

THE INHUMAN RENAISSANCE:
NATURALIST POETICS AND FORMS OF LIFE

BY

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Just as I started writing my dissertation, my father, Robert Charles Swarbrick, passed away. I dedicate this manuscript to him.

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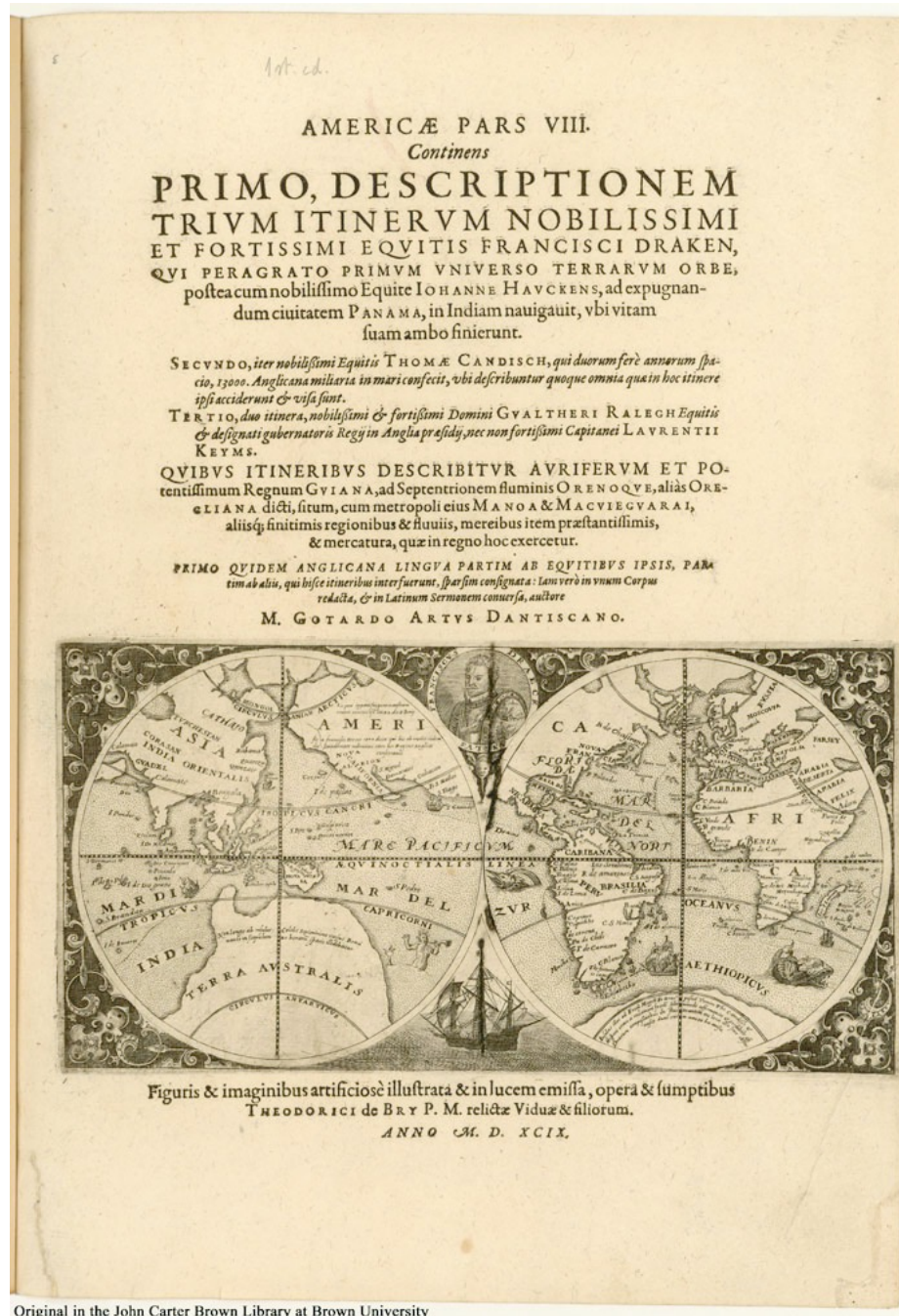
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AMERICÆ PARS VIII.
Continens
**PRIMO, DESCRIP-
TIONEM TRIVM ITINERVVM**
NOBILISSIMI ET FORTISSIMI EQVITIS FRAN-
cisci Draken, qui circumnavigato vniuerso terrarum orbe, postea copiis nau-
ticis, ad expugnandum ciuitatem P ANA M A M, in In-
diam nauigauit.

SECUNDO, iter nobilissimi Equitis THOMAE CANDISCH, qui duorum fere anno-
rum spacio, 13060. Anglica miliaria in mari confecit, vbi describuntur quoque omnia
que in hoc itinere ipsi acciderunt & visa sunt.

TERTIO, duo itinera, nobilissimi & fortissimi Equitis GVALTHERI RALEGH
quibus describitur auriferum & potentissimum Regnum GVIANA, ad Septentrionem
fluminis ORENOQUE, alias OREGLIANA dicti, situm cum Metropoli eius
MANOA & MACVIEGVARA, aliisque finitimis regionibus & fluuiis, merci-
bus item prestantissimis, & mercatura, que in regno hoc exercetur, cuius luculent a tabu-
la Geographica in fronte operis occurrit.

PRIMO QUIDEM ANGLICANA LINGVA PARTIM AB E-
quitibus ipsis, partim ab alijs, qui hisce itineribus interfuerunt sparsim consignata: iam vero
in vnum corpus redacta, & in Latinum sermonem conuersa, Figurisq; & imaginibus
artificiose illustrata & in lucem emissa, opera & sumptibus
IOH. THEODORI de BRY P. M. hæredum.



FRANCOFVRTI,
Typis ERASMI KEMPFERI,
Anno M.DC.XXV.

Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

Figure 2. Title page and map of the Mare del Nort or Atlantic Ocean. From Theodor de Bry's *Americæ, Pars VIII*, Frankfurt, 1625. Here again we see, on close inspection of a later edition of de Bry's *Americæ*, an illustration of the Mare Del Nort, or Atlantic Ocean, which surfaces, I argue, in Spenser's maritime address to Raleigh. Photograph courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.



Figure 3. George Gower's the "Armada" portrait of Queen Elizabeth, c. 1588. Photo: Woburn Abbey, Woburn, Bedfordshire.

Introduction: Preposterous Natures

The preposterous is a pardonable fault.... We call it by a common saying to *set the carte before the horse*. —George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*¹

Preposterous [L. *praeposterus*, placed in the wrong order, inverted, unseasonable, perverse] 1. b. Of an animal: having parts reversed in position, going tail first. *Rare*. Now *arch*. —*Oxford English Dictionary*

I do confess—pardon a fault confessed— / My mouth too tender is for thy hard bit. —Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* (4.7-8)²

In the spring of 2007, the film documentary *Zoo*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival to a mixture of “revulsion” and “laughter” from audiences, gained the distinction of being the most shocking film ever to be seen at Sundance.³ The film revisits the true story of a man who died in July 2005 after a sexual encounter with a horse in rural Washington State. “This topic is not something people want to think about,” Robinson Devor, the film’s director, said in an interview at Sundance.⁴ Contemplating an unorthodox merging of man and beast, *Zoo* recreates the events of the fateful night that caused a media frenzy in the Seattle area. Shortly after being dropped off at an emergency room in Enumclaw, Washington, a 45-year-old Boeing engineer named Kenneth Pinyan—known in the film only by his Internet moniker, Mr. Hands—died of internal injuries resulting from a perforated colon. The police investigation led to a farm and turned up videotapes and DVDs that showed several men engaging in sexual acts with the resident Arabian stallions. Bestiality was not illegal in Washington at the time, but in response to the Pinyan incident the State Senate voted in 2006 to criminalize it.

Although a film about zoophilia in rural Washington State may seem like an odd place to begin a discussion of early modern poetry, I see in the film certain historic overlaps between the zoophile, whose very name conjures moral outrage over “crimes against nature,” and that other antiquarian figure of moral indignation, the sodomite. Indeed, “in the ancient civil or canonical codes” to which Michel Foucault alludes in the introductory volume of *The History of Sexuality*, sodomy is equated with bestiality, as it is in the first English sodomy law, passed during the reign of Henry VIII, which punishes with death those convicted of “the detestable and abhominable vice of buggery commyttid with mankynde or beaste.”⁵ As Jonathan Goldberg has argued, the act of sodomy in early modern England “lacks specificity—it might be oral or anal sex, performed by ‘mankind’ or with an animal.”⁶ Yet, to the extent that sodomy in early modern England was “utterly confused,” as Foucault suggests it was, it proves valuable for rethinking the moral indignation over so-called “crimes against nature.” Goldberg, for one, “seeks” in the confusion over sodomy—both past and present—“sites of sexual possibilities, the syntax of desires not readily named.”⁷ Goldberg does not use the words “crimes against nature” to describe such “sexual possibilities”; instead he mobilizes the denaturalizing force of Derridean deconstruction and queer theory to dislodge “nature” from the sexual act. But as this dissertation will argue, it is precisely nature’s power to transgress itself, that is, to enfold “crimes against nature” as nature’s very own condition of possibility, that the poets of this study, beginning with Sir Philip Sidney, would have us regard.

Nature, in other words, is no less “confused” a category than sodomy, insofar as nature, like Derrida’s “text,” has no outside.⁸ Crimes against nature are fully of nature,

within nature, by nature, which is not to suggest that acts against nature such as sodomy are somehow made less perverse, less world-destroying, by “becoming” natural. Rather, the purpose of this study is show that nature itself is a thoroughly preposterous category, in the sense that it violates our commonplace notions of before and after, pre- and post-, as well as nature and culture, where the latter is supposed to supplement (or queer) an otherwise dull, unthinking, and unfeeling nature, animating it from outside. Drawing on both the queer naturalism of Karen Barad, Mel Y. Chen, Vicki Kirby, and others, as well as the latent naturalism of queer theorists such as Leo Bersani, Lee Edelman, and Jonathan Goldberg—a strange comingling of posthumanist, neo-vitalist, poststructuralist, and Lacanian queer theory whose respective interest in the Real of life and materiality bears surprising and, until now, unexplored similarities⁹—this study approaches the “after” of early modern poetry like Bersani’s “gay outlaw,” that is, from behind, reading the cultural output of the English Renaissance from the site of a preposterous “before.”¹⁰

Consequently, in this study relations of cause and effect, active and passive, and animate and inanimate lose their familiar bearings as encodings of the nonhuman’s secondary status in relation to the first-mover, God or Man (they mean the same thing in the end). Whereas an earlier iteration of queer theory and social construction had attempted to queer nature from the outside, *The Inhuman Renaissance* reads for the queerness *of* nature. In this way, it follows a model of exegesis theorized by Gilles Deleuze and developed via Spinoza, which Deleuze defines as a singular and ongoing process of *explication*.¹¹ According to Deleuze, all of nature conceived immanently is “a life,” what Spinoza refers to as *Deus sive natura*, “God, or Nature.”¹² For Spinoza, all things, including God, are a part of nature, one of nature’s infinite effects. Accordingly,

Deleuze argues that all things being a part of nature must therefore *explicate* or unfold nature as its very own condition of possibility. Likewise, all things being a part of nature, they must therefore *implicate* or rewrite nature by enfolding their singular effects, or their own unique way of being in the world, back into nature's "original" text. Nature, in short, constantly reads and rewrites itself. Far from being passive or inert, as Hegel understood Spinoza's nature to be,¹³ Spinoza's nature (read through Deleuze) becomes a preposterous effect of its own reading-writing-unfolding. Likewise, too, both God and Man become effects rather than causes. The common thread of Deleuze's Latinate expressions—explication and implication—is *pli*, or "fold." Deleuze's point (one that I adopt throughout this study) is that nature itself is in a constant state of unfolding (*explication*) and folding (*implication*). Consequently, the human as self-moving agent is just one of nature's infinite effects, a monstrous birth animated by inhuman forces, or a fold or effect of a sodomitic nature folded back on itself. Nature, as it were, goes tail first.

Toxic Assets

To be sure, this is a nature imperiled by risk, as the punishment of death levelled against sodomy and other crimes against nature attests. And yet the "preposterous" is not just a form of nature, one of nature's "kinds." The "preposterous" names the very perversion of substance; nature "itself" is inverted, or, as Deleuze says, nature has no "inside," but is altogether "an inside that is merely the fold of the outside."¹⁴ Or again, "The outside is not a fixed limit but a moving matter animated by peristaltic movements, folds and foldings that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but," as Deleuze says, "precisely the inside *of* the outside."¹⁵ As such, nature troubles the

categories of “human” versus “animal,” “inside” versus “outside,” that the laws against “crimes against nature” would seek to protect. Deleuze turns to Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson to insist on the inhumanity at the core of the living, and on the inhuman forces that create and decreate the human subject. He states, “We will never find the sense of something (of a human, a biological or even a physical phenomenon) if we do not know the force which appropriates the thing, which exploits it, which takes possession of it or is expressed in it. A phenomenon is not an appearance or even an apparition but a sign, a symptom which finds its meaning in an existing force.”¹⁶ Similarly, Elizabeth Grosz argues that to identify force with masculine forms of coercion and authority “is already to humanize force”; “In place of conceptualizing the subject as an agent of causal effects or as a victim of another’s agency,” Grosz suggests “a way of understanding politics, subjectivity, and the social as a consequence of the play of the multiplicity of active forces that have no agency, or are all that agency consists in.”¹⁷ Grosz ventures the truly preposterous assertion that “what is before, beyond, and after the human” is “the inhuman, the uncontainable condition of the human.”¹⁸ While Grosz writes from a philosophical tradition shaped by the naturalism of Nietzsche, Bergson, Darwin, and Deleuze, queer theorists such as Goldberg, Bersani, and Edelman define the *queer* in similarly inhumanist or ahumanist terms. In his reading of the “classical trope, *histeron proteron*,” in *Sodometries*, Goldberg characterizes the act of sodomy as “inhuman.”¹⁹ Likewise, in “Is the Rectum a Grave?” Bersani refuses to pastoralize anal sex and instead champions “the inestimable value of sex as ... anticomunal, antiegalitarian, antinurturing, antiloving.”²⁰ For Bersani, as for Edelman, the inhuman names “a self-

shattering and solipsistic *jouissance*” that is not only self-destroying but world-destroying as well.²¹

To suggest an affinity among the above theorists (Deleuze, Grosz, Bersani, and by extension, Lacan) may seem to some readers entirely preposterous, and thus raise hackles. Ecological and “new materialist” scholarship today defines itself in opposition to the “linguistic-turn” of the 20th century, and so takes leave of the labyrinthine formalism that marked an earlier generation of theory.²² As I have already indicated, however, what unites the above theorists under the rubric of this project, and what could be considered their common cause, is a certain fidelity to the Real as that which not only exceeds and destroys but also makes possible “our” world. Writing in a Lacanian register, Edelman defines the Real as that which vitiates “the energies of vitalization.”²³ This is not to say, however, that the Real (i.e., the drive) is ever outside of the social. “Lacan makes clear,” Edelman writes, “that the death drive emerges as a consequence of the Symbolic.”²⁴ Thus “the negativity opposed to every form of social viability” is never outside the social, whose “constant movement toward realization” cannot be severed “from a will to undo what is thereby instituted.”²⁵ Translated slightly, the Real of the death drive cannot be cordoned elsewhere, as anterior or posterior to the social, since the Real is what refuses “every substantialization of identity, which is always oppositionally defined.”²⁶ For Edelman, “the queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure or form.”²⁷ Although Edelman trips over his own logic by positing a (human) Symbolic order that is above or outside nature, my claim is that ecological scholarship stands to gain far more than it loses by taking the violence of the Real as its ally. Edelman’s contention that the Real refuses the

oppositionality of inside versus outside accords with my view that “crimes against nature” are fully *of* nature, since there can be no position outside nature’s structure. The consequence of this view, as Edelman meticulously demonstrates, is that any progressive politics aimed at protecting nature will have already been contaminated by nature, by what is “improper” to nature, and yet fully *of* it. Ecology, after all, is already a –logy, that is, a *logic*; it cannot therefore be the place from which to mount a defense of mother earth from the ravages of “crimes against nature.”²⁸ What this means, practically speaking, is that there can be no *praxis* of nature without a corresponding toxicity of nature. Nature, in all its liveliness, is a toxic asset.²⁹

Although Edelman rigorously defends the opacity of the Real against any oppositional identity, what I find most intriguing in Edelman’s argument is his insistence on the literalization of the Real as a way of reading, and thereby corrupting, figural logics. Edelman notes that “the discourse of the right,” wielded by political conservatives, “tends toward a greater awareness of, and insistence on, the literalization of figural logics that various social subjects are made to inhabit and enact.... The right, that is, better sees the inherently conflictual aspect of identities, the constant danger they face in alterity, the psychic anxiety with which they are lived.”³⁰ Because “conservatism preemptively imagines the wholesale rupturing of the social fabric,” it literalizes, and thus quite strangely gives insight to, the inhuman dimension of psychic life.³¹ Following Edelman, I approach the figural logics on display in this study from the preposterous and perhaps naïve vantage of the literal. In other words, rather than read the figural as always already human, I insist (in chapter 1, for example) that a tree is also a tree, and that to make so naïve a point is to do considerable damage not only to our traditional humanist

epistemologies but also to any affirmative politics based on the politics of accommodation.

Take, for instance, the following: in *The Accommodated Animal*, Laurie Shannon recasts the idea of the “great chain of being”—variously described by thinkers such as E.M.W. Tillyard and Michel Foucault³²—in terms of Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory as a specifically Shakespearean form of “cosmopolity,” referring to the cosmic link that existed between human and nonhuman animals before the Cartesian *bête-machine* hypothesis severed our sense of ecological community. Shannon writes,

Granting the free agency of thought to all humans and classifying the entire balance of creatures, from the oyster to the ape, as uniformly hardwired, René Descartes extracted people and animals alike from a longer cosmic inventory to face them off in an either/or metric of just two categories, or kinds. One was autonomous, a pure mind for which embodiment was beside the point and even unnecessary; the other was a mindless automaton for whom the material constraints of the body set an absolute limit on existence. While our perennial efforts to specify what is human show how hard it is to settle the question,

Descartes’s indelible formula tied the pair in a lasting knot of adverse definition.³³

Taking the “before” of Cartesian modernity as her starting point, Shannon “charts the creaturely dispensation into which seventeenth-century mechanism so decisively intervened” in order to recall “a fundamentally political idiom” used by early moderns prior to Descartes.³⁴ Shannon refers our understanding of this “political idiom” to “a constitutionalist sense of legitimated capacities, authorities, and rights,” adding that “when early moderns describe the relations between humans and nonhumans, they

readily frame them in terms of polity.”³⁵ This polity “is sometimes well ordered and sometimes in disarray.”³⁶ In all cases, however, Shannon notes that early moderns “refer to rule and tyranny, liberty and bondage, obedience and rebellion, contingency and negotiation, and transgression and entitlement; they refer to citizenship.”³⁷ Adopting a literalist approach similar to my own, Shannon advocates “literal reading” as a way of freeing “textual animals” from “the yoke of human symbolic service.”³⁸ As such, her reading practice brilliantly illustrates the elasticity and flexibility with which early moderns envisioned creaturely belonging, finding hope in the “contingency and negotiation” whereby a polity’s borders are never fixed.

Shannon’s vision of cross-species affiliation divests the animal of its mechanistic bondage and grants to it the freedoms of inclusion, participation, and free will. While I share Shannon’s interest in the literalization of animal figures, I throw my support behind a politics that is far less reasonable. The inhuman, as I understand it, cannot “be” accommodated. Taking a page out of Edelman’s *No Future*, I define the inhuman as what refuses all forms of adaptation. Rather than liberate the animal from its mechanistic bondage, I propose that we let the inhuman—the machinic, the absurd—contaminate our visions of agency, hospitality, and free-will. Only then will the Real—and not just the real that “we” want—have its due.

While this proposal may veer in the direction of the impossible, it is my claim that early modern ecotheory has far too much to do with the possible, and not enough interest in the impossible. Although Shannon expresses the need for “some fictive leap of imagination” in outlining a politics of the animal, her vision of “cosmopolity” lands squarely within an affirmative politics of recognition, whereby “we”—late modern, late

capitalist, post-Cartesian subjects—might learn to welcome animals within the human fold, and to recognize “their own subjective investments in the world.”³⁹ To this I ask: what would it mean to take a “leap of imagination” that is *not* invested in this world? The idea advanced throughout this study, however preposterous, is that “crimes against nature” (Cartesian or otherwise) are never outside of nature. Nature, in other words, is not (and has never been) world-affirming, unless by this we also mean world-destroying. The real, as embodiment of the figural, cannot therefore be a place of refuge from the inhuman; it can, however, be a place from which to imagine a leap beyond this world, while remaining fully within it. Edelman’s name for this impossible leap is “jouissance, sometimes translated as ‘enjoyment’: a movement beyond the pleasure principle, beyond the distinctions of pleasure and pain, a violent passage beyond the bounds of identity, meaning, and law.”⁴⁰ As such, jouissance describes a breached boundary, an act of violent penetration that contaminates and destroys not only the worlds we abject but also the worlds we love. In what follows, I show how queer theory’s interest in a poetics of impossibility alters our vision of “crimes against nature” by casting nature in the light of the preposterous. Philip Sidney, whose poetry I will examine, literalizes the figure of the preposterous by imagining himself penetrated by a horse. The result is a vision of nature that takes nature’s toxicity, rather than its adaptability, as an emblem of political freedom.

The Impossible

There is no longer any possible: a relentless Spinozism. —Gilles Deleuze, “The Exhausted”⁴¹

Returning to the film *Zoo*, it is notable that, despite the film's illicit content, the goal in making *Zoo*, according to one of the film's writers, was not only to denaturalize normative views of sex, but also to revivify their zoophilic subjects. "People didn't want to have any connection or identification with these men," Charles Mudede, one of the film's writers, remarks.⁴² "Early on [the director] and I said to each other, 'We're going to revive their humanity.'" As a project aimed at restoring the zoophiles' lost humanity, *Zoo* minimizes its erotic aspect by emphasizing the coexistence of the mundane and the bizarre. What emerges is a sad, even tender portrait of a group of men who met from time to time at a farm, where they would drink slushy cocktails, watch some television and repair to the barn to have sex with horses. *Zoo* makes the most of its Edenic setting to "revive" the pastoral innocence of its subjects. And yet the film's greatest achievement, I argue, is not the restitution of the zoophile's humanity, but rather the confusion it generates regarding the differential constitution of the human and the animal.

The overwhelming aversion to zoophilia and to bestiality specifically, is, as Karen Barad argues, bound up with "crimes against nature," where "the 'real crime,' as the accusers would have it, is the breach of the nature/culture divide."⁴³ In other words, "those who would prosecute the 'perpetrators' of 'crimes against nature' trip over the very divide they seek to secure" by labelling "humans who commit 'acts against nature'" as inhuman.⁴⁴ Conversely, "Nature is the victim, the victimized, the wronged.... [The] perpetrator is seen as damaging nature from the outside, yet at the same time is reviled for becoming part of Nature."⁴⁵ Whereas "one might think," Barad argues, "that forms of violence against animals perpetuated by industrial meat production—that is, the mass extermination of 'Others' made killable—would qualify in this logic as 'acts against

nature' worthy of provoking our moral outrage," "it is particular sexual acts that are criminalized and labeled immoral."⁴⁶

This is the logic of "acts against nature" that the film *Zoo* so elegantly depicts. Indeed, it centers on a question that runs throughout early modern debates about freedom, namely, the question of consent. To put this in familiar theoretical language, the film asks us to consider the "bare life" of the animal in relation to the supposed self-sovereignty of the human subject. Yet, whereas contemporary political thinkers such as Giorgio Agamben and Martha Nussbaum would, despite their many differences, both agree that the animal lies outside the political realm, the men in *Zoo* attest to the reciprocity of zoophile relationships and claim not to resort to coercion.⁴⁷ On this count they have an unlikely ally in Rush Limbaugh, who can be heard in the film weighing in on Mr. Pinyan's death, asking: "How in the world could this happen without consent?"⁴⁸

Both the film's creators and its detractors run aground on the question of consent. For Devor and his co-writer, the zoophile's humanity is something separate from animal nature; in attempting to "revive" the zoophile's humanity, they reinforce the idea of the singular superiority of humans. At the same time, by elevating the zoophile above the animal, they elide the very thing that makes the sexual act so provocative, that is, the confusion of categories between human and beast. In the words of Barad again, "This kind of [humanizing] response echoes the problem it seeks to address," which is the "devaluing [of] one side of the equation—the nonhuman at the expense of the human," and thus "underwrit[es] an ethical and moral position engaged in erasure."⁴⁹ But the contrary positions—"the reassertion of an equivalency between humans and nonhumans in the name of animal rights," or the privileging of consent as a lubricant to noncoercive

sex—rest on the same kind of assumptions, namely, that nature is the victim, and that the only alternative to victimhood is to fashion nature as a rights-bearing human subject, endowed with free will.⁵⁰

Oddly enough, given its source, the question posed by Rush Limbaugh, “How in the world could this happen without consent?” raises a more interesting, albeit more philosophical, question about the nature of political freedom, which is, “How in the world could this happen without free will?” Or, more precisely, “How in the world could this happen without the free will of the animal?” To ask such a question is to transgress the nature/culture binary, and to “disrupt” what Karen Raber rightly identifies as “the social coding of bestiality in the twentieth century as a peculiarly human act of dominance, power, and abuse enacted on a silent, passive victim.”⁵¹ Like Raber, I, too, locate the “crux of my problem with readings that simply elide pleasure with sex[,] ... leav[ing] no room to ask what *kind* of pleasure is at stake in loving an animal.”⁵² Both the makers of *Zoo* and its detractors elide to varying degrees the pleasures of zoophilia, which, like sodomy, not only reverses but throws into fundamental confusion—fundament being the appropriate word here—relations of active/passive, masculine/feminine, and human/animal. What does the confusion over the zoophile’s sexual act suggest about the nature of human versus animal freedom? And what is at stake in imagining, as the film imagines, though not entirely, a sexual freedom “without consent,” that is, without the rights of man, indeed, without “man” at all—a freedom without the human?

To be sure, I am not advocating, nor am I seeking to ignore, the violence of certain sexual acts. My use of the word “inhuman,” rather than the more celebratory “posthuman,” rubs against “inhumane” as a reminder of the sexual, racial, and colonial

violence that the category of the human contains within itself. My point, rather, is that we repeat this violence by reinscribing the nonhuman in the role of eternal victim. Instead, what seems useful—politically speaking—in thinking through the confusions caused by zoophilia, and in particular a zoophile bottoming for a horse, is the nonviolence at the heart of violence that, according to Bersani, links queer desire, understood as an unlivable, unnameable, and impossible *jouissance*, with the self-sacrifice and self-shattering of sovereign subjects. Bersani calls this form of nonviolence “ecological ethics,” though he does not explore, as I seek to do, the ecological importance of the phrase.⁵³

Early modernity offers a useful, if counterintuitive, site to begin excavating an “ecological ethics” of the kind Bersani imagines, since it is here that the present day concepts of human rights and freedoms begin to take shape. As James Kuzner has argued, there are (at least) “three definitions of freedom in early modernity and the present.”⁵⁴ The first definition concerns negative freedoms, or “freedoms from” forms of coercion. “Here,” Kuzner writes, “freedom assumes the form of protection, a set of borders or frontiers that surround and safeguard the individual.”⁵⁵ In the case of zoophilia, those who would condemn bestiality would do so on the basis of negative freedoms, arguing that the animal, say, a horse, has an inherent right to be free from sexual coercion. The second definition of freedom concerns positive freedoms, or “the freedom to participate in government, to exercise the positive freedom of political liberty.”⁵⁶ Positive liberty centers on “freedom to” rather than “freedom from.” This, essentially, is the definition of freedom underlying the men’s arguments in *Zoo*, who, like Rush Limbaugh, attest to the freedom of both man and horse in zoophile relationships. To quote Kuzner once again,

“Both those who privilege negative freedom and those who privilege positive liberty think of freedom, first and foremost, in terms of self-government and sovereignty.”⁵⁷ I would add to this summary statement that any definition of freedom conceived of as individual, sovereign freedom is by default human-exceptionalist, since the oppositional structure that defines individual freedom denies to the animal what it grants to the human as a power or ability: whether it is reason, language, thought, consciousness, or the ability to dress, to bury, to mourn, to invent, and so on.⁵⁸

Clearly, a different definition of freedom, one that does not simply redress the nonhuman by dressing the animal up in man’s own image, is needed. My claim is that early modern poetry, as well as some strains of radical theory, offer a third definition of freedom that takes nature as its starting point for imagining freedom without sovereignty. For Jacques Derrida, to cite just one example, freedom as sovereignty is unthinkable outside of a sacrificial schema, in which the power to dominate and kill is constitutive of the human as such. Derrida writes, “People are going to object: there are ethical, juridical, and political subjects (recognized only quite recently, as you well know), full (or almost full) citizens who are also women and/or vegetarians!”⁵⁹ Still, Derrida states,

Authority and autonomy (for even if autonomy is subject to the law, this subjugation is freedom) are, through this schema, attributed to the man (*homo* and *vir*) rather than to the woman, and to the woman rather than to the animal. And of course to the adult rather than to the child. The virile strength of the adult male, the father, husband, or brother ... belongs to the schema that dominates the concept of the subject.⁶⁰

Freedom as sovereignty consists for Derrida in the “virile figure” of the adult male, whose freedom, construed as properly “human” freedom, is enacted through the domination of woman, animal, and child, “but often precisely under the authority of rights.” “Deconstruction,” Derrida says, “therefore calls for a different kind of rights, or, rather, *lets itself be called* [emphasis mine].”⁶¹ This letting oneself “be called” entails a different understanding of freedom, one that consists not in sovereignty and free will, but in radical openness to the Other, including the animal other. For Derrida, this third kind of freedom, which is neither “freedom from” nor “freedom to,” but freedom as radical openness to the inhuman, the stranger, comes at the expense of self-propriety, sovereignty, and free will. Freedom in this sense cannot be prescribed, won, or defended, but only enacted in relation to man’s sexual, racial, and colonial “others.”

Sidney provides a provocative test case for this third kind of freedom. In *The Defence of Poesy*, Sidney begins, interestingly enough, with a discussion of horses. Recalling a winter spent with Edward Wotton at the court of Emperor Maximilian II in Vienna, Sidney recounts that “we gave ourselves to learn horsemanship of John Pietro Pugliano, one that with great commendation had the place of an esquire in his stable.”⁶² On the subject of horsemanship, Sidney relates that Pugliano “would ... add certain praises by telling what a peerless beast the horse was, the only serviceable courtier without flattery, the beast of most beauty, faithfulness, courage, and such more.”⁶³ Moved by Pugliano’s “strong affection and weak arguments,” Sidney muses that “if I had not been a piece of a logician before I came to him, I think he would have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse.”⁶⁴ Seduced by the horseman’s “strong affection,” Sidney entertains the other’s passionate rhetoric as a spur to self-transformation, that is, as a call

or calling to become other, to become a horse. Read as an urbane joke about his own name, Philip, which means “horse lover” in Greek, Sidney’s desire to become a horse could indicate a typical subversive attitude toward the cultures of the court, in which something bestial becomes the literal and symbolic manifestation of chivalric man. And yet to read Sidney’s joke in this way, as mere political unconscious, is to miss the literal aspect of his “wish” as an involuntary, unelected, and indeed radically, ontologically queer response to the horseman’s seductive call. In fact, Sidney compares the experience of being called—passively—to this alluring, ennobling, and at the same time inhuman act of transformation, to the experience of becoming a poet. He writes that, “I know not by what mischance in these my not old years and idlest times, having slipped into the title of a poet, [I] am provoked to say something unto you in defence of that my unelected vocation.”⁶⁵ Sidney’s “unelected vocation” arrives (impossibly) as an event, gift, or calling, and it arrives because (and only because) he *lets* himself be called to it: “I am provoked,” from the Latin *vocare*, to call. This understanding of poetic vocation as passive reception and violent opening to the unknowable, to the event, and to what is by definition indefensible, is not unique to Sidney’s writing. What is unique, however, is the identification of this “unelected vocation” with the desire to become-animal.⁶⁶

Throughout the opening pages of the *Defence*, Sidney imagines his “unelected vocation” as an experience of radical openness, of being penetrated, even sodomized, by an inhuman other and transformed thereby. This openness to the inhuman takes on a direct bestial language as Sidney interrogates the status of the stranger. Although poetry was the “first light-giver to ignorance and first nurse,” it has become a stranger, Sidney argues, to “tougher knowledges.”⁶⁷ Thus Sidney asks, “will they now play the hedgehog,

that, being received into the den, drove out his host? Or rather the vipers, that with their birth kill their parents?”⁶⁸ The “host” in Sidney’s example is poetry. Poetry offers hospitality to philosophy. Only philosophy then banishes poetry, making the poet the stranger, the exile. Because he is made vulnerable by the stranger, one would think that Sidney would define poetic freedom, the subject of his “defence,” as freedom *from* vulnerability. And yet this is precisely what Sidney argues poetic freedom is not. Instead he defines poetry as “a great passport,” and states that,

Only the poet, disdain[ing] to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like. So as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit.⁶⁹

For Sidney, freedom from “subjection” means freedom from “nature”—it requires “a great passport of poetry.” And yet this freedom “goeth hand in hand with nature,” suggesting a movement or passage within nature toward “another nature,” a second nature, rather than an exit from. Poetic freedom, so imagined, conceives of nature not merely as a form of “subjection,” as something to be left behind, but as something to be travelled, traversed, and remapped—a reading-writing-mattering of nature in its very unfolding. Between freedom from and subjection to, the poet “bringeth forth . . . forms such as never were in nature,” *with* nature. In other words, Sidney finds in animal nature a freedom without freedoms—defined as uniquely human freedoms—since the freedom

imagined here unfolds within nature. The poet's second nature therefore does not depart from nature, but rather follows nature's steps, taking "her" beyond herself.

In the *Defence*'s opening pages, Sidney asks the reader to "bear with me, since the scholar is to be pardoned that followeth the steps of his master."⁷⁰ The "master" in question here is poetry, but it is also the figure of the animal, whose identity with poetry Sidney signals at the start of the *Defence*. The act of following the animal thus carries the dual meaning of after and before, as Derrida has argued in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*,⁷¹ but it also carries for Sidney the erotic valence of the breached "behind," as in the film *Zoo*, where one lets oneself be taken from behind by a horse. In *The Postcard*, Derrida describes a similar scene in which Socrates, who logically "comes *before* Plato," is depicted on a postcard writing *after* Plato, "writing in front of Plato," "seated, bent over, a scribe or docile copyist, Plato's secretary."⁷² The confusion of pre- and post-occasioned by the postcard "immediately seemed ... obscene," Derrida writes.⁷³ He describes this preposterous temporality as an "apocalypse" of reason, order, and succession, "an apocalyptic revelation."⁷⁴ The obscenity and catastrophe of the revelation—Socrates in front of Plato—pertain for Derrida to the same movement, turn, or strophe: "*Plato* wants to emit.... To sow the entire earth, to send the same fertile card to *everyone*.... This is what I call catastrophe."⁷⁵ At the same time, the destruction of the world occasioned by the improper destination of the postcard is also our catastrophe, Derrida writes; the catastrophe "is us." In other words, the preposterous as condition of the queer—Plato behind Socrates—destroys, as it makes possible, our world. Alighting on the queer potential of this revelation, Derrida, like Sidney, unfolds his subjection to Plato's "seed" by imagining himself mastered, or tamed (*dresse*), like a horse:

The di-rection, the dierection of this couple, these old nuts, these rascals on horseback, this is us, in any event, *a priori* (they arrive on us) we are lying on our backs in the belly of the mare as if in an enormous library, and it gallops, it gallops, from time to time I turn to your side, I lie on you and guessing, reconstituting it by all kinds of chance calculations and conjectures, I set up [*dresse*] within you the *carte* of their displacements, the ones they will have induced with the slightest movement of the pen, barely pulling on the reins. Then, without disengaging myself I resettle [*redresse*] myself again.⁷⁶

Here, the act of following unfolds (from) the *a priori* confusion of human and nonhuman. More specifically, it highlights the confusions raised by the early modern figure of the sodomite and his contemporary double, the zoophile (both registered in Derrida's text), with whom relations of active/passive, masculine/feminine, and human/nonhuman are not just reversed but rather transversed or queered.⁷⁷

A final example of such queer-inhuman transversal comes from Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*. In it, the speaker returns to the *Defence*'s mode of apologia, stating: "I do confess—pardon a fault confessed— / My mouth too tender is for thy hard bit" (4.7-8). Echoing the theme of the master/follower set out in the opening pages of the *Defence*, Astrophil imagines himself to be mounted, bridled, and ridden by love. Mastered by this foreign intruder, Astrophil exclaims,

I on my horse, and love on me doth try
Our horsemanships, while by strange work I prove
A horseman to my horse, a horse to love. (49.1-3)

Astrophil makes of his subjection to love its own kind of freedom, fulfilling Sidney's wish in the *Defence* to become a horse. Consequently, he imagines freedom not as freedom from nature's "subjection" but as the freedom to live that "subjection" otherwise. My goal in what follows is to examine how the poets in this study—Spenser, Raleigh, and Milton—similarly turn tail on the category of the human as free from nature's subjection. By reading "crimes against nature" as nature's inside, I show that there is critical value to reading nature not only after Sidney, but also, from behind.

Chapter Summaries

In each of my four chapters, I theorize an inhumanist understanding of literary phenomena that focuses on the lively and vexed relations between material beings. From the wooded labyrinths of Spenser's epic romance, *The Faerie Queene*, to the erotic entanglements of Milton's georgic laborers in the Garden of *Paradise Lost*, I examine the matter of poetic form in the context of early modern natural history. I argue that the poets in this study conceive of poetic making as an active, affective, and sensuous engagement with the world's becoming. Nature is not the "object" of their poetic practice but rather the network of material relations from which their poetics emerge. Through readings of these poets' work, *The Inhuman Renaissance* develops a theory of early modern naturalist poetry aimed at highlighting the range of queer possibility that encounters with the inhuman open onto.

At stake in this inhuman poetics is what I call, after Deleuze, *intensive naturalism*—the idea that mind is an involuted form of nature, and that the human is fully imbricated in natural processes.⁷⁸ While numerous studies have pointed to the implicit, at

times explicit, resemblance between early modern inventions of the microscope and telescope on the one hand, and poetic vocabularies of frame, glass, and lens on the other, these studies tend not to question the status of the observer, the Cartesian humanist subject who is “outside” the boundary of the apparatus.⁷⁹ In short, the role of experimentation is reduced to recording the objective marks displayed by the instrument. *The Inhuman Renaissance*, by contrast, argues that poetic apparatuses—relations of matter, measurement, and form—are not simply in the world but, as Barad argues, are material reconfigurations of the world.⁸⁰ Building on animal studies scholars who, in the past decade, have made important inroads in early modern debates about the nature of scientific inquiry and the impact of the Cartesian *bête-machine* hypothesis on human-animal relations, my focus on naturalism—that is, material relations beyond human and animal—rewrites the conditions of intimacy for experimental practice, and, in so doing, revises biopolitical conceptions of “bare life” and the spheres of public action that remain all too human in their definition. My inhumanist elaboration of poetic apparatuses entails reworking notions of materiality, agency, and ethics in transverse relation with discourses shaped by race, sexuality, and disability. In this way, naturalist poetics remaps problematic divisions between inside and outside, and subject and object, so that the matter of poetic figures really does come to *matter* to our political, ethical, and aesthetic definitions of the human.

My first chapter, “Trauma in the Age of Wood,” deals with the phenomenological aspects of Spenser’s naturalism by illustrating the psychic foreclosures that constitute the human subject. I begin with Book I of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596) to establish the melancholy affects that saturate attachments to nature in the era known by

environmental historians as the “age of wood.” This era sustained unprecedented losses of England’s woodlands due to untrammelled deforestation and so ushered in the real potential for what Timothy Morton calls an “ecology without nature.” The political and economic consequences of this loss were dire. As Arthur Standish explains in a pamphlet published in that era: “no wood, no Kingdome.” While strange to our familiar categories of historical periodization, I argue that the age of wood is no less pertinent to our literary analyses for being uncanny. Indeed, it is precisely the uncanny and often times traumatic resurfacing of wooden bodies in *The Faerie Queene* that foregrounds the age of wood as an internal, not just external, condition of possibility for Spenser’s allegory.

Spenser’s naturalism foregrounds human subjects who come to exist and act by virtue of their shared vulnerability with the ecological surround. My second chapter, “The Life Aquatic,” directs the reader to the “transindividual” relations (Gilbert Simondon’s term) that such intensive encounters produce. I move from phenomenological and psychoanalytic encounters between subjects and objects toward intra-active relations between friends. Beginning with Spenser’s queer address to Raleigh in Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene* and continuing through Book 4, I argue that Spenser reimagines the discourse of friendship in terms of a liquid, transcorporeal poetics, one that not only takes to its logical extreme humoral descriptions of bodies as conduits for liquids and passions but also importantly reworks human-exceptionalist readings of ontology in Spenser’s epic. Whereas most critics tend to read Spenserian ontology as merely allegorical, I argue that in the case of friendship, the liquid bodies made fungible by early modern vocabularies, affects and desires are not strictly speaking bounded human bodies:

Spenser's liquid poetics foregrounds bodies made richer and stranger by co-mingling with rivers, waters, and other sea-like bodies.

In chapter three, "Tempestuous Life," I broaden my transindividual focus on liquid conjunctions to encompass transnational and transatlantic relations between England and the Americas. Turning to Raleigh's *Discoverie of Guiana* (1596) and *The History of the World* (1614), I reframe such biopolitical factors as Raleigh's "dissability" around a concept that has less to do with human world-making and more to do with the "states of exception" under which inhuman agencies come to matter for world history (often by disabling human epistemologies). Whereas critics such as Greenblatt, Fuller, and Helgerson, among others, have wanted to see Raleigh's writings as evidence of an imperial ideology in service of the English nation, I suggest that to fully appreciate Raleigh's involvements in the Caribbean and American tropics we need to be less geo- and more aqua-centric in our accountings. Only then can we begin to understand "forms of nationhood" (Helgerson) in their proper relational context, not as reflections of discrete national bodies exerting unilateral control over colonial environments, but as imbroglios of material (human and nonhuman) agents. By drawing on Atlantic histories as well as Raleigh's own experiences in the liquifying swamp- and river-lands of the American tropics, I read Raleigh's "tempestuous life" as a figure for the agency, relationality, and transcorporeality of the sea.

Lastly, in chapter four, "Steps to a Georgics of the Mind," I examine the cross-species desires engendered by the Garden in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667, 1674). While Miltonists have long pointed to the fact that Milton revises the Genesis story by figuring Adam and Eve as georgic laborers whose divine charge is to put off carnal temptation

through physical exertion and cultivation of the Garden, a task traditionally reserved for fallen man, I show that Milton's poem, far from simply reproducing laboring subjects as the embodiments of a Puritan mentality, instead testifies to a form of life that is not dependent on the separation of subjects from objects or on the de-cathexis of work from desire. Rather, subjects and objects, humans, animals and plants, unwork their fixed identities through their erotic entanglements. In this way, I reframe Milton's naturalism not as a turn away from the more sober "georgics of the mind" advocated by Bacon in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), but rather as an excavation of the intensive naturalism that can be read as a submerged undercurrent in Bacon's philosophical text.

¹ See George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, eds. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 253.

² Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, in *The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 154. All subsequent quotations from *Astrophil and Stella* are from this edition.

³ Dennis Lim, "A Lyrical Approach to a Subject that Shocks," *The New York Times*, April 1, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/01/movies/01lim.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0. See also Howard Feinstin, "Is this the most shocking film ever to hit Cannes?" *The Guardian*, May 16, 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2007/may/17/cannes2007.cannesfilmfestival>.

⁴ Lim, "A Lyrical Approach to a Subject that Shocks."

⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1985), 43.

⁶ Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 3.

⁷ Goldberg, *Sodometries*, 22.

⁸ See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 158. For a salient rewriting of Derrida's "no outside of the text" as "no outside of nature," see Vicki Kirby, *Quantum Anthropologies: Life at Large* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), x.

⁹ In queer naturalism, see Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), and Vicki Kirby, *Quantum Anthropologies: Life at Large* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); and in queer theory, see Leo Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), and Goldberg, *Sodometries*. In addition to works directly discussed in this introductory chapter, other oft-cited texts at the intersection of queer theory and the posthumanities include, in animal studies, Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); in ecotheory, Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), Claire Colebrook, *Death of the Posthuman: Essays on Extinction*, vol. 1 (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2014), and Colebrook, *Sex after Life: Essays on Extinction*, vol. 2 (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2014); and in feminist new materialisms, Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in*

Contemporary Feminist Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), Kirby, *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal* (New York: Routledge, 1997), Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), and Wilson, *Gut Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

¹⁰ On the subject of the “gay outlaw,” Bersani asks, “Should a homosexual be a good citizen?” (Bersani, *Homos* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995], 113). His answer, that “the aversion of inverts to the society of inverts may be the necessary basis for a new community of inversion[,] ... one that would be considerably less indebted than we now are to the communal virtues elaborated by those who want us to disappear,” directly informs the queer naturalism that I seek to unfold in this introduction, which refuses a politics of accommodation in favor of an inhuman poetics of inversion (131). See Bersani, *Homos*, 113-181.

¹¹ Explication and implication are two aspects of Spinoza’s “expressionism,” according to Deleuze. “To explicate,” Deleuze writes, “is to evolve, to involve is to implicate. Yet the two terms are not opposites: they simply mark two aspects of expression” (16). See Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992).

¹² On immanence as philosophical concept and synonym for the virtual in Deleuze’s notion of “a life,” see Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman

(New York: Zone Books, 2001); on Spinoza's One substance, or *Deus sive natura*, see Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, in *The Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002).

¹³ See G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol. 3: Medieval and Modern Philosophy*, trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995). Hegel remarks that "thought must begin by placing itself at the standpoint of Spinozism; to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential commencement of all Philosophy" (257). For Hegel, however, Spinozism is only the *beginning* of philosophy, and a dangerous one at that. Because Spinoza's substance is infinite, his philosophy cannot account for the individuality of finite modes. Spinoza's substance, according to Hegel, is motionless: "The moment of negativity is what is lacking to this rigid motionlessness, whose single form of activity is this, to divest itself of their [the finite modes'] determination and particularity and cast them back into the one absolute substance, wherein they are simply swallowed up and all life is utterly destroyed" (288). For a detailed discussion of Hegel's reading of Spinoza, see Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization*.

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 96-97.

¹⁵ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 97.

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 3.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 187.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 11.

¹⁹ Goldberg, *Sodometries*, 4.

²⁰ Leo Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?” in *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 22.

²¹ Bersani, ““Is the Rectum a Grave?” 30.

²² For instance, Barad begins her essay “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter” (*Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28.3 [2003]) with the declaration: “Language has been granted too much power.... It seems that at every turn lately every ‘thing’—even materiality—is turned into a matter of language” (802). Likewise, in their introductory essay to *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, eds. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), Coole and Frost associate “the eclipse of materialism in recent theory” with “a cultural turn that privileges language, discourse, culture, and values” (3). They further claim that this turn “has encouraged a de facto neglect of more obviously material phenomena and processes” (3).

²³ Edelman, *No Future*, 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸ On the logocentrism of ecogistics, see Claire Colebrook, “Not Symbiosis, Not Now: Why Anthropogenic Change is Not Really Human,” *The Oxford Literary Review* 34.2

(2012): 185-209. For a related critique, see Derrida's discussion of reason in "Cogito and the History of Madness" (*Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978]), where he challenges Foucault's idea that a history of madness could *restore* the experience of madness "prior" to the onset of the Cartesian cogito.

²⁹ I borrow the language of toxicity from Mel Y. Chen. See, in particular, her chapter, "Following Mercurial Affect," in *Animacies*, 189-221. For a related discussion that invokes the language of "toxic assets," see Jacques Derrida, "Biodegradables: Seven Diary Fragments," trans. Peggy Kamuf, in *Signature Derrida*, ed. Jay Williams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

³⁰ Edelman, *No Future*, 14.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³² See E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture: A Study of the Idea of Order in the Age of Shakespeare, Donne and Milton* (New York: Vintage, 1942), and Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Humane Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1994).

³³ Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1-2.

³⁴ Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal*, 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁹ Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal*, 3.

⁴⁰ Edelman, *No Future*, 25.

⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze, "The Exhausted," in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 152.

⁴² Lim, "A Lyrical Approach to a Subject that Shocks."

⁴³ Karen Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity (the authorized version)," in Kvinder, Køn & Forskning/*Women, Gender, and Research*, no. 1-2 (Copenhagen, 2012): 30.

⁴⁴ Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity (the authorized version)," 30.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁷ See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), and Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁴⁸ *Zoo*. DVD. Directed by Robinson Devor (New York: ThinkFilm, 2007).

⁴⁹ Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity (the authorized version)," 31.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 31. For a trenchant critique of rights-based activism and its liberal humanist underpinnings, see Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), which advances a critique of human rights from the perspective of animal studies scholarship.

⁵¹ Karen Raber, *Animal Bodies, Renaissance Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 84.

⁵² Raber, *Animal Bodies, Renaissance Culture*, 84.

⁵³ Leo Bersani, “Sociability and Cruising,” in *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays*, 62.

⁵⁴ James Kuzner, “Early Modern Ideas of Freedom,” *Modern Philology* 110.1 (2012): 1.

⁵⁵ Kuzner, “Early Modern Ideas of Freedom,” 1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁸ Here I refer to Derrida’s analysis of the differential capacities negatively attributed to the animal in contradistinction to the human in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject,” in *Points...: Interviews, 1974-1994*, trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 280.

⁶⁰ Derrida, “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject,” 280-81.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁶² Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*, in *The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 212. All subsequent quotations from *The Defence* are from this edition.

⁶³ Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*, 212.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁶⁶ I use the phrase “become-animal” in the technical sense developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). The becoming-animal that

Deleuze and Guattari describe is not a process of analogy; one does not become *like* an animal, collapsing differences into a single identity. Rather, becoming-animal signals an escape from the creatural confinement that defines any organized body or organism. Becoming-animal thus means tracing an abstract line *between* entities, where desire circulates.

⁶⁷ Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*, 213.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 213.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 216.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 212.

⁷¹ See Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 1-51.

⁷² Jacques Derrida, *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 9.

⁷³ Derrida, *The Postcard*, 17.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁷⁷ As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick reminds us, “The word ‘queer’ itself means across—it comes from the Indo-European root *-twerw*, which also yields the Germanic *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*.... The immemorial current that *queer* represents is antiseparatist as it is antiassimilationist. Keenly, it is relational, and strange” (*Tendencies* [Durham: Duke University Press, 1993], xii).

⁷⁸ I borrow the phrase “intensive naturalism” from Joshua Remy’s brilliant reading of Deleuze in *The Hermetic Deleuze: Philosophy and Spiritual Order* (Durham: Duke

University Press, 2012), 16. For an analysis of Deleuze that directly engages contemporary science studies, see Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002).

⁷⁹ See in particular Rayna Kalas, *Frame, Glass, Verse: The Technology of Poetic Invention in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), and Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁸⁰ See Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*.

Chapter One: Trauma in the Age of Wood

In comparing modern thought with ancient records, we must remember the difficulties of translation.... For instance, how differently would Aristotle's metaphysical reflections read if we persisted in translating one of his metaphysical key words by the English term *wood*, and also insisted on giving the most literal meaning to that word. —Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*¹

And here am I, and wood within this wood. —William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2.1.192)²

Deep in the woods of Torquato Tasso's epic romance, *Gerusalemme liberata*, estranged lovers exchange words in the dark as the hero, Tancred, wounds an unknown tree. The tree speaks:

“Alas! Too much,” it cried,
“have you, O Tancred, wronged me! Now let be!
... Would you assail (ah cruel and perverse!)
your dead foes in their very sepulchres?
“I was Clorinda, not the only soul
lodged here in rough, hard plants.
... These branches and these trunks can feel. If you
hew down their wood, you murder what you hew.” (13.42-43)³

Who or what is the subject of this statement? Why does Clorinda believe that “these branches” and “these trunks,” rather than her imprisoned “soul,” “can feel”? Has she forgotten the early modern commonplace that plants, unlike animals, lack the power of

sensation?⁴ Or does she perhaps know something that we don't know, or that we care to overlook? I pose these questions first as a matter of grammar and second as a matter of interpretation. For if we read Tasso's poem carefully, we find that there is no one thing speaking in these lines, but two. There is the "it" who "cried," and secondly the "I" who speaks. There is the "it" of "rough, hard plants," and the "I" named "Clorinda." We are accustomed to referring to nonhuman things as "it," but, in this case, who is "it" and what is "Clorinda"? Should we read the Clorinda figure as double, as both humanoid and plant? And if so, are we discomfited by the animateness of this feeling, talking, plant, this "it"? Clearly "it" can be read, has been read, as a figure or trope. But then, we have to ask, why this figure, why this trope? Why would Tasso grant figurative power to the body of a tree in his depiction of Clorinda?

For most readers, the answer is obvious: Clorinda embodies a long literary tradition in which the boundary between human and plant was ceaselessly crossed. Ovid, for example, turns many of his transformations upon this boundary. In the *Metamorphoses*, Daphne's flesh is changed into bark as she resists Apollo's amorous pursuit, transforming her body into a branching laurel: "her soft white bosom was ringed in a layer of bark, her hair was turned into foliage, her arms into branches" (1.545-550).⁵ Ben Jonson, too, celebrates the amorous mixings of floral and fleshy bodies by translating lovers' "flames" into the sinuous form of "writhèd" and sexually writhing "bark" in his poem, "To Penshurst": "Beneath the broad beech, and the chestnut shade; / ... There, in the writhèd bark, are cut the names / Of many a Sylvan, taken with his flames" (12, 15-16).⁶ Even up to the late seventeenth-century when John Milton invoked

the generative power of plants in his pastoral elegy “Lycidas,” plants served as a key discursive and topographic reference for the narration of human events.

Yet even with this literary archive in place, critics have been loath to see these chiasmic figures as *more* than just figures. As Jean Feerick argues, figures like Clorinda who expand our notions of embodiment have largely been disregarded in literary studies where “questions of embodiment have led us, rather unreflectively, to ... representations of mostly *human* bodies.” While we have grown adept at “locat[ing] literary texts within a broader discursive field,” “in surveying a range of discursive moments” in order to “observe the patterns of logic that underpin a cultural formation,” we have “narrowed notions of embodiment such that they comply with” what Feerick, following Michel Foucault, calls a “distinctly modern episteme.”⁷ Thus, in the case of Clorinda, instead of a feeling, talking plant, we see a figure of the human voice. Instead of a lively and vociferous tree, we see a wounded and vulnerable body.

Tasso’s depiction of Clorinda partakes of a rich archive in the history of literary and theoretical understandings of trauma: from its appearance in Spenser’s short poem, *The Doleful Lay of Clorinda*, to its brief mention in Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, to its central role in Cathy Caruth’s study, *Unclaimed Experience*. In each of these texts, key questions of violence and materiality are at stake. Yet readers of these texts tend only to see these questions at stake for “the human.” My reading resists this tendency. Indeed, so as to interpret the above archive against the grain of modern human-exceptionalism, I will indulge a queerly literal reading as a curb to human-allegorization: for what is most interesting about allegory is not its power to transubstantiate matter into (human) meaning, but rather the collapse of human meaning at precisely those moments

when allegorical violence becomes most extreme.⁸ If theorists of modernity (Walter Benjamin) and postmodernity (Paul de Man) were wont to point out the limits of human allegorization, they fell short of considering how the collapse into human meaninglessness could open up onto other vistas of historicity and nonhuman efficacy. Early moderns were far less convinced of this anthro-determinacy. As Laurie Shannon notes, “for early moderns, who entertained the possibility that animals speak among themselves with curiosity and interest, the nonhumanity of a power to signify would have been held obvious.” “Human beings, by these lights, could claim no monopoly on signification.”⁹

This chapter asks what it would mean to take the content of Clorinda’s statement literally—to see her, that is, not merely as a crypt or encryption of human meaning (a “sepulchre,” as she puts it), but to recognize instead her protestations that “these branches and these trunks *can feel*.” What do we miss when we overlook Clorinda’s claim to affectivity? And what forms of bodily intelligence might we infer if we take seriously Clorinda’s responsive limbs?

In order to respond to these questions and to the difference they register in thinking about the representational logic that organizes allegorical readings of nonhuman bodies as well as the violence that hews to those figures, I shift the critical optic surrounding trauma from “wounds” to “wood wounds,” centering my literal reading on the etymology of the Greek word *hyle*, which means both matter and wood. Following Timothy Morton’s conceptualization of “dark ecology” as an ecology *without* nature,¹⁰ I turn to Book I of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* to register the melancholy affects that saturate attachments to nature in the era known by environmental historians as the “age of

wood.”¹¹ This era sustained unprecedented losses of England’s woodlands due to untrammelled deforestation and so ushered in the real potential for an ecology without nature. The political and economic consequences of this loss were dire. As Arthur Standish explains in a pamphlet published in that era: “no wood no Kingdome.”¹² While strange to our familiar categories of historical periodization, Vin Nardizzi writes that the age of wood is no less pertinent to our literary analyses for being uncanny.¹³ Indeed, it is precisely the uncanny and often times traumatic resurfacing of wooden bodies in *The Faerie Queene* that foregrounds the age of wood as an internal, not just external, condition of possibility for Spenser’s allegory.

My central argument is this: Under Spenser, allegory becomes a way of understanding a mutuality of influence between human and nonhuman, such that, to use a familiar pun, the matter of allegorical figures really does come to *matter*.¹⁴ The point in reading Spenser’s metaphors, then, is not to move beyond or through them, not to transubstantiate matter into (human) meaning, but to attend to the hospitality of a difference within allegory itself, what Karen Barad calls “the inhuman within.”¹⁵

The archive of trauma in both literary and theoretical studies has for the most part been anarchivic (in Derrida’s sense of the term): it has necessitated a certain concept of matter as inert and passive with which to record human experience, all the while ignoring the difference that this material sub-stance makes with respect to so-called “human” experience.¹⁶ By contrast, I show that trauma theory, at times against itself, has not only had recourse to complex figurations of matter but has also made bodily matter central to its articulations of ideation, affect, and ontology. To echo Catherine Malabou, it’s not that we don’t know that meaning, historicity, and existential indeterminacy pertain to

matter—we do; but (and here’s the rub) *we do not yet know what to do with this knowledge*.¹⁷ How to make sense of the strange appurtenance of matter (purportedly “nonhuman”) and meaning (purportedly “human”)? How to let “the inhuman within” contaminate our readings?

While I adopt the language of trauma in this chapter, I do so with the express purpose of revising its basic coordinates. Specifically, when I use the term “trauma” I do so in order to denote moments of non-instrumentalizable opacity in which what surfaces is not a lamentable void bereft of human meaning but rather an inhuman capacity already at the core of living, and of life. While theories of trauma have proven adept at illustrating that forms of opacity are intrinsic to human subjectivity, trauma theory foregrounds what I take to be the persistent parochialism of our literary and theoretical understandings insofar as it narrativizes the traumatic event as an event destined *for* and emerging *from* the human.¹⁸ For theorists such as Cathy Caruth and Slavoj Žižek, for example, the present of experience is rendered unintelligible by the latency inherent within experience itself, suspending the present moment between a past that never was and a future that will never be.¹⁹ But what makes history traumatic does not therefore make it meaningless (quite the opposite), just as what is meaningless does not therefore make experience traumatic.²⁰

Although theories of trauma have often pointed to the inhumanity of certain acts of violence, what if our theories are not inhuman enough? By pointing to the inhuman agency of matter within Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, I argue that it is by exploring our inhumanity that we begin to rethink terms such as violence, the human, and materiality anew.

Wood Wounds

Shortly after introducing the “traumatic neuroses” in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud turns to the genre of epic romance to give an account of the violent repetitions at the heart of traumatic experience. He writes:

The most moving poetic picture of a fate such as this is given by Tasso in his romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Its hero, Tancred, unwittingly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight. After her burial he makes his way into a strange magic forest which strikes the Crusaders’ army with terror. He slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again.²¹

Following Freud’s reading of Tasso in the third chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Caruth explains that, “as Tasso’s story dramatizes it, the repetition at the heart of catastrophe—the experience that Freud will call ‘traumatic neurosis’—emerges as the unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind,” since—as Caruth’s argument suggests—it is an event that one never simply *had* in the first place.²² Trauma, according to Caruth, is an experience (or rather, a non-experience) of deferred, retrospective action, or “afterwardsness,”²³ in which the present replays the past through a series of uncontrolled and uninvited repetitions, eviscerating the present through their unassimilable force. The subject of trauma is thus either too soon or too late to apprehend the present moment, with the consequence that one’s claim to present experience—to

being there precisely—falls repeatedly out of grasp. Just as we do “not hear Clorinda’s voice until after the second wounding, so trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past.” Rather, trauma appears in its very absence, in “the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance,” and in the way it “returns to haunt the survivor later on.”²⁴

In the case of the bleeding tree, the interpretive rational proffered by Caruth suggests that the center of gravity of the trauma lies strictly in its human content, in the way that Clorinda’s body is animated by the power of the human voice. Indeed, early on in her book, Caruth distinguishes her conception of trauma from Freud’s by highlighting the distinctive character of the voice. She argues that “what seems to me particularly striking in the example of Tasso is not just the unconscious act of the infliction of the injury and its inadvertent and unwished-for repetition, but the moving and sorrowful *voice* that cries out, a voice that is paradoxically released *through the wound*.”²⁵ Here what is paradoxical for Caruth is the surprising communicativeness of the body. Yet from the start, this voice and this body are seen as mere stand-ins for the human agent. Clorinda’s vegetable body, needless to say, goes without mention. Thus we read that Tasso’s story “represents traumatic experience not only as the enigma of a human agent’s repeated and unknowing acts but also as the enigma of the otherness of a human voice.”²⁶

While Caruth’s description of trauma rests upon the assumption that meaning, experience, and historical significance inhabit only those regions of the living that obtain for human life, Freud entertains the idea that consciousness, historicity, and meaning are precipitates of traumatic events that have no human referent. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud anticipates the challenge posed by nonhuman life to what Quentin

Meillassoux calls “correlationist” ways of thought.²⁷ He does so by speculating on a time before the “human,” offering the reader another nonhuman figure no less woundable than Clorinda, and no less germane to the generic traits of epic romance. Freud writes:

Let us picture a living organism in its most simplified possible form as an undifferentiated vesicle of a substance that is susceptible to stimulation.... This little fragment of living substance is suspended in the middle of an external world charged with the most powerful energies; and it would be killed by the stimulation emanating from these if it were not provided with a protective shield against stimuli. It acquires the shield in this way: its outermost surface ceases to have the structure proper to living matter, becomes to some degree inorganic and thenceforward functions as a special envelope or membrane resistant to stimuli.... By its death, the outer layer has saved all the deeper ones from a similar fate.²⁸

While the human is usually thought of as the self-present origin of the psyche, there is a strategic movement in this passage that disperses this origin through a systematic play of differences and deferrals. The passage illustrates the limits of determining what Derrida refers to as the “enigmas of the ‘first time’ and of originary repetition” in Freud’s texts: whether the very movement of the organism “described as the effort of life to protect itself by *deferring* a dangerous cathexis,” that is, an outside force or disturbance, is “not already death at the origin of a life which can defend itself against death only through an *economy* of death, through deferment, repetition, reserve.”²⁹ Recall that, for Freud, life emerges from the attempt to master death through repetition. Thus, the idea of the “first time” becomes enigmatic precisely because of a deferment of death at the origin of life, a deferment which installs repetition and delay *in*

the beginning. “No doubt life protects itself by repetition, trace, *différance*,” Derrida writes, “but we must be wary of this formulation: there is no life present *at first* which would *then* come to protect, postpone, or reserve itself in *différance*.” On the contrary,

Life must be thought of as trace before Being may be determined as presence.

This is the only condition on which we can say that life *is* death, that repetition and the beyond of the pleasure principle are native and congenital to that which they transgress.... It is thus the delay which is in the beginning.³⁰

Or, to return to Freud’s text, we can say that in the beginning there was delay: Freud’s origin story locates the “undifferentiated vesicle” at the beginning of human life; he thus installs a nonhuman “delay” at the origin of human auto-genesis, one that works both narratively and ontogenetically to forestall human presence.³¹ What accounts of the body and of trauma are possible if we consider Freud’s “undifferentiated vesicle” in the light of this nonhuman delay?

Unlike Caruth’s analysis, Freud’s description of trauma does not begin with the human subject. Rather, Freud’s speculative account is posthuman *avant la lettre*.

Focusing on a rudimentary organism, “an undifferentiated vesicle” that is at once living and dead (“its outermost surface ceases to have the structure proper to living matter”)

Freud enables us to consider the agency and vitality of this inhuman body as both antecedent to and condition of possibility of the “human,” what Barad calls the inhuman within. As Freud later notes, “In highly developed organisms the receptive cortical layer of the former vesicle has long been withdrawn into the depths of the interior of the body.”³² Thus, far from hailing any sort of turn to the posthuman, Freud points to the

always already of the inhuman within humanity, of the outer within the inner, and of the lowly material body within “highly developed organisms.”

How does this involution of the inhuman within abut with Freud’s larger narrative? Although Freud has recourse to nonhuman figures (Clorinda, the tiny vesicle) and ultimately undoes the dichotomy human/nonhuman, the frame of his narrative remains a humanizing one. Writing between wars, Freud turns to Tasso’s epic romance and the figure of Clorinda as an example of traumatic neurosis; as a result, he uses Tasso’s story to fulfill essentially metaphorical or allegorical ends: the wounding of Clorinda’s wooden body represents a loss of self-mastery and misrecognition on the part of the hero, Tancred, and human suffering on the part of Clorinda. While Freud’s literary archive does much to displace the human center of historical experience, it inadvertently enacts its own re-centering by equating traumatic experience with the failures of human representation.

And Say the Tree Responded?

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep...” (13).³³ So goes Robert Frost’s elegiac poem, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.” The speaker of Frost’s poem mourns a death to come (his, ours) by projecting that death onto a snowy landscape. He imagines his death via nature, a nature so blighted as to appear dead itself. Spenser, by contrast, takes us deeper. He does not stop to imagine a nature “over there” which would reflect our existential woe. Nor does he set out to mourn nature. Rather, Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* attests to a melancholy attitude in which the lost object (“nature,” the “other”) cannot be mourned or given up because we *are* it. Resembling Freud’s description of the

melancholic subject who cannot mourn the lost object but rather incorporates the object as one of his deepest attachments,³⁴ Spenser outlines a melancholic ecology in which subjects are unable to detach from nature precisely because nature, far from being a thing “over there,” is already within subjectivity itself. This is what Morton calls “dark ecology,” which “is based on negative desire rather than positive fulfillment. It is saturated with unrequited longing.”³⁵ Rather than mourn nature as dead and gone or redeem it through acts of idealization, dark ecology asserts that “we want to stay with a dying world.” Dark ecology is ecology *without* nature, meaning that melancholy emotion is an irreducible part of ecological subjectivity. Its medium is pain. As Morton writes, “Nature, if it is anything at all, ... at its simplest is pain.”³⁶

In the *Legend of Holinesse*, the first book of Spenser’s epic romance, pain emerges as a vehicle of traumatic encounter with nature, a nature not subject to human idealization or beautification, but one that conjures close encounters of an abject kind with the inhuman within. This inhuman “other” is something that Spenser’s self-fashioning knights cannot detach from (try as they might) and thus cannot do without. It is not a nature “over there” but something intimate, and thus horrifying.

Near the beginning of the *Legend of Holinesse*, the Redcrosse Knight, having entered the dark deep of the romance genre’s signature wooded labyrinths, encounters a wooden figure named Fradubio. Trauma mediates the encounter: “He pluckt a bough; out of whose rifte there came / Smal drops of gory bloud, that trickled down the same” (1.2.30).³⁷ Like Clorinda in Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*, this wounded tree speaks:

Therewith a piteous yelling voice was heard,

Crying, O spare with guilty hands to teare

My tender sides in this rough rynd embard,
But fly, ah fly hence away, for feare
Least to you hap, that happened to me heare,
And to this wretched Lady, my deare loue,
O too deare loue, loue bought with death too deare.
Astond he stood, and up his heare did houe,

And with that suddein horror could no member moue. (1.2.31)

Drawing on a long literary archive of trauma that, time and again, de-centers human subjectivity via the pain and suffering of nonhuman bodies, Spenser's Fradubio (whose name means "brother doubt" or "amidst doubt") stands as a plangent reminder of the romance genre's chimerical and often vexed relationship to allegory. After explaining to Redcrosse how he came to be "in this rough rynd embard," how he, now a tree, was seduced by Duessa and thereby became transformed into his current woody state; after relating his story to Redcrosse, whose own beloved, Fidessa, we learn is none other than the seductive Duessa in disguise, we are confronted with what Patricia Parker calls the essentially "dilatory" nature of romance: whether Redcrosse Knight will witness his own fate reflected in this bleeding, speaking tree and therefore learn to distinguish false beauty (Duessa) from true (Una); or whether he will repeat Fradubio's error and wander in the woods of romance without end.³⁸

Well before Freud, Spenser was already in the ambit of traumatic repetition. And like Freud after him, he followed Tasso in making the pain (and violence) of repetition sound out through trees.

Ecce homo? For most critics, the answer is yes. Fradubio's wooden and wounded body yields (to) a simple allegorical meaning: the tree represents not only the trials of a reformist Protestant morality—Fradubio fails his trial by succumbing to the seductions of Duessa; his mortified body thus serves as an emblem of his failure: "My tender sides in this rough rynd embard"—but also of a Protestant poetics whose champion is Spenser.³⁹ Donald Cheney argues that "Fradubio's human reason is the first to fail him when he chooses Duessa"; he provides "an emblem of man trapped by the flesh."⁴⁰ Maureen Quilligan, setting aside the marvelous physicality of Fradubio, reads the episode as an allegory of the Knight of Holinesse's inner moral conflict: "The Redcrosse Knight meets a character who is a projection of his own psyche."⁴¹ Even Joseph Campana, who notes that "Ready-made interpretations for even the most marvelous events spring up easily in the Legend of Holiness ... [a Legend] all too often read as an emblematic version of allegory written in support of rather obvious Protestant moral impulses," obscures the woodenness of Fradubio's literal wounded body by emphasizing the shared humanity that this body-in-pain communicates.⁴² What Fradubio's wounded and wooden body forces us to ask, Campana writes, is this: "How do we hear and receive other people's pain? How is pain communicated and does its communicability make us spectators, participants, or members of a community?"⁴³

Campana's attention to pain is crucial; indeed, I would say it is essential if we are to dislodge readerly complacency in the face of physical manifestations of suffering and to enlist genuine com-passion (suffering with) in our literary and historical observations. Against strict theological readings of Spenser (*Spenser's bleeding bodies are always already allegorical bodies; their pain tells us to read beyond the flesh*) or generic ones

(*Fradubio's wooden and wounded body is a topos of the romantic quest*), Campana asks: insofar as Spenser is drawing on theological and literary conventions, why do these conventions appear so unconventional?⁴⁴ What it is about Spenser's conventions that obliges them to refer beyond themselves, not to a realm of pure and proper meanings but to an unconventional realm of pain, horror, and bodily abjection, simply in order to signify? In the case of the bleeding tree, which, Campana notes, is a stand-in for the bleeding and crucified body of Christ, Campana argues that Spenser reintroduces the suffering and salvific body of Christ into a post-Reformation England marked "by escalating religious violence, proliferating doctrinal and sectarian differences, and a fundamental ambivalence about theological opinions and ritual practices centered on the incarnate Christ."⁴⁵ In contrast to the iconoclastic violence that readers typically associate with Spenserian poetics, Campana, following the work of Regina Schwartz, argues that the bleeding tree represents a form of "poetic compensation for the diminishing importance of the figure of the suffering Christ in the early modern Protestant imaginary, a figure that embodies the importance of the lived experience of pain and provides the ground of an ethics rooted in compassion."⁴⁶ In other words, Spenser's idolatrous (read: Catholic) interest in the lived body stems from an enduring attachment in post-Reformation England to the suffering body of Christ. "For, indeed," Campana writes, "the problem of pain in the Renaissance was also the problem created by Protestant disavowals of the suffering body"⁴⁷; the trauma of such disavowals worked to reawaken a real hunger for the sacrament.

Similarly, in her book *Sacramental Poetics*, Schwartz argues that with the dawn of secularist modernity and the consequent break-up of sacramental unities of spirit and

matter, “most of the Reformation poets who lived on the brink of this new world embraced, predictably, a spiritual—not material—presence of Christ in the Eucharist.”⁴⁸ Although Schwartz asserts that secularist modernity was not and never has been a settled fact, but rather was and still is an event deferred by the many “deaths of God” throughout Western history, still, the guiding principle of her book is that post-Reformation poetry emerged out of a sense of profound mourning for the loss of God’s worldly presence. Bereft of God, the Eucharist, and the unity of body and soul, Protestant poets were left to crave “a dinner that they could only imagine—however compelling their imaginings.”⁴⁹

Underscoring the ambivalence of Spenser’s attachment to the bleeding body of Christ in post-Reformation England, the 1596 edition of *The Faerie Queene* registers a similar hesitation, if not horror, as Redcrosse at the sight of the bleeding cross—this time not Fradubio, but rather the “bloodie Crosse” that “he,” Redcrosse, “bore”:

And on his brest a bloodie Crosse he bore,
The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,
For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,
And dead as living euer him ador’d. (1.1.2)

Here, adoration (“ever him ador’d”) mixes with the most sanguinary aspect of Christian identification, where “remembrance” of Christ’s heroic sacrifice means, quite literally, being coated (as in a coat of arms) in blood. Redcrosse’s identification with the “bloodie Crosse” draws on a heroic epic tradition that assimilates knightly virtue to the image of a warrior Christ whose battle for man’s salvation took place on a blood soaked piece of wood. That this “bloodie Crosse” also happens to be the most ambivalent symbol of Christian Protestant identity is made manifest in Spenser’s revision, in the 1596 *Faerie*

Queene, of “And” to “But”: “But on his brest a bloodie Crosse he bore.” Read symptomatically, the revision speaks to Spenser’s ambivalence regarding a figure of extreme masculine vulnerability. Read historically, it points to the rift within a post-Reformation imaginary that rejected Christ’s bleeding body as an acceptable object of worship.

Although it is now commonplace to read Spenser in the light of post-Reformation religious and political turmoil, Campana and Schwartz make a compelling case for reading Protestant poetics as an ineluctably melancholy endeavor. Rather than accept a landscape bereft of corporeal and affective experience, they argue that Renaissance poets satisfied their hunger indirectly, through unique and stylistically inventive speech acts whose beauty owes to the textures of pain and suffering they gave rise to. According to Campana, “allegory became one location for the contentious materiality of the body of Christ in an age in which both the idea of the real presence of Christ and, by extension, the nature and efficacy of sacraments were hotly contested.”⁵⁰

But having stressed this “contentious materiality,” an earlier set of questions wells to the surface: Why should the interest in materiality and the violence and vulnerability that accrue to it be limited to persons? Why shouldn’t the impulse to “hear and receive other people’s pain” be extended to nonhumans, too?

While economies of shared affect circulate widely in theories of trauma, both early modern and modern, much of what counts as affectivity remains circumscribed to the anthro-determinacy of ethical frameworks and biopolitical formulations of “bare life” that continue, even in decimated form, to singularize and define “life” as a being-towards-death proper to the human. Thus, in *Precarious Life* (a key text in Campana’s

bibliographic repertoire), when Judith Butler asks “What *makes for a grievable life?*” the life she refers to is human life, whose claim to grievability is defined by “a common human vulnerability.” “Is there a way,” Butler asks, “in which the place of the body ... opens up another kind of normative aspiration within the field of politics,” to “consider the demands that are imposed upon us by living in a world of beings who are, by definition, physically dependent on another, physically vulnerable to one another?”⁵¹ “From where,” she asks, “might a principle emerge by which we vow to protect others from the kinds of violence we have suffered, if not from an apprehension of a common human vulnerability?”⁵²

Alighting on these same lines, Cary Wolfe points to a fundamental aporia in Butler’s efforts to think politics and ethics on the basis of a shared human vulnerability, asking: “why should the dangers and vulnerabilities, the exposure to violence and harm that accrue from the fact of embodiment be limited to a ‘common *human* vulnerability’? Why shouldn’t *nonhuman* lives count as ‘grievable lives’?”⁵³ Wolfe suggests that Butler’s “notion of subjectivity ... remains too committed to the primacy of ‘agency’ for ethical standing, whereas a crucial aspect of taking ‘embodiment’ seriously ... is that it subverts the overly hasty association of agency with personhood.”⁵⁴

Following Wolfe, what would an impersonal theory of vulnerability, one that takes seriously the agencies of both human and nonhuman bodies, look like? Moreover, what if it were not simply a question of paying witness to nonhumans, of extending “our” concern to nonhumans, as Wolfe prescribes, but of recognizing in scenes of trauma the *inhumanity* that is both human and nonhuman? As Barad argues, “The inhuman is not the same as the nonhuman.”⁵⁵ Rather, “partly in an attempt to unsettle the recent a-bit-too-

easy accommodations of the nonhuman into the usual human centered stories,” Barad suggests that

it may well be the necessity of facing our inhumanness, the inhuman that we are—that is, this infinite alterity in its material and lively indeterminacy that lives in, around, and through us—that will help us face the depths of what responsibility entails. For all our concerns with nonhumans as well as humans, there is nonetheless always something that drops out. But what if the point isn’t to widen the bounds of inclusion to let everyone and everything in? ... What if it is only in facing the “inhuman”—the indeterminate non/being of mattering and not mattering—that an ethics committed to the rupture of indifference can arise? ... Perhaps it takes facing the inhuman within “us” before com-passion—suffering together with, participating with, feeling with, being moved by—can be lived.⁵⁶

If Wolfe’s critique of Butler is salient here, and I believe it is, we will have to consider what falls out of our discussions when the suffering body is limited (once again) to a “common human vulnerability.” For though Campana does mention that “the essential mystery of the bleeding tree is not just the infliction of violence but the experience of suffering matter,” and that “the Greek word for wood, *hyle*, is also the word for *matter*,” he limits this key etymological reference to a logocentric and human-centric metaphor: Fradubio’s wooden and wounded body is an allegory for the suffering body of Man, or better still, of Christ, the Word made flesh.⁵⁷

But Christ’s body was not the only body to disappear from the early modern landscape.⁵⁸ Literary critic and environmental historian Vin Nardizzi reminds us that the age of humanism typically referred to as *the Renaissance* was also the “age of wood,”

and this is because of the “indispensability of wood as the primary energy source underpinning subsistence and manufacture in the preindustrial era.”⁵⁹ “*The age of wood* is, I trust, an epochal designation unfamiliar to literary scholars,” Nardizzi writes; “it names a swath of time that stretches from prehistory to the second half of the eighteenth century, when coal generally replaced charcoal (an energy source plucked from the ashes of cone-shaped piles of lumber that had been charred) in industrial iron making and fuelwood homes, where it heated food and consumer alike.”⁶⁰ Despite its utility, or rather because of its utility, wood was considered no less central to questions of violence and vulnerability than fleshly bodies. For by the time Shakespeare’s Globe was in full swing, the age of wood had entered an age of crisis, as shortages of wood and timber resulting from untrammelled deforestation of England’s woodlands threatened to bring this ligneous era to a state of economic and ecosystemic collapse. Nardizzi spotlights Shakespeare’s playhouses—playfully dubbed “wooden Os”—“as uniquely self-reflexive spaces for mediating on wood” in a time of “unprecedented wood scarcity ... and energy insecurity.”⁶¹ For my part, I want to delve into the dark deep of Spenser’s wooded (and at times wooden) romance to rethink the precarity of bodily matter outside of a human-centric framework. To respond to the pain of others is one thing. To the death of God another. But how did poets respond to the ecological trauma of a disappearing nature? Literally, dead wood.

The answer, I argue, is a melancholy one. Rather than mourn a post-Reformation world in which materiality became a contentious, if not wholly discarded, issue, Spenser’s poetry affirms a melancholy attachment to matter, attachments that surface most profoundly in moments of pain and trauma. These attachments are often dark,

deadly dark. For the “matter” in question is not, strictly speaking, human. Instead, Spenser’s dark attachments make legible the inhuman within human-allegorization. According to Morton, the task of ecology is “to figure out how to love the inhuman: not just the nonhuman (that’s easier) but the radically strange, dangerous, even ‘evil.’ For the inhuman is the strangely strange core of the human.”⁶² To mourn the inhuman is to separate oneself from it—to make it “other”; to love the inhuman is to open oneself up to the hospitality of the inhuman within—what Morton (translating Derrida’s *arrivant*) calls “the strange stranger”: “We can’t ever predict exactly who or what strange strangers are, whether they are a ‘who’ or a ‘what’”; “After all, they might be us.” But the ecological thought “consists in intimacy with the strange stranger,” in an intimacy that itself is strange.⁶³ “Dark ecology,” a melancholy ecology, is Morton’s name for this strange familiarity. Spenser calls it his “darke conceit.”

Virtuous Matter, Dark Conceit

In the interest of making the familiar strange, I want to read Spenser’s well-known reference to his poem’s “darke conceit” in the author’s “Letter to Raleigh,” appended to the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene*, in connection with Morton’s “dark ecology.” In that letter, Spenser acknowledges “how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed,” and, having labeled his “booke ... a continued Allegory, or darke conceit,” begins to outline “the general intention and meaning” of his poem so as to shed “better light in reading thereof.”⁶⁴ Spenser’s “Letter” is meant to illuminate the dark, to bring truth to light, and to disclose secrets. Critics have read it accordingly.

Following in the wake of Stephen Greenblatt's landmark volume, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, which not only takes its title from Spenser's "Letter" but also reads that letter as a paradigmatic statement about subject-formation in the early modern period,⁶⁵ many readers have opted to believe Spenser when he says that "The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline," as if such a statement assured readerly credulity.⁶⁶ But as Richard Rambuss points out, secrecy in Spenser's works is never so simple, for secrecy is never more guaranteed than in moments of disclosure. Taking the Proem to Book I as his example,

Lo I the man, whose Muse whylome did maske,
 As time her taught, in lowly Shephards weeds,
 Am now enforst a farre vnfitter taske,
 For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds:
 And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds, (I.Proem.1)

Rambuss argues that "for all the impetus towards disclosure here, much remains obscure. For if Pastoral was only a mask, and if the move to epic feels uncomfortably compelled ('enforst'), what kind of poet then is really putting himself forward here, however reluctantly?"⁶⁷ The proem's inaugural address, "Lo I the man," modeled on Virgilian self-identification, stages poetic self-fashioning, the fitting of matter and form, as something unfit: "a farre vnfitter taske." Thus the "enforst" mask of epic, instead of announcing the poet's true self as the destination of the *rota Virgilii*, makes self-fashioning a rather dark and secretive business. In Rambuss's words: "all the masking, all the secreting, has not ended with the proem's inaugural unmasking.... the proem is perhaps best taken as the discovery of muse and poet merely altering their disguises."⁶⁸

What does it mean, then, “to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline”? By and large, “vertuous” has been taken to mean “the twelve priuate morall vertues” described by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which Spenser alludes to in his “Letter.”⁶⁹ Each of *The Faerie Queene*’s intended twelve books would thus be an allegory of man (“virtue” derives from the Latin *vir*, meaning “man”) in pursuit of one of the twelve virtues. But as Jeffrey Cohen points out, the etymology of “virtue,” rather than denoting the sole powers of the “human,” far exceeds anthropomorphism. “*Vertu*,” he writes, “is the most inhumanly powerful word in medieval English and French, its meanings ranging from energy, might and vitality to potential, magic and force.”

Vertu does not descend from heaven (God sends miracles; *vertu* resides in the substance of the world), nor rise from hell (a possession of material and form, not the trick of a demon). Stones and leaves radiate *vertu* as easily as knights, horses and clerics.... *Vertu* is life force: reproduction and vitality, affect and intellect and health, that which moves the flesh. The term can be theologized, so that sacramental efficacy is among its polysemous yields. Anthropomorphized *vertu* includes legal authority, chivalric valor. But *vertu* is non-human and profane, the term that best describes the elements in their solitary powers. Of which *vertu* engendered is the flour, of which *vertu* engendered is the soul.⁷⁰

Alighting on this reference to Chaucer’s “General Prologue” to *The Canterbury Tales*, Cohen reminds us that “virtue” in its medieval sense is radically ecological rather than anthropocentric. In other words, virtue is not just the power of humans to produce events; virtue is also the power of matter to move, animals to sense, plants to grow, and so forth. The medieval definition of virtue is vital force—something akin to what Jane Bennett

terms “vital matter”: the idea that agency and vitality are shared by all things, and not restricted to humans alone.⁷¹ What if we were to keep this definition of virtue in play in Spenser’s poem? How else would matter come to matter? Considering the enormous cache that an idea like “self-fashioning” has had in Renaissance studies, what if the idea of “self-fashioning” were no more unique to the human than to an animal, plant or stone?

Reading Spenser’s “darke” allegory against the grain of modern human-exceptionalism enables us to ask not only how nonhumans matter but also how they matter in the fashioning of the human, the less than human, and the utterly inhuman. For if, as Butler argues, “the human is not only produced over and against the inhuman, but through a set of foreclosures,” we will have to consider how these traumatic foreclosures enduringly haunt the human as its constitutive outside.⁷² “Hence, it is not enough to claim that human subjects are constructed,” or “fashioned” in Greenblatt’s sense, “for the construction of the human” is irretrievably interwoven with the production of strange strangers—strangers who, as Morton insists, *are* us.⁷³ Spenser’s dark ecology enacts a series of traumatic encounters with strange strangers so as to reopen the wound of prior foreclosures and to reanimate affective attachments to not just nonhumans but the inhuman within. Spenser’s allegory, far from being a simple transubstantiation of “darke” matter into the light of human meaning, takes us darker and deeper into the shadowy depths of material reality, such that we can no longer see the forest for the trees.

Ecce Fradubio

The encounter with Fradubio is just one in a series of traumatic misrecognitions in which Redcrosse’s subjectivity is threatened by strange strangers (Error, Orgoglio, Duessa, the

dragon) whose abject physicality overwhelms his ability to fashion abstract, allegorical meanings. The pertinent word for this failure to fashion is “frame.”

And thinking of those braunches greene to frame

A girlond for her dainty forehead fit,

He pluckt a bough; out of whose rifte there came

Smal drops of gory blood, that trickled down the same. (1.2.30)

Seeking not only psychic but also stylistic compensation for the battle against Error, Redcrosse frames “A girlond,” an image of allegorical closure, to crown his beloved (and false) Fidessa, for whose “Faire seemely pleasaunce” and “falsed fancy,” Redcrosse, “to expresse, ... bends,” that is, perverts, “his gentle wit” (1.2.30). But this attempt to frame (fashion) allegorical closure immediately results in failure (failed “fit”): Redcrosse, the play on words suggests, is not yet ready to frame (too “greene to frame”), and so not being consummate in his ability to fashion Holinesse, instead exposes a “rifte,” or wound, within allegory itself. This wound surfaces, in Lacanian terms, as the traumatic “Thing” that both inaugurates subjectivity through processes of misrecognition and haunts subjectivity as its material-psychotic surplus. The result is a framing *mise en abyme*. For what horrifies Redcrosse is not so much this thing, be it man or tree, but the recognition that he *is* this thing. Spenser breaks the frame of human recognition, the frame that distances and represents the material world as a reserve for human utility, and allows the bleeding tree to speak, and thus to “frame” his (its?) story. In doing so, Spenser transforms Redcrosse’s traumatic misrecognition into a potential to reframe human perception to account for nonhuman vulnerability and to recognize (à la Derrida) *the inhuman that therefore he is*.

Already at the outset of the Legend of Holinesse, this potential to misrecognize and to frame nonhuman matter as always already human appears written on trees, carved into the archetypal Wandering Wood, whose “couert,” “shadie groue” shades Redcrosse and Una as they wander out of epic and into the dark deep, the *selva oscura*, of romance (1.1.7). The transition from epic to romance, like the transition from pastoral above, is one that it is “compeld,” constrained (“constrain”), and indeed, “enforst”: “with pleasure forward led” (1.1.5, 6, 7, 8). Redcrosse and Una are passively “led” to the Wandering Wood, a type of *hortus conclusus* “shrouded from ... dred” (1.1.8). There they encounter a catalogue of trees whose names are framed according to human use:

Much can they praise the trees so straight and hy,

The sayling Pine, the Cedar proud and tall,

The vine-propp Elme, the Poplar never dry,

The builder Oake, sole king of forrests all,

The Aspine good for staues, the Cypresse funerall. (1.1.8)

Listed according to their use-value, the trees are both an emblem of human consumption and a marker of poetic accomplishment. The “Laurell, meed of mightie Conquerours” is also the crown of “Poets sage,” linking Spenser’s epic to Virgil’s *Aenied* (1.1.9). The “Firre that weepeth still” and the “Willow worne of forlorne Paramours” recall Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, in which Orpheus has the power to arouse the passions of trees and gather a forest to his lyre (1.1.9). And unlike Redcrosse, who “bends his gentle wit” to frame reluctant matter, here the “Eugh” is “obedient to the benders will,” the “Birch” gives itself “for shaftes,” and “the Sallow for the mill” (1.1.9).

Such an image of nature in harmony with human desire would seem to re-seal the “rifte” opened by Redcrosse, were it not for the melancholy hexameter line that closes, or rather tears open, the eighth stanza. “Cypresse funerall” speaks to the negative dimension of desire, in which the desired object (“nature”) is already absent, thus provoking an endless series of metonymic displacements: pine, cedar, elm, poplar, oaks, and so forth (1.1.8). Against the inviting appearance of the Wandering Wood, which is described as a “shadie groue” and “Faire harbour,” a maternal house and dwelling (*oikos*), what we find is the quintessential lost object: ecology *without* nature. While the allegorical frame that lured (“led”) Redcrosse and Una is the type that promises “pleasure,” the kind of pleasure that comes from voyeuristically distancing nature as “other,” precisely so as to possess it as fetish, “Cypresse funerall” implicates Redcrosse and Una in a dying world. The Wandering Wood offers pleasure, but an *ek-static*, destructive pleasure (*jouissance*). It preserves the melancholy quality of life in the form of a dead emblem. No surprise then that Walter Benjamin, in his well-known essay on German *Trauerspiel*, translated as “mourning play,” claims that “whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape.”⁷⁴ Whereas the Romantics privileged symbol over allegory because, in the symbol, “the beautiful is supposed to merge with the divine in an unbroken whole,” Benjamin privileges allegory because of its direct relation to history:

Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face—or rather in a death’s head.... This is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing, of the baroque, secular

explanation of history as the Passion of the world.... The greater the significance, the greater the subjection to death, because death digs most deeply the jagged line of demarcation between physical nature and significance. [So that] if nature has always been subject to the power of death, it is also true that it has always been allegorical.⁷⁵

The Wandering Wood has a baroque form. Its “untimely materiality” rebels against the symbol by refusing to turn dead wood into an ideal aesthetic form.⁷⁶ The challenge then is to love this dead wood, to keep it close, intimately close. “Loving the thing *as* thing, not as a person in disguise”—this, Morton writes, is ecological ethics.⁷⁷ It identifies the beautiful with the monstrous.

When we reach the end of the catalogue of trees, we do so silently, mournfully: the last line reads, “the Maple seeldom inward sound” (1.1.9). For Benjamin, because it is fallen, nature is mute: “fallen nature mourns.”⁷⁸ The presentiment of mourning in the silence of the maple tree foreshadows a death—not a death that has already happened in *the* past but, in Derrida’s sense of “to come,” a death that haunts the living present, Redcrosse’s “present,” as an indebtedness to ghosts. The maple is mute because inside it is corrupt: literally, unsound. Yet the death it foreshadows (the monster lurking inside the allegorical Wood, whom we know to be Error) is already announced from very beginning of Book I, starting with the first stanza:

A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,
Ycladd in mightie armes and siluer shielde,
Wherein old dints of deepe woundes did remaine,
The cruell markes of many a bloody field. (1.1.1)

And “Yet”:

Yet armes till that time did he never wield. (1.1.1)

“Yet”: a word that means in addition, continuation, besides, further, furthermore, moreover, repetition, duration, delay, surplus; *and yet* also means difference, although, nevertheless, not yet. Spenser’s “Yet” disjoins the living present; it points to “dints,” “markes,” and “deepe woundes,” forms of violence but also forms of writing, which Redcrosse wears and inherits without having been present to the event of their reception: “deepe woundes did remaine,” and *yet*, “armes till that time” (what time?) “did he never wield.” Redcrosse’s physical description doubles as a description of the traumatic event in that the symptomology of his “woundes” comes as much from the future as from the past: we do not (yet) know from whence these “woundes” came; only a future event, a traumatic repetition, can bring “old” wounds to the surface.

Hence, it is not until after the battle with Error, in which Redcrosse receives fresh injuries, that “His Lady,” Una, says to him, “Well worthie be you of that Armory” (1.1.27). Spenser’s “Yet” delays the moment of recognition when Redcrosse becomes identical to, and not just a simulacrum of, “A Gentle Knight.” Or so it seems. For it is not until after we read Spenser’s “Letter to Raleigh,” which comes at the end of Book 3 in the 1590 *Faerie Queene*, that we learn that the “Armory” belongs to Una. Una gives “the Armes of a knight” to Redcrosse (another instance of the gift, of inheritance), who, before that time, was described as “a tall clownishe younge man . . . unfitte through his rusticity for a better place.”⁷⁹ The gifting of Redcrosse takes us back to the problematic of the proem, that is, to the “unfitter taske” of turning pastoral into epic. Or better still, it takes us back to the “Januarye” eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*, in which the

mirroring of “gifts,” from Hobbinol to Colin Cloute and from Colin to Rosalind, ends in the humiliation of refused return: “Ah foolish *Hobbinol*, thy gyfts bene vayne: *Colin* them gives to *Rosalind* againe” (“Januarye” 59-60).⁸⁰ As Jonathan Goldberg notes, “The same ‘vayne’ effect is achieved in each case—[the gift] passes through several hands and is yet refused. Although it is the same, it is no one’s and never proper, a text circulating from hand to hand, always out of hand, never arriving.”⁸¹ Never arriving and yet, never let go: while the circulation of gifts proceeds ineffectually on either side of the colon, the “rurall musick” which Colin “broke” off in his failed courtship of Rosalind (“Both pype and Muse, shall sore the while aby. / So broke his oaten pype, and downe dyd lye” [“Januarye” 71-72]) persists in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* as the failed “fit” of pastoral into epic and epic into romance. The “rusticity” of Colin Cloute clings to Spenser’s epic hero Redcrosse like a clot of dirt clings to one’s shoe. The name *Cloute*, though rightly attributed by E.K. in the “Januarye” gloss to the writings of John Skelton and Clément Marot, means “clot of earth” (*OED*). Thus the progression from pastoral to epic begins, as E.K. explains in the “Dedicatory Epistle,” in “the baseness of the name,” Colin *Cloute*.⁸² Rather than unfold pastoral into epic, Spenser “chose ... to vnfold great matter of argument couertly” (“Dedicatory Epistle” 139-40); he fashions a knight who is less faery than georgic, and who repeats Colin’s failure to fashion base matter into greatness.⁸³ Just as Colin “broke his oaten pype” in a fit of melancholy, so Redcrosse breaks the frame of allegory.

Although much Spenser criticism focuses on the boundedness of Spenserian subjects, I follow James Kuzner in asserting that experiences of unboundedness, of trauma and vulnerability, are just as important to Spenser’s sense of ecological

subjectivity.⁸⁴ The iteration of the wound is not locatable, is not fixable to a discrete temporal or characterological identity. Much less a human identity. And this is because subjectivity in Spenser's poem is profoundly, traumatically, relational: no "I" without a "you," no "self" without an "other." Perhaps this explains why, without cause or referent, Spenser's "iolly knight" appears so melancholy: "But of his cheere did seeme too solemne sad; / Yet nothing did he dread" (1.1.1, 2).

Errant Natures

The "nothing" that Redcrosse encounters in the Wandering Wood, of course, is Error. Error is the manifestation of this empty signifier, "no-thing"; she is the dark and occluded object of Redcrosse's aimless "dread." Yet despite her apparent monstrosity, she is also gendered (as my switching between "she" and "it" will indicate), adding another layer of significance to Redcrosse's paradoxical "dread." Error is the traumatic "nothing" of female castration. "She" is the "it" (id) that Lacan calls *objet petit a*, the "nothing" that distances the unconscious "Real" from its symbolization, creating a surplus, or remainder, that desire tries to fill.⁸⁵ Whereas conventional knowledge has it that "the return of the repressed" (the symptomatic no-thing that haunts subjectivity) signals a return from the past, Žižek argues that the traumatic "thing," insofar as it drives a wedge between conscious and unconscious subjectivity, comes not from the past but from the future. "The past exists as it is included, as it enters (into) the synchronous net of the signifier ... and that is why we are all the time 'rewriting history' ... because the symptom as a 'return of the repressed' is precisely such an effect which precedes its cause (its hidden kernel, its meaning), and in working through the symptom we are

precisely ‘bringing about the past’—we are producing the symbolic reality of the past, long-forgotten traumatic events.”⁸⁶ Hence, the process of working through trauma (the interminable process that Freud calls “melancholy”) does not entail deciphering hidden meanings but rather letting oneself be overcome by the “nothing” that a future misreading can only temporarily occupy and conceal. This is what Lacan calls “misrecognition”: it installs a “nothing” (what Žižek’s calls the “rock” of the Real, an expression I find apt in the case of Redcrosse, whose semblance is St. George: George derives from the Greek *geo*, meaning “earth”) in subjectivity itself. In a felicitous phrase, Žižek describes the “time structure” of misrecognition as a passage through “error.” Although he models it on psychoanalysis, it is in truth the structure of romance⁸⁷:

The time structure with which we are concerned here is such that it is mediated through subjectivity: the subjective ‘mistake,’ ‘fault,’ ‘error,’ misrecognition, arrives paradoxically *before* the truth in relation to which we are designating it as ‘error,’ because this ‘truth’ itself becomes true only through—or, to use a Hegelian term, by mediation of—the error.... [W]e overlook the way our act is already part of the state of things we are looking at, the way our error is part of the Truth itself.⁸⁸

Is this not the time structure of the Legend of Holinesse? When Redcrosse and Una enter the Wandering Wood, Una knows the truth of their error. She implores Redcrosse:

Be well aware ...

Least suddaine mischief ye too rash prouoke:

The danger hid, the place vnknowne and wild,

Breedes dreadfull doubts: Oft fire is without smoke,

And perill without show: therefore your stroke

Sir knight with-hold, till further tryall made. (1.1.12)

... the perill of this place

I better wot then you, though nowe too late,

.....

This is the wandring wood, this *Errours den*,

A monster vile, whome God and man does hate. (1.1.13)

As the symbol of feminine humility (she is first seen riding “Vpon a lowly Asse”) and truth (her name means “the One, the True”), Una knows (“I better wot then you”) that “the return of the repressed”—their journey’s “danger hid, the place vnknowne”—lies ahead. She knows that for every image of feminine beauty—herself, the Wandering Wood—there are abjects: Duessa, the Whore of Babylon, and Error, the figure of monstrous maternity. What is more, she describes their task as an interminable task of reading and deciphering the “nothing” that lurks within the Wood’s “hidden shade” (1.1.12). In an effort to prevail upon Redcrosse, she says: “Therefore I read beware” (1.1.13), where reading is a matter not of uncovering hidden meanings, but, as Žižek puts it, of going darker and deeper into “the paradoxical structure in which the Truth arises from misrecognition.”⁸⁹

Una’s motto is this: Truth comes from misrecognition; therefore beware of wandering into the dark. Her double warning (“Be well aware,” “I read beware”) doubly insists not to give way to desire, not to be premature in one’s dark desires, for this can only lead to error. Hence her admonition: “therefore your stroke / Sir knight with-hold,

till further tryall made” (1.1.12). And again: “Yet wisdom warnes, whilst foot is in the gate, / To stay the steppe, ere forced to retrate” (1.1.13). Una advises against entering the Wood too early, prematurely, before Redcrosse has ripened—“further tryall made.” Yet her admonition indicates already the paradoxical time structure, the revisionary “re-trate,” that she seeks to keep at bay. Error, err, *errare*: the meanings of “to wander” are already internal to the “before” (“ere”) of “ere forced,” and so the errant step, too, is already in motion in the “steppe” not taken. To “stay the steppe” is already double, of a piece with the logic of the *pas/ne pas* (step/no step) that Derrida articulates, in which action and non-action cancel and overlap (the active/passive “retrate” of the trace).⁹⁰

Redcrosse’s motto is more exorbitant: not that we should not give way *to* desire, but that we should not give way *on* desire. Having entered the Wandering Wood, Redcrosse is drawn (“Led with delight”) to the promise of “nothing,” which guarantees both the “pleasure” of substitution and the ecstasy of annihilation. By mapping the fear of female castration, as well as the scopic pleasure of fetishistic substitution, onto the Wandering Wood, Spenser proffers this “nothing” (which of course need not be feminine, supposing we consider Leo Bersani’s claim that the male rectum is also a grave⁹¹) in the form of a “darksom hole,” into which we the readers, along with Redcrosse, enter and look in:

But full of fire and greedy hardiment,
 The youthfull knight could not for ought be staide,
 But forth vnto the darksom hole he went,
 And looked in. (1.1.14)

From the very first line of Spenser's epic romance, he describes Redcrosse's "greedy" desire as a form of "pricking"—that is to say, spurring, wounding, i.e. urging one's horse, but with the added connotation of phallic penetration. "Pricking" is desiring, but it also makes holes. Combining chivalry and violence, the *equus eroticus* imagined in the first line joyfully envisions the pleasure and pain associated with bestial couplings. Later on, it is the horse who suffers in this desiring assemblage: "He prickte with pride / And hope to winne ... / Forth spurred fast: adowne his coursers side / The red bloud trickling staine the way, as he did ride" (1.2.14). Before that, however, it is Redcrosse who feels the spur of desire. Entering "*Errours den*," that "darksom hole," Redcrosse becomes hard ("full of ... greedy hardiment") in anticipation of the beast within:

his glistering armor made

A litle glooming light, much like a shade,

By which he saw the vgly monster plaine,

Halfe like a serpent horribly displaide,

But th'other halfe did womans shape retaine,

Most lothsom, filthie, foule and full of vile disdaine. (1.1.14)

Loss saturates the whole scene. Redcrosse's "glistering armor" provides "A litle glooming light," but this "light" only produces more "shade." The adjective "glooming" derives from the verb "gloom": to gloom means to glow; but its primary sense is to make dark, solemn, or melancholy. Redcrosse's armor fills the "darksom hole" with more dark; he merges with the dark "like a shade." Himself a shadow, he experiences what Hegel calls "the night of the world," the uncanny "nothing" glimpsed in the gaze of the Other—the night of the eye, the empty dimension of subjectivity, "a Night which turns

terrifying,” Hegel writes.⁹² Invaginated by this “nothing,” Redcrosse experiences a radical ecological negativity, the uncanny darkness of the feminine home or dwelling (*oikos*).⁹³ The Wandering Wood, rather than being a safe haven or respite, a light at the end of the tunnel, forces Redcrosse darker and deeper into the uncanny materiality of allegory. As a result, nature stops being a sheltering surround and starts to close in. Exit nature. Enter Error.

Error embodies in her monstrous flesh disavowed components of Protestant masculine identity, abjected but strangely familiar. Her stomach is “Full of great lumps of flesh and gobbets raw,” material leftovers, Linda Gregerson argues, of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.⁹⁴ “Her vomit” is “full of bookes and papers,” an image that conjures not only the outpouring of Catholic textuality (another byproduct of the age of wood), as Lawrence Rhu argues,⁹⁵ but also the excessive generic outpouring of romance, a genre that resists the classical Aristotelian unities of space and time by over-pouring their boundaries.⁹⁶ Shifting from a materialist to a hermeneutic register, Gregerson and Quilligan both stress the textuality of Error’s body, claiming that, in the Protestant poetics championed by Spenser, Error’s monstrous body serves as an allegory or exemplum warning Redcrosse and the reader not to be seduced by surfaces, not to be “Led by delight” and “thus beguile the way,” but rather to read beyond the letter of the text and so, as Una warns, “read beware.”⁹⁷

While such readings find their warrant in Spenser’s writings, I concur with Campana in insisting that there is more to Error than the medium or mechanism of textuality, on the one hand, and the excesses of Catholic religiosity, on the other. Also interesting is the ecological dimension of Error’s monstrous body, which limns the

borders of Redcrosse's physical and psychic geography as the abjected, yet still intimate, waste product of Protestant masculine identity.⁹⁸ She is half-human, half-beast, an unraveling, perpetually moving, self-generating assemblage of inchoate, inhuman matter. She is also a mother. In the following lines, we witness this unholy "dam" giving suck to her creaturely "brood":

And as she lay vpon the durtie ground,
.... Of her there bred,
A thousand yong ones, which she dayly fed,
Sucking vpon her poisonous dugs, eachone
Of sundrie shapes, yet all ill fauored. (1.1.15)

Error's vomiting, excreting body returns the abjects of post-Reformation English culture to the surface of textual visibility. Not only that, her unbounded body, a collocation of material entities—animal, serpent, frog, and so forth—confronts Redcrosse with his own chimerical identity: not only is he compared to a "Lyon" in a scene of animal-becoming ("he leapt / As Lyon fierce" [1.1.17]), but also the poem's insistence on Error's snake-like body, which slithers on the "durtie ground," doubles as a reminder of Redcrosse's own lowly beginnings, his "rusticity," not to mention his name St. George, which means "earth."

Whereas the Wandering Wood had first been a source of pleasure, the confrontation with Error marks the symptomatic return of the repressed last line of the catalogue of trees, "the Maple seeldom inward sound," making the uncanny materiality of the allegorical Wood akin to the irreducible strangeness of the inhuman within. Nowhere is this strangeness more pronounced than in the details of Error's monstrous corporeality.

When we first see Error, deep within the depths of a “darksome hole,” much like a keyhole, what we see, though darkly, is the most chimerical body that the Legend of Holinesse has to offer us in its vast zoo-ontology. Indeed, Error’s “beastly bodie” becomes a prototype of monstrosity in the Legend of Holinesse, already containing in her serpentine coils and “poisnous duges” the dragon’s “hundred foldes,” Orgoglio’s “monstrous mas,” and Duessa’s “misshaped parts” (1.1.15; 1.11.11; 1.8.24; 1.8.46). While critics mostly focus on the monstrosity of Error’s body, the category of monster does not sufficiently capture the physical ontology of Error, who is, in the first instance, both woman and beast. She is a chimera. In the following lines, we witness another chimerical scene, one in which Duessa, having been stripped of her disguise, stands naked as an animal. Here is Duessa:

Her neather parts, the shame of all her kind,
My chaster Muse for shame doth blush to write;
But at her rompe she growing had behind
A foxes taile, with dong all fowly dight;
And eke her feete most monstrous were in sight;
For one of them was like an Eagles claw,
With griping talaunts armed to greedy fight,
The other like a beares vneuen paw:

More vgly shape yet neuer liuing creature saw. (1.8.48)

Ecce animot. The “shame” registered in the first two lines, doubled and repeated between Duessa and Spenser’s blushing Muse, prefigures the mirror-play of shame that Derrida recounts in the opening pages of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. There, Derrida

narrates a scene in which he is looked at, naked, by his cat (a cat that, as Derrida insists, is also female), and describes it as an experience of “impropriety”: “The single, incomparable and original experience of the impropriety that would come from appearing in truth naked.”⁹⁹ The name Derrida gives to “the animal” denied the power of response is *animot*. It is a portmanteau, a chimerical word denoting “neither a species nor a gender nor an individual” but rather “an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals,” “a chimera waiting to be put to death by its Bellerophon.”¹⁰⁰ *L’animot* is an allegory, a word that means “word” (*mot*) and which points to something other than itself, namely, to the heterogeneous assemblage of animals “whose plurality cannot be assembled within the single figure of an animality.” “There is no Animal in the general singular,” Derrida writes, “separated from man by a single, indivisible limit.”¹⁰¹ By means of the chimera of this word, *animot*, he brings to focus the figure of Bellerophon, who is the figure of the hunter, the one “who puts Chimera to death” in Homer’s *Iliad*. As he goes on to explain,

all of Bellerophon’s exploits can be deciphered ... as a history of modesty, of shame, of reticence, of honor, to the extent that he is linked to modest decency.... The ordeals that constitute the story of Bellerophon are ... all destined to put to the test his sense of modesty. Because he has resisted the shameless advances of Stheneboea, the wife of his host, Proetus, king of Argos; because he is accused by that shameless woman, also called Antea, of having sought to seduce her or take her violently during the hunt, he is condemned to death by her husband.... It is in that context that the hunt of the Chimera takes place.¹⁰²

Two monsters: the wife and the chimera. She, it. Both show forth (*monstare* means “to show”) the threat of Bellerophon’s shame.

The same holds true in the encounter between Redcrosse and Duessa. From the outset of the Legend of Holinesse, Spenser describes the Redcrosse Knight as a hunter: he journeys “To proue his puissance in battell braue / Vpon his foe, ... / ... a Dragon horrible and stearne” (1.1.3); he journeys to kill “that balefull Beast” (1.12.2). When he reaches the Wandering Wood, shame compels him forward: “Ah Ladie (sayd he) shame were to reuoke, / The forward footing for an hidden shade” (1.1.12). And when he is nearly overcome in battle with Error, it is shame that he considers: “Thus ill bestedd, and fearefull more of shame” (1.1.24). Redcrosse, like Bellerophon, is put to the test of modesty, of shame. The Legend of Holinesse allegorizes that test. But when Redcrosse sees Duessa, after she has been stripped naked (“Ne spared they to strip her naked all” [1.8.46]), the shame that Spenser records before blazoning Duessa’s chimerical body does not so much lead to improved modesty but rather interrupts, in a moment of self-reflexivity, the poetic allegory, turning the poem’s allegory into a scene of writing, of materiality, and what is more, into a reflection (in words) of Duessa’s animality; the poem becomes an *animot*, an utterly chimerical allegory, and hence, a source of shame for Spenser’s muse: “My chaster Muse for shame doth blush to write” (1.8.48). Redcrosse’s encounter with Duessa breaks the frame of human recognition, so much so that Spenser’s allegory becomes more akin to a beast fable, a genre, Spenser acknowledges, not fit for his “chaster Muse ... to write.”

Nor is this the first time that we encounter Duessa’s beastly body in the flesh. Already in Canto 2, Fradubio recalls seeing Duessa standing waist-deep in a pool of water, “Bathing her selfe in origane and thyme” (1.2.40). Then, as though witnessing a

trauma too much for human sight, he “chaunst to see her in her proper hew,” not a “Faire Lady,” but “A filthy foule old woman I did vew”:

Her neather partes misshapen, monstrous,
Were hidd in water, that I could not see,
But they did seeme more foule and hideous,
Then womans shape man would beleue to bee. (1.2.41)

Fradubio misrecognizes Duessa’s “misshapen” body, including her wooden “skin as rough, as maple rind,” and so becomes her victim, a prisoner in “rough rynd embard” (1.8.47). Because he “could not see” Duessa’s false disguise, he has to live out his days as a false object, a thing to be misrecognized: “a tree I seme, yet cold and heat me paines” (1.2.33).

The pain of misrecognition that Fradubio suffers returns, however, for it is the nature of a trauma to return later on, in Duessa’s full exposure in Canto 8. There, the shame that interrupts Spenser’s muse also immobilizes Redcrosse, leaving him “amazd” at Duessa’s abject corporeal form (1.8.49). The trauma of Duessa’s wooden-animal-body would all but overwhelm the Knight of Holinesse were it not for Una’s timely reconstruction of the allegorical frame. Whereas Redcrosse stands in dumb amazement (the Old English root of “amazd,” *masse*, means “to stupefy, to make dumb”) at the spectacle of Duessa’s chimerical body, Una mobilizes the most potent power of allegorical expression, namely, the violent and instrumental imposition of abstract form. Here is Una:

Which when the knights beheld, amazd they were,
And wondred at so fowle deformed wight.

Such then (said *Una*) as she seemeth here,
Such is the face of falsehood, such the sight
Of fowle Duessa, when her borrowed light
Is laid away, and counterfesaunce knowne.
Thus when they had the witch disrobed quight,
And all her filthy feature open showne,

They let her goe at will, and wander waies vnknowne. (1.8.49)

In *Allegory and Violence*, Gordon Teskey argues that allegorical meaning is not, as it is commonly understood, “a simple object or goal,” nor is it a mere “representation of any kind.”¹⁰³ Rather, allegorical meaning, for Teskey, “is an instrument used to exert force on the world as we find it, imposing on the intolerable, chaotic otherness of nature a hierarchical order in which objects will appear to have inherent ‘meanings.’” In the stanza quoted above, Una, whose name denotes the One, the True, summons the instrumental force of allegory to give form or meaning to the “deformed” body of Duessa, whose very image as a chaotic assemblage of inhuman nature, beastly parts, and feminine decay, threatens to tear a rift in the poem’s allegorical, that is to say, Protestant-heroic, framework. Duessa’s naked body exudes the dark, unseemly materiality of an ecology without nature; it lacks the “wholeness” (Holinesse) of human form. As such, it exposes a rift or wound, a trauma that Una deftly repairs (remember Una’s motto: “read beware”) by suturing the readers’s gaze away from “deformed” matter, the bestiary that is Duessa’s body, onto the transcendental Truth of allegory. Duessa represents “falsehood”; she bears its figure or “face.” Thus the reader can rest assured that her “falshood” has been exposed, her “counterfesaunce knowne.” The instrumental force that

Una applies to Duessa's body, turning matter into (human) meaning, is all the more strange given the gendered dimension of allegory. As Teskey writes, all allegory is gendered: "As a father stands to his sons, so form stands to its instances, which are begotten in and propagated through an alien subject, matter-as-woman."¹⁰⁴ By these lights, to fashion allegory is not just to instrumentalize inchoate matter into sensible form, but to violently erase the feminine in the production of human meaning.

Phallogocentrism and humanism go together.

Still, having just mobilized the instrumental force of allegory in the interest of securing the poem's masculinist and humanist framework, Redcrosse and Una nonetheless return Duessa back to the wild, like an animal released from captivity:

Shee flying fast from heauens hated face,
And from the world that her discouered wide,
Fled to the wastfull wildernesses apace,
From liuing eies her open shame to hide. (1.8.50)

More than any other book in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, scholars tend to agree that the Legend of Holinesse reaches the greatest level of allegorical and narratological closure. Harry Berger, Jr., for example, summarily contrasts the Legend of Holinesse to Book 6, the Legend of Courtesie, writing that whereas the latter reflects the problems and lacunas faced by "the Renaissance poet trying to make sense of the world around him," such that "almost every episode is left unresolved," the former is "self-contained.... The allegorical dimension ... has its main purpose in illuminating the character and quest of the fictional hero—the holiness (wholeness) of Redcross."¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Campana, while alert to the "textures of suffering and sympathy" that disrupt the smooth surface of Spenser's text,

proffers the opinion that by its conclusion, the Legend of Holinesse “witnesses the correction of Redcrosse by Protestant ideology and the defeat of the problems of pain and sympathy (in the form of Duessa, Orgoglio, and the dragon),” the same problems that, as Campana poignantly observes throughout his study, are the source of the legend’s antinomy.¹⁰⁶

While such readings ground their understanding of the legend’s final resolution in the wedding scene between Redcrosse and Una, this so-called “resolution” raises more questions than answers about the hero’s final “correction.” For example, how does the legend’s conclusion, the marriage of Holinesse and Truth, square with the freedom granted to Duessa? Although Duessa is cast off into the wild, the inhuman configuration of pain and materiality that she, along with Error, represented does not simply vanish but rather returns under different guises, leaving exposed the “rifte,” or wound, that has haunted Redcrosse from the beginning.

The Matter of Return

Take, for instance, the opening lines of Canto 12, in which the materiality of the poem surfaces once again in the etymological sense of the Greek word *hyle*, as timber or wood:

Behold I see the hauen nigh at hand,
To which I meane my wearie course to bend;
Vere the maine shete, and beare vp with the land,
The which afore is fairely to be kend,
And seemeth safe from stormes, that may offend;
There this faire virgin wearie of her way

Must landed be, now at her iourneyes end:

There eke my feeble barke a while may stay,

Till merry wind and weather call her thence away. (1.12.1)

Recalling the “blustering storme” that first drove Redcrosse and Una into the Wandering Wood, Spenser elaborates his elemental conceit by imagining a fragile vessel, “my feeble barke,” exiting the tempest and returning to safe harbor. The “barke” of the poem, “wearie” and “feeble,” doubles as a portrait of the poet as navigator, a nautical persona who emerges in the last instance to bring the legend’s “wearie course to bend.” More than an author function, or an attempt on the part of Spenser to bring his “wearie” ship to harbor by securing narrative closure, the figure of the poem as a sailing “barke” harkens to the figure of the dragon, whose

... flaggy wings when forth he did display,

Were like two sayles, in which the hollow wynd

Is gathered full, and worketh speedy way. (1.11.10)

No idle metaphor, the image of the wooden vessel, here used as a simile for the dragon’s monstrous bulk, points to exorbitant mirrorings: the dragon’s body as double of the poem, the poem’s body as double of the dragon, Error, and Duessa. And then there is Christ’s body, the image of suffering materiality, Catholic idolatry, masculine vulnerability, and so forth, which has as one of its most common metaphoric figures the image of the wooden vessel, as in John Donne’s divine poem, “A Hymn to Christ”: “In what torn ship soever I embark, / That ship shall be my emblem of thy ark” (1-2).¹⁰⁷ Finally, there is Fradubio, the “it” that was “a man ... now a tree,” whose “piteous yelling voice” vitiates Redcrosse in excruciating, abjecting, “horror.”

That Spenser has recourse to wooden bodies is not surprising; after all, such bodies are the stock and trade of poetic convention, not to mention religious convention. What is surprising, however, is the adverse purpose to which these conventions are used. Rather than appeal to epic expectations, Spenser downplays a triumphant conclusion. His legend does not subsume the pains of materiality; rather, it ends on a “wearie” note, racked by the traumas of its making, a “feeble barke.”

When we reach the final episode of the wedding between Redcrosse and Una, Spenser’s deployment of poetic conventions at cross-purposes with their familiar significations persists as the trauma of the bleeding tree disruptively resurfaces. Whereas Redcrosse’s failure to fashion a “girlond,” symbol of allegorical unity, out of Fradubio’s wooden body led to traumatic encounter with that inhuman body, Una, we are told, assumes a “girlond greene” and at last becomes the rightful image of a “Queene”:

Then on her head they sett a girlond greene,

And crowned her twixt earnest and twixt game;

Who in her self-resemblance well beseene,

Did seeme such, as she was, a goodly maiden Queene. (1.12.8)

By virtue of her own “self-resemblance,” Una brings art and nature into mirroring accord and thus becomes what she always was, “a goodly maiden Queene.” Redcrosse’s error of framing a “girlond” for false Duessa comes full circle in the once erring, now obedient body of nature: “braunches” too “greene to frame” transform into “girlond greene” as Redcrosse ripens into maturity and completes his allegorical journey.

Were this the end of the story we could agree with C.S. Lewis’s influential argument that *The Faerie Queene* completes the history of love and allegory by

synthesizing the material and the immaterial in a dialectical union of married pairs. For Lewis, courtly love speaks to the erotic and often abject nature of human embodiment; in it, “the lover is always abject.”¹⁰⁸ By contrast, allegory takes place in “married pairs of sensibles and insensibles”¹⁰⁹; it speaks to the abstract union of concrete substance and ideal form. In his book length study, Lewis argues that the intertwining history of love and allegory culminates in *The Faerie Queene*, which represents “the last phase of that [history]—the final defeat of courtly love by the romantic conception of marriage.”¹¹⁰ Allegory, for Lewis, achieves a *discordia concors* whereby the material substance of love and romance culminates in the ideal of heterosexual union, of matter married to essence. He focuses his argument on Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene*, the Legend of Chastity, specifically on the freeing of Amoret from Busyrane and her subsequent reunion with the grief stricken Scudamour, which he describes as “the triumphant union of romantic passion with Christian monogamy”—Amoret and Scudamour represent the romantic passion which Chastity must reunite.¹¹¹ In Book I, however, the triumph of allegory over romance appears less certain. Indeed, whereas Lewis claims that the heterosexual union represents the positive triumph of allegory over passionate materiality, in the marriage between Redcrosse and Una, Spenser instead takes us into the dark underside of allegory in terms of what Teskey describes as its inherent negativity and gendered violence. He does so through a series of material disruptions of strange strangers who haunt the wedding ceremony as traumatic reminders of Redcrosse’s indelible ecological melancholy.

Beginning with the metaphor of the wooden ship, Spenser proceeds to shadow the conclusion of his legend with material remainders of an abject past. No sooner has Una

been crowned with the “girlond” and the wedding ceremony been set underway when that obedient and pliant symbol of allegorical unity—a crown made of leaf and bark—is undone by its opposite: in the very next stanza, the dragon’s dead body stubbornly clings to the scene of the wedding like a stain too dark to rub out:

But when they came, where that dead Dragon lay,
Stretcht on the ground in monstrous large extent,
The sight with ydle feare did them dismay,

Ne durst approch him night, to touch, or once assay. (1.12.9)

Continuing with the wedding ceremony despite the looming presence of the dragon’s monstrous corpse, the allegorical motif introduced by the circular “girlond,” now complete, repeats in the tying together of hands. Yet just as art and nature, love and holiness, are brought together in the binding of hands, the poem yields to an exorbitant repetition that undoes the work of binding and brings the poem’s allegory and Redcrosse’s re-formation to an open-ended and, what is more, melancholy close.

Beginning with the following lines:

Thus when that Princes wrath was pacifide,
He gan renew the late forbidden baine,
And to the knight his daughter deare he tyde,
With sacred rites and vows for euer to abyde.
His owne two hands the holy knotts did knitt,
That none but death for ever can diuide;
His owne two hands, for such a turne most fitt,
the housling fire did kindle and prouide,

And holy water thereon sprinckled wide. (1.12.36-37)

Moving from the immaterial register of Protestant theology to the material register, Una's father, Adam, patriarch and "Lord of all that land," Eden, calls upon the ancient Roman marriage rites of fire and water to supplement "sacred rites and vows." The initial invocation of binding ("bains") ties Redcrosse and Una in spiritual union. Yet, as if to supplement that spiritual bond, the second stanza repeats the act of binding by tying "holy knotts" in material, not just tropological, bands. Una's father, acting as priest, mediates the relation to the divine by administering the sacraments of fire and water. "His owne two hands," a line repeated twice, registers the material dimension of the ceremony while also taking part in a passive syntactical unit in which agency ("did knitt") circulates between "hands" and "holy" knitting: an image of material and immaterial co-presence in the Eucharist. In this way, Una's father embodies a pre-Reformation spirituality that accords the power of the sacraments to the mediating body of the priest. Including the elements of fire and water, physical mediators in the transfer of power over Una, the land, and its resources to Redcrosse, the wedding ceremony's continued reliance on material signs as supplements to "sacred rites" attests to the ongoing attachment to material forms of spirituality even in the aftermath of a post-Reformation English society. Along with fire and water, the dragon's beastly body, and the "barke" of Spenser's wooden ship, there is, however, one final ecological force that threatens to disrupt the allegorical unity of the poem: Duessa's letter.

Last seen secreted in shame, Duessa returns from the wild via a messenger, who is Archimago in disguise. The messenger interrupts the wedding vows and proceeds to read a letter addressed to the "most mighty king of *Eden* fayre" (1.12.26). The letter reads:

... be advized for the best,
Ere thou thy daughter linck in holy band
Of wedlocke to that new vnknownen guest:
For he already plighted his right hand

Vnto another loue, and to another land. (1.12.26)

Duessa echoes the language of the wedding: she refers to a “holy band,” “sacred pledges,” and warns of “hasty ... / ... knitting” (1.12.27, 28). More important, she reveals that she and Redcrosse have already been married: “To me sad mayd, or rather widow sad, / He was affyaunced long time before” (1.12.27). Duessa, who declares herself “neither friend, nor foe,” makes of Redcrosse an “vnknownen guest,” a stranger at his wedding (1.12.28, 26). Redcrosse echoes this estrangement: “It was in my mishaps, as hitherward / I lately traueild, that vnawares I strayed / Out of my way, through perils straunge and hard” (1.12.31). Acknowledging his “breach of loue, and loialty betrayed,” Una interrupts Redcrosse and again endeavors to reseal the rift that Duessa has rent open (1.12.31). She exposes Duessa as a “false sorceresse,” and proves the latter’s messenger to be the false Archimago, “The falsest man aliue” (1.12.33, 34). Having done so, the king her father “with suddein indignation freight, / Bad on that Messenger rude hands to reach” and “bound him strait”:

Who seeming sorely chauffed at his band,
As chained beare, whom cruell dogs doe bait,
With ydle force did faine them to withstand,
And often semblaunce made to scape of their hand. (1.12.35)

The emphasis on binding, along with the repetition of “band,” “hand,” and “bound,” is not coincidental. Duessa returns to disrupt the allegorical ending by unbinding the vows made between Redcrosse and Una. Although he means it literally, Spenser’s emphasis on forms of binding approximates Freud’s notion of *Bindung* (i.e., “binding”), which plays a key role in the discussion of trauma as the effort on the part of the psychic apparatus to cathect, that is, to bind, an excessive and unwanted force. With *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the problem of binding moves to the forefront of Freud’s thought as he considers how “a failure to effect this binding would provoke a disturbance analogous to a traumatic neurosis.”¹¹² Apropos of the repetition of unpleasurable experiences in trauma, Freud insists that “only after the binding has been accomplished would it be possible for the dominance of the pleasure principle ... to proceed unhindered. Till then,” Freud writes, “the other task of the mental apparatus, the task of mastering or binding excitations, would have precedence.”¹¹³ This task, the task that Freud gives “precedence” in the psychic apparatus, is that of the death-drive. It is the site of the demonic, the masochistic, and the melancholic in Freud’s psychic economy, and it surfaces in Spenser’s text in the return of Duessa.

What beastly images are conjured by this return? With Duessa’s pretense of “breaking ... the band” between Redcrosse and Una exposed, and with Archimago in chains, the ceremonial “knitting of loues band” and the triumph of allegory can go on unhindered. Those critics who try to attribute allegorical closure to the legend no doubt find their warrant in this ending. Yet the logic that tries to do so is quite perverse. Clearly, beastiality is at issue in this ending. Just as Redcrosse broke his vows to Duessa, so he breached the divide between human and animal by falling for this chimerical figure.

Paradoxically, the language of bear-baiting that surfaces here not only evidences this breach but also displaces the shame of Redcrosse's crime onto Archimago. In other words, Redcrosse's beastly sexuality gets transformed into violence against animals: Archimago, "chained" and dehumanized, becomes a "beare, whom cruell dogs doe bait." Duessa's crime against nature—her disruption of the allegorical ideal, the heterosexual union—is met with a moralizing and dehumanizing response: Archimago, her messenger, is "bound" and "bait[ed]," "As [a] chained beare." Erica Fudge has written extensively about the particular (il)logic that grounds violence against animals in the early modern period. In the case of bear-baiting, she explains that this violence was (at least) twofold: on the one hand, "the entertainment is a representation of wild nature controlled and choreographed (in the main) by humans."¹⁴ At the same time, humans who "watch a cruel entertainment such as baiting ... sink below the level of the beasts." "In proving their humanity," Fudge writes, "humans achieve the opposite. The Bear Garden makes humans into animals."¹⁵ Quite similarly, the binding of Archimago is a choreographed representation of wild nature controlled by knights and ladies. Holinesse (wholeness) has been achieved—but only on the surface. For the binding of Archimago also binds Redcrosse to this animal "other." The wildness of this animal figure to whom Redcrosse is bound evokes all the strange strangers whom the hero has encountered on his journey to slay the dragon, such that Eden, his final home and destination—paradise regained—more and more resembles the uncanny Wood that was the site of his earliest divagations. Archimago, far from being the only beast in chains, binds Redcrosse to the inhuman within. An "vnknownen guest" indeed.

Finally, there is the issue of Redcrosse's melancholy:

And all the while sweete Musicke did apply,
Her curious skill, the warbling notes to play,
To driue away the dull Melancholy;

The whiles one sung a song of loue and iollity. (1.12.38)

The age of wood that I have highlighted as an internal “background” to Spenser’s dark ecology evinces many avatars, some animal, some tree, but in all cases wooden with respect to their material nature, the *hyle* at the root of allegory. In a certain sense, no ending is more wooden in its mundane conventionality than a wedding. And yet, in Spenser’s hands, the “song of loue and iollity” proper to a romance ending is not the dominant strain here. Rather, what hangs largely are the “dull” and heavy tones of “Melancholy,” an emotion described at length by Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) as an excess of dark matter or black bile welling into conscious feeling (1.12.38).¹¹⁶ In the final lines of the poem’s final stanza, Spenser invokes this dark materiality: he calls to his readers, “strike your sailes yee iolly Mariners,” announcing that the poem has reached a temporary dwelling (1.12.42). If, as I have been arguing, melancholy emerges in Spenser’s poetry as a felt response to the pain of one’s attachments, to attachments that are material and thus embodied in the flesh, then what we have in the invocation of “Melancholy” is something akin to Spenser’s final call to his poem as ship: a repeated attempt on the part of the author to weigh these material attachments and, as though it were possible, to “light this weary vessell,” the poem’s wooden body, “of her lode” (1.12.42). Wood bodies, far from being idle metaphors in the Legend of Holinesse, take us darker and deeper into Spenser’s allegorical journey, wherein no element or figure is bound to the anthro-determinacy of human self-

fashioning. In Spenser's poetic world, the pain and suffering of self-fashioning sounds out through trees.

¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Free Press, 1938), 40.

² William Shakespeare, *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Orgel and A. R. Braunmuller (New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

³ Torquato Tasso, *The Liberation of Jerusalem*, trans. Max Wickert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 247.

⁴ In *De anima*, Aristotle divides living beings into three distinct types: vegetative, sensitive, and intellective. Plants belong only to the first type, while sensation, along with movement, were reserved for animals, leaving humans the signature trait of reason. See Aristotle, *De anima* (On the Soul), *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1535-603. See also the discussion of the tripartite soul in Katherine Park, "The Organic Soul," *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 464-484. For a generous reading of Aristotle's *De anima*, one that foregrounds "humankind's complex embeddedness among creaturely life on earth," see Jean Feerick and Vin Nardizzi's "Introduction: Swervings: On Human Indistinction" in *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature*, eds. Jean Feerick and Vin Nardizzi (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 2-3.

⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. David Raeburn (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 32.

⁶ Ben Jonson, "To Penshurst," *The Complete Poems* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 95.

⁷ Jean Feerick, “Botanical Shakespeares: The Radical Logic of Plant Life in *Titus Andronicus*,” *South Central Review* 26.1 (March 2009): 82-83.

⁸ For more on the subject of allegorical violence, see Gordon Teskey, *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

⁹ Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 5-6.

¹⁰ Though “ecology without nature” is likely to be misconstrued as a constructivist denial of nature, Morton deflects the accusation of “postmodern nihilism” by insisting “I do not believe that there is no such thing as a coral reef,” while underscoring that “modern industrial processes are ensuring they do not exist, whether I believe in them or not” (see Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007], 5-6). In fact, Morton distinguishes between postmodernism as “a cultural and ideological form” and deconstruction as a way of searching out “points of contradiction and deep hesitation in systems of meaning.” “Just as Derrida explains how *différance* at once underlies and undermines logocentrism, I assert that the rhetorical strategies of nature writing undermine what one could call ecologocentrism” (6). Here, the emphasis on ecology as *text*, or “writing in the general sense” (to quote Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*), is meant to dislodge the inside/outside manifold of nature/culture that structures so much ecocritical debate. Indeed, the inverse of “ecology without nature” could also be written. Take the recent example of Vicki Kirby, who rewrites Derrida’s “no outside of text” (*il n’y a pas de hors-texte*) to say “no outside of nature” (see Vicki Kirby, *Quantum Anthropologies: Life at Large* [Durham: Duke University Press, 2011], x). The result is not that matter is disqualified, nor that

nature becomes the “other” of human representational systems. Instead, “no outside of nature” posits that nature itself is a force of dissemination *without* the need of a constitutive cultural supplement. So whether we adhere to the call of ecology without nature or nature without culture, the point of the “without” is not to banish nature to a site “over there,” beyond human representational systems. Instead, the point is to see both “entities,” nature and culture, as articulations of the same textile or text. To quote Kirby: “their respective identities are what we might describe as ‘mutualities’ with no simple independence, and where their difference involves no distance at all” (7). The language of melancholy that I deploy in this chapter is meant to signal this sense of mutuality without prior distance. Under Spenser, melancholy becomes the name of that system of relation that both underlies and undermines the inside/outside manifold of subject/object and nature/culture. Melancholy ecology appears not in the bright light of “green” ideology but in a manner darkly. It is, to quote Spenser, a “darke conceit.”

¹¹ For environmental histories of the age of wood, see Paul Warde, *Ecology, Economy and State Formation in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 224-279; Michael Williams, *Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 169-209; and Robert L. Youngs, “Every Age, the Age of Wood,” *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 7.3 (1982): 211-219. For literary historical accounts of the wooden age, see Vin Nardizzi, *Wooden Os: Shakespeare’s Theatres and England’s Trees* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

¹² Arthur Standish, *The Commons Complaint* (London: 1611), 2.

¹³ See Vin Nardizzi, “Wooden Slavery,” *PMLA* 126.2 (March 2011): 313-315. For a fuller development of Nardizzi’s eco-materialist account of Shakespeare’s England, see *Wooden Os: Shakespeare’s Theatres and England’s Trees*.

¹⁴ For a related argument about matter and Spenserian allegory, see Theresa Krier, “Daemonic Allegory: The Elements in Late Spenser, Late Shakespeare, and Irigaray,” *Spenser Studies* 18 (2003): 315-342.

¹⁵ See Karen Barad, “On Touching—The Inhuman That Therefore I Am,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 23.3 (2012): 206-223.

¹⁶ See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). In considering the medium/mediation of the archive, Derrida asks whether the archivic drive can ever *not* be an archive of the remainder, of ash. “This drive [the archivic drive] . . . is above all *anarchivic*, one could say, or *archiviolithic*,” Derrida writes; “It will always have been archive-destroying, by silent vocation” (10). I will return to Derrida’s description of the self-annihilating “death drive” of the archive at the end of this chapter, to consider whether what persists in its destructivity, as remainder, is not already the inhumanity at the heart of living, of life, and of nonhuman lives who as yet have no archive.

¹⁷ See Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009).

¹⁸ To take just one example: in her meditation on the post-apocalyptic world pictured by Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*, Cathy Caruth inquires after what it might mean to “remain after the end,” “in a world not suited for human life” (see Caruth, “After the End: A Response,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 41.2 [Fall 2008]). “To remain after the

end,” she writes, “in a world covered in ash—a world after the apocalypse—raises questions for thinking anew the Christian theological framework that itself is left in ‘tatters,’ covered in ashes, by the unknown yet absolutely catastrophic event” (121). In such a world, “a world covered in ash,” survivors are but “remainders of the living,” since, in Caruth’s argument, “human life” and “living” are identical terms; there is no “life” that is not human life, and so no “remainder,” not even “ash,” that is not also a witness to a human end. Caruth aligns this impossible experience of living “after the end” with the experience of trauma, stating that traumatic experience is “something that is ‘ungrasped’ not because it is simply too painful for understanding, but rather because it has remained in the very aftermath of the world—of meaning, experience, historical significance—that it has destroyed” (125). Caruth reads trauma at the level of ontology: trauma, she argues, is not simply a part of history, but its structure and end. Yet it is here that her reading runs aground, precisely in the conflation of “life” and “human life,” Earth and “world.” Indeed, one might follow Eugene Thacker in distinguishing “Earth” from “World,” the latter term bearing the humanist existential connotations of “worlding,” of “being-with-world” (recall Heidegger’s thesis about the animal, that it is “poor in world”), and the former the non-anthropocentric connotations of inhuman life forms (see Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy Vol. 1* [Washington: Zero Books, 2011]). Whatever the case, Caruth’s theorization of survival as the imperative to pay witness (though admirable on ethical grounds) is, like McCarthy’s *The Road*, ultimately a redemptive (and moralizing) parable not unlike the “Christian theological framework” it purports to reinterpret.

¹⁹ See Cathy Caruth, “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History,” *Yale French Studies* 79 (1991):181-192.

²⁰ On this point, see Dominick Lacapra, “Trauma, Absence, Loss,” *Critical Inquiry* 25.4 (Summer 1999): 696-727, and Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). On a related point, see Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

François poses the possibility of an “open secret” within the period of the Enlightenment, which for her stands as “nonemphatic revelation,” that is, revelation “that does not demand response but is there for the having, as readily taken up as it is set aside” (xvi). Identifying a kind of inter-zone between “revelation” and “annihilation,” François locates this idea of an “open secret” in certain “minor” poems of Romanticism—minor in that they are “minimally expressive”—and argues that such poems run counter to “the Enlightenment allegiance to rationalism and unbound progress,” along with the concomitant belief in the “development and realization of human powers” through work (xvii, xvi). These poems short-circuit “the hermeneutics of suspicion” informing our post-Enlightenment reading habits, François argues, where the objective of both literary criticism and theory remains rigidly twofold: either to recuperate something lost and undervalued or to demystify something of its ideological work. Yet “[n]either of these critical models ... is prepared to accept something that does not require either the work of disclosure or the effort of recovery” (xvi). François’s version of the “open secret,” or “nonemphatic revelation,” is comparable to the kind of conceptual dampening that I wish to perform in this chapter with respect to trauma, which here stands neither for revelation nor annihilation but rather a kind of “thereness” that exceeds human mastery or control.

²¹ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), 24.

²² Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 2.

²³ This is Jean Laplanche's preferred translation of *Nachträglichkeit*. See Laplanche, "Notes on Afterwardsness," in *Essays on Otherness*, ed. John Fletcher (New York: Routledge, 1999), 260-265.

²⁴ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁷ See Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2010).

²⁸ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 28, 30.

²⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 202.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 203.

³¹ As Elizabeth Wilson explains in *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), this strategy of difference and delay is as much a part of the origins of psychoanalysis as it is a part of the history of psychic beginnings. "It has been usual to locate the beginnings of psychoanalysis in Freud's clinical encounters with hysterical patients in the 1880s and 1890s. It was from the strange aggregations of psyche and soma—paralysis, amnesias, strangulated affects, nervous tics, and infantile fantasies—that Freud was able to forge the foundations of psychoanalytic theory and

method.... Yet perhaps the body in psychoanalysis has been understood in terms that are too narrow. There has been a tendency, especially in feminist writing, to disregard Freud's neuroscientific and prepsychoanalytic bodies" (1). Alighting on a letter exchanged between Freud and Karl Abraham in 1924, Wilson notes that the subject of the letter—an early publication of Freud's on the nervous system of the lamprey—taxes our familiar understanding of psychoanalytic beginnings by turning our attention to precisely those neuroscientific and prepsychoanalytic bodies that Freud, and many of Freud's readers, thought they had moved beyond.

³² Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 31.

³³ Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," *Collected Poems, Prose, & Plays* (New York: The Library of America, 1995), 207.

³⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1989), 584-589.

³⁵ Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 186.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.

³⁷ All quotations from *The Faerie Queene* (book, canto, and stanza) are taken from Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 2007).

³⁸ See Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

³⁹ Protestant poetics

⁴⁰ Donald Cheney, *Spenser's Images of Nature: Wild Man and Shepherd in "The Faerie Queene"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 37.

⁴¹ Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 111.

⁴² Joseph Campana, *The Pain of Reformation: Spenser, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Masculinity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 47.

⁴³ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁴ On the unconventional nature of Spenserian allegory, see Anne Lake Prescott, "Complicating the Allegory: Spenser and Religion in Recent Scholarship," *Renaissance and Reformation* 15 (2001): 9-23.

⁴⁵ Campana, *The Pain of Reformation*, 51.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁸ Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics At the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008): 16-17.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁰ Campana, *The Pain of Reformation*, 79.

⁵¹ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 26, 27.

⁵² Ibid., 30.

⁵³ Cary Wolfe, *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 18.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 19-20.

⁵⁵ Karen Barad, "Intra-Actions," *Mousse Magazine* 34 (Summer 2012): 81.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 81.

⁵⁷ Campana, *The Pain of Reformation*, 48.

⁵⁸ Rambuss

⁵⁹ Vin Nardizzi, “Wooden Slavery,” 313.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 313-314.

⁶¹ Nardizzi, “Wooden Slavery,” 315.

⁶² Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 92.

⁶³ Ibid., 46.

⁶⁴ Edmund Spenser, “Letter to Raleigh,” in *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, 2nd ed. (London: Longman), 714.

⁶⁵ See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 157-192.

⁶⁶ Spenser, “Letter to Raleigh,” 714.

⁶⁷ Richard Rambuss, *Spenser’s Secret Career* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 65.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 65.

⁶⁹ The statement of purpose in Spenser’s “Letter” reads as follows: “*I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a braue knight, perfected in the twelue priuate morall vertues, as Aristotle hath deuised, the which is the purpose of these first twelue bookes.*” See Spenser, “Letter to Raleigh,” 715.

⁷⁰ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “An Abecedarium For the Elements,” *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 2 (2011): 292.

⁷¹ See Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). Drawing on the vitalist philosophies of Epicurus, Spinoza, Deleuze, and Bergson, Bennett's approach to ecology dissipates classical binaries of life/matter, human/animal, will/determination, and organic/inorganic by sketching a style of analysis that accounts for nonhuman agencies, or what she calls vibrant materialities. While I do not engage Bennett's work directly in this chapter, it should be counted as an indispensable backdrop for thinking nonhuman agency in Spenser's poetry.

⁷² Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 8.

⁷³ Ibid. 8.

⁷⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (New York: Verso, 1998), 166.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 160, 166.

⁷⁶ I borrow the term "untimely matter" from Jonathan Gil Harris. See Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

⁷⁷ Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 196.

⁷⁸ Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 224.

⁷⁹ Spenser, "Letter to Raleigh," 717.

⁸⁰ Quotations from *The Shepheardes Calender* are taken from Edmund Spenser, *The Shorter Poems*, ed. Richard A. McCabe (New York: Penguin Books, 1999).

⁸¹ Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 64.

⁸² For more on Spenser's Virgilian progression, see Patrick Cheney, "Spenser's Pastorals," *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 86.

⁸³ From the Greek *geo*, meaning "earth," Redcrosse Knight derives his name, St. George, from georgic roots. Brought to Faery Land "unweeting" by a faery, he was left in a furrow of land; he is a changeling:

Thence she thee brought into this Faery lond,
And in an heaped furrow did thee hyde,
Where thee a Ploughman all vnweeting fond,
As he his toylesome teme that way did guyde,
And brought thee vp in ploughmans state to byde,
Whereof *Georgos* he thee gaue to name. (1.10.66)

⁸⁴ James Kuzner, *Open Subjects: English Renaissance Republicans, Modern Selfhoods, and the Virtue of Vulnerability* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 41-44.

⁸⁵ See Jacques Lacan, *Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1998). There, Lacan writes, "the *objet a* is something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ. This serves as a symbol of the lack, that is to say, of the phallus" (103). The *objet petit a* assumes its function as a consequence and reminder of symbolic castration. "At the oral level," Lacan writes, referencing Freud's account of the development of the drives and their objects, "it is the nothing, in so far as that from which the subject was weaned is no longer anything for him. In anorexia nervosa, what the child eats is the nothing" (103-104). Slavoj Žižek begins his book *Tarrying With The Negative* (Durham:

Duke University Press, 1993) by explicitly linking Lacan's theory of symbolic castration to ideological formation. "Desire," he writes, specifically ideological desire, "is constituted by 'symbolic castration,' the original loss of the *Thing*; the void of this loss is filled out by *objet petit a*, the fantasy-object" (3). In language that resonates nicely with Spenser's, he identifies the void of this loss with a "hole": "The most sublime image that emerged in the political upheavals of the last years ... was undoubtedly ... the rebels waving the national flag with the red star, the Communist symbol, cut out, so that instead of the symbol standing for the organizing principle of the national life, there was nothing but a hole in its center.... The enthusiasm which carried them was literally the enthusiasm over this hole" (1). Historical differences notwithstanding, we might say that Redcrosse's enthusiasm upon entering the Wandering Wood is carried by a similar desire over filling the "nothing" that Error represents. Spenser's Redcrosse Knight puts to the test the "wholeness" of Protestant ideology by tarrying with this negative "other." He does so, in terms that would satisfy Žižek, by entering a "darksom hole" (1.1.14).

⁸⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2008), 59.

⁸⁷ The classic accounts of "error" as a mode of *différance* in Spenser's romance are Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); and Jonathan Goldberg, *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

⁸⁸ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 61-62.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹⁰ Derrida's concept of *pas* names both a step and the negation "not." The result is a composite term that weaves together affirmation and negation in one complex movement.

⁹¹ See Leo Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?,” in *Is the Rectum a Grave?: And Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3-30.

⁹² G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6)*, trans. Leo Rauch (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 87.

⁹³ I should note that despite longstanding philosophical, ecocritical, and feminist codings to the contrary, nature is not feminine. Dark ecology maintains that nature is, at bottom, queer (see Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 81). If I use the term “feminine,” it is to underscore the hyperbolic treatment of maternal substance, rendered monstrous, in Spenser’s representation. For an alternative “masculine” account, consider my suggestion, via Bersani, that the “darksom hole” also represents the male rectum, conjuring the threat (and ecstasy) of the death-drive that Bersani links to gay men’s *jouissance*.

⁹⁴ Linda Gregerson, *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 96.

⁹⁵ Lawrence F. Rhu, “Romancing the Word: Pre-texts and Contexts for the Errour Episode,” *Spenser Studies* 11 (1996): 101.

⁹⁶ Campana, *The Pain of Reformation*, 90-91.

⁹⁷ Gregerson, Quilligan

⁹⁸ Morton, in reference to Butler, makes a case for thinking masculine gender performance as a subset of ecology. He shows how a great deal of ecological thinking mirrors the “inside-outside manifold” that heterosexist gender identification produces, albeit contingently, through rituals of exclusion and purification. Through appeals to

“compulsory” organicism, rugged individualism, and the positing of a pure, pristine nature, environmentalisms repeat compulsory heterosexuality’s fantasy of organic gender difference. Dark ecology operates in a different register. Rather than idealize a heterosexist fantasy of nature as pure difference, it attests to the melancholy dimension of ecological life as interdependence: just as (for Butler) masculine-heterosexist gender identity is the sedimented effect of foreclosed homosexual attachments, such that, in Butler’s words, “the ‘truest’ gay male melancholic is the strictly straight man” (see Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, ?], ?); so (for Morton) “the truest ecological human is the melancholy dualist” (Morton, “Queer Ecology,”). Redcrosse, I argue, is both. Marked by an indelible ecological melancholy, one that refuses to digest or swallow the lost object (Christ’s body, or more broadly, nature’s), his encounter with Error figures that refusal in its most extreme form.

⁹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 4.

¹⁰⁰ Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 41.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 47.

¹⁰² Ibid., 45-46.

¹⁰³ Teskey, *Allegory and Violence*, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 15-16.

¹⁰⁵ Harry Berger, Jr., *Revisionary Play: Studies in The Spenserian Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 216.

¹⁰⁶ Campana, *The Pain of Reformation*, 49.

¹⁰⁷ John Donne, “A Hymn to Christ, at the Author’s last going into Germany,” in *The Complete English Poems*, ed. A.J. Smith (New York: Penguin Books, 1996).

¹⁰⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 298.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 345.

¹¹² Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 41.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 41.

¹¹⁴ Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 15.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 15.

¹¹⁶ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* [STC 4159] (Oxford: printed by Iohn Lichfield and Iames Short, for Henry Cripps, Anno Dom. 1621).

Chapter Two: The Life Aquatic

So to the sea we came; the sea? that is

A world of waters ...

... and in those wandring stremes

Seek waies vnknowne. —Edmund Spenser, *Colin Clovts Come Home Againe*¹

Near the end of Book 4 of *The Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser writes:

O What an endlesse worke haue I in hand,

To count the seas abundant progeny,

Whose fruitfull seede farre passeth those in land,

And also those which wonne in th'azure sky? (4.12.1)²

A modesty topos, to be sure: Spenser, having just recounted the “seas abundant progeny” in the previous Canto, in what is without doubt a bravura performance of the poet’s genealogical cum thalassological knowledge and poetic mastery, begins Canto 12 less as a mariner in command of the “seas abundant progeny” and more as a courtier and lover avowing his shortcomings before the sea’s inimitable “seede.” The “fruitfull seede” that most confounds Spenser’s numerical qua metrical “count,” both here and elsewhere (as we shall soon see), is, of course, Venus, both goddess of beauty and fertility and figure for the errant sexuality of the seas:

That *Venus* of the fomy sea was bred;

For that the seas by her are most augmented.

Witnesse th'exceeding fry, which there are fed,

And wonderous sholes, which may of none be red.

Then blame me not, if I haue err'd in count

Of Gods, of Nymphs, of riuer yet vnred:

For though their numbers do much more surmount,

Yet all those same were there, which erst I did recount. (4.12.2)

Venus, figure of life-giving fertility, of the sea's autoerotic *excess*, disturbs Spenser's numerical "count," and so also, for a moment, interrupts the measure or metric of his poetic rendering, exposing the errancy ("err'd") internal to both the life represented (in this case, the sea) and Spenser's own poetic making. Venus augments the seas ("the seas by her are most augmented"), meaning that she multiplies, grows, swells (the Latin *augmentare* means "to increase") the already "abundant" oceans, "th'exceeding fry," and the "wonderous sholes," which, being too many, "may of none be red." Venus is a figure of love *en abyme*—a marine love which, as Roland Barthes reminds us in his lover's taxonomy, *A Lover's Discourse*, most represents "a craving *to be engulfed*" (*s'abîmer*). "The crisis of engulfment," Barthes writes, "can come from a wound, but also from a fusion: we die together from loving each other: an open death, by dilution."³

The sea-swellings that Venus represents in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* share this double edged meaning, which Barthes finds emblemized in the lover's outburst (translated from Goethe): "I am engulfed, I succumb." Venus multiplies life, but she also exceeds it ("their numbers do much more surmount"). If Spenser's stated goal in *The Faerie Queene* is to fulfill the *rota Virgilii* by abandoning pastoral life in favor of the martial, imperial, and territorial thematics of epic, as announced in the first lines of his poem, "For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds," then it is the fluid, dilute, and engulfing power of Venus, figure not only of the abyss but of a sexuality that is itself

abyssal, that threatens to turn Spenser's poem away from the war-machine of epic to the erring-desiring-machine of romance—a non-totalizable assemblage in which every part melts (yes, melts, we will return to this word later) with desire: “Gods ... nymphs ... riuer[s] yet vnred” (4.12.2).

This chapter embarks upon two questions concerning friendship in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. The first question asks: what propinquity of desire links amity to the sea, such that, to invoke Foucault, friendship (*amicitas*, or, in a related sense, *amare*, “to love”) becomes a way of life in Spenser's allegory? And second: whence this way of life such that it undoes the very category of “the human,” indeed of the self-same human (*homo*) whose face, Foucault suggests, may someday “be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea”?⁴

In recent decades, early modern scholars' engagements with the history of sexuality have shifted attention to the somaticized and highly affective zones of encounter between friends, making the discourse of friendship a key point of study in early modern accounts of the body, queer sexuality, philology, and political structure.⁵ A central feature of nearly all of this work has been a greater attention to crossings and exchanges—to what Jeffrey Masten describes as the “interchangeability and absolute likeness of friends.”⁶ Despite bridging older divisions within the history of sexuality, however, many of these studies retain a prior division, one that separates out the domain of culture from that of nature and confines critical work to studying cultural production and the forms of communication it makes possible. Thus, when Masten describes the literal interchangeability of male friends in terms of “the fungible, humoral body, a conduit for liquids, humors, passions, and so forth,” this *liquid* body remains wholly

human—a site of philological and cultural investigation separate from the natural world.⁷ In the wake of ecocriticism and posthumanist theories of the body, however, this separation is increasingly untenable and in recent years scholars have produced work that not only trespass cultural divisions but also that of culture from nature.⁸ Following this renaturalizing trend,⁹ my goal in this chapter is to bring together early modern studies, ecocritical studies, and the history of sexuality so as to think through Foucault's admonition to treat friendship not as a process of discovery or mutual recognition but rather as a way of *life*—that is, a rethinking of how we define and value “life” itself.

From Michel de Montaigne's essay “Of Friendship” to Jacques Derrida's rearticulation of the former in *The Politics of Friendship*, scholars both early modern and modern have sought ways to address the fluid co-mixture of bodies from which the discourse of friendship can and does emerge. More recently still, new materialist thinkers of ontology have begun to shift our attention to the ways both human *and* nonhuman bodies inter-animate in the making of political, interpersonal, and artistic life worlds.¹⁰ Together with these investigations, I argue that an *aquacentric* account of relation is necessary to think the subject of friendship in Spenser's epic.¹¹ Beginning with Spenser's queer address to Raleigh in Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene* and continuing through Book 4, I argue that Spenser reimagines the discourse of friendship in terms of a liquid, transcorporeal poetics, one that not only takes to its logical extreme Masten's description of bodies as “conduits for liquids, humors, [and] passions” but also importantly reworks human-exceptionalist readings of ontology in Spenser's epic.

The first section develops my understanding of Spenser's liquid poetics, focusing in particular on the framing technologies, such as “*Venus* looking glas,” that magnify and

make tangible love's immaterial "seede" (3.1.8). Following recent scholarly investigations into the ways that specifically Lucretian materiality appears in English Renaissance texts,¹² I read Spenser's poetics as a way of magnifying the aleatory movements of atoms, which Lucretius calls "seed." My claim is that the aleatory movement of atoms, of matter imperceptible to human sight, gains visibility in Spenser's poem predominantly in the form of liquid and erotic conjunctions: of bodies that "melt" with desire and therefore challenge definitions of human being as solid or stable. From there I examine Britomart's benthic imaginary in Book 3 as a precursor to the liquid and lithic love figured around Marinell and Florimell in the Legend of Friendship. Whereas most critics tend to read Spenserian ontology as merely allegorical, I argue that in the case of friendship, the liquid bodies made fungible by early modern vocabularies, affects and desires are not strictly speaking bounded human bodies: Spenser's liquid poetics foregrounds bodies made richer and stranger by co-mingling with rivers, waters, and other sea-like bodies. His is an aesthetics open to the hospitality of a difference within the self; his waters know no boundaries.

Liquid Poetics

In Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser makes of Elizabeth's chastity a spur for maximizing, not abstaining from, the most intense and affectively charged corporeal expressions of love and self-shattering. In doing so, he reflects on the matter of poetic making as a *Volta do Mar*, a turn to the sea (see Figs. 1 and 2).¹³ Spenser states:

It falls me here to write of Chastity,

The fayrest vertue, far aboue the rest;

For which what needes me fetch from Faery

Forreine ensamples, it to haue exprest?

Sith it is shrined in my Soueraines brest. (3.Proem.1)

In order to represent chastity, Spenser must represent the inner life of the Queen, the inner temple or sanctum of her heart. And yet, this task of mimesis is itself impossible. As Spenser goes on, he acknowledges that “so liuely in each perfect part” is his sovereign’s heart that neither “liuing art ... / Nor life-resembling pencill it can paynt”:

All were it *Zeuxis* or *Praxiteles*:

His dædale hand would faile, and greatly faynt,

And her perfections with his error taynt:

Ne Poets witt, that passeth Painter farre

In picturing the parts of beauty daynt,

So hard a workemanship aduenture darre,

For fear through want of words her excellence to marre. (3.Proem.2)

Neither the painter’s “dædale hand” nor the poet’s “witt” can represent the queen’s inner “perfections,” for the “pourtrait of her hart” exceeds any “liuing art.” In “Autobiography As De-facement,” Paul de Man makes a similar claim: he asserts that every act of biographical or autobiographical representation assumes the act of giving life (*bios*) imagined as a face to an absent or nonexistent entity, an act “which posits the possibility of the latter’s reply and confers upon it the power of speech. Voice assumes mouth, eye and finally face.”¹⁴ Such an act of life giving figuration or facialization carries with it, however, for de Man as for Spenser, an autoimmunitary death-drive that cancels, in the same movement, the figure or face inscribed. “Our topic deals with the giving and taking

away of faces,” de Man writes, “with face and deface, *figure*, figuration and disfiguration.”¹⁵ Such is the dilemma of (dis)figuration that Spenser, and later de Man, underline: the figure (face) of poetry must deface itself to become writing, hence every “liuing art” (to use Spenser’s term) becomes its own *memento mori*.

What is noteworthy, however, is that the failure to fit matter and meaning does not end in allegorical violence, as Gordon Teskey’s theory of allegory would suggest,¹⁶ but rather makes of Spenser’s allegory a tool for magnifying and thus visualizing *nonhuman* modes of self-fashioning.

In other words, while Spenser partakes of a poetics of the face, he does so with a difference: unlike de Man, he does not imagine defacement as a wholly human phenomenon; he does not recognize in the human face the degree-zero of figuration. Rather, in a proleptic address to Raleigh, Spenser reimagines the act of defacement as a becoming-inhuman of the face and a becoming-more-than-human of life. “That,” Deleuze and Guattari argue, “is what the face is from the start”—inhuman—“to the point that if human beings have a destiny, it is rather to escape the face, to dismantle the face and facializations ... by quite spiritual and special becomings.”¹⁷ Spenser’s term for this inhuman becoming is “marre.”

What does it mean to “marre” in Spenser’s poem? A word steeped in polyvalent and diachronic meanings (among them, notably, *to impair*, *to ruin*—as Spenser writes in Book 3: “And striuing, fit to make, I feare doe marre” [3.2.3]), “marre” doubles as a shibboleth for the agency and transcorporeality of the sea. From the Old English *mere* and the Middle English *marre*, as well as post-classical Latin *mare*, we gather from this etymological stew an alternative account of what it means to “marre” the queen. Writing

in reference to his friend Raleigh, whose pseudonym “Ocean” provides the material and semantic substrate of Spenser’s liquefacient verse, Spenser characterizes the act of marring as a kind of bodily “melting”:

But if in liuing colours, and right hew,
Thy selfe thou couet to see pictured,
Who can it doe more liuely, or more trew,
Then that sweete verse, with *Nectar* sprinckled,
In which a gracious seruaunt pictured
His *Cynthia*, his heauens fayrest light?
That with his melting sweetnes rauished,
And with the wonder of her beames bright,

My senses lulled are in slomber of delight. (3.Proem.4)

Beginning with “Thy self thou covet to see pictured,” we find not only the return of the prolepsis “marre” in Raleigh’s *Ocean to Cynthia* but also the return of Venus, goddess of the sea, whom the allegorization of chastity was meant to forebear. Spenser mares the queen, that is, defaces, disfigures. But from this disfiguration there emerges an alternative sensory economy, what Daniel Juan Gil summarizes as an “asocial sexuality,”¹⁸ and what for my purposes I term (after Freud) an oceanic feeling of becoming.

Writing on the concept of “oceanic feeling” in the opening pages of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud disparages the notion of oceanic selves, of selves bleeding into their surroundings, and of bodies melting into other bodies, on the basis that such an affective transverberation of bodies entails a regression to an earlier state of narcissistic indifference.¹⁹ By contrast, recent psychoanalytic theorists writing to the side of Freud,

among them Leo Bersani and Kaja Silverman, have asked whether there might be a way of retooling narcissistic indifference to allow for an experience of the oneness of the world's flesh.²⁰ Whereas Freud dismisses the oceanic feeling of being extended in space and time beyond the envelope of one's skin, Spenser bids welcome to the hospitality of a difference within the self, of a self that overflows itself, indifferent to its own difference. This sense of (in)difference that Raleigh—nicknamed “Ocean”—absently represents first appears in the word “sweete,” a word that, according to Masten, compels us to make at least “two observations about early modern bodies”:

first, the commonplace, copied out of Aristotle and endlessly recirculated, that friends are “one soul in two bodies”; second, the idea of the fungible, humoral body, a conduit for liquids, humors, passions, and so forth. As a recurrent term in friendship's vocabulary, *sweet* indicates the fungibility of male friends—not merely the exchangeability and indistinguishability of identities or selves but also the way in which what we have regarded as an identity trope is imagined in this culture as literally embodied.²¹

A significant signifier in the rhetoric of early modern friendship, “sweete” conjures a highly motile sense of desire and affection between bodies. Let us first consider the body of the queen. Writing on the sexual politics of Queen Elizabeth and on the Elizabethan cult of chastity, Valerie Traub notes that “Elizabeth's self-presentation as an object and subject of erotic interest occurred, not in contrast to the image of chaste virgin, but in terms of it.”²² By stimulating an erotics of the chaste body, in other words, Elizabeth lubricated the political field. In Spenser's poem, the liquid dynamics of male-male friendship detailed by Masten ebb and flow in relation to the paradox of Elizabeth's

“chaste” pleasure, a pleasure portrayed by Raleigh not as singular, chaste, or inviolable virginity but as “melting sweetnes.” This “sweetnes” collates, first, the taste of colonial power abroad with the importation of sugar at home, linking Raleigh’s seagoing and colonial ventures in the Americas to the erotics of domestic and poetic consumption²³; and second, the disaggregation of sovereign bodies—human, national, and territorial—which, by overflowing the opposition between inside and outside, makes way for a different kind of bodily becoming, one that dissolves human subjects in watery undertows and combines them with ecological forces.

By mirroring Elizabeth’s narcissism, Raleigh not only welcomes the oceanic feeling of bodies melting into other bodies, he turns the speculum of narcissistic indifference against itself, revealing, in Irigaray’s words, “the other of the other”—not just the specularized Other of the masculine subject but the irreducible otherness internal to all subject “positions.” This “other of the other” surfaces in Irigaray’s ecomaterialist reading of Friedrich Nietzsche as an elemental “marine lover”; in Raleigh’s hands, the marine love (*mare*) that threatened to “marre” Spenser’s poetic count not once, but twice, returns in the image of Elizabeth qua Venus, figure of the errant sexuality of the seas.²⁴

By abandoning the poet’s “humble quill” in favor of the refractive powers of the allegorist’s oblique “mirrours,” Spenser transforms the narcissistic self-assertion of epic conquest to the recursivity and reconciliation of friendship. In mirroring Raleigh (who mirrors the queen), Spenser himself performs such a mis-en-abyme and exhorts his queen to do the same, and therefore to recognize the instability and porousness of her own sovereign subjectivity: “Ne let his fayrest Cynthia refuse, / In mirrours more then one her selfe to see” (3.Proem.5).

In the Letter to Raleigh, Spenser acknowledges that many readers will find “displeasaunt” his “Methode” of using “Allegoricall devices,” which are “clowdily enwrapped” at best.²⁵ In the lines above, however, he signals an alternative definition whereby the very artifice of allegory, understood technically as a play of mirrors, enables him to render the Queen “in liuing colours, and right hew.” The paradox is that this “liuing art” is in fact the product of an inhuman apparatus. The poem, figured as a kind of mirror, makes visible a life inaccessible to human sight. Spenser cannot represent the queen’s inner virtue, but an apparatus such as allegory provides the optical illusion necessary to create a living poetry, one “clowdily enwrapped”—and therefore one that enacts at the level of form the pleasures as well as the frustrations of “clowdily” defined subjective and ontological borders.

Daniel Tiffany describes this conjunction between poetic iconography and scientific apparatus as being the very crux of “philosophical materialism,” from Democritus’ atom through the history of modern science, wherein “inquiries into the nature of material substance rely fundamentally on images that do not bear witness to empirical entities, but rather serve as models of unobservable phenomena.”²⁶ For Tiffany, “the foundation of material substance is intelligible to us, and therefore appears to be real, only if we credit the imaginary pictures we have composed of it.”²⁷ Hence “the forms of mediation and imagination proper to ... poetry begin to resemble the tools and practices of science—especially, as in physics, when it is a question of depicting unobservable phenomena.”²⁸ Both science and poetry proceed by attributing corporeal qualities to events imperceptible to human sight. In this sense, the matter of scientific observation is never quite distinct from the matter of poetic fashioning.

Following Tiffany, I want to suggest that the verb “to marre,” far from being an idle pun in my usage, speaks directly to the liquid dynamics oft visualized in Spenser’s fashioning of virtuous subjects. In other words, by drawing our attention to the failure of his allegorical “Methode” to make vivid things inscrutable to human sight, Spenser not only embraces the pictorial powers of the scientific apparatus but also imagines his allegorical method as a tool for magnifying the capacity of friendship to reinvent “life” as we know it. As James Kuzner explains, “in Spenser’s epic ... friends respect and reinforce each other’s boundaries but also disregard and dissolve them.”²⁹ This tendency to dissolve individual boundaries surfaces in the following lines, wherein Spenser admonishes Cupid, “thou dred infant, *Venus* dearling doue,” to “chase imperious feare” from “my soueraigne Queene” and “vse of awfull Maiestie remoue”:

In sted thereof with drops of melting loue,
Deawd with ambrosiall kisses, by thee gotten
From thy sweete smyling mother from aboue,
Sprinckle her heart, and haughtie courage soften,

That she may hearke to loue, and reade this lesson often. (4.Proem.5)

Spenser imagines his ideal reader as one open to the “melting loue” that he previously attributes to Raleigh. Rather than halt his “magnifying” lens, he turns to Cupid, beckoning the latter to scatter ambrosial “drops” akin to Venus’ “fruitfull seede,” so that the image of love, being “fruitfull,” can multiply. My interest here is in the way Spenser represents love: what do the fruition and multiplicity of his “Allegoricall devices” depict?

Reid Barbour notes that in early modern depictions of materiality, the atom was often eroticized: “Mythologized in the person of Cupid, the atom ... is made all the more

complex insofar as atomic desire risks lust and anarchy.”³⁰ Francis Bacon, for example, “maintains that the ancients allegorized the properties of the atom in the nudity, archery, infancy, and blindness of Cupid.”³¹ Lucretius no doubt provides precedent for this allegorical view: not only are his atoms blind, but Venus, mother of Cupid, is the muse of his poem. Spenser’s invocation of Venus’ “fruitfull seede” in Book 4 shows a keen awareness of this allegorical interpretation of the atom. What’s more, his emphasis on the instruments of visualization, making repeated reference to his own poem as a tool of magnification, as when Britomart, “wondrous glad,” softens her martial demeanor at hearing “her Love so highly magnifyde” by Redcrosse’s speech, begs us to think of Spenser’s allegory in Tiffany’s terms as a poetic apparatus, a tool capable of “giving life and ‘passion’ to insensible things” (3.2.11).³²

Between the 1590 and 1596 editions of *The Faerie Queene*, the images of love’s virtue do indeed multiply according to the refractive angle of Spenser’s poetic apparatus: from the images of Cynthia, Gloriana, and Belphebe in the Proem to Book 3, to the image of Venus evoked by Britomart’s “looking glas.” Spenser’s multiplication of life’s images are as numerous as Venus’ innumerable “seede”—and as volatile. For the “lust and anarchy” that Bacon discerns in the atom finds its expression in the “drops of melting loue” that Spenser twice attributes to poetic fashioning. If, in Spenser’s hands, poetry is an instrument of magnification, then the insensible object of his gaze—atomic desire—appears most often and most powerfully as a kind of melting carried out allegorically as an erosion of bodily boundaries by liquid forces. To follow Kuzner’s remarks above, it does not suffice to read Spenser’s “open subjects” as always already human; for the power to practice non-sovereignty in relation to others—via friendship—is as much a

power to co-assemble with inhuman forces. To imagine “open subjects,” we need think not only of what it means to fail at self-fashioning—“to marre,” as Spenser says; but also how such failure enables us to visualize a much broader cosmopolity beyond the strictly human community, to see, along with Foucault, the human face erased at the edge of the sea.³³

In the following section, I examine the relationship between poetic iconography and material description through the particular lens of Britomart’s benthic imagination. Dan Brayton usefully defines the “benthic imagination” in the context of Shakespeare studies as the figurative construction of human life as a sea voyage. The ocean according to Brayton serves as “(1) a mirror of human ontology, culture, and civilization; (2) the space of transit, an undomesticated boundary between realms, a threat to cosmic and social order; (3) the arena of providence; and (4) a transitional space between the supernatural and the protoscientific.”³⁴ Each of these definitions will come to bear on my reading of the Legend of Friendship, and of Marinell and Florimell in particular. For now, I turn to Britomart in Book 3 to show that the image of human life reflected by the sea not only mirrors human ontology, as Brayton suggests, but much more troublingly erodes and consumes that image, producing an oceanic subjectivity open to the pain and suffering of others.

Britomart’s Benthic Imaginary

Thus far I have argued that the focus on fashioning in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* can and should be read in terms of the technical apparatuses figured throughout the poem, which give to the reader’s eye a semblance of events imperceptible to human sight. These

semblances are neither static nor mimetic, for what they “represent” are not objects or things but rather happenings or becomings: from the French *sembler*, meaning to gather or assemble. Semblances visualize the movement of poetic making (*poiesis*) by making that very movement of creation the object of poetic sight. In so doing, they enable us “to see” bodies available only at the scale of the poetic apparatus—what Spenser calls his “Allegoricall devices” or “frame”—assembling and disassembling before our very eyes. Such shifts in scale—from the imperceptible to the perceptible and back—result in disaggregating movements at the level of the human body, as the image of the human body begins to dissolve in relation to other assembled images, such as Spenser’s “melting” in sensuous “delight” before the image of Raleigh’s *Cynthia*.

In Book 3, we see another such image, this time mixed not with the affect of “delight” but with the affect of “melancholy” and despair. Here, Britomart gazes upon a mirror fashioned by the “Magitien *Merlin*,” whose “deepe science” produced a “looking glasse” capable of “shew[ing] in perfect sight / What euer thing was in the world contained” (3.2.18-19). Britomart sees in this “world of glas” the “semblant of a knight, / Whose shape or person yet [she] never saw,” but whose image, she remarks, “Hath me subjected to loues cruell law” (3.2.19, 38):

The Damzell well did vew his Personage,
And liked well, ne further fastned not,
But went her way; ne her vnguiltie age
Did weene, vnwares, that her vnlucky lot
Lay hidden in the bottome of the pot;
Of hurt vnwist most daunger doth redound:

But the false Archer, which that arrow shot
So slyly, that she did not feele the wound,
Did smyle full smoothly at her weetlesse wofull stound.

.....

And if that any drop of slombring rest
Did chaunce to still into her weary spright,
When feeble nature felt her self opprest,
Streight way with dreames, and with fantastick sight
Of dreadful things the same was put to flight,
That oft out of her bed she did astart,
As one with vew of ghastly feends affright:
Tho gan she to renew her former smart,

And thinke of that fayre visage, written in her hart. (3.2.26, 29)

At once an object of human “shape” and a figure of love’s inscrutability, the “Personage” whom Britomart encounters in the “looking glas,” far from being a mere representation of a knight, is best understood as a figure of conjunction. This figure is akin to the “melancholy assemblage,” which, according to Drew Daniel, “joins together its sufferers and its witnesses into tenuous perceptual communities.”³⁵ Britomart, “weetlesse” of Cupid’s arrow, “thought it was not loue” which she suffered, “but some melancholy” (3.2.27). The “semblant” that enables her to see “her Loue ... magnifyde” also subjects her to the “tyranny” of that love, which is experienced as both internal compulsion and external force, and thereby questions the boundaries between inside and outside, self and other.

The joining of sufferer and witness that melancholy enables begins from the moment “fayre *Britomart*” looks into the “mirrhour playne.” From this “did grow her first engrafted payne, / Whose root and stalke so bitter yet did taste” (3.2.17). The image itself entangles seer and seen, just as the language of vegetable love engrafts foreign bodies. Later the image of “engrafted payne” transforms into an image of writing, as Britomart turns her gaze inward “to renew her former smart, / And thinke of that fayre visage, written in her hart” (3.2.29). From the initial graft of “root and stalke” to its engraved repetition in Britomart’s “hart,” the image takes on the phantasmatic or dreamlike quality that again confounds the objective perception of external objects with internal, subjective experience. Shrouded by this image-world, this “Night,” in which the “beautie of the shyning skye” is “Defaste,” and “reft” is the “worldes desired vew,” Britomart suffers “dreames” and “fantastick sight / Of dreadfull things ... As one with vew of ghastly feends affright” (3.2.28-29). Under “loues cruel law,” Britomart’s “liuely cheare” turns more “dead” than “liuing”; the negative obverse of Spenser’s herbal metaphor, it loses “Both leafe and fruite, both too vntimely shed” (3.2.31).

This assemblage of image-plant-heart that joins Britomart’s melancholy to the wider ecological surround includes forms of relationality that go beyond the bounded subjectivity that would seem to ground Spenser’s purported aim of fashioning persons of “vertuous and gentle discipline.” Britomart’s nurse, Glauce, for example, would seem the exemplary voice of such disciplinary measures. Reasoning with Britomart, Glauce urges Britomart not to be carried away by “despeire,” since no love, no matter how “sore,” is beyond the “salue” of reason (3.2.35). And yet Glauce, too, suffers melancholy’s web of entangled relationality. Having just “auow[ed]” to “ease [Britomart’s] grieve, And win

[her] will” from the “known signes and passions” of love (3.2.33), Glaucé undergoes the same melancholy transformation: “So hauing sayd, her twixt her armes twaine / Shee streightly straynd, and colled tenderly, / And euery trembling ioynt, and euery vaine / Shee softly felt, and rubbed busily” (3.2.34). This compassion—or fellow-feeling—has the effect of taking Britomart out of herself. Seeing her nurse thus tormented, Britomart exclaims: “Ah Nurse, what needeth thee to eke my paine? / Is not enough, that I alone doe dye, / But it must doubled bee with death of twaine?” (3.2.35). The reciprocal grief shared by Britomart and Glaucé makes visible the joining of sufferer and witness that Daniel attributes to melancholy’s involuntary processes of assembly. Yet while scholars such as Daniel and Gail Kern Paster often use images of fluidity to describe humoral fluctuations and assemblages, these liquid bodies are, in the end, always already human bodies.³⁶

Britomart’s melancholy resists this anthro-determinacy. What first reads as metaphor in the encounter with the mirror soon turns literal as Britomart, journeying to find her “semblant” knight and “Following the guydaunce of her blinded guest,” Cupid, arrives at the “seacoast” (3.4.6). There she reactivates the memory of her inner scar—“her wound she fedd”—and “to the seacoast at length she her addrest.” This self-consuming scar—Cupid’s “shot”—“more grieuous bredd” (3.4.6), until inner grief and outer nature become mutually expressive:

Tho hauing vewd a while the surges hore,
That gainst the craggy cliffs did loudly rore,
And in their raging surquedry disdayned,
That the fast earth affronted them so sore,

And their deuouring couetize restraynd,

Thereat she sighed deepe, and after thus complayned. (3.4.7)

Inner “deepe” and outer “deepe”—self-consuming “wound” and “earth”-consuming “surges”—change places. The sea’s “deuouring” currents not only mirror Britomart’s “deep engord ... hart” but also magnify and deterritorialize her physical body, remapping the topography of her “hart” away from the fixed body and the land’s “craggy cliffs” to the disassembling movements of the “sea ... and tempestuous griefe” (3.4.8). In Britomart’s benthic imaginary, “deepe” echoes “deepe”:

Huge sea of sorrow, and tempestuous griefe,
Wherein my feeble barke is tossed long,
Far from the hoped hauen of reliefe,
Why doe thy cruel billowes beat so strong,
And thy moyst mountaines each on others throng,
Threatening to swallow vp my fearefull lyfe?
O doe thy cruell wrath and spightfull wrong
At length allay, and stint thy stormy stryfe,
Which in thy troubled bowels raignes, and rageth ryfe.
For els my feeble vessell crazd, and crackt
Through thy strong buffets and outrageous blowes,
Cannot endure, but needes it must be wrackt
On the rough rocks, or on the sandy shallowes,
The whiles that loue it steres, and fortune rowes;
Loue my lewd Pilott hath a restless minde

And fortune Boteswaine no assuraunce knowes,

But saile withouten starres, gainst tyde and winde:

How can they other doe, sith both are bold and blinde? (3.4.8-9)

Here love and fortune take tangible form in the image of life at sea. More than just a metaphor for Britomart's inner "deepe," Spenser uses the Petrarchan image of a "feeble vessell crazd, and crackt" to illustrate the material linkage between love and the body's vulnerability. In so doing, "stormy stryfe" serves less as a reflection of human ontology than as an image of material and intertextual assembly. Britomart loses her fixed identity by dissolving into the sea; although temporary, this moment of dissolve showcases a fundamental lesson about Spenserian ontology: that persons—"shadow[s]" as Spenser calls them in the Letter to Raleigh—are as much a part of the world of material "Accidents" or events as they are separate from it.

Britomart's benthic imaginary testifies to love's power to fashion oceanic subjects. However, the appearance of Marinell shortly after in Book 3 forces us to reckon with a subject whose fame as "loues enemy" runs contrary to the fluid co-mixture of bodies that I have been tracing (3.4.26). Marinell, as his name indicates, is the product of ontological crossing; a "Sea-nymphes sonne," Marinell is both human and inhuman: son of both man and nymph, grandson to Nereus, and heir to the "riches" of the "deepe" (3.4.22). Marinell, his mother Cymoent laments, is the very "image" of herself (3.4.36). And yet Marinell also brings to an abrupt conclusion Britomart's liquid reverie, shifting the optic of the poem from the dilute bodies made visible by melancholy to the martial and agonistic bodies that we see magnified by friendship in Book 4. Spenser renders this perceptual shift as a "mist" lifting from Britomart's visual field:

As when a foggy mist hath ouercast

The face of heuen, and the cleare ayre engroste,

The world in darkenes dwels, till that at last

The watry Southwinde from the seabord coste

Vpblowing, doth disperse the vapour lo'ste,

And pours it selfe forth in a stormy showre;

So the fayre *Britomart* hauing disclo'ste

Her cloudy care into a wrathfull stowre,

The mist of grieve dissolu'd, did into vengeance powre. (3.4.13)

After seeing “proud *Marinell* vpon the pretious shore,” Britomart dissolves her “griefe,” and with it the connection of her fragile “feeble vessell” to the foreign bodies to which she was “engraffed”: plant, nurse, sea, and earth. The ensuing battle ends as abruptly as it began, with Marinell suffering a “mortall” wound, and Britomart continuing her journey without concern for the wounded: “The martiall Mayd stayd not him to lament” (3.4.17, 18). The epic assertion of bounded selfhood leaves no room for compassion.

We see in the case of Marinell that the defense of psychic as well as bodily boundaries reproduces the violence needed to maintain those boundaries. In this regard, Marinell allegorizes the paradox that self-protection—avoiding the vulnerability of love—requires an adversarial way of being that exposes one to more, not less, violence. Fearing Proteus’ “prophecy” that “of a woman he should haue much ill,” Marinell, at the behest of his mother, “euer from fayre Ladies loue did fly” so as to avoid the deep wounds that love can make (3.4.25-26). In this sense, Marinell, although rarely the focus of scholarly inquiry, best reveals the symptomatic logic of the friendship legend as one

bent on fashioning virtuous subjects through violence. This self-defeating logic is exemplified by Marinell's mother, Cymoent, about whom Spenser states: "So weening to haue arm'd him, she did quite disarme" (3.4.27). Marinell's vulnerability makes clear that bounded subjects do not reduce the need for violence. On the contrary, Marinell's exposure to violence is a direct result of his opposition to love's enervating force. Whereas the former violence leads to death without community ("The martiall Mayd stayd not him to lament"), the latter gathers bodies together through a shared vulnerability and openness to others.

What makes Marinell's story so significant, then, is that he multiplies love's attachments by making the violence and vulnerability of love the basis for friendly community. Spenser imagines this form of violence as a kind of elemental fragility shared among individuals—both human and nonhuman—and so shifts the optic of his poem away from the seacoast locale of Britomart's benthic imaginary to the "seas abundant progeny," of which Marinell is one. Turning to Book 4, we find that the appearance of Marinell marks not so much the cessation of Britomart's benthic imaginary as its multiplication and refraction among friends.

Marinell and the Legend of Friendship

In "Friendship as a Way of Life," Foucault argues that the problem of love (or homosexuality more specifically) "is not to discover in oneself the truth of one's sex, but, rather, to use one's sexuality henceforth to arrive at a multiplicity of relationships." To treat sexuality "not [as] a form of desire but [as] something desirable," Foucault suggests, means "to invent, from A to Z, a relationship that is still formless, which is friendship."³⁷

Although numerous critics have pointed to the often surprising overlaps and tensions between love and friendship in *The Faerie Queene*,³⁸ I reference Foucault's definition of friendship in order to highlight a key aspect of Spenserian ontology that scholars have yet fully to remark upon: namely, the linkage in Spenser's poetry between love (*amare*) and the sea (*mare*) has consequences for all relationships in which acknowledgment of likeness (homo-geneity) overcomes difference and hierarchy (hetero-geneity). In the Legend of Friendship, we see the literalization of Foucault's idea of friendship as a "way of life"—whereby "life itself" becomes a type of wending, journeying, erring condition of human agency—in the marriage of two rivers. In Canto 11, Spenser turns his allegorical gaze to the Thames and the Medway rivers, for whom "all the Sea-gods and their fruitfull seede, / In honour of the spousalls," are gathered together (4.11.8). Enacting the epithalamion genre's signature traits of sexual violence and heteronormativity,³⁹ Spenser not only changes the sex of the Medway river, as noted by A.C. Hamilton,⁴⁰ but also depicts a scene in which the "proud Nymph" "relent[s]" to the Thames' sexual advances:

Long had the *Thames* (as we in records reed)
 Before that day her wooed to his bed;
 But the proud Nymph would for no wordly meed,
 Nor no entreatie to his loue be led;

Till now at last relenting, she to him was wed. (4.11.8)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "relent" as a type of bodily melting, from the Anglo-Norman word *releuter*, meaning "to melt, slacken, give up." Although in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries "relent" could be used interchangeably to mean either

“to relinquish or abandon a resolution or course of action” or “to dissolve into water,” Spenser capitalizes on both meanings by portraying the marriage of the two rivers as a loss of will, a “relenting” on the part of the Nymph. While common enough within the genre of epithalamic poetry, the coercive nature of the rivers’ union, whose sexual *telos* is signaled by the rhyming of “bed,” “led,” and “wed,” serves here to remind the reader of Florimell’s capture by Proteus in Book 3 and to prefigure the marriage between Florimell and Marinell in Book 4. Regarding the former, Proteus captures Florimell after having rescued her from the “Fishers wandring bote” (3.8.31). He then takes her to his underwater “bowre” deep “in the bottom of the maine,” where he “make[s] him selfe a mortall wight,” and “like a Faerie knight him selfe he drest; / For euery shape on him he could endew” (3.8.37, 39-41). Infinitely changeable, Proteus cannot, however, change Florimell’s heart, since “Eternall thraldome was to her more lief, / Then losse of chastitie, or chaunge of love” (3.8.42). Unable to win Florimell’s affections through friendship, Proteus turns to violent force: “Down in a Dongeon deepe he let her fall, / And threatned there to make her his eternall thrall” (3.8.41).

Thus the marriage of the two rivers is not only a reminder of Florimell’s capture by Proteus; more importantly, it is a recapitulation of the violence that Florimell endures over the course of two Books. The model of relationality thus allegorized by the two rivers is one in which domination and loss of will are essential to the instrumentalization of friendship for the purpose of marriage. No doubt it is for this reason that scholars keen on investigating the erotic impulses of Book 3 have little to say about Florimell and Marinell, who seem to conform all too well to C.S. Lewis’ influential assertion that the direction of love in Spenser’s allegory is the marriage bed.⁴¹ The Legend of Friendship

binds the erotic excesses of Book 3 by fashioning subjects whose ultimate purpose is—so the story goes—to “relent” to the marriage plot.

And yet there is another possibility for reading the language of “relenting” in the Legend of Friendship. In this second reading, the rivers do not just prefigure the marriage of Florimell and Marinell; they represent the more-than-human possibilities for thinking friendship in Spenser’s allegory. Just as we have seen Spenser “melt” in relation to Raleigh, and Britomart in relation to the sea, so the marriage of the Thames and Medway rivers enables us to imagine forms of relationality beyond the strictures of domination, utilization, and heteronormativity. Read literally (as Spenser’s allegory no doubt invites us to do) “relenting” serves not only to connect Spenser’s liquid poetics to the discourse of friendship but to multiply love’s intensities in places where, in Foucault’s words, “there is supposed to be only law, rule, or habit.”

Consider Florimell’s complaint at the end of Book 4. Imprisoned in Proteus’ “dungeon deepe,” and “bound” by “chaynes” (4.11.2-3), Florimell provides the visual and topographic obverse of the wedding ceremony by literalizing—in “chaynes”—the rivers’ “spousalls” bonds:

Yet loe the seas I see by often beating,
Doe pearce the rockes, and hardest marble weares;
But his hard rocky hart for no entreating
Will yeeld, but when my piteous plaints he heares,
Is hardned more with my abundant teares.
Yet though he neuer list to me relent,
But let me waste in woe my wretched yeares,

Yet will I neuer of my loue repent,

But ioy that for his sake I suffer imprisonment. (4.12.7)

At its extreme, Spenser suggests, the fashioning of virtue through friendship leads to bondage and imprisonment; for Florimell, however, more disconcerting than Proteus' stony prison is the imprisonment she suffers due to Marinell's "rocky hart," to which "no entreating / Will yeeld," and which, unlike "marble" or "stone," not even the "seas" rough "beating" can "pearce." For Florimell, love is a prison, "So had [she] rather to be thrall, then free" (4.12.10). Echoing Britomart's complaint in Book 3, Florimell draws a negative comparison between Marinell's "rocky hart" and the rock that confines her, stating that whereas the latter yields in time to the heaving of the sea, Marinell, by contrast, "when my piteous plaints he heares / Is hardned more with my abundant teares." An imaginary more lithic than benthic, Florimell contrasts love's oceanic bodies (her own) with the mineralized and militarized bodies of epic. And yet, what appears at first as antinomy soon gives way to bodily mingling as the stone that surrounds Florimell "relents" to her "lamentable voice":

So feeling her case she did complaine,

That ruth it moued in the rocky stone,

And made it seeme to feele her grieuous paine,

And oft to grone with billowes beating from the maine. (4.12.5)

From stone that confines to stone that moves in fellow feeling for its captive's "grieuous paine," Florimell's Orphic song imagines a lithic love in which "rocky stone" relents—that is, dissolves—becoming more lively by sharing in Florimell's pain. By entering into sympathetic union with Florimell, the stone becomes a thrall to her emotion, but one with

more animation and agency than those, like Marinell, who fashion “rocky hart[s].”⁴²

Hence Florimell’s paradox: “Such thralldome or such freedome.” To be a thrall to love is to be free; Florimell shares this e-motional freedom, “or” this bondage, with the elements of rock and sea.

When Marinell hears Florimell’s complaint, he too “relent[s]”:

All which complaint when *Marinell* had heard,

And vnderstood the cause of all her care

To come of him, for vsing her so hard,

His stubborne heart, that neuer felt misfare

Was toucht with soft remorse and pittie rare;

That euen for grieffe of minde he oft did grone,

.....

Thus whilst his stony heart with tender ruth

Was toucht, and mighty courage mollifide,

Dame *Venus* sonne that tameth stubbore youth

With iron bit, and maketh him abide,

Till like a victor on his backe he ride,

Into his mouth his maystring bridle threw,

That made him stoupe, till he did him bestride:

Then gan he make him tread his steps anew,

And learne to loue, by learning louer paines to rew. (4.12.12-13)

Recalling the ecological assemblage of image-plant-heart that grafts Britomart’s

melancholy to Guyon and Glauce, and later the sea, Marinell’s encounter with Florimell’s

voice brings him into sympathetic union with the elements: his “stony heart” was with “tender ruth / ... toucht”; it “moued” in unison with the “rocky stone.” And like the stone that cries out “with billows beating,” he too “for grieve of minde ... did grone.” For the first time in Marinell’s journey, he experiences pain without purpose of utility; his “ruth” is not secondary to the pains of self-fashioning but rather integral to the unbounded being that he is (becoming). Marinell becomes a thrall to love, so much so that he too appears bound and bridled by “*Venus sonne*.” This inhuman assemblage of voice-rock-sea-and-horse shifts the optic of Spenser’s allegory away from the bounded body of (human) self-fashioning toward a different understanding of the *homo*: for with Marinell, it is the relation of difference *and* sameness indicated by his very name (Marinell is a composite of both masculine and feminine nouns—*marin*, *marine*—and land and sea, since *marine* refers to tidelands) that links his capacity to feel pain to the elements that pass through him, which are not exterior but rather animate his every movement. In Spenser’s hands, this sense of homo-ness—of being composed by the same matter as rock and sea that goes beyond man (*homo*) toward intimacy with inhuman beings suggests a different kind of friendship, one at odds with the regulatory norms of a marriage plot premised on sexual difference, conquest, and hierarchy.

Tamed by “*Venus sonne*,” Marinell succumbs to “louers paines” and to a melancholy that consumes his every thought: “In solitary silence far from wight, / He gan record the lamentable stowre, / In which his wretched loue lay day and night, / For his deare sake that ill deseru’d that plight” (4.12.19). Like Britomart before him, Marinell “record[s]” his melancholy by engraving Florimell’s memory directly on his heart: “The thought whereof empierst his hart so deepe, / That of no worldly thing he tooke delight; /

Ne dayly food did take, ne nightly sleepe, / But payn'd, and mourn'd, and languisht, and alone did weepe" (4.12.19). Alone, consumed by melancholy, the Marinell we see in Book 4 is the semblance of the knight whom Britomart left alone on the beach, friendless and without care, but with the following difference: when Cymoent sees her son Marinell, "vnable once to stirre or moue," she at first rebukes the sea-god Tryphon for failing to heal his "former fatall wound," and seeks a final cure for his "new languishment" (4.12.23). When no cure can be found for the "loue" that "afflict[s] his engrieued mind," she too relents (4.12.25). By rejecting Proteus' prophecy, which ruled against love, Cymoent becomes a friend to her son not despite their shared affliction but because of it; in so doing, she makes of friendship a means for maximizing, not abstaining from, the most intense and corporeal experience of love as a shattering of boundaries:

That *Florimell* it was, which wrought his paine,
She gan a fresh to chafe, and griue in euery vaine.
Yet since she saw the streight extremitie,
In which his life vnluckily was layd,
It was no time to scan the prophecie,
Whether old *Proteus* true or false had sayd,
That his decay should happen by a mayd.
It's late in death of daunger to aduize,
Or loue forbid him, that is life denayd:
But rather gan in troubled mind deuize,
How she that Ladies libertie might enterprize. (4.12.27-28)

The “libertie” to love Marinell made Florimell a prisoner to Proteus’ desire; hearing this, both Marinell and Cymoent become thralls to this “mayd” whose affliction they share: “Or loue forbid him, that is life denayd” (4.12.28). The “life denayd” to Marinell is not only his mortal life but also Florimell’s; his “extremitie” is her imprisonment.

But the “relenting” that we see between Florimell, Marinell, and Cymoent is altogether different from the “relenting” prescribed by Proteus, who understands friendship as a means of giving way on one’s desires, whether through discipline or through violent coercion. By contrast, the “relenting” that Cymoent undergoes for her son and for Florimell at the end of Book 4 is more like the “drops of melting love” that Spenser describes in reference to Elizabeth, namely, an anonymous and involuntary state of being dissolved through non-mastery. Just as the anonymous elements of stone and sea move with pity, so Cymoent, whose provenance is the sea, moves with e-motion for the “mayd” whose suffering she shares. Such voluntary relinquishment of the autonomy and self-determination celebrated by epic rests on a shared vulnerability in which boundaries are not so much overcome as recognized as permeable and phantasmatic from the beginning.

This version of friendship, in which one individual relents to another not by sacrificing one’s will but by sacrificing one’s wish for autonomy, runs counter to the Friendship Legend’s previous episodes where the body’s inhuman composition is cordoned off by the imperative to fashion impenetrable subjects. Consider the following scene of martial combat in which the collision of warlike bodies produces an ecological milieu at once *co-extensive* with the bodies rendered and *separate*:

As when two billowes in the Irish sowndes,

Forcibly driuen with contrarie tydes,
Do meete together, each abacke rebowndes
With roaring rage; and dashing on all sides,
That filleth all the sea with fome, diuydes
The doubtfull current into diuers wayes:
So fell those two in spight of both their prydes,
But *Scudamour* himself did soon vprayse,

And mounting light his foe for lying long vpbrayes. (4.1.42)

When Paridell attacks Scudamour, he does so out “of friendship” for Blandamour, who reasons: “That as I late aduentured for your sake, / The hurts whereof me now from battell stay, / Ye will me now with like good turne repay” (4.1.40). In the friendship economy defined by Blandamour, friends assume “hurts” only if it is profitable to do so based on their individual interests. As bounded individuals, Blandamour and Paridell agree to risk their autonomy so as to establish greater autonomy through the unequal distribution of bodily suffering. Consequently, when Paridell “of friendship” competes with Scudamour, they do so as “two billowes” moving with “contrarie tydes,” who with “roaring rage ... diuydes / The doubtfull current into diuers wayes.” Although Spenser once again shifts the optic of his poem to visualize friendship in a nonhuman register, he does so from the vantage of an oblique simile: “As when.” The distance surmounted by Spenser simile—between human events on the one hand, and nonhuman events on the other—remains *the* focus of the analogy, such that we are meant to recognize the divisions between self and sea (“the sea with fome, diuydes”) over and above their

continuities. These knights whose “prydes” multiply their injuries remain too prideful to relent to each other’s suffering.

Cymoent, by contrast, does not give way on her desires only to further her self interest; nor does she prize greater autonomy as the telos of friendship. Instead, Cymoent lets herself be undone by her affections; she relents to an internal force that seeks amity rather than enmity. Like the suffering shared between Britomart and the sea, and Florimell and the “rocky stone,” Cymoent melts with fellow-feeling. When we reach the end of the Friendship Legend, this mutuality of feeling, or this indifference to the other’s difference, crosses the ontological boundaries between nymph and mortal “wight” to enfold all three:

Right so himselfe did *Marinell* vpreare,
When he in place his dearest loue did spy,
And though his limbs could not his bodie beare,
Ne former strength returne so suddenly,
Yet chearefull signes he shewed outwardly.
Ne less was she in secret hart affected. (4.12.35)

When Marinell rises to meet Florimell, “though his limbs could not his bodie beare,” we read that he does so like a plant: Marinell turns to his friend, “As withered weed through cruell winters tine, / That feeles the warmth of sunny beames reflection, / Liftes vp his head, that did before decline / And gins to spread his leafe before the faire sunshine” (4.12.34). Here the distance travelled by Spenser’s simile is not called into question by warring subjects. Instead, Spenser invites us to read Marinell’s “chearefull signes” materially, heliotropically, and errantly—as signs of *life*.

If, as I have argued above, scholars of early modern sexuality have tended to neglect Marinell and Florimell due to their supposed predictability and conventionality in comparison with the amorous “play” of Book 3, then what I wish to underscore here is just how counterintuitive and unpredictable is a marriage that collates the diverse materialities of human-nymph-rock-plant-and-sea. Unlike the marriage between the two rivers, which turns gendered difference into a loss of will, and unlike the battle between Paridell and Scudamour, which instrumentalizes friendship for personal gain, the concord achieved between Marinell and Florimell is conventional only in the most capacious sense of the word *convention*: a concordance structurally shared by all. The friendship that we witness at the end of the Book 4 between Marinell and Florimell is as much *hetero* as it is *homo*, in Foucault’s sense. And that is because the entanglements wrought by love, far from abating after Book 3, proliferate along vectors of friendship that link what is *hetero*—self and other—to a much denser, more perverse fabric of life and materiality.

Spenser’s liquid poetics thus enables us to read signs like “relent” both doubly and materially: not just as an expression of a Protestant morality aimed at fashioning proper subjects; but as a literal manifestation of the fragility “we” share with inhuman ecologies. In Spenser’s liquid poetics, signs such as Marinell’s are best read athwart human ontology, as *vital signs*; they are as innumerable, and as errant, as the sea’s abundant seed.

¹ Edmund Spenser, *Colin Clovts Come Home Againe*, in *The Shorter Poems*, ed. Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 350.

² All quotations from *The Faerie Queene* (book, canto, and stanza) are taken from Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 2007).

³ Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 10, 10-11.

⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1994), 387. See also Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, trans. Robert Hurley, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997).

⁵ See esp. Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Alan Stewart, *Close Readers: Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁶ Jeffrey Masten, "Toward A Queer Address: The Taste of Letters and Early Modern Male Friendship," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10.3 (2004): 371.

⁷ Masten, "Toward A Queer Address," 376.

⁸ Among early modern ecocritical accounts, see Vin Nardizzi, *Wooden Os: Shakespeare's Theatres and England's Trees* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); and Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean*

Locales (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). See also Gail Kern Paster's influential study of the humoral body's co-composition with the environment in *Humoring the Body: Emotion and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁹ I borrow the term "renaturalization" from political theorist Hasana Sharp, who develops "a politics of renaturalization from Spinoza's naturalism." See Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 2.

¹⁰ My account of Spenser's liquid ontology draws on the new materialism of Stacy Alaimo. See Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

¹¹ In making this aquacentric argument, I draw on the recent "oceanic turn" in early modern studies. See, for example, Dan Brayton, *Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012); and Steve Mentz, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean* (London: Continuum, 2009).

¹² See in particular Jonathan Goldberg, *The Seeds of Things: Theorizing Sexuality and Materiality in Renaissance Representations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), and Jacques Lezra, *Unspeakable Subjects: The Genealogy of the Event in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

¹³ I derive this felicitous phrase, *Volta do Mar*, from Brayton's *Shakespeare's Ocean* (3).

¹⁴ Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 75-76.

¹⁵ De Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement," 76.

¹⁶ See Gordon Teskey, *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 171.

¹⁸ Daniel Juan Gil, *Before Intimacy: Asocial Sexuality in Early Modern England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), 10-21.

²⁰ See Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Forms of Being: Cinema, Aesthetics, Subjectivity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 124-178, and Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips, *Intimacies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 57-87; and Kaja Silverman, *Flesh of My Flesh* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 17-36.

²¹ Masten, "Toward A Queer Address," 376.

²² Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 126.

²³ Kim F. Hall, "Culinary Spaces, Colonial Spaces: The Gendering of Sugar in the Seventeenth Century," in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, ed. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dymphna Callaghan (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 168-190. Other key studies of the relation of sugar commodification, domestic consumption, gender, and power are Roland Greene's account of sugar in *Astrophil and Stella* in *Unrequited Conquests: Love and Empire in the Colonial Americas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 185-187, and

Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For another account of the literary and cultural significance of sugar to questions of exoticism, colonialism, race and gender, and capitalist ideology, see Timothy Morton, *The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²⁴ Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

²⁵ Edmund Spenser, "Letter to Raleigh," in *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, 2nd ed. (London: Longman), 716.

²⁶ Daniel Tiffany, *Toy Medium: Materialism and Modern Lyric* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2000), 3.

²⁷ Tiffany, *Toy Medium*, 3.

²⁸ Ibid., 5. For a related discussion of framing technologies in Renaissance poetry, see Rayna Kalas, *Frame, Glass, Verse: The Technology of Poetic Invention in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

²⁹ James Kuzner, *Open Subjects: English Renaissance Republicans, Modern Selfhoods and the Virtue of Vulnerability* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 39.

³⁰ Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 34.

³¹ Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics*, 35. Barbour's reference is to Bacon's *De sapientia verterum* ("Wisdom of the Ancients," 1609).

³² Tiffany, *Toy Medium*, 5.

³³ For a discussion of “cosmopolity,” see Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal*.

³⁴ Dan Brayton, *Shakespeare’s Ocean*, 62-63.

³⁵ Drew Daniel, *The Melancholy Assemblage: Affect and Epistemology in the English Renaissance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 5.

³⁶ On the concept of “body without organs,” see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983). On Paster’s usage of Deleuze and Guattari in relation to the body’s liquid composition, see *Humoring the Body*, 1-24.

³⁷ Foucault, “Friendship as a Way of Life,” 135, 136.

³⁸ See, for example, Jonathan Goldberg, *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); James Kuzner, *Open Subjects*; Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Melissa E. Sanchez, “Fantasies of Friendship in *The Faerie Queene*, Book IV,” *English Literary Renaissance* 37 (2007): 250-273; and Kathryn Schwarz, *Tough Love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

³⁹ On the violence of epithalamion, see Melissa E. Sanchez, “‘Modesty or Comeliness’: The Predicament of Reform Theology in Spenser’s *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*,” *Renascence* 65 (2012): 5-24.

⁴⁰ See Hamilton, ed. *The Faerie Queene*, 493.

⁴¹ See C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 2.

⁴² On the subject of stone and animacy, see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015). For a related discussion of pain and the relational dynamics of vulnerability, see Joseph Campana, *The Pain of Reformation: Spenser, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Masculinity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

Chapter Three: Tempestuous Life

A single and same Ocean for all the drops, a single clamour of Being for all beings: on condition that each being, each drop and each voice has reached the state of excess. —

Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*¹

Certainely, as all the Riuers in the world, though they haue diuers risings, and diuers runnings; though they some times hide them-selves for a while under ground, and seeme to be lost in Sea-like Lakes; doe at last finde, and fall into the great Ocean: so after all the searches that humaine capacitie hath; and after all Philosophical contemplation and curiositie; in the necessitie of this infinite power, all the reason of man ends and dissolves it selfe. —Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World*²

Becoming Ocean

In the preface of his intended six volume magnum opus, *The History of the World* (1614), Walter Raleigh imagines his life as a tempest of misfortune, physical ruination, and inexorable time. A life and death meditation at the bleeding edge of contemporary biopolitics, including such concepts as Achille Mbembe's necropolitics, "the living dead," and Giorgio Agamben's "bare life,"³ Raleigh's *History* begins, in derelict fashion, as a confession of his life's "dissability":

I confess that it had better sorted with my dissability, the better part of whose times are runne out in other trauailes; to have set together (as I could) the unioynted and scattered frame of our English affaires, than of the Uniuersall: in whome had there beene no other defect, (who am all defect) then the time of the

day, it were enough; the day of a tempestuous life, drawne on to the very euening ere I began.⁴

From the beginning, Raleigh cancels the very prospect of his *History*, a history so massive as to extinguish the author's life long before the writing of it began. Raleigh's *History* is a history in ruins. In part, this chapter argues, the problems arise from what Laurie Shannon, along with a host of other ecologically-minded critics refer to as the "human exceptionality" of the term.⁵

History, Shannon argues, tends to be a narrative for and about personhood. Absent persons, there is no subject of history. Thus the efficacy or continuity of the term always seems to depend on the marginality of nonhuman agents. Yet as Raleigh proceeds from the altered states of his "dissability," in which the boundary between life and death seems little more than the dilation between day and evening, to the "frame" of "our English affaires," he imagines human history as itself "unioynted," as a "scattered" and disabling confrontation with the Earth's troubling liquidity: "How unfit, and how unworthy a choice I haue made of my self, to undertake a worke of this mixture; mine own reason, though exceeding weake, hath sufficiently resolved me. For had it been begotten then with my first dawne of day," Raleigh muses, "I might yet well haue doubted, that the darkenesse of Age and Death would haue couered ouer both It and Mee, long before the performance."⁶ This vision of life and death testifies not only to Raleigh's own waning health but also to the disabling force of "a worke of this mixture," a work in which human history—the history "of our English affaires"—dissolves into the deterritorializing flows of "Uniuersall" time, "beginning with the Creation."⁷ The attempt to write the history of the world seems initially to confirm a scholarly tendency to read

Raleigh's various and incomplete writings as contributing to the imperialistic project of continental expansion. Yet as Raleigh moves deeper into his meditation, human history—the history of persons, geographies, and nations—dissolves in the face of uncontrollable and cataclysmic natural agents. History undergoes a radical transvaluation, becoming a study not just of persons, but of the whole *world*.⁸ In Raleigh's "Uniuersall" history, human activity collapses time and again into the sea, becoming a plane of immanence for life's forces to reconfigure.⁹ As the human civilizations that Raleigh details over nearly 3,000 pages move steadily toward annihilation, Raleigh reminds the reader that just as all the rivers of the Earth must end in the "great ocean, so "after all the searches that humane capacitie hath," including Raleigh's own ill-fated searches, "in the necessitie of this infinite power, all the reason of man ends and dissolves it selfe." History becomes ocean, and only the ruins are left to attest to man's ending.

Biopolitics at Sea

I begin with Raleigh's *The History of the World* with an eye toward reframing such biopolitical factors as Raleigh's "dissability"—a term that animates paradoxically life and death ontologies of matter, including the fragile boundaries between animacy and inanimacy, as Mel Y. Chen has recently theorized with respect to so-called "inanimate" materialities¹⁰—around a concept that has less to do with human world-making and more to do with the "states of exception" under which inhuman agencies come to matter for world history (often by disabling human epistemologies).

Among contemporary theorists of biopolitics, Giorgio Agamben has been the most successful at calling our attention to a series of "states of exception" in which

human freedoms grounded in the law of sovereign nations are suspended, and all for the purpose of reconstituting the law by furthering its forms of calculation, management, and instrumental reason. For Agamben, the defining feature of biopolitics is that of “bare life” (*zoē*), which he opposes (in ways we will want to question) to the political life (*bios*) of man. In Agamben’s formulation, it is only in the modern era, when the exception “everywhere becomes the rule,” that “bare life—which is originally situated at the margins of the political order—gradually begins to coincide with the political realm.”¹¹ When the exception becomes the rule, *bios* (human life, us) and *zoē* (nonhuman life, them) “enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction,” and politics becomes biopolitics, a system of managing life and death ontologies through elaborate forms of calculation and instrumental reason.

Although Agamben is critical of the power of sovereign nations to suspend the rights of man, he nevertheless sees the law’s suspension as ushering in a real potential for human redemption¹²: for “only within a biopolitical horizon will it be possible to decide,” Agamben writes, “whether the categories whose opposition founded modern politics [*bios* and *zoē*] ... will have to be abandoned. And only a reflection that ... interrogates the link between bare life and politics ... will be able to bring the political out of its concealment and, at the same time, return thought to its practical calling.”¹³ For Agamben, the project of returning “thought to its practical calling”—of going beyond the politics of bare life and death to regain a sense of life’s quality or freedom—requires that man once again think of life’s proper “calling” as an act of *creation*, in other words, that he think of politics as something *made* and just not given. Alain Badiou voices a similar “call” in his reading of St. Paul. In opposition to the calculations of bare life and death

wrought by “false universality”—the Church in Paul’s case, or world capitalism in Badiou’s—Badiou endeavors to “refound a theory of the Subject” based on Paul’s own evental state of suspension: “Let us say that, for Paul, it is a matter of investigating which law is capable of structuring a subject devoid of all identity and suspended to an event whose only ‘proof’ lies precisely in its having been declared by a subject.”¹⁴ As with Agamben, life’s proper calling, according to Badiou, requires a suspension of law and normativity precisely so as to return human life to its practical calling: that of “subtracting truth from ... any objective aggregate.”¹⁵ For both thinkers, the return to “life” proper can only be founded on the exclusion of bare life (*zoē*) from the human polis and the suspension of calculation and techno-reason. Only then can man (for it is always a question of man with these thinkers) become an opening to future horizons and return politics to its proper calling.

But one can think here, *with* Raleigh, of a state of exception that does not return politics to its so-called “human” grounding. What if, for example, we recognized the Earth’s liquefaction as an agent of suspension? Would the “Ocean,” “Rivers,” and “Sea-like Lakes” of which Raleigh writes count as an opening to future political horizons, such that we would then have to speak not of man’s “practical calling,” but of the sea’s? For the Raleigh of the *History*, as well as *The Discoverie of Guiana* (1596) and *Ocean to Cynthia* (1592), the Earth’s waters do just that: they suspend life and death’s proper boundaries by redefining problematic notions of “liveliness,” “bodily integrity,” and “disability” in the light of inhuman exigencies and anarchic temporalities—life and death (de)compositions of matter in contremps with human world-making. In short, there is no pure realm outside of *bio*-politics, no way to wash ourselves clean of our inhuman

condition, since the matter of the earth is already politically active in “our” designs.¹⁶

Rather than try to return man to his “proper” calling, Raleigh puts forth the very real possibility of a state of suspension that returns man to the sea. This is not a posthumanist rapture, much less a return to an organic vitalism, but rather an attempt to live life among the ruins, at the “infinite” speed at which Raleigh imagines human thought destroys itself by becoming ocean.

Whereas critics such as Stephen Greenblatt, Mary Fuller, and Richard Helgerson have each wanted to see Raleigh’s writings as evidence of an imperial ideology in service of the English nation,¹⁷ I suggest that to fully appreciate Raleigh’s involvements in the Caribbean and American tropics we need to be less *geo*- and more *aqua*-centric in our accountings.¹⁸ Only then can we begin to understand “forms of nationhood” (Helgerson) in their proper relational context, *not* as reflections of discrete national bodies exerting unilateral control over colonial environments, but as imbroglios of material (human and nonhuman) agents.¹⁹ Along with Édouard Glissant, I conceive of these land-sea imbroglios as a “poetics of relation.”²⁰ By drawing on Atlantic histories²¹ as well as Raleigh’s own experiences in the liquifying swamp- and river-lands of the American tropics, I read Raleigh’s “tempestuous life” as a figure for the agency, relationality, and transcorporeality of the sea.²² My contention is that early modern studies, postcolonial studies, and ecocritical studies in general have not been eager to consider the full extent of Raleigh’s strange and liquifying phrase, “tempestuous life,” especially given that unlike questions of national sovereignty, imagined community, and ecological plunder, Raleigh’s “tempestuous life” does not seem to offer fixed solutions in which anyone might stand to gain the upper hand. My suggestion that Raleigh’s works dissolve sovereign bodies

(human, national, and territorial) by returning them to the sea departs from critical assessments that assume, far too easily, that Raleigh's seagoing and colonial ventures were largely one-sided. In my account, the "stuff" of history, what Agamben excludes from biopoliticity, has a say in the composition (composition being a variant of compost, of matter returning to earth) of world events. To echo Steve Mentz, "Too often [in literary studies] the sea quickly becomes a metaphor for the artistic process ... or mutability itself. The real taste of the ocean gets lost in the flux. It shouldn't. It's there."²³

In what follows, I trace the uncanny "thereness" of the ocean in three parts: from the amorous disaggregation of bodies in *Ocean to Cynthia*, to the abyssal encounters of *The Discoverie of Guiana*, to the techno-oceans of the *History*. More than just a cipher or thing to be crossed, the ocean in Raleigh's writings represents an agency of biopolitical suspension, an archive or *mal d'archive* of the earth's shifting transformations of matter. Oceans *world* in Raleigh's archive. To figure that inhuman worlding is the task of this chapter.

Suspensions I: Cinders

Allow me to begin with a brief genealogy. In classical accounts, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, we recall that Venus uses her aquatic origins as a source of political agency, invoking her Greek name, Aphrodite (from the Greek *aphros*, meaning "foam"), to rebuke the over-weening god of the sea, Neptune. Venus exhorts: "'Lord of the Ocean, ... / ... take pity upon my children whose bodies you see / are afloat in the vast Ionian Sea. Transform them to sea-gods. / Some credit is owed me in your domain, if I once was formed / out of foam in the midst of the sea, as the story survives in my Greek name'"

(4.533-538).²⁴ Or take the lachrymal effusions of Shakespeare's Venus in *Venus and Adonis* (1593), which metamorphose (in true Ovidian fashion) from salty "tears" to "distilling showers" to torrential "rain"—until finally, "peering through a wave," "bath[ing] in water," Venus's tears outstrip the very limits of the earth: "The sea hath bounds," Venus says to Adonis, "but deep desire hath none" (82, 66, 71, 86, 94, 389).²⁵ As in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Venus's aquatic transcorporeality exceeds the limits of bodily integrity and thus becomes a curb to martial masculinity:

"I have been wooed, as I entreat thee now,
Even by the stern and direful god of war,
Whose sinewy neck in battle ne'er did bow,
Who conquers where he come in every jar;
Yet hath he been my captive and my slave,
And begged for that which thou unasked shall have." (97-102)

Venus disarms Mars, god of war, and teaches him "To toy, to wanton, dally, smile and jest" (106). Taking a lesson from the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid's didactic love poem about the arts of sexual domination, which begins with an invocation of Venus and which can be counted as an urtext in the history of sexuality—along the lines of the Marquis de Sade's *Juliette* and Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus In Furs*—Shakespeare's Venus not only masters the god of war; she outfits him in the chains and gear of bondage:

"Thus he that overruled I overswayed,
Leading him prisoner in a red-rose chain;
Strong-tempered steel his stronger strength obeyed,
Yet was he servile to my coy disdain." (109-112)

Although Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* begins by laying claim to a field of knowledge separate from that of the sea—"Seamen with sailing Arts their Vessels move; / ... But I am Master in Love's mighty School" (1.3-6)—Shakespeare weds *ars erotica* and *ars aqua* together, beginning his poem with an epigraph plucked from the *Amores*, Ovid's erotic love elegy in which the language of hydraulics, of "*plena ministret aqua*" (i.e., of water ministered plentifully), serves to foreshadow the engulfing tears of Venus in *Venus and Adonis*: "*Vilia miretur vulgas: mihi flauus Apollo / Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua*" ("Let what is cheap excite the wonder of the crowd; to me, may golden Apollo minister full cups from the Castalian fount").²⁶ In the liquid dynamics of Ovid and Shakespeare, Venus out-masters martial masculinity by engulfing the latter in sea-like becomings that are also violent endings.

Still, we need not read these violent endings apocalyptically, for in them what emerges is a different kind of bodily becoming—what Spenser, in reference to Raleigh, identifies as a type of bodily "melting." While numerous critics have shown Spenser's martial protagonists to be especially susceptible to the enervating and engulfing powers of Venus, I want to make a case for reading these abyssal encounters between epic and romance in light of a revised biopolitical theory of the sea.²⁷ Returning to Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser alights on one of Agamben's central biopolitical formulations: that the sovereign exception underlies all claims of sovereignty. Or to use Carl Schmitt's formula in *Political Theology*: "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception."²⁸ Sovereign power is demonstrated through an "inclusive exclusion," that is, exclusion (being held in suspension) from the political community is the very mark of "bare life" and of life's subjection to sovereign rule. And yet, as I have already noted, Agamben

holds out the redemptive possibility that the sovereign exception can return politics to its proper grounding in the Aristotelian description of humans as *bios politikos*, as the kind of beings whose natural calling is to create the political community of man. In contrast to Agamben's overt humanism, then, allow me to begin with an "inclusive exclusion" of a different kind, one that does not return man to his proper calling but instead gives rise to a different understanding of the *bios* in biopoliticity.

If Spenser fears at times the engulfing powers of Venus, Raleigh's *Ocean to Cynthia* does nothing but lament a barren existence bereft of the fructifying powers of the sea:

Lost in the mudd of thos hygh flowinge streames
which through more fayrer feilds ther courses bend,

.....

from frutfull trees I gather withred leves
and glean the broken eares with misers hands,
who sumetyme did injoy the waighty sheves

I seeke faire floures amidd the brinish sand. (*The 21th: and last booke of the
Ocean to Scinthia* 17-24)²⁹

Beginning in the alluvial sands of once flowing tides, rivers, and streams, the speaker's identity materializes as the mineralized effect of fluidities become solidities, and of vibrant materialities become dead beaches. From "withred leves" to "broken eares," the landscape of Raleigh's poem is one of drought and desiccation: "I seeke faire floures amidd the brinish sand." "[A] boddy violently slayne" by once "pleasinge streames"—"the messengers sumetymes of my great woe"—the speaker addresses his wounds to the

dead, “as to the dead, the dead did thes unfold,” asking: “what heat in Cynders of extinguished fiers?” A necropolitical question of extreme duress, the speaker invites the reader to pay “wittnes” to “joyes interred ... under dust,” to a life more dead than living, and more spectral than human. It would be wrong to say that Raleigh’s allegory of the ocean merely allegorizes “the human,” for at every turn the allegory in question refigures the speaker as less than human, as utterly inhuman, as “Cynder[.]” and “dust.” Raleigh’s *Ocean to Cynthia* does not give face to the figure of the ocean; it does not try to recreate the abyss in man’s best image. Instead it elaborates seasons of drought and flood so severe as to render the human face beyond recognition. In the following lines, the speaker (here known as “Ocean”) writes “as onn ... / whom love, and tyme, and fortune had defaced”; he writes his face in the “dust”:

Alone, forsaken, frindless onn the shore
with many wounds, with deaths cold pangs inebrased
writes in the dust as onn that could no more
whom love, and tyme, and fortune had defaced. (89-92)

Raleigh’s poem is a poem about defacement, and yet it is not tragic because it offers the understanding that the human face is not lost but rather changed. From drought and desiccation to flood and flowing waters, the speaker’s essential question, “what heat in Cynders of extinguished fiers?” returns with surprising force as “dust” and “cinder” give way to energies of liquefaction within the environment itself, disintegrating (or indeed melting) the desert ocean into “suddayn streames”:

so did my joyes mealt into secreat teares

so did my hart desolve in wastinge dropps
and as the season of the year outweares
and heapes of snow from of the mountayn topps
with suddayn streames the valle[y]s overflow
so did the tyme draw on my more dispaire
then fludds of sorrow and whole seas of wo
the bancks of all my hope did overbeare. (134-141)

In Raleigh's *Cynthia* poem, "fludds of sorrow" and emotions of "joye[]" and "dispaire" are not projected onto the outside environment; they have their source in it. From "seasons" to "mountayn topps," "valle[y]s" and finally river "bancks," Raleigh welcomes the oceanic feeling of bodies melting into other bodies as affects of despair, disquietude, torment and love channel through him, from him, and without him, making it true what the speaker says: "All is desolvde" (235). This shift from a poetics of defacement to a poetics of ecological assemblage allows us to abandon the elegiac orientation that Raleigh so often adopted and that many of his critics, most notably Greenblatt, have so conveniently taken for granted. For Greenblatt, Raleigh's work consists of an "unending dialectic ... between optimism and despair, between the vision of a world made over in the image of man's desires and the vision of a world of lies, disappointment, and death."³⁰ For Agnes Latham, "everything [Raleigh] did seems to have been tainted by a curious impermanence."³¹ To be sure, Raleigh saw his life as an epitaph upon ruins, as a tempest of misfortune, stagnation, and death. But beyond this elegiac terrain of bare life and death Raleigh describes transformations of the human body that are at once literal and

allegorical and that render the possibility that lovers' wounds are not simply human because they move with the ocean and partake of its watery stirrings.

To read Raleigh's poetry in this way, as a force of ecological assemblage, is to insist on the advantages of thinking the land-nation-body of Renaissance writing in relation to the water-flow-abyss of the sea. Glissant's theory of relation unfolds some of those advantages. Writing nearly four-centuries after Raleigh, Glissant identifies what he calls a "cross-cultural poetics" distinct from (but not unrelated to) the literary traditions of the West.³² This "cross-cultural poetics" consists of "the memories of cultural contact," Glissant argues, "which are put together collectively by a people before being dispersed by colonization."³³ In the example of the African epic, Glissant observes: "I am aware of a certain 'suspension' of the narrative: as if, while composing the discourse, the poet seems *to be waiting for something* that he knows he cannot stop. The succession of kings does not give rise to [nor is it based on] a theory of legitimacy. The epic is disruptive."³⁴ Shifting focus from the "disruptive" past of cross-cultural contact to the afterlives of colonization in the Caribbean, Glissant makes of the "suspension" of epical time in the West (which he identifies with the time and telos of the imperial nation) an opportunity to reimagine history as itself errant, as an "estuary" of overlapping desires, cultures, temporalities, and locations. "Caribbeaness, an intellectual dream," represents this errant possibility of shared history while suspending the "need for nationalism" on the one hand and (this is implicit in Glissant's text) anthropocentrism on the other:

lived at the same time in an unconscious way by our peoples, [Caribbeaness] tears us free from the intolerable alternative of the need for nationalism and introduces us to the cross-cultural process that modifies but does not undermine

the latter. What is the Caribbean in fact? A multiple series of relationships. We all feel it, we express it in all kinds of hidden or twisted ways, or we fiercely deny it.

But we sense that this sea exists within us with its weight of now revealed islands.

The Caribbean Sea is not an American lake. It is the estuary of the Americas.³⁵

Displacing the mass of the Americas into the Caribbean sea, Glissant emphasizes the way that the sea forges relations and transcorporealizations that, in addition to impacting bodies and things (“this sea exists within us”), also catalyze sedimentations that express not the feeling of isolation endemic to the British island but instead the openness of the land-sea.³⁶ “[I]n the Caribbean each island embodies openness. The dialectic between inside and outside is reflected in the relationship of land and sea.”³⁷

Like Glissant, Raleigh imagines the Caribbean sea and the Guiana coastline as a type of estuary, a rhizomatic body of terraqueous connection linking the maritime environments of the Atlantic ocean with the intercontinental flows of rivers and sediment. As we shall see in the following section, this vision of Guiana as a land-sea zone—as a tissue of watery transport and connection—is far from utopic, for it describes liquid bodies that repeatedly threaten to engulf Raleigh’s voyage. Continuing my analysis of the personification of material entities (of the giving and taking away of face), I argue that Raleigh’s attempt at personifying the Guiana territory as a virgin landscape already enthralled to the English nation meets with, and ultimately comes undone by, apocalyptic undertows of rivers and lakes extending from the lower Orinoco to the Guiana basin to the Atlantic ocean. Starting with Raleigh’s *aquacentric* (and decidedly not *geocentric*) account of relation in *The Discoverie of Guiana*, I show that far from vanishing human agency Raleigh’s fascination with the Earth’s liquefaction holds open the possibility for a

different kind of material agency, something akin to what Jonathan Goldberg, in *Tempest in the Caribbean*, identifies as the “different kind of creature” made possible by inhuman genealogies.³⁸

Suspensions II: Transatlantic Ecologies

Writing to Sir Philip Sidney in the “Dedicatorie Epistle” to his *Divers Voyages Touching the Discoverie of America, and the Ilands Adiacent vnto the fame, made first of all by our Englishmen, and afterward by the Frenchmen and Britons* (1582), Richard Hakluyt—student of geography and later proponent of England’s colonizing efforts in Virginia and South America—enjoins his readers to consider England’s precarious economic, political, and cultural position after the “so great conquests and plantings of the Spaniardes and Portingales” in the West, stating: “I Maruaile not a little (right worshipfull) that since the first discoverie of America (which is nowe full fourescore and tenne yeeres) ... that wee of Englande could neuer haue the grace to set fast footing in such fertill and temperate places, as are left as yet vnpossessed of them.”³⁹ Chafed not only by the desire to annex New World territories from England’s geopolitical rivals, Spain and Portugal, but also by England’s seeming reluctance to contend for maritime supremacy in a newly globalized environment, Hakluyt, an inveterate propagandist of England’s imperial expansion, nonetheless states that “I conceiue great hope, that the time approacheth and nowe is, that we of England may share and part stakes (if wee will our selues) both with the Spaniarde and the Portingale in part of America, and other regions as yet vndiscovered.” So hopeful is Hakluyt about the prospect of England partaking in the project of “discovery” in America that he turns to the language of natural

history and, in particular, that of bees, to illustrate the biopolitical necessity of colonial conquest in the West:

Yea if wee woulde beholde with the eye of pitie how al our Prisons are pestered and filled with able men to serue their Countrie, which for small roberies are daily hanged vp in great numbers euen twentie at a clappe out of one iayle ... wee woulde hasten and further euery man to his power the deducting of some Colonies of our superfluous people into those temperate and fertile partes of America, which being within sixe weekes sayling of England are yet vnpossessed by any Christians and seeme to offer themselues vnto vs, stretching neerer vnto her Maiesties Dominions, then to any other part of Europe. Wee reade that the Bees, when they grow to be too many in their own hiues at home, are wont to be led out by their Captaines to swarme abroad, and seeke themselves a new dwelling place. If the examples of the Grecians and Carthaginians of olde time, and the practise of our age may not mooue vs, yet let vs learne wisdome of these final weake and vnreasonable creatures.⁴⁰

The reference to bees in Hakluyt's passage is not atypical. As Jonathan Woolfson argues, "both the ancient Judeo-Christian and the Greek and Roman heritage emphasized the special nature of bees, suggesting in different ways that they were comparable to humans."⁴¹ For Renaissance authors drawing on these traditions, the ancients' ideas about the specialness of bees exerted a major influence. Aristotle calls them a "peculiar and extraordinary kind of animal" due to their social and gregarious nature.⁴² Meanwhile Pliny the Elder regards them as superior to humans because of their commitment to the common interest of the hive.⁴³ Other ancient writers, notably Virgil in his *Georgics*,

celebrate bees for their industry, organization, and division of labor.⁴⁴ “These writers, and Virgil especially, exercised a huge influence,” Woolfson argues, such that “medieval and Renaissance authors often continue to consider bees the most outstanding of all animals, or ... at least the most noble of the insects.”

For Hakluyt, moreover, the analogy between “her Maiesties Dominions” and the dominion of bees carries an overt sexual connotation in that it alludes to one of the most hotly contested problems in Renaissance natural history: namely, the autogenesis of bees. As historian of natural science David Freedberg writes, “if there was a central natural historical problem—let us not yet call it biological— ... it was precisely the problem of generation and reproduction.” Because “the ancients maintained [that] bees were autogenetic,” early modern naturalists, including Galileo, believed that bees “reproduced without any kind of sexual congress, and were therefore particularly pleasing to Diana,” goddess of both war and chastity.⁴⁵ Here again Virgil is instructive. In the *Georgics* he writes “that bees refrain from intercourse, their bodies never weaken into the ways of love, nor suffer pangs of labour.”⁴⁶ That the autogenesis of bees would have seemed an apt metaphor for “her Maiesties Dominions,” her majesty the virgin queen—Hakluyt’s text leaves little doubt.

And yet what is most fascinating about Hakluyt’s analogy to bee society, hierarchy, and sexual generation, beyond its reference to Elizabeth the Virgin Queen, is its vitalist rationale, a rationale which highlights issues of security, territory, and population—the trivium of concerns punctuating Foucault’s late writings on biopolitical organization—as key to the stability and furtherance of the English nation.⁴⁷ Targeting the overpopulation of England’s prisons as reason for undertaking colonizing expeditions

to America, Hakluyt's bee analogy layers the spatial coordinates of the "iayle" cell with that of the hive in order to demonstrate the necessity of imperial expansion. In vitalist terms, Hakluyt's call to "swarme abroad" is consubstantial with the desire to maximize and preserve life through colonial autogenesis—a genesis produced not through sexual coupling but through the replanting of populations by a virgin queen. If Hakluyt relishes the aleatory movement of the "swarme," an image of life's profusion and circulation, the correlative image is then that of the cell, an architectural model emblematic not only of life's absorption by, and contribution to, a larger republic but also of life's division and appropriation in the colonies, and of the grids of knowing that Anglo-Europeans used in the classification of New World environments.

For literary scholars, the genre typically associated with this process of division and classification is that of the blazon. Drawing on Nancy Vicker's influential analysis⁴⁸ of blazon writing's central motif—the fragmentation and metonymization of the female body—Patricia Parker and Louis Montrose each detail the relation between blazon as a form of *writing* and nature as a *material surface* in the ideology of colonial conquest. For Parker, the blazon's rhetorical techniques of amplification or dilation by division in which a whole body—here, the body of a woman—is distributed into parts finds its New World expression in the gendering of America as female, as in John Donne's erotic line, "Oh my America, my new found land" (27).⁴⁹ Similarly, for Montrose, the "gendered body of America calls attention to the affinity between *discovery* and the *blazon*, two Renaissance rhetorical forms that organize and control their subjects—respectively, the body of the land and the body of the lady—by means of display, inventory, and anatomy."⁵⁰ Following Michel de Certeau, Montrose argues that the affinity between the

discourse of discovery and that of the blazon is “emblematic of the inception of a distinctively modern discursive practice of historical and cultural knowledge,” one that ruptures the relation, in de Certeau’s words, “between a *will to write* and a *written body* (or a body to be written).”⁵¹ The blazon enacts “the writing subject’s textualization of the body of the Other, neither as mere description nor as genuine encounter but,” as Montrose observes, “as an act of symbolic violence, mastery, and self-empowerment.”⁵²

If we return to the image of the beehive, we note that the same logic of partition—of parts taken for wholes, and of subjects *who write* and objects *written*—informs Hakluyt’s wish to “part stakes ... both with the Spaniarde and the Portingale in part of America,” and to bring order to “regions as yet vndiscovered” in the image of an atomized and highly regulated honeycomb. Rather than follow Parker and Montrose, however, I want to put forth an alternative understanding of the relation between part and whole in the discourse of discovery.

According to French historian and philosopher of science Georges Canguilhem, even in the limited context of seventeenth century discussions of “cell theory,” which Hakluyt’s cell image anticipates, there were competing understandings of the relation between part and whole. Whereas Robert Hooke, in 1665, coined the term “cell” after looking at a magnified piece of cork and noting its compartmentalized structure, Nehemiah Grew, by contrast, writing just a few years after Hooke’s discovery, theorized that “cells are preceded by and grow out of a so-called vital fluid.”⁵³ The difference, Canguilhem notes, is that of “continuity versus discontinuity”: “Some thinkers imagine living things growing out of a primary substance that is continuous and plastic; others think of organisms as composites of discrete parts, of ‘organic atoms’ or ‘seeds of life.’”

Pointing to the persistence of this difference in modern scientific concepts such as particle and wave, Canguilhem suggests that the dissensus between theories of continuity and discontinuity date as far back as classical mythology and the earliest representations of life's emergence from the sea. He asks:

For what, in the end, is this continuous initial plasma, this plasma that biologists have used in one form or another ever since the problem of identifying a structure common to all living things was first posed in order to deal with the perceived inadequacies of the corpuscular explanation? Was it anything other than a logical avatar of the mythological fluid from which all life is supposed to arise, of the frothy wave that bore Venus on its foam?⁵⁴

Canguilhem's question returns us to the mythical waters of the previous chapter, to the "seas abundant progeny" and the "fruitfull seede" of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. There I argued that Venus's fructifying waters both disturbed *and made possible* Spenser's poetic "count," bringing into view a biopolitics in which the life represented is not simply opposed to calculation, systemization, and measure but rather produces forms of organization and metastability from its own liquid excess. Spenser's poetic "count" can be read as an emergent structure rising from, and collapsing back into, Venus's "frothy wave." The same can be said of Hakluyt's bees. Recall that for Virgil and for much of the natural historical tradition, bees were thought to generate without sex. As Freedberg explains, "the process of generation started with the honey itself. This was the basic formative material out of which the bee emerged." From this vital honey, "boundaries are firmly established, parts are formed.... The parts and figures of the body are thus formed by a process in which the basic particles both move and are moved, dissolve and are

dissolved, until the necessary connections for the formation of the animal are coordinated, ordered, and established.”⁵⁵ Parts of bodies flow together and dissolve, assemble and reassemble, just as the seminal substance of bees, the honey fluid, overflows the walls of each partitioned cell, forcing the bees to flow elsewhere.

I have been arguing that what makes Raleigh’s poetry so “sweete” (to quote Spenser) is precisely this conceptualization of bodies as parts not confined to any given form but rather open to the movements of honey-like, or sea-like, flows. Whereas Vickers, Parker, and Montrose each critique the body in parts as emblematic of the kinds of colonial violence that Hakluyt’s image promotes, they, like Hakluyt, each remain committed to the idea of the body as a potential whole, whether in the Lacanian inflected criticism of Vickers or in the anticolonialist criticism of her followers. The body remains *ideally* what it was in Hakluyt’s image of the beehive: a whole body containing many individuated parts. And yet it is precisely the idea of the body as a potential whole that grounds the humanist subject as *bios politikos*, as the kind of being capable of detaching *from* and holding dominion *over* the material world. For critics of the blazon’s rhetoric of division and fragmentation, the environment is an elemental condition of our being in the world, and yet the world remains structurally *for us*: it environs *us*, sustains *us*, and thus *we* are called to protect *it* from the destructive illogics of the Enlightenment subject. For all of its seeming radicalism, then, the critique of the body in parts—which for many scholars is synonymous with the critique of the humanist subject as such—merely repeats rather than ruptures the idea of “the human” insofar as it regards the human body as single and self-identical over time despite the diverse materials that flow through it.

Raleigh's aqueous bodies demand a different materialism of the body. In *The Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Bewtifvl Empyre of Gviana* (1596), Raleigh's aquacentric account of his travels to the Caribbean and the Guiana river basin, the blazon's rhetoric of division and fragmentation is set in sharp relief, only the bodies we "discover" there are neither singular nor self-identical; Raleigh does not relate their parts to a greater (if fragmented) whole. Rather, he makes of the human body's dissolution and disaggregation into parts a vehicle for reframing the materialism of the body in accord with the active intrusions and cavitations of the environment.

Consider the following passage taken from the final pages of the *Discoverie*, in which Raleigh inventories the New World territory for the reader's probing eye:

To conclude, *Guiana* is a Countrey that hath yet her Maydenhead, neuer sackt, turned, nor wrought, the face of the earth hath not beene torne, nor the vertue and salt of the soyle spent by manurance, the graues haue not been opened for gold, the mines not broken with sledges, nor their Images puld down out of their temples. It hath neuer been entred by any armie of strenght, and neuer conquered or possessed by any Christian Prince.⁵⁶

Raleigh uses the similitude of the land and a woman's body to provoke Elizabethan subjects toward New World colonization. Earlier in the narrative he makes a similar analogy, but to different effect. Recalling his conversation with the native peoples of Trinidad, he states that:

I made them vnderstand that I was the seruant of a Queene, who was the great *Casique* of the north, and a virgin, and had more *Casiqui* vnder her then there were trees in their Iland: that she was an enemy to the *Castellani* in respect of

their tyrannie and oppression, and that she deliuered all such nations about her, as were by them oppressed, and hauing freed all the coast of the northern world from their seruitude had sent me to free them also, and with al to defend the countrey of *Guiana* from their inuasion and conquest. I shewed them her maiesties picture which they so admired and honored, as it had beene easie to haue brought them Idolatrous thereof.⁵⁷

Raleigh stages the discourse of discovery in terms of the competing connotations of the virgin body, whose exemplary figure is that of the virgin queen. On the one hand, Raleigh blazons the Guiana territory as a naked virgin awaiting Old World occupation; on the other hand, he projects the inviolable female body of the monarch onto the islands of the Caribbean, offering her protection from a common “enemy,” the *Castellani* of Spain. As I have already mentioned, Queen Elizabeth’s presentation of chastity had the paradoxical effect of intensifying, not just delimiting, the sexual field of politics. We see one instance of this in the passage above, wherein a servant’s praise for his queen’s inviolability transitions smoothly to a scene of “Idolatrous” gazing at “her maiesties picture.” We see another instance of “picture”-gazing in the “Armada” portrait of Queen Elizabeth (c. 1588), by George Gower (fig. 3). As many critics, among them Montrose, have pointed out, this painterly representation of the defeat of the Spanish Armada has at its pictorial and ideological center the queen’s virginal body. And yet we do not so much *see* the queen’s body but rather intuit its existence beneath the surface of her garments. The queen’s clothes are as impenetrable as they are ornate, at once luring the viewer’s eye and defeating ocular penetration. In Montrose’s reading, the presentation of chastity is signaled by a white bow resting at the bottom of Elizabeth’s stomach, which

figuratively represents the queen's "virgin knot." "This demure iconography of Elizabeth's virgin-knot suggests a causal relationship," Montrose argues, "between her sanctified chastity and the providential destruction of the Spanish Catholic invaders."⁵⁸ For Montrose and others, Elizabeth's power depends on the containment of her—and by extension the English nation's—erotic body as a knotted, bounded whole. The containment of the queen's body thus yields an emerging discourse of nationalism and imperialism, figured most dramatically by the queen's hand resting atop the globe.

By contrast, Traub identifies in the Armada portrait an erotic assemblage of human and animal parts that breaks mens' bodies and scatters them at sea. Noting the uncanny semblance of the queen's body in the figure of a mermaid, Traub observes:

Elizabeth is turned slightly away from the only other figure in the frame: a small statue of an exquisitely carved "mere-maid," whose genitals are effaced by the smooth and continuous impenetrability of her aquatic appendage. In Renaissance typologies of the monstrous, the hybrid bodies of mermaids, like those of sirens and nereides, defy what Ambroise Paré calls the "confusion and conjunction of seeds," that is, the reproductive potential that is every woman's lot. The mermaid's vagina is precisely a point of non-entry, overwritten by the fantasized space of a mythical marine topos. No line separates her torso from tail; surfaces overlap, in an eerie reminder of Elizabeth's dress. Representing genital impossibility, the mermaid is endlessly desirable: like the sirens, she lures men into the boundless sea of desire; but because her body is devoid of a genital opening, the psychic threat of "erotic drowning" is displaced away from her body and onto the sea that is her element.⁵⁹

A figure of “non-entry,” the mermaid displaces the interior of the body onto a “smooth and continuous” surface of pleasure points and folds coextensive with the surface and folds of the sea. A bridge between the engulfing power of the ocean (“mere”) and the bounded body of Elizabeth (“maid”), this aquatic assemblage of human and animal parts splits the optic of the painting as it disperses the queen’s body across the surface of the canvas. Like the blazon, the Armada painting invites fragmentation; only this fragmentation does not relate the body in parts to a greater whole. If the mermaid’s “genital impossibility” evokes ruin, this is not because of a lack in the body but because of a fullness that drowns mens’ bodies and combines them with the elements.

If we return now to the previous “picture,” in which Raleigh personifies the Guiana territory as a naked virgin awaiting Old World fabric, what we encounter is another figure of “non-entry” akin to the mermaid. Continuing the quotation, Raleigh writes: “There is therefore great difference betwene the easiness of the conquest of *Guiana*, & the defence of it being conquered.” And this is true, Raleigh asserts, because “*Guiana* hath but one entraunce by the sea (if it haue that) for any vessels of burden, so as whoeuer shall first possesse it, it shall bee founde vnaccessable for anie Enimie, except he come in Wherries, Barges, or Canoas, or els in flatte bottom boats.”⁶⁰ Of course, as many critics are quick to point out, the (mythical) Empire of Guiana, sometimes called *El Dorado*, was never discovered; what’s more, the “entraunce by the sea,” which Raleigh immediately calls into question (“if it haue that”), was never entered. All of this supports the logic of difference and deferral that, according to Mary Fuller, structures the movement of non-entry or non-discovery that Raleigh’s text paradoxically elaborates.⁶¹ And yet, granting these deferrals, Raleigh does more than just personify a virgin

landscape in honor of a virgin queen; he details in excruciating prose the disruptions to his journey brought about by the rivers and floods that mark the Guiana territory and that connect it to the sea. Whereas Montrose and others read the virgin body as a container for the English nation, one that extends across the Atlantic Ocean to encompass the whole globe, such a work of containment, I argue, is itself impossible, and for the simple reason that it presumes the separation of the human body from the natural world. In fact, in page after page of the *Discoverie*, what we “discover” is not a *prima facie* landscape, naked and serene; what we discover is that “the face of the earth” has a history, and that this history is wrought in the relation of the land-sea.

If, in echo of Gertrude Stein, we wish to say “there is no there there” in Raleigh’s *Discoverie*, it is not because there is no proper referent to bridge the abyss between land and text; rather, it’s because the land itself is already abyssal—already crossed and crossed-out by the waters that inscribe it. Guiana represents a point of non-entry for Raleigh, which is to say a point of *nonseparation* between the subject who writes and the objects written. Far from inscribing a virgin body with a face, Raleigh’s *Discoverie* gives face to the liquid forces that deface, that is, *mar (mare)*, his own epistemological and colonial enterprise.

Developing the idea of the nonseparation of human bodies from colonial environments, Monique Allewaert asserts that “In the American tropics, bodies were often experienced as disorganized and disorganizing, and, what’s more, it seemed possible that parts once organized into bodies might well evince autonomy outside of this organization. This transformation of human and other bodies was a key anxiety,” Allewaert observes, “of Anglo-Europeans writing in and about the American colonies,”

for whom individual “identity depend[ed] on the organization of matter into individual bodies.”⁶² From debilitating heat to impassable waters, poisonous snakes to penetrating insects, the American tropics foregrounded not just the vulnerability of the body to environmental influence but far more radically the deformation, penetration, and disaggregation of the human body and its potential for disorganization into parts by climatological and other materials forces. For the Raleigh of the *Discoverie*, the body’s nonseparation from and consequent disorganization by colonial ecologies made the work of personifying the American tropics for the economic, objective, and aesthetic use of the English nation physically impossible. In the opening pages of the *Discoverie*, he describes his journey to America and the island of Trinidad as one unilateral progress and unimpeded entrance, a kind of coasting carried out on the horizontal surface of the ocean: “I my selfe coasted in my barge close aboard the shore and landed in euery Coue, the better to know the Iland, while the ships kept the chanell.”⁶³ While Raleigh’s fixation with the island and its inhabitants seems predicated on a belief in the ultimate horizontality and navigability of the water’s surface, his description of Guiana belies a greater concern with fluid depths. There, in the midst of river-crossings and vertiginous channels, instead of coasting on the water’s smooth surface, Raleigh gets pulled into a quickening environment of liquid and sedimentary flows, of liquefactions inimical to the body’s sensory-motor-schema, and of histories and cultures in contretemps with the hegemonic time of English expansionism. If, as Allewaert asserts, Anglo-Europeans understood the body to be essentially what it was for Hakluyt—a whole body containing many individuated parts—then what we find in Raleigh’s description is the body *in extremis*, that is, pulled into parts so that it becomes a body without organization. Already in his

“Dedicatorie Epistle” to Charles Howard and Sir Robert Cecil, Raleigh attests to the body’s potential for disorganization, writing:

*I did therefore euen in the winter of my life, undertake these trauels, fitter for bodies lesse blasted with misfortunes, for men of greater abilitie, and for mindes of better incouragement.*⁶⁴

To which Raleigh adds:

*Of that little remaine I had, I haue wasted in effect all herein, I haue undergone many constructions, I haue been accompanied with many sorrows, with labor, hunger, heat sicknes, & perill.... I doe not then knowe whether I should bewaile my selfe either for my too much trauel and expence, or condemne my selfe for doing lesse then that, which can deserue nothing. From my selfe I haue deserued no thanks, for I am returned a begger, and withered, but that I might haue bettred my poore estate, it shall appeare by the following discourse.*⁶⁵

Raleigh’s conditional “*might*” signifies a rhetoric of elegy and loss consistent throughout his writerly corpus, from the wasted life of the speaker in *Ocean to Cynthia* to the “*wasted*” and “*withered*” body of the explorer turned “*begger*” in the lines above. What interests me is not this mournful rhetoric, however, but the ecology it yields.

Raleigh capacitates a sense of becoming in which the breakdown of the body into parts does not signify death but rather opens the body up to an alternative form of agency. Starting with the preface “To the Reader,” Raleigh describes this material agency as a kind of tempest or *temporization* (from the Latin *tempus*, meaning time); time grows abyssal as land becomes sea, and as the tempestuous life that Raleigh “discovers” in Guiana drives his body further into the deep:

There were on this discouerie, no lesse than 100 personnes, who can all witnesse, that when we past any braunch of the riuer to vewe the land within, and staid from our boats but six houres, wee were driuen to wade to the eyes, at our returne: and if we attempted the same the day following, it was impossible either to forde it, or to swim it, both by reason of the swiftnesse, and also for the borders were so pestered with fast woods, as neither bote nor man could finde place, either to land, or to imbarque: for in Iune, Iuly, August, and September, it is impossible to nauigate any of those riuers, for such is the furie of the Current, and there are so many trees and woods overflowne, as if anie boate but touch vppon anie tree or stake, it is impossible to saue any one person therein: and ere we departed the land, it ran with that swiftnesse, as we draue downe most commonly against the winde, little lesse then one hundred miles a day.⁶⁶

Suspending time, space, and forward action, the tempest that Raleigh encounters in the Caribbean draws bodies into the abyss of multitudinous rivers, unnavigable currents, shifting sediments, and labyrinthian islands connecting the lower Orinoco that Raleigh “draue downe,” unsuccessfully, to the greater Atlantic Ocean (fig. 4). In this transatlantic ecology, survival is put into question, as “it is impossible to saue any one person therein.” Rather than construct a virgin body, a whole body, an image of land and discovery, Raleigh gives rise to a liquid ontology, a language of inhuman depths, and of depths in which it is right to say, as Jacques Derrida says of his encounter with his cat, that “what is here called the ‘[...] abyss’ is not a hole, a gulf, but too much being.”⁶⁷ Raleigh imagines the Guiana territory as a body in parts, a body so divided by river-crossings as to become an image of archipelagic and rhizomatic affiliation between land and sea: “For I know,”

Raleigh writes, “all the earth doth not yeeld the like confluence of streames and branches, the one crossing the other so many times, and all so faire and large, and so like one to another, as no man can tell which to take.”⁶⁸ The land becomes, in Glissant’s terms, an “estuary” of “now revealed islands”—of islands opened up and thus suspended by their own watery edges. “And if we went by the Sun or compasse,” Raleigh adds, “hoping thereby to go directly one way or other, yet that waie we were also caried in a circle amongst multitudes of Ilands, and euery Iland so bordered with high trees, as no man could see any further then the bredth of the riuer, or length of the breach.”⁶⁹ Here Raleigh encounters yet another figure of “non-entry,” for the body of America is already multiple, already transgressed by its own vertiginous abyss. Where critics have seen only the projection of “text” onto a New World landscape, Raleigh sees his relation to the environment as one of “breach[ing],” “border”-crossing, and translation across “multitudes,” a *scene of writing* enacted in and by the materials of the Earth. Such a scene of writing, I argue, constitutes an assemblage, or a *worlding* practice in which parts not confined to a greater whole *have world* insofar as they relate to their “outsides” through a palimpsestic eco-nomy of breaching, crossing, ontological spacing, and temporization.⁷⁰ This is a writing that is *of the Earth* rather than a writing that *writes the Earth*. More than anything, it is what constitutes the major “discovery” of Raleigh’s text, namely, that there is something rather than nothing in the abyss, and that this something resists—is a force against—the history and artifacts of colonialism.

If it has been convenient to assume, as most critics do, that Raleigh treats the Guiana territory as an abyss, a tabula rasa devoid of history, this is because the abyss itself—the vertical, intertidal, and oceanic zone—has largely been overlooked by critics

who see it simply as a surface, empty and void—an abyss of meaning. And yet Raleigh devotes most of his time in the *Discoverie* to describing precisely these waters and to recognizing that there is, indeed, “being rather than nothing” in the deep.⁷¹ In the following section, I return to Raleigh’s *The History of the World* in order to draw out the consequences of this oceanic perspective for a reading of what is often called, all too stubbornly (see my first epigraph), “life” or “life itself.” For Greenblatt, Raleigh’s sense of the “‘tide of man’s life’ lies at the heart of his entire *History*,” and yet “its particular expressions are often highly conventional, ... reaching back through centuries of histories, sermons, and orations to the Bible and to classical moralists,” even if “the effect of the whole is profoundly personal.”⁷² Against this reading (itself highly conventional), I show that the “personal” in Raleigh’s *History* is, from the beginning, as much technological as it is bio-logical, as much a matter of convention, ornamentation, and framing as it is a matter of creation, poeticization, and life. Whereas Greenblatt, among others, treats Raleigh’s “tempestuous life” as mere figure, I ask: what is “life” such that it necessitates the figure of “tide,” “tempest,” and “deep”? What does “highly conventional” here mean? Rather than return to life’s practical calling, to a life that would be just life, Raleigh ushers in a sense of life’s difference and multiplicity, and of worlding powers beyond the human.

Suspensions III: Worldings

The History of the World was never completed, a fact that compounds Raleigh’s anxious accounting of his so-called “dissability” with a “defect” identical to and seemingly exacerbated by the scene of writing. Written late in life, Raleigh stages his *History* as a

competition between incommensurable speeds, between the speed of a human life, of writing, and the spectacular speed of the Earth's shifting transformations of matter. From the outset of the first book, "Intreating of the Beginning, and first ages of the same, from the Creation vnto Abraham," Raleigh's engagement with these differential speeds devolves upon the question of beginnings, from the meaning of the word "beginning" to the "meaning of the words Heaven and Earth" in Genesis: "This word *beginning* (in which the *Hebrewes* seeke some hidden mysterie, and which in the *Iewes Targum* is conuerted by the word *Sapientia*) cannot be referred to succession of time, nor to order, as some men haue conceived, both which are subsequent."⁷³ Time for Raleigh is not now, not movement, not before and after (which are more spatial than temporal). Dealing with Genesis and the problem of the creation of Heaven and Earth, Raleigh posits an initial mixture of co-temporal and interstitial states, of chaos turning into solid and solid into chaos. He writes that

it is more probable and allowed, that by the wordes *Heaven and Earth*, was meant the solid matter and substance, aswell of all the Heavens, and Orbes supernall, as of the Globe of the Earth and Waters, which couered it ouer, (to wit) that very matter of all things, *materia, Chaos, possibilitas, siue posse fieri*. Which matter (saith *Calvin*) was so called, *quod totius mundi semen fuerit; Because it was the seede of the Vniuersall*, and opinion of ancient Philosophers long before.⁷⁴

Invoking a Lucretian universe of vital and recomposeable matter, of atoms or "seede," Raleigh goes on to explain how differences emerge within this "Vniuersall" matter. Whereas for Lucretius all things emerge from the chance meeting of atoms, in Raleigh's universal history, the *clinamen* in question is less that of atoms and more that of oceans

and waters—aqueous bodies that separate and connect at the same time the Earth’s terrestrial masses. In the beginning, Raleigh posits, there was neither speech nor act nor atom, but “*Deepe*”:

*The Earth was couered with the Deepe (meaning with waters) as with a garment, saith David. And if by naturall arguments it may been proued, that water by condensation may become earth, the same reason teacheth vs also, that earth rarified may become water: water, aire: aire, fire; and so on.... For the Heauens and the Earth remained in the same state, though there was afterwards added multiplicite of perfection, in respect of beauty and ornament.*⁷⁵

From the beginning of the world, or of what we might well call *globalization*, there will have already been “multiplicite,” “ornament,” and instrumentation. Raleigh compares his “*Deepe*” to a text or textile, “*a garment, saith David,*” playing on both meanings of the word creation: creation as the invention *ex nihilo* of something new, and creation as a form of technology or reproduction. Poiesis *and* techne, then. Whereas the one speaks *prima facie* of a primordial, untouched and unpolluted emergence, the other speaks of creation as a form of technology or prosthesis. This latter, essentially *parergonal* (to use Derrida’s phrase, borrowed from Kant) conceptualization of the world simultaneously “constitutes ... and ruins” the world of pure creation by supplementing, “*as with a garment,*” that which is already complete.⁷⁶ The garment “would have the function of a *parergon* and an ornament,” Derrida writes, “[meaning] ... that which is not internal or intrinsic ... to the total representation of the object but which belongs to it only in an extrinsic way as a surplus, an addition, an adjunct, a supplement.”⁷⁷ The garment separates the inside from the outside, the intrinsic from the extrinsic, and yet:

“One wonders, too, where to have clothing commence. Where does a *parergon* begin and end.”⁷⁸ Derrida’s analysis of the *parergon* bridges the intrinsic and the extrinsic, showing them to be interdependent. Raleigh goes one further: for it is not just the human body that is contaminated by its outside, but the whole world. Raleigh’s ocean is, to quote Patricia Yaeger, a “techno-ocean”: it *begins* with “the recognition that our relation to the sea is always already technological.”⁷⁹ In his *Upon the first Invention of Shipping* (1650), subtitled “A Discourse of the Invention of Ships, Anchors, Compasse &c,” Raleigh furthers this eco-techno-poetic vision of the sea by stating:

That the Ark of *Noah*, was the first Ship, because of the Invention of God himself, although some men have believed, yet it is certaine, That the world, being planted before the Flood, the same could not be performed without some transporting vessels; It is true, & the successe proves it, That there was not any so capacious nor so strong to defend itself against so violent, as so continued a powring down of raine, as the Arke *Noah*, the Invention of God himself, or of what fashion or fabrick soever, the reft withall mankind perished, according to the Ordinance of God. And probable it is that the Anchors, whereof *Ovid* made mention of, found on high Mountains: *Et inventa est in montibus Anchora Summis*, were remaining of ships wrackt at the generall flood.⁸⁰

Raleigh’s history of the world cannot be known outside a techno-ocean, for even God is an inventor, or better still, a builder of ships. Even “before the Flood,” the world had already been “planted,” seeded, and artificially yoked by “some transporting vessels.” In this way, Raleigh does to Genesis what Derrida does to Plato’s pharmacy: he shows that the creation of the world is already a de-creation, and yet the *pharmakon* in question does

not diminish the world “in respect of [its] beauty and ornament.” Taking a page from George Puttenham’s *The Art of English Poesy*, which admonishes against *too much* “ornament” but necessitates it nonetheless,⁸¹ Raleigh entertains the (rather Ovidian) idea that well before humans began making the world over in their own image, before the invention of ships, anchors, and compass, the Earth had already begun to write itself, to create and de-create its own globalizing tapestry or blazon: its own *technopoiesis*. For Raleigh (as for poet Derek Walcott⁸²) the sea is this history: a “garment” as long as Penelope’s in Homer’s *Odyssey*, and as bottomless as the darkest “*Deepe*.”

In recent decades, scholars of world history, imagined community, and globalization have begun to turn their sights to the Renaissance to track the emergence of the “globe” as a transnational and techno-national phenomenon in the advancements of early modern print and other related technologies (most notably map-making).⁸³ In literary scholarship, the study of print technology has fueled expanded forms of book history, which treat the invention of the printing press as a key to understanding early modern transformations of knowledge of and around the globe.⁸⁴ For world-systems theorists Pascale Casanova and Franco Moretti, the global spread of print in and outside of Europe and its colonies in the Renaissance and beyond constitutes what Casanova conceives of as a “World Republic of Letters,” in which writers of different nations from different periods of time—from Dante Alighieri to Samuel Beckett—compete to have their works (and the nations they represent) become part of an abstract network of literary and cultural influence and global dominance.⁸⁵ In *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, Moretti promotes “distant reading”—“a process of deliberate reduction and abstraction”—as a way of

contending with the enormous bibliographic troves that comprise the “World Republic of Letters.”⁸⁶

Similarly, for New Historicist critics Mary Fuller and Richard Helgerson, the notion of a globalized world of information-exchange is tied to the imperial ambitions of the English nation, which relied on the global dissemination of print to level cultural and geographic differences and to reflect back—from Virginia to South America to the Elizabethan court—its own “forms of nationhood.” In Helgerson’s study, the England represented in Richard Hakluyt’s *The Principal Navigations of the English Nation* (1589) as well as other overseas narratives, including Raleigh’s *Upon the first Invention of Shipping*, is “an England defined by its relations to those other more or less similar entities, an England reconstituted in response to a new global system of differences.”⁸⁷ For Helgerson, Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* is the first among voyage narratives to insist on “the nation as ultimate actor” in world affairs and “to promote English expansion abroad.”⁸⁸ It is thus exemplary for Helgerson not as a nautical text but rather as a representation of nationhood and territorial expansion. In Helgerson’s reading, it is not the voyages themselves that constituted the “age of discovery,” but rather the books that were printed about them.

Likewise, in Mary Fuller’s *Voyages in Print*, Fuller begins with an epigraph from Francis Bacon’s *Novum Organum* (1620) reminding the reader of “the force, effect, and consequences of inventions which,” according to Bacon, “are nowhere more conspicuous than in those three which were unknown to the ancients, namely printing, gunpowder, and the compass.”⁸⁹ Whereas Bacon opines that the inventions of print, gunpowder, and the compass “have changed the appearance and state of the whole world,” Fuller isolates

the first invention in Bacon's series, printed texts, arguing that printed voyages "were both generated by and helped to generate England's entry into American discovery and colonization."⁹⁰ Focusing on "the importance of the Elizabethan and Jacobean voyage texts as central to forming the idea of the English nation," Fuller writes that "Raleigh's expedition [in *The Discoverie of Guiana*] is literally a search for the referent, a place to which can be attached the proper names 'Manoa' and 'El Dorado.'"⁹¹ For Fuller, as for Helgerson, the printed text animates and precedes the voyage; it invents the voyage as it invents the globe, making it the true agent of discovery. Among land, nation and text, the sea is merely a cipher: *terra mundi*, not *aqua mundi*.

By contrast, Shannon is the rare scholar who reads Raleigh's writings about oceans and ships as above all *about* the lives that inhabited oceans and ships. Reacting against "the beast-machine doctrine" forged in the seventeenth-century by René Descartes, who "grant[ed] the free agency of thought to all humans" while "classifying the entire balance of creatures, from the oyster to the ape, as uniformly hardwired," Shannon looks to natural-historical accountings of species-being and cross-species relating (what Shannon calls "cosmopolitics") in order to chart an alternate, "zoographic" history that runs counter to "the modern constitution" theorized by Bruno Latour, which places humans on the side of politics and culture and nonhumans on the side of mechanized and homogenous nature.⁹² In the last chapter of *The Accommodated Animal*, Shannon turns from the landed cosmopolitics of Shakespeare's plays to the ocean ecologies of Raleigh's *History*. There, in contradistinction to the nation-based focus of Fuller and Helgerson and the abstract and abstracting role of print in Casanova and Moretti's "World Republic of Letters," Shannon locates (and at the same time de-locates,

that is, unmoors) the biopolitical and technological center of Raleigh's *History* in the hull of Noah's ark: "The story of Noah's ark taxed the early modern imagination," Shannon writes, triggering "doubt about how Noah could have built a craft sufficient to hold all the earthly kinds" and inducing "early modern commentators into the cold waters of mathematical calculation."⁹³ Among these commentators, Shannon singles out Raleigh for "weeding out such creatures as could easily be reconstructed rationally," thus conserving space on Noah's ship: "For those beasts which are of mixt natures," Raleigh writes, "either they were not in that age, or else it was not needfull to praeserve them: seeing they might be generated againe by others."⁹⁴ From the hull of Noah's ark to the shores of the "black Atlantic," Shannon shows how Raleigh's speculative calculations about animal life and death on Noah's ark prefigure the transatlantic traffic in "human chattel," making the sea voyage itself, and not just the text written about it, key to understanding the biopolitics of early modern globalization.⁹⁵ In this way, Shannon not only critiques Foucault's biopolitics and Agamben's "bare life," which "remain essentially human in reach," she also critically supplements New Historicist accounts of nationhood by torquing our attention toward the multi-vectored zones among land, nation, and print.

Even so, while Shannon is critical of the human-exceptionalism of Agamben's biopolitical formulation, she nevertheless shares with Agamben an interest in returning thought to its practical foundation, that is, to a conception of life that is not that which has already been shaped by efficiency and instrumental reason. Cosmopolitics, in her argument, thus stands for the inclusion of species difference within the human polis, and for the specifically pre-Cartesian ability to think the world-making capacities of nonhumans. And yet, one might want to ask whether "life," as both Agamben and

Shannon conceive of it, can simply be added back to the polis, or whether a more radical suspension of life and the political is needed in order to think life beyond “the human.”

Returning to the world-making power of oceans, I want to foreground Raleigh’s relation to the earth as one of infinite speed. Rather than add more, respect more, Raleigh’s relation to “life” is purposefully abstract: that is, beyond animal and human, what it requires is not greater inclusivity but, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, greater *intensity*.⁹⁶ The problem with theoretical models, Deleuze and Guattari write, “is not that they are too abstract but, on the contrary, that they are not abstract enough.”⁹⁷ The opposite of “life” for Deleuze and Guattari is not *techne*, not even death, since life “itself” is already a machinic assemblage of recomposable dead matter. Instead, what stands in opposition to life for Deleuze and Guattari is the organism or organ: the body, the nation, the printed book. Against these, the “body without organs” is at the same time real and abstract: real because it is *of* life, and abstract because it takes life beyond its parochial (human, nationalistic, and organic) confines. As Brian Massumi explains, “The charge of indeterminacy carried by a body is inseparable from it.... Far from regaining a concreteness, to think the body in movement thus means accepting the paradox that there is an incorporeal dimension *of the body*. Of it, but not it. Real, material, but incorporeal.”⁹⁸ Real but abstract. Among the elements that carry out this deterritorializing or abstracting movement, Deleuze and Guattari single out the earth’s liquefaction as a primary agent in the creation and de-creation of human knowledge: “Concepts are like multiple waves,” they write, “rising and falling, but the plane of immanence is the single wave that rolls them up and unrolls them.”⁹⁹ The “plane of immanence” describes the earth’s own processes of abstraction, its own speeds of deterritorialization, which are

incommensurable to human reason. “The plane envelops infinite movements that pass back and forth through it,” like waves crashing on the shore. Folding and unfolding, the plane *produces* the potential for “infinite speed,” or the thought of life as the potential for infinite relations: “From Epicurus to Spinoza the problem of thought is infinite speed. But this speed requires a milieu that moves infinitely in itself—the plane, the void, the horizon. Both elasticity of the concept and fluidity of the milieu are needed. Both are needed to make up ‘the slow beings’ that we are.”¹⁰⁰

Along with Epicurus and Spinoza, we can add Raleigh to the list of thinkers who problematize the relation of the earth’s “infinite speed” to human reason. “True philosophy,” Raleigh writes, “is an ascending from the things which flow, and rise, and fall, to the things that are for euer the same.”¹⁰¹ Not “life itself,” then, not some pure organic sameness that then falls into alienation, technologization, and difference, but rather differences *within* the same: this is what characterizes the “life” that Raleigh calls “tempestuous,” and what constitutes the sea as a potential plane of immanence. Whereas Shannon, Helgerson, and Fuller each consider Raleigh’s writings to be emblematic of a biopolitical dispensation in the service of the English nation, together with Deleuze and Guattari, we might begin to see Raleigh’s writings, especially his writings on Creation, on the essential *technopoesy* of Creation, not as an escape from difference—from national, geographical, and species difference—but rather as a proliferation of differences carried out at the absolute speed of deterritorialization. Speed of writing, speed of deterritorialization: from the outset, Raleigh’s writings are about this movement, a movement that makes the writer more, not less, heterogeneous. “A writer,” Deleuze and Guattari argue, “is not a writer-man; he is a machine-man, and an experimental man ...

who thereby ceases to be a man in order to become ... inhuman.”¹⁰² To become inhuman, Deleuze and Guattari aver, “is to participate in movement.”¹⁰³ Such a movement Raleigh attributes to the earth’s waters:

This Masse, or indigested matter, or Chaos created in the beginning was without forme, that is, without the proper forme, which it afterwards acquired, when the Spirit of God had separated the Earth, and digested it from the waters: *And the earth was voide*: that is, not producing any creatures, or adorned with any plants, fruits, or flowers. But after *the Spirit of God had moued upon the waters*, and wrought this indigested matter into that forme, which it now retayneth, then did *the earth budde forth the hearbe, which seedeth seede, & the fruitfull tree according to his kinde, and God saw that it was good*; which attribute was not giuen to the Earth, while it was confused, nor to the Heauens, before they had motion, and adornment.¹⁰⁴

Both meanings of creation are active in this passage: creation as poetic production *ex nihilo*, and creation as separation, digestion, supplementation, and “adornment.” God supplements the world of pure creation by adding, “*as with a garment*,” the earth’s fructifying waters. And yet, these waters re-create the world by adding “motion, and adornment.” Neither “*budde*” nor “*hearbe*,” “*seede*” nor “*fruitfull tree*” appears without the *paregonal* supplement of the earth’s techno-waters, which “had not only motion,” Raleigh writes, “but also power to procreate or bring forth liuing creatures.”

In Book One, chapter six of his *History*, Raleigh considers “*How it is to be understood that the Spirit of God moued upon the waters*,” how, in the words of Psalm 147, “*the winde from the face of God did blow under, driue, or remoue, or did blow upon*

... *stirring upon the face of this double liquor.*”¹⁰⁵ Resolved that God’s ways “cannot bee conceiued by any minde, or spirit, compassed with a mortall body,” Raleigh nevertheless maintains, so as to “eschew curiosity,” that this much at least “is true”: “that the English word (moued) is most proper and significant: for of motion proceedeth all production, and all whatsoeuer is effected.”¹⁰⁶ Movement, production, water: how compelling that, for Raleigh, it is the inhuman face, the face of an anonymous materiality or faciality (as Deleuze and Guattari would say) that constitutes the very possibility of our being/becoming human; how compelling that it is the inhuman face, “*the face of this double liquor,*” that constitutes our very forms of worlding.

Coda: The Ends of Man

Flying over the land between Baghdad, Beirut, Haifa, and Tripoli, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes: “I am making a clandestine entry into ‘Europe,’ [and] [y]et the land looks the same.” “I know the cartographic markers,” Spivak observes, writing from the airplane above, “but, in search of a springboard for planetarity, I am looking at the figure of land that seems to undergird it. The view of the Earth from the window brings this home to me.”¹⁰⁷ The figure of planetarity, in contrast to that of the national or international, makes our home *unheimlich* or uncanny, Spivak argues, in that it introduces the idea of “land” as continuous with the Earth. “Land” is the element that makes possible the displacement of the national into planetarity, a term that, for Spivak, goes beyond cosmopolitanism in that it reminds us of the inhumanness of the place that we call “home” or “mother earth”: “The planet is in the species of alterity,” Spivak argues, “belonging to another system;

and yet we inhabit it, on loan.... When I invoke the planet, I think of the effort required to figure the (im)possibility of this underived intuition.”¹⁰⁸

For Spivak, it is the alterity of the land that signals the limit, or rather the impossible possibility, of thinking the planet in a human-centered frame. And yet, for those travelers living in the era of exploration and discovery, it was not the figure of land but rather that of water—vast expanses of water, sea, and oceanic abyss—that both made the territorializing ambitions of the English nation possible and, in the case of Raleigh, set them catastrophically off course. As Peter Sloterdijk argues succinctly, “the fundamental thought of modernity was articulated *not* by Copernicus, but rather by Magellan.”¹⁰⁹ By displacing land into ocean, nation into sea, Raleigh (dis)figures the face of planetarity by rendering the matter of the Earth as “depe”: “And the earth was without forme & voyde, and darkeness was vpon the depe.”¹¹⁰

If, as I have been arguing, Raleigh’s aquacentric discourse represents a sustained philosophical and poetic mediation on the suspension of sovereignty, bodily integrity, and world, it does not therefore represent a return to “life” understood in Agamben and Badiou’s sense as the practical life of man. Raleigh’s “tempestuous life” does not represent a praxis that could be used to re-found the human polis or to awaken politics to its proper calling. Whereas Foucault, at the end of his archaeology of man, famously imagines a future time, a *posthuman* time when “man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea,” Raleigh attests to man’s erasure from and in the beginning.¹¹¹ And this is so because man has always existed as a being who attempts to survive himself through an “autoimmunitary process” of endings.¹¹² Man as *homo faber*, as the being who exists by exiting himself through endless self-fashioning, has always

been this self-erased being, this posthuman being who survives his own ending. The ends of man, then, is perhaps the only history of man that “we” have ever known.

What we need instead, and what Raleigh’s texts offer us, is an image of life not based on human survival. Against a redemptive future, a posthuman future in which man, having been erased by the tides of the sea, surpasses himself by returning to life and ecology, against this image of reproductive futurity, Raleigh figures the “tide of man’s life” as nothing other than a state of suspension without end.¹¹³ Raleigh’s “tempestuous life” is not *for us*; it is an image of inhuman durations, of speeds of life that leave “our” time, the time of persons and nations, “unioynted and scattered.” To say (à la Shakespeare’s Hamlet) that time is out of joint is one thing; the real question that “we” should ask is: whose time? For as Foucault makes clear, “man is neither the oldest nor the most constant problem that has been posed for human knowledge.”¹¹⁴ Rather than think of life in terms of man’s ending, we might begin to think of the inhuman abyss *within* man himself. Perhaps only then, “after all Philosophical contemplation and curiositie,” after “all the reason of man ends and dissolves it selfe,” might the (im)possible and underived intuition of a world without “us” start to take hold.

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 304.

² Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World*, ed. C. A. Patrides (London: Macmillan, 1971), 74. All subsequent citations from *The History of the World* are taken from this edition.

³ See Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003): 11-40; and Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Rozen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

⁴ Raleigh, *The History of the World*, 45.

⁵ Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1-28, 127-173.

⁶ Raleigh, *The History of the World*, 45.

⁷ Ibid., 45.

⁸ For a detailed analysis of the intellectual, political, and theological motivations that prompted Raleigh to work on a universal world history, see Nicholas Popper, *Walter Raleigh’s History of the World and the Historical Culture of the Late Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

⁹ For more on the sea as a potential “plane of immanence,” see Cesare Casarino’s excellent study, *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx, Conrad in Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), which asserts the centrality of the sea to the making and unmaking of Western modernity. According to Casarino, “the sea narrative questions not only its own foundations but also reaches beyond itself to question the foundation of a world that for several centuries had been run in all sorts of ways by ships—in questioning itself, it questions the whole world” (12).

¹⁰ See Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

¹¹ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 9.

¹² See Claire Colebrook, “Not Symbiosis, Not Now: Why Anthropogenic Change is Not Really Human,” *The Oxford Literary Review* 34.2 (2012): 185-209, and *Death of the Posthuman: Essays on Extinction, Vol. 1* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2014).

Here and elsewhere in this chapter, I am indebted to Colebrook’s analyses of the recent redemptive turn to life in contemporary theories of the posthuman.

¹³ Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁴ Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 7, 5.

¹⁵ Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 5.

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida makes this point in *The Beast and the Sovereign, Volume 1*: “What is difficult to sustain, in this [Agamben’s] thesis, is the idea of an entry (a modern entry, then) into a zone of irreducible indifferentiation, when the differentiation [between *bios* and *zoē*] has never been secure; and, above all, what remains even more difficult to sustain is the idea that there is in this something modern or new; for Agamben himself ... is keen to recall that it [the biopolitical] is as ancient as can be, immemorial and archaic” (316-317).

¹⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh: The Renaissance Man and His Roles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Mary Fuller, *Voyages in Print: English Travel to America, 1576-1624* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁸ My call for a more aqua-centric literary criticism develops from Patricia Yaeger’s analysis in “Sea Trash, Dark Pools, and the Tragedy of the Commons,” *PMLA* 125.3

(2010): 523-545. I also draw on the recent “oceanic turn” in early modern studies. See, for example, Dan Brayton, *Shakespeare’s Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012); and Steve Mentz, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare’s Ocean* (London: Continuum, 2009).

¹⁹ My thinking on imbroglios of material agents that are human, nonhuman, and inhuman draws on the work of Monique Allewaert, *Ariel’s Ecology: Plantations, Personhood, and Colonialism in the American Tropics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences Into Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); and Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

²⁰ See Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

²¹ Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). For related works on the cultural history of the Mediterranean, see Fernand Braudel’s *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); and Peregrine Horden and Nicholas

Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), which sets out to update and revise Braudel's influential study.

²² My readings of Atlanticism and of liquid bodies more generally draw on Stacy Alaimo's new materialist definition of "transcorporeality." Alaimo defines transcorporeality as "a suspension of humanist presumptions ... a sense that the human is held, but not held up, by invisible genealogies and a maelstrom of often imperceptible substances that disclose connections between humans and the sea." See Stacy Alaimo, "States of Suspension: Trans-corporeality at Sea," *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 19.3 (Summer 2012): 477-478, and *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

²³ Mentz, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean*, 1.

²⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. David Raeburn (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

²⁵ All quotations from Shakespeare's works are taken from *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Orgel and A. R. Braunmuller (New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

²⁶ Quotations from Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (The Art of Love) are taken from John Dryden, *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. John Sargeant (London: Oxford University Press, 1913).

²⁷ On the relation of vulnerability, masculinity, and romance in Spenser's epic, see Joseph Campana, *The Pain of Reformation: Spenser, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Masculinity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); Linda Gregerson, *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton and the English Protestant Epic* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995); James Kuzner, *Open Subjects: English Renaissance Republicans, Modern Selfhoods and the Virtue of Vulnerability* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh

University Press, 2011); and Melissa E. Sanchez, *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011). For other key readings of early modern masculinity, see Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (New York: Routledge, 1997) and Cynthia Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

²⁸ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 5.

²⁹ All quotations from Raleigh's "Cynthia" poems are taken from *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh: A Historical Edition*, ed. Michael Rudick (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies in conjunction with Renaissance English Text Society, 1999). I have also consulted *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh*, ed. Agnes M. C. Latham (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951).

³⁰ Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh: The Renaissance Man and His Roles*, 104.

³¹ Latham, *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh*, xiv.

³² Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989), 134.

³³ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 135.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁶ On the topos of *ultima Britannia*, antiquity's idea of England as a remote island at the margins of the Mediterranean, and its persistence in the early modern English imaginary,

see Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, *Dire Straits: The Perils of Writing the Early Modern English Coastline from Leland to Milton* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

³⁷ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 139.

³⁸ Jonathan Goldberg, *Tempest in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 3-37.

³⁹ Richard Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages Touching the Discoverie of America, and the Ilands Adiacent vnto the fame, made first of all by our Englishmen, and afterward by the Frenchmen and Britons* [STC 12624] (London: for Thomas Woodcocke, dwelling in paules Church-yard, at the signe of the blacke beare, 1582), 1-2.

⁴⁰ Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages*, 1-2.

⁴¹ Jonathan Woolfson, "The Renaissance of Bees," *Renaissance Studies* 24.2 (2009): 283.

⁴² Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* (Generation of Animals), 3.10, trans. A. Platt, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1176.

⁴³ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XI, trans. John F. Healy (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 149-157.

⁴⁴ Virgil, *Georgics*, Book 4, trans. Peter Fallon (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁴⁵ David Freedberg, *The Eye of the Lynx: Galileo, His Friends, and the Beginnings of Modern Natural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 165.

⁴⁶ Virgil, *Georgics*, 4.198-202.

⁴⁷ See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, ed. Michael Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2007).

⁴⁸ See Nancy J. Vickers, "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme," *Critical Inquiry* 8.2 (Winter 1981): 265-279, and "'The Blazon of Sweet Beauty's Best': Shakespeare's *Lucrece*," in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), 95-115.

⁴⁹ Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), 126-154. John Donne, "To His Mistress Going to Bed," in *The Complete English Poems*, ed. A.J. Smith (London: Penguin, 1996).

⁵⁰ Louis Montrose, "The Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery," *Representations* 33 (Winter 1991): 13.

⁵¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), xxvi.

⁵² Montrose, "The Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery," 6.

⁵³ Georges Canguilhem, *A Vital Rationalist: Selected Writings from Georges Canguilhem*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Zone Books, 2000), 163.

⁵⁴ Canguilhem, *A Vital Rationalist*, 176-177.

⁵⁵ Freedberg, *The Eye of the Lynx*, 175-176.

⁵⁶ Quotations from *The Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Bewtifvl Empyre of Gviana* [STC 20636] are taken from *Sir Walter Raleigh's Discoverie of Guiana*, ed. Joyce Lorimer (London: Ashgate, 2006), 211-213.

⁵⁷ Raleigh, *Discoverie of Guiana*, 31.

⁵⁸ Louis Montrose, "The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text," in *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, eds. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 315.

⁵⁹ Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*, 131-132.

⁶⁰ Raleigh, *Discoverie of Guiana*, 213.

⁶¹ See Mary Fuller, "Raleigh's Fugitive Gold: Reference and Deferral in *The Discoverie of Guiana*," in *New World Encounters*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 218-240.

⁶² Allewaert, *Ariel's Ecology*, 2.

⁶³ Raleigh, *Discoverie of Guiana*, 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁷ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 66.

⁶⁸ Raleigh, *Discoverie of Guiana*, 95.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁷⁰ My reference to "worlding" here and elsewhere in this chapter alludes to Martin Heidegger's well-known thesis in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001), namely, that "the stone is worldless [*weltlos*], the animal is poor in world [*weltarm*], man is world-forming [*weltbildend*]" (176). Heidegger defines "world" according to a being's capacity for active engagement with the environment. His theses concerning the human and the

animal have been discussed at great length by Jacques Derrida in *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), and *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, as well as by Giorgio Agamben in *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). Yet very little has been said about Heidegger's theses concerning the worldlessness of the elements. By calling attention to the worlding power of oceans, my purpose is to counter a critical myopia toward oceans and to show that, indeed, oceans, rivers, and other sea-like bodies *have world* and are world-forming to the extent that they not only relate to the environment but also actively transform it. Raleigh's term for this active engagement is "breach[ing]." Recall that, in Derrida's essay on Freud's "Note on the Mystic Writing Pad," Derrida defines writing as a palimpsestic economy of "breaching" (*Bahnung*), and argues that it is the difference between facilitations that is at the origin of memory and historicity: "We then must not say that breaching without difference is insufficient for memory; it must be stipulated that there is no pure breaching without difference. Trace as memory is not a pure breaching that might be reappropriated at any time as simple presence; it is rather the ungraspable and indivisible difference between breaches" (see Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978], 201). Raleigh's attention to river-crossings and alluvial traces accords with Derrida's sense of breaching as an "ungraspable and indivisible difference between breaches." While I follow Derrida's lead in using the metaphors of writing to describe the worlding power of oceans, it is not my intention to reduce oceanic writing to the history and memory of the human, a maneuver that would once again make man the

measure of all things; rather, my intention is to open up the concept of writing to histories beyond the human. The question is not simply, *what is nature such that it becomes a form of writing?* but rather *what is writing such that it belongs always already to nature?*

⁷¹ Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 66.

⁷² Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh: The Renaissance Man and His Roles*, 131.

⁷³ Raleigh, *The History of the World*, 88.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁷⁶ Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 73.

⁷⁷ Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 57.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁹ Yaeger, "Sea Trash, Dark Pools, and the Tragedy of the Commons," 526-527.

⁸⁰ Walter Raleigh, *Judicious and Select Essayes and Observations. By the Renowned and Learned Knight. Sir Walter Raleigh. Upon the first Invention of Shipping. The Misery of Invasive Warre. The Navy Royall and Sea-Service. With his Apologies for his voyage to Guiana* [Wing STC R170] (London: Printed by T. W. for Humphrey Moseley and are to be Sold at the Princes Armes in St. Pauls Church-yard, 1650), 1-2.

⁸¹ See George Puttenham, "Of Ornament," in *The Art of English Poesy*, eds. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

⁸² Derek Walcott, "The Sea is History," in *Collected Poems, 1948-1984* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1986), 364-367.

⁸³ By “imagined community” I refer to the work of Benedict Anderson, whose book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Verso, 2006), focuses closely on print cultures and public spheres in relation to the emergence of nationalist subjectivities.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press As An Agent of Change* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), and *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800* (London and New York: Verso, 1976); Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); and Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁸⁵ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁸⁶ Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005), 1.

⁸⁷ Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, 153.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Fuller, *Voyages in Print*, 1.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1, 66.

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- ⁹² Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal*, 1. For more on the idea of “the modern constitution,” see Bruno Latour’s *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 13.
- ⁹³ Ibid., 270.
- ⁹⁴ Quoted in Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal*, 275.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., 281.
- ⁹⁶ I derive this reference to the intensive model of thought about life from Claire Colebrook: “What is required is not a shift in extensity (including more, respecting more, furthering our historical imagination), but a shift in intensity.” See Colebrook, “Not Symbiosis, Not Now,” 188.
- ⁹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 7.
- ⁹⁸ Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 5.
- ⁹⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 36.
- ¹⁰⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 36.
- ¹⁰¹ Raleigh, *The History of the World*, 75.
- ¹⁰² Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 7.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., 13.
- ¹⁰⁴ Raleigh, *The History of the World*, 92.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 93.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 93.

¹⁰⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of A Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 93.

¹⁰⁸ Spivak, *Death of A Discipline*, 72.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Sloterdijk, “Geometry in the Colossal: The Project of Metaphysical Globalization,” from *Sphären II—Globen*, trans. Samuel A. Butler, *Society and Space* 27 (2009): 33.

¹¹⁰ Genesis 1.2. This citation is from the Geneva Bible; see *The Bible: That Is, the Holy Scriptvres Conteined in the Olde and New Testament* [STC 2166] (London: 1595).

¹¹¹ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 387.

¹¹² I borrow the phrase “autoimmunitary process” from Jacques Derrida: “As we know, an autoimmunitary process is that strange behavior where a living being, in quasi-suicidal fashion, ‘itself’ works to destroy its own protection, to immunize itself *against* its ‘own’ immunity.” See Jacques Derrida, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, ed. Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 94.

¹¹³ On the idea of “reproductive futurity,” see Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹¹⁴ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 386.

Chapter Four: Steps to a Georgics of the Mind

Our knowledge, and the scale of nature set

From centre to circumference, whereon

In contemplation of created things

By steps we may ascend to God. —John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (5.509-512)¹

This way of thinking I call the “ecology of mind,” or the ecology of ideas. It is a science which does not yet exist as an organized body of theory or knowledge. —Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*²

In his *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* (1597), the English herbalist John Gerard hastens to explain why plants ought to be considered preeminent “Among the manifold creatures of God.”³ He reasons that of all God’s creatures “that have all in all ages diversely entertained many excellent wits, and drawen them to the contemplation of the diuine wisdom,”

none haue prouoked mens studies more, or satisfied their desires so much, as plants have done, and that vpon iust and woorthie causes: For if delight may prouoke mens labour, what greater delight is there than to behold the earth apparelled with plants, as with a robe of imbroidered worke, set with orient pearles, and garnished with great diuersitie of rare and costly iewels?⁴

Gerard’s assessment of the Earth’s floral estate is striking not only for the immediate reason that he privileges plants “among the manifold creatures of God,” including humans, but also because, in addition to naming the “use” and “necessity” of plants, which since “the first ages of the world ... have continued ever since of necessarie use

both for meates to maintaine life, and for medicine to recover health,” Gerard also specifies the “principall” measure of plants as their ability to affect “delight,” both in “the outward senses” and “in the minde.”⁵ Indeed, Gerard goes so far as to say that the affect of “delight” elicited by plants is not only congenial to the mind, but may be a necessary provocation to “wisdome,” “contemplation,” and the “satisfaction” of our “desires.”

Gerard’s ascription of a propaedeutic efficacy to plants hinges, seemingly without contradiction, on the latter’s ability to cultivate the higher faculties of the mind through an involutionary address to the senses. Plants, according to Gerard, “pro-voke,” meaning that they call forth, challenge, arouse, stir up, excite, and appeal (the Latin etymology of *vocare* means literally “to call”). This address turns the mind inside out, making it flush with the body’s sensitive exterior. How do plants perform this involutionary vocation? By appearing before the eye, “apparelled ... as with a robe of imbroidered worke,” rhetorically emblazoned in accordance with the Petrarchan genre’s signature combination of visual fragmentation and lush adornment, plants acts in Gerard’s description as lures to thought, or to what Timothy Morton calls, “the ecological thought.” As Morton writes,

The ecological thought is thought about ecology, but it’s also a thinking that is ecological.... The ecological thought doesn’t just occur ‘in the mind.’ It’s a practice and a process of becoming fully aware of how human beings are connected with other beings—animal, vegetable, or mineral. Ultimately, this includes thinking about democracy.⁶

I begin with Gerard’s *Herball* not because it takes an interest in looking at plants (though that is part of it), but because it forces us to consider how plants invite us to look differently, to see more, that is, and in turn to feel more than we are used to.⁷ Today, we

are accustomed to thinking of terms such as “wisdom” and “contemplation” (to use Gerard’s terms) with respect to the higher faculties of cognition (i.e. “the mind”). Yet rarely do we associate these terms with affective response, much less with the other creatures: animal, vegetable, or mineral. What once appeared obvious to Gerard and to the naturalists of his time as a practice that veered unimpeachably upon the strange and unpredictable nature of their life’s work, namely, the cultivation of mind through the nurturing of plants, today seems odd. Yet more and more in the twenty-first century we humans increasingly find ourselves in daily encounter with nonhuman species who are challenging our claims to sovereignty over the Earth’s physical and mental resources.⁸ More and more we find ourselves confronted with different scales of life and different modes of living, of which we are deeply, inextricably, intertwined. Today, in an era of biopolitics, in which the question of how and where to value life is precisely what is at stake in debates over “bare life” and the growing threats of extinction, biologists and philosophers of life are asking again and again “What is life?,” or, as Stefan Helmreich has recently posed the question, “What was life?”⁹ From proliferating reproductive technologies to genomic experimentation, digital simulation and informatic representation, “life” is everywhere in question, but nowhere the same.¹⁰ At the level of the global ecosystem, we are learning that the history of human affairs is deeply entangled with natural history; the history of “life”—hitherto understood as the history of human life—is coming undone in the face of new and previously unimaginable historical agents: global pandemics, natural disasters, mass extinction of species.¹¹ Although the contemporary crisis of the Earth’s global ecosystem makes this entanglement all the more precarious, it does not therefore make it vivid. The difficulty of perceiving

entanglement is that it implies scaling down human perception; no longer the measure of all things, humans are obliged to perceive life at all levels, from the molecular to the global. Difficult though this may be, Richard Doyle points out that this kind of scalar perception is precisely what is needed:

Across the life and climate sciences, the news is this: You are deeply implicated in the global ecosystem in ways scientific and technical practices are only beginning to comprehend and model. If the breakthroughs in medical and global imaging systems have provided us with revelations, they reveal that our separateness from ecosystems is itself an illusion, and that we are membranes inseparable from a global ecology.¹²

How can we begin to adjust our scales of perception to apprehend our entanglement with the Earth's ecosystems? And what new models for thinking and perceiving entanglement might we derive from Gerard's description of plants?

In what follows, I argue that plants provide an uncanny way of re-calibrating our mental architecture. As imaging systems in their own right, plants serve as unique, evolutionarily adapted technologies for training human perception to visualize life's many entanglements. Like the posthuman figures that Donna Haraway has theorized, from the fleshly silicon of the "cyborg" to the human-animal symbiosis of "companion species," I argue that plants, too, act as cybernetic pedagogues with the capacity to seduce the mind's eye toward more worldly modes of perception.¹³ Although the concept of "seduction" has held a prestigious place in the history of psychoanalysis, it was Charles Darwin, not Freud, who first articulated the role of seduction in the dynamic processes of nature. Whereas natural selection provides a utilitarian understanding of

evolution, one in which nature, bent on survival, fundamentally aims to match the organism to its environment, it was Darwin's theory of sexual selection that introduced a disturbance in the natural selective order. As Elizabeth Grosz explains,

In affirming the radical distinction between natural and sexual selection—that is, between skills and qualities that enable survival, and those that enable courtship and pleasure, which sometimes overlap but commonly do not—Darwin introduced an excessiveness into the development and transformation of species. Species are no longer natural collections or kinds developed to survive and compete, they are also the a posteriori and ultimately incalculable consequences of sexual taste, appeal, or attraction.¹⁴

What is more, because sexual selection does not serve the reproductive ends of survival, it uses forms of seduction to elicit novel forms of attention. Elaine Scarry has written beautifully about the evocative powers of plants in training the mind's eye toward diverse forms of perception. Although as humans we often see ourselves as sole arbitrators over the worlds of meaning and perception, Scarry argues that human perceptual capacities have been fundamentally shaped by our evolutionary entanglement with plants. In the case of flowers, this evolutionary shaping most resembles a game of courtship.

Flowers can be taken as the representative of the imagination because of the ease of imagining them. That ease is in turn attributable to *their* size and the size of our heads, *their* shape and the shape of our eyes, *their* intense localization and the radius of our compositional powers, *their* rarity that lets them rise and enter our brains and our willingness to receive them as the template for the production of other, more resistant compositions. It is clear: we were made for one another. No

wonder the kind of cross-species desire that Ovid recommends turns out to be key to imaginative life, to the bringing forth of what is fresh.¹⁵

In this chapter, I pursue the kind of cross-species desire that Darwin and Scarry sketch out here. I do so by focusing on two motifs central to both the writings of John Milton and the history of sexuality. Those motifs are, following Foucault, labor and eros.¹⁶

Consider the laboring that takes place, *contra* Christian orthodoxy, in the Garden of *Paradise Lost* (1667), among the tendrils and branches and the seductively overgrown *flora*, which, despite the absence of physical need or the ever renewed efforts of the first man and woman to curb their excessive growth, continue to exude themselves, in Milton's words, by "Tending to wild" (9.212). In an evocative passage taken from Book 5 of *Paradise Lost*, we witness a scene of erotic labor that turns on this very language of plants tending to wild. In it, "rural work" registers as a deeply seductive ecology:

On to their morning's rural work they [Adam and Eve] haste
Among sweet dews and flowers; where any row
Of fruit trees over-woody reached too far
Their pampered boughs, and needed hands to check
Fruitless embraces. (5.211-215)

Here, the poetics of laboring inaugurated by Virgil's *Georgics* cross-cuts with Milton's epic, producing a scene of "rural work" in which "trees over-woody" outstrip the efforts of the first workers "to check" their wild growth. In this Sisyphean venture, "work" tends to unwork as plants overreach man's labors. What interests me, however, is not the futility of Adam and Eve's work but rather the cross-species desire that such work enables. Continuing from the last line:

they led the vine
To wed her elm; she spoused about him twines
Her marriageable arms, and with her brings
Her dower the adopted clusters, to adorn
his barren leaves. (5.215-219)

The entanglement of “vine” and “elm” doubles as human and nonhuman desires intertwine around the confusion of pronouns (“they,” “her,” “she”). Is the vine a “she”? Is the “she” that “twines” Eve? Milton’s poem is replete with such moments in which “rural work” combines with ecological forces to unwork the Garden’s “human” center.¹⁷ In the following passage, Adam’s call to “labour” is again undone by this wild ecology:

And at our pleasant labour, to reform
Yon flowery arbours, yonder alleys green,
Our walk at noon, with branches overgrown,
That mock our scant manuring, and require
More hands than ours to lop their wanton growth. (4.627-629)

In good Puritan fashion, Milton’s Adam equates “pleasant labour” with the desire to “reform” the Garden. But no sooner does he express this desire when his labors are undercut (the reflexive obverse of “to lop”). The hard dual syllabic, “More hands,” unworks Adam’s reformist ambitions in the face of “overgrown” plants and “wanton growth.” A haunting refrain that repeats throughout Milton’s poem (for instance, it appears in my first quotation, “needed hands”), “More hands” signals an interruptive force internal to the Garden. It is not that “pleasant labor” results in nothing; rather, it is that Adam and Eve’s labors reveal an excess that is both inhuman and unworkable.

By focusing on this “wanton” *flora* and on the cross-species desires engendered by the Garden, my goal is to show that instead of simply producing laboring subjects as the embodiments of a Puritan mentality¹⁸ or an emergent public sphere,¹⁹ Milton’s vision of the Garden testifies to a form of life that is not dependent on the separation of subjects from objects²⁰ or on the deathexis of work from desire.²¹ Rather, subjects and objects, humans, animals and plants, unwork their fixed identities through their erotic entanglements.²² In the space created by this ecological reimagining, plants assume a new agency, something akin to what Jane Bennett terms, a “vital materiality”: the recognition that “vitality is shared by all things,” and not limited to humans alone.²³

While Miltonists have long pointed to the fact that Milton revises the Genesis story by figuring Adam and Eve as laborers whose divine charge is to put off carnal temptation through physical exertion and cultivation of the Garden, a task traditionally reserved for fallen man, too often readers of Milton desist at the point of determining the full significance of this revision. Consequently, what is unconventional in Milton has now become rote among Milton critics: the fact that Adam and Eve must cultivate the Garden is read as a commonplace of Milton’s Puritanism. My reading of *Paradise Lost* resists this assumption. Indeed, it shows that we err in reducing Milton’s poetic (re)vision to either a theological exercise,²⁴ on the one hand, or a protestant work ethic,²⁵ on the other. We err insofar as we miss seeing the queer potentiality, or the sheer erotic excess, of Milton’s vision of the Garden, which is not merely about work, after all, but about unworking our assumptions about collectivity, agency, sexuality, and the commons.²⁶ I call this form of unworking and the assemblage of human and nonhuman forces that it enlists an ecology. Though it can also be read, after Foucault, as a form of *askesis*.

Writing in his essay “What is Enlightenment?” Foucault reflects on a matter of intrinsic importance to Milton’s ecopoetics. Following Kant, he describes what he calls “the discreet entrance into the history of thought of a question that modern philosophy has not been capable of answering,” namely, *Was ist Aufklärung?* (What is Enlightenment?), and asks: “What, then, is this event that is called the *Aufklärung* and that has determined, at least in part, what we are, what we think, and what we do today?”²⁷ The emphasis on “today” is not inconsequential. For as Foucault goes on, he notes that Kant does not define Enlightenment as an accomplished fact or as “a historical process.” Instead, Kant refracts the history of modernity from the perspective “of contemporary reality alone,” asking, in Foucault’s words: “What difference does today introduce with respect to yesterday?”²⁸ What is Enlightenment *now*, in other words? As a precursor to what Foucault will later term “care of the self,” that ongoing process of desubjectivization and experimentation that inhabits modes of quotidian existence, self-practice, corporeal comportment, living and dying, Kant’s “attitude” to modernity ushers in a different way of relating to history as the history of the present. This way of relating that involves forms of *askesis*, that is, practices of the self in the transformation of thought, will be the framework with which I proceed in this chapter as we encounter attitudes and practices akin to those that Foucault labels under “Enlightenment.” From poetic labor to eating to practices of sexual assemblage, Milton’s georgics, like Foucault’s *Aufklärung*, gravitates toward the time of the now, but a now that explodes time from any strict teleological or instrumental development.²⁹ Milton’s “georgics of the mind” (a phrase I borrow from Francis Bacon³⁰) torques time toward an ecology *to come*.³¹ Tracing that untimely ecology will be the work of this chapter.³²

There is Perception Everywhere

Renaissance historian Brian Ogilvie has observed that “humanist scholars and their pupils emphasized the moral and aesthetic benefits of a precise knowledge of nature.”³³ He states that:

Where medieval philosophers concentrated on universal essences and natures, humanists focused on outward appearances and particulars—in rhetoric, in history, in philology, but also in the study of nature. In the case of nature, this approach harmonized with an aesthetic judgment rooted in the particular:

humanists derived more pleasure from nature when they knew it intimately.³⁴

According to Ogilvie, Renaissance natural history grew out of this double movement between the study of classical texts, on the one hand, and the reformist tendency toward the study of nature, on the other. It was the impulse toward the particular which precipitated the early modern “science of describing,” an empirical science that emerged soon after the beginnings of natural history in the late fifteenth-century and which, by the turn of the sixteenth-century, took the description of nature as an end in itself, thus rejecting the medical rationale of earlier naturalists, as well as the economic rationale of later ones. Botany was at the forefront of this development, which saw a flourishing of descriptive activity aimed at the diversity of the vegetable kingdom. As Ogilvie relates, the goal of botanists was no longer “to establish correspondences between ancient names and modern plants[,] ... [but] to establish a new catalogue of nature, starting from the premises that the ancients did not know everything, that they had described only a fraction of the natural world, and that their modern successors could best follow their

example by surpassing them, by describing the living world more precisely and more extensively.”³⁵

What’s more, their efforts were fruitful. Starting with the title page of Gerard’s 1636 text, we can see the desire to follow as well as to surpass the ancients etched out in linear succession. There, the reader encounters a luscious portrayal of the Garden of Eden, illuminated from above by God and ensconced by two inscriptions: the first from Genesis reads, “Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is”; and the second, an admonition to the reader that, “Lest you forget the Author of the divine gift, every plant shows the presence of God.” To the left and right of Eden we find Ceres and Pomona, Roman goddesses of the harvest who are enshrined among their characteristic symbols of grain and fruit. Below this first entablature are two telamones representative of the ancient founders of botanical science, Theophrastus and Dioscorides, the first a philosopher and student of Aristotle, and the second a Roman physician. At the third and lowest rung of this engraved estate, we find Gerard himself, whose *Generall Historie of Plantes* stands as the final blossoming of this ancient tradition.

While on the face of it, this engraved tableau seems to position Gerard’s *Historie of Plantes* as the latest rendition, if not the final culmination, of ancient and classical tradition, beyond the title page we find something quite different. In the Proem to his *Herball*, Gerard is at pains to distinguish his “historie of plants” from his Latin predecessors, stating that:

it would be tedious to use by way of introduction, any curious discourse upon the generall division of plants, contained in Latin under *Arbor*, *Frutex*, *Suffrutex*, *Herba*: or to speake of the differing names of their severall parts, more in Latine

than our vulgar tong can well expresse. Or to go about to teach thee, or rather to beguile thee by the smell or taste, to gesse at the temperature of plants: when as all and every of these in their place shall have their true face and note, whereby thou maist both know and use them.³⁶

Unlike Theophrastus, whose *Enquiry into Plants* minces over the essential divisions of plants, as well as their moisture and temperature, Gerard is centrally interested in the dynamic of looking and taking “note,” of seeing plants as they are, and of doing so face to face.

Emmanuel Levinas has told us that “the face is signification, and signification without context,” meaning that it does not signify in the manner of Saussure; its meaning does not depend on “its relation to another thing.”³⁷ Rather, the face for Levinas “is meaning all by itself.”³⁸ This “all by itself” (*il y a*) disturbs all context insofar as it elludes the present of signification. For Levinas, this non-presence “is what cannot become a content, which your thought would embrace.” “Vision,” by contrast, “is a search for adequation; it is what par excellence absorbs being.”³⁹ Thus, in the face to face encounter, “the best way of encountering the Other,” Levinas suggests, “is not even to notice the color of his eyes.”⁴⁰ Clearly Levinas was not thinking of plants when he wrote this sentence, but it is for that reason that his text is all the more instructive when read in comparison with Gerard’s. Whereas for Levinas “to notice” is to put oneself in a position of visual mastery in regard to the “Other,” for Gerard, something that is noteworthy does not necessarily become a “content” of the mind or an object of ocular possession; it is not simply a continuation of domination by other means. Rather, “to notice” is to enter into a sympathetic encounter in which all things suffer—are affected by—their relations.

A Mapplethorpe of his day, Gerard's text embodies the naturalist's commitment to observing nature in all of its studded particularity. Despite its quixotic overtones, however, the call to the particular—driven by curiosity for the natural world—did not go unchallenged.

Writing to Lord Burghley in 1592, Francis Bacon concludes his letter by naming two targets of his “vast contemplative ends”—what he would later term in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) his “Georgics of the mind.” Bacon styles his conclusion, interestingly enough, in the manner of a confession:

Lastly, I confess that I have as vast contemplative ends, as I have moderate civil ends: for I have taken all knowledge to be my province; and if I could purge it of two sorts of rovers, whereof the one with frivolous disputations, confutations, and verbosities, the other with blind experiments and auricular traditions and impostures, hath committed so many spoils, I hope I should bring in industrious observations, grounded conclusions, and profitable inventions and discoveries; the best state of that province. This, whether it be curiosity, or vain-glory, or nature, or (if one take it favorably) *philanthropia*, is so fixed in my mind as it cannot be removed.⁴¹

The “two sorts of rovers” that Bacon seeks to reform include the “frivolous disputations” and bookish “confutations” of scholasticism, on the one hand, and the “blind experiments” of the alchemists, on the other. But the confessional style of Bacon's letter owes not to what it objects to, but rather, to what it supports, namely: “curiosity.” Caught between *cura* and *curio*, care and attraction, Bacon's confessed promotion of “curiosity” sets out a precarious reinterpretation of humanity's fall and restoration, one in which the

senses—physical requisites of both knowledge and sin—undergo a radical transvaluation. Bacon turns to the Adamic act of naming, biblical exemplar of the primordial accord between the senses and things, as both typological forebear and ideological end. It is by looking backwards, in other words, that Bacon manages to reinstate curiosity in his advance toward nature.

This much at least is clear from *The Advancement of Learning*. In the opening pages of the *Advancement*, Bacon turns to Adam and the Garden of Eden in order to dislodge the fruit of creation from humanity's carnal appetites. Standing in stark contrast to postlapsarian habits of induction, Adam's innocent curiosity represents a model of learning that has the potential, in Bacon's view, to reform consumption into knowledge production. Here is Bacon:

[I]t was not the pure knowledge of nature and universality, a knowledge by the light whereof man did give names unto other creatures in Paradise, as they were brought before him, according to their properties, which gave the occasion to the fall; but it was the proud knowledge of good and evil, with an intent in man to give law unto himself and to depend no more upon God's commandment, which was the form of the temptation.⁴²

In a powerful reading of Bacon's distinction between "pure knowledge" and "proud knowledge," Joanna Picciotto argues that Bacon attributed "an apparent design flaw—the maladaptation of human perception to the scope of creation—to original sin."⁴³

Consequently, Bacon's advocacy of a new science required a new understanding of the senses. "For created humanity," Picciotto writes, "divine worship was indistinguishable

from satisfying the cognitive appetite.”⁴⁴ By contrast, the question for fallen humanity is, “What is creation *before* the fallen body and mind experience it?”⁴⁵

It is this unique understanding of the “maladaptation” of the fallen senses to the natural world, a view that left open the possibility of their improvement, that radically distinguished Bacon’s reformist project from other, likeminded reformers who shared his zeal for returning to things themselves. After all, earlier figures such as Paracelsus had already denounced the bookishness of humanist learning in favor of the immediacy of the first book, the Book of Nature, which he proposed revealed the imprints—or “signatures”—of the divine *verbum dei*.⁴⁶ But whereas Paracelsus imagined the divine “signatures” to be accessible to humanity’s exegetical practices, Bacon demurred, arguing instead that the stable link between signatures and the divine, signs and signified, had been lost. What was left to humanity were the senses, wayward and in need of reform. In effect, Bacon legitimated the advancement of learning by turning the sensitive body into a spectatorial body, that is, a medium of perpetual self-re-formation. As Picciotto writes, “In his effort to put off the old man and put on the new, the experimentalist placed his hopes not in the second Adam but the first.... In doing so, [Bacon] linked paradisaal recovery to progressive knowledge production or experimentation: the production of alien experiences of the known world.”⁴⁷ Through a kind of Brechtian alienation effect *avant la lettre*, Bacon “worked to make visible the material causes or ‘originals’ of sensory experience” by means of a progressive “de-education” of the senses. In this way, the Baconian experimentalist “aspir[ed] to a state of permanent estrangement from the known world, he turned conversion into a way of life.”

In experimentalist space, the old conflict between body and soul was reprised as a dialectical struggle between the fallen, “sensitive” body with which the investigator was saddled and the spectatorial body towards which he strove. In practice, the spectatorial body was restored as his own body, improved by artificial enhancements, disciplined by new evidentiary canons, absorbed into a working collective, and directed towards spiritual ends.⁴⁸

In Picciotto’s reading, Bacon conceived of scientific learning on the model of the first naturalist, Adam, as an ongoing “labor of seeing.” This labor, she argues, came with a moral imperative: the experimentalist must, as a matter of duty, practice unremitting self-discipline so as to forestall aesthetic judgement and the mediation of the senses. Only then can epistemology be set on a solid footing; only then can the fleshly body become a spectatorial body, one directed toward the true image of nature.

Picciotto’s reading of Bacon thus adheres to a version of enlightenment that links scientific advancement to what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno famously termed “disenchantment.”⁴⁹ In their view, “Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advancement of thought, has always aimed at liberating beings from fear and installing them as masters.... It wanted to dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge.” In short, enlightenment means “the extirpation of animism.”⁵⁰ For Horkheimer and Adorno, “Bacon ... brought these motifs together.”

Yet this version of enlightenment has come under scrutiny in recent years by scholars who question its historical inevitability. Bruno Latour for one has argued that the emphasis on “matters of fact” in most enlightenment narratives misses the point that “matters of fact are only very partial ... very polemical renderings of matters of

concern.”⁵¹ Meanwhile Jane Bennett, writing in a counter-tradition to the one established by the disenchantment narrative, asks “not whether disenchantment is a regrettable or a progressive historical development” but “whether the very characterization of the world as disenchanted ignores and then discourages affective attachment to that world.”⁵² For both Bennett and Latour, matters of concern connect the knowing subject to a universe of things, such that, to quote Alfred North Whitehead, “we may not pick and choose” between “the red glow of the sunset” on the one hand, and “the molecules and electric waves” on the other.⁵³ Both the poet’s “red glow” and the scientist’s “molecules and electric waves” belong to the same experience of nature. The whole of Whitehead’s philosophy thus aims at overcoming “the bifurcation of nature,” or the absolute division between “the nature apprehended in awareness and the nature which is the cause of awareness.”⁵⁴ For the poet, Whitehead suggests, the nature apprehended “holds within it the greenness of the trees, the song of the birds, the warmth of the sun, the hardness of the chairs, and the feel of the velvet.”⁵⁵ For the “man of science,” by contrast, the “nature which is the cause of awareness is the conjectured system of molecules and electrons which so affects the mind as to produce the awareness of apparent nature.”⁵⁶ Much of modern thought is founded on the bifurcation between the poet’s “red glow” and the scientist’s “molecules and electrons,” which separates mind and nature as to opposing substances. This bifurcation has its roots, Whitehead argues, in the writings of Bacon. As Whitehead remarks, “the method of rigid empiricism is not confined to metaphysics.... In natural science this rigid method is the Baconian method of induction, a method which, if consistently pursued, would have left science where it found it. What Bacon omitted was the play of a free imagination, controlled by the requirements of coherence and logic.”⁵⁷

Bacon's method of induction—what he calls his “Georgics of the mind”—eliminates the problem of perception (or the mind's metaphysical “additions”) by severing the knot between nature and perception completely. Consequently, what modern thought inherits from Bacon “is the uselessness of philosophic speculation”⁵⁸; what Whitehead seeks instead is a “speculative philosophy” in which “the obvious solidarity of the world receives its explanation.”⁵⁹

I will return to Whitehead's speculative philosophy later on in this chapter to explain its greater relevance to Milton's ecopoetics. For now, however, I would like to offer an alternative reading of Bacon, one that suggests not only how, as heirs to the Adamic art of naming, experimentalist poets like Milton labored toward an aesthetic re-education of the body, but also how that aesthetic re-education differed from the “sensuous iconoclasm” described by Picciotto. Turning to an alternative moment in the history of Baconian science, one that I would describe as deeply animistic, Bacon suggests a different response to the problem of sensation.

One of these responses found its expression in ancient atomism's distinction between primary and secondary qualities, which Descartes later reformulated as the distinction between mechanical nature, *res extensa*, and sensible or thinking nature, *res cogitans*. As Picciotto notes, this distinction had “revealed the extent of humanity's blindness to the creation over which it was supposed to be sovereign. In an inescapably new relation to the physical world,” one ushered in by the epiphany of a micro-world beneath the threshold of the visible,⁶⁰ “the senses were suspect not because they reflected the merely material aspects of creation, but because they *failed* to do so.”⁶¹ This recognition of the disjunction between the world of the senses and the world itself

drastically changed the problem of epistemology. The task, Picciotto avers, was no longer to see through to creation, but to see through the secondary qualities of perception into things themselves.

Because much of Picciotto's argument rests on aligning Bacon's project with this task, we do well to look elsewhere to gage the range of responses to the problem of sensation. For, as Daniel Heller-Roazen would have us remember,

There is little doubt that the Cartesian was among the most influential of the early modern theories of sensation, but it would be an unfortunate oversight to take it to have been alone in its kind. In the years during which Descartes aimed to found all knowledge, physical and metaphysical, on the activity of the thinking "I," the development of another current of thought was already well under way.⁶²

This alternative "current of thought" did not aim to distinguish consciousness from the world around it; it did not posit a cut between seer and seen, spectatorial body and sensorial body. Rather, "it made of animal sensation, in its many varieties, the fundamental principal of all things." Pointing to the Italian philosopher Tommaso Campanella, whose major work *De sensu rerum et magia* dates from 1589-1590, Heller-Roazen notes that Campanella condemned

Aristotle and his disciples for having foolishly restricted the field of perception to the terrain of animal life. Plants, he recalled, react to that which is around them, growing toward the sun, for example, or away from it, depending on what they sense themselves to need.... [Likewise,] the movements of waters show that they, too, perceive the affections they suffer; magnetism is the proof of perception among stones; the reaction of air to that which sounds within it tells us much

about its powers of sensitivity. An unbroken chain of perception, for Campanella, stretched from matter, which senses in desiring the forms it lacks, to the sensations of the astral bodies that circulate in the sensing heavens.⁶³

“The world is an extremely sensitive animal,” Campanella writes, meaning that all things sense, although to different degrees. Within this philosophical framework, there can be no distinction between primary and secondary qualities, between things that perceive (us, humans) and things that do not (them, nonhumans). Given this alternative “current of thought,” the Cartesianism which Picciotto highlights, though significant, accounts for only a portion of the responses pertaining to the senses.

Bacon was more multifarious. As Heller-Roazen notes, “Campanella was not alone in his age in finding in the world a quantity of perceptions in excess of the conscious minds to which they might be attributed.”⁶⁴ Bacon, too, in the conclusion to Book 4 of *De augmentis scientiarum*, argued that perceptions far outnumber the conscious sensations they give rise to. And this is so, Bacon remarks, because “no body when placed near another either changes it or is changed by it, unless a reciprocal perception precede the operation. A body perceives the passages by which it enters; it perceives the force of another body to which it yields.”⁶⁵ Writing in striking anticipation of Spinoza, whose *Ethics* appears some five decades later, Bacon defines the body as a ratio of movement and rest. As with Spinoza, the body’s ratio of motion to rest is determined not just by its own nature, but by a host of other bodies. Each body is itself many bodies, connected in a pulsating whole. For Spinoza, the body does not end at the skin, and identity is not centered in the mind. Rather, mind is the expression of the body

perceiving its own movement, and this perception is endless.⁶⁶ In Bacon's paraphrase, "there is perception everywhere."

Bacon's text ventures the idea that all things—animal, vegetable, and mineral—"suffer" their relations and thus share the same ontological status. Turning now to Milton's "Sonnet 7," I frame Milton's naturalism not as a turn away from the more sober "Georgics of the mind" advocated by Bacon, but rather as an excavation of the intensive naturalism that can be read as a submerged undercurrent in Bacon's philosophical text.

How Soon Hath Time?

Although critics often read "Sonnet 7" as a statement about poetic immaturity,⁶⁷ the poem works rather to undo developmental chronologies by figuring poetic life, and indeed life in general, as a labor of temporal multiplicity. Here is Milton:

How soon hath time the subtle thief of youth,
Stol'n on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arrived so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endueth.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even,
To that same lot, however mean or high,

Toward which time leads me, and the will of heaven;

All is, if I have grace to use it so,

As ever in my great task-master's eye. (Milton, [1645] 2008, 34-35)

“Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow”: Milton’s poem, published among his 1645 poems, is an experiment in the anachronic time of becoming.⁶⁸ It is nothing if not untimely. From the opening quatrain, indeed, the opening line, time is set off center. “How soon,” says the speaker, already intoning the lesson (his and ours) that time in Milton’s poetic universe is neither a series of discrete nows nor a linear succession. Time is process; it is composing and decomposing. “How soon hath time”—time has already happened. In Milton’s cosmos, time lags precisely as it moves forward. Already “Stol’n,” “youth” reappears after “hasting days” only to appear too early, too late: “my late spring no bud or blossom shew’th.” In the following quatrain, while there is an appearance of growth, what “shew’th” is not “the truth” of “manhood” or “inward ripeness,” but their fleeting “semblance.” A semblance does not register depth, only surface. The speaker’s “semblance” refracts time as it “deceives the truth.” Behind it are only more semblances.

I want to pause here to reflect on the nature of these semblances. We should recall that semblances are more than just surfaces; semblances are gatherings: they simulate (*sembler*) as they as-semble.

Writing on the notion of assemblage in early modern historiography, Jonathan Gil Harris suggests that material objects oblige us to think history in terms of the anachronic, that is, in terms of the differential timelines that fold and unfold in the object, any object whatsoever.⁶⁹ For Harris, time is always the inhuman time of the baroque fold; it has infinite points of contact, and infinite gradations of speed and slowness. Time is, he

suggests, inhuman precisely because it inheres in objects and at scales unimaginable to human comprehension. Quoting Bruno Latour, Harris observes that “I may use an electric drill, but I also use a hammer. The former is thirty-five years old, the latter hundreds of thousands.... Some of my genes are 500 million years old, others 3 million, others 100,000 years old, and my habits range in age from a few days to several thousand years.”⁷⁰

Not unlike Latour’s hammer, Milton’s poem partakes of this inhuman time by imagining itself at multiple speeds and multiple scales of becoming: from youth to maturity; ripeness to decay; and last, eternity. Milton’s poem is a happening. In point of fact, it is about being in the midst of a happening. But this happening is and is not the speaker’s. Although the speaker’s temporal attitude is fastened to an image of nature, here figured as “my late spring,” this nature is, as we soon learn, not one: nature is not natural. As vehicle, “spring” connotes the cyclical time of growth and fertility; as tenor, poetic maturity. But the speaker’s image of “late spring” tends finally to infertility (“no bud or blossom shew’th”), despite his future hope “That some more timely-happy spirits” may “endueth.” In this way, the promise of a certain futurity that would develop from and be continuous with the past is left suspended: neither finished nor unfinished, the poem radiates from the middle—like a plant—producing differences, surprises, and uncanny emergences through its temporal unfolding.

“Sonnet 7” calls to mind the sense of activity and immediacy that Alfred North Whitehead and, more recently, Brian Massumi have termed “process philosophy.” Following Whitehead, Massumi re-conceives of “life” as a generalized process of becoming or “emergence.” “The world is not a grab-bag of things,” Massumi writes, “It’s

always in germ. To perceive the world in an object frame is to neglect the wider range of its germinal reality.”⁷¹ In an uncanny way, process and emergence come to represent core concepts in both the vitalist philosophies of Whitehead and Massumi and, in a less explicit sense, Milton’s poetry. Gordon Teskey avers to the “patterns of emergence” that “tend to appear at crucial moments in Milton’s poetry,” writing: “It is the persisting and undeniable sense we have that the poem is an emergent structure, something that feels, even as we read it, still in the process of being created, of excitedly breaking forth from the poet’s imagination and passing, even now, through the poet’s lips to our ears.”⁷² From this sense of untimely passing, it is hard not to detect the emergence of another, transhistorical folding—Milton’s “less or more” in folded touch with this statement by Whitehead:

[T]he notion of existence involves the notion of an environment of existences and of types of existences. Any one instance of existence involves the notion of other existences, connected with it and yet beyond it. This notion of the environment introduces the notion of “more and less,” and of multiplicity.⁷³

For Whitehead, the notion of “more and less” emerges from the “recognition of the goings-on of nature in which we, and all things of all types, are immersed. It has its origin in the thought of ourselves as process immersed in process beyond ourselves.”⁷⁴ Contrary to the positivist belief in pure objectivity, Whitehead claims that “connectedness is of the essence of all things of all types,” and that to abstract from connectedness—that is, to see only positivities—“involves the omission of an essential factor in the fact considered.”⁷⁵ In short, “No fact is merely itself.” To look from the vantage of “process” is to perceive infinite gradations of “connectedness” in and between the bare “facts” of

life. It is to see life in terms of “more and less,” composition and de-composition, rather than in terms of either/or, presence or absence. Whitehead suggests that so entangled are the perceiver and the perceivable world “that in every consideration of a single fact there is the suppressed presupposition of the environmental.... This environment, thus coordinated, is the whole universe in its perspective to the fact.”⁷⁶ Echoing what anthropologist and early cyberneticist Gregory Bateson once called “steps to an ecology of mind,” Whitehead maintains that a truly ecological perspective is one that is always willingly outstripped by the scale and complexity of ecological entanglement. “Any one instance of existence involves the notion of other existences, connected with it and yet beyond it.” This “beyond” implies a limit to what we can know about the environment, and implicatively, about ourselves. Hence the need to approach the environment by “steps.”

And Milton? The notion of “less or more, or soon or slow” in Milton’s poem invites us to think along the lines of what Gilles Deleuze describes as a life of *immanence*. The term immanence refers to things which are massively intra-connected, neither subject nor object, but web. For Deleuze, “immanence is in itself: it is not in something, *to* something; it does not depend on an object or belong to a subject.”⁷⁷ Immanence, says Deleuze, is “a life.” In Milton’s poem, “a life” translates “in strictest measure even” to the final couplet’s opening two syllables: “All is.” While the previous line, “Toward which time leaves me,” gives the poem a teleological (not to mention theological) bent, one which arcs toward “heaven” and the all-seeing “eye” of God, I am more concerned here with the perspective that the “All is” engenders for approaching the notion of “life.” In the immanent field that is “Sonnet 7,” one of the figures that emerges

is the figure of plant life, a figure that pushes the poem heliotropically, as it were, from “late spring” to “inward ripeness” to the poem’s sublime conclusion.

Although nothing is more common among Renaissance figures than that of a plant or flower—ubiquitous for their poetic tropes—laurel and poesy—this particular figure stands out as one that will re-emerge much later in Milton’s poetic process as “care of the self” and care of the land intersect in scenes of eating. It is to that untimely figure that I turn to next.

Eating Well

In Book 5 of *Paradise Lost*, Milton invites the reader to perceive the created universe as an alimentary one.⁷⁸ Pausing over a discussion between the first man, Adam, and his guest, the angel Raphael, a discussion that circles around (of all things) the subject of “food,” Milton dilates his poem to make “nourishment” the governing principle of “whatever was created” (5.414, 421). From embodied man to “purest spirits,”

... both contain,
Within them every lower faculty
Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste,
Tasting concoct, digest, assimilate,
And corporeal to incorporeal turn. (5.409-413)

Jonathan Goldberg, writing on the philosophical materialism of Lucretius, points out that in Milton’s monist universe “digestion is the route to oneness.”⁷⁹ In this sense eating is parallel to sex (the other subject of Adam and Raphael’s discussion), which, according to Raphael, “Leads up to heaven, is both the way and guide” (8.613). Alighting on the

notion of the “incorporeal” as it appears in both Milton and Foucault, Goldberg suggests that it is the very “perversion” of substance, substance turning into “simulacra” without depth or direction, that constitutes the (de)foundational nature of Milton’s (and Foucault’s) monist universe. “It is the nature of things that they are not solid bodies but rather bodies in motion; between things, connecting and separating them, are the simulacra they cast off.”⁸⁰ What remains to be said, however, is that as Milton’s poem continues, the way things are connected and “cast off” is entirely “alimential.” From the smallest scale of Milton’s universe to the largest, eating is not simply what one does; it is of the very nature of things:

For know, whatever was created, needs
To be sustained and fed; of elements
The grosser feeds the purer, earth the sea,
Earth and the sea feed air, the air those fires
Ethereal, and as lowest first the moon;
.....
Nor doth the moon no nourishment exhale
From her moist continent to higher orbs.
The sun that light imparts to all, receives
from all his alimential recompense
In humid exhalations, and at even
Supps with the ocean. (5.414-426)

In these lines, Milton’s early invocation of “less or more” finds its echo in the vast concatenation of a universe strung together by little more than the material necessity of

eating and (this is implied) shitting. Such is the “nourishment” by which, as Raphael will later say, “All things proceed ... / ... one first matter all, / Indued with various forms, various degrees / Of substance, and in things that live, of life” (5.470-474). What’s striking, however, is less the alimentary nature of Milton’s cosmology and more the form it resembles. Recall that in one of the earliest attempts to think the ontology of “life,” Aristotle’s *De anima*, Aristotle partitions “life itself” into three separate forms (plants, animals, humans) according to the type of “life” that is manifested in them (Aristotle, 1984).⁸¹ Humans alone are accorded the power of thinking; animals the power of movement and sensation; whereas plants are deemed “living” only in the sense that they decay and grow. Aristotle identifies this form of life common to plants “nutritive life”: “it is the only psychic potentiality they possess.”⁸² Commenting on this division in the ontology of life, Giorgio Agamben has noted that “the isolation of nutritive life (which the ancient commentators will already call vegetative) constitutes in every sense a fundamental event for Western science,” for “it was primarily by means of a progressive generalization and redefinition of the concept of vegetative life (now coinciding with the biological heritage of the nation) that the State would carry out its new vocation.”⁸³

The division of life into vegetal and relational, organic and animal, animal and human, therefore passes first of all as a mobile border within living man, and without this intimate caesura the very decision of what is human and what is not would probably not be possible.⁸⁴

Milton’s poem enacts this “mobile border” at all scales of existence, only to confound it. Cutting across Aristotle’s tripartite ontology, “life” proper becomes synonymous with vegetative life; humans and animals co-mingle; and at the center of this entangled

universe, Milton foregrounds the vital movements of nourishment and decay. In Milton's vitalist universe, flesh and spirit share the same root:

... So from the root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More airy, last the bright consummate flower
Spirits odorous breathes: flowers and their fruit
Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed
To vital spirits aspire, to animal,
To intellectual, give both life and sense,
Fancy and understanding, whence the soul
Reason receives,
.....
Differing but in degree, of kind the same. (5.479-490)

From the view offered by these few words, "Differing but in degree," we begin to perceive how Milton's theory of life works—or rather unworks. Stanley Fish has argued that to understand how Milton works, one should look to Freud. Beginning with the Freudian death drive, that inexhaustible machine of repetition, Fish maps the story of the fall onto the story of life's emergence. Drawing on Freud's theory that all living matter emerges from and desires return to rest and stasis, Fish recasts the Freudian death drive in a distinctly Christian light:

[W]e must leave the analogy with Freud behind, because for Milton the issues at stake are theological ones and the circuitous paths are the vehicles either of redemption or damnation. Where a path leads to depends on whether those who

are on it believe that they are striking out in new and adventurous directions ...or whether ... they are trying to get back home.... Those who seek to find rest in service to the deity act independently in the hope that they may one day cease to do so because their labors and their voices will have been reabsorbed into the rhythms and harmony of eternity.⁸⁵

Here, the terms labor, motion, sound, and rhythm are repurposed by Fish to reach after the Platonic ideals of “harmony” and eternal form. By extension, Fish renders Milton’s poetry (labor, motion, sound, rhythm) as an art whose “aim,” like “the aim of life,” is stillness, quiescence, death. Poetry is linked to spirit, a spiritual form achieved only by extinguishing life and poetic vitality. The materialism that Fish borrows from Freud is in turn linked to poetic deviation “aimed at getting back in tune with heaven.”⁸⁶ Out of tune, the rhythms of life are thus directed toward death, but a death that is, oddly enough, truer than life itself: “It is in this sense that the aim of life, rightly lived, is death.”⁸⁷ For Fish, the force of life’s essential dynamism points to a deviation, a lapse, and so mirrors the psychological deviations of Milton’s Satan. In Fish’s programmatic words, “the direction of knowledge” in Milton’s poetry “is from the inside out.... Rather than confirming or disconfirming belief, the external landscape, in all its details, will be a function of belief.”⁸⁸ And again: “affirming God is not something you do on the basis of evidence [in Milton’s poetry]; it is something you do against the evidence provided by forms of life considered apart from his creative and sustaining power, forms of life that appear real and compelling in their attraction but that are finally (and always) unreal and therefore without any claims on us at all.”⁸⁹

What follows from Fish's retooling of Freud is an interlocking series of binaries: inside/outside, belief/fact, center/deviation, stasis/movement, man/nature, mind/materiality, life/death. Although Fish qualifies his appropriation of Freud ("All we need do is substitute for Freud's organist vocabulary the vocabulary of creation, sin, redemption, and reunion"⁹⁰) he does not escape the latter's conception of matter as tending towards lifelessness or homeostasis. For Fish, Milton "works" precisely insofar as matter in his poem does not—insofar as it is rendered lifeless and inert, "without any claims on us at all."⁹¹ Fish's reading produces a monoculture in which there is only fallen nature, and death. A more astute reading, Picciotto's, notes that for Milton there is no "rigid boundary between two states of being whose incommensurability provides the mechanism for readerly self-correction.... Milton's famous dips into fallen language when describing Eden are just what they seem to be: efforts to disrupt an at once naive and corrupt understanding of innocence as a reassuringly lost state of perfection."⁹²

On the other hand, what makes Freud's account so gratifying is his paradoxical claim that internal to the reproductive logic of the organism is a machine of regressive a-futurity. The words "rest" and "stasis" mark not only life's beginning but also life's end. Thus the problem with beginnings: that the reproductive logic of life—what Freud calls "pleasure"—is already outstripped by its opposite—the machine of death. Freud's "earlier state of things" is as much proleptic as it is analeptic, both prospective and retrospective at once; for his view of "life" is essentially anachronistic insofar as the organism itself is torn between separation and return, time and no time, movement and death. "Life" vexes the living organism and redirects it to beginnings that are already endings.

A Miltonic test case for this vexatious temporality appears in Book 11, *after* the Fall: there, the Angel Michael marks the temporal rupture between pre- and postlapsarian life by invoking the “original crime” (11.424), that of eating the forbidden fruit, and cuts to a future scene in which Adam and Eve’s offspring, Cain and Abel, offer up the fruits of their labors to feed a carnivorous God. In this scene, the trauma of the first crime doubles and repeats: Cain and Abel, cursed to labor for their parents’ sins, offer up not one sacrifice, but two: first, a vegetable sacrifice,

A sweaty reaper from his tillage brought

First fruits, (11.434-435)

and second, an animal sacrifice,

a shepherd next

More meek came with the firstlings of his flock

Choicest and best; then sacrificing, laid

the innards and their fat, with incense strewed. (11.436-439)

If what makes prelapsarian life Edenic is the absence of death—or in this case, animal sacrifice—what makes Book 11 so intriguing is that it militates against the notion of an “original crime” by collapsing past, present, and future into a scene of traumatic repetition. From the vantage of the future anterior, Adam witnesses his own crime doubled by the sacrifice of “First fruits.” In Christian typology, this future anterior doubling looks both ahead to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and backwards again in time to Christ’s circumcision, as is recounted in Richard Crashaw’s devotional lyric, “Our Lord in his Circumcision”: “To thee these firstfruits of my growing death / (For what else is my life?) lo I bequeath” (Crashaw 1-2).⁹³ In the lines above, not only are we confronted

with an image of “what is to come” (12.11), but included in this image is a new relation to eating. Milton’s God becomes quite literally a God of visual consumption:

His [Abel’s] offering soon propitious fire from heaven

Consumed with nimble glance, and grateful steam. (11.441-442)

God’s eye devours. In *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida asks: “Might sovereignty be devouring? Might its force, its power, ... its absolute potency” *to exteriorize and to kill* “be, in essence and always in the last instance, a power of devourment ...?”⁹⁴ While Milton’s postlapsarian vision seems to answer this question in the affirmative, positing both God and man as sovereigns *because* they have the right to kill and eat animals, he does not simply adhere (*pace* Stanley Fish) to a strict timeline of before and after. Put differently: *if* what makes prelapsarian life Edenic is the absence of animal death, what about plants? Remembering that the first sacrifice to take place “after” the Fall involves plant life, or “First fruits,” I would like to suggest that one of the ways Milton “dips into fallen language” in his poem is through the eating, sharing, cultivation, and calculation of plant life and death. The question posed to the reader, then, is not whether or not to renounce death (Fish’s question) but rather how to live with death. As Derrida says, it would be a question of how to eat well.⁹⁵ (see Derrida, 1995). Unworking Milton entails grappling with the calculations of plant life and death from (and in) the beginning.

All About Eve

To delight of human sense exposed

In narrow room nature’s whole wealth, yea more,

A heaven on earth, for blissful Paradise

Of God the garden was, by him in the east

Of Eden was planted. (4.206-210)

Paradise Lost begins with a question: “what cause / Moved our grand parents in that happy state, / ... to fall off / From their creator ...? / Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?” Leaving aside the obvious answer—that Satan was the “cause” of that “foul revolt”—I would like to point out that some of the more complex figurations of seduction that occur in Milton’s poem take place not with Satan, but among a wider field of bodies, namely plants. Echoing the naturalist’s delight that we first saw in the case of Gerard and his garden, Milton’s poem is replete with references to the seductions offered by Eden. From the beginning of Book 4, in which Satan first spots “delicious Paradise,” to the many trials Eve faces in relation to that “fair plant,” the tree of knowledge, Milton suggests that the first seductions to lead “our grand parents” astray came not from Satan, but from the first gardner and his plants: “Of God the garden was, by him in the east / Of Eden was planted.” And like the “sovereign planter” (4.690), Milton, too, delights in the rhetorical excess afforded by Eden, weaving lavish descriptions of the garden’s flora into his own flowering verse. Nowhere is this overlay of rhetoric and botanical description more animate than around the figure of Eve, who, from the very first description, appears entangled with the garden: “Her unadorned golden tresses wore / Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved / As the vine curls her tendrils” (4.305-307). In the following passage, this hybridization of plant and human enters the realm of classical mythology, intersecting between Eve’s desire and that of Ovid’s Narcissus:

I first awaked, and found myself reposed

Under a shade of flowers, much wondering where

And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.
Not distant far from thence a murmuring sound
Of waters issued from a cave and spread
Into a liquid plain, then stood unmoved
Pure as the expanse of heaven; I thither went
With unexperienced thought, and laid me down
On the green bank, to look into the clear
Smooth lake, that to me seemed another sky.
As I bent down to look, just opposite,
A shape within the watery gleam appeared
Bending to look on me, I started back,
It started back, but pleased I soon returned,
Please it soon returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love. (4.450-465)

The scene of Eve's awakening, which portrays her ensconced by flowers and in search of answers regarding "what," "whence," and "how" she came to be, unfurls according to what would seem like a familiar story. In Ovid's story of Narcissus we recall the lovely boy looking in the pond and falling for his own image. Not able to possess himself, Narcissus is driven by his frustration to the point of despair and, with no way out of this circular fate, dies. After death he is transformed into a flower. While there is significant diegetic overlap between the two versions, Milton's retelling of the Narcissus story has Eve less in a state of despair and more in a state of awe over what appears at first as "A shape," an "It." Before discovering that the "shape within the watery gleam" is

in fact her shape, Eve entertains the possibility of “sympathy and love” between her and this “it.” The seduction between Eve and the “watery” thing floating on the lake’s surface is manifest in the dilatory repetitions of “Pleased” and “returned,” doubling in each case the “I” and the “it,” and recreating in prose the “murmuring sound / Of waters” that first drew Eve to the lake. These audiovisual “murmurings” significantly alter the status of Eve’s staring: for though the image is a reflection, Eve apprehends it as a material composite of sound and light, a sonorous, “watery image.” The effect of this passage is to make Eve the female simulacrum of the Narcissus figure, but the delayed recognition of the “self” in the water makes this a scene unlike that of the Lacanian mirror stage, for in it there is not the presupposition of human identification but the more peculiar crossing of “it” and “I.”⁹⁶ (see Lacan, 2006). Although the father’s “no” (to put this in Lacanian terms) does impede Eve’s looking: “Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire, / Had not a voice thus warned me, What thou seest, / What there thou seest fair creature is thyself” (4.466-468); although God’s voice displaces Eve’s inhuman desire away from the watery signifier onto the human signified: “I will bring thee where no shadow stays / Thy coming, and thy soft embraces, he / Whose image thou art” (4.470-472); nonetheless, Eve’s narcissism continues to blur forms of identification across the inhuman landscape: “I espied thee, fair indeed and tall, / Under a platan, yet methought less fair, / Less winning soft, less amiably mild, / Than that smooth watery image” (4.477-480).

Patricia Parker, along with a host of others critics, reads Eve’s crucial moment of staring as the dilation of a choice between temptation and Fall, and suggests that “Eve’s momentary staying upon her own image becomes within the epic an emblem of all such

suspensions.”⁹⁷ But just as important, I argue, is the suspension of difference in the desire for sameness that Eve’s narcissism enables.

Writing on the subject of narcissistic attachment, Leo Bersani claims that “Every theory of love is, necessarily, a theory of object relations.”⁹⁸ I highlight this sentence in order to point to what is unthought—and what Milton, by contrast, would have us consider—in its transitive description, namely, the unthought role of the object. For the key question that psychoanalysis raises, Bersani argues, is not how we choose objects to love, but more fundamentally, how we proceed to love an object at all. Bersani quotes Freud in asserting that from its inception, psychoanalysis has been doubtful of that possibility: “‘The finding of an object,’ Freud famously declared in the 1905 edition of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, ‘is in fact a re-finding of it.’ Love, which we like to think of as a discovery, is inseparable from memory.”⁹⁹ Bersani adds to Freud’s claim that love is about “re-finding” a lost object (prototypically the mother’s breast) by asserting that “the resurrected object may really be the loving subject, a self we lovingly recover at the very moment we may wish to celebrate our openness to the world, that is, to an irresistibly seductive otherness.”¹⁰⁰ The difficulty of loving an object, then, is that we never know who or what the object is: whether it’s the singular and unique object, or the object of one’s past. It may even be oneself.

Significantly, Bersani does not reject narcissism. Instead, following Foucault, he asks whether there might be a way of “modeling an impersonal relational field” that uses narcissism as a resource, not an obstacle, for exploring different forms of relationality. Bersani calls this relational field “impersonal narcissism,” and through a reading of Plato’s *The Symposium* argues that “narcissistic love in both the lover and the beloved ...

is exactly identical to a perfect knowledge of otherness” insofar as the “self the subject sees reflected in the other is not the unique personality central to modern notions of individualism.”¹⁰¹

In the generous narcissism of the exchange between Socratic lovers, each partner demands of the other ... that he reflect the lover’s type of being, his universal singularity (and not his psychological particularities, his personal difference), by recognizing and cultivating that singularity as his own most pervasive, most pressing potentiality. If we were able to relate to others according to this model of impersonal narcissism, what is different about the other (their psychological individuality) could be thought of as merely the envelope of the more profound (if less fully realized, or completed) part of themselves which is our sameness.¹⁰²

Bersani’s important re-conceptualization of the psychoanalytic theory of narcissism is in some sense a late heir to the Lucretian worldview that Milton operated within. We can see, for instance, the same stress on sameness and difference in Jonathan Goldberg’s claim, informed by his reading of Lucretius, that “from the point of view that prevails in early modernity, there is no explanatory principle beyond the aleatory swerve, no god behind the machine, indeed, no machine at all, since the fact that some things, once they arise, are capable of replication is not the fundamental principle of how things are.”¹⁰³ How things are, more exactly, is a question of sameness and difference, or of being differently composed of the same stuff, and of experiencing this sameness as a matter of fullness rather than lack. As Goldberg continues, “differences-within-the same cannot be the basis for invidious and divisive difference or foundational for juridical concepts of the normal.” Bersani’s impersonal narcissism is one example of this Lucretian ethos.

Still, I would like to take this Lucretian narcissism one step further. Neither Goldberg nor Bersani extend the theoretical architecture of Lucretius or Freud to account for nonhuman entities. Milton, by contrast, forces us to consider what it would mean for Eve to identify with an “it” and to become, herself, a thing. In Book 8 of *Paradise Lost*, the analogy to Narcissus becomes literalized as Eve, more and more, identifies with the garden:

... Eve

Perceiving where she sat retired in sight,
With lowliness majestic from her seat,
And grace that won who saw to wish her stay,
Rose, and went forth among her fruits and flowers,
To visit how they prospered, bud and bloom,
Her nursery; they at her coming sprung
And touched by her fair tendance gladlier grew. (8.40-47)

Here, the “delight” of the garden is rendered mobile. Eve, going forth among “her fruits and flowers,” not only occupies the poem’s central focus but also wins (“won”) “who saw to wish her stay”:

With goddess-like demeanor forth she went;
Not unattended, for on her as queen
A pomp of winning graces waited still,
And from about her shot darts of desire
Into all eyes to wish her still in sight. (8.59-63)

Eve commands the attention of all in her presence—Adam, Raphael, even “Her nursery,” which “at her coming sprung.” At once the image of “lowliness,” a woman “retired in sight,” Eve commandeers the gaze of both Adam and Raphael, bringing their “discourse” to a halt and interrupting the flow of the passage as the visual register intercedes. Eve does not just appear within the field of vision; she “Rose,” and in doing so mirrors that line’s final word, “flowers.” Eve becomes-flower. This form of mirroring takes Bersani’s theory of narcissism beyond its humanist confines and grounds it in an involutionary becoming that links humans and plants. It also foregrounds the active role of visual pleasure as Eve becomes the female object who, as Laura Mulvey argues, both stills and sutures the male gaze through a constant elicitation of visual pleasure and narcissistic desire.

Writing in her now classic essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Mulvey asserts that what cinema offers us is visual pleasure matched to female form. We sit in the darkness, peering at the cinema screen, watching while beautiful women are stilled in sight. We are, consequently, all perverts at the movies, Mulvey famously writes. And what’s more, this pleasure is asymmetrical. “The paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world.”¹⁰⁴ (1975, 6). So powerful is this dependence that, when she is on screen, the female image tends to stop the progress of narrative itself, suspending the action for the male viewer’s erotic contemplation. Milton’s Eve does just that.

Beginning with the description of Eve as “lowliness majestic,” Milton’s passage exemplifies the paradoxical relation of the male viewer to the female object as both image of attraction and image of arrest. Already in a relation of mirroring rapport with

the “flowers” in “her nursery,” Eve’s image, both human and plant, elicits the attention of Adam and Raphael by staying their visual pleasure as they, in turn, “wish her stay.” If Mulvey’s theory of visual pleasure puts the male viewer in the position of active agent, Milton has Eve, the object of visual fascination, in the position of master. As the poem unfolds, Eve moves from “lowliness” to “majestic” as she assumes “goddess-like demeanor” and traffics in the scene’s multiple, non-unilateral vectors of visual fascination. Oscillating between movement (“With goddess-like demeanor forth she went”) and stasis (“all eyes to wish her still”) the scene works athwart Mulvey’s gender binary by envisioning the female image as agent of arrest and the male viewer as thrall to pleasure. Active and passive lose their gendered index. For if, in Milton’s hands, Eve is image, she is not for that reason merely objectified by desire, “cut to the measure of desire,” as Mulvey insists.¹⁰⁵ Rather, Eve, the image of visual pleasure, “goddess-like,” flowers-forth through the scene like the goddess Venus, followed by a train of “graces,” shooting “darts of desire / Into all eyes” who “wish her still in sight.” Amidst Eve and her flowers, a disequilibrium of furtive, florid forces courses throughout, joining *flora* and flesh in a seductive, ecological assemblage.¹⁰⁶

In the following passage, we see the force of this assemblage at work as Adam recounts a highly affective encounter whereby he is “transported” (“transported I behold”) by Eve’s “powerful glance.” He describes this “glance” in haptic terms as a form of visual “touch”:

Thus I have told thee all my state, and brought
My story to the sum of earthly bliss
Which I enjoy, and must confess to find

In all things else delight indeed, but such
 As used or not, works in the mind no change,
 Nor vehement desire, these delicacies
 I mean of taste, sight, smell, herbs, fruits, and flowers,
 Walks, and the melody of birds; but here
 Far otherwise, transported I behold,
 Transported touch; here passion first I felt,
 Commotion strange, in all enjoyments else
 Superior and unmoved, here only weak
 Against the charm of beauty's powerful glance. (8.521-533)

Among the definitions current in Milton's time, the *Oxford English Dictionary* records that to be "transported" meant "to cause to be beside oneself, to put into an ecstasy, to enrapture." To say that Adam is beside himself, though, may be an understatement. Having "told ... all," and having "brought" the reader's mind to "the sum of earthly bliss," Adam finds still more he "must confess." His confession produces what we might describe as an ecstatic dismembering of space and time, sense and nonsense. Following an effusion of sensory modalities, "I mean of taste, sight, smell, ... and ... melody," Adam is torn between "here" (but where is "here"?), and "far otherwise." "Here / ... Far": the collapse of immediacy and distance puts Adam outside himself (from the Latin *ekstasis*, to be put out of place). Adam is, as it were, "transported"; he is carried away by "vehement desire." "But here / Far otherwise, ... I behold": Whom does Adam behold? The meaning is (at least) double: Adam beholds Eve, but he also beholds himself beholding. Adam sees himself as the distance separating "here" and "far," while at the

same time his very locution, “behold,” collapses that distance by turning seeing into a form of touch. Adam describes this encounter as “commotion strange.” So “strange” is this co-motion of the seer and the seen that we can no longer be certain who is looking: Who, after all, is the subject of “beauty’s powerful glance”? Adam or Eve? Although Eve is the image of beauty, this “commotion strange” blurs the opposition between subject and object, such that Eve is at once the object, the “charm,” *and* the bearer of the “glance” (and note that “glance” already carries with it the non-visual meaning of touch, as in a weapon or an object struck). Whereas Adam, after repeating his sense of (dis)location, “here only,” conveys feeling “weak” before Eve, “transported” by her “glance.” Touched, weakened, transported by desire, Adam dissolves before Eve into an ecstatic assemblage of affects and pleasures. “All higher knowledge in her presence falls” (8.551).

The image of Eve as “beauty’s glance” returns us to the impersonal narcissistic realm of becoming in which subject and object lose their fixed distinctions. Eve’s image, an assemblage of human and plant, leaves Adam “weak”: “Not proof enough such object to sustain” (8.535). But this weakening also exposes Adam to an altered sensory experience in which “taste, sight, smell” and “touch” mutually enfold subject and object in a “strange” affective realm. This type of enfolding grounds Milton’s poetic ecology in what Elaine Scarry refers to as the “cross-species desire” that links humans and plants. It also foregrounds the active role of material life in Milton’s poem, thus going against Fish’s desire to replace materiality with “pure” theology. More importantly, it calls to mind the utter strangeness of plant life—and life in general—in Milton’s poetry.

Plant Seduction and Ecology to Come

In *Cultivating Delight*, subtitled *A Natural History of My Garden*, Diane Ackerman begins with the following observation: “I plan my garden as I wish I could plan my life, with islands of surprise, color, and scent.”¹⁰⁷ For Gerard, as for the naturalists of his time, the cultivation of delight was a practice that veered unimpeachably upon the strange and unpredictable nature of their life’s work: the careful and painstaking task of cultivating, preserving, and describing plants. What’s more, gardens were, as Ackerman points out, a means of controlling life. Prefiguring what Foucault later termed the biopolitics of modern life, whereby each life is cultivated to procure more life, and in which life itself becomes—as Agamben notes¹⁰⁸—a kind of vegetable existence suspended between life and death, nature’s body entered into the biopolitics of control largely through the local and global transfer of plants between Europe and its colonies in the early modern period.¹⁰⁹ Contemporary scholars Londa Schiebinger and Susan Scott Parrish, writing from the intersections of historiography, postcoloniality, and the history of science, note that plants, though integral to how bodies of knowledge have been formed and reformed throughout human history, continue to be regarded as supernumerary agents in the affairs of human societies.¹¹⁰ “Plants seldom figure in the grand narratives of war, peace, or even everyday life in proportion to their importance to humans,” Schiebinger writes, “yet they are significant natural and cultural artifacts, often at the center of high intrigue.”¹¹¹ As Schiebinger continues,

Botany in this period ... was big science and big business, an essential part of the projection of military might into the resource-rich East and West Indies....

Curators of botanical gardens—both in Europe and its colonies—collected rare

and beautiful plants for study and global exchange, but they specialized in cultivating those plants, such as Cinchona, crucial for European colonizing efforts in tropical climates.¹¹²

To paraphrase Schiebinger's argument, plants have been a consistent leitmotif throughout human history, a central yet invisible theme, so apparent as to be inapparent to the economic, political, and cultural inquiries of historians and literary critics alike. This blindsight notwithstanding, as historical artifacts, plants have provided for a wide range of human desires, and at great cost, serving variously as sweeteners, spices, pharmacological curatives, narcotics, abortifacients, and laxatives, to name just a few of their many uses, while being aggressively appropriated and sold ("thingified," to use Aimé Césaire's word¹¹³) as what Schiebinger (quoting a student of Carl Linnaeus) calls "the base for all economics," both in the early modern period and after.

Still, there is something else in Gerard's exaltation of plants that, while common enough among the annals of Renaissance botany, now seems strikingly discordant with our own practices of looking and perceiving plants. Schiebinger argues convincingly that we miss seeing "how the study of a lowly periwinkle and its ilk can contribute to the wealth of nations" when we separate economic and theoretical motivations that "were often talents embodied in a single botanist." Along these lines, I want to venture the point that what's most striking about Gerard's assessment of plants goes beyond his consideration of their uses. French botanist Francis Hallé claims that "plants to us are principally food, drink, medicine, raw material for industry, pasturage for domestic animals, green space for cities, landscapes for relaxation"; rarely do they "arouse any real passion in most of us."¹⁴ Gerard, by contrast, precipitates a sense of the agency of plants,

hinting not only at their capacity to be moved (bought, sold, consumed) but to move, and thereby to seduce.

Gerard's text illustrates that plants not only have the capacity to move, but they move us as well. Plants seduce: from the Latin *seducere*, meaning to lead, to persuade. Though we are used to thinking of plants as passive beings lacking in movement and sense, arguably the two attributes most often chosen—reason notwithstanding—to set plant life apart from the existential affairs of humans, for Gerard, not only do plants move, their movements are an invitation to refocus our attention on the ways that humans can end up acting as prosthetics for other things in the world, in this case plants. This, we might say, is what constitutes the uncanny sentience of plants: their ability to invite, to teach, and no doubt to seduce. Ackerman reminds us that although “when we describe ourselves as ‘sentient’ beings we mean that we are conscious,” thoughtful, intentional beings (in Latin *sent-* means “to head for,” hence, to go out or to intend mentally), “the more literal and encompassing meaning is that we have sense perception” (*sentir*, “to feel”).¹¹⁵ Ackerman's more literal, more lowly definition of intelligence offers critical insight for those interested in countering the human exceptionalist tendency of reducing the greater ecology of mind to a rather limited, philosophically and biologically speaking, datum of sense.

Seen in this context, Milton's way of looking at plants is less straightforwardly epistemological or pragmatic; it is, rather, pharmacological in Derrida's sense of *pharmakon*¹¹⁶: it infects the viewer by crossing the traditional boundary between objective contemplation and affective response. Indeed, it exemplifies Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's language of worlding. As they put it, “We are not in the world” as

thinkers absolved from life's forces, but rather, "we become with the world; we become by contemplating it."¹¹⁷ Foucault describes this way of looking as an act of curiosity. Despite its negative valuation within the orders of objective knowledge, Foucault sees curiosity, along with its related affects of interest, excitement, surprise, and wonder, as essential goads to inquiry. In this respect, Foucault can be placed in an uncanny alliance—stretching across the premodern-modern divide—with the purveyors of Renaissance natural history, who saw, as Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park have argued, "objective order and subjective sensibility" as "obverse and reverse of the same coin."¹¹⁸ According to Daston and Park, early modern naturalists organized their science of looking around the affects of wonder, curiosity, and delight, which were "as much about knowing as about feeling." For these early modern scientists, "To register wonder was to register a breached boundary, a classification subverted. The making and breaking of categories—sacred and profane; natural and artificial, animal, vegetable and mineral; sublunar and celestial—is the Ur-act of cognition, underpinning all pursuit of regularities and discovery of causes."¹¹⁹ Indeed, it was René Descartes who called wonder the first of the passions, "a sudden surprise of the soul which makes it tend to consider attentively those objects which seem to it rare and extraordinary." To read Foucault next to Descartes is to risk more than anachronism. It is to suggest something monstrous. Yet from the perspective I have tried to map out here, a perspective based on the aesthetics of ecological perception, the distance between the two is not at all far. They are simply "obverse and reverse" of the same coin. As Foucault himself says, curiosity, read etymologically as "care," calls for a different way of looking. It "evokes the care one takes of what exists and what might exist; ... a certain determination to throw off familiar

ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way; ... a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental.”¹²⁰ An aesthetics *without* criteria, then.¹²¹

Milton conjures the sense of an ahierarchal aesthetics based on a belief that all beings, be they “less or more, or soon or slow,” partake of the “All is.” To take steps to the “All is” is, for Milton, an ecological and thus material endeavor. It does not come from beyond. Nor does it grow from the earth. It is a work. But what Milton’s georgics of the mind essays (that is, puts to the test) more precisely is the unwork, the practices of *askesis*, whereby a community or cosmopolity of “strange strangers”¹²² may take shape in the very fault lines of instrumental action. To quote Gregory Bateson, this ecological way of thinking that outstrips human agency “does not yet exist as an organized body of theory or knowledge,” it is not yet a commodity or a convention; happily, it is *to come*. Milton urges its coming.

¹ Quotations from Milton’s works are taken from *The Major Works*, eds. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

² Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), xxiii.

³ John Gerard, *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* (London: Iohn Norton, 1597), 1.

⁴ Gerard, *The Herball*, 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 7. Although Morton claims “the ecological thought” is only thinkable in

modernity, he makes an exception in the case of Milton, writing: “Milton achieves the ecological thought in form as well as in content” (23).

⁷ For an account that traces the authorship and print production of Gerard’s *Herball* within the context of a “European Republic of Letters,” see Deborah E. Harkness, “Living on Lime Street: ‘English’ Natural History and the European Republic of Letters,” in *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁸ See Mike Smith, “Against Ecological Sovereignty: Agamben, Politics and Globalization,” *Environmental Politics* 18.1 (2009): 99-116.

⁹ Stefan Helmreich, “What Was Life? Answers from Three Limit Biologies,” *Critical Inquiry* 37:4 (Summer 2011), 676.

¹⁰ On this point, see Eugene Thacker, *After Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

¹¹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Winter 2009): 197-222.

¹² Richard Doyle, *Darwin’s Pharmacy: Sex, Plants, And the Evolution of the Noosphere* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2010), 7.

¹³ See Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), and *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

¹⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 33.

¹⁵ Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 65.

¹⁶ Foucault enjoins labor (*askesis*) and eros as “the two major forms in Western spirituality for conceptualizing the modalities by which the subject must be transformed in order finally to become capable of truth” (see Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*, trans. Graham Burchell [New York: Picador, 2005], 16.) For a related account of spiritual *askesis* that centers on early modern lyric, see Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954).

¹⁷ Such moments can be read in light of what Jean Feerick and Vin Nardizzi have termed “the indistinct human” in Renaissance humanism. As they put it: “The potential for human indistinction is the dark underside of Renaissance celebrations of man’s preeminent place within the cosmos” (2). For an account of “the indistinct human” as an *internal* condition of Renaissance humanism, see their “Introduction: Swervings: On Human Indistinction” in *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature*, eds. Jean E. Feerick and Vin Nardizzi (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 1-12.

¹⁸ For a compelling argument against reading Milton as a “Puritan poet,” see Catherine Gimelli Martin, *Milton Among the Puritans: The Case for Historical Revisionism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

¹⁹ As James Kuzner argues in “Habermas Goes To Hell: Pleasure, Public Reason, and the Republicanism of Paradise Lost,” *Criticism* 51.1 (Winter 2009), critics who read Milton in light of Habermasian public sphere theory (see, for example, David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* [Cambridge, UK:

Cambridge University Press, 1999]) tend to neglect the fact that Milton “shows sympathy for interaction defined by an indistinction between ostensibly public and ostensibly private spaces and behaviors ... whose separation permits Habermasian forms of modern, public selfhood to emerge” (106).

²⁰ On the separation of subject-object relations in the early modern period, see, for example, Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (New York: Harper, 1958); Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass, “Introduction,” in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-16; and Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

²¹ On the separation of work from desire in early modern England, see Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

²² By “unwork” I refer to Jean-Luc Nancy’s idea of “the community of unworking.” See Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 1-42.

²³ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 89.

²⁴ See Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

²⁵ See Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

²⁶ This ecological approach departs from the place-based and phenomenological ecocriticism of critics such as Ken Hiltner (see Hiltner, *Milton and Ecology* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003]) and instead aims at the uncanny or out of place (*unheimlich*) nature of Milton's *oikos*. For a trenchant critique of place-based ecology, see Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Planet and Sense of Place: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

²⁷ Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: The New Press, 1997), 303.

²⁸ Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" 305.

²⁹ For an account of the explosive atemporal power of the "now" in medieval and postmodern timeframes, see Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, And the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

³⁰ Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 245.

³¹ On the Derridian inflection of "ecology to come," see Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 6.

³² Given my emphasis on life practices of the self, this chapter could very well have been titled "Steps to a Pastoral of the Mind." I persist in the generic attribute of *georgic* for two reasons: first, to avoid the too easy relegation of all that is pleasurable to the side of pastoral, while leaving untainted all that concerns physical moderation to the side of labor; and second, to enter into the centuries-old conversation, beginning with Francis Bacon and culminating in the work of Stanley Fish (see Fish, "Georgics of the Mind: The Experience of Bacon's *Essays*," in *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience*

Seventeenth-Century Literature [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972], 78-155)

and Joanna Picciotto (*Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England*, 2010), about the role of labor in the construction of Miltonic subjects. In my account, which differs from Fish and Picciotto's, Milton's "georgics of the mind" does not conform to the ideals of abstract, bounded selfhood but instead produces a material excess that is both internal to and destructive of the project of Enlightenment.

³³ Brian W. Ogilvie, *The Science of Describing: Natural History in Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 92.

³⁴ Ogilvie, *The Science of Describing*, 92.

³⁵ Ibid., 139.

³⁶ Gerard, *The Herball*, 1.

³⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 86.

³⁸ Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, 86.

³⁹ Ibid., 86-87.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 85.

⁴¹ Francis Bacon, "Letter to Lord Burghley," in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 20.

⁴² Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 123.

⁴³ Joanna Picciotto, "Reforming the Garden: The Experimentalist Eden and *Paradise Lost*," *ELH* 72.1 (Spring 2005): 26.

⁴⁴ Picciotto, "Reforming the Garden," 25.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 26.

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- ⁴⁶ For more on Paracelsus and other naturalist reformers, see James Bono, *The Word of God And the Languages of Man: Interpreting Nature in Early Modern Science and Medicine, 1: Ficino to Descartes* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).
- ⁴⁷ Picciotto, "Reforming the Garden," 26.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 26-27.
- ⁴⁹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 1.
- ⁵⁰ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 2.
- ⁵¹ Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Winter 2004): 232.
- ⁵² Jane Bennett, *The Disenchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 7.
- ⁵³ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (New York: Dover, 2004), 29.
- ⁵⁴ Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, 31.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 31.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 31.
- ⁵⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 4-5.
- ⁵⁸ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 14.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 7.
- ⁶⁰ See Catherine Wilson, *The Invisible World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- ⁶¹ Picciotto, "Reforming the Garden," 26.

⁶² Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 167-168.

⁶³ Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch*, 171.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 175.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch*, 176.

⁶⁶ See Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, in *The Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002).

⁶⁷ In their “Introduction” to Milton’s *Major Works*, Goldberg and Orgel write that in the revolutionary times of the 1630s and 1640s, “to take charge of circumstances that were not always in his control, Milton described himself as both feeling and appearing younger than he really was” (xv).

⁶⁸ On Renaissance anachronism, Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

⁶⁹ See Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*.

⁷⁰ Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*, 3.

⁷¹ Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 6.

⁷² Gordon Teskey, *Delirious Milton: The Fate of the Poet in Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 17-19.

⁷³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1938), 7-8.

⁷⁴ Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 8.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 26.

⁷⁸ For an extended treatment of Milton's alimentary poetics, see Michael Schoenfeldt, "Temperance and Temptation: The Alimential Vision in *Paradise Lost*," in *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 131-168.

⁷⁹ Jonathan Goldberg, *The Seeds of Things: Theorizing Sexuality and Materiality in Renaissance Representations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 193.

⁸⁰ Goldberg, *The Seeds of Things*, 33.

⁸¹ See Aristotle, *De anima* (On the Soul), in *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume One*, ed. J. Barnes, trans. J.A. Smith (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁸² Quoted in Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 14.

⁸³ Agamben, *The Open*, 14, 15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸⁵ Stanley Fish, *How Milton Works* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 3.

⁸⁶ Fish, *How Milton Works*, 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹² Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*, 403.

⁹³ Richard Crashaw, "Our Lord in his Circumcision to his Father," in *The English Poems of Richard Crashaw*, ed. Richard Rambuss (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 27.

⁹⁴ Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign, Volume 1*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 23.

⁹⁵ See Jacques Derrida, "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject," in *Points....: Interviews, 1974-1994*, trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

⁹⁶ Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function," in *Écrit*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006), 75-81.

⁹⁷ Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 116. See also John Guillory, "Milton, Narcissism, Gender: On the Genealogy of Male Self-Esteem," in *Critical Essays on John Milton*, ed. Christopher Kendrick, 194-233 (New York: G. K. Hall, 1995); and Linda Gregerson, *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁹⁸ Leo Bersani and Adam Philips, *Intimacies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 72.

⁹⁹ Bersani and Philips, *Intimacies*, 72.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁰³ Goldberg, *The Seeds of Things*, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16.3 (1975): 6.

¹⁰⁵ Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 17.

¹⁰⁶ My suggestion that Eve's narcissism threatens to dissolve subject and object into an ecological assemblage of forces departs from critical assessments that try to redeem Eve's role from an anti-feminist tradition bent on characterizing her as a figure of wantonness and seduction. Diane McColley (*Milton's Eve* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983]) has been at the forefront of critical calls to "redeem" Eve from "a reductive literary and iconographic tradition, and to establish a regenerative reading of her role" (4). While this project finds its warrant in Milton's writings, it stops short of the queering of Eve that I attempt via the Garden. Specifically, whereas McColley interprets Eve's narcissism as a temporary obstacle to right conduct and heteronormative union with Adam (74-77), my reading explores the seductive possibilities for human and nonhuman assemblage opened up by Eve's narcissistic entanglements. In short, there is no necessary contradiction between (feminist) agency and (narcissistic) perversion, so long as we recognize too that there is no *authentic* Eve or Eden to redeem. In Milton's ecological vision, seduction and perversion are integral to the Garden; queering human relations is what gardens do.

¹⁰⁷ Diane Ackerman, *Cultivating Delight: A Natural History of My Garden* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 1.

¹⁰⁸ Agamben, *The Open*, 15.

¹⁰⁹ See *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World*, eds., Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

¹¹⁰ See Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) and Susan Scott Parish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

¹¹¹ Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, 3.

¹¹² Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, 5.

¹¹³ See Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

¹¹⁴ Francis Hallé, *In Praise of Plants* (Portland: Timber Press, 2011), 25.

¹¹⁵ Diane Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses* (New York: Vintage, 2000), xvii.

¹¹⁶ See Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). For an example of the applicability of Derrida’s definition of pharmakon to ecological practice, see Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics I*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

¹¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 169.

¹¹⁸ Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 14.

¹¹⁹ Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 14.

¹²⁰ Michel Foucault, “The Masked Philosopher,” in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: The New Press, 1997), 325.

¹²¹ Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009).

¹²² See Morton, who translates the irreducible otherness of Derrida's *arrivant* as "strange stranger" in *The Ecological Thought*, 41.

Coda: Larval Subjects

How aimless and arbitrary, the human intellect appears in nature.... [If] we we could communicate with the mosquito, then we would learn that it floats through the air with the same self-importance, feeling within itself the flying center of the world. —Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*¹

In the Introduction to this dissertation I argued that early modern scholars and ecocritics alike have shown too little interest in the preposterous as a category of thought. Taking the unthinkable as my starting point, I suggested that the scene of sexual encounter between Sidney and his horse captures the preposterousness of nature—a nature made up of folds, inversions, doubles, and queer relations—that we see on display in texts by not only Sidney but also Spenser, Raleigh, and Milton. This scene, like so many in this dissertation, gives birth to an image of thought that is inhuman—that is precisely a thought not of man but of the *outside*. The outside, properly speaking, is not beyond nature, even if it is beyond our power to think it. For Badiou, “the outside, as an agency of active force, takes hold of a body, selects an individual, and submits it to the choice of choosing.”² The power to think, in this sense, “is not the spontaneous effusion of a personal capacity. It is the power, won only with the greatest difficulty against oneself, of being constrained to the world’s play.”³ We think, says Badiou—but of course Sidney says almost the same thing—only to the extent that we are first traversed by this inhuman force, a force that, according to Deleuze, is none other than *a* life—impersonal and inhuman. To think this inhuman force—to think nature in its preposterousness—means first and foremost to encounter what is not thought, that is, forms of life beyond man’s

own measure. Even the lily of the field, says Deleuze, contemplates the universal clamor of nature, or rather it thinks *because* it is first penetrated by this universal clamor—a proposition that Milton (on my reading) would no doubt accept: “the lily of the field sings the glory of the heavens,” Deleuze writes, “the goddesses and gods—in other words, the elements that it contemplates in contracting.”⁴ To think nature as encounter means above all to undergo a process of violent transformation akin to that of Actaeon and the stag, or Narcissus and the lily: “We are always Actaeon by virtue of what we contemplate, even though we are Narcissus in relation to the pleasure we take from it. To contemplate is to draw something from. We must always first contemplate something else—the water, or Diana, or the woods—in order to be filled with an image of ourselves.”⁵ “Selves,” Deleuze writes, “are larval subjects.”⁶

Throughout this dissertation I have explored scenes of encounter, transformation, and bodily disintegration in order to capture the larval subjects that live in us, through us, and beyond us, that most mutable dimension of reality: nature in its becoming. Following the perverse naturalism of Sidney, Spenser, Raleigh, and Milton, my goal has not been to denaturalize these poetic encounters. A major part of my argument in fact is that *denaturalization* has become an all too familiar, all too human move in early modern studies. Instead my goal has been to intensify these encounters, to showcase their penchant for the literal, the material, and the excessive in nature, by foregrounding a poetics in which the human not only derives proposterously from nature—putting the cart before the horse, as it were—but is also undone by the very life forms he encounters and in some cases abjects.

In Chapter One, for example, it is the encounter with Fradubio that forces Redcrosse Knight to rethink the matter (*hyle*) not just of trees but of his own person. Whereas trees and other nonhuman bodies come alive in *The Faerie Queene* because they are opened up by life's wounding forces, it is the human subjects who suffer the deadening effects of their own self-sovereignty. In Chapters Two and Three, encounters with liquid forces—humors, tempests, rivers, and oceans—dissolve Marinell's martial body, as well as the imperial body that Raleigh represents in his travel writings, to reveal a body without organs beneath the veneer of bodily semblance. Lastly, in Chapter Four, Bacon's "georgics of the mind" mutates in the hands of Milton's Edenic workers, whose encounters with the Garden become more and more lubricious as the impossibility of controlling nature's forces gives way to assemblages of human-plant metamorphosis.

In these final pages, I look more closely at an example of larval subjects who have not yet appeared in this dissertation. From Fradubio's plaintive cry to Adam's horror, each of my chapters unfolds from the same universal clamor of nature—nature understood both as a din, a mingling of voices, *and* as an outcry or complaint against one's creatural confinement. My aim in what follows is to better understand the nature of this complaint as it pertains to the poets in this study.

According to Lacan, the first question in the philosophy of the complaint is always: *who* speaks? Words detached from the speaking subject take on an alien quality in the analytic context: they are less my own words than those of an other, or others. The value of the complaint is that it gives voice to this alien language within us. From Job's protests against the trials of an arbitrary God to Freud's case histories, which are filled with plaint worthy situations, complaining serves as a major source of poetic creation,

testifying at once to something that is stronger than the ego, and to an exhilarating and dehumanizing force of *becoming*. For Deleuze, complaining gives voice to a univocal “clamor of being,” which is divorced from the speaking subject.⁷ “Underneath the self which acts,” Deleuze writes, “are little selves which contemplate and which render possible both the action and the active subject.”⁸ Underneath the active “self” there are thousands of larval selves: “We speak of our ‘self’ only in virtue of these thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us: it is always a third party who says ‘me.’”⁹ Who better to register this “third party” than that arch-complainer who gave us an entire volume of complaints, two of which are about insects? Who better than the Spenser of the *Complaints* (1591) to turn to when thinking about the larval subjects that stir within us?

Like the insect from which its name derives, Spenser’s *Muiopotmos*, the second poem in the *Complaints* to feature an insect as its protagonist, appears to us in sections, as stories set within stories of classical mythology, which frame, divide, foreshadow, and forestall the fate of the butterfly, Clarion. These inset-stories—including the story of Venus and Astery, a nymph turned butterfly, Cupid and Psyche (still another butterfly), Ovid’s story of the contest between Minerva and Arachne, and Minerva’s own story of the butterfly, spun “with workmanship so rare”—form a *mise-en-scene* of frames within frames, giving Spenser’s mock-epic poem a formal quality that is both insect-like (from the Latin *insecare*, meaning “to cut into”) and highly inventive. As numerous scholars have pointed out, Spenser draws on well-known sources in Hellenistic or Alexandrian literature, including Lucian’s encomium on a fly, the Homeric battle of frogs and mice, Chaucer’s *Nun’s Priest Tale*, and Spenser’s own *Virgils Gnat*, in crafting his insect poem.

Other scholars have pointed to epic allusions such as the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, as well as Spenser's own epic, *The Faerie Queene*, as essential to the poem's framing structure.

I choose the word "larval" here to indicate what I find singular or unique about Spenser's insect poem, which is its art of framing. Framing, as Cary Wolfe defines it, "separates the inside from the outside, the intrinsic and the extrinsic, and yet also serves to bridge them, making them interdependent.... Framing decides what we recognize and what we don't, what counts and what doesn't; and it also determines the consequences of falling outside of the frame."¹⁰ That Spenser magnifies his art of framing—letting the intertext overtake the text—is of course not unique to Spenser's insect poem; it is, after all, the very stuff of romance. What does seem singular, however, is that Spenser figures this art of framing in and through the image of a fly, giving his poetics a distinctly larval form. How might we read Spenser's *Complaints*, a significant text in the poetic history of the lament, within the natural history of becoming that I have examined in this project?

Although it is beyond the scope of this coda to give an exhaustive reading of Spenser's *Muiopotmos*, I turn to it in order to highlight a claim running throughout this dissertation: that it is above all the power *not* to act that forces the self to think and to create. The poetics that I theorize derives from the incapacity to act in moments when the encounter with inhuman forces overwhelms the individual's ability to make sense, to plot a course, and to go on in the world of established actions and habits. A naturalist poetics thus names the impossibility of certain actions, certain clichés of action, which, being exhausted, loosen the self to experience its own unravelment as a mode of freedom, creativity, and experimentation with the world's forces. Writing in the interval between the 1590 and 1596 editions of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser turns to the genre of the

complaint as if to underscore the impossibility of certain actions.¹¹ *Muiopotmos* can be understood as “mock-epic” because of its size and subject matter, but it is above all a complaint against epic itself. For if epic sings of “Arms and a man,” as in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, then the Spenser of the *Complaints*, like all of the poets whom I study in this dissertation, sings only of man’s dissolution among inhuman forces.¹² I conclude with Spenser’s insect poem therefore because it highlights the interval or gap that all of my chapters theorize, namely, the gap separating the human subject from his actions, as well as the affects, forces, and queer relations that well to the surface within that space of delay or suspended animation. A naturalist poetics conceived in this way, not as the power to act in “our” best interest but as the power to feel nature’s action upon us (“of being constrained to the world’s play,” as Badiou puts it), will, I propose, not only help sharpen posthumanist inquiry (thereby avoiding the traps of a now pervasive hyper-humanism that sees nature as just another prosthetic for our own enhancement) but also engender new ways of thinking about early modern poetry, which in Spenser’s case entails a rethinking of allegory. What kind of inhuman “other” does Spenser’s allegory invent?

In the essay “Psyche: Invention of the Other,” Derrida argues that “The other is ... what is not inventable, and it is therefore the only invention in the world, the invention of the world, *our* invention, the invention that invents *us*.”¹³ If the object of invention, according to Derrida, does not extend to the other, this is because the other *as* other must remain unknowable, that which in its radical otherness cannot be reduced to a self that could invent it. Invention in this sense proceeds from the other. Derrida allegorizes the human subject’s nonself-identity and dispersal by positing “a ‘we’ that does not find *itself*

anywhere, does not invent *itself*,” but rather gives itself over to the inventiveness of this other.¹⁴ While Derrida does not refer here to the other as human or nonhuman, elsewhere, in “A Silkworm of One’s Own,” he extends this allegorical reading to the invention of a worm, stating:

I would observe the invisible progress of the weaving, a little as though I was about to stumble on the secret of a marvel, the secret of this secret over there, at the infinite distance of the animal.... It dribbled. It secreted absolutely, it secreted a thing which would never be an object to it, an object for it.... It did not separate itself from its work. The silkworm produced outside itself, before itself, ... a thing which was no other than itself.¹⁵

In this description, the silkworm’s art of “weaving” allegorizes the subject’s nonself-identity: not only does it distance the human subject from his own self-image as *homo faber*; it also reframes the inventive act as one of radical exposure to the nonhuman. The silkworm’s thread can be understood as a technology, but it is not a technology that is added *to* life. The “weaving” that frames the inside of the worm’s dwelling (its *oikos* “home”) bridges the inside and the outside, the natural and the technological, showing them to be interdependent. Derrida’s encounter with the silkworm directly contrasts with Heidegger’s famous thesis in “The Question Concerning Technology,” wherein he argues that *Gestell*, or the art of framing, functions to create a “standing reserve” whereby humanity confronts the world only through the objects of its own invention, rendered as objects of utility.¹⁶ Over and against this art of framing, which is subordinated to human use, Heidegger sets the power of poetry, which is a distinctly human power of “bringing-forth,” or *poiesis*. Poetry, according to Heidegger, does not frame the world as standing-

reserve but rather reveals humanity's essence as the power to open up thought beyond the frame of instrumental reason. As Wolfe notes, however, "this difference between a proper and improper relation to technology enables, in turn, a decisive ontological distinction between those who are fully human and those who are less than human, those others who have been so fundamentally distanced from Being by an improper relationship to technology that their very humanity is in question."¹⁷ For Heidegger, in fact, humanism *is* just this difference between a proper and improper relation to technology: "For this is humanism," he writes, "mediating and caring, that man be human and not inhumane, 'inhuman,' that is, outside his essence."¹⁸

The silkworm, being at once "outside itself, before itself," and "a thing which was no other than itself," short-circuits the problematic of the frame that Heidegger (and no doubt others: see Chapters One and Two for an analysis of the frame in Spenser) juxtaposes to poetry. The silkworm's thread is not added to life; it is one of life's inventions. Life, in this sense, is not prior to technology. Life, as a system of intra-active differences, is itself an art of framing.¹⁹ Rather than see the silkworm's thread as a veil concealing nature's true essence, we can see the silkworm as always already technological, as one of nature's works. The work of poetry, by extension, rather than being the site of man's salvation from the inhuman, would be just another one of nature's frames, one technology among many. The work of poetry, that is, unworks man's "improper" relation to the inhuman by becoming less human, by becoming-animal.

Spenser's allegory of the butterfly performs a similar work. Whereas the critical tradition around *Muiopotmos* has excavated the political, theological, and aesthetic bases of its allegory, this tradition has tended to read the butterfly as a mirror of the same,

of the human. The invention of the other thus turns the other, in this case an insect, into an image of man. Following Derrida's suggestion that the other is "what is not inventable," that it is "what invents us," I read Spenser's allegory not as a reflection of the human, but as a framing activity that cuts against the absolute division between human and nonhuman, psyche and insect.

In what is perhaps its quintessential act of poetic invention, *Muiopotmos* departs from its literary master-text, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, by crowning Minerva's tapestry with an embroidered fly. The image, we read,

seem'd to liue, so like it was in sight:

The veluet nap which on his wings doth lie,

The silken downe with which his backe is dight,

His broad outstretched hornes, his hayrie thies,

His glorious colours, and his glistering eies. (*Muiopotmos* 332-336)²⁰

At odds with Arachne "to compare with her in curious skill / Of workes with loome, with needle, and with quill," Minerva creates an image that "seem'd to liue, so like it was in sight." The familiar contest between art and nature, what Sidney calls art's "second nature" (see my Introduction), wavers in this image as life and nonlife, nature and techne, seem to intermix. Not to be outdone by Minerva's art, Arachne, too, creates an image that tests the boundary between life and nonlife:

Arachne figur'd how *Ioue* did abuse

Europa like a Bull, an don his backe

Her through the sea did beare; so liuely seene,

That it true Sea, and true Bull ye would weene. (277-280)

Despite the liveliness of Arachne's tapestry, however, it is ultimately Minerva's image of the butterfly, "Fluttring among the Oliues wantonly," that prevails:

Which when *Arachne* saw, as overlaid,
And mastered with workmanship to rare,
She stood atonied long, ne ought gainsaid,
And with fast fixed eyes on her did stare,
And by her silence, signe of one dismaid,
The victorie did yield her as her share:
Yet did she inly fret, and felly burne,
And all her blood to poisonous rancor turne. (337-344)

Judith Dundas notes that "Spenser derives his other myth, of the spider's origin, from Ovid, from whom he deliberately departs by making Arachne transform herself by envy into the spider."²¹ Spenser's revision to the Ovidian text not only prefigures Clarion's death: the epic hero will appear, as in Minerva's tapestry, framed by the spider's web; it also identifies the art of weaving with the poem itself, making it, in Ayesha Ramachandran's words, a highly gendered commentary on the "triumphant craftsmanship" of poetry.²² By framing the matter of epic in the form of a minor poetics, indeed a beast fable, Spenser appears to be using the interval marked by the publication of the *Complaints* as an opportunity to revise or reframe the power of epic in relation to the "wanton" and seductive powers of romance. By foreshadowing Clarion's death, Minerva's web suggests on the one hand the problem that a poet such as Spenser faces when epic action is wasted in favor of nonaction or suspended animation. On the other hand, if the *Complaints* are in some sense about the loss of epic agency, they are also

experiments (as all of the poems I have examined in previous chapters have been) in the art of becoming-animal, or in this case, becoming-larval. A naturalist poetics foregrounds the role of the inhuman apparatus, or the frame, in the making and unmaking of what is, including the ontological definitions of the human and the nonhuman. As Spenser's insect poem unfolds, however, from the inset story of Minerva and Arachne to the larger narrative frame of Clarion and Aragnoll, the relation between art and nature transforms as the image of nature, formerly the allegorical representation of nature as other, gives way to an image that nature—this time the spider—itself invents.

In the poem's final episode, our hero, "The luckles *Clarion*," flies unwittingly into the web set by Aragnoll, the spider, who "Lay lurking couertly him to surprise" (417, 386). The spider's web mirrors the tapestry of Minerva, but with a difference: whereas the latter utilized the image of a butterfly as metaphor for the human soul, Spenser undoes this humanist conceit by giving the spider the power to build, construct, and thereby reinvent Minerva's story. Spenser writes:

Into the cursed cobweb, which is foe
Had framed for his final ouerthroe.
There the fond Flie entangled, struggled long,
Himselfe to free thereout; but all in vaine.
For striuing more, the more in laces strong
Himselfe he tide, and wrapt his winges twaine
In lymie snares the subtill loupes among;
That in the ende he breathlesse did remaine. (423-430)

If the power of invention is, as Derrida contends, always bound up with the image of the human, then Spenser's allegory stands as an exception to this rule by thematizing the relation of self and other as one of mutual enmeshment. The poem weaves Clarion's identity among multiple others, and in the final frame gives us an image of invention in which Clarion, however construed (human or insect), cannot be disentangled from the poem's inhuman web. The frame that captures Clarion, in the end, is not the life-giving frame of Minerva; against the vitalism of the former, the spider's web vitiates the fly's body as he strives, unsuccessfully, to free himself of the web's framing "snares": "breathelasse [he] did remaine" (429). Although this scene of exhaustion seems to contradict a poetics of life, my point in pursuing a naturalist poetics has not been to counterpose life (seen as exuberance, abundance, and joy) to death (seen as inertia, loss, and fatigue); rather, my goal throughout this dissertation has been to experiment with the frames that divide life and death in the first place, along with everything that follows from that division: the opposition between poetry and technology, nature and artifice, and human and nonhuman.

In a telling moment from the last essay that Deleuze published during his lifetime, "Immanence: A Life," he recounts a scene from Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* in which the character Riderhood, who makes his living fishing corpses out of the Thames, almost drowns in that same river before being carried indoors, half-dead, and later revived. What interests Deleuze, however, is not the before and after of life and reanimation but rather the gap or hiatus, the struggle between life and death, that punctuates the narrative:

Between his life and his death, there is a moment that is only that of *a* life playing with death. The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life that releases a pure event freed from the accidents of internal and external life, that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens: a “Homo tantum” with whom everyone empathizes and who attains a sort of beatitude. It is ... a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil, for it was only the subject that incarnated it in the midst of things that made it good or bad. The life of such individuality fades away in favor of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other.²³

The point to be taken from this passage is not that life triumphs over death. On the contrary, life, *a* life, hovers between the individual life that it incarnates and the anonymous life that “no longer has a name.” For Deleuze, it is the latter, the impersonal life, marked by the indefinite article “a,” that art, when it is an art of the inhuman, approximates and makes livable. Art in this sense is an art of dying. It is only by encountering what is beyond life—death, the inhuman—that we truly become creative, which for Deleuze is the truest meaning of the word “creature.” By positing a naturalist poetics, I have tried to showcase the centrality of this inhuman art to the poets in this study. Each of them—Sidney, Spenser, Raleigh, and Milton—expresses in their works the power of a life that no longer has a name, and for that reason they are indeed unmistakable.

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), 42.

² Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 11.

³ Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, 11.

⁴ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 75.

⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 74-75.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰ Cary Wolfe, *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 6.

¹¹ Richard Rambuss points out that in the interval between the 1590 and 1596 *Faerie Queene*, Spenser turned to a number of minor poetic genres such as the beast fable, thus unlocking a “secret” medievalism discontinuous with the poet’s Virgilian route to epic. For an account that takes issue with the prevailing notion that Spenser’s career was shaped by a single-minded pursuit of the *rota Virgilii* from pastoral to epic, see Rambuss, *Spenser’s Secret Career* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹² Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Sarah Ruden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

¹³ Jacques Derrida, “Psyche: Invention of the Other,” in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume I*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 45.

¹⁴ Derrida, “Psyche: Invention of the Other,” 45.

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, “A Silkworm of One’s Own (Points of View Stitched on the Other Veil),” trans. Geoffrey Bennington, in Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 353.

¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” trans. William Lovitt, in Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 323.

¹⁷ Wolfe, *Before the Law*, 5.

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” trans. Frank A. Capuzzi and J. Glenn Gray, in Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 224.

¹⁹ Karen Barad defines “intra-action” as the mutual imbrication of all things, both living and nonliving, such that no one “thing” exists in isolation. All entities, from humans to atoms to books of poetry, emerge from the same intra-active web. Barad’s concept of the apparatus, a technology that is *of* nature rather than added *to* nature, resolves intra-active networks into temporary differences of inside and outside, and self and other, with all the ethical consequences that result. For an overview of Barad’s posthumanist theory of apparatuses, see Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 145-185. My interest in the poetics of framing draws on Barad’s naturalist insights.

²⁰ Quotations from *Muiopotmos* are taken from Edmund Spenser, *The Shorter Poems*, ed. Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin Books, 1999).

²¹ Judith Dundas, “Complaints: *Muiopotmos*, or *The Fate of the Butterflie*,” in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A.C. Hamilton (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 186.

²² Ayesha Ramachandran, "Clarion in the Bower of Bliss: Poetry and Politics in Spenser's *Muiopotmos*," *Spenser Studies* 20 (2005):

²³ Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 28-29.