Selected Papers from the 26th Annual Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature

Held in Brandon, Manitoba

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Acknowledgements

When my colleague Deanna Smid pitched the idea that we zip down to Minot—a mere three hours away (or more like two, with Deanna driving)—to give papers at a conference there, it sounded like a bit of a (scholarly) lark, as well as too convenient to pass up. Weeks later, when we made our way to MSU (after one brief return to Brandon when I realized, at the border, that I'd forgotten my passport), we had no inkling that we would become part of such an interesting and supportive community, and, indeed, end up hosting the annual conference this year. For that opportunity we thank all those "northern staters" on the advisory committee and other members involved, who agreed to have the event move a little further north. It's great for Brandon University to be included among institutions in the designated "northern plains," and to occupy a place in the rotation.

We wish to thank the great number of people who helped us bring the conference to Brandon University and who made hosting it a pleasure. We thank both Dr. Demetres Tryphonopoulos, Dean of Arts, and Dr. Heather Duncan, Dean of Education and Associate Vice-president, who spoke at various times to welcome and acknowledge our esteemed visitors. We also thank our keynote speaker, Dr. Randall Martin, who traveled from the University of New Brunswick to join us and give his presentation, "Shakespeare and Ecological Modernity: Wood, Glass, Gunpowder." We received financial support from numerous departments at BU and from organizations connected with the City of Brandon, for which we are grateful. Other contributors include the campus bookstore, the Brandon School of Dance, and the Prairie Firehouse—where we held our banquet. Finally, we thank all of the presenters, both those who travelled to participate and those who teach or study at Brandon University, whose presentations on many facets of early British literature gave us much to think and talk about.

Please find, below, a selection of papers from the conference, for your reading pleasure and edification.

Sincerely, the organizing committee:

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NPCEBL, 2018
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Mephistopheles Confesses: *Dr. Faustus,* B-text, Act 5, Scene 2, Lines 91-103

Early modern plays were performed in repertory for relatively short runs, but could be frequently revived, and some plays remained popular for long periods of time. For example, Henslowe's Diary records fifteen performances of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* between January 1594 and January 1597 (Bevington and Rasmussen 49). Exact numbers of performances for later years are not extant, but clearly Henslowe thought it financially worthwhile to pay two playwrights, William Birde and Samuel Rowely, to create additions to the text in 1602, and the play was still being performed up to the closing of the theaters in 1642. The quality of Birde and Rowley's 1602 additions to *Faustus* have been much debated, but rather than argue whether their additions were truly improvements to the play, it might be better to ask what they perceived their task to be. Answering such a question relies on inference, but insight may be gained by considering other plays that were furnished with additions intended to enhance audience appreciation. Two such plays are *Macbeth* and *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Originally written circa 1606 or 1607, *Macbeth* was both cut and augmented by Thomas Middleton sometime around 1616. Gary Taylor and Inga-Stina Ewbank credit Middleton with about 11% of the play as we have it (Taylor and Lavagnino 1165). What Middleton decided to cut is unknowable, since the play exists only in the altered text published in the Folio. His interpolations include two songs from his play *The Witch*, probably written in mid-1616 (Taylor and Lavagnino 1128), along with the surrounding Hecate material. He seems to have also altered the appearance of the original witches, since Simon Forman's 1611 account of the play describes them as nymphs or faeries (Taylor and Lavagnino 1611). Comparisons between the Folio text

and the lost original are at best speculative, but some critics suggest that the additions alter our perception of Macbeth's evil. Perhaps so, but it is hard for us to judge from seeing them acted since the songs and their accompanying music and lengthy dances are generally cut in performance. What we can consider is why Middleton chose to expand the play in this way. Clearly, he was responding to a contemporary interest in in witchcraft and the supernatural. Shakespeare had given them a play with witches, and Middleton chose to enhance that aspect of the play in response to audience demand. He can certainly be said to have succeeded. Although twentieth-century editors and directors became disdainful of the songs, the singing, dancing witches were an audience favorite in earlier times. Samuel Pepys originally saw a production of Macbeth without the musical interludes and was not impressed, but he was much taken by performances that included them (Orgel 148). Stage magic also entranced the early modern audience. Taylor suggests that it was Middleton who added the apparitions, giving them lines that Shakespeare had originally given to the weird sisters (Taylor and Lavagnino 1188).

Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* is another well-known instance of an older play being revitalized by adding new material to the original text. It was first published in 1592, and ten years later in 1602, contains five additions to the play. These additions provide several textual puzzles. Ben Jonson was paid to write additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* in 1601 and 1602, but the style is not Jonsonian, and the most substantial addition, the painter scene, appears to have already been in existence by 1599 when it is parodied in john Marston's *Antonia and Mellida* (Blamires 265). Some speculate that Jonson's "additions" may actually refer to *The First Part of Hieronimo*, which is what we would call a prequel to *The Spanish Tragedy*. Eliminating Jonson as the author of the additions to the 1602 text leaves the question of who did write them, and the current frontrunner is William Shakespeare (Blamires 265). Modern criticism has been

divided as to the literary and dramatic merits of the additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*. Some find no real value; others have urged that the play is better because of them (Cannon 230). Clearly, though, the additions make no attempt to move the play in new directions. Rather, the author of the additions sought to identify and to elaborate on those aspects of the play that had made it popular in the first place—the grief and madness of Hieronimo. A modern playwright might desire to find new depths within the text or to take it in new directions. These early modern playwrights sought to identify and build on the elements of the play that had most greatly appealed to their original audiences.

Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* exists in two markedly different early editions. The earliest, which we refer to as the A-text, was published in 1604, a decade after Marlowe's death in 1593, and is now understood to reflect the play as composed by Marlowe and an unknown collaborator. The second text, the B-text, was published in 1616. It differs substantially from the A-text. As David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen point out in their Revels Plays edition of the two texts, "The B-text omits a few short speeches or episodes totaling 36 lines in the A-text, provides new passages totaling 676 lines, and introduces thousands of verbal changes" (63). Much of its additional length can be attributed to William Birde and Samuel Rowely, who in 1602 were paid £4 by Philip Henslowe for "adicyones in doctor fostes" (62). The tide turned in favor of the A-text a quarter of a century later with the work of Constance Kuriyama and Michael Warren, and the new scholarly consensus was cemented by the Revels Plays edition of the two texts by David Bevington and Eric Ramussen. The B-text is seen as having been revised and expanded by Birde and Rowley, and the A-text, far from being a memorial reconstruction, is seen to have been printed from an authorial manuscript. The realization that the A-text is closest to the original play has meant that Marlowe scholarship understandably now focuses primarily

on that text. Despite our increasing appreciation that playscripts are flexible and changeable documents that are likely to evolve with performance, we continue to fetishize the idea of the author, and it is the A-text that can bring us nearest to Marlowe's original language and vision. Bevington and Rasmussen do maintain that the B-text, although at a remove from Marlowe, merits study as a separate play, and perceive it as providing useful insight into early 17th-century stagecraft.

My contention is that Birde and Rowely brought the same assumptions to their task of updating Doctor Faustus as Middleton and Jonson or Shakespeare brought to the additions they introduced into *Macbeth* and *The Spanish Tragedy*. I see them as attempting to build thoughtfully on audience-pleasing elements in the earlier text. This seems clearly the case when Birde and Rowely import additional material from the Faustbook, Marlowe's primary source and when they expanded the stage magic. One suspects that these efforts were successful and that early modern audiences did in fact enjoy the increased magic and spectacle, but modern critics often perceive a degradation of the original. Bevington and Rasmussen find not only that the A-text is closer to Marlowe's original than is the B-text, but "that the B-text trivializes the very nature of Faustus's tragic experience by its endless appetite for stage contrivance" (47). Many critics also find a difference in the theological perspective of the two plays, though Bevington and Rasmussen concede that it is difficult to assess whether this reflects a systematic effort to revise the theology of Marlowe's play or whether the differences we perceive are inadvertent (48). The latter seems more likely to me. This is not to say that careful reading cannot perceive differences between the theology of the A- and B-texts, but I would argue that the goal of Birde and Rowely was not to correct Marlowe's theology. Rather, as with the stage magic in the comic

scenes, it was intended simply to give the audience more of what had thrilled and entertained it in the original performances.

Perhaps no scene is a better locus for this discussion than Birde and Rowley's addition to the final act, when Mephistopheles tells Faustus that it was he who guided Faustus's eye as he misread the Bible. In the A-text, Faustus takes his leave of the scholars, saying "Gentlemen, farewell. If I live till morning, I'll visit you; if not, Faustus is gone to hell" (A:5.2.65). Then, after the scholars exit, he begins his final, exquisitely moving soliloquy. In the B-text, the scholars' exit is followed by the appearance of Mephistophilis, who tells him to despair of salvation:

Mephistopheles. Ay Faustus, now thou hast no hope of heaven;
Therefore despair. Think only upon hell,
For that must be thy mansion, there to dwell.

Faustus. O thou bewitching fiend, 'twas thy temptation
Hath robbed me of eternal happiness.

Mephistopheles. I do confess it, Faustus, and rejoice.
'Twas I, when thou wert i'the way to heaven,
Damned up thy passage. When thou took'st the book
To view the Scriptures, then I turned the leaves
And led thine eye.
What, weep'st thou? 'Tis too late. Despair, farewell!
Fools that will laugh on earth must weep in hell.

(B:5.2.92-103)[1]

This is a passage that can figure strongly in analyses of theological differences between the A- and B-texts, for as Bevington and Rasmussen suggest, one may perceive here "a Faustus whose freedom of choice is markedly reduced" (48). However, Birde and Rowely have in fact firmly rooted this passage in aspects of Marlowe's original vision. Mephistopheles both begins and ends this visit to Faustus with an exhortation to despair, a sin that figures strongly in key moments of the A-text. There, in Act II, Faustus contemplate his damnation while awaiting the return of Mephistopheles with the contract of deed that he will sign:

> Now, Faustus, thou must needs be damned,
>
> And canst thou not be saved.
>
> What boots it then to think of God or heaven?
>
> Away with such vain fancies and despair!
>
> (A:2.1.1-4)

Another such moment occurs after Faustus swindles the horse-courser:

> What art thou, Faustus, but a man condemned to die?
>
> Thy fatal time doth draw to final end.
>
> Despair doth drive distrust unto my thoughts.
>
> (A:4.1.139-141)

Similarly, Faustus despairs of his salvation just prior to asking for Halen of Troy to be made his paramour:

> Where art thou, Faustus? Wretch, what hast thou done?
>
> Damned art thou, Faustus, damned! Despair and die!
>
> (5.1.48-49)

Mephistopheles's urging of despair in Birde and Rowely's additions thus echoes a theme that was repeatedly invoked in Marlowe's original play, and which is central to its meaning. Marlowe's Faustus may be said to have committed all seven of the deadly sins, and additional ones as well, but it is despair that damns him, for the result of despair is a failure to repent. The sinner who believes that god will not forgive him will therefore not repent, and his sins will not be forgiven. This belief in the impossibility of forgiveness is clearly Faustus's, who tells the scholars who are urging him to remember God's mercy that "Faustus' offence can ne'er be pardoned. The serpent that tempted Eve may be saved, but not Faustus" (A:5.2.15-16). There may be an element of pride in boasting that one's sin is so bad as to be unpardonable, but one who believes this will not seek to repent.

Students of the Faust analogues in American literature will be aware of our modern tendency to focus on the compact with the devil as a contract. If one regrets selling one's soul, what one needs is a good lawyer who will be able to find a loophole in the legal language.[2] However, in Marlowe's time, selling one's soul or making a pact with the devil as witches do, is not a legal transaction, it is a sin, and like any sin, it can be repented and forgiven. For Mephistopheles and Lucifer, the challenge is to keep Faustus from repenting. Their tactics are varied. One response is to divert Faustus from contemplating repentance, either by entertaining him with amusing spectacle, as when the demons produce the pageant of the seven deadly sins to keep Faustus from thinking about God, or by providing pleasurable experience, as with the simulacrum of Helen of Troy. Another ploy is to threaten Faustus with violence when he is on the verge of repentance. Thus, when Faustus responds to the Old Man's plea for him to "call for mercy and avoid despair" (A:5.1.57), by finding that "Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast" (AL:5.1.65), a raging Mephistopheles appears with the threat to "in piecemeal tear thy

flesh" (A:5.1.69). Finally, the demons strive constantly to persuade Faustus that the pact is indeed binding, for his thinking so will effectively make it so. We see this for, example, in Faustus' disputation with Mephistopheles about the nature of hell. Faustus asks, Why, think'st thou then that Faustus shall be damned?" and Mephistopheles answers, "Ay, of necesssity, for here's the scroll" (A:2.1.131-123). The Birde-Rowely addition to the play's ending builds on Faustus's A-text acceptance that his fate is certain because "I writ them a bill with mine own blood" (a:5.2.41-42). Mephistopheles' boast that Faustus has "no hope of heaven" is not true of necessity, but is designed to reinforce Faustus's feelings of despair and hopelessness. The devils want Faustus to abandon hope and to acquiesce in the belief that he must be damned because of the deed of gift that he has signed.

The most striking part of this addition to the A-text is Mephistopheles' statement to Faustus that "When thou took'st the book / To view the Scriptures, then I turned the leaves / And led thine eye." Mephistopheles refers, of course, to Faustus' partial reading of two passages from the bible in the play's first scene. He combines part of Romans 6:23, "The reward of sin is death," with part of 1 John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, / We deceive ourselves" (A:1.1.41&44-45). Neglecting the full texts, which clearly say that repentance and salvation are possible, Faustus concludes that the biblical message is that we all sin, and therefore we will all be damned. The conclusion that Faustus comes to in the A-text is clearly his own. He bears responsibility for it. What the B-text adds is the notion that his choice of texts was prompted by Mephistopheles. Presumably the fatal syllogism is still Faustus's responsibility, but one may perceive that his chances of choosing rightly are narrower in B than in A, and many have argued this. However, in the A-text, Faustus tells the scholars that he would call on God but Lucifer and Mephistopheles draw in his tears and stay his, and moreover, "I would lift up may hands, but see,

they hold them, they hold them" (A:5.2.30-34). All in all, then, the B-text addition refers to and builds on an important moment in the opening of the original play, and places it in the context of the close demonic control found elsewhere in the A-text. Most modern readers may prefer the A-text, but the craftsmanship with which Birde and Rowely augmented the original play is apparent. They gave their audience more of what it liked in the original: more comedy, more appearances of the devil, and more debates between the good and bad angels, and in doing so they also responded thoughtfully to the content of the original. Theirs was not hack work.

Notes:

[1] All quotations from *Doctor Faustus* (A or B) are from Bevington and Rasmussen.

[2] In Stephen Vincent Benét's "The Devil and Daniel Webster," Webster persuades a jury of the damned to acquit his client through the sheer power of his eloquence.

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Talk with the Animals: Knowing and Understanding Animals in Milton's *Paradise Lost*

"If he could only talk" is an oft heard refrain from animal lovers. Today we know that animals do talk to us if we can only be observant and knowledgeable enough to hear them. They use any number of sounds, sighs, gestures, and body movements to communicate with us (Thomas 127). In John Milton's *Paradise Lost,* Adam is in the enviable position of completely understanding animals soon after God created them in prelapsarian Eden. It is fascinating to think that Adam knew and understood all animal's natures. More so than Adam, Eve believes that animals can reason, and she has a close relationship with the plants in Eden. Milton is addressing interspecies communication when he has God say that animals know Adam, and can reason. This was not a common view in early modern England. As Dr. Randall Martin discussed yesterday, when he said that Shakespeare was at the beginning of environmental consciousness, so too was Milton at the forefront of a movement to improve the treatment of animals. Milton's stated goal in writing *Paradise Lost* was to "justify the ways of God to men" (PL 1.26); thus, by depicting animals as reasoning and knowing he is making a statement for the better treatment of animals. Milton is saying that even though we live in a postlapsarian world, we can and should strive to act more prelapsarian towards animals and nature, as God intended.

In Milton's prelapsarian Eden, the animals all get along with each other and have an idyllic innocent existence. In fact, Milton seems to take special delight in describing animals in Book 4 of *Paradise Lost.* The diction Milton uses in the following Adam and Eve lines reflects the bucolic nature of the scene: fresh, sweet, ease, easy, wholesome, grateful, compliant, soft,

damasked, savory, gentle, endearing, fair; culminating in happy, a fitting summary of the passage.

Under a tuft of shade that on a green
Stood whispering soft, by a fresh fountain side
They sat them down, and after no more toil
Of their sweet gard'ning labor than sufficed
To recommend cool Zephyr, and made ease
More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite
More grateful, to their supper fruits they fell,
Nectarine fruits which the compliant boughs
Yielded them, sidelong as they sat recline
On the soft downy bank damasked with flow'rs:
The savory pulp they chew, and in the rind
Still as they thirsted scoop the brimming stream;
Nor gentle purpose, nor endearing smiles
Wanted, nor youthful dalliance as beseems
Fair couple, linked in happy nuptial league,
Alone as they. (4.325-340)

The following animal passage uses *frisking*, *played*, *wild*, *wood*, *wilderness*, *forest*, *den*, *chase*, *sporting*, *ramped*, *dandled*, and *gamboled*, culminating in *mirth*, which reflects the amusement and laughter inherent in this section:

About them frisking played
All beasts of th'earth, since wild, and of all chase
In wood or wilderness, forest or den;
Sporting the lion ramped, and in his paw
Dandled the kid; bears, tigers, ounces, pards
Gamboled before them; th' unwieldy elephant
To make them mirth used all his might, and wreathed
His lithe proboscis; (4.340-347)

The serpent lines use *sly*, *insinuating*, *Gordian*, *fatal*, *guile*, *unheeded*, *ruminating*, all words resonating with evil—the serpent is unstoppable and dark:

close the serpent sly
Insinuating, wove with Gordian twine
His braided train, and of his fatal guile
Gave proof unheeded; others on the grass
Couched, and now filled with pasture gazing sat,
Or bedward ruminating: for the sun
Declined was hasting now with prone career
To th' Ocean Isles, and in th' ascending scale
Of heav'n the stars that usher evening rose:
When Satan still in gaze, as first he stood,
Scarce thus at length failed speech recovered sad. (4.347-357)

Satan's words include *hell, grief, mold, inferior, woe, pursue, ill, foe, forlorn, unpitied*—all words that reflect Satan's cold, harsh, calculating nature:

"O Hell! what do mine eyes with grief behold,
Into our room of bliss thus high advanced
Creatures of other mold, earth-born perhaps,
Not Spirits, yet to heav'nly Spirits bright
Little inferior; whom my thoughts pursue
With wonder, and could love, so lively shines
In them divine resemblance, and such grace
The hand that formed them on their shape hath poured.
Ah gentle pair, ye little think how nigh
Your change approaches, when all these delights
Will vanish and deliver ye to woe,
More woe, the more your taste is now of joy;
Happy, but for so happy ill secured
Long to continue, and this high seat your heav'n
Ill fenced for Heav'n to keep out such a foe
As now is entered; yet no purpose foe
To you whom I could pity thus forlorn
Though I unpitied: league with you I seek,
And mutual amity so strait, so close,
That I with you must dwell, or you with me
Henceforth"; (4.358-378)

Milton weaves a spellbinding atmosphere with his words.

Part of the mesmerizing quality of the poem relates to Milton's use of caesura and enjambment. With few end-stopped lines the eye and ear are urged on past the place we are

expecting to stop or pause. He unsettles us wonderfully in the passages about Satan. But Milton also writes pleasing, calming cadences as evidenced in the animal section and the Adam and Eve passages. Generally, those parts also contain fewer syntactic inversions within the lines hence they are more straightforward and reassuring. Satan's passage, however, contains frequent inversions to confound the reader: “grief behold” instead of “behold grief.” Milton uses more negative words in the Satan lines: “not and un-.” It is perhaps a case not so much of what Milton puts in the lines about animals that differentiate them, as what he leaves out - the inversions, the negatives. What of the meter? Written in blank verse, *Paradise Lost* is composed in iambic pentameter with some variations. Robert Bridges in *Milton's Prosody* says that an inversion of the accent in the first foot “freshens the rhythm” (41). In *Poetic Designs,* Stephen Adams comments that “trochaic reversal is much greater if it follows enjambment, the two effects combining with redoubled force” (17). Hence, we see the trochee in line 343, “sporting” is not as arresting as the ones in the next two lines which follow enjambments. In “Dandled” and “Gamboled” the latter is particularly notable. The word itself lends some emphasis—the unusualness of it and the drawn-out “o.” But its placement after the strident spondaic listing of “bears, tigers, ounces, pards” also lends it weight. With his playful diction and meter as well as the scarcity of syntactic inversions, Milton seems to emphasize animals in prelapsarian Eden. The innocence in this scene is something for man to aspire to: “all is not lost” Milton is saying, there is hope.

In Book 8 of *Paradise Lost,* Adam relates his memory of the world’s creation to the angel Raphael. God tells Adam to name the animals and he obliges:

> Approaching two and two, these cow’ring low
> With blandishment, each bird stooped on his wing.
> I named them, as they passed, and understood

> Their nature, with such knowledge God endued
> My sudden apprehension: (8.350-354)

According to the *OED*, "named" used as a verb means "to give a name to" and "to identify correctly by name." Milton is saying that God has given Adam or educated him in such knowledge in the lines: "With such knowledge God endued/ My sudden apprehension." Is he referring to knowledge of the "name" or "nature" here? Do the "names express inner truth" or does it mean "only that they are beasts and he is not" (McColley, *Poetry & Ecology* 214)? Looking to the Bible for clarification we find these words:

> And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof. Genesis 2:19

The Bible, then, simply says that Adam names living creatures. There is no mention of Adam knowing their natures. Milton's thoughts on this issue are discussed in an article by Christopher Eagle titled "Thou Serpent That Name Best." Eagle concludes that Milton hesitates to say overtly what this knowledge of animal's natures ultimately is (188). Milton appears to leave Adam in an ambivalent position in terms of understanding and knowing animals, but it is nonetheless Milton's construct, different from the Bible.

Eve has a different perspective on animals when, upon the serpent approaching her, she cries:

> "What may this mean? Language of man pronounced
> By tongue of brute, and human sense expressed?
> The first at least of these I thought denied
> To beasts, whom God on their creation day

> Created mute to all articulate sound;
> The latter I demur, for in their looks
> Much reason, and in their actions oft appears." (9.553-559)

Eve declares that the creature has "much reason" and expresses "human sense" or intelligence. Bruce Boehrer agrees, in his book *Animal Characters*, when he says that although Eve does not understand animals' language, she does interpret their behavior as providing "evidence of the capacity for reason" (67). Eve demonstrates that perhaps she is more closely aligned with nature than Adam when she visits her garden:

> and went forth among her fruits and flow'rs,
> To visit how they prospered, bud and bloom,
> Her nursey; they at her coming sprung
> And touched by her fair tendance gladlier grew. (8.44-47)

Eve has an intimate knowledge of plants, and perhaps more significantly, the plants are happy to see her, they do better when she is there. Is Milton suggesting that plants have agency or intelligence? Perhaps to some extent he is. In Book 11, Milton even has Eve name the flowers: "and gave ye names" (11.277). McColley remarks that it was quite uncommon to show Adam and Eve gardening in Eden before Milton and "especially to make Eve a gardener even more committed and original than Adam" ("Eve and the Arts of Eden" 104). She goes on to say that it was "equally unheard of to join him in naming the creatures by having her name the flowers, *naming* until then had been Adam's prerogative. It implies knowing, and so being able to aid, the natures of God's creatures" (105). Eve knows plants and animals and plants know Eve.

"God is a firm believer" in animal intelligence according to Boehrer (67). Certainly, God demonstrates a more enlightened attitude towards animals when, in a passage where he chides Adam for complaining about not having a partner, he exclaims:

> "What call'st thou solitude? Is not the earth
> With various living creatures, and the air
> Replenished, and all these at thy command
> To come and play before thee? Know'st thou not
> Their language and their ways? They also know,
> And reason not contemptibly; with these
> Find pastime, and bear rule; thy kingdom is large." (8.369-375)

It seems God is having a bit of fun with Adam, laughing at him even. Isn't it enough for you, Adam, that you have the entire earth with various animals, continuously replenished, all under your direction, to come and play or perform for you? God continues, and says that Adam can communicate with them as he knows their language and ways. What language did they speak? According to an interesting footnote in the Alistair Fowler edition of *Paradise Lost*, it was "a Jewish belief that until the Fall, Adam understood the language of the beasts" (449). Fowler names Hebrew, Syriac, Greek or Aramaic as being possible languages as well as "the 'in-articulate sounds' of the animals" (449). Philip Almond, in his book *Adam & Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* states that "Another non-verbal possibility for the language of Adam was that of gesture. Gesture was perceived as a somatic hieroglyph" (135). Almond articulates that in the seventeenth century, gesture was viewed as a kind of universal or Adamic language. Perhaps that is Milton's meaning when he tells Adam he knows their language. More significantly though, God declares that Adam knows their "ways." Adam understands animals. God continues to believe in the intelligence of animals when he says that animals also "know." Who or what do animals know? Do they know Adam and Eve? Do they know Adam's ways? One can only speculate that they do. Continuing, God says that animals "reason not contemptibly." Annabel Patterson in *Milton's Words* opines that "Several critics have noted that Milton tends to put his positives—his most important positives at that—in negative form" (165). The "not" before the

"contemptibly" slows speech down and focuses the reader, makes them pause if only to puzzle out Milton's meaning, thereby emphasizing the phrase. Milton is saying that animals can reason quite well and effectively communicate, and he wants us to clearly understand that.

We are never far from the realities of postlapsarian life in *Paradise Lost* though. In Book 10 we see how animals fare after the fall:

> Beast now with beast gan war, and fowl with fowl,
> And fish with fish; to graze the herb all leaving,
> Devour'd each other; nor stood much in awe
> Of man, but fled him, or with count'nance grim
> Glared on him passing: (10.710-714)

This is in stark contrast to the animals' play and frolicking in Book 4. Beasts, birds, and fish fight each other and the days of the prelapsarian diet as proscribed by God in Genesis 1:30 ("And to every beast …*I have given* every green herb for meat") are over, as they devour each other. It is the beginning of interspecies violence. The beasts are no longer in awe of Adam; rather they flee or turn their gazes to him with harmful intent. The innocence of the prelapsarian Eden is gone for creatures and man alike. Vicki Hearne in *Adam's Task,* has a noteworthy perspective of the fall when she says that postlapsarian, most "animate creation… turned pretty irrevocably from human command. The tiger, the wolf and the field mouse…refuse to come when called, to recognize our naming" (48). This is the beginning of the divide between wild and so called "domestic" animals. Perhaps a better way to look at the tame/wild paradigm is to examine interspecies communication and its role in this categorization. Are animals "wild" because we do not know how to communicate with them or because they have little interest in communicating with us? An interesting question brought to our attention in the animal communication and reasoning portion of *Paradise Lost*.

Milton paints a dismal picture of life on earth after the fall but it is particularly gruesome for animals who had once lived in such harmony. What was life like for animals in early modern times? Wild animals were often the targets of elaborate hunts and a large number of domestic animals in early modern times were alive solely for their value as a food source; death had indeed come for them. According to Keith Thomas in *Man and the Natural World*, domestic animals "were relatively more numerous than they are today; and they lived much closer to their owners" (94). It was common for people in Medieval times to live in the same structure as their cattle but this practice was changing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as more cattle were housed separately from people. Still "In the towns of the early modern period, animals were everywhere" (95). There was a belief that cows produced better milk or geese laid more eggs if they were close to their people (94-5). The animal with the closest relationship to man in Milton's time and since time eternal however, is the dog. The poet Petrarch had many dogs and often mentioned them in his letters giving us an idea of how pet ownership existed during this period (Walker-Meikle 39). In Petrarch's letter of 1353, he lists the elements of a simple life: clothes to wear, servants, a horse to ride, a roof and a bed, and a dog for company (40). Not only did dogs work as cart pullers, flock guards, estate guards or hunters, but dogs kept people company and were a comfort to them. In Milton's words then, animals knew and understood man.

Philosophers and scholars have long debated whether animals can reason. Erica Fudge in *Brutal Reasoning* says that reason was often presented as "the distinguishing feature of humanity" (2). In the seventeenth century, there were various "chains of being" hierarchies with God at the top followed by angels, man, animals, plants and rock (Greenblatt 1349). While Milton showed in *Paradise Lost* that beings can move between levels, nonetheless he says again

and again that man is superior to every being in Eden. In Book 7 lines 506-508, Raphael, in describing Adam's creation, says that God created "a creature who not prone / And brute as other creatures, but endued / with sanctity of reason". Animals can reason, but man has the higher reasoning power. Aristotle posited that of the three types of souls, vegetative, sensitive, and rational "the sensitive soul is possessed by animals and humans alone" and the "rational soul [which] houses the facilities that make up reason—including will, intellect, and intellective memory—is only found in humans" (Fudge 8). Fudge argues that in early modern England "there was no one way of viewing animals" (104). Going back to Plato's ideas of the brain being the seat of ideas, Plutarch "argued that animals are reasonable and that they are more virtuous than humans" (87). Building on these ideas, "Montaigne posed the question, 'When I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me?'" (Montaigne, qtd in Edwards 76). Opposed to this is the discourse of reason embodied by Descartes who "likened animals to automata, without souls, devoid of speech or reason, and by implication incapable of feeling pain" (Edwards 76). Milton waded into this debate as a student at Cambridge around 1625 in his Prolusion VII (303-305). Critics credit his support of Plutarch's ideals with informing his portrayal of animal reasoning in *Paradise Lost* (McColley *Poetry and Ecology* 219; Boehrer 66). Opinion on animal reasoning remained divided throughout early modern times. Perhaps Fudge puts it best when she says that there was "the possibility that a dog might know more than we can know that it knows" (85).

To return to the question of what animals "know" and "understand" is to enter the realm of present-day scholarship on animal studies. Linda Kalof in her Introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies* says that "the notion that animals are mere unthinking machines has been thoroughly debunked" (7). Today it has been proven that animals have "cognitive and

emotional capacities"; studies have also shown that animals "extend empathy, cooperation, and forgiveness" (7). Philosophers still debate whether animals have agency and intentionality but the argument is more focused on securing better treatment for animals and animal rights (7). Ken Hiltner posits that "Milton did not believe, as did other thinkers of his time, that the world was in a state of irretrievable decay as a result of the Fall; rather, he held out hope for a regenerative era here on earth" (3). There is hope for mankind, animals, and the planet. McColley's idea that "we cannot return to Eden, but we can make Edenic choices" resonates to this day (*Poetry and Ecology* 273). Was Milton encouraging us to be better stewards of nature with his portrayal of the reasoning ability of animals and plants in *Paradise Lost*? It would seem so.

In *Paradise Lost,* Milton showcases a prelapsarian world where man, plants, and animals co-exist in peaceful harmony. The plants gladden to see Eve; they know when she is there and grow better. Animals know and understand Adam and Eve. Milton was at the forefront of an ecological movement to care for our planet better. We know today that plants are much more aware of man than previously thought, with books like "*The Hidden Life of Trees"* and *"What a Plant Knows"* becoming best sellers. Perhaps Milton's ideals of animals knowing and understanding man, can lead us to become more Edenic in our outlook and ensure that we are stewards of our planet.

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Paradise's Two Trees of Knowledge

In Book V of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve's peace is breached by the lingering remembrance of Eve's dream in which she ascended to heaven by eating from the forbidden tree. The dream, sent by Satan as a precursor to temptation, is followed by God sending Raphael to warn Adam and Eve, lest they sin and plead ignorance. Raphael accordingly comes to Adam and Eve, conversing with them about things pertaining to men and angels, and eventually relating the story of the angelic rebellion led by Satan. In the process of his discourse, Raphael uses a metaphor of a tree to outline a comforting view of the universe's created hierarchy and the process by which progression is possible.

The metaphorical tree appears at first glance to be very like the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, as it is through learning that the boughs or leaves of the tree grow closer to heaven. However, it is possible that Raphael's tree image is designed to represent the Tree of Life, as the method of ascension Raphael imparts is presumably approved by God. Though there is no mention of the Tree of Life in Book V, the metaphorical tree could evoke an understanding of it in the abstract sense. Certainly, Raphael's metaphorical tree appears in opposition to the Tree of Knowledge, though it cannot be conclusively considered the Tree of Life itself. Possibly Milton omitted mention of the Tree of Life in Book V because he wanted to present Jesus as the physical manifestation of it. Book V is pre-fall, and therefore Jesus' redeeming function as the Tree of Life (although already decided) is not yet necessary and certainly not able to be communicated to Adam and Eve. Raphael uses the tree metaphor to effectively communicate the

alternative to the Tree of Knowledge in pre-fall existence, while at the same time foreshadowing the need for another "tree" to facilitate reunion with God should Adam and Eve choose to fall.

Eve dreams that she goes to the forbidden Tree of Knowledge where "[o]ne shaped and winged like one of those from Heav'n" (5.55) gives her the fruit to eat. When she does, "[f]orthwith up to the clouds / With him I flew... / … / …suddenly / My guide was gone, and I, methought, sunk down" (5.84-91): an interesting parallel to Satan's own fall through attempting to attain the heights of God. When Raphael comes to converse with Adam and Eve, he introduces another tree, albeit metaphorical, to express the order of the created world:

> … one Almighty is, from whom
> All things proceed, and up to him return
> …
> Each in their several active spheres assigned,
> Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
> Proportioned to each kind. So from the root
> Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
> More airy, last the bright consummate flow'r
> Spirits odorous breathes. (5.469-482)

This second tree seems to not only share the ascendant purpose of the Tree of Knowledge, but also the method. Adam responds to Raphael's exposition by saying, "Well hast thou taught the way that might direct / Our knowledge" (5.508-09), indicating that the way Raphael suggests is through a growth of knowledge. Although one is a physical reality and the other is symbolic, the two trees appear to function in a very similar way. However, it being implied in Eve's dream that the Tree of Knowledge cannot fulfill exaltation, the metaphorical tree is presented as the

guaranteed alternative. In his article on the subject, Stanton J. Linden writes, “all of the preceding part of Book V is carefully designed to prepare Adam for the possibility of melioristic ascent from body to spirit that is figured forth so effectively in Milton's springing tree” (604). The implications behind using one tree or the other is the real differentiating factor between them: to eat of the forbidden tree goes against and therefore without God, to ascend the metaphorical tree one must necessarily obey and rely on God. God’s approved plan for the exaltation of man and angels involves continuous progression, as is evident from the mention of root, stalk, leaves, and flowers. This second tree also applies the principle of merit to the progression, in the phrase “[t]ill body up to spirit work” (5.478). As mentioned before, learning and knowledge are central to the metaphorical tree, but it is a specific kind of knowledge: knowledge of God. Knowledge of God reveals his worthiness to be served and worshipped because of his power and goodness.

Michael C. Schoenfeldt makes an important distinction when discussing the word “hierarchy” in *Paradise Lost*: “For Milton… hierarchy implies both a tyrannical structure enjoining absolute servility and a beneficent order encouraging heroic obedience” (88). Satan’s view of hierarchy is the former, placing emphasis on the need to maintain the order as it is with no progressions or reassignments. The incident that sets Satan against God is the naming of his Son head of the angelic hosts in a way that proves the hierarchy is rather “a beneficent order.” Satan rails against “The great Messiah… / Who speedily through all the hierarchies / Intends to pass triumphant, and give laws” (5.691-93). Carol C. Cox writes that, rather than acknowledging similarities between individuals in different stations as Raphael does, “Satan nowhere claims that all angels are equal: rather he consistently denies equality in order to assert that (aristocratic) ‘freedom’ which consists in the secure possession of one’s place in a hierarchy” (179): Satan

says of angels, “if not all equal, yet free, / Equally free; for orders and degrees / Jar not with liberty, but well consist” (5.791-93). Cox goes on to say that

> Satan’s speech, taken by itself, is consistent in terms of the most common understanding of freedom from at least the time of Plato, who was insistent on the point that the artisan and the guardian in his republic were “equally free” precisely because they acknowledged the rightness of their places in a hierarchy. (180)

Satan’s royalist, aristocratic viewpoint is certainly convenient as he himself holds an exalted position: “for great indeed / His name, and high was his degree in Heav’n” (5.706-07).

In contrast, the created hierarchy expressed by Raphael is fluid: “one Almighty is, from whom / All things proceed, and up to him return” (5.469-70). Raphael’s visit to Adam and Eve in the garden is indicative of the fluidity between levels of the universal hierarchy as he “[descends] from the thrones above” (5.363) to converse face to face with mankind while he retains his innate nature, appearing as a “godlike guest” (5.351). However impressive Raphael appears, Adam also shows to a good advantage as he

> walks forth, without more train
> Accompanied than with his own complete
> Perfections…
> …
> Nearer his presence Adam though not awed,
> Yet with submiss approach and reverence meek,
> As to a superior nature, bowing low. (5.351-353, 358-360)

Adam, grand in his own right, still recognises what Schoenfeldt refers to as “the hierarchal distance separating him from Raphael even as the act of sitting and eating together serves to

close it" (81). By Raphael deigning to hold equal fellowship with Adam and Eve, Milton shows them to be elevated beings themselves (Knott 38). Raphael's discourse at the table further elucidates the compatibility between human and angel as he tells the human couple, "Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit, / Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend / Ethereal as we are" (5.497-499). As evinced in Raphael's metaphor about the tree, Milton establishes a view of the universe in which matter is connected along the descent from and ascent to God, changing in refinement as it progresses, but essentially the same in substance, allowing for humanity's ascension in the setting of constant motion and change (Marjara 88, Linden 605). It is apparent throughout the text that the hierarchy, if such it may be called, is a fluid one where angels and men are concerned.

The method of progression is through merit, as Raphael states: "Each in their several active spheres assigned, / Till body up to spirit work, in bounds / Proportioned to each kind" (5.477-79). The mention of work in these lines implies a measure of self-determination in the process of ascension. Cox writes, "Achievement of that higher level of merit depends upon recognition of the divine will in the abstract" (173). In his confrontation with Satan, the angel Abdiel asks a rhetorical question:

> Canst thou with impious obloquy condemn
> The just decree of God, pronounced and sworn,
> That to his only Son by right endued
> With regal scepter, every soul in Heav'n
> Shall bend the knee, and in that honour due
> Confess his rightful King?" (5.812-17)

It is apparent from this question, not only that the Son "by right" and with "honour due" has

achieved lordship over the angels, but that Satan is in opposition to the divine will in his condemnation of "[t]he just decree of God." Again, Cox writes, "Satan assumes 'degree' to be self-explanatory and self-justifying rather than a fact requiring explanation and justification. Abdiel, not Satan, offers such a justification—the abstract principle of merit" (182). Abdiel is not the only one who articulates the principle of merit. In conversation with Adam and Eve, Raphael also espouses the idea of an individual's behaviour affecting his or her position: "that thou art happy, owe to God; / That thou continu'st such, owe to thyself, / That is, to thy obedience" (5.520-22). The correct response to God is following the "divine will," which in turn guarantees the meritorious holding of, and possibly ascension from, certain positions.

Meritorious obedience necessarily branches from accurate knowledge of God. In Eve's dream, the tempter figure asks when looking upon the forbidden tree, "Is knowledge so despised?" (5.60). The question is misleading at best. Ironically, it is Eve, the one often thought most misinformed about the subject, that clarifies the understanding of the forbidden tree. Eve calls it the "tree / Of interdicted knowledge" (5.52), her phrasing indicating that it is only the specific knowledge contained in the tree that is forbidden: knowledge "of Good and Evil." Adam and Eve already know good from experiencing what God has done for them, as Adam says,

> Can we want obedience then
> To him, or possibly his love desert
> Who formed us from the dust, and placed us here
> Full to the utmost measure of what bliss
> Human desires can seek or apprehend? (5.514-18)

If Adam and Eve already know what is good from experiencing God, they know that evil in the abstract sense is to go against God by disobeying his command. The actual function of the Tree

of Knowledge is in effect to realise evil (in the act of humans defying God), where there had only been an abstract concept before, in contrast to the already realised goodness of God.

In a somewhat troubling parallel of the unrestricted desire for knowledge that Eve displays in her dream, Adam wants "to know / Of things above his World, and of their being / Who dwell in Heav'n" (5.454-56). However, Raphael concludes it is "good" for Adam to be knowledgeable about these things (5.570-71), also explaining his reasoning behind the use of metaphor, which retroactively provides a rationale for the tree image:

> what surmounts the reach
> Of human sense, I shall delineate so,
> By lik'ning spiritual to corporeal forms,
> As may express them best. (5.571-74)

Adam also views Raphael's communicativeness as beneficial for their closer knowledge of God: "Well hast thou taught the way that might direct / Our knowledge… / …whereon / … / By steps we may ascend to God" (5.508-12). Adam's reference to steps reinforces the idea that the created hierarchy is fluid and traversable, evoking the image of something such as the biblical Jacob's dream in Genesis 28.10-12: "he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold angels of God ascending and descending on it" (King James Version). It is also reminiscent of the Free Masonry symbol of Solomon's Staircase, also called the Winding Staircase, which is a metaphor for the attainment of degrees of knowledge in the Masonic belief system. In Masonry a candidate is required "to ascend, step by step, until he has reached the summit, where the treasures of knowledge await him" (Mackey). Considering these external connections, Milton is undeniably linking the idea of knowledge with ascension,

although he very carefully specifies the approved method and subject of the knowledge gained. For instance, Abdiel claims that to have knowledge of God is to have knowledge of good:

> Yet by experience taught we know how good,
> And of our good, and of our dignity
> How provident [God] is, how far from thought
> To make us less, bent rather to exalt
> Our happy state under one head more near
> United. (5.826-31).

Not only is knowledge of God knowledge of good, but that very knowledge is what aids in ascension to unity with God, through acknowledgment of his worthiness. As Cox writes, "The authority of Milton's God… *had to be justified by its goodness*" (192, emphasis hers).

A proper understanding of God will lead to the admission of, and willing submission to, God's superior authority. In their praise to God, Adam and Eve say,

> Thou sun, of this great world both eye and soul
> Acknowledge [God] thy greater, sound his praise
> In thy eternal course, both when thou climb'st,
> And when high noon hast gained, and when thou fall'st. (5.172-74)

An equally meaningful reading of this would be to replace the addressee "sun" with "Son." When God's Son "falls" in the sense that he is lowered to the angelic or even human realms, he still acknowledges God. Satan, in contrast, ceases to acknowledge God when he is in his exalted position, and certainly fails to do so when he falls. In his confrontation with Satan, Abdiel asks, "Shalt thou give law to God, shalt thou dispute / With him the points of liberty, who made / Thee what thou art" (822-24)? By instructing Satan on the doctrine of creation, Abdiel reveals

knowledge about God that Satan rejects: that God is superior to the angels because he created them. Schoenfeldt writes, "for Abdiel and Milton the difference [between service and servitude] in not phonetically superficial but morally crucial, depending upon the caliber of one's superior" (78). Satan disregards God's claim to worship by denying his claim to worth as creator, stating, "We know no time when we were not as now; / Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised, / By our own quick'ning power" (5.859-61). In Satan's refusal to admit correct knowledge of God, he justifies his disobedience. However, Abdiel counters this wilful ignorance by reminding Satan of the reality that will result from his rebellion:

> for soon expect to feel
> His thunder on thy head, devouring fire.
> Then who created thee lamenting learn,
> When who can uncreate thee thou shalt know. (5.892-95)

The result of Satan's refusal to acknowledge God's rule is what effects his fall and guarantees his judgement. The correct response to God's majesty and power is to serve him as is due, because, Cox states, "when [characters in *Paradise Lost*] base their choice on correct principle… then their free choice enacts a society in which coherence of motive and act and of act and result is guaranteed by the Providence to which they have willingly submitted themselves" (Cox 168). The key idea here is "willing submission," which should result from an accurate and deep knowledge of God (i.e. "correct principle"). As Raphael says: "freely we serve, / Because we freely love, as in our will / To love or not; in this we stand or fall" (5.538-40). In another statement, Raphael presents a seeming paradox: "Our voluntary service [God] requires" (5.529). The necessity for service to God initially seems to reinforce the hierarchal system, establishing rifts between the levels, but ultimately destroys the hierarchy in the form of one from a high state

(the Son) lowering himself willingly (the Incarnation) to create what Schoenfeldt calls "the moment of greatest physical intimacy between God and humanity" (88). The antithesis of Satan's refusal to acknowledge God's inherent worth, is Christ's willingness to step down from his exalted place. Abdiel points out that the Son isn't "by his reign obscured, / But more illustrious made, since he the head / One of our number thus reduced becomes" (5.841-43). Schoenfeldt writes, "[Satan's] own desire for exaltation results in degradation, just as Christ's willing humiliation provides the occasion for his coronation" (75).

Raphael's metaphorical tree presents a striking contrast to the Tree of Knowledge despite superficial similarities. By likening ascension to a tree, Raphael educates Adam and Eve in the acceptable exercise of their knowledge and capacity to serve God and acknowledges the reality of natural growth and change: "all nature tends to rise in the scale from corporeal to spiritual forms" (Marjara 96). Raphael places those who follow God's metaphorical tree in contrast to Satan by the story of Satan's fall and Abdiel's strong witness. Enfolded in the fluidity of the created hierarchy is the idea of merit as the method of progression through knowledge of God that results in recognition of his superiority. The process in its entirety effects the closer union of God with man.

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Out of the Woods: Hybridity, Transness, and the Forest as Liminal Space in Jean D'Arras' Mélusine

At the turn between the 14th and 15th centuries, a unique manuscript appeared in central France. Lavishly illustrated and commissioned for Marie de Valois by her husband, the Duke of Bar, the text was intended to perform three distinct functions. First, it was designed to entertain the Duchess, who was known to enjoy reading romances. Second, it was meant to serve as a sort of informal mirror for princes or young nobles. Third, and perhaps most interesting, the manuscript was intended to lend legitimacy to Charles VI's claim to the French throne by tracing the Valois lineage back to the powerful House of Lusignan. Any spare legitimacy the text could offer was much needed; by 1380, when Charles VI officially took the throne, France was well into the Hundred Years' War, a series of conflicts involving civil wars between French counties and violent land and ruling disputes between France and England. Among the disputed territories was the area from which this manuscript emerged, and about which it concerned itself—Poitou. This text was Jean D'Arras' *Le roman de Mélusine.*

A relatively popular French legend/coulrette prior to its compilation, D'Arras' *Mélusine* was among the first literary versions of the myth. Compiled for the Duke and Duchess de Bar between 1382-1394 CE, *Mélusine* is an amalgamation of many versions of the legend which mythologizes the origins of the French noble lineage of Lusignan and its foundress, Mélusine. Written during a significant series of shifts in the French political climate, the text is surrounded—and filled by—several instances of 'border blending.' Among them are the hybrid function of the text, the location of Poitou as a dense woodland area, and the distinctions

between the human and fairy worlds. Not only did D'Arras' text appear as the eastern-central regions of France were controlled alternately by French and British monarchs, but also it was written as the late Middle Ages were beginning to blend with the early Renaissance. Additionally, *Mélusine* is a creative work, while also being designed to teach and to legitimize. Moreover, it seems to be a unique hybrid of medieval French literary genres. Taking into account that the tale was massively popular throughout France, we are also able to consider the shape of the text itself—D'Arras' was pure French-language version of the legend, which was a mixed prose/lyric form, compiled of several different oral traditions of the same legend. It would be remiss to ignore one of the most obvious instances of hybridity in the text in this brief list; Mélusine's body, at once part fairy, part human, and part serpent. In many ways, the text—like the legend itself—is blended. The version I examine throughout this paper is the Middle English translation of D'Arras' *Mélusine,* which was not extant until well over a century after the initial appearance of the manuscript (around 1500 CE).

Primarily, the legend offers a history of sorts: for the most part, it follows the far-reaching escapades of Mélusine's ten sons, nine of whom are proficient in battle and politics and who established kingdoms in the name of Lusignan across Europe and the Mediterranean. It is only briefly that the manuscript explains the supernatural origins of the noble line, D'Arras' original French version of the legend, the titular character is by birth a fairy who has been cursed by her mother to appear as a half-snake hybrid every Saturday. By virtue of her curse and her hybridity, she is barred from becoming the human woman she longs to be. Yet beyond the hybridity of Mélusine's body, there is additional hybridity that features in nearly every aspect of D'Arras' retelling. For example, Mélusine herself is a hybrid of lineage—part human, part fairy. Additionally, her ten children are hybrids of a human/fairy union. Even further, the town of

Poitou in which the legend is set is itself a hybrid of city and forest, located deep in the woods yet thriving due to Mélusine's non-human magic and influence.

The choice on D'Arras' part to represent Mélusine as half serpent is a significant one. In other literary versions of the tale which are not direct translations from D'Arras' manuscript, the matriarch of the Lusignan line is cursed to appear as half fish—her appearance as snake is unique to D'Arras' text and its translations. This is an interesting choice on the part of D'Arras, and one that serves to masculinize his portrayal of Mélusine. Being depicted as a snake-woman in this version causes her to fulfill the masculine role alongside her husband, which automatically creates and illuminates an air of transness within the text. In this paper, I examine Middle English translations of *Le livre de Mélusine* and the treatment of the forest as a monster/nonhuman-producing liminal space in early English writings. I argue that Mélusine's hybridity can be read not only as a product of liminal space, but also in terms of *transness*. To accomplish this, I rely on Alexander Eastwood's definitions and model of "trans reading," a process that involves reading for moments of "slippage" or potential in a text in order to throw "certainties" of identity such as gender into question. Performing a close reading of *Mélusine* using Eastwood's lens, I argue that liminal space, as well as images of blending and hybridity, were used deliberately in the Middle Ages in order to allow for the possibility of identities that were not feasible—or that did not yet exist by name—at that moment in time.

One such unnamed identity which I argue can be represented by textual details in *Mélusine* is transness. Though gender subversion is not explicit in *Mélusine* as it is in some other medieval texts, "trans reading" allows us to examine these moments for traces of these identities. According to Alexander Eastwood, trans studies (or trans reading) "confront[s] the limits of post-structuralism; intricately connected to self-authorship, trans practices of reading and being read

call into question the valorization of irony and the free play of signification" (Eastwood 594). Trans reading allows for the possibility of "trans-" individuals not only in literature, but also in history, as subjects—not just, as Eastwood puts it, "objects of inquiry" (Eastwood 594). Trans studies and trans reading are deliberately subversive, asking people to critically engage with the revisionist idea that "trans-" people did not exist before "modern" times. For my purposes, then, trans reading offers another type of hybridity—taking a text and re-envisioning it to highlight passages that might represent the "trans experience." Trans reading involves the process of making a text into a liminal space (here defined as a space in transition between two states) that previously has not been viewed as such. Liminal space—particularly within a text—allows for more possibility as it fills a void between two permanent states. This allows us to resist the apparent certainties of the text, including but not limited to certainties like gender. Looking at a text such as *Mélusine* through a trans lens, the search for gender subversion becomes a bit difficult. Because of the opaqueness of gender in the text, in order to perform a trans reading of D'Arras' *Mélusine*, we must instead look for places where identity or status is in transition, or in other words is liminal, fundamentally uprooting what we know and allowing for radical readings of the changes that already exist in the text. While gender does not seem to be deliberately addressed in *Mélusine*, there is still considerable room for identity slippage in the text, particularly in terms of physical, spiritual, and geographical hybridity.

These depictions of hybridity are numerous within *Mélusine*, whit perhaps the most clear example being of Mélusine's gender presentation. Based on the often-explored conceptions of medieval womanhood as beauty, devoutness, and obedience, at the surface, Mélusine is a perfect woman. She is elegant, beautiful, pale, and just. When she first meets her husband, she even makes a point to insist that she is "of god," thus ensuring the goodness of her feminine soul,

although she has just revealed a supernatural knowledge of Raymondin (ch. 6 f. 16, ln 6). Mélusine is beautiful and fair, and this causes Raymondin to instantly revere her quite literally. Upon their first meeting, D'Arras' narrator notes that "whan Raymondyn herd her spek, he beheld her, and perceyued the gret beaulte that was in her, and toke of hit grett meruayłł, For it semed to hym that *neuer byfore he had not seen none so fayre*. And thenne Raymondyn descendid from hys hors, and bowed hys knees, and made reuerence vnto her" (6.15, 19-22, emphasis mine). While she is seemingly supernatural in her prescient knowledge of him, this is not something that is totally recognized by Raymondin—he is drawn to Mélusine, but does not know why. He falls to his knees because he is in awe of her and her unrivaled fairness. Mélusine embodies many of the expectations for medieval women, but most notably (and most problematic for her percieved humanity) she is not *passive*. All of her actions involve an aspect of agency; rather than obeying her future husband, everything she does is contingent on Raymondin obeying *her*. She gives him explicit orders, down to the script which he is to use in his negotiations, which she expects him to follow without hesitation, and which he does. Even further, Mélusine proposes marriage to Raymondin, rather than the other way around, offering him a ring in exchange for his agreement to her stipulations (6.17, 23-34). Through this repeated expression of self-interest and agency, Mélusine demonstrates that her perfect femininity (beauty, grace, well-spokenness) is a clever construct. She is part divine, and therefore automatically sort of outside of gender confines, and has had humanity taken away from her as a punishment. Because of this, she cannot truly fulfill the human expectations of femininity, even as she attempts to. Thus, her beauty, her charm, and her good graces become a form of gender-deception, only available to Mélusine within the confines of the forest.

Conversely, when she is in the kingdom of Lusignan itself and therefore within the confines of society, Mélusine cannot perform the ultimate female role (birth/nakedness/sex) with any sort of audience. She deliberately bars her husband from seeing her at her most vulnerably female—when she is bathing on Saturdays—because she cannot *be* vulnerably female; her anatomy and her curse will not allow it. What's more, Mélusine is not only unable to be biologically female in the public eye, but she insists on taking a formative and generative role in the society around her. She holds a place in her court, she completely oversees the goings-on of her community, she names Lusignan, and is not afraid to challenge her husband in front of their subjects. In these ways, Melusine and Raymondin's gendered marriage roles are flipped, casting Raymondin in the passive, feminine, "wifely" role. As Ruth Mazo Karras explains, "to be active was to be masculine, regardless of the gender of one's partner, and to be passive was to be feminine" (29). All of these things demonstrate activeness, and therefore detract significantly from Mélusine's performance of medieval femininity, thrusting her into the realm of the masculine. For the most part, she is able to look and act in the role of perfect woman, and yet, there is *something* about her that causes her to step outside of what is expected of her. Something causes her to transgress her place in society. As I will continue to argue throughout this paper, I assert that this 'something' is a physical obstacle to femininity. The long, thick tail that encompasses her lower half once a week (and only when she is nude) seems to be—both literally and figuratively—the masculinizing force that continually derails Mélusine's best efforts at femininity, and casts her as not just an outsider, but as a monster.

This kingdom, too, is important. The kingdom of Lusignan is established deep in the forest, just beyond the Fountain of Thirst that serves as the realm of fairies. Bordered by cliffs at the edge of the mountainous region, the kingdom is built at a supernatural speed, something that

is noted not just by Raymondin, but also by the Earl of Poiters and his court. Not only is this kingdom "the moste strong and fayre place the euer man saw in this Countree," it is also couched in a supernatural and borderland context, allowing readers to cast Lusignan as a liminal space (XIX.64, 5-6). Liminal spaces are those physical or spiritual locations where the rules of the natural world seem to be suspended (Schleif 201). In these liminal spaces, the "veil" between the natural and supernatural is thin, and so the borders between physical spaces and well as between the possible and impossible are blended. In medieval literature, the forest encompasses this idea of "liminal space," acting as a border between lands, between society and lawlessness, and between physical identities, as evidenced by the frequent presence of monsters in forest scenes of medieval literature. Forests are areas of transformation, by virtue of their status as borderlands. According to Valerie B. Johnson:

> [G]reenwoods are simultaneously space and place. As space, the greenwood becomes a zone of freedom and personal transformation…[while] as a place, the greenwood participates in a recursive and cyclical process of imaginative reconstruction and appropriation, using the freedom of the greenwood-as-space to transform into a "place of imagination." … [Thus] the greenwood-space, by participating in an ongoing cycle of imaginative transformation, becomes a space of transformation, or liminality. (Johnson 2016)

Liminal spaces are in and of themselves transitory locations. The forest ("greenwood") is a liminal space because it has the capacity to transform both people and landscape. Forests in medieval literature, for all intents and purposes, are areas that are encompassed by their own laws, both social and natural (Saunders). Though these social laws of the forest are dictated and 'enforced' by the king, it is difficult to police and survey all parts of a forest at all times. Thus, these areas are often quasi-lawless and become a haven for thieves, the banished, and monsters. Laws can be bent and redrawn in these liminal spaces, and the space between worlds becomes

malleable and permeable, allowing for any number of unexpected or unnatural possibilities. Mélusine is not only potentially conceived in a forest, which places her body in a transitional status by virtue of this fact alone, but also, she meets her future husband Raymondin. This casts their union—and by association Mélusine's identity as wife and mother—into that transitory space as well. The forest as liminal space provides the opportunity for conception in Mélusine's case, as has been previously mentioned. It is only in the forest that Raymondin—faced with the emotional turmoil of the death of his uncle—could become lost in the way that he does, and in a way that so fundamentally changes his identity from squire to husband and father.

The shifting of identity in the tale compounds in the confines of the forest. It is no coincidence that Mélusine must travel only through the forests of the human world to get to the Fountain of Thirst, where she meets Raymondin. Until her acceptance by Raymondin, it has been clear to Mélusine and her sisters that they do not belong in the human world, and so the only way she can cross from the world of Avalon into the human world is by traversing multiple liminal spaces until she reaches the place where the veil is thinnest, and she can take a human husband. The forest of Poitou is primed for her arrival, itself having a history of hosting fay, according to D'Arras' narrator:

> We haue thenne herd̓ say and telle of our auncyents, that in many partes of the sayd̓ lande of Poytow haue ben…many manyeres of thinges / the whiche somme called Gobelyns / the other ffayrees, and the other 'bonnes dames' or good ladyes / and they goo by nyght tyme and entre within the houses without opnyng or brekyng of ony doore…[T]he sayd fayrees toke somtyme the fourme & the fygure of fayre & yonge wymen / of whiche many men haue hadd̓ som doughtirs, and haue take to theire wyues by meanes of som couenauntes or promysses that they made them to swere vnto them (1.2b)

The people of Poitou may not have done anything to "deserve" the coming of Mélusine. Yet because they have verbal record of the history of fairy behavior in the region, her arrival is

expected and in fact, largely tolerated until her fully monstrous form is revealed. What's more, these cities have located themselves as a society springing up within the forest, blending the boundaries between tame society and The place itself exists as the most liminal of the liminal spaces within the text, and so Mélusine existing there, given the history of the place, is no surprise. In fact, she can be counted as another in a line of snake-women that have plagued this county. Even further, her curse can only be leveled in the forest, and so the fact that she makes a home out of the quasi-magical location of her transformation compounds the liminality in the text which makes Mélusine's existence possible. This sets a tone for change, transition and magical intervention in the ensuing tale, which allows us to read the presence of many changes—including gender-bending—within Mélusine's status as hybrid.

Because she is recognizably monstrous, Melusine's specifically serpentine body in Jean D'Arras's tale actively negates her ultimate feminine form and identity. This serpent's tail not only negates her painstaking construct of femininity, molding her into the archetypal "monstrous woman" who can do nothing but cause her husband's demise, but also serves to masculinize her physically as well as socially. Readers, like her husband Raymondin, do not ever see Mélusine performing the motherly duties of birth, caring for, and feeding her children. In the enactment of her curse, Mélusine's humanity has been revoked by her mother, and she cannot *be* human, but only a mimesis of a human woman. Even though she is beautiful, she can't be a woman in the way medieval people consider "the woman" to exist. What's more, the serpent itself is inescapably phallic—long, thin, cylindrical, *and* traditionally gendered male. By virtue of shape alone, the lower half of her body masculinizes her. The connection to sex organs is undeniable. Where Mélusine has a serpent's tail, a man would have a penis—her "monstrous" hybrid anatomy mirrors that of the male. This serpent—phallic—body is arguably the main reason that

her marriage is not and cannot be functional after her husband knows her true form. Since Mélusine has a sort of phallus herself, she and her husband are not only incompatible as monster and human, but also they are incompatible anatomically. By medieval standards, men cannot have intercourse with another phallus. The fact that Mélusine and Raymondin must then procreate in some way in order to produce heirs is significantly subversive to both of their gendered presentations. Even without the serpent's tail, however, because Mélusine allies herself with womanhood, her transgressions make her masculine, which in turn makes her monstrous. Even without the presence of the physical monstrosity (the tail) or her final transformation into a dragon (the metamorphosis), Mélusine is Othered from the women who would belong in the society that she builds. The tail and the transformation only *add* to the monstrosity that is already present in the text, cluing readers in to a social *and* physical reading of Mélusine's transness. This compounds her status as a hybrid—already monstrous because, as Dana Oswald notes "monsters were largely understood as hybrid creatures…[and] according to Augustine's definition…humans who possess animal parts are not to be classified as animals, but as monsters" (4-5). She is not only inherently monstrous because she is half fairy and half woman (and an animal hybrid), and in terms of the fact that she from the realm of monsters—the forest—but also, she is destined for true monstrosity in the enactment of her mother's curse. Mélusine is frequently shown, as a young fairy, to have several character defects; she is jealous, willful, and disobedient. Most importantly, though, Mélusine is wrathful. There is something *wrong* with Mélusine in that she cannot control her temper.

Still, though, Mélusine presents herself as perfectly human to seduce and enchant Raymondin, the man who will give her the opportunity to break her curse, in the transitional/border space of the forest. Significantly, after being entranced by a song he hears in

the forest he falls in to a state of hybrid sleep and wakefulness—Raymondin does not hunt, observe, and woo Mélusine in any sort of active capacity. Mélusine must work for his attention, a fact which enrages her. Initially, she admonishes him for his rudeness: "by my feyth, sire vassal, hit commeth to you of grette pryde or grette rudesse for to pass before ony ladyes without spekyng or somme salutacion," and she does so in part because she must take in upon herself to begin their interaction (6.28, 29-32). Her frustration is only compounded when she realizes he will not answer: "Raymondyn [neither] herde nor vnderstood, ne ansuered her not. And she, as angry & wroth, sayd ones agayn to hym: 'And how, sire musarde, are ye so dyspytous that ye dayne nat ansuere to me?'" (6.29, 1-3). Again, the character flaw of Melusine's wrath appears when she feels disrespected, and this rage comes because she must take it into her own hands to acquire the reverence and respect she requires to break her own curse. His sleep state forces her into an act of agency, something which she recognizes as a non-feminine attribute, and hopes to avoid. Mélusine feels rage because, by taking it upon herself to wake Raymondin and begin their romance, she is jeopardizing her future humanity by acting out of accord with the femininity she must perfect.

This becomes clear once Raymondin has awoken. Mélusine's rage changes rapidly to demureness and attempts to be alluring or charming. She instantly replaces her visible rage with caring and beauty, the only feminine attribute she can adopt at the drop of a hat. Recognizing his sleeping state, Mélusine masks her anger—and therefore her agency—in an effort to perform a femininity that will please her future husband, laughing and calming him:

> 'By my feith,' sayd she within her self, 'I byleue nonne other / but that this yong man slepeth vpon his hors / or ellis he is eyther dombe or def / but as I trow I shal make hym wel to spek, yf he euer spak byfore.' And thenne she toke and pulled strongly hys hand, sayeng in this manere: 'Sire vassal, ye slep.' Thanne Raymondyn was astonyed and affrayed, as one is whan another awaketh hym fro slepe / and toke hys swerd…And the

> lady thanne perceyued wel that he yet had not seen her, and, al lawghing, bygan to say to hym, 'Sire vassal, with whom wyl you bigynne the bataille? / your enemys ben not here, And knowe you, fayre sire, that I am of your party or syde?' (6.14-15)

Mélusine knows Raymondin on sight; in some sort of mystical capacity, she knows his name, and expects him to be startled when he is forcibly awoken—she even laughs at his knightly instincts to draw his sword when startled, almost as if she expects this behavior. Yet just prior to this passage, she becomes enraged when he does not acknowledge her at first, not understanding that he is asleep. She seems to expect that her interaction with a man in this place will follow the exact same pattern as her own mother's experience, expecting that this man has been watching and hunting her as she bathes with her sisters. She does not realize that he has fallen asleep under the sound of her song, or that his horse has transported him to the center of the forest by following her voice as she sings by the fountain. Her rage, while seemingly unfounded, is not so much stemming from the fact that he does not immediately acknowledge her, but rather that his sleeping state forces her to take on some sense of masculinizing agency. As she is performing femininity in a bid to break her curse, having to take control over her destiny and momentarily dominate the exchange in an effort to get what she wants is a direct contradiction to her endgame of medieval human womanhood.

Another challenge to Mélusine's womanhood is the lack of clarity surrounding her biological motherhood. Though readers do see the couple accompanied to their bridal chamber, this only happens with the first son, Urian, who "was that nyght engendered or begotten of them both"—at a time before the kingdom has become much more than a small cluster of buildings deep within the forest (19.58, 11). This is, until the naming of Lusignan several pages later, the only mention of Mélusine being physically with child. What's more, there is no clear delineation

of how long it takes for the kingdom of Lusignan to be built—particularly since a castle and full court appear within the span of time it takes Raymondin to travel to and visit Poitou for only a handful of days (9.37, 4-16). Because of this, it is unclear how long Mélusine's pregnancy actually lasts. Without the inclusion of any other bedding scenes, or pregnancies, or labors in *Mélusine*, it cannot be proven that the marriage is actually resulting in procreative sex, or even that the ten sons are fathered by Raymondin. Based on contextual clues provided in the text, we can envision the forest becoming the space of conception, casting even more of the hybridity—in this case specifically gendered hybridity—in the text as that which has sprung directly from the forest.

Though her feminine wiles win her husband's affection at first, it is Mélusine's hybridity and the revelation of her lack of humanity that causes the ultimate destruction of her marriage—and of her humanity altogether. Upon the revelation of her true form, she can never resume her performance of femininity. She is physically incompatible with her husband, and so her function as a medieval woman—in other words, her ability to be a wife and a biological mother—is immediately revoked. Once this reveal of her body occurs, Mélusine cannot reclaim her identity. She cannot return to her identity and function as a woman, and so she must flee. In the end, after the accidental revelation of her snake-body, Mélusine transforms into a dragon and flees her constructed kingdom, swearing to fulfill the final piece of the curse she has been bestowed—she will return as an omen signaling the death of current and future kings in her kingdom.

Beyond Mélusine's *physical* hybridity (taking the half-snake form), she is a gender hybrid as well, simultaneously embodying both masculine and feminine gendered traits. Yet since she portrays herself as a woman—this is the gender that she aligns herself with, consistently framing herself into the role of wife/mother even as she acts as active creator/ruler,

her masculine attributes often supersede her performed womanhood, which in turn functions to make her hybridity a monstrous one. Readers can make this connection because hybridity is a form of monstrosity both literally and figuratively. If Mélusine is "not woman" the only other medieval option a *person* is afforded is to be "man." Time and time again, however, she proves that she cannot be categorized as man either, largely because of her body—her body can and does produce children (in some way—we do see her pregnant with her firstborn son, even if we do not witness the birth or the conception in any meaningful measure), and for all intents and purposes it is made fairly clear that Raymondin does believe that his wife is fully and truly a woman in all regards. Because of these repeated conflicts of gendered traits, it becomes clear that it is difficult to categorize Mélusine largely because she is fay—but more than this, her unclear gendering is a clear signifier that she is not *human*. Her inability to be categorized by human binary genders makes this inhumanity all the more clear. As perfectly feminine as she appears in her first encounter with Raymondin, her masculine attributes (her active participation in her kingdom's creation and establishment), her guidance of Raymondin's actions (active where he passively allows her to direct him) and her sons' military training, and her physical incompatibility with her husband, all revoke her femininity and by association her humanity. Not only is she a hybrid of lineage, but also she is a hybrid of gender, and these concurrent forces of hybridity make her a monster in multiple conceptions of the term.

Discussing the medieval perception of the monstrous body in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, Sauer notes that "Isidore imagines the monstrous body as disharmonious" (98). In *Etymologiae*, Isidore refers to monsters as "portents." He argues for a conception of monstrous humans as natural, but disquieting at the least. He states that "a portent is therefore not created contrary to nature, but contrary to what is known nature. Portents are also called signs, omens,

and prodigies, because they are seen to portend and display, indicate and predict future events" (Isidore, XI.ii). Because of these writings, we can assume that medieval audiences would have seen through Mélusine's humanity just as much as we do in our modern conception of her, and this emphasizes her status as hybrid. In effect, the monstrous body was not unnatural, necessarily, because it was created by God, but still could not belong in any sense of the word. The monstrous body was either not natural or not logical, and therefore was Other. Mélusine falls into this category. In this myth, Mélusine is distinctly and consistently a monster—a fish-or-snake/human hybrid—who exists on par with the Sirens. This medieval understanding of the titular character of Jean D'Arras's tale sets a tone for Mélusine's behavior, and an expectation that no matter how human she looks (and at various points in the tale she is convincingly human-esque), she cannot actually *be* human—she is not inhabiting a harmonious body.

Calling into question her humanity and the status of her body as hybrid and monstrous recalls the earlier discussion of liminal space and Mélusine's hybridity as a facet of her transness. Mélusine is half-human, half-fairy herself, and she marries and mates with a human man Raymondin. The danger of this would have been apparent to medieval audiences. In *Gender in Medieval Culture*, Sauer touches briefly on the medieval conception of hybridity, noting that:

> the greatest fear of monstrosity…is the potential for interbreeding…the offspring of a monster and a human would be a dangerous sort of hybrid, able to "pass" in human society, entitled to human rights and privileges, but never being truly human. This is the literal embodiment of deviance…these hybrid creatures could…create their own society that would inevitably challenge humanity for control of the earth. Fearfully, the hybrid 'is a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite.' To the medieval person, that sameness was a reflection of the otherness within the self, the potential imperfection that lurks within humanity. (99)

Sauer has an important note about hybridity—one which here fits my examination of Mélusine. Hybrids will never be truly human, regardless of how human they act or appear. Mélusine has an extreme desire to be human, and her monstrosity (and the curse bestowed upon her) is what is keeping her from fulfilling that need. Still, though, Mélusine makes an arduous task of performing humanity, and more specifically (and perhaps more insidiously in the eyes of those around her) femininity. However, though she becomes more progressively "good" throughout the text of D'Arras's tale, we as reader cannot forget or discount her status as hybrid, and so the two (hybridity and gender slippage) are inextricably linked.

Mélusine is able, on her Saturdays away from Raymondin, to greatly expand Lusignan through magic; she causes fountains, castles and streams to rise out of the ground, aligning her with the Holy Father as the ultimate creator of worlds. This is another instance where Mélusine is only excessively and perfectly feminine when it suits her. She would rather build and create and take on the more masculine founding role of Lusignan than stand beside her seemingly ineffectual husband and let him hold control over her legacy. This disregard for femininity when she does not need it is something that is especially seen in her ability to give prescient combat advice to her sons in order to ensure that they carry a great legacy with them—a requirement of Mélusine's curse being broken. Mélusine's femininity is almost entirely performative, rather than inherent. She must make the consistent choice to be feminine, to play at the passive role, in order to counteract the mechanism of her curse. What's more, while it is intended to help fulfill her dream of living as a human woman, this performative femininity actually serves to put Mélusine's other actions throughout the tale in a significantly masculine light. Actions that are not tied to her looks or her motherhood automatically seem unfeminine. Her cunning, her battle prowess, her ability to build and create are all distinctly masculine traits. While her roles as wife

and mother are undeniably separate throughout the text, the fact that both cause her to become masculinized in one way or another joins them, here. They are enhanced in their juxtaposition against her self-portrayal as the ultimate woman. Even while trying to fit into her expected (and seemingly desired) role, she cannot, due to her physical body and her upbringing. She is not human and cannot be, and so her efforts to be a woman are also derailed and distorted.

As I have shown above, transness in the legend of *Mélusine* serves many different functions. For one, it can fulfill the aforementioned aims of Eastwood's "trans reading" by showing that transgender identities and instances are not a new phenomenon, and that, even though there is no "happy ending" to the legend itself, trans people have long had the power to change and impact history. This is shown by Mélusine's status as the foundress of the noble lineage of Lusignan, a far-flung bloodline that includes kings, noblemen, and abbots. Another function this type of reading serves is explaining the previously unexplainable—in every myth lies a kernel of fact, and this reading may provide one possible facet of that fact, as unlikely as it may seem. Mélusine's spiritual and physical hybridity allow us to pull at the threads of the text, destabilizing the already shifting identities therein and potentially revealing something Other.

After the reveal that she is not human—and specifically that she is a phallic, masculinized serpent—Mélusine can *never* reclaim her identity as a woman. Throughout the text, it is shown time and time again through Mélusine's actions that humanity is an identity to which she aspires and which sees within herself. Humanity is something Mélusine can only achieve when, despite her body, she performs femininity in such a way that makes her undetectable as monster in the medieval world. Mélusine knows, more than her audience, more than any other person, what she is. *Who* she is. Mélusine, from the moment she is conscious of her fay body, knows instinctively that she is meant to be a human woman even when her circumstances, her

nature, and countless others around her require her to act otherwise. And yet she continues. Femininity and all its trappings are the only chance Mélusine has at achieving humanity through performance. This is why she endeavors so wholeheartedly to never be found out. When she is eventually discovered, it is cataclysmic; her identity as a woman is literally ripped away from her, and instead of being able to reconcile these two identities (because transness did not *exist* as a plausible identity marker in the Middle Ages), she becomes an omen of how difference (performing humanity) can threaten established norms. She is finally fully monstrous. Though this final act shifts Mélusine's body away from what Dana Oswald terms a "humanoid monster" into something much more recognizably non-human, it is clear through this moment that hybridity and true monstrosity are not separate things in this text. While it is certainly problematic to link monstrosity to transness, the connection here rests in the way each of these experiences—of the medieval monster or of our modern social conception of gender transition—are based largely on the experience of an individual who's inclusion is contingent on social perception and acceptance of difference.

This inability to extract differing categories of monster from *Mélusine* is by and large the force that colors the text more generally with aspects of the trans experience. I do not want to be reductive here, but the parallels between the serpentine Mélusine's experience of humanity and the trans experience of gender cannot rightly be ignored. Mélusine believes that the identity which others impose on her is not her own—we see this in her deeply held desire to be human. Additionally, her physical body is the primary obstruction between the way she sees herself and the way others perceive her. In the same way that "passing" as their gender is often integral for the safety of trans people, passing as human (and specifically female) is the only thing that can ensure Mélusine the life she so desires. What makes this inherently a trans experiences is that

Mélusine is existing in two states based on how others see her (and therefore a monster in her world) both literally and figuratively. Because of this, it is not only impossible for her to be a human, but also impossible for Mélusine to be a *woman.* In every way, her medieval audience can only see her as playacting at womanhood. Try as she might, circumstances around her force her to act in traditionally masculine ways, and because she is not perfectly biologically female, her body absorbs and reflects this masculinity in the appearance of a physically masculinizing snake tail.

Where we see liminality, transition, and border blending in a text like *Mélusine*, suddenly there is room to read for identity and physical slippage, as Eastwood models. While often presented as dangerous and as a sort of warning about the destructive potential of those who fail to conform to social expectations, the specter of hybridity that haunts many medieval texts may not be something to fear. Rather, it may be that these hybrids advance our stories and civilizations, and that the texts we find them in need to be preserved and their many facets to be discussed and analyzed. These texts have potential to resonate with identities beyond the bounds of the traditional heteronormative narrative. That potential, as I have shown here, can and should be explored. The adage goes that in every tall tale, there is a kernel of truth. Who is to say that there is not such a kernel at the heart of *Le roman de Mélusine*? Perhaps, realistically, there were never fairies in medieval France. Perhaps no dragon ever took to the skies above Poitou. But it seems possible to imagine that a woman we remember as having a phallic snake tail might have truly been a woman with a phallus.

Notes:

Daughter of John II of France (d. 1364)

Summarized briefly, the conflict emerged out of the application of Salic law, meaning that women were unable to serve as the crown monarch of France. Salic Law resulted in King Charles IV's closest living male relative (Philip VI) to be discounted as a legitimate heir to the French monarchy, because his relation to the king was through his mother, the King's sister. Without a legitimate French heir, the closest male heir was King Edward III of England, and war broke out between those French citizens loyal to Charles, and the British-held territories of Northern France. However, it would not be long before King Henry V regained the French throne for British rule in 1412.

Spinning-wheel fable, a French oral storytelling tradition.

A subsequent manuscript published in 1404 (authorship contested, but largely attributed to French poet Courdrette) represents Mélusine as half-fish (a mermaid/Siren), and was, by all accounts, equally as popular as D'Arras' version.

The manuscript was quickly translated into many languages throughout the fourteen- and fifteen-hundreds.

In a brief summary of *Le Roman de Mélusine,* Dyfed Lloyd Evans identifies the tale as one of Les Dames Blanches (the White Ladies) stating "[these tales] were primarily associated with the Normandy region in France…these fairies crowded the forests of Normandy and lurked near streams, bridges, and ravines, where they would accost lost travelers. The White Ladies were generally known as being irresistibly beautiful, yet they were also cruel and furtive…[and] could foretell a man's passing" (Evans).

At the risk of being reductive, the "trans experience" is one of transition. Transness, in my own experience, is an explicit feeling of being in-between—no matter how much a trans person may "pass" as their gender, there is always moments of exposure in which a trans person is simultaneously the sex that they were assigned at birth and the gender that they present, based solely on the social perception of that person's identity.

In the Middle Ages, biological essentialism required that those women who did not make use of their female bodies (as sex objects, wives, caretakers, and mothers, were automatically less womanly—and most importantly, more masculine—than their counterparts.

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"The best in this kind are but shadows":
Midsummer Night's Dream at the Movies:
Some Observations for Teaching and Learning

Introduction

My project is to suggest the productive use of a number of Shakespeare films for the understanding and enjoyment of A Midsummer Night's Dream. The starting point is the innovative and useful collection, Shakespeare: Script, Stage, and Screen (Bevington, Welsh, and Greenwald), which calls this play "especially 'film friendly'" (163) and mentions 12 productions from 1903 to 2000, adding 3 filmed operas, a couple of ballets, and at least one puppet show, not to mention "spin-offs" like A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy (1982, dir. Woody Allen). We might add a recorded original pronunciation version (mentored by linguist David Crystal), a TV sketch performed by the Beatles, as well as at least five productions since 2000.

My assumption (no surprise here) is that every production, whether live on stage, a recorded performance, or a scripted film version, is an interpretation of the play on which it is based. It reads the play as we read the performance. And while viewing a production is a rewarding way to be introduced to a play (take your kids to the Shakespeare!), prior engagement with the text provides a basis for learning from, and engaging, adaptations. I realize that viewing may be the best way in for some; it may even be the only way in. I have students who tell me they listen to or watch a recording while reading the text. For those students, we would recommend a version that leans toward the accurate and the full (Ian McKellan's Lear, not Ran, for instance). But such viewing can be limiting. With a voice in your head or a scene before you, it is difficult to imagine other ways to read a line or to stage a scene, something I work hard

to conjure in my classes. Thus while viewing before reading can be a tremendous aid; reading, discussing, and speaking the text is the best preparation for experiencing film versions. In this way, viewers are prepared to be surprised, affirmed, challenged, and excited by what they see.

The terminology for describing adaptations is a bit fluid. Bevington and friends cite versions, adaptations, and spin offs. Desmond and Hawkes distinguish among close, intermediate, and loose adaptations. It's the shared term, adaptation, which is tricky. While Bevington, et. al. suggest that in an adaptation the "play serves as a source for a new story and its characters" (46; they cite Kiss me Kate), Desmond and Hawkes define the term as "the transfer of a printed text in a literary genre to film" (1). I'd suggest that the former distinctions are best at the edges (we can agree that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead and 10 Things I Hate about You are spin-offs and that Branagh's Hamlet is a version (close adaptation). But what of Ethan Hawke's Hamlet, which preserves much of the language but resets the play in contemporary New York? Intermediate seems a good description. On the other hand, recent recordings of live performances, like Benedict Cumberbatch's Hamlet (which I have not seen) or the Globe on Screen series use multiple cameras and angles, as well as some film techniques, to move them from the static to the dynamic. While these distinctions are worth exploring, the one I wish to make is that between productions that are faithful (or close enough) to the language, plot, and characters of the play in order to offer a good introduction to the play—they teach it to us. Others, call them loose, reward us for knowing the play well and often more freely adapt, enhance, and explore the play's ideas.

Resources

In 2006, David Bevington collaborated with theatre critic Anne Marie Welsh and actor/director Michael L. Greenwald to develop an anthology, Shakespeare: Script, Stage, and

Screen. Included are 14 plays, using Bevington's well-established edition. An abbreviated version of Bevington's introduction to Shakespeare and his world is supplemented by introductions to interpreting Shakespeare and (especially helpful) to the practice of adapting the plays to the stage and screen. Individual plays are framed by an introduction which highlights "Themes and Issues" as well as "Staging Challenges" and (following the text) by an extensive survey of stage and screen versions, one which often includes script excerpts, scene analyses, and director profiles. It's really a marvelous collection of material, great for sending yourself and students off in a variety of directions. I taught from this text once and wore out my students and myself with its richness. My only complaint is that I have not seen a copy that did not fall to pieces. And of course, such compilations quickly go out of date. Still, it's the best one-stop resource I've found.

The work of accessing a variety of film versions for yourself and your students is complicated, especially if you've been doing it for a while (would you believe that I still have some VCR tapes in a pile?). Amazon Prime, Netflix, and other platforms are very helpful, as is YouTube, but of course the latter is not always reliable for copyrighted material. The academic database which I found most helpful is the Films On Demand: Master Academic Video Catalog, a subscription Infobase Learning collection. This resource offers 4 full-length versions of the play before tailing off into Pilates videos (the search function is a work on progress), as well as dozens of clips. It's a good place to start, especially because it is relatively easy to link or embed the video into your course management platform, and the videos should show up in your online catalog.

Three resources, all online, bear mentioning as we focus on Midsummer. The first has nothing to do with film, but rather is an intriguing approach to the texts. Understanding

Shakespeare is website that pairs the Folger Shakespeare Library's online texts with keyword-linked references to articles in the JSTOR database: click on a number in the right margin which indicates how many articles are referenced, and links to articles pop up on a right-hand pane. This is either the best thing since sliced bread or the end of good research as we know it. If used thoughtfully, it can provide a foundation for engaging secondary sources.

More to our current point, the BBC One website for its 2016 adaptation of the play contains clips, interviews, galleries, and links, including some interactive explorations that are part of their iwonder website. In one, Eleanor Matsuura (Hippoyta in this version) explores Shakespeare's treatment of women, and in another screenwriter Russell T. Davies explains the importance of updating Shakespeare, including why he cut lines in which young women mention suicide. Equally interesting is the PBS website for its series Shakespeare Uncovered, which in two seasons has produced hour-long introductions to 11 plays, all currently available in full (most are available on Films on Demand as well). The episode on Midsummer, ably hosted by Hugh Bonneville, weaves analysis, appreciation, plot summary, and performance into its presentation. It includes commentary by Jonathon Bate, Stephen Greenblatt, Gail Kern Pastor, Ralph Fiennes, Julie Taymor, and Dominic Dromgoole while featuring scenes from the latter two's productions of the play.

The Set Up: "The course of true love never did run smooth" (1.1.134)

The master stroke of Russell T. Davies's 2016 BBC production of Midsummer Night's Dream is his set up. Davies, credited with reviving the Dr. Who franchise, worked with director David Kerr and a varied cast of accomplished and new British actors to develop what Davies characterized as an updated, family-friendly 90 minute production that could introduce a broad audience to Shakespeare. To that end, the script is compressed, the pace is accelerated, the

music intentionally overdone, and the occasional line reassigned. But all the elements are there: a framing story, young lovers, a forest marriage spat, and, of course, the rude mechanicals. This set of artisans gathers at a pub, and their organizer, named Quince, in a nice nod to the balancing of gender throughout the production, is now a woman. By its conclusion, the impetus of its opening spins the ending off into some unpredictable, but not unwarranted, directions. (Spoiler alert!). Theseus must be done away with, as becomes clear when all play's mocking asides regarding the mechanical's play are reassigned to him, and we see him ordering exterminations on his iPad. The dying lines of Pyramus and Thisbe are voiced over his apparent heart attack which occurs while he is alone in a hallway. The mechanicals' country dance becomes a Bollywood extravaganza, and the final scene of the play is overlaid on this one as Titania invades the party, releases Hippolyta from her straightjacket (what a wedding dress!), and Hippolyta is discovered to have been a fairy all along. It was never going to work between Theseus and Hippolyta, nor between Oberon and Titania, as the two fairy women spread their butterfly wings, mounting up to the ceiling where they kiss. The apparent message of this production is that any love is good love, and we can be released from ourselves into something truer.

The opening scene of the production is a good place to investigate the screenwriter's creative interaction with a well-known, and carefully contrived, scene. Davies activates a number of interesting themes, creating some emphases and directions that invite us to consider the play's characters, plot lines, and motifs. The first of these is patriarchy and suppression. Is the Theseus of Shakespeare's play the author of what Lysander calls the "sharp Athenian law" (1.1.162)? This one surely is. The production opens loudly with a choral paean chanting "Theseus" as he (John Hannah, sneering and confident) approaches a podium, apparently to be

received as the new autocrat of Athens. He is flanked by storm troopers and huge red flags emblazoned with a fascist-looking "A" design. A news runner in red borrows early lines from the play about stirring up the Athenian youth—the lines suggest a youth rally—and grainy news shots of the scene point to a state characterized by surveillance and propaganda. Now, I don't read Shakespeare's Theseus as a tyrant, but pushing those buttons allows us to examine his statements and actions in the play in this light. How sympathetic should he be?

The next scene in the film extends our impression of Theseus as he marches along a gallery and enters a great hall where fascist symbols adorn the walls. This space will be redeemed, I would suggest, at the conclusion of the play when it becomes the site of the play's marriage celebration and entertainment. But at the moment it introduces one of the most fascinating feature of the production, the radically coerced marriage which Theseus is orchestrating with Hippolyta. His intended is not in the hall, so the opening line of the play, "Now, fair Hippolyta . . ." (1.1.1), becomes an announcement rather than an address—the lines are about her, not addressed to her. More so, they are an order, as Philostrate begins tapping on his tablet. (Screens, tablets, cameras—called "Athenscam"—are ubiquitous in this regime, including a nod to sexting). There is a pause, then a squeaking which turns out to be a steel wheel, and a new music cue (flutes!), as we discover (with aversion mixed with delight as we know this is a comedy) that Hippolyta (Eleanor Matsuura) is being wheeled in on a hand truck, bound in a straitjacket and muzzled, Hannibal Lecter style.

When a handheld video camera begins recording, we learn that Theseus's continuing of the first lines of the play "our nuptial hour / Draws on apace" (1.1.1-2) is a staged wedding announcement, delivered with a sadistic glee punctuated a bit later with Theseus's transferring a kiss to Hippolyta's reluctant lips. Before that, what to do with Hippolyta's reply, "Four days will

quickly steep themselves in night" (7)? In this adaptation, Hippolyta, her muzzle carefully removed, is prompted to recite the lines for broadcast as they scroll down Philostrate's screen. Hippolyta's loathing and disbelief are palpable. When that finger kiss is delivered, sound and visual effects reveal a supernatural power on the part of Hippolyta. Apparently, the precautions are warranted.

The key lines here are "Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword / And won thy love doing thee injuries" (notice the "woo" and "won" alliteration, 1.1.16-17). Whether Theseus and Hippolyta are in love, are falling in love, or aren't even close is an interesting question for the play. Clearly, Davies's script defines the outer limit of the "this couple has no chance" end of the spectrum. The lines just cited may certainly point to a rocky start for this couple, as do the various versions of their mythological story. In the play text, when later in the scene Theseus turns to his fiancé, who has been silent since her opening lines, to ask "What cheer, my love?" (122), we may wonder, with Theseus, what she has been thinking as she watches her husband adjudicate coldly in favor of patrimony and against true love. And if the marriage troubles between Titania and Oberon in the woods are a reflection of the royal relationship which frames the play, we may impute trouble onto this couple. These are the suggestions which Davies seizes upon in his script.

The counterargument, though, is that while Theseus and Hippolyta are opposites (he feels that time "lingers," she that it will pass "quickly" 1.1.4, 7), they are nonetheless in love. It is hard not to see that they are in love by the end of the play when they lead a procession of lovers to a wedding feast. And if the play is in any way occasional, it seems strange that the royal couple, whom the honored couple at a wedding celebration would first identify with, would be portrayed as unsuited for matrimony. One way to resolve this idea is to imagine this couple

caught up in the transforming power of love which the play celebrates: in that case, like a skit at the last wedding reception you attended, we learn how much the lovely couple hated each other when they first met. Theseus and Hippolyta are caught up in the magical transformations of the play, as the honored couple is by their love. My point is that Davies's choices, which are adeptly handled and wonderfully executed, create a useful dialogue with the text, as well as with other adaptations of the play.

Having dispatched with Hippolyta, Philostrate's tablet displays the next appointment on Theseus's calendar: "Enter Egeus." Our introduction to the young couples is brief, but it has some interesting dynamics. Demetrius turns out to be a storm trooper, aligned with Theseus, while Lysander is s Harry Potter clone. The more to make Lysander an outsider, Hermia, her father, and Demetrius are all black while Lysander is not. We are not surprised that this Theseus leaves no options for Hermia (religious chastity is an option in the play): before leading his entourage out, he ends his speech with a truncated version of Shakespeare's lines: "Or else the law of Athens yields you up—to death" (1.1.119) his sneering pause almost challenging us to notice his hardening of Shakespeare's lines.

A cut-away to a storm outside, with Theseus's menacing fortress atop a cliff, does a lot of work. It emphasizes Theseus's anger, envisions the possibility of escape (we are viewing from the woods), and connects the emotional worlds of city and forest. To complete the scene, we move to a hallway where Hermia and Lysander plot (using a screen to map their path into that woods), and, of course, we meet Helena, as tall, blond, ditzy, and insecure as any Valley Girl. The Young Lovers: "Jack shall have Jill; / Naught shall go ill" (3.2.461)

The parts of the young lovers are perhaps the most difficult to realize in the play. In Davies's adaptation, they are young and spunky enough, but perhaps a bit too caricatured.

Surprisingly, Julie Taymor's young lovers seem fitted to a certain stereotype as well. This is most clear when as the four fight, they gradually, but almost ritually, disrobe in 3.2. I just don't see why stripping to your shorts is a necessary pretext to a fight. And when Helena is the only left fully clothed, you know what will happen next. But that production is as much about spectacle as character.

The place to go for the young lovers is the Globe production from 2015, filmed in June of that year for Globe on Screen and featured in Shakespeare Uncovered, the PBS introduction to the play. When teaching the play, I tell my students to pay attention to Helena's journey, and this Helena (the other young lovers, too) is worth watching. While the subject of the lover's plot in the play is immature, young love (a counterpoint to Romeo & Juliet, written in the same year), the range demanded by the parts is wide. Thus Helena is the desperate, jilted teen; the philosopher of love ("How happy some or other some can be" 1.1.226); one who has lost all self-esteem ("No, no, I am as ugly as a bear" 2.2.101); the cat fighter; and, finally, the eager beloved. None of this is lost in the Globe version. Perhaps the best way to put it is that the actors in the Globe production are up to it: the young lovers are mature while seeming young, comic both emotionally and physically, and in control of their language. In part of Act 1, scene 1 reenacted for Shakespeare Uncovered, these qualities are enhance as a handheld camera frames them tightly: we can see the development of their thought, their immediacy, their reactions, their conflict. On stage, we see their gesture and pacing, measured to the size of the New Globe's space.

Retelling the Story: "something of great constancy" (5.1.26)

I mentioned earlier that some adaptations reward viewers who know the play well. Such is the episode of this play from the 2015 BBC mini-series, Shakespeare Re-Told. At 90

minutes, the productions is tightly compressed, of necessity overlapping the love stories in a way that reminds us of Shakespeare's intent. Theo and Poly become Hermia's parents, who are troubled to learn that she refuses to be engaged to James Demetrius, having fallen in love with Zander. Her choice ruins an elaborate party planned at their getaway location, Dream Park (can you guess that the staff includes our rude mechanicals, including Bottom, played by Johnny Vegas?). Turns out, as suggested in 2.1 of the play, Titania and Oberon are in the neighborhood to repair the flagging love between Theo and Poly (Bill Paterson and Imelda Staunton), but the fairy royalty have their own trouble, which has mostly to do with Oberon's need for control. Puck, an errant bloke in a stocking cap who is equipped with an eyedropper, frames the action: he doses us at the beginning and the end of the play. Most of the scenes can be referenced to the play (Hermia and Zander's first sleep in the woods is moved inside to a cabin, and it has a different conclusion), but the dialogue is completely redone. Occasionally, however, writer Peter Bowker throws in a line straight from the play—good touchstones. The virtue of this rendition is less in its parts than in its whole: its tone is generous and funny, and the need for empathy, grace, and commitment are everywhere evident. The journeys of the two senior couples, one in the forest and the other guests at the park, are the most interesting—and particularly Oberon, who admits his faults and reconciles to Titania without terms or reservation. Lovely, as the Brits say.

Who's in Charge Here?: "as I am an honest Puck" (5.1.425)

Puck as frame for the action is a feature as well of Julie Taymor's extravagant stage version, recorded in 2014. Kathryn Hunter, the diminutive, acrobatic actor who has played Lear and Richard III, enacts Puck in a wrinkled suit and whiteface: she is clown, contortionist, muse, and chorus—and the best reason to watch this version. The spectacle of this production—with

its massive blue-toned fabrics, its video effects, its set of young actors singing and dancing around the edges, its puppetry and its costumes—are both beautiful and evocative. But as I suggested above, her approach to the script is traditional (slightly at odds with her style), and the tone is somber (just look at all those blues!), which can lead to a consideration of how deeply we are to feel the traumas of the woods.

Sense of an Ending: " 'A tedious brief scene'" (5.1.56)

The best version of the rude mechanicals' play I have seen is from a difficult-to-find recording of a 1988 outdoor summer performance at Joseph Papp's Delacorte Theatre. What distinguishes this version is that it takes its cue from Shakespeare's interest in his own theatrical practice and informs it with an actor's take on everything that can go wrong in performance. Quince misreads his prologue lines (as Shakespeare's lines direct: "All for your delight / We are not here" 5.1.114-15); Snug has used meter to memorize his lines, and it shows; Snout, the Wall, is a broken record, skipping back to the beginning of his speech, and Bottom breaks the fourth wall (Shakespeare again). Props misbehave, and "director" Quince intrudes. The second brilliant stroke is that Bottom as Pyramus, having discovered Thisby's bloody scarf, heads to the edge of the stage where, for a moment, he glimpses his Faerie Queen. When prompted by Quince with his next line, Bottom has suddenly become the great tragedian he believes he is: his lines are spoken naturally and with gravitas, and he dies well, explaining by his actions Hippolyta's line (which does not occur in this production), "Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man" (5.1.286). The transforming power of love is made manifest in Bottom. The moment can't last, though, and Snout as Thisby breaks the mood by forgetting "her" line and dying hilariously, in this way encapsulating the play. Other versions (Davies and Taymor, for instance) find the great actor in Snout as Thisby, but this production makes the case for Bottom.

What's Left?: "So, good night to you all" (5.1.431)

There are a number of productions of the play—all readily available and worth exploring—that I have not touched upon. I focused on recent productions, as well as those not described in Shakespeare: Script, Stage, and Screen, since they showed up after 2000. I close with a brief description of some other notable productions (most are covered by Bevington). In terms of its usefulness for teaching and learning about the play, the 1909 silent version gets a respectable amount of the plot into 9 minutes. As befits the silent genre, there is much overt gesturing to indicate love and hate, and stop action photography is used, à la Georges Méliès, to allow the fairies to pop in and out (and to pop an "asses knoll" on Bottom). Oberon is regendered as Penelope, and the Youtube copies I've seen end abruptly (often old prints have lost their tails). It allows for a fun classroom game in which you try to assign lines from the play to specific scenes (none occur in the intertitles) as well as to consideration of special effects and the play. Max Reinhardt's 1935 version is perhaps more interesting as a Hollywood studio production than as an adaptation, but it revels in Mendelssohn's music, fairy magic, and Mickey Rooney as Puck. Peter Hall's 1968 film is based on his stage version with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Bevington and friends call it "perhaps the best-spoken Dream on film" though "heavy-handed" (164). A later Royal Shakespeare Company version was creatively filmed in 1996, directed by Adrian Noble. Its frame is inventive: a young boy, apparently in a dream, spies the opening scene through a keyhole and enters the action; in the end, he is returned by the entire cast to a version of a paper pop-up stage in his room. This production blends stage and screen conventions well, leading to a consideration of how the two media overlap. The play is also notable for its overt doubling of Theseus/Hippolyta and Oberon/Titania (also Puck and Philostrate). Finally, the commercially successful Michael Hoffman film (1999) creates for

Bottom (Kevin Kline) a sympathetic (or pathetic) backstory as a henpecked husband whose theatrical aspirations are an attempt at lost dignity.

The remarkable number of film adaptations, recorded performances, and spin offs of A Midsummer Night's Dream may seem both curse and blessing: which is best and how do you keep up? What I have tried to do is sort through some options, with an emphasis on features of particular performances which offer creative and stimulating perspectives on the play—one's that lend themselves, in other words, to good classroom debate.

Notes:

[1] This paper provides the background for a presentation I gave at the 2018 conference, in which I screened clips from three adaptations, offering them up for discussion and analysis.

[1]Finally, we might consider how much a film opens up the play. Desmond and Hawke quote Allardyce Nicoll to the effect that "the theatre rejoices in artistic limitation in space" (162). The virtue of film, on the other hand, is that it can cut from scene to scene, or even intercut between them. Both film and theatre can reset a play in time and space, add music cues, and reimage the context of a scene.

[1] For instance, Hippolyta's "Oh, how mine eyes do loath his visage now!" (4.1.78) is directed to Oberon, not Bottom—no matter, they reconcile for the moment. Later, Theseus's announcement, "Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth" (5.1.) refers solely to himself and Hippolyta—the others are already present—making the pronouncement coercive.

[1] For an eager, albeit mini-skirted, Hippolyta, see the opening of Peter Hall's 1968 film. For an overtly sensual version of the opening lines (we begin with Hippolyta abed) with muted strains of Mendelssohn playing, see Joan Kemp-Welsh's 1964 version (with Benny Hill).

[1] Shakespeare writes:

> Or else the law of Athens yields you up—
> Which by no means we may extenuate—
> To death or to a vow of single life. (1.1.119-21)

[1] Taymor calls the scene "the quartet," noting in *Shakespeare Uncovered* that it's her favorite scene (35:50).

[1] The actors are Olivia Ross (Hermia), Sarah MacRae (Helena), Luke Thompson (Lysander), and Joshua Silver (Demetrius).

[1] The series also contains *Taming, Much Ado, and Macbeth*. All are eminently watchable.

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Resources for *Midsummer* on Film

Selected Film Versions

Ardolino, Emile, director. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Produced by Joseph Papp at the Delacorte Theatre, choreography by James Lapine, performances by William Hurt, Christiana Baranski, and Michele Shay, 1988. Films for Humanities, 2013. [2:45]

Blackton, J. Stuart and Charles Kent, directors. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Vitagraph Company of America, 1909. [11 min]

Bonneville, Hugh, presenter. "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Hugh Bonneville." *Shakespeare Uncovered*, series 2, produced by Richard Denton and Nicola Stockley, PBS, 30 January 2015. [55 min]

Davies, Russell T., screenwriter. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Directed by David Kerr, performances by John Hannah, Maxine Peak, BBC, 2016. [1:30]

Dromgoole, Dominic, director. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By William Shakespeare, Globe Theatre Production, 2013. Directed for the screen by Robin Lough, performances by Michelle Terry and John Light, Globe on Screen, 2015. [2:47]

Fraiman, Ed, director. "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Written by Peter Bowker, performances by Imelda Staunton, Bill Paterson, and Johnny Vegas. *Shakespeare Retold*, season 1, episode 4, BBC, 2015. [1:30]

Hall, Peter, director. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Performances by Judi Dench, Ian Holm, Ian Richardson, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1968. Water Bearer Films, 2004. [2:04]

Hoffman, Michael, director. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Screenplay by Hoffman, performances by Christian Bale, Kevin Kline, Michelle Pfeiffer, Fox Searchlight, 1999. [2:00]

Kemp-Welch, Joan, director. *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* performance by Benny Hill, 1964. [1:51]

Noble, Adrian, director. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Adapted by Noble, performances by The Royal Shakespeare Company, Miramax, 1996. [1:43]

Reinhardt, Max and William Deterle, directors. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Performances by Mickey Rooney, James Cagney, Oliva de Havilland, Warner Brothers, 1935. [2:13]

Taymor, Julie, director. *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Performances by Kathryn Unger, David Harewood, and Tina Benko, Londinium Films, 2014. [2:24]

Print Resources

Bevington, David, Anne Marie Welsh, and Michael L. Greenwald, editors. *Shakespeare*: *Script, Stage, Screen*. Pearson/Longman, 2006.

Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare After All*. Anchor, 2005.

Web Resources

BBC One: A Midsummer Night's Dream. 2016. www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07dx7lt

The Hay Festival: Talking about Shakespeare, 2016. www.talkingaboutshakespeare.org.

"The Globe Player." *Shakespeare's Globe*. The Shakespeare Globe Trust, 2018. globeplayer.tv.

"Illuminating Shakespeare." Oxford University Press, 2018 global.oup.com/academic/category/arts-and-humanities/literature/shakespeare/religion/?lang=en&cc=us

Open Source Shakespeare. George Mason University, 2018. www.opensourceshakespeare.org.

"Shakespeare." *Folger Shakespeare Library*. Folger Shakespeare Library, 2018. www.folger.edu/shakespeare.

Shakespeare Uncovered, PBS, 2015. http://www.pbs.org/wnet/shakespeare-uncovered/

"Silent Shakespeare." *Silent Era*. Carl Bennet and the Silent Era Company, 2018. www.silentera.com/video/collSilentShakespeareHV.html.

Understanding Shakespeare. Ithaka and the Shakespeare Library, 2018. labs.jstor.org/shakespeare.

Links:

Kent, 1903: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iYN-015NUM

Benny Hill: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rx2lQ-iMqMA

Conference Schedule

Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature

April 26th, 2018 (Thursday) Opening Evening		
6:30 pm	**Registration opens coffee/tea/water provided**	Clark Hall Room 212
7:00	**Brief welcome by conference organizers**	
7:00-8:30	**Early dance workshop, led by Brandon School of Dance**	
April 27th, 2018 (Friday)		
8:00 am	**Registration** **Coffee/beverages, refreshments provided**	Clark Hall 212
	Panel II **The Nature of Text** **Chair: Eric Furuseth, Minot State University** "Mephistopheles Confesses: *Dr. Faustus*, B-text, Act 5, Scene 2, Lines 91103" Bruce Brandt, South Dakota State University "Nature vs. Nurture: Growing Up 'Medieval' in *I Henry IV*" Ann Hubert, St. Lawrence University "'From This Time Forth, I Never Will Speak Word': *Othello* as Dual Revenge Tragedies" Tanner Sebastian, Ohio University Chillicothe	Clark Hall 206

10:30-10:45	**Coffee Break**	Clark Hall 212

10:45-12:15	**Panel III** **Gender and Sex** **Chair: Eftihia Mihelakis, Brandon University** "Antonio, Antonio: The Battle Between Homoeroticism and Heteronormative Expectation in *the Merchant of Venice* and *Twelfth Night*" DeAndra Miller, Minot State University "Gendering Good and Evil: The Presentation of Vice and Evil in *Paradise Lost* Book I & II" Jenna English, Brandon University "The Glitch Queen: Queering the Fairyland in *Sir Orfeo"* Hannah Naylor, University of North Dakota	Clark Hall 212
	Panel IV **The Evolving Nature of Nature** **Chair: Christina Di Gangi, Dawson Community College** "Changing into 'Something Rich and Strange': Nature's Transformative Powers in *The Tempest* vs. Those in *The Twelfth Night, As You Like It*, and *Midsummer Night's Dream*" Eric Furuseth, Minot State University "Trouble in Paradise: The Argument in *Paradise Lost*, Book IX" Emily Kroeker, Brandon University	Clark Hall 206
12:15-1:45	**Lunch**	Clark Hall 212

1:45-3:15 pm	**Panel V** **New responses to old literature** **Chair: Bob De Smith, Dordt College** *"Up and Down*--Exploring Ellington's Musical Homage to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*"* Ben Roloff, Brandon University *includes a live performance "'This is Hardly Comedy. This is *Julius Caesar'*: Sexuality & Shakespeare in the Comedy of Morecambe & Wise" Stephen Hamrick, Minnesota State University, Moorhead "Fantasy Exceeds Feminism: From Jane Austen's Proto-Feminism to BBC's Fantasy and Helen Fielding's Postfeminism" Brandy Robertson, Brandon University	Clark Hall 212
	Panel VI **Literary Landscapes** **Chair: Rosanne Gasse, Brandon University** "Negotiating Patriarchal Landscapes in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*" Audrey D. Johnson, North Dakota State University "Out of the Woods: Hybridity, Transness, and the Forest as Liminal Space in Jean D'Arras' *Mélusine*" Casey Kohs, University of North Dakota "Solitary Journeys and the Hostile Literary Landscapes of *The Wanderer* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" Ashley Bartelt, Northern Illinois University	Clark Hall 206
3:15-3:30	**Coffee and Refreshment Break**	
3:30-5:00pm	**Keynote address:** Dr. Randall Martin, Professor of English at the University of New Brunswick "Shakespeare and Ecological Modernity: wood, glass, gunpowder"	Clark Hall 212
6:30-9:00 pm	**Conference Banquet**	Prairie Firehouse

Saturday, April 28		
8:30am	**Muffins/Coffee etc.**	Clark Hall 212
9: 00-10:30	**Panel VII** **Shakespeare on the Big Screen** **Chair: Stephen Hamrick, Minnesota State University, Moorhead** "Muse of Fire: The Essential Role of the Chorus in Shakespeare's *Henry V* in Modern Film" Amanda Watts, North Dakota State University "Muted Voices and Stolen Glances: Possibilities for Ophelia in Adaptation" Julia Wold, University of North Dakota "'The best in this kind are but shadows': *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Movies" Bob De Smith, Dordt College	Clark Hall 212
	Panel VIII **Reading Against the Grain** **Chair: Barbara Rose, Brandon University** "Shakespeare's *Othello* Viewed through Military Eyes" Christopher Brewer, Minot State University "Sensibility and Immaturity--Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*" Kayliegh Penner, Brandon University	Clark Hall 206
10:30-10:45	**Coffee and Refreshment break**	Clark Hall 212

10:45-12:15	**Panel IX** **Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?** **Chair: Audrey D. Johnson, North Dakota State University** "The Lithic Agency of Crystals & Magnets in *The Revelations of St Birgitta"* Michelle M. Sauer, University of North Dakota "Talk with the Animals: Knowing and Understanding Animals in Milton's *Paradise Lost*" Sherry Helwer, Brandon University "Paradise's Two Trees of Knowledge" Abigail Hysop, Brandon University	Clark Hall 212
12:15-1:30	**Business Lunch** Closing Remarks Conference Wrap Up	Clark Hall 212