $750 to a customer who seeks to change her itinerary—a person who requests a balanced trade between a reserved seat and an open seat, with several weeks of forewarning or the excuse of a critical emergency—but it is a standard practice in the business to oversell flights and displace customers when demand inevitably overtakes supply.182 Ironically, whenever an airline is unable to deliver on its promised service, its customer support team comforts passengers with the promise of “re-accommodation”—an indication that the word still possesses some rhetorical charm, some hint of the outstretched assistance that characterized its earliest use—even though the attendants are only vending the leftover seats on pre-


182 $750 is the change of itinerary fee for an international flight for US Airways. Domestic flight changes are $200. The fees are comparable for Delta, American Airlines, United, US Airways, and several major carriers, although there are some smaller airlines that advertise no such penalty charges. It’s also worth mentioning here that hotels will book at 110%, hoping that they will have no-shows who will still need to pay for their unused reservation.
existing flights. Much like the bad wine in Jordan’s account, these open seats are past-
prime commodities that the airline would have likely taken a loss on if they were not
unloaded on the waylaid customers. In making matters less convenient for their
passengers while saving money on jet fuel and wages, the airlines claim to be
accommodating them.

Moreover, several cities—from the major metropolitan centers of Paris, Rome,
Tokyo, Berlin, and St. Louis to the smaller towns of Laramie, Wyoming and Surf City,
North Carolina—have implemented so-called accommodation taxes, a per-diem
surcharge on hotel and motel rooms. In promoting a 4% accommodation tax in an
upcoming vote, the Laramie Boomerang stated that the decision was a “no-brainer”
because the citizens of the town would “never be likely to pay that tax unless they chose
to pay to farm out some houseguests.”183 Boldly declaring that no objections can be
drawn if one’s pocketbook isn’t directly affected (The article opens with the joke: “When
is a tax not a tax? When someone else pays for it.”), the article’s enthusiasm for
collecting money from travelers seems to be the inverse of Derrida’s model of absolute
charity; knowing that these people are outside of the community makes them the perfect
target for increasing the town’s coffers.

Attendees of the 2014 Shakespeare Association of America conference might
remember seeing the accommodation tax on their bills, which were served at a front desk

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183 Community Editorial Board, “Competing in the World of Travel and Tourism.”
to competition is noted with some degree of irony: Laramie does not render itself more
attractive as destination by introducing a hotel room tax.
adorned with a sign reading, “Where we are, there’s daggers in men’s smiles.” It seems that the St. Louis Hyatt Regency wanted its scholarly guests to feel welcomed with some recognizable Shakespearean quotations, but did not pause to consider how the import of the message insinuated murder, or how its greater context revolves around the danger the two Scottish princes face if they continue to accept Macbeth’s pernicious hospitality.

Form over substance seems to be the general rule with accommodations in the hospitality industry, and the word aptly fits into that formula because it possesses the semantic groundwork of generosity, but shows itself to be empty jargon that often masks a self-serving agenda. Contrary to Bardolph’s claims in 2 Henry IV, being accommodated is not an excellent thing, at least not where there is money to be made.

The Empty Accommodation Form

Having already examined how the word’s loose connotations featured in sermons

\[184 \text{ Macbeth, 2.3.120-121. The Hyatt also featured Iago’s “O, beware, my lord, of jealousy; / It is the green-ey’d monster” from Othello 3.3.165-166, another thematic misfire. These wooden signs were stationed at the check-in desks and were decorated with inkwells and quills. The presentation was lovely; the message was horrifying.}

\[185 \text{ In a more serious misuse of the language of hospitality, accommodations are also featuring as a euphemistic descriptor for Israeli internment camps. Translations of government documents reveal a conscious contemplation of the terminology: “The difference between the two terms is not as great as it may seem. By ‘closed accommodation centre’ we mean an accommodation centre which prevents the residents from leaving without the permission of those in charge of the facility, but with a possibility of different degrees of openness within different sections of the prison, and between the living quarters and the public areas. The degree of openness within the facility will be determined through accumulated experience of its operation.” These are, of course, translations of a language distinct from the Latinate, but I offer them as another opportunity for English-speaking audiences to recognize the rhetorical pull of accommodation and the degree to which euphemistic language is relied upon to counter harsh realities.}

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and Puritanical propaganda, let’s turn to secular drama for the remainder of the chapter, where the competing valences of accommodation often spurred humor and reminded the audience of its equivocal nature. In Jonson’s *Poetaster* (1601), for example, Histrio attempts to secure the performance talent of Tucca’s men for his play and hears a bewildering hodgepodge of contractual cues in response before moving to “accommodate” the men—a reply as inscrutable as the contradictory speech that prompted it. At first the poet Tucca seems outraged when Histrio inquires what price would book them for the week, and he accuses Histrio of being a “mangonizing slave” who would sell the young men as “enghles,” or boy prostitutes. In context, Tucca’s insult reads as incriminating hypocrisy: “mangonize” means “to traffic in slaves” and “to furbish up inferior wares for sale,”\(^{186}\) offenses he commits within the scene. For the first charge, Tucca converts people in his employ into assets; he very much wants to broker this deal with Histrio and is simply waiting for the right price. He also addresses any character of lower status as a slave, which is how the paradoxical “mangonizing slave” comes about. As to the second charge, relating to a deceptive presentation, he demands that his pages take on the most overwrought dramatic speeches for their auditions, hoping that the intensity makes them appear more polished as artists. (This tactic ends up being a noticeable misfire because their heroic monologues are all written for male parts instead of the lady roles suited for boys).

After claiming that he “will not part from them,”\(^{187}\) Tucca promises that they will talk over dinner, insinuating that a deal might be struck if he was wined and dined into

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\(^{187}\) Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*, 3.4.293.
the right humor. Revolving once again, he closes by eagerly speculates that Histrio has a sum of six and thirty in hand in order to strike a deal then and there. Tucca’s incoherence translates into several kinds of valuation and relationships: does Tucca need to see cash or a casual relationship before he agrees to service? Tucca seems tone-deaf to how many degrees of difference rest between a contemptible manonist and a friendly business partner. Increasing the confusion, Histrio uses the debatable term *accommodate* to broker his business in response: “No, here's all I have, captain, some five and twenty: pray, sir, will you present and accommodate it unto the gentleman? For mine own part, I am a mere stranger to his humor.”188 As written, the text is unclear about whether the offering functions as a convivial gift or the evidence of a contract—between Tucca’s request for a foundational friendship, the immediate business propositions, and his vacillating willingness to lend his players out, the spirit of this accommodation is inscrutable. We are all strangers to Histrio’s humor.

Furthermore, Histrio neglects Tucca’s position as the men’s master; Histrio assumes that the money and the decision-making fall to the performers when Tucca has made it clear that he desires payment and handles the negotiations. In seeking to accommodate the players, Histrio asks that the master play the intermediary and turns the servant into either a free agent or a friend. Perhaps this inversion of roles is a playful joke about theater’s employment of masterless men; perhaps the joke hinges on Histrio’s lack of acumen and skittish approach; and perhaps the joke is best left blank, with the audience shuffling through the catalogue of possible agreements—from prostitution to

188 Ibid, 3.4.302-4.
friendship, to acting employment—with a third party required to present the money because he is unsure how the performer will react to it. In any case, the scene reminds us that *accommodation* carries more perfume than substance, which suits the contradictory, incomprehensible, and incompetent dealings of its negotiators.

While Jonson collapses a wide range of services under the category of accommodation, Richard Brome’s *Mad Couple Well Matched* (circa 1639) humorously confuses the word with *commodity* to underscore the self-absorption of an adulterous housewife. In the second act of the play, Alicia Saleware finds herself in a financial bind after Lady Thrivewell buys wares from her shop on the “credit” that her husband established when he paid Alicia for sexual favors. When Saleware asks his wife, Alicia, to give him the money for the “bed-lace” that she claims to have sold, she replies “I have dispos'd of the money, the odd hundred pound for apparel, friend, and other accommodations for my self.”¹⁸⁹ She wants her husband to imagine that accommodations figure as the satisfaction a thing can impart to a person, and forget the interpersonal dynamics that accompany its collectivist definition and general use. This is no easy task: even when accommodations represent inequitable transactions in the Renaissance, they gesture to assumed social contracts and speak to how well people relate to one another. In Alicia’s lexical faux pas, she reminds the audience of how many people stand outside of her consideration: her husband, whose shop had a need for cash and to whom she owes fidelity; Thrivewell, who funds the accommodation after she overcharges him for sexual access (he assumes that he is paying for complete possession and not just renting Alicia for the hour); or Lady Thrivewell, on whom she is plotting a retaliation after the Lady

reclaims the value of her husband’s dalliance. For Alicia, accommodations are things that do not prompt any social obligation or mindfulness; on the contrary, they are enjoyed only after tricking and betraying those who love her.

When Saleware seems miffed at his wife’s selfish spending, she assures him that the goods will make her more marketable: “I have done it friend, whereby to appear more Courtly, and Ladylike as you say, to gain you more custom to your Shop.” Her more modern thinking is evident here as she prioritizes the image of gentility over appropriate conduct: she wants to appear more refined through her purchased goods instead of being more respectable by following moral codes. She instructs her husband to quell his anger and not “think much on it, if [he] respects [his] profit.” Once again, she ignores the upright freight of her vocabulary: “respects” registers as “considers” or “anticipates,” and has nothing to do with honor or esteem. The expenditure is justified by its ability to generate more revenue—to “make merchandize,” one might say—an expectation that defies our keyword’s emphasis on use value and the disavowal of the irrational telos of money that begets more income. Not only does Alicia confuse an accommodation for a commodity, but she also motions toward a commodity fetish, seeing her purchases as a means to accrue more capital without any qualms as to how it is accomplished.

As a final example of commentary on accommodation’s economic fluctuations and open form, I turn to King Lear, and probably its most famous iteration. When King Lear meets the naked, raving, disguised Edgar on the heath, he invents the nonce word “unaccommodated” in order to summarize his deprivations:

Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the

190 Ibid, 1009-1010.
beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha, there’s three on ’s are sophisticated; thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here.191

In criticism, this poignant moment and its provocative neologism have been deciphered through the general definition of *accommodated* as the provision of something fit, apt, and proper to a given situation, which suits the scenario because of the variegated outcomes.192 However, given the history fleshed out in this chapter and a few textual cues, the passage might be considered as a commentary of a use-based lending economy: by listing the animals that might have their products returned, by referring to his own garb as “lendings” (another unique coinage), and by venting his outrage that his own daughters could deny him anything after he gave them all and then assuming Poor Tom’s daughters likewise reduced him to such a state, Lear envisions a reciprocal economy where property is temporarily used rather than fully owned.

While it is tempting to read this passage with respect to the “transitional” history that so often characterizes scholarship of *King Lear*193—to mark this scene out as another instance where a “feudalistic” order represented by the older men of the play is replaced by the nascent capitalism of the next generation—it must be noted that Lear himself

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191 *The Tragedy of King Lear*, 3.4.92-98.

192 The fifth chapter of this dissertation considers the most salient readings of this passage, viewing accommodations as clothing (Margreta de Grazia), natural design (Laurie Shannon), or a socio-economic system (Richard Halpern, Judy Kronenfeld, and Hugh Grady). See pages 135 – 140.

exposes accommodations as illogical and unsustainable. His lending economy focuses on pre-production, forgetting the human labor that wove the silk, sheared and spun the wool, tanned the leather, and collected the glandular secretions of the civet. The most basic kinds of property do not materialize without some manufacturing and the reckoning of that human effort is conspicuously absent from Lear’s calculations. Also absent is full cognizance of what can and cannot be repaid: while the other animals might thrive without their contributions, the beast perishes when its hide is removed. Owing the beast for its hide means owing it life, which cannot be restored. In expanding the system of accommodations beyond the individual, post-market exchange to include pre-commodity production, Lear seems to suggest that there is no way to avoid the economic calculations that determine value and create inequity; there is no such thing as an item freely lent.

**Conclusion**

The principal point that I would like to reinforce through this semantic history crossed with a Marxist critique is that accommodation’s mutations—from its original definition as non-interest property loans to usury, from hospitality to snookering, from the “passion by which charity is defined” to a “merchant’s word” that signals evil collusions—are not a symptom of a proto-capitalistic agenda so much as they are a factor in its success. In recalibrating and appropriating a word so integral to the principles of Christian conduct, one that implicitly carries its own justification of fitness with it in its root, the business-minded men of the seventeenth century were able to both endorse their practices and erase the old economic logic that threatened to expose their ambivalence towards social welfare. A key tenet of this conversion is the parallelism between
accommodation, as both a word and a concept, and commodity fetishism. In its speedy evolution, the term elucidates how exchange value eclipses use value, the preference for a rhetorical form over the actual experience, the erroneous belief that market matters are dictated from autonomous and immitigable forces rather than the actions of people, and the social alienation that ensues after such ideology is adopted.
CHAPTER 3
Imperfect Speech: Donne, Milton, and Divine Translation

“He therefore who think to scholiaze upon the gospel, though Greek, according to his Greek analogies, and hath not been auditor to the oriental dialects, shall want in the heat of his analysis no accommodation to stumble.” – John Milton, *Tetrachordon*¹⁹⁴

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth but the Spirit gives life.” – 2 Corinthians, 3:5-6

While Catholics and Protestants warred over specific implications and interpretations of the Bible, each camp doctrinally supported that Scripture was comprised of accommodations.¹⁹⁵ Agreeing that as an omniscient, eternal deity God possesses wisdom far beyond the compass of a human’s wits or the confines of language, early modern Christians believed that divine communication necessitated a translative process—termed *accommodation* and imagined as a litany of intercessions¹⁹⁶—in order


¹⁹⁵ While the “Doctrine of Accommodation” is often assigned to Calvin and evoked to criticize the perceived literalism of the Catholic faith, the principle belongs to a longer tradition that spans Judaism, Patristic Christianity, Catholicism, and Protestantism.
to be understood. This acknowledgment of mediation and conversion was crucial to
Biblical analysis since it implicitly justified all sorts of contradictory points, especially
the anthropomorphized and anthropopathized versions of God.¹⁹⁷ Concerns about why
God narrates his capabilities through a physical body that is endowed with eyes and
hands, or why God experiences destructive emotions such as jealousy or anger threatened
to either expose the Bible as illogical or restrict the omnipotence of God to a familiar
human scale.¹⁹⁸ The tidy, catch-all answer to these quandaries was to acknowledge them
as accommodations: God’s speech had been deliberately altered and analogized to
correspond with man’s limited purview of the natural world.

However, as is its tendency, our keyword did not settle into one type of action or
outcome, which led to some disagreements about whether some accommodations

¹⁹⁶ Here I will explore the endpoints of the communication circuit, God and men; Chapter
5 will shed light on the greater system of intermediaries involved, working with the
scholarship of Bruno Latour and Michel Serres. See pages 127-130 for the analysis.

¹⁹⁷ See Joad Raymond’s Milton’s Angels, Donald J. Wilcox’s In Search of God and Self:
Renaissance and Reformation Thought, and Paul Cefalu’s English Renaissance
Literature and Contemporary Theory: Sublime Objects of Theology for a historical
review of how Renaissance religious figures accounted for mundane or human metaphors
for God’s divinity. To list one example of how the word accommodation was weaved
into this discussion of anthropomorphism, consider this 1580 quotation from Michael
Cope (via a translator known only as M. O.): “For inasmuch as God is a spirit, we must
understand that he hath neither arms nor hands, that can be either touched or seen: but the
holy Ghost to accommodate himself to our rudeness, doeth attribute unto God those
things which properly and naturally appertain unto us” (A godly and learned exposition
upon the Proverbs of Solomon, page 402).

¹⁹⁸ And this inclination to register spiritual forms as physical was, of course, the essence
of idolatry. While God states that man should be made in his own image and likeness,
justifying analogies based on resemblance, God is eternal and therefore outside of Nature
and not bound by material conditions. See Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, II,” 27-29,
for a discussion of how Christians negotiated concerns about corporality versus
spirituality.
stretched beyond the boundaries of justifiable interpretation. God had many ways of rendering his message more fit to his audience, including using facile language accessible to all, speaking in metaphors that could have specialized meanings for different audiences, and relying on angels to confer and adapt the import. In each case, God was serving all levels of reader, ensuring that his intentions could be read within the framework of a basic, universal humanity. As Augustine puts it, “if Scripture did not use such terms, it would not communicate its meaning so clearly to all the race of men for whom it has care. If it did not first bend down and, as it were, descend to the level of the fallen, it would not terrify the proud, arouse the negligent, exercise the inquirer and nourish the intelligent.” While Augustine endorses God’s condescension, wisdom, and, of course, accommodation, he also illustrates the multivalence and subjectivity that suggest deliquescent readings rather than one overarching message. As a result, accommodations present a paradox: they signal how the scriptures employ the most suitable vocabulary possible to transmit the word of God universally, but this mass messaging necessitated an incomplete and imperfect translation towards a personal orientation. This inconsistency left an opening for mankind to justify, if not solicit, nuanced allegorical readings that attempted to unravel the nature of divinity from those ill-fitting physical metaphors. Interestingly, the term for man’s active scriptural interpretation was also called *accommodation*.

As above, so below: the term that was meant to rationalize the earthiness of God’s messages now legitimized the reverse action of explicating the transcendent wisdom that was intended. While accommodation was viewed as a necessary tool for anyone looking

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199 *City of God*, 411, 686.
to apply and interpret scripture, there were several voices that cried out against accommodation as a distortion of the truth: among many examples I will discuss in this chapter, Patrick Forbes (1613) denounces it as “poisonable doctrine,” John Goodwin (1641) calls it a deliberate perversion aimed at personal “sanctuary under the wing of error,” and even John Milton, as quoted in this chapter’s epigraph, suggests that it can be a redundant stumbling block. Once again, a standardized, collective version of accommodation—a God-sanctioned universal set as Scripture—is being threatened by a more individual orientation—a case of selfishly manipulated misdirection or, in other words, idolatry.

So how does the word accommodation manage this paradox of justifying the infallible word of God and permitting human reconceptualizations? And how does it obviate threats against its meaning or intent so well that it eventually is christened into doctrine? To answer these questions, this chapter is devoted to characterizing how accommodation was used during the Renaissance so that we might understand how the concept and term evolved together: I will parse out the actions the word suggests, the

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200 An exquisite commentarie upon the Revelation of Saint John Wherein, both the course of the whole booke, as also the more abstruse and hard places thereof not heretofore opened; are now at last most cleerely and evidently explaned, 84.

201 The Christians engagement for the Gospell opened in foure sermons on part of the third verse of the Epistle of Jude, 123.

202 In following the interpretations of man over the word of God, one would be committing “spiritual fraud” that rejects the Holy Spirit that would encourage a correct reading of Scripture. Consider Tertullian’s On Idolatry: “Well, idolatry does fraud to God by refusing to Him, and conferring on others, His honors” (1) and “And why should I, a man of limited memory, suggest anything further? Why recall anything more from the Scriptures? As if either the voice of the Holy Spirit were not sufficient; or else any further deliberation were needful, whether the Lord cursed and condemned by priority the artificers of those things, of which He curses and condemns the worshippers!” (4).
justifications offered for its viability, and the associations drawn between it and Calvinic thought. In reviewing this history, I will demonstrate how this term is both evoked in contradistinction to idolatry and styled as a version of spiritual fraud, but that the pressing exigencies of stabilizing belief and textual authority outflanked worry about misappropriation. In the later sections, I demonstrate how two of the most eminent theologians of the age—John Donne and John Milton—indicate their philosophies via their respective preference or avoidance of the word *accommodate*. While John Donne favors the term and defends this word against charges of contemporization, Anglicization, and general misapplication through both subtlety and open defiance, John Milton’s complex cogitations regarding accommodation are juxtaposed to his treatment of the word itself. In continually selecting it to demonstrate limitations and failures, Milton rejects its simplification of theological and political processes. Taken all together, this archive delineates a full spectrum of the word’s liabilities, benefits, and exceptions that forces *accommodation* to exist in a dialectical conversation instead of being repelled for its many occasions of idolatry.

**A Brief History of Religious Accommodation**

As fascinating and extensive as the history of accommodation is, my study is specifically concerned with how the term *accommodation* factored into this theoretical expansion and must restrict its scope accordingly.\(^{203}\) Thanks to Thomas Jackson’s 1638

\(^{203}\) I am aware of the irony of doing a literal search for the word that activates figurative readings. If one would like to review the fuller conceptual history of accommodation, I recommend Edward Dowey’s *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theory*, Arnold
treatise, we know that there was direct aversion to the *accommodation* word family in reference to Biblical interpretation: gesturing to the “ingenious writer” John Calvin for using “accommodat in another sense” than a slew of authors labeled as literalists, Jackson acknowledged that they “oftentimes though not always, oppose the word accommodation, or allusion, to concludant proof.” By fixing the literalists’ occasional opposition and his own praise to the vocabulary itself, Jackson establishes that there was an ideological investment within *accommodation*, here described as having multiple senses. Once again, we must parse out what this appealing word means and what effect it is imagined to cultivate.

Let’s begin this study of historical semantics by reviewing what Early Modern dictionaries establish about the religious applications of this *accommodation*, which is nothing. Despite the fact that nearly a quarter of the word’s usage within the sixteenth century referred to translation, that verb or a comparable synonym was not listed in any of the entries from contemporary dictionaries. As discussed in the second chapter, the

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Huijgen’s *Divine Accommodation in John Calvin’s Theology*, and Victoria Silver’s *Imperfect Sense: The Predicament of Milton’s Irony*.

204 Thomas Jackson, *A treatise of the consecration of the Sonne of God to his everlasting priesthood and the accomplishment of it by his glorious resurrection and ascention*, page 291. The full passage reads, “But this ingenious Writer, and accurate Latinist useth this word accommodat in another sense than lansenius, Suarez, or Maldonat, or other literalists do, which oftentimes though not always, oppose the word accommodation, or allusion, to concludant proof.” Contemporary critics have echoed Jackson’s appraisal, commenting that Calvin’s word choice was deliberately Latinate and deservedly latched upon. See Huijgen pages 49-52 for further review.

205 This percentage reflects 61 mentions of accommodation as translation within 259 mentions total, between the years 1536 and 1599. The statistic is based on a 2015 EEBO search of “accommod*”, alternative spellings included, and excludes reprintings and any passages written in a foreign tongue.
primary definition across references involves making something more apt, convenient, fitting, or suitable. There are a few elaborations on this—“to lend”\(^{206}\) is frequently cited, as is the vague “to apply,”\(^{207}\) conforming to other men’s manners and the conditions of time and space\(^{208}\)—but no authoritative entry marking how “making fit” was assumed within religious discourse, whether it be through the formulation of meaningful speech or its translation, interpretation, application, or imitation. This meant that the word’s usage could range. John Dove might insist that accommodation was for God alone to perform, claiming “the conversion of the world may not be ascribed unto man’s wisdom, or humane eloquence, or any other thing that is in man,”\(^{209}\) but the word was clearly up for broad importation: Andreas Hyperius (via translator John Ludham) in his handbook for preachers declared that notable points should be inserted as an accommodations,\(^{210}\) and even John Day’s translation of John Calvin styled his use of plain speech as an accommodation to assist the simple folk towards God’s true message.\(^{211}\) Despite the

\(^{206}\) See footnote 63.

\(^{207}\) This common gloss appears in several dictionaries, including Elyot’s (1538), Huloet’s (1578), and Cooper’s (1578). I checked contemporary dictionaries and the Oxford English Dictionary to ascertain whether “apply” had any standardized connotations within religious discourse and its case mirrors accommodation’s: while the word is employed frequently enough with such a reference to textual extenuation, there are no set parameters for how things are to be set to order.

\(^{208}\) See Huloet, page 7; Elyot, page 138.


\(^{210}\) Andreas Hyperius, *The practice of preaching*, 79. Also, as early as John Rastell in 1566, the word has been used to refer to marginal markings made within a text in cursive so as to differentiate them from scripture.
enormous stakes of being the foundation of Biblical legibility, the action at the heart of an accommodation was subject to whatever a speaker or audience might deem an appropriate.

Since the term *accommodation* eventually settles into Calvinic doctrine, let us first look at the English translations of his work to see if his example helps to set boundaries for its unmoored semantics. As it happens, these texts only feature the word a scant five times—the linkage between him and the term that started to take effect in the late 1630s\(^{212}\) must have either been a cultural mutation or a reaction to a stunning usage. If the latter, I would imagine his review of the eucharist would be the prime example: according to the English translation of his *Faithfull and most godly treatise concerning the most sacred Sacrament of the blessed body and blood of our savior Christ*, God “accommodates himself unto our infirmity” by joining his words with “a sign to be seen with the eyes, whereby he might represent unto us the very substance of his promises” when Christ presents bread and imparts that his living body is a kind of nourishment. To speak of bread and internalizing its substance is not enough to solidify the full measure of the message, the accommodation here is a visual aid—and, ultimately an edible aid. Of course, Calvin would go on to describe the Eucharist wafer itself as literalist idolatry: men are not meant to linger upon the physical world when they are looking to attribute to

\(^{211}\) John Calvin, *A short instruction for to arm all good Christian people against the pestiferous errors of the common sect of Anabaptists*, 82.

\(^{212}\) Thomas Jackson, by my calculation, is the first person to make this connection in stating that Calvin used “accommodat in another sense” (291) in 1638. Other authors would soon follow suit and contextualize accommodate as Calvin meant it to be implemented.
the mysteries of divine will, and so he mentions accommodation here as an exception to the usual incompatibility between spirit and matter, an acceptable commixture of appearance and reality, a jointure between divine design and the profane world. In this particular example, the hairbreadth of difference between an accommodation and an idol depends here on who is performing the gesture and whether one can correctly choose between figurative and literal meanings. While God might accommodate, man’s discernment is a necessary component of the appropriate reception of God’s message—the action is not so simple or so one-sided.

While Calvin’s translators positioned these non-literal accommodations in a proximate contradistinction to idolatry, there were more than a few authors who associated the word with that capital sin. As a representative specimen of the objections raised by forced accommodations, consider *The Mystery of Iniquity* (1612), an anti-Catholic polemic folio written by Phillippe de Mornay and Englished by Samson Lennard, in which Pope Gregory is attacked for presenting Scripture at a slant to suit his purposes:

> He will do whatsoever pleaseth him, whether by right or by wrong. He is an Apostat Monk, who by his new opinions adulterateth the sacred divinity, the Scriptures by his false and forced interpretations he accommodates to his own affairs and purposes, he breaks the peace and concord of the College, he mingleth things sacred and profane, divine with humane, and polluteth both the one and the other, he lendeth an ear, and gives credit to the D[evil] the diabolical, and impure
and false accusation of our deadliest enemies, to the maledictions of wicked men.

He is both witness, and judge, and accuser, and party, himself.\textsuperscript{213}

This passage delineates a laundry list of idolatrous outcomes resulting from such forced interpretations: a conflation between the sacred and the profane, another conflation between the divine and human, man’s selfish desires outweighing spiritual imperatives, and a collusion with the devil instead of an aspiration to do God’s will. The final accusation of fulfilling all roles of a trial reflects both solipsism and insulated ignorance: the pope deliberately inflects his own affairs and purposes into his emphatic readings, but then does not recognize himself as the victim of this spiritual fraud. When a man cannot see beyond himself toward the will of God, he will be punished in kind.

While many such criticisms against accommodation as Biblical interpretation seemed reasonably warranted, others marred their cases through their own forcefulness, conflations, and insulations. Such is the case with Patrick Forbes, who wrote at length about the damage a “wrong accommodation” could cause, which was nothing short of the apocalypse promised in the Book of Revelation. In \textit{An exquisite commentarie upon the Revelation of Saint John} (1613), he insisted that Biblical analogies were manifestly clear and distinctive:

That which hath led exceeding learned men in this error of accommodation, both here and in other parts of this Prophecy, is that wrong conceived ground, whereof I spake before, that these seals and trumpets are sections of time; and, finding, that at the opening of the seventh seal, such effects ensue, as are anterior in time

\textsuperscript{213} Phillippe de Mornay, \textit{The Mystery of Iniquity}, 250.
to this fall of the Western, and great weakening of the Eastern Empire, they draw back the accommodation.\textsuperscript{214}

He went on to describe how this errant interpretation would be defied with plagues of locusts, serpents with stings in their heads and tails, as well as the “fire, smoke, and brimstone.”\textsuperscript{215} It takes a great deal of temerity to assert that the Bible is so inherently legible that it cannot be misunderstood while referencing the enigmatical Revelations: the historicist viewpoint that Forbes condemns was largely accepted among Protestants, so there is room here for debating whose immovable beliefs are skewing their reading. In faulting “men of learning and judgment” for their “prejudices” (“they could not have been mistaken, if forelaid prejudices had not forced the wresting of clear things to wrong accommodations”\textsuperscript{216}) rather than recognizing that language is an inexact medium for communication, figurative examples abound in the Bible, and a deluge of tradition and scholarship stands behind this non-literalist reading, Forbes seems to commit the very sin he denounces. He cites a strawman argument against his opposition, offers no logical reasoning to defend his literalist reading, and demonstrates a forceful wresting and as he insists on the real-world existence of Biblical monsters. To take Forbes at his word would be to accept a comingling between the supernatural and the profane, something that was

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  Patrick Forbes, \textit{An exquisite commentarie upon the Revelation of Saint John Wherein, both the course of the whole booke, as also the more abstruse and hard places thereof not heretofore opened; are now at last most cleerely and evidently expolaned}, 1613, EEBO, pp. 83-84.
\item[\textsuperscript{215}]
  Ibid., 83
\item[\textsuperscript{216}]
  Patrick Forbes, \textit{An exquisite commentarie upon the Revelation of Saint John Wherein, both the course of the whole booke, as also the more abstruse and hard places thereof not heretofore opened; are now at last most cleerely and evidently expolaned}, 1613, EEBO, pp. 83-84.
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either an accommodation or idolatrous. His invective ultimately backfires and
demonstrates how easily accommodations can be wrested into supposedly clear things.

As one last twist to this dilemma of how accommodation exposed conundrums inherent in the justification of beliefs and the shared agency behind communication, consider how our keyword also lent its distorting self-orientation to equivocation, the ethically questionable practice of relying on ambiguous phrasing in order to both speak truthfully and deceive. For example, in 1607, English priest Robert Parsons (also known as Persons) recommended accommodation as a mode of mental reservation that would deceive judges who persecuted Catholics for their faith:

But he may when he is thus pressed, and cannot otherwise avoid the violence, and the injury offered unto him, so accommodate his words, as they may be true according to his own intention, and in the sight of God, though they be false according to the intention of him that doth unjustly exact the oath.\footnote{217} From a Catholic standpoint, this reads as a tactical guide for preserving life and soul in inclement circumstances: God would recognize the truth while the prosecuting judge’s “intention” would block him from accurately weighing the statement. From a Protestant standpoint, the errant intentionality belonged to the architect of the dubious statements, which were crafted to mislead. Herein lies a conundrum: in both cases accommodations are a cleavage of truth and falsehood, equally reliant on the interpretive powers of man. But in the Catholic assessment, the accommodation makes a virtue of imperfect sense and human error: the statements only succeed if they can misdirect meaning and show the

listener’s inability to decipher nuances and protean language. In this way, a Catholic accommodation will only triumph if a Protestant is unable to accommodate in kind, to accept that language is not so straightforward or universal, and that accurate communication is not an inherent aim.

This quick survey of self-conscious usage of *accommodation* turns up very few notes for its semantic plotting: the word’s directionality and tenor are unmoored as they show that communication is a mutual endeavor and truth can contain degrees. To this archive of deliberate use I can add two high-profile cases of theologians who worked from opposite philosophies: John Donne, who employed the word in a relatively high concentration, and John Milton, whose expansive works only cite it a handful of times. Between the two examples, we can chart how the word carried with it a certain freight that indicated a mode for Biblical exegesis, in one case celebrated for its free parameters and roving implications, in another constrained by successive failures and limitations.

**“God Employs Several Translators”: Donne’s Biblical Extensions**

While the critics of accommodation aimed at limiting or demonizing man’s role in religious translation, John Donne was open to its charms and potential. Arguably the most stalwart defender of man’s right to accommodate religious texts, Donne frequently employed the term *accommodation* to justify his Anglicized, contemporized, or multilayered applications of Scripture. For anyone familiar with his poetry this is unsurprising: as a master of metaphysical conceits, Donne excelled at bringing multiple perspectives into conversation and refusing to espouse an unwavering position. This dialectical philosophy followed Donne as he moved from poetry to sermons: as a
Catholic-born Anglican priest he could allow for alternative positions; for example he might argue that bread was not “transubstantiated to another substance,” but then such dogmatic pronouncements would be balanced out by encouraging his congregation to avoid “a peremptory prejudice upon other men’s opinions”\(^\text{218}\) regarding the eucharist. He was a preacher of many truths, so accommodation’s ranging meanings suited him.

As a defense against the speculation of misapplied translations, Donne often qualified his accommodations: they were “fair,”\(^\text{219}\) “just,”\(^\text{220}\) and “due.”\(^\text{221}\) Each of these descriptors help illuminate how Donne shaped the reception of accommodation; not relying on the supposed fitness inherited through the root of the word, Donne’s index of adjectives indicate that these translations are not just apt, but righteous and far-reaching. “Fair” and “just” speak to both the weight of his own judicious assessment in determining the correct application of the text and also remind that Donne’s expansion of scripture into vulgar English offers religious equity, a fairness seeded in access. “Due” casts accommodation as a necessary function: a subtle confirmation that the suggestiveness born from their vagueness or analogical nature was intended to be maneuvered further.

While these descriptors smoothed over the concerns that an accommodation could

\(^{218}\) Sermons, 291.

\(^{219}\) As seen in two entries of The First Sermon preached to King Charles, 1625, p. 35, among several others.

\(^{220}\) In “Two Sermons Preached before King Charles,” in Six Sermons upon Several Occasions, 1634 (Delivery date unknown; printed posthumously) and “Sermon LXV” (1625) in LXXX sermons preached by that learned and reverend divine, John Donne (1640).

\(^{221}\) John Donne, “To the Honorable, the Virginia Plantation,” Foure Sermons Upon Special Occasions (1625), page 4.
manipulate text and promote an idolatrous reading, Donne employed others that directly acknowledged how interpretation was influenced by those limited human capacities: “useful,” 222 “occasional,” 223 “public,” 224 and “civil” 225 versus “spiritual.” 226 “Useful” breaks the pattern of appealing to authority and exigencies; a critic might well ask whether the uses in question belonged to Donne or God. “Occasional” is a frequent word with John Donne—after all, his published speeches are styled as *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* or a certain number of sermons upon “several” or “special” occasions. Donne draws attention to the fact that his religious reflections are bound by the moment, and those moments are both unique and many. 227 “Second” (and, on occasion, tertiary) readings reiterate that more than one truth could be gathered from a text—there is no reason to assume one true interpretation. As he stated in *Essays in Divinity*, the lesson behind Scriptural ambiguity was to teach us “that a unity and consonance in things not essentia, is not so necessarily requisite as imagined.” 228 His

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<td>223</td>
<td>“Sermon LX” (no date) in <em>LXXX sermons preached by that learned and reverend divine, John Donne</em> (1640), 601.</td>
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<td>“Sermon XVII” (1624) in <em>LXXX sermons preached by that learned and reverend divine, John Donne</em> (1640), 171.</td>
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<td>“Sermon XVI” (1624) in <em>LXXX sermons preached by that learned and reverend divine, John Donne</em> (1640).</td>
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<td>226</td>
<td>“Sermon LXXV” (1628) in <em>LXXX sermons preached by that learned and reverend divine, John Donne</em> (1640).</td>
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<td>227</td>
<td>Donne also emphasized the multiplicity of interpretation by labeling accommodations as “second” or a “third part.”</td>
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next descriptors—“public” and “civic”—gesture to unspoken private interpretations and also hint that these religious truths sponsor a more secular obligation or context, that they might speak to everyday conduct rather than launch aspirations of the beyond. These descriptors activate several anxieties laid out by wrong accommodations—a wresting of divine communication to the discretion of fallible man, a disregard for separate spheres of the profane and the spiritual, a binding of timeless wisdom by a finite moment—but Donne unabashedly challenges such condemnations in order to expand and explicate verse.

Building on this theme, Donne marks his defiance of idolatrous connotations to accommodation in less subtle ways elsewhere in his oeuvre. In a sermon regarding the conversion of St. Paul, he explains how even the behavior of a saint might be ill-advised for someone living today, yet it is safe to assume the sins of the past remain off limits, then announces that his third point is to accommodate the message to the current moment:

So have ye then seen, That though it be not safe to conclude, S. Paul, or any holy man did this, therefore I may do it, (which was our first part) yet in this which S. Paul did here, there was nothing that may not be justified in him, and imitated by us, (which was our second part) Remains only the third, which is the accommodation of this to our present times, and the appropriation thereof to our selves, and making it our own case.229

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228 Essays in Divinity, 56.

229 “Sermon XILX, Preached on the Conversion of S. Paul” (1629) in LXXX sermons preached by that learned and reverend divine, John Donne (1640).
If we missed the import of his sermon and its selective stance on Biblical precedents, the emphatic thrust of ownership marked here in the three repetitions of the first-person plural possessive and the redundant addition of “own” would reinforce it just the same: scripture can be individuated on a case-by-case basis.

While Donne’s affinity for multiple, self-reflexive accommodations is apparent, explicit reasoning for this philosophy is missing in these passages. In the next example, Donne justifies his Anglicizing and contemporizing by analogizing Christ as polychronic:

So Christ spoke the words of this Text, principally to the Apostles…but they are in their just extension, and due accommodation, applicable to our present occasion of meeting here: As Christ himself is Alpha, and Omega, so first, as that he is last too, so these words which he spoke in the East, belong to us, who are to glorify him in the West?"²³⁰

While in the beginning was the word and the word was with Christ, Donne gestures to an endpoint where Christ is the word as well. In being Alpha and Omega, Christ is occupying all the distinct moments of ordered time with a literal variation of character rather than being one uniform truth that stretches across eternity. This view challenges the frequent disqualification of man’s accommodations in that God’s import is viewed as universal and timeless; it dismisses the purity quests for original texts and shakes the idea that such originalist thinking is universal in the first place. Donne favors the idea of “God employing several translators”²³¹—whether the Bible takes on renewed meaning due to

²³⁰ John Donne, “To the Honorable, the Virginia Plantation,” Foure Sermon’s Upon Special Occasions (1625), page 4.

²³¹ Meditation XVII, from Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, par. 1.
age, sickness, war, or justice, “God’s hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again.” John Donne’s playful dialectic shows us how the most problematic aspects of accommodation—its vagueness, its reliance on human input, its fixation within time, its promotion of deliquescent readings—can be converted into virtues that widen the influence of Scripture.

**“Things to their thought so unimaginable”: Milton’s Accommodation**

No other seventeenth-century author seems to theorize, imagine, or activate accommodation more than John Milton. Beyond the fact that *Paradise Lost* is itself a masterpiece of Biblical extenuation, the poem poignantly reflects on the “sad task and hard” of comprehending the method behind angelic communication and therein suggests how man is meant to assess the word of God. In Book 9, Raphael’s comments to Adam:

Higher matter thou enjoin’st me, O prime of men,

Sad task and hard; for how shall I relate

To human sense th’invisible exploits

Of warring spirits? how, without remorse,

The ruin of so many, glorious once,

And perfect while they stood? how, last, unfold

The secrets of another world, perhaps

Not lawful to reveal? yet for thy good

This is dispens’d; and what surmounts the reach

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232 Ibid.
Of human sense, I shall delineate so,
By likening spiritual to corporal forms,
As may express them best; though what if earth
Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein,
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?\(^{233}\)

While the stakes could not be higher for the mining of this passage, a firm resolution is impossible due to the “revealing-concealing” function of accommodation.\(^{234}\) On the one hand, Milton consents to the conversion principle that partially reveals ineffable workings: spirit forms will mimic the corporal, which makes sense due to their resemblances, allowing a hint of what the divine realm holds. As Paul Cefalu regards it, this teasing will “incite rather than appease Adam’s curiosity,”\(^{235}\) inviting him and Milton’s readership to press for a more complete understanding of God. This reminds of a Milton who stated that God raises “men of rare abilities” to revise incorrect teachings and advance Christians toward “some new enlight’ed steps in the discovery of truth”\(^{236}\)—a Milton who encourages men’s accommodations.

On the other hand, Milton emphatically describes the several limitations on this communication: it is so beyond a human’s sense, it is unlawful and secret to reveal, and it is imagined to trigger remorse, either in Raphael or Adam. With logistics and the edicts

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\(^{234}\) Edward Dowey, Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 12.


of heaven against it, Raphael cannot represent the nature of heaven or the acts of God as they really are. Instead of viewing this as an invitation, Victoria Silver takes it to be a deliberate blockade and warning: “in their copious reconfiguring and empty ingenuity” humanity will seek vulgar explanations that evolve into “apostate fascination” and eventual “skeptical despair of meaning itself.” 237 Her assessment reminds us that Milton insisted that “When we speak of knowing God, it must be understood with reference to the imperfect comprehension of man; for to know God as really is, far transcends the powers of man’s thoughts, much more of his perception.” 238 Caught between the desires to expose and expand versus the restraints of unknown, forbidden knowledge, Milton’s complex views on the concept of accommodation dilate this conundrum of phenomenology: this chapter explores how his views on a word so frequently associated with it illuminate his stance.

Given Milton’s expertise in and creative implementation of accommodation, it is surprising to see that he rarely used the term, especially with respect to religious translation. In fact, in the handful of examples where he does employ accommodation—whether it applies to deciphering scripture, political designs for accord, or marital compatibility—it is within the context of failure and limitation. Extrapolating on this pattern and his hesitation to employ the term, we might conclude that Milton wanted to

237 Victoria Silver, Imperfect Sense, 161.

stumble accommodation’s tautological justification, its easy answers and its political liabilities.

Let’s begin this analysis with the quotation used in the epigram, delivered in the midst of Milton’s impassioned argument for divorce from Tetrachordon. While acknowledging how “the majesty of God” operates through a range of cultural dialects thanks to recognizable idiomatic expressions, he then declares that the “metropolitan language” is preferred and quips, “He therefore who thinks to scholiaze upon the gospel, though Greek, according to his Greek analogies, and hath not been auditor to the oriental dialects, shall want in the heat of his analysis no accommodation to stumble.” The now obsolete word “scholiaze” means to write marginal commentary for a Greek or Latin text, and the assertion seems to be that the passage is straightforward enough that those versed in Greek will not need to reference any alternative phrasing. “Stumble” could either mean “to make a slip in speech or action” or “to find a stumbling block or obstacle to belief”—the accommodation is envisioned as either an opportunity for the scholar to introduce error or needlessly complicate the groundwork of their faith. This depiction of accommodation as redundant and harmful after showcasing his ability to maneuver in other dialects and parsing out the language raises a question: what is his project in explicating these passages if not an accommodation? In this rare instance of his employment of the term, he disavows its purpose and denies it as a descriptor for his own translativ...
Perhaps Milton’s aversion the word is fueled by his politics; Milton views the accommodations as tainted by lies and rendered impossible. In *Eikonokleestes* (1650), Milton quips that “if accommodation had succeeded upon what terms soever, such a devilish fraud was prepared, that the King in his own esteem had been absolv’d from all performance.” Whatever conditions were in play, Milton avers that they would have been disastrous for the Parliamentarians because the king would not honor them: Milton warned against a hollow, faithless accommodation. This sense that such peace brokerings were empty rhetoric was repeated in *The Life and Reign of King Charles* (1651), in which Milton explains how the King’s next overture for an accommodation “came to no other issue than to signify nothing; a game wherein the King was well versed.” “Signifying nothing” is a double insult: Charles is a feckless negotiator and a liar; because his accommodations are “inseparably accompanied with dissemblings, fraud, wiles, and reservations,” the peace deals are dead in the water.

Such noting of King Charles I’s lies and failures to broker peace conforms with the stout disapproval Milton held for “the pseudo-martyr,” but surprisingly, his wariness lingers around accommodation independently of the subject. *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1650), speaks of extremists so bent on revenge that they are “beyond the cure of any sound or safe accommodation.” While our keyword is employed here in a much more favorable way—representing a compromise that would end bloodshed rather


243 Ibid, 45.

than a devilish fraud—the fact that it is imagined to be impossible cuts against its assumed appeal as a mutually gratifying situation. In demonstrating how sound, safe peace accommodations lose out to a cycle of evil and violence, Milton diminishes the inherent attractiveness so many have associated with the word.\footnote{See Chapter 2, 33-44.}

As accommodation refuses to shed its political connotations, Milton revives the twinomial underscoring used by Parliamentarians in the previous decade to show how the word cannot independently assert its assumed meaning. In discussing an “unfortunate war” between Protestant factions in Bremen and Sweden, John Milton expresses his sincere wish for peace with the most belabored language of accommodation:

> Hearing therefore that a Truce for some days was made at Breme, I could not forbear signifying to your majesty, upon this opportunity offered, how cordially I desire, and how earnestly I implore the God of Peace, that this Truce may prove successfully happy for the Good of both Parties, and that it may conclude in a most firm Peace, by a commodious Accommodation on both sides.\footnote{John Milton, “To the Most Serene Prince Charles Gustavus Adolphus, King of the Swedes, Goths, and Vandals, &c,” in \textit{Letters of state written by Mr. John Milton} (1658-1659), p. 127-128.}

We’ve seen this pattern before: our keyword cannot signal its basic definition independently and must rely on repeated assurances of its being fit and mutually gratifying, here established by the pleonastic adjective “commodious” and the inclusion of “both sides.”\footnote{As I noted in Chapter 2, accommodations were supposed to give equal terms to both sides. See footnote 102.} But when Bowles, Parker, and their fellow Parliamentarians parsed out
the differences between a true accommodation and the so-called accommodations that were forestalling productive negotiations, they were in the midst of dangerous deals and wordplay, whereas Milton writes during a period of tentative peace and at a remove from the distress. There are no bad deals to balk from, no tyrants with a history of reneging to denounce: his skepticism does not seem attached to a particular proposal, but rather the lexicon of compromise itself. As sincerely as Milton wishes for an end to the turmoil, he reminds with reflexive language that accommodation is based on conditions and contingencies that are assumed to be implicit but must be belabored; it is neither easily said nor done.

_De Doctrina Christiana_, the last example from Milton’s oeuvre, seemingly breaks this pattern since it is an unequivocal endorsement of what would eventually be known as Calvin’s Doctrine of Accommodation. Of course, when God accommodates there is magnanimity rather than hitches to report; God condescends to our mean capacities and supplies man with two types of reference so that man may form a coherent conception of his greatness:

For granting that both in literal and figurative descriptions of God, he is exhibited not as he really is, but in such a manner as may be within the scope of our comprehensions, yet we ought to entertain such a conception of him, as he, in condescending to accommodate himself to our capacities, has shown that he desires we should conceive.\(^{248}\)

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If this quotation were taken in isolation, it would run counter to the wariness and blockades I have hitherto noted, but the immediately following lines maintain the emphasis on limitation as they target the other type of accommodation: “For it is on this very account that he has lowered himself to our level, lest in our flights above the reach of human understanding, and beyond the written word of Scripture, we should be tempted to indulge in vague cogitations and subtleties.”

God’s accommodation forestalls mankind’s: even though Milton beautifully styles interpretations as a flight above the compass of human intelligence and beyond the text, even though his warning comes against the mild problem of “vague cogitations and subtleties” instead of poisonous doctrine, the sticking point is that God has removed the necessity of such exertions; in the heat of our analysis we shall want no accommodation to stumble.

**Conclusions:**

All of these cases taken together—Calvin’s exception, the confused invective, Donne’s sprawling applications, and Milton’s transdisciplinary aversion—illustrate a far-reaching conundrum: there is no standardized meaning to anchor *accommodation*. It does not belong exclusively to God, it does not exclusively belong to one religious sect, it is not bound to a truth or universal version of events, and it suggests no core action besides fit-making, which is fraught from its subjectivity. This review of its ambiguity and bifurcated reception might seem aimed at destabilizing it, but the word resists such absolute dismissal because it is the foundation for any and all divine communication.

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249 Ibid.
This word of infinite variety is thus precariously positioned between the bedrock of faith and deplorable idolatry.

While John Donne and John Milton are unsurprisingly occupying opposite ends of a religious spectrum and a usage spectrum, there is one important similarity to note: they both gesture to accommodation’s secular careers. Donne’s calling for “public” and “civil” accommodations push the influence of scripture past the orientation of Christian conduct, while his many refrains of accommodating to time and place bring to mind the courtier’s playbook. For Milton the cross-references are clearer: this word is not purely germane to religion, government, or civil exchange. Whether that secular framework is an asset or liability depends on the philosophy, but both recognize that this word is peppered with the residue of the world’s other accommodations, a phenomenological crossing that the next chapter will explore.
CHAPTER 4
Accommodation Factishism in Shakespeare and Jonson

“Unaccommodated: without the trappings of civilization…It is never used by Shakespeare in the modern sense.” – Kenneth Muir, editor of *King Lear*250

“The investigation bears upon a blend of skills: an ingenious innovation is developed by clever engineers, one of beings is substituted for another by bold scientists in order to unblock stalemated power relations, accommodations are made behind closed doors, simulations are produced by means of calculations…Then the miracle is produced and the impossible harmony among incommensurables is discovered—not because the right compromise has been made, but because the nature of the ‘we’ with which each one had chosen to identify has been changed.” – Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature*, translated by Catherine Porter251

From the second chapter of this dissertation, I have neglected a question crucial to unraveling the semantics of our keyword: how is a soldier better accommodated than with his wife? Are audiences likely to interpret the jab as an attack on Falstaff’s domestic arrangements or his wife’s person, or the Boar’s Head Tavern, or something else? Like 2 *Henry IV*’s Bardolph and Shallow, I became engrossed by the extra-lingual value of


251 Page 176. While the language and complicated history of *accommodation* does not apply to Latour’s original text, the fact that it is chosen for this English translation demonstrates how it is imagined as systemic and inscrutable.
accommodation and lost track of what such a statement could possibly mean. Once recalled to the task, the mutability and blankness of the word—as I have demonstrated in the previous chapters—now collaborates with a proliferation of contextual clues: for example, Bardolph’s expectation that the word is “soldier-like” and will be maintained with his sword suggests that he might see it as part of a military trope, that Falstaff is already stationed among soldiers instead of holding back with the women. As such, the accommodation might be interpreted as a matter of setting or a matter of company. A second meaning could lie in the juxtaposition to Falstaff’s wife: if this accommodation is an upgraded replacement of being with his spouse, it might be some form of sexual gratifier, such as a prostitute, the four boys that Shallow has rounded up for his service, or, perhaps, something more in line with Freud’s definition of the fetish. Between Falstaff’s cozying up with Doll and the puns on “backswordsman” and “pricking,” it would be difficult to ascertain the most sexually suitable conditions for the old knight. This quandary of meaning is not helped by Bardolph’s tautological definition of the word as “when a man is, as they say, accommodated,” which both preserves its ability to refer to anything and everything, while also prompting one to wonder whether there is a secret euphemism at work, coined by the nebulous “they.” In this one example, the hollow verbal form of accommodation imagines all sorts of possibilities and collusions, inserting different people, places, themes, and things into its ever-expanding capaciousness.

In the ensuing chapter, I will consider how accommodation’s vast semantic range is more than overlaid multivalences; the word is meant to represent assemblages, pleasing situations rendered by a litany of shadowy actants. Instead of trying to locate the one true activator at the heart of Falstaff’s imagined accommodation, we can instead consider how
the term was designed to include many elements—oftentimes of heterogeneous make-up—that together conspire to gratify. Case in point, how could Falstaff enjoy any sexual improvement upon his wife without a venue or excuse to call him away from home? We might imagine accommodation as a package deal for which the possibilities of interpretation do not need to be exclusive. And, instead of viewing Falstaff as a passive recipient who stands outside of the provision, we can instead consider how his identity is shaped by the accommodation: it increases his manliness by either the company or activities, his stature through military ranking, his mood by sexual relations. When parsed, and they do always require a parsing, Renaissance accommodations reveal surprising combinations of matter and action.

Simply put, this chapter will consider how Renaissance accommodations are not things so much as situations, oftentimes mixing incompatible elements, blurring actors and recipients, and black-boxing the mysteries of composition. I have sectioned it into two parts: first, a dilation of Bruno Latour’s theories regarding factishes, assemblages, 

\[252\] It took a long while for the word to brazenly acknowledge that sexual accommodations could be part of the service menu of an inn. Nicholas Goodman’s 1632 *Historical Discourse of the Life and Actions of Dona Britanica Hollandia the archmistress of the wicked women of Eutopia, Wherein is detected the notorious sin of panderism, and the execrebale life of the luxurious impudent* is a good example of the word hinting at this context: “she had charms to entice the simple, money to bewitch the needy, rich clothes to adorn proud spirits ease for idleness, pleasure for wantons, and indeed any thing, or all things to keep her common-wealth from falling. Being thus accommodated, and her Mart proclaimed, there was no doubt of customers, every man hath a penny for a new Tavern, and every Lecher hath a dollar for a renowned brothel” (15). Of the many listed accommodations possessed by “the archmistress of wicked women,” “pleasure” is listed as a commodity for wantons and it ensures that the “lechers” will be patrons for her brothel.
and black-boxes that accords with already established aspects of accommodation.

Second, as the bulwark of this chapter, I offer close readings of Shakespeare and Jonson, two authors who explicitly called attention to how accommodation constructs meaning. Jonson’s *Discoveries* and *Every Man His Humour* insist that the word activates confusion that rests in its packaging of action and its sprawling implications: his audience is warned against perfum’d terms that operate as both nouns/verbs and his fictional characters do not understand *accommodate* as “a word of action.” Examining the five plays in which Shakespeare mentions accommodations—*2 Henry IV, King Lear, Measure for Measure, Othello,* and *Cymbeline*—demonstrates how they are holding in place immense systems of action with uncertain points of origin and debatable results: are Claudio’s accommodations evidence of his lost nobility or a factor spurring that degradation in *Measure for Measure?* What systems of socialization and nature conspire to create a poor, bare, fork’d unaccommodated man in *King Lear?* These literary experts self-consciously illustrate how this transdisciplinary word operates as a crucible for conjoined systems—persons and things, subjects and objects, and even polysemantic language itself—and then why such dissection of its components is necessary.

**Accommodating Latour**

Latour’s actor network taps the “rich, protean” vein of attachments in order to theorize how systems of exchange, interaction, and interconnection work. Latour dismisses the urge to divide the world into society and nature, studies into sociology and science, and actions by subject and object. By his logic, representing events in terms of

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253 *Every Man in His Humour*, 1.4.100.
human subjects that exert power and control over sedentary objects is a fallacious narrative of one-way domination; the categories of actor and acted upon, maker and made are unrealistic.\textsuperscript{254} To explain this discrediting of divisions, Latour exposes the spurious distinction between fact and fetish, two words that seem to be polar opposites but are actually coined from the same Latin root, \textit{facere}, meaning “to make or do.” A fact is a fabrication, something produced in a laboratory, negotiated into being by scientists and applicable technology. Its function as knowledge depends on our ability to forget its conceptive history and assume its autonomy:

If we add to the facts their fabrication in the laboratory, and if we add to the fetishes their explicit and reflexive fabrication by their makers, the two main resources of the critique disappear…Appearing in their stead is that which had been broken by iconoclasm, and had always been there; that which always has to be carved anew and is necessary for acting and arguing. This is what I call the factish.\textsuperscript{255}

A fetish is also a fabrication, “something that is nothing in itself, but simply the blank screen onto which we have projected, erroneously, our fancies, our labor, our hopes and passions.”\textsuperscript{256} Fetishes cannot be summarily dismissed on the grounds of fabrication because our facts are constructed as well: they are theorized and formulated in a

\textsuperscript{254} Bruno Latour, “Factures/Fractures,” 22.

\textsuperscript{255} Bruno Latour, \textit{Pandora’s Hope}, 274.

\textsuperscript{256} Ibid., 270. This description of the fetish reminds of accommodations in that they have a subjective orientation that is determined by desires, hopes, and philosophies. There is an assumption that accommodations are constructed with some sort of justification and common values, but as we have seen, that can be distorted.
laboratory setting, oftentimes gesturing to contingent information that is not wholly understood or explicable. The question becomes not “which is real knowledge?” or “which is manufactured belief?” but “what is it to fabricate well so as to make autonomy possible?” Since Renaissance accommodations included religious truths and social imperatives that carried with them a force akin to facts, plus variations that demonstrated selfish projections à la fetishism, they are already specimens of this broken dichotomy between legitimate and improper beliefs. The only question that remains is whether they maneuver their operations seamlessly enough to support their respective theological, economic, and rhetorical systems. While I have noted the failures and challenges in each chapter, the overwhelming answer to this question, for both an Early Modern and a contemporary audience, is “yes”: accommodations are eventually galvanized into doctrine, high-interest loans seem to be decent bargains to their recipients, and diplomatic compromises are still envisioned through this word even though it has this messy history of being called out as a deceptive ruse because there is a persistent impression that all parties are well-served under the auspices of accommodation. The fact that I am the first scholar to collate these standardized versions of proper aims, their

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257 Ibid., 274.

258 As I explained in my fourth chapter, accommodations are acceptable interpretations of the Bible’s literal text. While I cannot state for certain when the accommodation doctrine took effect, the word is referred to as a legitimizing principle throughout the Renaissance and then directly linked with Calvin’s theories in the 1630s.

259 The fact that 90% of people who receive payday loans report that they are satisfied with the service, according to the Community Financial Services Association of America evidences this complacency with uneven terms of lending.
antithetical counterparts, and the commentary surrounding this competition for meaning suggests that *accommodation* is a factish par excellence.

Latour introduces the conflated term *factish* to remind us of the shared etymology of facts and fetishes, and re-route our focus toward acknowledging the roles of actants in all activities. These actants are further elucidated by the term “quasi-object,” which indicates how objects are more than a “white screen on to which society projects its cinema”\(^\text{261}\): they “are much more social, much more fabricated, much more collective than the ‘hard’ parts of nature, but they are in no way the arbitrary receptacles of a full-fledged society.”\(^\text{262}\) These are objects that act; they are invested with qualities from both nature and culture that allow them to reify beliefs, compel behavior, and formulate facts. This is an apt descriptor for Othello’s handkerchief: the “magic in the web of it” is a collective fabrication from the “prophetic fury” of a sibyl and the auspicious materials of silk wrought by hallowed worms and mummy rendered by maidens’ hearts.\(^\text{263}\) While it might appear to be as a passive object to be injected into the characters’ schemes, it exerts agency, most notably in the fact that it maintains its form so as to prevent Bianca

\(^{260}\) Ibid., 306.

\(^{261}\) Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 53.

\(^{262}\) Ibid., 55.

\(^{263}\) Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.4.69-75. I would be remiss if I neglected to mention several scholars who have treated Othello’s handkerchief as the quasi-object it is. Jonathan Gil Harris argues that the handkerchief is a palimpsest that reifies time and connects various characters through both real and imagined physical contact (see *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*, pages 170-171), while Paul Yachnin explores how the “quasi-magical” handkerchief is a fetishized object for all the characters who encounter it because they project themselves, commercial value, and labor onto it even through they recognize that it is private property (see “Wonder-effects: Othello’s Handkerchief,” pages 324-327).
from taking out its work. In a similar vein, quasi-objects are a useful handle for Shakespeare’s situational accommodations: for example, those mentioned in *Measure for Measure* that are “nursed by baseness”\(^{264}\) because they are both social and natural products\(^{265}\) and either demonstrate Claudio’s degradation or cause it.

Latour’s redemptive analyses of objects (or quasi-objects) have led to a spate of excellent object-oriented post-medieval scholarship—the conjunctive power of factishes and quasi-objects refigure as palimpsests for Jonathan Gil Harris,\(^{266}\) as scientific mimesis for Henry S. Turner,\(^{267}\) and as object lessons for Julian Yates.\(^{268}\) While Latour designs his theories for broad importation—they can apply across disciplines, eras, cultures, and various quasi-objects—accommodations present an exceptional case in that they enter into language as assemblages and do not always refer to concrete, observable material objects. Whether the subject of investigation is idols, yeast microbes, cigarettes, portrait miniatures, relics, architecture, actor bodies, DNA, or a printed or palimpsested page, scholars in conversation with quasi-objects can begin by naming their objects of study, which allows them to contemplate each object’s numerous characteristics before mapping it into a collective or system. Accommodations require a modified strategy because of

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\(265\) According to the Norton Shakespeare gloss, they are either “grown from plants and animals” or “made by lower class people” (2053). See pages 146-148 for a fuller analysis of this.


their mutability and undefined nature. By beginning not with an object but the word accommodation itself, we find a vantage point from which a distinct thing itself may not exist, a vantage point from which we can visualize potential subjects and objects as they take form, direction, and meaning in a subjective, undetermined context.

Also, because of the shared etymology of fact and fetish, the factish reveals what Latour terms the faire-faire, which means “to make one do” and “causing to be done” in French and, when acknowledged, “shifts our attention to what makes us act and away from the obsessive distinction between the rational (facts) and the irrational (fetishes).” In other words, instead of naming a supreme agent of action which can then be assessed as appropriately or inappropriately endowed with power and value, the faire-faire emphasizes the transactions conjoined between actants (a term that doesn’t discriminate between human and nonhuman actors or agents), and assesses whether they are bound poorly or well. With faire-faire, we are not on the lookout for a cause, controller, or the one true activator of accommodation; we instead evaluate how all the parts of an interaction come together as an assemblage, and whether the action they produce suits our needs and desires; that is, whether they accommodate. Faire-faire theoretically works well with the effect of accommodate and accommodation, because the word already exists as a mixture of the collected efforts of celestial beings, humans, objects, and their qualities, as evidenced by the previous chapters.

The best example of showcasing accommodation’s compositional nature belongs to its religious iterations. In Chapter 4, I demonstrated how Biblical accommodations prompted a three-way tug-of-war between the ineffable intent of God, the imperfect but

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ambitious understanding of man, and the limitations/advantages of language. This was an abbreviated list of actants: members of the Renaissance also imagined how the spectacular presence of angelic messengers, adjustments in tone or musical accompaniment, heavenly smells, inclusions of allegorical signage, and other conditions impacted the reception of divine communication, which were occasionally named as accommodations. Joad Raymond explains how John Pordage’s visions were

270 Serres’s *Angels* gives excellent treatment to how angels are intermediaries, impacting the message they deliver in a litany of ways. Their wings, appearance, ladders, and instruments are all subject to intense scrutiny as people attempt to trace the network behind divine communication. This curiosity is at odds with the efficacy of the system: if angels are too apparent, too glorious then they will be confused with God or distract from the portent of the message; the best angels “vanish in the process of showing themselves” (102). See pages 99-111.

271 Trumpets, harps, or choirs of angels were frequently reported in visions and evidenced in art. To list one example, Stephanus Luzvic (via translation, 1634) implores his readers to “attend besides how seriously the Angels accommodate their voice to the sound of the harp; that even look what the see Jesus to do for our good, they endeavor to do also, studying to accommodate themselves to our occasions” (196).

272 Several accounts and paintings depict angels as using censers. According to John Pordage, who experienced a vision, it was a full sensory experience with music, sights, tastes, and smells. Regarding the olfactory stimulation, he reported that the “odors of paradise and heavenly perfumes” pierced “into the spirit with a cherishing tincture” (76). On the other hand, devils produced “sulphurous hellish smells” and “noisome poisonous smells” (74). See Pordage, “Innocence Appearing” (1655) for the full account.

273 Angels come equipped with several objects in order to signal their message: crowns, robes, knives, magic stones that rid the mouth of pollution (see John Lydgate’s *The Lyfe of Our Lady*, page 23), etc. Serres posits that the type of angel operates as signage: “So angels are representations of the Word, their forms as messengers can be seen as types of metaphor: hosts or legions of angels suggest liturgical repetition of and acclamation; a visitation of angels can be indicated by euphemism or hyperbole; disappearing angels are represented by ellipses and litotes…and finally angels playing the lute or psaltry enact the sublime intercession of the Word” (146).

274 Accommodations as translation were far more common, but all of modes on this list were catalogued as accommodations.
simultaneously a product of “inward senses” and “visual, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory” facets. As another example, consider how in Paradise Lost, Raphael “performs his message” rather than speaks it, suggesting that there is more than words to absorb: either the visual splendor of his entry, the symbolism behind the distance Adam must cross in order to receive the message, or some other undisclosed element is at work to condition the communication. Early Modern Christianity was a culture that theorized about how angels might migrate via ladders or whether angels existed as condensed dust—they intended to know how the spiritual world might maneuver through physical and figurative channels, even though threats of idolatrous mischaracterization loomed.

The fact that such elaborate, multi-sensory modes are tempered with the “revealing-concealing” function of accommodation calls to mind one more facet of Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory: black-boxing. Latour sets up the concept within science studies to describe how knowledge is neatly packaged into simple equations or processes rather than parsed for their multiple parts and complicated systems. Black-boxing is

275 Joad Raymond, Milton’s Angels: The Early Modern Imagination, 133.
276 Paradise Lost, Book V Argument.
278 For example, the debate regarding whether souls were made of any substance, and whether that substance is of God or of the same material generated ex nihilo skirted the line between theological contemplation and idolatry. See Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, II,” pages 28-29.
an expression from the sociology of science that refers to the way scientific and technical work is made invisible by its own success. When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on the inputs and outputs and not its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more sciences and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become.

As the one-word explanation for how communication between God and man is possible, accommodation was designed to be such a shortcut in theological explication. It accounted for all the possibilities and circumvented all the hitches, so that Biblical translation became a simplistic process of input and output. In the secular world it works by the same principles: the contributors of Falstaff’s accommodation are inscrutable, innumerable, and seemingly inconsequential—the end result of “when a man is, as they say, accommodated” is all that matters. By attempting to open up and identify the mechanisms and “internal complexity” behind Jonson’s and Shakespeare’s accommodations, this chapter offers a study of layered, intricate intersections between agents and actions.

Understanding “Words of Action”: Shakespeare and Jonson

To continue addressing unanswered questions from the second chapter, a composite make-up could be the rationale behind Jonson’s grouping of perfumed terms. When Jonson’s Discoveries warns its audience to avoid the “hazards of being mistaken” by not “casting a ring for the perfumed terms of the time, as accommodation,

279 Pandora’s Hope, 306. While this is a theory designed to explain a scientific phenomenon, I justify its use here because Early Modern thinkers viewed the divine through a prism of natural wonders and interconnected observations.
part of his concern might stem from the fact that all of these words cross categories of metaphysics, language, and concrete objects. The term “spirit” might pertain to a human soul, the Holy Spirit, devilish hobgoblins,\textsuperscript{280} the meaning of a statement (as opposed to the letter, as discussed in Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians), general vitality, a solution of alcohol, or the action of infusing life, spirit, or ardor—this is the stuff and non-stuff of heaven and earth, a foundation-shaking debate about essence and material waiting to happen. “Complement” is just as dicey since it requires an antecedent and context that explains how it is completing or perfecting something, and having no real limitations on what can fill that role. J. G.’s catalogue of flattering phrases, \textit{The Academy of Complements}, demonstrates how the word was recognized as a stylistic element,\textsuperscript{281} while Euclid introduced the term to geometry, Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser used it to refer to polite civilities,\textsuperscript{282} and then other authors treated it as Biblical interpretation,\textsuperscript{283} akin to accommodation. “Complement” also seems to be used for not-so-fit alterations, such as when Protestant philosophers use it to describe it was an

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\item \textsuperscript{280} According to Huloet, spirites were “Hobgoblins, which men say walketh at night” (254). Just as accommodation required context and judicious assessment, \textit{spirit} is another word that hangs between God’s grace and damnation.
\item \textsuperscript{281} See Chapter 2, pages 42-44.
\item \textsuperscript{282} See \textit{The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia} (1590) and \textit{Complaints containing sundry small poems} (1591).
\item \textsuperscript{283} See William Fulke, \textit{A defense of the sincere and true translations of the Holy Scriptures into the English tongue} (1583) or Jean Calvin’s \textit{Aphorisms of Christian religion} (1596). See Gregory Martin’s \textit{A discovery of the Manifold Corruptions of the Holy Scriptures by the heretics of our days} (1582) for an example of complement acting as poisonous doctrine, just as it was styled for certain accommodations.
\end{itemize}
activating component of the Catholic sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.\textsuperscript{284} Words, partial angles, social protocols, and idolatrous rites: no wonder Jonson stresses that this word might be used too liberally. And, to close out the list, I have already noted the way in which the word \textit{accommodation} has represented the process and product of divine communication, the spirit of charity as well actual goods that have been exchanged, and suggestive phrasing as well as concrete offerings of lodgings, wine, and other provisions. These perfumed terms are the constructive spaces of quasi-objects, abstractions that can encompass everything—actions, people, the matter of heaven and earth—while their overriding appeal threatens the efficacy of language.

The hazards of being mistaken are also tied to the fact that these words can function as multiple parts of speech. “Complement” as a noun means “perfection, fine behavior,”\textsuperscript{285} while the verb is “to make complete or perfect.”\textsuperscript{286} Spirit, in addition to all the contexts above, can mean “to make of a more active or lively character.”\textsuperscript{287} Not only

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\item \textsuperscript{284} According to Pierre Viret’s \textit{The Cautels, Canon, and Ceremonies of the most blasphemous, abominable, and monstrous popish mass together} (1584), “that for which is spoken in this complement, that the bread is turned into fleshm and the wine into blood…” (131). According to Zacharius Ursinus’s \textit{The Sum of Christian Religion} (1587), “Hence is it, that the effusion of Christ’s blood (as being the complement and conummmation of Christ’s satisfaction) is only said to be our justice and righteousness” (681) and “By which words he showeth the complement and truth of Baptism is the complement and truth of circumcision” (730). These examples go on to dispel the logic behind such ceremonies and religious imputations.
\item \textsuperscript{285} Henry Cockerham, \textit{The English Dictionary}, 20. This 1623 entry is a bit outside the window of reference, but it is the earliest dictionary to define the term.
\item \textsuperscript{286} “complement, v.” \textit{OED Online}. March 2014. Oxford University Press. Accessed May 14, 2016. There are no contemporary dictionary definitions that settle this word as a verb.
\end{itemize}
do these parameters require that perfumed terms depend heavily on context to illuminate their amorphous semantics, but they also speak to an implicit action being present in the things represented, an assumption of how such objects act. \[288\] As a deverbal noun, accommodation works in the opposite direction of turning action into a product, and while it is not a multifaceted word, its cognate accommodate is another story: it serves as a verb, an adjective, and if, Shakespeare’s Shallow is to be believed, a phrase. \[289\] More and more, Ben Jonson’s insistence that one “but use them properly in their place, as others” \[290\] reads as joke because there are few standards or even grammatical rules to anchor the sense of these hybridized forms.

Jonson exploited accommodation’s grouping of different parts and actions for comedic effect in Every Man in His Humour, which was first performed in 1598, the same year as 2 Henry IV. The inclusion of the “perfumed term” overturns a seemingly straightforward request when Captain Bobadil commands “Hostess, accommodate us with another bed-staff here quickly. Lend us another bed-staff” \[291\] with no apparent result.


\[288\] Perhaps Jonson was taking note because these senses were very new, evolving in the turn of the century. The first printed verb forms for spirit and complement occur in 1600 and 1617, respectively. The latter might be a bit outside of usage patterns for the time, but the eventual conversion and sense that the action is resting within the noun carries the point.

\[289\] “Better accommodated! It is good, yea, indeed is it: good phrases are surely, and ever were, very commendable. Accommodated! It comes of ‘accommodo’: very good; a good phrase” (2 Henry IV, 3.2.61-64).

\[290\] Ben Jonson, Discoveries, 71.

\[291\] Ben Jonson, Every Man in His Humour, 1.4.98-99.
because “the woman doesn’t understand words of action.” Even though the example notifies the audience of the elsewhere ambiguous object (a bed-staff, a small stick that held the bedding in place) and agent (the hostess, Tib), a standstill of incomprehension results that is pinned to the vexed meaning of *accommodate*. In fairness to the hostess, *accommodate* hardly constitutes a graspable command: according to Florio’s contemporaneous dictionary entry, she could be lending the item or making a gift of it, and given the tavern-talk of *2 Henry IV*, one might see a sexual joke in play in which the bed-staff is imagined as a scandalous source of gratification for this pair.

Continuing to sketch the many possibilities offered by this failure to communicate, perhaps Tib sees through *accommodate* to its close relative *commodity*, a word that frequently means “prostitute” in other city comedies, and then hears a solicitation within the command, thinking that she should make herself commodious over a freshly pinned bed; after all, she is in the hospitality business. Her confusion in assigning a proper action to this accommodation might also stem from suspicion of

292 Ibid., 100. Sometimes printed as “Acton.” Both variants point to *accommodate* as the cause for misunderstanding—action because it implicates the verbs in the command, “Acton” because it suggests the fashionable connotations Jonson condemned.

293 According to John Florio’s dictionary, the Italian *accommodare* means “to lend, to accommodate, to ease, to borrow, to bestow, to place, to stow.” I will discuss this contradictory arrangement later on in this chapter, on pages 143-144.

294 The word is more of a suggestive euphemism than a salacious reference. There are a few examples that firmly establish a more sexually explicit register, including Philip Massinger’s 1633 *The Guardian*, wherein Durazzo comments “In a handsome wench’s lap, a whoreson; you are the best accommodated” in Act 5, scene 2; and Nicholas Goodman’s 1632 *Historical Discourse of the Life and Actions of Dona Britanica Hollandia the archmistress of the wicked women of Eutopia, Wherein is detected the notorious sin of panderism, and the execrebale life of the luxurious impudent* which mentions how the mistress is accommodated with several assets, including “her pleasure for wantons” (15).
misuse since Bobadil’s preferences baffle Tib in the play. She cannot fathom why he sleeps on benches instead of on his bed, and she likewise might pause and wonder what such a man would deem as the suitable purpose of a bed-pin. Tib’s inaction is a symptom of a contextual quandary: does the object in itself gratify Bobadil’s needs, or will she need to offer some service along with the provision, or does Bobadil have some strange enterprise planned for the bedstaff in order to make it suit his off-kilter needs? (As a matter of fact, he does—it becomes a makeshift sword for a fencing lesson). While the most accessible joke is leveled at the hostess, the person who seemingly doesn’t understand “words of action,” the lingering effect of the line implicates Bobadil for not realizing that there is no pure, distilled action at the heart of the perfumed term, and for not recognizing the word’s overcarriage as he fails to use it in its appropriate place, in both terms of the conversation and his current location.

Without adding another overt meta-commentary about accommodation’s semiotic effect, à la 2 Henry IV, Shakespeare’s later plays continue to insist upon the abstracted space for meaning within the word that weaves together collected efforts and shadowy actants. In the famous heath scene of King Lear, the titular ruler refers to Poor Tom’s lack of accommodation,295 as he witnesses the naked, destitute Edgar and philosophizes on what makes a man:

295 In addition to those later mentioned, germane critical readings about Lear’s unaccommodated man include Laurie Shannon’s “Poor, Bare, Naked, Fork’d” and Marshall Berman’s All That is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity. Also, Donna Haraway’s A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Social Feminism in the 1980s explores the capacity for figuring several accommodations that make a human: technologies, languages, social ideology, capitalist structures, physical matter and imagined capacity, etc.
Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha here’s three on ’s are sophisticated; thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here.\textsuperscript{296}

Elsewhere materialist critics have thoroughly treated the connection between a person’s identity and their property, such as Peter Stallybrass’s excellent essay about the human and material networks that maintain a king’s attire, ability, and dependent identity or Margreta de Grazia’s equally excellent investigation of how property and the use of property establishes character.\textsuperscript{297} In this vein, scholars frequently read Lear’s assessment of Edgar’s identity in his lack of clothing, and gloss \textit{unaccommodated} as naked and uncivilized—something that indicates his character’s current state. But this reading does not do justice to the complete scenario: in addition to ignoring how one word has generated such a diversity of outcomes, the Norton gloss of “naked; without the trappings of civilization”\textsuperscript{298} misses the processing action that is part and parcel of an accommodation, even one that is negated. \textit{Unaccommodated} is Lear’s invented term and it conveys an implied action of unmaking—perhaps alluding to the treacherous acts of Poor Tom’s imagined daughters (“Nothing could have subdued nature / To such a lowness but his unkind daughters”\textsuperscript{299}), perhaps alluding to the blanket’s inability to

\textsuperscript{296} Shakespeare, \textit{King Lear}, 3.4.92-98.

\textsuperscript{297} “The Mystery of Walking” and “The Ideology of Superfluous Things,” respectively.

\textsuperscript{298} Norton Shakespeare, 2400.
provide Tom with sufficient warmth. Instead of showcasing just the end result, that Tom is naked or uncivilized, unaccommodated calls attention to the agents (whether they are human or object) that create his unfortunate condition. In accordance with Latour’s fait-faire, the act of making and doing is the key point to understanding the interaction between these actants. Accommodations do not deal in just obliging objects or possessive subjects, but prompt us to examine what actions render them into their suitable, useful, appropriate state—actions that blur degrees of agency between things and people, much like Lear’s split directions to his clothes (“Off, off you lendings!”) and his sartorial assistants (“Come, unbutton here”).

Just as King Lear demonstrates how our keyword’s capaciousness activates several possible enterprises, it also showcases a proliferation of qualities that result from these interwoven actions. “Unaccommodated man” is no more but a poor, bare, forked animal: a single descriptor suggests three traits, which in turn split into different meanings since they can be seen as the result of both social and environmental/natural forces. “Poor” is an economic state and an assessment of luck—Tom’s problem might be a matter of money or it could be general misfortune imputed to his unhappy existence, here coming to a head as Tom faces a brutal storm. “Bare” could be construed as a lack of protective fur—a failed evolutionary design, as Laurie Shannon argues—or a lack of garb, which indicate that this man possesses no job, no status, and no charitable aid—

299 Shakespeare, King Lear, 3.4.60-61.

failures derived from social architecture, which Richard Halpern cogently explores.\textsuperscript{301} “Forked” refers to man as a biped, an attribute that could reinforce humankind’s distinct morphology or remind us of what Peter Stallybrass terms “the mystery of walking”: the series of dependencies created over lacing boots, relying on canes or younger strengths, and the physical miracle witnessed as Lear defies the Sphinx’s “riddle of man” by summoning the strength to carry his daughter’s corpse when he himself is close to death. In summation, \textit{unaccommodated} is the meeting ground of social and biological forces, a synthesis of several systems that suspends the play’s many questions about the influences of nature and culture.

Later in the play, accommodations reappear and demonstrate a similar grouping of parts, but this time they indicate a splintered agency instead of an entanglement of abstract macro-forces. When Lear enters mad, wearing a crown of weeds and flowers, Edgar remarks, “But who comes here? / The safer sense will ne’er accommodate / his master thus.”\textsuperscript{302} By using a comparative adjective in “safer sense” Edgar implies that there are at least two different mental faculties within Lear—a presumably sane one and another that lacks either civilizing or survival instincts. And then there is a third part of Lear, or perhaps the whole, which is the receiver of this accommodation: “his master.” The third-person possessive reinforces the cleavage of the situation as Lear is separated into the roles of accommodator and accommodated, rejecting a unified subjectivity for a composite personhood of ambiguous composition. The wording is also suspicious

\textsuperscript{301} See \textit{The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital}, page 260.

\textsuperscript{302} Shakespeare, \textit{King Lear}, 4.5.80-82.
because fitness has nothing to do with the encounter: this accommodation is something that defies the king’s station as well as sanity, and we have no record of accommodate being used before this time to mean “adorn” or “dress,” which is the frequent gloss.\textsuperscript{303} With primary connotations laid aside, the keyword might be in play due to its tendency to describe systems with multiple and mysterious actants.

Interestingly, some critics have noted the use of accommodations in \textit{King Lear} as strange. Margareta de Grazia, for example, claims that \textit{King Lear}’s “unusual use of ‘accommodations’ to refer to clothing rather than lodging reflects its primacy in the play’s economy.”\textsuperscript{304} De Grazia’s approximation of the word is based on Kenneth Muir, whose 1985 edition of \textit{King Lear} indicates that Shakespeare never used “accommodation” in the “modern sense of the word,” which he identifies as “lodgings.” Such an editorial inclusion is technically correct—Shakespeare does not employ \textit{accommodation} in the modern sense of the word, but then again, accommodation has never been modern. For Latour, the specious notion of modernity depends on the establishment of separate categories that allow for individualized study: in order to understand our world we must distinguish culture from nature, human from object, sociology and science, and adopt different investigative techniques accordingly. Latour argues that a quick glance at a newspaper’s headlines reveals that the real world is full of mixed-up issues that disrupt these ideological divisions; as one example, climate change cannot be explained without acknowledging environmental factors, chemical reactions,

\textsuperscript{303} See Norton, 2437 or the Signet Classic \textit{King Lear} edited by Russell Fraser, page 113.

\textsuperscript{304} Margreta de Grazia, “The Ideology of Superfluous Things: King Lear as Period Piece” in \textit{Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture}, page 23.
economic incentives, political exigencies, and human decision-making, demonstrating a complicated web of both individual actors and institutional forces.\textsuperscript{305} In the same way, accommodations reject the kinds of categorization that would allow it individuated study—as we have seen in this dissertation, it is at once secular and religious; deliberate, isolated actions and systemic behavior; gratifiers and gratifieds. I tried to separate the chapters evenly by subject—rhetoric, economy, religion, and (forecasting the failure of this sorting) assemblages—but again and again the examples overran their limits: John Milton calibrated his sense of accommodation through the joint prisms of theology and politics, the concept of angelic messengers found its proper place outside of the religious chapter because it more closely aligns with a review of the scientific concept of black-boxing, and the same passage of \textit{Othello} appears three times in this project because its speaks to as many contexts. Given this hybridized make-up within the Renaissance and its contemporary proclivity to be termed within just about every discourse, including law,\textsuperscript{306} sociolinguistics,\textsuperscript{307} psychology,\textsuperscript{308} optometry,\textsuperscript{309} and disability studies,\textsuperscript{310} such

\textsuperscript{305} Bruno Latour, \textit{We Have Never Been Modern}, 2.

\textsuperscript{306} In law, an accommodation is a partial or substituted delivery of goods that is offered in lieu of the full amount promised in a contract. Also, labor laws refer to “reasonable accommodation” as small alterations required to accommodate disabled workers in the workplace. See the conclusion for an example.

\textsuperscript{307} Accommodated speech entails the ways in which interlocutors adjust their communicative techniques in light of personal, situational, or interactional variables. Interestingly, accommodated speech is also the term used for the process by which God’s word is filtered to human perception.

\textsuperscript{308} According to Piaget, assimilation and accommodation are the twin components of adaptive learning. With accommodation, the subject must develop a new schema because it is confronted with information that does not fit in with its existing frames of reference.
accusations of “unusual use” or the assignation of “modern” cannot be leveled at such a pliant piece of vocabulary.

Along the same lines, The Oxford English Dictionary Online ironically cites both *2 Henry IV* and *Every Man in His Humour* as exempla for the term *accommodate*, as though they offered untroubled histories and straightforward meanings instead of debate and confusion, respectively. Some of their other samplings of *accommodate* and its variants also demonstrate strain; for example, under an eighteenth-century definition of *accommodation*, we see the question of agency unaddressed: “3. Self-adaptation; conformity to circumstance; conciliatory disposition or conduct: obligingness.” This entry suggests that knowing whether the accommodation is prompted by individual efforts (self-adaptation) or coerced by a something or someone (since “circumstances” do not indicate whether a person, event, or object is at work). Should we expect a marked distinction between charting one’s own conduct and conforming or obliging to others? As usual, the action behind accommodation has a warped sense of direction that subtly challenges its meaning.

Moreover, John Florio’s original 1598 dictionary entry for the Italian *accommodare* reveals a similar crisis of agency as its definitions blur the line between actor and recipient: “to lend, to accommodate, to ease, to borrow, to bestow, to place, to stow.” Sidestepping the legal quandary that would arise from having no distinction

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309 Accommodation is the process of altering optical power so that an object remains in focus even though it changes in distance.

310 See the epilogue for how some are challenging the word’s capaciousness or assumed reconciliation, pages 153-155.
between lending and bestowing, the Italian cognate for our keyword covers the action of both the provider (whether it be as a loan or a gift) and the recipient (to borrow), which is highly problematic. (Perhaps it is less problematic within a collectivist culture, in which everyone is expected to share their goods). This bundling of obverse actions suggests that *accommodate* functions more an assemblage and less a distinct and singular motion.

Whether looking at Renaissance dictionaries or the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s modern collations, the baseline definition of *accommodation* acknowledges multiple agents and their combined roles in action, calling to mind Latour’s analysis of *fait-faire* as it “makes one do” and “causes to be done.”

As further evidence of our keyword’s struggle for a standardized meaning, the earliest dictionary record for *accommodate* seems to retrofit later ideas of accommodation onto an incompatible example. The first definition of “To apply fittingly (a thing to a person)” is applied unfittingly to “This sentence is…supposed to have

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311 *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598), 5.

312 See Latour, “A Few Steps Towards the Anthropology of the Iconoclastic Gesture”: “when a fact is fabricated, who is doing the fabrication? The scientist? The thing? If you answer ‘the thing’, then you are an outdated realist. If you answer ‘the scientist’, then you are a bloody constructivist. If you answer ‘both’, then you do one of those repair jobs known as dialectics that patch up the dichotomy, hiding it even deeper and further by turning it into a contradiction that has to be resolved and overcome. And yet, it is both, obviously, but without the mastery that seems to go with the realist or relativist answer or a clever mixture of both. Laboratory scientists make autonomous facts. That we have to hesitate between two versions of this simple ‘make do’ (fait-faire), proves that we have been hit by a hammer that has broken in two parts the simple and straightforward factish” (72).

313 *Norton Shakespeare*, 1531.

314 The full entry appends a more suitable definition: “to attribute or ascribe, by way of explanation, or from inherent fitness.” This raises two questions: why is the first
been first spoken by Chilo. Others do accommodate it to Apollo.” The entry stresses an inaccurate division between human and nonhuman roles—we are told that early accommodations entail the application of thing to person, but a sentence is not really a material thing and the pagan god Apollo is not really a person. The notion that this attribution showcases an aptness is undercut by the contention—people disagree on who spoke the line and whether there is any reason to justify Apollo as the preferred choice. These dictionary entries seem to be retrospectively trying to standardize accommodate into a common, stable notion instead of the imagined, flexible fusion space that it operates as in the Shakespeare and Jonson’s works. And in the dictionaries’ failure to pin down its dynamic or meaning, we see how accommodation and can provide a linguistic opportunity that doesn’t assume one-way action or hierarchical divisions between agentive subjects and everything else.

As I have mentioned in passing, Measure for Measure’s Claudio’s nobility is tied to an inscrutable accommodation. The disguised Duke attempts to prepare Claudio for death by cataloguing earthly fears and troubles, leading to his mentioning of our problematic term: “Thou art not noble, / For all th’ accommodations that thou bear’st / Are nursed by baseness”315 First, there is the usual problem of deciphering what actants are intended. The Duke might be referring to Claudio’s inability to understand the rules and will of God, since his reasoning seeks to excuse sins of the flesh. This interpretation would certainly fit the Duke’s theme of pointing out how Claudio is menaced by

315 Shakespeare, Measure for Measure, 3.1.13-15.
ineffectual notions. But, considering “all th’ accommodations,” the Duke might be gesturing to the physical conditions of his cell, as the Norton suggests, with accommodations being a wide placeholder for the worldly goods “grown from plants and animals” or “made by lower class people.”

Imagined as such, these are quasi-objects: they are simultaneously the products of nature (the provider of raw materials) and society (which stratifies the classes and retains that reference point within the products). This inability to neatly designate the natural and cultural influences holds even if we extrapolate other possibilities based on staging or Claudio’s proclivities: they accommodations could be the coarse lodgings of prison, his personal degradation of indulging in pre-marital sex with Juliet or, given the city-comedy slang and his familiarity at bawdy houses, prostitutes. To sum up, these accommodations are neither things nor action, personal nor endemic, social nor natural; they are not even past or present, for they speak to Claudio’s surrounding environment, recent transgressions, and mortality.

Second, in addition to not understanding the form these accommodations nursed by baseness take, an audience must question whether they are the cause that cancels his nobility or the corollary that announces it. In the Renaissance, “bears” could mean “to carry as a consequence,” suggesting that these accommodations are the outcome of Claudio’s mistakes, mentioned as evidence of his guilt. On the other hand, the accommodations could be the root of Claudio’s fallen status: whatever they are, they

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316 Norton Shakespeare, 2053.

have conditioned Claudio out of the nobility granted by his blood or breeding (nature and culture are once again conflated). These unspecified accommodations nullify Claudio’s claims to the gentlemanlike quality of nobility and simultaneously seem to be beyond his selection or control: he cannot extricate himself from prison, he cannot help but seek nourishment from plants and animals if he remains living, and he faces the same earth-bound limitations that all flesh is heir to when it comes to approximating spiritual truths. If these variegated factors play roles in Claudio’s decline, then they do so regardless of his consent or decision-making. This balancing between symptom and cause calls to mind faire-faire: the composite accommodations reflect the direct agency of “making one do” and the secondary, shared prompting of “causing to be done.”

Third, these accommodations have nothing to do with suitability, that primary anchor for our keyword’s meaning. They thrive on baseness, the lowest rates of morals, class, or condition: the fitness assumed in the word is counterweighted by this association with degradation. Poor Claudio is chronically out of step with what others deem appropriate for him: state authorities judge his marriage to Juliet as illegitimate, he begs for life when his sister and the Duke (disguised in the habit of a friar) moralize that death suits him better, and, as discussed above, he is not noble despite himself. From this perspective, the Duke conjures a certain unquestioned ideological power in being able to assign Claudio accommodations and adjudicate their nature. Claudio finds himself forcefully tracked into the institutional discourses of religion (man’s automatic sinfulness and deliverance by God) and class (behaving against his breeding or marrying beneath his status) via the nebulous accusation of being inappropriately accommodated, which allows Friar/Duke to wield prescriptive judgment over his personal quality, conduct, and
fate. After scrutinizing the scene, it seems that Claudio’s accommodations gratify the Duke and his ideological conditioning more than they reflect their alleged bearer.

With all of these cases in mind, let us turn back to Othello to see how accommodations highlight action without establishing firm roles for actors. First, allow me to acknowledge how continually reviewing accommodations within the same passage—initially for the self-conscious repetition of accommodation’s synonyms, again for its articulation of hospitality, and now to parse out how it operates as a process—reinforces my earlier point regarding the word’s multivalence. Once again, when the call comes to leave for Cyprus, Othello requests that the Duke help him arrange an appropriate situation for his wife:

Most humbly therefore bending to your state,

I crave fit disposition for my wife,

Due reference of place and exhibition,

With such accommodation and besort

As levels with her breeding.318

Consider how many of Othello’s requests are nominalizations of verbs: “disposition,” “reference,” “exhibition,” “besort,”319 and, obviously, “accommodation”—in fact, there’s only one appeal that falls out of this pattern and that is “place.” The speech emphatically dwells on the action required to make Desdemona’s situation suitable; Othello is less concerned with naming physical things for her upkeep and more concerned with services that he hopes will reinforce her breeding (yet another verbal noun). As was the case with

318 Shakespeare, Othello, 1.3.233-7.

319 The primary definition of “besort” is a verb that means “to be suited to.”
Falstaff’s better-than-with-his-wife accommodations and Claudio’s nobility-canceling accommodations, the nature of these instruments of respectability are undisclosed and undecipherable: while Desdemona is the object here—Othello desires that she be seen, positioned, and acknowledged, in addition to the vague call for having accommodation—but whether this status is achieved by the maneuvering of staff, stuff, or setting remains out of view, or, more to the point, black-boxed. Readers are provided with a litany of outcomes and no firm context within which to situate them.

Clearly, Othello does not view himself as a maintainer of his wife’s contingent propriety since he charges the Duke with sorting out this business, names pity as the foundation of her love, and later lists his own weak merits in order to corroborate Desdemona’s infidelity. And since Othello either denies or does not realize the mechanisms that accommodate his wife, Iago’s fabricated suggestions are snatched up as truths and confirmed by the handkerchief’s circulation. As many scholars have explored, Othello demonstrates an inability to evaluate: he underestimates himself, overestimates his wife and then underrates her, overvalues Iago’s credibility, and accepts a piece of embroidered fabric as an absolute indicator of his wife’s promiscuity. According to Natasha Korda, “the problem of valuation in Othello, characterized on the one hand by the what [Rymer] terms the play’s ‘gross rate of trifling’…and on the other by its undervaluation of what Rymer himself deems valuable, nevertheless represents an astute observation about the poetics of jealousy at work within the play, in which the modalities of overvaluation and undervaluation are inextricably linked.”320 Korda maintains that both racialized others and women were imagined to be subject to the same jealousies and,

320 Natasha Korda, Shakespeare’s Domestic Economies, 112.
as a result, criticism, based on skewed “object relations.” But there is a sticking point: Othello might slip into a fetishistic mindset in which he projects all of his fears onto a bit of linen, but his expressed reliance on accommodations as the basis of identity politics demonstrates the same principle of objective conditions informing personal qualities, and yet it goes unchallenged. The Duke does not balk at his request in the first act, nor have readers been disturbed by the contingencies laid out for Desdemona’s proper recognition—the system was not problematic, just this particular data. Othello is not a fetishist when he seeks to maintain his wife’s status through the dream-screen of accommodation, only when he settles on an inappropriate concrete object to perform that work.

In addition to grappling with the determination of what is suitable, Othello also struggles with the processing action that renders accommodations, the “making.” In the same way that King Lear’s unaccommodated man points out the stripping and suffering that reconfigure Poor Tom, Othello’s request for accommodations highlights an invisible process of identity formulation and the threat of its unmaking: Desdemona’s unspecified stuff and service must actively maintain her status and breeding because she is not intrinsically invested with her own qualities. If Desdemona is unaccommodated—by losing her handkerchief, by keeping an untrustworthy or indecorous attendance, and by lacking due place and exhibition—she might become an unrecognizable monster in Othello’s eyes. Othello’s plot does not turn on a handkerchief; the early acknowledgement of accommodations’ indeterminacy, capaciousness, and importance

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321 Ibid., 114.
keeps a simmering pressure on all the social and physical variables that contribute to Desdemona’s homeostasis.

While his tragedies depict the destructive edge of accommodations as their variegated systems either fail or work against one’s cultivation, Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* explores the potential triumph of uniting social and natural forces. In Act V, scene iii Posthumous describes how Cymbeline’s army were resigning themselves to defeat against the invading Romans until they witnessed the fierceness of the disguised British princes and Belarius:

These three,

Three thousand confident, in act as many, --

For three performers are the file when all

The rest do nothing,--with this word “Stand, stand,”

Accommodated by the place, more charming,

With their own nobleness, which could have turn’d

A distaff to a lance, gilded pale looks,

Part shame, part spirit, renew’d…

In this final example, we see some vindication to Bardolph’s claim that *accommodated* is, in fact, a soldier’s word since it represents a cluster of conditions that create a military

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[322] Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 5.3.28-35. Throughout this chapter I have included the glosses of various editions in order to belabor a point: *accommodation* does not have a standardized meaning in the secular world. The fact that this recognizably modern word frequently prompts a gloss (for example, the Norton offers “assisted,” which still doesn’t clarify the action or situation), or a footnote (for example, the Arden edition’s J. M. Nosworthy dismisses the accommodation as “parenthetical”), reminds us that *accommodation* does not clearly indicate its action and physical attachments; they always require a parsing.
advantage: this place, a “ditch’d” lane “wall’d with turf” (14), provides the three warriors with an opportunity to turn the tide of the battle. However, the account speaks to shared agency because the place has been rendered “more charming” due to the nobleness of its inhabitants. The three performers are impacted by the space and its advantages, but not before it has felt the influence of their presence and adapted itself accordingly. Moreover, the convenient circumstance occurs not only “by the place” but also “with this word ‘Stand, stand.’” Due to a layering of prepositional phrases, this commandment to the soldiers—uttered from an unknown source—can be read as a parallel condition to the accommodation or as its subject, a word that is being made more fitting due to its location or circumstances. In any event, we understand this accommodation less as the result of a singular action and more as a situation created from an overlaid and indistinct collaboration between speech, exuded personal characteristics, and the physical environment. Like Latour’s diagrams of quasi-objects,323 there are no one-way arrows to draw in order to determine a directionality for the influence or proper sequencing for this phenomenon: no elements operate discretely and no action is the original impetus.

Furthermore, in the spirit of the constructive space of accommodation, the scene’s highlighted action is an imagined transformation: the combination of the characters’ nobleness and the place could have changed a distaff into a lance, much like the way Bobadil’s bedstaff accommodation turns into a sword for the purposes of a fencing lesson.

323 See We Have Never Been Modern, 52. Latour’s diagram shows quasi-objects positioned between nature and society, all of which are connected with parallel intersecting lines rather than arrows. This set-up reconciles the dilemma within the social sciences, because objects are simultaneously too powerful and too weak: they have no salient intrinsic properties and can operate as blank screens that project human desires or beliefs, but then again are rigidly catalogued as hard facts that determine, inform, and mould “the soft and pliable wills of the poor humans” (53).
in *Every Man in His Humour*. Cymbeline’s transformation is imagined because the soldiers are, one must assume, armed with weapons and not spinning tools, but the hypothetical change underscores a real alteration: now the Britons’ weapons are somehow rendered more suitable for the battle. This creative maneuvering of their situation solves the mystery of how the place is rendered more “charming,” a descriptor that at first seems reminiscent of court and out of place on this battleground. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the primary definition of “charming” is “using charms; exercising magical power” and it did not develop its milder distinction of being pleasant or delightful until 1664.\(^{324}\) This accommodation operates through enchantment, a miracle of the men appearing to be more than they are, which in turn leads the soldiers to readjust their relationship to reality. To put it into Latour’s terms, it is a factish: an illusory idea that is fabricated so well that it “makes [them] act rightly.”\(^{325}\)

**Conclusions**

As a term, *accommodation* is a rich nexus that unites subjects with objects, linguistic convertibility with social esteem, and actions with outcomes. As a factish, its efficacy depends on whether it conjoins its constituents so seamlessly that we forget that the word gestures toward an assemblage of physical matter, service, and assumptions of suitability; we can forget that an accommodation is a system reliant on interwoven and complicated actions and instead imagine it as a simple thing, as output. Just as Milton


\(^{325}\) Bruno Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 274.
marked accommodation so as to hinder its limitations and black-boxing of complex processes, Shakespeare and Jonson do not seem interested in smoothing over the reception of accommodation in their plays; they employ the term to disrupt conversation, baffle characters, unravel identities, reimagine agency, proliferate meanings, and reveal ideological encroachment.

In the end, Bardolph and Shallow are both right—accommodation is a word and a phrase. It is a free-standing word that a person might wield in order to convey what is fitting and proper, used again and again to anchor individual desires or interests, but that fantasy of independent orientation is immediately countered by the ready list of accommodation’s referential contexts and presumed conditions, which remind us how it functions as a phrase, albeit one constantly in flux. The accommodations here do not upset discipline-specific standards here as they did in previous chapters, but rather show that the unmoored, changeable semantics of this unusual word are active in any setting, that they are crossing lines of reference and continually breaking through those sectionalizing logics of what is religious versus secular, action versus matter, inappropriate fetish versus legitimate belief, by giving them a common vocabulary with common assumptions. Instead of insisting that accommodations can maintain their purity of meaning, that they have a “modern sense” that make them decipherable concepts within doctrine, hospitality, exchange, diplomacy, or any other discourse, I urge readers to accept the Early Modern senses of this word/phrase: it appears as a complex cleavage of elements, it carries traces of its charms and across different spheres, and it always deserves a thorough parsing despite its vanishing horizons. Additionally, we might appreciate how this word is so charming and resilient that the contentions catalogued
within this dissertation can be shelved so that this word can proliferate and expand—like any good factish, *accommodation* binds us so well that we forget the competing meanings and fractured logic that undergirds its assumption of fitness.
“It just comes back to, you know, they can accommodate for all sorts of other issues, and we ask for one simple accommodation and we cannot receive it.” – Kim Davis, defending her refusal of marriage licenses to gay couples

“I want to make up my missed midterm. Give me a list of times when you’re in your office and I will accommodate you.” – Student email, name retracted

When I first embarked on this project, I was warned that basing an entire dissertation on a single word was a risky gambit and that I might find myself short on salient examples or distinct, relevant ideas. This has not been the case: accommodation, in its infinite variety, has led me to contemplate structures of language, ideology, economy, and theological thought within hundreds of fascinating records. I encountered the reverse problem, where I needed to limit the scope of the research by language, context, and period in order to maintain a manageable grip on the meaning and impact of this protean word/phrase. In

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326 Tobias Salinger, “Defiant Kim Davis is willing to go back to jail, asks ‘Why should I have to quit a job that I love, that I’m good at?’” *New York Daily News.*

327 I wanted to include a casual example of the inversion of the word from everyday conversation. Consider how it begins with the student’s directly expressed desire, commands the teacher with an imperative grammatical mood, and then states that he will accommodate her by virtue of achieving his non-negotiable goals during her open schedule.
this informal epilogue, I will briefly sketch how these findings relate to current circumstances and forecast future scholarship.

I would like to offer a brief glance at how accommodation’s ranging semantics continue to bewilder us in the modern moment. There are glances of these current iterations of this word and its inherited complications throughout the dissertation—criticisms against the hospitality and airline industries, modern notes or glossings that demonstrate the specious assumption that accommodation had a standardized definition, among others—but I attempted to keep these brief and thematically probative for the sake of continuity. As it happens, accommodations feature prominently in many discourses, and sometimes they demonstrate the fetishistic elements discussed here. Disability studies offers an excellent example of presumed directionality: there are contentions regarding who is performing the action and whether it undermines any of the involved parties. According to Elizabeth F. Emens, accommodation is a “dirty word” in our history of racialized politics, since early civil rights activists rejected it as a form of gradualism, a method of conciliation based on blacks becoming gaining better social standing by accepting the beliefs and attitudes of the white majority. This calls to mind the Parliamentarians who raged at the term in the mid-seventeenth century, insisting that the proffered compromises only satisfied on one side. Emens juxtaposes this sense of destructive integration to how disability accommodation is generally seen, as “an entirely different creature, since it involves making affirmative changes to the environment in

328 See footnotes 306-309 in Chapter 5.


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response to difference,”\(^{330}\) but she acknowledges that there is lingering contention about whether accommodation practices result in unfair preferences, broadened employee rights, less discrimination, or more entrenched attitudes against disability.\(^{331}\) They are simultaneously instruments of inclusion and separation, solutions and offenses, with a skewed sense of who is meant to perform the accommodating action. As Harriet McBryde Johnson stated in a 2003 essay, “The peculiar drama of my life has placed me in a world that by and large thinks it would be better if people like me did not exist. My fight has been for accommodation, the world to me and me to the world.”\(^{332}\)

This quandary of whether accommodation assists or prevents discrimination takes an interesting turn when it becomes the legal basis of Kim Davis’s rejection of the Supreme Court ruling that permitted gays and lesbians the right to wed. What is an accommodation for Davis, the county clerk from Kentucky whose baffled reaction opens this epilogue? Is it a special exemption that arises to suit a pressing personal dilemma, a privilege that is whimsically delivered or denied? Or is an accommodation an endowed, unalienable right that she might demand and sue for? The scenario reminds us that accommodation exists between etiquette and law, service that is both generously given and forcibly compelled. And like the anonymous rabble-rouser in the seventeenth century, in her mind, accommodations are all comparable and interchangeable; if Muslims are allowed to refuse to serve alcohol and Sabbatarians are excused from

\[^{330}\text{Ibid.}, 19.\]

\[^{331}\text{Ibid.}, 19-21.\]

working on Saturdays, why should she be denied in her faith-based request? While Title VII of the Civil Rights Act includes laws of religious accommodation that are written flexibly so as to determine suitability in a case-by-case fashion, Davis seems to argue the worthiness of her demand based on the precedent that others were indulged, regardless of the circumstances involved, such as the fact that elected government officials do not have the protections of Title VII and that her proposed solution is that homosexual couples obtain their marriage licenses from neighboring counties in order to “accommodate” her sincerely held beliefs. There is nothing “simple” about her proposal to deny a couple an authorized marriage; an order that was justified by the broadest code of our law—the Constitution—through an Equal Protection Clause aimed at establishing equitable treatment among the citizenry, is here made subject to the whims of one person. In the end, the Kentucky State Senate attempted a reconciliation by passing a bill that created a second type of marriage license, one that designates a “first party” and “second party” instead of a bride and groom and carries no obligation for her to sign her name to the form. Davis’s legal team has touted this maneuver as their “victory,” stating that it “solidifies the religious liberty accommodation,” while the LGBT and ACLU communities have expressed their displeasure with the arrangement, insisting that separate is not equal. And, as the anonymous author of Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious argued, equal terms were a prerequisite for accommodations—“wheresoever then the word Accommodation is pressed…’tis most absurd and

contradictory to exclude a yielding and compliance on both sides”—there should be no such thing as a “victor” because the benefits and sacrifices are supposed to be mutually shared.

The contentious history of accommodation also helps us understand the restructured concept of charity where the Syrian refugee crisis is concerned. Several programs—ones in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States—advertised that their humanitarian assistance would accommodate refugees by helping them transition into the private retail market. Stacie Blake of the U.S. Committee for Refugee and Immigrants explains that there are no special considerations such as discounted rates or blocked sections: "[The housing] is on the open market. We're trying to rent apartments just like anybody else. There's nothing special or privileged about that." Guarding such programs from accusations of undeserved charity seems to be par for the course: according to the Australian government’s Department of Social Services, the objective of their short-term/private pay “accommodations” is to “assist clients to become self-reliant and participate equally in Australian society and minimise longer-term reliance on support services.” Insisting on the limitations of their service towards

334 Accommodation Discommended as Incommodious, 6.

335 Henry Parker, Accommodation cordially desired, and really intended, 21: “both parties by mutual agreement condescend equally to depart from the rigor of their demands on either side, and so comply, accommodate, and meet together upon terms as equal as may be.”

the dispossessed while advertizing their actions as a humanitarian response to a crisis, these programs demonstrate the flipped social contract that became a standard practice in the Renaissance; the recipients of accommodation are supposed to pay as anyone else would, be accountable for their own welfare, and feel the obligation conferred onto them that they should be contributing members of their community. In the United States, the refugees must reimburse the program for their plane tickets, which reminds of indentured servitude rather than charity or humanitarian aid.338

This compassion crisis was a foregone conclusion at the time when I was finalizing this dissertation draft, in the midst of an election cycle where Donald Trump, the future President of the United States, enthusiastically pledged to erect walls on our borders and relocate refugees as a form of protection against terrorism. His campaign capitalized on a xenophobic fear, exigencies of profit, deference towards wealth, distrust of facts in favor of personal accounts, and insulated self-interest that undergirds the mentality of a large portion of our American citizenry—circumstances that have led many to wonder about who we are and what we will become. Do we have baseline criteria that anchor our expectations of fact or ethics, or can anything be accommodated to personal/partisan exigencies? Bruno Latour’s answer to this question would be no: he


338 During the finalizing stages of this dissertation, Donald Trump signed an executive order banning Syrian refugees as a countermeasure to terrorism. When mass protests broke out at airports, he angrily tweeted that this intense outrage should have been exhibited as jobs were leaving the country. His comment—a misrepresentation of an economy changing through automation—connects his order with concerns about American job retention. This insistence that charity shown to refugees comes with immense risks and zero recompense brings us to a new level of paranoia and apathy.
explains the crisis of a populace divided into separate realities not as a matter of the availability of facts so much as people’s eagerness to maintain a world of indulgent, convenient lies:

The real tragedy, though, is that the others live in a bubble, too: a world of the past completely undisturbed by climate change, a world that no fact, study, or science can shake. After all, they swallowed all the lies of the calls to restore an old order with perfect enthusiasm, while the alarm bells of the fact-checkers went on ringing unheard. A Trump goes on lying and cheating without remorse, and what a pleasure it is to be misled. We can’t expect them to play the roles of good, common-sense people, with their feet planted firmly on the ground. Their ideals are even more illusory than ours.\(^{339}\)

In Latour’s analysis the desire to live in a bubble of tailored truths complements the logic of “it’s every man for himself!,” which applies to everything, from environmental policy to market health to public education to sovereignty. There is no hope for an accommodation based on collective interests in this divisive climate: universally gratifying arrangements such as shared property, mutual peace brokering, and an agreed-upon textual authority are relics of the past that have been outmoded by the stripping away of community wellness programs,\(^{340}\) promises of military wins tempered with


\(^{340}\) For example, Trump’s Budget Manager Mick Mulvaney stated that programs providing food for poorer kids has not been shown to improve their education, prompting his administration to cut them: “We justified it [meal programs] by saying these kids will do better in school and get jobs. We have no proof that’s helping” (Nelson, par. 9). Who knew that feeding children was an investment that needed to be justified through improved testing scores and eventual employment? Mulvaney also stated that his office
threats of nuclear retaliation,\textsuperscript{341} and “alternative facts.”\textsuperscript{342} “Globalization” is a dirty word that suggests that politicians, businessmen, and the intelligentsia would dare to care about large-scale system health more than their more particular commitments to country and self. In contemporary America, our frame of reference for an accommodation is one-sided and shortsighted.

My goal with this reference is not to be political or overly preachy; to paint the complex social forces behind Trumpism as the aftermath of fetishistic modes would be a reductive and self-centered misreading. The small contribution that this analysis of \textit{accommodation} makes in this massive, on-going conversation is in providing an example for how our language might be at fault, that we might have an inexact understanding of

\_{\textsuperscript{341}} In a recent rally at an aircraft carrier, Trump stated “We have to start winning wars again. I have to say, when I was young, in high school and college, everybody used to say we never lost a war. We never lost a war. You remember, some of you were right there with me. You remember: America never lost” (Cesca, par. 5). This notion that wars are about competition and victory rather than untenable conditions, sacrifices, and grievous causalities not only simplifies geopolitical conflict but it shows an insulated perspective wherein one only calculates personal interest. Trump seems to forget that there are always losses for both sides in a war. In his short tenure as president, Trump has already made serious threats to Iran and North Korea and seems to be itching for the opportunity to win again.

\_{\textsuperscript{342}} This phrase was first used by Kellyanne Conway to defend Donald Trump’s and Sean Spicer’s assertions that the crowd size of his inauguration despite photographic evidence, metro ticket sales, and expert testimony. Since then it has been used in conversation to point out the administration’s shirking of scientific data (such as EPA director Scott Pruitt’s claim that carbon dioxide emissions are not a primary contributor to climate change) or the promotion of baseless narratives that contradict our eyes, ears, and record of events (Trump’s claims that he never supported the Iraq invasion despite audio evidence, the Bowling Green Massacre, Obama’s alleged wiretapping of Trump Tower, etc.).
what outstretched actions signify as charity and which come with provisos or limitations. The way in which immigrants are described as “stealing” or “taking” resources when they join the American workforce, while “job creators” are praised for bringing a boon to the labor force while they make considerable profits off of that human capital calls to mind questions regarding whether individual action can stand apart from a symbiotic system, and how the gauge for commodiousness can be arbitrarily adjusted to self-interest or collective welfare. The fetishism endemic to accommodation remains a problem for the modern age to sort.

These revelations about accommodation’s capaciousness and sophistication will add further depth and dimension to ongoing studies in its conceptual ground. Now that the valences are established within the vocabulary, we might be able to consider how they impact our readings of phenomena: future readings of “unaccommodated man” might find a precedent among iterations of this deliquescent word, the interplay between Calvinic thought and its colonization of accommodation can be interrogated with a better sense of competing connotations and caveats, and scholarship that explores the balance between capitalist drives and an older mentality concerned with credit and community now has vocabulary that better fits that transition. This word might be the tool some scholars have been looking for, a compact term for a billowing system or a paradoxical element.

Additionally, accommodations point to the kind of cross-cultural traffic that interest many scholars. Case in point: why would a Puritan cite a Ben Jonson play in order to make a political point? Whether the mention is aimed at widening the audience or taking a jab at another hateful practice, there is a curious moment in which cultural
spheres do not seem to exist and supposed factions speak the same language. This intercommunication gives rise to a question of how these communities developed these connections, and whether authors who had a particular penchant for the word’s use—Shakespeare, Jonson, Donne, and Milton—were attempting to influence the greater cultural topos through their vocabulary. At any rate, accommodation is a pidgin word of sorts that takes on inflections from different discourses, making it a bridge for anyone who might wish to interrogate the overlays between economics, religion, politics, and language.

Speaking of a harmonious synthesis, I would like to work my observations from another perspective. This dissertation has emphasized the existence of the discommendable sort of accommodations, the ones that stretch the qualifications of aptness and propriety to their breaking points and, as a result, excite pointed metacommentary. But that criticism is a check on the errant linguistic sprawl, a call to reset the word to bring it back to former meanings. These moments in which accommodation meets censure demonstrate that there is an enduring expectation to maintain its sense of universal gratification and lockstep with an innate moral code. The ethical strain of the word is part of its operation: whether it is present or not, it is always assumed to exist. This is what makes it such a dangerous disguise for selfish agendas, but it is also the verbal residue that overturns such agendas by referring to more systemic or overarching notions of fitness.

Now that I have covered the potential of this work, there is just one more matter of business to attend to. In presenting a portion of the dissertation at a conference, I was asked to develop the proper gloss for this keyword that would make sense of its infinite
variety and fetishistic tendencies. My reply in the moment was that a gloss would not fit the scope of active connotations and their complex interplay, so it would be best to simply footnote my work. Now, with the advantage of timely deliberation and exigencies of bringing a satisfying synthesis to this project, I have condensed the essence of the word/phrase to a few provisional attributes with ruthless brevity: accommodation is a presumably apt situation built upon several factors, whether they be social, physical, celestial, financial, linguistic, fantastical, or of indeterminable origin. It could refer to the intended message of God or a willful interpretation of the Bible, a non-interest property or a usurious emergency loan, a lie or the truth: there is no universal assignation of what is proper, and there is no end to what an accommodation might signify so long as it can claim some shred of positivity. It is no usual word.


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