Stéphanie Prieto:
“Of Hands, Hearts, and Trees”

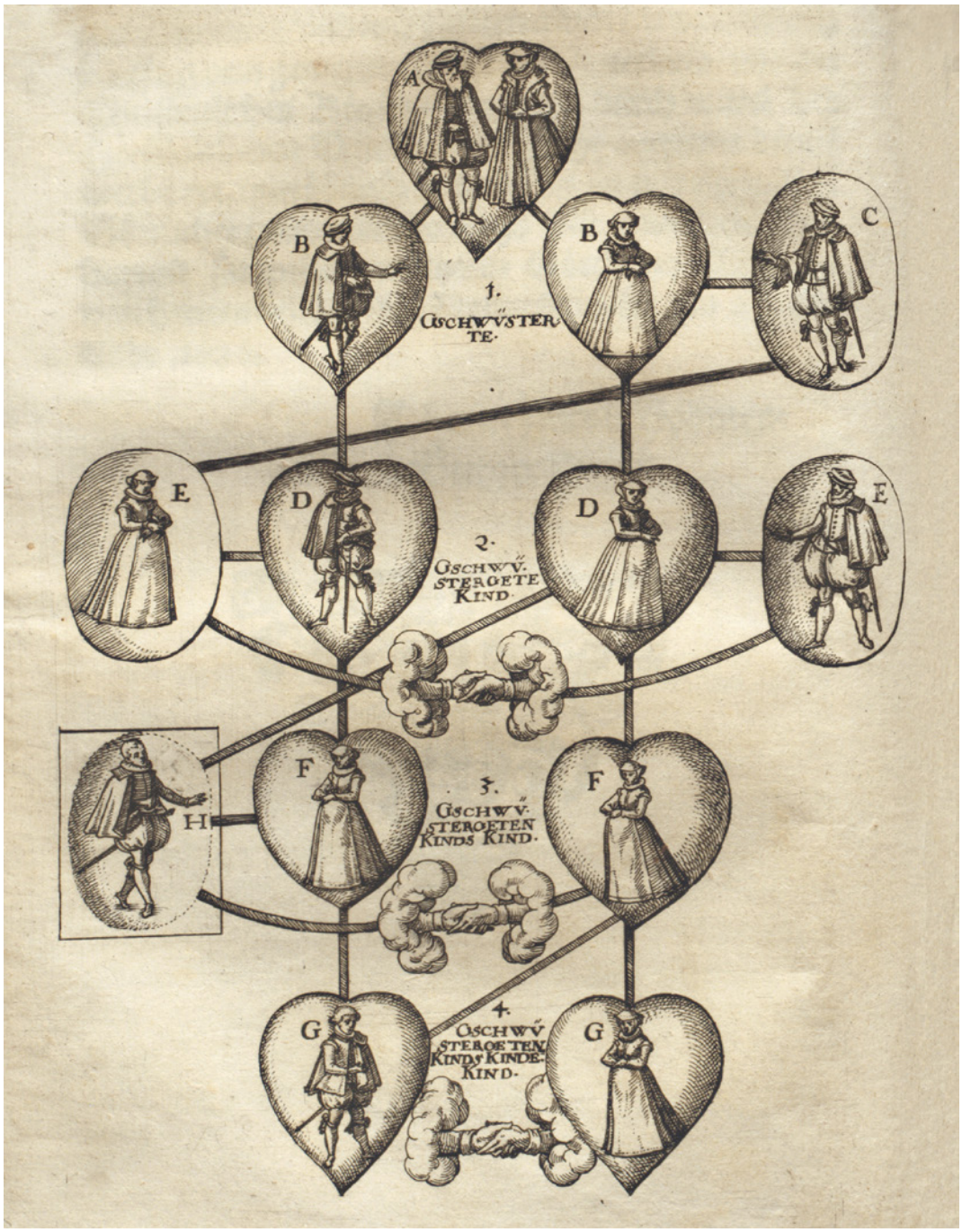
in: Eric Hounshell, Ruth Amstutz (eds.):

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SHADOW OF THE TREE

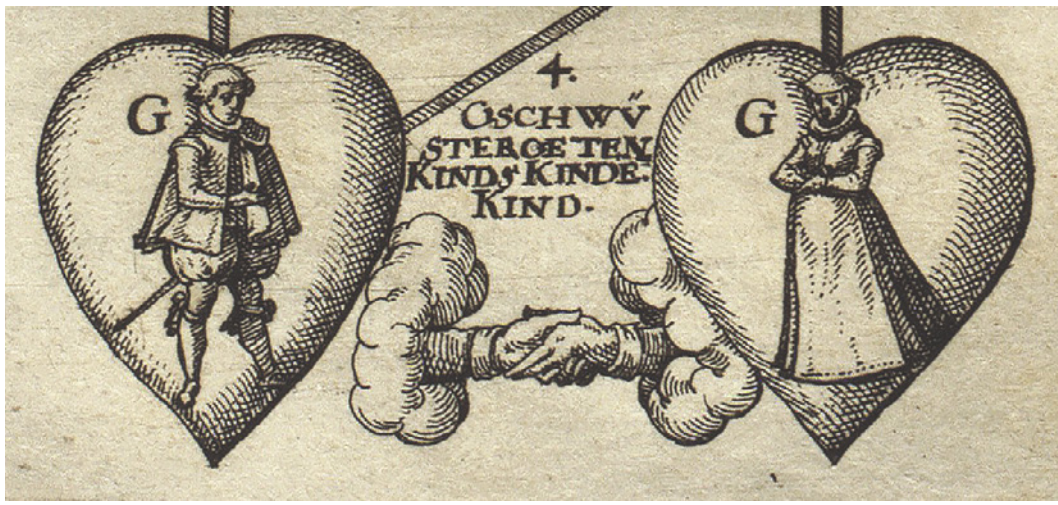
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OF HANDS, HEARTS, AND TREES
Forbidden Marriages



Johann Jakob Breitinger: *Verstendtliche Anleitung, wie man in Statt unnd Landschafft Zürich aussrechnen solle die Freundschafft: sampt einer Figur, in welcher begriffen unnd fürgebildet wirt der gantze Jnnhalt der Statt Zürich loblicher Ehesatzungen. und letstlich ein summarischer Bericht, warumb in der Bluotfreundschafft der dritte Grad bey uns verbotten seye [...]. Jetzt aber getruckt zu Zürich. bey Joh. Jacob Bodmer* (1626), Zentralbibliothek Zürich, 6.120,4. Online: https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-11090.

Could this be an illustration of a love treatise? To the modern-day reader the copper engraving preceding Johann Jakob Breitinger's comments in his *Verstendliche Anleitung* (Zurich 1626), a comprehensible instruction to the forbidden degrees of marriage, must seem endearing. Reminiscent of an illustrated story, seven male and seven female figurines are arranged in carefully shaded heart-shaped and elliptical bubbles. Narrow bands interlace the figurines, displaying the entanglement of their various relations. The two vertical rows in the middle build a strong, symmetrical core vying for the reader's attention. However, while dominating the diagram spatially, hierarchically the center is subsidiary to the only couple pictured. Prominently placed at the top of the page, their union crowns the network.



Detail from Johann Jakob Breitinger: *Verstendtliche Anleitung, wie man in Statt unnd Landschafft Zürich aussrechnen solle die Freundschafft* (1626), Zentralbibliothek Zürich, 6.120,4. Online: https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-11090.

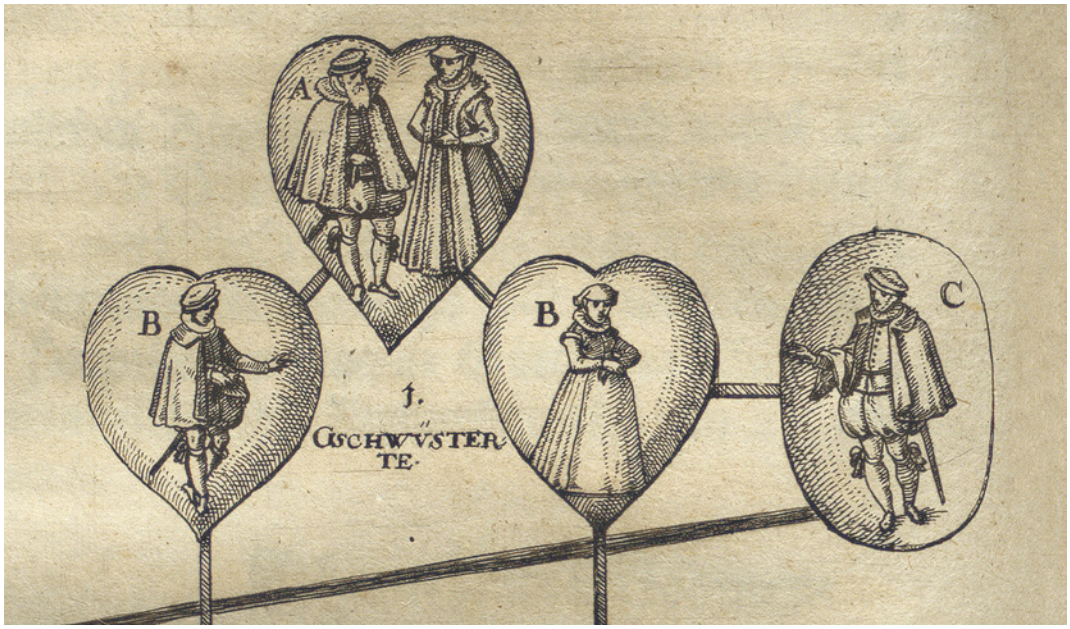
Moreover, three pairs of intertwining hands, reaching out of small clouds, connect their descendants with the "outsiders" to their left and right. A symbol that highlights and reinforces each couple's union, and that Breitinger calls *Treuw*. Often used as a metonymic representation of an intervening God, here the hands are an emblematic representation of the (marital) fulfilment of duty and reliability. However, while seemingly playful and rich in details, the diagram's actual purpose is of didactic and legal nature: rendering the forbidden degrees of kinship and making them comprehensible.

"Verstendtliche anleitung / Wie man in Statt vnnd Landtschafft Zürich auszrechnen solle die Freundschafft. Sampt Einer Figur / in welcher begriffen vnnd fürgebildet wirt der gantze Innhalt der statt Zürich Loblicher Ehesatzungen."

Furthermore, as was commonly the case with early modern publications, the title doubles as a synopsis. The *Verstendtliche Anleitung* introduces readers to correctly calculate the degrees of kinship *(die Freundschafft),* and Breitinger illustrates this concept with a *Figur,* a simple diagram depicting the familial relations. Announced in the title as representing all of Zurich's marriage statutes *(Ehesatzungen),* this diagram was clearly meant to appeal to readers as a helpful tool. With its positioning right at the beginning of the work, Breitinger and his printer, Johann Jakob Bodmer, clearly understood the diagram's quality as an abstract: by offering readers a compact, explanatory version of the *Ehesatzungen* to study and consult,

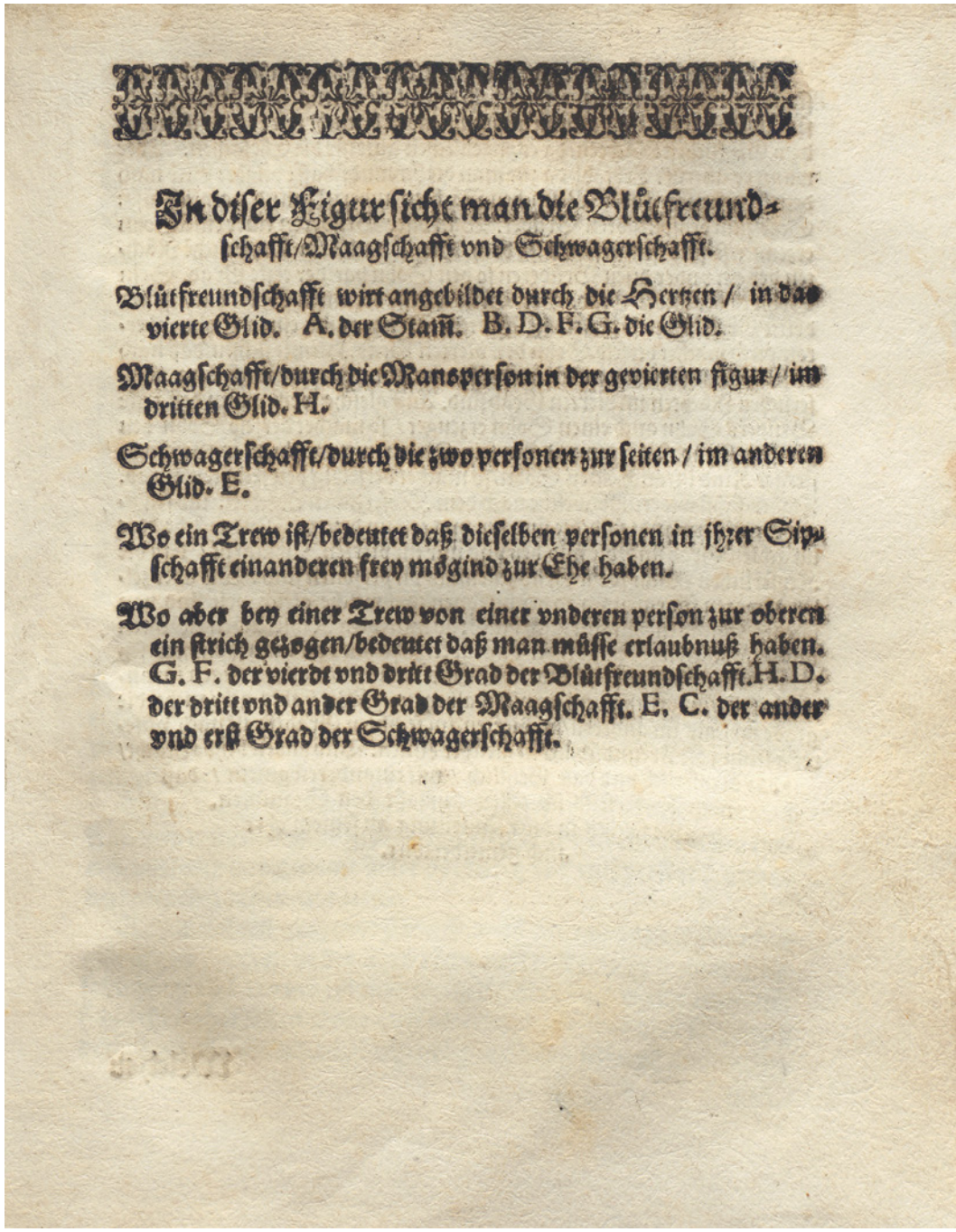
Breitinger and Bodmer enhanced its readability and comprehensibility. In addition, the careful embellishment of the diagram emphasizes its significance as a visual medium, a medium that not only serves ornamental purposes but also conveys complex content.

OF HANDS, HEARTS, AND TREES
Diagrammatic Details



Detail from Johann Jakob Breitinger: *Verstendtliche Anleitung, wie man in Statt unnd Landschafft Zürich aussrechnen solle die Freundschafft* (1626), Zentralbibliothek Zürich, 6.120,4. Online: https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-11090.

The stylized heart as a symbol of love has been used in Western contexts since the late thirteenth century. In this diagram, the hearts frame the various blood relatives and closely link the heart as a vessel of love and life with the blood as a constitutive substance of kinship. Although provided with guiding numbers and kinship labels for better understanding, the reader still seems to be missing some crucial information to read the diagram. To decipher the letters, A-H, and the relations depicted, Breitinger printed a legend to the diagram on the opposite page. Here, readers learn of their diagrammatic 3-in-1 deal, so to speak, simultaneously showing the allowed marital unions of *Bluotfreundschafft* (consanguinity), *Maagschafft* (here meaning a distant blood relative), and *Schwagerschafft* (affinity) to the fourth degree.[1]



In diser Figur ſicht man die Blůtfreund-
ſchafft/Maagſchafft vnd Schwagerſchafft.

Blůtfreundſchafft wirt angebildet durch die Hertzen / in das vierte Glid. A. der Stam̃. B. D. F. G. die Glid.

Maagſchafft/durch die Mansperſon in der gevierten figur / im dritten Glid. H.

Schwagerſchafft/durch die zwo perſonen zur ſeiten / im anderen Glid. E.

Wo ein Trew iſt/bedeutet daß dieſelben perſonen in jhrer Sipſchafft einanderen frey mögind zur Ehe haben.

Wo aber bey einer Trew von einer vnderen perſon zur oberen ein ſtrich gezogen/bedeutet daß man müſſe erlaubnuß haben. G. F. der vierdt vnd dritt Grad der Blůtfreundſchafft. H. D. der dritt vnd ander Grad der Maagſchafft. E. C. der ander vnd erſt Grad der Schwagerſchafft.

Detail from Johann Jakob Breitinger: *Verstendtliche Anleitung, wie man in Statt unnd Landschafft Zürich aussrechnen solle die Freundschafft* (1626), Zentralbibliothek Zürich, 6.120,4. Online: https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-11090.

OF HANDS, HEARTS, AND TREES Arboreal Kinship

Since the Early Middle Ages, Catholic theologians and specialists of canon law had developed diagrams – *arbores consanguinitatis et affinitatis* – to define the range of kin falling under incest prohibitions. Used to quantify, measure, and teach kinship in degrees, the bifurcated diagram had become a synonym for descent. Luther, however, demanding a return to the sole authority of the Scripture, rejected the canonists' diagrammatic practices of systematizing kinship – including its most popular form: the tree. By dismissing canonists' centuries' worth of work on the *arbores*, Luther also rebuffed any theological and legal knowledge provided by the church's philosophical fathers. Hence, starting anew, Protestant scholars relied on God's word for a definition of incest, learning that incest was not to be prohibited by degrees but by naming the forbidden relations. The list in *Leviticus* 18 of the twelve women forbidden for men to marry was first published in 1522, but it was soon deemed incomplete and in need of further interpretation. Challenging the biblical text's unambiguousness, the exegesis of *Leviticus* 18 led to a variety of publications in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These publications struggled to produce valid alternatives to the tree diagram, explaining the complex web of kinship and their restraints with the use of lists, enumerations, and biblical examples. Breitinger gives testimony to this revision, namely by combining the use of degrees with the naming of relations, while lexically resorting to *arbores* terminology.

"In dieser Figur sicht man die Bluotfreundschafft/Maagschafft vnd Schwagerschafft. Bluotfreundschafft wirt angebildet durch die Hertzen / in das vierte Glid. A. der Stamm. B.D.F.G. die Glid. [...] G.F. der vierdt vnd dritt Grad der Bluotfreundschafft. H.D. der dritt vnd ander Grad der Maagschafft. E.C. der ander vnd erst Grad der Schwagerschafft"

When illustrating consanguinity up to the fourth degree *(viert vnd dritt Grad)* and calling the ancestral couple "A." the stem *(Stamm)* and their descendants "B.D.F.G." the branches *(Glid)*, Breitinger clearly abandons the initial exegetical optimism of the early Protestant theorists. His somewhat eclectic use of diagrams of relatedness proves his high didactic standards since he is rather concerned with symmetry of perspective and completeness of content. While scholars often fought their battles on paper only, Breitinger, Antistes of Zurich, was primarily concerned himself with the spreading and teaching of his faith. Nevertheless, this diagram is a convincing example of the *arbores*' dominance and the way they have shaped the western understanding of kinship and its systematization. Breitinger represents a new generation of Protestant scholars, with a willingness to adjust to readers' needs by making the Scripture accessible – just as Luther would have liked it.

Notes

1 *Maagschafft* was often used as a synonym for marital kin but could also mean distant blood relatives. In the diagram, Breitinger distinguishes between *Maagschafft* and *Schwagerschafft*, but in the text itself he discards this distinction and only uses the two terms *Bluotfreundschafft* and *Maagschafft*, i.e. blood relations and affinity.

Further Readings

Már Jonsson: "Incest and the Word of God: Early Sixteenth Century Protestant Disputes", in: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 85 (1994), pp. 96–119.

Christiane Klapisch-Zuber: "The Genesis of the Family Tree", in: *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 4 (1991), pp. 105–129.

David C. Steinmetz: *Luther in Context*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press (1986).

Simon Teuscher: "Flesh and Blood in the Treatises on the Arbor Consanguinitatis (Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries)", in: Christopher H. Johnson, Bernhard Jussen, David W. Sabean, Simon Teuscher (eds.): *Blood & Kinship: Matter for Metaphor from Ancient Rome to the Present*, New York: Berghahn (2013), pp. 83–104.