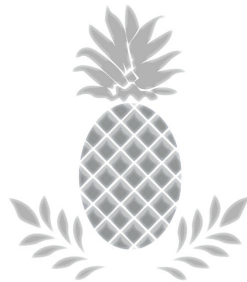


Proceedings  
Of the 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
Of the  
**Northern Plains**  
  
**Conference on**  
  
**Early British Literature**



April 12-13, 2019

Sponsored jointly by

Concordia College – Moorhead  
&  
Minnesota State University – Moorhead



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## Introduction

No meeting of the Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature has proven the organization's resilience like 2019, the group's twenty-seventh conference.

Great plans had been laid. We had accepted papers from thirty scholars and arranged them into a variety of thematic sessions. Seth Lerer, author of notable studies such as *Chaucer and his Readers* and *Shakespeare's Lyric Stage: Myth, Music, and Poetry in the Last Plays*, was scheduled to fly into Fargo to attend sessions and deliver a keynote address. A festive banquet catered by the innovative Urban Foods was planned for Friday night in Fargo's Plains Art Museum. All was in readiness – and then we were reminded of what it means to be a conference of the “northern plains.”

The first hints of trouble were unsettling. A major storm was forming to the south and west, but we remained optimistic. It was April and winter had already weakened its grip on the region. We were poised for spring. At the beginning of the week, the National Weather Service cautioned that travel plans might be disrupted, and soon we heard from presenters who would not be able to guarantee their presence. Stephen and I reimagined and reconfigured sessions. The number of presenters continued to decline. When our numbers fell below the threshold needed for the banquet, we regretfully cancelled the reservation, forfeited our deposit, and continued planning. The storm predictions became more dire.

Fortunately, Stephen began to make arrangements for a hybrid conference. We would meet as planned on the campus of Minnesota State University – Moorhead, but people separated by the storm would be able to use technology to monitor the sessions and present their own papers. Early

Thursday morning, we received word that after a valiant attempt to rearrange his flight options, Lerer was not able to reach Fargo but would deliver his paper by video link. We reorganized the paper sessions one more time, and printed our programs.

Then, late in the day on Thursday, a storm watch turned to a storm warning and then to an actual blizzard. All flights to the airport were grounded. The interstates in all directions were shut down. The MSUM and Concordia campuses were closed to all non-essential personnel. It seemed that after 27 years, the NPC needs must be canceled.

And yet, we preserved. Stephen shuffled the sessions one more time, and the conference went on. Friday was designated an on-line day. All of the papers and the discussion sessions were delivered by technology, using a telepresence setup provide by the MSUM instructional technology gurus. Presenters participated from their campus offices, living rooms, and the hotel rooms in which they had been stranded on the road. By Friday afternoon, the storm had abated enough that scholars in town could meet at a local Indian restaurant for an impromptu banquet. On Saturday, we were able to convene at MSUM for the hybrid sessions that we had imagined during the first phase of reorganization.

In the end, the conference comprised 26 papers plus the plenary address, 18 delivered online and nine on the MSUM campus. During the on-line day, most sessions ranged from nine to 20 participants. As 65% of the 26 papers were presented *only* online, from as far away as greater Boston and San Diego, we apologize to anyone who experienced any challenges or frustrations due to the weather or the switch to the online meeting venue.

Twenty-six papers and an enjoyable keynote address in the face of, for some of us, new technology and, in several cases, white-knuckle driving (and a stranded birthday celebration), constitute a decided victory and a testament to your dedication to the conference. Assessments

agree that all of the sessions included strong papers and excellent discussion. The Northern Plains Conference carries on.

Stephen Hamrick and David Sprunger



## **The pineapple Theme**

As the art of printing flourished during the Renaissance, printers made use of distinctive emblems on the title pages of their works, such as the well-known dolphin and anchor design used by the Venetian printer Aldus Manutius. The emblem we chose for the twenty-seventh NPCEBL was the pineapple. This now ubiquitous fruit was a novelty to Europe in the late seventeenth century, displayed by the wealthy and idealized by those who only dreamt of seeing, much less tasting, the fruit in person. As a visual symbol, it has historically represented many things from the sixteenth century to today, ranging from a symbol of hospitality, travel, friendship, and all-around luxury.

For the conference, Ellen Wuflestad, office manager for the English Department at Concordia College, designed a stylized pineapple logo for visual continuity of the program, the nametags, and the room signs. Besides branding conference materials, the pineapple was intended to evoke a sense of wonder and an invitation for fellowship, qualities at the heart of the NPCEBL.

As a historic artifact, the original program is included in these proceedings, along with the modified schedule that follows sessions actually delivered. As we told participants in April, the conference depends on the goodwill of its participants, and no academic group has more goodwill and collegiality than the NPCEBL. Thank you for your ongoing support.



## Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature

12-13 April 2019

### Comstock Memorial Union

Minnesota State University Moorhead, Moorhead MN

#### Friday 8:20-

*Registration* – Comstock Memorial Union 204

#### Friday 8:50

*Welcome* – Comstock Memorial Union 205

Marsha Weber, *Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs*, Minnesota State University Moorhead

#### Friday 9:00-10:15

*Beowulf and Beyond* – Comstock Memorial Union 203

Session Chair: Gayle Gaskill, St. Catherine University

“Divine Titles in Old English Heroic Verse, Peter Ramey, Northern State University, Aberdeen, SD

“Exsultet of Redeemed Pagans: An Integrative Study on Judeo-Christian and Anglo-Saxon

Covenants in Beowulf,” Austin Murr, University of St. Thomas. St. Paul, MN

“Everybody Needs Some Consolation Sometime: Alfred and Elizabeth’s Translations of the Latin

*Consolatio*,” Robert Kibler, Minot State University, ND

**Friday 10:30-11:45 A**

*Feasting and Martyred Bodies* – **Comstock Memorial Union 203**

Session Chair: Peter Ramey, Northern State University

“‘If Thy Will It Be’: The Autonomy of Martyrdom in Middle English Hagiographies,” Emily E.

Severinson, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

“*Cleanness* as an Aristocratic and Active Virtue,” Caleb Moistad, University of Minnesota,

Minneapolis

“Recovery and Deferred Conversion in *The Sege of Melayne*,” R. Jesse Stratton, University of

Minnesota, Minneapolis

**Friday 10:30-11:45 B**

*Consolations Prophetic and ‘Natural’* – **Comstock Memorial Union 208**

Session Chair: Michelle M. Sauer, University of North Dakota

“Prophecy, Persuasion, and Poetry: Cassandra and Futility in Lydgate’s *Troy Book*,” Jennifer Easler,

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

“Feminized *Imitatio Christi* and the Wailing of Margery Kempe,” Aimee Coons, University of North

Dakota, Grand Forks

“Revisiting Ecophobic Sleep in Arthurian Romance,” David Sprunger, Concordia College,

Moorhead, MN

**11:45-12:45 Lunch Break**

**Friday 1:00-2:15**

*Playing with Gender* – **Comstock Memorial Union 203**

Session Chair: Jennifer Easler, University of Minnesota

“The Masculine Dream: *Pearl’s* Dream as Masculine Space,” Kirby Lund, Williston State College,

ND

“God is my Second Husband, Actually: Widowhood and Anchoritism in Medieval Europe,”

Michelle M. Sauer, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

“*Twelfth Night*: Cross-Dressing as a Cautionary Tale,” Gayle Gaskill, St. Catherine University, St.

Paul, MN

**Friday 2:30-3:45 A**

*Spenserian Locations* – **Comstock Memorial Union 203**

Session Chair: Bob De Smith, Dordt College

“‘A Simple and Faithful Narrative’: Spenser and Jesuit Poetics,” Stephen Hamrick, Minnesota

State University Moorhead

“Bodies, Blood, and Manure: The Rhetoric of Nutrient Cycling in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie*

*Queene* and *A View of the State of Ireland*,” Bailey Kemp, University of Minnesota, Morris

“Fairy in The Faerie Queene: Making Elizabeth Irish,” Sarah M. Severson, University of

Minnesota, Morris

**Friday 2:30-3:45 B**

*The Soul of Narrative* – **Comstock Memorial Union 208**

Session Chair: Kirby Lund, Williston State College, ND

“Poring Out The Soul: Lucretius, Herbert of Cherbury, and ‘To His Coy Mistress,’” Michael

Kensak, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA

“‘Each to Other Like’: Parallels between Problems of Matter and of Narrative in *Paradise Lost*”

Todd Rains, Bethlehem College, Minneapolis, MN

“The Tragedy of the Common Patriot: Nathaniel Lee’s *Brutus* and its Sources,” Art Marmorstein,

Northern State University, Aberdeen, SD

**Friday 4:00-5:15**

*Keynote Address* – **Comstock Memorial Union 205**



“The Metamorphic Worlds of Early Modern Literature,” Dr. Seth Lerer, Distinguished Professor of Literature, The University of California, San Diego

**Friday 6:00-8:30**

*Conference Banquet – Plains Art Museum, 704 1st Ave North, Fargo, ND 58102*

**Saturday 8:45-**

*Registration – Comstock Memorial Union 204*

**Saturday 9:00-10:15 A**

*Shakespeare, Sexuality, and the Body of Words – Comstock Memorial Union 203*

Session Chair: Eric Furuseth, Minot State University, ND

“Variety of Language in Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labor’s Lost*,” Bob De Smith, Dordt College, Sioux Center, IA

“Oberon’s Lesson: Boyhood and Miscegenation in the Love Quadrangle of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” Benjamin S. Reed, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

“The Story of Space in *The Winter’s Tale*,” Kara McCabe, Tufts University, Medford MA

**Saturday 9:00-10:15 B**

*Adaptations and Afterlives – Comstock Memorial Union 208*

Session Chair: Art Marmorstein, Northern State University

“Sight and Sympathy: Grendel’s Mother for Young Readers,” Janet Schrunk Ericksen, University of Minnesota, Morris

“14th century French Melusine in Comparison with the 16th century English Melusine,” Lisa Bevevino, University of Minnesota, Morris

“Young Hamlets,” Bruce Brandt, South Dakota State University, Brookings

**Saturday 10:30-11:45 A**

*Queer Readings – Comstock Memorial Union 203*

Session Chair: Jonathan Steinwand, Concordia College

“Beyond the Honeysuckle and the Hazel Tree: Disentangling the Queer Feminist Potential of Marie de France’s ‘Chevrefoil,’” Christopher Lozensky, Minot State University, ND

“Sacred Secrecy: Identity and the Role of ‘the Closet’ in the Hagiographies of Christina Mirabilis and Marie d’Oignies,” Mark Patterson, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

“The Stakes of Queer Failure in John Gower’s ‘Tale of Acis and Galatea,’” Casey Kohs, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

**Saturday 10:30-11:45 B**

*Exchanges Past and Present* – **Comstock Memorial Union 208**

Session Chair: Janet Schrunk Ericksen, University of Minnesota, Morris

“Amusing Horace Walpole and the Quality of His Medievalism,” Jesse G. Swan, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls

“Tristram Shandy meets *The Trip*: Sterne’s Witty Conversation Goes On,” Eric Furuseth, Minot State University, ND

“Helen Maria Williams’s Letters Written in France as Feminist Imaginative Historiography,” Audrey Johnson, North Dakota State University, Fargo

**Saturday 12:00-1:00**

*Business Lunch and Close* – **Comstock Memorial Union 205**



## **Actual Schedule**

**12 April 2019**

### *On-Line Sessions*

#### **Friday 9:00-10:15**

##### *Succour and Song*

Session Chair: Stephen Hamrick, Minnesota State University Moorhead

“Exsultet of Redeemed Pagans: An Integrative Study on Judeo-Christian and Anglo-Saxon

Covenants in Beowulf,” Austin Murr, University of St. Thomas. St. Paul, MN

“Revisiting Ecophobic Sleep in Arthurian Romance,” David Sprunger, Concordia College,

Moorhead, MN

“Everybody Needs Some Consolation Sometime: Alfred and Elizabeth’s Translations of the Latin

*Consolatio*,” Robert Kibler, Minot State University, ND

#### **Friday 10:30-11:45**

##### *Feasting and Martyred Bodies*

Session Chair: Eric Furuseth, Minot State University, ND

“‘If Thy Will It Be’: The Autonomy of Martyrdom in Middle English Hagiographies,” Emily E.

Severinson, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

“*Cleanness as an Aristocratic and Active Virtue*,” Caleb Moistad, University of Minnesota,  
Minneapolis

“Recovery and Deferred Conversion in *The Sege of Melayne*,” R. Jesse Stratton, University of  
Minnesota, Minneapolis

**11:45-12:45 Lunch Break**

**Friday 1:00-2:15**

*Counsels and Reveries*

Session Chair: David Sprunger, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN

“The Masculine Dream: *Pearl’s* Dream as Masculine Space,” Kirby Lund, Williston State College,  
ND

“God is my Second Husband, Actually: Widowhood and Anchoritism in Medieval Europe,”  
Michelle M. Sauer, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

“Prophecy, Persuasion, and Poetry: Cassandra and Futility in Lydgate’s *Troy Book*,” Jennifer Easler,  
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

**F**

**riday 2:30-3:45**

*Shakespeare: ‘All The World’s My Way’*

Session Chair: Audrey Johnson, North Dakota State University, Fargo

“*Twelfth Night*: Cross-Dressing as a Cautionary Tale,” Gayle Gaskill, St. Catherine University, St.  
Paul, MN

“The Story of Space in *The Winter’s Tale*,” Kara McCabe, Tufts University, Medford MA

“Young Hamlets,” Bruce Brandt, South Dakota State University, Brookings

**Friday 4:00-5:15**

*Keynote Address*

“The Metamorphic Worlds of Early Modern Literature,” Dr. Seth Lerer, Distinguished Professor of Literature, The University of California, San Diego

**Friday 6:00-8:30**

*Conference Dinner – Passage to India*, 855 45th St. S, Westfield Strip Mall, Fargo, ND 58103

**Actual Schedule**

**Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature**

13 April 2019

*Hybrid Sessions*

**Comstock Memorial Union 205**

Minnesota State University Moorhead, Moorhead MN

**Saturday 8:45-**

*Registration*

**Saturday 9:00-10:15**

*Queer Readings*

Session Chair: Jonathan Steinwand, Concordia College

“Beyond the Honeysuckle and the Hazel Tree: Disentangling the Queer Feminist Potential of Marie de France’s ‘Chevrefoil,’” Christopher Lozensky, Minot State University, ND

“Sacred Secrecy: Identity and the Role of ‘the Closet’ in the Hagiographies of Christina Mirabilis and Marie d’Oignies,” Mark Patterson, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

“The Stakes of Queer Failure in John Gower’s “Tale of Acis and Galatea,”” Casey Kohs, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

**Saturday 10:30-11:45**

*Exchanges Past and Present*

Session Chair: Robert Kibler, Minot State University, ND

“The Tragedy of the Common Patriot: Nathaniel Lee’s *Brutus* and its Sources,” Art Marmorstein, Northern State University, Aberdeen, SD

“Tristram Shandy meets *The Trip*: Sterne’s Witty Conversation Goes On,” Eric Furuseth, Minot State University, ND

“Helen Maria Williams’s Letters Written in France as Feminist Imaginative Historiography,” Audrey Johnson, North Dakota State University, Fargo

**Saturday 12:00-12:45**

*Business Lunch* – **Comstock Memorial Union 208**

**Saturday 1:00-2:15**

*Expansions Personal and Textual*

Session Chair: Amanda Watts, Minot State University, ND

“‘If Thy Will It Be’: The Autonomy of Martyrdom in Middle English Hagiographies,” Emily E. Severinson, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

“Oberon’s Lesson: Boyhood and Miscegenation in the Love Quadrangle of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” Benjamin S. Reed, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

“Poring Out The Soul: Lucretius, Herbert of Cherbury, and “To His Coy Mistress,”” Michael  
Kensak, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA

**Saturday 2:30-3:45**

*Spenserian Locations*

Session Chair: Michelle M. Sauer, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

“‘A Simple and Faithful Narrative’: Spenser and Jesuit Poetics,” Stephen Hamrick, Minnesota State  
University Moorhead

“Bodies, Blood, and Manure: The Rhetoric of Nutrient Cycling in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie  
Queene* and *A View of the State of Ireland*,” Bailey Kemp, University of Minnesota, Morris

“Fairy in The Faerie Queene: Making Elizabeth Irish,” Sarah M. Severson, University of Minnesota,  
Morris

**Saturday 4:00-5:15**

*Adaptations and Afterlives* – **Comstock Memorial Union 205**

Session Chair: Christopher Lozensky, Minot State University, ND

“Divine Titles in Old English Heroic Verse,” Peter Ramey, Northern State University, Aberdeen,  
SD

“Sight and Sympathy: Grendel’s Mother for Young Readers,” Janet Schrunk Ericksen, University of  
Minnesota, Morris

“14th century French Melusine in Comparison with the 16th century English *Melusine*,” Lisa  
Bevevino, University of Minnesota, Morris



David Springer  
Concordia College  
[sprunger@cord.edu](mailto:sprunger@cord.edu)

## Revisiting Ecophobic Sleep in Arthurian Romance

In what he calls a “coda” to his 2011 book *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare*, Simon Estok proposes sleep as an underappreciated topic for ecocritical readings of early modern literature. While Estok acknowledges that sleep is not connected directly to the activist agenda that typically characterizes much ecocritical practice, he, nevertheless, considers sleep a component of the theoretical construction of ecocriticism, particularly in sleep’s ecophobic implications. Today I will extend this claim to medieval literature by considering some episodes of significant sleep in the *Arthuriad*.

At its broadest level, ecocriticism reads literature to highlight the relationship between humans and the environment. A number of metaphors have been used to classify this relationship, but I particularly connect with the notion of working with or across the grain of nature. The idea of grain suggests linear patterns that vary, yet flow in a general direction. Cutting, sanding, or otherwise manipulating a piece of wood is easiest when one follows the wood’s natural grain. So too, living with the grain of nature means adapting the self to the patterns of the natural world, working with nature rather than against it. On the other hand, one who lives cross grain to nature seeks to bend the world to human will, regardless of environmental consequences. To underscore what is probably obvious, ecocritics prefer living with the grain to living against it. When people align with



nature, they became part of a healthy pattern in which one respects the natural world and thrives within it.

Not everyone, however, sees nature as a source of unlimited good. The term “ecophobia” describes those who fear nature. In contemporary practice, one finds multiple working definitions of ecophobia, but since Estok is credited with coining the term and introducing the concept to ecocritical discourse, I will concentrate on his understanding of the term. Estok’s original definition was in his own later assessment fairly “simplistic” – “fear and loathing of the environment” (3). Over time, he refined his understanding to a more subtle “literal and groundless fear or hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature as homophobia and racism” (4).

Estok is careful to point out that not all action against nature has ecophobic roots. For example, someone who breaks boulders into gravel may harm the environment, but the destructive action isn’t motivated by a fear of nature. Someone who seeks to have aquatic boulders destroyed just because they represent the destructive potential of nature (as in the Franklin’s Tale) could, however, be classified as ecophobic. This distinction becomes important, for it suggests that not every discussion of nature in literary texts should be considered ecocritical. They might be what Estok calls merely “thematic” rather than truly “ecocritical” (1) – more on this later.

As I mentioned, Estok introduces sleep as a potential component of ecophobia. While he recognizes that sometimes a nap is just a nap, Estok identifies, in particular, three conditions under which sleep in early modern literature can signal ecophobia. I quote them verbatim:

1. Sleep intimates bestiality and thereby generates considerable literary representations of antipathy;
2. Diurnal sleep is seen ... as disrupting humans’ place in nature’s order;
3. Night and darkness (the proper cover of sleep) are consistently imagined as the flipside of everything good in nature, indeed of much that constitutes an abhorred nature. (Estok 111)

The first two categories – bestial sleep and diurnal sleep -- recur enough in the Arthurian tales that they may suggest the potential presence of deeper, more dangerous ecophobic currents.

In different tales by different authors from different times and provenance, three Arthurian heroes suffer prolonged bouts of madness, and all three are associated with abnormal sleeping: Yvain, in Chretien's romance of the same name, and Lancelot and Tristram in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*.

*Yvain* is the earliest of the texts, written around 1170, so we may look at it more closely to establish the basic sleeping pattern repeated in the other texts. After suffering a psychotic break, Yvain flees his orderly, chivalric life and retreats into the forest where he lives for an unspecified time in a condition more like that of an animal than a human. He runs naked and resorts to eating uncooked food, including raw meat. Although Yvain is assisted at times by a convenient hermit, there is no evidence that he has human speech. The overall imagery is that of a wild beast who learns to serve a human master.

Yvain may have escaped the social shame and conflicting obligations that pushed him beyond the breaking point, but there is no evidence that the retreat to nature is pastoral, idyllic, or even moderately relaxing. In this sense, one might contrast Yvain's life in nature with that of Orfeo, who finds solace in nature as he grieves for his lost love. Gillian Rudd, for example, reads Orfeo as an example of someone whose life is improved by living in harmony with animals, following a vegetarian diet, and so forth (Rudd 97-98). Not so with Chretien – Yvain may be living more with the grain of nature, but the text treats him more with pity and fear than admiration. The ubiquitous hermit fears Yvain as he would a beast, and the poem's narrator misses no opportunity to point out how far Yvain has fallen from the "civilized" life he once enjoyed.

After a prolonged but unspecified amount of time, Yvain is discovered one day by a damsel while he is sleeping in a forest glade. The episode connects with Estok's categories of meaningful

sleep in two ways. First, Yvain sleeps when he is tired, even if it is during the day, not waiting for a socially approved time when people should sleep. An implication of day sleeping is that the sleeper plans to be awake at night, which further inverts the civilized way to live.

Another element that differentiates Yvain's sleep from healthy nighttime sleep is its unnatural depth and duration. Whereas one might expect a creature in tune with nature to sleep lightly and be alert against potential threats, Yvain sleeps soundly while the damsel examines him thoroughly, returns to her castle for a magic ointment, slathers Yvain with generous quantities of the ointment, and ultimately transports the slumbering hero back to the castle. The text emphasizes that throughout this treatment Yvain sleeps "all he wanted" (3018). Fortunately, Yvain's discoverer has benign intentions, for sleep has left the knight vulnerable to attack or other mischief.

The madness – forest – sleep – recovery model established in *Yvain* appears twice in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, written perhaps in the 1470s but certainly based on earlier sources. The sleep episode is developed most thoroughly in 'The Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot Du Lac. After Lancelot goes mad following a confrontation with Elaine and Guinevere, he escapes in the forest, resists various attempts by people to capture him, and eventually ends up in Corbinek Castle where he lives a sort of sub-human existence, hovering between the condition of wild animal and court fool. The text emphasizes Lancelot's animal nature particularly through his wild eating: "And so every day they wolde throw hym mete and set hym drynke, but there was but feaw that wolde brynge hym mete to hys hondys" (vol. 2, 823). He is discovered and nursed to sanity by Elaine when he is discovered sleeping in a garden one afternoon. Even though he is living in the castle, a solid symbol of human imposition on the earth, Lancelot has chosen to sleep by a well in a garden, the green space and water suggesting the environment of the wilderness.

Similarly, Malory's Tristram undergoes a similar cycle. After pretending to be mad, he crosses a line into actual madness and lives in the forest, emerging occasionally to torment a group

of shepherds. Determined to locate this menace, King Mark finds Tristram sleeping by a well, where he captures him and returns him to his castle (vol. 2, 500). Later, Iseult finds Tristram “in the gadyne takyng hys reste to repose hym agyenst the sunne ” (vol. 2, 501). Tristram remains sleeping during Iseult’s inspection. Once again, the daytime sleeper is associated with green space and watering holes, just like an animal.

So, how do these episodes connect more explicitly to ecophobic discourse? Four questions may help us dig deeper:

1. Is the sleep unnatural or natural – and by whose standard?
2. Is the sleep bestial or therapeutic?
3. Does the sleep suggest an “abhorred nature”?
4. What might we notice if we read the sleep scenes for hints of ecophobia rather than for more general ecocritical considerations?

A first consideration is if day sleeping really signals a departure from expected human practice. Sleeping when one is tired would be instinctive behavior, but human economy is most productive and efficient when people maximize activity during daylight and recharge their bodies during darkness. In our modern age, we can shorten the dark period of night through the use of artificial light, allowing a constant, predictable time of darkness for sleeping. In this way, our modern sense of proper sleep habits is a way of living across the grain of nature. Before artificial light, however, the duration of darkness changed every day and, depending on the season, could last half the day or more, making it harder to develop regular sleep cycles.

Studies on medieval sleeping patterns have shown the widespread practice of segmented sleep in which a person might go to sleep at nightfall but then wake up a few hours later to eat, pray, study, or so forth before returning to sleep some more. In any case, the practice of segmented sleep is limited to the night. In his book *At Day’s Close*, A. Roger Ekirch explains that “many wild animals

exhibit” segmented sleep throughout the day, which has “long been the natural pattern of our slumber before the modern age” (303). Ekirch also finds considerable evidence that segmented sleep is associated more with lower classes.<sup>1</sup> Presumably, as people of higher status – like Yvain, Lancelot, and Tristram – become increasingly removed from natural rhythms, they are more likely to sleep in continuous stretches of night. Thus, the animalistic day sleeper is starkly separated from what the narrator considers normative, civilized behavior.

The second question is whether the sleeping is bestial or merely therapeutic. There is a tradition in medieval medicine that some illnesses, including madness, may be treated through increased sleep. The therapeutic sleep should take place in a dark and quiet room, which is particularly conducive to calming a frenzied patient. The texts don’t specify when the extended sleep should occur. On the other hand, no less a medical authority than Avicenna recommends, “It is also bad [for a patient] to go to sleep during the day” because the practice develops undesired conditions: “the colour of health passes off, the spleen becomes heavy, the nerves lose their tone; lack of vim and a poor appetite are noticed, and inflammatory conditions and fevers often appear” (Canon 4.i.9). Nappers beware.

In the narratives mentioned today, the sleep precedes the protagonist’s restoration to sanity, yet there is no evidence that the sleep has directly contributed to the cure. Yvain is healed by the ointment, not the sleep. Lancelot is soothed by a spell from Dame Brisen and ultimately healed by exposure to the Holy Grail. Tristram is captured by King Mark and appears to be waking naturally before he is examined by Isolt. None of the sleepers have exhibited any of the negative conditions against which Avicenna cautions. Each has previously been fit and alert albeit insane. Sleep serves in all these instances as a plotting device, but it is always an element of the character’s life in the wilderness.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ekerich, particularly p. 300 and following.

My third question is the hardest to answer. Is sleep just a thematic element or is tied to a more unified pattern of loathing and ecophobia? There are a number of ways to look at the madness episodes, and, indeed, I have considered them from a variety of angles over the years – thematic periods of repentance, purgatory, social recalibration, medical consistency, and so forth. In all views, however, the protagonist has suffered a setback, and the texts treat animalistic living with the grain of nature as a practice to be ended and reversed as quickly as possible. These readings use nature as thematic element, however, the approach that Estok differentiates from a true ecocritical reading.

There is much of an *inversus mundi* trope in the entire madness sequence. Characters who have been living in what the text clearly considers the normal, civilized world are tipped into a chaos where the heroes lose their status. Stripped of their distinguishing clothing, their martial weaponry, their servants, they are cast into a world where they must kowtow to hermits, servants, and shepherds. They have no clearly defined purpose around which to organize their lives. As each reaches a nadir, all three sleepers find themselves at the mercy of women, a situation that stands in stark contrast to their roles in a society where men of high birth generally have legal rights and physical control over women. For narrators and audiences in the non-wild world, this condition may well be one to abhor.

The final question I posed was what is gained by reading the sleep scenes ecophobically instead of ecocritically. A nonecophobic, but still ecocritical, reading of the sleep scenes might find something positive in the heroes' ability to shed the clothing, social expectations, and personal angst of living in the human-created chivalric work. As denizens of wild spaces, they have ceased to be destructive to themselves and others. The ecophobic perspective, however, gives us no such relief. The animalistic sleeping is something to be greatly feared, for it suggests that the hero has crossed some raggedy line between human-like-a-beast and pure beast, a condition from which there may be

no return. However, having threatened the ultimate loss of self, the narrative at this point always turns away from the natural world and brings the hero back to the human world.

Sleep is, of course, merely one component of the wild living, but coming as it does at the end of the cycle, it takes on a culminating status. Estok claims that “contempt for both sleep and night are inseparable from a generalized contempt for the natural world” (16). If one accepts this claim, the sleep episodes signal ecophobic attitudes. Further, if we accept these sleep episodes as having ecophobic dimensions, we should expect to find further evidence of ecophobic thinking or practices throughout the *Arthuriad*.

One other point is worth noticing. Estok argues that the ecophobia he found in Shakespeare reflects a late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century zeitgeist fueled by growing awareness of the negative effect humans might have on the environment. The implication of his discussion is that the Early Modern period marks the early border for the ecophobic perspective. If my readings are correct, however, and the Arthurian narratives treat the sleep episodes in an ecophobic manner, then Estok’s advent of ecophobia must be pushed back into the Middle Ages.

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University of Minnesota, Minneapolis  
[molst036@umn.edu](mailto:molst036@umn.edu)

## What Not to Wear at a Feast:

### Rewriting Cleanness as an Aristocratic Value in *Cleanness*

‘Cleanness’ is a vexing word for scholars who study the fourteenth century alliterative poem by that name.<sup>1</sup> The poem *Cleanness* is one of the lesser known works of the anonymous *Pearl*-Poet, who is more widely known for the poems *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Pearl*. The poem itself is composed of retellings of several Biblical narratives, mainly from the Old Testament. Surveys of the poem often attempt to pin down the meaning of ‘cleanness’ in the context of these narratives, though without much success.<sup>2</sup> An older generation of scholars often referred to the poem as *Purity* in an attempt to remove this ambiguity.<sup>3</sup> Other scholars, such as Elizabeth Keiser in her book *Courtly Desire and Medieval Homophobia*, have focused on the theme of sexual cleanness that runs

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<sup>1</sup> The poem, which begins on folio 57/61r of the Cotton Nero A.x manuscript has no title. For this reason, it is commonly identified by the first word of the first line, “Clannesse,” modern *Cleanness*. London, British Library MS Cotton Nero A.x. (art. 3): A Digital Facsimile, fol. 057/61r.

<sup>2</sup> For an example of two important monographs, years apart, that wrestle with the question see: A. C. Spearing, *The Gawain-Poet: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 50; Ad Putter, *An Introduction to the Gawain-Poet*, Longman Medieval and Renaissance Library (London: Longman, 1996), 205, 234. Both scholars find it easier to come to a conclusion on the way the poet gives meaning to cleanness and filth than the precise type of filth that warrants the examples of divine wrath that fill the poem.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. Spearing, *The Gawain-Poet*; Putter argues that *Cleanness* emphasizes physical cleanness, while *Purity* emphasizes moral cleanness. He argues that the uniting of physical and moral revulsion is the poem’s aim. *An Introduction to the Gawain-Poet*, 234.

through the poem.<sup>4</sup> In this paper I want set aside for a moment the precise meaning of ‘cleanness’ and instead focus on the literary *topos* of feasting that is scattered throughout the poem’s lines.<sup>5</sup> I would like to argue that the *topos* of feasting, and in particular the observation of the proper etiquette for a feast, is critical for understanding the poem as a unified whole and points to the way the poet has rewritten the virtue of ‘cleanness’ into an aristocratic value rather than an exclusively religious one.

### The Three ‘Courses’ of *Cleanness*

At the end of the poem, the poet tells us plainly how he has structured the work. “Þus vpon þrynne wyses I haf yow þro schewed / Þat vnlcanness tocleues in corage dere / Of þat wynnelych Lorde þat wonyes in heuen” (ll. 1805-07).<sup>6</sup> A.C. Spearing uses these lines to counter earlier scholars who viewed the poem as an unwieldy mess that barely holds together.<sup>7</sup> He identifies those three “wyses,” which means something like ways or manners, as the retellings of Noah and the Flood, Abraham, Lot, and Sodom and Gomorrah, and Belshazzar’s Feast.<sup>8</sup> On the handout I’ve include Spearing’s outline since it is helpful for those who are unfamiliar with the poem and its contents. What Spearing identifies as the “ways” appear in all capitals. While I think the structure that Spearing identifies is good, I want to argue that the first *exemplum*, the parable of the wedding feast from Matthew 22:1-14, presents a paradigm of feasting through which to understand the *exempla* that follow.

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<sup>4</sup> New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> I think the multiple valences of the word ‘cleanness’ is something the poet exploits in creative ways in the poem.

<sup>6</sup> “Thus in three ways I have shown you / That uncleaness cleaves in the dear heart / Of that excellent Lord that dwells in heaven.”

<sup>7</sup> *The Gawain-Poet: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 41.

<sup>8</sup> 43–44.

## What to Wear to Dinner

The spring board for the parable of the wedding feast is the sixth beatitude from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. In the Douay-Rheims translation this is “Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God,” which the poet translates as “Þe hapel clene of his hert hapenez ful fayre / For he schal loke on oure Lorde with a leue chere” (27-28). This, counterintuitively, leads to a discussion of clothing which *segues* into the parable of the wedding feast. The parable of the wedding feast in the gospel of Matthew may be briefly summarized this way.<sup>9</sup> A king invites guests to the wedding feast of his son. When the guests refuse the invitation, the king has them destroyed. He then sends his servants to invite whomever they can find, good and bad. One of these new guests enters the feast without wedding clothes.<sup>10</sup> He is punished for not wearing the appropriate clothing by being bound and thrown into the outer darkness.<sup>11</sup>

The *Pearl*-Poet rewrites the parable, imaginatively expanding the story. His attention to detail recalls the more well known feast scene in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The poet turns the Biblical wedding feast into a feast fit for fourteenth century aristocracy, which is what one would expect in a medieval adaptation.<sup>12</sup> What is a little unexpected is the poet’s fixation on the inappropriateness of attire of the guest who is not wearing wedding clothes.

Both the poet and the master of the feast describe the clothes in a multitude of unflattering terms. The clothes are not appropriate for a “halyday” (134, 141). They are “vnþryuandely” (135), “fyled with werkkez” (136), “so fowle” (140), “ratted” and “rent at þe sydez” (144), and “febel” (145).<sup>13</sup> The master of the banquet takes the man’s clothing as a personal insult:

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<sup>9</sup> The other version is in Luke 14:15-24.

<sup>10</sup> “vestem nuptialem” Matthew 22:12, Vulg.

<sup>11</sup> “tenebras exteriores” Matthew 22:13, Vulg.

<sup>12</sup> Derek Brewer writes that “The king’s feast at the beginning of *Cleanness* is fully in accord with fourteenth-century notions”: “Feasts,” in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson, Arthurian Studies (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 138.

<sup>13</sup> Putter argues that the primary offense is that the clothes are not the right kind for a “halyday.” While this is true, the thing that makes them unfit for a holiday is their ragged and filthy quality. *An Introduction to the Gawain-Poet*, 228–29.

Pou praysed me and my place ful pouer and ful gnedede,

Pat watz so prest to aproche my presens hereinne. (146-47)<sup>14</sup>

The poorly dressed guest is not just ejected from the feast, he is to be thrown into a dungeon where “doel euer dwellz” (158).

Lest the audience interpret the clothes literally, the poet explains their significance at the end of the *exemplum*.<sup>15</sup> He says about the clothes,

Hit arn þy werkez, wyterly, þat þou wrozt hauez,

And lyued with þe lykyng þat lyze in þyn hert; (171-72)<sup>16</sup>

As in the more well known *Pearl*, a physical object becomes a symbol of inner purity, *i.e.* “in þyn hert.” Wearing clean clothes in this allegorical sense makes it possible that “þou se þy Sauior and His sete ryche”(176), while those with impure clothes will “þe Souerayn ne se” (176) and “neuer see Hym with syzt” (192).<sup>17</sup> The poet’s interpretation of the parable links the feast to the sixth beatitude as well as an eschatological vision of God at the last judgment. The explanation also establishes a pattern for the poet’s use of the feasting *topos*. In the poet’s version of the *topos*, God is the master of the feast and the guests are people who come before him. Those who are attired with clean works remain in his sight while those whose metaphorical clothes are filthy are cast from his presence.

This pattern established in the parable of the wedding feast continues through the three main divisions of the poem identified by Spearing. As the poem is 1812 lines, there is not space to look at every instance of the way the poet’s version of the feasting *topos* appears in the poem.

Instead, I will note a few examples before looking at the details of the middle *exemplum* which

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<sup>14</sup> “You considered me and my place so poor and stingy, that you were so quick to approach my presence here.”

<sup>15</sup> Spearing argues that the poet tends to use the Bible literally. For him, the poet’s explanation of the allegory here is evidence of the poet’s reluctance to use allegory unless he can control the interpretation: *The Gawain-Poet*, 130. I think Spearing’s attempt to counter the excesses of the typological and exegetical interpretations of his day causes him to limit the possibility for the *Gawain*-poet’s own, potentially eclectic, use of allegory.

<sup>16</sup> “They are the works, surely, that you have done, and lived with the pleasure that lies in your heart.”

<sup>17</sup> “You will see your Savior and his rich throne” “not see the Sovereign” “never see him with sight”

contrast's Abraham's reception of the divine visitors at a meal with the meal given to the angelic visitors at Sodom.

### Variations and Riffs

Once the poet's explication of the parable ends, the poem shifts to a series of *exempla* that are ordered according to a standard medieval religious chronology, beginning with the rebellion of Satan.<sup>18</sup> These *exempla* present variations or "riffs" on the pattern offered by the interpretation of the wedding feast. This shows up ironically in the poet's comment that prior to his fall Satan "were so fers for his fayre wedez / And his glorious glem þat glent so bryzt" (217-218), only to be thrown into hell with a host of "fendez ful blake" (221).<sup>19</sup> Satan's pride in his fine clothing reflects the internal pride that leads to his fall. Like the guest in the parable he is cast out from his host's presence, in this case literally God, to a place where his clothes become sullied to match his internal state. Likewise, Adam and Eve in the poem are expelled from paradise because they eat the very thing that their host tells them not to eat (241). The poet even finds ways to insert minor riffs on this pattern in his *exempla*. The raven in the retelling of the story of Noah's ark is "colored as þe cole" (456) and forgets its mission because it "Fallez on þe foule flesch and fyllez his wombe" (462).<sup>20</sup> Here the raven's external covering, the coal black feathers, alerts the reader to the bird's uncleanness even before we read about its gluttonous feast of foul flesh.

The third and longest section of the poem features Belshazzar's feast which is drawn from the book of Daniel. There Belshazzar is in a sense ejected from his own feast after using the vessels

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<sup>18</sup> Ingledew attempts to align the *exempla* with the divisions of history established by Augustine: "Liturgy, Prophecy, and Belshazzar's Babylon," 264.

<sup>19</sup> "was so proud of his fair clothes and his glorious radiance that shined so bright" "very black fiends"

<sup>20</sup> "colored as coal" "fell on the foul flesh and filled its belly" Divine visitors in the poem are typically associated with a shining whiteness. cf. The description of the angels that visit Sodom ll. 791-794. Brightness and whiteness are one of the physical qualities that the poet uses to mark cleanness, e.g. a pearl. cf. also the poem's frequent use of *fair* as a synonym for physical cleanness. Though less common, the opposite, blackness, can be a sign of uncleanness.

from the conquered Jewish temple in an unclean manner. There is also the New Testament interlude between the second and third divisions in which one sign of Christ's cleanness is his ability to break bread with his hands more nobly and excellently than the best tools of Toulouse (ll. 1105-08). It is an odd passage in the poem, but its inclusion makes more sense if we see Christ's cleanness being expressed through the *topos* of feasting. Christ is such a perfect host that when he tears bread with his hands he makes a perfectly *clean* break, which is more than a mere play on words for the poet.<sup>21</sup>

### Look Who's Coming to Dinner

The *exemplum* of Abraham and the destruction of Sodom is particularly interesting because it is structured as a contrast between a "clean" feast and an "unclean" one. The *exemplum* is prefaced with a restatement of the sixth Beatitude:

And þere He fyndez al fayre a freke wythinne,  
With hert honest and hol, þat haþel He honourez,  
Sendez hym a sad syȝt, to se His auen face, (593-95)<sup>22</sup>

This is followed by the negative expression of the Beatitude. God "drepez in hast" (599) those who do "dedez of schame" (597).<sup>23</sup> These starkly different receptions of a human by God prefigure the contrast that follows between Abraham's clean and respectful reception of the three visitors at the oak of Mamre and the hostile reception of the angels by the inhabitants of Sodom and Lot's wife.

While Abraham sits in the shade of the oak at Mamre, he becomes aware of "wlonk Wyȝez þrynne" (606) who are "farande and fre and fayre to behold" (607).<sup>24</sup> The supernatural cleanness of

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<sup>21</sup> For an interesting comparison, the Green Knight in *SGGK*, another unexpected guest at a feast, is described as "clene" four times within the space of sixteen lines (145-161). There "clene" not only refers to the lack of dirt but also to the quality of his dress and grooming, roughly in the way we might say someone looks 'clean cut.'

<sup>22</sup> "And where he finds all fair within a man, with an honest and whole heart, that man he honors, sends him a sober sight, to see his own face"

<sup>23</sup> "destroys in haste" "deeds of shame"

<sup>24</sup> "three splendid/noble men" and "handsome and noble and fair to behold" *Wlonk* is an adjective with a wide range of meanings. When applied to people it can mean they are of distinguished birth, but also physical beautiful, either

the three visitors is reflected in their physical appearance. Abraham correctly recognizes these external signs and receives the guest with the utmost respect and cleanness. One of the poet's additions to the Vulgate's version of the meal is particularly important:

Þe burne to be bare-heued buskez hym þenne,  
Clechez to a clene cloþe and kestez on þe grene,  
Þrwe þryftyly þeron þo þre þerue kakez, (633-635)<sup>25</sup>

The use of present tense verbs in these lines emphasizes Abraham's eagerness to serve the guests. Here, as elsewhere, there is a concern with attire. The poet invents the detail that Abraham uncovers his head for the guests and reiterates it later, saying that Abraham was "al hodlez" (643). The language of the first line echoes that used by the master of the feast to assess the guest's clothes, "Þou, burne, for no brydale art busked in wedez" (142), reminding us that we should overlay this story with the parable of the wedding feast.<sup>26</sup>

It can be no accident that the cloth that Abraham spreads for his guests is "clene." Ad Putter notes the meticulous and carefully ordered way that Abraham arranges the various elements of the meal on the cloth in the description.<sup>27</sup> The poem's description of Abraham's ritualistic attention to detail and cleanness is reflected in its designation of the cakes as unleavened, a distinction that is absent from the Vulgate as is the number of cakes.<sup>28</sup> The designation of the cakes as unleavened is

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in body or in clothing. The angels that visit Sodom are described as wearing "wlonk whit" clothing in addition beautiful bodies (793). cf. "Wlonk, Adj.," *Middle English Dictionary* (University of Michigan, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> "The man dresses/prepares to be bared headed for them then, He seizes a clean cloth and casts it on the grass, skillfully throws on it eagerly three unleavened cakes." *Busken* can mean to prepare in general but is frequently applied to clothes. In a poem with such an interest in clothing, this narrower definition is more appropriate: "Busken (V.)," *Middle English Dictionary* (University of Michigan, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> "You, man, are not dressed in clothes for a wedding feast."

<sup>27</sup> *An Introduction to the Gawain-Poet*, Longman Medieval and Renaissance Library (London: Longman, 1996), 232.

<sup>28</sup> The Vulgate does mention that Abraham tells Sarah to use "tria sata simlae" [three measures of fine flour] Gen. 18:6. The poet retains this as "þre mettez of mele" (625). Even if the poet was working from a commentary or exegetical tradition rather than directly from the Vulgate, he was not doing so mindlessly.

another example of the poet adding markers of external cleanness to the meal to signify the internal cleanness of the participants.<sup>29</sup>

At one point the poem notes that “God as a glad gest mad god chere” (641) and refers to the visitors as the “Men þat myȝtes al weldez” (644), indicating that Abraham’s three guests are a manifestation of God.<sup>30</sup> Abraham’s meal with the three visitors becomes an actual feast with God. Mapping the parable of the wedding feast onto this situation makes each participant simultaneously guest and host. God, who is master of the feast in the interpretation of the parable, is Abraham’s guest at this feast. Abraham, who is the ostensible host in the *exemplum* acts as the inferior participant in this meal, suggesting that he is in some way the guest at God’s feast. In contrast to the poorly dressed man in the parable, Abraham performs his role as host and guest with absolute cleanness. Abraham’s superlative hospitality at the meal serves as a foil for the reception given to the angels at Sodom.

Much has already been written about the poem’s depiction of Sodom’s homosexuality and the way the poet contrasts it with the pleasures of married heterosexual love.<sup>31</sup> Instead, I want to focus on the way the inhospitality of Lot’s wife is used as a foil for Abraham’s hospitality. The attempted sexual assault of the angelic visitors is quite clearly presented as unclean by the poem. Lot’s wife’s behavior, however, typically receives little attention from scholars.<sup>32</sup> Though her punishment is given a comic turn by the poet, her poor reception of the divine guests is not less serious.

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<sup>29</sup> Augustinus, *The City of God: (De Civitate Dei) XI - XXII*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. William Babcock (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013), 220–21. He arrives at this conclusion through a comparison of the visit to Abraham with the visit of the angels to Lot, much as the poet links the two stories.

<sup>30</sup> “God as a glad guest made merry” “Men that control all might” Putter notes the way this passage shifts between the third person singular pronoun and the third personal plural to refer to the guest(s), reflecting “the mystery of the Trinity.” *An Introduction to the Gawain-Poet*, 223

<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Keiser’s book is the standard work on the depiction of homosexuality in *Cleanness: Courtly Desire and Medieval Homophobia*.

<sup>32</sup> Ingledew shows the most interest in Lot’s wife, spending about a page discussing her: “Liturgy, Prophecy, and Belshazzar’s Babylon,” 255-56.



The Vulgate mentions the meal very briefly. In the Douay-Rheims translation it is a single sentence: “and when they were come in to his house, he made them a feast and bake unleavened bread, and they ate.”<sup>33</sup> *Cleanness* expands this considerably. Lot, like Abraham, is concerned with the food that he will serve his guests. He instructs his servants,

Bot þenkkez on hit be þrefte what þynk so 3e make,  
for wyth no sour ne no salt seruez hym neuer. (819-20)<sup>34</sup>

Lot’s wife disregards this and puts salts into the food. Since the salt detail is not in the Vulgate, it is significant that Lot’s wife fixates on it, fuming more over the salt than the leaven.<sup>35</sup> She also scorns the angels during the meal, “And als ho scelt hem in scorne þat wel her skyl knewen” (826).<sup>36</sup> This is quite different from Abraham’s detailed and humble attention to the preparation and serving of the food. Lot’s wife’s open scorn towards the guests at the meal is all the more striking when compared to Abraham’s reverent removal of his hood. For this reason, the poet singles out her behavior for offending God, writing “Why watz ho, wrech, so wod? Ho wrathed oure Lorde (827).<sup>37</sup>

Unlike the Vulgate, in which Lot’s wife’s only fault is looking back at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, *Cleanness* turns her behavior into a longstanding character flaw. Just before she ignores the angels’ warning and looks back at Sodom the poet informs us that, “þe balleful burde, þat neuer bode keped” (979).<sup>38</sup> Keiser sees Lot’s wife’s punishment as a consequence of her disobedience of the divinely ordered male hierarchy represented by her husband and the male

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<sup>33</sup> Genesis 19:3, Vulg. “ingressisque domun illius fecit convivium coti azyma et comederunt”

<sup>34</sup> “But bear in mind that it be unleavened whatsoever you make, for with neither sour/leaven nor salt ever serve them.”

<sup>35</sup> The source of the salting of the angels’ food is likely a Jewish tradition, though it is not clear how it reached the poet: Andrew and Waldron, eds., *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, 146; Ingledew struggles to account for the salt since it usually has positive connotations in the Old and New Testament. In a creative move, he sees her use of salt as imitating a proper sacrifice. Her punishment arrives in the end because she typifies “Augustine’s redeemed sinner who returns to his sin”: “Liturgy, Prophecy, and Belshazzar’s Babylon,” 255. The problem with this interpretation is that the passage presents her use of salt in nothing other than a negative light. It is more probable that the salt in this section has entirely separate connotations from its tradition use in Scripture.

<sup>36</sup> “And also she reviled them in scorn that well her skill knew”

<sup>37</sup> “Why was she, wretch, so angry? She angered our Lord”

<sup>38</sup> “But the wretched woman, that never kept a command”

angels.<sup>39</sup> While I agree with Keiser's assessment, Lot's wife's disobedience is made more egregious because it violates her social role as hostess at the meal with the angels. She is expected to support her husband in the hospitable and carefully ordered reception of the guests, a social function that Abraham's wife Sarah performs flawlessly. Thus, Lot's wife's fault in the poem is not only her disobedience of male authority but also a breach of finely wrought feasting etiquette.

The poet's explication of the *exemplum* ends as the story began, with a restatement of the sixth beatitude:

To se þat Semly in sete and His sweet face,

Clerrer counseyl con I non, bot þat þou clene worþe. (1055-56)<sup>40</sup>

Abraham's careful and ordered service at the meal exemplifies these lines; his cleanness allows him "to se þat Semly." Sodom and Lot's wife, because of their uncleanness, receive the inverse of the Beatitude, the ejection from God's sight. Sodom and Gomorrah are "sunkken to helle" (968), as the poorly dressed guest in the parable is thrown in the dungeon were "doel euer dwellz" (158), while Lot's wife's obsession with salt results in a punishment that savors of this poetic justice.

### **Aristocratic Values**

Throughout this paper I have looked at the ways the poet has rewritten his source material according to a particular set of interests, expanding and adding to Biblical stories so that they align with his interpretation of the parable of the wedding feast. From this rewriting, I would like to offer a tentative opinion as to what these changes tell us about the poet's objective in *Cleanness*. After all, the choice of feasting as a vehicle to promote cleanness is counter-intuitive. The vice of gluttony, rather than the virtue of cleanness, seems to be the appropriate moral value to associate with a feast.

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<sup>39</sup> Keiser writes that Lot's wife, "threatens the male-dominant family unity." *Courtly Desire and Medieval Homophobia*, 65.

<sup>40</sup> "To see that Fair One on his throne and His sweet face, I know no clearer counsel than that you become clean."

Chaucer's Parson, for example, condemns not only overeating and eating greedily as the sin of gluttony in his tale, but the elaborate preparation of food (X.828-82). (A feast without overeating and the elaborate preparation of food would be a sorry feast indeed.) As the title of this paper indicates, I think the poet is rewriting cleanness into a value that is as at home in an aristocratic setting as it would be in a monastic environment.

Feasting is closely associated with aristocratic life, its presence throughout *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* being just one example. At the same time, the excess that is involved in feasting makes it a spiritually problematic activity. The *Pearl*-Poet turns this on its head, appropriating the etiquette and decorum of feasting to promote a positive spiritual value. The effect is two-fold: 1) it removes the moral stigma surrounding feasting and suggests that it might even have a positive value when done properly, 2) cleanness becomes a virtue that is accessible and even desirable to the upper classes since they can achieve it in the very things they already practice. The poet does much the same with married sex in the poem, writing at one point that God portrayed the "play of parmorez" himself and compares its pleasure to paradise (700-704).

This is not at all to argue that the *Pearl*-Poet's rewriting of cleanness had much influence beyond this work.<sup>41</sup> Instead, it places the poem in the tradition of vernacular theology, a category of Middle English writing proposed by Nicholas Watson, which includes authors like Langland and Julian of Norwich, who used the vernacular in creative and unique ways to explore religious ideas. The *Pearl*-Poet is doing just that in the poem, reflecting on cleanness in Biblical texts through a literary *topos* that would have particular cultural resonances in his day. The result is not only a

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<sup>41</sup> Though scholars still debate the identity of the author, the most convincing arguments picture him as a cleric working for a lay lord or in the service of a bishop where he would be in constant contact with aristocratic circles. Putter argues for a "humble cleric" working at an administrative job (p. 14-17). Cecilia Hatt argues that the poet was a clerk working for a powerful ecclesiastical official, going so far as to suggest that the poet might be Robert Hallum who served under two archbishops of Canterbury (pp. 224-231)

rewriting of the Biblical sources the poet is adapting, it is also a rewriting of feasting and the virtue of cleanness itself.

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Williston State College  
[kirby.lund@willistonstate.edu](mailto:kirby.lund@willistonstate.edu)

## **The Masculine Dream: *Pearl's* Space and Masculine Bleeding**

*Pearl* scholarship offers rich interpretations of the Dreamer's vision of the heavenly city of New Jerusalem. At the forefront of that scholarship is Sarah Stanbury, who argues that New Jerusalem represents "a feminized and maternal residence" for the Maiden and the other brides of Christ throughout the dream vision (33).<sup>1</sup> This suggests that the heavenly city is a nurturing and maternal space, much like her description of Christ the Lamb's bleeding side wound as a home for Christian souls. She further claims that the city "becomes an imagistic crypt in which [the Maiden's] body is transposed and preserved in stone" (39). Stanbury contends that the dream vision transforms the Maiden's body into the city, thereby marking this space as a feminine one to coincide with the Maiden's female body.

While I would agree that the Maiden is preserved, I would argue that *Pearl's* city exerts masculine, patriarchal control over the women inhabiting that space. This control can be seen by approaching the poem using Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory and Judith Butler's gender performance theory. Christ is constructed as masculine throughout *Pearl*, and his bleeding side wound acts as a masculine performance of control over his own body and his brides. The blood is not passively leaking from the side wound, but rather, Christ is actively letting his blood flow, thereby suggesting

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this essay, I will refer to *Pearl's* dreamer-narrator as "the Dreamer" and the Pearl-Maiden as simply "the Maiden."

that this is a masculine performance. The blood also provides a form of control over the brides of Christ: first, the blood limits the brides' mobility in the city space—a limitation not taken against the men of the city—and second, the blood acts as a cleansing agent to mitigate the pollution of the brides' female bodies. My point, however, is not to reinscribe patriarchy onto a poem that has been the subject of decades of feminist readings; rather, I am attempting to show *Pearl* in the religious context of the fourteenth century.

This reading goes against the medieval construction of Christ's gender as feminine which often presented him and his side wound as nurturing and maternal. Scholars have viewed the side wound as a feminine image with a feminine function; Leo Steinberg notes the resemblance of the wound to the image of a vagina in medieval and Renaissance work, suggesting “the perception of a womanly, therefore life-giving Christ” (247). Caroline Bynum Walker discusses the function of the weeping wound in terms of “devotional texts that refer to a gestating, birthing, and lactating Jesus” (97). Bynum Walker goes further here by drawing on the teachings of Galen, the ancient physician who provided for much of medieval physiology. Blood was seen as the fundamental support of life since it was the foundational stuff from which all other bodily excretions transmuted, meaning that Christ's blood traditionally represented both blood escaping from the body and milk lactating from the side wound to feed humanity. Steinberg and Bynum Walker's descriptions both construct Christ and his side wound as feminine due to their form and function.

Viewing Christ's bleeding in *Pearl* through Lefebvre's spatial triad theory provides a complex and interdisciplinary view of the Middle Ages when tied to Butlerian gender performance. Lefebvre's spatial triad theory involves representations of space, spatial practice, and representational space, though it might be simpler to break down Lefebvre's triad into only two parts: the visual codes within a space and the actions and interactions of human users within the space. In my previous work, I have discussed the visual codes within *Pearl*'s city space, but my present work dwells



primarily on the spatial practices of the heavenly city to discuss gender. To Butler, a body's gender performances construct the overall gender of a person, and Lefebvre echoes that same idea about spatial construction, noting that spatial practices deal with "a guaranteed level of *competence* and a specific level of *performance*" (Lefebvre 33, original emphasis). Space and gender are therefore constructed in similar ways because of this competence, so we can equate Lefebvre's spatial practices to Butler's gender performances, at least to some extent.

Medieval masculinity hinges on exerting power and control over others. Though Ruth Mazo Karras breaks medieval masculinity into several categories, she notes that the most recognizable form was knightly masculinity because of the Arthurian legends. In these legends, Karras explains, "violence was the fundamental measure of a man because it was a way of exerting dominance over men of one's own social stratum as well as over women and other social inferiors" (10). The idea of control is prominent in this description, but it is important to note that this control was meant not only for peers, but especially over social inferiors—like women. Karras mentions that "the subjection of women was always a part of masculinity, but not always its purpose or its central feature"; Karras continues, "Men might demonstrate their gender conformity by ostentatiously pursuing women and declaring love for them, as well as by oppressing them" (11). Women and other social inferiors were therefore a means by which a man could perform masculinity, either by showing romantic affection for women or by outright controlling them. The importance of these acts wasn't simply to do them, however, since masculinity was meant to be a public display to other male observers to show oneself as superior to them.

Though Karras' defines medieval masculinity primarily in terms of controlling others, masculinity also entailed control over one's own body. A man could regulate his body through ritual bloodletting practices, Peggy McCracken explains, which "construct gender difference through a focus on control and lack of control" (7). Derek G. Neal asserts that medieval masculinity formed

around “the well-ruled body...its gestures are controlled, its motions moderated” (153). The one-sex model of medieval gender assumed that the male body was complete and pure in comparison to the incompleteness and impurity of a female body, but bloodletting allowed a man to control his body even further:

Menstruation was an essential female bodily process that male bodies only sometimes imitated or were forced to perform. When they did either, it was almost always *their choice*: to be cut or to live a lifestyle that made their bodies spontaneously bleed. They suffered under no physiological imperative or supernatural curse, as did women and Jews. (Groeneveld 140, my emphasis)

Women’s menstrual bleeding was considered a physiological imperative or supernatural curse, one that implies that women couldn’t control their bleeding. This lack of control suggests that women’s bleeding was a feminine activity, but a man’s control over his bloodletting led to a performance of masculinity.

For men, bleeding was almost always their choice, whether by bloodletting or by combat. McCracken explains that “Men bleed prominently in medieval fiction to avenge unjust wrongs, and to impose justice,” all of which could add to a man’s masculine performances (10). Bloodshed in combat would seem to be a feminine performance in this case, however, because an opponent would penetrate the man and wound him, thereby causing his bleeding. Instead, McCracken notes, any blood lost in battle was “subsumed into a model of masculine heroics” in which the “value of masculine bloodshed as the controlled, public bloodshed of battle seems to depend on its difference from women’s blood, an uncontrolled bloodshed that remains private and hidden” (14). Again, blood in the Middle Ages is carefully dichotomized between the active, controlled bloodshed of men compared to the uncontrolled menstrual bleeding of women; men could choose to bleed, yet women

were forced to bleed by physiological imperative, and because bleeding was a choice for men, they could control their bodies and, ergo, perform masculinity.

In previous versions of my writing, I have argued that the imagery of *Pearl's* city space constructs the space as masculine, but this hinges on a masculine gendering of Christ in the text. Christ's gendering deals partly with the imagery of the city in what Michelle M. Sauer terms "performative essentialism." In the Middle Ages, "biology, social roles, and personal actions not only can determine gender, but also can change it" (*Gender* 12). Where modern scholars separate biological sex from gender construction, performative essentialism allows biological sex to provide a framework for a medieval person's gender construction. That said, New Jerusalem's phallic imagery is therefore important to Christ's gendering in *Pearl*. To Neal, the image of the phallus signals "that this is a *man's* body: both male and masculine" (133, original emphasis). Though this imagery speaks more toward Lefebvre's representation of space, it proves important to a discussion of the city space's gendering: the Dreamer explains to the Maiden that he would like to see her residence inside the city, yet she exclaims, "Þou may not enter wythinne hys *tor*" (*Pearl* 966, my emphasis). The Maiden's description of New Jerusalem as a tower offers an image charged with phallic and masculine power, thus pointing to Christ's masculine gendering in *Pearl*. Christ is also referred to as "prynce" throughout *Pearl* and the rest of the Cotton Nero poems, which furthermore points to Christ's masculine gendering via the poet's use of a masculine title. According to S. L. Clark and Julian N. Wasserman, "Christ *is*...Jerusalem," implying that Christ and the city are inherently connected and that Christ is the central figure of New Jerusalem (299, original emphasis). Because Christ and the heavenly city are linked, Christ's masculine gendering in *Pearl* also reflects a masculine gendering onto the city space.

This masculine gendering of *Pearl's* New Jerusalem is reinforced by the spatial practice of Christ's bleeding because he deliberately chooses to bleed, thereby suggesting that he is in control of

his own body. McCracken explains that the blood of sacrifice “is blood that is shed deliberately and with intention” (58). Shedding one’s blood deliberately and intentionally as Christ does in the city space would demonstrate control over his body, ergo a masculine performance. The Maiden reminds us that Christ’s suffering and bleeding was *his choice*. New Jerusalem is the place where Christ “con fonde / To soffer inne sor for maneȝ sake” (*Pearl* 939-940). The Maiden’s verbiage that the Lamb *con fonde to soffer* explicitly uses the word *fonde*, which the Middle English Dictionary (MED) defines as “desire,” suggesting that Christ’s suffering for humankind was *his* choice. This choice implies that Christ exerts masculine control over his body by actively shedding blood from his side wound, thereby marking the city space masculine as well.

Christ’s bleeding displays his control over his own body, but that bleeding also leads to a masculine performance of control over his brides, furthermore constructing the city space as masculine. This performance of control by Christ refers to “space syntax,” the analysis of how people move through the layout of a space and how that layout affects mobility for certain individuals. Sonit Bafna explains that “limiting the freedom of movement of others...creates...hierarchies of status that help to maintain social organization” (18). The Dreamer pays special attention to the wound at Christ’s side, saying that “þurȝ hyde torente. / Of his quite syde his blod out sprent” (*Pearl* 1135-1137). Here, the Dreamer notes the open wound in the Lamb’s hide, which echoes Steinberg’s descriptions of the wound’s form, but I am concerned more with the *function* of the bleeding here. As Christ the Lamb walks through the city, he leaves behind him a trail of blood in which the 144,000 brides *must* walk, thereby limiting their mobility within the space. Christ is exerting control over his thousands of brides because, as their leader, he and his trail of blood guide them through the city, thereby limiting their mobility. In terms of spatial syntax, Christ is performing masculinity by controlling the women’s movements with the blood pouring from his side, thereby constructing the city space as masculine in turn.

In addition to Christ's blood acting as a control over the women's mobility, the blood takes on a purifying function to control and mitigate the brides' polluting bodies. Bynum Walker's reading posits the side wound's blood as maternal and nurturing, ergo feminine, but she further explains that blood was typically seen as cleansing via medieval physiological studies; she notes that bleeding was essentially seen as purging, so "bleeding was an obvious symbol for cleansing expiation, and all Christ's bleedings were assimilated" (407). This purifying function of Christ's blood is seen specifically in *Pearl* in line 1137: the poet mentions that the blood *out sprent* from the Lamb's side wound, leaving a trail of blood for the brides to walk through in the city's streets. According to the MED, a *sprent* is "a sprinkler for holy water," thereby linking the cleansing function of holy water to the Lamb's cleansing blood.

Christ's bleeding exerts a masculine control over the women in *Pearl*'s heavenly city, marking this masculine and patriarchal space in which medieval women were to be carefully controlled because of their supposedly unclean bodies. According to A. J. Minnis, who draws from Thomas of Chobham, women were forbidden to wear sacred vestments or instruct men publicly "on account of the uncleanness of their menses" (122). McCracken confirms, "Menstrual blood, like other bodily wastes (urine or feces, for example) is anomalous...because it escapes the natural boundaries of the body by which it is normally contained" (5). Due to women's uncontrollable menstrual bleeding, women's bodies were considered unclean: "further, menstruum, even if only regarded as a superfluity of blood and not an impurity, was considered harmful and polluting, at very least to the body that produced it, but more commonly as well to other bodies with which it might come into contact" (Groeneveld 140). Women's lack of control in menstrual bleeding was seen as harmful and polluting, and it is Christ's cleansing blood that both controls the brides' mobility and purifies their supposed pollution, thereby marking this city space as patriarchal and masculine.

Though a woman could potentially gain the status of a man in the Middle Ages, this change was not physical and biological, and the woman's body was still considered unclean. St. Jerome explains, "long as woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But when she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, then she will cease to be a woman and will be called man." If a woman truly devotes herself to Christ, she is actively choosing to deny those maternal and nurturing performances associated with the female body, thus controlling her body and performing masculinity. In doing so, Vern L. Bullough notes, "the woman could control her sexuality, even go so far as to denying her sex, could enter on a higher plane of rationality to that of a male" (189). The devout woman could transcend her gender in a spiritual sense to become the equivalent of a man, yet she could not transcend her bodily sex. Her body was still unclean and polluting despite her devotion to Christ, and it is Christ's bleeding side wound in *Pearl* that cleanses the potential danger of pollution from the female bodies in the space of the heavenly city.

Christ's cleansing blood acts as a form of mimesis in the context of *Pearl* and is closely linked to anchoresses. An anchoress was a woman who devoted her life to Christ—and even became attached to Christ. Sauer explains that the anchoress lived her whole life in a cell that was built directly adjacent to the church, and "by being attached to the church itself, the anchoress was metaphorically attached to Christ, as his presence infused the sacred space" ("De blod" 128). It was a dangerous situation, however, to have the anchoress and her cell attached to the space of the church because of the pollution of her female body, but it was Christ that cleansed her body and mediated that danger. Sauer details:

the anchoress's body threatened the purity of the church, while Christ's stainless, bleeding body neutralized potential harm. When the two merge, his body becomes a stand in for hers, able to withstand sin and temptation, and able to overcome pollution and corruption through his saving blood. ("De blod" 123-124)

In this act of mimesis, Christ takes on the impurity of the anchoress's menstruation to mediate the pollution caused by her bleeding, and he bleeds through the side wound to neutralize the danger with the purity of his body. Christ's bleeding side wound is therefore necessary for the anchoress—specifically her female body—to take up residence in the church through mimesis.

The same could be said of the brides of Christ who follow the Lamb through the heavenly city, thus marking Christ's bleeding side wound in *Pearl* as a form of masculine control over the brides' bodies. Stanbury claims that the Maiden's transformation into a bride of Christ "allows the girl to be formally ordered and contained in a material structure," suggesting the same relationship that anchoresses had to their cells (39). The brides of Christ in *Pearl*, Stanbury contends, may exist only within the walls of the city space, implying that they are like anchoresses, and their cell is the space of New Jerusalem. By leaving this interpretation as it stands, Stanbury is looking at the form of the city space instead of its form *and* function, and this perhaps explains how she reached her conclusion that the heavenly city in *Pearl* is gendered feminine. Through mimesis, however, the bleeding side wound becomes a mechanism of masculine control which genders the city space as masculine. The only reason that the brides and their female bodies are even *allowed* into the city is because of Christ's mimetic bleeding which neutralizes the danger of their polluting bodies in the sacred space of New Jerusalem.

Again, I do not mean to reinscribe patriarchy onto *Pearl* in light of numerous feminist examination, but rather, I seek to recognize the patriarchal influences surrounding the text and how those patriarchal influences manifest themselves. The masculine, patriarchal space of New Jerusalem sheds light on the religious and political climate surrounding the poem's composition in fourteenth-century England in the conflict between the Church and the Lollard heresy. The Lollards contested that a major restructuring of the clergy was necessary in the pre-Reformation Church, even going to so far as suggesting that "all believers living holy lives, male or female, could be priests" (McSheffrey

204). To the orthodox Church, the idea of women taking authoritative and instructional roles over men—especially in public—was unheard of because of the supposed pollution of women’s bodies as compared to men’s bodies. The female body was a specific impediment to the ordination of women in the Church; according to Minnis, “the possibility of receiving holy orders relates to men alone, since only they can naturally represent Christ” due to their male bodies (116-117). Men and their male bodies were natural stand-ins for Christ in delivering the sacraments, and those male bodies required none of the precautions taken against women’s polluting female bodies. This contention from the Lollards proved a significant threat to the sacred—and patriarchal—space of the Church.

*Pearl* therefore links the space of the heavenly city to the sacred space of the fourteenth-century Church to suggest that women and their polluting bodies must be carefully controlled. Though the *Pearl*-poet hints at a reformation of the clergy in his chastisement of unclean priests at the beginning of *Cleanness*, it seems a far cry to suggest that the poet joined the ranks of the Lollards. In the conclusion of *Pearl*, the Dreamer states that it is mad that others go “against Thy pay” to oppose or displease the Lord (*Pearl* 1199-1200). In the context of the fourteenth century, this Lollard threat against the Church represents those mad individuals who go against God and the Church. Cecilia A. Hatt explains that “We see depicted in *Pearl* a church triumphant, imagined as a city,” furthermore linking the masculine space of the heavenly city to the medieval Church (63). The poet constructs the heavenly city as a masculine space meant for masculine roles, and by examining the time period of *Pearl*’s composition, it appears more fitting to acknowledge the patriarchal influences surrounding and emanating from the poem that so strictly limit women’s mobility and agency.



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Gayle Gaskill  
St. Catherine University  
[ggaskill@stkate.edu](mailto:ggaskill@stkate.edu)

### ***Twelfth Night: Cross-Dressing as a Cautionary Tale***

Though wistful and romantic, when viewed in the context of its source materials, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* displays itself as a fierce cautionary tale, the dangerous escapades of a young woman freed by terrible accident not only from patriarchal regulation but also from patriarchal protection until at the eleventh hour arbitrary fortune and dramatic convention rescue her from death and dishonor. In 1602, when Shakespeare's last joyous comedy molded her into Viola, the cross-dressed, loving heroine was already an established crowd-pleaser. Geoffrey Bullough traces her literary sources through a half dozen stage plays and four prose narratives from 1537 to 1595, and Shakespeare had already employed the device five times himself, most recently in Rosalind of *As You Like It*. He would use it once more in *Cymbeline* as the faithful Imogen's desperate strategy to escape a double murder plot. In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare also returns to an older but equally favored comic device, the confusion of twins, a trick he borrowed from the ancient Roman comedy of Plautus for *The Comedy of Errors*. In contrast to the bold male twins of *Errors*, each of them matched with a protective male servant, Viola, from her play's second scene to its last, must negotiate her fate with no reliable defender and no confidant save the audience. Moreover, by passing herself off as the male Cesario, Viola endangers other

characters as well as herself and possibly—according to the era’s theological debates—the audience as well. Shakespeare’s two most obvious literary sources explicitly warn female audience members against the deceptions of carnal love and demand that women regulate their appetites by reason, and each source illustrates the warning with multiple mischiefs accruing from a woman’s unruly decision to disguise her gender and pursue the man she loves.

The earliest dramatic precedent for romantic intrigues involving a woman masquerading as male is probably the 1537 Italian comedy *Gl’Ingannati* (*The Deceived Ones*), a farce from the Academy of the Intronati at Siena. Though not available to Shakespeare in English, it stands as a model not only for Viola’s male disguise as a favored page to Duke Orsino, whom she loves, but also for her unintentionally successful and thus discomfiting courtship of Olivia, the Duke’s stubbornly resistant beloved. It also models Orsino’s consequent fury at his servant’s betrayal and the timely return of a brother who resembles Viola so closely as to substitute for her as Olivia’s suitor until the endangered page recovers her female identity sufficiently to win the Duke’s declaration of love. It is likely, according to Naseeb Shaheen, that Shakespeare’s grasp of Italian was adequate to comprehend this popular comedy and to select its richest plot elements for his own work, though notably he modifies the salacious humor of the original servants and essentially supplants the greedy, foolish old fathers—stock blocking characters—in favor of the exquisitely drawn Malvolio subplot. Thus, as Kenneth Muir shows, Shakespeare subtracts the comic old suitor from his cross-dressed heroine’s troubles and multiplies the hopeless wooers who pursue her rival for the Duke’s love (75). Viola’s mournful isolation contrasts poignantly with Olivia’s busy Elizabethan household.

Because of her convincing masculine attire, Viola’s *Gl’Inganatti* counterpart, Lelia, is threatened with a scandalous reputation: midway through the action, her father histrionically

denounces her as “a whore” (3.3), a label that could devastate her marriageability and one that *Twelfth Night* altogether resists. As Peter Sallibrass insists, a daring Elizabethan woman earns accusations of harlotry simply for speaking and frequenting public space. For example, Desdemona’s comic, energetic charm at the start of *Othello* turns tragically to fatal evidence of her infidelity once “she becomes the object of surveillance” (127; 141). In her safer, comic genre, Lelia still anticipates Viola’s frustrations, for despite her efforts to convince Flamminio, the Orsino counterpart, that he should abandon his suit to “cruel” Isabella, the model for Olivia, “and attach yourself to some other woman who loves you,” and despite Flamminio’s recollection of past love from “the most beautiful, accomplished and courteous young lady in the city, . . . Lelia, who . . . is the very image of you” (2.1), Flamminio persists in using her as a page called Fabio to convey his love to Isabella. Lelia suffers still more for love when Flamminio tells her as Fabio “that I love Lelia no longer; that, on the contrary, I hate her and cannot bear to hear her named” (2.7). Shakespeare spares Viola this humiliation by only vaguely hinting of her prior awareness of the Duke, when she recognizes his name at its first mention: “Orsino. I have heard my father name him. / He was a bachelor then” (1.2.27-28), and much later the Duke recognizes Viola’s family identity as he hears his cross-dressed page confess to her brother that she/he is “Of Messaline. Sebastian was my father.” The Duke interrupts that astonishing family reunion to declare of Sebastian and thus of his twin: “Right noble is his blood” (5.1.222; 254). As Nancy Hayles indicates, the evocation of Viola’s father in one breath with the Duke at both the start and conclusion of her male disguise “links ambiguity of sexual identity with a concern that this ambiguity can be exploited by super-human forces for evil ends” (68). For both spiritual and physical safety, Viola craves a male protector, and as Suzanne Penuel points out, her Cesario identity is less a celebration of freedom than an expression of concealed grief at her loss of father

and brother alike (74). Unlike Lelia, Viola is not struggling to rekindle an old love, but like her she discovers that the cross-dressing that permits her intimate conversation with the man she loves also silences any expression of her own amorous feelings. Lelia rails against herself: “Lelia! Why do you waste time serving this cruel man? All is of no avail—your patience, your prayers, the good deeds you have done for him; and now your disguise is no longer pleasant” (2.7). Similarly, Viola, who early admits, “Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness” (2.2.26), riskily hints to Orsino that her father’s daughter “never told her love / But . . . sat like Patience on a monument/ Smiling at grief” (2.4.107-08; 111-12). As Karen Greif comments, Viola “learns that the freedom playing permits her is only circumscribed liberty” (122). Premature admission of her true sex in a male-dominated environment would humiliate and endanger Lelia or Viola, yet each draws the audience’s attention to her sorrows by suspensefully hinting her secret to her beloved.

Each faces a murder threat as well. In *Gl’Ingannati*, after Flamminio’s jealous servant Crivello tells his master to distrust the talented Fabio, he and a fellow servant espy Isabella kissing the disguised Lelia, and the men offer lecherous interpretative commentary:

Crivello: Alas, alas, I thirst! Do it to me please! . . .

Scatizza: Every fowl scratches for itself; and in brief, all women are made alike.

(2.5)

By promptly reporting the surreptitious kiss, Crivello stirs his master into a rage: “I’ll kill them both. . . Isabella and Fabio. I’ll have such a revenge!” (2.8). Shakespeare’s Orsino is less melodramatic and more calculating, for he requires no servant’s report to attribute Olivia’s rejection of him to her preference for Cesario but announces that “A savage jealousy / That sometime savors nobly” inspires him to “sacrifice the lamb that I do love / to spite a raven’s

heart within a dove.” With theatrical efficiency, Shakespeare condenses the rejected lover’s rant and combines his violent threat with a bewildered first declaration of love for the long-suffering page, who masochistically confesses that she “to do you rest a thousand deaths would die” (5.1.112-13; 123-24; 126). This newly docile Viola appears beaten by the role she had eagerly originated when she first heard Orsino named. Leah Scragg observes, Viola’s “assumption of an alien persona . . . leads not to freedom of action and self-fulfillment but to passivity and emotional attrition” (58). Nor is this Viola’s first threat of death, for she has survived drowning to face Sir Andrew’s challenge, and though the audience knows Andrew “hath the gift of a coward to allay the gust he hath in quarreling” (1.3.27-28), Viola seems to believe Sir Toby’s claim that Andrew’s quarrel with her cannot be satisfied “but by pangs of death and sepulcher” (3.4.215). Her rapier, the prop that identifies her as “a gentleman” (1.5.261), betrays her into mortal danger, as she believes, and ironically emphasizes “how much I lack of a man” (3.4.272). Additionally, it betrays Antonio, her twin’s devoted follower, who rescues her from Sir Andrew’s sword only to face arrest by the Duke’s officers. Viola’s duel, like Antonio’s dilemma, has no precise counterpart in *Gl’Ingannati*. Instead *Twelfth Night* multiplies the unforeseen dangers its unregulated, cross-dressed heroine brings upon herself and on all she encounters.

In contrast to the crudely jokey *Gl’Ingannati*, which frankly displays its roots in Italian *Commedia*, Shakespeare’s English source, Barnaby Riche’s didactic prose narrative “Apolonius and Silla” (1581) emphasizes the dangers of male disguise not only to the temporary transvestite but also to those she deceives. For example, in the smirking Italian comedy, Isabella’s dishonorable pre-marital sexual encounter is broadly hinted but instantly resolved into a respectable marriage. When Lelia’s brother, Fabrizio, arrives unannounced, her father and

Isabella's father mistake him for his cross-dressed sister and lock him up with Isabella, who is already enamored of Lelia in her role as Fabio (3.7). Isabella's maid directs her description of their offstage encounter to the ladies in the audience:

Those two old dunces [the fathers] . . . gave me the key. I thought I'd go and see what they [Isabella and Fabrizio] were doing, and what do you think? I found them with their arms round each other, kissing and cuddling! . . . [It did not take long for Isabella—and me—to see that he was a man.] . . . If any of you ladies don't believe me and wants to prove it, I'll lend her the key. (4.5)

Lest an audience miss the ribaldry over Isabella's eager forfeit of her chastity, the maid soon reports of the wedding: "Before he gave her the ring, my young mistress had given him something too! I know it all" (5.3). *Twelfth Night* is more circumspect on the subject of Olivia's self-regulated sexuality, for though the countess pursues Sebastian with unseemly comical haste, she is merely "betrothed both to a maid and man" (5.1.253), in other words to "a man who is a virgin," as Stephen Greenblatt's footnote insists, until the two shall "crown th'alliance" (5.1.305) in a state wedding. More safely, the pompous, socially unruly Malvolio substitutes as the comedy's chief laughingstock. Nonetheless, Viola's unregulated pursuit of her deception unintentionally exposes the infatuated, fatherless countess to grave danger from public shame, as Riche's didactic tale warns at length. In 1901, in fact, in his variorum edition of *Twelfth Night*, the editor, Howard Furness, blithely deleted "a page and a half of commonplace moralizing on the vagaries of love" from Riche's introduction (328), thus anticipating Shakespeare's artistic restraint.

Riche's lovesick Silla, like Lelia of *Gl'Ingannati*, assumes male dress to pursue the man who has rejected her, and like both Lelia and Viola she serves him as page and proxy wooer to



the disdainful lady who prefers the reluctant messenger to the persistent master. Once again, the unexpected arrival of the cross-dressed heroine's brother and their close resemblance resolve the romantic riddle, but Riche's Julina, Olivia's counterpart, bears the public shame of a pregnancy long before Fortune draws her insouciant lover to an honorable marriage. Riche raises the stakes by elevating his protagonists' social class, for just as Apolonius is a Duke like Orsino, Silla and her brother Silvio are a Duke's children. Julina, meanwhile, is a widow whose illustrious late husband has left her "large possessions and greate livinges" sufficient to inspire the previously warlike young duke, again like Orsino, to "become a scholler in love's schoole" (Riche, cited in Bullough 351). Like Shakespeare's daring young noblewomen, Julina and Silla escape patriarchal regulation, for the first is a widow and the second a runaway whose protective male servant dies in the shipwreck that strands her in Constantinople, where her beloved Duke reigns. Riche stresses his ingénue's vulnerability from the start: whereas Viola's sea captain rescues her, collaborates in her disguise, and retains the evidence of her identity, Silla's captain attempts to rape her at sea. Just after Silla determines to preserve her virginity by suicide, a sudden storm rescues her, and she survives the wreck by floating ashore on the despicable captain's sea chest filled with "good store of coine and sondrie sutes of apparel." Utterly alone in her distress, Silla self-consciously wears the captain's apparel and takes her brother's name, ominously "to prevent a number of injuries that might bee proffered to a woman that was lefte in her case" (350). Self-consciousness, as Juliet Dusinberre indicates, is one part of the unanticipated torment of cross-dressing (252), for it recalls the absent brother who can no longer shield her from danger or sympathize with her plight. Apolonius fails to penetrate the agonizing Silla's disguise but employs her as his love messenger. Riche interrupts his story to caution female readers against risking anguish like hers: "Now gentilwomen, doe you thinke there could have been a greater

torment devised wherewith to afflict the harte of Silla?" (351). Still greater suffering awaits both of Riche's heroines.

Before the tale is done, Julina will be pregnant and the friendless, cross-dressed Silla locked in Apolonius's dungeon. Seeking his missing sister and pursuing revenge against the servant who, as he thinks, has eloped with her, Silvio encounters the lovelorn and misguided Julina, who invites him to dinner. Though he knows her elevated social position, Silvio irresponsibly accepts the pleasures of his hostess's bed as well as those of her table so that, as Riche coyly but caustically comments, Julina, "feeding too much of some one dishe above the reste, received a surfet whereof she could not bee cured in fourtie weekes after, a natural inclination in all women which are subjecte to longyng, and want the reason to use a moderation in their diet." An unencumbered cad, Silvio, "for feare of further evilles, determined to come no more there, but took his journey towards other places" (354). Like Shakespeare's Orsino, Apolonius bitterly relinquishes his courtship when his lady tells him she has given power over herself "to another, whose wife I now remaine by faithfull vowe and promise" (355). Julina, however, has substituted sex for Olivia's betrothal contract sworn before a priest (4.3.22-24). Servants' gossip identifies Silla/Silvio as Julina's lover, and Apolonius "without any further respect, caused [his page] to be thrust into a dungeon, where [she]/he was kept prisoner in a verie pitifull plight," her "petitions and supplications to the Duke" (356) going unnoticed. Lacking the drama's alacrity, Riche's narrative stretches the unjust incarceration far longer than Malvolio's torment in the dark house (4.2) until Julina, "perceiving no decoction of her former surfette . . . and . . . fearing to become quite bankrout of her honour" desperately pleads with the Duke, who confronts Silla with her/his double treachery. When Julina bravely defends her beloved and, like Olivia, announces their "pli [gh]ted faithe," Silla further shames her with a scolding in

her manly manner: “a woman is, or should be, the image of curtesie, continencie, and shamfastnesse, from the whiche so sone as she stoopeth, and leaveth the office of her duetie and modestie, besides the degradation of her honour, she thrusteth her self into the pitte of perpetuall infamie” (358). Riche underscores Silla’s warning with his own, for no sooner does his Julina admit her pregnancy than he interjects more advice to “gentilwomen”:

For God’s love take heede, and let this bee an example to you, when you be with childe, how you sweare who is the father before you have had good prooffe and knowledge of the partie; for men be so subtill and full of sleight that, God knoweth, a woman may quickly be deceived. (359)

In another paragraph, the barrage of high-strung accusations and counter-accusations leads the Duke to draw his rapier on Silla, who begs a private audience with Julina to demonstrate, as Viola considers doing, “how much I lack of a man” (3.4.272). Dramatically showing “Julina his breastes and pretie teates, surmounting farre the whitenesse of snowe itself,” Silla identifies herself by gender and social class, “a woman, the daughter of a noble Duke” (361), brought to sorrow by her unregulated love and dishonestly disguised gender.

Viola’s revelation of her identity is, by contrast, poignant rather than graphic as she marvels in the recovery of her lost brother instead of complaining she is love’s martyr, but Shakespeare follows Riche in moving quickly to the plot’s resolution. Silla’s confession, of course, prompts Apolonius to recognize her as the daughter of his erstwhile host, the Duke of Cyprus, to praise her “true love moste pure and unfained,” and to provide “sondrie sutes of sumptuous apparel” that designate her a female aristocrat, a signal costume change into “maid’s garments” (5.1.265) that Shakespeare’s hurried stage action cannot provide. Unlike Olivia, however, Riche’s publicly humiliated Julina goes home “with suche greefe and sorrowe, that she

purposed never to come out of her owne doors againe alive, to be a wonder and mocking stocke to the worlde,” while Silla, her mischief completed, relinquishes an irregular and nearly disastrous foray into masculine masquerade by marrying the Duke “with greate triumphe” (362). News of the “wonderful and strange” ducal wedding draws the errant Silvio back to Constantinople, where he blushingly sorts out the mystery of Julina’s pregnancy, and in Riche’s last sentences he apologetically marries her. His bride is “ravished with joye” (363), and with no evident authorial irony, patriarchal regulation of women’s physical and social bodies triumphs in the persons of a pair of high-born, morally feckless bridegrooms and their chastened brides. With its elusive music, its witty dialogue, its sympathetic characters, its complex plots and subplots, and a tone that surges between clownishness and melancholy, *Twelfth Night* is unquestionably a richer work than either the Italians’ farce or the Englishman’s sullen homily. In reviving the beloved literary prototype of a clever, cross-dressed, love-stricken maiden forced by the man she desires to woo another woman on his behalf until her matching brother resolves all dilemmas, Shakespeare resurrects not only an entertaining plot of confused identities but also a cautionary tale of the dangers in store for naïve women who attempt to regulate the social roles their own bodies dictate.

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Kara McCabe  
Tufts University  
[Kara.McCabe@tufts.edu](mailto:Kara.McCabe@tufts.edu)

### **The Story of Space in *The Winter's Tale***

The story of space in *The Winter's Tale* includes more than physical space. Within the world of the play, and in service to my argument, space includes the physical body, the space of misinterpretation, and the space encompassed in the gap of time. By employing anthropological concepts, my aim is to account for the critically troublesome gap of time at the center of the play.

In his essay “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage”, Victor Turner describes rites of transition as occurring in three distinct phases: “separation, margin (or *limen*), and aggregation”.<sup>1</sup> Within this model Turner explains that, “The first phase of separation comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure...; during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject...is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state; in the third phase the passage is consummated.”<sup>2</sup>

While Turner developed his theories through close study of tribal cultures, the progression through a state which is stable and references a set of social norms to one in which the subject is, to

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<sup>1</sup> Turner, Victor. “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage.” *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*. Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster, and Meredith Little, ed. Open Court, 1994. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

use Turner's phrase "structurally, if not physically, 'invisible'", is useful in understanding the way that Hermione's pregnant body progresses from a state in which she is an expectant queen consort to a protracted liminality in which she is both keenly alive and quite dead. By establishing this anthropological model in order to understand the liminality present in the play, we are able to reshape the gap of time into a productive space which produces movement toward future stability.

At the play's opening, Hermione's position at court and within her family has moved out of the stage of separation and toward the liminal state of pregnancy. She has produced one heir and her body "rounds space" as she expects a second child (2.1.21). Ideally, the physical manifestations of pregnancy moves Hermione from a stable state before pregnancy through the pregnancy itself and finally onto the postnatal phase. Because pregnancy was a risky endeavor for both mother and child, the mother's lying-in represented a retreat from society, a time during which the mother's body moves into the enclosed space of the birthing room and would only exit after recovering from childbirth. The birthing chamber was closed off to everyone at the onset of labor, except those female friends and relatives who would assist both the mother and the midwife: "Childbirth took place in a separate, darkened room. Only adult women were present...and even after the incursion of the male midwife, the majority of women gave birth in an all-female environment."<sup>3</sup> The birthing space was essential to a successful birth, and even those mothers who were not wealthy enough to have a separate room in their home dedicated to labor and delivery would create a space within their lodging in which to give birth. One of the essential features of the birthing space, regardless of its physical characteristics, was its boundary. This boundary, permeable only to those women in attendance at the birth, was meant not to keep the birth in, but rather to keep men and young women out.<sup>4</sup> The boundary of the birthing chamber also functioned to protect the mother's body.

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<sup>3</sup> Mendelson, Sarah and Patricia Crawford. *Women in Early Modern England*. Clarendon Press, 1998. 153.

Humoral theory supported balance in all things, and the radical opening of the body through birth presented a dangerous shift. The deconstruction of the barrier of the body allows for the child to be born, but the body then required a separate boundary, that of the birthing chamber, to remain intact. The birthing chamber is only reopened after birth to allow the child to move out of the space. The mother remains in the birthing chamber until the danger has passed and she is able to move back into society. As the child is birthed from the mother's body, the mother thus leaves the womb of the birthing chamber and is reborn again in a ceremony that resembles baptism.

Several weeks after the birth, Early Modern mothers re-entered society through churching in which the mother signaled her return to the community through her ceremonial return to church. In the Protestant Church, "churching signaled the woman's status as a mother, her community's recognition of her experience, and her own thanksgiving for her survival".<sup>5</sup> In its original iteration, a woman would move through the churching ceremony in order to celebrate the birth of her child and renew her commitment to the community. She enters the church as a shadow of her public self, having been interred in the birthing room for many weeks, and emerges as a member of her community once again, refashioned as a mother or remade again as a mother two, four, or six times over.

Hermione is denied both the traditions of the birthing room and churching. Instead, the jail becomes her birthing room and the court her church. Traditionally, the boundary of the birthing chamber was controlled by women, and while Hermione is attended by women within the space of the jail, creating a proto-birthing chamber, the boundary of that space is controlled by Leontes' guards. Male agency thus acts on a female space in a way that creates a false birthing chamber which is permeable only to previously prohibited male bodies. Male control further influences the churching ceremony that follows birth.

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<sup>5</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 154.



Hermione is *symbolically* churching by being forced to appear in court so soon after the birth of her daughter. She returns to the community in appearing outside of the birthing chamber, but does not gain recognition as a mother and is unable to offer thanks to God or celebrate the birth of her child. From her position as a marginalized mother, she addresses the ways in which she has been denied this important right of passage. In Act 3, Scene 2 she lists for her husband all that she has lost:

My third comfort,  
Starred most unluckily, is from my breast,  
The innocent milk in it most innocent mouth,  
Haled out to murder; myself on every post  
Proclaimed a strumpet; with immodest hatred  
The childbed privilege denied, which 'longs  
To women of all fashion; lastly, hurried  
Here, to this place, i'th' open air, before  
I have got strength of limit. (3.2.94-104)

Rather than celebrating the return of an intact body into society, Hermione's subverted churching in the court becomes an unstable birth in which a male figure remakes her body and reads onto it the **sins** that he hopes to find there. The birth of this symbolically complex body into the court rather than a church, and her escape from the womb of the jail, forces her to maintain her original sin without the possibility of being redeemed through prayers of thanksgiving. Her child, the traditional locus of sin that is cleared through baptism, is denied the baptismal right and sent out to be murdered. Any prayer of thanksgiving that Hermione might have offered in her movement out of

the birthing chamber is silenced by the loss of her daughter, her own mistreatment, and the change of station from queen to prisoner that defies the patterns of traditional rights of passage.

The lack of redemption open to Hermione is largely due to Leontes' inability to read Hermione's body correctly. Hermione's pregnancy, regardless of the power that Leontes can exercise in moving her physical body into new and inappropriate spaces, is well beyond his authority. He cannot control the child or the progress of his wife's pregnancy any more than he can control the weather. In her article, "Early Modern Dramatizations of Virgins and Pregnant Women," Monika Karpinska describes the pregnant body as "nonrational": "This physical image of the divide between man and woman reinforces the 'deep distrust of all things nonrational...all of which are equated with the feminine' and that are central to representations of the power of pregnant wives."<sup>6</sup> The laws of man are no match to the laws of nature, and Leontes' inability to control and understand the pregnancy and his wife's body serves as a destabilization of his control. Hermione's pregnancy and the issues of paternity that it represents disrupts Leontes' position and results in the unconscious fashioning of a new liminal space for the king himself. The liminal space in which Leontes passes through the gap of time, with Paulina acting as both confessor and jailor, is not my project in this particular paper. It is, however, fruitful ground in which to explore the ways that liminality can be gendered within the structure of the play.

The collapse which precipitates Hermione's death comes at the news that Mamillius, her firstborn son, has died: "The Prince your son, with mere conceit and fear / Of the Queen's speed, is gone. / How? Gone? / Is dead." (3.2.156-159). The death of a child was not uncommon during the Early Modern period. 25 percent of children would die before their first birthday and another 25 percent before their tenth birthday.<sup>7</sup> Mothers did not suffer the deaths of their children without

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<sup>6</sup> Karpinska, Monika. "Early Modern Dramatizations of Virgins and Pregnant Women". *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 50.2 (2010). 439.

<sup>7</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 156.

grief, however common the loss. Mendelson and Crawford provide us with two recorded examples of a mother's mourning from the period: "In 1647 Lady Mary Verney was so distressed at the deaths of two of her children 'that she spake idly for two nights and sometimes did not know her friends'. In 1680, Elizabeth Stout 'was afflicted with great sorrow by the death of her two youngest sones...she continued in much sorrow for a long time'".<sup>8</sup> Any grief that Hermione suffers, however, is done in Paulina's gallery as a part of her own living death, separate from the text of the play. We do not see her grieve, as she collapses immediately upon hearing the news that Mamillius is lost. Though the portrayal of her mourning is missing, there is still something to bear on the undeniable human experience of loss. Hermione has just given birth to a daughter that was taken from her, and to her knowledge, "Haled out to murder" (3.2.99). Compound this with her weakened state and the death of her first child and only son, and it is natural that she should *appear* to die, the destruction of her body following the destruction of her station as queen, as well as the bodies of her children, and the love that she had for her husband.

We do not doubt that Hermione's faint is real, but Paulina's interpretation of her body shapes the action into a theater of death rather than the reality of physiological death: "This news is mortal to the queen," she says. "Look down and see what death is doing." (3.2.163-164). Once Hermione's body has been removed from the court, Paulina gains further agency over the creation of Hermione's body in its liminal state. Though Hermione is not dead, Paulina declares that she is so:

Oh lords,  
When I have said, cry woe! – the Queen, the Queen,  
The sweet'st, dear'st creature'd dead, and vengeance for't  
Not dropped down yet...

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<sup>8</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 156.

I say she's dead. I'll swear 't. If word nor oath  
Prevail not, go and see. If you can bring  
Tincture or luster in her lip, her eye,  
Heat outwardly or breath within, I'll serve you  
As I would do the gods. (3.2.218-228)

In taking over control of Hermione's body, Paulina becomes midwife to her mistress. She becomes both a shaper of bodies and a shaper of truths. In removing Hermione from the court, shielding her from Leontes' misreading, *Paulina creates the gap of time*, the protracted liminal space in which Hermione waits for her daughter's return and Leonte's atones for his sins. In acting as both protector and confessor, Paulina keeps the queen alive and the king apart.

The liminal state in rights of passage is akin to death. Turner explains that "The subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, 'invisible'" (6). The invisibility of the subject is akin to death. He is neither seen nor heard by his community and cannot participate in daily life until he has moved through the liminal stage. Hermione is made invisible in the liminal stage at the center of *The Winter's Tale*. The audience does not see her, and all of the characters in the play, except Paulina, are sure that she has died of heartache and rough treatment.

Hermione returns to the stage in the final scene as a symbolic body. The statue appears magical, and Paulina draws on the vocabulary of magic, witches, and wonder in order to shield the reality of Hermione's confinement. Turner reads the symbolic body as one in which "The symbolism attached to and surrounding the liminal *persona* is complex and bizarre... They give an outward and visible form to an inward and conceptual process. The structure of "invisibility" of liminal *personae* has a twofold character. They are at once no longer classified and not yet classified." (6). The symbolic body portrayed as a statue is the last moment in which Hermione is kept in a

liminal space. Her descent from the dais marks her transition into aggregation. Before she greets her daughter, however, she embodies Turner's concept – she is no longer classified by the cloister in which she lived protected for 16 years nor has she stepped back into her role as queen and mother. Hermione's statue is better suited to represent the liminal space in the gap of time than Time herself, who is only on stage for a moment.

In the final scene, Leontes is in awe of the artistry that built the statue which looks so much like his late wife. He enumerates her lifelike qualities to those in attendance: “Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed / Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she / In thy not chiding, for she was as tender as infancy and grace...See, my lord / Would you not deem it breathed/ and that those veins / Did verily bear blood?...Still methinks / There is an air comes from her. What fine chisel / Could ever yet cut breath? Let no man mock me, / for I will kiss her.”(5.3.--). Leontes' kiss threatens the closed symbol of the stone body, a body which belongs to Paulina in its liminal state: “If I had thought the sight of my poor image / Would thus have wrought you – for the stone is mine - / I'd not have showed it.” (5.3.68-71). The statue of Hermione is Paulina's “poor image” and the “stone is [hers]”. It is Paulina, not time, that controls the liminal space.

In commanding Hermione to descend, Paulina leads her through to aggregation. As Paulina is the midwife, the shaper of bodies, she is also the elder who guides the neophyte through the transitional right so that she is reborn in a new station in the final stage:

‘Tis time. Descend. Be stone no more. Approach.

Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come,

I'll fill your grave up. Stir, nay, come away.

Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him

Dear life redeems you. – You perceive she stirs.

Start not. Her actions shall be holy as

You hear my spell is lawful. Do not shun her  
Until you see her die again, for then  
You kill her double. Nay, present your hand.  
When she was young, you woo-ed her; now in age  
Is she become the suitor? (5.3.125-135)

Our hope is that, with her descent, Hermione regains the agency that was lost in the first half of the play. We hope that she is able to right the wrongs done to her and come into a power that is greater or equal to that of her husband. She does not. In descending, Hermione reenters the world that she left and while she is new and different, having passed through the liminal stage, itself a crucible for change, the world that she left behind is much the same. The King still has power over his queen, and Leontes attempts to put everything to rights in his final speech. He marries Paulina to Camillo and Perdita to Florizel, and finally repairs his broken friendship with Polixenes.

Hermione's survival in the liminal stage does not keep her for her husband, but for her daughter. Hermione's descent into aggregation gives her the permission to greet her husband with silence, instead turning to embrace Perdita, the true reason for her survival. Hermione is not the only silent player at the play's close, however. Mamillius, Hermione's first child, is a silent player in the final scene. While his physical presence on stage is not indicated in the first folio of 1623, he is sometimes present in modern productions as a ghostly presence and a reminder of all that has gone wrong. Whether his presence is figurative or literal, the loss of Mamillius is keenly felt when Hermione is finally reunited with her daughter. The queen has passed through the liminal stage, 16 years of survival in death, and emerged as a symbolically new body, reborn from absence. This does not mean, however, that the end of the play offers a happy resolution. Mamillius is left behind in

the gap of time that makes up the liminal space in the play. Not quite a child and not yet a man, Mamillius is lost.

I propose that it is not the liminal space, but this lingering loss, which serves to destabilize the conclusion of the play's narrative. The threads that run throughout each act are not rejoined into a pattern that we can read easily. The king is reunited with his queen and their lost daughter is found, but we cannot forgive or forget the sins of the father. Victor Turner's anthropological concept of rights of passage provides a map to understand Hermione's liminal body and the functioning of the gap of time at the center of the play. This new theoretical map does not, however, correct the loss of the young prince. For all that has been regained in the play's aggregation, his is the loss that we feel we cannot explain at the conclusion this problematic play.



Professor Emeritus, South Dakota State University  
[Bruce.Brandt@SDSTATE.EDU](mailto:Bruce.Brandt@SDSTATE.EDU)

## Young Hamlets

Three recent works feature characters based on Shakespeare's Prince Hamlet: Ian McEwan's *Nutshell*, Matt Haig's *The Dead Fathers Club*, and David Davalos's *Wittenberg*. The three Hamlet characters are all younger than Shakespeare's Hamlet: one is a current-day third-trimester infant nearing birth, one is an eleven-year old boy living in modern England, and one is Hamlet prior to the events of Shakespeare's play when he is a senior studying at the University of Wittenberg. All three works rely on the reader's knowledge of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* for their full effectiveness, and all three lead the reader back to an enriched engagement with *Hamlet*.

The youngest of the Hamlets is the unnamed narrator of McEwan's *Nutshell*. The title alludes to Prince Hamlet's retort to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams" (2.2.256-7). The nutshell that confines McEwan's Hamlet is his mother Trudy's uterus, where he floats "fully inverted, not an inch of space to myself, knees crammed against belly" (1). His head and thoughts, he tells us, "are fully engaged. I've no choice, my ear is pressed all day and night against the bloody walls. I listen, make mental notes, and I'm troubled. I'm hearing pillow talk of deadly intent and I'm terrified by what awaits me, by what might draw me in" (1). His terror arises because, as his self-awareness has grown, he has discovered that his "mother *is* involved in a plot," which means that he is also involved,



“even if,” he says, “my role might be to foil it, Or if I, reluctant fool, come to term too late, then to avenge it.”

Given that he is still unborn, McEwan’s still-unnamed Hamlet has little opportunity to mimic actions within the play. McEwan does introduce a ghost, though it is not his Hamlet who is haunted. Instead, Hamlet’s mother Trudy breaks into tears recalling a pet cat from her youth for whose death she feels responsible, and young Hamlet is taken aback by the fact that his mother, who is contemplating cold-blooded murder, could be haunted by “the ghost of an old cat [...] demanding revenge for its own stolen life” (49). Another such oblique allusion is that Hamlet’s father, John Cairncross, is a poet and a publisher, and rather than a choir of angels, a memorial reading by fifty poets will guide him to his rest.

The eleven-year-old protagonist of Haig’s *The Dead Fathers Club* is Philip Noble. Presenting many clear parallels to the plot of *Hamlet*, the novel begins just after the funeral of Philip’s father. His father’s ghost appears to Philip, and only to Philip, to tell him that the car crash that killed him was not an accident, but that his brother Alan had tampered with the car’s brakes. Reappearing repeatedly throughout the novel, the ghost’s message is always the same. Philip must avenge his murder by killing his Uncle Alan, and he must do so soon, or else his father’s spirit will suffer eternally in what he calls the “Terrors.” These “Terrors” are unlike the purgatorial fires in which Hamlet’s father suffers to atone for “the foul crimes done in [his] days of nature” (1.5.14). Rather, Philip is told that only murder victims become ghosts, that all ghosts experience the “Terrors,” and that unless avenged, the murdered person remains a ghost forever.

In addition to their concern for vengeance, Philip and the ghost are disturbed both by Uncle Alan’s courtship of Philip’s mother and by the changes he has introduced in running the pub owned by Philip’s parents: The Castle and Falcon. (The ghost’s T-shirt proclaims him to be the king of the castle). Philip’s girlfriend, Leah Fairchild, mirrors Ophelia. She has an older father who, like

Polonius, is fond of aphorisms, though his are consistently biblical. She also has a tough older brother who strives to protect her. Mr. Fairchild ultimately dies in a fire set by Philip in the belief that the victim will be his uncle, and in her grief, Leah attempts suicide by jumping from a bridge into the fierce torrent of the river below. At this point Haig conspicuously breaks the parallels to *Hamlet*. Philip jumps into the river and rescues Leah, but he himself is trapped in the current. He is saved by Uncle Alan, who then returns to the water, mistakenly thinking that a third person is still there. Uncle Alan is pulled unconscious from the river and taken to the hospital, where he flatlines at the very end of the novel.

Haig reinforces our awareness of the importance of *Hamlet* to his story with numerous brief allusions to language or events within the play. For example, at the beginning of the novel Philip mentions that the regulars at the pub are smoking Hamlet cigars (which was in fact a well-known brand in Great Britain). He has named his pet angelfish Gertrude (Gertie for short), which he thinks “is a funny name” (63). Listing ways to kill his uncle, Philip notes that “You can pour poison into someones ear when they sleep and it kills them” (126). He eliminates this option since poison stores no longer exist, and he doesn’t know if weedkiller would work if poured into an ear. Subsequently, to test his uncle’s guilt Philip rents a DVD of *The Murder of Gonzago* (171). However, Uncle Alan says that he doesn’t like costume dramas and does not watch much of it.

David Davalos’s play *Wittenberg* is set just prior to the death of Hamlet’s father. When it opens, Hamlet has returned to the University of Wittenberg after spending a semester abroad in Poland where he studied astronomy with Nikolai Copernik. John Faustus, a professor of philosophy, admonishes him that as a senior it is a “Good time to be thinking about declaring a major” (9). He advises Hamlet to major in philosophy and then enter into graduate study with him. Hamlet’s other mentor and confessor, the Reverend Father Martin Luther, advocates taking his course in the

Principles of Christian Theology and belittles doctor Faustus's philosophy seminar as appropriate for those who "are in league with the Devil" (11).

Witty allusions to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, and Luther's life are abundant. Thus Hamlet, while waiting in Doctor Faustus's study, picks up and contemplates a skull that was sitting on the professor's desk (17). Hamlet is there to consult Faustus about his bad dreams, which have affected his tennis game (19). The root of the problem is a crisis of faith engendered by his study of the earth's revolution with Copernicus. "To believe or not to believe," says Faustus, to which Hamlet responds, "That is the question" (19). To prepare Hamlet for his upcoming tennis match, Doctor Faustus gives Hamlet some mocha candies and suggests some light reading "to take your mind off weightier things" (24). Hamlet leaves with a tabloid article about "The Murder of Gonzago" (24). The advice works, and Hamlet wins his tennis match against Laertes. At the end of the play, Lady Voltemand arrives from Denmark to announce King Hamlet's death, which prompts Hamlet to embrace his destiny and return to Elsinore. Voltemand, we should recall, is one of Claudius's ambassadors to Norway. In addition to such parallels to the plot of *Hamlet*, verbal echoes of Shakespeare's language are interwoven throughout the play. Twice characters sum up what they are saying with the phrase "in a nutshell" (43,50). Hamlet has a vision of the Virgin Mary, who exhorts him to "Remember me!" (44). A particularly clever use of these linguistic parallels is found in a word-association exercise that Faustus administers to Hamlet in his effort to provide psychological help: "I'm going to say a word to you, and I want you to respond with the first word that comes into your head as a result" (46). The list of words and responses that follows all recall Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, such as "sleep," "dream," "cloud," "camel," "weasel," "whale," "hawk," "handsaw," "fishmonger," "frailty," "woman," and many others. Davalos also plays such games with the text of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and well-known incidents and phrases associated with Martin Luther.

How do these three young Hamlets affect our understanding of Shakespeare's Hamlet? McEwan's infant draws on our appreciation of the intelligence and introspection of Shakespeare's Hamlet and on the obligation he feels to avenge King Hamlet's murder. Though not yet born, he has acquired an adult vocabulary and extensive knowledge of the world and its history because of his mother's absorption in radio news, "podcast lectures, and self-improving audio books" (4). So eager is he for knowledge that he will kick his sleeping mother so that she will awaken and put her earbuds in to lull herself aback to sleep. He is good at visualizing a world that he has not yet seen, and we see the shock of his discovery when he deduces from a remark by Claude that he is not only his mother's lover but his uncle. Like Shakespeare's Hamlet, the infant worries about the state in which he finds himself. Beginning with a vision of the good life he will be born into, he progresses to a vision of living snugly with his mom in jail, and then ultimately to the realization that Claude and Trudy are planning to place him with someone else once they have gotten away with poisoning his father. Just as Hamlet does, the infant contemplates suicide. Trying to wrap his umbilical cord around his neck while his uncle and mother are making love, he envisions Claude being blamed and imprisoned for his death. The plan fails, but later the baby does achieve revenge. As Claude and his mother are preparing to flee their imminent arrest, the baby causes Trudy's water to break and throws her into labor. His revenge is accomplished, and McEwan's Hamlet thus mirrors Shakespeare's, but does not cause us to rethink him.

*The Dead Fathers Club*, on the other hand, profoundly rethinks the experience of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Shakespeare's play explores ideas of madness and melancholy, but we have no doubt that that the ghost is real, that Hamlet's father has been murdered by Claudius, and that these are circumstances in which revenge is justified. In the novel, events are seen through the eyes of the eleven-year-old narrator, who does not always understand the adult world. At the very end it becomes clear that the ghost is a hallucination, a projection of Philip's anger and grief over his

father's death. The ghost knows only what the boy already knows and there are inconsistencies in the ghost's revelations about the afterlife. Similarly, some vandalism at the pub that had been presented by Philip and the ghost as being done by Uncle Alan turns out to have been the work of a gang that had been involved in a series of pub robberies. As Philip's unreliability as a narrator becomes clear, we see that Uncle Alan is a kind man, that his marriage to Philip's mother has made her very happy, and that his changes in the way the pub is run do not come from greed. Rather, Philip's father was a poor manager, and had left his wife badly in debt. It may occur to us that though Horatio describes Hamlet's father as "a goodly king" (1.2.186) and we know he was good at single combat, we really have no idea of how well he served as administrator or diplomat. In short, we may return to *Hamlet* from *The Dead Fathers Club* with a refreshed sense of skepticism.

A running joke in *Wittenberg* is Hamlet's indecisiveness. However, the play is about faith and skepticism in the Reformation rather than about Hamlet per se. Hamlet's faith has been severely challenged by his study with Copernicus, and he ends up sharing with both Doctor Faustus and Martin Luther a manuscript written by Copernicus which describes the earth's rotation. Luther is appalled and burns his copy, while Doctor Faustus is delighted. Simultaneously to all of this, Faustus in his psychiatric role has asked Luther to do some daily free writing or journaling which becomes an assignment for Luther to write out some points of debate concerning indulgences. He comes up with a list of 95 which he asks Hamlet to look over in preparation for an informal debate with Faustus. Faustus inveigles Hamlet into sharing them, and much to Luther's horror, has them printed and widely disseminated, including nailing a copy to the church door. The Reformation has begun. Meanwhile, the ever-indecisive Hamlet has decided to commit himself to the religious life, only to change again when Lady Voltemand brings the news of his father's death: "I thought God meant me for / The cloth, but now he bids me wear the crown" (61). Note that all present assume that Hamlet will be king – a nice touch by Davalos. Hamlet's decision accords with a providential reading of

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the reading suggested by "There's a divinity that shapes our ends" (5.2.10). In *Wittenberg*, the play ends with each character stating his final position of belief.

Luther: Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, so help me God.

Hamlet: The readiness is all.

...

Faustus: What will be, will be. (63)

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Minnesota State University — Moorhead  
[stephen.hamrick@mnstate.edu](mailto:stephen.hamrick@mnstate.edu)

## ‘A Simple and Faithful Narrative’:

### Spenser and Jesuit Poetics

Militant reformer Edmund Spenser’s Protestant, epic Romance, *The Faerie Queene*, and missionary priest John Gerard’s Catholic, didactic *Autobiography* remain unnecessarily isolated from one another in contemporary scholarship. Scholars continue to examine a range of Catholic and anti-Catholic discourses in relation to *The Faerie Queene*, yet have not engaged Jesuit Gerard’s autobiographical training text in their analyses.<sup>1</sup> On opposite sides of a vicious religious war, Spenser and Gerard’s differences also emerge in the divergent modes and genres of their writing: allegorical, designedly-archaic English verse and unadorned (Caraman, xiv), self-effacing Latin prose, respectively. When compared, however, intriguing similarities emerge. Both lived in hostile environments; both worked for organizations inimical to the other; and both modeled radical interpretive lenses for readers. As the following essay will establish, Spenser and Gerard each fashion a hermeneutics of suspicion from diametrically opposed positions, using the same biblical and classical intertexts, as well as the same rhetorical methods, to prepare readers to live and work in a religiously fractured society.

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<sup>1</sup> Voss, 2016; Miola, 2010; Shell, 1999; Northrop, 1969; Bennett, 1960.



While working as part of the occupying forces suppressing Irish Catholics from 1580-1598, Spenser returned to London in 1590 and 1596 to publish the purposely opaque *Faerie Queene*. The soldier, secretary, and poet died in 1599 having been driven from Ireland after his appropriated residence, Kilcolman Castle in County Cork, was sacked and burned by the forces of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, three months earlier. The long-term English exile explains his choice of genres in a prefatory letter to Walter Raleigh, writing "being a continued Allegory, or darke conceit, I have thought good, aswell for avoyding of gealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof, (being so by you commanded,) to discover unto you the general intention and meaning" (Maclean, 1) of the work.

Spenser's 'continued,' we might say continuous, 'Allegory' serves foremost as a pragmatic tool for teaching readers to see or understand the world from a militant Protestant perspective. If allegory requires readers to interpret surface or outward symbols for their underlying and prescribed meanings, then the process of reading *The Faerie Queene* inculcates a critical attitude towards the world. One critic describes this as 'the poem's process of exploration and cumulative understanding' (Alpers, 22), yet, through their exploration, readers must also learn to distrust appearances and, with a 'cumulative understanding' of perceived deception and deceit, locate recusant Catholics, priests, and Jesuits. From this perspective, the allegorical knights on their quests represent the Protestant reader's ongoing efforts to discover Spenser's dark conceits and, by extension, hidden forms of Catholicism.

Rather than a modern interpretation, such a religio-political mode of reading originates with the militant Protestant himself. As Spenser also writes in his prefatory letter, 'the generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline: Which for that I conceived shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historicall fiction' (Maclean, 1)). In addition to offering the etymology of instructive religious

punishment, the OED defines ‘discipline,’ from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century on, as ‘instruction or teaching intended to mould the mind and character’ of the individual and as ‘mental, intellectual, moral, or spiritual training’ (OED, 4a). While some 21<sup>st</sup> Century students find reading the allegorical epic a kind of penance, Spenser’s intention to discipline or ‘mould the mind’ significantly parallels Gerard’s narrative teaching of Jesuit novitiates preparing for the English Mission.

On the Jesuit mission to sustain Catholicism in Britain from 1588-1606, Englishman John Gerard astonishingly escaped from The Tower of London, having suffered torture at least two times in the space of three-and-a-half years imprisonment. He would later include these horrific experiences in his didactic autobiography. Where Raleigh commanded Spenser to write his explanatory letter delineating the purpose and mode of the *Faerie Queene*, superiors at the Jesuit College, Louvain (Spanish Belgium) ordered Gerard to write the story of his life on the English mission for the benefit of novitiates. In Philip Caraman’s English translation of his short prefatory epistle, Gerard writes that, despite his many faults, ‘it is a praiseworthy thing to make known the works of God’ (xxiv) and so, he writes of his superiors, ‘it is at their orders that I am setting down in a simple and faithful narrative all that happened to me, under God’s providence’ (ibid). Although Spenser’s ‘historical fiction’ provides him with plausible deniability in the face of potential critique, Gerard’s ‘simple and faithful narrative’ provides a similar evasion by assigning agency to ‘the works of God’ and ‘God’s providence.’

Spenser’s complex use of allegory immediately establishes his excellence as a writer while Gerard’s crediting God fashions his humility from the start. Gerard goes on to define his service organization (or religious home), the Society of Jesus, as ‘that body which has received from Jesus its head a remarkable outpouring of His Spirit for the healing of souls in this last era of a declining and grasping world’ (Caraman, ibid). Gerard’s evocation of that Catholic ‘body’ or evangelizing religious

order, and his role as a teacher preparing novices for the English mission, perfectly situates the ‘simple’ narrative within the disciplinary or communal context in which its first readers engaged it.

Alongside the subtly apocalyptic tone of Gerard’s ‘declining and grasping world,’ the work of teaching future missionaries through his autobiography includes interpretive training. In addition to reports of teaching the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*, the Jesuit’s autobiography teaches future missionaries to read the English world from an oppositional Catholic perspective. Gerard recounts interrogations with British ‘heretics’ and torturers, using his narrative to model strategic interpretation of the Protestant (mis)use of language. During his Spring 1594 interrogation in the Poultry Counter, a small prison or gaol for dissenters, debtors, homosexuals, prostitutes, and drunks in Cheapside, London, interrogator J.G. Young, asks the priest, ‘you are ready to conform if Southwell has?’ (Caraman, 75; Morris, 195). As narrator, Gerard interrupts the diegesis, writing, ‘by ‘conform’ [*conformare*] they mean embrace their deformed [*deformis*] religion’ (ibid). In the narrative moment, Gerard says, ‘of course not . . . I don’t keep out of heresy and avoid heretical gatherings, because he or any other person does so, but because I would be denying Christ by denying His faith’ (ibid). In breaking from the diegetic tale and directly addressing his novitiate readers, which rhetorical move Spenser’s narrator also offers his readers (Gough, 2.0.1-5; 3.0.4-5), the Jesuit priest provides an interpretive clarification of the absorbing narrative—telling his readers to see beyond what he defines as Protestant ‘lies.’

Beyond the simple delivery of information, Gerard’s interpretive model uses homophonic and linguistic overlap of the terms ‘conform’ and ‘deformed’ to embed theological definition within a pithy and witty verbal construction; the root ‘form’ appears in the Latin terms as well but not, unsurprisingly, in the German translation.<sup>2</sup> The long-standing Judeo-Christian extended metaphor of whoring after idols or false gods (Ezek. 23:37) finds expression in Gerard’s euphemistic ‘embrace

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<sup>2</sup> “<<Anpassen>> nennen sie es, wenn man sich ihrer verstümmelten Religion unterwirft” (von Barloewen, 101).

[of] their deformed religion,'<sup>3</sup> and also in *The Faerie Queene's* deceptive image of a false Una or 'one true faith' depicted in 'wanton lust and lewd embracement' in Book I (1.2.5.41) or others elsewhere in the epic.<sup>4</sup> In attempting to demoralize Gerard, Protestant Young unsuccessfully deploys the lie that Father Robert Southwell conformed to English law and informed on other Catholics.

Mirroring Young, Spenser's Archimago, who 'well could file his tongue as smooth as glass' (1.1.35.7), fashioned the false image of Una in order to dishearten the Protestant everyman, Red Cross Knight, and separate him from the British church; unlike Young, the fictive Archimago succeeds. Sometimes seen as the legendary Irish Jesuit James Archer (Herron, 2007), Archimago resides 'in dungeon deep' only briefly, yet Una's father, a kingly reformed 'Adam,' ensures that the arch mage is bound 'hand and foot with iron chains' (1.12.36.2). Unlike Spenser's character, Archer was never clapped in 'iron chains.'

In any case, both Spenser and Gerard evoke the biblical sense of 'embrace' in combination with false or deceptive language and images designed to fool the unwary. Where Spenser's Jesuit Archimago presents the 'miscreated faire' copulating with a false knight, Gerard's Protestant torturer Young offers the embrace of an equally 'deformed' lady 'religion.' Whether or not Spenser's equally monstrous Duessa (1590/6) rests in the background of Gerard's 1609 text, poet Robert Southwell's Jesuit influence<sup>5</sup> on contemporary Protestant writers, including Spenser, might find its counterpart in Spenser's influence on the Jesuit *Autobiography*.

In place of rhetorical, philosophical, or theological allegory, the far more familiar language of lascivious embracement further structures both the Protestant and Catholic didactic texts. Whether read as an allegorical recommendation against Italian and Gallic over-cultivation of British soil (Bullard, 2018), or as an allegorical embodiment of the more commonplace struggle of virtue against

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<sup>3</sup> (Prov. 5.20)

<sup>4</sup> 1.3.29.7; 2.3.42.6; 2.12.65.9; 3.8.10.5; 3.10.48.3; 4.1.49.2; 4.9.10.5.

<sup>5</sup> Rust, 2012.

fallen human nature and temptation (Scodel, 2002), Spenser's Bower of Bliss in book 2 offers a redolent site at which Protestant and Jesuit rhetoric overlap. The infamous Bower of Bliss presents an extended image 'where pleasure dwells in sensual delights' (2.12.1.8), 'in wanton joys and [in] lusts intemperate (2.12.7.7), boasting 'lustful luxury' and 'looser days in lewd delights' (2.12.9.3, 5). Compared to both Parnassus and Eden, (2.12.52), Spenser's bower presents a sensual paradise of false images or phantasms constructed by Acrasia, the 'wicked Witch' who hides 'deformed monsters thousand fold' (2.12.25.2). 'Made there to abound with lavish affluence' (2.12.42.9), the Bower embodies a quintessential lack of temperate restraint, attempting to outdo God's natural creations. Such an imbalance signals the need for the Faerie knight, Guyon, 'in whom great rule of Temperance goodly doth appear' (2.0.45), as well as for readers, to engage an active faith, living with balance and restraint lest they remain prisoners in the carnal gaol that is the Bower of Bliss.

Within Spenser's narrative and discursive instruction, the multiple temptations of the bower require mental and material iconoclasm. The pornographic bathing pool at the center of the bower, moreover, includes 'curious imagery' 'over-wrought' with 'shapes of naked boys' (2.12.60.5-6). A fluid trap, the naked 'maidens,'

Which therein bathing seemed to contend

And wrestle wantonly, ne cared to hide

Their dainty parts from view of any which them eyed. (2.12.63.6-7-9)

The 'two naked damsels,' with their 'amorous sweet spoils' revealed 'to greedy eyes' (2.12.64.9),

represent only the most obscene obstacle designed to tempt Guyon, as well as the structural

opposites to Spenser's painfully shy lady, Shamefastness (2.9), whom Guyon entertained earlier.

Although the adventurer's steadfast sidekick, the Palmer, successfully urges the knight to temperate

action, the poet informs readers that 'his stubborn breast gan secret pleasaunce to embrace'

(2.12.65.9). Again, 'embrace' offers the biblical resonance of the allegorical whoring after false gods

deployed elsewhere by both Gerard and Spenser. Always silent, the Spenserian *femme* or *église fatale*, Acrasia, nevertheless embodies intemperance and fornication, as well as the transformative powers of a Circe-like false church, as her name means ‘giving in to desire’ or ‘badly mixed.’

Recalling the biblical equation of idolatry and adultery, the other central image within the bower represents, among other things, the individual’s embrace of false religion or Catholicism. As a kind of vampiric false goddess, Acrasia ‘with a new lover’ ‘laid a slumbering’ / in secret shade after long wanton joys’ (2.12.72.3, 6, 9). In addition to the visual pleasures offered in the morally darkened, ‘secret shade’ of the Catholic bower, Acrasia offers an erotically-charged soundscape akin, for the exiled allegorist, to the Mass rather than to Protestant preaching. In addition to lying in paradisaal bedding, Acrasia and her sleeping lover have ‘round about them,’ Spenser writes, ‘many fair ladies and lascivious boys’ who ‘pleasantly did sing’ and, significantly, ‘ever mixt their song with light licentious toys’ (2.12.72.7-9). The aural landscape discursively replicates an imbalanced synthesis of moral and immoral pastimes, envisioning the mixture of ‘fair ladies and lascivious boys’ as well as song and ‘licentious toys.’

Mirroring the idolatrous soundscape of the Bower, Jesuit Gerard offers tuition in fashioning a Catholic world of sound for his studious English missionaries. When captured and placed in the Counter Poultry in Cheapside, John Gerard was chained like the fictive Archimago; like Archimago, Gerard escaped. Inculcating both survival skills and a martyr’s subjectivity, the autobiography records that he managed to move side-to-side in his very narrow cell. Gerard writes, in fact, that ‘I got some exercise. Also, and this mattered more, when the prisoners below started singing lewd songs and Geneva psalms. I was able to drown their noise with the less unpleasant sound of my clanking chains’ (77). Alongside his own liquid metaphor for sound, the resourceful Jesuit artfully fashions service on the English mission as transformative through the image of his chains which, due to his movement, achieved a high polish despite their initially rusty condition. Rather than

drowning in the pornographic pool, the Jesuit ‘drowns’ the bawdy songs. The normally disempowering material chains, which actually provide religious or spiritual freedom, serve Gerard as a kind of inverted objective correlative that fails to elicit the expected sorrow, hopelessness, or carnal desire created by the fallen soundscape.

Recalling, moreover, the songs sung in the Bower of Bliss, ‘the singing of lewd songs and’ Protestant ‘Geneva psalms’ in a different kind of prison requires Gerard’s acoustic iconoclasm. The imprisoned priest functionally destroys the ‘lewd songs’ through the clinking of his chains; for Catholic’s, in fact, ‘Geneva psalms’ served as shorthand for carnal Protestant additions to holy scripture. For Gerard, what might simply be endured by inexperienced novitiates as abuse and torture, now serves, rather, as another model for religious transformation, active iconoclasm, and proactive interpretation. As he would say concerning his move to the infamous prison in Southwark, ‘though I was locked up, I looked on this change to the Clink as a translation from Purgatory to Paradise. I no longer heard obscene and bawdy songs, but, instead, I had Catholics praying in the next cell’ (78). If the death of the satanic dragon at the end of Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* represents an allegorically renewed and Edenic eschaton, Gerard’s ‘translation from Purgatory to Paradise’ on the sounds of ‘Catholics praying in the next cell’ models a form of allegorical reading for novitiates entering an avowedly deceptive world of oppression and carnal temptation, which they might more rightly see as a martyr’s quest for paradise.

In the allegorical and deceptive world of the Bower of Bliss, Spenser also didactically adapts Ovid’s vengeful tale of Vulcan capturing Mars and his philandering wife Venus in a net. The classical image of the adulterous deities also appears in the Jesuit autobiography. The Roman exile and writer of the *Metamorphoses* (8 CE) describes Vulcan’s net as ‘less visible than sleekest threads of wool / or nets that spiders hang from tallest beams’ (Gregory, 116). Spenser similarly depicts Guyon and the Palmer catching the sleeping Acrasia with her denuded (2.12.80) and deluded knight

Verdant under a web of silk and silver. The epic Protestant text informs readers that this trap serves as a ‘more subtle web’ (2.12.77.7) than Arachne or her transgressive ideological analysis can spin.

Like Vulcan, the allegorical double act of pilgrim and knight throw a net on these later-day fornicators (2.12.81); the term ‘net’ would later be used in reference to catching Jesuits.<sup>6</sup> In addition to imprisoning the witch, Guyon releases pent-up emotions,

But all those pleasant bowers, and palace brave,

Guyon broke down with rigor pitiless:

Ne ought their goodly workmanship might save

Them from the tempest of his wrathfulness. (2.12.83.1-4)

Not unlike Gerard’s use of ‘providence,’ the ideological process of naturalizing such Protestant iconoclasm in the bower works through the meteorological ‘tempest of his wrathfulness’ which evokes the kind of righteous anger deployed by Christ against the money changers (Mk 11.15-19).

Spenser’s use of Venus and Mars in the proem to *The Faerie Queene* and elsewhere has been read as a critique or ethical rejection of heroic masculinity and violent empire building.<sup>7</sup> The text actually opens with an *invocation* of the classical and Petrarchan deities, that is, a *request* for disarmament. The speaker invokes ‘Faire Venus’ sonne,’ saying

And with thy mother mild come to mine aid:

Come both, and with you bring triumphant *Mart*,

In loves and gentle jollities arrayed,

After his murderous spoils and bloody rage allayed. (1.0.3.5-9)

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<sup>6</sup> Heale, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Campana, 201



Despite such ostensible success, the knight of Temperance, and each of the other questing characters, continues the mission of Protestant enlightenment and iconoclastic world-building by consistently engaging effective and lethal violence.

Spenser's violent allegorical Protestant iconoclasm and the lewd image of pagan philanderers find their Jesuit parallels in Gerard's autobiography. Echoing Spenser's characterization of the Faerie knight Guyon, the 1609 training text evokes Mars and Venus in order to characterize the Jesuit martyr and Guy Fawkes school mate, Edward Oldcorne, as a devoted Jesuit priest and militant iconoclast. Indicating that the Father's 'zeal in these matters was remarkable,' Gerard also realizes that despite having 'heard many instances of' that zeal, 'one must suffice for all' (10). As a synecdoche, Oldcorne's actions thus serve as another example to those bound for England. Gerard writes,

Once in London he visited a house of a Catholic who was a close friend of his. In the window of his room he saw a painted pane of glass depicting Mars and Venus. The scene was indecent, and although the house did not belong to his friend—he had merely rented it—Father Oldcorne, unable to endure the sight, struck his fist through the glass and told his friend how unseemly it was to let such things stand. (10)

Not unlike Guyon, 'with rigor pitiless,' Oldcorne destroys the 'indecent' or 'improper' (Morris, 38) image 'depicting Mars and Venus,' because he was 'unable to endure' the pagan pornography. Not unlike the novitiate teaching text itself, Oldcorne's violent action instructs his fellow Catholics in the necessary material 'zeal' required on the English Mission. Gerard's peculiar recognition that the house was only rented fashions the Jesuit need to look beyond the worldly, social lens of hospitality and expected guest behavior, to see through the 'painted pane of glass' to its indecent nature. The Protestant planter and the Jesuit missionary each effectively adapt the pagan image of Mars and

Venus *en flagrante* as a highly apt humanist trope for all Christians to represent the adulterous idolatry of ‘whoring after’ false religion.

To conclude, even this brief comparison of these normally unconnected texts illuminates the process by which contemporary writers teach religionists not only to read the world from their extremist perspectives, but also how to engage the world as a militant. Regardless of Gerard’s knowledge of *The Faerie Queene*, the lexicon of religious bigotry and othering deployed the same terms, tropes, and images. Such an awareness further erodes the simplistic binaries that have too often structured the study of the English Reformations and British literature.

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University of Minnesota – Morris  
[kempx192@morris.umn.edu](mailto:kempx192@morris.umn.edu)

**Bodies, Blood, and Manure: The Rhetoric of Nutrient Cycling**  
**in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and *A View of the State of Ireland***

*“How ever gay their blossome or their blade  
Doe flourish now, they into dust shall vade.  
What wrong then is it, if that when they die,  
They turne to that, whereof they first were made?”*

-Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (V.ii.40.4-7)

The law of conservation of mass states that matter cannot be created or destroyed – it can only change form. By this law, the atoms and compounds that make up a living body are the same atoms that composed bodies that lived millions of years ago. These atoms will continue on this never-ending journey, perpetually cycling through living and nonliving systems. Although phrases such as “conservation of mass” and “nutrient cycling” did not exist when Edmund Spenser was writing, similar ideas *were* present during Spenser’s time. From Shakespeare’s poetry to husbandry manuals, written works from the early modern period explore topics such as the return of bodies to the earth after death, fertilizing soil with decaying plant and animal tissue, and the interdependence between the living and the nonliving (Ekland 2-3).

As the above quote from Book V of *The Faerie Queene* illustrates, these concepts also found their way into Spenser's works. In this passage, the heroic knight Artegall declares that when someone dies, their material body returns to the earth "whereof they first were made" (V.ii.40.7). Clearly, Spenser was cognisant of the cycle bodily matter undergoes: plants grow from the soil, animals (humans included) eat the plants, animals and plants die, their decaying bodies return to the soil, and the cycle continues. Spenser's rhetoric surrounding the interrelations between living beings and the surrounding environment may even be considered a form of ecological understanding. Again, although the term "ecology" did not exist during Spenser's time, the ideas that form the basis of this science were present throughout 16th-century English society. Therefore, the modern language of "ecology" – specifically the phrase "nutrient cycling" – provides a useful vocabulary with which to discuss Spenser's works, especially when this language helps to illuminate a contradiction in Spenser's logic.

In particular, these terms allow for new insight into two of Spenser's most prominent texts: *The Faerie Queene*, an epic poem that follows the adventures of virtuous knights, and *A View of the State of Ireland*, a colonial dialogue between the characters Eudoxus and Irenius. Book V of *The Faerie Queene* is generally regarded as an allegorical companion to *A View*, as the knight's quest in this book is to rescue the lady Eirena, an allegorical personification of Ireland. Throughout these texts, there is significant evidence that suggests Spenser's awareness of the cyclical patterns that govern the natural world. In fact, Spenser's motivations for colonizing Ireland are heavily based on his awareness of the rich soil that covers the landscape. While emphasizing the fertility of the Irish landscape serves to advance his colonial agenda, Spenser's apparent ecological awareness also poses a paradox: the valuable soil is composed of exactly what Spenser wants to get rid of – the Irish. As I will argue, anxieties about the presence of Irish bodies in the soil seep into Spenser's writing, exposing an irreconcilable flaw in his colonial rhetoric. Although Spenser's goal is to excise the Irish and cultivate

a new English society, “planting” the English in soil that is full of decomposing Irish bodies will only result in the cultivation of another Irish society.

To develop this argument, this essay will be divided into two parts. In the first section, I will discuss Spenser’s rhetoric surrounding the Irish landscape in *A View*, illustrating both his motivations for colonizing Ireland and the obstacles that stand in his way. I will also discuss the forms of ecological understanding present during the early modern period, placing Spenser in the context of the English movement toward agricultural order. In the second part of this essay, I will show how anxieties about the presence of Irish bodies in the soil appear in Spenser’s Book V of *The Faerie Queene*. Then, I will illustrate how Spenser’s apparent ecological knowledge directly contradicts his colonial plan, thus exposing flaws in both the logic of *A View* and the allegory of *The Faerie Queene*.

## I. Spenser’s View of Ireland and Early Modern Soil Ecology

In *A View*, Spenser places significant emphasis on the various commodities associated with the Irish landscape, the most important being the fertile soil. In the opening lines, Eudoxus inquires to Irenius about why Ireland is not yet in English control: “But if that cuntry of Ireland... be of so goodly and commodious a soyl... I wonder that no course is taken for the turning thereof to good uses, and reducing that nation to better government and civility” (11). Irenius responds: “there have bin divers good plottes devised ... but they say, it is the fatall destiny of that land, that no purposes whatsoever which are meant for her good, will prosper or take good effect” (11). This exchange sets the stage for a question/answer dialogue centered around the necessity of creating an English society in Ireland that will use the land in the proper way. As the opening lines illustrate, the fertile Irish soil offers a promising colonial opportunity, but there are obstacles that stand in the way of this resource being put “to good uses.”

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the largest obstacle is the Irish people. In the following pages, Irenius provides a detailed explanation of everything wrong with the Irish and outlines a well-developed plan to exterminate them. While Irenius's plans are proposed with confidence, he nonetheless acknowledges – at the very beginning of *A View* – that previous attempts to colonize Ireland have failed. He even declares that “it is the fatall destiny” of Ireland to remain out of English control. Later in the text, Irenius states that “great houses there bee of the English in Ireland... have degendred from their auncient dignities, and are now *growne* as Irish” (*View* 70, emphasis added). Through the voice of Irenius, Spenser explains that the reason previous colonization attempts have failed is because the English that are “planted” in Ireland simply “grow” to be Irish. As I will demonstrate, this may be due to the presence of Irish bodies in the soil, as Spenser's works suggest an understanding of the cyclical relationship between decaying bodies and new growth. Here, the phrase “nutrient cycling” provides a useful framework to clarify exactly what I mean by “cyclical relationship.” In short, Irish bodies decay, Irish bodies become the soil, and new Irish bodies grow from the soil. As a result, the English that are “planted” in Irish soil grow to be Irish. And even further, the English colonizers that are sustained by the Irish plants and livestock grow to be Irish themselves, embodying the common phrase “you are what you eat.”

Placing Spenser in the context of 16th-century English society, it becomes clear that he was indeed aware of this cyclical pattern. In an article titled “Early Modern Ecology,” Julian Yates explains, “the [early modern] period was characterized by a concerted attempt to understand the interrelations between humans and the so-called natural world” (334). As Yates explains, Spenser was living during a time when new ideas about humanity's impact on their surrounding environment – and vice versa – were circulating throughout society. In particular, early modern ecological knowledge is very apparent in the context of soil. In the introduction to a recently published book, *Ground-Work: English Renaissance Literature and Soil Science*, Hillary Ekland states, “we can conjure what



a Renaissance soil science might have looked like from what early modern observers recorded . . . They knew, for instance, that with its combination of minerals, organic matter, air, and water, soil is animal, vegetable, *and* mineral. It is the living *and* the dead, both flourishing and decaying” (5). As Ekland discusses, people living in the early modern period were aware that soil is not just unchanging dirt beneath their feet; they understood that life depends on soil, and soil itself is composed of what was once living. As the quote at the beginning of this essay illustrates, Spenser himself appears to have been aware of the very type of “flourish[ing]” and “vad[ing]” (V.ii.40.5) that Ekland describes, as Spenser declares that living bodies both come from the earth and will return to the earth after death.

Instances of this form of ecological knowledge are present throughout various genres of early modern English literature. For example, in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Hamlet appears to have a keen awareness of this cyclical pattern: “Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam, and why of that loam whereto he was converted might they not stop a beer-barrel?” (qtd. in Ekland 2). In this quote, Hamlet expresses his anxiety about a noble human body being “converted” into the loam in a beer-barrel stopper, explicitly illustrating the knowledge that decaying bodies cycle back into the soil after death.

While this instance paints nutrient cycling in a rather negative light, another genre of early modern literature – husbandry manuals – illustrates a more positive viewpoint. Husbandry manuals are how-to handbooks for land management, and these manuals are “drenched with detailed and comprehensive material advice on how to create and manage a large farm: selecting land; draining and dressing it for arable use; constructing various household buildings . . . and managing the chores of housewifery and husbandry that sustain the estate” (Wall 771). As Frances Dolan discusses, many of these manuals give suggestions for the best ways to produce a fertile plot of soil: by adding everything from rotten vegetables to animal manure and human blood (Dolan 25). Therefore, the

idea of using dead and decaying matter to make something new and useful was present during the early modern period, exemplified in theories about what today would be called “composting.”

In fact, Spenser himself appears to be aware that decaying organic matter makes soil particularly good for cultivation. Throughout *A View*, Spenser utilizes the language of husbandry, advocating “to ditch and inclose [the] ground, to manure and husband it as good farmours use” (*View* 83). Considering his emphasis on manuring the landscape, Spenser was familiar with the ideas put forth in husbandry manuals. Spenser also discusses “the ill husbandrie of the Irish people” (87), and later declares, “The first thing therefore that wee are to draw these new tythed men into, ought to be husbandry” (149). With husbandry first on the list of ways to amend the Irish society, the importance of cultivating the landscape comes into sharp focus.

In particular, agriculture is a primary motivation for the English to colonize Ireland, and this motivation directly influences the vocabulary of Spenser’s works. As John Patrick Montaña discusses, the transformation of Ireland from wilderness to farmland was a vital aspect of the colonial strategy, as orderly enclosures and tilled landscape were indications of civility (120). Spenser utilizes the language of cultivation to discuss the economic benefits of cultivating the land as well as to advocate for the literal “plantation” of the English in Ireland. For example, throughout *A View*, Spenser advocates for the “planting” (21; 26; 114; 123 and more) of English people, English buildings, and English ideals throughout Ireland. Importantly, it was not just Spenser using this rhetoric. The language of “plantation” circulated throughout colonial discourse, providing the English with a way to justify their subjugation of Ireland on the basis of “improving” the landscape (Montaña 123). Therefore, Spenser’s emphasis on husbandry and “plantation” is a reflection of a more widespread – and more dangerous – colonial mindset.

Just how dangerous this mindset is becomes clear as the rhetoric of “plantation” even extends into Spenser’s suggestion for excising the Irish people. In *A View*, Eudoxus inquires about how to begin reforming Ireland (93), and Irenius responds:

Even by the sword; for all these evils must first be cut away by a strong hand, before any good can bee planted, like as the corrupt branches and unwholesome boughs are first to bee pruned, and the foule mosse cleansed and scraped away, before the tree can bring forth any good fruite. (93)

In this quote, the “good” to be “planted” is the English, and the “evils” are the Irish that prevent the English from adequately managing the land. Extending the planting metaphor even further, Spenser equates the Irish to “corrupt branches and unwholesome boughs” that must be removed before the full potential of the fertile Irish landscape can be realized. As this quote illustrates, the language of “plantation” functions to simultaneously advertise the economic opportunity of colonizing Ireland and to dehumanize the Irish that stand in the colonizers’ way.

Beyond desiring to colonize for agricultural benefits, it appears that Spenser and other English settlers felt they had a *responsibility* to colonize Ireland. As John Walters argues, the colonial ideology put forth in *A View* depends on the anthropocentric belief system that humans, especially the English, are superior to nature (153). Therefore, as Walters later discusses, the English have both the ability and the responsibility to control the landscape (153). As Andrew McRae explains, the English obsession with husbandry and a cultivated, orderly landscape was driven by “a sense of the moral duty to exploit more efficiently the riches of the natural world” (qtd. in Montañó 125). Therefore, by “planting” the English throughout Ireland, the colonizers would rescue the neglected landscape and use the land in the proper way: for English benefit.

The “moral duty” to colonize Ireland is further exemplified in *A View*. For example, when Irenius discusses the uncultivated land and lack of organized towns, he declares: “Thus was all that

goodly countrey utterly wasted” (27). By regarding the land as “wasted” if it is not being used for agriculture, Irenius embodies the anthropocentric, or more specifically, Anglocentric, belief that the Irish landscape is *meant* for English use. Following this statement, Irenius catalogues some of the most valuable resources and “excellent commodities” that Ireland offers, such as the “goodly woods even fit for building of houses and ships” and “the soyle it selfe most fertile, fit to yeeld all kinde of fruit” (27). Eudoxus responds by lamenting for the “wasted” land: “Truly Iren... I doe much pity that sweet land, to be subject to so many evils as I see more and more to be layde upon her” (27). Clearly, Spenser’s concern is for the “sweet land” that needs rescuing from the “many evils” of the Irish culture. By framing the Irish landscape as a damsel in distress in need of rescue, Spenser appeals to the English cultural value of using the land as it *should* be used.

This damsel in distress rhetoric is more literally apparent in Book V of *The Faerie Queene*. In this book, Artegall’s quest is to rescue the lady Eirena, who is being held captive by the “strong tyrant” Grantorto (V.i.3.7). As Abraham Stoll explains, “Eirena” has been etymologically interpreted to refer to both “Ireland” and “peace,” or together, a peaceful Ireland (8n3). Furthermore, Grantorto is often regarded as an allegorical representation of the Irish, and his name translates literally to “great wrong” (Stoll 8n2). Considering this, Book V can be read as an allegorical call-to-action for the English to rescue the damsel in distress from the clutches of a villain, or in the real world, to rescue the misused Irish landscape from an uncivilized society. And as Spenser proposes in *A View*, the best way to save Eirena, or to save Ireland, is through the plantation of English settlers and the cultivation of the landscape.

## II. The Body Problem

While plans for cultivating Ireland and developing a structured and orderly agricultural society are a large focus throughout *A View*, successful cultivation would not be possible if it were

not for the rich soil that covers the Irish landscape. With this in mind, there is a contradiction in Spenser's works regarding why the Irish soil is so rich and "commodious" in the first place. Specifically, the fertile soil that is so valuable to Spenser has been enriched with decaying Irish bodies: plant, animal, and, yes, human. Put simply, Spenser's plan to eradicate the Irish from Ireland becomes a lot more complicated when the very people he wants to remove are literally part of the soil.

In fact, there is a particular aspect of the Irish landscape that may have allowed Spenser to be keenly aware of the Irish bodies in the soil: peat bogs. Peat bogs are formed from partially-decayed plant material piling up over long periods of time. This ecosystem covers a large area of the Irish landscape, and "turf-cutting," the harvesting of peat to be burned for heat and energy, has been a common practice in Ireland for centuries (Renou-Wilson 145). However, there have been several occasions when peat-cutters have dug up more than they bargained for. In the bogs of Northern Europe, strikingly well-preserved human corpses have been pulled from the earth. Termed "bog bodies," these corpses appear to evade the laws of time. The acidic and relatively oxygenless environment of peat can preserve bodies for centuries, including flesh, hair, and even stomach contents (Sanders 2). Today, many bog bodies are on display in museums, allowing a perhaps unsettling glimpse into the past. Although Spenser never mentions bog bodies explicitly, descriptions of these bodies were recorded as far back as 1700. For example, Charles Leigh, an English physician and naturalist, notes: "sometimes in mosses are found human bodies entire and uncorrupted ... These are the most remarkable in phaenomena I have obsrev'd" (qtd. in Sanders 3). Although Spenser was writing a century earlier than Leigh, Spenser could have heard of well-preserved body parts being pulled from the earth, especially considering his estate at the Munster plantation was near a bog (Schwyzer 15). If Spenser was aware of these well-preserved corpses, the problem regarding the presence of Irish bodies in the landscape would have become far more

apparent, as these corpses provide a direct and haunting reminder of what makes up the fertile and “commodious” Irish soil.

Therefore, even if Spenser’s plan to remove the above-ground Irish succeeds, the Irish would still be present in the land. As Philip Schwyzer discusses, one of the most vital questions that all colonizers face is “How do you build a homeland . . . in alien soil, full of someone else’s dead?” (1). In *The Faerie Queene*, then, “the problem that preoccupies [Spenser] is not so much how to get the wayward Irish into the earth, as how to get them out of it” (15). Stated otherwise, Spenser’s proposal to excise the living Irish people is not sufficient to rid Ireland of their presence, and the decaying Irish bodies in the ground below his feet are what Spenser is truly concerned about.

In fact, anxieties about the presence of Irish bodies in the soil manifest in Spenser’s writing. This is apparent in Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, specifically in the episode involving the villain Malengin. At the beginning of canto nine, the damsel Samient tells Arthur and Artegall of a horrific villain named Malengin who steals treasure and lives underground (V.ix.4-5). To catch Malengin, the knights set a trap using Samient as bait (V.ix.8-9). After Samient lures the villain out of his underground dwelling, Malengin’s grotesque appearance is described:

Full dreadful wight he was, as ever went  
Upon the earth, with hollow eyes deepe pent,  
And long curld locks, that downe his shoulders shagged,  
And on his backe an uncouth vestiment  
Made of straunge stuffe, but all to worne and ragged,  
And underneath his breech was all to torne and jagged. (V.ix.10.4-9)

This passage is often interpreted to align with Spenser’s descriptions of the Irish in *A View* (Stoll 121n2). However, while Malengin is indeed an allegorical representation of the Irish, this villain is not necessarily a *living* Irish person. Instead, Malengin’s “hollow eyes,” “shagged” hair, and “worne

and ragged” clothing may be a depiction of a corpse, an image of the rotting flesh present in the Irish soil.

Malengin, however, is not the only corpse-like villain in Spenser’s works. As Schwyzer points out, this type of depiction also occurs in Book II of *The Faerie Queene* when the knights Arthur and Guyon are attacked “by a horde of ragged villains . . . [that] appear not to be alive” (15). Schwyzer states: “with their tattered clothing, deformed flesh, and hollow eye sockets, they bear the marks of decomposition” (16). Therefore, the description of Malengin in Book V is not the first time that Spenser invokes images of decaying corpses in his villainous characters. The appearance of these grotesque and potentially-decomposing villains begs the question: is Spenser describing bog bodies? This is especially relevant as Spenser references the bog of Allen in the same scene in which the horde of corpse-like villains attack in Book II (Schwyzer 15-16). If Spenser was indeed aware of preserved human corpses being dug up from the bogs, these bodies may have provided him with the perfect image for villains in *The Faerie Queene*. But character inspiration aside, the horror that these preserved bodies would have evoked in Spenser may have resulted in anxieties implicitly written into his works, manifesting in characters such as Malengin.

The interpretation of Malengin as an already-dead body is further strengthened by the fact that Malengin lives underground. In particular, he dwells at “A dreadful depth, how deepe no man can tell; / But some doe say, it goeth downe to hell” (V.ix.6.4-5). Besides connecting to the obvious fact that corpses are buried underground, this description also serves to dehumanize Malengin. As “no man can tell” how far beneath the surface Malengin lives, it is clear that Malengin himself is not human. In fact, Malengin is a hellish beast, crawling out of the earth to “pillage” (V.ix.4.9) and “[rob] all that countrie there about” (V.ix.4.8). As an allegorical representation of the Irish, specifically the *dead* Irish, this villain reflects Spenser’s anxieties about the threat dead Irish bodies pose to his colonial plan.

Another detail that links Malengin to both the Irish and to the dead is Malengin's association with the wailing cries of a woman. To lure Malengin out the earth, the damsel Samient sits near Malengin's underground dwelling, and "as she was directed" (V.ix.9.6), begins to "weepe and wayle, as if great grieffe had her affected" (V.ix.9.9). The knights are clearly aware that Malengin will respond to the wailing of a woman, and sure enough, he crawls right into their trap. In this episode, Spenser appears to be referencing the tradition of keening, an Irish custom in which women would literally wail for the dead (Eckerle 11). The English often associated this custom with "barbaric Irishness" (Eckerle 11), and in *A View*, Spenser himself condemns the Irish people's "lamentations at their buryals, with dispairfull outcryes, and immoderate waylings" (61). Therefore, Malengin is even further linked to the Irish culture, specifically the aspects of the culture that Spenser attacks. By associating Malengin with the tradition of keening, Spenser further aligns Malengin with the "barbaric" Irish corpses that stand in the way of English colonization.

In fact, Malengin even exemplifies Spenser's anxieties about the cyclical pattern that bodily matter undergoes. After Malengin crawls out of his underground dwelling, the knights chase him over the landscape. During the chase, the villain shape-shifts – first into a fox, then into a bush, a bird, a hedgehog, and finally into a snake (V.ix.17-18). Although this shape-shifting is often interpreted to be an aspect of Malengin's trickery, this scene can also be read through an ecological lens. By transforming from decaying body to various animals and plants, Malengin exemplifies the cyclical pattern that is out of Spenser's control. That is, a decaying body literally transforms into other bodies. Therefore, the episode involving Malengin not only illustrates Spenser's knowledge of the cycling of bodily matter, but also reflects Spenser's need to eradicate the Irish – those above *and* below the ground.

As illustrated throughout *The Faerie Queene*, killing those above the ground is the easy part. The problem, however, is how to get rid of the Irish bodies in the soil, and even further, to keep



new bodies from becoming the soil after they are killed. To address this problem, Spenser appears to provide two possible solutions: smash the bodies to pieces, or wash them away in the waterways. While these solutions may serve to ease Spenser's anxiety and temporarily cover up the flaws in his logic, they are not sufficient to solve the problem, and Spenser ultimately fails to rid the landscape of Irish bodies.

In the case of Malengin, Spenser uses the strategy of smashing the body to pieces. Indeed, when Malengin is killed (or perhaps, rekilled), his bones are ground to pieces "as small as sandy grayle [gravel]" (V.ix.19.4). Clearly, just "killing" this villain is not enough, but rather, the knights find it necessary to entirely *destroy* the corpse. As Schwyzer states, "the brutality with which the various villains are dispatched is often and sometimes shockingly in excess of what is required to terminate a life" (20). This excessive violence can also be seen when the knights kill the villain Souldan, whose body is "Torne all to rags, and rent with many a wound, / That no whole peece of him was to be seene (V.viii.42.7-8). As this passage illustrates, Souldan is not simply killed, but his body is unrecognizably shattered to pieces. By smashing Malengin, Souldan, and other allegorically-Irish bodies to bits, Spenser is attempting to completely remove these bodies from existence.

Besides shattering the bodies into particulate pieces, Spenser uses another strategy to keep bodies from the land: dissolving them into the waterways. This is exemplified in the episode involving the villain Pollente. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the death of this villain, like Malengin's and Souldan's, is gruesomely violent. After cutting off Pollente's head, Artegall throws his body into a river, and "His [Pollente's] corps was carried down along the Lee, / Whose waters with his filthy bloud it stayned" (V.ii.19.1-2). In this passage, Spenser focuses on Pollente's "filthy bloud," emphasizing the barbaric nature of this body. As Cynthia Nazarian argues, washing away Pollente's body functions to further dehumanize this villain, as any sympathy for this beheaded corpse is

carried away by the river (344-345). Therefore, this episode exemplifies both Spenser's dehumanization of the Irish and his desire to rid them from Ireland.

Throughout *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser uses flowing water to wash away other villainous bodies as well. For example, Pollente's daughter Munera is tossed over the castle wall and into the water, "And there her drowned in the durty mud: / But the streame washt away her guilty blood" (V.ii.27.4-5). In the case of both Pollente and Munera, flowing waterways are used to remove the corpse from the land, washing away the bodies along with their "filthy" and "guilty blood." In another episode, the female knight Britomart throws a body "Into the river, where he [the villain] drunke his deadly last" (V.vi.39.9). Yet another example can be seen in the death of the Egalitarian Giant as Talus, Artegall's sidekick, "shouldered him [the Giant] from off the higher ground, / And down the rock him throwing, in the sea him dround" (V.ii.49.8-9). Clearly, Spenser found drowning to be a useful method by which to vanquish villains in the hopes of not only killing the villains but also keeping their bodies from the land.

That said, even though Spenser appears to provide two possible solutions to get rid of Irish bodies (i.e. smash them to pieces or wash them away), his solutions are not adequate. In fact, these solutions only reinforce the recycling of bodies into the earth. By dissolving the villainous bodies in the water or completely destroying the corpses on dry land, Spenser is only introducing new bodies into the landscape. And in the case of Malengin, grinding the body into dust is only expediting the process of decomposition.

In fact, Spenser appears to directly contradict himself in his very attempt to control the landscape. To exemplify this, I will turn again to the episode of *The Faerie Queene* involving the Egalitarian Giant. In this episode, Artegall stumbles across a giant who advocates for leveling the land. The sea is described to "Encroch upon the land" (V.ii.37.5) and erode the shore, while the earth itself is increasing "By all that dying to it turned be" (V.ii.37.7). This disordered changing of

the landscape drives the giant to declare that he will level the land and restore balance to the world (V.ii.38). However, Artegall counters the giant's proclamation by discussing the inevitable cycling that the giant cannot counteract:

For whatsoever from one place doth fall,  
Is with the tide unto an other brought:  
For there is nothing lost, that may be found, if sought.  
...  
How ever gay their blossome or their blade  
Doe flourish now, they into dust shall vade.  
What wrong then is it, if that when they die,  
They turne to that, whereof they first were made? (V.ii.39.7-9 to V.ii.40.4-7)

This passage demonstrates the ecological knowledge that makes it impossible for Spenser to eradicate the Irish from the landscape. Specifically, Spenser acknowledges that bodies return to the soil – or “dust” – after they die. He also acknowledges that new bodies are “made” of the very dust of previous bodies. Therefore, his solution of smashing the corpses to pieces still does not wipe them out of existence, as Spenser himself declares: “For there is nothing lost, that may be found, if sought.” Likewise, washing away the villainous bodies in the rivers is not sufficient to keep them from the landscape, “For whatsoever from one place doth fall, Is with the tide unto an other brought.” Eventually, these bodies will simply end up washing back on shore, decaying into the landscape and starting the cycle anew.

Although Spenser appears confident in his ability to colonize Ireland, his own words can be used to expose flaws in his logic. In both *A View* and *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser exhibits a form of ecological knowledge, specifically regarding the concept of what we would today call “nutrient

cycling.” Throughout *A View*, Spenser argues to excise the Irish and “plant” the English. However, Spenser appears to be aware of the flaws in his colonial plan, as anxieties about the presence of decaying Irish bodies in the landscape are visible throughout *The Faerie Queene*. While Spenser advocates to remove the Irish and grow the English, he fails to reconcile the problem that the Irish are literally embedded in the land itself. And ultimately, Spenser can never cultivate an English society out of a landscape composed of Irish bodies.

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