

**Shakespeare and the Botanic Reformation**

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**Abstract**

Plants in Shakespeare's work operate as evidences for the divine persisting in the natural world after the Fall. Protestant reformers policed such evidence by means of herbal and emblem books, by undermining the sacred significance of fable and allegory and the cult of saints. However, by introducing plants into his work, Shakespeare promoted a cosmology in which the sacred remained immanent in nature. He highlighted the supernatural qualities of plants in ways that seemed to counter more orthodox herbal attitudes and reaffirmed medieval symbolism rooted in nature in a way that anticipated the recusant emblems of Henry Hawkins. Moreover, Shakespeare and others continued writing fable, a mode which once included forms like love complaint and dream vision. Thomas Lodge, Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare composed fables in the style of Ovid and Musaeus. These were provocative texts at the time because medieval religion had taught that these pagan authors had been able to access Christian revelation placed in the universe at the dawn of time and Protestantism had no organised way of countering these claims. Similarly, Lodge and others revived the moralisations which had been ascribed to Thomas Walleys. This gave informed readers the license to take a moralising approach to the latter-day fabulous forms. Shakespeare's plants remain rooted in fabulous and moralised literary worlds so that they argue for a more comprehensive religion that could account for pagan and Christian mysteries. Finally, the fabulous verse narratives include botanic relics of saints which reflect counter-reformation interest in Saint Winefride's well. To conclude, Shakespeare's plants attest to a Christian redemption located in the British landscape and the changing seasons. At a time when the sacred was being relocated in the historical past and on the scriptural page, Shakespeare reaffirmed the claims of the Book of Nature through fable and ritual drama.

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## Introduction

This study examines five layers of meaning that might accrue to any plant in Shakespeare's work. It has long been recognised that Shakespeare's plants are shaped by the Renaissance 'herbal' tradition, but do they reveal a straightforward engagement with this discourse?<sup>1</sup> Equally, it is popularly held that Shakespeare's plants are emblematic, but how far do they reflect the contemporary emblem books, and how far older medieval symbolism from writing in the fabulous mode or moralised commentary?<sup>2</sup> Finally, if, as has more recently been suggested, some of Shakespeare's plants provide evidence for something divine or 'unfallen' persisting in the natural world, might such plants have taken on ritual or cultic significance long before they were introduced into literature?<sup>3</sup>

The five chapters are necessary to address five things a Shakespearean plant can be: herbal, emblematic, fabulous, moral or cultic. The idea was to create a thesis that might simultaneously equip the researcher of Shakespeare's plants with a critical engine. Any plant in Shakespeare's work might accordingly be brought to this engine and its meaning unpacked through the insights of at least one of the chapters (the list encompasses what seem to me the key dimensions that Shakespeare's plants possess, but is not intended to be exhaustive and further investigation may reveal other dimensions). The 'crow-flowers' in *Hamlet*, for example, can best be interpreted by recourse to the herbal discourse, specifically John Gerard's herbal.<sup>4</sup> The 'strawberries' which diaper the handkerchief in *Othello* have previously been interpreted with reference to Protestant emblem books but will here be linked with late medieval symbolism which reappears in a seventeenth-century recusant emblem book.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mats Rydén, *Shakespearean Plant Names: Identification and Interpretations* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wicksell International, 1978), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Roy Strong, *The Quest for Shakespeare's Garden*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2016, 20, 37.

<sup>3</sup> Tom MacFaul, *Shakespeare and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 30, 32.

<sup>4</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1982), 4.7.169; John Gerard, *Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* (London: Norton, 1597), 599-600; Rydén, *Plant Names*, 40-42, 42 n.10; Thomas Faircloth and Vivian Thomas, *Shakespeare's Plants and Gardens: A Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 93,

<sup>5</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello*, Ed. E.A.J. Honigmann, London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997, 3.3.438; Laurence Ross, 'The Meaning of Strawberries in Shakespeare' in *Studies in the Renaissance*, vol. 7 (1960), 225-240, 226; for the late medieval symbol of the five wounds see, for example, Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press,

The 'love-in-idleness' and the 'gillyvors' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Winter's Tale* borrow their bi-chromatic colour scheme from the dream vision form or the fable mode, appropriately enough for plays with 'Dream' and 'Tale' in their titles.<sup>6</sup> The moral comment on the strewments in *Cymbeline*, where the flowers are said to represent 'the pleasures of the world', is just one of the botanic moments in Shakespeare's work which seems to glance back to the medieval moral commentary which was ascribed to Thomas Walleys.<sup>7</sup> Finally, it will be argued that the botanic specimens in the tradition of poetry that includes Thomas Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' and Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' have a cultic link with the botanic growths associated with the well of Saint Winefride.<sup>8</sup>

As will be apparent, any attempt to unpack the layers of meaning that Shakespeare's plants accumulate will end up being an examination of certain discourses. Unsurprisingly, these are often literary discourses, comprising forms, modes and traditions. It was a wish to better illuminate these discourses,

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1992), 238; for the medieval symbol persisting in a recusant emblem book Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, (1633 Menston: Scholar Press), 25.

<sup>6</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Ed. Harold F. Brooks (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007), 2.1.167-8; William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, Ed. J. H. P. Pafford (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1966), 4.4.82, 88-9. For the 'variegated' or 'pied' colour scheme of fable see Macrobius, *Commentaire au Songe de Scipio*, Ed. Mireille Armisen-Marcetti (Paris: Belle Lettres, 2001-3), 1.2.17; *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, Trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), 86; See also Jane Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer: The Fabulation of Sexual Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995), 4. For an example of this pied red and white colour scheme operating in medieval dream vision see, for example, Jean Froissart, 'Le Dit de la Marguerite', in *Chaucer's Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues*, Trans. B. A. Windeatt (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1982), 150.

<sup>7</sup> William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, Ed. J. M. Nosworthy (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1955), 4.2.296; For the medieval commentary itself see Pierre Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana Moraliter...Explanata* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), V.vi. For a translation of the commentary see William D. Reynolds, 'The *Ovidius Moralizatus* of Petrus Berchorius: An Introduction and Translation', (PhD diss., Urbana: University of Illinois, 1971), 238; i; For the misattribution of these morals to Thomas Walleys see James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson and Kathryn L. McKinley (eds.), *Ovid in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 83. See also Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1970), 169.

<sup>8</sup> For the most explicit mention of moss garlands in these poems see Thomas Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 11, 76.1T. For confusing presence of crimson greenery in Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' see Anthony Mortimer, "'Crimson Liveries" and "their verdour": Venus and Adonis, 505-8', *N&Q*, 246 (2001), 274-5. For moss garlands and red algae in the cult of Saint Winefride see W. Pritchard, *St Winefride, Her Holy Well and the Jesuit Mission c. 660-1930* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 2009), 33-4, 61, 64, 77. For seventeenth-century descriptions of the rituals involving moss and algae see John Gerard, *John Gerard: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, Trans. John Caraman (London: Longmans, 1951), 47-8 and Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (1611), Part 1, song 10 in Michael Drayton, *Works*, ed. J. William Hebel (5 vols., Oxford, 1931-41), vol. 4., 204-5. Significantly, Drayton had previously contributed a poem, *Endymian and Phoebe* (1595), to the poetic tradition heralded by Thomas Lodge.

which Shakespeare's plants evoke so neatly, which dictated the primary texts of this study. For this reason, many of the texts examined are not written by Shakespeare, since his plants partake of wider discourses pre-dating his work, that still, nonetheless, inform his literary or botanic preoccupations.

These discourses have one thing in common: they are all oppositional. This is because plants have always been understood according to particular beliefs about the cosmos.<sup>9</sup> In the wake of the reformation, when traditional cosmological beliefs were being contested, plants were rendered hugely controversial.<sup>10</sup> It was impossible to write about plants without taking sides in a religious debate. Where some people, like the herbalist John Gerard, would react strongly against the notion that a plant like the mandrake could have supernatural powers, others, like the Jesuit John Gerard, would view certain growths as botanic 'relics' worthy of a place on the Christian altar.<sup>11</sup> With this in mind, the first two chapters consider Protestant forms that were moderating, or even policing, certain kinds of plant behaviour and the way that Shakespeare and other writers resisted this moderation. The last three chapters consider pre-reformation traditions that persisted in certain kinds of literature, particularly the poems by Lodge, Marlowe and Shakespeare mentioned above which until recently were called Elizabethan 'epyllia.' These three poems are very clearly and strongly linked through shared themes and images and a fully understanding of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' can be gained when it is considered in this tradition than when it is examined in isolation.

It should be noted that in order to tackle the five distinct layers of meaning it is sometimes necessary to take time to define the literary forms or modes, which means that some of the chapters include background material mapping out a genre or drawing attention to a wider tradition that informs particular literary works. There is, thus, a certain amount of explaining that often needs to be done before the chapter can get down to the serious business of Shakespeare's botany. Similarly, there is seldom space to consider an individual literary work at length or as a whole, or to engage more expansively with debates that might be better elucidated in a study dedicated solely to the

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<sup>9</sup> Michael J. Balick and Paul Alan Cox, *Plants, People and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany* (New York: Scientific American Library, 1996), 142-3.

<sup>10</sup> See Kristen Poole, *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Gerard, *Herball*, 281; Gerard, *Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, 47-8.

reformation. Nor is it possible to assess what the insights into botanic matters might ultimately mean for the way that a work is viewed, because the emphasis of the study is on the way that their position with relation to genres, modes and traditions charges the botanic moments with oppositional meaning. Other scholars in other works, where space is less of an issue, may weigh the cumulative arguments. They may determine, for example, how a previously overlooked engagement with botanic organisms such as moss and algae might alter perceptions of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' as a whole.

It is also necessary to mention that, this study will draw on ethnobotany, the study of the relationship between plants and people. As the first chapter considers naming of plants, the lessons of ethnobotany (and, more specifically ethnotaxonomy) are pertinent. The second and fourth chapter are about symbolism, while the fourth is about myth, two areas that can be usefully explored using the ethnobotanic method. Other more literary methods have been employed. The study is inspired by the balanced attention to Catholic and anti-Catholic voices found in Alison Shell's work.<sup>12</sup> It is also inspired by Patricia Parker, who successfully navigates wide-ranging primary sources through close attention to linguistic detail.<sup>13</sup> This debt to Parker explains the rapid movement from one text to another. It is an attempt to recapture the syncretic links that were common to a mind in the period, a more immersive kind of reading than approaching in isolation one text at a time, which cannot account for the layers and complexities of Shakespeare's plants any more than it can account for his textured puns. In addition to this, the study takes its cue from Mats Rydén, taking Shakespeare's plant references as evidence for his engagement with certain works, something that is only possible owing to the finite number of books available in the period and to the 'commonplace' tradition.<sup>14</sup> However, it should be noted that there is simply not space to set out the implications of the insights into Shakespeare's botanic moments, when it comes to thinking about the fraught question of Shakespeare's religious background. Although there

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<sup>12</sup> Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Alison Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Patricia Parker, 'What's in A Name: and More' SEDERI XI: *Revista de la Sociedad Española de Estudios Renascentas Ingleses* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2002), 101-50.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Rydén, *Plant Names*, 42 n.10

clearly are such implications, they are of secondary importance here, and would have to be the subject of a separate biographical investigation.

The methods, particularly the streaming style of Parker and the interest in authorial engagement with texts found in Rydén, bring with them certain risks, and, as John Klause has pointed out, many in Shakespeare studies are too ready to reach for the word 'speculative' to shut-down enquiries that may result in valuable insights.<sup>15</sup> An immersive and transformative approach to primary material is arguably more valuable than a study that orientates itself in a non-transformative way, as if the inert way that a syllabus or university module presents texts would resemble the way that Shakespeare encountered the literature in the sixteenth century.

Once it was clear that Shakespeare's plants are part of a kind of resistance in his work, it was necessary to locate them on the spectrum of the contemporary religious debate. For this reason, it was clear that it would never have been possible to write a thesis just about Shakespeare, since it was necessary to consider other writers taking sides in this debate and appropriating and reacting against certain politically charged forms. These included Renaissance forms like herbals and emblem books and medieval forms like Macrobian fable and love complaint and moralisations. Protestant herbalists like John Gerard and recusant emblem writers like Henry Hawkins provide useful points of reference for thinking about Shakespeare's botanic achievement, and it is personalities like these that give the study much of its interest.

It only remains to note that the chapters are also joined together by a recurring theme. One of the key reasons that plants galvanised opposition in the period was because they could act as witnesses for the immanence of the divine in nature. This belief had been an accepted part of Christianity for generations but was now on trial. Herbal books attempted to insinuate that plants could not, in fact, have any divine properties or supernatural influences; emblem books tried to relocate symbolism away from nature; fable foregrounded the idea that pagan authors like Musaeus and Ovid had been able to access revelation before the bible was available precisely because the divine was imminent in the natural world; Ovid was understood as including a subtext relating to the passion and eternal life as revealed by nature; while botanic

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<sup>15</sup> John Klause, *Shakespeare, the Earl, and the Jesuit*, 2008, (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), introduction, 15-6.



relics like the moss and algae of the final chapter were literally understood as saints incarnate on earth. So the structure of this thesis allows an explanation of this theme of the immanence of the divine which was right at the heart of the reformation debate. This was the 'botanic reformation' that was going on and this study will attempt to relate Shakespeare's plants with their herbal, emblematic, fabulous, moral or cultic dimensions, to the debate over the immanence of the divine in nature. The evidence will suggest that, in a considerable departure from the orthodoxy, Shakespeare's plants bear witness to a belief that nature can be a setting for the sacred.

The remainder of this introduction will set the study in the context of scholarly literature relating to Shakespeare and plants, the ethnobotanic method and the 'turn to religion' in Shakespeare scholarship. The first field includes work which shares some of the same subject matter as this study, the second field informs some of the approaches, the last field maps out works that can be read alongside this study, which does not directly deal with Shakespeare's religious background but brings insights into Shakespeare's plant writing that have a bearing on this debate.

### **Contexts for Shakespeare's Plant Knowledge**

There are a number of studies of Shakespeare's plants, but two stand out. The first, Mats Rydén's *Shakespearean Plant Names: Identifications and Interpretations* (1978) is a work of meticulous scholarship with the primary aim of analysing the most problematic plant names. The second, Vivian Thomas and Nicki Faircloth's *Shakespeare's Plants and Gardens: A Dictionary* (2014), is a survey which imaginatively extends the parameters of what a dictionary can be, including headwords relating not only to plants but configurations of plants, processes connected with them, and the features and leisure activities to be encountered in an early modern garden setting.<sup>35</sup>

Thomas and Faircloth's dictionary raises the interesting issue of how to locate Shakespeare with regard to an age of progress and discovery. While the main body of the dictionary is consistent with the entry that identifies the crown imperial as 'one of the few occasions when Shakespeare mentions a newly

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<sup>35</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 1.

arrived exotic', the introduction misleadingly locates Shakespeare in the context of the scientific revolution and imports from the New World.<sup>36</sup> In this way, it foregrounds Bushnell's *Green Desire: Imagining Early Modern English Gardens* (2003) and Harkness' *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (2007). These studies set poets such as Milton, Marvell and Shakespeare and new philosophers such as Bacon, Hartlib and Evelyn side-by-side in a narrative of botanic consumerism and scientific revolution that unfolds in the heart of the cosmopolitan capital.<sup>37</sup> Harkness is ready to admit that the scientific revolution may well be a flawed central organizing principle for analysing the sixteenth-century and Shakespeare's life also resists this narrative.<sup>38</sup> Thiselton-Dyer and Jonathan Bate find more compelling evidence for a provincial Shakespeare, in no way linked to the rise of botany or interested in the global plant economy.<sup>39</sup> This view is supported by, among other things, Shakespeare's use of dialect names indigenous to Warwickshire, like 'palm tree' for willow, 'honeystalk' for clover, 'bilberry' for blueberry, and possibly 'golden lad' and 'chimneysweeper' for dandelion.<sup>40</sup> While a plant collector like John Gerard had himself depicted with a cutting of his prized potato plant, for the most part the first impressions of the potato among the English people were not positive and Shakespeare still sees it as a disgusting, lecherous 'finger.'<sup>41</sup> His works do not engage with the kind of exotica that fascinated plant collectors and his most glaring botanic omission is tobacco because it was ubiquitous in London throughout his life-time.<sup>42</sup>

If the co-opting of Shakespeare's work into a narrative of scientific discovery and progress seems flawed, increasingly scholars are recognising the value of locating plant writing with regard to the historical context of the reformation. Leah Knight's *Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England: Sixteenth Century Plants and Print Culture* (2009) has analysed the decision-making behind the printed works of William Turner and John Gerard and argued

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>37</sup> Bushnell, *Green Desire*, 7; Deborah E. Harkness, *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 255.

<sup>38</sup> Harkness, *Jewel House*, 278.

<sup>39</sup> Thiselton-Dyer, 'Plants', 506.

<sup>40</sup> Thiselton-Dyer, 'Plants', 504: Thiselton-Dyer points out that bilberry is 'the common name in midland counties for the whortleberry, *Vaccinium Myrtillus*'; Rydén, *Shakespearean Plant Names*, 32.

<sup>41</sup> Willes, *Shakespearean Botanical*, 13, 146.

<sup>42</sup> Ellacombe, *Plant-Lore*, xiv.

for the value of speaking of a 'botanical reformation.'<sup>43</sup> On reflection, Knight's term seemed like a useful one for describing the findings of this study.<sup>44</sup> Knight builds on Charles Raven's *English Naturalists from Neckam to Ray* (1968), praising his analysis of figures like William Turner and John Gerard and his wider perspective on the development of natural history.<sup>45</sup> In their analyses of botanic discourse at the time of the reformation, Knight, Walsham and Shell are indebted to Keith Thomas' *Man and the Natural World: A History of Modern Sensibility* (1983). In this survey, Thomas takes a wide-ranging approach that unites the disciplines of theology, natural history, botany, zoology, economics, anthropology, politics and aesthetics. However, just as influential is Jack Goody's *The Culture of Flowers* (1998), a work of social anthropology. This work has been criticised for its sweeping method and for projecting puritan resistance to flowers back into ancient history, but, nonetheless, it remains valuable for its insights into attitudes to plants following the reformation.<sup>46</sup> Alison Shell's willingness to attend to both anti-papist and recusant voices in the period has given rise to the measured, balanced scholarship of *Shakespeare and Religion* (2010).

### The Ethnobotanic Method

Anyone studying Shakespeare and plants at the present time is likely to be asked if they are taking an ecological approach. There are a growing number of ecocritical studies of Shakespeare's work which make for fascinating reading.<sup>47</sup> However, as Leah Knight asserts her right to take a different approach to 'green' in her book on *Reading Green in Early Modern England* (2014), this study will also take a different approach to plants in a post-reformation context: ethnobotany.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Leah Knight, *Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009), 39.

<sup>44</sup> Though for limitations of the term 'reformation' see Robert S. Miola, *Early Modern Catholicism: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1-9.

<sup>45</sup> Knight, *Books and Botany*, 6.n.

<sup>46</sup> James Fenton, 'Boughs off Many a Tree' *Times Literary Supplement*, (17 September 1993).

<sup>47</sup> Randall Martin, *Shakespeare and Ecology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Simon C. Estok, *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Gabriel Egan, *Green Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Knight, *Reading Green*, 113, introduction, 5.

The encounter of literary studies with the relatively new field of ethnobotany—in an interdisciplinary approach which might be called ‘botlit’—is already underway.<sup>49</sup> In Shakespeare studies, ‘ethnobotany’ can be seen percolating into the bibliography of the Bloomsbury *Dictionary of Shakespeare’s Plants and Gardens* (2014).<sup>50</sup> This suggests that Shakespeare scholars are second only to medical historians in recognising that the spanning of disciplines in fields such as ethnobotany could betoken a rich future for the study of plants in Shakespeare’s work.<sup>51</sup> In the field of ethnobotany, Michael Balick and Paul Cox have already found themselves discussing one of the more surprising textual sources for *Hamlet*, John Gerard’s *Herball, or General Historie of Plants* (1597), while Anne Van Arsdall comments that since the original community of readers who understood how to interpret herbals is long gone, ethnobotany can help recover these lost ways of reading.<sup>52</sup> What is at issue, then, is not whether Shakespeare studies will encounter ethnobotany—this has already begun—but how ethnobotanic method and terms can be fruitful for making sense of things that Shakespeare studies has proved ill-equipped to tackle alone.

The ethnobotanic method can bring insight into: the indigenous aspects of Shakespeare’s work; his culture of belief; his use of myth and symbolism; his use of naming systems and hierarchies (ethnotaxonomy); and his use of the doctrine of signatures (ethnopharmacology).

The term indigenous is explained by Michael Balick and Paul Cox in *Plants, People and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany* (1996) who use the term for ‘peoples who follow traditional, nonindustrial lifestyles in areas that have been occupied for generations.’<sup>53</sup> One reason that Shakespeare can be considered ‘indigenous’ is that he seems to have access to ‘indigenous’ oral

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<sup>49</sup> The term ‘ethnobotany’ was coined by the American taxonomist John Harshberger in 1895, but the discipline is relatively recent and still evolving. The term ‘botlit’ was coined more recently by my friend and colleague Mike Rose.

<sup>50</sup> See Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 384 which cites Allen, D. E. And G. Hatfield, *Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition: An Ethnobotany of Britain and Ireland*, (Portland: Portland Press, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> Peter Dendle and Alain Touwaide, *Health and Healing from the Medieval Garden* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 13. See Peter Dendle and Alain Touwaide, *Health and Healing from the Medieval Garden* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008) which includes an article by Marijane Osborn ‘Anglo-Saxon Ethnobotany: Women’s Reproductive Medicine in Leechbook III’ and an article by George R. Keiser ‘Rosemary: Not Just for Remembrance’ which takes Ophelia’s lines as a starting-point for a history of the use of rosemary in England.

<sup>52</sup> Anne Van Arsdall, ‘Evaluating the Content of Medieval Herbals’ in *Critical Approaches to the History of Western Medicine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 57.

<sup>53</sup> Balick and Cox, *Plants, People and Culture*, 5.

traditions and this guides his choice of the plants he introduces into his works. This study will suggest that in Shakespeare's plant learning there is a surprising amount of pagan material. He includes elements that reflect not merely classical paganism, which is often reductively linked with Renaissance humanism, but British paganism that persisted, or was assimilated syncretically, into medieval Christianity as a result of 'monastic humanism.'<sup>54</sup> Dympna Callaghan argues that in the past scholars have limited their understanding of the religious divide to merely Christian concerns and overlooked the telling ways that Catholics and Protestants orientated themselves towards classical and British paganism.<sup>55</sup> By acknowledging the presence of indigenous pagan material in Shakespeare's work it is possible to make a strong case for the medieval stamp of his religion because it is unlikely that it would have come down to him except through its entanglement with medieval Christianity.

Linked to Shakespeare's indigenous writing is his culture of belief. The field of Shakespeare studies reveals that 'plants were freighted with meaning, spiritual, emotional and medical' in Shakespeare's day while ethnobotany teaches that 'some of the deepest impacts [on human cultures] are those made by plants used for religious and spiritual purposes, impacts that can rarely be measured in economic terms.'<sup>56</sup> When the comments from Shakespeare studies and from ethnobotany are placed side by side an interesting discrepancy becomes apparent. In the Shakespeare comment the word 'religious' is absent. The list 'spiritual, emotional and medical' could describe interest in plants in a secular society like our own. It is almost as if to overtly state that Shakespeare evokes plants for their religious meaning, or that plants had religious significance for him, is not legitimate. This does not make sense from a historical point of view, as Shakespeare was living in a time of turbulent religious wars. Nor does it make sense from the point of view of ethnobotanists, who would argue that it is impossible for a religious society to invoke plants in

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<sup>54</sup> For 'monastic humanism' or *Klosterhumanismus* see James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 221. For the systematic syncretic approach to pagan and Christian material in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries see Joan Greatrex, 'Benedictine Sermons: Preparation and Practice in the English Monastic Cathedral Cloisters' in *Medieval Monastic Preachers* ed. Caroline Muessig (Brill: Leiden, 1998), 257-291, 260.

<sup>55</sup> On the omission of classical and British paganism from the discussion of Shakespeare and religion see Dympna Callaghan, 'Shakespeare and Religion', *Textual Practice*, 15 (2001), 1-4, 2.

<sup>56</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 3; Balick and Cox, *Plants, People and Culture*, 141.

literature without their religious meaning becoming apparent.<sup>57</sup> Ethnobotany could help Shakespeare studies towards a less anachronistic conception of Shakespeare and religion in which, as Eamon Duffy writes, 'not the least significant aspect may be the perception that he might actually have had a religion.'<sup>58</sup>

Martin's *Ethnobotany: A Methods Manual* (2004) and Cotton's *Ethnobotany: Principles and Applications* (1997) contain some useful advice on searching for ethnobotanical information in myth and symbolism. Martin cites the structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss who suggests compiling many different versions of myths and comparing them to discover the recurrent motifs that carry their deeper meaning.<sup>59</sup> Martin observes that indigenous myths tend to focus on plants that are 'anomalous—abnormal in their behaviour or morphology—[which] often serve as symbolic mediators, known for their specific ability to cure, nourish and protect people.'<sup>60</sup> Plant myths of this kind in the period were likely to come under attack from reformers who, according to Alison Shell, rebranded the 'more striking quiddities' of plants as incitements to idolatry.<sup>61</sup>

Cotton also writes of naming systems and hierarchies, the field of ethnotaxonomy that studies how peoples categorise and name plants in the world around them.<sup>62</sup> The origins of this branch of study are traced back to Harold Conklin's *The relation of Hanunóo culture to the plant world* (1954) which set out to acquire a vocabulary of botanic terms, relating to individual plants and wider plant communities.<sup>63</sup> The dominant hierarchy in Shakespeare's day was the neo-Platonic 'chain of being' which would put kingly botanicals like the oak tree and the laurel above lesser botanicals like algae (for the sake of convenience the term 'botanic' will be used in this study to refer to plants and to other organisms such as 'algae' which are strictly not botanic at all).<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Balick and Cox, *Plants, People and Culture*, 141.

<sup>58</sup> Balick and Cox, *Plants, People and Culture*, 143; Eamon Duffy, 'Bare Ruined Choirs: Remembering Catholicism in Shakespeare's England' in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, ed. Dutton et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 40.

<sup>59</sup> Martin, *Ethnobotany*, 114.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 115

<sup>61</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture*, 72.

<sup>62</sup> Cotton, C. M., *Ethnobotany: Principles and Applications*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1997, 68

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>64</sup> This, of course, is in keeping with the way that the term 'herbal' was appropriate to such diverse life-forms as moss and barnacles in the period.

Shakespeare's writing seems to ascribe to a more unusual hierarchy. He privileges red and white flowers (because they were associated with saints and because their colours were traditionally associated with the sacred).<sup>65</sup> He also foregrounds the flowers singled out by cuckoo spit (which was understood to fall from heaven).<sup>66</sup> Finally, he prioritises moss which, in an odd speech in *Cymbeline*, is named as a strewnment for laying on graves in winter (and which was associated with the garlands of Saint Winefride).<sup>67</sup>

Building on Tipppo and Stern's *Humanistic Botany* (1977) and Klein's *The Green World* (1987), Balée's *Footprints of the Forest* (1994) contains some useful insights into the doctrine of signatures, whereby certain features of plants

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<sup>65</sup> For red and white flowers associated with saints, particularly in areas where Celtic Christianity was strong, there are various sources. See Jacqueline Simpson & Steve Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 134 which describes how foxgloves, for example, 'are said to have sprung up wherever the blood of St Nectan, a locally revered saint [in North Devon], dripped on the ground after he was beheaded'. See also Terry Faul, *Secrets of the Hidden Source: In Search of Devon's Ancient and Holy Wells*, (Tiverton: Halsgrove, 2004), 117 which claims that 'At the place where [St Urith] died, a spring of pure water sprang up, scarlet pimpernels blossomed where spots of her blood fell, and divine vengeance fell on her murderers.' See also David E. Allen and Gabrielle Hatfield, *Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition: An Ethnobotany of Britain and Ireland* (London: Timber Press, 2004), 196 which notes that the lesser periwinkle was traditionally called 'Saint Candida's Eyes' in West Dorset, presumably also for reasons connected with her bloody martyrdom although the details of this do not survive.

For an interpretation of the red and white colour scheme as it is currently understood within its Tudor context see Katherine Duncan-Jones, 'Much Ado with Red and White: The Earliest Readers of Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis' (1593), *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 176 (Nov., 1993), 479-501, 490 and Shakespeare, William, 'Venus and Adonis' in *Shakespeare's Poems*, eds. Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007), 5n., 1168n. For the colour scheme in Musaeus see George Chapman, 'The Divine Poem of Musaeus: Hero and Leander', 84-5 in *Elizabethan Minor Epics*, ed. Elizabeth Story Donno, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 72; for the colour scheme in Ovid see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. R. J. Tarrant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 3.4.23. 481-485; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1986), 63, 65; for the colour scheme in relation to the Song of Solomon 2:1, 5:10 etc. see Parker, Patricia, 'What's in A Name: and More' SEDERI XI: *Revista de la Sociedad Espanola de Estudios Renascentas Ingleses*, Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2002, 139, n.128; for the colour scheme in Tertullian see Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum*, 2.13.7; for its presence in Celtic material in general see Sioned Davies, trans. *The Mabinogion* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2007) 228 3n.; for the colour scheme in a description of a Celtic saint see T.W. Pritchard, *St Winefride, Her Holy Well and the Jesuit Mission c. 659-1930* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 2009), 18; for the colour scheme in Arthurian material see Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal ou le roman de Perceval* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990), 467-8, 4139; Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, trans. William W. Kibler (London: Penguin, 1991), 387, 432; for its presence in medieval dream vision see Jean Froissart, 'Le Dit de la Marguerite', in *Chaucer's Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues*, ed. and trans. B. A. Windeatt (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1982), 150; for the presence of the colour scheme in recusant emblem-writing see Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, (1633; Menston: Scholar Press, 1971), 9.

<sup>66</sup> Edward A. Armstrong, *The Folklore of Birds* (London: Collins, 1958), 198.

<sup>67</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.228. Cf. Peter Dendle, 'Plants in the Early Medieval Cosmos' in *Health and Healing from the Medieval Garden*, Dendle et al. (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 58. T.W. Pritchard, *St Winefride, Her Holy Well and the Jesuit Mission c. 659-1930* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 2009), 33.

are interpreted as God-given clues to their therapeutic uses. Balée explains the doctrine by drawing on the concept of the ‘right pending disproof’ in Lévi-Strauss’ *The Savage Mind* (1966), the concept of ‘sympathetic magic’ in J. G. Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1886) and also the discussion of signatures in Foucault’s *The Order of Things* (1966).<sup>68</sup> More general information about the doctrine of signatures in the Renaissance can be found in Leah Knight’s *Reading Green in Early Modern England* (2014) and Cristina Bellorini’s *The World of Plants in Renaissance Tuscany* (2016). Bellorini cites some perceptive comments by Giorgio Agamben, making some useful continental scholarship accessible to English readers.<sup>69</sup> For British plants Allen and Hatfield’s *Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition: An Ethnobotany of Britain and Ireland* (2004) is indispensable. Finally, Mabey’s *The Cabaret of Plants* (2016) includes his personal impressions about the doctrine of signatures looking back over his botanic career.

## Shakespeare and Religion

Jeffrey Knapp writes that anyone who ends up writing about Shakespeare and religion is asked: ‘who else but a devout Christian would want to claim that Shakespeare was religious?’<sup>70</sup> Although this study may reflect the ‘turn to religion’ in early modern scholarship, I am not religious.<sup>71</sup> The theologian Karen Armstrong has suggested that religious societies have often prioritised the feeling of transcending everyday routine that can be found in religious places of worship, but that secular societies look for the feeling in dance, music, drugs and sex.<sup>72</sup> This reflects my own view and if this study has any message, it is that just as valid a way of experiencing this feeling is to lose yourself in a performance of a Shakespeare play, or in the gardening, for that matter.

The scholarship debating Shakespeare’s personal religious background is fraught. Perhaps the most extreme position in the debate is found in Harold

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<sup>68</sup> Balée, *Footprints of the Forest*, 103.

<sup>69</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Signatura rerum: Sul Metodo* (Torino, 2008). Quoted in Cristina Bellorini, *The World of Plants in Renaissance Tuscany* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 179 n.88.

<sup>70</sup> Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare’s Tribe: Church, Nation, and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002), preface, xi.

<sup>71</sup> Ken Jackson and Arthur Marotti, ‘The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies’, *Criticism*, 46:1, (2004), 167-90.

<sup>72</sup> Karen Armstrong, *The Bible: The Biography* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007), 5.



Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998), which imagines a secular Shakespeare whose work miraculously transcends any interest in theology whatsoever. Paradoxically, some of the most perceptive criticism of Shakespeare, such as Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory* (2001), also has a secularising streak that makes it ahistorical, even as it suggests ways in which Shakespeare's work remains haunted by the old religion. The wish to read him as the Romantics read him is shown by Richard McCoy in *Faith in Shakespeare* (2013), which depends on the assumption that it is impossible to determine Shakespeare's beliefs.<sup>73</sup> By contrast, Jeffrey Knapp in *Shakespeare's Tribe* (2002) has suggested that the widely-shared assumption that we cannot know what Shakespeare believed is not as insuperable as critics have generally claimed since plays in the period have a godly agenda.<sup>74</sup>

My own views are closer to what David Scott Kastan calls the 'new near-orthodoxy that says Shakespeare was, if not a believing Catholic, at the very least sympathetic to aspects of Catholicism and to the [pre-reformation] values of the English people'.<sup>75</sup> In fact, I believe that cumulatively the evidence for Shakespeare's Catholicism is strong, although many scholars would just as strongly disagree with me at the present time. When it comes to this perspective, there are two useful starting-points. Gary Taylor's 'Forms of Opposition: Shakespeare and Middleton' (1994) approaches the problem by demonstrating that Shakespeare is oppositional to the state but from the opposite vantage point to the Calvinistic playwright Middleton. Similarly, Anna Swärdh's *Rape and Religion in Renaissance Literature* (2003) includes some incisive points about Shakespeare's religious background.

E. A. J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare: The 'Lost Years'* (1998) examines the case for Shakespeare's links with Catholic Lancashire. This is picked up by Richard Dutton et al. in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare* (2003), which includes some thought-provoking essays on religious resonances in Shakespeare's work. Some of the arguments, such as those for the recusancy of Shakespeare's father and for the links of Shakespeare with Lancashire

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<sup>73</sup> Richard C. McCoy, *Faith in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), xiii.

<sup>75</sup> David Scott Kastan, *A Will to Believe: Shakespeare and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17.

Catholicism, are carefully weighed and often found wanting in a series of useful articles by Robert Bearmann, Peter Davidson and Thomas McCoog S.J.<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps the most extreme arguments for Shakespeare's Catholicism have been made by Richard Wilson, Clare Asquith and John Klause. Richard Wilson's *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Theatre, Religion and Resistance* (2004), is a political reading of Shakespeare's religion that makes the strongest possible case for his Catholicism, but in an allusive style of scholarship that makes many demands on the reader. Similarly, Clare Asquith's *Shadowplay: the Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (2005) begins by discussing the coded meanings in Soviet dissident plays and ends by astutely highlighting some covert Catholic symbolism in Shakespeare's plays. John Klause in *Shakespeare, the Earl and the Jesuit* (2008), argues for a fascinating series of correspondences between the work of Shakespeare and Robert Southwell, though the current consensus is that both writers were just drawing on contemporary commonplaces.<sup>77</sup> More cautious approaches focusing on the sacred subtexts of Shakespeare's work are taken by Gillian Woods, *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions* (2013) and Gary Waller, *The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature* (2011).

The 'turn to religion' has come to focus on early modern superstition and plants. Alison Shell's *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England* (2007) features a far-reaching study of attacks on fairy and plant lore during the reformation that could be revealing for Shakespeare's literary preoccupations. Alexandra Walsham glances at plants in her study of *Providence in Early Modern England* (1999) but includes more sustained writing on the attempt of reformers to stamp out superstition surrounding plants in her ground-breaking survey *The Reformation of the Landscape* (2011). This work takes its place in a movement of revisionist history of the reformation, which includes historical scholarship by John Bossy, Patrick Collinson, Eamon Duffy, Christopher Haigh, Peter Lake and Nicholas Tyacke.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Three from Robert Bearmann, "'Was William Shakespeares William Shakeshafte?" Revisited' (2002), 'John Shakespeare's "Spiritual Testament": A Reappraisal', (2003) 'John Shakespeare: A Papist or just Penniless?' (2005) and one from Peter Davidson and Thomas M. McCoog S.J., 'Unreconciled: What Evidence Links Shakespeare and the Jesuits?' (2007).

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 256 n.33.

<sup>78</sup> John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850* (London: Darton Longman & Todd Ltd, 1979); Patrick Collinson, *The Religions of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) and *The Birth Pangs of Protestant England* (London: Macmillan, 1998); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in*

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*England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) and Peter Lake, *Anglicans or Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988); Nicholas Tyacke (ed.) *England's Long Reformation, 1500-1800* (London: UCL Press, 1998) and *Aspects of English Protestantism c. 1530-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).





## Chapter One: Shakespeare's Counter-Herbalism

This chapter will argue that the Renaissance herbals, far from being neutral accumulations of plant lore, reveal a marked Protestant agenda. As Shakespeare can be seen to have engaged heavily with these texts, supplementing his general reading of Lyte's *Niewe Herball* (1578) with a reading of Gerard's *Herball or General Historie of Plantes* (1597) in the narrow period of 1598-9, it has generally been assumed that he engaged with them in a straightforward way, accepting that they were sources of unbiased information.<sup>1</sup> This was not an option for him because, this study will argue, the sources of his plant information were broader than what was being printed. In other words, they included precisely the kind of oral traditions that the Protestant herbalists were editing out of their view of botanic creation. Shakespeare, I will argue, reacts to the textual tradition by turning the herbalist learning on its head,

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### Chapter One: Shakespeare's Counter-Herbalism

<sup>1</sup> See Sir William T. Thiselton-Dyer, 'Plants' in *Shakespeare's England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), vol. 1, 508, 510; T. P. Harrison Jr., 'Flower Lore in Spenser and Shakespeare. Two Notes', *Modern Language Quarterly* 7 9 (1946), 175-78; Henry N. Ellacombe, *The Plant-Lore and Garden-Craft of Shakespeare* (London: W. Satchell & Co., 1884), 5; Geoffrey Grigson, *The Englishman's Flora*, (London: Phoenix House Ltd, 1955), 407; Mats Rydén, *Shakespearean Plant Names: Identification and Interpretations* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wicksell International, 1978), 18. Thiselton-Dyer put forward an argument that Lyte's *The Niewe Herball, or Historie of Plantes* (1578) and oral tradition were the main sources of Shakespeare's plant information. He argues for the influence of Lyte behind 'mandrake' in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, 'hebenon' in *Hamlet*, 'coloquintida' in *Othello*, 'soft myrtle' in *Measure for Measure*, 'cedar' in *Henry VIII* and 'long heath' in *The Tempest*. In addition, Harrison makes a strong case for the influence of Lyte behind 'love-in-idleness' and 'cupid's flower' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ellacombe and Grigson both argue that Shakespeare makes use of Gerard's *Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* (1598). Both of these scholars are eccentric in their own ways: Ellacombe's style reveals his hero-worship of Gerard, and Grigson is sometimes overly-impressionistic in his scholarship, but their separate claims nonetheless demand attention. Grigson suggests that Gerard's *Herball* lies behind 'lady smocks' in *Love's Labour's Lost* and the 'azured harebell' in *Cymbeline*. This idea was more fully-developed by Lever, who argues that Shakespeare's 'lady smocks' in the 1598 quarto and the 'mandrake' and Ophelia's 'coronet-weeds' were all indebted to a reading of Gerard in 1598 (J. W. Lever, 'Three Notes on Shakespeare's Plants' in *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 3 (1952), 117-29). It is fairly certain, at least, that in the narrow period of 1598-9, encompassing the printing of *Love's Labour's Lost* and composition of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare supplemented his earlier reading of Lyte with Gerard. There is evidence to suggest that the influence of Lyte remained strong late into his career. Rydén supports the view that 'the primary, printed sources of his botanical knowledge, including plant names, seem to have been Gerard's and Lyte's Herbals.' He sees the possible influence of Lyte in the 'azur'd harebell' of *Cymbeline* and in several other names previously associated with Lyte such as 'cupid's flower' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and 'long heath' in *The Tempest*. He comments that it is possible that Shakespeare lifted 'crow-flower' straight from Gerard where it means 'ragged robin' (though he ultimately interprets it as 'crowfootflower' meaning 'buttercup'). Rydén argues that for 'cuckoo-flower' and 'long purples' in *Hamlet* Shakespeare could have drawn on Lyte or Gerard or both.

making cynical and subversive use of the herbals. This complex response will be described as Shakespeare's counter-herbalism. This chapter is indebted to Alison Shell whose work has established a scholarly paradigm that recognises the importance of Catholic and anti-Catholic voices in the period.<sup>2</sup>

According to studies of the reformation, the reformers insisted that British Christianity had strayed in a direction that was not deemed productive and was therefore 'idle.'<sup>3</sup> For example, the Henrician divine, Thomas Beacon insisted that Christianity had been led astray by 'trifelyng fantasies invented of the ydle braynes of Papistes for lucre's sake.'<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the Elizabethan Protestant Roger Ascham maintained that the true faith had been misdirected by 'idle' fictions 'made in Monasteries, by Idle Monkes'.<sup>5</sup> The same rhetoric echoes into the work of the seventeenth-century curate and antiquarian, Henry Bourne, who commented that British Christianity had gone astray owing to 'indolent monks, who having nothing else to do, were the Forgers of many silly and wicked Opinions, to keep the World in Awe and Ignorance'.<sup>6</sup> It was the fault of idleness that medieval religion had preserved oral traditions alongside other more acceptable forms of authority and that it had become increasingly rooted in the British Book of Nature rather than in the scripture. A radical solution was offered: Christianity needed to be forced to return to some imagined 'original' text—even though there had never been a time when scripture had not been supplemented by oral tradition or corroborated by the natural world.<sup>7</sup>

Although there has been less criticism on the subject, the same rationale lies behind the herbals which try to recover an unblemished classical prototype

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<sup>2</sup> The paradigm is apparent in Alison Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. chapter two, 'Anti-popery and the Supernatural.' On Shell's critical paradigm see Gillian Woods, *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

<sup>3</sup> For some interesting uses of the word 'idle' see Ann Moss, *Ovid in Renaissance France*, (London: The Warburg Institute, 1982), 26; Woods, *Unreformed Fictions*, 16. Protestant use of the word 'idle' may possibly mean 'unproductive' in such phrases as 'idle monks', imagined sitting on their bottoms all day in the refectory staring into space, or in such phrases as 'idle text', which may have meant one that was not politically viable.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Becon, *A Christmas bankette garnyshed with many pleasaunt and deynty dishes* (1542), sig. G1<sup>1</sup>; Quoted in Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 82 cf. 87.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (London, 1570), sigs I.iiv-I.iiir; Quoted in Gillian Woods, *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 16.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Brand, *Antiquitates Vulgares*, (1<sup>st</sup> edn 1725), x-xi. Quoted in Shell, *Oral Culture*, 63.

<sup>7</sup> For reformers striving for a purified text see Whitney Jones, *William Turner: Tudor Naturalist, Physician and Divine* (London: Routledge, 1988), 11; for the scripture corroborated by the natural world see Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 144.

of plant writing by carefully editing out the medieval and pagan oral traditions that had gathered around plants in Britain. Jack Goody has explored radical plant culture in general, while Keith Thomas, Charles Raven, Leah Knight and Alison Shell have cautiously suggested that the herbalist discourse in particular can be partial.<sup>8</sup> This study will go further and argue that it is possible to speak about a Protestant herbal tradition. It will also qualify the ethnobotanic perspective that John Gerard's *Herball* is a straightforward compilation of generations of folk knowledge since this fails to take into account the complex ways in which his *Herball* often defines itself against precisely this kind of knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter will acknowledge that the plant information that Shakespeare derived from the written herbal tradition would be likely to be orthodox since nearly all the 'fathers' of the herbal tradition in Britain and Europe were fiery proponents of a reformed church. Leah Knight's catalogue of Protestant herbalists includes Otto Brunfels, Leonhart Fuchs, Jerome Bock, Carolus Clusius, Valerius Cordus and his father Euricius, Conrad Gesner, and the Bauhin brothers.<sup>10</sup> She adds that the catalogue could be extended to include Andrea Cesalpino, Ulisse Aldrovandi, and Garcia da Orta who fell out of favour with the Catholic Church to the extent that it was rumoured that they were heretics.<sup>11</sup> The authors of the herbals in Britain firmly located themselves in this European Protestant hegemony. William Turner was a friend of Conrad Gesner, identified the wild daffodil in Britain by referring to an illustration in Otto Brunfel's *Herbarium Vivae Eicones* (1530) and borrowed four hundred of the woodcuts for his *New Herball* (1568) from that of his friend Leonhart Fuchs. Similarly, Henry Lyte's *Niewe Herball* (1578) was a translation of the French Protestant Carolus Clusius' version of the Rembert Dodoen's Flemish *Cruydeboeck* (1554).<sup>12</sup> Finally, John Gerard reused in his own herbal the woodcuts from the work of another herbalist of the reformed faith, best known

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<sup>8</sup> Jack Goody, *The Culture of Flowers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp. 156; Charles Raven, *English Naturalists from Neckham to Ray* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947, repr. 2010), 98-9; Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (London: Penguin, 1983), 78-82; Leah Knight, *Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009), esp. 75-99; Shell, *Oral Culture*, 72-75.

<sup>9</sup> Michael J. Balick and Paul Alan Cox, *Plants, People and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany* (New York: Scientific American Library, 1996), 14.

<sup>10</sup> Knight, *Books and Botany*, 57.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 57

<sup>12</sup> Despite his position at the Calvinistic University of Leiden, it is generally assumed that Rembert Dodoens was Catholic.



as Tabernaemontanus.<sup>13</sup> Some of these men had links that brought them even closer to the pulse of the reformation. Leonhart Fuchs, for example, was recommended to the University of Tübingen by one of the leading figures of the reformation, Philip Melancton. This gave him the confidence to insist on a return to the original classical texts of writers like Dioscorides and Theophrastus, purged of the insights of Arab writers like Avicenna so central to the medieval Catholic curriculum.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, he advocated a return to scripture unblemished by Catholic tradition, presiding over an academic climate where Catholicism was suppressed and the mass abolished.<sup>15</sup> Back in Britain, William Turner flourished under the local influence of two men who would become celebrated Protestant martyrs, Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer. Their rhetoric echoes through his lambasting of bishops like Stephen Gardiner whom he insisted were obstructing the progress of the Henrician reformation. It also echoes through his attacks on papist vestments (and the attacks of his little dog, which he taught to snatch square hats off visiting bishops).<sup>16</sup>

This chapter will demonstrate that it is no exaggeration, then, to write that the herbal achievement was firmly founded in Protestant reform.<sup>17</sup> Why this should be the case is an interesting question. These men rejected papist traditions to hammer home the importance of unadulterated scripture.<sup>18</sup> In the same way, they inveighed against the indigenous plant knowledge of friars, apothecaries and herb women by brandishing classical authority. Of course, with the decision to write their herbals in the vernacular came a great deal of responsibility, and the herbalists took this very seriously. Their prefatory material suggests their aim was to make botanical information suitable for the 'mean sorte' and for 'common people', rather than to share all of their own more privileged knowledge.<sup>19</sup> However, in their hurry to decide what was appropriate

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<sup>13</sup> Agnes Arber, *Herbals: Their Origin and Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 266.

<sup>14</sup> Leonhart Fuchs, *The New Herbal of 1543*, ed. Klaus Dobat, (Köln: Taschen, 2016), introduction, 9-10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Whitney R. D. Jones, 'William Turner (1509/10-1568),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008), Accessed February 9, 2019. doi-org.lib.exeter.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/27874.; for the hatred of square-caps by humans in the period see Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London: Cape, 1967), 94.

<sup>17</sup> Raven, *English Naturalists*, 70.

<sup>18</sup> Whitney, *William Turner*, 11.

<sup>19</sup> Knight, *Books and Botany*, 43, 43, 75-6. For the 'mean sorte' or 'simple sort' see Raphael Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds: English Metamorphoses, 1567-1632* (Oxford: Oxford University

for the 'common good', they often seem to run to excess.<sup>20</sup> It is notable that even the plants described and illustrated in their works had to come from soil that had been purged by Protestant fervour. Leonhart Fuchs turned down the opportunity to be director of the oldest botanic garden in the world at Pisa because of his unwillingness to inhabit a Catholic country. The plants he describes were grown in the garden of a dissolved Beguine nunnery in Tübingen, just as the plants William Turner describes were grown in the botanic gardens at the dissolved Brigittine abbey at Syon.<sup>21</sup> The written herbal tradition, then, quite literally, grew out of the struggle for intellectual and geographical property which characterised the religious changes sweeping across Europe. From this point of view, in the words of Leah Knight, the herbals reflect not so much a botanic renaissance as a 'botanical reformation.'<sup>22</sup>

This chapter will build on Alexandra Walsham's insight that in the wake of the reformation Catholics were forced to realign their relationship with nature because it was no longer appropriate to locate the divine within the British landscape.<sup>23</sup> Shakespeare resisted this compulsion. Whether he is engaging with classical plant sources, such as Pliny, or classical authors such as Ovid, Shakespeare does not follow this approach of purging away the spurious accretions of the Middle Ages. The patina of the Middle Ages persists in his work and this is nowhere more apparent than in how disconcertingly comfortable he is with certain kinds of pagan and folkloric material which reformers would class as 'idolatrous.' Shakespeare rehearses certain notions about plants and, to recycle an observation of Keith Thomas, it is difficult to be certain if these notions were ever seriously believed.<sup>24</sup> As will be seen, it may be that he did not believe that the mandrake was somehow a shrieking plant, but equally he may have believed that plants with hand-like roots had come into existence within living memory as a divine comment on the times. It is also often hard to tell which of his notions could be integrated into a 'coherent cosmology' and which are 'isolated superstitions'—'learned errors' from Pliny or 'vulgar

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Press, 2001), 42; Eugene R. Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England*, (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 114-117.

<sup>20</sup> Knight, *Books and Botany*, 75-6.

<sup>21</sup> See Fuchs, *New Herbal*, introduction, 19-20; Knight, *Books and Botany*, 57.

<sup>22</sup> Knight, *Books and Botany*, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 166.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas, *Natural World*, 76-7.

ones' from folk lore—included out of a spirit of resistance.<sup>25</sup> The eclectic nature of this material might reflect the inclusive nature of a medieval understanding of the natural world where old lore might be included because the ancients had included it for a particular reason, which was often emblematic or allegorical. Equally, it might reflect his lingering medieval belief in a Macrobian *vulgus*, the uneducated multitude, who did not have to know the secrets of nature in detail as long as they were guided towards a general faith.<sup>26</sup>

This chapter will demonstrate that Shakespeare actively counters the botanic discourse of the Protestant herbals: undermining their claims to scientific impartiality; parodying their presumptuous rhetoric of plant-naming; tearing their stop-gap names apart at the seams; and resisting those textual moments that suppressed an inherited outlook on the natural world. Shakespeare's adversarial engagement with the herbals is most obvious when those plant-names that divide opinion are considered. The herbals attack 'idle and foolish' names of plants.<sup>27</sup> Shakespeare concocts his own 'idle' plant-names willy-nilly. The epithet 'idle', for the first time applied to such seemingly harmless plants as moss and darnel, becomes an advertisement for Shakespeare's own particular brand of resistance.<sup>28</sup>

However, above and beyond the names, Shakespeare can be seen to generate precisely the 'idololatricall performances' [sic] which might be

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 76-7.

<sup>26</sup> For the notion of the *vulgus* see William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3, 5, 15, 20.

<sup>27</sup> John Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole* (London, 1629), 283, 300.

<sup>28</sup> See E. A. J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare: The 'Lost Years'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, Second Edition, 1998, 71-76, 72). In recent years, Ernst Honigmann revived interest in Spenser's attack on an influential poet identified as 'pleasant Willy' who 'is dead of late figuratively, that is, he chooses to sit in an idle cell and not to write' (Ibid., 72). This attack comes in *The Teares of the Muses*, which was included in a collection of poems published just after Spenser's visit to England in 1589-91. For the context of this work see Mark David Rasmussen, 'Complaints and Daphnaida' in *The Oxford Handbook to Spenser* Ed. Richard McCabe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 224. If Shakespeare interpreted this as an attack on himself it might explain why he provocatively reaffirms his commitment to 'idleness' in the 1593 preface to 'Venus and Adonis.' He makes a 'vow to take advantage of all idle hours till [he has] honoured' his patron Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton (Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', dedication). However, the provocative way in which Shakespeare seems to have taken the insult 'idle' to himself commanded attention in Catholic critiques of Shakespeare too. See also Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2010), 89, 91. Shell draws attention to a critique of Shakespeare in a poem published by the Catholic secret press in 1603: 'When I.C. writes that [Shakespeare's] "muse is prest,/To spend the idle houres of her rest" in writing the poem ["Venus and Adonis"], the verb "prest" has the effect of counteracting the slightly disingenuous word "idle". See. One way of reading this would be to argue that the poet is using the word 'prest' to acknowledge that he understands that Shakespeare's use of 'idle' says less about leisure time and more about his 'idolatrous' approach to recusant writing.

calculated to disconcert those with reformist attitudes.<sup>29</sup> These constitute dramatic moments which, when placed against the backdrop of the idolatry debate, might appear provocative or even suspect. Anthropological studies have suggested that Protestant cultures are often suspicious of flowers, particularly those that are apparently used purely for decorative purposes.<sup>30</sup> Shakespeare's plants may be carefully introduced into his work but they are never entirely above this kind of suspicion. The following sections will identify different aspects of plant culture that the Protestant herbal reformers targeted.

### **'Idle and Foolish' Names and Epithets for Plants**

The most consistent characteristic of Shakespeare's counter-herbalism is the way that it targets the anti-idolatry rhetoric of the Protestant Herbalism. The word 'idle' was used in the rhetoric of the fathers of the herbal tradition to voice anxiety about the persistence of medieval plant culture into their time. An etymological pun made it interchangeable with the word 'idolatrous' and it was ostensibly used to police worship of 'idols.' However, historians never take reformers at their word when they claim that 'idolatry' is persisting in Britain. This is because the worship of idols is not usually understood as a feature of medieval British religion. The conclusion must be that the word 'idolatrous' was a convenient way of evoking biblical authority to launch a blanket attack on earlier botanical forms and usages. The herbal tradition would still be reacting against 'idle and foolish names' for plants well into the seventeenth century.<sup>31</sup>

An obvious place to start would be with an 'idle' plant-name. One of these names was ascribed to the mouse-ear-hawkweed, *Pilosella officinarum* (formally in the genus *Hieracium*), a golden flower in the same family as the more familiar dandelion, *Taraxacum officinale*.<sup>32</sup> The seventeenth-century herbalist John Parkinson averred that 'the fittest English name we can give it, is Golden Mouse-Eare, which may endure until a fitter be imposed upon it; for the

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Jackson, *A Treatise Containing the Originall of Unbeliefe*, 1625, 198-9; Quoted in Shell, *Oral Culture*, 72.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 72

<sup>31</sup> Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole*, 300.

<sup>32</sup> Francis Rose and Clare O' Reilly, *The Wild Flower Key* (London: Warne, 2006), 480; D. J. Mabberley, *Mabberley's Plant-Book*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), s. v. 'pilosella.'

name of Grim the Collier, whereby it is called of many, is both idle and foolish.’<sup>33</sup> This alternative name is ‘idle and foolish’ because, as Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud suggest, Grim was probably a supernatural entity, a pagan god or devil, after whom not only this flower but many landmarks throughout Britain were named.<sup>34</sup> The idly-named ‘Grim’ is brought together with Robin Goodfellow in a 1628 chapbook in the same way that an idly-named flower is brought together with Robin Goodfellow in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.<sup>35</sup> In this play, the king of the Fairies, Oberon, instructs Robin Goodfellow to bring him ‘a little western flower,/Before milk-white, now purple [i.e. blood red] with love’s wound,/And maidens call it “love-in-idleness.”’<sup>36</sup> This suggests that Shakespeare was manipulating precisely the kind of material that a herbalist like Parkinson would see not only as unfit or inappropriate, but ‘idle and foolish.’<sup>37</sup>

It is possible that the ‘idle’ nature of the plant was somehow linked to its designation as ‘the collier.’ Interestingly, the use of the occupational marker ‘collier’ for the ‘golden’ mouse-ear hawkweed is paralleled by Shakespeare’s use of the marker ‘chimney sweeper’ for the ‘golden’ dandelion.<sup>38</sup> Both

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<sup>33</sup> Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole*, 300.

<sup>34</sup> Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), s. v. ‘Grim.’

<sup>35</sup> See Simpson and Roud, *Dictionary*, s. v. ‘Grim.’ The chapbook is called *The Life of Robin Goodfellow* (1628). For other species more usually associated with Robin Goodfellow see Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, Ed. Helen Ostrovich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 145, 160n.

<sup>36</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Ed. Harold F. Brooks (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007), 2.1.166-8. For ‘purple’ understood as ‘red’ in the period see John Gerard, *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes*, (London: John Norton, 1598) Gerard writes of ‘red, which Ovid calleth purple’ (Ibid., 101). See also William Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’ in *Shakespeare’s Poems*, eds. Katherine Duncan-Jones, H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007). The editors note that ‘purple-coloured’ in Shakespeare can mean ‘red, rosy and the colour of blood’ (Ibid., 1n.).

<sup>37</sup> Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole*, 300.

<sup>38</sup> William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. J. M. Nosworthy (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1955), 4.2.262-3. The epithet ‘golden’ in the first line seems to be the link with ‘chimney-sweepers’ in the second. The number of plants that were said in Warwickshire to ‘come to dust’ and ‘rise from dust’ (where ‘dust’ was not soil but heaven-borne seed) extends beyond the dandelion e.g. rib-grass, *Plantago lanceolata*. The dandelion, however, is thought, though not unanimously, to be the plant Shakespeare means. See Tom MacFaul, *Shakespeare and the Natural World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 72, 51n.; Vivian Thomas and Nicki Faircloth, *Shakespeare’s Plants and Gardens: A Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 80. It should be added that the professional chimney-sweep website referenced by Vivian Thomas and Nicki Faircloth features an image that is not a typical representation of a sweep’s brush of the period and that earlier representations of chimney-sweep brushes, like holy water brushes, more closely resemble the dandelion than the ribwort. See, for example, the last emblem in Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna* (1612; repr. Scolar Press: Menston, 1973), 206, which features verses on the ‘golden’ promises of courtly favour that come to nothing in conjunction with an illustration of a holy-water brush that closely resembles a dandelion clock. This is not, of course, to argue that ribwort was not referred to as ‘chimney-sweeper’ from an early period, but that

occupations involved coming to dust only to rise out of the ashes; in the same way golden flowers that came to dust were believed to rise from the ashes in a 'golden' (in the Latin sense of 'evergreen') world. In other words, both the occupations and the golden flowers were associated with the raw materials of Genesis 2:7 and 3:19 from which man had been created and from which he would one day rise again.

It might be possible to develop these ideas further by attending to their mythic logic that was already well-established by the time oral traditions finally emerged into popular consciousness. At one time, certain 'golden' flowers closely associated with liminal watery contexts such as pits and wells were said to have come from them.<sup>39</sup> According to this logic, the 'golden' daffodil's ascent to the surface could be said to mirror the descent into the nether regions of its mythological namesake, Narcissus.<sup>40</sup> When pits, wells and chimneys became part of people's gardens and homes, they were seen as the entrances by which

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'dandelion' could also have been (as potentially could any other plant that arose with a bright head only to 'come to dust'). The only reason it has been assumed that 'chimney-sweeper' must refer EITHER to the dandelion OR the ribwort is that modern naming-systems seeks to isolate plants by their unique characteristics and name each plant separately. However, such fable-names, that suggest a network of ideas that may have once been linked in some rumour or narrative, are likely to be remnants of a pre-modern mythic naming-system operating in this country. Such a system might apply the same fable-name to two plants because as a fable-name it might not describe either plant in and of itself but 'fable' an absent supernatural identity. The purpose of the fable-name for such plants might merely be to acknowledge that their slight features or uses are even more apparent in an absent fabulous or supernatural plant in the taxonomy. Such a naming-system might originally have developed owing to a taboo on naming the fabulous or supernatural plant which would mean that fable-names, or even riddle-names, hinting at its identity would have to be displaced onto other plants which shared some of its qualities or uses. The remnants of such a system would result in what from a modern point of view is an absurd taxonomy in which more than one species would end up with the same name and a name that did not make any claims about those plants in and of themselves, but an absent original no longer remembered.

<sup>39</sup> One of the first literary examples of a 'golden' flower coming from the underworld via a liminal watery locale occurs in the first written version of the Proserpina fable, *The Hymn to Demeter*, in which the daffodil is encountered in water meadows or meadows. See Helene P. Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977, 33-4: 'Meadows in Greek myth are liminal sites, associated...with the underworld and with Elysion and the Isles of the Blest.' Just as humans are created erect 'to instruct them how t'adore the heavens', 'daffadils...peer' because they are looking back to a Celtic or Classical heaven under the earth from which they have come. See Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 3.2.3; William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, J.H.P. Pafford, (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1966), 4.4.116.

<sup>40</sup> See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.509ff. the daffodil is described as 'yellow' and 'white' but its usual epithet, as William Wordsworth knew, was always 'golden.' In the illustration to *The Romance of the Rose* in MS Egerton 3781, folio 1 recto, in the British library, Narcissus is depicted as a red and white lump with hair like a burnished bowl, by his well and beneath his pine tree. For the daffodil's descent into the nether regions see William D. Reynolds, 'The *Ovidius Moralizatus* of Petrus Berchorius: An Introduction and Translation', (PhD diss., Urbana: University of Illinois, 1971), 194: 'even in hell his soul continued to marvel, looking at itself in the Stygian waters.'; Pierre Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana Moraliter...Explanata* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), iii.xi: 'Animam igitur eius apud infernos se in quis stygiis adhuc respiceines mirabatur'.

supernatural guests from the outside world could get in, whether they were welcome or not. It has been forgotten if these guests were ever said to include uninvited garden and household plants (the 'golden' weeds of summer and the 'golden' boughs of winter). However, it is certainly not forgotten that these guests include certain garden and household spirits (with red caps and white, shaggy beards). The British garden gnome was originally represented as a collier or miner at the top or bottom of pits or wells on rock gardens and the British Father Christmas was originally a brush-wielding elf imagined going up and down chimneys.<sup>41</sup>

The 'golden' faces of these flowers turn the colour of ashes when the flowers 'come to dust', when they are figuratively as 'black as sin.'<sup>42</sup> At this time, it is their faces blackened by dust and ashes that reveal them as 'colliers' or 'chimney-sweepers', though at other times Grim the Collier and Father

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<sup>41</sup> The only study of the garden gnome by a Renaissance scholar to date is Gordon Campbell, *The Hermit in the Garden: From Imperial Rome to Ornamental Gnome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 188-195. Although not everyone will agree with his conclusion that the garden gnome is merely a more recent incarnation of the ornamental hermit, the work deserves praise as the first to open up the debate over the symbolism of the gnome within the context of scholarly writing. For the most part, scholarship in the field of garden history has sidelined the ubiquitous garden gnome (as would perhaps be expected for an ornament that is still specifically prohibited from the Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show). Surprisingly, gnomes have their origin in the occult cosmology of Paracelsus (1598-1541). In the British Isles, a Rosicrucian poem of Alexander Pope (1688-1744) associated these elemental beings with a cave in the centre of the earth while the Spiritualist rock gardens of Sir Charles Isham (1809-1903) and Sir Frank Crisp (1843-1919) associated the first British garden gnomes with wells and pits. The iconography of Father Christmas can be traced back at least to medieval times and is all present in an illustration in for the *Romance of the Rose* in MS Egerton 3781, folio 1 recto, in the British Library. The same illustration that features Narcissus as a kind of red-and-white present beneath a Christmas tree, also features a female figure (who may depict Idleness or Lady Abundance or reveal they are both parallel personifications in the poem) in a red-and-white, fur-trimmed costume who can get into doors that are otherwise barred. See Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Frances Horgan, (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1994 reissued 2008). Like Father Christmas, she is able to unlock doors for people, so that 'undeterred by keys and bars, they enter through cracks, cat-doors, and crevices.' (Ibid., 284). Also, like Father Christmas, who has been known to take little helpers along with him on his sleigh, Lady Abundance can take people 'toiling and chasing around the world.' (Ibid., 284). An understanding of this has been hampered by the notion that Coca Cola had invented the red and white fur-trimmed costume. For red and white visual imagery pre-dating Coca Cola see Russell W. Belk, 'Materialism and the American Christmas' in *Unwrapping Christmas*, ed. Daniel Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 83. Just as Gnomes often had props associated with their descent into the earth so the Father Christmas of the British mummings' plays had a broom which presumably helped him fly up chimneys. See Alan Brody, *The English Mummings and their Plays: Traces of Ancient Mystery*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 52: 'The character who...introduced the play [was] often Father Christmas.' The phrase that he often uses in his introduction, 'welcome or welcome not', may originally have reflected this latecomer's reputation for getting into houses that were barred to him. For this phrase in plays from Westwoodhay, Berkshire and Netley Abbey see Alex Helm, *Eight Mummings' Plays* (Aylesbury: Ginn and Company Ltd, 1971), 35-6 and Brody, *English Mummings*, 131.

<sup>42</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.261-3 where the image of the 'golden lad' that 'come[s] to dust' is used in a funerary context; Cf. Genesis 3:19.

Christmas seem to have always been red-faced individuals.<sup>43</sup> Going further back in history, their faces may have been said to resemble the golden mask of God or the besmirched mask of a devil, masks which presumably hid their supernatural complexions from vulgar eyes. This medieval iconography is more usually expected in a dramatic context but is perhaps not irrelevant to a botanic one too.<sup>44</sup> Again, the surprising implication is that the name ‘chimney-sweepers’, which seems harmless enough today, may have been used by Shakespeare for its offensive associations. Had this name remained current into John Parkinson’s time, it seems no less likely that he would have condemned it as ‘idle and foolish.’<sup>45</sup>

To further appreciate the way that the word ‘idle’ is used in the period, it is necessary to proceed from an ‘idle’ name, to the epithet ‘idle’ itself. Henry Ellacombe recognised long ago that the way that Shakespeare employs the plant epithet ‘idle’ is far from straight-forward:

It is rather strange that Shakespeare should have so markedly called [mosses] ‘idle’ or useless, considering that in his day many medical virtues were attributed to them.<sup>46</sup>

The same is true for its companion epithet ‘baleful’, which appears alongside the word ‘idle’ in Shakespeare’s work on more than one occasion. It is strange that Shakespeare applies it to mistletoe when he was almost certainly familiar with Pliny’s comment that it can cure epilepsy.<sup>47</sup> Clearly, there are two

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<sup>43</sup> ‘Grim the Collier’ is also known as ‘Red Devil.’

<sup>44</sup> Annette Drew-Bear, *Painted Faces on the Renaissance Stage: The Moral Significance of Face-Painting Conventions* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1994), 32-3; Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (London: Routledge, 2004), 9; See also Geoffrey Grigson, *The Englishman’s Flora* (London: Phoenix House Ltd., 1958), 393. Alternative names for ‘dandelion’ such as ‘bum-pipe’, which Grigson finds attested in Lanarkshire in Scotland, suggest that the mine-shaft implicit in the name ‘Grim the Collier’ or the chimney implicit in the name ‘chimney-sweeper’ might partly have been a bodily one, reflecting folk knowledge of the diuretic properties of these plants. The designation ‘collier’ or ‘chimney-sweeper’ may have described the ‘job’ that they did i.e. their medical uses. This would also explain why the name ‘chimney-sweeper’ might have been applied both to the ‘golden’ dandelion and the ribwort, since it may have referred originally not to a specific flower but to properties shared by more than one plant.

<sup>45</sup> Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole*, 300.

<sup>46</sup> Henry N. Ellacombe, *The Plant-Lore and Garden-Craft of Shakespeare* (London: W. Satchell and Co., 1884), 165.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Grigson, *Englishman’s Flora*, 200. See also David E. Allen and Gabrielle Hatfield, *Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition: An Ethnobotany of Britain and Ireland* (London: Timber Press, 2004), s.v. ‘mistletoe.’ Even today most British people believe that mistletoe is poisonous, even though ‘mistletoe is taken increasingly seriously by present-day medical



questions that demand answers. Firstly, why do the epithets 'idle' and 'baleful' appear side-by-side on more than one occasion in Shakespeare's botanic descriptions? Secondly, why do they seem to be consistently used in a way that is counterfactual or, at least, misleading?

In answer to the first question it is necessary to take into account classical precedent, in particular, the way that certain plants are introduced in Virgil's *Eclogues*. The popularity of Virgil's shepherd poems through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance indicates that readers found more to interest them in these *Eclogues* than their lowly subject-matter might at first suggest. One of the surprising features of the poems, for example, is the way that isolated instances of botanic description ('idle' and 'baleful') acquire deeper meaning through a kind of dramatic irony in the poetic sequence.

Shakespeare places the plant-epithets side-by-side because they are the way that he renders into English two companion epithets in Virgil's *Eclogues*:<sup>48</sup> Eclogue 5 describes how 'baleful darnel and idle oats spring up' [Infelix lolium et steriles nascuntur avenae].<sup>49</sup>

Today it is known that darnel [*Lolium tremulentum*] and wild oats [*Avena fatua*] are species in their own right, but in ancient times people believed that wheat and barley would degenerate into weeds like this.<sup>51</sup> However, to call it a 'degeneration' is potentially misleading because it was also a 'generation' of certain beneficial properties. According to Faircloth and Thomas, darnel often has 'medicinal uses including as a narcotic' and the same effects are

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science as an important source of therapeutic chemicals, both actual and potential.' (Ibid., 167) Shakespeare's *Othello* draws heavily on Pliny and includes an incident of 'epilepsy' so it is highly unlikely that Shakespeare was not familiar with Pliny's comments on this illness.

<sup>48</sup> See Mats Rydén, *Shakespearean Plant Names: Identifications and Interpretations*, (Almqvist & Wiksell International: Stockholm, 1978), 22. Rydén has pointed out that when Shakespeare is describing plants 'some of the epithets employed are conventional ones', which is to say that they are English words that correspond to the epithets used for plants in Latin texts. For the use of conventional epithets in the writing of the period see also Sir William T. Thiselton-Dyer, 'Plants' in *Shakespeare's England: An Account of the Life & Manners of his Age*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), vol 1., 502-3. Shakespeare may have translated Virgil's plant epithet 'infelix' with English words like 'baleful' or 'venomous'. Similarly, that Shakespeare's botanic epithet 'idle' partly operates as a translation of Virgil's Latin epithet 'steriles' ['barren'] is suggested by the hendiadys, 'sterile with idleness', that appears in a botanic context at *Othello* 1.3.325.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Virgil, *Eclogues*, 5:36-7

<sup>51</sup> John Martyn's comment is quoted in Elfriede Abbe, *The Plants of Virgil's Georgics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1965), 33-35. See also Maude Grieve, *A Modern Herbal* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1931; repr. London: Penguin, 1980), 372. Grieve provides evidence to suggest that the belief was not confined to the classical world but was indigenous to Britain.

occasionally present in oats.<sup>52</sup> In answer to the second question, then, the reason that Virgil applies the ‘baleful’ epithet to plants like darnel, when he almost certainly knew of its benefits, seems to be that he was drawing on a well-established classical tradition in which an epithet could be ‘motivated by its contrary’, a tradition that can be traced back to Homer.<sup>53</sup>

In support of this interpretation, a similar misleading use of the epithet ‘idle’ has been noted in the herbal discourse of Pliny. According to William Eamon, ‘whenever [Pliny] spoke of the...magi, he poured out his invective against their “fraudulent lies”. He denounced their art as “detestable, vain, and idle”...Yet Pliny’s views were ambivalent. Like many of his contemporaries, he regarded the magi as sources of profound philosophical wisdom.’<sup>54</sup> What this reveals is that Pliny was equivocating over the magi; the loudness with which he dismissed their herbal discoveries would mislead the common reader even as it drew the attention of the informed reader to moments where he was discussing herbal knowledge that should not be made dangerously common.<sup>55</sup> If Pliny’s herbal discourse employed the epithets ‘detestable, vain, idle’ to draw attention to his ‘ambivalent’ attitude to certain claims about herbs, it is no less likely that Virgil’s herb discourse might have used the epithets ‘baleful, idle’ to draw attention to the ‘ambivalent’ nature of the herbs themselves.<sup>56</sup>

That the need for Pliny’s precaution of equivocation was still felt in the Middle Ages is indicated by Roger Bacon’s judgement that ‘the man is crazy who writes a secret unless he does it in a way that conceals it from the crowd,

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<sup>52</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *Dictionary*, 104.

<sup>53</sup> For the classical names and epithets that activated ‘adverse’ meanings or were ‘motivated by their contrary’ see John Peradotto, *Man in the Middle Voice: Name and Narration in the Odyssey*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 113, 114. See also Mark Buchan, *The Limits of Heroism: Homer and the Ethics of Reading* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 23.

<sup>54</sup> William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25.

<sup>55</sup> It is to be thought that medieval monks, who knew that the magi had been wise enough to discover Christ at Matthew 2:1-12, would have seen through Pliny’s equivocation about these ancient herbalists. Roman equivocation about herbs must have been a strong influence on later Roman Catholic equivocation. On Roman Catholic equivocation see Shell, *Oral Culture*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> In this way, Virgil negotiated the appropriation of an oral secret into a literary form without making it dangerously common. Virgil, like Pliny, may have been conscious that the knowledge he possessed was such that ‘even those who possess it refuse to teach it, just as though they would themselves lose what they have imparted to others.’ (Pliny, *Natural History*, 25.16 cf. William Eamon, *Secrets of Nature*, 26) For the importance of scaring away ordinary people see John M. Riddle, *Goddesses, Elixirs, and Witches*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 62 and Anne Van Arsdall, ‘Exploring what was meant by *mandragora* in Anglo-Saxon England’ in *Old Names - New Growth. Proceedings of the 2nd ASPNS Conference* (Frankfurt: Peter Bierbaumer, 2009), 57-74. The epithet ‘baleful’ may have misled or even scared away the ordinary by understating the value of the crops.

so that it can be understood only by the effort of the most studious and wise.<sup>57</sup> A studious and wise monk could be expected to know that, since ‘every part of the plant world had been designed to serve a human purpose’, to label a plant ‘baleful’ was, paradoxically, to advertise its potential for benefit.<sup>58</sup>

This was the same oral tradition that Shakespeare found expressed in the medieval source for *As You Like It*, in the gnomic proverb: ‘after bale cometh boote by grace of god almight.’<sup>59</sup> Shakespeare adapted it into the Old Duke’s speech as ‘sweet are the uses of adversity’ and expanded on it to bring out its specific relevance to ‘baleful’ or ‘venomous’ plants and animals that turned out to have ‘precious’ virtues.<sup>60</sup> The Old Duke’s speech elicits a pun, ‘happy is your grace/That can translate the stubbornness of fortune/Into...so sweet a style’, where ‘grace’ is both an appropriate form of address and a completion of the paraphrased proverb which describes the translations made possible ‘by grace of god almight.’<sup>61</sup>

What at first seems like empty flattery of the Old Duke’s rhetoric, can provide extra guidance in the translation of Virgil’s epithet ‘infelix.’ Grammatically, the ‘stubbornness’ of ‘fortune’ could stand for the privative prefix ‘in-’ of ‘in-felix’ since together they form a word which, particularly in non-botanic contexts, was usually translated ‘un-fortunate.’<sup>62</sup> All it takes is a touch of divine inspiration and the translator knows how to ‘translate’ the phrase so that the ‘stubbornness’ of the prefix fades away and they are left with ‘fortunate’ or ‘happy’ danel.<sup>63</sup> What at first seemed an ‘adverse’ prefix merely signposted the ‘sweet...uses’ within, just as plants that at first seem intractably ‘baleful’ can possess latent ‘sweet’ uses.<sup>64</sup> In this way, Shakespeare demonstrates that

<sup>57</sup> Roger Bacon, *Epistola de secretis operibus naturae, et de nullitate magia*, ed. J.S. Brewer in *Opera quaedam hactenus inedita* (London: Longmann, 1859), 544, 1.523-51

<sup>58</sup> Thomas, *Natural World*, 27.

<sup>59</sup> *The Tale of Gamelyn*, ed. Walter W. Skeat (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884), 631.

<sup>60</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 2.1.12, 14. Shakespeare recognised that the proverb had a specific relevance to the toad, which was ‘ugly and venomous’ as a signature from God Almighty to draw attention to the sacred virtues hidden inside it. With the decline of monastic teaching, seventeenth-century commentators quickly began to forget that medieval oral tradition had taught that the ‘toad’ was ugly, let alone the reason that it had taught it. When Sir Thomas Browne wrote ‘I cannot tell by what logic we call a toad...ugly’ he no longer had access to the medieval logic that ‘after bale cometh boote.’ (Thomas, *Natural World*, 68; *Gamelyn*, 631). Anyone versed in this logic would expect the toad to be ‘baleful’ as a signature from God that heralded its hidden virtues.

<sup>61</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Ed. Juliet Dusinberre, London: Bloomsbury, 2006, 2.1.18-20

<sup>62</sup> Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, (1879), s.v. ‘infelix’, sense 2

<sup>63</sup> Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 2.1.19, 19

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.1.12, 12

'good'—or perhaps 'God'—is 'in everything', especially in what at first seems poisonous.<sup>65</sup>

The last piece of evidence that Virgil's epithets are motivated by their contrary depends not on wider herbal discourse, but on the dramatic irony that comes with the original position of the epithets within the wider context of Virgil's *Eclogues*.<sup>66</sup> Virgil's fourth eclogue, which monastic readers understood as the 'messianic eclogue' in the light of comments of Lactantius and Augustine, describes the coming of Christ which would make poisonous plants disappear.<sup>67</sup> It is followed by Virgil's fifth eclogue, which concerns the death of the Good Shepherd which causes poisonous plants to spring up. Crucially, it is only 'since fate took' this Good Shepherd ['postquam te fate tulerunt'], that darnel is 'infelix.' In other words, darnel can only remain 'infelix' in the poem if Christ will 'come no more'...but Virgil and his monastic readers knew that he would come again.<sup>68</sup>

The dramatic irony attached to the word 'infelix' in Virgil's pagan poem is

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 2.1.17

<sup>66</sup> This is presumably why Shakespeare often goes to such lengths to replicate the exact textual conditions by retaining the epithets side-by-side as they are in Virgil: he wishes to evoke the dramatic irony that came with their original context.

<sup>67</sup> For the best summary of the Christian or Messianic interpretation of Eclogue 4, which like the Gospels drew on the prophecies of the book of Isaiah though in this case mediated by the Sibylline Oracles, see Wendell Clausen, *A Commentary on Virgil's Eclogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 126-129. For a more detailed study see Pierre Courcelle, 'Les exégèses chrétiennes de la quatrième églogue', *Revue des Études Anciennes* 59 (1957) 298-315. Clausen explains that 'the Christian, or Messianic interpretation prevailed unchallenged for centuries supported by, and supporting, Virgil's reputation as a seer, a Christian before Christ' (128). He recounts how 'Virgil's first great modern commentator, the Spanish Jesuit Juan Luis de la Cerda (1617) accepted the Christian interpretation in principle' and that 'most learned men still accepted it' by the end of the eighteenth century (128). Finally, he admits that 'it would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine exactly when the Christian interpretation was given up', raising the possibility that it is still viable in some quarters (128). He adds that between the first and second world wars the German scholar Eduard Norden located the origins of Christianity within the context of other religious ideas spreading from Egypt and the Middle East and thus 'succeeded in making a religious or mystical interpretation of the Fourth *Eclogue* seem intellectually respectable' (129). For more general comments on Eclogue 4 see Bruce Arnold, 'The Literary Experience of Vergil's Fourth *Eclogue*', *Classical Journal* 90, (1995), 143-160 and Edward Courtney, 'A Basic Approach to the Fourth *Eclogue*', *Vergilius* 56, 2010, 27-38.

<sup>68</sup> This is suggested, among other things, by the name 'Daphnis' which comes from 'the laurel bush from which he took his name.' For this etymology see A.S.F. Gow, *Theocritus*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950) vol. II, 1. According to Clausen, 'Daphnis is represented as mysteriously dying of love' and yet, as Shakespeare points out, 'men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love.' (Clausen, *Commentary*, 152; Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 4.1.97-99) Daphnis is named after the laurel, which never withers and remains evergreen in the dead of winter, to hint that his mysterious death is no death at all. (Gow, *Theocritus*, vol. II, 2). Interestingly, in Bersuire, Daphne, who is, nominally at least, the female counterpart of Daphnis and escapes death by becoming a laurel, is glossed as the 'cross.' See Reynolds, 'The *Ovidius Moralizatus*, 141: 'The laurel signifies the cross'; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, l.xix: 'Ista laurus significant crucem.'

already Christian. It proved to monastic readers that Virgil had been granted knowledge of the fruit of Eden which is 'infelix' ['baleful'] (Genesis 2:17), as well as foreknowledge of the 'precious' fruit of the cross which is not only edible but 'felix' ['sweet, fortunate']. The talismanic momentum that rolls through Virgil's series of poems, means that after the coming of Christ daniel will lose its sting, just as death will lose its sting in the following eclogue, and render daniel 'sweet' all over again. The same Virgilian momentum informs the typology of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, which charts a similar shift from a perspective in which that man 'dies who touches any of this fruit' to a perspective where another man is recognised to be 'as full of sanctity as the touch of holy bread.'<sup>69</sup>

To better understand the anxiety over 'idle' names among Protestant herbalists and the reason that Shakespeare employs these Virgilian epithets, it is necessary to briefly examine the occasions on which such epithets appear in Shakespeare's writing. Firstly, in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, the 'baleful' mistletoe appears alongside a plant that had been 'idle' in an earlier play, carefully replicating the textual conditions that had activated Virgil's dramatic irony. In Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* there is a reference to 'idle moss', while in *The Comedy of Errors* a tree is described as 'overcome with moss and baleful mistletoe'

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Secondly, in *As You Like It*, while ordinary people often assumed that the toad was 'baleful' (or 'poisonous') and that the jewel in its head was no more than a fable, more informed listeners would have known that Shakespeare called it 'baleful' to draw attention to the 'precious jewel' of its parotid gland, containing bufotenin, that had long been used in medicine as an anaesthetic:<sup>71</sup> The original proverb from the Tale of Gamelyn is 'After bale cometh boote by grace of god almight', which is reworked in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* as 'Sweet are the uses of advertisity, which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in his head'.

<sup>69</sup> Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 2.7.99; 3.4.12-13.

<sup>70</sup> Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*, ed. R. A. Foakes, (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1962), 2.2.178.

<sup>71</sup> Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 2.1.12-14; Thomas, *Natural World*, 74; Robert Lacey, *The Year 1000: An Englishman's Year* (London: Abacus, 2003), 127.

Thirdly, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Friar Lawrence is indiscriminately gathering 'baleful' and 'precious-juicèd' flowers. This is not because he plans to poison anybody (although some contemporary playgoers may have jumped to this anti-Catholic conclusion).<sup>73</sup> Rather, it is because he knows that it is part of God's plan that within the same flower 'poison hath residence and medicine power.'<sup>74</sup> In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* there is a reference to 'baleful weeds and precious-juiced flowers'

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To summarise, then, there is not necessarily any reason that Shakespeare should be taken at his word when he affects to believe that mistletoe is 'baleful' as it is possible that he is keeping back half the story; it would, after all, have been easy to take him at his word when he affects to believe that the toad is 'venomous', had he not gone on to describe its 'precious' virtues. It was the friars who had traditionally pointed out what was 'baleful' and what was 'precious-juicèd' and they often seem to have had privileged knowledge that it amounted to the same thing. Interestingly, the Catholic liturgical epithet 'precious', which had been primarily used to describe the body and blood of Christ since the eleventh century, appears to be latent in Shakespeare's word 'baleful' on more than one occasion.<sup>76</sup> This seems to indicate that the divine grace that translates plants bearing the 'baleful' epithet into plants bearing 'precious' juice is the same grace behind the transubstantiation of the bread and the wine into Christ.

Also revealing for the resonances that this word 'idle' could have in the period are the lines in Shakespeare's *King Lear* describing Lear's plant-woven crown. The lines preserve the greatest number of textual elements from Virgil's commonplace to recall the way that the coming of Christ had taken the sting out

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 1.5.83: 'The violets, cowslips and primroses, Bear to my lodging.' The consensus that these lines have some sinister import remains to this day despite the fact that the flowers have no obvious poisonous properties (See, for example, Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 90). For anti-Catholicism directed at the character of Friar Lawrence as late as the twentieth century see Nancy Mitford, *The Pursuit of Love*, (1949; London: Penguin, 1954), ch. 6.

<sup>74</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.3.23-4.

<sup>75</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed, Rene Weis, (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2012), 2.3.8.

<sup>76</sup> See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'precious', etymology: 'Middle French precious (of the body and blood of Christ) venerable (end of 11<sup>th</sup> century) held in high esteem (early 12<sup>th</sup> century).'

of the epithets in their original context. The lines also name some of the plants that comprise Lear's botanic crown:

Baleful darnel and idle oats

Virgil, *Eclogues*, 5.37

Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow

In our sustaining corn.

William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 4.4.5-6<sup>77</sup>

The simplest way of interpreting this Virgilian echo is to point out that the oaten straws, which give Virgil and his shepherds their music in Virgil's *Eclogues*, provide King Lear with a crown.<sup>78</sup> However, Shakespeare's use of these Virgilian epithets also seems to have been informed by the way that an earlier Elizabethan writer, Thomas Lodge, engages with the same Virgilian commonplace. It is therefore necessary to examine Lodge's engagement with 'darnel' and 'idle weeds' in turn.

Firstly, Shakespeare's portrayal of darnel may draw on Thomas Lodge's reworking of the dramatic irony in Virgil's *Eclogues* in his own poem 'Truth's Complaint Over England' (1584):

Yet as great store of Darnell marres the seed  
Which else would spring within a fertile field  
And as the fruitful bud is choakt by weed...  
So sometimes wicked men doe overweeld,  
And keepe in covert those who would direct,  
The common state, which error doth infect.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Shakespeare, William, *King Lear*, 4.4.5-6

<sup>78</sup> See Virgil, *Eclogues*, 1.2. The word 'avena' is used of the oaten pipe of Tityrus who in the Renaissance was widely understood as a portrait of Virgil himself. For the theatrical tradition of portraying the mad Ophelia 'with scattered bedlamish straw in her hair' see Elaine Showalter, 'Representing Ophelia: women, madness and the responsibilities of feminist criticism' in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* eds. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartmann (New York: Methuen, 1985) 77-99, 83.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Lodge, 'Truth's Complaint Over England', in *The Complete Works* (London: Huntingdon Club, 1883, repr. London: Johnson Reprint Company Ltd., 1966), vol. 1, 85-91, 88

A short paragraph will suffice to demonstrate that Lodge could not have made this epic simile any more confusing if he had tried (and that this may be *because* he had tried). To start with, it speaks of ‘great store of Darnell’, though the phrase ‘great store’ is usually applied not to the weeds, which are burnt, but to the harvest itself, which is kept.<sup>80</sup> By the time it is describing what is kept ‘in covert’, it has passed from a consideration of *what* is being stored in granaries or fortified warehouses, to a consideration of ‘*those*’ who are kept idle, like Virgil’s oats, when they would rather use their latent talents to ‘direct/The Common state.’<sup>81</sup> At the start of the simile the subject is clearly darnel (though, oddly, the verb ‘spring’ [‘nascuntur’] that Virgil uses to describe the unwanted growth of darnel seems here to be transferred to the desirable growth of the ‘fertile’ corn).<sup>82</sup> By the third line the subject is the ‘fruitful bud’, which would mean that the subject has unaccountably shifted to the ‘fertile’ corn. This leaves the reader to assume that darnel is now the object, the ‘weed.’ However, suddenly darnel is the subject again, since it is presumably its undesirable quality that justifies its comparison with ‘wicked men.’ Finally, the word ‘fruitful’ is the antonym hidden in Virgil’s Latin epithet ‘infelix’ associated with the darnel. It is, however, hard to deny that ‘fruitful bud’ is a much better description of the smut that gives darnel its medicinal and narcotic uses than the ‘ear’ of corn, which no-one would describe as a ‘bud.’<sup>83</sup> The inversions and contradictions in

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<sup>80</sup> See, for example, Matthew 13:24-30 (Rheims-Douai Bible). The parable of the wheat and the tares is the wheat and the cockles (=darnel) in this Catholic version. For other Catholic associations of darnel see David Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, rev. ed., 2011), 24.

<sup>81</sup> Lodge, ‘Truth’s Complaint Over England’, 88.

<sup>82</sup> This may be Lodge’s way of implying that the network of connections drawn by the verb ‘nascor’ is Virgil’s way of counteracting the ostensibly negative coming of darnel in Eclogue 5 (5.25 ‘nascitur’) by subtly linking it with the coming of Christ (4.8 ‘nascenti’), the coming of the Golden World (4.5 ‘nascitur’) and the coming of an abundance of rare spices like Spikenard (4.25 ‘nascetur’) in Eclogue 4. Cf. Clausen, *Commentary*, 121 on the recurrence of the word in Eclogue 4: ‘Ever so slightly Virgil labours the coincidence: with the birth of the child 8 ‘nascenti’) is born (5 ‘nascitur’) a new order of time.’

<sup>83</sup> For Shakespeare’s interest in the ‘fruitful bud’ see William Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, epistle; William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 7.4.63-4. A Roman interest in the ‘fruitful bud’ may explain a suspect phrase in Virgil, *Eclogue*, 4:28 ‘mollis arista’ ‘soft grain’ cf. Virgil, *Eclogue* 5.38 ‘mollis viola’ [‘the soft violet (bud?)’]. Bruce Arnold comments that ‘The fields which grow golden *mollis arista* suggest by the unusual collocation of “soft” and “grain”...[something] not entirely natural.’ (Bruce Arnold, ‘The Literary Experience of Vergil’s Fourth *Eclogue*’, *Classical Journal*, 90:2, 143-160, 148). Arnold writes that the epithet is so characteristic of the *Eclogues* that it recurs in ‘Horace’s characterisation of the *Eclogues*’ style: *mole atque facetum* [soft and artificial] (Sat. 1.10.44)’ (Bruce Arnold, ‘The Literary Experience of Vergil’s Fourth *Eclogue*’, *Classical Journal*, 90:2, 143-160, 148). Compare the word ‘smutty’, used of literary style today, which originally alluded to the smut on grain. This is paralleled in sixteenth-century characterisations of medieval Roman Catholic writing as ‘rusty’ or ‘mouldy’ which probably also alluded to the ‘rust’ and ‘mildew’ of blasted darnel. For ‘rusty’ and ‘mouldy’ employed in this way



Lodge's simile cannot be understood independently of the dramatic irony that Virgil uses to counteract the sting of dandelion, any more than Shakespeare's epithets can.

Secondly, Shakespeare's use of the epithet 'idle weeds' may draw on another poem by Thomas Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' (1589), to be examined in detail in the last chapter. The poem features mossy 'weeds' which wave like 'hallowed hairs' on the banks of 'Isis' flood'.<sup>84</sup> These are almost certainly inspired by the botanic 'tresses of Isis' which are mentioned in Plutarch's *Moralia* in connection with a companion plant which cannot go unnoticed. Plutarch mentions the botanic 'tresses of Isis' alongside the fabulous plant which ultimately gave Shakespeare the properties of 'love-in-idleness'.<sup>85</sup>

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see Nicholas Culpeper's phrase about those who insist on giving sacred names to plants as reading 'too much in old rusty authors' (Nicholas Culpeper, *The English Physitian* (London: Peter Cole, 1652), s.v. 'Angelica.') and Ben Jonson's well-known description of John Gower's incest narratives like *Pericles* as a 'mouldy tale' (Ben Jonson, 'Ode to Himself', 21-2, 26: 'No doubt a mouldy tale, Like Pericles...May keep up the play club...').

<sup>84</sup> This study will interpret Thomas Lodge's 'mossy garlands' in the context of Robert Southwell's rebuke that calls for poems that do not include soft garlands but crowns of thorns: 'This theames my heavy penne to plaine in prose,/Christ's Thorn is sharp, no head his Garland wears,/Still finest wits are stilling Venus Rose./In paynim toys the sweetest vaines are spent:/To Christian workes, few have their tallents lent.' (Robert Southwell, 'Saint Peter's Complaynt' *Collected Poems*, eds. Peter Davidson and Anne Sweeney (Manchester: Carcanet, 2007), 63, l. 14-18). Previously, Christopher Devlin and Richard Wilson have argued that Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' was circulating in manuscript prior to its publication in 1593 so that when Southwell wrote 'Still finest wits are stilling Venus' rose' he was alluding to Shakespeare's poem. More recently John Klause has contested this on the grounds that Southwell was not in a position to respond to it after his capture in June 1592 (even his diary after this had to be kept in letters pricked with a pin since he had no writing materials). (See John Klause, *Shakespeare, the Earl, and the Jesuit*, 2008, (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), 51). Although 'Venus and Adonis' has the hallmarks of a coterie poem for the Earl of Southampton's circle, it 'clearly spoke to the condition of the twenty-year-old dedicatee' and so the consensus holds that it was written not long before its publication in 1593. This would mean that Southwell's rebuke to 'finest wits' could be directed at Thomas Lodge but not William Shakespeare. In fact, Southwell seems to have borrowed the verse form for 'Saint Peter's Complaynt' from Lodge. Lodge's 1586 poem, 'Truth's Complaint over England' began with the lines 'my mournful muse Melpomine draw neere' to chronicle Truth's 'tears' and 'plaints' with 'pen' and now Southwell's 'mourning muse...in teares' makes his 'pen' 'plaine' that Catholic writers are still couching their work in pagan allegory. Again, Southwell's 'finest wits' echoes Lodge's 'finest heads', suggesting that the poetry Southwell is ostensibly defining himself against is precisely the Catholic poetry of Lodge. The line 'Christ's Thorn is sharp no head his garland wears', seems to allude to the 'mossy garlands' worn by the 'conquering son' in Lodge (the epithet 'conquering' betrays the allegory since it is more appropriate to Christ than cupid). Lodge is taking refuge in the soft security of pagan moss instead of tackling the thornier issues of Christ's Passion. Southwell implies that Lodge is wasting precious ink in pagan subject matter when others are offering their blood up in martyrdom. Finally, the allusion to talents suggests the servant in Matthew 25:14-30 who displeased his master by hoarding his single talent and implies that Christian parables are a more fitting outlet for expressions of Catholic belief than pagan fables.

<sup>85</sup> See William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold Brooks, (London: New Arden Shakespeare, 1978), lxxxii. Harold Brooks first pointed out that the properties of 'love-in-idleness' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* do not derive from the plant of that name in Lyte's *Niewe Herball* but from a plant called 'anacamsoritis' in Lyly's *Euphues His England* (1578).

Shakespeare, then, could have learned of these plants indirectly by reading Lodge, or by reading Lodge supplemented by Plutarch, or even by direct recourse to Plutarch.

To sum up, then, it seems likely that Virgil's *Eclogues* furnished Shakespeare with his epithets 'baleful' and 'idle', and that, where he retained them side-by-side, he hoped to recall the dramatic irony that had taken the sting of death from them in their original context. Shakespeare was well-placed to recognise that Thomas Lodge's 'Truth's Complaint Over England' had dramatised the same irony in Virgil's text to reveal the 'fruitful bud' hidden in the 'fruitless darnel' ['infelix lolium'].<sup>86</sup> He was also well-placed to recognise that Thomas Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' had dramatised the 'weeds' from a bank of 'Isis' flood' as Plutarch's 'tresses of Isis'.<sup>87</sup> Finally, he could be expected to notice that John Lyly's *Euphues his England* had mentioned Plutarch's companion plant to these 'tresses of Isis.' Shakespeare retained the properties for his own version of Plutarch's plant but updated its name for his Elizabethan audience. The original name, advertising the redemptive properties of the flower, would have been all Greek to most playgoers, and it is still something of a relief that Shakespeare substituted the memorable English name 'love-in-idleness.'

Before this section is concluded, it only remains to examine where Shakespeare found the name 'love-in-idleness' and to point out some additional resonances of this 'idle' plant-name that had not been present in the plant-epithet 'idle' alone. According to Thomas Harrison, it was Henry Lyte's herbal that assured Shakespeare that the name 'love in idleness' for the pansy and the name 'Cupid's flower' for the rose had a common currency outside the local

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However, he stopped short of tracing the properties of Lyly's 'anacamsoritis' back to a fabulous plant in Pliny and Plutarch called 'anacampserotes.' The passage in Plutarch, which is incomplete, is the source for the 'hallowed hairs' and 'moss' of 'Isis' flood' in Thomas Lodge's *Scyllae's Metamorphosis* (1589) and the plant that makes a person fall in love with the first person seen in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1596): 'There grow and thrive down in the deep plants of great magnitude, some of which are called olives, some laurels, and some tresses of Isis; and the plants here called "restorers of lost love" [*anacampserotes*] when lifted out of the earth and hung up not only live as long as you wish but sprout...' (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 'Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon', 939 D). According to the classicist William Jones, Pliny describes the same plant using indirect speech 'as if to disclaim responsibility' from himself and, sure enough, he places responsibility for the knowledge of the plant with the 'idle' Magi again. (Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. W. H. S. Jones, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 24.167 n.: 'In this chapter Pliny uses indirect speech, as if to disclaim responsibility for the truth of the account he is giving.')

<sup>86</sup> Lodge, 'Truth's Complaint Over England', 8

<sup>87</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 52

context in which he may already have known them.<sup>88</sup> The simplest argument is that Shakespeare liked the name because it evoked a popular collocation of 'love' and 'idleness' which presumably could often be heard in Elizabethan conversation.<sup>89</sup> According to this idea, the name would be no more significant than the flower's alternative name 'heart's ease' since it would also mean something like 'the loving heart in easiness'. However, it is worth also considering another argument, that has the advantage of explaining both the two names and the red and white coloration of the flower, since both could be intended to recall the medieval form of dream vision. The two names applied to the same flower unite four symbolic elements from a medieval dream vision, *The Romance of the Rose*: the personifications of 'Love' and 'Idleness', the figure of Cupid, and the eponymous 'Rose' itself. Further evidence that Shakespeare associated the word 'idle' closely with this medieval dream vision is provided by a line in Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis':

Leave this idle theme...To Love's alarms it will not ope the gate.<sup>90</sup>

It is likely that this line hides an ironic allusion to the portress Idleness who does open the gate to the garden where the Rose can be found and where personified Love and the god Cupid can attack the soul with darts. One way of understanding the portress Idleness in this dream vision might be as a personification of the cross, which offers the Christian soul a refuge.

In the original text of *The Romance of the Rose*, 'Ydelness' is called 'Oiseuse,' a word that in Old French could mean 'Folly' or 'Foolishness.'<sup>91</sup> This pun depends on a phrase in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 1:25, 'the foolish thing of God', where the original Greek word *moron*, which had more than one meaning in Greek, was glossed by Tertullian as 'the crucifix.'<sup>92</sup> In

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<sup>88</sup> Thomas P. Harrison Jr., 'Flower Lore in Spenser and Shakespeare: Two Notes', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 7, 175-8

<sup>89</sup> The popular association occurs in the literary record in John Lyly's play *Galatea* 3.3.26-7: 'there is nothing to make idleness but love' and elsewhere.

<sup>90</sup> William Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 422, 444

<sup>91</sup> De Lorris and De Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 11. Interestingly, Geoffrey Chaucer is responsible for the use of the word 'Ydelness' to approximate to 'Oiseuse' in his English translation.

<sup>92</sup> See Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon of Ancient Greek*, s.v. 'morion'; Paul, 1 Corinthians 1:25; Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.5. See also Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2013), 173: 'Tertullian identified the foolish thing (stultum) as the cross and the weak thing (infirmiam) as the incarnation: "What is the folly of God wiser than men if not the cross and the death of Christ?"

Shakespeare's 'Dream' play, 'love in idleness' is a flower, but in its dream vision source, the character of 'Idleness' is perhaps a tree: the tree of the cross that grants access to heaven. According to this interpretation, the character's tunic, which in the text is described as 'Ghent green', may be intended to suggest that she was once a tree, and it is also possible that this is the reason that she is compared to a 'branch, her body well-formed and slender.'<sup>93</sup> If 'Idleness' does stand for the speaking tree of the cross this would by no means be unparalleled in the form of dream vision as the first dream vision in English, *The Dream of the Rood*, features a personification of 'the finest of trees' which 'began to speak.'<sup>94</sup>

The tree or wood of the cross was constantly being imagined and re-imagined in Catholic thought but Protestants despised crucifixes because these representations became the subject of idolatry.<sup>95</sup> The idea that the crucifix was an 'idle' or 'foolish thing' was worrying because of the part it had played in the Passion. Potentially, it might lead to the association of foolishness with the Passion, just as Shakespeare describes the idiocy of an epileptic fit, the 'sacred disease', as 'a passion most unsuited such a man.'<sup>96</sup> This was, understandably, deeply offensive to Protestant thought. To devise a literary flower that stands for the heaven-opening key that is the tree of the cross and to call it by the name of a medieval personification, like Idleness, might have been just as offensive as referring to a plant by the name of a pagan god, like Grim.

But, more than this, the name was offensive because it evoked the Wycliffite Ten Commandments ('thou schalt not take the name of thi god in ydelnesse') apparently only to offend against them. This struck at the textual heart of Protestant theological policy since the reformers believed that the Ten Commandments were God-given laws that had to be enforced and that the word 'idleness', elided into 'idolatry,' seemed to embody what Calvin had

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What is the weak thing of God stronger than men if not the nativity and flesh of Christ?" For a discussion of 1 Corinthians 1:18-20 in the context of Renaissance literature see Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *Shakespeare, Catholicism and Romance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 16.

<sup>93</sup> De Lorris and De Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 10.

<sup>94</sup> See 'The Dream of the Rood' in *The Anglo-Saxon World: An Anthology*, trans. Kevin Crossley-Holland, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 201.

<sup>95</sup> Adrian Streete, *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 59.

<sup>96</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello*, Ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997), 4.1.78.

described as the main crime and sin of humankind.<sup>97</sup> The Wycliffite bible might have claimed that 'in the beginning the earth was idle' but, as far as the early modern reformers were concerned, it was not going to be that way any longer.<sup>98</sup>

For this reason, the way that Shakespeare chose to refer to the flower could have been offensive to the ears of more Protestantised playgoers, suggesting as it did all the vanity of the Old Faith. In fact, as late as the seventeenth century the name Shakespeare chose was still offending the sensibilities of Protestant herbalists when it came to their discussion of the pansy: 'Some give it foolish names, as Love in idlenesse.'<sup>99</sup>

### **Plants with Self-Moving Properties or with a Christian Morphology**

Just as offensive to reformers as plants with 'idle and foolish' names were those plants which moved of their own accord or were responsive to the sun. This was ostensibly because a curiosity about such unusual virtues or powers could lead to a misguided reverence for the plant itself, though it is no coincidence that these features tended to carry mythic or traditional associations. Shakespeare's description of the marigold cannot be read as a mere poetical conceit independent of the debate:

The marigold, that goes to bed wi'th'sun  
And with him rises weeping...<sup>100</sup>

According to Jack Goody, the marigold was a flower that had been linked to Saint Mary the Virgin since her cult had come to prominence in the eleventh century.<sup>101</sup> In these lines in *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare puts the 'Mary' back in 'Mary-gold' and suggests that the flower may still have been seen to share the Madonna's lachrymose quality. He also personifies the Sun, who, like her Son, has risen, and is shedding tears of Christian pity. Jesus, famously, wept, and in a way that no classical god ever managed.<sup>102</sup> Thomas Lodge had used

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<sup>97</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 83.

<sup>98</sup> Genesis 1:1

<sup>99</sup> Parkinson, *Paradise in Sole*, 283

<sup>100</sup> Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, 4.4.105-6.

<sup>101</sup> Goody, *Culture of Flowers*, 156.

<sup>102</sup> Christ, the Son of Righteousness, as the Sun is one of the most common glosses of the medieval commentary on Ovid. See, for example, William D. Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus',

this incongruous quality to signal the Christ-like nature of his heroes: Glaucus, the sea-god in ‘Scyllae’s *Metamorphosis*’ was ‘sorrowing’ with ‘drooping eyne’ in need of a good ‘dry’; and the prototype for Shakespeare’s Orlando, in *Rosalynde or Euphues His Golden Legacie*, ‘lifted up his eye, and looking on Adam Spencer began to weep.’<sup>103</sup> If Shakespeare had merely included a pagan description of Phoebus in his chariot, it would have been above reproach. However, in mixing the pagan sun with Christian tears, Shakespeare insinuates that he still ascribes to medieval Christian explanations of pagan fables. A reformer like Thomas Jackson may have taken issue with the idolatry of Shakespeare’s lines from *The Winter’s Tale*:

Some whether halfe-Christians or meere Pagans, ranked by the auncient in the bed-rolle of heretickes, have held the Marigold, and like flowers, not incapable of divine honour, by reson of their live-sympathy with the Sunne... So easily are mindes apt to admire things strange and uncouth, drawne through curiositie of observation unto superstitious and idololatricall performances.<sup>104</sup>

His use of the phrase ‘bed-rolle’ is, of course, an allusion to the Catholic rosary, but here it is reimagined as a device for naming heretics. This linking of plant powers with heathenism was perpetuated in the herbal tradition as a habit of botanical thought. The Protestant Culpeper describes the heathens dedicating plants to gods and the papists following their example, as if they believed that the heathens were ‘the patriarchs’ in dedicating ‘our lady’s Thistle to the Blessed Virgin, St John’s wort to St. John and another wort to St. Peter &c.’<sup>105</sup> Culpeper not only finds papists ‘idolatrous’ in dedicating herbs to their saints but in giving names ‘to herbs for their virtue’s sake, not for their fair looks.’<sup>106</sup> In other words, the powers of a plant should not be acknowledged in their names for reasons best known to the Protestant reformers themselves. Alison Shell

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211: ‘She should turn herself to the Sun—Christ.’; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, iii.v: ‘Debet igitur ista ad Christem solem...se convertere’.

<sup>103</sup> Lodge, Thomas, ‘Scyllae’s *Metamorphosis*’, 7, 8; Lodge, ‘*Rosalynde: Euphues Golden Legacie*’, 56.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas Jackson, *A Treatise Containing the Originall of Unbelieve*, (1625), 198-9; Quoted in Shell, *Oral Culture*, 72.

<sup>105</sup> Nicholas Culpeper, *The English Physitian* (London: Peter Cole, 1652), s.v. ‘Angelica.’

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. ‘Angelica.’

notes that the ‘more striking quiddities’ of plants were seen as potential sources of idolatry because they could excite an intense interest which was utterly misplaced.<sup>107</sup> Culpeper claims that Physicians in his own day continued to use sacred names, which he ascribes to their reading ‘too much in old rusty authors’ so that ‘they have lost their divinity.’<sup>108</sup> He adds: ‘whether they savour more of superstition or folly I leave to the judicious reader.’<sup>109</sup> The reader of herbals that Culpeper imagines is a reader constantly having to make judgements, not merely about the medical claims surrounding certain plants, but whether plants were being referred to in a way free of idolatry. Shakespeare dares his audience to make similar judgements, as he manufactures brand-new ‘mouldy’ material to stir old feelings and incite fresh condemnation.<sup>110</sup>

Reformers not only targeted the names and powers of plants, but their morphology, particularly when it came to botanic features that suggested the trinity, the wounds of Christ or the shape of the cross. There is a famous story that St Patrick ‘explained’ the Trinity by means of the shamrock.<sup>111</sup> Jack Goody describes how religious teachers in rural areas enlisted flowers to explain their theological arguments in much the same way that Renaissance artists include symbolic flowers in their work.<sup>112</sup> Critics have argued that such objects had an ‘affective purpose’, making them a wonderful resource when it came to explaining the common humanity of redeemer and sinner.<sup>113</sup> Because the Christian narrative of redemption was linked to the changing seasons, certain flowers were fabulous accessories to the Catholic ritual year.<sup>114</sup>

For example, the liturgical year, which had dictated throughout the Middle Ages that the sacrist brought together white lilies and red roses for the feast of the martyrs, may have preserved memories that roses and lilies had

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<sup>107</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture*, 72.

<sup>108</sup> Note the use of the word ‘superstition’ alongside ‘folly’ which parallels the way the word ‘idle’ accompanies ‘foolish’ in herbal discourse. In the interest of balance, it should be pointed out that Culpeper was as ready to blame classical sources. He insists that Pliny is probably to blame for spreading lies about the windflower, Dioscorides is ‘full of whimsies’, the Egyptians were ‘the arrantest apes’ and the ‘heathens and papists were bad.’ (Culpeper, *The English Physitian*, s.v. ‘Archangel’, ‘Anemone’, ‘Cinquefoil’ ‘Camomile’, ‘Angelica’).

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. ‘Angelica’

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Ben Jonson, XXXIII ‘Ode to Himself’, 21-2, 26.

<sup>111</sup> David Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, rev. ed., 2011), 345.

<sup>112</sup> Goody, *Culture of Flowers*, 156.

<sup>113</sup> Streete, *Protestantism and Drama*, 59.

<sup>114</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture*, 73.

once had powerful connections with saints and martyrdom.<sup>115</sup> Certainly, roses and lilies compete in the face of Shakespeare's Lucrece who dies a saintly death. Shakespeare's contemporary John Weever went so far as to interpret Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' as a story of a 'rose-cheeked' saint consumed in the flickering love of 'fair fire-hot Venus.'<sup>116</sup> Marlowe's Leander, is also 'rose-cheeked' and dies for love in a similar saintly way.<sup>117</sup> Scholars today have noted that such symbolism pervaded medieval Europe. Everywhere the rose stood for the blood of the martyr, with thorns emblematic of death itself.<sup>118</sup> Interestingly, Jack Goody writes that Christ was also represented as the beloved rose of a sultan's daughter.<sup>119</sup> This clearly reworks the traditional interpretation of the Song of Solomon, with Christ, the red and white (5:10) flower of the field (2:1), as the lover of the 'black but beautiful' Church (1:4).<sup>120</sup>

The idolatry debate came to focus on flowers that were seen as morphological manifestations of Christ's suffering in botanic creation. Adrian Streete has described how the Catholic craving for physical embodiments and representations of the Passion became even more marked in the late Middle Ages.<sup>121</sup> By 1570, though, John Foxe was railing against any idolatrous object that was held up by Catholics as embodying the suffering of Christ on the cross.<sup>122</sup> He maintained that by mistaking the symbol for 'the thing itself' Catholic worship had lost sight of its object, Christ.<sup>123</sup>

In late medieval belief, the 'thing itself' was often immanent in nature in the shape of flowers that might be crowned with thorns or be cruciform.<sup>124</sup> As Michel Foucault has shown, it was believed that there were 'representations' in the botanic world, in the solid form of 'signatures', that had been put there by

<sup>115</sup> Sylvia Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 41.

<sup>116</sup> John Weever, 'Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare' in *Epigrams*, (1599); Reprinted in E. A. J. Honigmann, *John Weever: A Biography of a Literary Associate of Shakespeare and Jonson, together with a Photographic Facsimile of Weever's Epigrams* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 109

<sup>117</sup> Musaeus, 'Hero and Leander', 194: ῥοδέην...παρειήν; Thomas Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphoses', 584: 'roseate cheeks'; Christopher Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 93: 'rose-cheeked Adonis'; William Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 3: 'Rose-cheeked Adonis'; Cf. Thomas Lodge, *Rosalynde: Or Euphues His Golden Legacie*, 40: 'thy cheeks with roses dight'.

<sup>118</sup> Goody, *Culture of Flowers*, 156.

<sup>119</sup> Goody, *Culture of Flowers*, 156; C. Joret, *La Rose dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen Age: Histoires, Legends et Symbolisme*, (Paris, 1892), 244-5; A. Tapié, 'La nature, l'allégorie' in *Symbolique et Botanique*, eds. A. Tapié and C. Joubert (Caen, 1987), 26.

<sup>120</sup> Song of Solomon 2:1, 1:4

<sup>121</sup> Streete, *Protestantism and Drama*, 59.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 60

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 60



God to point the way to redemption.<sup>125</sup> According to James Heath, one of these signatures was identified on 'rue' and may be the reason that it was called 'herb of grace' by Shakespeare.<sup>126</sup> He cites Jerome Brunswick who claimed that whoever has water of rue in his house 'can not be hurte of the devil by the grace of god.'<sup>127</sup> He also cites William Coles, who saw this apotropaic property as a direct result of the 'signe of the Crosse which is upon the seed' so that it drove away devils 'by signature.'<sup>128</sup> The Book of Nature, often evoked by critics in conjunction with Alain of Lille's gnomonic verses teaching that every single creature could be deciphered, was not just an idea.<sup>129</sup> It was an active search for divine meaning in the natural world in which people were absolutely involved. In fact, long after this search was dismissed as delusional, the discoveries retained the power to unsettle and undermine. The reformers were alarmed by these 'representations' and their non-human source, so they attempted to bury all evidence that the cross could be found in nature and to

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<sup>125</sup> For a theorist's perspective on the doctrine of signatures see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 1966, repr. 2001), 28 ff. For an ethnobotanic perspective see William Balée, *Footprint of the Forest: Ka'apor Ethnobotany: The Historical Ecology of Plant Utilization by an Amazonian People* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 102; William Milliken, et al., *Ethnobotany of the Waimiri Atroari Indians of Brazil* (Kew: Royal Botanic Gardens, 1992), 36; V.J. Vogel, *American Indian Medicine* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 33; O. Tippe & W. L. Stern, *Humanistic Botany*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 47, 235-6, 280; R. M. Klein, *The Green World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 306; C. M. Cotton, *Ethnobotany Principles and Applications* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd. 1997), 24; M. J. Balick & P. A. Cox, *Plants, People and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany* (New York: Scientific American Library, 1996), 39; William Milliken and Sam Bridgewater, *Flora Celtica* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2004), 106; For an anthropological perspective see Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 16. For a folklore studies perspective see D. Evans, 'The Doctrine of Signatures as the explanation of some puzzling names and uses of plants' in *Plant-lore Studies*, ed. R. Vickery R., The Folklore Society Mistletoe Series Vol. 18, (London: The Folklore Society, 1984), 66-74; R. Vickery, *A Dictionary of Plant-lore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 109-110; Grigson, *Englishman's Flora*, 76, 78. For a herbal perspective see Arber, *Herbals*, 203. For a botany perspective see Maggie Campbell-Culver, *The Origin of Plants* (London: Headline, 2001), 11, 8: 'the monastic garden...had been based on the...system of the doctrine of signatures'; 'the system was practised for so long that monasteries were still using it until the birth of modern science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries'; Richard Mabey, *The Cabaret of Plants: Botany and the Imagination* (London: Profile Books, 2015), 144-5. From a Renaissance Studies and medical perspective see Leah Knight, *Reading Green in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2014), 77-8 and Cristina Bellorini, *The World of Plants in Renaissance Tuscany: Medicine and Botany* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 2-3. For a Shakespeare perspective see Ellacombe, *Plant-lore*, 91.

<sup>126</sup> James Heath, *Botanical References in Shakespeare: Some resonances of Ophelia's Gifts and Garland Flowers for Early Modern Auditors and Readers*, (unpublished MA Dissertation, University of London, Birbeck, and in the Shakespeare Centre Library, 2003), 86.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 86. Heath quotes Master Jherom Bruynswyke, *The Vertuose boke of Dystillacyon* (1527), ch. Ccxxx.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 86. Heath quotes William Coles, *Adam in England* (1657), ch. 21. p.45 and adds that 'the fruit capsule of rue has four stigma scars spread in the form of a cross.'

<sup>129</sup> See, for example, Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 319.

insist that it was misguided to look for botanic signs of Christ's suffering since it had happened in a human and historical past. This idea will be examined more fully in the next chapter.

However, the Catholic symbolic tradition refused to be left behind in the Middle Ages and continued to discover or generate new botanic evidence for the redemption in the New World. In 1609 Jacomo Bosio published a description of a flower that drew on the testimony of a Mexican Augustinian called Emanuello de Villegas. It claimed that in a passionflower called the 'flower of the five wounds' ('flor de las cinco llagas') 'the Creator of the world had chosen to represent the principal emblems of his Son's Passion.'<sup>130</sup> Shakespeare does not include this exotic in his work, but an indigenous 'flower of the five wounds' instead. It may be no more than coincidence, but 1609 is generally accepted as the date for Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* which includes a reference to a home-grown plant with symbolism that Shakespeare links with the five wounds. The next chapter, 'Shakespeare and Hawkins: Countering the "Prophane" Emblem Books', will examine the way that Imogen's birthmark with five spots comparable to 'the crimson drops/i' th' bottom of a cowslip' departs from nature in making the cowslip pattern 'cinque-spotted.'<sup>131</sup> This brings the symbolism closer to late medieval emblems of the five wounds which are more accurately described as 'cinque-spotted' i.e. laid out like the number five on a dice. If Shakespeare's presentation of certain flowers is partly a reaction to the Protestant herbal tradition, the possibility of an idolatrous link between his cowslip and the five wounds cannot be discounted, especially since the Jesuit passionflower would later come under attack from the same herbal tradition. In 1640 John Parkinson dismissed stories of the flower with 'thornes, nailes, speare, whippe, pillar etc.' as 'advantageous lies' which the Jesuits regarded as 'tolerable, or rather pious and meritorious' and 'wherewith they use to instruct the people.'<sup>132</sup> The instinct to enlist flowers and other botanic evidence, which began with Saint Patrick, has proved a remarkably long-lived and appealing element in Catholic teaching.

## Vocal or Anthropomorphic Plants

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<sup>130</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 353.

<sup>131</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 2.2.37-9.

<sup>132</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 353.

It is no accident that Shakespeare's plays provide a safe harbour for precisely the kind of mandrake lore and legend that was exciting the most virulent reformer attacks in the herbal tradition. It seems that mandrakes had a commodity value and that people were prepared to buy them, either for their curiosity value, or possibly for their medical, aphrodisiac or narcotic value. The herbalist William Turner, building on the earlier rhetoric of Matthiolus and Leonhart Fuchs, purported to expose the trickery of pedlars who included these roots among their wares:

The rootes which are counterfeited & made like little puppettes & mammettes which come to be sold in England in boxes with heir & such form as a man hath are nothing elles but folishe feined trifles & not natural. For they are so trimmed of crafty theves to mocke the poore people with all & to rob them both of theyr wit and theyr money. I have in my tyme at diverse tymes taken up the rootes of mandrag out of the the grounde but I never saw any such thing upon them as are in and upon the pedlers rootes that are commonly to be solde in boxes.<sup>133</sup>

This is not merely a tirade against pedlars. The religious tenor of this attack might not be clear to today's readers, but Turner's word 'mammette' gets right to the essence of what was offensive about the mandrake: it is a corruption of the name of the prophet of Islam, Muhammad.<sup>134</sup> To credit any of the beliefs about the mandrake was to literally worship an idol. Turner's rhetoric derives its force from earlier attacks on images in the reformation: the statues of Saint Mary the Virgin that moved, the paintings of the giant Saint Christopher that the poor people had believed could offer them protection.<sup>135</sup>

Although pedlars, just as much as mandrakes, are universally stigmatised in the Protestant herbal tradition, they are portrayed sympathetically by the Catholic composer John Dowland in his song 'Fine Knacks for Ladies' and by the Catholic Anthony Munday in his play *Robin Hood 1* which influenced

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<sup>133</sup> Turner, William, *Herbal*, 56

<sup>134</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. 'mammet,' n. 1.a

<sup>135</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly and Other Writings* trans. Robert M. Adams (New York: Norton, 1989), 41.

Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.<sup>136</sup> Mandrakes could easily have found a place among the wares of Shakespeare's own pedlar Autolycus, as he offers up what Shakespeare elsewhere calls 'such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff/As puts me from my faith.'<sup>137</sup> According to Gillian Woods, there were fears that 'Papists drew upon and peddled beguiling fantasies, idolatrously distorted from God's real word.'<sup>138</sup> However, even when Shakespeare alludes to false mandrakes, he seems to be on the side of the people carving them in the manner of Turner's pedlars.<sup>139</sup> Arguably, in introducing the mandrake into his plays, Shakespeare was in some basic way engaging in a battle for the faith of his audience. To reformers, the pedlar's pack spewing out puppets, dolls and mandrakes, was almost like what Calvin called a 'perpetual forge of idols.'<sup>140</sup>

The mandrake makes its appearance in two early poems by John Donne (1573-1631), both of which were Catholic and one of which was almost certainly seditious.<sup>141</sup> In particular, Donne's mention of the impossibility of getting 'with child' a 'mandrake root' reflects Marian conceits present in the work of Albertus Magnus and some Catholic hymns. These honoured Saint Mary as 'Mary the Mandrake', a root from which Christ emerged, 'born out of her to be a man, with like humility, who [himself] was her root.'<sup>142</sup> 'Get with child a mandrake root' is thus a reworking of a kind of Catholic paradox, whereby an 'infant' root begets a parent 'root', not unlike Robert Southwell's paradoxes on 'the nativity of Christ' ('Behould the father is the daughters sonne/The bird that built the nest, is hatchd therein') or Henry Hawkins' paradox addressed to the virgin ('Whom the heavens can not containe, hast thou held in thy lap').<sup>143</sup> Like Donne,

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<sup>136</sup> John Dowland, 'Fine Knacks for Ladies' in *Elizabethan Lyrics: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1952), 152; Anthony Munday, *A Critical Edition of the Downfall and the Death of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon* ed. John C. Meagher (Garland: London, 1980), 1566-7. For the friar as pedlar see J. J. Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages (14<sup>th</sup> century)*, Translated by Lucy Toulmin Smith. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901), 304-5.

<sup>137</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry IV Part 1*, ed. David Scott Kastan (London: Arden, 2002), 3.1.150-1.

<sup>138</sup> Woods, *Unreformed Fictions*, 158.

<sup>139</sup> J. W. Lever, 'Three Notes on Shakespeare's Plants', *Review of English Studies*, vol. 3 no 10 (April 1952), 117-29, 121-2.

<sup>140</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 84.

<sup>141</sup> John Donne, *Selected Poems*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Oxford World Classics), 82, 'Song'. See also the seditious poem by Donne, *The Progress of the Soul*, ll. 130-60. See also Ben Jonson, *The Complete Poems*, London: Penguin, 1996, appendix ii, 464, 'Ben Jonson's Conversation with William Drummond of Hawthorden'. Jonson claims that the target of Donne's seditious poems was 'Calvin' rather than 'Elizabeth.'

<sup>142</sup> Richard à Saint-Laurent, *De Laudibus Beatae Mariae Virginis* (1475), 1.13, c.4, n.40

<sup>143</sup> Southwell, *Collected Poems*, 6; Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 174.

Shakespeare's Friar Lawrence may have been aware of the Marian virtues of the mandrake through a reading of Albertus Magnus, because his belief in the virtues that lie in 'plants, herbs, stones' sounds like the title-page of the hugely popular book of secrets which claimed to provide insights into 'the virtues of herbs, stones and certain beasts.'<sup>144</sup> The supposition that Shakespeare's portrayal of the mandrake is closer to that of Albertus Magnus and John Donne than the herbals that he is drawing on is suggested by the way that he includes no disclaimer of its vocal or anthropomorphic qualities, but instead has Juliet launch into an unqualified report of 'shrieks of mandrakes torn out of the earth' moments before she takes the potion and is buried in the earth.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> See Albertus Magnus, *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus of the Virtues of Herbs, Stones and certain Beasts*; also, *A Book of the Marvels of the World*, eds. Michael R. Best and Frank H. Brightman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); Eamon, *Secrets of Nature*, 71.

<sup>145</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 4.3.47. Since the early twentieth century it has been plausibly claimed that the 'sleeping potion of Juliet [is] a preparation from this plant [the mandrake].' See Maud Grieve, *A Modern Herbal*, (1931; repr. London: Penguin: 1979), 585. The 'weak flower' held up by Friar Lawrence, could be seen to encourage this reading, as it suggests the flimsy flower of the mandrake, illustrated alongside the monstrous root in Lyte's *Niewe Herball* (Lyte, *Niewe Herball*, 437). Friar Lawrence's use of the word 'mickle' might also encourage this reading since it recalls those archaic entries on the mandrake in Anglo-Saxon herbals which begin 'Theos wyrte the man mandragoram nemneth ys mycel...', exactly the kind of herbal knowledge that John Gerard instructed 'you shall hencefoorth cast out of your bookes and memorie.' (John Gerard, *Herball*, 65). Finally, and most persuasively, Juliet's mention of the 'shrieks of mandrakes torn out of the earth' moments before she takes the potion also encourage the reading that the potion was derived from this plant (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 4.3.47). The theme of 'deathlike sleep' from the mandrake is not exclusive to Shakespeare. It is possible that he was familiar with the he mandrake-induced 'death' of Ruggieri in Boccaccio's *Decameron* because he borrows the name 'Rogero' for a minor character who brings the news of the reconciliation of the main characters at the end of *The Winter's Tale*. However, it is equally possible that he borrowed this name from a contemporary ballad about a jealous husband. The reason that it matters to identify the root in Shakespeare's play is that if it is the mandrake it seems to be closely linked with an allegorical conceit in Shakespeare referred to as 'the sleep of faith.' This is examined by Margaret Jones-Davies who argues that 'sleep in *Cymbeline* is the sleep of faith' and that 'the sleeping scenes in *Cymbeline* are the closest Shakespeare ever comes to an allegorization of a religious theme.' See Margaret Jones-Davies, 'Cymbeline and the sleep of faith' in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, ed. Dutton et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2003), 197. However, it is possible that the allegory is as common as death-like sleep in Shakespeare. In Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*, for example, there is a reference to the hope of the heathen queen that mandrake might allow her to 'sleep out this great gap of time' until her Anthony comes, suggesting the hopes of recusants 'waiting out Elizabeth's "heretic" reign.' (Shakespeare, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, 1.5.5; Southwell, *Collected Poems*, eds. Peter Davidson and Anne Sweeney, introduction, xv). More generally, it could suggest the sleep of the saints, before they are resurrected for the thousand-year reign of Christ, with particular reference to the bride and the delayed bridegroom of the Book of Revelation.). *Romeo and Juliet* 'is filled with reminders of the [delayed] "bridegroom" of the Apocalypse ("when the bridegroom in the morning comes/To rouse thee from thy bed" 4.1.107-8; "Make haste, the bridegroom is come already," 4.4.27).' See Parker, Patricia, 'What's in a Name: And More', *Sederi XI: Revista de la Sociedad Espanola de Estudios Renascentistas Ingleses* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2002), 131. Plants like mandrake and angelica (associated with the Archangel Saint Michael) pave the way for apocalyptic imagery in the play, especially since medieval herbalists recommended that the mandrake's screams be drowned out by trumpets.

According to Patricia Parker, the Greek word for ‘the mandrake’ [‘morion’] could, among other things, refer to ‘the Moor’ and to the biblical word mentioned earlier, ‘The Foolish Thing of God’ [‘moron’] (which Tertullian glossed as ‘the Cross’).<sup>146</sup> This etymology seems to be at work in John Lyly’s *Euphues: An Anatomy of Wit*, when ‘Morion’ and ‘Mandrake’ are mentioned in quick succession: ‘Tush, a fair pearl in a Morion’s ear cannot make him white...No, no, Philautus, either swallow the juice of mandrake, which may cast thee into a dead sleep...’<sup>147</sup> Strikingly, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* charts the same course between ‘a rich pearl in an Ethiop’s ear’ and a dead sleep associated with ‘mandrakes.’<sup>148</sup>

Whether or not it is held that the mandrake can provide insight into the wider narrative of *Romeo and Juliet*, it seems to offer insight into the conjunction of ‘Morion’, ‘Mandrake’ and the ‘Foolish Thing of God’ (i.e. the crucifix) in Shakespeare’s *Othello*. The observation of Iago, as he watches Othello’s suffering, is that ‘Not poppy nor mandragora shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep that thou owest yesterday.’<sup>149</sup> The mention of these two drugs side by side is a clear reference to *trifera*, a concoction of mandrake and opium. This is what Pliny describes as ‘mandrake wine, or death wine...given to persons being crucified.’<sup>150</sup> It was administered on a sponge on a stick.<sup>151</sup> Once this context to the lines is restored it makes them even more difficult to interpret. It can, however, be stated with a degree of certainty that Iago seems to be comparing the suffering of Othello to the suffering of Christ on the cross. Perhaps this comparison should not be surprising. Emrys Jones has argued that the inspiration behind certain scenes in *Othello* lies in the medieval mystery plays, and the same could be true for the metaphor of the ‘bruised heart’

<sup>146</sup> Patricia Parker, ‘What’s in A Name: and More’, ; Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.5.

<sup>147</sup> John Lyly, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit and Euphues His England*, ed. Leah Scragg, 232: ‘Tush, a fair pearl in a Morion’s ear cannot make him white...No, no, Philautus, either swallow the juice of mandrake, which may cast thee into a dead sleep...’; Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 191.

<sup>148</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.5.45.

<sup>149</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997), 3.3.333-4. If ‘yesterday’ is interpreted as a general term, Iago may be relishing depriving Othello of peace of mind; if it is interpreted as specific to the play’s chronology, Iago may be relishing depriving Othello of joy in his marriage bed.

<sup>150</sup> Frederick J. Simoons, *Plants of Life, Plants of Death* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 113. The Romans used these drugs cynically to prolong the suffering, but by the Renaissance Paracelsus had come to believe that opium could bring eternal life to the soul.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Mark 15:23; Matthew 27:34.

symbolically 'pierced' by Iago.<sup>152</sup> Jones points out that Iago's character, often compared to the 'vice' character of the morality plays, is just as much like a character in the mystery plays, a Judas or a Pilate.<sup>153</sup>

The closest thing to the mystery play's death and resurrection in Shakespeare's Jacobean play is the moment when Othello falls on the stage in his epilepsy only to rise up again.<sup>154</sup> It is possible that Shakespeare is using the Moor's 'sacred disease' as a metaphor for the suffering caused by 'the foolish thing of god' [the 'moron'].<sup>155</sup> In fact, Iago potentially compares it to the suffering and death of Christ when he calls it 'a passion most unsuiting such a man.'<sup>156</sup> A later gloss on this line in the play suggests that Iago might mean that it is particularly 'unsuiting' to a man of divine 'nature/Whom passion could not shake...nor dart of chance could neither graze nor pierce.'<sup>157</sup> In this way, the play links the epilepsy that shakes Othello with the 'passion' and, in turn, links the 'passion' with a moment in which a heart is 'pierce[d].'<sup>158</sup> To anyone with a knowledge of herbal medicine, Iago's comparisons of Othello's sufferings to the Passion of Christ are not without a certain irony. If mandrake could not ease

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<sup>152</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.3.220. The wounded heart of Othello is later described as 'the fountain from the which my current runs/Or else dries up' and he ultimately dies in a fountain of blood. (Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.2.58, 60-1) See Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 57.

<sup>153</sup> See Jones, *Origins of Shakespeare*, 75, 78: 'Brabantio's projected arrest of Othello...[has] its ultimate theatrical source in the mystery cycles: the arrest of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, a scene that occurs in all the surviving cycles...Just as Jesus is forcibly led away from the scene of arrest to be tried before Pilate, so Othello leaves the scene of his thwarted arrest for the Senate where in i.iii he undergoes a kind of trial when he defends his marriage before the Duke and Senators.' Jones compares Othello's words 'Put up your bright swords for the dew will rust them' with the York mystery cycle dialogue 'For-thy putte uppe thi serde/Ful goodely agayne'. Ultimately, Jones argues 'in the opening sequence of the play (i.i.ii) Iago plays the part of Judas.' In support of this, when Iago guides Roderigo in the piercing of Cassio he seems to be playing the part of Pilate who guides the blind soldier Longeus in his piercing of Christ. Iago's lines, 'Here stand behind this bulk, straight will he come./Wear thy good rapier bare, and put it home./Quick, quick, fear nothing, I'll be at thy elbow' also seem closest to Pilate's lines in the York mystery cycle: 'Ser Longeus, steppe forthe in this steede./This spere, loo, have halde in hande/...sted nought, but stiffely thou stande.../In Jesu side Schoffe it this tyde' See William Shakespeare, *Othello*, 5.1.1-3,7; The Death and Burial *Mortificacio Crisiti* York 36: Bocheres (and Pulters)' 23.290 in *English Mystery Plays*, ed. Peter Happé (London: Penguin, 1975), 547.

<sup>154</sup> It is also potentially like the resurrection of the slain knights in a mummers play.

<sup>155</sup> It is interesting that the eponymous emperor of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* has the same condition as he takes on an almost Christ-like significance in the play.

<sup>156</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.1.78.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.1.265-6, 267-8

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.1.265-6, 267-8

Christ's crucifixion, it could potentially ease Othello's epilepsy.<sup>159</sup> According to Philip Schwyzer and Frederick Simooms, mandrake, like the 'mummy' that is also mentioned in the play, could be used for treating the epilepsy that Othello experiences.<sup>160</sup>

Whether or not it is allowed that Donne and Shakespeare were evoking the mandrake in provocative ways, reformers were certainly troubled by this plant. It seemed to embody in a monstrous way everything they hated about plants.<sup>161</sup> One reason was that, as with the ginseng in the east, the root's anthropomorphic morphology was taken as a divine hint that it was a catholicon for the entire human body.<sup>162</sup> It was almost as if it had the atavistic power to take mankind back to an indigenous time, when a mandrake was not held to resemble mankind but when mankind was held to have been created in the image of plants like this Man Devil. It thus offered a direct challenge to the view that plants had no innate supernatural powers and threatened to excite an almost worshipful or fearful awe, even in the breasts of Protestants. The fact that John Gerard, for example, has to insist that 'I my selfe and my servaunts also have digged up, planted, and replanted verie many: & yet never could either perceiue shape of man or woman' shows that he still felt the need to check.<sup>163</sup> Since it was not an uncommon belief that 'if a man tried to dig it up he would die soon after', or at the very least succumb to mental illness, the use of servants might have been a necessary precaution.<sup>164</sup>

In an effort to relocate the errors on the side of the herbalists rather than necessarily in Shakespeare's counter-herbalism, it is worth making the final point that some of the more absurd beliefs surrounding the mandrake have a basis more rational than anything in Turner or Gerard. When Shakespeare introduces the mandrake into his work with the apparent conviction that its

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<sup>159</sup> The possibility that the epilepsy in *Othello* could be treated by the mummy of the handkerchief, like the possibility that all the other medical symptoms mentioned in the play could be treated by the strawberries of the handkerchief, demands further investigation.

<sup>160</sup> Simooms, *Plants of Life*, 118; Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 156.

<sup>161</sup> See Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 220, which discusses how it 'was linked with the apple of Eden.'

<sup>162</sup> Richard Mabey, *The Cabaret of Plants: Botany and the Imagination* (London: Profile Books, 2015), 144.

<sup>163</sup> Gerard, *Herball*, 281.

<sup>164</sup> Willes, *Shakespearean Botanical*, 116. See also Thomas, *Natural World*, 75: A similar precaution that he took against the adverse influence of plants in his garden was the placing of a lattice of sticks over the cyclamens in case any pregnant women stepped over them and, in accordance with popular tradition, miscarried.



scream can cause insanity, whether or not he does believe this, modern medicine has proved it to be true.<sup>165</sup> Once a tincture of mandrake has been ingested, according to Simooms, the effect is delirium characterised by the 'exaggeration of sound.'<sup>166</sup> It is completely understandable that anyone under the influence of mandrake would associate this exaggeration of sound with the root that caused it. Although the Protestant herbalists found no truth in the screams causing death, the Greek root gatherers (*rhizotomoi*) could have circulated stories of the terrifying aural effects for a good reason. The scarceness of the mandrake meant that ordinary people needed to be scared away to allow the root-gatherers to get the best price.<sup>167</sup> Similarly, the use of dogs in digging it up has been recognised by Anne Van Arsdall as reflecting the way it was harvested, with dogs trained to pick up its scent in the woods and scrublands.<sup>168</sup> Finally, it is understandable that the pedlar's roots in wooden boxes might excite an unusual degree of curiosity, because of effects caused by the evaporation of moisture from a root vegetable. This might leave stains on the lid of the box where the mouth had been carved as if it was breathing. If left for long enough it might even force the hinges of the box. These botanic effects, like the hissing of crab apples, were not explained by the science of the time.<sup>169</sup>

### **Plants used as Surrogates or Substitutes for Others not Present**

The next four sections are important because they examine a practice that seems to have been widely and tacitly followed in British plant culture, particularly where oral tradition remained strong. The use of surrogates was a defining feature of medical practice in medieval times. According to Anne Van Arsdall, medieval monks and nuns would sometimes not have the ideal plant to treat their patient, so they would consult medical texts 'for substitutes.'<sup>170</sup> She adds that from an early date substituting one plant for another was a necessary

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<sup>165</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 220.

<sup>166</sup> Simooms, *Plants of Life*, 116.

<sup>167</sup> John M. Riddle, *Goddesses, Elixirs, and Witches* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 62.

<sup>168</sup> Quoted in John M. Riddle, *Goddesses, Elixirs, and Witches*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 62

<sup>169</sup> Cf. William Shakespeare, *Love's Labours Lost*, ed. David Richard (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1951), 5.2.925; Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1.2.47-50

<sup>170</sup> Anne Van Arsdall, 'Evaluating the Context of Medieval Herbals' in *Critical Approaches to the History of Herbal Medicine: From Classical Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, eds. Susan Francia and Anne Stobart (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 47-65, 59.

expedient as evidenced by the medical text called the *quid pro quo*.<sup>171</sup> This is more fully explored by Alain Touwaide in his seminal article on the subject.<sup>172</sup> According to Clemens Stoll, early in the Middle Ages monks began adapting the remedies in classical works to more immediate needs, which accounts for the disparities between many of the medieval compilations of remedies.<sup>173</sup> Ethnobotanists David Allen and Gabrielle Hatfield have also described how plants in the classical texts consulted by monks and nuns were optimistically seen to correspond to indigenous British plants.<sup>174</sup> Further documentary evidence that this was going on is offered by late medieval catalogues of *quid pro quo* alternatives and Van Arsdall brings anthropological insight into this by pointing out that the same medical practice persists in New Mexico herbalism to this day.<sup>175</sup>

However, the use of surrogates by monks in their healing cannot be understood merely in medical terms. Unsurprisingly, it was also motivated by theological precedent. According to Alison Shell, it was believed that ‘nature revealed God by means of similitude’ and that accordingly religious people should follow nature’s example and discuss the divine only under similitudes.<sup>176</sup> Similitudes ensured that they would not ‘take the name of...god in ydelnesse.’<sup>177</sup> Shell cites Levinus Lemnius’ *An Herbal for the Bible*, translated into English by Thomas Newton in 1587. This work argues that biblical texts ‘use so manie Similitudes, & make so many Comparisons of things fetched out of the verie secrets and bowels of Nature; as namely from beasts, fowls, wormes, creeping and swimming creatures [by this is presumably meant ‘serpents’ and ‘toads’ which usually appear side-by-side in literature of the

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 47-65, 59.

<sup>172</sup> Alain Touwaide, ‘Quid Pro Quo: Revisiting the Practice of Substitution in Ancient Pharmacy’ in *Herbs and Healers from the Ancient Mediterranean through the Medieval West: Essays in Honour of John M. Riddle* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 19-61.

<sup>173</sup> Clemens Stoll, ‘Arznei und Arzneiversorgung in frühmittelalterlichen Klöstern’ in *Das Lorscher Arzneibuch und die frühmittelalterliche Medizin*, eds. Gundöf Keil and Paul Schnitzer (Lorsch: Verlag Laurissa, 1991), 175-6. Quoted in Anne Van Arsdall, *Medieval Herbal Remedies: The Old English Herbarium and Anglo-Saxon Medicine* (London: Routledge, 2002), 85.

<sup>174</sup> Allen and Hatfield, *Ethnobotany of Britain and Ireland*, 17.

<sup>175</sup> Anne Van Arsdall, *Medieval Herbal Remedies: The Old English Herbarium and Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, London: Routledge, 2002, 85. For the most part, studies of art associated with herbals have not been carried out in sufficient detail to examine how far potential quid pro quo substitutions are reflected in illustration. A useful encyclopaedia of plant illustration is Minta Collins, *Medieval Herbals: The Illustrative Traditions* (London: The British Library, 2000).

<sup>176</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture*, 72.

<sup>177</sup> Exodus, 20:7 (Wycliff)

period e.g. in the ballad *The Wracks of Walsingham*], Herbes, Trees...'<sup>178</sup>

Similitudes are necessary substitutes for direct discussion of things that comprise 'the Secrets of Nature' which according to Jane Chance were 'presumably secrets of the gods or of the soul.'<sup>179</sup> The example had been set by the prophets so monks continued to substitute some plants for things with secret theological significance.

It was presumably not merely the medical but the theological implications of surrogacy that eventually meant that some reformers came to be suspicious of plants that were substituted for other plants. Why surrogates might be condemned is no longer clear, though the concept of surrogacy could potentially be understood to induce anxiety, if it enabled something absent to lurk behind other things.

Willows had long been used as substitutes for the palm and in some parts of Catholic Europe Palm Sunday was still called Willow Sunday.<sup>180</sup> William Turner sneered at this custom in 1538: 'On the Day of Palm Sunday as they call it I have often heard priests saying "Bless also these palm-branches"' when I could see nothing present but sallow boughs. What others saw, I know not. If they were not supplying us with palm boughs, they ought to change their petition and say "Bless these sallow branches." It is a lie to call a sallow a palm.'<sup>181</sup> This is a clear attack on the use of surrogates, an accepted part of medieval practice which was now seen as a threat to Protestant authority. Turner's pronouncement was aligned with the times as the Privy Council passed orders forbidding the use of palms in worship in 1548 and 1559.<sup>182</sup>

The exception that reformers took to willows may have had less to do with the fact that they were not really palms and more to do with the way that they were used after they had been blessed with holy water:

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<sup>178</sup> Levinus Lemnius, *An Herbal for the Bible*, trans. Thomas Newton (1587), 6-7; 'The Wracks of Walsingham' in *The New Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse*, ed. Emrys Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 550-1.

<sup>179</sup> Jane Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer: The Fabulation of Sexual Politics* (Mineapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 4 (my italics).

<sup>180</sup> Alison Syme, *Willow* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014), 22.

<sup>181</sup> Translation from Charles E. Raven, *English Naturalists from Neckam to Ray* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 69; Quoted in Knight, *Books and Botany*, 63.

<sup>182</sup> Eamon Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 457. Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 183-4.

The palms were intended, of course, for use in the procession, but were certainly taken back to people's homes and put to apotropaic use; one of the benedictions prayed for the banishment of "adverse powers" wherever the palms were brought and blessing for the inhabitants of any such home.<sup>183</sup>

This effectively made the Palm Sunday willows parallel to branches used in pagan rites, so that they were not a million miles away from the torches of pine which in some parts of the country were borne in procession sun-wise around fields at Halloween.<sup>184</sup> Some memory of the blessing of the willows continued to operate on the level of a 'covert taxon' in British medical tradition.<sup>185</sup> In other words, the religious ritual was believed to reinforce the medical qualities of a willow so that as late as 1652, when the religious reasons had been forgotten, branches of it were still being recommended as 'very convenient to be placed in the chamber of one sick with fever.'<sup>186</sup> Evidence for this lingering memory can be found in the writings of John Stow, whose nostalgia for Merry England was said to be nourished by 'phantastical [i.e. allegorical, fabulous] popishe bokes printed in the old tyme.'<sup>187</sup> He writes of the springtime custom of 'fetching twisted trees or withies out of the woods into people's houses, which must have been what in other parts of the country was called "palming."<sup>188</sup> Alternatively he may be describing the custom of 'bringing in the may', which often seems to have involved decorating houses with the frothy blossoms of the hawthorn.<sup>189</sup>

After the use of willow for palms in worship was forbidden, Shakespeare continues to use the word 'palm' for willow. Ellacombe was the first to suggest that a palm in the 'unlikely setting of the forest of Arden' might point directly to Shakespeare perpetuating the medieval view of willow as 'a readily available substitute' for a palm.<sup>190</sup> Alternatively, it might represent nothing more than the

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 1992, 23.

<sup>184</sup> Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, 360.

<sup>185</sup> Martin, *Ethnobotany*, 216.

<sup>186</sup> Culpeper, *English Physitian*, s.v. 'willow.'

<sup>187</sup> Patrick Collinson, *This England: Essays on the English Nation and Commonwealth* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 298.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 289

<sup>189</sup> Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 169, 266; Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, 230-1. In some areas, bringing may boughs into the house was deemed unlucky.

<sup>190</sup> Ellacombe, *Plant-Lore*, 194.

Warwickshire dialect name for 'willow.'<sup>191</sup> There are, however, numerous allusions to willows where they seem to retain some memory of palm symbolism.<sup>192</sup> Behind the ostensibly classical image of Dido 'with a willow in her hand' potentially lurks a memory of a medieval female saint with a martyr's palm.<sup>193</sup>

According to Leah Knight, while Turner was researching his *Libellus de res herbaria* (1538), he encountered a little girl on a Norfolk road. She was carrying a flower, which he recognised from a picture in Brunfel's *Herbarum Vivae Icones* (1530). On making some enquiries he found that this flower was still referred to by the locals as 'Laus tibi.' The Latin name was offered up by the people, suggesting that it had not derived from book-learning but from the old religion, and some Catholic rite in which the flowers were used. This is presumably why Turner was prepared to accept a single church authority, a Protestant clergyman called Warren Hash, over the word of the local people in settling for the stop-gap secular name of 'French Gillyflower.' Knight interprets his reform of the name as parallel to church reforms designed to purge away traditions that had no place in the true church:<sup>194</sup>

The religious connotations of 'laus tibi' might...account for Turner's dissatisfaction with the name proffered without exception in the village where the plant grew. The phrase was used in Latin church services that may well have been objectionable to one of Turner's radical persuasion.<sup>195</sup>

It may be that Turner objected to the name 'Laus Tibi' because, like the blessed willow withies, it was associated in his mind with Catholic celebration of Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday processions were marked by the singing of the hymn beginning 'Gloria, Laus' and the strewing of flowers.<sup>196</sup> The wild daffodil is likely

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<sup>191</sup> Thiselton-Dyer, 'Plants', 504.

<sup>192</sup> This is supported by the medieval source, Chaucer's narrative of Ariadne in his *Legend of Good Women*, which can be read as a kind of Golden Legend of classical female martyrs.

<sup>193</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 5.1.10

<sup>194</sup> Knight, *Books and Botany*, 59.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 60

<sup>196</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 25.

to have been one of those flowers and its name became an extension of the hymn which it accompanied, an association Turner might wish to sever.<sup>197</sup>

Turner seems to be fashioning a Protestant parody of the idea of similitude in which the 'daffodil' might be cynically allotted a stop-gap name 'gillyflower' (more usually reserved for the carnation). Ironically, this seems to align him with an earlier tradition known to Shakespeare in which the 'daffodil' was a recognised surrogate for the flower of the 'gillyvor' (which, in English, was originally called the 'incarnacyon', to suggest a deliberate link with the incarnation of Christ, and, in Latin, the 'dianthus, the flower of God', to suggest the same link).<sup>198</sup> The next section will examine the way this use of the 'golden' daffodil as a similitude for the red and white flower of the incarnation persists in Shakespeare's work.

#### **i.) Botanic Surrogates linked with Dust and Ashes or with Anointing**

In the section on "Idle and foolish" names and epithets for plants', it was suggested that 'golden' plants ('golden' mouse-ear hawkweed, 'golden' dandelions, the 'golden' bough of evergreen mistletoe) could sometimes operate as similitudes for 'red and white' identities (supernatural colliers or chimney-sweepers like 'Grim', traditionally imagined with red caps and shaggy white beards). Spring flowers that were 'golden' (in the sense of yellow) were elided into winter boughs that were 'golden' (which in Latin could also mean 'evergreen'), and that often had red or white berries. The spring flowers withered in this world only to rise again in a 'golden' (evergreen) world where they would take upon themselves the red and white colours appropriate to a sacred realm. This section will examine the scriptural language that at some

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<sup>197</sup> See Grigson, *Englishman's Flora*, 110. According to Grigson from the start of Shrovetide to Holy Saturday, the holy song of 'Alleluia was dropped and *Laus tibi domine, rex aeternae gloriae* was substituted' and that if this is accurate the botanic 'alleluia' (the 'wood sorrel') may have given way to the botanic 'laus tibi' in liturgical rituals.

<sup>198</sup> According to Maggie Campbell-Culver, *The Origin of Plants*, London: Headline, 2001, the word 'carnation' 'first appeared [as] "incarnacyon"'. See also Karen L. Edwards, *Milton and the Natural World: Science and Poetry in Paradise Lost* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 181, which points out the link between 'carnation, with the painterly representation of flesh'; Jack Goody, *The Culture of Flowers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 297.

point became linked with the way that the 'golden' plants would 'come to dust' in spring and 'rise from the ashes' in winter.<sup>199</sup>

This is the symbolism behind the Christian tradition in which the Palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday are burnt to provide the ashes for the current year's Ash Wednesday. These are then used by the priest to make an ashy black cross on the red 'front' or 'forehead' in a ritual that usually falls at the start of April.<sup>200</sup>

In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare reworks this Christian mark of the cross on an April 'forehead' in pagan terms as a 'gracious mark' of 'Flora/Peering in April's front.'<sup>201</sup> In the scene, the mark of Flora in the middle of Perdita's forehead is also a sign that suggests her coming new life with Florizel, because he himself is the 'gracious mark o' th' land.'<sup>202</sup> On a practical level, this last phrase suggests that he is responsible for the face-painting on this festive occasion (and may even have been making the final touches to Perdita's face-paint at the start of the scene). On a more symbolic level, Florizel's painting of Perdita can be understood in various ways: it might make him the 'stain to the [painted] nymphs' like Shakespeare's Adonis; or make him a 'similitude' for the cross-flower that stains the face of Nature; or even make him Christ whose blood stains the face of the Mater Dolorosa.<sup>203</sup> In any case, it seems to be this Floral character who presses the mark of 'Flora/Peering' or the 'peering flower' in the middle of Perdita's forehead.

The word 'peering' suggests that the pagan cross-flowers are the 'daffodils' which were described as 'begin[ning] to peer' in the scene before.<sup>204</sup> 'Peering in April's front' can describe the old year's Palm Sunday Palms, '[ap]peering' all over again in this new ashy sign of the coming resurrection in the forefront of April.<sup>205</sup> Alternatively, it can describe the way that the ashy mark symbolically raises to the forehead the eyes, which straight away 'begin to peer' or 'look forward' to the resurrection of the soul into heaven (just as daffodils were thought to 'peer' into watery spaces because they yearned to be restored to the heavenly place from which they had risen). Daffodils may be 'unusual

<sup>199</sup> Genesis 3:19; Isaiah 52:5

<sup>200</sup> Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, 170, 172.

<sup>201</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.2-3; 4.4.8.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.4.2-3; 4.4.8

<sup>203</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 8.

<sup>204</sup> Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, 4.4.1-2; 4.3.1.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.4.3

weeds' to appear in the forehead in April, where the more 'usual' would be the Christian cross, but, perhaps surprisingly, they already seem to partake of the same symbolism. Interestingly, Shakespeare places the emphasis of these marks not on repenting for sins and remembering that man will 'come to dust.'<sup>206</sup> Rather, he comments that the marks of Flora or Florizel, 'peering' daffodil-like 'in April's front', 'to each part of you/Do give a life.'<sup>207</sup>

The previous year's Palm Sunday Cross, then, reappeared from the ashes in April to 'look forward' to the resurrection at Easter and [re-]birth of Christ at Christmas. These same ashy rites also seem to be the reason that, in British folk tradition, it was considered lucky for a bride to kiss a chimney-sweep before beginning her new life with her husband.<sup>208</sup> It is probably no accident that the Chimney-Sweeper's kiss can be understood in precisely the same terms as Shakespeare's 'Palmer's kiss' in *Romeo and Juliet*.<sup>209</sup> Chimney-sweeper's faces could also have been imagined as black on the surface and blushing underneath because of 'the sin that they had took' from the 'lips' of the bride.<sup>210</sup> However, they were also black as a sign that they had 'risen from the ashes' and were blushing with the 'rising' blood of the resurrection, so that their kiss could grant the bride new life.

As the shared logic behind the Palmer's and Chimney-Sweeper's kiss indicates, this symbolism was already established in Elizabethan theatre. Whatever is assumed in modern times, the primary significance of the black faces of Morris Dancers (which hid their puffing red-faces) or Shakespeare's Othello (which hid his rising 'bloody passion') was never racial.<sup>211</sup> Othello is described as having a 'sooty' face or bosom because he shares this association with chimney-sweeps: he 'rises from the ashes' of the 'steep-down gulfs of liquid [hell-]fire' in the blackface Morris [i.e. Moorish] Dance or Jig that would have rounded off the original play.<sup>212</sup> For anyone who missed the significance

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<sup>206</sup> Genesis 3:19 (Geneva). See also Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, 179, 469n.7.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.4.2-3

<sup>208</sup> Simpson and Roud, *Dictionary of English Folklore*, s.v. 'chimney-sweeps'.

<sup>209</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Rene Weis (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2012), 1.5.99.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.5.107.

<sup>211</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello*, Ed. E. A. J. Honigmann, London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997, 2.3.184,5.

<sup>212</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.2.70; 5.2.278; François Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1988; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 318 n. 11; Charles Read Baskerville, *The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929, 192), 3; David Wiles, *Shakespeare's*



of the subtle 'sooty' epithet, Othello makes it plain in a piece of stage-business that is generally missed because, as is usual in Shakespeare, the cue for the stage-direction is in the dialogue alone.<sup>213</sup> He is 'blowing' the seeds from an imaginary chimney-sweeper or dandelion clock:

Look here, Iago,  
All my fond love do I blow to heaven,  
'Tis gone.<sup>214</sup>

Tellingly, this gesture is followed by the phrase 'Arise, *black* vengeance, from the hollow hell.'<sup>215</sup> The irony of these lines is, that when all pity seems to be 'gone', Christ has merely descended into 'the hollow hell' before he is resurrected. Othello, of all people, should know that a face 'black' with 'vengeance', even if it is 'unused to the melting mood', can dissolve into a face shining with 'tears' of Christ-like pity.<sup>216</sup>

## ii.) Botanic Surrogates linked with the Narcissus Fable

The fathers of the herbal tradition seem to have been particularly sensitive to flowers linked to ancient fables and plant lore that were once central to pagan mystery religion.<sup>217</sup> In these fables, the archetypal 'golden lad' who 'came to dust' was Narcissus, which brings us full circle again, to the ashy mark of the flower 'peering in April's front.'<sup>218</sup>

Pliny's *Natural History* asserts that there are two kinds of daffodil: the usual 'leaf-bearing' kind that is dead by the end of spring and the symbolic 'red' kind, presumably leafless, appearing at the end of the year.<sup>219</sup> Similarly, Virgil's fifth eclogue includes the conceit that the death of the Good Shepherd

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*Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 43-60.

<sup>213</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.2.70.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.3.447-9.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.3.450. My italics.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.3.450; 5.2347, 348.

<sup>217</sup> See Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 70. Agamben's exploration of the link between 'fable' and 'mystery' religion will be examined more closely in chapter three.

<sup>218</sup> Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, 4.4.2-3; 4.4.8.

<sup>219</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, 21.74 cf. 21.12. In modern times, it is sometimes claimed that this 'red' daffodil is the same as Linnaeus' so-called *Narcissus poeticus* but this attribution is based on a misunderstanding of Pliny's text. The *Narcissus poeticus* blossoms at the end of April but Pliny is discussing a fabulous Narcissus that appears late in the year.

Daphnis—who shares some secret quality with the ‘golden’ [i.e. evergreen] laurel bush which gives him his name—coincides with the disappearance of a symbolic ‘blood-red daffodil’ [‘purpureo narcisso’].<sup>220</sup> Of course, implicit in the name of the dying Daphnis is his discovery of a new lease of life through the evergreen laurel (which in medieval tradition was glossed as ‘the cross’).<sup>221</sup> This, in turn, can be expected to coincide with the discovery of the symbolic ‘blood-red’ flower that it can be born in the dead of winter.<sup>222</sup> It is possible that the fable of Daphnis reflects a Delphic tradition in which the ‘golden’ laurel leaves, which were mixed with Castalian waters to aid with divination, were substitutes for the ‘blood-red’ flower used in the winter months.<sup>223</sup>

Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* describes Narcissus’ complexion as ‘red’ and ‘white’ and, given the precedent of previous metamorphoses, it would be natural to expect he would become a red and white flower.<sup>224</sup> However, when he is eventually transformed into a flower it is not ‘red’ and ‘white’, but ‘yellow’ and ‘white.’<sup>225</sup> Pierre Bersuire’s medieval commentary silently corrects this ‘yellow’ and ‘white’ flower into a ‘blood-red flower’ [‘flore purpureum’].<sup>226</sup> That Bersuire is in a position to offer this different version of the final metamorphosis, apparently out of nowhere, suggests that his interpretation of Ovid’s text is supplemented by further reading in the classics and oral tradition. It also raises the possibility that he is not taking an antiquarian interest in a fable that used to have some relevance long ago in the pagan past. Arguably, he is writing within a living oral tradition that recognises the truth of this fable is on a par with that of the gospels.<sup>227</sup>

Bersuire is aware that the resurrection, insofar as this word can be used to describe a figure who comes to dust and rises from the ashes again, could be credited to Narcissus as well as Christ. In the Middle Ages, Narcissus was recognized as having the dual aspects of human and flower, as is clear in a

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<sup>220</sup> Virgil, *Eclogues*, 5:38.

<sup>221</sup> Reynolds, ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’, 141; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, I.xix.

<sup>222</sup> See note 81 above.

<sup>223</sup> This ‘blood-red’ flower was confused with the dragon’s blood of the later tradition.

<sup>224</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.423, 3.482-5.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.509-10.

<sup>226</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.509ff.; Reynolds, ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’, 194; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, III.xi.

<sup>227</sup> ‘See Madeleine Forey, (ed.), *Metamorphoses*, trans. Arthur Golding, (London: Penguin, 2002) xix-xx, xix. ‘It was believed that Ovid was either directly inspired by the Holy Spirit or knew the books of Moses indirectly via Plato and Pythagoras and the Egyptian philosophers before them’ (*ibid.*, xix).

woodcut from the *Ortus Sanitatis*, just as Christ was recognised as having the dual life of human and god.<sup>228</sup> His brief life was cut short with the life of the yellow and white (or golden) daffodil, which by Bersuire's time was cut for Palm Sunday and Easter, but his rebirth coincided with that of the symbolic blood-red daffodil in the dead of winter. According to Helene Foley, this flower, in its two variations, descends and re-ascends from under the earth.<sup>229</sup> It disappears to the Elysian fields where in some traditions it grows as the red asphodel or in other traditions as the red and white pomegranate flower. However, it reappears as the golden daffodil from an egg-like bulb that in this pagan context is already a symbol of resurrection. In another surprising departure from the Ovidian text, Bersuire's commentary recounts Narcissus' descent into the underworld in terms that make it impossible not to think of Christ's descent into hell shortly before his resurrection.<sup>230</sup> Not only that, both Narcissus and Christ were occasionally said in these nether regions to make others partakers of themselves (in classical tradition the red-and-white botanical in the netherworld offers up its edible seeds to Proserpina, while in Christian tradition Christ in the netherworld offers up his red blood and white body to the saints).<sup>231</sup> These are not coincidences, nor are they forced connections; they suggest an organic and generous give-and-take between pagan fable and Christian narrative.

Clearly, then, there was a continuing awareness in the Middle Ages among the educated clergy that Narcissus was a pagan figure who had been resurrected in a decidedly Christ-like fashion; the only difference was that this had happened in the rosy-tinted world of fable and not in human history. To prevent knowledge of these parallels from becoming dangerously common, Bersuire's commentary takes certain precautions. Although Narcissus was easily the most famous character from Ovid in medieval literature—*The Romance of the Rose* claims that Narcissus' 'spring beneath a pine-tree' has been 'spoken of...in many places, in books and romances'—Bersuire's

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<sup>228</sup> See illustration 17 in Paul Hulton and Lawrence Smith, *Flowers in Art from East and West* (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1979), 19.

<sup>229</sup> Helene P. Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 34.

<sup>230</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.509ff. Reynolds, 'The *Ovidius Moralizatus*', 194; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, III.xi.

<sup>231</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima*, 7.55. Tertullian had claimed that when Christ was in the tomb he had descended deeper into hell and then deeper still into the bosom of Abraham 'that he might there make the patriarchs and prophets partakers of himself' which presumably imagines a kind of holy communion of red blood and white bread happening in the depths of the earth (*ibid.*, 7.55).

commentary accords him the tiniest entry.<sup>232</sup> This is in stark contrast to the endless ingenuity of some of the entries, which devise negative (*in malo*) interpretations one minute, and positive (*in bono*) ones the next, until it is increasingly hard to single out which of the readings of the fable are merely for the vulgar congregation and which ones would accord with the more privileged understanding of the preachers. The entry on Narcissus is not only short, but it is merely negative (*in malo*), and so played into the hands of later Protestant emblem writers and propagandists.<sup>233</sup> However, the original Catholic monks who read this text would have understood that Bersuire had deliberately left out the opposite more positive (*in bono*) reading.

That the monks would have been in a position to restore this missing interpretation is, of course, unprovable, since it was never committed to writing. However, it is worth bearing in mind the possibility that such an interpretative tradition existed since it would be in keeping with what is known of monastic forms of herbal knowledge. Scholars have stressed that there were such traditions that had been discreetly passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth.<sup>234</sup>

It is possible to extrapolate from Bersuire's text the kind of counter-tradition concerning Narcissus that could have persisted among a privileged few with access to monastic oral tradition. If such a tradition existed, it would have recognised that Narcissus was one of a number of hermaphroditic young men who died for love, sometimes even in a similar spring of love or pity (the two terms are used interchangeably in the period).<sup>236</sup> One by one Bersuire links these Ovidian hermaphroditic heroes to Christ, then reaches Narcissus and

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<sup>232</sup> Frances Horgan (trans.), *Romance of the Rose*, 23, 25.

<sup>233</sup> Mason Tung, 'From Personifications to emblems: Peacham's use of Ripa in *Minerva Britannia*' in *The English Emblem and the Continental Tradition*, ed. Peter M. Daly (New York: AMS Press, 1988), 109-50, 124: The connection of Narcissus with self-love was more easily assimilated into Protestant discourse than more sacred associations with self-knowledge. Henry Peacham emphasises the self-love of Narcissus by referring 'the reader in a marginal note to Andrea Alciato's "Philautia" [Self-love] (no. 69) where it is represented by the traditional Narcissus' looking at his head and neck in a brook (ibid., 124). See also Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems*, 1586, Ed. Henry Green (1866; repr. New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1971), 149; Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems in The English Emblem Tradition*, ed. Peter M. Daly et al., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), vol. 1, 244.

<sup>234</sup> See Anne Van Van Arsdall 'Evaluating the Content of Medieval Herbals' in *Critical Approaches to the History of Western Medicine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 57; See also Anne Van Arsdall, *Medieval Herbal Remedies: The Old English Herbarium and Anglo-Saxon Medicine* (London: Routledge, 2002), 85.

<sup>236</sup> Frances Horgan (trans.), *The Romance of the Rose*, 23, 25. The words love and pity were alternately used to translate 1 Corinthians 13:13.

stops short. However, there is no longer any reason that Narcissus should not be restored to the company of Christ-like martyrs for love. According to monastic tradition, the company included Musaeus' Leander, Theocritus' and Virgil's Daphnis, and, according to Bersuire's commentary, it also included Ovid's Pyramus, Adonis, Hippolytus and Hermaphroditus. In fact, this last character is especially useful when it comes to recovering the positive (*in bono*) reading of the fable of Narcissus:

Hermaphroditus the son of Mercury can figure the Son of God, beautiful beyond all else, who decided to leave his own country—that is Paradise—and go to other places—that is the world and there to wash in the water...he descended into the spring of pity.<sup>237</sup>

Clearly, this comment could equally apply to Narcissus who, the commentary implies, returned through the spring of love to the classical Elysian fields beneath the earth. All these hermaphroditic figures, renouncing love and dying for love, were understood in the Middle Ages as pagan prototypes for Christ, and were celebrated for the same reasons in the Elizabethan era. Narcissus, however, was the best pagan analogue for Christ, and that is why both Marlowe's Leander and Shakespeare's Adonis are explicitly and implicitly compared to Narcissus in the fabulous verse narratives to be examined in later chapters.

Shakespeare's most celebrated description of daffodils comes in *The Winter's Tale*:

Daffadils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty.<sup>238</sup>

In these lines Shakespeare arguably encompasses both kinds of 'daffadils', Pliny's fabled 'red' winter daffodil and the 'golden' spring daffodil. Anyone who knew of the monastic tradition supplemented by Pliny's *Natural History* would

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<sup>237</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 213-4; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IIII.viii; Henry Hawkins, *The Devout Heart*, dedication, 4; Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.3.449.

<sup>238</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.116-20.

understand why Shakespeare claims that daffodils are able to come in the dead of winter long before the swallows arrive *and* to blossom in March when they arrive. According to this argument, the word 'daffodils' encompasses the two kinds in Pliny, which are included one after another in the two consecutive clauses. This covert syntax implies that Pliny's fabled blood-red daffodil came to the surface of the earth in the midwinter long before the advent of the swallow but is now hidden deep under the earth. This fabled blood-red flower might be expected to possess first-hand knowledge of these powers, since, according to Virgil's cosmology, it shares lodgings with the wind-god Aeolus in his cave of winds in the middle of the earth.<sup>239</sup> However, Shakespeare's second clause implies that Pliny's leaf-bearing daffodils, as 'similitudes' of the blood-red kind, are not without some knowledge of how to 'take' (or 'bewitch') the winds. As late as the eighteenth century, Dorothy and William Wordsworth ascribe daffodils powers over divine winds through covert allusion to other classical sources. The 'nodding' or 'glancing' that they associate with daffodils was intended to evoke the 'nodding' or 'glancing' of divine heads associated with corn and ambrosia, which send windy shockwaves through the natural world in classical descriptions.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*, 1.52-54

<sup>240</sup> Dorothy and William Wordsworth encountered the daffodils on the western shore of Ullswater on 15 April 1802. William's poem describes how 'The waves besides them danced, but they/Outdid the sparkling waves in glee' which seems to have a hidden rhyme of 'dancing' and 'glancing' hidden in its shift from 'dancing' to 'sparkling.' This association is more explicitly articulated in Dorothy's entry in her journal: 'I never saw daffodils so beautiful, they grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon the over the lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing.' This contrast of drooping heads and glancing is present in an ironic speech in Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part 2*: 'Why droops my lord, like over-ripened corn/Hanging the head at Ceres' plenteous load?.../We'll both together lift our heads to heaven/And never more abase our sight so low/As to vouchsafe one glance unto the ground.' (Shakespeare, *Henry IV Part 2*, 1.2.1-2, 13-16). This speech is ironic because the nodding head of Ceres was not a sign of submission but a sign that elemental power was being unleashed. Ovid described the divine 'nodding' or 'glancing' of Ceres that sends shock-waves through the corn: 'That most lovely goddess/Assented and the teeming countryside,/Laden with harvest, trembled at her nod./A punishment she planned most piteous...' (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 8.780-2, translated by A. D. Melville). This idea of the divine nod or glance associated with corn can be traced back to Homer's description of the divine nod or glance of Zeus associated with ambrosia (Homer, *Iliad*, 1.528-530). Interestingly, this classical moment also seems to have drawn the attention of other poets of the time (Cf. Byron, 'The Destruction of Sennacherib', 23-4; William Cowper, 'Truth', 242-243; and S.T. Coleridge, 'Kubla Khan', 50.). However, the main point here is that William Wordsworth 'daffodils' poem, which is not usually understood as containing sacred meaning, is covertly ascribing to daffodils divine powers associated with corn or ambrosia in ancient texts.

### iii.) Botanic Surrogates linked with the Proserpina Fable

By an odd literary conceit, the 'peering' epithet of the daffodils is transferred to Perdita's face in the sheep-shearing scene.<sup>241</sup> This is the first of many indications that the scene is engaging with the competing traditions surrounding the Proserpina fable, which, again, was associated with ancient mystery religion. Shakespeare's scene in which Perdita presides like a 'pranked-up' pagan 'goddess' over a dance of shaggy-footed satyrs can seem to recall Christopher Marlowe's description of ancient mysteries involving 'gawdie Nymphes' gathering together 'Ixion's shaggy-footed race.'<sup>242</sup> Amid all this revelry, the 'peering' epithet that moments before was exclusive to daffodils is transferred to the 'peering' face of this more 'lowly' version of the 'goddess' 'Flora.'<sup>243</sup> The logic behind this transferred epithet seems ultimately to derive from the eighth line of the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, the earliest surviving literary version of the Proserpina fable. The classicist Helene Foley has argued that Proserpina is described as having a 'flowerlike face' [Greek: καλυκώπιδι 'having a face like a blooming flower'] in this poem in order to link her with the flowers she gathers, especially the 'daffodil' [Greek: νάρκισσόν 'narcissus'] in the same line.<sup>244</sup> This is the covert way in which the Homeric hymn implies that this is no ordinary kind of daffodil but one whose colours accord with the fair and rosy complexion of Proserpina. By the same logic, Perdita is 'peering' because she is like the 'peering' daffodils.<sup>245</sup> However, Autolycus cannot have been using the 'peering' epithet to describe the ordinary kind of daffodil because when it is ascribed to Perdita's face it does not seem to bring with it any trace of a yellowish hue. Florizel prays that Perdita's face 'darken not/The mirth o'the feast' saying 'let's be red with mirth', and Perdita is certainly that, since throughout the scene she resembles a 'prank'd up', 'gawdy', 'painted' nymph, whose 'blush' and 'blushes', reveal a 'face of fire.'<sup>246</sup>

<sup>241</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.3; 4.3.1, 3-4.

<sup>242</sup> Christopher Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.114-7.

<sup>243</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.9; 4.4.2-3.

<sup>244</sup> Foley, *Homeric Hymn*, 34.

<sup>245</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.3; 4.3.1, 3-4.

<sup>246</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.41-2, 4.4.54, 4.4.10; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.114-7; Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.101; 4.4.12; 4.4.67.4.4.60.

It seems, then, that the purpose of the 'peering' epithet is to link Perdita with Proserpina and the flowers she gathers.<sup>247</sup> However, it is presumably not to be taken literally when it implies that she has been gathering the 'peering' flowers.<sup>248</sup> As 'mistress of the feast', Perdita is perfectly capable of gathering a 'race or two of ginger' for her baking or the 'shaggy-footed race' for the dancing.<sup>249</sup> Strictly speaking, though, no one would expect her to gather the 'race' [Greek: *ρίζης* 'root'] of the fabled daffodil described in *The Hymn to Demeter*, as it is not available in sheep-shearing time.<sup>250</sup> The same is true for the other red and white kind: 'Of that kind', Perdita says, 'our rustic garden's barren; and I care not/To get slips of them.'<sup>251</sup> She would much rather petition 'Warden' Abbey for apples which the monks have already gathered from their orchards and laid out in their fortified barns and warehouses (in his eagerness to name the monastic origin of the apples Shakespeare momentarily forgets his Bohemian setting).<sup>252</sup> However, if the fool encounters a pedlar on the way to the Abbey, so much the better.<sup>253</sup>

The pedlar Autolycus is described as singing over his goods 'as [if] they were gods', even chanting over a lady's 'smock' as if it 'were a she-angel.'<sup>254</sup> If Autolycus really does sing everything he sells, it raises the possibility that his sow-skin pack might be full of impossible things, like daffodils out of season. He keeps hopes evergreen, suggesting that he is a lucky sprite, like a Chimney-sweeper, or Grim the Collier, and it is no accident that some of the earliest descriptions of Father Christmas describe him as 'a pedlar just opening his pack.'<sup>255</sup> The same source describes him 'tarnished with ashes and soot' which

<sup>247</sup> Foley, *Homeric Hymn*, 34.

<sup>248</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.3; 4.3.1, 3-4.

<sup>249</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.3.40, 4.4.68, 4.3.47; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.114-7.

<sup>250</sup> N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 96 cf. 146 n.12: According to Richardson the 'hundred heads' of the 'daffodil' that Proserpina gathers are a sign that it is 'a divine flower' (ibid., 146 n.12).

<sup>251</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.83-5.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 4.3.45.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., *Winter's Tale*, 4.3.44.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.210, 211.

<sup>255</sup> Clement C. Moore, 'A Visit from Saint Nicholas'. This nineteenth-century poem paradoxically shares some of Shakespeare sources and can therefore be seen to rework some of the same material that Shakespeare is reworking in *The Winter's Tale*. On close inspection, it draws on the same kinds of classical learning for the Ovidian catalogue of reindeer that resembles the catalogue of Actaeon's hounds in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.204-224 (Moore, 'A Visit', 21-2). It also draws on the same kind of oral tradition for the idea that just as chimney-sweepers come to dust and are blown to the winds as dandelion seeds, this chimney-visitor comes to 'ashes and soot' and vanishes like the 'down of a thistle' (Ibid., 34, 60). It describes Father Christmas as an 'elf' who 'looked like a peddler just opening his pack' (Ibid., 45, 36). Critics have noted that



hides 'cheeks like roses' and a 'beard like snow', and it may be that Autolycus, like Perdita, also shared the face of the red-and-white daffodil.<sup>256</sup> Alternatively, the presence of such improbable wares in the billowing bladder of his pack, may have been advertised by the usual red and white spots (making it like traditional depictions of Dick Whittington's bundle). At the end of the day, Autolycus' bundle is not so different from the bundle in which Perdita is found. It contains what seems to be a bastard son or 'natural daughter' because it has no obvious father and is the offspring of Nature (whom, in his commentary on the Hermaphroditus fable, Bersuire identifies as the 'Blessed Virgin', a reading by no means incompatible with the saintly descriptions of Perdita's mother in the play).<sup>257</sup> This is the precise nature of the dramatic irony that Rebecca Bushnell admires in the gillyvor speech which Nicki Faircloth and Vivian Thomas have persuasively called the 'the most significant botanical exchange in Shakespeare.'<sup>258</sup> Perdita cannot see that she is Nature's bastard as surely as the red flower of which she so violently disapproves: they are made of the same 'red clay' and will both rise from the same 'red clay' on the day of reckoning.<sup>259</sup> Since the discussion of this fabled flower of the incarnation was hedged around by all kinds of injunctions, largely monastic in origin, the red and white painted face of Perdita and the red and white carnations stand in as convenient 'similitudes' to undermine her argument.

In Perdita's conjuration for the flowers that Proserpina gathered, pride of place is given to daffodils:

O Proserpina,  
For the flow'rs now, that frighted, thou let'st fall  
From Dis's wagon! Daffadils...<sup>260</sup>

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Autolycus resembled an 'elf' like Robin Goodfellow, but he equally resembles this 'elf.' (Ibid., 45).

<sup>256</sup> Clement C. Moore, 'A Visit from Saint Nicholas', 36, 38, 40.

<sup>257</sup> Reynolds, 'The *Ovidius Moralizatus*', 213-4; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IIII.viii.

<sup>258</sup> Rebecca Bushnell, *Green Desire: Imagining Early Modern English Gardens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 150-1; Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 7.

<sup>259</sup> The substance of Genesis 2:7 and 1 Corinthians 15:49 is the 'red clay' that gives Adam his Hebrew name and Christ his 'heaven's eternal mould'. Further discussion of this will follow in the final chapter.

<sup>260</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.116-20.

This is the start of a catalogue of flowers which includes many Marian flowers ('the Virgin was also seen as a lily and a violet') but is nonetheless firmly rooted in classical tradition (for example, 'in Sicilian and Alexandrian [pagan] sources Proserpina is more usually picking violets and lilies [than the original daffodil]').<sup>261</sup> Shakespeare could have gone to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for details of the flowers that Proserpina gathered but his catalogue does not correspond to the list in Ovid. Instead, like Chaucer before him, Shakespeare had recourse to Claudian's *The Rape of Proserpina*.<sup>262</sup> He had engaged with Claudian's work before earlier in his career. In *Romeo and Juliet*, he had included translations of Claudian's *Panegyric on the Emperor Honorius* in his visionary Queen Mab speech. Similarly, he furnished Friar Lawrence with an 'osier cage' for his 'baleful weeds and precious-juicèd flowers', to echo Claudian who had furnished Proserpina with 'vimine texto...calathos' ['baskets, osier-woven'] for gathering Pliny's flower with the two varieties.<sup>263</sup> In *The Rape of Proserpina*, Claudian specifies that this daffodil is 'now in the pride of spring' to acknowledge that the red and white incarnation of this flower was at other times 'the pride' of winter. One critic has noted that the daffodil operates as 'a kind of "Open Sesame"', 'the key that opens the earth, revealing the underworld, and its hidden treasures' which are the glistening edible pomegranate seeds heralded by another version of that red and white flower.<sup>264</sup> Another critic has pointed out that it all begins when Proserpina is 'playing with girlfriends, [and] reaches out to pick the narcissus. By this act, she sets in motion a narrative that ends when she returns from the Underworld to her mother [Demeter], having eaten pomegranate seed.'<sup>265</sup> According to this reading, although Claudian's version of the narrative has come down to posterity as incomplete, it is clear that the golden daffodil above the ground would have found its counterpart below in the red and white pomegranate flower. Incidentally, this is the flower to which Adonis' flower is compared by the Ovidian source for Shakespeare's

<sup>261</sup> Goody, *Culture of Flowers*, 156; Claudian, *De Raptu Proserpinae*, ed. Claire Gruzelier (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 191.

<sup>262</sup> Chaucer, 'The Merchant's Tale', 2232 in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 166.

<sup>263</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.3.7,8. See Claudian, *Works*, trans. Maurice Platnauer (London: William Heinemann, 1921), vol. 2, 329, 2.138-9. For the other epithet associated with these baskets, 'laughing', ['ridentes'] see Claire Gruzelier (ed.), *De Raptu Proserpinae*, 192, 138f. n. She argues that the 'gay riot of flowers' is imagined as pleasing to the baskets and affects their mood, making them laugh (Ibid., 192, 138 f n.).

<sup>264</sup> Richardson, *Homeric Hymn*, 144.

<sup>265</sup> Ann Suter, *The Narcissus and the Pomegranate* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 25.

'Venus and Adonis.' Not only that, Peter Daly has pointed out that according to a conventional emblematic reading the pomegranate was also the forbidden fruit of Eden.<sup>266</sup> It is starting to seem unequivocal: just as in the pagan tradition the pomegranate flower was alternated with the Narcissus, in the Christian tradition the forbidden fruit was counterpoised by the fruit of the cross.<sup>267</sup> This is the idea that will be developed in the next section.

#### iv.) Botanical Surrogates as a Mess or Mass

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<sup>266</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10.735-7, See Peter M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem* (Toronto: University of Toronto, second edition, 1998), 105 which argues that the link between 'the fall of man' and the 'pomegranate' is 'a mainstream emblematic interpretation'. He also discusses a continental tradition in which a 'split pomegranate is used as a hieroglyphic of the emblem of the crown of thorns, which is itself emblematic of Christ's suffering and redemption: "A fruit which breaks open its breast and offers its entrails deserves to be crowned." In itself the pomegranate might well function as an emblem, since the meaning of "sacrifice" can be read out of certain facts concerning the form and quality of the fruit.' (Ibid., 94).

<sup>267</sup> It should not be surprising if Perdita's isolated invocation of Proserpina's flowers has wider significance for understanding the way that Shakespeare's tragicomedy is built around two distinct settings. After all, the Proserpina fable had also used flowers to chart a journey between one world and the next. If the Proserpina allusion is understood in isolation, the play has an unsolved mystery identified by Alfred Thomas:

Why does Shakespeare invert the setting of Robert Greene's romance *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time* (1588) to make Antigonus flee with Perdita from Sicilia to Bohemia rather than the other way round? (Alfred Thomas, *Shakespeare, Dissent and the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 187)

When the Proserpina allusion is applied to the wider play, according to Stephen Orgel, a solution to the mystery presents itself:

If Shakespeare took the Proserpina story as an underlying fable for the play, rather than as a mere local allusion, it would explain why he switched the locations he found in *Pandosto*, so that Perdita's return...would be to Sicily, not to Bohemia, and would thus be true to the myth. (Stephen Orgel (ed.), *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), introduction 45-6)

Finally, the local allusion to Proserpina also has a more immediate significance for the scene in which it appears:

Through her identification with plants and the growth of plants in a seasonal cycle, Persephone [i.e. Proserpina] is also, mythically speaking, an appropriate spouse for an underworld god, for the seed with which she is identified in later myth and cult disappears and reappears from beneath the ground. (Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 34.)

This indicates that Perdita is both the mother and spouse of the red and white Narcissus who disappeared into the underworld and reappeared from beneath the ground (and she eats 'seeds of his spirit', just as women initiates in ancient mystery religion were said to eat their own children). (Cf. Galatians 6:8 (Geneva))<sup>267</sup> Similarly, she is the mother or spouse of the red and white Christ-child who, according to the medieval *Credo*, descended into hell and rose from the dead (and who is eaten in the rites of the mass).

Autolycus' song, which includes the first mention of daffodils in the play, draws a link between flowers and feasting that is developed in the sheep-shearing scene immediately after it. According to Autolycus, 'when daffodils begin to peer...Why then comes in the sweet of the year, for the red blood reigns in the winter's pale.'<sup>268</sup> It is usually assumed that the 'sweet of the year' is a sentimental Elizabethan way of referring to spring and that the 'daffodils' are therefore Pliny's 'golden' kind, while the spring's 'red blood' is *reining in* the winter's pale. However, there is nothing in the textual tradition to support this reading of 'reins in' for 'reigns'. This study will suggest that on this occasion Shakespeare's Autolycus is describing the fabled daffodil of Pliny. It is the 'blood-red' flower that *reigns* supreme 'in the winter's pale' when there are no other flowers to challenge its rule. According to this reading, the 'sweet of the year' is the *dessert* that 'comes in' after all the other courses, or feast days in the ritual year. This reading is supported by the way that Shakespeare uses the word in *Richard II* and elsewhere (and is reflected in Midlands dialect to this day).<sup>269</sup>

The most important botanic discourse in Shakespeare's work is introduced as a 'feast' in which 'every mess' will have its due season: first should be served the starter of spring, and then the main course of middle summer, and 'then comes in the sweet of the year.'<sup>270</sup> Perdita's conceit is a sacred one, of seasons in the ritual year in which the feast days are the courses that are rounded off with a redemptive dessert. It is Polixenes and Camillo who misunderstand 'every mess' as referring to the secular 'ages of man' ending in 'mere oblivion.'<sup>271</sup> Although it is not what she meant, Perdita politely humours them ('these are flowers/Of middle summer....and, I *think* they are given/To men of middle age' [my italics]).<sup>272</sup>

The usual scenario was that after the 'Mistress of the Feast' had 'welcom'd all' she 'serv'd all' the food; in this scenario, after Perdita has

<sup>268</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.3.1, 3-4.

<sup>269</sup> William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, ed. Charles R Forker, London: Arden Shakespeare, 2002, 2.1.12-3: 'The setting sun and music at the close,/As the last taste of sweets, is sweetest last.' Given that Gaunt speaks these lines shortly before his death, they may possibly bring with them associations with the Catholic sacrament of extreme unction. However, on a more literal level he is clearly discussing the 'dessert' and the reason it is at the end of the meal.

<sup>270</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 7; Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.3.1, 3-4.

<sup>271</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 2.7.140-166; 2.7.16.

<sup>272</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.106-8.

'welcom'd all', , she serves some of them only 'flowers.'<sup>273</sup> She is like a Shepherdess who teaches that her flock 'should leave grazing' and 'only live by gazing' if they want to have 'abundance' (Cf. Matthew 13:12).<sup>274</sup> Alternatively, she is like the beggar or the courtier in the Arabian tale that lies behind the induction to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, presiding over an imaginary, Barmecide feast. Whether it is understood as a biblical parable, or Arabian tale, or just plain English nonsense, Perdita offers a menu made up not of food but of flowers. To be more precise, she leaves out the food and includes the herbal garnishes. She presents it as a foolish party-game, which the locals know of old, which calls upon the guests to suspend their disbelief and pretend to eat flowers, until such time as they have worked out the riddle: 'Our feasts/In every mess have folly, and the feeders/Digest it with a custom.'<sup>275</sup> An alternative interpretation of these lines might suggest that the flower feast is necessary precisely because the culinary feast to come is garnished with 'idle and foolish' plants in keeping with the May Day traditions.<sup>276</sup> By stalling with this flower game, Perdita is thus trying to ascertain whether the strangers are too puritanical to appreciate such a menu. Clearly, in a religious climate when 'it was even thought wrong [by some people] to stick a piece of rosemary in the joint of meat when it was brought to the table' such precautions may have been necessary with urbane strangers.<sup>277</sup> It is notable that, having gauged their reaction to 'rosemary', Perdita proceeds to other plants. All the herbs she mentions, including the 'carnations', had been used to spice feasts before the reformation, and any of them could potentially have met with uncertain reactions in this time of religious change.

There is one final puzzle to be solved: Perdita proffers 'the flowers of winter' first, which should properly only be served when the feasts are drawing to the close 'and the year growing ancient.'<sup>278</sup> They represent the 'sweet' or 'afters' but they are brought in *before* the 'flowers of middle summer' (the main

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<sup>273</sup> This depends on a Catholic pun whereby a 'feast' day could mean a holy day or the day of the holy meal. The first time that the audience hear that Perdita is 'mistress of the feast, and she lays it on' it exclusively means that she is in charge of the food, but when they are reminded that she is 'mistress of the feast', it suddenly seems to mean that she is in charge of the flowers (Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.3.40, 4.4.68).

<sup>274</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.108-9

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.4.10-12

<sup>276</sup> Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole*, 300.

<sup>277</sup> See Thomas, *Natural World*, 78.

<sup>278</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.79.

course) and the 'flowers of the spring' (the starter).<sup>279</sup> she allows these guests to skip to the dessert, since these winter herbs have more 'savour.' As they puzzle over this riddle, Polixenes and Camillo come to the conclusion that the peasants are being 'rude' and implying that their palates have reached the final age of man 'sans taste.'<sup>280</sup> But the real reason Perdita begins by offering the winter plants is that they are 'golden' (i.e. evergreen) 'similitudes' for the 'red and white' flower. Rue was called 'Herb of Grace' because it 'revealed God by similitude', or, more accurately, by the signature of the cross on its seed which foretold of the winter rebirth of the fruit of the cross from seed. Rosemary was called 'British frankincense' because it 'revealed God by similitude' or, more precisely, by the 'savour' that it kept safe until such time when it would witness the rebirth of Christ in the dead of winter and have need of the 'gift of frankincense' all over again. Both, then, are herbs that are present at feasts throughout the year and so have privileged knowledge of the desserts to come that round off the year. Both herbs know what comes next, and it is a red and white mess. The history of red and white messes or desserts in Britain traditionally begins with the Benedictine monks of Tavistock Abbey and their prototype of the Devon Cream tea (red strawberries and white cream), but also includes what is still called 'Eton Mess' (red strawberries and white cream).<sup>281</sup> It is possible that the red and white colours of these monastic-style recipes are the way that they reveal 'God by means of similitude'.<sup>282</sup> However, no evidence for this survives in written records, and the traditions linking these red and white messes with the mass are merely suggestive.

Perdita hints that May Day is a time when 'every mess' might be passed through at once to the herbs of winter, appropriate to the final 'mess' of the year or the evening, the red and white 'mess.' This, of course, stands for the 'Christ-mess' or '-mas.' In Old Testament terms, in this liminal time of carnival, the mass consists of 'the fairest flowers o' th' season' (2:1), the red and white (5:10) flower of the Song of Solomon.<sup>283</sup> In New Testament terms, the mass consists of the flower or fruit of the cross since, as Perdita explicitly says, 'our feasts/In

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 4.4.113.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 4.4.75

<sup>281</sup> The link between the cream tea and Tavistock Abbey, Devon, is a local tradition rather than a substantiated historical fact, but the tradition itself is suggestive.

<sup>282</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture*, 72.

<sup>283</sup> Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 2.7.167 Cf. Autolycus' phrase a 'dish for a king' or the boar's head carol's phrase 'the fairest dish in all the land.'

every mess have folly' or the 'foolish thing of God.'<sup>284</sup> In classical terms, it is a rite that contains Pliny's 'blood-red' daffodils in white milk. In indigenous British terms, it is a rite that contains the red-and-white 'May' that under the similitudes of 'carnations and streak'd gillyvors' stand in for the conspicuously absent May Pole in Shakespeare's scene.

Perdita, like the educated friars, is aware that at the liminal time of May, 'not yet on summer's death nor on the birth of trembling winter', the year can provide this foretaste of 'the first fruits of those that lie dormant' (1 Corinthians 15:20): the 'blood-red' flower decorating the winter's 'pole' or 'pale' (or flavouring the 'curds and cream' of the winter's pail).<sup>285</sup> But Polixenes and Camillo, in the position of vulgar shepherds, are confused why, when they had hoped for a place at a 'Whitsun' feast they are presented with flowers appropriate for the *winter* of men's lives.<sup>286</sup> There is thus a discrepancy in understanding between the strangers, versed in court life, and the locals, steeped in the medieval customs.

Perdita has privileged knowledge that seasons that seem poles apart—lambing time and the feast of the nativity, sheep-shearing and the feast of the circumcision—could converge on the axis of the monastic calendar.<sup>287</sup> Polixenes and Camillo are not to know that this trick of the ritual year probably also explained the biblical *non sequitur* that the shepherd's spring gift of a lamb is able to coincide with God's winter gift of Christ. Shakespeare includes both explanations, the educated and the vulgar, in his play. Where the educated medieval monks had known that 'Time' could 'slide' from May Day to a Winter Feast 'and leave the growth untri'd/Of that wide gap,' the vulgar had been told in answer to their queries that the presence of a lamb at the nativity must have got into the bible through some miscalculation in 'the shepherd's note.'<sup>288</sup>

The concept that the magi's winter herbs might add spice to a shepherd's spring gift and 'natural vermilion clothe the grazing lambs' is already present in

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<sup>284</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.10-11.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.4.113, 4.4.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.4.134

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, 201ff.

<sup>288</sup> William Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.1.4-7; 4.4.113, 1.2.1. Ovid's phrase describing the months of Callisto's pregnancy 'orbe resurgebant lunaria cornua nono' (2.453) is reworked as Shakespeare's phrase 'nine changes of the watery star/Have been the shepherds note.' (2.1.1) Later, though, the shepherd admits that he has no use for 'dates', they are 'out of his note' (4.3.46). This curious comic echo of the earlier tragic line is perhaps intended to suggest the way that the Feast of May Day can be collapsed into the Feast of the Nativity.

Virgil's *Eclogues*.<sup>289</sup> The concept was also a carnivalesque element in the ritual year before the reformation 'o'erwhelm[ed] the custom.'<sup>290</sup> In *The Winter's Tale*, Perdita has been brought up in a community that lets things 'slide' back to the old ways, and skip straight to dessert. As the 'simples' reveal God by 'similitude', 'the 'final course' can turn out to be a floral 'corse' spread out on a 'bank' for 'love to banquet royally.'<sup>291</sup> Food may have its 'savour', but it is nothing to the 'spicy' flower of the 'incarnacyon' itself: the red blood and white body of the Christ-child.<sup>292</sup>

### Plants with Sexual Associations

The anti-popery associated with the suppression of idolatrous plant-names is enacted in an appropriation in *Hamlet*. The following lines tend to be read independently of the debate and so taken as a charming poetical conceit:

Long purples

That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,  
But our culcold maids do dead men's fingers call them.<sup>293</sup>

However, these lines represent an appropriation of the rhetoric of naming in John Gerard's *Herball* by Shakespeare, literally evoking on stage the sections of Gerard's *Herball* that he includes under the subheading 'The Names.' The word 'culcold', of uncertain meaning, stands in for the adjectives Gerard uses to denote the 'occupational groups', 'national language groups' and 'regional' communities which he singles out in ascribing particular plant names.<sup>294</sup> So within the prose of Gerard it is possible to find the lines that motivated Shakespeare's echo:

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<sup>289</sup> Virgil, *Eclogues*, 5.36-7.

<sup>290</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.1.9.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.4.11, 4.4.130-1. The final point in this sentence depends upon the parallel structure of Shakespeare's phrase 'a bank for love to lie and play on' with Marlowe's phrase 'a brow for love to banquet royally.' (Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.130; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.86).

<sup>292</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.75.

<sup>293</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 4.7.168-70.

<sup>294</sup> Knight, *Books and Botany*, 86.



Usually of our English women it is called Ladies Laces, or Painted Grass.<sup>295</sup>

Leah Knight regards Gerard's mention in passing of plant-names ascribed to women as a reflection of the important role of women in the botanic culture of the early modern period.<sup>296</sup> This is a compelling way of reading such throw-away lines. Moreover, in this case, the mention of women also plays down the well-attested religious connotations of the name Gerard includes. According to Jack Goody, flowers said to belong to 'Ladies' were originally 'Our Lady's' but following the reformation such Catholic names became unacceptable.<sup>297</sup> It is interesting that another name for 'Ladies Laces' is 'Painted Grass' as many of these 'Lady' flowers can be seen to have a 'painted' quality, as if spotted, stained or dyed blood-red.<sup>298</sup> This is the case with many plants, for example, Lady's bedstraw, a relative of madder which historically was used to make cheese red, and it is also the case with an insect like the 'Lady bird' (which in German is also the *Marien käfer* or 'Mary Beetle').<sup>299</sup> Why the epithet 'Our Lady' might designate this stained quality is no longer clear. Goody gives 'Our Lady's laces' as the original Catholic name for stranglewort or dodder which suggests that Gerard may have had some qualms about including it.<sup>300</sup> His way around this is to ascribe this widespread medieval folk name to a regional community of women who cannot be expected to exercise judgement in naming. In fact, the way that he includes it implies that the 'English women' themselves are the 'ladies' and not Saint Mary the Virgin at all.

The general assumption is still that the 'grosser name' is a sexual name. As there were a great number of colourful sexual names for orchids in the period (priest's pintle [i.e. penis], fox stones [i.e. testicles], fool's stones, *testiculus morionis* [Morion's testicles] etc.), alternative possibilities are never

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<sup>295</sup> Gerard, *Herball*, 25.

<sup>296</sup> Knight, *Books and Botany*, 86.

<sup>297</sup> Goody, *Culture of Flowers*, 156.

<sup>298</sup> See Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 28.

<sup>299</sup> See, for example, William Milliken and Sam Bridgewater, *Flora Celtica* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2004), 65, 177. This describes the traditional use of lady's bedstraw for dyeing cheese and wool in the British Isles. The name Lady's Bedstraw was explained in the past as indicating that Saint Mary the Virgin had used the plant to fill Christ's manger; it may be that the flaming red colour of the maternal ladybird gave rise to the popular apotropaic rhyme that it's 'house is on fire', since presumably a ladybird's house would resemble it in some way.

<sup>300</sup> Goody, *Culture of Flowers*, 156.

considered.<sup>301</sup> However, it is undeniable that it was names that included a religious element (such as *testiculus morionis*, suggestive of the *moron* or ‘the foolish thing of god’), and religious names (such as *palma Christi*), that could potentially have been regarded as much more provocative in the period. Shakespeare’s phrase ‘liberal shepherds’ [Latin: pastor] looks back uncertainly to his use of the phrase ‘ungracious pastors’ earlier in the play and raises the possibility that he is talking about religious names: are these *pastors* giving it a grosser name to hide an original sacred name or is the name gross because it savours of the old religion? The word ‘liberal’ might also look back to Gerard. His plant-writing reveals a shift from a medieval view that flowers teach a story of redemption to a view that they can ‘fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline’ like Spenser’s Protestant allegory.<sup>302</sup> Protestants remained so suspicious of ‘papists giving names to herbs for their virtues sake, not for their fair looks’ that they reversed the logic, suggesting that ‘fair looks’ were some kind of ‘virtue.’<sup>303</sup> Gerard claims ‘fair looks’ or ‘comeliness’ as a ‘virtue’ alongside ‘honestie’, despite the fact that elsewhere he admits that ‘when we say in English, He is an honest man, our meaning is, he is a knave.’<sup>304</sup> Whether or not Shakespeare counted honesty as a virtue with Gerard, he undermines the glib use of ‘honourable’ and ‘honest’ in *Julius Caesar* and *Othello*.<sup>305</sup> Gerard’s concept of virtues (‘airs and graces’) stand in stark contrast to the very real virtues (‘therapeutic powers’) that Shakespeare would have known were advertised in a name like ‘herb of grace.’ Gerard argues that plants ‘bring to a liberall and gentlemanly minde, the remembrance of...all kindes of virtues’ and as a consequence it will shun the ‘filthie.’<sup>306</sup> In Shakespeare, however, the ‘liberall’ minds bestow the ‘grosser’ names,

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<sup>301</sup> James Heath, *Ophelia’s Gifts and Garland Flowers*, 23, 31, 50. Heath cites the earliest gloss on ‘long purples’ by Johnson and Steevens from 1772 who aver that ‘testiculus morionis’ is ‘the grosser name by which it is sufficiently known in many parts of England and particularly in the county where Shakespeare lived.’ If this is the ‘grosser name’ Shakespeare had in mind, it would not be surprising for it to have an alternative religious name’ since *morion*, as has been seen, has sacred resonances.

<sup>302</sup> Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, letter to Raleigh

<sup>303</sup> Culpeper, *English Physitian*, s.v. ‘Angelica’.

<sup>304</sup> Gerard, *Herball*, 43.

<sup>305</sup> See Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, 3.2.83, 84, 88, 95, 100, 125, 128, 207, 209; Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.3.295 etc. See William Empson, ‘Honest in Othello’ in *The Structure of Complex Words* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951), 218: ‘Most people would agree with what Bradley, for example, implied, that the way everybody calls Iago honest amounts to a criticism of the word itself’.

<sup>306</sup> Gerard, *Herball*, 312.

suggesting that this take on Gerard's herbalist rhetoric may be motivated by satire.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* not only threatens to dig up 'grosser' flower names, it also buries Ophelia with offensive flower rituals. Ophelia is buried with 'virgin crants,/Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home/Of bell and burial.'<sup>307</sup> The use of the word 'crants' is clearly intended to have Catholic associations as a character called 'Rosencrantz' (meaning 'rosary') takes his place alongside characters named after Catholic saints in the play.<sup>308</sup> The use of the word 'bell' does not apply, as Harold Jenkins assumes, to knelling of the church bell, but to the maiden's garland itself, which usually took the shape of a bell.<sup>309</sup>

Medieval garlands were not necessarily the wreaths that might be imagined today. According to Simpson and Roud, they were bell-shaped and borne on a pole though the reason that they took this form remains obscure.<sup>310</sup> The most tenacious of these bell-shaped garlands was the 'knap' that capped a May-Pole.<sup>311</sup> Reformers made no secret of why they loathed the May-Pole: it was because it was an 'idol.'<sup>312</sup> This word was used in 1549 by a reforming curate of St Katherine's and in 1583 by Philip Stubbes in his *Anatomie of Abuses* and elsewhere.<sup>313</sup> Like Turner's mandrakes, May-Poles were also 'painted puppets.'<sup>314</sup> This clearly suggests their phallic quality, but the painted quality in itself was also offensive. It is likely that many sympathisers with reform would have struggled with the meretricious excesses of the May Games. Many would have struggled, for example, when Shakespeare's Perdita is 'goddess-

<sup>307</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.5.225-6.

<sup>308</sup> The play opens with the entrance of Francisco and Barnardo, suggesting saints Francis and Bernard respectively.

<sup>309</sup> Harold Jenkins (ed.), *Hamlet*, 5.1.227n.; Morris, Rosie, 'Maidens' Garlands: A Funeral Custom of Post-Reformation England' in *Cemeteries: Funerary Customs, Burial and Identity*, Eds. Chris King & Duncan Sayer, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010, 271-282, 273; Cf. Alfred Burton, *Rush-bearing* (Manchester: Brook & Chrystal, 1891), 91.

<sup>310</sup> Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary*, 227.

<sup>311</sup> For 'knap' see John Stow, *A Survey of London: Reprinted from the text of 1603*, ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 143. For a nineteenth-century definition see John Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. Henry Morley (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1890), 163 n.: 'Knap, knob or bunch of flowers on top of the May-Pole'

<sup>312</sup> See Thomas, *Natural World*, 78. In support of his comment that the May-Pole was perceived as idolatrous Thomas cites William Pryne, *Histrion-Mastix* (1633), 21; Gordon Huelin in *Guildhall Studies in London History*, iii, (1978), 168; John Stow, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster*, enlarged by John Strype, (1720), ii (2). 66; Thomas Hall, *Funebria Florae*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 1661.

<sup>313</sup> Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary*, 227.

<sup>314</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 121.

like pranked-up' like a painted carnation, sharing her 'piedness...with Great Creating Nature.'<sup>315</sup> Philip Stubbes, for one, objects to the way that both the virgins and the May-Pole were 'painted with variable colours', possibly because, rightly or wrongly, he believed that it reflected the 'vario tegmine' [variegated garments] of the pagan Goddess Nature.<sup>316</sup> Give a virgin a 'gillyvor' and, as far as Shakespeare was concerned, she was 'no shepherdess, but Flora', but give a virgin a May-Pole and, as far as reformers were concerned, she was in possession of 'a relique of the shameful worship of the Strumpet Flora in Rome.'<sup>317</sup> The sexual implications of this language suggest that reformers were responding to some perceived sexual symbolism behind the pole. If, as they claimed, the pole was a remnant of a pagan time when divinity was understood as immanent within nature, its close association with virgins dressed in white like multiple brides might suggest that it was partly imagined as a phallic substitute for their future bridegroom. This would not only explain the sexual attributions of Protestant attacks but also explain why it was seen as an 'idol' or 'dagon.'<sup>318</sup> However, historians have been reluctant to take reformers at their word when they insist that the May-Pole is an 'idol' and compilers of folklore are sceptical that the symbolism of the pole was merely phallic or even pagan, so there is much room for further debate.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.9, 10; 4.4.88-9.

<sup>316</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl, New York: Columbia University Press, 1951, 86 'Nature...has withheld an understanding of herself from the uncouth senses of men by enveloping herself in variegated garments'; Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionis*, 1.2.17: 'Naturae...vulgaribus hominum sensibus intellectum sui vario rerum tegmine operimentoque subtraxit'.

<sup>317</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.2; Walsham, *Landscape*, 121. 'Flora' is sometimes called 'Flora Meretrix' ['Flora the Prostitute'] in Renaissance texts.

<sup>318</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 121.

<sup>319</sup> For a useful summary of the scholarly debate, which is currently polarised between sacred and utilitarian interpretations, see Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 233-4. The sacred interpretation is much earlier, and it accounts for the disapproval of early anti-Catholic writers like Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) condemned the may-poles as relics of Priapus, the phallic god, but this association is not paralleled elsewhere. J. G. Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890) argued that it was a survival of tree-spirit worship, because it was sometimes presided over by effigies called may-dolls, but these are comparative latecomers to the tradition. Other scholars have suggested that the may-pole represents the world-tree or *axis mundi*, a concept described at the start of Della Hooke's *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England: Literature Lore and Landscape* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2010), 3. Mircea Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958), 309-13 has been evoked to suggest that the foliage on the may-pole may be what is sacred and represented the returning strength of vegetation. This shift in focus from the may-pole to the foliage has given scholars such as Ronald Hutton and Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud the confidence to take a utilitarian stance on the pole itself, seeing may-poles as 'useful' receptacles for hanging foliage. The sacred argument seems to imperfectly have grasped the details of what made may-poles 'idols', which is likely to have been the poles themselves rather than may-dolls or foliage, while the utilitarian argument also

When set against the backdrop of the idolatry debate, the presence of a 'bell-shaped' garland, a 'crants' or 'bell', at Ophelia's burial may not only have seemed inappropriate considering her self-slaughter but offensively popish. In 1617 an Essex lecturer would claim that even to 'put garlands of flowers on a hearse at a funeral was monstrous idolatry.'<sup>320</sup> Just as the bell-shaped 'knap' on the May-Pole was a floral symbol reserved for unmarried virgins in white bridal dresses, so the bell-shaped 'crants' on the coffin was only present in the absence of any bridegroom. It is not difficult to appreciate how this kind of garland became linked with the cult that celebrated the role of chastity in bringing a young woman closer to God, like the female saints who had been understood as 'brides of Christ.'<sup>321</sup> According to researcher Rosie Morris, even the presence of a bell-shaped crants on a coffin might seem heretical from an orthodox Protestant perspective because it affirmed those ideas that had sanctified maidens who died celibate.<sup>322</sup> As with the supernatural element in *Hamlet*, the flower references are delicately poised between the sacred or idolatrous.<sup>323</sup>

### Plants associated with Bodily Fluids

In the Middle Ages the medical attributes of lungwort were closely tied up with the bodily fluids of Saint Mary the Virgin. Anne-Marie Korte and Gary Waller have suggested that one reason that reformers were hostile to the medieval cult of the Virgin was because it became associated with miracles brought about by female bodies.<sup>324</sup> Lungwort can be understood in this context. It was variously described as having leaves stained with the Virgin's tears or breastmilk, side-products of her maternal love for the Christ-child. This resulted in vernacular

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fails to account for the recurring insistence that the pole is an 'idol' or 'ro[o]d.' The truth must lie somewhere between the two extreme positions. British scholarship may have to overcome its reluctance to take into account living may-pole traditions in other parts of the world such as Germany where the *maibaum* is still traditionally crafted and garlanded and still associated with 'bell-garlands' carried on poles in *mardi gras*-style carnivals.

<sup>320</sup> Thomas, *Natural World*, 78.

<sup>321</sup> Rosie Morris, 'Maidens' Garlands: A Funeral Custom of Post-Reformation England' in *Cemeteries: Funerary Customs, Burial and Identity*, eds. Chris King & Duncan Sayer (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 271-282, 278; Farmer, *Dictionary of Saints*, 81.

<sup>322</sup> Morris, , 'Maidens' Garlands', 271-282, 280.

<sup>323</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture*, 73.

<sup>324</sup> Gary Waller, *The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 178; Anne-Marie Korte, *Women and Miracle Stories: A Multidisciplinary Exploration* (London: Brill, 2003), 352-3.

names such as 'Mary's Tears', 'Mary-Spilt-the-Milk' and 'Virgin Mary's Milkdrops'.<sup>325</sup> The evidence that the leaves had therapeutic application to the lungs was the lung-like appearance which was a result of these signature blotches by which Saint Mary the Virgin was held to have changed the face of nature. Some notion of the way that the Virgin's milk was inextricably woven into the medieval universe can be gleaned from the use of the term 'milky way' to refer to the Walsingham pilgrims-route with reference to the phial of the Virgin's milk among the Walsingham relics and the band of light in the night's sky that guided pilgrims to it.<sup>326</sup>

Leah Knight's conclusion about Gerard's description of lungwort is that females, or at least a rural group of females, are not a legitimate authority on lungwort because of the kind of information that they are likely to have inherited concerning this plant.<sup>327</sup> She points out that Gerard is suspicious of their name for it to the point that he ultimately settles for a class-based name ('Clownes' lungwort) that demonstrates his contempt for the name and the healing properties.<sup>328</sup> The most likely reason for this is because of the myth and the other names that lay behind it. He associates it with women and then with peasants because he wishes to pour scorn on its superstitious associations:

There is nothing extant of the faculties hereof: Neither have we any thing of our owne experience; onely our countrey women do call it Lungwort, and do use it against the cough, and all other imperfections of the lungs: but what benefit they reape thereby I know not; neither can any of judgement give me further instructions thereof.<sup>329</sup>

When Gerard writes 'there is nothing extant of the faculties' he means that there is nothing within the narrow confines of the classical record and is ignoring a wealth of medieval traditional knowledge respecting lungwort and its use for respiratory problems. This is why it can be misleading to claim that a herbal like

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<sup>325</sup> Masha Bennet, *Pulmonarias and the Borage Family* (London: Batsford Ltd, 2003), 43; Grigson, *Englishman's Flora*, 282-3.

<sup>326</sup> Dominic James and Gary Waller (eds.), *Walsingham in Literature and Culture*, 75; see Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 132; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana Moraliter*, I.iii.

<sup>327</sup> Knight, *Books and Botany*, 87.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, 87. For Gerard's class contempt reflecting in his taxonomies see also Leah Knight, *Reading Green in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2014), 115-7, 123.

<sup>329</sup> Gerard, *Herball*, 1388.

Gerard's is defined by a neutral gathering of plant information rather than a reformist purging of it.<sup>330</sup> There is nothing neutral about his overlooking of medieval tradition here. In the wish to close the gap between the time he is writing and the classical herbals, Gerard is as much an agent of botanic reform as Turner.

Gerard clearly drew the line at including material in which the body of a 'maid,' 'culcold' or otherwise, might be felt to have left its signature on nature. Shakespeare dramatises the aetiological fable of how lungwort got its spots from the tears of Saint Mary the Virgin in *Richard II* by displacing it onto rue, which in this play is connected with the tears of the queen. By substituting rue (signed by God with a cross) for lungwort (signed by Mary with her tears or milk), he underlines that his interest is in signatures that can act as evidence for the Christian story in the British landscape, even as he obscures his debt to indigenous pre-reformation fable. In invoking a fable of this kind, however imperfectly, Shakespeare was in danger of seeming lacking in 'judgement' by Gerard's standards. He aligns himself with 'our culcold maids', and so with 'our cuntry women', suggesting that he identifies more closely with the rejected group than with Gerard himself.<sup>331</sup> By substituting one signed plant for another, the details of his argument are rendered above suspicion, while the general point, concerning the continuing relevance of the doctrine of signatures, remains the same. However, the queen's tears do not sign the earth without the intervention of the gardener, problematizing the relationship of the dramatic episode to the earlier lungwort fable, so that it can stand as both medieval myth and modern memorialisation:

Here did she fall a tear. Here in this place  
I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace  
Rue e'en for ruth here shortly shall be seen  
In the remembrance of a weeping queen.<sup>332</sup>

Here, in a nutshell, is the difference in perspective between the Protestant herbalists and Shakespeare: for Gerard, flowers should bring 'remembrance of

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<sup>330</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture*, 73.

<sup>331</sup> Heath, *Ophelia's Gifts and Garland Flowers*, 86.

<sup>332</sup> Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 3.4.104-7.

honestie, comelinesse, and all kinds of vertues'; for Shakespeare they should bring 'remembrance of a weeping queen.'<sup>333</sup> Protestant reformers took flowers that had traditionally been used to prompt meditation on the grief of Saint Mary the Virgin or the Passion of Christ and turned them into pretty mottoes, fit to grace a sampler, like the decorative work in George Chapman's play *All Fools*.<sup>334</sup> This is not to say that the beauty of flowers was not part of what had made them important to Catholic meditation, nor to argue that when flowers came to feature in women's embroidery in the period that they lost all their symbolic value. Nevertheless, the suffering and pain of martyrdom which had been linked with a flower like the rose through centuries of Catholic meditation, can seem wholly absent from a rose as it appears in a sampler.<sup>335</sup> It is possible, then, that Laertes is claiming that Ophelia is losing sight of these more troubling significances when she reduces the powerful symbolism of some herbs to a few pretty words: 'Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself/She turns to favour and to prettiness.'<sup>336</sup> He implies that when she says rosemary is 'for remembrance' or pansies are 'for thoughts' she is devising pretty meanings for flowers that, if used appropriately, could prompt Catholic meditation, bringing to mind the bitterness of 'affliction,' the 'passion' of Christ and even the torments of 'hell.'<sup>337</sup> It is often recognised that Ophelia's madness expresses itself in mangled fragments of Catholic material but, as far as Laertes is concerned, what she is doing with flowers is 'mad' because it resembles the Protestant subversion of flower symbolism essential for salvation.<sup>338</sup> An alternative way of reading the scene, would be to suggest that Ophelia is a saintly creature who is able to convert the suffering of Christ, evident in the stained flowers and funereal odours of botanic creation, into something gracious.

In her madness Ophelia famously crafts 'fantastic [i.e. allegorical, fabulous] garlands.'<sup>339</sup> Mats Rydén has plausibly suggested that it was Gerard's observation that crowsfeet 'serve for garlands and crowns' that prompted

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<sup>333</sup> Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 3.4.107; Gerard, *Herball*, 698

<sup>334</sup> George Chapman, *All Fools* 1605 (London: Edward Arnold), 1968, 2.1.232-239.

<sup>335</sup> Goody, *Culture of Flowers*, 156.

<sup>336</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 4.5.185-6.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.5.185-6.

<sup>338</sup> Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 111.

<sup>339</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 4.7.167.



Shakespeare to include this flower in Ophelia's garlands.<sup>340</sup> It may have sparked his interest because he knew of the wider context in which this flower (ragged robin) had been used alongside others in the ritual year. The use of red and white flowers in 'garlands' and 'bell garlands' at Whitsuntide and May Day is well-documented and it is plausible that this one was among them.<sup>341</sup> The possibility that Shakespeare might be taking the single flower of Gerard and conjuring an entire tradition is suggested by the colour scheme of the flowers in Ophelia's 'fantastic garlands.'<sup>342</sup> This study will suggest that Ophelia's garlands consisted of:

'Crowflowers' ragged robin [*Lychnis flos-cuculi* L.] RED

'Nettles' Dead Nettle [*Lamium Album* L.] WHITE

'Daisies' [*Bellis Perenis* L.] WHITE

'Long Purples' Northern Marsh Orchid [*Dactylorhiza purpurella* L.] RED

According to this reading, Ophelia's garlands consisted of red ragged robin alongside white dead nettle, white daisy and a red orchid with finger-like roots. This is the first reading of Ophelia's garlands for the importance of colour, but it is indebted to earlier painstaking research into the identifications of the flowers by scholars Harold Jenkins, Mats Rydén, James Heath, Vivian Faircloth and Nicki Thomas.<sup>343</sup>

Whatever the reason it caught his attention, Shakespeare cynically uses Gerard's garland as a framework for pinpointing the inconsistencies in Gerard's naming of two flowers: 'crow-flowers' and 'Satyrion Roiall.' If Shakespeare were harmlessly purveying local botanical knowledge the name 'crow-flowers' would not have featured in his work at all. The presence of the name can be taken as

<sup>340</sup> Rydén, *Plant Names*, 42 n.10.

<sup>341</sup> Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, 136; Landsberg, *Medieval Garden*, 41; See for example, John Lydgate, *Poems*, ed. John Norton-Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 47, 'A Complaynt of a Lovers Lyfe', ll. 1-2: 'In May, when Flora, the fresh[e] lusty queen,/The soyle hath clad in grene, rede and white...'; See also Teresa McLean, *Medieval English Gardens*, (London: Collins, 1981), 69 which mentions garlands of red roses and white sweet woodruff associated with medieval feast-days.

<sup>342</sup> Less likely but still possible is that it caught his attention because it may have been one of a number of unlucky flowers 'not to be included in May Day garlands' making this a monstrous parody of a red and white May Garland. See Geoffrey Grigson, *A Dictionary of English Plant Names* (London: Allen Lane, 1974), 66.

<sup>343</sup> Harold Jenkins (ed.), *Hamlet*, longer Notes, 544-546; Rydén, *Plant Names*, esp. 41, 42; Heath, *Ophelia's Gifts and Garland Flowers*, 41, 45-53; Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 93, 100-2 215-6, 241-2.

evidence of his close engagement with the herbal tradition because it is almost certainly the case that Gerard's 'crowe flowers' is merely a translation of Dutch and Latin plant names and not a usage current in the British Isles in Elizabethan times.<sup>344</sup> In other words, the name has never been in the mouths of the people. Gerard has attempted to dislodge a pre-existing name used by the people by imposing a reformed name used only by himself and translating the Dutch *Craeynbloemkens* ['Crow-flowers' because of the petals' resemblance to crow-feet]. However, when it comes to the flower called 'Satyrion Roiall,' although Lyte's translation of Dodoens provides the substance for the entry, he carefully omits Lyte's mention of the Dutch vernacular name for the plant *Cruszblum* ['Cross/Crucifix Flower'].<sup>345</sup> This is because the name reflected a belief that the flower had been stained with the blood of Christ shed on the cross. This is a medieval Christian myth that can be found reworked in Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' but that Gerard could not countenance.<sup>346</sup>

Gerard translated the Dutch name where it described the look of the flower but carefully edited out the Dutch name where it reflected myths of the Passion. Shakespeare, on the other hand, lifts the artificial name straight out of Gerard for the first plant and does not so much as give Gerard's name 'Satyrion Roiall' (or even the Dutch name *Cruszblum* that Gerard disliked) to seal away the monstrous names shimmering behind the second.<sup>347</sup> In this way, he opens up Gerard's tidy act of naming like a can of worms. Writers with no awareness of the religious debate have still responded to the knowing way that Shakespeare enacts an anxiety of naming. In the nineteenth century, the country parson Henry Ellacombe commented 'as to the other names to which the Queen alludes, we need not inquire too curiously...[since] they are fortunately extinct', implying that he was simply not interested.<sup>348</sup> Conversely, in the 1950s, Geoffrey Grigson commented that 'Shakespeare knew exactly what he was about when he included in the garlands of the drowned Ophelia the

<sup>344</sup> Rydén, *Plant Names*, 41.

<sup>345</sup> Grigson, *English Plant Names*, ix

<sup>346</sup> Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 665-6: 'Whose blood upon the fresh flowers being shed/Doth make them droop with grief and hang the head.'

<sup>347</sup> See Shakespeare *Hamlet*, 1.2.140. It is possible that Hamlet's phrase 'So excellent a king that was to this Hyperion to a satyr' is a riddle whose answer is 'Satyrion Roiall'; anyone who noticed that Shakespeare was engaging with John Gerard's herbal discourse in the play would be able to identify his orchid more accurately by supplementing the description in the speech describing Ophelia's garland with this earlier riddle.

<sup>348</sup> Ellacombe, *Plant-Lore*, 149

“long purples””, implying that he was one of the initiated, through his research into sexual names.<sup>349</sup> ‘Long purples’ may be a folk name for any kind of purple orchid. The mention of a ‘grosser name’ could easily be cross-referencing ‘Palma Christi’ [‘Hand/Palm of Christ’] which Gerard includes despite its idolatrous associations.<sup>350</sup>

Shakespeare has oral tradition behind him as well as a printed tradition, but this is no reason for it to be taken for granted that he is being any more straightforward with names than Gerard. No ‘Dead Men’ names survive in the folk record and this study will suggest that the plural form reveals his own manipulation of the ‘Dead *Man’s*’ name which features in an oral ballad. This ballad, preserved in the Roxeburgh Collection, features a lovelorn maid who plucks such flowers ‘as Dead Man’s Thumb and Harebell Blue’ in a way that probably inspires the garland-making and the soteriological concerns of *Hamlet*.<sup>351</sup> The grouping of the flowers in the ballad reflects an awareness that in May-time it is common to stumble upon the ragged robin, blue bells, and purple orchids flowering close together in woodlands, so that in Gloucestershire the blue bell and orchid had the same name: ‘Bloody Man’s Finger.’<sup>352</sup> Grigson suggests that formally people may have imagined some kind of sexual or supernatural relationship between these mysterious plants with their divergent morphology and convergent habitat.<sup>353</sup> The ‘harebell blue’ (bluebell) of the original ballad, the ‘crowflowers’ (ragged robin) of Gerard’s herbal and the ‘satyrion roiall’ of Gerard’s herbal that Shakespeare includes as ‘dead men’s fingers’ (some species of purple-spiked orchid with finger-like roots such as the northern marsh-orchid, *dactylorhiza purpurella*, or spotted orchid, *dactylorhiza maculata*), have all been referred to as ‘cuckoo flowers’ for reasons that remain obscure.<sup>354</sup> This is a name that pre-dates modern usage in which flowers were isolated into species, and suggests that it was the stained or painted quality that defined them as a group.

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<sup>349</sup>Grigson, *Englishman’s Flora*, 427.

<sup>350</sup> See Heath, *Ophelia’s Gifts and Garland Flowers*, 48-53

<sup>351</sup> It is a seventeenth century broadside ballad entitled ‘The diseased maiden lover’ which in its surviving printed form post-dates *Hamlet* but which may have been current as a ballad at the time of composition. Quoted in Ellacombe, *Plant-Lore and Garden-Craft*, 157.

<sup>352</sup> Grigson, *Englishman’s Flora*, 83.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 83

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 83, 427. See the note on ‘cuckoo spit’ for an overview of the complexity of ‘cuckoo’ and ‘robin’ plant names.

Another flower which sometimes came under this umbrella-term was the flower Shakespeare calls lady-smocks [*Cardamine pratensis* L.], which Gerard wrote comes out 'for the most part in Aprill and May, when the cuckoo begins to sing her pleasant note without stammering.'<sup>355</sup> However, according to Grigson, this is unlikely to be the whole story.<sup>356</sup> He describes how it is often surrounded by foam or froth. It is now known that this is created by an insect, the froghopper nymph, but it was traditionally believed to be ejaculated by a bird, the cuckoo.<sup>357</sup> Shakespeare's line about 'lady-smocks... all silver-white' has

<sup>355</sup> Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, 5.2.895; Grigson, *Englishman's Flora.*, 65.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>357</sup> Grigson, *English Plant Names*, 64. Today the folk name 'cuckoo spit' is still current as a way of referring to this 'foam.' However, since humans are known to spit and birds are not, it is far more likely that the spit was originally ascribed to humans rather than birds. Possibly 'cuckoo spit' was originally 'culcold spit' and originally ascribed to the 'occupational group' attested by Shakespeare in *Hamlet* (Cf. Knight, *Books and Botany*, 86). This would make the folk name 'cuckoo spit' parallel to other names with an occupational marker such as the 'collier' and 'chimneysweeper' names examined earlier in this chapter. Alternatively, the occupational marker 'culcold', the bird/plant name 'cuckoo' (often interchangeable with 'Robin') and the social label and folk image of the 'cuckold' could be interpreted as operating simultaneously in all three fields of reference from an early period. For example, the early modern nursery rhyme that originally ended 'Cuckolds all in a row' seems to bring together the plant name with the social label and/or occupational marker. See Iona and Peter Opie, *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), rhyme 342, 355. In traditional bird lore, the ash-grey cuckoo as the herald of spring is the counterpart of the painted robin, the bird of winter. The cuckoo is also associated with monastic chant by Shakespeare ('the plainsong cuckoo grey' Shakespeare,) and John Gerard (when 'the cuckow singeth most... *Alleluya* was wont to be sung in Churches') and possibly by Greene ('the cuckoo with its *never changed* note' i.e. still singing the old songs). See Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.1.126; Gerard, *Herball*, 503; Greene, *Quip*, 1. The cuckoo is certainly linked by Greene with the cuckold (as 'the cuckold's querister') and apparently also by Shakespeare ('whose note full many a man doth mark and dare not answer nay'). See Greene, *Quip*, 1; Shakespeare, *Midsummer*, 3.1.127. Possibly, 'cuckoo' in this sense obscured the occupational marker 'culcold', which may have denoted herb-gatherers distinguished by "their hooded cloak or *cucullus*". See Stephen J. Yeates, *The Tribe of Witches: The Religion of the Dobunni and Hwicce* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008), 15. That Shakespeare knew of this hooded cloak is revealed by his mention of a proverb from a Latin oral tradition, '*cucullus non facit monachum*' ['the hooded cloak maketh not the monk'], which potentially links the occupational group back to plainsong chant (William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 1.5.53-4). Just as the cuckoo was the obvious counterpart to the painted robin, so the 'culcold' was associated with painted 'cuckoo' flowers which doubled as 'Robin' flowers. In Catholic tradition, monks were thought of as both celibate and wedded to the Marian Church. In Robin Hood traditions, Robin is celibate, devoted to Saint Mary the Virgin and wedded to the virginal Maid Marian, although he sometimes invites a monk to cuckold him. See the ballad, *Robin Hood and the Friar* in David Wiles *The Early Plays of Robin Hood*, (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1981), 76. Both Robin and the Cuckolding Monk are celibate and symbolically wedded to the equally chaste Maid Marian who may also be a 'Culcold Maid.' Whether or not these observations are useful, any interpretation of the onomastics and associations of 'culcold' must be supported by a close reading of the context in which the word appears in *Hamlet*. The sole explicit mention of this 'occupational group' comes in the context of a flower which was held to be stained by bodily fluid, in this case the blood of Christ. The Shakespearean context in which this stained flower is mentioned is itself a reworking of an herbal context in which another stained flower is named, 'painted' grass. In other words, Gerard's mention of a 'painted' plant inspired Shakespeare's mention of another stained plant

unsettled critics like J. W. Lever who asks 'if lady-smocks...are pale lilac...why did Shakespeare call their colour silver white? Could the Stratford peasant have forgotten?'<sup>358</sup> In fact, the flowers can be 'silver white' and can 'paint the meadows with delight' because of a sacred emanation that would be sure to unsettle Protestant sensibilities. As late as John Ray (1627-1705) it was still popular belief that the foam fell from heaven and Ray was the first person to challenge this in print.<sup>359</sup> The line from Shakespeare's song also seems to engage with a line in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: 'Et sparsit uirides spumis albertibus agros' ['And scattered the green meadows with white spume.'].<sup>360</sup> This is counter-herbalism at its most subversive, affecting to adopt the safe Protestant plant names promoted by Gerard, but using an Ovidian moment to draw attention to a sacred emanation that is not adequately explained in Protestant theology. Shakespeare enlists substances like this emanation to insist on a universe where 'holy water' is natural and the divine is immanent. As Stephen Greenblatt pointed out, the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* bless their marriage-beds with dew in a provocative reminder of a similar Catholic ritual involving holy-water.<sup>361</sup> The sprinkling of holy water had been forbidden since 1549.<sup>362</sup> If holy water in churches was forbidden, how much more disconcerting was the thought that it might be dropping from heaven?

The mention of 'cuckoos' in lines 3, 5, 7 and 14 of the lady-smocks song, and their link with the language of cuckoldry, is another example of Shakespeare's way of signposting his engagement with unreformed material.<sup>363</sup> But it also identifies the heavenly liquid that may have been implausibly dismissed as the 'promiscuous expektoration' of cuckoos by reformers anxious

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and the shared quality of both plants is presumably what is associated with the occupational group of 'culcold.' Other cuckoo/Robin flowers all share this 'painted' quality. It is possible that herb-gatherers may have been known to spit on 'baleful flowers' to avert evil and that ordinary people on seeing the frog-hopper foam would ascribe it to a human cause, specifically this 'occupational group.' When monks were no longer seen in the British landscape, filling 'osier cage[s]' with 'baleful weeds and precious-juicèd flowers', this 'occupational group' may also have gone into decline (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.3.7,8). Increasingly, the name of the 'occupational group', preserved by pre-reformation oral tradition, would be encountered only in its rationalised form as 'cuckoo' or 'cuckold' until the existence of an alternate form would be forgotten altogether.

<sup>358</sup> Lever, 'Three Notes on Shakespeare's Plants', 117-29.

<sup>359</sup> Edward A. Armstrong. *The Folklore of Birds* (London: Collins, 1958), 198.

<sup>360</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 7.415.

<sup>361</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 10-11.

<sup>362</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 465-6.

<sup>363</sup> Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, 5.2.880 ff.

to find some acceptable cause for the spring phenomenon.<sup>364</sup> Certainly the emanation might easily have been condemned among ‘things strange and uncouth’ which would lead minds ‘through curiositie of observation unto superstitious and idololatricall performances.’<sup>365</sup> The song about lady-smocks and the rehearsing of names for long purples could both be seen as ‘idololatricall performances.’<sup>366</sup> Whatever Shakespeare believed to be the origin of the foam around the frog-hopper nymph, he knew that it was the idolatrous nature of ‘cuckoo flowers’ that would make them fit to be grouped with the ‘idle weeds’ of *King Lear*. By his inclusion of such bodily fluids staining the face of nature, Shakespeare insists that the truth of medieval Catholicism is still written into the fabric of the universe in the form of the indelible graffiti of God and the weeping saints.

### Ominous Plants

Gerard not only omitted the Dutch name linking ‘Satyrion Roiall’ with the blood of the Passion. He also modified Lyte’s claims that the flower had recently been discovered and named by implying that it had been so-called generations before by the ancients. In this way he aimed to counteract popular uncertainty as to whether an orchid with these irregular roots could be a prodigious, newly-appeared botanic phenomenon that could be read as a comment on the times. The language of contemporary botanical phenomena could closely follow prophetic idiom as in Batman’s *Doomes Warning All Men to the Judgement* (1581) which pointed to ‘manifest tokens of troublous times and discords, for nature growing out of course doeth tell what the rewarde of sin shallbe.’<sup>367</sup> It has been pointed out that during the period misshapen flowers caused anxiety and were held to have ominous implications for the future.<sup>368</sup> Shakespeare may have been interested in Lyte’s hand-rooted orchid because the possibility that it was a recent prodigy could generate precisely this deep unease and prophetic

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<sup>364</sup> Armstrong, *Folklore of Birds*, 198.

<sup>365</sup> Thomas Jackson, *A Treatise Containing the Originall of Unbelieve*, 1625, 198-9. Quoted in Shell, *Oral Culture*, 72.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-9. Quoted in Shell, *Oral Culture*, 2007, 72.

<sup>367</sup> Stephen Batman, *The doomes warning all men to the judgemente* (1581), 362. Quoted in Walsham, *Landscape*, 350.

<sup>368</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 350.

dread. However, he also seems to have been impressed by the way that ballads like the Roxeburgh ballad could create an atmosphere of foreboding:

Then round the meadow did she walke,  
Catching each flower by the stalke,  
Such as within the meadow grew,  
As dead-man's thumb and harebell blue...<sup>369</sup>

Such ballads demonstrated how plants could be brought together with folk prophecy to generate popular unease.<sup>370</sup> According to Philip Schwzyer, prophecies in Shakespeare's age could revolve around 'a familiar parade of beasts and flowers.'<sup>371</sup> Not only were plants an accepted part of this prophetic tradition but roots that had a claw-like morphology suggestive of hairy hands were interpreted as some dire warning.<sup>372</sup> Alexandra Walsham, for example, cites an example of Catholics interpreting such roots as a sign of God's anger at the reformation.<sup>373</sup> It is possible that, just as two personifications lay behind the name 'Love-in-Idleness', the allegorical figures of 'Love' and 'Idleness', two personifications lay behind the phrase 'Dead Man's Thumb', the 'Dead Man' and 'Tom Thumb.' Tom Thumb may originally have had a botanic identity. In any case he is encountered in British plant names to the extent that the birdsfoot trefoil, *Lotus corniculatus* has been known as Tom Thumb or Hop-o'-my-Thumb in six English counties.<sup>374</sup> He was routinely linked with Robin Goodfellow—for example, in Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584)—who is also still encountered in the names of several British plants (e.g. Ragged Robin, Herb Robert). In fact, the orchid that Shakespeare calls 'Dead Men's Fingers' in several counties was named Robin, which is a name that seems to overlap with 'Our Lady' names.<sup>375</sup> Both Tom Thumb and Robin Goodfellow might be evoked in an unreformed atmosphere of plants and prophecy since

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<sup>369</sup> The broadside ballad called 'The diseased maiden lover' quoted in Ellacombe, *Plant-Lore*, 157.

<sup>370</sup> See Shell, *Oral Culture*, 65.

<sup>371</sup> Philip Schwzyer, *Shakespeare and the Remains of Richard III* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 176.

<sup>372</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 351.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 350

<sup>374</sup> Grigson, *Englishman's Flora*, 137.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 137

reformers had a habit of linking fables of Robin Goodfellow with the *arcana imperii* of the Romish church.<sup>376</sup>

It is no less likely that the ballad's 'Dead Man's Thumb' and Shakespeare's 'Dead Men's fingers' may be convenient names to evoke the topical language of Catholic prophecies. According to Keith Thomas, the Dead Man was a stock-in-trade of prophetic material from the 1570s onwards.<sup>377</sup> There is evidence that Shakespeare knew of such Catholic material because he refers to the 'mouldwarp that turned all up' in *1 Henry IV* which was understood to refer to Henry VIII and the way he had shaken up the mouldy medieval traditions of the country by setting in motion the reformation.<sup>378</sup> Alison Shell comments that prophecy operating as a kind of 'folk allegory' empowered ordinary people to engage in masked defiance.<sup>379</sup> If hand-shaped roots were liable to be seen as fateful in this way, Shakespeare was quick to associate them with prophecy too and Catholic tales that 'a Dead Man shall rise that shall make all England rue.'<sup>380</sup> Risings in Tudor England had resulted in the deaths of certain martyrs but in 1570 it was rumoured that the rebels of the Northern Rebellion of the year before were not, in fact, dead and they were expected to return any day.<sup>381</sup> This was twenty years earlier than *Hamlet*, but as Schwyzer argues, this was a period when living memory could be supplemented by an active or communicative memory that could cross generations.<sup>382</sup> The idea that the seasons would turn and Dead Men would return is one that seems to have been potent in popular consciousness.

### **Barnacles that 'commeth to the Shape and the Form of a Bird'?**

By way of conclusion, it should be noted that the sources of the herbalists' and Shakespeare's plant learning are not always poles apart. It has been

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<sup>376</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture*, 14.

<sup>377</sup> Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribener's Sons, 1971), 407.

<sup>378</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture*, 65; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 175.

<sup>379</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture*, 65.

<sup>380</sup>

John Harvey, *Discursive Probleme Concerning Prophecies* (1588), 56. There is also a version of the same prophecy that dates from the reign of Mary Tudor included in the Sloane manuscript 2578, ff. 18<sup>v</sup>, 20. Quoted in Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, 407, cf. 419, 422n.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, 419

<sup>382</sup> Schwyzer, *Remains of Richard III*, 71-2.



demonstrated that on more than one occasion Shakespeare appropriates the dominant Protestant rhetoric of the herbals. In the interest of balance, it will also be demonstrated that on at least one occasion John Gerard goes out of his way to include highly questionable monastic material. This is not to suggest that the general purpose of Gerard's *Herball* was anything but Protestant; it is merely to suggest that he was moved to suspend this general purpose in one exceptional case. The lasting impression is of a Protestant form that makes every effort to depart from earlier plant learning all the way through only to converge with it at the very end. Why John Gerard might write in this way is an interesting question that can bear further investigation.

John Gerard's final entry is on 'barnacles.'<sup>383</sup> For this he draws on the extraordinary tradition that the barnacle goose emerged from shells growing on trees.<sup>384</sup> Gerard merely writes that these growths appear on 'certaine trees', but earlier traditions specify that they appear on 'fir-timber' or 'pine-logs.'<sup>385</sup>

His description is of 'verie cleare and shining' things like 'crimson bladders' which are 'much whiter' at the 'nether end.'<sup>386</sup> These 'bladders' are 'in shape like unto [blood] puddings newly filled.'<sup>387</sup> It may be relevant that Iago, whose first word in Shakespeare's *Othello* is an oath by '[God]'Sblood!', later swears that the only divine virtue he knows is 'a fig!', then swears by the 'blessed fig's [nether] end!', and, finally, by the 'blessed pudding!'<sup>388</sup> The pudding was not just a word for a kind of sausage or for entrails; according to Gillian Woods, 'pudding' could be the name of a devil ('Pudding of Thame'), and Iago seems to name it in the place of God.<sup>389</sup> In the final scene, Othello has about his person one of those 'concealed bladders' 'newly filled' with crimson blood, a familiar prop in the theatre of the day.<sup>390</sup> When these pig's bladders

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<sup>383</sup> See John Gerard, *Gerard's Herbal*, Ed. Marcus Woodward, London: Senate, 1994, 'Chap. 188. Of the Goose tree, Barnacle Tree, or the tree bearing Geese', 282-285; for Barnacles see; Maaïke van der Lugt, 'Animal légendaire et discours savant medieval: la barnacle dans tous ses états', *Micrologus*, 8, (2000), 351-93

<sup>384</sup> Thomas, *Natural World*, 88.

<sup>385</sup> Woodward (ed.), *Gerard's Herbal*, 282: 'certaine trees'; Giraldus Cambrensis quoted in *The Exeter Riddle Book Riddles*, trans. Kevin Crossley-Holland (London: Enitharmon Press, 2008), riddle 10, notes, 87: 'they are produced from fir-timber'; *Bestiary*, trans. Richard Barber (Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2006), 120: 'they first appear as growths on pine-logs'

<sup>386</sup> Woodward (ed.), *Gerard's Herbal*, 284.

<sup>387</sup> Woodward (ed.), *Gerard's Herbal*, 284.

<sup>388</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.1.4.

<sup>389</sup> Woods, *Unreformed Fictions*, 160.

<sup>390</sup> Leo Kirschbaum, 'Shakespeare's Stage Blood and its Critical Significance', *PMLA*, vol. 64, no. 3 (Jun. 1949), 517-529, 517; Woodward (ed.), *Gerard's Herbal*, 284.

were attached to sticks, they were associated with the Fool in a Morris dance. The Fool's bladder was both the 'painted club' which he used to bewitch and control the crowds and the 'bauble' that he reserved 'evermore' about him to 'kiss and talk to.'<sup>391</sup> Moments after the play's start, Iago promises the audience "Sblood!" and some of the audience might even have caught sight of Othello pulling his 'blessed pudding!' from his costume, moments before the end.<sup>392</sup> The audience knew that it was the hidden cause of his final suffering and bloody death. Some would have seen this as the 'foolish thing of the Morris [i.e. Moorish] Man', others as 'the foolish thing of God' [the *moron* of the 'Morion'].<sup>393</sup> It would, therefore, be possible to interpret Gerard's 'crimson bladders' or '[blood] puddings newly filled' as everyday comparisons, to the bladders and blood puddings seen in Tudor England, but it would also be possible to interpret them as theatrical or feast day comparisons, to the Morris man's or Fool's bauble associated with May Day or to dumpy Christmas puddings tied in muslin.<sup>394</sup> As late as the nineteenth century, the Christmas pudding was still being described by certain hard-line Protestants as 'the flesh of idols.'<sup>395</sup>

Gerard's barnacles, then, look ordinary, but they are also out of the ordinary. In fact, the most extraordinary thing about them is that 'in time [they] commeth to the shape and forme of a bird.'<sup>396</sup> Having passed through 'Grasses, Herbes, Shrubs, Trees, and Mosses' Gerard explains that he decided to end his herbal with these 'certaine Excrescences of the earth' because they are one of the wonders of the world that comprise 'the secrets of nature.'<sup>397</sup> Just as Lemnius' *The Herbal for the Bible* (1587) claimed that the bible itself 'use[s] so manie Similitudes, & make[s] so many Comparisons of things fetched out of the verie secrets and bowels of Nature', so Gerard's *Herball* (1597) cross-references the same text to make it clear that these 'secrets' have come to light after a 'search into the bowels of Nature.'<sup>398</sup> From a theatrical point of view, a Shakespearean character might, paradoxically, reveal himself as 'Great

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<sup>391</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.3.299-300.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.1.4.

<sup>393</sup> It is interesting that the eponymous emperor of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* has the same condition as he takes on an almost Christ-like significance in the play.

<sup>394</sup> Woodward (ed.), *Gerard's Herbal*, 284.

<sup>395</sup> Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son*, ed. Michael Newton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 64.

<sup>396</sup> Woodward (ed.), *Gerard's Herbal*, 283.

<sup>397</sup> Woodward (ed.), *Gerard's Herbal*, 282.

<sup>398</sup> Levinus Lemnius, *An Herbal for the Bible*, trans. Thomas Newton (1587), 6-7; Woodward (ed.), *Gerard's Herbal*, 282.

Creating Nature' in the act of destroying (or, to be more precise, disembowelling) himself on stage.<sup>400</sup> An audience today, however, is unlikely to have much sympathy for the idea that, by ending his own life, a character like Othello is embarking on a 'search into the bowels of Nature' or 'the undiscovered country' of a hellish or heavenly realm in the 'bowels of the Earth.'<sup>401</sup> In the end, like Reformed England,<sup>401</sup> he will have made a 'shameful conquest' of himself.<sup>402</sup>

Similarly, readers today are unlikely to agree that John Gerard's inclusion of barnacles is 'not impertinent to the conclusion' of his book.<sup>403</sup> The general consensus is that it is unfortunate that he included such a bizarre error from medieval learning, and that his book would have been more worthy of the esteem in which it is held if he had ended it just before this entry. The only way it has ever been interpreted is as a naive belief to which he still ascribed alongside much more modern and evidence-based beliefs. Even though the notion had been rejected by Emperor Frederick II and Albert the Great in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries respectively, William Turner and John Gerard curiously sought to affirm the belief in the sixteenth-century.<sup>404</sup> It became difficult to promote the belief in the seventeenth century after Dutch sailors had witnessed the hatching of the geese from eggs, and Thomas Johnson in his 1633 revised edition of Gerard's *Herball* felt compelled to mention this.<sup>405</sup> It is worth pointing out that the barnacle would not seem out of place in Shakespeare's counter-herbalism because it has impeccable sources in riddle and Catholic fable.<sup>406</sup> It is first attested in the early eighth-century in riddle ten of the Exeter Riddle Book:

My beak was bound and I was immersed,  
The current swept round me as I lay covered  
By mountain streams; I matured in the sea,  
Above the milling waves, my body

<sup>400</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.9, 10; 4.4.88-9.

<sup>401</sup> Lemnius, *Herbal for the Bible*, 6-7; Woodward (ed.), *Gerard's Herbal*, 282; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.1.79.

<sup>402</sup> Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 2.1.66.

<sup>403</sup> Woodward (ed.), *Gerard's Herbal*, 171.

<sup>404</sup> Thomas, *Natural World*, 88.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>406</sup> See Giraldus Cambrensis quoted in Crossley-Holland (trans.), *Riddle Book*, riddle 10, notes, 87; Barber (trans.), *Bestiary*, 13, 120

Locked to a stray, floating spar.  
 When, in black garments, I left wave  
 And wood, I was full of life;  
 Some of my clothing was white  
 When the tides of air lifted me,  
 The wind from the wave, then carried me far  
 Over the seal's bath. Say what I am called.<sup>407</sup>

According to Kevin Crossley-Holland, there has been general agreement that the answer is 'barnacle goose' since it was first suggested in Stopford Brooke's *History of Early English Literature*.<sup>408</sup> If this *is* the right solution to the riddle, it is also an unsolved riddle in its own right.

By the twelfth century the riddle had been elaborated by Gerald of Wales in his *Topography of Ireland*, which was a direct source for the medieval bestiaries. It is often claimed that it developed as a convenient excuse to bulk up the tables during Lent since 'bishops and men of religion eat them during times of fasting without committing a sin, because they are neither flesh, nor born of flesh.'<sup>409</sup> Whether or not this is the whole story, the *Travels* of Sir John Mandeville claim the 'fruit' of these barnacle-trees as one of the commodities and wonders of Britain.<sup>410</sup>

Rather than continue to view Gerard's inclusion of these 'secrets of nature' in a patronising way, as a sign of his naivety, it may be more helpful to find another way of making sense of this extraordinary aspect of his work. Anyone wishing to read the barnacle as straightforward natural history is forced to defend the untenable position that the Exeter riddles and bestiaries also conform to this modern model of evidence-based empiricism. The only reasonable position to be taken is that these earlier forms in which the barnacle had its origins were riddling and allegorical and Gerard's barnacle still demands to be interpreted in this context. Just as some of the Exeter riddles remain unsolved—so remote is the vision of the world that informs them—so too these

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<sup>407</sup> Crossley-Holland (trans.), *Riddle Book*, riddle 10, notes, 87

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, riddle 10, notes, 87

<sup>409</sup> Barber (trans.), *Bestiary*, 121

<sup>410</sup> Sir John Mandeville, *The Book of Marvels and Travels*, trans. Anthony Bale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 104; see also Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, eds. S. E. Banks & J. W. Binns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 819-2.

barnacle geese remain unsolved—they are just too remote from today's outlook to admit of an explanation any time soon.

However, if it is not possible to solve the riddle of the barnacle geese at the present time, it is possible to pinpoint the approach which might ultimately prove fruitful. Any answer is likely to come through immersion in four main monastic authors: Pliny, Ovid, Macrobius and Isidore of Seville. Unsurprisingly, these authors can also be seen to lie behind Shakespeare's own counter-herbalism.

Firstly, it is likely that medieval monks would have noticed that Gerald of Wales' claim that barnacles were 'at first gummy excrescences from pine-beams' tallied with various creatures from Pliny 'derived from the gum that comes from trees.'<sup>411</sup> Shakespeare was also well-placed to recognise this link since Othello dies, like Ovid's Myrrha (who in medieval tradition was glossed as the 'Blessed Virgin' Mary), in tears that well up from beneath his black cork-tree face-paint and reveal his red and white complexion beneath.<sup>412</sup> The burnt-cork is his bark, exuding a fountain of shining tears-drops and crimson blood-drops, 'as fast as the Arabian trees' exude 'their medicinale gum.'<sup>413</sup>

Secondly, medieval monks could be expected to notice that the transformations through which the barnacle passed resembled specific transformations in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>414</sup> Unsurprisingly, Shakespeare also seems to have recognised this since it informs an interesting line in *The Tempest*. In this play, Caliban fears that 'we shall...all be turned to barnacles' which would suggest a doubly-painful transformation into bird and then shellfish.<sup>415</sup> These fears suggest the reversal of an Ovidian creation myth in which all mortals might revert atavistically to a damp excrescence on wood.<sup>416</sup>

Thirdly, it was likely to occur to medieval monks that the 'pied' colours of the barnacle—which are usually 'black' and 'white' but in John Gerard's *Herball* are 'red' and 'white'—evoke Macrobius' description of the way that throughout history 'Nature has withheld an understanding of herself by enveloping herself

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<sup>411</sup> Gerald of Wales, *Topography of Ireland*. Quoted in T. H. White, *The Book of Beasts: Being A Translation of a Latin Bestiary from the Twelfth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1958), 267. See also Pliny, *Natural History*, 22.47.

<sup>412</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 359; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, X.xi.

<sup>413</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 5.2.348-9.

<sup>414</sup> For a comparable Ovidian creation myth see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 7.392-3.

<sup>415</sup> Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 4.1.247-8

<sup>416</sup> Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 7.392-3.

in pied garments.<sup>417</sup> That this was unlikely to have been lost on Shakespeare is suggested by Stopford Brooke's more precise translation of the Old English word describing the barnacles' parti-coloured 'clothing' [Old English: 'hyrste']: 'white in part were my pranked garments fair.'<sup>418</sup> When Shakespeare's Perdita is 'goddess-like pranked-up' some playgoers may have believed that she shared her 'piedness...with Great Creating Nature.'<sup>419</sup>

Fourthly, when Gerald of Wales alleges that 'Nature produces the barnacles against Nature [*Contra Naturam*]' it might have recalled Isidore of Seville's allegation that 'Fables are things which have neither happened nor can happen because they are against Nature [*Contra Naturam*].'<sup>420</sup> Whether a white and red bladder is brought forth by a pine-tree, or a white and red bladder is brought forth by Othello, or the 'white and red' child Adonis is brought forth by Myrrha, it is likely that all three could be considered white and red products of 'Nature...with herself at strife.'<sup>421</sup>

The medieval monks would have drawn on these four authors of the medieval curriculum when applying themselves to the puzzle of the barnacle and it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the secret might be locked up in these texts for the finding. That it can be demonstrated that Shakespeare was also familiar with this material suggests that the riddle might not have been beyond his understanding. However, more importantly, it reinforces the impression that a barnacle would be entirely in keeping with Shakespeare's counter-herbalism but stick out like a sore thumb in Gerard's *Herball*.

Gerard came to the barnacle when medieval allegory was on its way out. Be that as it may, an age that was capable of interpreting Geoffrey Whitney's emblem of an extraordinary fruit growing on a pine-tree, was probably still capable of understanding the monastic riddle.<sup>422</sup> Post-reformation descriptions of the barnacle bring new tantalising material to the riddle. This can be interpreted either as material that adds something truly new to the riddle or

<sup>417</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, 86; Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionis*, 1.2.17.

<sup>418</sup> Stopford Brooke, *The History of Early English Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1892), 179.

<sup>419</sup> Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, 4.4.9, 10; 4.4.88-9.

<sup>420</sup> Gerald of Wales, *Topography of Ireland*. Quoted in Armstrong *Folklore of Birds*, 226; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 1.44.

<sup>421</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 11-12.

<sup>422</sup> Cf. Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* in *The English Emblem Tradition*, Ed. Peter M. Daly et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), vol 1. 123 which features a fruit growing on a pine-tree.

material that was well-buried in the original riddle that is merely being brought into the light for the first time.

One of the details that is truly new to the riddle is Gerard's claim that a good place to find barnacles had formerly been Piel Island, now in Cumbria, where the only thing of note was an unusually robust fortified warehouse, the largest in North West England, built by Cistercian monks.<sup>423</sup> In 1212 King John licensed these Cistercians to land a cargo of 'wheat, malt and other provisions' shipped over from Ireland to be stored in this stronghold and later in the century he granted them an unlimited cargo license and placed their ships under royal protection.<sup>424</sup> The fortifying of this warehouse dates from a time when the answer to the barnacle riddle was presumably known to much of the elite of Catholic Europe. This seems like a reasonable surmise since in 1215 Pope Innocent III issued a papal edict prohibiting eating of 'barnacle geese' until Lent was over and on Fridays.<sup>425</sup> Clearly, the Pope would not have gone to the trouble of issuing a papal bull if he was not confident that his meaning would be grasped by the monastic brothers and sisters of the thirteenth-century medieval church.

However, in general it is true to say that the post-reformation glosses on the barnacle tradition are more explicit about the consecutive phases of the creature's transformation. For example, William Turner provides more details of the forms that 'break out' of the wood in the first phase than can be found in any monastic description, before proceeding to the forms that are assumed when 'the obvious shape of a bird becomes visible' in the later stages of growth.<sup>426</sup> Similarly, Joshua Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas's *Divine Weeks*, includes a description of the barnacle that begins:

So rotten sides of broken Shippes doo change  
To barnacles; O, Transformation Strange!

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<sup>423</sup> Woodward (ed.), *Gerard's Herbal*, 283.

<sup>424</sup> Frederick Ross, *The Ruined Abbeys of Britain* (London: William MacKenzie, 1882), Vol. 2, 204-5. For the Cistercian lands in Ireland from which harvests were shipped see Colmille S. O. Combhui, OCSO 'The Extent of Cistercian Lands in Medieval Ireland' in *Cistercians in the Late Middle Ages*, Cistercian Studies Series: No. 64. ed. E. Rozanne Elder (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 59-69; For the use of Piel Island by Furness Abbey for illicit trafficking in the fifteenth century see R. A. Donkin, *The Cistercians: Studies in the Geography of Medieval England and Wales* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1987), 146.

<sup>425</sup> Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Naturae*, book xvii, 40. Quoted in Tim Birkhead, *The Wisdom of Birds*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 12.

<sup>426</sup> William Turner quoted in Armstrong, *Folklore of Birds*, 227-8.

'Twas first a greene tree; then a gallant Hull...<sup>427</sup>

By the end of his rhymes he embarks on details that is perhaps best understood as his later embellishment, since monastic authors in the thirteenth-century heyday of barnacle description include no explicit mention of such details in their texts.. The twenty-first century reader may be inclined to dismiss barnacles from their thoughts altogether as they lose patience with these last decadent flourishes of monasticism. However, the fact remains that Turner, Gerard and Sylvester chose to include the barnacles in their writing, presumably because they were still beguiled by the last enchantments of the Middle Ages. That unreformed counter-herbalist voice was so mysterious, arch and dominating that even the Protestant Herbalists could not resist adopting it upon occasion. This is the paradox of the British reformation, that even the reformers were not above being entranced by the world they were otherwise intent on dismantling.

This chapter has drawn on the critical paradigm of Alison Shell to argue that plant-writing in the period cannot be read independently from the anti-idolatry debate. Writers on both sides of the religious debate became adept at appropriating the rhetoric against which they defined their own work, usually to undermine it, but occasionally to marvel at its power and glory. Thus, there are moments when Shakespeare appropriates herbalist rhetoric and there are moments when herbalists like William Turner or John Gerard seems to overturn their own herbal achievement and turn counter-herbalist. These complicate the otherwise overwhelming evidence for a clear divide between the plant-writing of the Protestant herbalists and Shakespeare. In fact, between the herbalist orthodoxies of Turner, Lyte and Gerard and Shakespeare's plant provocation lay not only a religious divide, but a 'botanical reformation.'<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Guillaume de Salluste, Sieur Du Bartas, *The Divine Weeks*, trans. Joshua Sylvester (1584; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 293.

<sup>428</sup> Knight, *Books and Botany*, 39.





## **Chapter Two: Shakespeare and Hawkins Counter the ‘Prophane’ Emblem Books**

This chapter will tackle one of the most riddling and curious literary forms to come out of the Renaissance: the emblem book. At first sight, these books are oddly familiar. They often have pictures of animals or mythological superheroes, woodcuts that can seem to anticipate more modern cartoons. These pictures are often accompanied by verses, that are not exactly poetical, but are nonetheless neat and pithy. Then there is the moral import that can seem like nothing more complicated than the resounding end to an Aesop’s Fable. But it is important not to be fooled, because these books are hiding something. Although they can seem to have all the innocence of children’s books, they are not to be taken literally. They might seem to offer up a rosy apple, like the picture in a children’s ABC, but all the while their discourse is insinuating, even poisonous. Not only that, the apple they offer up turns out to be strangely metallic, because it is their advice that is intended to be wholesome. In this way, the books insist on being taken deadly seriously. They are marshalling and manufacturing ideologically-charged symbolism. It is this symbolic aspect of the books that calls for closer examination.

This chapter will argue that Shakespeare recognised the way that Protestant emblem books were redirecting symbolism, but that in the case of two central images in his Jacobean plays, the strawberry handkerchief in *Othello* and cowslip birthmark in *Cymbeline*, they are brought in line with late medieval or recusant symbol. This reading is indebted to Michael Bath who has covered new ground in locating Renaissance emblem books at the vortex of a religious debate.<sup>1</sup> On one side of the debate, advocates of medieval and recusant symbolism believed that evidence for the claims of Christianity could be found in the natural world in the form of naturally-present emblems identified by immemorial traditions.<sup>2</sup> According to this older tradition of symbolism, a living vine might continue to embrace a tree after its death to teach mankind about

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### **Chapter Two: Shakespeare and Hawkins Counter the ‘Prophane’ Emblem Books**

<sup>1</sup> Michael Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, (London: Longman, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

their deliverer, the human hand might have five fingers as a reminder of the five wounds of Christ and certain flowers might have red coloration because they were stained with the blood of the Passion.<sup>3</sup> On the other side of the debate, Protestant emblem books promoted emblems with brand new connections which can seem to come from nowhere.<sup>4</sup> These were premised upon the belief that it was delusional to look for symbols embedded in creation and all such symbols, especially those linked to specific plants and parts of the human anatomy, are banished from their pages. Once the emblem books are read within the context of this debate, it restores to them the sense of urgency that they held in the period. As Bath points out, since this debate rages most obviously in the pages of emblem books, there is every reason to look at them even more closely.<sup>5</sup>

Recent scholarship has demonstrated that all but two of the English emblem books are motivated by Protestant imperatives.<sup>6</sup> In fact, even those two recusant emblem books from the period seem conscious that they are changing a Protestant form from within by tapping into a rich vein of symbolism pre-dating the Reformation.<sup>7</sup> The growing awareness that emblem books were not neutral compendia means that they cannot be understood independently of ideological considerations. Of course, this has implications for understanding the ways that early modern writers engaged with them too. It could not have been lost on such writers that the emblem books represented a restricted system of meaning. They could never have been experienced in isolation from competing

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<sup>3</sup> The *topos* of the vine and the dead tree will be examined shortly, but especially relevant is Peter Demetz, 'The Elm and Vine: Notes toward the History of a Marriage Topos', *PMLA*, vol. 73, No. 5, 1958, 521-532. For the numerology of the human hand see the way that the Catholic author Thomas Lodge adapts Musaeus' description of Hero's rosy-fingers. See Musaeus, *Hero and Leander*, trans. Thomas Gelzer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), 114, 116: 'ῥοδοειδέα δάκτυλα', 'ῥοδέην χεῖρα' ['rose-like fingers', 'rosy hand']. Lodge seems to understand that Musaeus includes fingers like roses because there are five fingers and because the rose is a longstanding symbol for a wound. He brings together ideas of Christ's wounds as the springs of pity and roses associated with the fingers of the hand in his own poetry. See Thomas Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 311-2: '[her fingers are like] spring-born friends/Whose pretty tops with five sweet roses ends'; Cf. Thomas Lodge, *Rosalynde: Euphues' Golden Legacie*, 25: '[her fingers are] ten branches from two boughs tipt all with roses'. This numerological patterning may also be in the Song of Solomon which describes the fingers of the human hand dropping myrrh as if they have been wounded at 5.5. The idea of Nature 'purple with Love's wound' will be examined shortly, but it is neatly expressed in Margaret Willes, *A Shakespearean Botanical* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2015), 112.

<sup>4</sup> Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 69, 84, 90.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, (1633; Menston: Scholar Press, 1971), preface, Ai, Aiii.

traditions of symbolism. For this reason, it seems naïve to pursue a critical approach that might match a symbol in the work of a Renaissance writer to a symbol in the dominant Renaissance emblematic discourse, as if the one is bound to be a continuation of the other. Such an approach may have been viable in the 1960s and 1970s, when some critics treated Geoffrey Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* as a 'codebook' to illuminate any obscure image in the work of Shakespeare.<sup>8</sup> However, in their eagerness to force these connections, these critics were overlooking ways in which Shakespeare's tradition of symbolism and the orthodox emblem books were poles apart. Increasingly, it is becoming clear that the orthodox emblem books are in no way the ultimate sources for Shakespeare's symbolic view of the world.

Any study that takes as its subject Shakespeare and the Botanic Reformation might be especially likely to reveal the discontinuity between Shakespeare's emblematic material and that of the Protestant emblem books. This is because contemporary attitudes to botanic material tend to reveal perspectives on the divisive issue of evidences for the Christian narrative in the natural world. Unsurprisingly, Shakespeare seems to prefer botanic emblems that are located within nature, the kind that are least likely to be found in the orthodox emblem books. Strange though it may seem, then, there is no better sign that Shakespeare's sources of symbolism were not mainstream, than his attitude to plants. Even a superficial reading would reveal that there is a marked discrepancy between the wealth of emblematic plants in Shakespeare's work and the paucity of plants in the Protestant emblem books. In the many places where Shakespeare includes flower symbolism, as in the recusant emblem books, it is almost always possible to identify the flowers; by contrast, in one of the only moments when a reformer like Whitney makes a flower the focus of one of his emblems he does not care enough to mention what it is.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most memorable emblematic plants in Shakespeare's work, Ophelia's

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<sup>8</sup> David Ormerod, 'Speaking pictures: English emblem books and Renaissance culture' in, *Parergon*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Jan. 1995, 139-141, 140.

<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* in *The English Emblem Tradition*, ed. Peter M. Daly et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), vol. 1, 141. The woodcut seems to depict a rose which occasionally manages to produce the threefold leaves of a strawberry; it is possible that this unnamed flower partly inspired Friar Lawrence's 'weak flower' in *Romeo and Juliet*, that also contains contraries within it, poison and medicine.

plants, are not well represented in the Protestant emblem books.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, then, Shakespeare's emblematic plants do not have a tidy origin in the orthodox emblem books. According to Mats Rydén, the sources of Shakespeare's plant symbolism are both classical and medieval.<sup>11</sup> This combination was unlikely to find a safe harbour in Protestant emblem books and there are good grounds for expecting that Shakespeare's sources were likely to be elsewhere.

Shakespeare's emblematic material has much in common with the material in the two recusant emblem books of Henry Hawkins. In fact, it will be suggested that the sources of Shakespeare's symbolism are closer to Hawkins' than to any of the Protestant emblems. This is true for the way Shakespeare wields plants and flowers, which resembles the way that Hawkins wields his botanical symbols. It is also true for other kinds of symbolism operating within his plays and poems, which seem to promote a late-medieval or recusant belief in the Book of Nature.<sup>12</sup>

This chapter will attempt to locate Shakespeare's symbolism in the context of recusant symbolism for the first time, a development that has only been slow to arrive owing to the comparative neglect of the two recusant emblem books. The remainder of this introductory section will examine in more detail the two extreme positions of the religious divide which lie behind competing symbolic traditions. The mainbody of the chapter will explore the way that both Protestant and Catholic writers re-order images to promote their vested interests in their disparate traditions of symbolism. In the first part it will explore the arbitrary way that Protestant emblem books re-order earlier pagan and Catholic symbolism relating to a botanic marriage. In the second part it will explore the way that Hawkins re-orders the Protestant emblem book form to include a late-medieval and recusant emblem of the five wounds and the way that Shakespeare re-orders images in Italian narratives to include the same recusant emblem.

At this stage it is necessary to consider the case for the ideological stance of the orthodox emblem books in more detail. The originator of the

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<sup>10</sup> James Heath, *Ophelia's Gifts and Garland Flowers for Early Modern Auditors and Readers* (Unpublished MA Dissertation, University of London, Birbeck, in the Shakespeare Centre Library, 2003), 118.

<sup>11</sup> Mats Rydén, *Shakespearean Plant Names: Identification and Interpretations* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1978), 29-30.

<sup>12</sup> See Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), 20.

emblem book form, the Italian lawyer Andrea Alciato, was an unusual man who managed to be an Italian Catholic with an outlook that reflected that of Luther and Erasmus. According to Virginia Callahan, Alciato remained under the influence of Erasmus' work all of his life.<sup>13</sup> She maintains that his personal links with Erasmus had a huge impact on the form that his emblem book took to the point that it can be considered a 'distillation of the Alciati-Erasmus friendship.'<sup>14</sup> This set the ideological tone for the emblem books to follow. Some of the French emblem books are more Catholic in flavour. For example, Claude Paradin's devises, which Shakespeare and George Wilkins plundered for the devices in the play *Pericles*, were composed by a Canon from a non-monastic institution near Lyon.<sup>15</sup> However, all the orthodox English emblem books are inspired by Protestant motives. Michael Bath has insisted that Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* (1586) is in no way a neutral compilation but an expression of a particular political ideology.<sup>16</sup> He maintains that it is a literary work that cannot be understood independently of the programme of Protestant piety that defined it.<sup>17</sup> The book was intended to celebrate the Earl of Leicester's campaign in the Netherlands in 1556 which established a Protestant alliance against Catholic Spain.<sup>18</sup> It is dedicated to Leicester, the royal favourite. Similarly, Bath argues that Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britannia* (1608) was aligned even more closely with royalty. Its political and ideological concerns are those which were most likely to find favour in the Henrician court of the time.<sup>19</sup> This insight of Bath regarding the Protestant agenda of the emblem tradition seems to be reflected in the way that these books were seen from the other side of the religious divide. The recusant Hawkins openly admits in his preface that he is subverting a Protestant form: 'the instruments I use, may seeme prophane, so prophanely used nowadays, as Devises consisting of Impreses and Mottoes, Characters, Essayes, Emblemes and Poesies.'<sup>20</sup> It is possible that Hawkins' merely means that the forms are used in secular contexts. However, it seems more likely that

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<sup>13</sup> Virginia Woods Callahan, 'The Erasmus-Alciati Friendship', *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Lovaniensis, Proceedings of the First International Congress of NeoLatin Studies*, (Louvain, 23-8 August 1971, Munich, 1973), 133.

<sup>14</sup> Woods Callahan, 'Erasmus-Alciati Friendship', 133.

<sup>15</sup> See Alan R. Young, 'A note on the tournament impresas in *Pericles*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36, (1985), 453-6.

<sup>16</sup> Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, 69.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 90, 84

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 69

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 90

<sup>20</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, preface, Ai, Aiii.

this jibe at the 'prophane' form of emblems is an acknowledgment that these were commonly associated with books with a Protestant agenda.

According to Rosemary Freeman, where Shakespeare does engage with the Protestant emblem tradition, it is in the spirit of satire.<sup>21</sup> Where he engages with late medieval or recusant symbolism, it is in a similar spirit of countering the Protestant emblematic achievement. This countering of emblems, begun in Shakespeare's work, is continued by Henry Hawkins in his two recusant emblem books.

Hawkins' work has been championed by Josephine Evetts-Secker who has insisted that he was not an unworldly Catholic figure cut-off from his fellow men but a representative post-Elizabethan and contemporary of Shakespeare.<sup>22</sup> His subversive agenda is apparent in the way that his use of the English language brings out the Catholicism that is already present in it, rather than the Catholicism that needs to be fetched from mainland Europe.<sup>23</sup> He was certainly born into a strong Catholic tradition. One of his sisters, like Shakespeare's Catholic daughter, was named Susanna, but unlike Shakespeare's daughter made a good recusant marriage; his other sisters became Benedictine nuns in Brussels.<sup>24</sup> As for his brothers, more than one of them had a hand in recusant writing.<sup>25</sup> Hawkins became a veteran missionary associated with British institutions like Clerkenwell (from where he worked to save the soul of English recusants) and continental institutions like the College in Rome (where he lived out his exile years). In 1592, when Hawkins was fourteen, he followed in his elder brother's footsteps and matriculated at Gloucester Hall in Oxford.<sup>26</sup> This institution had been founded in the late thirteenth-century on a Benedictine initiative to provide a base for student monks, and it retained its distinctive monastic atmosphere into the early modern period.<sup>27</sup> It was also the college that claimed among its former scholars John Lydgate, the Benedictine writer of

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<sup>21</sup> Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, 100.

<sup>22</sup> Josephine Evetts-Secker, 'Henry Hawkins S.J., 1577-1646: a recusant writer and translator of the early seventeenth century', *Recusant History*, 11 (1971-2), 237-52.

<sup>23</sup> Evetts-Secker, 'Henry Hawkins', 240.

<sup>24</sup> Anthony Charles Ryan, 'Henry Hawkins (bap. 1577 d. 1646),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008), Accessed February 9, 2019. doi-org.lib.exeter.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/12669.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Karl Josef Hölzgen (ed.), *The Devout Heart* (London: The Scholar Press, 1975), note, iv.

<sup>27</sup> Joan Greatrex, 'Benedictine Sermons: Preparation and Practice in the English Monastic Cathedral Cloisters' in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Brill: Leiden, 1998), 257-278, 260; Joan Greatrex, 'From Cathedral Cloister to Gloucester College' in *Benedictines in Oxford*, ed. Henry Wansbrough et al., (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997), 48-60.

medieval dream visions. Hawkins' own creative endeavour was *Partheneia Sacra: Or the Mysterious and Delicious Garden of the Sacred Parthenes* (1633) (the title is a mix of Latin and Greek meaning 'A Sacred Chorus of Maidens', perhaps implying that all his emblems were in harmony like a musical chorus). The work took as its chief sources the Marian writings of Jacobus de Voragine as well as the Marian sermons of the Dutch Jesuit Maximilianus Sandaeus.<sup>28</sup> Although Hawkins' work is ostensibly ordered around a Marian garden, all the well-established Marian flowers in this garden are stained with Christ's heart's blood. Hawkins' book charts a shift from the garden to the wounded heart representing a progression from nature to grace.<sup>29</sup> This leads the reader 'step by step, from the outwards appearance of each symbol to its mystical significance.'<sup>30</sup> Freeman was the first critic to suggest that Hawkins was also responsible for the translation of Etienne Luzvic's *The Devout Heart* (1634), which is more obviously ordered around a crowned and pierced heart.<sup>31</sup>

In discussing the importance of appreciating the ways that recusant writing was integrated into the Elizabethan and Jacobean literary achievement, Evetts-Secker expresses her personal enjoyment of Hawkins' devotional works:

I am often impressed in reading recusant writings, by the intense delight felt in the natural world. Perhaps it is the exile's heightened awareness of things easily and imminently lost.<sup>32</sup>

It is this sense of a fleeting mythical meaning in the British landscape that gives Hawkins' writings a real claim on our attention at a time when the significance of what has been lost is being re-evaluated. As Claude Lévi-Strauss has indicated, mythical and mystical epistemologies are not modern and scientific, but this does not necessarily mean that modern science should turn its back on them:<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Wolfgang Lottes, 'Henry Hawkins and "Partheneia Sacra"', *Review of English Studies*, new ser., 26 (1975), 144-53, 271-86, 273

<sup>29</sup> Höltgen (ed.), *Partheneia Sacra*, 1633, note, iv.

<sup>30</sup> Lottes, 'Henry Hawkins and "Partheneia Sacra"', 271-86, 277.

<sup>31</sup> Höltgen (ed.), *The Devout Heart*, note, ix.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 244

<sup>33</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1978; repr. London: Routledge, 2001), 4.



I think there are some things we have lost...but we can try to become aware of their existence and their importance.<sup>34</sup>

Reading Hawkins is one way to become aware of this lost symbolic engagement with nature. In sharp contrast to the Protestant emblem books, Hawkins seeks to bring out the symbolic significance by appealing directly to the senses and the imagination.<sup>35</sup> This must have been what led Mario Praz to compare Hawkins' prose writing to the sensuous verse of Richard Crashaw.<sup>36</sup> However, if it is possible to look forward to Crashaw, it is even more revealing to look backwards to Shakespeare.

Once the two writers are read side-by-side it becomes clear that there is an overlap in their symbolism which is best explained as a result of a shared recusant oral tradition. When Shakespeare's career was at its height, Hawkins was a scholar in Oxford. It was a mere fourteen years after Shakespeare's death that he published his most original emblem book in 1633. On more than one occasion, Hawkins seems to include deliberate echoes of Shakespeare's work. Karl Hölting, for example, has identified in Hawkins' phrase 'Now then the winter past of melancholie thoughts...' an echo of 'the winter of our discontent' from *Richard III*.<sup>37</sup> Evetts-Secker has also argued that Hawkins' description of Saint Elizabeth's life as 'a tragedy full of Sad Catastrophes, in a word, a passion of all patience' is a deliberate echo of Shakespeare's description of King Lear's life as a 'pattern of all patience.'<sup>38</sup> It might be objected that one word of Hawkins' phrase departs from Shakespeare's line, but that word actually brings us closer to the line which, according to Hannibal Hamlin, is alluding to the shared etymology of patience and Passion from Latin *patior* 'to suffer'.<sup>39</sup> Although Protestant tradition has memorialised a supposed link between Shakespeare's Richard II and Queen Elizabeth I, here Hawkins draws a link between Shakespeare's King Lear and another Queen Elizabeth: the Catholic saint. This suggests that Hawkins, like the Lancashire writer John

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>35</sup> Lottes, 'Henry Hawkins and "Partheneia Sacra"', 144-53, 271-86, 280.

<sup>36</sup> Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-century Imagery* (1939; repr. Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1964), 163.

<sup>37</sup> Hölting (ed.), *Partheneia Sacra*, note ii, Epistle, A1v

<sup>38</sup> Evetts-Secker, 'Henry Hawkins', 242; William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997, repr. 2003), 3.2.37.

<sup>39</sup> Hannibal Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 323.

Weever whose sonnet to Shakespeare will be discussed in later chapters, was in a tradition that understood that certain Shakespeare characters were not so removed from saints.<sup>40</sup> Hawkins' botanic emblems can also be seen to draw on the same cultural references as Shakespeare, as when the comment that sunflowers fix their eye 'on the sun of justice' and do not follow 'the deceptive influence of the changeable moon' might suggest Juliet's plea: 'O swear not by the moon, th'inconstant moon...'.<sup>41</sup> In countering the Protestant tradition, Hawkins, no less than Shakespeare, has recourse to earlier symbolic forms. These included Pliny's *Natural History* and the bestiaries; Macrobius on the Secrets of Nature (to be examined in chapter three); Benedictine commentary on Ovid (to be examined in chapter four); the Song of Solomon and dream visions such as *The Romance of the Rose* based around the idea of the enclosed garden; the litany of Loretto; and possibly George Cavendish's and Thomas Lodge's elegies or complaints.<sup>42</sup> Now more than ever, both Hawkins and Shakespeare demand to be read in 'a Counter reformation context.'<sup>43</sup> A direct line can be drawn between the symbolic wall-paintings of the medieval guild buildings where Shakespeare was educated and the symbolic emblem books for Hawkins' sodality; increasingly, it seems likely that somewhere in the middle of this line, tracing the move from medieval guild to recusant sodality, Shakespeare's symbolism can be located.

### Re-Ordering Symbolism along Protestant Lines: Arbitrary or Ingenious?

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<sup>40</sup> In 1601 Elizabeth I was said to have remarked to William Lambarde, 'I am Richard II. Know ye not that?'. See E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), vol. 2, 326.

<sup>41</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed., Rene Weis (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2012), 2.2.109.

<sup>42</sup> See Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*. For the influence of Pliny's *Natural History* see the discussions of dew and the generation of pearls (ibid., 62, 68, 187, 192); for the influence of the bestiaries see the description of the panther (ibid., 50); for the influence of Macrobius see the references to the secrets of Nature (ibid., proem, 21, 31, 117, 166, 191, 211, 227); for the influence of Bersuire see the way that Ovid's description of the milky way is transposed to this Christian context (ibid., 96); for the influence of the Song of Solomon see the marginal notes (ibid., 15, 87, 203, 215); for the influence of the *Romance of the Rose* see the illustration of the enclosed garden which resembles illustrations for the medieval dream vision such as the one in MS Egerton 3781, folio 1 recto; for the influence of the Litany of Loreto see the descriptions of Saint Mary the Virgin as the morn and as the star of the sea (ibid., 119, 121, 244); for the possible influence of the tradition of complaints literature of Cavendish and Lodge see the description of Niobe (ibid., 205).

<sup>43</sup> Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, 233.

Critics of emblem books are all agreed that by the sixteenth century, an active belief in the Book of Nature was on its way out.<sup>44</sup> The search for meaning in the natural world, which by monastic times had developed into an attempt to puzzle out the barely-legible prescriptions of the universal doctor, God, had its origins in a pre-Christian doctrine of signatures.<sup>45</sup> Certain emblems of medieval religion, such as the vine and elm image to be examined shortly, also had their roots in pagan mystery religion. It is no accident, then, that medieval symbolism has been described by Josephine Evetts-Secker as 'a means of manifesting mystery through symbolic pictures.'<sup>46</sup> The sixteenth-century reformers, however, presided over a wholesale dismantling of this eclectic world-view. As far as they were concerned, this overarching knowledge-system depended on misguided reading of sacred meaning into meaningless quirks and vagaries of the natural world.

Peter Daly affirms Rosemary Freeman's argument that the medieval worldview was vanishing in the sixteenth century as the unified allegorical explanations for phenomena were discarded.<sup>47</sup> Since Daly agrees with Freeman in this matter, it is not clear why he takes exception to other scholars' astute comments that the Renaissance emblem books represent a 'degenerate form of allegory', 'allegory's bastard children' or that they are overcompensating by being 'overly ingenious.'<sup>48</sup> After the sweeping away of a parent allegory that explained all kinds of correspondences, any symbolic form manufactured as a replacement would be so invested in this sweeping away as almost to dramatise its own bastardy, as Edmund does in *King Lear*.

Daly is a disciple of the German scholar Albrecht Schöne, whose criticism departed from more intuitive and descriptive German studies to pioneer a systematic approach. Daly laments how emblems have been repeatedly judged as 'arbitrary' and 'capricious' which he believes is an unfounded evaluation.<sup>49</sup> But the fact that so many perceptive critics have pinpointed this quality surely reflects some reality in the texts and not one wholly imposed by a

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<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, 20; Daly, *Light of the Emblem*, 39.

<sup>45</sup> Evetts-Secker, 'Henry Hawkins', 248.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>47</sup> Daly, *Light of the Emblem*, 39.

<sup>48</sup> Else Eichler, Charles Hayes and Gerhard Fricke quoted in Daly, *Light of the Emblem*, 3, 3, 99.

<sup>49</sup> Daly, *Light of the Emblem*, 3, 48.

puzzled modern reader.<sup>50</sup> Daly acknowledges that before Schöne there was German scholarly tradition that highlighted the arbitrary aspects of emblem writing.<sup>51</sup> Sometimes he implies that English studies have for the most part moved on from this aberrant view.<sup>52</sup> At other times, he concedes that hardly any British critics actually reject the notion that the emblem is arbitrary by definition.<sup>53</sup> This latter view is more accurate, since Freeman and Bath have ensured that the word 'arbitrary' is used cautiously, but usefully, to describe the emblem books in British scholarship:

In the emblem books the treatment of abstract symbol, the stiffness of the personified figures, the imposition of moral significance upon straightforward unallegorical stories, the introduction of purely figurative detail in the plates and the interpretation of realistic detail there in a figurative way, all bear witness to the forced and arbitrary nature of Elizabethan and Jacobean symbolism.<sup>54</sup>

In the interest of balance, Bath pointed out that there is a fine line between arbitrariness and subtlety.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps the best way of approaching this problem is to compare the Protestant emblem writing to the Protestant herbalism of the previous chapter. A Protestant herbalist might arbitrarily pluck a stop-gap name for a plant out of thin air (for example, Turner's name of 'French Gillyflower' for the wild daffodil).<sup>56</sup> However, a Protestant herbalist might also contrive a subtle name for a plant (for example, John Gerard's name 'Traveller's Joy').<sup>57</sup> Both represent a Protestant attempt to mask what came before, even if it is only temporary or make-shift. The attempt can spur Protestant writers on to results that are more creative and appealing than the earlier Catholic traditions. The same motivations lie behind the Protestant emblems. Some seem arbitrary when set against earlier traditions, often because they in some way attempt to

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 240-91n.

<sup>54</sup> Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, 31.

<sup>55</sup> Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, 108.

<sup>56</sup> William Turner *Libellus de res herbaria* (1538) quoted in Leah Knight, *Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009), 59-60.

<sup>57</sup> John Gerard's *Herball* quoted in Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, London: Penguin, 1983, 81

dislodge the sacred claims of those traditions (for example, the rose in Whitney covered with a scarab and associated with death on the sole authority of Propertius 3.17, which is enormously different from the more traditional rose in Hawkins' emblem book associated with eternal life).<sup>58</sup> Others can seem inventive and intriguing (for example, Whitney's emblem of *Experientia Docet* that pits the weather forecast of an astronomer against a ploughman).<sup>59</sup> Others still can afford to be traditional, but only when the tradition is one of impeccable textual and secular authority: Andrea Alciato or Aesop or the Roman satirists.<sup>60</sup>

Clifford Davidson notes that within an emblem book traditional meaning can be changed or reversed, sometimes until it is completely unrecognisable.<sup>61</sup>

The emblem was made complicit in severing religious and doctrinal issues from the allegory that had perpetuated them and by the seventeenth century the allegorical gestures and beliefs were realigned with the sacred issues which were their reason for existing.<sup>62</sup> By this time, allegory was a stimulating literary mode in its own right but it was no longer an interpretative tool granting insights into cosmology.<sup>63</sup>

Bath notes that often a Protestant emblem is formed by cementing together two disparate *topoi* to produce a brand new link.<sup>66</sup> This kind of originality, the cementing together of the unrelated, is not the regular kind of Renaissance originality which in the period was usually understood to mean operating within a tradition.<sup>67</sup> Here the originality equates to arbitrariness, in the sense that in an instant it breaks from the convention naturalised by repetition down the ages or from any sense that an emblem can be natural rather than manmade.

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<sup>58</sup> Whitney, *Choice of Emblemes* in Daly et al (eds.) *English Emblem Tradition*, vol 1. 110.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, vol 1. 98

<sup>60</sup> For emblems from Alciato see the emblem of the battling redbreasts in Whitney, *Choice of Emblemes* in Daly et al. (eds.) *English Emblem Tradition*, vol 1. 148; for emblems from Aesop see the fox and the grapes or the satyr and the man in Whitney, *Choice of Emblemes* in Daly et al. (eds.) *The English Emblem Tradition*, vol 1., 196; for emblems from the Roman satirists see Whitney, *Choice of Emblemes* in Daly et al. *The English Emblem Tradition*, vol 1. 196.

<sup>61</sup> Clifford Davidson, 'Repentance and the Fountain: The Transformation of Symbols in English Emblem Books' in *The Art of the Emblem* ed. Michael Bath, John Manning and Alan R. Young (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1993), 5.

<sup>62</sup> Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, 160.

<sup>63</sup> Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, 31.

<sup>66</sup> Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, 105.

<sup>67</sup> Daniel Quint, *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Rebecca Herrisone and Alan Howard (eds.), *Concepts of Creativity in Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013).

Bath also borrows from Ferdinand de Saussure the idea that ‘the only quality that links signifier with signified is its difference from other signs.’<sup>68</sup> It is possible to move towards a theory of semiotic difference by pointing out that medieval allegory had been woven into cosmology and the natural world, the signatures of the flowers and the numerology of the human body, whereas Protestant signs were dislocated from all these contexts. Similarly, where a recusant like Hawkins might have recourse to the curriculum and commentaries of monastic humanism, to Christian interpretations of Virgil, Pliny or Ovid, a Protestant emblem writer would approach these interpretations in iconoclastic ways, or draw on more secular conceits of Plutarch, Martial, Propertius, in an attempt to embody a one-man scholastic tradition.

### **Re-Ordering Symbolism along Protestant Lines: The Botanic Marriage**

This section will consider the first emblem in Geoffrey Whitney’s *Choice of Emblemes* (1599). According to Michael Bath:

The emblem is addressed to the queen, whose fortitude it symbolises in the pillar supporting the entwining ivy of the flourishing church. This emblem initiates the program of loyal Protestantism which underpins the political ideology of the whole volume.<sup>69</sup>

This is emblem-writing at its most sycophantic because, right at the start of the book where such flattery would be most likely to be approvingly encountered by royal eyes, it presents Elizabeth in the role of messiah.. Whitney’s book was dedicated to the Royal favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, but the first emblem is addressed directly to the Queen herself. The emblem sets out to suggest a particular model for the way that a marriage between an English monarch and English church might work (this was a common Protestant concern in the period and was allegorised elsewhere, for example, in the marriage of Argentille (Elizabeth) and Curan of Kirkland (the Church) in William Warner’s *Albion’s England*).<sup>70</sup> However, in order to do this, Whitney insinuates

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<sup>68</sup> Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, 6-7.

<sup>69</sup> Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, 84.

<sup>70</sup> Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 354.

that the ivy can be an allegory for the church emancipated by the Queen.<sup>71</sup> This is a deliberate reversal of a pagan and Catholic tradition which accorded 'ivy' the emancipatory role in a symbolic marriage.<sup>72</sup>

Since ancient times ivy had been a symbol central to the Dionysian mysteries and it was borrowed by the early church to stand for their own divine bridegroom and the eternal life that he could offer a dead tree like an elm.<sup>73</sup> The symbol was easily assimilated because Christ himself had declared, 'I am the vine' (John 15:1). That monastic readers were still capable of divining the older symbol behind the biblical verse is suggested by a reworking of the verse by the Italian Dominican Francesco Colonna: 'I am like the climbing vine deprived of its pole and prop, lying prostrate without the supporting elm.'<sup>74</sup> The mystical

<sup>71</sup> Whitney, *Choice of Emblemes* in Daly et al. (eds.) *The English Emblem Tradition*, vol. 1, 90.

<sup>72</sup> Even the earliest versions of the *topos* in pagan literature seem to be ripe for Christian moralisation. Catullus' Poem 62 seems to contain Christian meditation on the virgin flower as *hortus conclusus* before arguing that such a virgin vine should be wed to 'a husband elm.' In Horace's Odes 4.5, the genders are reversed so that 'every man weds the vine to the maiden tree.' Horace goes on to write that in this Augustan golden age, every man 'goes home to wine and invites you, Caesar, as a god, to the second course.' Today it is understood to mean that the meal ends in an obligatory toast or libation to Caesar; to readers in the late Middle Ages, the lines might have suggested that wine was the first course and the body of a god was present at the second. Finally, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* features the elm and the vine as an 'exemplum of the trees' or 'tree's lesson' that in the moralised tradition was understood as material appropriate for a Christian sermon. Catullus 62 also features an image of an elm and vine that could be a reworking of an earlier Greek poem by Sappho. See Catullus, *The Poems*, ed. Kenneth Quinn (London: St. Martin's Press, 1970), 43, Carmen 62.39 'ut flos in saeptis secretus nascitur hortis...' 'just as a flower that grows cloistered in an enclosed garden...' (my translation). The Catullus poem featuring the *hortus conclusus* may have drawn on a Sappho poem featuring a purple flower that now survives only in fragmentary form. See Eduard Frankel, 'Vesper Adest', *Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 45, 1955, 1-8, 5 'the flower in the well-protected garden is...different from the [purple] wild hyacinth...and yet the feeling behind the two passages seems to be kindred.' See also Denys Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, 121, n. 4: 'The imitation in Catullus lxii.38 ff. suggests that the context in the Greek poem was similar.' The conclusion of Frankel and Page suggest that the Greek poem could have contained the vine and the elm *topos*, however, see also Peter Demetz, 'The Elm and Vine: Notes toward the History of a Marriage Topos', *PMLA*, vol. 73, No. 5, 1958, 521-532, 522 who argues that although Sappho's poetry could have alluded to a 'technique of training the vine on wooden poles', 'the method of attaching a vine to a tree, and particularly an elm' was a kind of viticulture native to Italy not Greece. This would mean that Catullus reworked Sappho's material relating to purple flower and then added his own motif relating to the elm and the vine because it was in keeping with this material. For Horace see Horace, *Opera*, ed. Edward C. Wickham, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), Ode 4.5.29-30; Horace, *The Complete Odes and Epodes*, trans. David West, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 119, Ode 4.5.29-30, 31-2. For Ovid see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. R. J. Tarrant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 14.660-668, 667: 'exemplo arboris'; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, 345, 'tree's lesson'; see also Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 414; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, XIV.xvi. The medieval commentary interprets Vertumnus teaching of the vine and elm as a preacher preaching of the vine and elm, presumably because the Christian resonance of this *topos* was so strong.

<sup>73</sup> Peter Demetz, 'The Elm and Vine', 524: 'an early church...absorbed a central symbol of the Dionysian mysteries'

<sup>74</sup> John 15.1; Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 391.

meaning of the symbol and verse, promoted in early Christian catacomb art and medieval gothic carved pillars, was that even when those of the true church were dead like an elm, their souls could continue to reap the fruit of eternal life through Christ.<sup>75</sup> These associations eventually found their way into emblem books on the Catholic continent, such as Jean-Jacques Boissard and Jean Pierre Joly Messin's *Emblemes* (1588), which depicts two people under the tree who can expect to be given eternal life because of the vine which stands for Christ.<sup>76</sup> The *topos* can also be found in John Lyly's *Mother Bombie* (1594), alongside a number of symbolic pairings drawn from nature which could have been hypostasised as the sacred couples of Christ and Mary, Christ and the Church, Christ and the Soul.<sup>77</sup> In keeping with pagan mystery religion and Christian scripture, these traditional versions of the *topos* consistently feature the vine as the bridegroom and the elm as the bride.

However, Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* (1586) differs from Boissard and Messin's *Emblemes* (1588) by breaking with this age-old tradition. In reworking emblem 159 of Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum Liber* (1581), he opts for a motto which lays the emphasis on friendship: 'Amicitia etiam post mortem durans' ['Friendship lasts even after death'].<sup>78</sup> In fact, the 'after death' of Whitney's motto is not the heavenly afterlife that enchanted the Middle Ages, but a secular world that goes on without the dead man, paving the way for a modern secular universe. Similarly, the elm that Whitney depicts is not a happy tree reaping eternal life through Christ, but a 'senseless block' whose hopes can only run to its 'stock' on earth, his children or 'stock' (a use of the word which potentially implies that these children take after the father in being somehow stupid or lifeless, like 'stocks and stones'):

...When the Elme, was rotten, drie, and dead,  
His braunches still, the vine abowt it spread...  
Which shoves, wee should be link'de with such a frende,

<sup>75</sup> Peter Demetz, 'The Elm and Vine', 524: 'stressing the continuity of the pre-Christian meaning, one could...interpret this [catacomb] ikon as suggestive of the dead mystically wedded to the tree of Christ, thus achieving immortality.'

<sup>76</sup> Henry Greene, *Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers* (London: Trübner, 1870), 107 n.

<sup>77</sup> Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 200; John Lyly, *Mother Bombie*, ed. Leah Scragg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 1.3.137-8.

<sup>78</sup> Whitney, *Choice of Emblemes* in Daly et al. (eds.) *English Emblem Tradition*, vol 1, 156.



That might revive, and helpe when wee bee oulde:  
 And when wee stoope, and draw unto our ende,  
 Our staggering state, to helpe for to uphoulde:  
 Yea, when wee shall be like a senseless block,  
 That for our sakes, will still imbrace our stock.<sup>79</sup>

Some readers might have derived comfort from the thought of this friendly ivy, wrapping its arms around an infirm figure, and embracing their descendants 'still' (which, at a push, might mean forever and ever, rather than 'at least'). However, a reader used to the old Catholic symbolism, might find little in this emblem to counteract the suspicion that Whitney is merely describing an oblivion presided over by parasitic ivy. John Lyly's version of the emblem in *Mother Bombie* had associated it with kind 'embracings' of bride and bridegroom; Whitney's version of the emblem already seems to gesture towards the deadly embraces of the ivy-tree emblem in Joseph Hall's *Occasional Meditations* (1630-3)<sup>80</sup>:

Behold true emblem of false love! Here are kind embracements, but deadly: how close doth this weed cling unto that oak, and seems to hug and shade it! But in the mean time, draws away the sap; and at last kills it. Such is a harlot's love: such is a parasite's.<sup>81</sup>

Whitney's emblem underlines the parasitic nature of the vine and the rotten and shaky foundations of any belief in a kind of love that lasts beyond this world. Potentially what is granted by the vine is not an eternal life in heaven for the rotten elm, upon which Whitney heaps all kinds of odium (presumably since he knows that certain readers will recall that it once stood for the souls of the Catholic church) but a sinister legacy of slow strangulation for its children on earth.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., vol. 1. 156; cf. 123, which features a fruit growing on a pine-tree.

<sup>80</sup> Lyly, *Mother Bombie*, 1.3.137-8.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, 164.

<sup>82</sup> It is possible that 'ivy' was further associated with Catholicism in the period because of the ivy-clad condition of dissolved monastic ruins. See Philip Schwyzer, 'Late Losses and the Temporality of Early Modern Nostalgia', *Parergon: Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, (2016), 97-113, 98-9.

Whitney's emblem of the elm and vine demonstrates the distinctness of this Renaissance form from the earlier types of allegory.<sup>83</sup> It is often claimed that Protestant emblems are counterintuitive and emotionally disconnected (it could certainly be argued that this one of Whitney's has these qualities to the point that it seems to possess the sinister subtext articulated in Hall's later meditative emblem). However, the original Catholic symbol was just as counterintuitive because where the layman would see a pillar carved with vine-leaves in a church and assume that it represented a pillar propping up the vine, the informed clergyman would know that it represented a conceit in which the vine was actually the stronger of the two (after all, it represented Christ).<sup>84</sup>

According to Nicki Faircloth and Vivian Thomas, *The Comedy of Errors* 'provides a classic example of the elm as support for the vine. The unhappy Adriana delivers a homily to her husband, beginning "Thou art an elm, my husband, I am a vine,/Whose weakness, married to thy stronger state,/Makes me with thy strength to communicate."<sup>85</sup> In fact, it will be suggested that Shakespeare, like Whitney, reverses the classic example. By including a male elm and a female vine, Shakespeare is evoking the correct Protestant identities in what is otherwise a context of mistaken identity.

However, this very context makes it difficult to contend that Shakespeare is using the speaker of the lines as a clear mouthpiece for his own preferred version of the *exemplum*. It is Adriana, not Shakespeare, who explains the identities according to the elm and vine and, crucially, she mistakes those identities. Just as the male vine is absent in Adriana's botanic *topos*, so her true husband is absent from the stage, and she addresses the homily to another man (namely, Antipholus of Syracuse, the long-lost identical twin of her husband, Antipholus of Ephesus). This complicates a straight-forward reading of her botanic symbolism since it does not fit with any observable reality. Her words cannot be understood in isolation from the irony of this moment and the truth of her version of the botanic marriage is consequently undermined.

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<sup>83</sup> Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, 31.

<sup>84</sup> For an instance of such carved pillars in church iconography see, for example, Avril Henry, 'The Iconography of the West Front' in *Medieval art and architecture at Exeter Cathedral*, ed. Francis Kelly (1991) (British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions, 11, 1985), 134-146.

<sup>85</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 120; William Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*, ed. Kent Cartwright (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2016), 2.2.174-6.

Of course, when Adriana makes her botanic overtures to a stranger, he is likely to be dumbstruck. He will thus be forced into the role of the elm which Whitney glosses as a 'senseless block'.<sup>86</sup> However, strictly speaking, she is the senseless one, and the thoughts of the audience might turn to her true bridegroom who is delayed. One way of reading this speech, then, is as a parody of a Protestant vision of an unruly female monarch trying to embrace an English Church reduced to a 'senseless block.'<sup>87</sup> This may have prompted certain playgoers to recall the longstanding Catholic tradition that it is for Christ to support his English Church and raise its souls to immortality. If this is a countering of the Protestant emblem, it is easy to imagine how it could be reinforced by the physical business of a boy-actor draping himself over a stunned and stupid older actor on stage. In this way the audience could be encouraged to see how ridiculous Protestant models for marriage truly were, as well as Protestant models for friendship. However tenaciously the boy-actor entwined himself around the actor playing Antipholus of Syracuse, it would be clear from that actor's face that he had never seen this 'lady' before in his life. If he agreed to put himself in her power, it was either a sign that he had taken leave of his senses or that he was content to go along with the Protestant travesty of marriage for convenience sake. In this way, Shakespeare exposes Whitney's self-serving, one-sided and rotten vision of social interaction. That it was just so much deadwood and strangulation was all too clear from the flattering first emblem in the book.

### **Re-Ordering 'Prophane' Forms Along Recusant Lines: 'Purple with Love's Wound'**

Karl Höltgen has argued that behind the two recusant emblem books associated with Hawkins lies the popular cult of the sacred heart.<sup>88</sup> According to William Slights, this cult was already established by the twelfth century.<sup>89</sup> It developed into the late medieval cult of the five wounds of Christ, which

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<sup>86</sup> Whitney, *Choice of Emblemes* in Daly et al. (eds.) *English Emblem Tradition*, vol 1, 156.

<sup>87</sup> Anything that would lure the church away from this unruly female is accordingly imagined as 'usurping ivy, briar, or idle moss' (Shakespeare, *Comedy of Errors*, 2.2.178).

<sup>88</sup> Henry Hawkins, *The Devout Heart*, 1634, Menston: Scholar Press, 1971, note, xi

<sup>89</sup> William W. E. Slights, *The Heart in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). 47, fig 6. 48

illustrated the way that the blood of the sacrament and water of life flowed from the lance-pierced heart at the centre.<sup>90</sup> Eamon Duffy describes how the well-known cult was only increasing in popularity by the Reformation.<sup>91</sup> It was usually linked with a vision seen by Pope Gregory and was adopted as a useful visual aid to meditation:<sup>92</sup>

The emblem was carved on bench-ends, painted in glass, cast in brass or carved in slate to be placed on graves. It was also distributed in the form of cheap woodcuts, by the Charterhouses...[The emblem] was specially linked to intercession for the dead and deliverance from Purgatory.<sup>93</sup>

The remainder of the chapter will examine how Shakespeare secretes this emblem in his plays and how he promotes the notion that it is in no way a synthetic symbol but one grounded in plants and the human body. By assimilating this emblem into his drama Shakespeare can be seen to counter the claims of the Protestant emblem books and to anticipate the ordering principle of seventeenth-century recusant emblem books. This chapter will also explore the ways that the Protestant emblem writers try to tear up this recusant emblem by the roots, particularly when its roots are in nature, in the signatures of plants or in bodily fluids or in the body itself.

Both Shakespeare and Hawkins locate the emblem within nature, closely associating it with plants and with the human body, as is typical of Catholic symbolism. For example, Shakespeare re-orders images found in the Italian sources for *Othello* and *Cymbeline* along botanic lines, so that they become a strawberry handkerchief and a cowslip birthmark. Each of these images is an intimate token of the heroine, familiar to no-one but her husband, so that when the villain finds out about them he is able to imply that she is untrue. On one level, then, both these images operate as evidence, in Othello's sense of 'ocular proof', that is misused to condemn a calumniated woman who is in fact true.<sup>94</sup> On another level, both these emblems operate as evidences in William Paley's

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 47, fig 6. 48

<sup>91</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 238.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 238

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 246

<sup>94</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.3.364; Cooper, *Romance in Time*, 275.

sense, that is, as proofs placed by God in the natural world to reveal his true church; any claim that this church was untrue must somehow deny these proofs.<sup>95</sup> Imogen or Desdemona are versions of the same calumniated woman and it is tempting to interpret this woman as partly a representation of the Catholic Church (or, at least, of the claims of the Church embodied in the figure of Nature).<sup>96</sup>

It is no accident that the grouping of flowers in Shakespeare's late plays, *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*, are identical to the emblematic flowers that Hawkins chooses to bring out his ordering principle of the five wounds of Christ. The catalogue of flowers in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* includes 'lilies of all kinds/(The flow'r-de-luce being one)' (4.4.126-7), 'violets, dim/But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes/Or Cytherea's breath' (4.4.120-2) and 'the marigold, that goes to bed wi' th' sun/And with him rises weeping.' (4.4.105-6). This catalogue overlaps with the strewments in *Cymbeline*: 'The purple violets and marigolds/Shall as a carpet lay upon thy grave/While summer days doth last.' (4.1.14-16). Both the recusant emblem books feature a parallel catalogue that encompasses: 'The bashful rose, the candid Lillie, the purple violet, the goodlie heliotropion' (he later identifies this last flower as the golden 'marygold').<sup>97</sup>

These flowers that feature in *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* are located by Hawkins within a cosmology in which their colours are caused by blood from the Five Wounds of Christ. There are traces of this in Shakespeare's work in the 'flower before milk-white, now purple with Love's wound', where 'Almighty Love' could stand for Christ Almighty.<sup>98</sup> There are further traces of this in Shakespeare's claim that it is the Christlike Adonis who 'set[s] gloss on the rose, smell to the violet.'<sup>99</sup> Hawkins' more expansive prose treatment of this subject can be read as a useful commentary on these Shakespearean lines: it is 'deaw...which fel from the Five Wounds of IESUS', or 'Grace, which is a kind of Deaw', which 'covers the rose with scarlet, that clothes the lillie with innocencie,

<sup>95</sup> See William Paley, *Natural Theology: or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity* (London: J.Faulder, 1809). This work reprised the 'God's handwriting' and doctrine of signatures arguments for signs of a divine hand in creation itself.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Shell's insights into the figure of 'Weeping England' in Catholic elegiac poetry in Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, 179-180.

<sup>97</sup> Hawkins, *Devout Heart*, 164, 165. For the 'heliotrope' as 'marigold' see Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, 26 n.1: 'The Marigold, Sunflower, Heliotrope and Girasole were regarded as interchangeable terms in the seventeenth century.'

<sup>98</sup> For 'Almighty Love' see Thomas Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', envoie

<sup>99</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 935-6

the violets with purple, which embroiders the marygold with gold, and enriches all the flowers with gold, silk and pearls, that metamorphosies itself, heere into flowers, there into leaves, and then to fruits of sundrie sorts.’<sup>100</sup> This is precisely what Shakespeare’s Adonis does, he *metamorphoses* himself into a flower, though it is interesting that Hawkins implies that his ultimate metamorphosis could have been into a fruit. Hawkins’s prose makes clear that the metamorphosis is caused by the same dew that colours the flowers, and which has its origin in ‘the Five Wounds of IESUS.’<sup>101</sup>

The work of Shakespeare that can most often be heard as an echo in Hawkins’ recusant emblem book is ‘Venus and Adonis.’ Just as ‘Venus and Adonis’ unfolds in an everlasting spring common to the medieval dream vision form later to be ruptured by the incongruous winter boar, so in Hawkins’ garden ‘it is perpetual spring.’<sup>102</sup> Just as Venus speaks of a place ‘where never serpent hisses’ so Hawkins describes a garden ‘whereto no serpent, nor original sin, much lesse actual, could access’, scrupulously retaining the ‘hisses’ of the earlier phrase in the sibilance of his later reworking.<sup>103</sup> In an earlier pun of his in the dedication to *Fuga Saeculi* (1632), he likens himself to ‘Narcissus’ encountering the ‘Brooke’ to please his patron Sir Basil Brooke, a link which suggests that it was Shakespeare’s version of the fable in ‘Venus and Adonis’ that he had in mind: ‘Narcissus so himself mistook and died to kiss his shadow in a brook.’<sup>104</sup> Shakespeare’s description of ‘Nature...with herself at strife,’ begging herself to create beautiful heroes like Narcissus and Adonis, seems to be picked up by Hawkins: ‘Nature...all the pleasures and delights on earth, amassed together, to make a dearth elsewhere’; at other times Nature seems to also be a teary-eyed female at the crucifixion: ‘The Deaws...are the verie teares of Nature...No teare she sheads, that stands her not in as much, as a drop of her dearest bloud.’<sup>105</sup> Is this weeping Nature or the teary-eyed Virgin, who, according to the early Tudor play *Hick Scorner*, ‘wept tears of blood’?<sup>106</sup> Or is it Mary Magdalen, also present at the crucifixion? In this flexible recusant

<sup>100</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 63, 65, 63

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 65

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>103</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 17; Grigson, *Englishman’s Flora*, 425; Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 13.

<sup>104</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 161-2.

<sup>105</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 11; Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 6, 59.

<sup>106</sup> *Hick Scorner* in *Two Tudor Interludes* ed. Ian Lancashire (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), ll. 19-20.

allegory, the figure stained by her proximity to the crucified Christ could equally be the Madonna, or the symbolic bride of Christ, or the face of Nature, perhaps in the form of a flower. Shakespeare's description of how 'no flower was nigh [at Adonis' death]...but stole his blood and seem'd with him to bleed' suggests the medieval aetiology behind the orchid named 'Gethsemane', stained at the crucifixion; Hawkins himself writes of 'Gethsemnay, watred with Bloud flowing from our Saviour's precious bodie.'<sup>107</sup> The evidence for a shared tradition here is strong, even though Shakespeare, writing for a wider audience, can only touch upon some cosmological ideas that Hawkins is able to develop at length, writing for a sodality.

The writers of poems in the tradition of Thomas Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis,' which includes Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis', locate themselves in a tradition of classic Benedictine explanations of Ovidian fable in which 'nymphs' stood for 'saints' (to be discussed more fully in the fourth chapter).<sup>108</sup> Not only is Hawkins aware of this Benedictine tradition, he is also aware of an even older tradition, in which a spring might be 'the Nymph herself', as had been the case in indigenous Celtic religion in the British Isles.<sup>109</sup> In a neat phrase, 'the Nymphs of flowers', he suggests the way that St Candida might be the saint of the periwinkle, or St Urith the saint of the pimpernel, and that both might be stained in such a way as to identify them as brides of Christ.<sup>110</sup> This explains why, in Shakespeare's poem, Adonis is described as the 'stain to all nymphs', just as Hawkins calls the rose the 'darling of the garden-nymphs.'<sup>111</sup> Hawkins reworks Shakespeare's idea of the staining Adonis with specific reference to Christ's mother: 'lastly her sonne made her purple red...No faith of Mortals then but had a Staine,/Excepting hers; for she was died in

<sup>107</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1055-6; Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 11. This description of Gethsemane watered with blood brings to mind that the Hebrew toponym means 'wine-press.'

<sup>108</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 279; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, VII.x; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.1.89-90. It is possible that Hamlet's line addressed to Ophelia cross-references this moment in Bersuire's commentary to establish Ophelia's status as a saint whose drowning will be a kind of martyrdom.

<sup>109</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 210, 211. Celtic deities 'were seen as personifications of natural features [so that] Sulis was the hot spring at Bath, not simply its guardian or possessor' See Miranda J. Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 24. This belief persisted among the Benedictines who took over the care of the Celtic spring at Holywell. They continued to believe that the moss and algae associated with the spring 'were the saints [and] they were perceived as being alive'. See T. W. Pritchard, *St Winefride, Her Holy Well and the Jesuit Mission, c. 650-1930* (Bridge Books: Wrexham, 2009), 11.

<sup>110</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 28.

<sup>111</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 9; Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 17.

graine.’<sup>112</sup> Elsewhere he states that ‘the rose is her Adonis, bleeding in her lap; the Rose her Ganimed, presenting her cups ful of the Nectar of her sweets.’<sup>113</sup> This recalls Shakespeare’s ‘Venus and Adonis’ or *As You Like It*, where Rosalind assumes the role of the distributor of nectar, Ganymede.<sup>114</sup> This supposition is supported by the fact that no sooner is ‘Ganimed’ mentioned than the rose is compared to ‘the quintessence’, two aspects of Shakespeare’s Rosalind.<sup>115</sup> All this suggests that Hawkins was immersed in the same symbolic traditions as Shakespeare and that such traditions borrowed their colours and fragrance from the five wounds of Christ.

### **Re-Ordering Semiotics Along Recusant Lines: Giral-di-Cinzio’s Handkerchief**

As has been established, both *Othello* and *Cymbeline* provide parallel instances of Shakespeare re-ordering an image in an Italian source to bring it in line with a recusant emblem. The next two sections will examine these Jacobean plays in chronological order, focusing on the ways that the imagery of the Italian narratives is altered to accommodate emblematic significance.

*Othello* has been dismissed as a ‘Tragedy of the Handkerchief’ although it is equally possible to admire the way that this prop comes to represent the tissue of lies by which the villain ‘proves’ that the heroine is untrue.<sup>116</sup> This chapter will examine one of the key changes between the source and the text of *Othello* and suggest that this change is ultimately made to introduce botanic symbolism into the narrative. In the main source for *Othello*, Giral-di-Cinzio’s *Ecatommiti*, it is ‘a handkerchief most intricately in the Moorish manner [il qual pannicello era lauorata alla moresca sottilissimamente]’, but Shakespeare’s reworks it into ‘a hankerchief/Spotted with strawberries.

*il qual pannicello era lauorata alla moresca sottilissimamente*

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 1.5.240

<sup>113</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 18.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.; Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 1168, 7; Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 1.3.121-2.

<sup>115</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 1.3.121, 3.2.136-7.

<sup>116</sup> Thomas Rymer, *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693) in Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, (London: Routledge, 1974), vol. 2, 25 ff.; See also Nigel Alexander, ‘Thomas Rymer and *Othello*’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 21 (1968), 67-77.



a handkerchief embroidered most intricately in the Moorish manner

Giraldi-Cinzio, *Ecatommiti*, 3.7

a handkerchief/Spotted with strawberries

Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.3.437-8

As soon as the handkerchief in the original story of Giraldi-Cinzio is compared with the reworked one in Shakespeare's play, two questions suggest themselves.

Firstly, why did Shakespeare not retain the Moorish pattern mentioned by Giraldi-Cinzio? It might be held that this question has already been more than adequately addressed since many critics have suggested that Shakespeare's pattern is intended to evoke bloodstained wedding sheets.<sup>117</sup> However, such a significance would not necessitate a botanic design. The decision to add a botanic emblem may simply be a matter of updating, of substituting a popular design from English needlework. Even if this were the case, though, it was common for designs on fabric to have symbolic meanings in Elizabethan times and it seems unlikely that a playwright would miss this opportunity to introduce meaning into a play. The conclusion must be that, in keeping with the symbolic nature of embroidered fabric in the period, the botanic pattern is meant to activate specific emblematic interpretation.<sup>118</sup>

Secondly, why did Shakespeare decide on the strawberry of all plants? If he had wanted to interpret the *alla moresca* design in a botanic way, the obvious plant to choose would have been the mulberry. This would have tapped into etymological associations with Moorishness since "Moro" was the Italian for mulberry as well as Moor'.<sup>119</sup> It would also have suggested an obvious link with the veil stained in the blood of Pyramus (possibly too obvious, since it would have been widely-known that Pyramus had been interpreted as

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<sup>117</sup> See Michael Neill (ed.), *Othello, the Moor of Venice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 155; Lynda E. Boose, *Othello's Handkerchief: 'The Recognizance and Pledge of Love'*, *ELR* 5 (1975), 360-74.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Laurence Ross, 'The Meaning of Strawberries in Shakespeare' in *Studies in the Renaissance*, vol. 7 (1960), 225-240, 226. Ross writes that an 'emblematic tendency was in fact operative in his conception of the otherwise elaborately symbolic "handkerchief spotted with strawberries"'.

<sup>119</sup> Patricia Parker, 'What's in a Name: and More', *Revista de la Sociedad Española de Estudios Renascentistas Ingleses* ed. Pilar Cuder Domínguez et al., *SEDERI* ii (2002), 101-50, 123; See also R. E. Prothero, 'Agriculture and Gardening' in *Shakespeare's England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), vol. 1. 369.

Christ in the Middle Ages). A mulberry handkerchief would have been in keeping with the presence of what is probably a mulberry tree in the willow song, since the tree was usually called 'sicomorus' or 'sycamor' in medieval Latin.<sup>120</sup> The strawberry, then, is another plant reference that does not emerge organically out of the source, a plant reference that Shakespeare imposes for reasons of his own. The strawberry turns out to be a plant in the surprisingly modern sense of things surreptitiously deposited in a theatrical context to implicate the plays in the contemporary wars of religion.

In the early modern period reformers were wresting the strawberry from the fixed place it had held in the medieval symbolic universe. Shakespeare's *Othello*, however, is a play that demands to be supplemented by medieval knowledge. The monastic doctrine of signatures had identified the fruit as a treatment for 'the panting and beating of the heart.'<sup>121</sup> When Desdemona fears that 'some bloody passion shakes your very frame' some of the audience might have remembered that strawberries are 'good against the passion of the hart.'<sup>122</sup> In classical tradition 'by virtue of its heart-like shape and colour, the strawberry became a badge of Venus.'<sup>123</sup> Similarly, in Celtic tradition, the red fruit and white flower were believed to link the strawberry to the otherworld.<sup>124</sup> Both of these traditions come together in the medieval symbolic world-view, in

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<sup>120</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.3.39; Maggie Campbell-Culver, *The Origin of Plants* (London: Headline, 2001), 54; Parker, 'What's in a Name: and More', 134. According to Patricia Parker a punning relationship between the word 'sycamour' and the word 'murmo[u]r' later in the song suggests that the tree may be a mulberry.

<sup>121</sup> It has not been pointed out that almost all the medical symptoms mentioned in *Othello*, with the possible exception of the epilepsy which was cured with mummy also on the handkerchief, could be treated by strawberries. The strawberry was prescribed not just for the heart but for any affliction of the blood, including haemorrhages, dysentery and menstrual flow (Shakespeare, *Othello*, 2.3.20; Culpeper, *Complete Herbal*, s.v. 'strawberry') When Othello's 'blood begins [his] safer guides to rule' he might have considered that 'the berries are excellently good to cool the blood.' (Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.1.51; Culpeper, *Complete Herbal*, s.v. 'strawberry'.) Similarly, when he is stricken down in a 'fit' brought on by the strawberry handkerchief he should have borne in mind that 'it is not amiss to refrain from' strawberries in these cases 'lest by putrefying in the stomach they increase the fits.' (Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.1.51; Culpeper, *Complete Herbal*, s.v. 'strawberry') When he says, 'I have a salt and sullen rheum offends me: lend me thy handkerchief' the irony is that strawberries were believed to help 'defluations of the rheum in the mouth, throat, teeth or eyes.' (Shakespeare, *Othello*, 5.2.43-4; Gerard, *Herball*, 845) The doctrine of signatures can also explain the connection between strawberries, spots and spottedness. As with the cowslip, 'the juice of water is singularly good...to take away any redness in the face, or spots, or other deformities in the skin and to make it clear and smooth.' (Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.1.51; Culpeper, *Complete Herbal*, s.v. 'strawberry').

<sup>122</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 5.2.43-4; Gerard, *Herball*, 845

<sup>123</sup> Michael Neill (ed.), *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, 155.

<sup>124</sup> *The Mabinogion*, ed. Sioned Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 228 3n.; Cf. Marina Heilmeyer, *The Language of Flowers: Symbols and Myths*, (Munich: Prestel, 2001), 28.

which the strawberry's habit of simultaneously flowering white and fruiting red 'made it an emblem for the chastity and fertility of the Virgin Mary.'<sup>125</sup> It seems likely that this is precisely the kind of association that Shakespeare is evoking when Othello takes Desdemona's hand in the absence of the strawberry handkerchief. In this moment, like the gypsy who gave the handkerchief to his mother, he reads her palm: 'this argues fruitfulness and liberal heart.'<sup>126</sup> Some playgoers may have noticed that Othello insists on the virgin's fertility twice over and pointedly leaves out her chastity. Had the palm and the strawberry not parted company, it is implied, Desdemona's chastity would be above question. Aside from this emblematic link with the virtues of Saint Mary the Virgin, the strawberry had heraldic links with the pierced heart. In fact, in many heraldic church carvings of the five wounds the heart looks more like a strawberry spotted with seeds.<sup>127</sup> The first chapter drew on the scholarship of Emrys Jones to suggest that *Othello* can be read as a reworking of the mystery play theme of the piercing of the heart, with the crucial difference that the 'bruised heart is pierced through the ear'.<sup>128</sup> Increasingly it will be seen that the heraldry of hearts lies behind the symbolism of Shakespeare's play, just as it lies behind Hawkins' later emblem books.

Both Shakespeare and Hawkins use interchangeable heraldic terms to describe the spotted patterns formed by their botanic emblems. In the heraldry of gardening, gardeners would "powder" the ground with strawberries' and Hawkins, as will be seen, even writes of primulaceae 'diapered' in woodland. However, it was in referring to fabric that heraldic terms like 'powdered' and 'diapered' came into their own to describe motifs against a coloured ground 'in the semé or "spotted" pattern, as the famous handkerchief in Othello was described.'<sup>129</sup> Shakespeare uses the heraldic implications of 'spotted' to bring together numerous kinds of fabric, all of which can be classed as 'vesture

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<sup>125</sup> Michael Neill (ed.), *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, 155; Cf. Judyth A. McLeod, *In a Unicorn's Garden*, (London: Murdoch Books Pty. Ltd, 2008) 124.

<sup>126</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.4.38

<sup>127</sup> See, for example, the image in Todd Gray, *Devon's Ancient Bench Ends* (Exeter: Mint Press, 2012), 153.

<sup>128</sup> See chapter one, note 151.

<sup>129</sup> George Wingfield Digby, *Elizabethan Embroidery* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), 8. It would be easy to add to the well-established critical tradition that links the strawberry handkerchief with the 'wedding sheets' of Desdemona and Othello by reading the word 'semé' as part of the same semantic field that prompted Shakespeare to write of 'an enseamed bed' (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.4.92). For the 'wedding sheet' tradition see, for example, Michael Neill, 'Unproper beds', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40, (1989), 383-412.

wounded.<sup>130</sup> Firstly, there were recusant church vestments which were figuratively and literally stained with Christ's blood in the form of communion wine. Secondly, there were the relics of Christ's shroud and Mary's veil, wet with bloody wounds and bloody tears. Thirdly, there were theatrical props like the costume of Pity in early Tudor drama emblazoned with 'the five wells of pity,/Of purple velvet, powdered with roses red.'<sup>131</sup> Fourthly, there was the military banner of the five wounds, 'the flag and sign of love' or pity.<sup>132</sup>

To begin with the secret Catholic church vestments of early modern Britain: a 'handkerchief spotted with strawberries' might easily be mistaken for a chalice veil powdered with the five wounds. It is surprising that chalice veils are not more often linked with Othello's handkerchief as it is often pointed out that at a glance they can easily be mistaken for handkerchiefs because they are also bordered with bold decorative embroidery.<sup>133</sup> A chalice veil at the Victoria and Albert Museum has the cross and pierced heart in its centre, winged cherubic heads at each corner, and a broad border scattered with symbols of the Passion.<sup>134</sup> The heart in the middle and the heads in the corners form what is aptly called a 'cinque-spotted' motif or 'five-fold blazon', a variation on the five wound emblem.<sup>135</sup> Just like Othello's handkerchief it is embroidered in red silk but also white linen.

The link between the strawberry spotted handkerchief and the heraldic motifs of these chalice veils is further suggested by Othello's lines:

The hearts of old gave hands  
But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts.<sup>136</sup>

Michael Neill writes that lurking behind the words, through the rhetorical emphasis on hands and the heraldic image of hearts, is the paranoid presence of the handkerchief.<sup>137</sup> In other words, linguistically (*handkerchief*) and visually

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<sup>130</sup> William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniell (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1998) 3.2.194.

<sup>131</sup> See R. E. Prothero, 'Agriculture and Gardening' in *Shakespeare's England*, vol 1. 373; *Hick Scorer* in Ian Lancashire (ed.) *Two Tudor Interludes*, I. 19-20

<sup>132</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.1.153.

<sup>133</sup> Wingfield Digby, *Elizabethan Embroidery*, 76.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 77

<sup>135</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 1.5.297.

<sup>136</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.4.46-7.

<sup>137</sup> Michael Neill (ed.), *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, 155.

(heart-shaped *strawberry*), the handkerchief is being connected with the five wounds.

A chalice was often included on the emblem of the five wounds too, so that if a playgoer noticed the visual similarities between the spotted motif of the handkerchief and the five wounds they might be reminded of a chalice veil.

The connection between the handkerchief and the wounds might help to make sense of Desdemona's unusual behaviour towards it. She 'reserves it evermore about her/To kiss and talk to.'<sup>138</sup> Her kissing of the handkerchief suggests ballad lines such as 'kiss his wounds that were so red' and the Catholic practice of kissing the wounded feet of Christ in rituals such as creeping to the cross.<sup>139</sup> Her talking to it also suggests the way that the wounds were actually addressed in Jesuit meditation.<sup>140</sup> Later in the play, Othello dismisses her tears as crocodile tears and her passion as a 'well-painted passion.'<sup>141</sup> It does not take an early modern recusant to spot that the idea of tears and 'well-painted passion' also have sacred Catholic associations. From this perspective, the handkerchief stands in for Christ's shroud or Mary's veil which, in the words of Thomas Lodge, were 'wet in the tears of his sad mother's dye.'<sup>142</sup> Alternatively, it is Nature's veil, which in Hawkins' emblem book seems interchangeable with Mary's veil, 'powdered with stares of flowers, and all embroidred with flowrie stones.'<sup>143</sup>

In the early Tudor play *Hick Scorner*, the character of Pity might gesture to his blood-coloured costume with the words: 'Record I keep of Mary, that wept tears of blood.'<sup>144</sup> In Shakespeare's early Jacobean play, Othello also draws attention to a blood-coloured handkerchief, associated with maiden tears and a dye 'conserved of maiden's hearts.'<sup>145</sup> However, Pity's costume may ultimately be adorned with the blood of another maiden:

Splayed on a cross with the five wells of pity,

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<sup>138</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.3.299-300.

<sup>139</sup> Thomas Ravenscroft, 'The Three Ravens' in *Melismata, Musically Phansies*, 1611 (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 20; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992, 29

<sup>140</sup> See, for example, Robert Southwell, 'Man to the Wound in Christ's Side' in *Collected Poems*, ed. Peter Davison and Anne Sweeney (Manchester: Carcanet, 2007), 62.

<sup>141</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.1.226-7.

<sup>142</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 9

<sup>143</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 6

<sup>144</sup> *Hick Scorner* in Ian Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*, 7-8, 10.

<sup>145</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.4.77

Of purple velvet, powdered with roses red...

A maiden so laid his life to wed...<sup>146</sup>

From the heart's blood of this clean maiden, Christ, the wounds on the talismanic fabric, and the eyes of another maiden, Saint Mary the Virgin, are powdered or spotted. But Shakespeare had already written as much: 'forth of my heart, those charms, thine eyes, are blotted.'<sup>147</sup>

Pity's costume, as much as Othello's handkerchief, may count as a theatrical 'vesture wounded.'<sup>148</sup> It was Ian Lancaster who plausibly suggested that the lines of *Hick Scorner* presuppose an emblem on the tabard of Pity clarifying his allegorical personality.<sup>149</sup> If this is the case, the speech would provide evidence for a theatrical fabric powdered with five red roses for the five wounds of Pity as a precursor to Shakespeare's theatrical fabric spotted with red strawberries. The theatrical context is parallel; the heraldic terms of powdered and spotted are parallel; the use of botanic symbolism is parallel. It does not seem likely that the substitution of roses for strawberries could utterly sever this chain of associations leading back to the five wounds of Pity.

However, there is one theatrical fabric that is more conspicuous by its absence. Iago is an ensign and so the absence of his ensign or banner is a strange feature of the play. Of course, it is not actually absent but alluded to again and again. One banner in particular might spring to mind, given Iago's Spanish name and his Spanish oath by 'el Diablo', together with his personal crusade against the Moor.<sup>150</sup> Banners of the five wounds were used in a campaign against the Moors in Spain and the badges from this expedition were later reused in the British rebellion of the Pilgrimage of Grace.<sup>151</sup>

If Iago is bearing a banner of Christ's heart in the cause of Christendom, it might plausibly be expected to be the reason for throwaway lines such as 'My cause is hearted.'<sup>152</sup> He seems as committed to this ensign of wounded hands, heart and feet as he is to Othello's service: 'Iago doth give up his...hands,

<sup>146</sup> *Hick Scorner* in Ian Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*, 19-20, 23

<sup>147</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 5.1.36

<sup>148</sup> Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, 3.2.193.

<sup>149</sup> *Hick Scorner* in Ian Lancashire (ed.) *Two Tudor Interludes*, II. 19-20.

<sup>150</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 2.3.157

<sup>151</sup> Anthony Fletcher and Diamuid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, (London: Routledge, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 2008), 34.

<sup>152</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.3.367.

heart,/To wronged Othello's service.'<sup>153</sup> However, secretly he admires those men who *seem* to bear the heart of the Christian faith but who 'keep yet their hearts attending on themselves.'<sup>154</sup> As he is true to his own heart 'he lies to th'heart' under which he serves.<sup>155</sup> His 'outward action' even in war does not correspond to the 'figure of heart', and he rails against the foolishness of 'wear[ing] my heart upon my sleeve' which may be a direct allusion to the rebel badges first worn on the sleeve of soldiers in the Spanish campaign.<sup>156</sup> Thus, he is in the preposterous situation of bearing a banner that he cannot believe in or understand:

I must show out a flag and sign of love,  
Which is indeed but a sign...<sup>157</sup>

This is the closest Shakespeare comes to directly telling us that Iago's banner bears an insignia of love or pity (Hawkins links pity and love in such phrases as 'piteous and amorous affects' and Shakespeare also uses the terms interchangeably in *Othello* as is clear when Othello declares 'all my fond love thus do I blow to heaven' and prepares for pitiless vengeance).<sup>158</sup>

If Iago is imagined bearing the five-wound emblem it was not merely a throw-back to the crusades. The five wells of pity literally set the standard for several Catholic rebellions which were still fresh in recusant memory. It was the emblem on the banners of the 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace, the proposed emblem of the 1537 St Keverne Rebellion, the emblem for the 1549 Prayer Book Rebellion and the 1569 Northern Rebellion.<sup>159</sup> The badges that had been used in the Spanish campaign against the Moors and later in the Pilgrimage of Grace were the source of much anxiety. At the trial before his execution, the aristocrat who had provided them 'was interrogated at some length about the Badge of the Five Wounds, which seemed to obsess his questioners, who put no fewer than fifteen questions to him about it ("If they were new, who made them and

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 3.3.469-70.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 1.1.50.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 1.3.152

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 1.1.153-4

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 1.1.154-6

<sup>158</sup> Hawkins, *Devout Heart*, dedication, 4; Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.3.449.

<sup>159</sup> Joanna Mattingly, 'The Helston Shoemakers Gild and a Possible Connection with the 1549 Rebellion', *Cornish Studies*, 6, 1998, 30.

where?...”).<sup>160</sup> This historical interrogation can bear comparison with Othello's interrogation of Desdemona about the whereabouts of the handkerchief:

Othello: Fetch me the handkerchief, my mind misgives.

Desdemona: Come, come.

You'll never meet a more sufficient man.

Othello: The handkerchief!

Desdemona: I pray, talk to me of Cassio.

Othello: The handkerchief!

Desdemona: A man that all his time

Hath founded his good fortunes on your love,

Shared dangers with you—

Othello: The handkerchief!

Desdemona: I'faith, you are to blame.

Othello: Zounds!<sup>161</sup>

In this exchange, Shakespeare includes the recusant emblem on the illocutionary level of oaths. Just as the wounds were suppressed by Protestant emblem books, so swearing by the wounds was suppressed by Protestant censorship.<sup>163</sup> Shakespeare's play can be seen to defiantly resist this Protestant impulse to suppress sacred swearing. The oaths are aligned with this sacred narrative from the first word (or non-word) of Iago in the play "sblood" through an astonishing nine instances of 'zounds' and one specific case of "ud's Pity."<sup>164</sup> The equation of the handkerchief spotted with strawberries and God's wounds is most explicit in the substitution of the word for a telling oath in the rhythmic exchange examined above. Just as Othello interrogates Desdemona, so Shakespeare's entire play can be interrogated for similar signs.

<sup>160</sup> Geoffrey Moorhouse, *The Pilgrimage of Grace* (London: Widenfield & Nicholson, 2002), 299, 300.

<sup>161</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.4.91-99.

<sup>163</sup> The success of this initiative is perhaps reflected in the non-blasphemous nature of British swearing following the reformation compared to a Catholic country like Italy where it is still common to hear oaths like 'sangre de Juda!' ['blood of Judas!'].

<sup>164</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.1.4, 1.1.86, 1.1.107, 2.3.141, 2.3.160, 2.3.203, 3.3.158, 3.4.99, 4.1.36, 5.2.217, 4.3.74. Shakespeare's wish to include 'sblood', when it would be taken out of the folio, suggests that the oaths had a literary importance for him.



Signs like the heart, at the centre of Shakespeare's and Hawkins' symbolic systems, suggest a defiant refusal to move with the times. The Protestants had gone to great efforts to sever the link between the strawberry and the sacred heart. The impetus for this was provided by the French canon Claude Paradin, who used a memorable tag from Virgil's *Eclogues* to detract from the strawberry's sacred medieval meaning. His strawberry emblem included the Virgilian commonplace, 'Latet anguis in herba', which, in the English translation of 1591, would be rendered: 'the adder lurketh privilie in the grasse.'<sup>165</sup> For Paradin, the moral is that 'in reading of authors and bookes, which carrie a fair shew to the eye, and yeelding small delight to the eare, we must be carefull that we runne not into absurd, and wrong judgements, and opinions, & by that means make shipwracke of our soules.'<sup>166</sup> In France, where there was no reformation, Claude Paradin could evoke strawberries to warn of the perils in store for the beguiled soul, and as late as 1915 the poet Paul-Jean Toulet could evoke 'doves and roses' to make the same point: 'Beware of the sweetness of things.'<sup>167</sup> However, in England, where the reformation ruptured the symbolic landscape, a Protestant emblem writer could insist that strawberries meant deception and evil, and later generations would for the most part forget that there had ever been anything sacred about them at all.

Geoffrey Whitney, in a creative masterstroke, adapts Paradin's emblem about the reader's soul endangered in the act of reading. However, he turns the reader's attention to the scheming hearts of those around them. He avers that the strawberry can teach that in their hearts men hold evil intentions. This is borne out in his verse: 'Suspect the harte, whose face doth fawne and smile.'<sup>168</sup> With all this writing of suspecting the heart, it became harder to suspect that the late medieval symbolism of the sacred heart lay buried behind the moralistic devices. To counter this, Catholics continued reading the heart into the Protestant emblem. Mary Queen of Scots would include the emblem among those on the Oxburgh tapestry and the Catholic composer William Byrd would

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<sup>165</sup> Virgil, *Eclogues*, 3.93; Faircloth and Thomas, *Dictionary*, 329; Ross, 'The Meaning of Strawberries', 229.

<sup>166</sup> Quoted in Ross, 'The Meaning of Strawberries', 229.

<sup>167</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 10; Paul-Jean Toulet, *Les Contrerimes: Nouvelles Contrerimes*, Paris: Editions Flammarion, 2008, 'En Arles'. The last line of this poem is 'Prend garde à la douceur des choses' [Beware of the sweetness of things].

<sup>168</sup> Whitney, *Choice of Emblems*, 1586, no. 24

make it a madrigal.<sup>169</sup> In *Richard II*, Shakespeare counters Whitney's emblem by associating snakes with the heart of a king, instead of a strawberry: 'Snakes in my heart-blood warmed, that sting my heart...terrible hell make war upon their spotted souls for this'.<sup>170</sup> The symbolism of the sacred heart behind these lines would later re-emerge as an ordering principle behind the recusant emblem books, but not for another fifty years. According to William Slights the medieval symbol of the sacred heart continues to reinvent itself in new forms and media and the emblem books by no means provide the last instance of an updating of this archaic symbol.<sup>171</sup>

### Re-Ordering Semiotics Along Recusant Lines: Boccaccio's Birthmark

The image of the birthmark in *Cymbeline* can be read as parallel to the handkerchief in *Othello* in this regard: once again the most striking departure from the Italian source is Shakespeare's introduction of a plant into the design. In Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which Shakespeare almost certainly consulted as a source for the narrative of *Cymbeline*, the birthmark of the heroine is described as 'a sizeable little mole, surrounded by six or so fine golden hairs'. Shakespeare reworked this into 'a mole cinque-spotted: like the crimson drops/In the bottom of a cowslip', which it will be argued ultimately allows for botanic symbolism once again.

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Clearly, this reworking of the Italian description amounts to a strange reordering of semiotics along botanic lines. In fact, it could be argued that the introduction of a plant represents a needless departure from the source.<sup>174</sup> It is also

<sup>169</sup> Wingfield Digby, *Elizabethan Embroidery*, 124; Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, 86.

<sup>170</sup> Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 3.2.131.

<sup>171</sup> Slights, *Heart*, 58.

<sup>172</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 2.9

<sup>173</sup> William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. J. M. Nosworthy (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1972), 2.2.38-9.

<sup>174</sup> But see suggestive comment in Nosworthy (ed.), *Cymbeline*, introduction, 51: 'in the French versions of the wager-story the mole is likened to a rose and to a violet, but Shakespeare's flower analogy is almost certainly coincidental.'

apparent that Boccaccio's birthmark is built around the number six, but that Shakespeare replaces it with a botanic reference built around the number five.

One enduring explanation for the decision to introduce the five crimson spots of the cowslip into the description here is that Shakespeare possessed such extraordinary personal powers of observation that they were bound to be reflected in his work. The first critic to put this in writing was Sidney Beisly. He saw it as a description demonstrating Shakespeare's personal powers of observation, surpassing that of many of the nineteenth-century botanists.<sup>175</sup> The most influential Victorian scholar on Shakespeare's plants, Henry Ellacombe, agreed that the detailed description of the cowslip showed that Shakespeare had examined it fondly.<sup>176</sup> He believed that Shakespeare must have retained the image in his photographic memory and could not resist including it in his writing.<sup>177</sup>

One dissenting voice emerged out of the nineteenth-century. Leopold Grindon argued that the crimson drops were not a sign of careful observation but quite the opposite: they were a mistake. They constituted the only Shakespearean botanic mistake, an error that would be immediately obvious to anyone familiar with English wild-flowers.<sup>178</sup> By the time that Grindon was writing, Shakespeare was universally acknowledged as the yardstick for measuring literary value.<sup>179</sup> In other words, to point out such a mistake was to question that Shakespeare was Shakespeare. This almost forced Grindon into the curious line of reasoning that Shakespeare meant the mistake to be detected. Ultimately, though, he concluded that 'a certain amount of latitude is always permissible in descriptions designed to be vivid and picturesque, but it is going beyond the reality to say that the spots in the cup of the cowslip are "crimson". The nearest approach to that colour ever seen could only be described as rosy orange.'<sup>180</sup>

The interpretation of the drops as a reflection of personal observation has prevailed; Grindon's point has not been re-examined. Again, the reason for this may be that the name of Shakespeare in the nineteenth century was

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<sup>175</sup> Sidney Beisly, *Shakspeare's Garden* (London: Longmann, 1864), 20.

<sup>176</sup> Ellacombe, *Plant-Lore and Garden-Craft*, 65.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 120

<sup>178</sup> Leopold Grindon, *The Shakspeare Flora*, (Manchester: Palmer and Howe, 1883), 6.

<sup>179</sup> M. Rose, *Authors and Owners* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 123.

<sup>180</sup> Grindon, *Shakspeare Flora*, 7.

inextricably linked with the belief that there had once been incarnate on earth a man of such preternatural powers that all surviving trace of him must reaffirm his sheer excellence.<sup>181</sup> The notion persists that a superhuman faculty of observation is to be expected in a person who has produced works of such value. The birthmark is still more likely to be taken as a sign of this, rather than a symbol with sacred significance. In other words, readers consistently favour the far-fetched conclusion that it is a sign of Shakespeare's superhuman eyes, over the much more realistic conclusion that it is a symbol in a religious debate.

The first reason, then, that Grindon's point merits further enquiry, is that this assumption that Shakespeare's superhuman qualities can explain such details in his work seems increasingly flawed. The second reason is because most reference works on wild flowers lay an emphasis on a more orangey colour at the bottom of the cowslip.<sup>182</sup> A yellow corolla with orange streaks or spots seems to be the closest approximation to an accurate botanical description.

Grindon claims that 'Shakespeare never misled any one by saying that the dots in the cowslip flower are "crimson"'.<sup>183</sup> However, it is no accident that botanic books that emphasise the reddish nature of these spots tend to be the ones that cite Shakespeare, sometimes implicitly as proof. For instance, Maude Greve writes:

On the yellow disks are five red golden spots, one on each petal: 'In their gold coats spots you see/These be rubies, fairy favours'...<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Rose, *Authors and Owners*, 123.

<sup>182</sup> Sometimes it is implied that this orangeness is merely a vague change in coloration, at other times it is claimed that it is configured in little streaks or spots. For example, *Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland* claims that the cowslip flowers are 'deep yellow, orange at the base.' (Marjorie Blamey and Richard Fitter, *Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 110.) *The Wild Flower Key* describes the corolla as 'apricot-yellow with orange streaks inside.' (Francis Rose, *The Wild Flower Key* (London: Penguin, 2006), 232.) Similarly, in Sarah Raven's book of wild flowers the cowslip is said to have 'egg-yolk-yellow flowers (8-10mm across) with orange streaks at the heart.' (Sarah Raven, *Wild Flowers* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 195.) The illustrative collections at Kew Herbarium, stretching back to the coloured copperplate prints of the *Flora Londoniensis*, support this. Whether the corolla is depicted with streaks or localised spots, these points of colour are universally represented as orange. In the text of the *Flora Londoniensis* itself, the corolla is described as 'marked at the base with five small distinct orange-coloured spots.' (William Curtis, *Flora Londinensis: or plates and descriptions of such plants as grow wild in the environs of London, etc* (London, 1775-1777-1798), vol 1.). This would seem to be a fair approximation of the flower, which, of course, displays infinitesimally small variations which resist encyclopaedic precision.

<sup>183</sup> Grindon, *Shakspeare Flora*, 112.

<sup>184</sup> Maude Greve, *A Modern Herbal* (London: Penguin, repr. 1978), 230.

The first sentence is a botanical description, with aspirations to scientific accuracy, the second is a poetic metaphor. However, both texts are elided into each other on the implicit assumption that they are motivated by the same kind of empiricism. This flawed approach leads Greve into a botanical error, the insistence that the spots are as red in reality as they are, , in Shakespeare's poetry.

The most definitive of recent reference works on *Primulaceae*, John Richard's *Primula*, seems to come dangerously close to perpetuating Shakespeare's myth about the red spots:

Corolla golden-yellow with an orange to reddish spot at the base of each spot.<sup>185</sup>

Here the spots are 'orange to reddish' but at the next mention of them they are merely 'reddish' and Shakespeare's words are marshalled as if to authenticate this:

The cowslip is amongst the most familiar of all European plants, beloved of poets such as Shakespeare who likened the reddish spots at the petal-bases to rubies and who correctly identified the main pollinator as bees ('Where the bee sucks, there suck I/In a cowslip's bell I lie'). Flowering chiefly in May, cowslips are usually efficiently visited, and in most areas seed-set is good, despite the requirements for cross-pollination...<sup>186</sup>

Perhaps this is also where Thomas and Faircloth found their word 'reddish' to lend to the spots, a word already displaced from the more accurate 'orange to reddish' in order to explain or justify Shakespeare's odd insistence on a red colour.<sup>187</sup> All of these examples, in which the coloration is configured as spots which are reddish/red, are inseparable from Shakespeare's comments about the flower. In other words, Shakespeare's inaccurate claims about the cowslip

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<sup>185</sup> John Richards, *Primula* (London: BT Batsford Ltd, 2002), 108.

<sup>186</sup> John Richards, *Primula* (London: BT Batsford Ltd, 2002), 108.

<sup>187</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *Shakespeare's Plants and Gardens*, 89.

continue to find a place in reference works that are otherwise accurate and scientific in their approach.

Once the accuracy of this coloration is called into question, it becomes apparent that other aspects of Shakespeare's botanical description are suspect too. 'Cinque-spotted' is not the same as 'five-spotted.'<sup>188</sup> According to the OED, in the period it meant 'the number five, as marked on dice.'<sup>189</sup> In other words, it is primarily a means of describing a pattern rather than a number. In Goodge's translation of a German work on garden husbandry, there are instructions for the planting of willow trees in this quincunx arrangement 'in order like the sinke upon a Dye.'<sup>190</sup> Shakespeare could have used the word 'five' and not sacrificed any faithfulness to the plant as it grew in nature. However, as the five marks are all positioned at the base of each lobe of the calyx and not positioned as four marks around a central point, to describe them as 'cinque-spotted' represents a not inconsiderable departure from observable reality. Shakespeare seems to have chosen this artificial word over the accurate word because it suggested an emblematic pattern. This, together with the description of the colour of the spots as crimson or ruby-red, combines to show that his description not only departs from the original source, but that it also departs from nature. These departures were presumably necessary to activate a specific emblematic interpretation.

This study will argue that Shakespeare re-orders the birthmark and the cowslip to include the late medieval and recusant symbol of the five springs of pity.<sup>191</sup> As has been indicated, this generally featured a bleeding heart or occasionally a host, hovering over a chalice, set about with wounded hands and feet at the four corners.<sup>192</sup> It is difficult to know exactly when the five spots on the cowslip became linked with the five wounds or the shape of the flower became linked with the chalice. A longstanding interpretation of its cup-like form emerging out of medieval religion may lie behind the folk-name 'Golden Drops', no less than the scientific name generally given to such cup-like forms ('calyx'

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<sup>188</sup> OED s.v. 'cinque-spotted'

<sup>189</sup> OED s.v. 'cinque-spotted'

<sup>190</sup> Conrad Heresbach, *Four Bookes of Husbandry* trans. B. Googe, (1577), bk 2, p. 103-4.

<sup>191</sup> This has previously been suggested by Clare Asquith, *Shadowplay: the Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 256, 292.

<sup>192</sup> Reproductions of these emblems of these five wounds or wells were ubiquitous with the advent of printing. The host also appeared in heraldic representation in the form of red spots or *torteaux gules*. For an illustration of this devotional image see, for example, Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, fig. 99; See also Moorhouse, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, 120.

or 'chalice').<sup>193</sup> Shakespeare merely accentuated these pre-existing traditions, bringing the numerological significance in line with the chequered layout of the five wounds, and altering the 'golden drops' into 'crimson' to identify them more closely with the blood of Christ. This bending of the truth allowed the flower to be seen more clearly with the eyes of faith. Once the divine markings were understood, they could prompt meditation and provide evidence for the existence of Christian pity within nature. Shakespeare had merely to encourage that first leap of understanding and if that meant making the divine terms of the signature slightly more explicit, he was prepared to do this.

It is no accident that the cowslip birthmark in *Cymbeline* appears just before a song which includes a reference to 'those springs/On chalic'd flowers that lies.'<sup>194</sup> The emblem of the five wounds, entangled with the cowslip, was ascribed to Pope Gregory the Great who had a vision of Christ in which blood welled up from his wounds revealing that they were springs of pity.<sup>195</sup> By the time the Protestant herbalists got hold of the cowslip, they corrected the flowing 'drops' or 'springs' into inert 'spots', but still ascribed the sweet fragrance of the flower to the spots themselves. For example, John Parkinson described them as 'spots of a deep yellow at the bottom of each leaf [i.e. petal], smelling very sweet.'<sup>196</sup> However, it is likely to be Pope Gregory's 'springs' and not Parkinson's 'spots' that are refreshing Ariel in *The Tempest* when he sings, 'Where the bee sucks, there suck I/In a cowslip's bell I lie.'<sup>197</sup> After all, Pope Gregory was credited with opening the flowers for the bees on his feast day of 12 March.<sup>198</sup> In this song the chalice-flower is also a Sanctus bell, both associated with the rites of the 'altar', which, incidentally, is what Ariel's name means. When Ariel is dismissed with the words 'to the elements/Be free' there is the distinct possibility that the word 'elements' is being used to describe the Eucharist and that Ariel partly represents the real presence.<sup>199</sup> Ariel's song

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<sup>193</sup> Grigson, *Englishman's Flora*, 265.

<sup>194</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 2.3.22.

<sup>195</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 238.

<sup>196</sup> Quoted in Esther Singleton, *The Shakespeare Garden* (New York: Century, 1922), 106; Cf. Slights, *Heart*, 58 which describes a thirteenth-century nun describing a vision in which she 'placed her mouth on [Christ's] wound. She drank in [the] sweetness...'

<sup>197</sup> Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 5.1.88-9

<sup>198</sup> See Gladys Taylor, *Saints and their Flowers* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1956), 56.

<sup>199</sup> Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (eds.), *The Tempest*, introduction, 27: 'marginalia to Isaiah 29 of the Geneva bible observe that "The Ebrewe word Ariel signifieth the lyon of God, & signifieth the altar, because the altar semed to dvoure the sacrifice that was offred to God.'; Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 5.1.318-9.

introduces the cowslip to express a yearning for heavenly nectar. Interestingly, in *Cymbeline*, the birthmark may be linked with the cowslip 'drops' to express the same yearning. When Shakespeare encountered a birthmark in its original Italian source, it may have prompted him to consider that in Italian birthmarks are called 'voglie' ('cravings', 'longings', 'fancies').<sup>200</sup> A birthmark with 'crimson drops' on the body of an honourable female figure might partly represent the craving of the True Church for the blood of Christ.

In the *Tempest* and *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare seems to use the cowslip as shorthand for the chalice. This was not an ingenious idea of his own, but one that was already enshrined in nature. In fact, he implies that there are such things as 'chalic'd flowers', flowers that grow into the shape of a chalice to teach the importance of the mass.<sup>201</sup> Even by including this word, he was engaging with the kind of symbolism that reformers saw as deceiving, but which recusants found attractive. However, Shakespeare goes further, implying that the same symbol of the chalice-shaped cowslip could be found inverted in the cup-shapes of the human anatomy: the cheek or breast. God had put the heart in the breast in the human body, anticipating the sacred heart in the chalice in emblems of the five wounds; similarly, God had put 'roses' in the cheeks, anticipating the 'five roses red' in the chalice which could also stand for the wounds.<sup>202</sup> Again, this is precisely the kind of symbolism Protestant reformers would shun but that medieval and recusant Catholics would embrace.

First to be considered is the cheek. In Shakespeare's drama a spotted cheek can reveal a figure as a Bride of Christ, though the Madonna may also be implicated. In the play-within-a-play of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, the character of Thisbe is described with a 'cowslip cheek' to suggest that pre-reformation Christian dimension is operating in this performance.<sup>203</sup> According to monastic commentary, Thisbe is spotted with the blood of Pyramus who stands for Christ. Similarly, according to a monastic strain of the indigenous doctrine of signatures, the cowslip was called 'freckled face.'<sup>205</sup> In

<sup>200</sup> See Reynolds, Barbara (ed.), *The Cambridge Italian Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), s.v. 'voglia'.

<sup>201</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 2.3.22

<sup>202</sup> For images of the sacred heart and the chalice see, for example, the badge on the front cover of Diamuid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (5<sup>th</sup> edition) for the Catholic symbolism of 'roses' in cheeks see Shakespeare, Sonnet 130.

<sup>203</sup> Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.332;

<sup>205</sup> Grigson, Geoffrey, *The Englishman's Flora* (London: Phoenix House Ltd., 1955), 265.



purely medical terms, the doctrine of signatures taught that the spots were God's way of indicating that the flower could take away 'spots and wrinkles from the face' as well as 'freckles' and 'other vices of the skin.'<sup>206</sup> However, the doctrine of signatures also had wider theological significance, since, according to Paracelsus' *De Natura Rerum*, all such signatures were a result of the Fall.<sup>207</sup> This suggests that, insofar as signatures are marks of sin, they will be washed away with the second coming of Christ. According to this logic, the cowslip birthmark does not just represent the 'craving' of the true Church for Christ's blood; it is also a blemish that bears the image of an unblemished future when the true Church, as the spouse of Christ, will 'be made white in the apocalyptic marriage of Bride and Bridegroom.'<sup>208</sup> The fault on Christ's beloved's cheek is therefore just a sign that she is faultless. It points to the divine power that can cleanse all blemishes in the breasts of mortals: 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who offered himself unspotted, cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?'<sup>209</sup>

Next to be considered is the breast. In Shakespeare's drama a spotted breast is usually associated either with the figure of Nature or the figure of the Nightingale, though again the Madonna may lie behind both. This may be because if the heroine of *Cymbeline* is 'divine nature,' as Shakespeare explicitly reveals later in the play, the cowslip at her 'natural bosom' is the child that can

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<sup>206</sup> Greve, *Modern Herbal*, 231. Cf. Culpeper, *The Complete Herbal*, s.v. 'cowslip': 'an ointment being made with them, taketh away spots and wrinkles of the skin, sun-burnings and freckles...' Shakespeare's *Hamlet* uses the metaphor of a spotted breast to discuss the insidious way that vice can be projected back onto an individual. It describes how 'some vicious mole of nature' [sic] may affect a mortal so that he 'shall in the general censure take corruption from that particular fault.' See Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.4.24,35-6. Ethnobotanists have noted that certain indigenous societies 'find moles unsightly' and claim that the products of certain plants 'when properly applied, will cause them to go away.' See William Balée, *Footprints of the Forest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 110. That a similar indigenous idea may have persisted into Elizabethan culture is suggested by a line of Lyly's *Mother Bombe*, where a mole has been created in such a way that it can only be 'taken away with the iuyce of mandrage.' See John Lyly, *Mother Bombe*, ed. Leah Scragg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 5.3.337. However, the mole in *Cymbeline* is associated with the 'cowslip'.

<sup>206</sup> Quoted in Cristina Bellorini, *The World of Plants in Renaissance Tuscany: Medicine and Botany* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 179; See also Giorgio Agamben, *Signatura Rerum: Sul Metodi* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008), 35.

<sup>207</sup> Quoted in Cristina Bellorini, *The World of Plants in Renaissance Tuscany: Medicine and Botany* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 179; See also Giorgio Agamben, *Signatura Rerum: Sul Metodi* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008), 35.

<sup>208</sup> Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.320; Parker, 'What's in a Name: and More', 81n., 126.

<sup>209</sup> Hebrews 9:14 (Rheims Douay Bible)

wash away the vice of the world in the springs of his five wounds.<sup>210</sup>

Interestingly, while Shakespeare associates 'springs' merely with 'chalic'd-flowers', Hawkins associates 'springs' directly with the breast of Nature herself:

[The Fountain] is the breast of Nature, and Nature the Nurse that suckles all things with her milke...for what is the blossomes, trow you, to spring and bud forth, but for Nature to breake out as into Springs...The Springs and Fountains therefore are the life of Nature...They are the tickling of Nature's hart.<sup>211</sup>

Like George Cavendish and Thomas Lodge in their complaints, Hawkins also draws on the figure of Niobe to explain the connection between the springs of pity ('Niobe herself was transformed into a Living Fountain, as it were, when she wept out her eyes') and the drops associated with a breast (since Christ's 'mother's breast' was 'a verie Niobe of teares').<sup>212</sup> However, classical mythological figures seem less compelling to Hawkins than Nature herself, perhaps because she is able to unite a number of disparate symbolic elements. For example, the breast of Nature seems to have been easily inverted into the secrets of nature, imagined as a chaliced-flower or holy grail: 'a verie purselin cup, replenished within, with the rarities of Nature, enough to stupefy and astonish the curious in search of secrets.'<sup>213</sup> Hawkins also seems to have inherited some tradition of chaliced-flowers, 'enameled with drops of gold', while elsewhere he associates *primulaceae* with a heraldic 'diapred' pattern.<sup>214</sup> The pattern of the five wounds of pity even features explicitly in his illustration for the emblem of the rose. In this illustration disembodied hands and feet hang around a central pierced heart, and all five wounded body-parts are dripping onto the flower below.<sup>215</sup> The text makes it clear that Hawkins intended this as a

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<sup>210</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.170; Cf. Slights, *Heart*, 49: Giovanni di Balduccio's relief sculpture of Charitas or Pity in Pisa portrays 'the figure's left breast' cut away to allow 'streams of her lifeblood flowing into the mouths of the children of God' symbolising a 'river of divine love.' (Ibid., 49).

<sup>211</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 211.

<sup>212</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 214, 205; George Cavendish, An Epitaph on Queen Mary in *The New Oxford Book of Sixteenth-Century Verse* ed. Emrys Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 133; Thomas Lodge, 'Truth's Complaint Over England', in *The Complete Works* (London: Huntingdon Club, 1883, repr. London: Johnson Reprint Company Ltd., 1966), vol. 1, 85-91, 88

<sup>213</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 29

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 10, 42

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 25

metaphor for the way that the Church is watered by the 'Deaw, which fel from the Five Wounds of Jesus' which is presumably what elsewhere he calls 'the verie milk of the breasts of Nature, wherewith she nourisheth the universe.'<sup>216</sup>

When the spotted breast is not associated with Nature in the work of Shakespeare and Hawkins, it is associated with the Nightingale. The breast of the nightingale was an established Catholic symbol. According to recusant tradition, the breast of the nightingale only swelled to its sweetest singing when it was pricked by a thorn.<sup>217</sup> For example, Thomas Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' includes a dialogue concerning the breasts of birds and nymphs pierced by the prickle of the eglantine. At first this seems like no more than an erotic conversation, but the three elements had readily available emblematic significance in the period. The nightingale, who as Philomela is ravished by Tereus in Ovid's fable, was often taken as an emblem of the martyr; in fact, Shakespeare implies that the nightingale can be interpreted as a martyr in *Titus Andronicus* when he alludes to the 'martyr'd signs' that she uses in Ovid's fable to communicate what she has suffered.<sup>218</sup> Similarly, according to a classic Benedictine gloss on Ovid's pagan fables, 'nymphs' could stand for 'saints'.<sup>219</sup> Finally, it was well-known that 'Queen Elizabeth [had] adopted the Eglantine as her personal emblem.'<sup>220</sup> So one way of reading Lodge's discussion of the nightingale and the nymphs pricked by the eglantine might be as a fairly straightforward description of martyrs persecuted by Elizabeth.

Henry Hawkins, in turn, develops the notion that the spear of Longeus that pierced Christ's breast 'even transfixed withal the mother's breast', so great was her empathy for her son's suffering.<sup>221</sup> The breast of Saint Mary the Virgin empathetically pierced by the spear leads Hawkins to consider the breast of the

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 65, 62

<sup>217</sup> Cf. John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*. A song in the play includes the line: 'I love to sleep against a prickle, so doth the nightingale'.

<sup>218</sup> Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, 3.2.35-37; See also Douglas E. Green, 'Interpreting her "Martyr'd Signs": Gender and Tragedy in *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Autumn, 1989), 317-326; for Philomela as a martyr cf. Clare Asquith, *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 14. Shakespeare's enduring fascination with this Ovidian fable is revealed by extensive allusions in 'The Rape of Lucrece', 1079-1080, 1128-1148. Lucrece addresses Philomel directly in the poem and refers to the Catholic tradition that it was when the nightingale's breast was against a thorn that it brought out the best in her singing.

<sup>219</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 279; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, VII.x; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.1.89-90.

<sup>220</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 118.

<sup>221</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 205.

nightingale pierced by the thorn. He describes how the nightingale will 'sometimes by herself alone be singing in private also in a bush, where having a thorn at her breast, it is incredible, the varieties she will put forth...so our blessed Virgin, the Nightingale of Heaven, though she would often sing in the companie of Angels...yet sometimes againe she would retire herself, and the thorns of her deerest beloved through a livelie memorie sticking at her breast, & pricking the hart, it can not be imagined, how dolefully and yet how sweetly she would sing.'<sup>222</sup> Ultimately, Hawkins avers that the 'terrene Philomel' is nothing to the 'Divine Nightingale.'<sup>223</sup>

The 'varieties' that Hawkins mentions could be musical or colourful, relating to the song or the drops, the Nightingale's exquisite descant or 'martyr'd sign'.<sup>224</sup> This network of symbolism seems to have already been well-established by the twelfth century. It can be found, for example, in a story of Marie de France in which the song of the nightingale provokes the spilling of the blood of a nightingale, which stains the heroine's linen undergarments 'just on her breast'.<sup>225</sup> Interestingly, Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* develops the same symbolism. The villain of the play spies on the sleeping heroine and simultaneously draws attention to her spotted breast ('on her left breast: a mole cinque-spotted...') and her bedtime reading ('here the leaf's turned down/Where Philomel gave up.')<sup>226</sup> The moment where Tereus strove to possess Philomela and she finally 'gave up' was also the moment when she 'gave up' (or 'put forth') her 'varieties.'

This conjunction of the musical and colourful varieties can be interpreted medically. It partly reflects a medical system which interpreted birdsong and spotted flowers as nature's way of pointing the way to healing and even redemption. For instance, there are two ancient folk traditions about the nightingale's song: that it is a song of mourning for its lost chicks; and that it is

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 150

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 146, 141: He adds that the nightingale brings 'joy to the heart' (*corde iubilis*) and is 'honey in the mouth' (*in ore melos*) (Ibid., 138). This last claim is presumably an allusion to its 'delicious' singing.

<sup>224</sup> Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, 3.2.35-37. Green, 'Interpreting her "Martyr'd Signs"', 317-326.

<sup>225</sup> Marie de France, *The Lais of Marie de France*, eds. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby (London: Penguin, 1986 repr. 2003), 95; Marie de France, *Lais*, ed. Alfred Ewert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944), 100, 117-119.

<sup>226</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 2.2.38-9, 2.2.45-6.

only heard where there is an abundance of cowslips.<sup>227</sup> The signature of the song points to the 'martyr'd sign' of the drops of blood of her lost child.<sup>228</sup>

However, more importantly, the conjunction of the musical and colourful varieties can be interpreted theologically. Shakespeare pinpoints the point in the fable where the presence of Christian meaning is made troublingly explicit. At the precise moment when Philomela gives up and Tereus possesses her, she blushes into two Christian symbols in the work of a pagan author: a bloody 'lamb' (*agna*) and then a 'dove, with feathers dripping blood' (*columba*).<sup>229</sup> Today, this would have to be explained as coincidence; in Shakespeare's time some would have seen it as evidence that Ovid knew 'the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hid wisdom, which God had determined before the world, unto our glory.'<sup>230</sup> Many Renaissance thinkers believed that key Christian symbols could be reconciled with hidden significances in classical mythology and even with Ancient Egyptian symbolism.<sup>231</sup> It was thought that the cross, for example, had already stood for the afterlife in Ancient Egypt before Christianity was even imagined.<sup>232</sup> Equally, it was claimed that the chalice had already been a significant symbol before it became linked with Christ's blood, which is presumably why Hawkins' emblem book could borrow 'the silver and golden vessels, of those profane Egyptians, and not the poisonous liquors they caroused in them.'<sup>233</sup> In the same way, the red and white lamb and dove could easily have been interpreted as Christian varieties put forth by a pagan Nightingale. Shakespeare's play invites such a reading, strange as it may seem to modern eyes.

However, Protestants might be expected to find aspects of the tale of Tereus offensive, not only because the pagan fable provided an illusion of

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<sup>227</sup> P.M.C. Forbes Irving, *Metamorphoses in Greek Myths* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 99; T. F. Thiselton Dyer, *The Folk-lore of Plants*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1889), 303.

<sup>228</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.170.

<sup>229</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.527-530.

<sup>230</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:7 (Geneva Bible). Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:8 (Geneva Bible): it is a mystery 'which none of the princes of this world hath known; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.' The contrast of the mystery with the princes of the world is reworked in the emblem book tradition. According to Hawkins' translation of Steven Luzvic's words, the 'love of this one IESUS' is worth more than 'al the graces and favours of the princes of the world' since 'the crosse of Christ and love of holy poverty, is deeper and more strongly imprest than al those mushrumps of honours' (Hawkins, *Devout Heart*, 9).

<sup>231</sup> Rudolf Wittkower, 'Hieroglyphics in the Early Renaissance' in *Developments in the Early Renaissance*, ed. Bernard S. Levy (New York: State University of New York Press, 1972), 74.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>233</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, preface, Aiii

Christian significance, but because the same illusion was provided by the nightingale and the cowslip in the natural world. Sure enough, Geoffrey Whitney's treatment of the pagan fable suppresses those aspects which were most offensive to Protestant thought.

Where Shakespeare and Hawkins lay the emphasis on the first sister who underwent great suffering and became a nightingale (Philomela), Whitney concentrates on the second sister who killed her child and became a swallow (Procne). However, Whitney refuses to fall back on Ovid as his source, presumably because it was a pagan text that already seemed to anticipate and justify monastic Christian commentary. Instead, he finds an obscure instance of similar swallow behaviour in a completely secular source, Plutarch's *Life of Mark Antony*.

In Ovid's fable, the woman who became a swallow, for all the extremity of her child-killing, was deserving of pity. However, one advantage of using the swallow material from Plutarch to guide the reader's judgement is that it is a pitiless episode. By implication, it suggests that there might be more condemnatory ways of interpreting the two sisters in Ovid's fable. It thus resembles Arthur Golding's Protestantised interpretation in which Philomela and Procne bring their misfortune upon themselves because they are 'blind' to the things that concern their own wellbeing.<sup>234</sup> In Whitney's words, even animal creation 'will those condempne, that tender not their frute.'<sup>235</sup>

Whitney bases his emblem, then, on a secular source that was unlikely to invite sympathy or pity for the behaviour of the swallow. The material Whitney found in Plutarch might be thought unpromising material for creating an emblem, since unlike the richly-symbolic tale of Tereus, it is not a narrative, and amounts to no more than an obscure detail in Roman history. Plutarch tells how child-killing swallows foretold doom for Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium: 'The admiral-galley of Cleopatra was called Antontiad, in the which there chanced a marvellous ill sign: swallows had bred under the poop of her ship, and there came others after them that drove away the first and plucked down their nests.'<sup>236</sup> In order to adapt this text into emblematic form, Whitney

<sup>234</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Translated by Arthur Golding. Edited by Madeleine Forey. (London: Penguin, 2002), 'Epistle of 1567', 9.

<sup>235</sup> Whitney, *Choice of Emblemes* in Daly (ed.), *The English Emblem Tradition*, 118.

<sup>236</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Antony*, trans. Thomas North, 34; The same passage informs Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, 4.12.

relocates these swallows. In his emblem they are no longer under the poop of a battle-ship but under the breast of a statue of a woman who has killed her child. The statue is thus like Procne who killed her child and became a swallow, presumably because in ancient times this bird was said to have a breast stained with the blood of its own children:

The swallowe yet, whoe did suspect no harme,  
Hir image likes, and hatch'd upon her breste.<sup>237</sup>

By choosing Plutarch over Ovid, Whitney can provide a grim commentary on child-killing swallows, purged of all potential for Christian interpretation, and with an ominous atmosphere that potentially condemns both victims of Tereus' aggression, the nightingale and the swallow. The nightingale's varieties, part of an unbroken symbolic tradition that has been identified in works as early as Marie de France's twelfth-century lay and as late as Hawkins' seventeenth-century emblem book, are re-invented as the blush of shame at an outrageous deed. This, at least, is one way of making sense of Whitney's remark that mythological child-killers like Procne and Medea and, in fact, all such women, should 'blusshe for shame'.<sup>238</sup>

The swallow emblem with the nest under the statue's breast is an unorthodox treatment of Ovid's fables which refuses to engage with them on their own terms. It distances them by relegating them to a world of statues and attaching a grim omen to their stone-cold anatomy. As such, it shows considerable originality, and could be interpreted either as a creative reworking of the fables along redirected classical lines or a perverse manufacturing of a doom-laden atmosphere surrounding white marble and red-breasted birds, a cup-like nest and a chiselled breast. However, one thing is for sure: the pagan heroine anticipating the blood of the lamb, the chalice-flower attesting to the wounds of Christ, the pierced breasts of the nightingale and the doleful Madonna, have no place in this new symbolic world.

This chapter has argued that Shakespeare was conscious of the way that Protestants were redirecting emblematic symbolism at the time that he was writing, but he himself reorders botanic images such as the handkerchief and

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<sup>237</sup> Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* in Daly et al. (ed.), *The English Emblem Tradition*, 122.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 118

the birthmark according to older system-systems. It has located emblems within the context of a religious polemic, with Shakespeare and Hawkins on the recusant side. According to Rosemary Freeman, Hawkins was preserving his symbolism for one of the secret Catholic sodalities which had a similar social and religious function to the medieval guilds.<sup>239</sup> The guild buildings where Shakespeare was educated in Stratford-on-Avon have also preserved their medieval wall-paintings of the bleeding breast of a hermaphroditic Christ, the red and white veil of a Saint Mary the Virgin and the red and white cinquefoil roses of the Middle Ages.<sup>240</sup> All these symbols anticipate the ordering principles of the recusant emblem books: the emblems of the sacred heart and of the five wounds.

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<sup>239</sup> Lottes, 'Henry Hawkins and "Partheneia Sacra"', 272; Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, 180.

<sup>240</sup> K. Giles and J. Clark, 'The archaeology of the Guild buildings of Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon' in R. Mulryne (ed.), *The Guild and Guild Buildings of Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 135-69.





### Chapter Three: Not Just a Pretty Fable

This chapter will examine some ‘fabulous’ poems from the 1590s. It will argue that they are ‘fabulous’ in the colloquial sense, but also in a technical sense. In fact, it will argue that they share similar themes, techniques and even a colour scheme because they are influenced by the tradition theorised in this book. This is because they draw on a book that outlines a theory of fable. Although this book was written in the fifth century, it became a founding text of medieval learning, and, according to James Clark, remained central to the Benedictine curriculum.<sup>1</sup> It was Macrobius’ *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*.

Macrobius’ commentary examines a dream vision that originally came from the end of Cicero’s *On the Republic*. Classicists speculate about how the story fitted into this lost work of Cicero and what it would have meant to its original Roman audience. However, the story only survives because it was included in Macrobius’ commentary and so it was understood according to Macrobius’ commentary in later tradition. This study will follow medieval precedent and emphasise the role of Macrobius in preserving the story and mediating it to later ages.

The story in question is a pagan prototype for the Christmas ghost story, based on true events that occurred in the Latin holidays of the winter of 129 B.C. at the home of Scipio.<sup>2</sup> It tells how Scipio was visited by his grandfather’s ghost decked out in battle-array and how he was taken flying by the ghost along the Milky Way. In the Middle Ages, Macrobius inspired fables of nocturnal travels through the air like those included in *The Romance of the Rose*.<sup>3</sup> This allegorical dream vision describes people who ‘go toiling and chasing around the world’ and ‘get into every home’ in the company of a female personification of ‘abundance’ (just as, in more recent times, little helpers have been said to hitch a ride with that modern ‘symbol of material abundance’, Father

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#### Chapter Three: Not Just a Pretty Fable

<sup>1</sup> James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 214.

<sup>2</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 93 n. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1994 reissued 2008); Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1992).

Christmas).<sup>4</sup> In the sixteenth century, Macrobius inspired the Christmas apparitions in the Jesuit Robert Southwell's poem 'The Burning Babe' and in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which also includes a ghost in 'complete steel'.<sup>5</sup> As late as the nineteenth century, a similar ghostly journey through the winter air appeared in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843).<sup>6</sup> This was heavily influenced by a high-flying episode in the Jesuit-educated French writer Alain-René Lesage's *The Devil On Two Sticks* (1770).<sup>7</sup> Although the supernatural aeronaut in this last story is not a ghost in battle-array, but a devil in a 'red crepe turban' and a 'white satin vest' and 'mantle', it is no less likely that Macrobius was the ultimate source.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the story preserved in Macrobius' commentary is the unacknowledged influence behind some of the most famous Christmas apparitions of all time.

Today, the original story might be classed as a myth with fantasy, science fiction, or fairy tale elements. After all, it seems to conform to the modern understanding of a myth as a story with the vague purpose of addressing questions about the place of man in the universe.<sup>9</sup> However, most of the Christmas ghosts mentioned above feature in literary forms where there is some engagement with allegory (it could even be argued that allegory haunts these literary forms more effectively than the ghosts themselves). Similarly, Macrobius uses the more precise technical term 'fable' to discuss such narratives because he recognises that the key to the meaning that is present in them can only be found in a meaning that is absent from them. In other words, these spoken forms depend upon an unspoken mystery. Crucially, Scipio was only able to conceive his midwinter night's dream after 'learning of the secrets

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<sup>4</sup> Lorris and Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 284; Lorris and Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, 18429ff; Russell W. Belk, 'Materialism and the American Christmas' in *Unwrapping Christmas*, ed. Daniel Miller, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 83.

<sup>5</sup> St Robert Southwell, *Collected Poems*, eds. Peter Davidson and Anne Sweeney (Manchester: Carcanet, 2007), 14; William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1982, repr. 2003), 1.4.52; for a possible link between the Christmas ghosts of Southwell and Shakespeare see John Klause, *Shakespeare, the Earl and the Jesuit* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), 153.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Books*, ed. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst (1843; Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008), stave two; see also Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, ed. Elizabeth M. Brennan, (Oxford: Oxford World Classics), 248.

<sup>7</sup> René Le Sage, *The Devil On Two Sticks*, trans. William Strange (1841; London: Navarre Society, 1927).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Laurence Coupe, *Myth*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 6; Don Cupitt, *The World to Come*, (Oregon: Trinity Press International, 1982), 29; Gary J. Martin, *Ethnobotany: A Methods Manual*, London: Earthscan, 2004), 112; Michael J. Balick and Paul Alan Cox, *Plants, People, and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany* (New York: Scientific American Library, 1996) 90.

of Nature'.<sup>10</sup> According to one medieval monk, this meant 'those things that pertain to the soul'.<sup>11</sup> The reason that it is necessary to take the word of a medieval monk is because neither Cicero nor Macrobius tell the reader what these secrets are. However, Macrobius does write that the perfection of the fable's plot is only possible because it is keeping these things back.

Macrobius clearly believed that fable was not only worthy of the attention of a philosopher like himself but of a careful critical commentary. In more recent times, Jane Chance and Giorgio Agamben have also demonstrated that sensitive criticism does not render fable less magical or enjoyable.<sup>12</sup> The work of these three scholars, late antique and modern, make the strongest possible case for taking fable seriously. Having read their work, it is simply not an option to continue to read fable literally, as if the form were flat, inert, or shallow. Instead, they point the way towards more nuanced readings of fable that account for its colourful narratives and deeper resonance.

This chapter will guide the the reader through various porches and veils in which Macrobius or Nature herself are presiding spirits. In this way it will resemble the Protestant quest to find Acrasia's Bower of Bliss at the end of Book Two of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.<sup>13</sup> It will, however, make no grand claims to reach any destination in particular, and will end with the red and white gate with which Spenser began.<sup>14</sup> Alternatively, the chapter can be understood as a handbook to Macrobius, and his main character Nature, which will lead the reader 'step by step, from the outward appearance of each symbol to its mystical significance'.<sup>15</sup> From this point of view, it might resemble the recusant meditative procedure of Henry Hawkins' *Partheneia Sacra* with the crucial difference that it will come to no conclusions about 'mystical significance'.<sup>16</sup> It will end with a consideration of the 'outward appearance' of

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<sup>10</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary*, 89, 7

<sup>11</sup> William Donald Reynolds, 'The *Ovidius Moralizatus* of Petrus Berchorius: An Introduction and Translation' (PhD diss., Urbana: University of Illinois, 1971), 61.

<sup>12</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1993). Jane Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 108.

<sup>13</sup> Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, bk. 2, canto 12, sts. 42-69. Sir Guyon and the Palmer proceed step by step through: a red and white gate; which leads to the porch of Genius; which leads to a flowery plain; which leads to a grape-vine archway; which leads to the porch of Excess; which leads to a fountain with two damsels; which finally leads to Acrasia's Bower of Bliss.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* bk. 2, canto 12, st. 45 describes the red ('vermell') and white ('yvy') gate.

<sup>15</sup> Wolfgang Lottes, 'Henry Hawkins and *Partheneia Sacra*' in *Review of English Studies*, new ser., 26 (1975), 144-53, 271-86, 277

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 277

fables, the red and white colour scheme by which some fables advertise their Macrobian purpose.

However, perhaps it is less helpful to think of the chapter as a Protestant quest or a recusant meditation, and more helpful to think of it in terms borrowed from medieval religion. Just as reformers would dismiss fables until the use they had once served was disregarded, so they would deface roodscreens and strip away veils until their purpose was forgotten. But according to Eamon Duffy, decorated roodscreens had once provided a barrier between the people's space and the sacred space where the miracle of transubstantiation could occur, while Lenten veils had marked a boundary between penitential and festive time in the liturgical year.<sup>17</sup> The point here is that medieval religion obscured its mysteries from common eyes with decorated veils, just like medieval fable such as dream vision. For this reason, medieval Benedictines reading Macrobius may have been interested to learn that ancient mystery religion was also, for most people, an elaborate fable:

Only eminent men of superior intelligence gain a revelation of her [Nature's] truths; the others must satisfy their desire for worship with a ritual drama which prevents her secrets from becoming common.<sup>18</sup>

What would a sentence like this have meant to the Benedictines? Would it have been taken as of merely antiquarian interest, providing insight into pagan religion, or would it have seemed as relevant to their own beliefs as the phrase the 'secrets of nature' which remained current through the Middle Ages? The sentence might be even more useful for thinking about Shakespeare's plays, which allude more than once to the 'secrets of Nature.' It raises the question: how far did Shakespeare see himself as creating 'ritual drama' for his audience? The extent to which Shakespeare, or other early modern writers, remained committed to Macrobius' model of secrecy will be an underlying question throughout this section. Those who did remain committed, such as Thomas Lodge, were completely mystified how others could claim that

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<sup>17</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University, 1992), 111.

<sup>18</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary*, 87; Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionis*, 1.2.18.

'Poetes...fayle in their fables, Philosophers in the verye Secrets of Nature.'<sup>19</sup> As far as Lodge was concerned the truth in the mouldy tales and old certainties was still beyond question, but many early modern people had serious reservations about this.

### Antic Fables

The examples of early modern literature examined in this chapter discreetly advertise themselves as 'antique fables' or 'antic fables'; the first interpretation of the word suggests the way that they slyly attempt to seem 'ancient' when they are brand new, while the second interpretation suggests the way that they 'mask' certain sacred truths.<sup>20</sup> The early modern authors use another technique to 'mask' what their fables are doing. Although these are important artforms, engaging with sacred questions that divided society, the authors themselves wave them aside as 'just' or 'merely' fables.<sup>21</sup> When Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare dismiss literal notions about the 'liquid fire' of hell and the 'shaggie-footed' devil with the phrase '...but that's a fable', or when Henry Hawkins dismisses classical notions that the milky way was the highway of the gods with the phrase '...but it is just a fable', the phrase should not be taken as an indicator of the authors' scepticism.<sup>22</sup> The rhetoric locates them in a medieval tradition of equivocation which would ironically reject fable to draw attention to the kernel of truth that it contained.<sup>23</sup> Potentially damned characters like Faustus and Othello dismiss these notions at their peril because they are in some sense true; similarly, Henry Hawkins might not credit this pagan cosmology but he is likely to have known of the medieval Christian claim that

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas Lodge, 'A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse' in *The Complete Works* (London: Huntingdon Club, 1883, repr. London & New York: Johnson Reprint Company Ltd., 1966), vol. 1, 1-48, 6.

<sup>20</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold F. Brooks (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007), 5.1.2.

<sup>21</sup> Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, 5.125; William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. E.A.J. Honigmann, (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997), 5.2.278; Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, (Menston: Scolar Press, 1971), 96

<sup>22</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 5.2.278; Christopher Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.114; Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, 5.125; Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, Menston: Scolar Press, 1971, 96. Cf. Shakespeare, *Othello*, 5.2.275, 279. Othello has already affirmed that 'devils' will 'wash' him in 'liquid fire', imagining hellfire has the same cleansing qualities as the 'blood of the lamb' in Revelation 7:14, so it is clear he believes in devils when he denies the possibility of Iago's cloven-feet.

<sup>23</sup> Alison Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 12, 178 n.58.

according to Macrobius' commentary, the soul went back to the milky way from whence it had come.<sup>24</sup> The irony of these apparent dismissals is most obvious in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In this play, Shakespeare has Theseus, the closest thing to a main character in Ovid's 'fables', apparently dismiss the whole genre that he belongs to as 'more strange than true.'<sup>25</sup> This elliptical phrase is not the same as saying that fable is false, as can be seen when it is expanded into a phrase like: 'it is true, but more strange than true.' It is possible, then, that Theseus is aware that the sacred truths which these fictions contain are stranger than the fictions themselves. The speech clearly deploys dramatic irony to draw attention to the debt that the play owes to *narratio fabulosa*.<sup>26</sup> Theseus also seems to dismiss fable by lumping together 'the lunatic, the lover and the poet.'<sup>27</sup> This draws directly on a 1595 preface of the Jesuit Robert Southwell which had also apparently undermined fable with the claim that 'a poet, a lover and a liar are by many reckoned but three words of one signification.'<sup>28</sup> But Southwell was also equivocating because he himself had admitted earlier in *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* (1591) that 'in fables are often figured moral truths and that covertly uttered to a common good which without mask would not find so free a passage.'<sup>29</sup>

This technique of equivocation, whereby Catholics had spent the Middle Ages veiling the truth that fables contained, was adopted by reformers to evacuate truth from idle tales, popish conceits, winter's tales, monkish fables and old wives' tales.<sup>30</sup> Alexandra Walsham writes that Bale and Foxe established a kind of Protestant polemic that continued to dismiss lies, damned lies and fables.<sup>31</sup> Writing and print were partly responsible for this supplanting of fable; John Aubrey commented that 'the divine art of printing' and 'many good Books...have put all the old Fables out of doors.'<sup>32</sup> With Protestants

<sup>24</sup> Chance, *Mythographic Chaucer*, 108.

<sup>25</sup> Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.2.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Lewis Carroll, *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, ch. 7, where the unicorn says that he had always believed that children were 'fabulous monsters'. Of course, unicorns and children have both functioned as allegories for other things altogether, the unicorn for Christ, children for the plants torn apart by maenads.

<sup>27</sup> Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.7-8.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Southwell, *The Poems of Robert Southwell S. J.*, ed. James H. McDonald and Nancy Pollard Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 1

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> See Shell, *Oral Culture*, 12-13.

<sup>31</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 125.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Shell, *Oral Culture*, 179 n.70.

appropriating and nullifying Catholic rhetoric, Catholic oral culture had no way of defending itself. Protestants could expatiate in text about how untrue fables were, but Catholics could not suddenly start defending their truth in writing, because to do so would not only expose their denominational motives but would make the truth of fables, previously accessible only to privileged clergy, more commonly available.<sup>33</sup>

At some point, the same people who had taken pleasure in puzzling out *how* a fable was true, came to use the word as no more than a derisive label, operating in similar ways to the modern term ‘conspiracy theory.’ Increasingly, facts were preferred to fable which, as far as Protestants were concerned, was a hysterical network of information to be rejected without further thought. Where fables had been merely part of the oral tradition they were dismissed by Protestant discourse until a knowledge-system which had once contained a grain of truth became synonymous with falsehood. This reflected the way that medieval oral plant cultures and sacred symbolism had been replaced, distorted or commandeered by writing and print in the Protestant forms of herbals and emblem books.<sup>34</sup> For the most part these changes were met by silence—even Shakespeare could only silently undo the profane errors. This was because to promote unreformed material was dangerous. It may also have been because medieval religion recognised the importance of silence when it came to some forms of traditional religious knowledge.

However, even as oral fables were suppressed, there was a rise in printed fable supplemented by oral tradition. This proved that Catholic writers were quick to seize the opportunity to strike back by bringing together print and orally-transmitted media.<sup>35</sup> This mixed-media approach enabled Catholics to camouflage their own ‘old wives tales’, dream visions of ‘a hot midsummer night’, and ‘winter’s tales’ in plain sight and not commit sacred truths to writing.<sup>36</sup> The influence of fable on drama was advertised in the titles of plays by George Peele and William Shakespeare.<sup>37</sup> However, it also had an influence on the

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<sup>33</sup> See Gillian Woods, *Shakespeare’s Unreformed Fictions*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 16; Walsham, *Landscape*, 87, 82; Shell, *Oral Culture*, 63.

<sup>34</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture*, 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 16

<sup>36</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Bloomsbury, 2006, repr. 2015), 4.1.93.

<sup>37</sup> George Peele, *The Old Wives Tale*, (1595); Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, (1595); Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*, (1611).



most sophisticated form of fable that medieval tradition had ever produced, a kind of fabulous verse narrative; the irony was that it was being written in the Elizabethan era. The technically dazzling fabulous verse narratives that appeared in Elizabethan times, with allegory more multi-layered than any symbolism that made it into an emblem book, managed to encode the sacred concerns of Catholicism in ways that even the Protestant elite could admire. In fact, writers from different religious backgrounds were attracted to this medieval form that managed to engage with the symbolic subtext on which society seemed to be built and which engaged with the deepest hopes and fears of humanity.

This is the context in which the three poems of this chapter will be examined: Thomas Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphoses' (published 1589); Christopher Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' (composed before 1593); and William Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' (published 1593). Thomas Lodge's poem was a magisterial influence behind the two later poems. Marlowe was working on his poem shortly before he was murdered in the spring of 1593 and the close links between his and Shakespeare's poem make it likely that both men embarked on their poems in 1592.<sup>38</sup> The poems did not explicitly own that they were fabulous narrative or name Macrobius as the theorist behind them, but increasingly it is clear that they demand to be read according to this form and theory.<sup>39</sup>

### **Macrobius, Authority on Fable**

The three poems manage to square erotic Ovidian poetry with Elizabethan Christian culture, just as medieval monks had squared erotic Ovidian poetry with their medieval religion. This chapter will argue that the poets, like the monks before them, found their moral justification in Macrobius.<sup>40</sup> In fact, Macrobius had offered what Jane Chance has called 'the most important theoretical justification for the use of classical myth in medieval poetry', teaching

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<sup>38</sup> William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Poems*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Henry Woudhusyen (London: Arden Bloomsbury, 2007), 20-21.

<sup>39</sup>But cf. Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*, 2.51 which alludes to 'Aesop's Cocke...[and] the jewel he enjoyed.' This may hint that the work might be interpreted as a fable against nature, such as those of Aesop in which animals talk, although Marlowe is writing a different kind of fable.

<sup>40</sup> Jane Chance (ed.), *The Mythographic Art: Classical Fable and the Rise of the Vernacular in Early France and England* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1990), 5.

that erotic material could be used to distract the common reader from the ultimate sacred meaning intended for the informed reader.<sup>41</sup>

Macrobius was a fourth or fifth-century theorist from North Africa. His commentary on Cicero's *The Dream of Scipio* remained a popular and oft-quoted work a thousand years later and he established the way that dreams were categorised and fiction was analysed in the Middle Ages.<sup>42</sup> He is included as an authority on dreams in Chaucer's celebrated animal fable (this may be ironic, because he was also reputed to be an authority on fables in which 'dumb animals or inanimate objects are feigned to have spoken among themselves').<sup>43</sup> According to Chanticleer the cockerel:

Macrobeus, that writ the avisioun  
In Affrike of the worthy Cipion,  
Affermeth dremes, and seith that they been  
Warnynge of thynges that men after seen.<sup>44</sup>

However, this chapter will concern itself more closely with what Macrobius identifies as the features of narratives in the fabulous register or mode. Macrobius' commentary explains that fabulous narrative (*narratio fabulosa*) only concerns itself with sacred matters: sacred rites; the ancestry and deeds of the gods; the mystic ideas of the Pythagoreans; ideas about the upper and lower air. The sacred subject-matter means that it is truthful in substance, but it also calls for it to have a fictitious style. This prevents the truths from becoming generally known, which can have devastating effects, as Numenius found out to his cost when he revealed the Eleusinian mysteries in a recreational context.<sup>45</sup> Such truths should not be made common because it debases and offends the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>42</sup> Julia Boffey, *Fifteenth-Century Dream Visions: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), introduction, 1; Chance (ed.), *Mythographic Art*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Papias, eleventh-century lexicographer, quoted in Barry Taylor 'Exempla and Proverbs in the *Libro de Buen Amor*' in *A Companion to the Libro de Buen Amor*, ed. Louise M. Haywood & Louise O. Vasvári, (London: Tamesis, 2004), 86; Cf. Papias, *Etymologiarum Sive Originum Libri* xx, ed. Wallace M. Lindsey, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), I, 40.

<sup>44</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Nun Priests Tale' in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 3123-3126.

<sup>45</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, 2.19. Numenius was a Greek aristocrat who attempted to transpose the rites of Eleusis to a secular setting and consequently provoked the anger of the goddesses.

gods. The metaphor that Macrobius uses is that base men should not see the goddess Nature openly naked (*apertam nudamque*).<sup>46</sup>

Macrobius' philosophy of literature and its distinctive aesthetic was familiar to poets throughout the Middle Ages and lies behind many vernacular works called romances.<sup>47</sup> Occasionally, it is even acknowledged. With respect to his literary aesthetic reflecting Nature's own ornament, Chrétien de Troyes writes:

I claim as my guarantor Macrobius...<sup>48</sup>

Other works calling themselves 'romance' are more likely to be labelled 'dream vision' today. Nevertheless, *The Romance of the Rose* establishes its debt to Macrobius almost immediately:

Some say that there is nothing in dreams but lies and fables; however, one may have dreams which are not in the least deceitful, but which later become clear. In support of this fact, I can cite the author named Macrobius.<sup>49</sup>

Moments after this name-dropping of Macrobius comes the line from the *Romance of the Rose* that Shakespeare paraphrases to introduce his midwife of dreams, Queen Mab (it is the same line that Chaucer uses to introduce Macrobius' definition of dreams):

Many people dream things secretly at night which are later seen openly.  
(*Romance of the Rose*, 18-20)<sup>50</sup>

Macrobeus affirmeth dremes...[as] thynges that men after seen.  
(Chaucer, 'Nun Priest's Tale', 1987)<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Chance (ed.), *Mythographic Art*, 5-6.

<sup>47</sup> Chance, *Mythographic Chaucer*, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Chretien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, ed. William W. Kibler, trans. Carleton W. Carroll, (London: Penguin Books repr, 2004), 119.

<sup>49</sup> Lorris and Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Chaucer, 'The Nun Priests Tale', 3123-3126.

Dreamers often lie...in bed asleep, while they do dream things true.

(*Romeo and Juliet*, 1.4.52-3)<sup>52</sup>

Not only are Shakespeare's descriptions of Queen Mab suffused with imagery from *The Romance of the Rose* (particularly the imagery surrounding the figure of Lady Abundance in that dream vision), they may also derive material directly from Macrobius. Shakespeare's description of 'the hag, [who] when maids lie on their backs...presses them' seems to be directly lifted from Macrobius' description of 'the incubus, which, according to popular belief, rushes upon people in sleep and presses them with weight they can feel.'<sup>53</sup>

Close reading like this can highlight the importance of scholarship of medieval and Renaissance mythography. In this field of study, in essays by

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<sup>52</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.4.52-3.

<sup>53</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.4. 93-3; Macrobius, *Commentary*, 7. Having established that the *Romance of the Rose* in general can be counted among his sources for what is to follow, Shakespeare then pinpoints a more specific section of the text:

O then I see Queen Mab hath been with you. (*Romeo and Juliet*, 1.4.54)

Many people are so foolish as to imagine that they become sorcerers at night and go roaming with Lady Abundance. (*Romance of the Rose*, 18429ff.)

Queen Mab courses through the dreams of lovers, lawyers and soldiers just like her prototype Lady Abundance and many of Shakespeare's lines describing this ride can be seen to have their origins in *The Romance of the Rose*:

...through lover's brains, and then they dream of love...(1.4.71)

...those who claim to be true lovers...dream of their beloved...(19399, 18405)

...she gallops...o'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees...(1.4.70, 73)

...dreams of lawsuits and judgements...(18385)

...of cutting foreign throats, of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades...(1.4.83-4)

...of anger and fury and quarrels with the enemies who are responsible for their hatred, and of the consequences of war...(18410-18414)

The ride of Lady Abundance is also somehow equivalent to the glancing of the poet's eye 'from heaven to earth from earth to heaven' described in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a speech which can be seen to paraphrase an extensive section of *The Romance of the Rose* specifically linked with Macrobius' 'secrets of nature':

There are those in whom devout and profound contemplation causes the objects of their meditations to appear in their thoughts, and who truly believe that they see them, clearly and objectively. But these are merely lies and deceits, just as in the case of the man who dreams and believes that the spiritual substances he sees are really present, as Scipio once did. He sees hell and heaven, the sky and the air, the sea and the land, and all that you might find there...(18361-18374)

Lady Abundance can give access to heaven and earth and the sensation of glancing between them in the twinkling of an eye. In this she can grant the same insights as the 'secrets of nature,' because in Macrobius' commentary, it is as Scipio was 'learning of the secrets of nature' that he found himself among the stars of the Milky Way.

Theodore Steinberg and George Economou, Shakespeare is once again located in the Macrobian tradition.<sup>54</sup> However, it is Jane Chance who has done most to promote the studies of mythography in recent years, setting out the Macrobian theories in painstaking detail. Without the work of Chance and other scholars of mythography a chapter like this would have been impossible. As will be demonstrated, her work on medieval fable is just as relevant to what will be called Elizabethan fabulous verse narratives which include veiled sacred rites at their heart, divine deeds and metamorphoses, and allegory that often seems to concern the mystic union of the soul with God.<sup>55</sup>

### Fabulous Verse Narratives

Before the importance of Chance's work for these poems was recognised, they were variously categorised as 'epyllia', 'Elizabethan Erotic Poems', 'Verse Romances' and in general it is easier to say what they are not.

The main thing to establish is that they are *not* 'epyllia', a misleading term, implying that they are a condensation of the 'epic' into a 'minor epic' (as if Homer's *Iliad* had got shrunk in the wash).<sup>56</sup> Not only that, to call these works 'minor epics' can undermine their status as examples of a major form at which many of the major poets of the age tried their hand.<sup>57</sup> The term ἐπύλλιον ['epyllion'] was first used by Aristophanes in the fifth-century BCE, to pour scorn on tragedy that aspired to the grandeur of epic diction, but in the mid-nineteenth century it was adopted as a serious literary term by German scholars.<sup>58</sup> The term was later popularised by the French critic Georges Lafaye in *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide et Leurs Modèles Grecs* (1904) and it was from him that it came to Mary Crump. Crump's *The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid* (1931), by ignoring the sources of Ovid in Alexandrian authors and indigenous Mediterranean myths, manages to overlook the importance of elements associated with transformation. She even dismisses the speech of Pythagoras

<sup>54</sup> See 'Part III. Renaissance England Shakespeare and the Mythographers' in *Mythographic Art*, ed. Jane Chance, 235-256.

<sup>55</sup> Parker, 'What's in a Name: and More', 101-149, 121 n.81

<sup>56</sup> Paul. W. Miller, 'The Elizabethan Minor Epic' in *Studies in Philology*, vol 55 no 1 (Jan 1958), 31-8, 32.

<sup>57</sup> Nigel Alexander (ed.), *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1967), introduction, 1.

<sup>58</sup> John F. Reilly, 'Origins of the Word "Epyllion"' in *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Dec 1953), 111-114, 111.

which she claims lacks interest and purpose and was a sign that Ovid was 'tired' of his poem by the fifteenth book.<sup>59</sup> To bolster this distorted view of the work, she borrowed from Georges Lafaye the notion that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is actually a compilation of epyllia.<sup>60</sup> This has about the same critical merit as her other claim that Ovid's world continually reveals itself as a 'fairy land'.<sup>61</sup> Of course, both claims were equally attractive to C. S. Lewis, who, perhaps drawing on the assertion of Frederick Wright that the original text of Musaeus behind Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' was an 'epyllion,' used the term 'epyllion' to describe the Elizabethan poems in his highly influential survey *English Literature of the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (1954).<sup>62</sup>

By this time works like Johannes Heumann's *De epyllio Alexandrino* (1904), Carl Jackson's *The Latin Epyllion* (1913) and Walter Allen's *The Epyllion: A Chapter in the History of Literary Criticism* (1940) had all concluded that the term epyllion did not exist in ancient times to denote a literary form.<sup>63</sup> Critics of the Renaissance had always been uncomfortably aware that there was no external evidence that the Elizabethan poems were thought of as 'epyllia' in Shakespeare's time either.<sup>64</sup> Finally, Crump herself had already admitted that it did not exist as an obvious modern type since there was no agreement from one critic to the next about what made a poem an epyllion.<sup>65</sup>

The word 'epyllion' had not been used to define a literary tradition in classical times or Elizabethan times and nobody in the present time could agree on what it meant. Given this threefold failure, it might be expected that all parties would have agreed that it was in everyone's interests to abandon the failed literary term until it was obsolete.<sup>66</sup> Why then is it still possible to read and hear 'Hero and Leander' and 'Venus and Adonis' referred to as 'epyllia'? The answer can be found in the way that classical and English scholarship remained largely separate spheres in the later part of the twentieth century. The English

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<sup>59</sup> Mary Marjorie Crump, *The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1931), 211.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 47 cf. 53.

<sup>62</sup> F. A. Wright, *A History of Later Greek Literature* (London: Routledge, 1932), 404; C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954).

<sup>63</sup> Walter Allen Jr., 'The Epyllion: A Chapter in the History of Literary Criticism' in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol 71, (1940), 1-26, 6.

<sup>64</sup> Paul. W. Miller, 'The Elizabethan Minor Epic' in *Studies in Philology*, vol 55 no 1 (Jan 1958) 31-8, 33

<sup>65</sup> Crump, *The Epyllion*, 217.

<sup>66</sup> Walter Allen Jr., 'The Epyllion', 25.

scholar Paul Miller continued to refer to the classical genre after its existence had been disproved by classicists. Similarly, the classical scholar Walter Allen missed a chance to bring his astute scholarship to bear on the English poems.<sup>67</sup> In other words, a situation prevailed in which classicists were not reading the English books and English scholars were not reading the classics books, and it is this that has allowed the term 'epyllion' to outstay its welcome in critical discourse and in university teaching; Katherine Duncan-Jones and Henry Woudhuysen pointedly do not use this term in the introduction to the Arden edition of *Shakespeare's Poems*.<sup>68</sup>

In recent years, Terence Cave has written of the importance in criticism of thinking about literary 'pre-histories,' attempting to define texts not by what came after them but according to the influences that were around at the time they were conceived.<sup>69</sup> This is essentially an attempt to find a theory to redress the issues raised by Walter Allen in connection with the epyllion. Allen insisted that it was 'folly to talk of authors writing in a definite literary form before it is known that there was such a form and that they believed themselves to be writing in that form.'<sup>70</sup> The first critic to attempt to define Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' by what came before was Douglas Bush. He realised that Lodge could not have been writing sure in the knowledge that his work would in the distant future be placed as the first in a tradition of epyllia by modern scholars, a term that was already beginning to show signs of being a 'modern invention.'<sup>71</sup> The conclusion he came to was that Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' was not at the head of a new genre, but at the tail-end of an old one, not a mini-epic, but a 'love-complaint'.<sup>72</sup> This might sound simple but, as this chapter will demonstrate, the implications are far-reaching and have still to be assimilated into scholarship. When Lodge's form had been described as an epyllion, since this form was in effect a 'modern invention' it had not challenged

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<sup>67</sup> Walter Allen, 'The Non-Existent Classical Epyllion' in *Studies in Philology*, vol. 555, no. 3 (Jul 1958), 515-518, 515.

<sup>68</sup> William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Poems*, Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones & Woudhuysen (Arden: Bloomsbury, 2007).

<sup>69</sup> Terence Cave, *Pré-histoires: textes troublés au seuil de la modernité* (Genève: Libr. Droz, 1999), 7.

<sup>70</sup> Allen Jr., Walter, 'The Epyllion: A Chapter in the History of Literary Criticism', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol 71, (1940), 1-26, 4

<sup>71</sup> John F. Reilly, 'Origins of the Word "Epyllion"', 111.

<sup>72</sup> Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1932 repr. New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1963), 81.

critics to stray beyond a comfort zone of secular modern ways of reading.<sup>73</sup>

However, now that Lodge's form was an invention of the Middle Ages it potentially demanded far more exacting and historically-grounded methods of interpretation.<sup>74</sup> After all, was it not the case that poems in this medieval tradition, such as John Lydgate's 'A Complaynt of a Lovere's Life', demanded to be interpreted in the light of spiritual allegory which could puzzle the most dedicated of medievalists? Not only that, what could someone like Lodge, at this early period in his life before he had officially come out of the closet as a Catholic, possibly have in common with a Benedictine monk like John Lydgate, who was potentially drawing on the Benedictine spiritual allegory of Pierre Bersuire? These are just two of the implications of Bush's groundbreaking realisation.

The love complaint was a form that drew on a fable or dream vision formula to structure a complaint which engages with a debate.<sup>75</sup> According to Dana Symons, these poems usually begin with a narrator who, after bewailing his own troubles, encounters a solitary plaintive figure.<sup>76</sup> In the case of Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', the narrator stumbles upon the lone figure of the god Glaucus who instructs him to 'mourn no more, but moan my helpless state.'<sup>77</sup> These poems also often conclude with an envoy addressed to lovers, just as Lodge ends with an envoy addressed to 'ladies' which purports to offer love advice in the face of 'women's proud back-sliding.'<sup>78</sup> There are other elements, which strongly suggest the dependency of Lodge's love complaint on allegorical dream vision. The ride on the backs of dolphins, which in classical myth transported the souls of the dead to the afterlife, parallels moments of religious vision in Dante's *Purgatorio* and Chaucer's *The House of Fame* where narrators ride on the backs of eagles.<sup>79</sup> Chaucer's eagle is sent by Jupiter and according

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<sup>73</sup> John F. Reilly, 'Origins of the Word "Epyllion"', 111.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 28. Spearing argues that any attempt to make sense of medieval forms must take into account that 'in the Middle Ages, the only language of absolute value was the language of religion.'

<sup>75</sup> Dana M. Symons, *Chaucerian Dream Visions and Complaints*, (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), 2.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' in *The Complete Works* (London: Huntingdon Club, 1883, repr. London & New York: Johnson Reprint Company Ltd., 1966), vol. 1, 1-30, 8,

<sup>78</sup> Symons, *Chaucerian Dream Visions*, 3; Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 28

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Exodus 19:4: 'Ye have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I carried you upon eagle's wings, and have brought you unto me.' According to Jane Chance, in dream vision the notion of being carried on the back of an eagle becomes a metaphor for the 'transported



to Anthony Spearing, Jupiter often stood for the Christian god in dream vision.<sup>80</sup> In ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, Lodge describes how Glaucus, not Jupiter, ‘upon a dolphin hors’d’ the narrator, but, as will be seen, it is no less likely that he is to be understood as the Christian God.

This chapter will consider these poems as part of the medieval tradition that set up Macrobius as an authority on dreams and fables. This explains why the poems contain certain elements that can be found in Chaucer’s dream poem *The Legend of Good Women* and some of the French *dits amoureux* (courtly poems on the subject of love) such as Froissart’s, Machaut’s and Deschamp’s marguerite poems.<sup>81</sup> Although Lodge’s, Marlowe’s and Shakespeare’s poems are all Ovidian, others in the same tradition are not (such as Henry Willoby’s ‘Willobie his Avisa’ (1594), which makes the readers eavesdroppers on a conversation occurring within the idyllic landscape of a dream vision).<sup>82</sup> It is therefore misleading to refer to them as ‘Ovidian verse narratives.’ What these poems all have in common is a kind of spiritual allegory which, although it seems to have been partly sourced in the medieval commentaries on Ovid, did not depend on an Ovidian setting but could be accommodated to any literary form engaging with love.<sup>83</sup> In this way, as Alison Shell has noted, the multi-layered couplings of Christ and his beloved—whether she was interpreted as Mary, the Marian Church or the Human Soul—could be collapsed into amatory discourse.<sup>84</sup> Lodge’s ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphoses’, Marlowe’s ‘Hero and Leander’ and Shakespeare’s ‘Venus and Adonis’ do not all feature a dreaming narrator or a complaining lover, but, as will be seen, they all dramatize the poet’s engagement with Christian revelation channelled by philosophers or poets perceived as pre-Christian: Pythagoras, Musaeus, and Ovid.

### **Fabulous Verse Narratives as Divinely-Inspired Forms**

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poet’ privileged to see ‘the larger workings of the cosmos...“Helle and erthe and paradys”’ (Chance, *Mythographic Chaucer*, 63).

<sup>80</sup> Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, 77

<sup>81</sup> Boffey, *Fifteenth-Century Dream Visions*, introduction, 4

<sup>82</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, *Dream Visions and Other Poetry*, ed. Kathryn L. Lynch (New York: Norton, 2007), xiv

<sup>83</sup> Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 200.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

John Weever wrote of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis', 'I swore Apollo got [it] and none other.'<sup>85</sup> He was suggesting that Shakespeare had fulfilled the claim to divine inspiration made in his epigram: 'Let the vulgar delight in common things, may fair Apollo serve me cups filled from the Castalian waters [of divine inspiration].'<sup>86</sup> In fact, Weever suggested, he had surpassed it since the poem surely comprised a pure stream of divine inspiration with no human mediating it.

Weever's comment is provocative because for centuries Apollo had stood for the Christian God in classic Benedictine explanations of Ovid. When Thomas Carew claimed that Donne had been 'Apollo's first, at last, the true God's priest', he was acknowledging that Donne had shifted from a position of unreformed Catholicism to Protestantism.<sup>87</sup> The fact that John Weever—and by implication William Shakespeare—were not inclined to 'take seriously the opposition between Apollo and the true God' implies that they had not entirely shifted in their views about Christian revelation in pagan material.<sup>88</sup>

If Shakespeare's pagan poem could be ascribed to a divine source it was in good company. It was not an uncommon view in the period that a pagan poem like *The Metamorphoses* had a divine source because Ovid was inspired, either directly by the Holy Spirit or indirectly through his familiarity with the books of Moses mediated by Pythagoras.<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, the first English translation of a fable from Ovid, 'the Fable of Ovid Treting of Narcissus' (1560) referred to Ovid as 'this poet sure divine'.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, it was believed that Musaeus was schooled in pagan divine mysteries by Orpheus who journeyed to the underworld and returned to tell 'the secrets' of that 'prison-house'.<sup>91</sup> However, the fourth-century Eusebius had also claimed that his name was just the Greek version of Moses and that he was the same figure who had

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<sup>85</sup> John Weever, 'Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare' in *Epigrams*, 1599. repr. in E. A. J. Honigmann, *John Weever: A Biography of a Literary Associate of Shakespeare and Jonson, together with a Photographic Facsimile of Weever's Epigrams* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 109.

<sup>86</sup> William Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis' in *Shakespeare's Poems*, eds. Katherine Duncan-Jones & Henry Woudhusyen (London: Arden Bloomsbury, 2007), 127.

<sup>87</sup> Helen Gardner (ed.), *The Metaphysical Poets* (London: Penguin, 1957), 141.

<sup>88</sup> Alexander, *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, 2.

<sup>89</sup> Madeleine Forey (ed.), *Ovid's Metamorphoses translated by Arthur Golding* (London: Penguin, 2002), introduction, xix.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in M. M. Reese (ed.), *Elizabethan Verse Romances*, ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), 3; see also Alexander, *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, introduction, 1.

<sup>91</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1982), 1.5.14.

communed with God on the mountaintop.<sup>92</sup> It is likely that this explains why Marlowe refers to him as 'divine Musaeus'.<sup>93</sup> This is parallel to the way that Dante referred to 'Divine Virgil', who, for reasons that remain obscure, was seen as a suitable guide to the Christian underworld.<sup>94</sup>

The reason that Musaeus could be understood as divine was partly because he was double. There were two Musaeuses, the ancient one Plato described as the founder of mystery religion, and the sixth-century one who lived late enough to incorporate Christian spiritual allegory into his fabulous verse narrative, *Hero and Leander*.<sup>95</sup> However, in Shakespeare's time, it was thought that they were both one and the same Musaeus. He was understood as the first ever poet, as pre-Homeric. Yet it was also recognised that his symbolism was Christian (something that was not recognised in modern times until the classicist Thomas Gelzer pointed it out).<sup>96</sup> Musaeus' work seemed to its early-modern readers to be proof that clues to the coming of Christ had been put by God in creation at the beginning of time in accordance with 1 Corinthians 2:7. Not only that, it was proof that certain pagans had grasped the meaning of these clues without the benefit of the teachings of Christ. The revival of interest in Musaeus' work in the Elizabethan period is largely a reflection of the way that it spoke directly to the issues of the contemporary religious debate. Elizabethan state religion was premised on the notion that the Christian narrative had been a one-off event in history, not some message put in creation for heathens to access in some pre-Christian past. Anyone who made Musaeus accessible to English readers with no Greek, was potentially promoting religion of the old stamp, since this was the only version of Christianity continuous with the Christian truth accessed by this pagan author.

The popularising of 'divine' authors like Musaeus was not just a response to contemporary religious debate. It was also arguably a continuation of a medieval debate of Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women* which sets up the importance of texts for learning about divine realms.<sup>97</sup> Since there 'nis noon dwelling in this contree/That eyther hath in hevene or helle ybe', where is a

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<sup>92</sup> Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, trans. Edwin Hamilton Gifford, (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publications, 2002), 432 (9.27.3-4).

<sup>93</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.52

<sup>94</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Robert Kirkpatrick, (London: Penguin, 2006), 317 etc.

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Gelzer, *Musaeus: Hero and Leander* (Harvard: Loeb Classical Library, 1975), 318.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 320-322

<sup>97</sup> Boffey, *Fifteenth-Century Dream Visions*, introduction, 4

reader to turn on matters of salvation?<sup>98</sup> Firstly, there is the knowledge of the senses, but not everyone is lucky enough to be granted visions like the priest Bernoldus.<sup>99</sup> Secondly, there are textual sources of revelation that might at first seem mere fables 'of love, of hate, [and] of other sondry thynges.'<sup>100</sup> Because the evidence of the senses is not always forthcoming, Chaucer is aware of the urgency of having access to these 'olde bokes.'<sup>101</sup> He fears that 'yf that olde bokes were awaye,/Yloren were of remembraunce the keye.'<sup>102</sup> In other words, if the works of these *auctores* were for whatever reason taken away from us, our knowledge of what was in store for the soul would be utterly lost.

This is precisely the frightening situation in which Lodge, Marlowe and Shakespeare had found themselves in Elizabeth's England: a position in which it was increasingly hard to get hold of the sources of salvation, and this included the textual sources of salvation. But this was not merely concerning if you happened to be a poet, because it was a dilemma faced by the human soul everywhere it turned.<sup>103</sup> It is precisely with this dilemma in mind, and with the aim of continuing the medieval debate about how to interpret the divine secrets present in texts, that the 'fabulous' texts of Lodge, Marlowe and Shakespeare set about translating Latin and Greek texts. If the aims of the texts seem ambitious, this may be because they assume that the human soul is at stake. With deliberate efficiency these works pinpoint the ancient texts that make the largest claims for divine inspiration: Lodge included translations from Pythagoras' divinely-inspired speech from book fifteen of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in his own 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis'; Marlowe translated Musaeus' spiritual allegory of Hero and Leander in his poem of the same name; finally, the work of Shakespeare in the mid-1590s includes translations from Claudian's *Panegyric of the Emperor Honorius* in the visionary Queen Mab speech in *Romeo and Juliet*, a translation of the first line of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and a Greek epigram of Marianus Scholasticus.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Chaucer, 'The Legend of Good Women' in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 repr. 1989), 5-6.

<sup>99</sup> See Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, 14. 'The Vision of the Priest Bernoldus' was written in Latin by Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, in the ninth century.

<sup>100</sup> Chaucer, 'Legend of Good Women', 23.

<sup>101</sup> Chaucer, 'Legend of Good Women', 25.

<sup>102</sup> Chaucer, 'Legend of Good Women', 25-6.

<sup>103</sup> Michael St John, *Chaucer's Dream Visions: Courtliness and Individual Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 1.

<sup>104</sup> See Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.14-5. Shakespeare's translation of the first line of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* ('Imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown') is in

Fable was always considered to be a form that was kindled by heaven. Ovid's Pythagoras claimed that a god 'inspires my tongue' before embarking on his revelatory speech.<sup>105</sup> Lodge does not translate this line; instead, he dramatises it, putting the rest of the speech back into the mouth of a god. Lines 23-4 of Lodge's poem 'unto the world such is inconstancy...as apple to the eye' start out as a paraphrase of Pythagoras' phrase at Ovid 15.177, 'nihil est toto quod perstet in orbe' (literally: 'nothing is constant that stands in the world'). However, his mention of the 'apple' suggests that he thinks that Pythagoras knew that the reason for this was the Fall, since he had mentioned 'ciborum...vetitorum' ('forbidden food') a mere five lines before the divine invocation beginning 15.138. The poem seems to suggest that this may have been proof that Pythagoras had some mysterious knowledge of the forbidden fruit of Eden predating the book of Genesis.

Lodge's translation resumes at 15.165 and 15.174 with translations of the phrases 'omnia mutantur' ('all things change') and 'tempora sic fugit' ('so time flies on') which come together in his line: 'times change by course of fate.' The poem appears to interpret Pythagoras' words in a Christian way, not as a sign that all is changeable, but as a sign that God is unchangeable, so that faith should be put in him and in the fruits of the Passion. This becomes increasingly clear in his engagement with Ovid 15.186-7: 'cernis et emensas in lucem tendere noctes,/et iubar hoc nitidum nigrae succedere nocti' ('You see how day extends as night is spent,/And this bright radiance succeeds the dark') which he renders at 25-6: 'mark how the morn in roseate colour shines/And straight with clouds the sunny tract is clad.' Lodge reworks Ovid's lines into a comment on the decline of 'pomp' and a shift from 'high to low', which raise the possibility that his Christian reading of the classical text prompted meditation on a stripping away of ceremony and shift from high church to low church in post-reformation England.<sup>106</sup> According to Henry Woudhuysen, Shakespeare's *Love's Labours Lost* also engages with Book Fifteen of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in much

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'poulter's measure' in Theseus' otherwise pentametric speech on 'fable' towards the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His translation of Marianus Scholasticus is in the last two sonnets which 'seem closer to the Greek original than any of the Latin vernacular adaptations'; see William Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997), 153; James Hutton, 'Analogues of Shakespeare's Sonnets 153-4: Contributions to the history of a theme', *Modern Philology* 38 (1940-1), 385-403.

<sup>105</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. D.A. Melville (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1986), 356.

<sup>106</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 27-28.

the same way as Lodge. At the outset, Shakespeare's mention of 'cormorant devouring time' (1.1.4) translates 'tempus edax rerum' (Ovid 15.234).<sup>109</sup> Later in the play, Shakespeare's comment that 'study's god-like recompense' (1.1.58) are 'things hid and barred...from common sense' (1.1.57) recalls Arthur Golding's 'whatsoever other thing is hid from common sense' (15.80), both translations of Ovid's 'quodcumque latet' (Ovid 15.72).<sup>110</sup> Both Golding and Shakespeare interpret Ovid's line in the light of Macrobius' secrets of Nature veiled from the 'common' herd, so it seems that they came to translate Book Fifteen with similar interests to Lodge.

Lodge also includes direct translations of Musaeus' words in 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' that may have given Marlowe the confidence to attempt his own extended translation. Lodge's phrase 'sea-borne nymphs' is an accretive translation of Musaeus.<sup>111</sup> Firstly, the epithet 'sea-borne' is lifted directly from the second line of Musaeus' fabulous narrative verse: καὶ νύχιον πλωτῆρα θαλασσοπόρων ὑμεναίων ('the one who swam by night to sea-borne spousals').<sup>112</sup> Secondly, Musaeus uses the word 'nymph' in constructions associated with the 'bride' Hero and the 'bridegroom' Leander. In line 268, for example, he writes: Νυμφίε, πολλὰ μόγησας, ἃ μὴ πάθε νυμφίος ἄλλος ('Bridegroom, heavy toiler, [who has suffered] as no other bridegroom has suffered').<sup>113</sup> Musaeus use of the word is intended to identify his lovers as the bride and bridegroom of the Book of Revelation 19. That Lodge understood and retained Musaeus' biblical resonances in his word 'nymph' is indicated when he writes of 'the nymphs in flocks' because they are wedded to the Lamb as brides of Christ.<sup>114</sup> Lodge also borrows from Musaeus the mention of 'cheeks...like...ruddie rose bespred on whitest milk' or 'roseat cheekes' or

<sup>109</sup> William Shakespeare, *Love's Labours Lost*, Ed. Henry Woudhusyen, London: Arden Shakespeare, 1.1.4; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. Tarrant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15.234.

<sup>110</sup> Shakespeare, *Love's Labours Lost*, 1.1.57; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Trans. Arthur Golding, Ed. Madeleine Forey, Penguin: London, 2002, 437; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.72; Alexander Pope was familiar with the Catholic notion that some secrets are a reward of learning and parodied the notion in his Rosicrucian mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock* Canto 1 37-8: 'Some secret truths, from learned pride concealed,/To maids alone and children are revealed' (Alexander Pope, *The Major Works*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 80).

<sup>111</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 235.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 305-6.

<sup>113</sup> Thomas Gelzer, *Musaeus: Hero and Leander*, Harvard: Loeb Classical Library, 1975, 2.

<sup>114</sup> Gelzer, *Musaeus: Hero and Leander*, 268.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 559.

finger 'tops' [sic] 'with five sweet roses.'<sup>115</sup> The description of 'Cinthia's face' 'blushing' also owes much to Musaeus' red-and-white imagery.<sup>116</sup> Lodge has no small role, then, in motivating Marlowe to commit to a full-scale translation which would make accessible this seditious proof that Christian messages were present in the universe before the coming of Christ.

Marlowe, like Lodge, begins translating directly after the invocation of divine inspiration, so as not to make explicit the sacred subtext concealed by the amatory tenor of his work. However, there are indications that he is no less committed to revealing the 'divine' credentials of his author. Musaeus in the first line of the original Greek text includes an invocation of a goddess, who could have equally been interpreted as a pagan Muse or a Christian saint: Εἰπέ, θεά, κρυφίων ἐπιμάρτυρα λύχνον Ἐρώτων (Gelzer, 1: 'Tell of the lamp, O goddess, the witness of hidden loves').<sup>117</sup> Marlowe's poem opens with the claim that Neptune (who in Benedictine explanations of Ovid stands for 'the devil') is guilty of 'true love's blood.'<sup>118</sup> This last phrase is his provocative rendering of Musaeus' reference in line 30 to Διοτρεφῆς αἷμα (literally: 'Jove-engendered blood'). The correct translation is not absent from Marlowe's poem; he displaces the epithet 'Jove-born' to a later description of Mercury which he adds to Musaeus' text.<sup>119</sup> This later use implies that the lovers and Mercury share the same divine blood and is further evidence that Marlowe may have chosen a Macrobian subject that 'de deorum progenie actuve narrantur,' that is, 'treat[s] of the ancestry and deeds of the gods'.<sup>120</sup>

This sacred subtext to Marlowe's poem has been consistently overlooked by critics. Even as he astutely points out that Christianising myth was the dominant approach of Marlowe's age, Claude Summers ends in reaffirming the received wisdom that 'Hero and Leander' is a secular poem:

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 293-4, 584, 312.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 305-6.

<sup>117</sup> Thomas Gelzer, *Musaeus: Hero and Leander*, Harvard: Loeb Classical Library, 1975, 344, l. 1 This same anxiety is dramatised in poems of the period, such as when Lodge's 'Truth's Complaint Over England' affects to call upon the Muse Melpomine, but then describes her as the 'saddest lady of the sister's three.' The more usual number of pagan muses was nine and this address may have been more likely to suggest the three women present at the crucifixion: Mary Magdalen, Saint Mary the Virgin, and her sister Mary of Cleophas.

<sup>118</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.1.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 1.386.

<sup>120</sup> Chance, *Mythographic Art*, 5-6.

Marlowe mocks his culture's dominant practice of co-opting and Christianising classical myth and literature (including, in fact, the story of Hero and Leander which was sometimes read as a Neoplatonic allegory of the soul's union with God).<sup>121</sup>

Scarcely has Summers expressed this opinion, which is in many ways a reiteration of a scholarly consensus that had been affirmed throughout the twentieth century, than Georgia Brown is repeating it again within the same collection of essays:

The 'arbitrariness of desire' and its potential for creation or destruction is the subject of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* but Marlowe resists his cultures 'dominant practice of co-opting and Christianising classical myth and literature' by refusing to moralise or allegorise the Ovidian narrative...<sup>122</sup>

However, the classical scholarship of Thomas Gelzer provides support for the idea that Marlowe was drawn to Musaeus for precisely the opposite reasons: because the text had spiritual allegory implicit in it.<sup>123</sup> In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Shakespeare describes 'Hero and Leander' as a 'deep love' beneath a 'shallow story'<sup>124</sup>; this anticipates the classical scholar Thomas Gelzer's rediscovery in the twentieth century of a "'higher" meaning' beneath 'the surface' of the love story.<sup>125</sup> He argues that the more contrived features of the poem reveal that beneath the amatory narrative lies an allegorical subtext concerned with transcendental truths. In this way, he locates Musaeus in a tradition of using amatory discourse to convey sacred meaning. According to Gelzer, this was an unbelievably long tradition that would be at its height when the love fables of Ovid were explained in Benedictine Christian Commentary and depicted in Christian Cathedrals, as will be seen in chapter four.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Claude J. Summers, 'Hero and Leander: Arbitrariness of Desire' in *Constructing Christopher Marlowe*. eds. J. A. Downie and J. T. Parnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 148.

<sup>122</sup> Georgia E. Brown, 'Gender and voice in 'Hero and Leander' in Downie and Parnell (eds.), *Constructing Christopher Marlowe*, 148.

<sup>123</sup> Gelzer (trans.), *Musaeus: Hero and Leander*, 299, 320-322.

<sup>124</sup> Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ed. William C. Carroll (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), 1.1.21.

<sup>125</sup> Gelzer (trans.), *Musaeus: Hero and Leander*, 316-7.

<sup>126</sup> Gelzer (trans.), *Musaeus: Hero and Leander*, 316-7.



## The Performance of Sacred Rites

As late as the eighteenth century, John Keats recognised 'negative capability' in Shakespeare's writing which introduced 'uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts' into his work.<sup>127</sup> More recently, this impression has been developed by Richard Wilson and Clare Asquith, who argue that Shakespeare deliberately adopted a secretive approach to writing because of his faith.<sup>128</sup> If Shakespeare inherited a Macrobian model of writing, it would provide further support for this perspective on his work. According to Jane Chance, not only was the proper subject for fable an enactment of sacred rites, but the entire artform was premised upon keeping back certain arcana.<sup>129</sup> Both the rites and the arcana had once been the preserve of ancient mystery religion. This is explored by Giorgio Agamben who argues that fable is a mode in which the telling is all because it is premised upon an untold mystery.<sup>130</sup>

As has been seen, Musaeus' *Hero and Leander* lies behind some of the imagery and language of Lodge's poem; it is the original that Marlowe translates; it is also, as I will go on to argue, the ultimate source for such iconic moments as the quibbling over the true meaning of 'palmer's kiss' in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. However, according to Plato, ancient mystery religion viewed books by Musaeus as one of the main sources for their rituals.<sup>131</sup> As has been noted, this was an earlier Musaeus than the one who wrote *Hero and Leander*, but Shakespeare and his contemporaries did not know this.<sup>132</sup>

It might be thought that this ancient use of works associated with the name Musaeus would have been forgotten and utterly irrelevant by the time that Renaissance poets got hold of them. However, in his translation, Christopher

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<sup>127</sup> John Keats, *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins (Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958), vol. 1, 193-4.

<sup>128</sup> Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 10-11. Clare Asquith, *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

<sup>129</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press), 1952, 1.2.17, 3.14 'arcana [Naturae]', 1.2.9.

<sup>130</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience* (London: Verso, 2007), 70. In this fable might resemble a 'fairy tale' like *Alice in Wonderland* which has a robust symbolic appeal that transcends the nonsense of its words and can therefore be adapted again and again like a myth.

<sup>131</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 364e

<sup>132</sup> Gelzer (ed.), *Musaeus: Hero and Leander*, 318.

Marlowe does not seem wholly ignorant of this ancient use. According to ancient tradition, Musaeus' knowledge of the mysteries came from his teacher Orpheus. Having been initiated in the mysteries of Osiris/Dionysus in Egypt, Orpheus introduced the same mysteries to the Greeks, relocating the fabled birthplace of the god in Hellenic Thebes.<sup>133</sup> Marlowe seems to be keen to acknowledge this tradition by adding to his translation his own fanciful description of the Dionysian mysteries which happened in the ritual landscape around Thebes. In his imagination these are not so removed from a British Whitsun pastoral like the one in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, with 'pranked-up' nymphs and the 'shaggie-footed race' gathered on 'pine-bearing mountains':

When gawdie Nymphes pursue the chace,  
Wretched Ixion's shaggie-footed race,  
Incenst with savage heat, gallop amaine,  
From steepe Pine-bearing mountains to the plaine.<sup>134</sup>

If these Elizabethan poets seem to be aware that Musaeus and Macrobius had links with ancient mystery religion, they also did not miss the opportunity to update the sacred rites at the heart of Musaeus' narrative for a Christian age. This was made easier by the fact that Musaeus was not a pagan anticipating Christian rites, but a Christian writing Christian allegory, whose name happened to be linked with the earlier pagan Musaeus mentioned by Plato. Unsurprisingly, the Elizabethan poets replace the 'sacred rites' with the Christian mass. On one level, this involved a silent holy meal traditionally associated with love and eternal life. The holy meal in itself was an experience which affirmed biblical knowledge. On another level, it was comparable to silent witnessing like that of Doubting Thomas examining the wounded palms. This was also an experience which affirmed knowledge.

The rest of the section will consider how Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander', Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet*, and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* all include non-speaking ritual events that

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<sup>133</sup> Aaron P. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, repr. 2009), 79.

<sup>134</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.114-7

crystallise intellectual awareness through experience. All of these non-speaking gestures, from the ingesting of the stone by geese in Lodge's poem, to the kissing and shaking hands in the later narratives, are ultimately descriptions of the Christian mass transposed to pagan contexts. In this way the poets brought the Christian mass more closely in line with the secret rites of the ancient mysteries, as described by Giorgio Agamben:

In the Mysteries, the conjunction of experience and knowledge consisted of an event without speech which culminated in the death and rebirth of the silenced initiate.<sup>135</sup>

The importance of both intellectual and experiential awareness to the event without speech is apparent in Lodge's poem in the case of the geese. Lodge's *Scyllae's Metamorphosis* describes how 'by reason' men can learn a secret art that Nature teaches birds 'by sense'.<sup>136</sup> What is learned is a 'wondrous skill' which consists of an event of 'stop[ping] their beakes to make them mute' which rehearses their 'dangerous deaths' even as it assures that they live to 'gaine the wished waters of frequent'.<sup>137</sup> This draws on a Greek account by Aelian describing birds ingesting a pebble to aid digestion, but Lodge shapes it into a fable of how cackling animals ingest something in nature, a stone, to 'charme their cackle' in a ritual that is characterised by silence and ends in salvation.<sup>138</sup>

In Marlowe's translation of Musaeus the event without speech is the secret rites of kissing and shaking hands: 'kiss and shake hands/Such sacrifice as this Venus demands'.<sup>139</sup> This event is described as a 'sacrifice' which recalls Plato's claim that Musaeus was a source-text for the 'sacrifices' of the mysteries. It is possible that Marlowe uses this to signpost an engagement with the mystic subtext of Musaeus' narrative. It happens in a thinly-veiled Christian

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<sup>135</sup> Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 24.

<sup>136</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 229, 230.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 250, 251, 252. Lodge's phrase, 'Let birds by sense exceed my reason far' is paralleled in Shakespeare's famous line claiming that 'reason is fled to brutish beasts' which is perpetuated in eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Romantic conceit that an animal or bird in its cries or singing reveals 'some Blessed hope, whereof he knew, and I was unaware.'

<sup>138</sup> Thomas Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 29. The irony is that although silence was a necessary for the ritual, according to the historian Livy, it was only by cackling that sacred geese could save Rome.

<sup>139</sup> Christopher Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.309-310.

'church', where the usual sacrifice is, of course, the mass.<sup>140</sup> This event without speech is clearly not a mundane one but transcendent:

These lovers parlèd by the touch of hands,  
True love is mute, and oft amazed stands...  
Dum signs their yielding hearts entangled.<sup>141</sup>

Shakespeare's gloss on this in 'Venus and Adonis' suggests that this event without speech is somehow an experience that crystallises knowledge.

All this dumb play had his acts made plain...<sup>142</sup>

More specifically, it makes clear Christ's love for the beloved member of the church in such an impressive way that it is never forgotten:

Though I were dumb...proceedings teach thee:  
O learn to love: the lesson is but plain,  
And once made perfect, never lost again.<sup>143</sup>

In Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet* the silent ritual occurs at Christmas time, underlining the link between the pagan rite and the Christian mass. At the Christmas party the lovers joyfully place their hands together in an event without words that brings this conjunction of knowledge and experience. This event is presented as a kind of witnessing in a way that recalls the story of Doubting Thomas. It brings proof of a 'cloven breast...by changing of his hue/From pale to red, from red to pale, and so from pale anew.'<sup>144</sup> The witnessing of the hands is closely linked to the witnessing of wounds, in this case, the 'cloven' or pierced heart. This makes it clear 'that veh'ment love was the cause...', suggesting that the loving sacrifice of Christ is already eagerly anticipated in Brooke's symbolic 'Christmas timeframe.'<sup>145</sup> The witnessing of a wounded divine hand causes a

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 1.310, 1.135.

<sup>141</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 185-7.

<sup>142</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 359.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 406-408.

<sup>144</sup> Arthur Brooke, *Romeus and Juliet*, 254-264, 266-271.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 155: 'The wery winter nights restore the Christmas games.' Cf. Shakespeare, *Othello*, 5.2.1, 65.

similar reaction in Marlowe's poem: 'when the fresh bleeding wound Leander viewed, his colour went and came.'<sup>146</sup> Both these reactions are upon witnessing the living proof of the cloven heart and the wounded palms. For this reason, they can be taken to affirm the truth of life after death.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* develops Marlowe's notion of a Christian 'sacrifice' sealed with the hands and lips.<sup>147</sup> The 'sacrifice' in 'Hero and Leander', 'kiss and shake hands' is a *hysteron proteron*.<sup>148</sup> If you were to greet someone you would be unlikely to kiss them and then shake their hand, but move from the handshake to a more intimate greeting. But in any case, it would make for an odd greeting, as it would involve a curiously belt-and-braces attitude, and it makes much more sense when considered as a rite or sacrifice like the Christian mass. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* play on the notion that a Christian sacrifice might involve some confusion over hands or lips. The common reader would assume that the lovers' exchange involved a saucy argument over whether 'palmer's kiss' is best rendered with 'palm' or 'lips.' However, the informed reader would recognise that it corresponded to the difference of opinion among Catholics over the rites of the mass: should the worshipper take the holy bread in their palm and then lips or in the lips? The words of the paternoster, 'Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses', are reversed in Romeo's 'prayer', 'O trespass sweetly urged. Give me my...', though what is given is not 'daily bread' but something more like forbidden fruit a second time round: 'Give me my sin again.' In support of this reading, the same association of ideas—sacred and profane, kissing and the touch of the sacrament—is found elsewhere in Shakespeare's work in such phrases as 'his kissing is as full of sanctity as the touch of holy bread.'<sup>149</sup> In this way, the ingesting of a stone by a goose or a sin by a man, the touching or seeing of a wounded palm, the turning pale as if a ghost has been seen and the blushing red that the truth was ever doubted, seem to represent non-verbal rites at the heart of intensely verbal artforms.

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<sup>146</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander' 1.214.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.309.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Hero and Leander', 1.309.

<sup>149</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Bloomsbury, 2006, repr. 2015), 3.4.12-3. The link between kissing and the touch of the sacrament may also lie behind some of the etherealised kissing in Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis.'

If the amatory exchange in *Romeo and Juliet* can be read as Macrobian 'sacred rites', it is no less true for the amatory exchanges in a play like Shakespeare's *Othello*. Shakespeare guides these sacred interpretations of the amatory discourse, as he does in *Romeo and Juliet*, with direct allusions to Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander.' Marlowe speaks of the 'rites in which love's Empress most delites' that have to be performed to initiate Hero into the medieval Christian institution of the nunnery: 'Then shall you most resemble Venus' nun/When Venus' sacred rites are performed and done.'<sup>150</sup> The performing of the rites, mentioned by Macrobius, is characterised by a need to perform them to the letter. Leander feels that he is 'rude', like the Macrobian common reader, because he senses that there is something missing but is not aware which 'amorous rites' are 'neglected.'<sup>151</sup> He feels that an 'elder' or informed reader would be able to put their finger on what was lacking straight away.<sup>152</sup> This is echoed in Shakespeare's *Othello* in Desdemona's fear that if she is absent from Othello 'the rites for which I love him' will be 'bereft me.'<sup>153</sup> On one level it is amatory discourse, on another level, it is a reference to the sacred rites with which the play will culminate. It has been argued that it has more in common with a mystery play than a classical tragedy and it adheres less to the tenets of Aristotle on unities than to the literary theory of Macrobius on sacred rites.<sup>154</sup> From this point of view, the play is not primarily designed to purge the audience with pity and terror; *Othello* famously does not offer any catharsis. Instead, it ends with the consummation of sacred rites, neglected until the end when it closes with an offering of 'blood', mixed with 'tears' and spiced with 'medicinal gum', all of it falling on the woman who has 'preserv[d] herself as a 'vessel for my lord.'<sup>155</sup> Desdemona herself has come to represent the stolen cup of 'Nectar' comparable to the stolen Promethean 'heat'; in a striking example of a hapax in Shakespeare's work Othello comments: 'I know not where is that Promethean heat/That can thy light relume.'<sup>156</sup> Earlier in the play, Iago directly quotes Marlowe's poem with the words 'her honour is an essence

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<sup>150</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.319-320.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 2.64, 2.64-5.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 2.69.

<sup>153</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1998), 1.3.258

<sup>154</sup> For *Othello* and mystery plays see Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 57.

<sup>155</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.2.85.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 5.2.12-3

that's not seen.' <sup>157</sup> This suggests that whether she is a vessel to receive the nectar of Othello's blood, or an honourable female figure hidden from view, she partly stands for Nature whose honour is obscured from sight by the veil of Macrobian allegory. The idea of an 'essence' is particularly appropriate, because the mysteries had at their heart something referred to as 'the essence of mystical experience' which, in this case, must stand for the secrets of Nature that she modestly keeps from sight. <sup>158</sup> Whether or not Desdemona is compared to Nature, the rites themselves are unambiguous. Where Marlowe's Leander enacted dumb signs, Othello enacts a silent suffocation. When he claims that this is a 'sacrifice' and Desdemona claims it is 'some bloody passion', according to the doctrine of transubstantiation they are both right. <sup>159</sup>

### **'Let the Vulgar Delight in Common Things'**

Critics who have studied books concerning the secrets of Nature, like that of Macrobius, have emphasised they have their origins in a predominately oral tradition passed down by practitioners. <sup>160</sup> So substantial was the oral component in this tradition that the printed works in this genre were merely 'the tip of a huge iceberg.' <sup>161</sup> William Eamon has also stressed that the secrecy was not just a Macrobian tradition but was woven into medieval and early modern society. In other words, it was a taboo that was not merely literary but was social because it involved keeping information from irresponsible outsiders and especially from the *vulgus*. <sup>162</sup>

The most explicit reference to the Macrobian *vulgus* in these poems is enabled by Shakespeare's choice of epigram: 'vilia miretur *vulgus*' ('let the vulgar delight in common things'). From its prominent position on the title-page it advertises that the poem would concern itself with divine mysteries that would be accessible to more informed readers but carefully veiled from the vulgar. Marlowe does not explicitly include the Macrobian term *vulgus*, but he does dramatise it in his allusions to 'the rudest paisant', 'the boor', the 'servile clown',

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 4.1.16

<sup>158</sup> Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 69.

<sup>159</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.2.85, 5.2.65, 5.2.44.

<sup>160</sup> William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 9.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 4

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 11; for the admonition against revealing secrets to the *vulgus* see 3, 5, 15, 20.

'the simple rustic', the 'vicious, hare-brained and illiterate hinds' and 'the drooping thoughts of base declining souls.'<sup>163</sup> Such 'base men', as Macrobius calls them, might be taken to include heretics and those not of the true church.<sup>164</sup>

Ultimately, Leander recognises a discrepancy between the understanding of the 'rude' and the 'elder.'<sup>165</sup> In this way, Marlowe dramatises the gap in understanding between the Macrobian *vulgus* and the more informed reader. The language is said to operate 'in plaine termes (yet cunningly)' to accommodate both levels of Macrobian interpretation.<sup>166</sup> In other words, it is plain enough for the vulgar to understand but also includes information accessible to those acquainted with what Lodge calls 'the schoolemen's cunning notes', the conned oral tradition of 'scholastic humanism' to be examined in the next chapter.<sup>167</sup> In his envoy, Lodge professes to aim it at 'ladies' who, like Scilla, might pay one day for their 'proud back-sliding.'<sup>168</sup> In this way, Lodge updates the notion of the Macrobian *vulgus* by associating it with the growing number of Renaissance 'lady' readers. However, Lodge aims much of his allegory at male readers who are prepared to search out notes and commentaries on classical fable to interpret this latter-day fabulous narrative. Thus, Lodge and Marlowe both follow a Macrobian model for writing that seems premised upon medieval beliefs that 'the man is crazy who writes a secret unless he does it in a way that conceals it from the crowd, so that it can be understood only by effort of the most studious and wise.'<sup>169</sup>

Given this necessity of delighting the Macrobian *vulgus* as a vehicle for more sacred concerns, it is worth looking more closely at the poems where they are at their most 'rude.' Marlowe's Leander owns that his are 'rude words', just as Shakespeare's Othello claims 'rude am I in my speech.'<sup>170</sup> In both cases, this is not an ordinary *captatio benevolentiae*, but signposts that they are going to speak in fable. In Leander's case, this is indicated by mentions of 'naked truth',

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<sup>163</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.79, 1.472, 1.481, 1.435, 2.218, 2.567

<sup>164</sup> Chance, *Mythographic Chaucer*, 4.

<sup>165</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.61, 2.69.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.71

<sup>167</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 37; for 'scholastic humanism' see James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages*, Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011, 221.

<sup>168</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 781, 786.

<sup>169</sup> Roger Bacon, *Epistola de secretis operibus naturae, et de nullitate magia*, ed. J.S. Brewer in *Opera quaedam hactenus inedita* 1.523-51 (London: Longmann, 1859), 544.

<sup>170</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.200; Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.3.82.



(since Macrobius frames his discussion of the truth of fable in terms of nakedness: ‘apertam nudamque’ [‘openly naked’]) and ‘sacrifice’ (which, as has been seen, was an alternative way of translating the words that Macrobius and Musaeus use for ‘sacred rites’).<sup>171</sup> In Othello’s case, he speaks of ‘men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders’, fabulous because they offend against nature.<sup>172</sup> In sixteenth-century Oxford, such men were called ‘hieroglyphics’, perhaps because Egypt was the home of animal-headed gods and hybrid monsters which offended against nature in similar ways.<sup>173</sup> In describing Othello’s wife and Cassio in the act of cuckolding Othello, Iago offers Othello another Egyptian sign, ‘the beast with two backs.’<sup>174</sup> This carries Othello from a world of ‘rude...speech’ into a terrifying world of rude signs.<sup>175</sup> As a result, he believes that he is a hieroglyphic himself—in his own words, ‘a horned man...a monster and a beast’—like a profane horned Moses out of Egypt, who is also included among the Oxford ‘hieroglyphics.’<sup>176</sup>

The rudeness in these poems takes two main forms. Firstly, it is apparent in the veiling of a naked body in natural features. Secondly, it is apparent in the portrayal of vicious kinds of divine love: adulteries, rapes, incest and self-love. The first kind of rudeness is in fact a sensitive and discreet covering of divine secrets. The second kind of rudeness was revealed by medieval authorities like William of Conches to be allegories for describing not profane but sacred and pure love-making.

To examine, then, the first kind of rudeness, Lodge teases the readers in an Ovidian way, offering to describe a naked female body which is increasingly obscured by nature. One minute he is describing the trembling flesh, the next a landscape, which gives him license to stray lower and lower. In the end, Lodge draws a veil over his description. ‘Silly wits’ would assume he does this because it is too rude, but readers who had been graced with understanding would have known that the presence of this rhetorical veil was intended to dramatise the naked body of Macrobius’ goddess Nature:

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 1.208, 1.209.

<sup>172</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.3.145-6.

<sup>173</sup> Christine Ferdinand, *Magdalen College Oxford: A Brief History and Guide* (London: Scala Arts and Heritage Publishers Ltd., 2015), 21-22.

<sup>174</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.1.115.

<sup>175</sup> Marlowe, ‘Hero and Leander’, 1.200; William Shakespeare, *Othello*, Ed. E. A. J. Honigmann, London: Arden Shakespeare, 1998, 1.3.82.

<sup>176</sup> Ferdinand, *Magdalen College*, 21-22.

Confounded with descriptions I must leave them;  
 Lovers must think, and Poets must report them:  
 For silly wits may never well conceive them,  
 Unless a speciall grace from heaven consort them.<sup>177</sup>

Emboldened by Lodge, Marlowe includes a female body that is a natural landscape with something heavenly hidden within it:

...tumbling in the grasse, he often strayed  
 Beyond the bounds of shame, in being bold,  
 To eie those parts, which no eie should behold  
 And like an insolent commanding lover,  
 Boasting his parentage, would needs discover  
 The way to new Elysium...<sup>178</sup>

Shakespeare's Venus also manages to 'clip Elysium' as she makes Adonis intimate with the natural landscape of her body:

Graze on my lips, and if those lips be dry,  
 Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.<sup>179</sup>

If the word is heard as 'graze' it might be for the common herd, but if it is heard as 'grace on my lips' it might be intended for an informed reader, suggesting that behind the veil of the natural landscape lies a female body and behind that a chalice filled with fountains of Christ's blood.

This leads to the second kind of rudeness. When Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' protests that the poet's 'rude pen can hardly blazon forth the loves of men much less of powerful gods', it has been taken as a *double entendre* for the word 'penis.'<sup>180</sup> However, it could also be a serious acknowledgement that

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<sup>177</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 32.

<sup>178</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.406-411

<sup>179</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 233-234.

<sup>180</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.69-70; Patricia Cahill, 'Falling into Extremity' in *Knowing Shakespeare: Senses, Embodiment and Cognition*, Eds. Lowell Gallagher and Shankar Raman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 88.

the poet is respecting the privacy accorded to God's secret rites. Many of the 'rude' moments in the poem admit alternative loftier interpretations. This is true for moments of rape, adultery, incest and self-love. Lodge's 'robe' and Marlowe's 'Church of Venus' are decorated with divine 'heady riots, incest, rapes.'<sup>181</sup> Concerning the adultery of the gods, William of Conches glossed Macrobius 1.2: 'the words are base [*turpia*] and yet by that adultery [*adulterium*] something honourable and beautiful must be meant; as is the case with Jupiter's adulteries with Cybele, and Semele, and other things of this kind.'<sup>182</sup> In these cases, classic Benedictine explanations of Ovid, explained the rape and incest of figures like Danae as the immaculate conception, since Christianity venerated a mortal woman impregnated by God, and a child of God loved by her Father. When Marlowe described the lovemaking of Hero and Leander with the words 'as a brother with his sister toyed' it similarly suggests the purity of God's love.<sup>183</sup> Both Marlowe and Shakespeare gesture to 'self-loving' characters, either 'self-loving nuns' or Narcissus who 'died ere he could have the love of any.'<sup>184</sup> According to Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen, this reflects a recurring insinuation in reformation debate that monks and nuns were masturbators.<sup>185</sup> However, another interpretation might be that nuns, like Narcissus, know of a kind of love for which they do not need a partner since they can experience it all by themselves: the love of God. Finally, when Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' includes an erotic rhetorical question 'can thy right hand seize love upon thy left?' it is possible to interpret this as a saucy conceit about an act akin to kissing oneself in a mirror. Alternatively, if the line is understood as reworking Song of Solomon 8:3 ('his right hand shall embrace me'), it can be interpreted according to the traditional commentary on that biblical verse: '*His left hand* signifying the Old Testament and his *right hand* the New.'<sup>186</sup> This would make the line a typological exhortation that the

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 1.144, 1.145.

<sup>182</sup> Chance, *Mythographic Chaucer*, 4.

<sup>183</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.52.

<sup>184</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 747, 752; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.76.

<sup>185</sup> William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Poems*, Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones & Woudhuysen (Arden: Bloomsbury, 2007), 747 n.752.

<sup>186</sup> This gloss on the left hand and the right hand is present in the commentary of the Song of Solomon in the Rheims-Douai bible and seems to underpin the description of 'holy palmer's kiss' in Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet*. Arthur Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet* is so oddly particular about logistics (where Romeo and Mercutio are sitting and whether they are able to offer a left or a right hand) because it seems to be drawing on a traditional commentary on the Song of Solomon 8:3: '*His left hand* signifying the Old Testament and his *right hand* the New.' Mercutio's hand is the Old Testament, and it as cold as sin, but Juliet's hand passes to Romeus, in a new

commandment to love in the New Testament (the right hand) be read back into the Old Testament (the left hand) in line with a typological reading of the Song of Solomon.

### The Universal Veil

In many ways it had been Macrobius who had heralded the literary tradition which took the goddess Nature as its main character.<sup>187</sup> William Eamon explains that, because she was wary of Peeping Toms, philosophers approached her with veiled images and fables.<sup>188</sup> This idea of a veil became universal to Renaissance allegory, Catholic and Protestant. However, in calling his Protestant allegory a 'veil', Spenser was still using terminology that was closely linked with the medieval Macrobian tradition. Gary Waller writes that allegory itself was still associated with archaic forms like the dream visions by Langland and Lydgate and the complaint called *A Mirror for Magistrates* to the point that Spenser was one of the few Protestants prepared to give it the time of day.<sup>189</sup> This was why Spenser had to defend his decision to include such a veil. According to Matthew Woodcock, Spenser insists that a 'covert veile' of allegory is vital for representing Elizabeth as her glory could not otherwise be conveyed to 'feeble eyes'.<sup>190</sup> Such a defence was only possible because Spenser had made marked changes: he made sure that his readers knew that behind the veil was a Protestant Elizabeth and not the Pagan and Catholic Goddess Nature.<sup>191</sup>

While it was necessary for Spenser to resist certain elements of this Macrobian allegory, the poets of fabulous verse narratives were more comfortable writing within this tradition. In accordance with Macrobius' commentary, their poems can be seen to take elaborate precautions to hide the 'naked' body of 'Nature' in a 'veil of allegory' to protect her from the eyes of

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covenant, and her hand can be warmed by the blood flowing from his pierced or 'cloven' heart. The difference between Mercurio's hand and Romeus' hand is the difference between a cold Old Testament and a New Testament warmed by Christ's love and sacrificial blood.

<sup>187</sup> William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 81; see also George D. Ecnomou, *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1972.

<sup>188</sup> Eamon, *Secrets of Nature*, 81; See also Ecnomou, *Goddess Natura*.

<sup>189</sup> Gary Waller, *Edmund Spenser: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 103.

<sup>190</sup> Matthew Woodcock, *Fairy in the Faerie Queene: Renaissance Elf-Fashioning and Elizabethan Mythmaking* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 111.

<sup>191</sup> For the Pagan and Catholic Goddess nature see Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 214; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IIII.viii.

'rude men' whose minds are too coarse to grasp the spiritual meaning behind the erotic.<sup>192</sup> Shakespeare's work may seem to allude to pagan authors like Ovid in the same way as a modern classicist, as if it were doing so with a vacuum between it and the unblemished classical text, but what Grahame Greene called the 'vast vacuum' at the heart of Shakespeare's work may be the Middle Ages rendered diaphanous by Macrobian concealment.<sup>193</sup> The presence in these poems of some tactic for concealing spiritual meaning with sensuous imagery has not escaped the notice of perceptive critics like Nigel Alexander. He points out that 'Hero and Leander' and 'Venus and Adonis' seem to be merely sensual forms, without spiritual meaning, but suggests that this is because the poets have taken 'elaborate precautions' to obscure the poems' significance.<sup>194</sup> It seems likely that the 'elaborate precautions' identified by Nigel Alexander might be best explained as the Macrobian precautions that these poets take to veil divine secrets from the rude or vulgar by ironically framing them as immoral.<sup>195</sup>

In Lodge's poem not only is Nature's breast 'shrouded', her flowers are imagined veiling themselves: 'The floures themselves... Gan vaile their crests.'<sup>196</sup> Another part of the divine body that Lodge imagines veiled is the eye, in phrases like 'had the vaile of reason clad mine eye.'<sup>197</sup> Marlowe also links the image of the veil with the eyes:

[Hero was]

Vail'd to the ground, vailing her eie-lids close

And modestly they opened as she rose.<sup>198</sup>

Here the veiled eye-lids are like veiled flowers opening as she grows upright. In fact, Lodge's divine Glaucus also shares characteristics with such veiled flowers. He also has a 'bushie crest' or 'bushie locks' and is advised, 'shroud

<sup>192</sup> Chance, *Mythographic Chaucer*, 5. In biblical terms, these are the men who take away the veil in the Song of Solomon 5:7.

<sup>193</sup> Grahame Greene (introduction), *John Gerard: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, trans. Philip Caraman, (London: Longmans, 1951), x-xi.

<sup>194</sup> Alexander, *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, 3.

<sup>195</sup> Chance, *Mythographic Chaucer*, 5.

<sup>196</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 326, 100.

<sup>197</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 277.

<sup>198</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.159-60.

thy head.<sup>199</sup> The sea-nymph Scylla is not so careful to shroud her head and, in Macrobius' terms, presents it 'apertam nudamque' ['openly naked']: 'she coillie vaunst her creast in open sight.'<sup>200</sup> At other times Glaucus spies her red-and-white female body 'through those golden shrowdes' and she is compared to a park, like Venus in Shakespeare's poem, with marble flanks and 'the vale that bounds this milkwhite bank.'<sup>201</sup> On the other side of the flimsy veil is the marble-white and apple-red body of a figure who becomes a thinly-disguised Nature herself.

Sometimes the veil of Nature seems interchangeable with the veil of Saint Mary the Virgin. John Weever could have been commenting on Marlowe's Hero, not Shakespeare's Lucrece, when he wrote 'virgin-like her dresses.'<sup>202</sup> Marlowe begins by describing Hero's garments as 'blue, whereon was many a stain,/Made with the blood of wretched Lovers slaine.'<sup>203</sup> In this, it resembles the Madonna's veil which was sometimes blue (her garments in traditional depictions of the nativity) and sometimes red and white (her blood-stained garments in the medieval wall-paintings of the crucifixion, like those recovered in the buildings where Shakespeare was educated).<sup>204</sup> These garments of Saint Mary the Virgin are dramatised later in Marlowe's poem when Hero gets tangled up in her bedsheets and 'Mermaid-like unto the floore she slid,/One half appear'd, the other half was hid.'<sup>205</sup> The Mermaid and Marymaid were parallel in some medieval traditions, but here the half-hidden body suggests Macrobius' Nature, especially because of the red and white imagery later associated with the veil in the poem.

The veil of Nature or Saint Mary the Virgin may be woven into Shakespeare's plays in ways that are not always appreciated. Nature's honour depended on not losing her veil, just as Desdemona's depends on not losing her red and white handkerchief, or Imogen's depends on veiling Nature's red

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<sup>199</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 550, 366, 374.

<sup>200</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 567.

<sup>201</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 290, 316.

<sup>202</sup> John Weever, 'Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare', *Epigrams*, (London: 1599). Repr. in Ernst Honigmann, *John Weever: A Biography of a Literary Associate of Shakespeare and Jonson, together with a Photographic Facsimile of Weever's Epigrams* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 109.

<sup>203</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.15-16.

<sup>204</sup> K. Giles and J. Clark, 'The archaeology of the Guild buildings of Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon' in R. Mulryne (ed) *The Guild and Guild Buildings of Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 135-69.

<sup>205</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.215-6.

and white breast from prying eyes. The notion may have even wider resonance in Shakespeare's art, particularly in his crafting of Christian tragicomedies. The red and white veil can also be imagined as a partition. As such it lies between this world of death and suffering and immortality, as Peggy Muñoz Simonds argues:

The tragicomic poet makes us confront our own foolishness and our mortality, but at the same time he liberates us from our sadness and loss through death by dramatising the happy ending that awaits the virtuous on the other side of the bloody veil.<sup>206</sup>

According to this idea, Shakespeare's tragicomedy dramatises the conceit of the veil as a kind of shroud, like that of the entombed Christ, that is drawn back to reveal the secret of eternal life.

The Latin words Macrobius uses to denote the veil of allegory are translated by the word 'shroud' in both Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' and *Rosalynde*, suggesting a living incarnation behind the veil of death. In Marlowe's poem he dramatises other theoretical terms for this veil as images within the narrative itself:

The conventional twelfth-century literary term ... "cloak", *integumentum*, literally means "cover" as is found in definitions of fabula going back to Macrobius' commentary, where Nature's nakedness is cloaked by the *velamen figmentorum*, 'veil of images.'<sup>207</sup>

The idea of the cover or 'integumentum' comes into play when Hero makes a tent of her bedsheets. In part this suggests how the virgin Mary was described as a tabernacle in works like John Lydgate's 'A Complaynt of a Lovere's Life.' However, more importantly, it dramatises the way that Macrobius insisted that Nature's secrets should be 'o'ercast with dim and darksome coverture' of spiritual allegory.<sup>208</sup> Hero, then, is like the snugly veiled Nature, when 'in her own mind [she] thought herself secure/O'ercast with dim and darksome

<sup>206</sup> Peggy Muñoz Simonds, *Myth, Emblem and Music in Shakespeare's Cymbeline* (Newark: University of Delaware 1992), 360.

<sup>207</sup> Chance, *Mythographic Chaucer*, 4-5.

<sup>208</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.265-6.

coverture.<sup>209</sup> Finally, Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' uses the word 'shadow' in a similar way in the phrase 'I'll make me a shadow of thy hairs' which, in a reversal of Song of Solomon 2.3, invites Adonis to 'sit down under her shadow, whom he desires.'<sup>210</sup> This may suggest that Shakespeare's fabulous verse narrative can be read as amatory allegory in the light of Renaissance readings of the Song of Solomon as a mystical conceit of God's union with the human soul.<sup>211</sup>

At other times, the veil is so true to nature that 'its workmanship both man and beast deceaves.'<sup>212</sup> This is a clever evocation of Nature's veil because it also has the literary term fable implicit in it. The notion of beasts being fooled by the trompe-l'oeil effects is an allusion to a fable in Pliny's *Natural History* about Zeuxis who painted grapes that could fool birds; as Shakespeare writes, in an allusion to the same fable, 'Even so poor birds [are] deceived with painted grapes.'<sup>213</sup> Unsurprisingly, Spenser seems interested in the same trompe-l'oeil effect of Nature's ornament; in book two of *The Faerie Queene*, the knight of temperance, Sir Guyon, encounters a 'porch with rare device' of an 'embracing vine/Whose bounces hanging down seeme to entice/All passers by to taste their luscious wine.'<sup>214</sup>

In Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' the impression that Leander is going to forcefully breach the veil keeps recurring. One moment Leander is claiming that he 'cannot force' love as 'Nature forceth' it.<sup>215</sup> However, the next he is proposing to perform mysteries rather than speak in fables. Thus, he threatens to discard the variegated or spotted veil altogether, 'my words shall be as spotless as my youth/Full of simplicitie and naked truth.'<sup>216</sup> In other words, he threatens to expose Nature 'apertam nudamque' [openly naked]. At the last minute, he aligns himself with medieval commentators who averred that the concealing veil rendered divine secrets more impressive:

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 2.265-6

<sup>210</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1.91.

<sup>211</sup> Parker, 'What's in a Name: and More', 101-149, 121 n.81

<sup>212</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.18-20; Cf. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 166: this Yuletide apparition, like that of Scipio Africanus, is a male embodiment of nature, veiled in fabric 'enbrauded abof, with bryddes and fly3es'.

<sup>213</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, 33.36; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 601.

<sup>214</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche (London: Penguin, 1987), 2.12.54.

<sup>215</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.206; Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 32.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 1.207-8.



Rich robes themselves and others do not adorn,  
Neither themselves nor others, if not worn.<sup>217</sup>

Although the text of the speeches is misleading, the subtext of these is plain: without the mystery, fable is nothing. Marlowe's poem can also be seen to engage closely with what Matthew Woodcock in his study of Spenser's allegory calls the 'the image of the concealing veil that reveals.'<sup>218</sup> This logic lies behind such lines as: 'What the secret trustie night conceal'd/Leander's amorous habit soon revealed.'<sup>219</sup> He also dramatises this in the lines 'those white limns, which sparkled through the lawn' which suggests the veil is so diaphanous as to derive its colours from the body of Nature herself.<sup>220</sup>

### **Nature 'With Herself At Strife'**

When Shakespeare died, Ben Jonson joked that the Droeshout engraving of him was such a bad likeness because 'the graver had a strife/With Nature, to outdo the life'.<sup>221</sup> It is possible that Jonson meant this as a pastiche of the Italianate baroque phrase from Shakespeare's funerary monument claiming that, when Shakespeare died, 'QVICK NATVRE [HERSELF] DIDE' along with him.<sup>222</sup> Shakespeare's plays may have been too Italian for Jonson's tastes while he lived and now the bad engraver had made Shakespeare troublingly Italianate in death.<sup>223</sup> However, it is equally possible that Jonson was comparing Shakespeare to his own dead Adonis: 'Nature that made thee, with herself at strife/Saith that the world hath ending with thy life.'<sup>224</sup> He may even have been

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 1.237-8.

<sup>218</sup> Matthew Woodcock, *Fairy in the Faerie Queene: Renaissance Elf-Fashioning and Elizabethan Mythmaking* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 111.

<sup>219</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander' 2.103-4.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 2.242.

<sup>221</sup> It is enlisted ironically, since the tone was recognised by readers nearer to Jonson's time as an 'insolent, unsparing and invidious panegyric', in Martial's satirical vein, but today, is read as straightforward praise. (Dryden)

<sup>222</sup> Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 402. Cf. the tomb of Raphael in the Pantheon in Rome described by Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Connaway Bondanella & Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008), 338. The inscription runs 'ILLE HIC EST RAPHAEL TIMUIT QUO SOSPITE VINCI RERUM MAGNA PARENS ET MORIENTE MORI' 'Here lies Raphael, by whom Nature feared to be outdone while he lived, and when he died feared the she herself would die.'

<sup>223</sup> See, for example, Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, Ed. Helen Ostrovich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), Induction, 276-281.

<sup>224</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 11-12 Cf. 290-1.

aware that this conceit, of Nature outdoing or at strife with herself, was a way in which Shakespeare's poem and others of its kind had located themselves within the tradition of fabulous narrative.

In an influential gloss on Macrobius, Isidore of Seville had insisted that 'Fables are things which have neither happened nor can happen because they are against nature [contra naturam].'<sup>225</sup> In the Middle Ages, writers were more likely to include this tell-tale conceit, than to explicitly identify their works as fables. Thus, Chaucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde' translates the phrase *contra naturam* in a description of his heroine:

Criseyde was this lady's name al right,  
 As to my doom, in al Troies cite  
 Nas non so fair, forpassynge every wight  
 So aungelik was hir natif beaute.  
 That lik a thing inmortal semed she,  
 As doth an hevenyssh perfit creature,  
 That down were sent in scornynge of nature.<sup>226</sup>

Chaucer's narrative was never far from Marlowe's mind when he was writing 'Hero and Leander'—he was aware for example that Chaucer's characters fall in love in a 'church'—and Chaucer's *contra naturam* conceit associated with Criseyde also features in Marlowe's description of Hero:

So lovely faire was Hero, Venus Nun,  
 As Nature wept, thinking she was undone,  
 Because she tooke more from her then she left,  
 And of such wondrous beautie her bereft:  
 Therefore in signe her treasure suffred wracke,  
 Since Hero's time, hath halfe the world been blacke.<sup>227</sup>

<sup>225</sup> Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. Stephen A. Barney, W. A. Lewis, J. A. Beach, Oliver Berghof & Muriel Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.44.

<sup>226</sup> Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 repr. 1989), 'Troilus and Criseyde', 99-105.

<sup>227</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.45-50.

Marlowe had described how 'In a grove/Venus in her naked glory strove/To please...proud Adonis, that before her lies.'<sup>228</sup> Shakespeare links this with Isidore of Seville's words to suggest 'Nature...with herself at strife.' According to this reworking, the grove includes a female figure striving to please a male figure who is somehow a repetition of herself. It also suggests an act of creation whereby Nature encompasses something that is greater than herself, recalling Henry Hawkins' paradox addressed to the virgin ('Whom the heavens can not containe, hast thou held in thy lap').<sup>229</sup> As this line suggests, Nature is not so different from the creator who, when he was imagined as male, was sometimes called the 'lord of Nature' or, when she was imagined as female, as is arguably the case in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, was called 'Great Creating Nature.'<sup>230</sup> Marlowe puts it differently:

This strife of hers (like that  
which made the world) another world begat  
Of unknown joy.<sup>231</sup>

The results are made clear later in Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis.' Because she has gone against the dictates of heaven in 'stealing moulds from heaven that were divine' for use on earth, 'forging Nature' is condemned by heaven.<sup>232</sup> Marlowe even fantasises about a heavenly war in which the gods attempt to take back the heavenly 'mould' or 'gem' that has been stolen.<sup>233</sup> The character of Nature, then, is just one of the signature features by which these Elizabethan poets acknowledge the influence of Macrobius without explicitly naming him.

### **Nature's Breast**

According to Vivian Thomas and Nicki Faircloth, the ancient term 'the secrets of nature' was still current when Shakespeare was writing, and it can be found in

<sup>228</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.11-14.

<sup>229</sup> St Robert Southwell, *Collected Poems*, eds. Peter Davidson and Anne Sweeney (Manchester: Carcanet, 2007), 6; Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra, 1633* (Menston: Scholar Press, 1971), 174.

<sup>230</sup> Richard Barber, *Bestiary* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993), 121; William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, Ed. J. H. P. Pafford (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1966), 4.4.89.

<sup>231</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.291-3.

<sup>232</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 730, 729.

<sup>233</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 729.

lines such as 'in nature's infinite book of secrecy/A little I can read' and 'the secrets of nature/Hath not more gift in taciturnity.'<sup>234</sup> One way of making sense of this last citation would be to argue that Shakespeare is evoking a powerful taboo in British culture at the time of writing as a metaphor for silence.

According to William Eamon, the need to maintain a careful reserve regarding the secrets of nature was understood by all learned men in the Middle Ages and the evidence suggests that the taboo remained strong into the early modern period.<sup>235</sup>

The secrets of Nature were not only alluded to in Macrobius' commentary, they were the preserve of the literature of secrets with a strong oral component. Sometimes Shakespeare's works depart from more recent sources to old-fashioned collections of secrets; at other times they leap from ancient sources to recent treatises on Nature's secrets. For example, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's Friar Lawrence's phrase 'nought so vile, that on the earth do live,/But to the earth some special good doth give' seems to echo a recent claim of William Harrison's from *Hollinshed's Chronicles*: 'Even those [herbs] which are most vile...are not without some universal and special efficacy...for our benefit.'<sup>236</sup> However, his belief in the virtues of 'plants, herbs, stones' locates him in an older tradition of 'the virtues of herbs, stones and certain beasts' on the title-page of a book of secrets that was ascribed to Albertus Magnus.<sup>237</sup> Similarly, although an ancient work by Claudian, *The Rape of Persephone*, provides a catalogue of flowers and a fabulous subtext to Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, the play explains these according to the research of Renaissance scholars into the secrets of 'Great Creating Nature.'<sup>238</sup> Rebecca Bushnell suggested that Shakespeare drew on the 'secrets' writing of Giambattista Della Porta for Perdita's speech on gillyvors.<sup>239</sup> As Della Porta was clearly a 'secrets' writer and carnations were streaked red and white, this would create an implicit link between the signature 'variegated garment' of Macrobius'

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<sup>234</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 6; Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, 4.2.72-3; Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1.2.10-11.

<sup>235</sup> Eamon, *Secrets of Nature*, 81.

<sup>236</sup> *Hollinshed's Chronicles* 1587, Volume 1, 209. Accessed at [http://english.nsms.ox.ac.uk/hollinshed/texts.php?text1=1587\\_0099](http://english.nsms.ox.ac.uk/hollinshed/texts.php?text1=1587_0099)

<sup>237</sup> Eamon, *Secrets of Nature*, 71.

<sup>238</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. J. H. P. Pafford (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1966), 4.4.89.

<sup>239</sup> Rebecca Bushnell, *Green Desire: Imagining Early Modern English Gardens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 142-3.

secrets of Nature and the 'pied' colours of the flowers. It was possible to elide recent and ancient material in this way, because Della Porta was in a tradition of writing that purported to publicise secrets that had either been jealously guarded for generations or, as William Eamon puts it, had been 'locked up in the bosom of nature itself.'<sup>240</sup>

The secrets locked up in the 'bosom of Nature' were, in the words of Jane Chance, 'presumably secrets of the gods or of the soul.'<sup>241</sup> Macrobius explicitly relates that he is prevented from openly revealing the identity of the 'secrets of Nature' because of a taboo placed upon him by the goddess Nature herself: 'a frank, open exposition of herself is distasteful to Nature.'<sup>242</sup>

Macrobius also wrote that 'the secrets of nature' constitute the true subject of fabulous narrative which also concerns itself with 'the mystic conceptions of the Pythagoreans.'<sup>243</sup> This is an acknowledgement that one of the ancient sources for the secrets of nature was Pythagoras. As has been seen, in the fifteenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pythagoras claims to teach 'quid natura...et quocumque latet' ['what nature is...and the whole sum of nature's secrets'].<sup>244</sup>

Lodge includes an extended translation of a later section of this speech by Pythagoras from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in his 'Scyllae's *Metamorphoses*.' However, his more obvious engagement with the secrets of Nature comes in the lines:

With secret eye looke on the earth a while,  
Regard the changes Nature forceth there.<sup>245</sup>

The term 'the secrets of Nature' first appeared in the writings of Timagenes who used it to describe the focus of the druids' investigations in a Pythagorean tradition.<sup>246</sup> This shared Pythagorean source can explain why both Celtic

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<sup>240</sup> Eamon, *Secrets of Nature*, 3.

<sup>241</sup> Chance, *Mythographic Chaucer*, 4; Eamon, *Secrets of Nature*, 3.

<sup>242</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 1.2.17.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.2.17, 3.14 'arcana [Naturae]', 1.2.9

<sup>244</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. Tarrant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15.68, 72.

<sup>245</sup> Lodge also uses the word 'forced' of Adonis' 'forced wound' and Marlowe argues that Hero, like Nature, 'forces love.'

<sup>246</sup> Timagenes quoted in Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, trans. John C. Rolfe (London: Loeb, 1950), 15.9.8: 'leges naturae...internes' ['secret laws of nature']. To the Romans the druids were 'magi' because they were schooled in the arts of Pythagoras who had himself 'journeyed to the east to study with the [Oriental] magi.' (Eamon, *Secrets of Nature*, 25). Renaissance texts

romance, and Ovidian fable, can be seen to engage with the same ‘secrets of Nature.’ In Celtic narratives, the secrets are locked up in the ‘fair and rosy’ heads of supernatural figures and saints, and the moment they are cut off, springs burst forth from the earth and other elemental forces are unleashed.<sup>247</sup> However, increasingly, the focus shifted from the head to the breast and the heart, which both became the seat of the forces of Christian pity, in such phrases as ‘pity renneth soone in gentil herte.’<sup>248</sup> Lodge describes ‘This lovely breast where all this beautie rested,/Shrouded in a world of deepe disdain.’<sup>249</sup> The mention of the shroud reveals it as the breast of Nature obscured by a veil.<sup>250</sup> Later in the poem Glaucus spies her red-and-white female body ‘through those golden shrowdes’ and it is her breast which holds his attention:

Her breast of alabaster cleere and fine,  
Whereon two rising apples faire unfolds them,  
Like Cinthias face when in her full she shineth,  
And blushing to her Love-mates bower declineth.<sup>251</sup>

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like Francesco Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* and Giambattista Basile’s *Tale of Tales*, according to the prefatory notes in both texts, deal with the ‘secrets of nature’

<sup>247</sup> See T.W. Pritchard, *St Winefride, Her Holy Well and the Jesuit Mission c. 659-1930* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 2009), 18 which describes Saint Winefride’s head prior to beheading as having a ‘fair and rosy complexion’.

<sup>248</sup> Chaucer, ‘The Knight’s Tale’, 1761. But if this secret force came to be associated with the human breast, some knowledge of it was also ascribed to animals and plants. Lodge claims that animals are thought to know ‘that secret art...by Nature taught’ (Lodge, *Scyllae’s Metamorphosis*, 230, 247) which is an idea picked up by Marlowe in a description of the way plants can leap across distances:

...creatures wanting sense,  
By nature have a mutual appetence,  
And wanting organs to advance a step,  
Moved by love’s force, unto each other lep,  
Much more in subjects having intellect  
Some hidden influence breeds like effect.  
(Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*, 2.55-60)

It is not difficult to see how this view of creation anticipates the eighteenth-century Romantic conceit whereby the poet envies the feelings of animals and birds and wishes, in the words of Giorgio Agamben, to be plunged back into the ‘pure, mute language of nature.’ (Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 70)

<sup>249</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 32.

<sup>250</sup> The lovely veiled Breast of Nature was where Lodge ‘thought my fancie should be feasted with kind affect’ and so it is presumably like the ‘hart fully fraught with pious and amorous affects’ mentioned by Henry Hawkins in 1634, but Lodge is aware that you can also be ‘wounded by affect’ of such a breast.

<sup>251</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 303-6.

This is a Macrobian description of nature's breast, suffused by red-and-white imagery, which draws on specific instances of red-and-white imagery in Musaeus' 'Hero and Leander.'

Similar imagery recurs in the Protestant context of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Although it has been suggested that Spenser often substitutes Elizabeth for Nature, there is one memorable moment when he does not. In book six of *The Faerie Queene* Spenser's knight of courtesy has made himself so like Macrobius' 'base men' that he is able to catches sight of Nature's breast without realising what it is. The knight Calidore glimpses 'a hundred naked maidens lilly white,/All raunged in a ring' with four other ladies arranged radially around a bag-piper, Colin Clout, 'in the midst.'<sup>252</sup> On one level, Calidore is spying on the naked fairies themselves, but he is also spying on the obvious 'fairy ring' they form.<sup>253</sup> It is not necessary to know Patricia Parker's arguments that Spenser sees the digressive nature of his poem as comparable to the swellings and dilations of the female body, to realise that Calidore in his voyeurism has encountered a specific female shape.<sup>254</sup> It is the shape of Nature's breast, albeit a breast spotted with ladies like 'gemmes' or 'starres' and music playing in the centre.<sup>255</sup> The breaching of the veil results in the dissipation of this vision of the breast and the ending of the fairy music from its heart. The uprooting of the breast from its place in Nature by Calidore seems to be echoed in the breaking of the bag from the 'bag-pipe' by Colin Clout.<sup>256</sup> It is an instance where Elizabeth is temporarily replaced by the naked Goddess Nature in the poem, just as the fourth maiden is pointedly not Elizabeth but Colin Clout's inspiration, a rustic muse 'with heavenly gifts from heven first enraced.'<sup>257</sup>

Spenser's inclusion of the breast of Nature in the form of a 'fairy ring', brought him perilously close to medieval Catholic allegory. For a Jesuit like Henry Hawkins, Nature is primarily thought of as a disembodied breast or a

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<sup>252</sup> Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 6.10.11, 12.

<sup>253</sup> That the ladies are 'fairies' associated with 'Mount Acidale' is suggested by the source in Geoffrey Chaucer's 'Wyf of Bath's Tale' in *The Canterbury Tales* and by the fairy ring that they form. Shakespeare mentions 'fairy rings' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.2.8-9, 2.1.85, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 5.5.66, *The Tempest* 5.1.369. See Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 232.

<sup>254</sup> Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), 15.

<sup>255</sup> Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 6.10.12, 13. Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), 15.

<sup>256</sup> Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 6.10.18.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.10.25

disembodied heart. He writes of ‘the breast of Nature’ and ‘Nature the Nurse that suckles al things with her milke.’<sup>258</sup> This prompts meditation on ‘the verie milk of the breasts of Nature, wherewith she nourisheth the universe’ in general and ‘the church’ in particular.<sup>259</sup> Elsewhere in his work ‘the breast of Nature’ seems interchangeable with the image of ‘Nature’s hart.’<sup>260</sup>

At other times, he seems to present the secrets of nature in the inverted form of a chaliced-flower or holy grail, claiming they are ‘a verie purselin cup, replenished within, with the rarities of Nature, enough to stupefy and astonish the curious in search of secrets.’<sup>261</sup> It is an understanding of this ‘cup’ that sets the poets apart from other men, although occasionally they profess to envy an ordinary existence ‘free from fancy’s cup.’<sup>262</sup> The fabulous verse narratives imply that the cup is merely the inverted form of Nature’s secrets locked up in her ‘bosom’, or in Lodge’s word ‘fancie [has] from the bosom lately fled’ to the ‘cup of fancie.’<sup>263</sup> It is clear, then, that the symbol of the breast remained a potent one for Elizabethan writers who were engaging with the ideas of the secrets of Nature.

## Red and White

A red and white colour scheme is at work in Lodge’s ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphoses’ (which describes Nature’s ‘cheeks...like crimson silk/Or ruddy rose bespread on

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<sup>258</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 65, 62.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 65, 62.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 29. In Lodge’s poem mentions of ‘fancie from this bosom late is fled’ is an image inverted into ‘fancies cup’ while Marlowe speaks of Leander feeding Jove from the cup of his hand and later has Neptune mistake him for Jove’s cupbearer, Ganymede.

<sup>262</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 546.

<sup>263</sup> Eamon, *Secrets of Nature*, 3; Thomas Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 376, 376; at other times this cup is imagined as a kind of Aladdin’s lamp. Shakespeare reworks the lamp of Musaeus’ poem into a flaming symbol of Christlike self-sacrifice: ‘the lamp which burns by night/Dries up his oil to lend the world his light.’ (755-6) Marlowe ends his poem with an allusion to the last book of the bible, which also points to his allegorical understanding of Musaeus. Criticism of the poem has often asked whether the poem is finished or not, but he certainly finishes with a fairly final allusion to Revelation 21:25 ‘there will be no night’ which is preceded by the words ‘the Lamb is its lamp.’ As the main symbol of Hero and Leander from the opening line onwards, the lamp was taken in ancient times to be ‘the light of the Lamb.’ This seems to suggest that Marlowe believes that Musaeus had grasped this before the coming of Christ. Shakespeare’s last two sonnets also include translations of a Greek text describing Love with his ‘firebrand’, perhaps also prompting the portrayal of Romeo as a Passionate Pilgrim with his pine-wood ‘torch’ in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*.



whitest milk').<sup>264</sup> The same colour scheme operates in Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' (which identifies a flower maiden by 'the fair vermilion.../And silver tincture of her cheek'). In Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' this red and white aesthetic is present throughout and colours the final metamorphosis ('A purple flower sprung up, chequered with white,/Resembling well his pale cheeks, and the blood/Which in round drops upon their whiteness stood').<sup>265</sup> Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen have been struck by the way that Shakespeare, in particular, creates a poem suffused by red and white imagery.<sup>266</sup> They point out that the riffing on the two colours can be seen in lines 35, 36, 50, 76, 345-8, 902, 1168 and so on.<sup>267</sup> This chapter will argue that this sustained engagement with the colours red and white is the most obvious way that these poems identify themselves as fable on the Macrobian model.

Because fable did not openly advertise itself as fable in the way that it operated became generally known, one of the tell-tale signs of the artform was what Macrobius called the 'vario tegmine' or 'variegated' colour scheme of Nature's 'garments.'<sup>268</sup> This is translated by Shakespeare as the 'piedness' which betrayed the presence of 'Great Creating Nature.'<sup>269</sup>

Patricia Parker has drawn attention to these colours in 'the familiar "lily-white and "red"' of the Song of Solomon.<sup>270</sup> She is presumably thinking of Song of Solomon 2:1 which describes a particular flower (in a verse translated by Shakespeare as the 'chiefest flower in the field') that by 5:10 is described as being 'white and ruddy.'<sup>271</sup> The Song of Solomon was universally understood in the sixteenth-century as 'a mysticall device of the spirituall and godly love between Chryste the spouse, and the church or congregacion his spousesse.'<sup>272</sup> Consequently, it is possible that literary characters who shared

<sup>264</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 293-4; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.396-7; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1168-1170.

<sup>265</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 293-4; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.396-7; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1168-1170.

<sup>266</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis' in *Shakespeare's Poems*, Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, H. R. Woudhuysen, London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007, 1168n.

<sup>267</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis' in *Shakespeare's Poems*, Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, H. R. Woudhuysen, London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007, 1. 10n.

<sup>268</sup> Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionis*, 1.2.17: 'vulgaribus hominum sensibus intellectum sui vario rerum tegmine operimentoque subtrahit'; Macrobius, *Commentary*, 86.

<sup>269</sup> Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.88-89.

<sup>270</sup> Parker, Patricia, 'What's in a Name: and More' SEDERI XI: *Revista de la Sociedad Espanola de Estudios Renascentas Ingleses* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2002), 139, n.128.

<sup>271</sup> William Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 8

<sup>272</sup> Patricia Parker usefully summarises the way that this erotic poem is revealed as a spiritual allegory in three sixteenth-century English bibles in Parker, 'What's in a Name: and More', 101-

this two-toned complexion could have been understood to share the same significance.

The colours also define some characters in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, especially hermaphroditic characters like Narcissus. Ovid describes 'his cheeks' uniting a 'snowy pallor and the blush.'<sup>273</sup> When Narcissus claps his fists to his breast, his breast is described as checkered 'white in part and partly red' with stains compared to those of variegated apples or grapes, as if his hands bore the staining wounds of Christ.<sup>274</sup> Musaeus also describes Hero as having a 'rosy cheek' ('ρόδην...παρειήν') like characters in Lodge's, Marlowe's and Shakespeare's poems.<sup>275</sup> In Musaeus, just as in the Song of Solomon, there is a link between the red and white head of a character and the head of a flower. Musaeus' lines 58-9 are translated by George Chapman as 'The top-spheres of her snowy cheekes puts on/A glowing redness, like the two hu'd rose (in the original Greek of Musaeus: ἄκρα δὲ χιονέης φοινίσσεται κύκλα παρειῆς/ ὡς ῥόδον ἐκ καλύκων διδυμόχροον).<sup>276</sup> Shakespeare's flower at the end of 'Venus and Adonis' primarily reflects Musaeus' allegorical 'two hu'd rose' (in the original Greek of Musaeus: ῥόδον...διδυμόχροον), rather than a real flower like the snakeshead fritillary in John Gerard's garden, as has sometimes been alleged.<sup>277</sup>

According to Sioned Davies, in Celtic fable indigenous to the British Isles red and white are colours traditionally linked with the otherworldly, both

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149, 121 n.81: 'In Taverner's 1239 English Bible, "The Ballet of Balletes of Salomon: Called in Latyne, *Canticum Canticorum*" is introduced as "A mysticall device of the spirituall and godly love between Chryste the spouse, and the churche or congregacion his spousesse"; the Bishops Bible of 1568 introduces "The Ballet of Balletes of Solomon, called in Latin, *Canticum Cantorum*" as "The familer talk and misticall communication of the spirituall love between Jesus Christ and his Churche." The Geneva (1560) Bible—unusual among sixteenth-century translations in titling it as Solomon's "Song" (rather than "ballet")—similarly introduces it as follows: "In this Song, Salomon by moste swete and comfortable allegories and parables describeth the perfite love of Iesus Christ, the true Salomon and king of peace, and the faithful soule of his Church, which he hath sanctified and appointed to be his spouse, holy, chaste and without reprehension. So here is declared the singular love of the bridegroom towards the bride...Also the earnest affection of the Church which is inflamed with the love of Christ desiring to be more and more joined to him in love, and not to be forsaken for any spot or blemish that is in her."

<sup>273</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.423; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1986), 63.

<sup>274</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.481-485; Melville (trans.), *Metamorphoses*, 65.

<sup>275</sup> Musaeus, 'Hero and Leander', 194; Lodge, 'Scyllae's *Metamorphoses*', 584 'roseate cheeks'; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 93 'rose-cheeked Adonis'; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 3, 'Rose-cheeked Adonis'; Cf. Thomas Lodge, *Rosalynde: Or Euphues His Golden Legacie*, 40 'thy cheeks with roses dight'

<sup>276</sup> Chapman, 'The Divine Poem of Musaeus: Hero and Leander', 84-5

<sup>277</sup> Willes, *Shakespearean Botanical*, 18-20.

supernatural animals like Geoffrey of Monmouth's dragons and supernatural plants like strawberries.<sup>278</sup> They can also be embodied in the 'fair and rosy complexion' of saints like Saint Winefride and the complexion and clothing that reveal Arthurian knights as defenders of the honour of Nature as much as that of their godly King.<sup>279</sup>

The garments of Nature are not red and white in the medieval romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* because they belong to a character who derives much of his mystery from being cloaked in green. Nonetheless, it is likely that they are intended to reveal him as a figure of Nature in the romance because they overlap with the natural world by being 'enbraudered...wyth bryddes and flyzes.'<sup>280</sup> Similarly, the garments of Nature are not red and white in Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander.' However, it is no less likely that the veil is decorated in such a way as to identify the veiled figure as Nature: 'Her vaile was artificall flowers and leaves,/Whose workmanship both man and beast deceaves.'<sup>281</sup>

For the most part, however, Arthurian literature indicates the presence of Nature by red and white imagery which is sometimes dramatised as a physical garment itself. For example, Chrétien de Troyes mentions a robe that stands for the veil of Nature and explicitly links it with Macrobius.<sup>282</sup> In his tale of Perceval, the Macrobian aesthetic is pervasive. He includes a hero dressed in 'a cloak and hood of buckskin', which is a red hide dappled with white spots, who later changes into a white 'shift and linen underclothing' and 'red-dyed hose' and 'a fresh new mantle of scarlet'.<sup>283</sup> The hero encounters 'a white lance' surmounted by a [red] 'drop of blood.'<sup>284</sup> On spotting 'drops of blood against the whiteness of snow', he meditates upon 'the red tone of his lady's cheeks in her

<sup>278</sup> Sioned Davies (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics), 228 3n.

<sup>279</sup> See Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 18 which describes Saint Winefride's head prior to beheading as having a 'fair and rosy complexion'.

<sup>280</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien & E. V. Gordon (eds.), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, repr. 2012), 166 'Pat were enbraudered abof, wyth bryddes and flyzes.' Birds and flying creatures.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 166: this Yuletide apparition, like that of Scipio Africanus, is a male embodiment of nature, veiled in fabric 'enbraudered abof, with bryddes and flyzes'.

<sup>282</sup> Chretien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, ed. William W. Kibler trans. Carleton W. Carroll (London: Penguin Books repr, 2004), 119.

<sup>283</sup> Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal ou le roman de Perceval* (Paris: Libraire Générale Française, 1990), 467-8 'Et si ot cote et chaperon/De cuir de cerf clos environ'; Kibler (trans.), *Arthurian Romances*, 387

<sup>284</sup> Kibler (trans.), *Arthurian Romances*, 420.

white face.<sup>285</sup> This complexion is properly reserved for the romance hero or heroine in British romances too, as in *Sir Bevis of Hampton* (directly quoted in *King Lear*): ‘Hyr visage was white as lylly floure/Therin ran the reed colore’ and *Sir Launfal* (one of the many likely sources for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*): ‘Sche was as whyt as lyllye yn May/Or snew that snewyth in winterys day...The rede rose whan sche ys newe/Against her rode nes naught of hewe.’<sup>286</sup>

Other romances may not be Arthurian but are no less linked with a ‘two hu’d’ head compared to the head of a ‘two hu’d’ flower. This is the case with the marguerite poems of Machaut, Froissart and Deschamps. Before Marlowe’s ‘Hero and Leander’ these French marguerite poems had in England only been known directly to Chaucer and indirectly to other fifteenth-century authors.<sup>287</sup> However, Marlowe’s ‘Hero and Leander’ can be seen to rework a passage from Froissart’s poem *Le Dit de la Marguerite*:

A young girl loved her lover so much—this was Hero...that the fair creature poured out her tears on the green grass where her lover had been buried...the earth gathered up her tears...and converted them all into [daisies]...Mercury, as the text says, first found the beautiful flower that I love beyond measure, for while he was leading his flock to pasture he came across the tomb...and he noticed there in the enclosure the sweet flower I care about so much. He was rightly amazed, for in January—when because of the winter all flowers are dead—this flower appeared white and red, and showed the brightness of her colour.<sup>288</sup>

Although it seems like a classical myth, the episode in Marlowe’s poem is clearly identifiable as a medieval fable. As such, it describes a chaste encounter between Mercury and a maid who is a daisy:

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<sup>285</sup> Chrétien de Troyes, *Conte du Graal*, 4136 ‘li vermauz sor lo blanc asis’; 4139 ‘Con ces .III. gotes de sanc furent/Qui sor la blanche noif paruent’; Kibler (trans.), *Arthurian Romances*, 432.

<sup>286</sup> Eugen Kölbing (ed.), *Bevis of Hamton: The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, EETS E.S. 46, 48 65. (London: Trübner, 1885, 1886, 1894), 24 including variants from the Pynson print of 1503, lines 397-8. Cf. ‘Bevis of Hamton’ in the Auchinleck MS, lines 521-2: ‘so faire zhe was & brigt of mod [= ‘mould’],/Ase snow upon pe rede blod’; Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 3.4.233-5; Thomas Chestre, *Sir Launfal*, Ed. A. J. Bliss (London: Thomas Nelson, 1960), 289-290, 292-3. The descriptions are of the heroines Josian and Triamour respectively.

<sup>287</sup> Boffey, *Fifteenth-Century Dream Visions*, introduction, 3.

<sup>288</sup> Jean Froissart, ‘Le Dit de la Marguerite’, in Barry A. Windeatt (ed.), *Chaucer’s Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues*, (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1982), 150.

Heaven's winged herald, Jove-born Mercury,  
 The self-same day that he asleep had laid  
 Enchanted Argus, spied a country maid  
 Whose careless hair, instead of pearl t'adorn it  
 Glister'd with dew, as one that seem'd to scorn it:  
 Her mind pure, and her tongue untaught to gloze;  
 Yet proud she was, for lofty pride that dwells  
 In tower'd courts is oft in shepherd's cells,  
 And too well the fair vermilion knew,  
 And silver tincture of her cheeks...<sup>289</sup>

Again, the red and white cheeks of the heroine are compared to a red and white flower. The reason that she is bespread with dew not with pearls, is because she is already a pearl (the word for daisy and pearl in French ['marguerite'], as in Latin ['margarita'], are the same).<sup>290</sup> Earlier in the poem Marlowe had dramatised the moment of Hero's weeping from Froissart:

A stream of liquid pearl, which down her face  
 Made milk-white paths, whereon the gods might trace  
 To Jove's high court.<sup>291</sup>

Marlowe's Hero, like Froissart's Hero, is weeping marguerites, this time in the form of pearls rather than daisies. Later in the poem Marlowe again invokes Froissart's image in a Catholic context. In Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis',

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<sup>289</sup> Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*, 1.386-397

<sup>290</sup> From Pliny's *Natural History*, Marlowe, like Henry Hawkins after him, could have learned pearls were born from dew and were 'stillicides from Heaven.' (Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 1633, Menston: Scholar Press, 1971, 187.) The circular logic is apparent in Henry Hawkins' emblem book, when he ends his description of the pearl with the words 'in fine, it is a rich Treasure of rarities enclosed in a box of Pearl' (Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 1633, Menston: Scholar Press, 1971, 154, 188) The aptness of the red and white daisy for thinking about the secrets of Nature is suggested by Hawkins 'If you look now into the mysteries of all natural Secrets, you shall find none to symbolize better with the Virgin Marie, this Margarit of ours, then this same pearl.' The deliberately ambiguous syntax of the sentence makes possible a reading in which the 'Margarit' is the word given to the secrets of nature, to be symbolized by either the Virgin Marie or the pearl. (Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 1633, Menston: Scholar Press, 1971, 191)

<sup>291</sup> Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*, 1.297-9.

Venus is entreated to 'knit thy temples with a roseate twist' and in Marlowe's poem it is pearls that are twisted not at the temples but round the arm:<sup>292</sup>

As she wept, her tears to pearl he turn'd  
And wound them on his arm, and for her mourned.<sup>293</sup>

Marlowe's poem has reworked Froissart's image of Hero weeping marguerites in such a way as to suggest that the chaplet of daisies is only another kind of rosary of pearls.

The signature 'two hu'd' aesthetic betrays the presence of fable in surprisingly disparate forms. The colour scheme reveals that the Elizabethan poems share their fabulous approach to writing not only with 'verse romances' and 'marguerite poems' but also with 'dream visions' like Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*. This last form begins with 'thise floures white and rede,/Swiche as men callen daysyes in our toun' and ends with a personification of the daisy, just like in 'Hero and Leander.'<sup>294</sup> Anthony Spearing noted that attempts to identify the red and white lady symbolized by a flower in Chaucer's poem have failed completely.<sup>295</sup> The red and white lady in Shakespeare's sonnet 98 has equally eluded identification: 'Nor did I wonder at the lily's white/Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose,/They were but sweet, but figures of delight,/Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.'<sup>296</sup> These lines suggest that the 'red and white' or 'dark lady' of the sonnets is a 'figurative' paradigm or 'pattern,' both terms in the period for an allegorical figure. The implication is that she is an allegory like the spouse of Christ who could be the church, the congregation, the human soul, since she is a 'pattern of all those.'<sup>297</sup> When the lines are read in this context, it suggests that Shakespeare's 'dark lady' is not likely to be a historical person to insert into Shakespeare's biography any more than Chaucer's red-and-white lady. Rather she is the 'spotted' and 'black bride' of the Song of Solomon 1:5, identified in all sixteenth-century bible commentaries, and by Patricia Parker in her painstaking article, as the

<sup>292</sup> Lodge, *Scyllae's Metamorphosis*, 490; Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*, 1.375-6.

<sup>293</sup> Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*, 1.375-6.

<sup>294</sup> Chaucer, 'The Legend of Good Women', 42-3

<sup>295</sup> Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, 110

<sup>296</sup> Shakespeare, Sonnet 98, 10-12.

<sup>297</sup> Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, 200; Shakespeare, Sonnet 98.

church.<sup>298</sup> This is in keeping with other contemporary conceits like that of Abraham Wright: 'Grieve not (faire maid) cause you are black; so's she/That's spouse to him who died upon the tree.'<sup>299</sup>

Other red and white ladies in dream visions might include Idleness from *The Romance of the Rose*. Although Idleness is described wearing green, like the Green Knight in Arthurian romance, in the illustration in MS Egerton 3781, folio 1 recto in the British Library, the red and white associated with her head are transferred to the whole of her costume.<sup>300</sup> Shakespeare's 'love-in-idleness', the mind-altering flower of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, also unites the colours red and white. Robert Greene's prose dream vision that precedes *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier* (1592) makes extraordinary allegorical claims about 'the checkerd (Paunsie) or party coloured Harts ease' which seems to have partly inspired the 'love-in-idleness' of Shakespeare's play.<sup>301</sup> As has been mentioned, Shakespeare may still have been drawing on Robert Greene's 'checkered' or 'particoloured' flowers for the 'streaked gillyvors' of *The Winter's Tale*, reflected in the pranked-up red and white complexion of his heroine.<sup>302</sup> Perdita and the carnations seem parallel to Nature and her veil, as indicated by the grafting conversation. As has been seen, this exchange seems to draw on the 'secrets' literature of Giambattista Della Porta, purely to identify the carnations as symbols for the secrets of Nature.

The 'love-in-idleness' and 'streaked gillyvors' of Shakespeare's fable recur as the 'violets' and 'the scarlet giloflower' of Hawkins' emblem book. The last chapter showed that both Shakespeare and Hawkins rework commonplaces that the rose is Cupid's flower. In the later play, Perdita is acutely conscious that she is dressed like the Goddess 'Flora' in what Hawkins calls 'Flora's pomps, where is the ward-robe of her richest mantles, powdred with stares of flowers, and al embroidred with flowrie stones.'<sup>303</sup> Perdita's 'piedness' is reflected in Hawkins' emblem book in the preponderance of white

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<sup>298</sup> Parker, 'What's in A Name: and More', 126. She implies that the red-and-white 'spotted' and 'black bride' of the Song of Solomon (who has this complexion 'because the sun has altered my colour'(1:5)) are both versions of the bride of Christ 'to be made white in the apocalyptic marriage' of The Book of Revelation.

<sup>299</sup> Abraham Wright 'To A Black Gentlewoman: Mistress A. H.'. Quoted in Parker, 'What's in A Name: and More', 126.

<sup>300</sup> Lorris and Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 10. According to Campbell-Culver, *Origin of Plants*, 355: 'it was not until 1720s that "pink" came to denote the colour.'

<sup>301</sup> Lyly, *Mother Bombie*, 1.3.139-41.

<sup>302</sup> Or at least 'curds and cream' though Perdita is goddess-like pranked up in red and white.

<sup>303</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 31, 6.

and red flower epithets.<sup>304</sup> When it comes to describing the gillyflowers that Perdita had made famous he excels himself: 'some were of white satin, streaked...some purple, some white, some speckled, and some partycoloured, some carnation, and some changeable.'<sup>305</sup> 'Changeable' seems to operate as a direct translation of Macrobius' phrase 'variegated veil' ['vario tegmine'], the contrasting colours that since ancient times writers had adopted in their work to signal that the subject was the 'secrets of the gods or the soul.'<sup>306</sup> Hawkins continues: 'God is very admirable in his works, since on so poore a thing as a slender stalk, grow such a number of excellent varieties.'<sup>307</sup> The stem of love-in-idleness or of the gillyvor, capped by the red and white variegated garments, teach the pious to admire the wonders of God's creation. Perhaps the neatest expression of this idea is by the nineteenth-century Catholic poet, Gerald Manley Hopkins, who could begin a poem with a meditation on 'pied beauty' and end with the words, 'praise Him.'<sup>308</sup>

To conclude, the Elizabethan fabulous verse narratives do not explicitly own that their writing is on the Macrobian model. This could either be taken to indicate that they are careful not to name him in order to obscure the sacred tenor of their amatory discourse, or that they have forgotten about Macrobius and his antique tradition of fable. However, the signature colour scheme of the poems seems to suggest that the former and not the latter is the case. Moreover, if they do not name Macrobius, they certainly name his main character Nature. In fact, the whole form seems to dramatise her veiled and curvaceous body, not to mention her florid complexion. In their separate ways, the Elizabethan fabulous poets make it clear that such things are not for the eyes of the vulgar. It was Macrobius who identified a link between fabulous narratives and mystery religions, and these Elizabethan verse narratives include events without speech that turn out to be allegories for sacred rites. They can also be seen to access divine inspiration through pagan authorities who were

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<sup>304</sup> White epithets include 'candid' from Latin 'candidum' and red include 'bashful' and 'purple' could equally have been applied to the 'blushing' rose, for example, to signify 'red' in the period, while 'gold' was often 'red gold.'

<sup>305</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 9.

<sup>306</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary*, 86; Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionis*, 1.2.17 'vulgaribus hominum sensibus intellectum sui vario rerum tegmine operimentoque subtraxit'; Chance, *Mythographic Chaucer*, 4; for a comparison of the writing of Giambattista della Porta and Shakespeare see Rebecca Bushnell, *Green Desire*, 142-3.

<sup>307</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 10.

<sup>308</sup> Gerald Manley Hopkins, *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 132.



able to interpret God's secrets in the universe in advance of the incarnation. The existence of such divine messages in creation, and the ability of pagans to access it, were ideas that shook the bedrock of Protestantism because they were not easily denied or explained away. This is what made fable a useful oppositional tool in the wake of the reformation.



## Chapter Four: 'Where's Walleys?': Looking for the *Moralised Ovid* in Post-Reformation Literature

In Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, Margaret prescribes carduus benedictus for Beatrice's love-sickness. On the surface this is medical advice about a purple-headed thistle, recommended by Paracelsus and others, and variously designated as 'holy', 'blessed' or 'benedictus'.<sup>1</sup> However, the underlying meaning is that Beatrice's love-sickness can only be cured by the man she loves, who shares his name (Benedict) with the thistle. Beatrice is quick to notice that this is a plant with a double meaning: 'You have some moral in this Benedictus.'<sup>2</sup> The phrase suggests that anyone who studies plants in Shakespeare's work might have to be prepared for both a literal and a moral meaning. This chapter will argue that there is a moralised or allegorical dimension to Shakespeare's plants which had its roots in the middle ages but which was promoted by contemporary media. It will argue that readers alert to this were able to bring particular expectations to Shakespeare's plants and access another allegorical dimension within them. . From a botanic perspective, it will include the herbs associated with a Shakespearean friar, the mulberry trees of *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the allegorical strewments of *Cymbeline*. However, from a reformation perspective, it will examine how attitudes to allegory in general and to Christian explanations of pagan material in particular reveal religious allegiances.

The kind of allegory that was operating in literature in the sixteenth century harked back to ancient classical and Jewish symbolic systems which brought with them the idea that all creation, if carefully interpreted, could be understood as an image of the divine.<sup>3</sup> As has been seen, evidence for the

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### Chapter Four: 'Where's Walleys?': Looking for the *Moralised Ovid* in Post-Reformation Literature

<sup>1</sup> Cristina Bellorini, *The World of Plants in Renaissance Tuscany: Medicine and Botany* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 176.

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, 3.5.68-73

<sup>3</sup> Clare Asquith, *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 21.

immanence of the divine in nature was coming under attack from Protestants in the period, and allegory was carefully policed, particularly where it was rooted in nature. That is why literary forms that contained a preponderance of ‘herbs, plant, trees, fruits and simples’ were contested ground because any one of these might be operating as ‘similitudes’ for the tree of the cross.<sup>4</sup> Saint Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians had claimed that by means of the cross, dismissed as ‘foolishness’ or the ‘foolish thing’ by those who would perish, a privileged few might be saved from death and live forever.<sup>5</sup> Ovid had also imagined a world where birds, beasts and trees might be released from death through suffering to live on continuously. That is why those schooled in the old moralisations recognised that, even in pagan works, ‘the follies’ or ‘foolish things’ of the world were often ‘disiphered’ ‘under ye shadow of byrds, beastes and trees’.<sup>6</sup> Since no pagan work was more densely populated by such living things than Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, it had understandably been read through the lens of 1 Corinthians.

But this was a pedagogical tradition on which Catholics and Protestants were divided. What a Catholic might call the ‘olde teaching of follye’, a puritan might call a ‘schoole of abuse’.<sup>7</sup> This was because by promoting ‘follies’, and covering them up under the sympathetic faces of Ovid’s creatures, the scholastic tradition could be seen as justifying ‘many abuses’, the violence suffered in this world to achieve eternal life in the next.<sup>8</sup> The characters in Ovid undergo great suffering and live for ever but few people today would recognise this as a realistic expectation following abusive violence (just as few people today would find Shakespeare’s ‘romances’ realistic). Velma Richmond has suggested that the message of ‘the Cross’s paradox of transcendence through suffering’ was condemned as even more of ‘an absurdity’ in the wake of the Reformation.<sup>9</sup> She writes that there were ‘strong humanist and Reformation prejudices’ against any literary mode that might be used to promote improbable

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<sup>4</sup> Levinus Lemnius, *An Herbal for the Bible*, trans. Thomas Newton (1587), title-page. Quoted in Leah Knight, *Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 42.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18-20 (Geneva). For a discussion of these biblical verses see Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *Shakespeare, Catholicism and Romance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 16.

<sup>6</sup> Lodge, *A Reply to Stephen Gosson’s Schoole of Abuse*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 32, 3, 3,

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 32, 3, 3,

<sup>9</sup> Richmond, *Catholicism and Romance*, 16. Cf. Andrew McRae, *Renaissance Drama*, London: Arnold, 2003, 102 for the way that the Renaissance saw the rise of the possibility that there was ‘no reason behind any particular instance of human suffering’.

teachings about the cross that were not consistent with ‘human intellect’ or ‘rational evidence.’<sup>10</sup> Hence, different writers on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* had to make clear their stance on whether this pagan text could be used to promote ‘folly’ or justify suffering, the ‘message of the Cross [which] challenges human intellect.’<sup>11</sup> This is why the first printed Protestant translation of Ovid’s fable of Narcissus is at pains to insist that ‘Ovyd by this tale no follye meante’.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, the ‘olde teaching of follye’ persisted into the Renaissance because of the scholastic tradition of a black-robed ‘folle’ (which was slang for a monk), someone simultaneously black in habit (i.e. Benedictine) and ‘black in mind’ (i.e. foolish).<sup>13</sup> Any study that sets out to examine Shakespeare and the Botanic Reformation cannot afford to ignore the allegorical tradition that drew on the monkish *Moralised Ovid*. This is because in stark contrast to the emblem books, it contains a wealth of botanic material. It was the reason that friars could introduce plants and even Ovidian fables into their sermons as accessories for preaching in the Middle Ages, and these habits can be seen to linger on into the Renaissance.<sup>14</sup>

### **An Old *Moralised Ovid* for a New ‘Moralising Age’**

If medieval Christian ways of reading Ovid persisted into the Renaissance, it was largely down to one dazzling interpretative tradition. This emerged out of a commentary on Ovid’s myths composed by a contemporary of Petrarch, a Parisian Benedictine monk called Pierre Bersuire (c.1290-1362). His commentary explained Ovid’s myths in Christian terms intended to be adapted

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander, (ed.), *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Lodge, ‘A Reply to Stephen Gosson’s *Schoole of Abuse*’, 32; For ‘folle’ or ‘fool’ as a word for a monk see various sources. As Thomas Moore observed when a Benedictine monk criticised Erasmus’ *In Praise of Folly*, how can this black-gowned priest ‘attack folly, being himself wholly compact of folly?’ (Parker, ‘What’s in A Name’; Hamlin, *Bible in Shakespeare*, 109.) The monkish schoolmaster returning to folly was returning to the teaching linked with the friar Walleys. As Owst says, ‘With merry Lydgate, then, we may believe that for the period ‘sumtyme is a folle (he means sarcastically a monk, like himself!) as good to here as the word of a fryer.’ (John Lydgate, *Merita Missae* in E.E.T.S. (O.S.), 71, p. 148, 1.g. Quoted in Owst, *Preaching*, 52.) Lydgate, supposedly educated at Gloucester Hall, asserted that his sermons were not less pithy than a friar, and schoolmasters trained at Oxford might have been just as well-acquainted with Ovid as the friar in *Romeo and Juliet*. (James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson and Kathryn L. McKinley (eds.), *Ovid in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 83.) For ‘black in mind’ see Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 3.4.25.

<sup>14</sup> Goody, Jack, *The Culture of Flowers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 156.

for Christian sermons. It became the most popular printed Ovidian commentary and is best-known as the *Ovidius Moralizatus* or *Moralised Ovid*.<sup>15</sup> It is not to be confused with the verse commentary in Old French called the *Ovide Moralisé*, which was the work of an anonymous Franciscan Friar and was never printed.

Bersuire's *Moralised Ovid* was written in Avignon in the 1330s and it was already among the works owned by the library of an Oxford college in 1374.<sup>16</sup> This was only the beginning of the book's impressive career across the channel as it can be counted among the pulpit reference-works that only increased in popularity in the age of the printing-press.<sup>17</sup> In the age of print the commentary was circulated under the name of Walleys.<sup>18</sup> This misattribution can be traced back to the pioneer printer, Jodocus Badius Ascensius (1462-1535), who brought out the first printed edition in Bruges in 1484.<sup>19</sup> Ascensius was working from a manuscript penned by a misinformed scribe. This scribe had been under the impression that he was revising and copying the work of an Englishman, a Dominican friar called Thomas Walleys.<sup>20</sup> Although the editions that followed were printed in Paris and Lyon, they all advertised themselves to English readers as natively English.<sup>21</sup> The name is sometimes understood to mean 'Thomas of Wales', but this did not stop the continental printers gracing the title-page with the word 'Anglico' or 'Englishman'.<sup>22</sup> Incidentally, there was a real Dominican friar called Thomas Walleys (c. 1287-1350), who may have hailed from Wales. It is even possible that he was responsible for a manuscript copy of the text, but it is certain that he was not the actual author.

According to Patricia Parker, no less than five editions were printed as the work of Walleys in the early part of the sixteenth century.<sup>23</sup> In other words, it became even easier to access in this later period and was readily available for any English reader who could read Latin.<sup>24</sup> This provides valuable evidence, borne out by the influential scholarship of G.R. Owst and the more recent

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<sup>15</sup> Clark et al. *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 83.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 83. The college in question is Merton College.

<sup>17</sup> G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts in the Period c. 1350-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), 308.

<sup>18</sup> James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson and Kathryn L. McKinley (eds.), *Ovid in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 83.

<sup>19</sup> Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 169.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 169, 14n.; Hexter, 'Allegari of Pierre Bersuire', 52.

<sup>21</sup> They bear the word 'anglico' on the title-page.

<sup>22</sup> *Epistolae obscurorum virorum* ed. and trans. F. G. Stokes (Hew Haven, 1925), 343-45.

Quoted in Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 168, 11n.

<sup>23</sup> Parker, 'What's in a Name', 120 n.80.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 120 n.80.

research of Susan Wabunda, that the learning behind the sermons of the Benedictines could still be sought out well into the early modern period.<sup>25</sup> In fact, some people in Shakespeare's day believed that they were living in a 'moralising age' and this would suggest the continued relevance for many people of these medieval commentaries.<sup>26</sup>

But why would Bersuire's medieval Christian explanations continue to interest Renaissance readers? After all, the Renaissance is usually imagined as a time when secular, humanist readings of classical authors like Ovid suddenly became so compelling that they eclipsed earlier forms of learning. However, as Helen Cooper points out, the equation of terms like Renaissance and humanism is not always helpful.<sup>27</sup> This is because it bolsters the misleading view that what is at issue is a rediscovery of forgotten classical authors in the sixteenth-century, when the reality is that Ovid had been carefully studied for centuries.<sup>28</sup> Bersuire's *Moralised Ovid* had been central to an earlier, and in many ways more committed, inflorescence of learning, which James Clark and others have called 'monastic humanism.'<sup>29</sup> This movement of the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries was the product of a new initiative which aimed to reconcile the whole surviving corpus of pagan and Christian intellectual achievement into an overarching synthesis.<sup>30</sup> This ambitious project raised the profile of learning so that it spread from the cloister to the cathedral schools and finally to the newly-founded universities. In the 1270s, with the support of other monastic houses, the Benedictines set up Gloucester Hall as an Oxford base for this kind of learning.<sup>31</sup> This became the place where students were sent, not to attain

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<sup>25</sup> G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts in the Period c. 1350-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926); Susan Wabunda, *Preaching During the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21-2. According to Wabunda, G.R. Owst's scholarship is often interpreted as saying that the Benedictine sermon was dead by the Tudor period, but in fact he contradicts himself on this point.

<sup>26</sup> Nashe, Thomas, *Works*, ed. R. B. Mc Kerrow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 154.

<sup>27</sup> Parker, 'What's in a Name', 120 n.80.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 120 n.80.

<sup>29</sup> James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 221: 'The commitment to the classical heritage which coloured Benedictine culture in the high and later Middle Ages has been characterised as a monastic humanism (*Klosterhumanismus*) comparable to, but distinct from, the scholastic humanism connected with the cathedral and secular schools of the twelfth century and subsequently with the arts masters of the new universities.'

<sup>30</sup> Joan Greatrex, 'Benedictine Sermons: Preparation and Practice in the English Monastic Cathedral Cloisters' in *Medieval Monastic Preachers* ed. Caroline Muessig (Brill: Leiden, 1998), 257-291, 260.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

academic qualifications, but to equip them with the knowledge and skills they would need for preaching.<sup>32</sup> In the fourteenth century there was an expansion in monastic preaching in England as both monasteries and cathedrals were called upon to engage lectors.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, as monks trained at Oxford swelled the ranks of the episcopate, they put pressure on those below them in the church to continue the learned tradition of preaching which had been a key part of their own schooling.<sup>34</sup>

Joan Greatrex and Barbara Harvey have shown that when bishops ordered that monks should preach to lay-folk those orders were carefully followed.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, it seems that these sermons were eagerly attended by penitent laity, who sometimes stood to gain an indulgence from purgatory simply from listening.<sup>36</sup> G. R. Owst's seminal study of medieval preaching includes a wonderfully romantic passage that is worth paraphrasing because it builds on a long tradition of nostalgia, for 'merry England', 'merry monks' and 'merry Lydgate', that was already operating in the Tudor period.<sup>37</sup> He imagines the wandering friar who had acquired his earthy grasp of the English language from rubbing shoulders with all manner of lay-folk, in the honest mud of country lanes or the hubbub of wakes and fairs.<sup>38</sup> He knew what people wanted to hear and he gave them what they wanted: sermons jingling with saws, rhymes,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>33</sup> Clark et al., *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 192. See also Clark, *Benedictines*, 201.

<sup>34</sup> Clark et al., *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 192. See also Clark, *Benedictines*, 201.

<sup>35</sup> See Patrick J. Horner, 'Benedictines and Preaching the *Pastoralia* in Late Medieval England' in *Medieval Monastic Preaching* ed. Caroline Muessig (Brill: Leiden, 1998), 280. Barbara Harvey, 'The Monks of Westminster and the University of Oxford' in *The Reign of Richard II: Essays in Honour of May McKisack*, eds. F.R.H. Du Boulay and Caroline M. Barron (London: University of London, 1971), 108-30 at 118-9; Joan Greatrex, 'Benedictine Monk Scholars as Teachers and Preachers in the Late Middle Ages: Evidence from Worcester Cathedral Priory' in *Monastic Studies II* ed. Joan Loades (1991), 213-25; Joan Greatrex, 'Monk Students from Norwich Cathedral Priory at Oxford and Cambridge c. 1300 to 1530' in *English Historical Review* 106 (1991), 555-83.

<sup>36</sup> Joan Greatrex, 'Benedictine Sermons: Preparation and Practice in the English Monastic Cathedral Cloisters' in *Medieval Monastic Preachers* ed. Caroline Muessig (Brill: Leiden, 1998), 257-291, 259.

<sup>37</sup> On nostalgia in general see Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 73-74. Schwyzer quotes John Bale who is already nostalgic for the 'golden worlde' of earlier monastic Britain before the reformation (73). On 'merry England' in particular see Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 89. According to Hutton, 'grumbles were heard that the Protestant Reformation had destroyed a happy society. In 1552 Dr John Caius either coined or appropriated what was to become an enduring expression, when he wrote of "the old world, when this country was called merry England"' (Ibid, 89). For romantic descriptions of monks and friars see Owst, *Preaching*, 52, 313; Cf. J. J. Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages (14<sup>th</sup> century)*, Translated by Lucy Toulmin Smith. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901), 279-308.

<sup>38</sup> Owst, *Preaching*, 313.



morals, and especially fables.<sup>39</sup> According to Owst, it was fables which brought that 'bright familiarity and raciness' which was 'capable of holding the attention of the masses.'<sup>40</sup> Of these fables perhaps it is unsurprising that Ovid's seem to have been the most popular.<sup>41</sup> In fact, increasingly scholarship suggests that by the start of the fifteenth-century, a preoccupation with Ovidian *exempla* may have become a defining feature of the monastic sermon for English listeners.<sup>42</sup>

This chapter will be more concerned with the ways in which Bersuire's commentary enabled these medieval sermons to echo on into the Renaissance, not least in the potential for 'moral' interpretation of plants in the period.<sup>43</sup> If the importance of the *Moralised Ovid* for Renaissance scholarship has been largely overlooked, it is likely to be for three main reasons that can be summarised as follows.

Firstly, influential scholarship of the 50s and 60s was vociferous in insisting on a clear-cut division between Medieval and Renaissance literature and Bersuire's commentary came on the wrong side of the divide.<sup>44</sup> William Keach's *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives* (1977) is testament to the surprising tenacity of this reductive view. The faith in the clear-cut divisions was beginning to crumble by the time that Jonathan Bate wrote his seminal *Shakespeare and Ovid* (1993). Bate acknowledges that through the *Moralised Ovid* the medieval Christian explanations found their way into works of Renaissance mythography.<sup>45</sup> Sometimes, his study suggests that Shakespeare always had direct recourse to Ovid rather than indirect recourse to his work via the mythological handbooks.<sup>46</sup> At other times, it is more open to the possibility that

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>42</sup> Clark et al, *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 193.

<sup>43</sup> Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, 3.5.68-73

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, 11, 26-7. On the other side of the argument see Keach, William, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives*, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1977, 33. Keach references a number of scholars who held this view: Clyde Barnes Cooper, *Some Elizabethan Opinions of the Poetry and Character of Ovid* (Menasha, Wisc 1914); Leo Rick, *Ovids Metamorphosen in der englischen Renaissance* (Munster 1915); T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakespere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols, (Urbana, Illinois, 1944); Davis P. Harding, *Milton and the Renaissance Ovid*, (Urbana Illinois, 1946); Boas, Frederick S. Boas, *Ovid and the Elizabethans* (London, 1947); Bush, Douglas, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition* (Sussex: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1977) esp. ch 4 'Ovid New and Old'.

<sup>45</sup> Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, 26-7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

in incorporating mythic patterns into his plays, Shakespeare was not ignorant of the usual moral interpretation of the myths.<sup>47</sup>

Secondly, scholars often behave as if writers like Shakespeare and Marlowe were secular or atheistic before their time, writing for what Jeffrey Knapp has called 'a secular, even a secularising, stage.'<sup>48</sup> This may partly be because their work does not seem moralistic or didactic as it is often assumed that Christian allegory must have been. Critics have been resistant to what they assume must be a loss of richness that it is assumed would come with the acknowledgement that Shakespeare's writing is Christian allegory.<sup>49</sup> Scholars with a more generous appreciation of allegory, such as G. Wilson Knight, have detected allegorical patterns in Shakespeare's work in the past.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the dominant voice in scholarship today would still echo Stephen Greenblatt in dismissing the allegorical insights of the 'neo-Christians.'<sup>51</sup>

Thirdly, Bersuire's commentary is now spectacularly inaccessible to scholars and general readers, existing only in a 1979 diacritic-laden Latin facsimile and a 1971 literal translation into English in a doctoral thesis by William Reynolds that remains unpublished.<sup>52</sup> There are no other translations into any other European languages and the editors of *Ovid in the Middle Ages* have identified an urgent need for a critical edition.<sup>53</sup> Anyone who would attempt to read Ovid through the lens of Bersuire today is compelled to fashion a

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>48</sup> Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1 cf. xii.; for arguments for a secular or timelessly Romantic Shakespeare see Shakespeare, Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (London: Riverhead Books, 1998), 3, 717-8; Richard C. McCoy, *Faith in Shakespeare* (2013), 4, 15-16. For Marlowe's alleged atheism see Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 80, 113-5, 117.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>50</sup> See G. W. Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (1930; Repr. London: Methuen & Co. 1949), which suggests that characters as different as the Duke in *Measure for Measure* (82) and Timon of Athens (218, 235, 236) conform to Christ-like patterns.

<sup>51</sup> Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, xi. See also Neema Parvini, *Shakespeare and New Historicist Theory* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017), 38.

<sup>52</sup> Pierre Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana Moraliter...Explanata* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979). For the study of medieval traditions of reading Ovid see Frank T. Courbon and Bruno Roy, *Incipitarius Ovidianum: A Finding Guide for Texts Related to the Study of Ovid in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Turnhout); Ann Moss, *Ovid in Renaissance France* (London: Warburg Institute, 1982); James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson and Kathryn L. McKinley (eds.), *Ovid in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); William D. Reynolds, 'The *Ovidius Moralizatus* of Petrus Berchorius: An Introduction and Translation', (PhD diss., Urbana: University of Illinois, 1971); William D. Reynolds, 'Selections from "De Forma Figurisque Deorum"' *Allegorica* 2, (1977), 58-89; J. Engels, *Note Sur Quelques Manuscrits Mythologiques*, *Vivarium* 6 (1968), 102-7

<sup>53</sup> James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson and Kathryn L. McKinley (eds.), *Ovid in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 55. 30n.

makeshift critical edition for themselves, writing the moralisations into the margins of a modern edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and noting the biblical parallels alongside the classical text.<sup>54</sup>

Now that its importance has been recognised for Renaissance studies the *Moralised Ovid* is unlikely to be overlooked again. This is because the Benedictine commentary is in many ways the missing link between the most consumed literary form of the Renaissance—the sermon—and the poetry and drama of writers like Shakespeare.<sup>55</sup> It bridged the didactic voice of the pulpit and the fictional world of drama in subtle ways that critics can begin to explore. As with other kinds of allegory it provided a kind of escapism into a parallel universe of meaning, meaning that could often seem more absolute or sacred. As critics begin to restore some of these parallels, the many messages that drama held for early modern playgoers might potentially start to seem less remote.

If Renaissance writers were still using this commentary, it is necessary to assess the precise function it would have had in a Renaissance context. Ralph Hexter points out that 'the function of Bersuire's moralized Ovid seems obvious: it is the *Metamorphoses ad usum praedicatorum*' [*Metamorphoses for the use of preachers*].<sup>56</sup> It could be used to reanimate sermons from the past. It might be assumed that by the sixteenth-century the text of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was more likely to be understood on its own terms as a poetical work of the classical past, rather in the anachronistic terms that had repackaged it as Christian sermons in the Middle Ages. However, it should be borne in mind that writers like Thomas Lodge and Shakespeare potentially believed that Ovid was inspired by the Holy Spirit and already writing material for sermons long before the arrival of monastic preaching. This is indicated in Lodge's *Reply to Gosson* (1579) in which he reveals his sympathy for Saint Jerome's comment that certain pagan poets were already 'good preachers' of divine revelation before

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<sup>54</sup> For biblical parallels see Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 171.

<sup>55</sup> For the sermon as the most consumed form see Jeanne Shami, 'The Sermon' in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern English Literature and Religion*, Ed. Andrew Hiscock and Helen Wilcox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 185-206, 185. See also Peter McCulloch, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>56</sup> Hexter, 'Allegari of Pierre Bersuire', 56.

the Christian monks adapted their surviving works for their own preaching.<sup>57</sup> It may also be indicated by Shakespeare's punning description of Ovid exiled 'among the Goths' or 'goats'.<sup>58</sup> Depending on the auditor's point of view this might either mean that he ended his life surrounded by barbarous peasants beyond the fringes of the civilised world or having found a flock receptive to his sermons. From this perspective, Bersuire was merely tapping into the pre-existing homiletic potential of Ovid's works.

If the function as a handbook for preaching was one that it retained for Shakespeare, it could potentially indicate that the literary forms of his that survive could once have been supplemented by homiletic forms that do not survive. These might have included such seemingly unlikely texts as 'Venus and Adonis' or 'Romeo and Juliet' because the handbook prompts sermons on Adonis according to Psalm 79:14 'The boar out of the woods has laid it to waste' or on Phaeton according to 1 Corinthians 3:13 'Every man's work shall be tried by fire.'<sup>59</sup> This would seem like a far-fetched claim, were it not for the fact that a 1589 tract, authored by one or more of Shakespeare's fellow playwrights, describes just such a sermon.<sup>60</sup> *Pasquill and Morforius* includes an account of a sermon preached by a 'Gentleman...studied in Philosophie' who 'trotted over all the Meteors bredde in the highest Region of the ayre' to reconcile 1 Corinthians 3 with 'Ovid's fiction of Phaeton's firing of the world.'<sup>61</sup> This sermon will be examined in more detail below.

There is another alternative, that the commentary was increasingly treated less as a preaching manual and more as a scholarly textbook. When it was used in the Middle Ages, Bersuire's *Moralised Ovid* had been part of what Beryl Smalley has called a 'text-book movement'.<sup>62</sup> It had been a familiar presence at the elbow of students at a time when glosses, commentaries and

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Lodge, *The Complete Works*, London: Huntingdon Club, 1883, repr. London & New York: Johnson Reprint Company Ltd., 1966, Vol. 1, 'A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse', 1-48, 19.

<sup>58</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2006), 3.3.6-7.

<sup>59</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 360; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, X.xii; Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 155; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, II.iv;. For a pre-reformation Franciscan sermon that draws on the fable of Adonis cf. J. W. Blench, *Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), 211.

<sup>60</sup> 'Pasquill and Marforius' in Nashe, *Works*, 88-9.

<sup>61</sup> Nashe, *Works*, ed. R. B. McKerrow, 88-9.

<sup>62</sup> Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 51.

other reference works were learning-aids in cloister and university alike.<sup>63</sup> The term 'text-book' suggests something pulverous and begrudged, but this picture could not be further from the case. One friar who encountered the book at university wrote that 'its profundity in theology passes belief.'<sup>64</sup> He was amazed at the ease with which the author set out 'the harmonies' between the Holy Scriptures and Ovid's fables.<sup>65</sup> In fact, it convinced him that 'Thomas of Wales', like Ovid before him, must have been inspired by the Holy Spirit.<sup>66</sup> With such praise, it is easy to see how the well-loved text-book sometimes became more familiar than the book itself, a 'surrogate Ovid'.<sup>67</sup> But in some ways, this is a misleading idea, because the commentary was less like a substitute for the text and more like keys to Ovid's text carried around in the heads of the learned. Interestingly, there still survive compilations of 'glosses' that certain monastic readers made from the *Moralised Ovid*. These give an impression of the personal comfort that the monks took from Bersuire's morals, since they tend to single out glosses relating to monastic life or affirming the casual misogyny of the cloister.<sup>68</sup> One of the most widely discussed compilations of these moral glosses from the *Moralised Ovid* is that made by a Benedictine monk called Thomas Walsingham, but there are other similar commentaries preserved in monastic manuscripts which incorporated quotations from Bersuire's *Moralised Ovid*.<sup>69</sup> These glosses, jotted down as part of the scholastic curriculum with a view to learning them by heart, seem to be what Thomas Lodge in 1589 is still referring to as the 'schoolmen's cunning [or 'conning'] notes'.<sup>70</sup>

On the one hand, they were 'cunning notes' because they made it possible to restrict knowledge of the hidden meanings in Ovid by operating 'in plaine terms (yet cunningly)', allowing the user to 'gloss' or 'glose' as they saw fit.<sup>71</sup> Owst describes how such glosing became more and more elaborate since it was believed that exposing the 'naked text' might shame the monastic student

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<sup>63</sup> Greatrex, 'Benedictine Sermons', 263.

<sup>64</sup> F. G. Stokes (ed., trans.), *Epistolae obscurorum virorum*. (New Haven, 1925), 343-45. Quoted in Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 168.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>67</sup> Clark et al., *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 193. Quoted in Joan Greatrex, 'Benedictine Sermons', 264.

<sup>68</sup> Clark et al., *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 191-2.

<sup>69</sup> Clark et al., *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 194; Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 167, n.10.

<sup>70</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 37

<sup>71</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.71

who was responsible for keeping back certain kinds of traditional knowledge.<sup>72</sup> For this reason, allegory was laid on richly at a time when, in the words of Macrobius, it was forbidden to reveal the text ‘*apertam nudamque*’ [openly naked].<sup>73</sup> The obligation to glose and the taboo on revealing literal meaning was discussed by William Tyndale (1484-1536). In a polemical treatise he makes the astonishing claim that nowhere was anyone likely to encounter the literal meaning of scripture in the early sixteenth-century.<sup>74</sup> He alleges that ‘the literal sense [of scripture] is become nothing at all: for the pope hath taken it clean away, and hath make it his possession.’<sup>75</sup> For Tyndale, then, what the lay-people encountered in worship was an elaborate allegory, while the literal meaning was the preserve of the highest Catholic elite. He adds that the Catholic church guarded the literal meanings of the biblical texts so closely that ‘no man dare abide by the literal sense of the text, but under the protestation, “If it shall please the pope”.’<sup>76</sup> This is not an exclusively Protestant point of view, because a similar claim is made in an annotation to 1 Corinthians 14 in the Catholic Douai-Rheims Bible (1609/10): ‘the simpler sort can not understand the Psalmes, nor scarce the learned, no though they be translated or read in knowen tongues’.<sup>77</sup> Since it was just not an option to discuss a text on its literal level, there was a growing need for collectively-endorsed systems of allegory.

On the other hand, Lodge’s term ‘cunning notes’ suggests that monks ‘conning’ the glosses for their sermons were not unlike actors ‘conning’ their lines for a performance. Lodge recalls the ‘schoolmen’s cunning notes/Of heaven, of earth, of flowers, of springing trees, of herbs, of metal...’ and he presumably also recalls that ‘each different moralization is a potential sermon’.<sup>78</sup> Each moralisation also seems to have provided a monastic ‘commonplacing’ tradition that was continuing into Lodge’s own time.<sup>79</sup> This chapter, then, is

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<sup>72</sup> Owst, *Preaching*, 313.

<sup>73</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary*, 2.

<sup>74</sup> *Doctrinal Treatises* ed. H. Walter, (Cambridge, 1848) P.S. The Obedience of a Christian Man, ‘The Four Senses of the Scripture,’ p. 303. Quoted in Blench, *Preaching in England*, 1.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 1; Cf. Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 241-2.

<sup>76</sup> *Doctrinal Treatises* ed. H. Walter, (Cambridge, 1848) P.S. The Obedience of a Christian Man, ‘The Four Senses of the Scripture,’ p. 303. Quoted in Blench, *Preaching in England*, 1.

<sup>77</sup> *The Holy Bible Faithfully Translated into English, out of the Authentical Latin* (Douai, 1609-10). Quoted in Lyne, *Ovid’s Changing Worlds*, 43.

<sup>78</sup> Hexter, ‘Allegari of Pierre Bersuire’, 58; Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1.4.44-7; Reynolds, *Ovidius Moralizatus*, 149.

<sup>79</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 37-8; On commonplaces see, for example, Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon

about a kind of 'commonplacings' that persisted into the Renaissance but that has gone unobserved for too long. It will locate Shakespeare in a 'commonplace' tradition that drew on the schoolman's glosses, which at some point in his life he may have copied down from a printed edition, and which it is possible that he had come to know by heart. It will be argued that Shakespeare continues to show the same 'eagerness to clothe the pagan fables with moral teachings' in his Renaissance context.<sup>80</sup> It will suggest that the importance of these old moralizations was potentially brought home in the Elizabethan age by protheatrical writing, retrograde sermons, the old teaching of folly and the poetic and dramatic writing in the Ovidian fabulous mode. These last literary forms in particular seem to have carefully constructed a religious vacuum that some might have felt inclined to fill.<sup>81</sup> Such people might have found themselves looking for Walleys, and in keeping with the general Elizabethan understanding of the medieval work, the following sections will refer to the *Moralised Ovid* under this 'English' name once again.<sup>82</sup>

### **Ovidian Characters in the Renaissance: Secular or Saintly?**

Before examining evidence for the persistence of allegory that had its origins in pre-reformation religion, it is worth establishing whether allegory was a viable mode as far as the orthodox religion of post-reformation England was concerned. A broad outline of the story of Protestant allegory in the period might begin with Arthur Golding's (c. 1536-1606) advice for interpreting Ovid and reach its height with Edmund Spenser's (1552-1559) idiosyncratic new brand of allegory. In the Jacobean period, allegory seems to have been increasingly linked with the treasonable ingenuity of Jesuits before John Bunyan (1628-1688) managed to make it seem plain and Protestant once again.<sup>83</sup> To better understand the relationship of allegory and the orthodox religion of the Elizabethan period it is necessary to look more closely at the way that the

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Press, 1996); Eric M. MacFail, *Dancing around the Well: The Circulation of Commonplaces in Renaissance Humanism* (Indiana: Brill, 2014).

<sup>80</sup> Clark et al, *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 193.

<sup>81</sup> Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 106.

<sup>82</sup> The title-page bears the word 'anglico' [Englishman]

<sup>83</sup> Jones-Davies, 'Cymbeline and the sleep of faith', 197..

allegorical mode was defined in a particular place in the Protestants books: the prefatory material.

Spenser's 'Letter to Raleigh' prefixed to *The Faerie Queene* (1590/6), is addressed to Sir Walter Raleigh. Golding's 'Epistle of 1567', prefixed to his new translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1565/7), is addressed to another pillar of the Protestant establishment, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Under the watchful gaze of his patron, Spenser appears to lay down the tenets of his new brand of Protestant allegory.<sup>84</sup> Golding's epistle can seem to fulfil some parallel purpose. However, in some ways, both approaches are an attempt to limit the time they spend explaining the allegory to common readers. Both seem to think that they can dispense with the job of explaining Ovid's or their own underlying meanings—a job that had preoccupied the main text of medieval commentaries—in a tiny space before their main texts have even begun.<sup>85</sup> They are both prepared to leave those readers who were used to the old way of doing things feeling adrift without a moral compass in the main narratives themselves.

As they embarked on their literary endeavours, both Golding and Spenser would have had to ask themselves how far the archaic mode of allegory was suitable for a new Protestant nation.<sup>86</sup> Spenser's achievement is that he gives the impression of discovering an allegorical newfoundland and claiming this virgin territory in the name of Protestantism and Elizabeth. It used to be assumed that Golding's prefatory material was evidence that he was getting on the medieval moralising bandwagon.<sup>87</sup> However, critics like Bate, Lyne and Shell recognise that in Golding's work 'something different from the medieval tradition emerges.'<sup>88</sup> In fact, at the present time critics are far from sure that the *exempla* of the 'Epistle' can be called allegory or moralisation.<sup>89</sup>

Golding's prefatory material appears to set out a radical new scheme for interpreting the allegorical meaning of Ovid's mythic poem: 'Now when thou

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 30 n.61

<sup>85</sup> See Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds*, 32-34, 48 which draws on Gerard Genette's theory of the 'paratext.'

<sup>86</sup> Gary Waller, *Edmund Spenser: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 103; for the translation movement and English nationalism see Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 30; Raphael Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds: English Metamorphoses, 1567-1632* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 14-15.

<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Rosenberg, Eleanor. *Leicester: Patron of Letters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 157.

<sup>88</sup> Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds*, 32.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 45-6.



read'st of god or man, in stone, in beast or tree,/It is a mirror for thyself thine own estate to see.<sup>90</sup> Golding insisted that Ovid was holding up a 'glass' to humanity and providing models of behaviour to be imitated or avoided.<sup>91</sup> The brilliance of this scheme is that it turned the classical poem back on the reader, tempting them to recognise themselves in these fictional figures whose souls were in the balance.<sup>92</sup> Less diligent readers would dismiss these fables at their peril, because any character might be understood as a timely 'warning' of the way they were headed.<sup>93</sup> The epistle manages to imply that the entire *Metamorphosis* could be reduced to incitements to virtue and 'reproofs of vice.'<sup>94</sup> The lasting impression is that Ovid must have composed the work to drive people to 'just repentance'.<sup>95</sup> Crucially, this show of moralising is broadly directed at a group Golding designates the 'simple sort'.<sup>96</sup> Who were the 'simple sort'? Raphael Lyne provides a working definition:

Those who had not received the benefits of a humanist education, and who did not keep commonplace books in which to structure and improve their thinking through judicious annotation. They were those, therefore, whose only guide to reading was from the pulpit.<sup>97</sup>

The Elizabethan yeomanry might have allowed Golding's token *exempla* to pass for full-blown moralisations because they knew no better. However, a learned Elizabethan might have had a view closer to that of Don Cameron Allen who recognises that the interpretations in Golding are 'dull' and 'encysted' excuses for moralisation.<sup>98</sup>

Golding's *exempla* reduce Ovid's universe to a binary world in which different figures are either good or bad. It is a far cry from the medieval system in which 'the same figure can be moralized both *in bono* [in a good way] and *in*

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<sup>90</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Arthur Golding ed. Madeleine Forey. (London: Penguin, 2002), 'preface to the reader', 25.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 12.

<sup>92</sup> On early modern reading as a 'prologue to practical action of some kind' see Eugene R. Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England*, (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 110.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 'preface to the reader', 28.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Epistle of 1567', 7.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Preface to the Reader': 'I would not wish the simple sort offended...' etc.

<sup>97</sup> Lyne, *Ovid's Changing World*, 42.

<sup>98</sup> Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1970), 186.

*malo* [in a bad way]' and often in other ways besides, such as literally, historically, naturally and spiritually.<sup>99</sup> Golding presents the 'simple reader' with a pared-down travesty of one approach of many in the more carefully-articulated medieval interpretative tradition.<sup>100</sup> Whether or not Golding practised the kind of interpretation he preached, it remains true that Golding's 'morals' have much less momentum than his stories themselves.<sup>101</sup> This may well have led the 'simple sort' of readers to give up on trying to make the morals fit and forced them to enjoy the stories independently of allegory.<sup>102</sup> Other more learned readers, and possibly even Golding himself, may well have been pleased with the translation but continued to consult earlier moralising commentators to access underlying meanings in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

There is another curious thing about Golding's *exempla*. Golding seems to have been a puritan writing for a puritan patron.<sup>103</sup> If he was able to pass seamlessly from his work on Ovid to his work on Calvin and Plessis Mornay, it seems to have been because all this material stimulated his puritan interests.<sup>104</sup> But critics have pointed out that, in spite of all of the evidence for his intense religious outlook, Golding's *exempla* are purely ethical and secular. Nigel Alexander claimed that Golding's work represented a shift in perspective from an approach in which literature was moralised to a perspective in which it was merely moral.<sup>105</sup> This is taken up by Bate who argues that Golding's new scheme was conceived as an attempt to replace the earlier medieval spiritual allegory.<sup>106</sup> Lyne suggests that Golding's translation has shifted the stories out of the 'moral arena' while his prefatory writing 'separates Ovid even further from moralization' and, by implication, from religion.<sup>107</sup> Finally, Shell has also suggested that Golding can be counted among early modern writers who 'professed a religious style of interpretation while, in practice, translating with

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<sup>99</sup> Hexter, Ralph Jay, 'The Allegari of Pierre Bersuire: Interpretation and the Reductorium morale', *Allegorica*, 10 (1989), 51-84, 58. Hexter traces the approach back to the Physiologus and the bestiaries, though it is employed in a more sophisticated way, alongside other kinds of approaches, in the medieval *Moralised Ovid*.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 58, Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 171.

<sup>101</sup> Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds*, 19-20.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>103</sup> Rosenberg, *Leicester*, 158, 22, 188 ff. 196 ff; Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds*, 48, 63.

<sup>104</sup> Golding, *Metamorphoses*, 'Epistle of 1567', xii

<sup>105</sup> Nigel Alexander (ed.), *Elizabethan Narrative Verse* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), 9.

<sup>106</sup> Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, 31.

<sup>107</sup> Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds*, 32, 46.

what seem to be different priorities.’<sup>108</sup> To summarise, with Golding’s *exempla* something separate to spiritual allegory emerges.

The striking secular nature of Golding’s *exempla* is best demonstrated by setting them alongside the sacred medieval moralisations ascribed to Walleys, the kind of thing that Golding seems to have set out to replace. In Golding’s Epistle, Acteon, whose own dogs tragically turn on him, is a dissolute roisterer.<sup>109</sup> Compare this with the medieval tradition ascribed to Walleys: ‘*In malo* Acteon is a usurer; *in bono* he is Christ’.<sup>110</sup> In Golding’s interpretation ‘Daphne turned to bay’ presents merely ‘a mirror of virginity’, but in earlier tradition Daphne could stand for the ‘human soul’ or ‘a religious person drawing on the bark of penitence’ while the bay tree could stand for ‘the cross’.<sup>111</sup> Golding claims that the tale of Phaeton can teach how the misguided ‘magistrate/Confoundeth both his commonweal and eke his own estate’, while earlier tradition evoked the tale to teach the ‘imprudent prelate’ that ‘you have destroyed your land, you have slain your people’.<sup>112</sup> When Golding insists that the ‘crow and the raven’ merely stand for sycophants and tell-tales, it is easy to forget that the same black-feathered birds had once stood for ‘good monks and the religious’ because of their black habits and because they embodied the ‘black but beautiful’ church.<sup>113</sup> According to Golding, ‘the piteous tale of Pyramus and Thisbe doth contain/The heady force of frantic love, whose end is woe and pain’, when according to the earlier tradition ‘this history can be allegorised about the passion and incarnation of Christ’.<sup>114</sup> Finally, where Golding stresses that ‘Adonis’ death doth show that manhood strives/Against forewarning, though men see the peril of their lives’, earlier readings had associated Adonis with incarnate godhood.<sup>115</sup>

In the early 1990s, Bate made a statement to the effect that Golding’s Epistle probably represented Shakespeare’s only sustained encounter with the

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<sup>108</sup> Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2010), 92.

<sup>109</sup> Golding, *Metamorphoses*, trans. ‘Epistle of 1567’, 7-8, 8, 9.

<sup>110</sup> Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 173.

<sup>111</sup> Golding, *Metamorphoses*, ‘Epistle of 1567’, 7; Hexter, ‘Allegari of Pierre Bersuire’, 58.

<sup>112</sup> William D. Reynolds, ‘The *Ovidius Moralizatus* of Petrus Berchorius: An Introduction and Translation’, (PhD diss., Urbana: University of Illinois, 1971), 155; Pierre Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana Moraliter...Explanata* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), Reynolds, 155, Bersuire II.iiiij

<sup>113</sup> Reynolds, ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’, 167; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, II.xvii. Song of Solomon 1.4.

<sup>114</sup> Golding, *Metamorphoses*, ‘Epistle of 1567’, 8.

<sup>115</sup> Golding, *Metamorphoses*, ‘Epistle of 1567’, 11.

moralising tradition.<sup>116</sup> This statement could still stand with a little tweaking, which is necessary now that critics are no longer comfortable with the idea that Golding was even engaged in moralising.<sup>117</sup> The revised statement might run: ‘Shakespeare was probably content with what passed for moralisations in Golding’s Epistle.’ On the face of it, this might still seem like a reasonable assumption, because Golding’s Ovidian *exempla* are the closest interpretation in time to Shakespeare and would not require him to draw on his training in reading Latin. Even if readers today were willing to claim that they knew as much Latin as Shakespeare, most people would still rather read the English verse of Golding’s Epistle than Latin allegories dreamt up by some medieval monk. However, it has long been recognised that Shakespeare’s knowledge of Ovid’s text itself came from several sources, as verbal borrowings from Golding’s translation appear in his plays alongside wording that is closer to the original Latin.<sup>118</sup> It is therefore not implausible that, in pursuit of the text’s allegorical meaning, he might also cast his net wider than the work of Golding and once again consult works in Latin. If Golding’s *exempla* represent a puritan take on Ovid’s meaning, this might also have driven Shakespeare to look elsewhere, as few critics have ever felt prepared to argue that Shakespeare had much sympathy for puritanism.<sup>119</sup> Finally, if Golding’s *exempla* are aimed at the ‘simple sort’, Shakespeare had sufficient education to consult alternative authorities on allegory like Boccaccio, Ficino and the printed fable-by-fable moralisations that circulated under the name of Walleys.<sup>120</sup> These are the authorities that the writer Thomas Howell had recourse to when preparing his own translation of an Ovidian fable in 1560, and there is no reason that Shakespeare could not have done the same.<sup>121</sup>

In fact, there has been a growing awareness among scholars that Shakespeare’s work includes general reminiscences of traditional spiritual allegory and even specific echoes of the moralisations associated with Walleys. Recently, critics like René Weiss and Rosalie Colie have identified sustained

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<sup>116</sup> Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, 31.

<sup>117</sup> Lyne, *Ovid’s Changing Worlds*, 25.

<sup>118</sup> John Considine, ‘Arthur Golding (1535/6-1606),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008), Accessed February 9, 2019. doi-org.lib.exeter.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/10908

<sup>119</sup> Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 82.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>121</sup> Alexander (ed.), *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, introduction, 8; Lyne, *Ovid’s Changing Worlds*, 34-5.

engagement with the Ovidian fable of Phaeton alongside spiritual allegory relating to Saint Mary the Virgin in *Romeo and Juliet*.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, Patricia Parker has suggested that much of the comedy in the 'Pyramus and Thisbe' play of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is derived from 'hilarious echoes' of Walleys' moralisations which explained the fable as an allegory for Christ's Passion.<sup>123</sup> Tom MacFaul has pointed out that Shakespeare seems to imagine an Adonis who is less a type of 'manhood', as Golding argued, and more a 'type of Christ' in 'an allegory of Christ's incarnation.'<sup>124</sup> Hannibal Hamlin has called for a long overdue rehabilitation of the term 'Christ-figure' which is useful for thinking about characters elsewhere in Shakespeare's work.<sup>125</sup> Finally, Margaret Jones-Davies has suggested that Shakespeare continued to engage with spiritual allegory in his work into the Jacobean period after the allegorical mode had become largely discredited in orthodox discourse and associated with Jesuits.<sup>126</sup>

By remaining open to the possibility that Shakespeare's work recalls *exempla* from spiritual allegory, these critics have brought modern criticism in line with Elizabethan comments. The earliest surviving poem addressed to Shakespeare seems to locate his work in a tradition of spiritual allegory pre-dating Golding's secular *exempla*. In the past, critics have tended to assume that Ovidian poems in the tradition of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' are taking a universe that has been emptied of saints and refilling it with pagan deities.<sup>127</sup> However, a contrary opinion is given by John Weever (1575/6-1632), who presumably knew what he was talking about because he would later contribute his own poem, 'Faunus and Melliflora' (1600), to the same tradition. His Shakespearean sonnet 'Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare' comments that, when

<sup>122</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. René Weis (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2012), 3.2.3 n.3.; Rosalie L. Colie, 'Othello and the problematic of love' in Harold Bloom (ed.) *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2000), 96.

<sup>123</sup> Parker, Patricia, 'What's in a Name: and More', *Sederi XI: Revista de la Sociedad Española de Estudios Renascentistas Ingleses*, Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2002, 138 n.128, 119

<sup>124</sup> Tom MacFaul, *Shakespeare and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 39, 40.

<sup>125</sup> Hannibal Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 70.

<sup>126</sup> Jones-Davies, Margaret 'Cymbeline and the sleep of faith' in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, eds. Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay and Richard Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 197. As evidence for the claim about the Jesuits and allegory, Jones-Davies cites G. P. Norton (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, The Renaissance Vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 105.

<sup>127</sup> Leech, Clifford, 'Venus and Her Nun: Portrait of Women in Love by Shakespeare and Marlowe', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 5, no. 2. Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring, 1965), 247-268, 252.

it comes to the main characters in works like Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis', it is more accurate to 'say they are saints, although like saints they show not' because 'they burn in love.'<sup>128</sup> After alleging that Shakespeare's pen has already given birth to some secular characters who are, in fact, saints it goes on to suggest that Shakespeare beget 'more [of this] nymphish brood'.<sup>129</sup> In other words, for some unexplained reason, it seems to be deploying the terms 'saint' and 'nymph' interchangeably. It may be that this unexplained aspect of Weever's work calls out for the kind of explanation that could be brought by an interpretative tradition. Sure enough, in a description of how Cerambus was snatched from a deadly river of sin when he prayed to nymphs, the commentary ascribed to Walleys includes a memorable equation of 'nymphs' with 'saints'.<sup>130</sup>

As would be expected of a medieval commentary, the *Moralised Ovid* includes material no longer appropriate in a post-reformation context, such as that relating to prayers for saints interceding on behalf of sinners.<sup>131</sup> Any echo of this kind of material in Elizabethan writing would be embarrassing, not to say subversive, as it would jolt the reader back to a time when lesser sanctified beings, including female saints and the blessed virgin, were universally believed to sway the decisions of the divine patriarch with regard to sinners.<sup>132</sup> The *Moralised Ovid* embarrassingly teaches that it is possible to evade sin by resorting 'to nymphs—that is to the saints—through prayer' ['ad nymphos id est ad sanctos pro oronem'].<sup>133</sup> Curiously, 'nymph' can occasionally seem to evoke the notion of a 'saint' or 'intercessor' in Shakespeare's own work, notably in Hamlet's address to Ophelia to remember him in her prayers: 'Nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remember'd'.<sup>134</sup> It is for the individual reader to decide how far the conjunction of classical 'nymph' and the Latinate, monkish 'orisons'

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<sup>128</sup> John Weever, 'Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare', Epigrams, London: 1599, 4<sup>th</sup> week, 22, repr. In Ernst Honigmann, *John Weever: A Biography of a Literary Associate of Shakespeare and Jonson, together with a Photographic Facsimile of Weever's 'Epigrams'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 109.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>130</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 279; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, VII.x; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.3..

<sup>131</sup> See, for example, Clifford Ronan, 'Keeping Faith: Water Imagery and Religious Diversity in Othello' in Philip C. Koln (ed.), *Othello: New Critical Essays* (London: Routledge, 2002), 280.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>133</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 279; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, VII.x.

<sup>134</sup> Interestingly, 'Nymph' is also the English form of the Greek words for 'bride' and 'bridegroom,' suggesting that it could have been used in spiritual allegory to identify the bride and bridegroom of the Book of Revelation.

constitute an echo of the memorable pre-reformation commonplace as it appears in the *Moralised Ovid*. Similarly, when Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke alternates between the words ‘saints’ and ‘nymphs’ in his poetic sequence *Caelica* (1577), one reader might take it for a poetic commonplace where another might be reminded of the old Ovidian moralisation.<sup>135</sup>

If Weever’s elision of ‘nymphs’ into ‘saints’ is best interpreted according to the tradition of the *Moralised Ovid*, this would also explain why he phrased the line: ‘Say they are saints’.<sup>136</sup> The dominant impression of reading the *Moralised Ovid* is very different from reading the verse Epistle of Golding because almost all of the separate moralisations are introduced with the phrase: ‘Say they are...’. The medieval moral commentary uses this formula of ‘Say they are...’ because it is instructing the preacher on how best to vocalise the mythic narratives for a congregation, something that was no longer a concern by the time that Golding was writing. An example of this might be the moral gloss on Atlas:

Say that he is Christ...  
 Or say that he is a contemplative man...  
 [*Dic quod iste est Christ...*  
*Vel dic quod iste est vir contemplatiuus...*]<sup>137</sup>

Another example might be the gloss on the nymph Leucothoe, immortalised in Elizabethan poetic tradition as ‘the Morn’:

Say that such a one is any virgin martyr...  
 [*Dic quod talis est quaelibet virgo martyr...*]<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Fulke Greville, *Fulke Greville: Selected Poems*, ed. Neil Powell (Manchester: Carcanet, 1990), 26. Quoted in Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 59. The poem substitutes the line ‘If in my heart all nymphs else be defaced’ for ‘if in my heart all saints else be defaced’, suggesting a system of meaning in which they are equated.

<sup>136</sup> My italics.

<sup>137</sup> Reynolds, ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’, 157 cf. 224; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, 2.6; see also Hexter, ‘Allegari of Pierre Bersuire’, 58; Cf. Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 173.

<sup>138</sup> Ovid’s ‘Leucothoe’ is universally referred to as ‘the Morn’ in the fabulous verse narratives of Lodge, Marlowe and Shakespeare. Reynolds, ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’, 209-210; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, 4.4; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. R. J. Tarrant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 4.239-40; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1986, repr. 1988), 81.

Ralph Hexter identifies 'Dic quod' ['Say'] and 'Vel dic' ['Or say'] as two of the most common of only a handful of formulas which can be found at the beginning of paragraphs in the commentary.<sup>139</sup> He speaks of the experience of reading Bersuire as encountering a rippling effect or 'open-ended series, potentially infinite, of "vel dic"s ['Or say's]'.<sup>140</sup> He adds 'the potential for meaning, for multiple and even contradictory significations, is endless.'<sup>141</sup> By means of a single word, so easily missed, Weever is potentially making a claim about the nature of Shakespeare's Ovidianism.

If Weever's sonnet deploys the word 'say' and equates 'saints' and 'nymphs' to link Shakespeare with a tradition of spiritual allegory, why would it take the trouble to do this? Alison Shell has identified Catholic critiques that target Shakespeare's work for a perceived lack of Christian subject-matter.<sup>142</sup> She suggests that Weever's sonnet is best understood as a way of defending Shakespeare from such critiques by pointing out that religion was not an absence, but a 'significant absence' in his work.<sup>143</sup> In other words, Shakespeare had built an Ovidian poem which you would almost swear was still inhabited by Christianity. Not only that, there were times when you could not acquit yourself of the suspicion that the pagan inhabitants recalled pre-reformation moralised figures much more than the secularising *exempla* of Golding.

Of course, this only reveals how Weever was reading Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis', and it could have been a perverse misreading. Shakespeare himself does not seem to advertise any interpretative tradition in the prefatory material and so cannot be said to emulate the Protestant precedent set by Golding and Spenser.<sup>144</sup> However, it is possible to home in on subtle moralistic moments incorporated into his verse, which potentially align him with those medieval moralisers who sometimes incorporated commentary into the body of their texts or marginal notes.<sup>145</sup> Shell has pointed out that there can be no question that the moralising voice is present in the main body of

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<sup>139</sup> Hexter, 'Allegari of Pierre Bersuire', 58.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>142</sup> Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 105-6. The Catholic critiques include a poem by someone calling themselves I.C. entitled *Saint Marie Magdalens Conversion* (preface, 1603) and a prefatory verse by John Gennings, John Wilson or another writer in *The Life and Death of Mr. Edmund Geninges Priest* (1614).

<sup>143</sup> Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 105-6.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 93

<sup>145</sup> Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds*, 34.



Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis'.<sup>146</sup> Shakespeare's verse certainly employs the language of allegory, pausing to 'moralise', 'applying this to that, and so to so', and providing allegorical 'comment'.<sup>147</sup>

So is there a tradition of moralisation that can provide glosses for the characters in Shakespeare's Ovidian world? As has been seen, a reader who was still reconciled to the approach of Walleys ran the risk of concluding that Shakespeare's Adonis was 'a type of Christ'.<sup>148</sup> Interestingly, this conclusion has been reached independently by today's Shakespeare scholars.<sup>149</sup> Of course, there is no reason to suppose that it was the most popular way of reading the poem in the early modern period, any more than it is likely to catch on as a popular way of reading it today. Nevertheless, the poem is compatible with spiritual allegories in which the lover and beloved can alternate, when one stands for Christ the other stands for the saints, the church, the human soul and so on.<sup>150</sup> This was a way of reading that, according to Parker, was mainstream when it came to biblical books like the Song of Solomon, but certainly has no place in a Calvinistic mirror of allegory relating to Ovid.<sup>151</sup>

In Walleys there were also glosses that corresponded closely to the animal inhabitants of Shakespeare's Ovidian world. Shakespeare mentions the 'hare' with the words 'mark the poor wretch', and later describes the 'hare' and the 'roe [deer]' as 'the timorous' and the 'fearful'.<sup>152</sup> As with Weever's sonnet, the potential for allegorical readings hinges upon sly little words, easily missed unless the reader is attuned to them. A Tudor reader might home in on Shakespeare's phrase 'mark the...' because in the period moral interpretation in commentaries and marginal glosses was still signposted in a 'sententious tone with exhortations like "Marke thys"'.<sup>153</sup> If Tudor readers were prompted by Shakespeare's 'mark the...' to search out a moral source for this way of characterising the beasts, they could have done worse than consult the *Moralised Ovid*, where the deer and the hare do indeed stand for 'the fearful

<sup>146</sup> Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 92.

<sup>147</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 712-4.

<sup>148</sup> MacFaul, *Natural World*, 39, 40.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 39, 40.

<sup>150</sup> Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 200.

<sup>151</sup> Parker, Patricia, 'What's in a Name', 120 n.80

<sup>152</sup> Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 674, 680, 674, 676, 677.

<sup>153</sup> Lyne, *Ovid's Changing World*, 35.

and the poor.’<sup>154</sup> Coming just after a stanza in which the word ‘moralise’ features so prominently, this is at the very least suggestive. This is why it is necessary to look more closely at this medieval interpretative tradition that John Weever provocatively linked with Shakespeare. If in those tantalising moments where Shakespeare can be caught in the act of moralisation it is not straightforwardly like the *exempla* of Golding, it is important to understand more about the retrograde tradition and why it was still being evoked in post-reformation Britain.

### **Protheatrical Writing Champions the Old Morals**

To gain further insight into Elizabethan views on allegory, it is necessary to examine the great literary controversies of the age.<sup>155</sup> The early modern period was one in which the arts, especially the performative arts, came under attack. A spate of vociferous tracts set out the case against the theatre and critics have understandably been drawn to the rhetoric where it reaches fever pitch. However, this section will suggest that the same noisy tracts can be quietly revealing about attitudes to medieval moralisation in the Elizabethan period. This is unlikely to come as a surprise since, as Alison Shell has pointed out, ‘allegory and polemic are natural companions’.<sup>156</sup>

In the past, the influential criticism of Jonas Barish has often taken literally the puritan rhetoric of the time and assumed that plays were secular entertainments competing with religion.<sup>157</sup> It certainly was a time when there were fears, voiced by the antitheatricalist churchman John Northbrooke, that some were not ashamed to claim ‘that they learn as much or more at a play than they do at God’s words preached’.<sup>158</sup> However, more recently, Jeffrey Knapp has pointed out that the reason people were potentially learning more at plays is because these plays engaged with didactic material. He argues that there was a trade in language and ideas between the pulpit and the stage to the

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<sup>154</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 679-680; Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 673-4, 6-7; Reynolds, ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’, 360; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, X.xii.

<sup>155</sup> As a means of assessing contemporary attitudes to Ovidian allegory this section will engage with the antitheatrical controversy, while the next section will engage briefly with the Marprelate controversy.

<sup>156</sup> Shell, *Catholicism*, 188.

<sup>157</sup> See Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1981).

<sup>158</sup> Northbrooke, *Treatise*, 60. Quoted in Knapp, *Shakespeare’s Tribe*, 5.

extent that plays were often understood as 'godly exercises'.<sup>159</sup> Censorship in the period targeted material of a religious nature in plays, eliminating overtly religious characters from the early modern stage and even restricting overtly religious language.<sup>160</sup> Knapp contends that censorship, traditionally imagined to be so effective, did not, in fact, succeed in suppressing the homiletic tenor of plays but merely drove it underground.<sup>161</sup>

Into the vortex of this debate, that often derives its tone from preaching to denounce or defend the preaching tone of plays, stepped two highly accomplished polemicists. The first was Stephen Gosson (1554-1625). His university education in the classics was cut short which left him with a niggling feeling of inferiority among his peers.<sup>162</sup> In London he turned his hand to didactic plays, writing one on the subject of Catiline long before Ben Jonson, but all of them fell flat.<sup>163</sup> At this point he saw his opportunity to catch public attention by railing against the university learning and the theatre world which he knew so well in his tract on the misapplications of art, *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579) which was reaffirmed later that year in *An Apology of 'The Schoole of Abuse'* appended to *The Ephemerides* (1579). If there seems to be a puritan quality to his arguments, this is perhaps not a wholly misplaced observation. He is clearly a kind of puritan.<sup>164</sup> Nevertheless, Gosson was perhaps not the kind of man who cared to rally to any kind of group, religious or otherwise, that might have wanted him for a member, and he sometimes attacked puritans as vehemently as plays.<sup>165</sup> *The Schoole of Abuse* claimed that drama, with its classical roots, raised concerns that it could lead to the biblical devil or, worse, heathen idolatry.<sup>166</sup> When writers like Shakespeare acknowledged that their inspiration came from the Castalian springs of Apollo of Fancy's cup, as far as

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<sup>159</sup> Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 3, 2.

<sup>160</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 10.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>162</sup> Arthur F. Kinney, 'Stephen Gosson (bap. 1554 d. 1625)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008), Accessed February 9, 2019. doi-org.lib.exeter.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/11120.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> For the problems generally associated with the label puritan see McRae, *Renaissance Drama*, 95-6. J. F. Kinney argues that in his later career Gosson became an agent for Sir Thomas Walsingham consorting with Jesuits on the continent. Arthur F. Kinney, 'Stephen Gosson (bap. 1554 d. 1625)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008), Accessed February 9, 2019. doi-org.lib.exeter.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/11120.

<sup>165</sup> Shell. *Shakespeare and Religion*, 34.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

the opponents of theatre were concerned, they were admitting that it was 'sucked out of the Devil's teats, to nourish us in idolatry, heathenry, sin'.<sup>167</sup> Such forms of inspiration were best left well alone.

The second of the two polemicists was Thomas Lodge (1558-1625). Like Gosson he left university with a superb classical education. Like Gosson he would go on to write his own Roman play, *The Wounds of Civil War* (1558) and a didactic play with Robert Greene that would recast London as Nineveh, called *A Looking Glass for London and England* (1559).<sup>168</sup> However, unlike Gosson, his plays would be a success and future generations would recall him as the first of many 'Libertines in poetry' who acquired his poetic license from Ovid.<sup>169</sup> Like Shakespeare, he seems to have had no problem with the idea that poetry and drama might have a divine source.<sup>170</sup> He insinuated that Gosson had betrayed his education out of self-interest. If Gosson wrote like a puritan, Lodge wrote like a recusant.<sup>171</sup> He was more than equal to prevail against the exuberance of Gosson's verbosity, but, like most recusants entering a public Protestant forum, he also seems to have had ulterior motives of his own. He was prepared to hijack the debate to promote the old medieval moralisations to the interests of a Renaissance readership.<sup>172</sup> So Lodge's *A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse in Defence of Poetry, Musick and Stage Plays* (1579) is not simply a work of 'Renaissance protheatricalism'.<sup>173</sup> It is a complex text that is calling out to be re-examined for three main reasons.

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<sup>167</sup> Stubbes, *Anatomie*, L7v, L6r. Quoted in Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 5.

<sup>168</sup> Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhusyen (eds.), *Shakespeare's Poems* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007), introduction, 22-23.

<sup>169</sup> Thomas Carew, 'Elegy on the Death of John Donne'. For a reading of this poem see Nigel Alexander (ed.), *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), 2-3. Cf. For Lodge's amatory poetry in the Ovidian mode 'that uses suspiciously religious language' see Clare Asquith, *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 23.

<sup>170</sup> Lodge, Thomas, *The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge*, 'A reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse', 13, 19 Cf. Boccaccio *Genealogy of the Gods* on the furor poeticus: '[Poetry is] a kind of fervor, a rare and divine gift of exquisite invention and exquisite expression. This fervor is sublime in its effects, impelling the soul to a longing for utterance; it produces strange, original creations of the mind, composes them in a certain order, adorns them with a unique fabric of words and meanings, and in this way covers the truth with a fabulous and fitting veil'. Quoted in Reynolds 'Ovidius Moralizatus', introduction, 22.

<sup>171</sup> Eliane Cuvelier, *Thomas Lodge Témoin de son Temps (c. 1558-1625)* (Paris: Didier Erudition, 1984), 28; Alexandra Halasz, 'Thomas Lodge (1558-1625)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008), Accessed February 9, 2019. doi-org.lib.exeter.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/16923.

<sup>172</sup> Alexander (ed.), *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, 7.

<sup>173</sup> Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 11.

Firstly, the importance of Lodge's pamphlet is that it is the first in the series of Renaissance works defending the poetry and theatre and the forerunner of the most famous of these, Sir Philip Sidney's *The Defence of Poesie* (1595).<sup>174</sup> Gosson had had the temerity to single out Sidney as dedicatee to bring clout to his first antitheatrical pamphlet. Sidney seems not to have taken kindly to Gosson's dedication and it may have provoked his own contribution to the debate.<sup>175</sup> He waited a seemly space of time and then brought out his own defence in which, naturally, he claims higher motives than responding to an upstart who does not merit a 'Reply'.<sup>176</sup> If Lodge's and Sidney's defences seem strangely parallel in their commitment to traditionalist values, this is interesting in the light of recent revisionist enquiries into Sidney's religious allegiances by Katherine Duncan-Jones and Clare Asquith.<sup>177</sup>

Secondly, Lodge's work is a highly accomplished work in its own right. It is a stirring read that seems to offer the reader a front-row seat at a heated disputation between two Oxford-educated gentlemen. Lodge feels compelled to stand up to 'disburden' Gosson's 'heavy head of those grose follies you have conceived'.<sup>178</sup> With a wave of the hand he dismisses Gosson's cherished classical examples, claiming that they 'bewray your reading but not your wisdom: would God they had been well aplied!'<sup>179</sup> He paints a picture of Gosson, forced to sit by and listen as he is exposed, foaming at the mouth with rage: 'methinks while you heare thys I see you swallowe down your owne spittle for revenge!'<sup>180</sup>

Thirdly, the tract has been misrepresented by scholars and this needs to be put right. In the 1970s, in his influential study *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives*, William Keach completely misread Lodge's tract. He claimed that Lodge's *Reply to Gosson* could just not be serious in its defence of spiritual allegory in Ovid.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Alexandra Halasz, 'Thomas Lodge (1558-1625)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008), Accessed February 9, 2019. doi-org.lib.exeter.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/16923.

<sup>175</sup> Arthur F. Kinney, 'Stephen Gosson (bap. 1554 d. 1625)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008), Accessed February 9, 2019. doi-org.lib.exeter.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/11120.

<sup>176</sup> Asquith, *Shadowplay*, 149.

<sup>177</sup> Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 126. Asquith, *Shadowplay*, 148.

<sup>178</sup> Lodge, 'A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse', 15.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>181</sup> Keach, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives*, 33; See also William S. Anderson (ed.) *Ovid: The Classical Heritage*, (London: Routledge, 2015), 214.

He insisted that in 1579 Lodge was employing irony to distance himself from the old-fashioned moralisations that he would abandon shortly afterwards (when he came to write 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis').<sup>182</sup> This is a perverse misreading of Lodge's tract (and his later poem) that depends on just a couple of isolated sentences from the tract cited by Keach. Other critics have recognised that Lodge's works reflect his monkish concerns and this pamphlet certainly reveals his retrograde commitment to medieval values.<sup>183</sup> In fact, Lodge's *Reply To Gosson* champions old moralised readings that lead the reader to sound Catholic conclusions. Ostensibly an attack on Gosson, Lodge's sustained explanation of spiritual allegory lays the groundwork for a campaign of literature, especially the tradition that was heralded by his own 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis.' Lodge achieves this by raising awareness of the continuing relevance of the hidden meanings of Ovid's work for Elizabethan people.

A clear sign that Lodge is paving the way for fabulous literature is that he takes issue with Stephen Gosson's rejection of fable. Lodge is not going to stand by and listen to Gosson dismissing fables as fairy 'toyes':<sup>184</sup>

These are "toyes" because they savour of wisdom which you want. Mark what Campanus sayth, *Mira fabularum vanitas sed quae si introspiciantur videri possunt non vanae*. The vanitie of tales is wonderful, yet if we advisedly looke into them they wil seme & prove wise.<sup>185</sup>

Today it is hard to accept that Lodge can be serious when he goes out of his way to insist that fairy tales are wise. However, some indication of how utterly serious he is can be gleaned from the subversive way that he cross-references the *sententia* of the Italian humanist Campanus (Giovanni Antonio Campani 1427-1477). Readers who traced the sentence back to its original context would find that it preceded Campanus' defence of the teachings of Bersuire's commentary about the significance of Ovid's gods. This means that the moralisations ascribed to Walleys are being alluded to by one remove, as if

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<sup>182</sup> Keach, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives*, 33; see also Anderson (ed.) *Ovid: The Classical Heritage*, 214.

<sup>183</sup> Edward A. Tenney, *Thomas Lodge* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1935), 111.

<sup>184</sup> Lodge, 'A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse', 2.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

Lodge is signposting his reading but also covering his tracks. Not only that, an impeccable humanist authority is being used to subliminally advertise retrograde religious messages.

Lodge teaches his readers to approach contemporary pagan material with the words, ‘Where’s Walleys?’ He starts by demanding: ‘For wot thou that in the person of Saturne our decaying years are signified?’<sup>186</sup> This reflects the pervasive classical tradition, mentioned in Walleys, that Saturn ‘is called an old man.’<sup>187</sup> Lodge adds that ‘in the person of Minerva is our understanding signified, both in respect of warre and policie. When they faine that Pallas was begotten of Iupiter their meaning is none other, but that al wisdom (as the learned say) is from above, and commeth from the father of lights.’<sup>188</sup> Again, this is a paraphrase of Walleys who writes that ‘Minerva signifies wisdom and the life of a wise man which is born from the brain of Jove—that is from the divine mind itself—and is derived from the father of lights.’<sup>189</sup> Lodge maintains that ‘in the portraiture of Apollo all knowledge is denocated’ just as Walleys identifies Apollo as Christ who can denote ‘wisdom...because through his influence men are taught to learn the secrets of God—that is those things that pertain to the soul.’<sup>190</sup> Lodge demands ‘Doth Juno with her riches displease thee?...O holy headed man, why may not Juno resemble the ayre?’ which reflects Walleys’ comments that ‘Juno is a representation of the air according to Fulgentius...or say that according to Fulgentius through Juno is perceived wealth.’<sup>191</sup>

However, Lodge’s argument with Gosson is disingenuous as he deliberately draws on selective material. Anyone who traced his words about Juno back to their ultimate source in Walleys’ commentary would find the claim that ‘such a goddess [as Juno] seems in all respects to be the Blessed Virgin because she is the goddess, lady, and mistress of authority, riches and paradise.’<sup>192</sup> Walleys’ commentary also offers an alternative possibility: ‘Or say

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>187</sup> Reynolds ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’, 37; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, De Saturno & eius figura, capitulum .i.

<sup>188</sup> Lodge, ‘A Reply to Stephen Gosson’s Schoole of Abuse’, , 5.

<sup>189</sup> Reynolds, ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’ 79; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, De Iove & eius figura capitulum secundum.

<sup>190</sup> Lodge, ‘A Reply to Stephen Gosson’s Schoole of Abuse’, 1-48, 5; Reynolds, ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’, 61.

<sup>191</sup> Lodge, ‘A Reply to Stephen Gosson’s Schoole of Abuse’, 1-48, 4, 8; Reynolds, ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’, 82, 84; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, De Iunone & eius figura capitulum .ix.

<sup>192</sup> Reynolds, ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’, 82

that the wife of Jove—that is Christ—is the church.’<sup>193</sup> By launching into a controversy focusing on the performing arts, Lodge cannot realistically expect to convince a puritan like Gosson to accept a system of allegory which recognised Juno as Saint Mary the Virgin or the Church. However, by using the polemic as platform, he can expect to reach readers more congenial to his teachings than Gosson and to advise that, if they value their souls, they should continue to search out the schoolman’s cunning notes.

The influence of Lodge’s *Reply to Gosson* was surely much greater than has previously been imagined, since in teaching its readers to remember the spiritual allegory, it achieved two things. Firstly, it provided one viable interpretative approach that could be brought to bear on the Ovidian verse narratives which were associated with so-called ‘libertines of poetry’ like Lodge, Marlowe and Shakespeare.<sup>194</sup> In the past, critics have tended to read these Ovidian poems in a way that is reminiscent of a post-medieval, secularised perspective like that of Arthur Golding. There were certainly many readers in the Renaissance who would have read Marlowe’s ‘Hero and Leander’ (1593) or Shakespeare’s ‘Venus and Adonis’ (1593) in this way. However, it is worth considering the possibility that certain early modern readers may have believed that the Ovidian style provided a license for the kind of permissive readings that are advocated by Thomas Lodge or John Weever. After all, when readers today are asking themselves how best to interpret Ovidian texts like ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’ (1589) or ‘Faunus and Melliflora’ (1600), it seems absurd to favour the straight and narrow path of an early modern puritan over the authority of the authors themselves. Even if the authors were being ironic in some way and their advocacy of reprobate interpretations was more like a pose than a genuine position, this still calls for further investigation.

Secondly, Lodge’s pamphlet provided a key to the theatrical practice of invoking pagan gods on the early modern stage. Critics have long been adept at converting ‘Jove’ to ‘God’ when the invocation is encountered in Renaissance drama. It is possible that this practice was popularised by the authority of Lodge, and earlier still by that of Walleys, who had instructed readers to ‘say allegorically that Jove can signify God’.<sup>195</sup> A superficial reading of Stephen

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<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 83/

<sup>194</sup> Thomas Carew, ‘Elegy on the Death of John Donne’. For a reading of this poem see Alexander (ed.), *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, 2-3.

<sup>195</sup> Reynolds, ‘Ovidius Moralizatus’, 46; Bersuire, *De love & eius figura capitulum secundum*



Greenblatt's work might suggest that he exposed this practice as nothing more than an expediency of the 1606 censorship which posited a ten pound fine for taking the name of the Lord in vain.<sup>196</sup> It is true that early modern writers were constantly saying to themselves: 'I must now search my wits, I see this shall pass through many severe sensors handling, I must advise me what I write, and write that I would wish.'<sup>197</sup> However, what Greenblatt actually argues is that 'the players' simple and effective response, sanctioned by a long tradition, was to substitute for the interdicted words names like Jove and Jupiter, each a miniature metaphor for the Christian god.'<sup>198</sup> In other words, he emphasises that it was not merely a negative response to government control but also a positive declaration of literary allegiance since the practice was 'sanctioned by a long tradition'.<sup>199</sup> It is not implausible that one important strand in this long tradition was the moralisations that went by the name of Walleys. An early modern playgoer familiar with this tradition might hear an actor mention Phoebus and recall that, through the image of Phoebus, Ovid portrays 'the sun of justice, Christ'.<sup>200</sup> Alternatively, he might hear the phrase 'Promethean heat' used to describe the vital spark of a Shakespearean heroine.<sup>201</sup> Next, he might remember that, through the 'image of Prometheus', 'Ovid presents the creation'.<sup>202</sup> In this way, something as simple as a pagan reference might emphasise the Christian raw materials that had framed the feminised body on stage. Not only that, it might emphasise a particular kind of Christianity. Here was a boy-actor whose very flesh bespoke the pre-reformation tradition that 'men of mould' were created from the 'pure' substance of 'heaven's eternal mould', rather than the puritan insinuation that man was created from 'earth, or

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<sup>196</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 10. See also McRae, *Renaissance Drama*, 88.

<sup>197</sup> Lodge, 'A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse', 34.

<sup>198</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 10.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>200</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 141; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, I.xix. Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 129; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, 1.1; Cf. Lodge, 'A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse', 3-4.

<sup>201</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 141; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, I.xix. Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 129; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, 1.1; Cf. Lodge, 'A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse', 3-4.

<sup>202</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 141; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, I.xix. Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 129; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, 1.1; Cf. Lodge, 'A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse', 3-4.

slimy clay.’<sup>203</sup> Suddenly, the body on stage becomes evidence for the claims of the true religion in much the same way as the Book of Nature. In short, just by asking ‘Where’s Walleys’, a Tudor playgoer might expand the possibilities for interpretation far beyond a simple substitution of one pagan figure for a Christian one. They might begin by marvelling at the colours in an actor’s cheek and end by reconstituting a vanishing cosmology. Crucially, if early modern playgoers were able to do this it was because of a long tradition of Ovidian moralisation it was also likely to be because they had been primed by Lodge’s more recent campaign.<sup>204</sup>

Henry Woudhuysen and Katherine Duncan-Jones have plausibly suggested that it was ‘through Lodge that Shakespeare, in turn, came to realize the huge poetic potential of Ovidian myth’.<sup>205</sup> This section will end by suggesting that the impetus for some of Shakespeare’s botanic comparisons seems to derive from a joint reading of the two Thomases, Lodge and Walleys. In ‘Truth’s Complaint Over England’ (1584), Lodge’s epic simile compared certain men of the ‘common state’ to darnel to suggest how the ‘reformed state’ might be threatened by the ‘idle hedded commones’.<sup>206</sup> Similarly, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare compares the commons to a ‘vagabond flag’ or reed:<sup>207</sup>

This common body

Like to a vagabond flag upon the stream,  
Goes to and back, lackeying the varying tide,  
To rot itself with motion.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 3.2.22; Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 520, 757; Golding, *Metamorphoses*, ‘Epistle of 1567’, 15, 449.

<sup>204</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 10

<sup>205</sup> Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen (eds.), *Shakespeare’s Poems* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007), introduction, 19-20.

<sup>206</sup> Thomas Lodge, *The Complete Works*, London: Huntingdon Club, 1883, repr. London & New York: Johnson Reprint Company Ltd., 1966, Vol. 1, ‘An Alarum Against Usurers...with the lamentable Complaint of Truth over England’, 1-91, 88; Thomas Lodge, *The Complete Works*, London: Huntingdon Club, 1883, repr. London & New York: Johnson Reprint Company Ltd., 1966, Vol. 1, ‘A Reply to Stephen Gosson’s Schoole of Abuse’, 1-48, 41.

<sup>207</sup> Lodge, ‘An Alarum Against Usurers...with the lamentable Complaint of Truth over England’, 88; Lodge, ‘A Reply to Stephen Gosson’s Schoole of Abuse’, 41.

<sup>208</sup> William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, Ed. John Wilders (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1995), 1.4.44-7.

At first this seems like nothing more than a secular simile. However, on closer inspection, the impetus to frame types of people as reeds derives straight from Walleys' spiritual allegory:

The sinful and obstinate soul...despises the friendship of God and turns itself to rivers—that is the pleasures of the world. For such a one is often changed into a reed—that is, a vain, unstable, and harmful person who like the reed is easily broken by sin and is moved by the wind of vanity and vain glory. About such a one is said Matthew 11:7: 'What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?'<sup>209</sup>

It is even possible that Shakespeare's word 'vagabond' is a concise way of rendering a 'vain, unstable, and harmful person' ['personam vanam, & instabilem & nociam']; his words 'flag' and 'stream' could easily be translations of Walleys' Latin words for 'reed' ['arundine'] and 'river' ['fluminum'] respectively. The result is an extended simile in which a botanic form stands in for an example of human life, not unlike Lodge's simile of the dandelion. However, behind this trend lies a long tradition of comparing people to plants to make some moral point.

### **Ovidian Preachers Career Out of Control**

The previous section examined the conflicting positions of a 'kind of puritan' disillusioned with the toyshop vanities of Ovid and one of the so-called 'libertines of poetry' addicted to outmoded Ovidian moralisation.<sup>210</sup> This section will also include some puritans, but it will come to focus on two unrestrained figures who evoke Ovid in defiance of puritan rhetoric. These last two figures may turn out to have more in common than is at first apparent; certainly, they are both careering out of control. The first is someone who probably existed, a Cambridge student who gatecrashes a gathering of puritans in Elizabethan England, described by Shakespeare's fellow playwrights in *Pasquill and Morforius* (1589). The second is a fictional friar, a figure who had been part of

<sup>209</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 149; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, L.xvi

<sup>210</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 2.3.240; Thomas Carew, 'Elegy on the Death of John Donne'. For a reading of this poem see Alexander (ed.), *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, 2-3.

the British landscape within living memory, sensitively portrayed in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1595).<sup>211</sup> What both these men have in common is that their religious discourse engages with the identical pagan fable of Ovid. The most likely reason for this is that both the Elizabethan student and the friar are trained in the same Benedictine tradition of Ovidian moralisation.

To begin with the Cambridge student, he appears in an anti-puritan tract called *Pasquill and Morforius*. This is one of the tracts in the Marprelate controversy which raged through the 1580s, when writers of various religious stances united against the common puritan enemy.<sup>212</sup> It could have been authored by Robert Greene, Antony Munday, Thomas Nashe, or a collaboration of any number of them. The tract describes a 'prophesying', an event which, to recycle Knapp's term, was one of the 'godly exercises' which had become increasingly popular among puritans as a way of training up preachers.<sup>213</sup> After a dinner those present were called on in turn to deliver quick-fire sermons on a surprise biblical text. The 'prophesying' in question occurred in Ashford in Kent and the after-dinner text that day was 1 Corinthians 3-12. Pasquill and his Cambridge-educated companion are both gatecrashers who have perhaps converged on the group at the prospect of a free meal. When the time for the sermons arrives, the joke is that the Cambridge student's homily represents a spectacular deviation into precisely the kind of material that is not likely to be palatable to puritans. He explains the biblical text according to Ovid's fable of Phaeton as if such monkish interpretations were still the order of the day and the Protestant reformation had never happened. The Cambridge student is described as 'a gentleman well studied in philosophie, but he had not yet meddled with divinitie'.<sup>214</sup> His unorthodox sermon may reflect a rumour that both universities are still breeding grounds for students with a monkish perspective on pagan texts rather than for expounders of sound Protestant theology. Since Pasquill himself is usually taken to be a self-portrait by one of Shakespeare's fellow playwrights it might suggest that such unreformed

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<sup>211</sup> See Stanley Satz, 'The Friar in Elizabethan Drama' (Unpubl. PhD Diss., Kent State University, 1972). Quoted in Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 53. Stanley Satz argues that friars are presented in universally negative ways in Tudor writing after 1563 except in drama—especially, it may reasonably be added, the drama of Shakespeare.

<sup>212</sup> Joseph L. Black (ed.), *The Marprelate Tracts: A Modernised and Annotated Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, xx.

<sup>213</sup> Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 3, 2.

<sup>214</sup> Nashe, *Works*, 89.

learning was also likely to find favour in the London theatrical milieu. The tone of the passage is difficult to judge because the sermon is ultimately explained away as a prank which has them in stitches all the way back to Canterbury. However, what is being described is potentially much more serious and threatening. Pasquill and his companion did not just politely bring to a puritan table a paganising Catholic sermon at a time when Catholicism was illegal. They brought unsettling proof of a living tradition of the retrograde *Moralised Ovid*:

My companion...chose the thirteenth verse of the chapter to discourse upon. Where the Apostle saith, Every man's worke shall be tryed by fire. But to see how bravely he trotted over all the Meteors bredde in the highest Region of the ayre, to see how lovingly he made the sence of the Apostle and Ovid's fiction of Phaeton's firing of the world to kisse before they parted...was sport enough for us to beguile the way, as we travelled backe againe from thence to Canterburie.<sup>215</sup>

This account provides a rare glimpse of a sixteenth-century sermon on a biblical text, drawing on a Catholic tradition that incorporated the fourth- or fifth-century philosophy of Macrobius and the fourteenth-century moralisations attributed to Walleys. The influence of Macrobius can be seen in the allusion to the highest region of the air since it was Macrobius who had argued that this was a fitting subject for *narratio fabulosa*.<sup>216</sup> The influence of Walleys is apparent in the coming together of 1 Corinthians and Ovid, which will be seen again later in this chapter in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

However, there may also be another influence at work that is not spelled out. It is apparent in the way that the coming together of a Biblical Text and Ovid is compared to the coming together of two lovers. They have had a love affair that has lasted as long as the Middle Ages but now they must take their leave of each other, so that a final kiss is all they can share before post-reformation daylight society forces them to part.

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 89

<sup>216</sup> Chance, Jane, 'The Medieval "Apology for Poetry": Fabulous Narrative and Stories of the Gods' in *The Mythographic Art: Classical Fable and the Rise of the Vernacular in Early France and England*, Jane Chance (ed.), (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1990) 5.

The original aubade of parting lovers from Ovid's *Amores* 1 and the fable of Phaeton firing of the world from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 2 are often evoked side-by side in medieval and Elizabethan amatory narrative and, in keeping with a European Catholic tradition, given a Christian context.<sup>217</sup> Ovid's parting lovers and his fable of Phaeton and the horses of the sun are evoked alongside one another in Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseyde* (c. 1382), Arthur Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet* (1562) and Barnaby Riche's tale of 'Apolonius and Silla' in *Farewell to the Military Profession* (1581).<sup>218</sup> This tradition seems to be the unacknowledged influence behind the sermon in the anonymous *Pasquill and Morforius* (1589) and the allusions to Ovid's aubade alongside Phaeton and the horses of the sun in Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (1593) and, later, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1596).<sup>219</sup> Although any text in the tradition might have homiletic potential, this is most explicit in Riche's 'Apolonius and Silla', which includes both Ovidian elements alongside a Christian *exemplum*:

...the daie to his seemyng passed away so slowelie that he had thought the statelie Steedes had been tired that drawe the Chariot of the Sunne, or els some other losua had commanded them again to stande, and wished that Phaeton had been there with a whippe.<sup>220</sup>

Interestingly, when Shakespeare comes to adapt the Romeus and Juliet story for the stage, he keeps in the Ovidian elements, the aubade and the Phaeton analogy, but he takes out the Christian elements. Anyone alive to the presence of the Ovidian material might pick up on the 'significant absence' and know exactly what was missing.<sup>221</sup> The early readers of Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseyde* were attentive to the Ovidian allusions to figures like Phaeton and would gloss them carefully in marginal commentaries, probably so that they could cross-reference them in works like the *Moralised Ovid*.<sup>222</sup> By incorporating

<sup>217</sup> See Alexander, *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, 3-4.

<sup>218</sup> See Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 3.1464, 5.659; See also T.W. Baldwin, *Shakespeare's Five Act Structure* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1947), 765-7 which identifies the source of Shakespeare's Phaeton's narrative in Arthur Brooke, *Romeus and Juliet*, 919-20. For Riche's allusions in Apolonius and Silla see J. J. Munro, *Brooke's Romeus and Juliet*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908), Appendix 2, 159.

<sup>219</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.87, 91-2; Alexander, *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, 3- 4.

<sup>220</sup> Quoted in Munro (ed.), *Brooke's Romeus and Juliet*, Appendix 2, 159.

<sup>221</sup> Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 105-6.

<sup>222</sup> Barry A. Windeatt, *Troilus and Creseyde: A Handbook* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 42.

references to the lingering kisses of parting lovers and the crazy chariot charge of Phaeton into their work, Chaucer and the later writers are potentially advertising that these pagan stories could be amplified by means of Christian commentary. This suggests that the material that Shakespeare is handling is the same material that was so offensive to puritan thinking when it was encountered in the form of the seditious sermon at the prophesying; it may even suggest that Shakespeare's material could have been supplemented by an equally seditious Ovidian sermon. Shakespeare does nothing to dispel this impression when he puts the Ovidian allusions into the mouth of a herb-gathering Catholic friar.

Like the Cambridge student who gave the anti-puritan sermon in *Pasquill and Morforius*, Friar Lawrence rates rather higher on philosophy than religion. According to Knapp, 'Lawrence counsels Romeo to regard "philosophy", not religion, as "adversity's sweet milk".'<sup>223</sup> In other words, the version of Christianity which he embodies is one in which pagan authority almost eclipses the Christian. In this it might be seen to reflect the concerns of 'monastic humanism' which recognised that pagan material was compatible with Christian revelation. When Friar Lawrence offers consolation, it is the consolation of philosophy.<sup>224</sup> This commitment to philosophy is also a feature of earlier versions of Shakespeare's character. In Lodge's *Historie of Forbonius and Prisceria* (1584), one of the models for Shakespeare's tragedy of star-crossed lovers, the counterpart to Friar Lawrence also provides 'fatherly councill'.<sup>225</sup> However, he is not a friar but an Egyptian 'Philosopher, whose wisdom could see into all causes'.<sup>226</sup> Shakespeare seems to have created a puritan's nightmare more potent than the Cambridge scholar, whose claim to holiness comes from his studies in philosophy and, just as disconcertingly, in botany.

The very first speech of Shakespeare's friar strongly suggests the way that behind the plant culture of friars lay a tradition of retrograde religious preaching obsessed with Ovidian *exempla* as much as moralised flowers. The sight of a friar entering with plants could potentially be as troubling as the sound

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<sup>223</sup> Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 53; Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.3.55.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.3.55 n.

<sup>225</sup> Lodge, *The Delectable Historie of Forbonius and Prisceria*, 25, 24. Stanley Satz 'The Friar in Elizabethan Drama', 222-238. Quoted in Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 53.

<sup>226</sup> Lodge, *The Delectable Historie of Forbonius and Prisceria*, 25, 24. Stanley Satz 'The Friar in Elizabethan Drama', 222-238. Quoted in Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 53.

of his first words, an extended metaphor describing ‘Titan’s fiery wheels’.<sup>227</sup> This metaphor suggests his affinity with the Benedictine monk John Lydgate, reputedly educated at Gloucester Hall, whose flowery dream visions featured ‘firy Tytan with hys persaunt hete’.<sup>228</sup> Clearly, Friar Lawrence has the potential to offer entertaining and instructive advice to the lovers, with or without herbs, in this Ovidian vein. It is difficult not to feel that in some way this friar embodies the Dominican or Franciscan friars who were responsible for the two main moralising traditions. He is also like the Dominican friar who, in a letter dating from the early sixteenth century, describes how he is attending university lectures on poetics to ‘add spice to his studies’ of theology.<sup>229</sup> It is easy to imagine a youthful Friar Lawrence echoing his boastful words: ‘I already know by rote all the fables of Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, and these I can expound quadruply—to wit, naturally, literally, historically and spiritually—and this is more than the secular poets can do.’<sup>230</sup>

From this point of view, Friar Lawrence is a metafictional character, since, as has been indicated, there are other moments in the play that might be brought out in his sermon on Phaeton. According to René Weis, ‘the tale of Phaeton provides a bodeful undertow to the loves of Romeo and Juliet.’<sup>231</sup> The Phaeton subtext is touched upon in the most surprising places in the play. Bate points out that the language describing the chariot of Queen Mab is partly lifted from Golding’s translation of Phaeton’s borrowed chariot (while, again, Queen Mab’s horses recall those in the Ovidian *Amores* tradition).<sup>232</sup> Sophie Chiari has claimed that the ‘Ethiop’ mentioned by Romeo recalls the aetiological tale of the Ethiopians who were feigned to have become black when half the world was burnt black by Phaeton’s sun-chariot.<sup>233</sup> Golding’s Phaeton drives ‘fiery-footed horses’ (the sparks from their hooves revealing that they are ‘fed with juice of ambrosy’).<sup>234</sup> For Juliet’s epithalamium, Shakespeare brings together Golding’s

<sup>227</sup> G. Blakemore Evans (ed.), *Romeo and Juliet*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2.3.4.

<sup>228</sup> John Lydgate, ‘A Complaint of a Lover’s Life’, 28.

<sup>229</sup> Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 167.

<sup>230</sup> F. G. Stokes (ed., trans.), *Epistolae obscurorum virorum*. (New Haven, 1925), 343-45.

Quoted in Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 168.

<sup>231</sup> René Weis (ed.), *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.2.3n..

<sup>232</sup> Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, 176, 176 8n; Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.2.1-7 Golding, *Metamorphoses*, 2.491, 2.160.

<sup>233</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.5.45; Sophie Chiari, *Shakespeare’s Representation of Weather, Climate and Environment: the Early Modern ‘Fated Sky’* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 65-6.

<sup>234</sup> Golding, *Metamorphoses*, 2.490, 2.160.



epithet and the same line from Ovid's *Amores* that Marlowe had given a Christian context in *Doctor Faustus*.<sup>235</sup> The first four lines are about as Ovidian as anything in Shakespeare:

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds  
Towards Phoebus' lodging. Such a waggoner  
As Phaeton would whip you to the west  
And bring in cloudy night immediately.<sup>236</sup>

Brian Gibbons suggests that the fable of Phaeton may lie behind Juliet's line 'the sun upon the highmost hill of this day's journey'.<sup>237</sup> He also points out that a line that comes towards the end of the play, 'The sun for sorrow will not show his head', recalls Golding's line from the Phaeton fable, 'A day did passe without the sun'.<sup>238</sup> Clearly, the Phaeton narrative has remained a parallel narrative throughout to the point that anyone in the audience familiar with the *Moralised Ovid* might expect Friar Lawrence to expand it into some commentary or sermon at any moment.

Golding's epistle had seen Phaeton as a magistrate but, unless the Prince is counted, there are no magistrates in Shakespeare's play.<sup>239</sup> However, anyone who felt inclined to ask themselves 'Where's Walleys?' in all of this might have pursued a parallel between Phaeton and the priest. In Walleys, 'Phaeton, the son of the sun, signifies a prelate' who drives the chariot of Titan who in turn 'signifies Christ, the sun of justice'.<sup>240</sup>

The possibility that Friar Lawrence himself can be understood as a Phaeton out of control can make sense of a 'significant absence' of judgement in Shakespeare's work.<sup>241</sup> Critics have remarked that Friar Lawrence is curiously difficult to read, as if the key to his character is elsewhere.<sup>242</sup> Once

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<sup>235</sup> See Gary M. McCown, "'Runawayes Eyes" and Juliet's Epithalamium', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 2, (Spring 1976), 150-170

<sup>236</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.2.1-4.

<sup>237</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.5.9-10. Brian Gibbons quoted in Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, 177 n.9.

<sup>238</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 5.3.360; Brian Gibbons quoted in Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, 177.

<sup>239</sup> Golding, *Metamorphoses*, 7.

<sup>240</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 153; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, 2.iii: 'iste sol solem iustitiam Christus signifiat. Phaeton filius solis signat quemlibet praelatum';

<sup>241</sup> Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 105-6.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

the link between Friar Lawrence and Phaeton is established, an invisible moral judgement begins to become visible. The friar can be interpreted as Bersuire's 'imprudent prelate who without the benefit of a call presses himself forward because of ambition.'<sup>243</sup> The play imagines him as a misguided individual who is not equal to the task that has fallen to him from above. It makes constant reference to the personified sun in phrases such as: 'an hour before the worshipped sun/Peered forth the golden window of the east'.<sup>244</sup> Even today such a metaphor might raise the suspicion that the sun is being compared to the Pope appearing at a window before crowds. Sure enough, Walleys' imprudent prelate is imagined 'set over a church by the sun—that is by the pope—as if by the light-giving sun.'<sup>245</sup> In this situation, when the Pope has ill-advisedly set store by this priestly Phaeton 'it often happens that he does not know how to govern either the chariot or the horses—that is either the church or his subjects—nor does he know how to restrain the horses with the reigns of regular discipline.'<sup>246</sup>

Juliet's epithalamium begins with the allusion to 'such a waggoner as Phaeton' and ends by wishing 'that runaways' eyes may wink, and Romeo/Leap to these arms, untalked of and unseen.'<sup>247</sup> The word 'runaway' could mean 'a horse that has a tendency to bolt', but the earliest recorded usage of it in this sense is dated 1607.<sup>248</sup> If it is already being applied to 'horses' in Shakespeare play of 1596, which seems likely in this context describing Phaeton's inability to handle Titan's chariot-team, a possibility for a new reading emerges. It might mean that Shakespeare is keeping close to Walleys' allegory in which the 'horses' stand for the betraying 'servants and advisors.'<sup>249</sup> This would make sense in this context, because the nurse is precisely the person whom Juliet might want to keep ignorant of her plans for the night.

The equation of Friar Lawrence with the imprudent prelate prompts thoughts of whether the friar has done wrong and should be punished. The friar's last lines also invite thoughts of blame: 'If ought in this/Miscarried be my

<sup>243</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 155, Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, II.iiiij.

<sup>244</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.1.116-7.

<sup>245</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 155, Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, II.iiiij

<sup>246</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 155, Bersuire *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, II.iiiij.

<sup>247</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.2.6-7.

<sup>248</sup> OED

<sup>249</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 155, Bersuire *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, II.iiiij.

fault...?'<sup>250</sup> How should the Prince respond to these lines? Golding's magistrate Phaeton was rebuked for confounding 'his commonweal and else his own estate'.<sup>251</sup> The earlier Walleys version is much darker: 'to the evil prelate it is said "you have destroyed your land, you have slain your people"<sup>252</sup>

Because of this it often happens that Jupiter—that is God—sends the lightning bolt of his judgement on such charioteers—that is on evil prelates—and burns them with their chariots—that is with their status and eminence—and horses—that is evil servants and advisors—beneath the sea—that is in the bitterness of hell.<sup>253</sup>

In the light of this commentary, it is difficult to overlook the way that Juliet brings together notions of advice and images of lightning to describe her love for Romeo: 'It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,/Too like the lightning which doth cease to be/Ere one can say it lightens.'<sup>254</sup> By the next scene, at least the lovers will no longer be 'unadvised', as Romeo will have sought out Friar Lawrence.<sup>255</sup> When Juliet speaks these lines the image of lightning seems to apply only to the love she shares with Romeo. However, as the advice of Friar Lawrence begins to influence the trajectory of that love, anyone playing 'Where's Walleys?' may have begun to ask themselves if the real lightning-bolt was one that God had in store for him. The possibility that the play is critical of Friar Lawrence—as an adviser who has 'slain' the two lovers, through his imprudent ministry, who deserves condemnation by God—is strongly hinted by Shakespeare's final reminder of the day without the sun following Phaeton's breakneck chariot ride. Curiously, however, this criticism of the friar demands to be understood, not in the anti-Catholic terms that have sometimes been brought to the play, but in the Catholic terms of Bersuire's commentary.<sup>256</sup>

What conclusions can be drawn at this point? Both the Cambridge student in the anti-puritan tract and the friar in Shakespeare's play are schooled

<sup>250</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 5.3.266-7.

<sup>251</sup> Golding, *Metamorphoses*, 7.

<sup>252</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 155, Bersuire *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, II.iiij.

<sup>253</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 155, Bersuire *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, II.iiij.

<sup>254</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.118-120.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.3.266.

<sup>256</sup> For a parody of an anti-Catholic reading of the play see Nancy Mitford, *The Pursuit of Love*, London: Penguin, 1945, ch. 6, pg. 53.

in an outmoded version of divinity that seems strangely heavy on philosophy and poetics. Both are also associated with the lingering kiss of separated lovers and the Phaeton fable of the blackening of half of the world, two Ovidian moments that could potentially be amplified along Christian lines. This is Ovidianism at its least puritan, Ovidianism in defiance of puritan values. Golding had carefully replaced the priestly Phaeton with a magistrate but here, again, was Walleys' Catholic friar on the Elizabethan stage, careering out of control.

### **Echoes of the Moralising Tradition in the Elizabethan Age: 'Underneath a sycamore—that is the cross'**

Early readers of Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseyde* had been unable to resist pinpointing the Ovidian allusions, presumably in case there was anything to learn by pursuing 'the harmonies' between Ovid's fables and the bible.<sup>257</sup> Tudor readers still seem to have taken guilty pleasure in reading in this way and were not exactly short of encouragement. 'Libertines of poetry', like Lodge and Weever, had given these readers a license to approach their pagan poems with the words 'Where's Walleys?'<sup>258</sup>

The trend for seeking out echoes of Walleys was associated with the 'libertine' or heathen pose, that was not so different from that of the *inglese italianato* in Elizabethan fashionable society.<sup>259</sup> The most famous printed denunciation of these affected Italianate fellows was that of Roger Ascham.<sup>260</sup> Whether or not they had been in Verona or Mantua, they would assume the Italian title of 'Signior' if they could not seriously aspire to the English title of 'Lord'.<sup>261</sup> Not only that, they would pepper their dialogue with glib phrases like '*bona roba*' and '*quaeso que novelles*?'<sup>262</sup> The fiery educational theorist may have been just as alarmed by young blades of the 1590s who affected a pagan

<sup>257</sup> Windeatt, *Troilus and Creseyde*, 42; F. G. Stokes (ed., trans.), *Epistolae obscurorum virorum*. (New Haven, 1925), 343-45. Quoted in Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 168.

<sup>258</sup> Thomas Carew, 'Elegy on the Death of John Donne'. For a reading of this poem see Alexander (ed.), *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, 2-3.

<sup>259</sup> Roger Ascham, *The Schoolmaster* (1570), ed. Lawrence W. Ryan. (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 67.

<sup>260</sup> For a general denunciation of the *Inglese Italianato* see Ascham, *The Schoolmaster* (1570), 67.

<sup>261</sup> For the details of this affectation see Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, ed. Helen Ostovich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 1.2.22 n. See also Ostovich's discussion of 'social performance' in Jonson, *Every Man Out*, introduction, 69-83.

<sup>262</sup> Jonson, *Every Man Out*, 5.2.68n., 5.2.69n.

stance, flaunting a provincial schooling in Ovid that smacked of ‘papistrie, or worse’, and swearing alternately by the ‘mass!’ or ‘Apollo!’<sup>263</sup> The Italianate and pagan trends of Elizabethan England were utterly compatible: Italianate posers drew their inspiration from an Italy that existed mainly in the imagination; the libertines of pagan poetry drew it from a moralised country that also existed mainly in the imagination. Both were lands of freedom and wish fulfilment; both could stir a heady nostalgia for plainsong and ‘merry Lydgate.’<sup>264</sup> From this point of view, looking for Walleys may have been a way of asserting an old scholastic identity and reclaiming a lost land.

But above all, it was fun. As the search for Walleys extended beyond poetic and protheatrical writing into stage drama, it brought with it a comic or playful tone. In her wide-ranging article ‘What’s in a Name: And More’, Patricia Parker suggests that the play-within-a-play of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* reveals a ‘traditional blending of Ovidian and biblical’ which she reads as ‘hilarious comic echoes of [the] moralizing tradition’ of Bersuire ‘in which Pyramus signifies Christ, Thisbe *anima humana* [the human soul], the lion “the roaring lion” of the New Testament (Peter 5) and the mulberry or *morus* [the cross].’<sup>265</sup> If this is the case, it suggests three things: firstly, that the play demonstrates sufficient awareness of the claims of the *Moralised Ovid* to enable parody; secondly, that it assumes sufficient familiarity on the part of the audience for this parody to be accessible; thirdly, that it proposes some kind of link between this material and lay-people or ‘rude mechanicals.’ These three implications, suggesting a nostalgia for a time when a shared culture of Ovid subsisted between the clergy and their illiterate congregation, highlight the need for a fuller investigation into the influence of Bersuire’s spiritual allegory elsewhere in Shakespeare’s work.

Bersuire’s moralisations of the ‘sycamore’ and the ‘wall’ inform *Romeo and Juliet* and the play-within-a-play of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, suggesting that the very fabric of the plays themselves partakes of the same medieval moralised universe.<sup>266</sup> The ‘sycamore’ and the ‘wall’ tempt the

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<sup>263</sup> Ascham, *The Schoolmaster* (1570), 67; Jonson, *Every Man Out*, 2.1.84: ‘[by the] mass!’; John Weever, ‘Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare’, Epigrams, London: 1599, 4<sup>th</sup> week, 22, repr. in Honigmann, *John Weever*, 109: ‘I swore [by] Apollo’.

<sup>264</sup> Owst, *Preaching*, 52.

<sup>265</sup> Parker, ‘What’s in a Name’, 138 n.128, 119.

<sup>266</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.4.35.

playgoers to glimpse Christlike qualities in Romeo and Bottom's Pyramus respectively. Romeo, in his guise of passionate pilgrim, might seem like a possible Christ-figure, but Bottom's Pyramus at first seems like an utterly unlikely candidate. Nevertheless, as Parker points out, 'the Pyramus described as "most lovely Jew" in the familiar "lily-white" and "red" of the Song of Songs, is the Pyramus/Bottom who will also later perform a mock-resurrection on stage, when he rises from the dead in Act V.'<sup>267</sup> Although the courtly audience appear merely to tolerate the fabulous play, Bottom and the other mechanicals are never in any doubt about its sacred subtext. The self-importance of Bottom is really a sign of his professionalism: he has effectively been given the part of Christ in a mystery play and he wants to do it justice so far as he is able.

The 'sycamore,' as Shakespeare persists in calling the mulberry, had been planted in monastic gardens because Walleys and others had recognised it as 'a symbol of Christ's crucifixion.'<sup>268</sup> Far from being replaced by humanist thirst for the classics, this Christian symbolism was precisely what ensured the popularity of the Ovidian symbol (even the illustration of the mulberry tree in Jerome Bock's herbal of 1546 includes a representation of Pyramus and Thisbe).<sup>269</sup> Parker also notes that the lovers appeared in the iconography of at least one English church and, more prominently, in Basel Minster in Switzerland.<sup>270</sup> Whenever Shakespeare's plays include the lover pining or 'the poor soul sighing' by a 'sycamore' they are potentially signalling that the figure is 'sub mori arbor: id est sub cruce' [literally: 'underneath a sycamore: that is underneath the cross.'].<sup>271</sup> Romeo, in particular, is 'underneath a grove of sycamore' and 'too late' for the feast, to suggest his affinity with a tree like the 'sycamore' which was a famously late-fruiting tree.<sup>272</sup> In this way, Romeo was identified with Christ; in the usual interpretation of the Song of Solomon in the

<sup>267</sup> Parker, 'What's in a Name', 138 n.128.

<sup>268</sup> Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden*, 41.

<sup>269</sup> Knight, Leah, *Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 25.

<sup>270</sup> Parker, 'What's in A Name' 120 n.80: 'Pyramus and Thisbe bas-reliefs appear in the cathedral at Basle, while in England, while in England, St. Mary's Church at Patixbourne has a sixteenth-century stained-glass window (of Swiss origin) depicting the deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe'.

<sup>271</sup> Reynolds, '*Ovidius Moralizatus*', 203; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IV.i; Parker, 'What's in A Name', 121.

<sup>272</sup> Campbell-Culver, *The Origin of Plants*, 54 cites the eminent medievalist John Harvey who writes that throughout the Middle Ages the sycamore was the usual name for the mulberry from 'its ancient Latin name and synonym...Sicomorus or "sycamor"'. That Shakespeare conservatively held onto the medieval names for trees can be seen in *As You Like It*, when he persists in calling a willow a 'palm'.

medieval and early modern period Christ would be the bridegroom of the human soul and he would be late for the very important date of his wedding.<sup>273</sup>

Both *Romeo and Juliet* and 'Pyramus and Thisbe' include Walleys' 'wall—that is the sin of Adam—[which] impeded their union'.<sup>274</sup> In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the 'wall' that divided Pyramus and Thisbe is physically embodied on stage, while its equation with 'sin' is intimated by the suggestive 'chink', an invitation for bawdy stage-business. The orchard 'wall' of *Romeo and Juliet* is one of many allusions in the play to the Song of Solomon with its *hortus conclusus*.<sup>275</sup> Rosalie Colie suggests that 'the virgin is, and is in, a walled garden: the walls of that garden are to be breached by a true love, as Romeo leaps into the orchard.'<sup>276</sup> Once the biblical resonances are supplemented with the moralisations of Walleys, further conclusions become available. When Romeo declares 'with love's light wings I o'erleaped these walls', some may have understood it as an image of the 'conquering son' overcoming sin.<sup>277</sup> Parker adds that walls and bounds in *Romeo and Juliet* symbolise 'the "wall"

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<sup>273</sup> Romeo's words 'a torch for me' also suggest the traditional pine-torch that in biblical times was carried by bridegrooms. This had its parallel in the oil-lamps carried at the wedding procession in the parable of the ten virgins which features the late bridegroom. (Matthew 25). The parable was used to explain a further reference in the book of revelation to a late bridegroom. In this way, Romeo's torch prop, and his 'delay' invite a particular tradition of interpretation.

<sup>274</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 202; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IIII.i.

<sup>275</sup> *Romeo and Juliet* is Shakespeare most densely Solomonic play: 'Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-doves, thy neck as jewels' becomes 'It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night, like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear...so shows a snowy dove'; 'Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun?' becomes 'But soft, what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun...'; 'Smelling sweet of the best ointments. Thy name is as oil poured out, therefore young maidens have loved you' becomes 'A rose/By any other name would smell as sweet; so Romeo...'; and 'I arose up to open to my beloved, my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers were full of the choicest myrrh' becomes 'palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss.' (Rheims Douay, Cantic of Canticles, 1:9; William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1:5:44-5, 7; Rheims Douay, Cantic of Canticles, 8:9; William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.2 ; Rheims Douay, Cantic of Canticles, 1.2; Rheims Douay, Cantic of Canticles, 2.2.43; Rheims Douay, Cantic of Canticles, 5:5; William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.5.99) Hawkins' shares with Shakespeare an interest in the Morn ('This star is the blessed Virgin, that may wel be tearmed Venus') and, of course, in the red-and-white flowers of the Song of Solomon ('Among which flowers of roses and lillies, the beloved, that is Christ, is feeding: *My beloved to me, and I to him; who feeds among the lillies*'). Often Shakespeare's allusions to the Song of Solomon are elliptical or enigmatic, where Hawkins is able to spell it out. Shakespeare will speak elliptically of the 'dew-dropping south' and leave the resultant spices that come from the dew whereas Hawkins will cite the Cantic of Canticles 4: 'Come Southern wind, and blow upon my garden, and the spices shall flow forth.' (William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 103; Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 1633, Menston: Scholar Press, 1971, 15).

<sup>276</sup> Rosalie L. Colie, 'Othello and the problematic of love' in Bloom (ed.) *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*, 96

<sup>277</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*,

dividing the lovers of the Song of Songs (2:9)...to be finally down in the marriage and the bridegroom.<sup>278</sup> As with the mulberry, then, the wall indicates the presence of the bridegroom, Christ who shall be late.

According to Hannibal Hamlin, influential Shakespeare scholars of the 1960s like William Empson, Roland Mushat Frye and William R. Elton were hostile to critics who argued for a Christian dimension in Shakespeare's work.<sup>279</sup> In particular, they lambasted G. Wilson Knight, Paul N. Siegel, J. A. Bryant, and others who recognized that certain Shakespearean characters might be described as 'Christ-figures.'<sup>280</sup> As a result, Hamlin writes:

the term "Christ-figure" became for many an embarrassment. This is unfortunate, since it is actually rather a useful term and it is also clear that, despite the excessive claims of Knight et al., there are in fact a number of major characters in Shakespeare's plays who might be so designated...<sup>281</sup>

Hamlin's re-evaluation of the work of G. Wilson Knight, and his call for a rehabilitation of the term 'Christ-figure' in Shakespearean scholarship, seem prescient in the light of research into the influence of Walleys on Shakespeare's drama of the mid-1590s.

So far, the comical character of Bottom has been explained only through comparison with Pyramus. However, some of the most comical moments associated with this character can be seen to draw on the *Moralised Ovid's* sacred commentary on the fables of Callisto and Midas. Playgoers alive to echoes of Walleys may have found themselves wondering if the moralised comments on Callisto, transformed into a bear and shunned by her own son, lay behind Bottom's grotesque transformation:

It is today's way of doing things that when a man has been changed into a beast—that is made poor—his own son—that is his false, carnal friends—forgets him and disdains to know him. And when he fixes his

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<sup>278</sup> Parker, 'What's in a Name', 119

<sup>279</sup> Hannibal Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 69.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.



eyes on them and comes near them to ask for help from them, they flee and despise his company.<sup>282</sup>

*Enter Bottom with the ass-head on.*

Bottom: 'If I were fair, Thisbe, I were only thine.'

Quince: O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted! Pray, masters! Fly, masters! Help!...

Bottom: Why do they run away? This is knavery of them...<sup>283</sup>

If the 'knaves' are 'false, carnal friends', Bottom's transformation has elevated him to more spiritual status. His ass's head can signify that, although he is 'a poor man' he is in possession of the secret of a king, like the secret ass's ears of King Midas in the fable.<sup>284</sup> Some might have recalled that the *Moralised Ovid* claims that 'there is nothing secret that will not be revealed...some garrulous person...sings and says it.'<sup>285</sup>

The first divine secret, in a curious echo of Walleys, is one that Bottom *sings*. Bottom sings of mysteries that he has discovered when this foolish character in an ass's head finds himself in the same position as Chaucer's Sir Thopas. This medieval knight famously learned 'a thousand honey secrets' by making love to the fairy queen, in much the same way as this medieval mechanical.<sup>286</sup> The verse that Bottom sings reworks a particular stanza from Chaucer's ballad describing the heavenly choirs of birds that are heard on entering the forest of a dream vision, which suggest that, like Sir Thopas, he has accessed a realm outside ordinary reality.<sup>287</sup>

The second divine secret, in another curious echo of Walleys, is one that Bottom says. It is a commentary on his fabulous dream vision:

<sup>282</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 163-4; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, II.xiii.

<sup>283</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold F. Brooks (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007), 1.3.98-100,107-8.

<sup>284</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 163-4; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, II.xiii.

<sup>285</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 368-9; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, XI.ii.

<sup>286</sup> Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 16.

<sup>287</sup> Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, New Edition, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), *The Canterbury Tales*, 'Sir Thopas', 766-771.

The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, not his heart to report what my dream was.<sup>288</sup>

This places the dream in which he has an ass's head alongside the imperfectly-grasped 'visionary *raptus* (which cannot be put into words)' from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: 'The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen...'.<sup>289</sup> This chapter began by acknowledging that the coming together of Ovid and 1 Corinthians was characteristic of pre-reformation interpretation of Ovid. The coming together of the two texts has already been encountered in *Pasquill and Morforius* and now it is encountered again in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. According to Hamlin, one can only understand the meaning of Bottom's Ovidian dream 'if one recognizes its allusion to Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.'<sup>290</sup> Hamlin points out that 'Bottom cannot himself be conscious of either the biblical allusion or the parody, since, despite his English appearance and language, he is at the same time living in ancient, pre-Christian Athens.'<sup>291</sup> As a classical pagan, Bottom is only able to grasp God's revelations imperfectly, like the beasts at the nativity: 'many rustics...are said to be given the ears of an ass, for they are known to judge things as do asses and beasts.'<sup>292</sup> That Bottom's ass's head is in many ways an extension of the Fool's ass's ears is implied by the next citation: 'Proverbs 23:9: "Do not speak in the ears of Fools."<sup>293</sup> The chain of associations here is tantalising. It has been suggested that Walleys' moralisations may be an important strand in the early modern theatrical tradition that led to the invocation of classical gods on stage, but it may also constitute an important strand in the theatrical practice of dressing the Fool in ass's ears.

Shakespeare decision to have the ass-headed Bottom cross-reference 1 Corinthians 2:9 recalls Walleys' decision to explain the ass-eared Midas

<sup>288</sup> Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 4.1.207-211.

<sup>289</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9 (Geneva)

<sup>290</sup> See Hamlin, *Bible in Shakespeare*, 108. Stroup, Thomas B. 'Bottom's Name and his Epiphany' *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1978), 79-82, 80. See also Parker, 'What's in a Name', 106: 'The name of "Bottom" also famously recalls the "bottome of Goddes secretes" from the Corinthians passage on the "wise fool" [1 Corinthians 3:18] that he cites and scrambles on awakening from his dream (4.1.211-214).'

<sup>291</sup> Hamlin, *Bible in Shakespeare*, 108.

<sup>292</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 368; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, XI.ii.

<sup>293</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 368; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, XI.ii.

according to 1 Corinthians 2:14.<sup>294</sup> Walleys supplements the Ovidian translation with a biblical reference: 'The rude man does not perceive those things that are of the spirit of God'.<sup>295</sup> This could be taken to support a conservative reading of Macrobius that keeps God's secrets from the *vulgus*. However, Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seem to champion a more radical interpretation of this, in which the golden knowledge of revelation might run 'headlong to the boor' and 'Midas' brood shall sit in honour's chair.'<sup>296</sup> This last phrase of Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' is, of course, dramatised by Shakespeare in the scene when Bottom, like the king with ass's ears, finds himself beside the fairy queen in the arbour.<sup>297</sup> Once Bottom has set aside this sensual and temporal life, he partially grasps the significance of his experience and immediately he wants to share it with others. In the words of Bersuire, he is 'a simple person...[who] will not be able to restrain himself from revealing the secret to others', the secret being 'the Bottom of God's Secrets' that is his name.<sup>298</sup> After his visionary experience, Bottom is well-placed to guide the Princes of the World like Theseus step-by-step through the sacred meaning of Ovid's 'antique fables'. As a weaver, he can provide the unravelling 'bottom' used by Theseus to guide him through the labyrinth of faith, which according to Bersuire, is the 'thread of divinity.'<sup>299</sup>

### **Echoes of the Moralising Tradition into the Jacobean Age: 'These flowers are like the pleasures of the world'**

In Shakespeare's Jacobean play *Cymbeline* there seems to be a sustained engagement with Ovidian botanic material and its corresponding moralisations. Most of these allusions are associated with the scene in the play in which Imogen is laid out for burial with the headless Cloten. Because Imogen has taken on the name Faith (Latin: Fidele), and because she will 'awake' just in

<sup>294</sup> Parker, 'What's in A Name'; Hamlin, *Bible in Shakespeare*, 102 n.4.

<sup>295</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:14 (Vulgate) quoted in Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 368; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, XI.ii.

<sup>296</sup> Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*, 1.472, 474.

<sup>297</sup> McRae, *Renaissance Drama*, 10.

<sup>298</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 369; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, XI.ii.

<sup>299</sup> For William Caxton's description of Theseus guided by a 'bottom' of thread see William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Peter Holland, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14; Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 308; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, VIII.iv.

time, Margaret Jones-Davies refers to the episode as ‘the sleep of Faith’. She also recognises that it is ‘an allegorization of a religious theme.’<sup>300</sup> For example, it could be argued that Imogen, who stands for Faith ‘sleeping out the term of a despised life’, could also stand for the faithful ‘waiting out...a “heretic” reign.’<sup>301</sup> Whatever it is taken to represent, the very presence of allegory in this moment could be interpreted as subversive. According to Jones-Davies, this was a time when ‘reprobation lay on allegorization now that the Jesuits were trying to rehabilitate the medieval mode of allegorical interpretation.’<sup>302</sup> It is no coincidence, then, that this allegorical sleep is also linked with an abundance of flowers that tempt the audience to ‘rehabilitate the medieval mode’.<sup>303</sup>

When Belarius says of Cloten and Faith, “You were as flowers, now wither’d”, it could be taken as a guide to their corresponding identities in the *Moralised Ovid*.<sup>304</sup> According to this reading, Faith stands for the Ovidian character of the Morn and Cloten stands for the character of Clytie. The Morn was associated with a transformation into frankincense. Clytie was associated with a transformation into a heliotropic flower, which Ovid describes as red and white, but which in the period was usually interpreted as one of several golden heliotropic flowers, such as ‘the goodlie heliotropion’, ‘the marygold’, or the ‘golden lad’.<sup>305</sup>

Faith partly stands for Ovid’s character of ‘the Morn’, that is ‘any virgin martyr’, whose love for the Sun, ‘that is, Christ’, is exposed so that the ‘father buried her/Deep in the earth’.<sup>306</sup> Insofar as the sleep of faith is a symbolic burial, it stands for the burial of ‘any virgin martyr’ in the space in the earth sometimes called ‘the bosom of Abraham.’ Just as heaven graces the grave of Faith with

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<sup>300</sup> Jones-Davies, ‘Cymbeline and the sleep of faith’, 197. As evidence for the claim about the Jesuits and allegory, Jones-Davies cites G. P. Norton (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, The Renaissance Vol. III, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 105.

<sup>301</sup> See Southwell, St Robert, *Collected Poems*, eds. Peter Davidson and Anne Sweeney (Manchester: Carcanet, 2007), xv, who write how poetry in the period might ‘characterise many of the groups of exiles and scholars waiting out Elizabeth’s “heretic” reign.’

<sup>302</sup> Jones-Davies, ‘Cymbeline and the sleep of faith’, 197.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>304</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.286.

<sup>305</sup> Henry Hawkins, *The Devout Heart* (London: The Scolar Press, 1975), 164, 165. For the ‘heliotrope’ as ‘marigold’ see Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), 26 n.1: ‘The Marigold, Sunflower, Heliotrope and Girasole were regarded as interchangeable terms in the seventeenth century.’

<sup>306</sup> Ovid’s ‘Leucothoe’ is universally referred to as ‘the Morn’ in the fabulous verse narratives of Lodge, Marlowe and Shakespeare. Reynolds, ‘*Ovidius Moralizatus*’, 209-210; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IIII.iiij; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. R. J. Tarrant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 4.239-40; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Melville (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1986, repr. 1988), 81.

'Moss', in lieu of the usual rosemary or 'British frankincense', so the burial in the fable is graced by 'drops of heavenly nectar' and 'frankincense'.<sup>307</sup>

Cloten's name suggests the other character in this Ovidian fable, Clytie. She also withers away for love of the Sun and shares with the Morn an earthy burial when she is 'stuck fast there in the soil'.<sup>308</sup> Cloten, like Clytie, is envious that Faith can bask in the love of her lord. Imogen exacerbates this envy when she says that Cloten, though the son of a Queen, is too base 'to be his groom'.<sup>309</sup> It is likely that implicit in this speech is the insistence that it is for Christ, not for the princes of the world, to be bridegroom to the church, an idea that, once again, comes in 1 Corinthians 2:8.<sup>310</sup> In any case, Imogen's words bring out the worst in Cloten and he resolves to 'torment' her to have his 'revenge'.<sup>311</sup> Like Clytie he resembles someone 'who when they see a friend loved by the sun—that is by some lord or powerful man—a little more than themselves, manage to secure death or trouble for her.'<sup>312</sup> It is not impossible that the symbolic 'death', that is actually a sleep, is dictated by this allegorical subtext.

The sleep of faith is not just associated with characters who are flowers but also with the flowers themselves which are strewed over them. This time Imogen provides the gloss:

These flowers are like the pleasures of the world

This bloody man, the care on't.<sup>313</sup>

The first line is a moralisation that recalls a gloss from Walleys' commentary. In the original Latin it is almost identical. It describes girls or the religious who resort 'to gathering flowers that is to the pleasures of the world' ['ad flores colligendos id est ad mundi delectamenta'].<sup>314</sup> The second line compares Cloten

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<sup>307</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4.252-3, 4.255; Melville (trans.), *Metamorphoses*, 81, 82. The link between a virgin martyr and moss, as a kind of Welsh frankincense, will make more sense in the light of ideas to be examined in the final chapter.

<sup>308</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4.264; Melville (trans.), *Metamorphoses*, 82.

<sup>309</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 2.3.126.

<sup>310</sup> See Chapter Two: 'Reordering Symbolism along Protestant Lines: The Botanic Marriage'

<sup>311</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 3.5.141, 147.

<sup>312</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 120; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IV.v.

<sup>313</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.296.

<sup>314</sup> My translation. For the full passage see Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 238: 'girls and especially [the] religious leave their paternal home or the home of Religion and because of Venus' urging—that is the lasciviousness of the mind—go out into the world to gather flowers—that is to the amusements, spectacles, and wantonness of the world'; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis*

to the namesake of 'Bloody Man's Fingers' or 'Bloody Man's Finger', flowers like long purples which were said to be stained with the blood of the Passion.<sup>315</sup>

The 'Bloody Man' was presumably the Man of Sorrows who, like Shakespeare's Adonis, stained botanic creation with his blood.<sup>316</sup> It is worth pointing out that, in Shakespeare's work, both Cloten and Adonis are identified as flowers after their deaths. Cloten's life climaxes in a truly violent act of beheading while Adonis' life 'climaxes in a tiny violent act of beheading: the plucking of a flower from its stem.'<sup>317</sup> In life Cloten is spurned by Imogen, but he is married to her in death, colouring her and the flowers with his Christlike blood.

To conclude, although in the Elizabethan Age Spenser would devise his own Protestant brand of allegory, for the most part puritans like Golding attempted to restrict knowledge of earlier moralisation from reaching the ears of the 'simple sort'. After all, it recalled the old times when superstitious friars had preached the *Moralised Ovid* to eager lay listeners. However, as puritans affected a new didactic discourse for a new age, so anti-puritans would affect the old language of the age before, the language of medieval spiritual allegory. This chapter has argued that the spiritual messages of old scholastic moralisations were potentially brought home in the early modern period by the old teaching of folly, eulogies, protheatrical writing, retrograde sermons, social affectation and performance, and the poetic and dramatic writing in the Ovidian fabulous mode. Increasingly, Elizabethan readers learned to approach post-medieval texts in the spirit of 'Where's Walleys?', and to proclaim by their morals that they had inherited the free land of the *Moralised Ovid*. By the Jacobean period, this craze was on the wane, as allegory became associated with Jesuits. Nevertheless, Ovidian libertines continued to practise the moralising of Walleys, and what they practised they may even have preached.

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*Ovidiana*, V.vii 'puellae & potissimum sanctimoniales domum paternam vel domum religionis deserunt & stimulante venere id est mentis lasciuia ad flores colligendos id est ad mundi delectamenta spectacula & ludibria exterius ad mundum exeunt.'

<sup>315</sup> Grigson, *The Englishman's Flora* (London: Phoenix House Ltd., 1955), 83, 424.

<sup>316</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1055-6; Margaret Willes, *A Shakespearean Botanical* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2015), 112.

<sup>317</sup> Herron Thomas, 'War, the Boar and Spenserian Politics in Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis' in Maley, Willy and Loughnane Rory (eds.) *Celtic Shakespeare: The Bard and the Borderers* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 61.

## Chapter Five: The Cult of Saint Winefride's Well

This final chapter is only about moss and algae, but it is important nonetheless. Many extraordinary claims will be made about these two lesser life-forms in the remaining pages. They can travel through time, collapsing the early modern period right back into ancient times.<sup>1</sup> They can also change the world, since, according to some Elizabethan sources, the algae can cure cancer of the mouth.<sup>2</sup> Finally, they can hold their own alongside the most sacred things on the planet when as botanic relics they appear on the altar, according to other Elizabethan sources.<sup>3</sup> Although they are spectacular, they have been overlooked in studies of Shakespeare's plant references. This is for the simple reason that they are moss and algae and are lucky if anyone spares them a thought.

This chapter will argue that Thomas Lodge, Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare traded in ideas and images to fashion poems which feature these life-forms. It will argue in turn that the moss and the algae are linked with the well cult of Saint Winefride, that they bring with them a particular cosmology and that their presence in these apparently pagan poems orientates them with regard to Christian saint legend. The argument will be presented by examining moss and algae as they appear in the literary tradition and relating them to aspects of cult and cosmology. This will mean that there is no space to concentrate on any of them poems as a whole or in isolation, but only within the wider tradition which gives each poem much of its meaning. Moss is conspicuous as the fabric of the 'mossy coat' and 'mossy garlands' in Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' (1589) and it will be demonstrated that it reappears as the fabric of the 'sedged crowns' in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611)(incidentally, attesting to the longstanding influence of Thomas Lodge's work on Shakespeare).<sup>4</sup> The algae is less conspicuous in the fabulous verse

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### Chapter Five: The Cult of Saint Winefride's Well

<sup>1</sup> The association of the moss and algae with this particular sacred site that stretched back into ancient times presumably came to an end in the nineteenth century as a result of the chemicals used to purify the spring.

<sup>2</sup> See below.

<sup>3</sup> See below.

<sup>4</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 11, 761; Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 4.1.202-3.

narratives, but it is referred to as 'moulds from heaven.'<sup>5</sup> The assumption has been that this refers to sculptural moulds, like glorified Easter egg or jelly moulds. However, when the phrase is read alongside the mentions of 'mould' in Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' and Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander', it becomes clear that it refers to a specific substance.

Once the presence of moss and algae is recognised in these fabulous verse narratives, it makes sense of elements that have otherwise gone unexplained. Why, for instance, does Shakespeare follow his description of a 'horse tail' with the pronoun 'who', as if the matted hairs of the tail were a living thing? Or, why does he refer to 'crimson verdure' in an age predating the advent of the poinsettia in the catalogue of winter evergreens? These aspects of the poem have puzzled critics, because the answers are only available once the presence of these botanic entities is detected in the poems.

It is worth pointing out, that this is by no means the only outing of this combination of moss and algae in English literature; they feature, for example, in the literary landscape of Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612).<sup>6</sup> However, they are introduced into the fabulous verse narratives not merely out of a wish to include some of the wonderful natural productions of the British Isles. Their very presence in the poems reveals their engagement with traditions and cosmology surrounding Saint Winefride's Well.

This pre-Christian well can still be visited at Holywell in Flintshire, Wales. There is a story that it gushed forth where the head of a virgin martyr fell after she was beheaded. The tufty moss and algae-stained stones, since ancient times interpreted as her hair and blood, were said to bear witness to the truth of the story. Pilgrims venerated the moss by weaving it into garlands and honoured the stones by raising them to their lips. The well was one of the most popular sites of medieval pilgrimage of the British Isles, with a grand well-chapel and canopy built in the gothic style (c. 1500).<sup>8</sup> Although the Privy Council threatened to dissolve the well-buildings in 1579 this came to nothing and the well survived the reformation.<sup>9</sup> It became the base for a Catholic mission in the

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<sup>5</sup> William Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 730

<sup>6</sup> *Poly-Olbion* (1611), Part 1, song 10 in Michael Drayton, *Works*, ed. J. William Hebel (5 vols., Oxford, 1931-41), vol. 4., 204-5.

<sup>8</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 53. See T. W. Pritchard, *St Winefride, Her Holy Well and the Jesuit Mission c. 660–1930* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 2009), 78.

<sup>9</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 103.



region and by the late sixteenth century there was a constant Jesuit presence there.<sup>10</sup> In 1605 an unnerving number of the Gunpowder Plotters courted the waters of St Winefride, possibly to invoke the assistance of the saint in their crusade against the Protestant nation.<sup>11</sup>

Although it is easy to assume that Lodge's 'mossy garlands' are a legitimate part of the classical pagan world of his poem, ultimately it will be made apparent that the only record of such garlands ever existing is in this well cult of this Welsh maiden.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the presence of the algae in the poem is not adequately explained by classical comparisons to 'the fire filch'd by Prometheus', but ultimately can be understood according to the same well cult of the British Isles.<sup>13</sup>

It will be demonstrated that the word 'relic' is used to describe the moss and algae by Elizabethans writing in recusant traditions.<sup>14</sup> The same word has been applied to Adonis' flower by an eminent critic of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis.'<sup>15</sup> However, it will also be demonstrated that each botanic specimen may also operate as a 'similitude' for discussing the incarnation, and, like Shakespeare's Adonis himself, as a 'type' of the 'Messiah.'<sup>16</sup> As such, each can comprise an example of heavenly grace within the natural world that has somehow survived the Fall of Man.

Recently, Tom MacFaul has drawn attention to this puzzling presence of grace in nature that seems to inform Shakespeare's cosmological world-view. He points out that this represents a departure from the common belief-system of the period that is perhaps best described as 'heterodox.'<sup>17</sup> To appreciate this it is necessary to recall three basic tenets that were at the root of almost

<sup>10</sup> See Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 91. Walsham, *Landscape*, 196.

<sup>11</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 148; Walsham, *Landscape*, 202.

<sup>12</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 761.

<sup>13</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.438.

<sup>14</sup> John Gerard, *John Gerard: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, trans. John Caraman (London: Longmans, 1951), 47-8.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Herron, 'War, the Boar and Spenserian Politics in Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis' in *Celtic Shakespeare: The Bard and the Borderers*, eds. Willy Maley and Rory Loughnane (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 61.

<sup>16</sup> Tom MacFaul, *Shakespeare and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 39: 'Adonis is a type of Christ'; William D. Reynolds, 'The *Ovidius Moralizatus* of Pierre Bersuire: An Introduction and Translation' (PhD diss., Urbana: University of Illinois, 1971), 359: 'By her father she [Myrrha] conceived a son [Adonis]—that is Christ'; Pierre Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana...Explanata*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), x.xi: 'Ista [Myrrha] igitur a patre suo filium [Adonis] id est Christum'; Cf. Geoffrey Grigson, *The Englishman's Flora* (London: Phoenix House, 1958), 202-3: Adonis' flower alone may be 'a type of the expected Messiah'.

<sup>17</sup> MacFaul, *Natural World*, 30.

everyone's beliefs in the early modern period and are still at the root of many people's beliefs today. Firstly, it was generally accepted that since the Fall of Man not so much as a trace of Eden or divine grace was present in the natural world any longer. Secondly, it was widely understood that Christ's incarnation had brought the possibility of eternal life to mankind. Thirdly, everyone knew that heaven itself could only be accessed once out of nature, that is, after death (and even then, not until after Judgement Day when it would be accessible only to a select few).<sup>18</sup>

Almost everyone, that is. Henry Hawkins' recusant emblem book, for example, includes some idle speculation to the effect that 'if the earthly Paradise be yet on earth it must be surely on some Mountain-top.'<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Shakespeare's work often seems to be premised upon the belief that something gracious and Edenic does still linger on in the natural world and that heaven is immanent in nature, if you know where to look. MacFaul does not come to any firm conclusions as to why this might be, but his intuition is almost as valuable as any conclusion:

I think we can see a sense—heterodox as it might seem—that grace (or the road to it) might be found in nature; that there might be surprising discoveries of unfallenness in that complex, tangled world, which could help men to redemption, or a foreshadowing of it.<sup>20</sup>

According to this scholarly intuition, Shakespeare seems to have 'anticipated the Romantics in finding hints of something unfallen, and even potentially redemptive, in the natural world.'<sup>21</sup> However, 'the question of how such redemptive nature might be mediated to man is particularly puzzling.'<sup>22</sup>

Tom MacFaul's insights emerge primarily out of his study of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis.' He suggests that 'Adonis is a type of Christ' and therefore that the poem is 'an allegory of Christ's incarnation.'<sup>23</sup> Ultimately,

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<sup>18</sup> The concept of passing 'into nature' and 'out of nature' is from Paracelsus, *De Rerum Natura*. Quoted in Cristina Bellorini, *The World of Plants in Renaissance Tuscany: Medicine and Botany* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 179.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 1633 (Menston: Scholar Press, 1971), 43.

<sup>20</sup> MacFaul, *Natural World*, 30.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 39, 40.

he argues that this ‘incarnation’ involves an unusual coming together of heaven and earth.<sup>24</sup> He concludes, ‘this I think, is Shakespeare’s subtlest point, if incarnation involves some fundamental fusion between the heavenly and the natural, the latter may be as necessary for redemption as the former, and must therefore have always had something unfallen in it.’<sup>25</sup>

This chapter will build on the insights of MacFaul and argue that the most obvious way that the poems fuse the heavenly and the earthly is in their portrayal of moss and algae. This will call for some close reading, in which more attention will be given to hair and kissing than is usual in the sombre corridors of criticism. Please bear with the argument through this restorative close-work because when it is possible to step back, the ‘wanton pictures’ of Glaucus and Scylla, Hero and Leander and Venus and Adonis, will reveal more of the artists’ original intentions and therefore look considerably more impressive.<sup>26</sup> Among other things, it will finally be possible to see the original mossy brush-strokes and the kind of earth that was used in the period for the red on the lips and cheeks.

### **Moss as Hallowed Hair**

Lodge’s ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’ is a science fiction poem set in the pagan world of Ovidian fable. A narrator, after moaning about worldly troubles, comes face to face with the mourning divinity. This sea-god, Glaucus, has forsaken a watery realm and pressed his way out of a channel (in the original story Ovid’s word ‘fretum’ could equally mean a ‘spring’ or ‘well’).<sup>27</sup> As he lies there on the bank, like a fish out of water, Glaucus explains that he has troubles on a divine scale, now that he is banished from the sight of the disdainful nymph Scylla. Over the course of the poem, Scylla will suffer a classical metamorphosis that is more like a Christian damnation. Glaucus, on the other hand, will learn to smile, and invite the mortal narrator to an honoured feast of the gods. In a piece of startling impertinence, Lodge’s poem ends with the gods wearing ‘mossy garlands’ in a divine realm in which moss is somehow on a par with ‘nectar.’ Is

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>26</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction

<sup>27</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. R. J. Tarrant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 15.904, 15.910; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 322.

there anything to justify this intrusion of moss into such a sacred corner of the cosmos?

As has been established in chapter three, Lodge opens 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' by directing his readers to the speech of Pythagoras in Book Fifteen of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Lodge's lines, 'mark how the morn in roseate colour shines/And straight with clouds the sunny tract is clad', correspond to the Latin lines, 'You see how day extends as night is spent,/And this bright radiance succeeds the dark' [Ovid, 15.186-7].<sup>28</sup> Next, Lodge's line, 'Then see how pomp through wax and wane declines' corresponds to the Latin line, 'You see how...the queenly moon...waxes and wanes' Ovid, 15.198].<sup>29</sup> Having pinpointed the precise speech he is alluding to in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Lodge then guides his readers through the different topics of Pythagoras' speech: it is a discourse 'Of Herbs [15.202], Of metal [15.260-1] and Of Thetis' floats [15.336-7], Of laws and nurture kept among the bees [15.361-7, 15.382-4].<sup>30</sup> According to a scholastic gloss of Pierre Bersuire, Pythagoras' description of the nurture of bees teaches that 'all things are subject to vanity and that nothing in this world is stable [but] God alone is unchangeable.'<sup>31</sup> It is 'the schoolmen's cunning notes' on Ovid, and not merely Ovid, then, that leads to the conclusion that as times change people should turn from private woes to the suffering of God and the state from which he has been banished: 'Conclude and know, times change by course of fate/Then mourn no more but moan my helpless state.'<sup>32</sup>

Between his discussion of the golden, silver, bronze and iron worlds ['Of metal' 15.260-1] and his discussion of the floating island of Delos ['Of Thetis' floats' at 15.336-7], Pythagoras discusses waters that turn hair 'gold' or 'amber' [15.315-6]. It should be noted, that in ancient and biblical times, the colour 'gold' meant 'red gold' and was therefore closer to an 'amber' colour. Thus, when Pythagoras claims that 'Crathis and Sybaris, our own twin streams/Tint hair like gold or amber', he means that the waters dye hair a shining red

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<sup>28</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 25-6.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-8.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

<sup>31</sup> Pierre Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana...Explanata*, Paris: 1509, Stephen Orgel (introduction), New York & London, Garland Publishing Inc., 1979, XV.ii; William D. Reynolds, 'The *Ovidius Moralizatus* of Pierre Bersuire: An Introduction and Translation', PhD diss., Urbana: University of Illinois, 1971, 420

<sup>32</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 41-2, 37.

colour.<sup>33</sup> The classical lines find their biblical parallel in the Song of Solomon 1:9. When Christ the lover tells his beloved ‘thy cheeks are comely with jewels, thy neck with chains of gold’, this was traditionally taken to describe the golden plaited hair of the bride of Christ against her white neck.

Once Lodge has gestured to Pythagoras’ speech, which includes the red wells, the poets in the tradition never mention it again. However, the red wells are conspicuous by their absence, since they are clearly behind this craze for dyed hair which takes this poetic tradition by storm. These fabulous verse narratives, like fashion-conscious adolescents, are besotted with their own hair, and it is often ‘amber’ and ‘gold.’

As elliptical references to hair accumulate, each reference acts as a continuation of the last, allowing meaning to accumulate. Similarly, Lodge’s ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, Marlowe’s ‘Hero and Leander’ and Shakespeare’s ‘Venus and Adonis’ can each be read as a continuation of the last, so that what is said about hair in one poem, may be clarified in the next. Lodge’s poem includes characters with ‘amber locks’ and ‘amber hairs’ and describes another character ‘renting the tresses of her golden hair.’<sup>34</sup> This is ‘hair’ like ‘gold wires’ or a ‘tress...curl’d and clear as beaten gold’ and so has the shiny metallic quality of the ‘chains of gold’ in the Song of Solomon.<sup>35</sup> Marlowe goes further, feigning that the earthly hair of Hero is apparently courted by heaven (specifically Apollo), just as heaven later wishes to claim the ‘fair gem’ of Hero’s virgin blood.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Leander’s shaggy hair makes it look like he is bearing a red-gold ram from heaven on his shoulders:

His dangling tresses that were never shorn,  
Had they been cut and unto Colchos borne,  
Would have allur’d the venturous youth of Greece,  
To hazard more than for the Golden Fleece.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.315-6; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, 361.

<sup>34</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 56, 628, 141.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 285, 518; Song of Solomon 1:11.

<sup>36</sup> Marlowe, ‘Hero and Leander’, 1.233, 1.247.

<sup>37</sup> Marlowe, ‘Hero and Leander’, 1.55-8.

Finally, although Shakespeare's Venus, like Lodge's Scylla, has 'golden hairs', Shakespeare's Adonis is not explicitly described as having 'amber hairs'.<sup>38</sup> Why, then, does John Weever write of Shakespeare's 'Adonis with his amber hairs'?<sup>39</sup> It is because he understands the game that the poets are playing and is playing it himself. That is to say, he recognises that the elliptical phrases acquire cumulative meaning as they are sustained from one poem to the next. What at first sight is an inaccurate phrase emerging out of a splicing together of Lodge's and Shakespeare's poem in his memory, is a deliberate strategy. It provides unique evidence that Shakespeare's poem of 'Adonis' was read as a continuation of Lodge's poem with 'amber hairs' in the period, and that contemporary readers recognised in these works some allegorical logic that prompted them to join the dots throughout each single poem and from one poem to the next.

It is tempting to fall back on the modern assumption that gold and amber hair might merely reflect an ideal of beauty from the period (in much the same that modern heroines in certain cheap kinds of fiction must *always* have auburn hair, or modern films by Hitchcock must *always* have a Hitchcock blonde). However, such assumptions seem anachronistic and a more pertinent response might take into account the biblical and ancient sources of the poems. On the one hand, the amber or gold hairs might act as an indication that an anatomy in a fabulous verse narrative is divine (or possibly a golden-haired saintly bride as in the Song of Solomon). They operate like the blue stripes on a pharaoh's headdress, which suggested that he had lapis lazuli hair like the Egyptian gods.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, the amber and gold hair is a tell-tale sign that these divine entities have been steeped in the fantastic waters of Ovidian fable, represented by the red waters of Pythagoras.

The four whole lines given over to describing Leander's hair suggest the disproportionate value that is put on hair in these fabulous verse narratives. The fascination that Hero's hair holds for Apollo, who is prepared to court her for that heavenly part of her body and overlook the rest, may be part of the same

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<sup>38</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 141; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 51.

<sup>39</sup> John Weever, 'Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare', Epigrams, London, 1599, repr. In Ernst Honigmann, *John Weever: A Biography of a Literary Associate of Shakespeare and Jonson, together with a Photographic Facsimile of Weever's Epigrams* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 109.

<sup>40</sup> John H. Taylor, *Journey Through the Afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (London: British Museum Press, 2003) 26.

fascination that his own 'Castalian wells' hold for him. It can be no accident that Shakespeare chose an epigram for 'Venus and Adonis' that brought together the 'golden-haired' ['flavus'] Apollo and 'cups' ['pocula'] plunged into his 'Castalian waters' ['Castalia aqua'], which were red, because they had been mingled with dragon's blood.<sup>41</sup> In fact, the waters of the Castalian well coloured with supernatural blood would recall the waters of the Adonis river mingled with Adonis' blood, since, in the words of John Milton, every year the 'smooth Adonis from his native rock/Ran purple to the sea.'<sup>42</sup> There may have been some logic for Shakespeare in referring to 'golden hairs' of Venus, and the same logic for Weever in recalling the 'amber hairs' of Adonis, in a poem about Adonis that began with an epigram about the 'Castalian wells' of poetic inspiration.

The god emerges out of the 'channel' of a well at the start of Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', and his 'hallowed hairs' are 'wet with the tears of his sad mother's dye.'<sup>43</sup> 'Sad mother' is Lodge's thinly-veiled translation of 'Mater Dolorosa' and so this phrase suggests the bloody tears, mingled with Christ's blood, wept by Saint Mary the Virgin.<sup>44</sup>

However, the hairs may also be dripping in the blood of the 'channel' to reflect a late-medieval cult. As was seen in chapter two, this cult had famously come into being when Pope Gregory witnessed the 'remorseful sight' of the wounded 'Man of Sorrows' hovering above an altar.<sup>45</sup> This image of Christ, sometimes called the 'Imago Pietatis', had revealed its dripping wounds. For this reason the cult was often called the cult of the five wounds or of the five healing 'springs of pity.' It is possible that the 'springs of pity' are explicitly alluded to by Lodge in the phrase 'piteous streams.'<sup>46</sup> Later it seems that he is using 'pity or remorse' interchangeably, so that the 'springs of their remorseful

<sup>41</sup> Ovid, *Amores*, 1.15.35-6. Cf. Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 72.

<sup>42</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.450-1. Cf. traditions surrounding a well at Heliopolis in Egypt dyed red by the rising sun. See Susan Sorek, *The Emperors' Needles: Egyptian Obelisks and Rome* (Bristol: Phoenix Press, 2010), 3: 'a famous well in which—according to tradition—the sun god Rā bathed his face when he rose for the first time on the world. The well is still there, at Mataiyah, and is known in Arabic as Ain ash-Shems (Fountain of the Sun). The Apocrypha of the Greek New Testament recounts that the Virgin Mary rested by this well and drew water from it to wash the clothes of the baby Jesus. Wherever the water fell, balsam plants sprang up; drops of their oil were mixed with the water used to baptize Christians.'

<sup>43</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 8, 9.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 9; Ian Lancashire (ed.), *Hick Scorer* in *Two Tudor Interludes: The Interlude of Youth, Hick Scorer*, line 10: 'Record I take of Mary, that wept tears of blood'.

<sup>45</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 590, 427, 427; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 238.

<sup>46</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 5.

sight' can refer to the same cult. Some indication of how cunningly these medieval cults are secreted in these fabulous verse narratives can be gleaned from a closer look at some misleading lines from Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis':

'Pity' she cries, 'some favour, some remorse!  
Away he springs, and hasteth to his horse.'<sup>47</sup>

The constellation of highly-charged words from Lodge's earlier poem—'pity' and 'remorse' and 'springs'—allows the allegorical subtext to rupture through the surface narrative. This means that the significance of the couplet is not exclusively tied up in the surface meaning of Adonis eager to be back in the saddle and the jilted Venus calling after him.<sup>48</sup> In Lodge's terms, the couplet is engaging on a subliminal level with 'spring-born' pity welling up from 'five red roses.'<sup>49</sup> In Shakespeare's terms, it is already preparing the reader for their interpretation of the 'bloody view' of Adonis' wounds which will have 'checkred' his 'pale' body with 'red.'<sup>50</sup> Earlier in Shakespeare's poem, the word 'pity' is revealed as a vocative way of addressing Adonis: "'O pity" 'gan she cry "flint-hearted boy!"'<sup>51</sup> Later on, Venus has a vision of Adonis, or 'an image like' him, 'all stain'd with gore', which makes it clear that he is her 'living sorrow.'<sup>52</sup> In this way, Shakespeare's Adonis, no less than Lodge's 'sorrowing' god who 'with pitiful looks before my face appears', stands for the *Imago Pietatis* ['Christ of Pity'] and the 'Man of Sorrows' of the late-medieval cult.<sup>53</sup>

Alternatively, when Glaucus presses his way out of a 'deep-dark' 'channel' from a 'wat'ry realm' 'beneath the earth', his hair may be 'wet' in the 'dye' of the 'channel' itself.<sup>54</sup> According to this idea, the red hair may not reflect the bloody tears at the crucifixion, or the bloody wounds of pity displayed to

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<sup>47</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 257-8.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 4.5.48: 'Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's Day...' etc.

<sup>49</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 311-12; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1168.

<sup>50</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 311-12; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1168.

<sup>51</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 95.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 665, 95, 671.

<sup>53</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 7, 10; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 238.

<sup>54</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 1038, 7, 399; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Michael D. Reeve and trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), 4.569, 9.153-4.



Pope Gregory, but specific red waters lapping in the 'channel' of a red well.<sup>55</sup> This might be a direct allusion to the Song of Solomon 7:5: 'The hairs of thy head as the purple of the King [Christ] bound in the channels.'<sup>56</sup> In this verse, as in all ancient and biblical texts, the colour purple means red, specifically the colour of blood.<sup>57</sup> When Lodge's God resorts to hyperbole and claims that 'a hundred swelling tides my mother spent/Upon my locks' he may not be grossly exaggerating.<sup>58</sup> It indicates that his hairs are still 'wet with the drops of the night' (Song of Solomon 5:2). In other words, they are still dripping from his nocturnal journey up a 'channel' from a 'wat'ry realm' which was sometimes said in medieval sources to be fed by 'sixty rivers.'<sup>59</sup> However, the red-headed nature of Glaucus was also believed in the Middle Ages to be the reason behind his name: 'according to some he is called Glaucus because he is adorned with bright colour...[he is] brightly coloured through a celestial way of life.'<sup>60</sup> In this way, the heavenly colour of his hair is a sign of his own heavenly nature.

The red-headed god is named as Glaucus and Elizabethan readers might have had certain expectations about this figure. Ovid had ensured that it was impossible to think of Glaucus without thinking of the miraculous herbs which feature so prominently in his fable. In Ovid's fable, Glaucus' herbs change dead fish into living fish and a fisherman (Glaucus himself) into a science fiction 'mermaidlike' creature.<sup>61</sup> In Bersuire's commentary, these are the herbs of penitence that make fishy sinners alive through grace and turn Glaucus into 'a holy, contrite and sad man through the grace of God.'<sup>62</sup> It is reasonable

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<sup>55</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 9, 9, 7.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 9.

<sup>57</sup> For 'purple' understood as 'red' in the period see John Gerard, *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes*, (London: John Norton, 1598) Gerard writes of 'red, which Ovid calleth purple' (*Ibid.*, 101). See also William Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis' in *Shakespeare's Poems*, eds. Katherine Duncan-Jones, H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007). The editors note that 'purple-coloured' in Shakespeare can mean 'red, rosy and the colour of blood' (*Ibid.*, 1n.).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 1038, 7, 399; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Kings of Britain*, 4.569, 9.153-4 The appearance of the number 'sixty' in this context is interesting because the sexagesimal counting system, which persists in the division of hours and minutes still used in the west today, has been traced back to ancient Iraq. This raises the possibility that Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'lake under the earth', derived from Celtic cosmology, may ultimately derive from an even more ancient Babylonian source. Similarly, Plutarch's 'wat'ry realm' of 'the deep' where the 'tresses of Isis' are found almost certainly corresponds to 'the deep' where the plant of immortality are found in the earliest literature of the Babylonian world.

<sup>60</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 420; Bersuire, *Metamorphoses Ovidiana*, XIII.vii.

<sup>61</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 393

<sup>62</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.315.

<sup>62</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 393.

to suppose that the first thing an informed reader would have asked themselves on encountering Lodge's poem was: where are the herbs of penitence?

There are two things that characterise Glaucus at the moment of his dripping 'entrance', a 'mossy coat' and 'hallowed hairs.'<sup>63</sup> Elizabethan readers might expect the moss to come into its own as the 'herbs of penitence' but instead the moss is only mentioned at the start and the end, while in the middle of the poem it is Glaucus' hair that gets all of the attention. But there is something strange about this focus on hair: as the poem becomes more and more preoccupied by Glaucus' hair it begins to describe it in botanic terms. In an allegorical poem there is always the possibility that this might indicate that both moss and hair are the same on an allegorical level. This is why in a single work like John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a 'burden' and a 'dusty floor', two things that metaphysically have nothing in common, can both stand for 'sin.'<sup>64</sup> It may be, then, that the transference of botanic description from moss to hair identifies them both as representations of the 'herbs of penitence' in the poem. According to this interpretation, these herbs are not strangely absent from this reworking of the Glaucus fable, but they are present in the two things that characterise Glaucus at the start when he journeys out of the 'wat'ry realm' of 'Isis.'<sup>65</sup>

The presiding presence of Isis in this watery retreat seems to be influenced by another classical source. Plutarch's *Moralia* describes a 'wat'ry realm' where miraculous plants can be found.<sup>66</sup> These include 'tresses of Isis' alongside the earliest prototype for the red-and-white flower of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>67</sup> In Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis,' when the

<sup>63</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 394, 11, 8.

<sup>64</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Ed. N. H. Keeble (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1984), 8, 265n.25.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 399, 397, 7.

<sup>66</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 399.

<sup>67</sup> See Harold Brooks (ed.), *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, (London: New Arden Shakespeare, 1978), lxxxi. Brooks first pointed out that the properties of 'love-in-idleness' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* do not derive from the plant of that name in Lyte's *Niewe Herball* but from a plant called 'anacamsorit' in Lyly's *Euphues His England*. However, he stopped short of tracing the properties of Lyly's 'anacamsorit' back to a fabulous plant in Pliny and Plutarch called 'anacampserotes.' The passage in Plutarch, which is incomplete, is the source for the 'hallowed hairs' and 'moss' of 'Isis' flood' in Thomas Lodge's *Scyllae's Metamorphosis* and the plant that makes a person fall in love with the first person seen in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'There grow and thrive down in the deep plants of great magnitude, some of which are called olives, some laurels, and some tresses of Isis; and the plants here called "restorers of lost love" [*anacampserotes*] when lifted out of the earth and hung up not only live as long as you wish but sprout...' (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 'Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon', 939 D)

god emerges out of the 'wat'ry realm' of 'Isis' 'with his hallowed hairs', readers acquainted with Plutarch's description may have come to certain conclusions.<sup>68</sup> In the light of the Plutarch passage, it seems that the mention of a 'wat'ry realm' of 'Isis' in conjunction with 'hallowed hairs' identifies these hairs as botanic 'tresses of Isis.'<sup>69</sup>

The combined authority of Ovid and Plutarch, therefore, seems to imply that the hairs of Glaucus are somehow herbal. The poems also imply this by means of hints dispersed throughout the poems that cumulatively contribute to this impression. Like *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, Lodge's poem includes talking flowers, that practically offer themselves up with the words, 'off with my head!'<sup>70</sup> However, the nearest thing that they have to a head is their 'crests.'<sup>71</sup> Similarly, the science fiction anatomy of Glaucus endows him with 'bushy locks' which are eventually revealed as a 'bushy crest.'<sup>72</sup> Scylla also has the same science fiction anatomy and the 'crest' that goes with it.<sup>73</sup> The word 'crest', first applied to flowers, and later accompanied by the epithet 'bushy' when it is transferred to Glaucus' hair, clearly suggests that there is something strangely botanic about this hair. A similar science fiction physique is encountered in the botanic hair of the Arthurian Green Knight, whose beard is likened to a 'bush' ['busk] and whose long hair clothes his shoulders and streams down his back like a king's mantle ['kynges cap-à-dos'].<sup>74</sup> Lodge's Glaucus and the Arthurian Green Knight may both owe their botanic hair to Ovid's fable, which has Scylla gazing 'in wonder' at Glaucus' 'bronze-green beard' because of 'his colour ['colorem'] and his hair ['caesariem'] /That clothed his shoulders and streamed down his back.'<sup>75</sup> Later in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the same word 'crest [ Latin: 'caesaries', cognate with the Roman cognomen 'Caesar' which may have meant 'hairy' or 'glaucous'] is applied to the snake-crested hair of the healer

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<sup>68</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 399, 397, 18.

<sup>69</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 399, 397, 18; Plutarch, *Moralia*, 'Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon', 939 D.

<sup>70</sup> In fact, they say 'nymph come gather me'.

<sup>71</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 100.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 366, 550.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 567.

<sup>74</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon (eds.), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, repr. 2012), 181-186; J. R. R. Tolkien, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), 22: 'fair flapping locks enfolded his shoulders, a big beard like a bush over his breast hanging that with the handsome hair from his head falling was sharp shorn to an edge just short of his elbows, so that half his arms under it were hid, as it were, in a king's capadoce that encloses the neck.'

<sup>75</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 13.960, 13.913-4; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, 97.

god. In the Middle Ages, the moment when the snake-crested healing god took the form of a golden-crested snake was thought to correspond to the biblical moment when Christ was prefigured in the form of the rod of Moses; his golden crest of long hair was said in Pierre Bersuire's commentary to signify the spiritual 'riches' of Christ.<sup>76</sup>

Whether the 'crest' is a botanic one, associated with fairy flowers or bushy elf-locks, or a serpentine one, associated with godly healing, it seems to signify some kind of riches or wisdom to be gathered from the head of these supernatural beings. In the case of the Arthurian lay, it is Gawain who reaps these benefits by beheading the Green Knight (although it is debatable whether he is any wiser by the end of the story). In Lodge's poem, it is the nymphs who are involved in 'cropping' or dead-heading the flowers, just as in Shakespeare's poem, it is Venus who famously 'crops' the flower-head of Adonis.<sup>77</sup> Lodge's nymphs 'crop' the 'crests' of the flowers and then they crop the head of Glaucus, or at least his hair.<sup>78</sup> Just as barber surgeons in the period might be involved in bleeding a patient or cutting his hair, so these nymphs do not seem to discriminate between this flower-arranging and hairdressing. Suddenly, their distinct pursuits merge into one. It happens so quickly that it calls for a double-take on the part of the reader: one minute they are running their fingers through greenery; the next they have 'tangled' their 'fingers' in Glaucus' 'tress' and even 'kempt his head.'<sup>79</sup> Now it is clear: it is no longer the flowers that they are 'plait[ing]' into 'gay-tricked garlands'; they are 'pleat[ing]' Glaucus' 'locks':<sup>80</sup> .<sup>81</sup> It is not just the flowers which are offering up their 'crests' to the nymphs, it is Glaucus, who offers up his own 'head' or 'crest' to them.<sup>82</sup> His 'bushy crest' equates to his 'bushy locks', which are not only dyed by his mother's tides, but 'pleat[ed]' and 'kempt' by the nymphs who flock around him in his bower.<sup>83</sup> At

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<sup>76</sup> See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.656: 'caesariem longae dextra dducere barbae'; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, 371: 'In a dream the god of health and hope [Aesculapius]/Appeared beside the Roman envoy's bed,/Standing as in a temple, his right hand/Seemed to stroke his flowing beard...' A similar bedside apparition appeared in Cicero's *The Dream of Scipio*. It was explained in Christian terms by Pierre Bersuire, as a vision of 'Christ.' (See Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus,' 425, 427; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, XV.vii).

<sup>77</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 102; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1175.

<sup>78</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1175; Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 100.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 266, 266, 560.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 98, 98, 363, 362.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 98, 98, 363, 362.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 98, 560, 362-6 cf. 559

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 550, 366, 361-2, 363, 560

the start of the poem they are said to have ‘frame[d]’ a ‘mossy coat’ and it finishes with them dighting ‘mossy garlands.’<sup>85</sup> Clearly, this is their material of choice. In fact, within this wonderland of allegory, there is nothing to discount the possibility that whatever ends up in their garlands—even if it is gathered on the head of a god—is just so much more moss. These nymphs are single-minded in their hobby, and clearly do not have to stray far to gather plants for their garlands when Glaucus’ botanic ‘hairdo’ is at hand.

This leaves the reader with the impression that hair dyed by a reddening well, Plutarch’s ‘tresses of Isis’ associated with a ‘wat’ry realm’, the ‘hallowed hairs’ of Glaucus dyed in ‘Isis’ flood’, and the moss that makes up the coat and garlands are all the same.<sup>86</sup>

From a classical perspective, there is no problem with the idea of garlands in a cavernous underworld. Plato claimed that Musaeus had described this realm as a place of intoxication associated with garlands and nectar and his description may have directly influenced Lodge’s depiction of this divine region.<sup>87</sup> The problem is not with garlands, but with moss, because there is no classical precedent for its inclusion in a divine realm. Or at least, there is only one classical precedent. The sole instance of moss associated with a god comes in an episode in book eight of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which inspired the eighteenth-century ‘River God’s Cave’ which can still be visited on the Stourhead estate in Wiltshire. Arthur Golding translates Ovid’s estate-agent notes about the River God’s home as follows:

Of pommy hollowed diversely and ragged pebble stone  
The walls were made. The floor with moss was soft to tread upon,  
The roof thereof was checkerwise with shells of purple wrought  
And pearl.<sup>88</sup>

In Lodge’s poem, Glaucus presses through the ‘channel’ leading down into a ‘wat’ry’ subterranean grotto to which the well water ‘repair[s].’<sup>89</sup> Ovid’s episode

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 761.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 399, 8, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Plato, *Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 51.

<sup>88</sup> Arthur Golding (trans.), *Metamorphoses* ed. Madeline Forey (London, Penguin, 2002), 8.723-5.

<sup>89</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 396, 7, 394.

is set in that 'flood's repair' (i.e. the horned river god's retreat). This cavernous retreat is decorated 'on either side' with 'a sweet and fruitful field' of moss and pebble stones and above with a 'checkerwise' red-and-white ceiling of red shells and pearl.<sup>90</sup>

In an odd poetic conceit, Marlowe plunders the language that Arthur Golding uses to translate Ovid's *ecphrasis* (describing interior décor) to furnish his own very different *ecphrasis* (describing Hero's fashionable dress). The 'pebble-stone' is transposed from the 'walls' of the cave to her 'neck', the 'shells' and the 'hollow' 'pearl' are transposed from the 'roof' of the cave to her cavernous knee-high boots or 'buskins.'<sup>91</sup> It is understandable that Marlowe might draw on these lines of Golding, as these fabulous verse narratives are highly conscious of Ovidian precedent. What is less easy to understand is why Marlowe might transpose these words describing a space in the landscape to a passage describing the dress of his heroine. It might be his version of the poetic trope that imagines the female body as a landscape, just as Shakespeare's heroine offers her body with the words: 'I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer.'<sup>92</sup> In Marlowe's version, the effect is more curious since if the reader chooses to attend to the echoes it can convert Hero's body into a watery cave, complete with 'pebble stone', 'shells' and 'blushing coral.'<sup>93</sup>

Golding's verses describing the horned river god in his 'shelly cave' may be alluded to in Shakespeare's stanza describing a horned snail in his 'shelly cave':

Or as the snail, whose tender horns being hit,  
Shrinks backward in his shelly cave with pain,  
And, there all smother'd up, in shade doth sit,  
Long after fearing to creep forth again:  
So at his bloody view her eyes are fled  
Into the deep-dark caverns of her head.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 394, 396, 396.

<sup>91</sup> For coral metamorphosed by gorgon hair see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4.550-2; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, 97; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.31-2; Golding (trans.) *Metamorphosis*, 723-5.

<sup>92</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 231.

<sup>93</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.25, 1.31, 1.32 Cf. 'Come live with me and be my love'.

<sup>94</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1033-9.

Shakespeare's stanza compares Venus' eyes to a snail retreating into his 'cabins' at the 'checkred' sight of the red and white wounded Adonis.<sup>95</sup> This, in turn, might suggest a scenario in which the horned river god, like Mary in the Gospels, would arrive at the 'shelly cave' to find the 'purple...checkred with white' furnishings gone, now that the colours triumph in the cheek of the resurrected Adonis on the surface of the earth.<sup>96</sup>

Shakespeare's stanza may be informed by other classical and indigenous folk traditions about the retreat of horned insects by means of their shell-like elytra which grant access to a heavenly realm free from the floods of sin. According to the medieval tradition of reading Ovid, the resurrected Adonis could double as the death-defying Cerambus (whose name means 'horned') who evaded a 'river' and with the help of the saints was borne into the air as what Shakespeare calls a 'sharded beetle'.<sup>97</sup> According to medieval indigenous tradition in Britain and Germany, the grief of Saint Mary the Virgin was linked to the grief of 'Our Lady Bird' (German: *Marienkäfer* 'Mary beetle') whose distinctive shards of red and white coloration were traditionally a sign that her home had been devastated and her children, insect versions of Christ, were gone.<sup>98</sup>

Although such ideas may have been familiar in folk tradition, they had never been developed in literature before (even Ovid only mentions the Cerambus fable in passing). In Shakespeare's unique literary conceit of the horned snail and the shell, the reader witnesses the 'bloody passion' through insect eyes.<sup>99</sup> These eyes, by shrinking snail-like into the head, not only identify Adonis as Christ, but also as Nature, by cross-referencing a line in Alain of

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 1038.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 1033, 1168.

<sup>97</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 279; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, VII.x.; William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. J. M. Nosworthy (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1995, repr. 2000), 3.3.19. Cf. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.3.3 where Juliet is called by the potentially Christian diminutives 'lamb' and 'ladybird'.

<sup>98</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1038; See also Jack Goody, *The Culture of Flowers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 156. The lady bird, like the 'painted' lady flowers enumerated by Jack Goody, was originally 'Our Lady Bird', and therefore associated with Saint Mary the Virgin. Her coloration was thought to augur the flaming colours of her house or children: 'Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home: your house is on fire your children are gone.' A similar charm relating to fairies not ladybirds appears in the story 'The Horned Women' collected by Joseph Jacobs, *Celtic Fairy Tales* (Lomond: Bath, 2000), 32, 246: 'The mountain of the Fenian women and the sky over it is on fire.' In this version, the sky with its white pinpoints of stars stands in for the roof of this imagined flaming 'house' of the fairies, which shares its spotted coloration with the imagined flaming 'house' of the ladybird.

<sup>99</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997), 5.2.44.

Lille's *Plaint of Nature*. The insect impulse corresponds to the moment in this earlier dream vision when the narrator is seized with dread at the approach of the virgin Nature: 'my eyes... fled with fear into the tents of my eyelids.'<sup>100</sup> Shakespeare's poem may already have signalled its debt to Alan of Lille's dream vision in the line 'the text is old, the orator too green', where the overly verdant orator may, of course, be Nature herself.<sup>101</sup> The 'horned' being (who is also Nature) in the flood's (that is, Saint Mary the Virgin's) repair, corresponds closely to Pierre Bersuire's description of a 'nymph' (who stands for Nature) in a 'spring of pity' (which stands for the Blessed Virgin).<sup>102</sup> In this underwater home, whether it is the property of a 'horned' river god, a water-nymph, or the goddess Nature herself, moss can be encountered for the first time in a divine setting.<sup>103</sup> On the face of it, this looks like just the kind of moss that might furnish a 'mossy garland' for the head of a god.

However, on closer consideration, to trace Lodge's 'mossy garlands' back to Ovid's description of the River God's Cave still leaves many questions unanswered. Although the moss *is* present in this classical 'flood's repair' the logic of its connection with hair and its sanctity is not clear from this classical source alone, or from any other classical sources, for that matter.<sup>104</sup> This suggests a need to examine traditions indigenous to the British Isles. But what tradition could possibly explain why moss would end up as hairs?

Possibly the medical theory of universal analogies, or curing like with like, which was an indigenous knowledge-system predating the theory of the Great Chain of Being.<sup>105</sup> Since ancient times hair was seen as analogous to worms or snakes, an association that is clear from so-called Gorgon's head carving that appeared on the pediment of the Romano-British Temple of Sulis

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<sup>100</sup> Alain of Lille, *The Plaint of Nature*, trans. James J. Sheridan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1980), Cf. John Donne's later poem, 'Good Friday, 1613, Riding Westward', which may rework the conceit from Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis': 'What a death were it... to see God dye?/It made his own Lieutenant Nature shrinke.'

<sup>101</sup> William Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 806. She may be 'too green' because, according to *The Winter's Tale* it is more proper to present Nature as 'pied' in red and white.

<sup>102</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 214; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IIII.viii.

<sup>103</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 761; Song of Solomon 7:5.

<sup>104</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 394.

<sup>105</sup> How far Aristotle's artificial and academic system of the *Scala Naturae*, cherished by E. M. W. Tillyard in his *Elizabethan World Picture* (1943), had an impact on genuine cosmology is increasingly open to question. Scholars like Kristen Poole in *Supernatural Environments in Early Modern England* (2011) are providing a different and more complex picture of competing cosmologies in the period.



Minerva in Bath Spa.<sup>106</sup> Such worms or snakes were imagined to be the invisible cause of illness, and best placated with moss. Peter Dendle explains that ‘illness was largely regarded as an external and invasive force, often zoomorphised’ and ‘the principal pathogens were the...worms...ubiquitous in early medieval diagnostics.’<sup>107</sup> By a leap of logic, ‘it is the lowest of living creatures then known...lichen and moss...which are employed to combat these worms, who are themselves the lowest creatures in the animal kingdom.’<sup>108</sup> In this way ‘the almost sacral veneration of plants, plant histories and plant potencies in many medical texts uncomfortably deifies organisms [specifically moss and lichen] that should, by all accounts, reside toward the bottom of the classical Neo-Platonic “Great Chain of Being.”’<sup>109</sup> These poems clearly inherit a taxonomy that can place moss on a par with heavenly substances and can thus be seen to predate ideas about the Great Chain of Being.

Another medical tradition that might lie behind this curious link between moss and hair might be the indigenous doctrine of signatures.<sup>110</sup> This taught that God had created plants like parts of the human anatomy to reveal their therapeutic potential for that body part. Unsurprisingly, the hair-like quality of certain plants was understood to give an indication of their efficacy for treating hair. A lichen called beard lichen [*Usnea Dillenius ex Adanson*] is one of the great success stories of the doctrine of the signatures: ‘*Usnea* has traditionally had a reputation for curing diseases of the scalp [because] its appearance recalls a head of long hair...and is still sold in the best chemist shops as an ingredient in anti-dandruff shampoo.’<sup>112</sup>

However, indigenous medical traditions of universal analogies and the doctrine of signatures alone cannot explain why Glaucus’ ‘mossy coat’ might be of the same material as his ‘hallowed hairs.’<sup>113</sup> One possible way forward is suggested by Peter Dendle’s comment that moss and lichen could become hallowed by association with where they were growing: ‘lichen are often

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<sup>106</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *Roman Bath Discovered* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 90.

<sup>107</sup> Peter Dendle, ‘Plants in the Early Medieval Cosmos’ in *Health and Healing from the Medieval Garden* eds. Peter Dendle and Alain Touwaide (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 57, 58.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

<sup>110</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>112</sup> David E. Allen & Gabrielle Hatfield, *Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition: An Ethnobotany of Britain and Ireland* (London: Timber Press, 2004), 41-2.

<sup>113</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 8. 11

identified by the substance on which they grow: hence “church-lichen” and “crucifix-lichen.”<sup>114</sup> He adds that ‘moss scraped from the cross of St Oswald heals a man’s broken arm in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*.’<sup>115</sup> Could there be an indigenous context in which moss might be found in the British Isles that would make it ‘heavenly’ by association? Lodge’s poem provides one more clue:

....At the last it was my chance to spy  
 A pleasant entrance to the floods’ repair;  
 Through which I press’d, and wond’ring there beheld  
 On either side a sweet and fruitful field.<sup>116</sup>

This stanza corresponds to the amazement felt by Ovid’s Glaucus when he discovers that there is another land under the water: ‘I felt my heart-strings tremble and my soul/Consumed with yearning for that other world.’<sup>117</sup> Lodge’s Glaucus is just as amazed. He presses on through the waving botanic tresses that line the ‘channel’ ‘on either side’ to the heavenly ‘realm’ of ‘Isis (the lady of that lovely stream).’<sup>118</sup> The tresses form ‘a sweet and fruitful field’ below the ‘flood’s repair’, which clearly recalls the ‘Celtic religious belief in Elysian lands below wells.’<sup>119</sup> If these ‘hallowed hairs’ form the ‘mossy’ Elysian ‘field’ and furnish the Elysian ‘mossy garlands’, it is not according to any classical tradition, but according to a Celtic tradition, indigenous to the British Isles.<sup>120</sup> One of the few ways such a tradition could have survived the Middle Ages and the reformation was probably through a local connection with a well. Unless he himself also had a local connection with the well, such a tradition was likely to have come to Lodge’s attention through pilgrimage. The poem engages with such traditions in defiance of anti-Catholic laws, like Henry VIII’s Injunctions of 1538, which had expressly forbidden the ‘wandering to pilgrimage.’<sup>121</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Dendle, ‘Early Medieval Cosmos’, 58.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 58; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), III.ii.

<sup>116</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 393-6.

<sup>117</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 395, 394; Francis Jones, *The Holy Wells of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), 52. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 13.947.

<sup>118</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 399, 396, 6, 395.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 395, 394. Jones, *Holy Wells*, 52. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 13.947.

<sup>120</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 7, 761, 394, 761.

<sup>121</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 407.

There is one stanza in 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' that brings together godly 'wand'ring' and a certain 'spring':

A hundred swelling tides my mother spent  
 Upon these locks, and all her nymphs were prest  
 To pleat them fair, when to her bower I went  
 He that hath seen the wand'ring Phoebus crest  
 Touch'd with the crystal of Eurotas spring  
 The pride of these my bushy locks might sing.<sup>122</sup>

This stanza seems to be a comparison of divine hairs, steeped in the bloody tides of the Mater Dolorosa's tears, and the rays of the westering Sun, which also can dye well waters red. The Sun is imagined as a 'wand'ring' pilgrim fleeting ever further 'westward' to reach the well at his journey's end.<sup>123</sup> In this, he resembles the 'wandering guest[s]' of Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' or Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, who stand for pilgrims (as is most clear in the case of Romeo himself). These wanderers, on an 'ancient feast' day commemorating the nativity of a dying god, will encounter 'breathing stars' or 'earth-treading stars' which in Bersuire's commentary stand unequivocally for 'the angels and saints.'<sup>124</sup> In support of this reading, the last-minute invitations in Shakespeare's play are extended to Catholic saints including 'Valentine' and 'Anselm', this last saint also a former archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>125</sup> In further support of this reading, both Leander and Romeo pose as pilgrims kneeling before images in devout medieval 'idolatry.'<sup>126</sup> Hero whispers, 'Were I the saint he worships, I would hear him' and proceeds to lend an ear to his 'sighs and tears', while Romeo famously plays the 'good pilgrim' to Juliet's 'dear saint' who

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<sup>122</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 361-6.

<sup>123</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 364, 391.

<sup>124</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 224; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IV.xvi

<sup>125</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.98; Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.2.64, 67. The 'ancient feast' is the 'Great Festival' of Adonis and the 'Old-Accustomed' Capulet Feast, which in spite of the summer setting, still holds onto the roaring fires of the Christmas timeframe of Arthur Brooke's earlier poem of Romeus and Juliet. On the subject of saints it should be noted that in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, in this speech of Capulet which echoes with the poetry of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, the saints are also compared to 'fennel buds' since the saints are kindled into being from the 'fennel' stalk in which 'the fire from heaven fet by Prometheus' was concealed.

<sup>126</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.113.

hears his 'prayer.'<sup>127</sup> In this way, Romeo enacts his name, since according to Cedric Watts, 'the Italian noun *romeo* means "pilgrim"; in 1598 John Florio's dictionary translated it as "palmer" (a pilgrim whose palm leaf shows that he has visited the Holy Land).'<sup>128</sup>

There is some justification for the view, then, that the above stanza of Lodge's poem has a potent subtext relating to pilgrimage. According to this logic, the wisp of moss is imagined as a kind of pilgrim 'crest' or badge.<sup>129</sup> It is well known that botanic crests were used by pilgrims, like the palm which was worn on the shoulder of a pilgrim returning from the Holy Land (and presumably by Romeo, since Juliet recognises him as a 'palmer' from his costume alone).<sup>130</sup> If there is a pilgrim logic to this link between a wisp of moss and a wisp of hair, the use of moss as a crest in the same way as a pilgrim's palm may have found its validation in the Song of Solomon 5:11: 'his locks as branches of palm trees.' This would provide further support for the supposition that the pilgrimage subtext may ultimately hold the answer to why Lodge's poem concerns itself with the weaving of 'hallowed hairs' one minute and with the weaving of 'mossie garlands' the next.<sup>131</sup> The pilgrimage subtext may also ultimately explain why Lodge's poem mentions 'piteous herbs or springs' in the same breath.<sup>132</sup>

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* famously brought together a mismatched gaggle of characters engaged in 'wandering to pilgrimage.'<sup>133</sup> Although pilgrimage was outlawed by the time Lodge was writing, his 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' also brings together some diverse travellers united by a single purpose and epithet: the 'wandering geese', the 'wandering Phoebus', and the 'wandering' Glaucus. They are all described 'flitting' or 'fleeting' in a journey 'westward.'<sup>134</sup> This brings them first to the 'chalky cliffs' of Dover and then 'at the last' to a well in the far west of the British Isles.<sup>135</sup> There is some justification for identifying it as a holy well, since it was evidently once believed to be an

<sup>127</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.179, 1.193; Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.5.96; 1.5.101; 2.2.55.

<sup>128</sup> Cedric Watts (ed.), *Romeo and Juliet* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 64.

<sup>129</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 364.

<sup>130</sup> It was likely that the 'palm' was supplemented by willow or pussy willow for pilgrimages within the British Isles.

<sup>131</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 8, 761.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>133</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 407.

<sup>134</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 246, 385.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 392, 393, 394, 2.

'entrance' to another world deep under the earth.<sup>136</sup> Nevertheless, for reasons best known to himself, Lodge does not directly disclose the location, preferring to refer to it indirectly as 'Isis' flood.'

In the past, interpretation of this well has been hampered by the assumption that 'Isis' flood' ultimately meant 'the Thames in Oxford.'<sup>137</sup> This assumption dates from the days when a scholar only had to utter those sonorous words, 'Lodge was an Oxford man', and the point was considered proven.<sup>138</sup> In fact, Elizabethan or modern readers who were led to believe that the goose pilgrimage ended at an 'Isis' in Oxford, were literally being led on a wild goose chase.<sup>139</sup>

Lodge's choice of the phrase 'Isis' flood' is best explained, not by unsubstantiated theories that he 'possibly wrote some of his poem' in Oxford, but by consulting Plutarch's *Moralia* and Bersuire's *Ovidius Moralizatus*.<sup>140</sup> Plutarch can shine light on the conjunction of 'Isis', botanic 'hallowed hairs' and a 'wat'ry realm' in Lodge's poem since the Greek scholar locates the 'hallowed hairs' of 'Isis' in a 'wat'ry' realm under the earth that he calls 'The Deep.' Bersuire can shine further light on the matter since the Benedictine identifies 'Isis' as the 'Blessed Virgin' (he also identifies 'the springs of pity' as the 'Blessed Virgin' elsewhere too).<sup>141</sup> Reading Lodge in the light of Plutarch and Bersuire, it starts to seem that Lodge's 'lady of the lovely stream' must have been a virgin who was somehow associated with botanic 'tresses'.<sup>142</sup>

At the start of the poem, Lodge suggested that the 'schooleman's cunning notes' on 'springing [Latin: 'salire'] trees' would come in handy, and, sure enough, his description of the well 'under a willow tree [Latin: 'salix']' also identify it as the classical Arethusa.<sup>143</sup> Lodge's Eurotas is another name for a stream that like the Arethusa ('the human soul') joins with the river Alphaeus ('God'), so it is reasonable to assume that it could also stand for Arethusa by

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 392, 393, 394, 2.

<sup>137</sup> M. M. Reese (ed.), *Elizabethan Verse Romances* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), 213.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>139</sup> The university nickname for the Oxford stretch of the Thames is thought to have its origins in the tail-end of the Latin name of the river 'Thamesis.'

<sup>140</sup> Reese (ed.), *Elizabethan Verse Romances*, 213.

<sup>141</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 397; Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 344, 214; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IX.xx, IIII.viii.

<sup>142</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 394.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 13. The 'willow' was sometimes called the 'springing willow', from the Latin etymology for the tree famously put forward by Isidore of Seville, that linked 'salix' ['willow'] with 'salire' ['to spring' or 'leap'].

one remove.<sup>144</sup> Arethusa merges with a river under a willow tree in much the same way as Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.<sup>145</sup> Ophelia, in turn, is given the name Winefride in the parody of Shakespeare's character by the dramatists of *Eastward Ho*.<sup>146</sup> If the Eurotas was the Arethusa by one remove, Arethusa was Winefride by two removes.

Saint Winefride was the blessed virgin of a well in the far west of the British Isles, at Holywell in Flintshire. Lodge relates the 'wand'ring' history of the taciturn 'troops' he knows so well.<sup>147</sup> The 'troops' traverse 'desart vales' 'rocks and desert haunts' until they reach a vale where one 'haughtie topped hill' rises above the 'western waters' of the well.<sup>148</sup> 'Passing these dangerous places of pursuit' was more of a risk than ever for Elizabethan pilgrims.<sup>149</sup> They would traverse the wilderness of Wales until they reached 'the place where [Saint Winefride's] blood was spilt [which] was originally called the Dry Valley' where 'a hill...likened to Calvary' rose 'above the well.'<sup>150</sup> Saint Winefride's well was associated with a kind of moss that had from time immemorial been identified as 'Saint Winefride's Hair.'

From Thomas Pennant's identification of 'Saint Winefride's hair', it is clear that it was the moss that is today called *Plagiochila asplenioides*. It usually occurs 'in pure patches or as scattered shoots mixed with other large bryophytes...on shaded soil or humus banks.'<sup>151</sup> Its ritual use in the early modern period is described by the Jesuit John Gerard (not to be confused with the Protestant herbalist of the same name). He reveals that 'the Catholics gather out of

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. Bersuire's description of the nymph who symbolises personified Nature mingling with the springs of pity symbolising the Blessed Virgin. Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 224; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IV.xvi.

<sup>145</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 397; Song of Solomon 4:12.

<sup>146</sup> George Chapman, Ben Jonson and John Marston, *Eastward Ho* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), 4.1.65 ff.

<sup>147</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997), 1.3.154-6, 1.3.140.

<sup>148</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 246, 247, 239, 237; Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.3.140-3.

<sup>149</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 248.

<sup>150</sup> Thomas Swift (trans.), *The Life of Saint Winefride, Virgin and Martyr*, (Holywell, 1888), 28; T.W. Pritchard, *St Winefride, Her Holy Well and the Jesuit Mission c. 660–1930* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 2009), 72.

It is possible that the reason that the Tauris is a mountain one minute and a 'hillie toppe' the next is because Lodge is adapting his story from Aelian, *De Natura Animalium*, 5:29-30 to the ritual landscape of Holywell. Similarly, the odd phrase which describes this mountain 'neighbouring air well-nigh' may be Lodge's way of hinting that the hill was once a mountain 'neighbouring ere well-nigh', which is to say, neighbouring once 'nigh' to the 'well.'

<sup>151</sup> T. L. Blockeel, Sam D. S. Bosanquet & Christopher Preston, *Atlas of British and Irish Bryophytes* (London: Pisces Publication, 2014), vol. 1, 185.

devotion and preserve reverently...a tufty weed (the English word is “moss”) which clings to the stones and gives a sweet smell when it is plucked.’<sup>152</sup>

According to the meticulous research of Bill Pritchard, to which this chapter is indebted, the moss was also woven into garlands and these were often carried from the well to those who could not travel to the shrine themselves.<sup>153</sup>

Furthermore, ‘a plaster made from moss, clay and mud, was mixed at some wells and applied to the afflicted part of the patient, e.g. at...St Winefride’s [Well].’<sup>154</sup> Since these are the only sacred garlands of moss recorded in the British Isles at the time they almost certainly inspired Lodge’s garlands of moss associated with divinities and divine realms.

The Jesuit poet Robert Southwell seems to have objected to the way that the pagan figures, that stood for Christ and the saints in Lodge’s poem, wore soft, comfortable garlands on their heads: ‘Christ’s thorn is sharp, no head his garland wears.’<sup>155</sup> However, Shakespeare’s direct response to Lodge’s

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<sup>152</sup> Gerard, *Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, 46.

<sup>153</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 33.

<sup>154</sup> Jones, *Holy Wells*, 101.

<sup>155</sup> This interpretation of Southwell’s line depends on the argument that Southwell’s ‘St Peter’s Complaint’ (1592), looks back to Lodge’s ‘Truth’s Complaint over England’, just as that poem has looked back to Cavendish’s lament for the passing of ‘Truth’ in the form of Mary and his prophecy of ruin for England (sometime after 1558). It is not generally recognised that Southwell is being so directly allusive to Lodge in this poem, but it is important because critics like Christopher Devlin and Richard Wilson have argued that his mention of ‘finest wits’ refers to Shakespeare. Klause has argued convincingly that this could not have been the case, and the final piece in this argument, is to realise that by his allusion to the ‘finest wits’ Southwell means Thomas Lodge. Southwell’s central plaintiff-figure, his metre, his title, and especially a number of verbal echoes, signal that the poem is a response to Lodge’s earlier work. Southwell’s mourning muse is a reincarnation of Lodge’s mournful muse. Southwell’s metre is lifted directly from Lodge’s earlier poem. Even Southwell’s title ‘St Peter’s Complaint’ may be modelled on Lodge’s earlier title ‘Truth’s Complaint over England.’ The reason it can be argued that the first readers may have noticed the implicit application for England is because it was believed that St. Peter’s denial of Christ had ‘a very particular application...to the English recusant Catholic.’ See Robert Southwell, *Collected Poems*, eds. Peter Davidson and Anne Sweeney (Manchester: Carcanet, 2007), 165. However, most striking are the extensive verbal echoes which work both ways, locating Southwell’s poem firmly in the tradition of Cavendish and Lodge, but also defiantly refusing to inhabit their pagan worlds of Catholic meaning.

George Cavendish invoked a pagan Muse to mourn the passing of ‘Truth’ as Mary Tudor: ‘Descend from heaven, O muse Melpomine,/Thou mournful goddess with thy sisters all,/Pass in your plaints the woeful Niobe...’ See Emrys Jones (ed.), *The New Oxford Book of Sixteenth-Century Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 131-4. Then Lodge packed verbal echoes of Cavendish into his opening lines and invoked a pagan Muse to record ‘Truth’s Complaint Over England’: ‘My mournfull Muse Melpomine drawe neare,/Thou saddest Ladie of the sisters three,/And let her plaints in paper now appeere:/Whose teares lyke Occean billowes seeme to bee.../Amidst the rest that set their pen to booke,/She pickt me out to tell this wofull tale,/A simple poet, on whose works to looke,/The finest heads would think it verie stale...’ See Thomas Lodge, *The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge*, ‘Truth’s Complaint Over England’, 85. Next Southwell packed numerous echoes of Lodge’s into his lines and invoked a non-pagan Muse in ‘Saint Peters Complaint’: ‘This makes my mourning Muse resolve in teares,/This theames my heavy penne to plaine in prose,/Christ’s Thorn is sharp, no head his Garland wears,/Still finest wits are stilling Venus Rose./In paynim toys the sweetest vaines are

garlands—in a Lodge-inspired atmosphere of ‘nymphs’, ‘channel[s]’ and herbs on divine heads—is more obviously sympathetic: ‘You nymphs...with your sedg’d crowns...leave your crisp channels.’<sup>156</sup> If the word ‘sedge’ is being used for Lodge’s word ‘moss’ here and elsewhere in Shakespeare’s work, as seems to be the case, this could suggest an alternative conclusion to that of Vivian Thomas and Nicki Faircloth in *Shakespeare’s Plants and Gardens: A Dictionary*: ‘Shakespeare probably uses sedge generically rather than specifically.’<sup>157</sup>

The stringy and mixed nature of the moss meant that Lodge could call it ‘moss’ and Shakespeare could call it ‘sedge’ and they could still be writing

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spent:/To Christian workes, few have their tallents lent.’ See Southwell, ‘Saint Peter’s Complaynt’ in *Collected Poems*, 63, l. 14-18.

The verbal parallels in the title persist in Southwell’s lines which pack Lodge’s mention of a ‘mournful Muse Melpomine’ (which becomes a ‘mourning Muse’ stripped of her classical name), ‘plaintes’ (which becomes the verb ‘plaine’) ‘tears’ and a ‘pen’ (which remain unchanged) into two lines. Finally, Southwell picks up on his allusion to ‘finest heads’ which he alters to ‘finest wits.’ Southwell appropriates Lodge’s opening ostensibly to complain that Lodge is still producing pagan work with Christian allegory, creating characters like Glaucus who might stand for Christ, but who is not crowned with the biblical thorns that would identify him more explicitly to readers. He ostensibly implies that Lodge is spending precious blood (‘vaines’) in pagan subject-matter (‘paynim toyes’) when others are offering theirs up in martyrdom. The allusion to talents suggests the servant in Matthew 25:14-30 who displeased his master by hoarding his single talent and implies that parables are a more fitting outlet for expressions of Catholic belief. Southwell adopts a debating form to imply that Lodge’s world of Melpomine, Venus and Neptune is not an appropriate world for Catholicism. His poem, therefore, defines itself against the ‘stale’ style of Catholic poetry that Lodge has made his own.

Southwell’s attack on the ‘finest wits’ who continue to produce poetry by ‘stilling Venus Rose’ has recently received considerable critical attention. Christopher Devlin and Richard Wilson have argued that Southwell’s literary critique is intended as a reproof to Shakespeare’s ‘Venus and Adonis.’ Their argument depends on the assumption that “Venus and Adonis” circulated in manuscript before its publication in 1593. See John Klause, *Shakespeare, the Earl and the Jesuit*, (Madison: Teckneck Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), 45. John Klause contests this because ‘Venus and Adonis’ ‘clearly spoke to the condition of the twenty-one year old dedicatee’ dating it more firmly in 1593. He also stresses beyond reasonable doubt that Southwell would have been in no position to respond to Shakespeare’s poem after his capture in June 1592. See Klause, *Shakespeare, the Earl and the Jesuit*, 45. According to Klause, Southwell’s sharp words were not intended for Shakespeare, who had yet to write his ‘Venus and Adonis’, but for ‘poets like Petrarch, Gascoigne and Watson, perhaps.’ See Klause, *Shakespeare, the Earl and the Jesuit*, 46.

By contrast, it will be argued here that the phrase ‘finest wits’ is one of a number of echoes that indicate that Southwell’s critique was intended for Thomas Lodge. Lodge uses the phrase the ‘finest heads’ to refer to discerning readers who are able to pick up on the Catholic tenor of his stale approach. Southwell adopts the phrase, but turns it back on the writer, changing it from ‘finest heads’ to ‘finest wits.’ It would be understandable if the plural ‘wits’, intended as an echo of Lodge’s phrase (and so as a plural that will, paradoxically, single him out), later came to be taken to refer to Lodge and another similar writer, such as Shakespeare, but it will be argued that this is in no way the original intention behind Southwell’s lines. ‘Finest wits’ refers to Thomas Lodge, primarily by the way that the phrase points back accusingly to a phrase in ‘Truth’s Complaint Over England.’ In support of this is Alison Shell’s argument that ‘Southwell’s call to repentance was certainly heard and attended to by Thomas Lodge...[who] repudiates his former writing and turns to religious subject-matter.’ See Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2010), 101.

<sup>156</sup> Shakespeare, *Tempest*, 4.1.202-3

<sup>157</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 309.



about the same botanic identity. Shakespeare teases loose ends of Lodge's 'mossy garlands' into his 'sedg'd crowns.'<sup>158</sup> In this way, he is able to pass on a memory, once passed on to pilgrims by Cistercian monks at Basingwerk Abbey in Flintshire, that 'King Edward IV [once] made his pilgrimage and, in respect to the sancity of Winefride, placed "the moss upon his crown."<sup>159</sup> This historical oral tradition, of the 'idle moss' of Saint Winefride that crowned King Edward, may also have inspired the 'idle weeds' that 'crown'd' King Lear in Shakespeare's play.<sup>160</sup>

Shakespeare's weaving of Lodge's moss into his own 'sedg'd crowns' also provides a retroactive gloss on a puzzling moment of redundant comparison earlier in Shakespeare's work.<sup>161</sup> The same Catholic strategy of redundant comparison was deployed by Henry Hawkins in his recusant emblem book. It is apparent in sentences like 'The palme, of trees is it, that bears away the palme' or in the description of a pearl as 'in fine, it is a rich Tresurie of rarities enclosed in a box of Pearl.'<sup>162</sup> This technique seems to have depended upon a repetition of words which, for those in the know, dramatised the act of leaving a particular word unspoken. This was likely to be a sacred name that was left out, perhaps because it would have been unwise to speak it in the current climate, or perhaps out of a wish to dramatise the 'taciturnity' dictated by long-standing taboos relating to 'the secrets of Nature.'<sup>163</sup> In any case, Shakespeare plays the same game, setting up his own redundant comparisons. *The Taming of the Shrew* features a 'wanton' painting that takes as its subject-matter the same fable of Venus and Adonis that Shakespeare would make the subject of his later poem. The painting is said to represent 'Cytherea, all in sedges hid,/Which seem to move and wanton with her breath/Even as the waving sedges play wi'th'wind.'<sup>164</sup> This is a tautological simile that compares 'sedges' to 'sedges' to make it clear that the first use of the word 'sedges' is a gloss for something else, that remains unnamed but that clearly has the quality of hair. The breath from Cytherea's mouth stirs the water-weeds that hide her,

<sup>158</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 11, 761; Shakespeare, *Tempest*, 4.1.202-3.

<sup>159</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 64, 77.

<sup>160</sup> Shakespeare, *Comedy of Errors*, 2.2.179; Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 4.4.3, 6.

<sup>161</sup> Shakespeare, *Tempest*, 4.1.202-3.

<sup>162</sup> Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 154, 188.

<sup>163</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 6; Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, 4.2.72-3; Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1.2.10-11.

<sup>164</sup> Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction

suggesting less the mouth of an anthropomorphic being and more the mouth of a well. Similarly, Saint Winefride herself was still imagined as her well, recalling the way that indigenous Celtic divinities 'were seen as personifications of natural features [so that] Sulis was the hot spring at Bath, not simply its guardian or possessor.'<sup>165</sup> It is possible that Cytherea is 'all in sedges hid' because in biblical terms she is also the 'sealed fountain' of the Song of Solomon 4:12. In Lodge's terms, she is 'the lady of that lovely stream' veiled by the 'lovely locks [which] her bosom hung adown.'<sup>167</sup> In the first appearance of the word 'sedges', they are her 'hair', 'which seems to move and wanton with her breath', in the second appearance of the word, they are the 'moss', which courts the wind.<sup>168</sup>

If the 'mossy garlands' of Lodge's poem are made of the same sacred substance as the sedges of *The Tempest* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, it explains why 'sedge' is linked with 'pilgrimage' in another Shakespeare play. In Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the word 'pilgrimage' is found in constellation with 'sedge', 'stones' and the 'sweet music' of a 'fair course' [i.e. beautiful water-course] or 'fair course' [i.e. beautiful corpse, beautiful remains]. By making the 'current' male and the 'fair course' female, Shakespeare implies that the 'current' is Alphaeus [God] mingled with the 'course' of Eurotas or Arethusa [Saint Winefride].<sup>169</sup> By a 'gentle kiss' the 'sedge', is revealed as an honoured relic, as are 'th'enamell'd stones' to be discussed shortly.<sup>170</sup> By this cluster of words and the conceit of the mingled 'current' and 'fair course', Shakespeare reveals more clearly than ever his literary engagement with the pilgrimage traditions surrounding Saint Winefride's well:

The current that with gentle murmur glides,  
Thou know'st, being stopp'd, impatiently doth rage;  
But when his fair course is not hindered,  
He makes sweet music with th'enamell'd stones,

<sup>165</sup> Miranda J. Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 24.

<sup>167</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 507, 397.

<sup>168</sup> Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 464-5: 'That hapless lover, worn with working woe,/Upon the ground lay pale as any corse', where 'corse' can mean a 'corpse' or a 'water-course'.

<sup>170</sup> Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 2.7.25-30.

Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge  
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage.<sup>171</sup>

Thomas and Faircloth aptly describe this as ‘a beguiling passage’ but it is also a passage ‘beguiled’ by an earlier description of a ‘sweet melodious noise of music’ ‘from the channel’s glide’ in Lodge’s ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis.’<sup>172</sup> By rechristening Lodge’s moss as ‘sedge’, Shakespeare was able to incorporate the relic into *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Tempest* in a way that presumably remained unobserved by all but a select, but significant, number of playgoers.

If the sacred material of Lodge’s ‘mossy garlands’ is the same as the ‘sedge’ of these three Shakespeare plays, it is also present in Shakespeare’s ‘Venus and Adonis.’ This poem features a moment that seems to be inspired by Lodge’s description of the mossy ‘locks’ that stream down Glaucus’ shoulders, dancing in the wind, or Cupid’s ‘plumes...[that] adorn his shoulders, dallying with the wind.’<sup>173</sup> In traditions surrounding the life of Saint Winefride, the moss springs from an extremity of Saint Winefride’s body: the hair of her head. In Shakespeare’s poem, Adonis is partly a figure of the chaste Saint Winefride, and the moss grows from the extremity of his saintly horse’s body: the mane and tail. It is not such a random part of a horse’s anatomy to find a plant hidden, as the ‘horse tail’ [*Equisetum arvense*] is a tufty plant said to be horse’s hair, just as the ‘moss’ [*Plagiochila asplenioides*] was said to be maiden’s hair. In this way, the ‘horse tail’ operates as a ‘similitude’ or ‘type’ that ‘vails’ the true botanic identity of the ‘hallowed hairs.’<sup>174</sup>

Shakespeare signals that the horse’s hair is the site of the botanic incarnation by maintaining Lodge’s botanic use of certain words. Just as Lodge deploys the word ‘crest’ to describe the heads of flowers ‘plait[ed]’ into ‘garlands’, so the horse has a ‘braided hanging mane’ and ‘upon his compass’d crest [the hairs of it] now stand on end.’<sup>175</sup> Just as Lodge’s poem implicitly compares the ‘weeds’ in the well, ‘vailing their crests [Latin: ‘caesaries’]’ and

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 2.7.25-30.

<sup>172</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 309; Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 51, 50.

<sup>173</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 52, 3, 523-4.

<sup>174</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 314; Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 8, 100.

<sup>175</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 100, 98, 98, 363; Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 271-2.

dancing in 'calmest winds', to Cupid's 'plumes...dallying with the wind', so Shakespeare compares a horse who 'vails his [horse]tail like to a falling plume [Latin: 'casearies']' to a divinity crowned with the horse-hair of a falling plume or 'crest' [Latin: 'caesaries'] of his helmet that tumbles 'uncontrolled' along his back.<sup>176</sup> The botanic horse tail is described as a 'cool shadow to his melting buttock' because Shakespeare's Venus has already promised 'to make a shadow for thee [Adonis] of my [Venus'] hairs' and because, in this unrefined horse's anticipation of his master's allegory to be refined later in the poem, Adonis himself will soon have 'melted' into a botanic incarnation that resembles a soft 'cheek.'<sup>177</sup>

Shakespeare also uses a further technique to signal that the horse tail is the site of botanic incarnation: he begins the first stanza of his equine digression with the words 'but lo', just as Lodge had begun the first stanza of his botanic digression with the same words, 'but lo (a wonder)', before embarking on a description of 'idle moss' as the 'idle weeds' animated by the miraculous breath of the well.<sup>178</sup> In Shakespeare's poem, the wind 'sings' through the 'mane and tail', where, in Lodge's poem, the 'balmy breath' of the well from the depths is said to stir the mossy 'weeds...near the bank' and makes them 'sing' in the 'wind.'<sup>179</sup> In Lodge's poem, the song passes from the 'weeds', to the 'willow tree' which overhangs the well, and therefore comprises the first 'willow song' in early modern literature. Shakespeare's later 'willow song' (in which 'the [sic] poor soul' corresponds to Pierre Bersuire's '*anima humana* [the human soul]') and the 'sycamore-tree' corresponds to his '*morus* [the cross]') is associated with 'a maid[en saint] called Barbary', although in Lodge's version it is associated with another virgin martyr, the maiden Saint Winefride herself.<sup>180</sup> In Lodge's poem, the 'sweet melodious noise of music' rising from the depths of the 'channel's glide' stirs the 'weeds', but in Shakespeare's poem the 'high wind' stirs 'the hairs [of the horse tail], who wave like feather'd wings.'<sup>181</sup> The 'hairs'

<sup>176</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 52, 3, 523-4, 100; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 314, 104.

<sup>177</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 315, 191, 1166, 1169.

<sup>178</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 49; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 259; Shakespeare, *Comedy of Errors*, 2.2.179; Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 4.4.3, 6.

<sup>179</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 305; Thomas Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphoses', 51.

<sup>180</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 52, 13; Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.3.38; Parker, Patricia, 'What's in a Name: and More', *Sederi XI: Revista de la Sociedad Espanola de Estudios Renascentistas Ingleses*, (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2002), 138 n.128, 119; 13; Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.3.24.

<sup>181</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 50, 52; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 306.

here do not belong to either the tail or the mane, but they constitute the most accurate description in Shakespeare's work of the feather-like shoots of *Plagiochila asplenioides*. This last clause is interesting because it has never been adequately explained why the 'hairs' might be followed by the word 'who,' but the reason is that 'the relics *were* the saints, they were perceived as being alive.'<sup>182</sup> As if to confirm his understanding of the moss as a botanic relic, the word 'crest' which is everywhere associated with the moss in Lodge's and Shakespeare's poems, first appears in Shakespeare's poem when Venus tells how her divine lover, Mars, 'over my altars...hung...his uncontrolled crest [Latin: 'caesaries']'.<sup>183</sup> On one level, this is a description of the horse-hair plume [Latin: 'caesaries'] on the helmet of the 'god of war', recalling the red and white headdress of Cupid the 'conquering son' in Lodge's poem that 'longst his back with pretty plaits did shed', since both are flowing and unsubdued.<sup>184</sup> On another level it prepares the reader, primed by Lodge's botanic use of the word 'crest', to look out for a botanic relic that had remained unreformed (and perhaps to admire how it is 'controlled' or 'compass'd', more completely than ever before, by Shakespeare's allegorical poem).<sup>185</sup> It also corroborates a contemporary use of the botanic relics of Saint Winefride in the Elizabethan period; an intriguing account has survived of them being placed 'on the altar with the other relics' 'at the time of Mass.'<sup>186</sup> All this suggests that, in incorporating this hairy growth into their work, whether under the name of moss or sedge, both Lodge and Shakespeare were consciously including the botanic relics of Saint Winefride.

### Heavenly Algae on Stones

Tom MacFaul's idea of incarnation as a fundamental fusion of heaven and earth is apparent in these fabulous verse narratives as moss intruding into heaven but it is equally apparent in heavenly moulds intruding onto earth. Almost everywhere that moss or hallowed hairs appear, in the sources and the poems themselves, they are alongside another botanic relic manifested as a red 'stain'

<sup>182</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 306; Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 11.

<sup>183</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 103-4, 272.

<sup>184</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 98; Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 517, 521, 522.

<sup>185</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 550.

<sup>186</sup> Gerard, *Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, 47-8.

on white 'pebbles.' Increasingly, it seems clear that both can be found on the banks of a well.<sup>187</sup>

Earlier the chapter examined the way that Marlowe transferred 'pebble-stone' plundered from the 'walls' of a watery cave to the 'neck' of Hero, and transferred 'shells' and 'hollow' 'pearl' from the very 'roof' of the cave right to the bottom of Hero's body.<sup>188</sup> It would be possible to argue that Hero is dressed in 'chains' not 'of gold' but 'of pebble-stones' in order to indicate that her neck is so lustrous that it makes the pebbles of her necklace light up like diamonds. According to such a reading, she would have selected a tawdry necklace, thrown together arbitrarily by some beachcombing artist, purely to show off this illuminating power that the patch of skin on her neck possesses. However, to advance such an argument would be to overlook the association of 'pebble stones' with watery contexts in Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' (the 'pebbles' at the 'wished waters of frequent') and Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* (the 'pebble stone' decorating the 'flood's repair'). If Marlowe's description is read as a continuation of these earlier mentions of pebbles, in keeping with the overlapping nature of this poetic tradition, it could be describing the way that pebbles seen in water seem to glisten like diamonds. It would thus also be consistent with descriptions later in the poetic tradition as well, such as the precious stones of Venus' eyes which 'shone like the moon in water seen by night' in Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis.'<sup>189</sup> If Marlowe's image is one of pebble-stones seen through water this would explain why they are 'lightened' by the so-called 'neck' of the well 'until they like diamonds shone.'<sup>190</sup> It would also explain why the same 'pebble-stones' might line the 'walls' of the 'flood's repair' in Golding's lines or the 'neck' of a well in Marlowe's lines: the 'walls' and the 'neck' of a well are two ways of referring to the same stone-built structure. Finally, it could reveal why the same 'shells' might be found on the 'roof' of a 'watery realm' or at the bottom of a character whose body is like a well in the landscape: the roof of the 'watery realm' of Lodge's poem is at the bottom of a 'channel' which leads to that 'realm.'

<sup>187</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 9; Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 250.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4.550-2; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, 97; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.31-2; Golding (trans.), *Metamorphosis* ed. Madeline Forey (London, Penguin, 2002), 723-5.

<sup>189</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 492.

<sup>190</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.25, 1.26.

The association of red stains with Marlowe's 'pebble-stone[s]' has already been foregrounded less than ten lines before they are mentioned.<sup>191</sup> In a flourish of *ecphrasis* describing Hero's garments, Marlowe has insinuated that she is clothed in the red-and-white veil and blue kirtle of the Blessed Virgin. This, of course, challenged more informed readers to make sense of how the incongruous 'pebble-stone[s]' fitted with this sacred *tout ensemble*.<sup>192</sup> They might have recognised that although the botanic 'smocks' of Our Lady were frequently imagined as 'paint[ed]', it could equally well have been her 'pebble-stone[s]' 'whereon was many a stain/Made with the blood of wretched lovers slain.'<sup>193</sup> The blood-stains that appeared on the pebbles of the saint also appeared on the 'kirtle' of the saint in at least one depiction. Just as Marlowe seems to have transposed choice words from Golding's description of a watery cave to his own description of his heroine who is also in some sense a cavernous well, a fifteenth-century stained-glass image in Llandyrnog in Denbighshire transposes the 'stain[s]' of Saint Winefride from 'pebbles' in a landscape to a 'kirtle' adorning a saintly female body.<sup>194</sup>

If Marlowe's description was alluding to the kirtle of Saint Winefride it would make it parallel to Shakespeare's description of 'the Morn in russet mantle clad' interceding after the fading of Hamlet's father's spirit.<sup>195</sup> Although Pierre Bersuire's commentary had said that the Morn could stand for 'any virgin martyr', only the virgin martyr at the Holywell shrine was attired in a 'russet' gown on feast days.<sup>196</sup> A Warwickshire-born person might be expected to know about this in a community where oral tradition was strong—and the cult of St Winefride just as strong—as it had been gifted by the Countess of Warwick herself two generations before in 1449.<sup>197</sup> Shakespeare's description of Saint Winefride as the Morn in a shining russet mantle seems to parallel John Falconer's characterisation of Saint Winefride's shrine as 'a bright morning-star' that had not ceased to emit light when others had been 'lamentably defaced'

<sup>191</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.25.

<sup>192</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.25.

<sup>193</sup> Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, 5.2.895, 897; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.25; 1.15-16

<sup>194</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 69, illustration 36.

<sup>195</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.1.171-2.

<sup>196</sup> Reynolds, 'Ovidius Moralizatus', 209; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IV.iv; Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 62.

<sup>197</sup> Jones, *Holy Wells*, 50.

and 'quite vanished out of living men's sights.'<sup>198</sup> This last phrase of Falconer could equally reflect the vanishing of the ghost of Hamlet's father, which could come to stand for the obscuring not just of Catholic places of worship but of purgatory itself, only to be followed by the intercession of the virgin martyr in her russet garment whose light shines on undimmed.<sup>199</sup>

Earlier in 'Venus and Adonis', the link between a 'red Morn' and the 'ruby-colour'd' mouth of the well with its blood-stained pebbles, is made relevant to ordinary people by an allusion to the red sky in the morning that presages 'sorrow to shepherds.'<sup>200</sup> This again has clear religious significance as, according to Matthew's gospel 16:3, Christ said: 'In the morning, ye say, today shall be a tempest: for the sky is red and lowering. O hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and can ye not discern the signs of the times?'<sup>201</sup> In this way, Shakespeare can take something ever-present in people's lives—like a red sky or a red-stained pebble—and use it to demonstrate the ever-present need to honour Saint Winefride in ominous times.

There are two ways in which the poems gesture to the provenance of the 'pebble-stone[s]' in a well.<sup>202</sup> Firstly, Lodge's poem implies that the 'troops' of 'wandering geese', like the 'wand'ring' figures of 'Glaucus' and 'Phoebus', are 'fleet[ing]' and 'flitting' 'westward' to a 'pleasant entrance to the flood's repair' associated with the saintly figure of 'Isis.'<sup>203</sup> Implicit in this is the idea that this is where the geese have learnt the 'wondrous skill' of taking 'pebbles' in their mouths.<sup>204</sup> Secondly, Lodge's poem seems to elide the hairs dyed the colour of red gold, associated with the red dying waters in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and the red Castalian waters of Ovid's *Amores*, and the 'chains of gold' in the Song of Solomon 1:11, also associated with waters of a 'fountain.' This is indicated by his description of a shiny, metallic 'tress...curl'd and clear as beaten gold.'<sup>205</sup>

However, the image of pebbles in chains connects them most strikingly with a well. The connection between the red 'stain[s]', like those that grace the

<sup>198</sup> John Falconer, *Admirable life of Saint Wenefride* sigs \*3v-4r, \*5r, \*8r. Quoted in Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 196.

<sup>199</sup> For a suggestive comparison of the language describing the vanishing of Shakespeare's ghost with the language describing the vanishing of Southwell's 'Burning Babe' see Klause, *Shakespeare, the Earl and the Jesuit*, 153.

<sup>200</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 451, 453, 455.

<sup>201</sup> Matthew 16:3 (Geneva)

<sup>202</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.25.

<sup>203</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 247, 246, 385, 385, 364, 391, 391, 247, 394, 397.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 240, 250.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 285, 518; Song of Solomon 1:11.



cheeks of 'rose-cheek'd Adonis', and Marlowe's 'chains of pebble-stone', is made more explicit by Shakespeare who writes of the coiled pebbles as Nature's own rosary or 'rose-red chain.'<sup>206</sup> Lodge's pebbles are taken in the mouth; Marlowe associates them with the 'neck' of a well; and Shakespeare suggests that they might be roseate in hue and connect the mouth of the well to the mouth of the pilgrim.

To recap, if the pebbles form a chain, they can seem comparable to the hairs plaited into chains of red gold in the Song of Solomon 1:9. This biblical description can be read in the light of Ovid's mention of red dying waters in the *Metamorphoses* and the red Castalian waters of the *Amores* that, through some miraculous epiphany, make hair shine the colour of 'beaten [red] gold'; it can also explain why Glaucus' hallowed hairs are 'wet in the tears of his sad mother's dye.'<sup>207</sup> The English pun on the words 'dye' and 'die', and the Celtic elision of the well and its presiding deity, mean that a 'dying well' can be a 'dying saint.' Glaucus' 'hallowed hairs' are thus dyed by the death of the Mater Dolorosa, presumably at the moment of the crucifixion when she feels her son's death as keenly as if it were her own.<sup>208</sup> When Glaucus emerges from the 'channel' of the well with his 'hallowed hairs' dyed in saintly blood, it ensures that both relics of the death of Saint Winefride, her hair and her blood, are present from the outset of the poem.<sup>209</sup>

More than one classical source mentions a subterranean space characterised by botanic hair-like growths alongside botanic red on white growths. In Plutarch's *Moralia*, he describes a 'wat'ry realm' boasting 'tresses of Isis' alongside the earliest prototype for Shakespeare's red and white flower in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>210</sup> In Plato's *Republic*, the underworld is a place of intoxication, where 'garlands' take their place alongside 'nectar.'<sup>211</sup> In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the 'flood's repair' features moss alongside the 'checkerwise' red on white growth suggesting the 'amber hairs' and 'chequer'd' flower of

<sup>206</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.15; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 3; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.25; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 110.

<sup>207</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 285, 9.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 8.

<sup>210</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 399; Plutarch, *Moralia*, 'Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon', 939 D.

<sup>211</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 757, 761; Plato, *Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 51.

Adonis.<sup>212</sup> In Virgil's *Aeneid*, the sacred grottoes of Paphos have altars adorned with ever-during garlands (*sertisque recentibus*) alongside sacrificial blood that exhales the odours of Sheba (*Sabaeo halant*).<sup>213</sup> These lines of Virgil were recognised by Anthony Mortimer as a direct influence on the final stanza of Shakespeare's poem. They imply that Venus' 'golden hairs' (in which she may 'immure herself' so that 'Cytherea' is literally 'all in sedges hid') correspond to the first Virgilian relic; while Adonis' flower (which 'sprung up' 'in his blood' and smells of 'violets') corresponds to the second Virgilian relic.<sup>214</sup>

In Lodge's poem, as has been seen, the 'channel' itself is lined 'on either side' with a 'sweet and fruitful field.'<sup>215</sup> The epithet 'sweet' is found elsewhere in the poem in conjunction with 'lovely nectar [which] doth all sweetes surmount' which, in turn, suggests Shakespeare's description of a loving cup in which 'the bottom [is] poison, and the top o'er straw'd/With sweets.'<sup>216</sup> The word 'fruits' is used elsewhere in the poem to refer to 'wreaths of coral' which correspond to the poem's 'mossy garlands' (this correspondence is only possible because in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, coral comes into being from the gorgon's hair, just as in the Welsh fable of Saint Winefride, moss comes into being from her 'hallowed hairs').<sup>217</sup> This seems to be Lodge's way of insinuating that the two relics of the hair and the blood (that line the 'channel' and come 'from forth the channel' at the start) can also be found as two heavenly substances (that make up the 'garlands' and fill up the cups of 'nectar' at the end).<sup>218</sup> It has already been established that, according to the saintly logic of the poem, the 'moss' is the same as the 'hallowed hairs.'<sup>219</sup> However, the two epithets describing 'pure...heaven's eternal mould' are almost identical to the two epithets describing the 'pure immortal nectar' in the heavenly realm under the earth.<sup>220</sup> In Lodge's poem, this suggests that 'heaven's eternal mould' is taken into the mouths of the gods, just as the 'pebble-stone[s]' are taken into the mouths of

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<sup>212</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphoses', 394, 396, 396; Golding (trans.), *Metamorphosis*, 723-5.

<sup>213</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1.415-17.

<sup>214</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 51, 1194; Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction; Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1168, 1167, 1171-2, 935-6. Cf. Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 297.

<sup>215</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 7, 396, 396.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 396; William Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1143-4.

<sup>217</sup> Thomas Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 341, 338, 761, 8.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 761, 756.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 8.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 520, 757.

the 'troops' of avian pilgrims when they reach the 'wished waters' at their journey's end.<sup>221</sup>

It is worth looking more closely at the word 'mould' in Lodge's poem.<sup>222</sup> The word has long been used for a wide variety of substances including 'lumps or clods of earth' and 'a woolly, furry, or staining growth.'<sup>223</sup> This last definition might suggest the blush growing in Adonis' cheeks, and the blood growing into his flower at the end. His berry-red cheeks make him a 'stain to all nymphs' when at his fatal wounding they are drenched in 'his blood and seem...with him to bleed.'<sup>224</sup>

The first appearance of the word 'mould' in Lodge's poem is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it is a thinly-veiled description of Cupid as the Christ-child:

Lovely was his skin  
Each part as pure as heaven's eternal mould.<sup>225</sup>

Secondly, it is another example of the Catholic technique of redundant comparison, in this case, of the divine complexion with what Lodge calls 'mould.' This is suspect because it seems to be a comparison of heavenly flesh with heavenly flesh, rendering the whole idea of comparison redundant (unless it is intended to hint that the 'mould' is also found in an earthly context independent of bodies in divine realms). However, it is also suspect because the word 'mould' should at first sight not be used for heavenly flesh at all since according to the OED, the primary meaning of 'mould' at the time was 'rotting earth considered as the material of the human body.'<sup>226</sup> Crucially, neither meaning encompasses sculptural moulds, which is what the poem's word is

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 520, 230, 246, 247, 252; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.25.

<sup>222</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 520.

<sup>223</sup> See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'mould'

<sup>224</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 9 (cf. 1056) where the word 'nymphs' can stand for 'saints' in the moralising tradition of Pierre Bersuire. As has been seen, this is also strongly suggested by the way that the nymphs are described as a 'flock' in Lodge's earlier poem (Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 559). On the one hand, this may suggest that they are saints in the sense of brides of the 'Lamb of God'. On the other hand, it may suggest that they are saints in the sense of relics of hair, like the 'hair' of Song of Solomon 4:1 that manages to also be a 'flock of goats'.

<sup>225</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 519-20.

<sup>226</sup> See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'mould'

assumed to mean today. Moreover, in a Christian society, the primary meaning of 'earth' might still lie behind this other meaning of 'physique', since the raw materials of human beings was considered to be 'earth'. This is the sense in such archaic phrases as 'mouldwarp' and 'men of mould.' This last phrase appears in Shakespeare's *Henry V* in a context that implies that the fragility of mortal Man arises from the clay from which he is created, but also seems to imply that the 'merciful' nature of Mankind may arise from some mysterious quality in the same clay.<sup>227</sup> This seems to reflect a biblical ambivalence about the raw materials of creation: according to Genesis 2:7 it was the 'red clay' which gave Adam his name, but according to Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 15:47 it was no ordinary red clay but the same 'heavenly' substance of which Christ was made. As Shakespeare writes in a gnomic phrase in *Cymbeline*: 'clay and clay differs in dignity,/Whose dust is both alike.'<sup>228</sup> Lodge seems to encompass this ambivalence through his redundant comparison of 'mould' with 'mould': the first use of the word 'mould' applies to heavenly flesh, a heavenly substance that is no longer incarnate on earth, and the second use applies to 'mould', an earthly relic that is lasting proof of that incarnation. The implied repetition affirms that they partake of the same substance. Ultimately, then, Lodge seems to use the word to mean 'bodily remains' or 'bodily remains as an eternal part of the botanic landscape.' In a word, 'relics.'

Contemporary responses by Robert Southwell and Christopher Marlowe may provide further evidence that the word 'mould' was interpreted in this way in the period. Robert Southwell's *Saint Peter's Complaint* not only seems to have alluded to Lodge's 'mossy garlands' in the line 'Christ's thorn is sharp, no head his garland wears', it also seems to allude to Lodge's 'mould' in the line: 'They once were brittle mould that now are saints.'<sup>229</sup> This is, of course, a reversal of the Saint Winefride fable, because while at one time she was said to have been encountered as a human on earth, in Lodge's lifetime she could only be encountered as her well itself and as her botanic remains. Marlowe's poem invites more informed readers to recognise that the difference between the 'basest mould' and 'golden earth remains', is nothing, if the last word in the

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<sup>227</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 3.2.22.

<sup>228</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.4-5.

<sup>229</sup> The spirit of debate that seems to motivate Southwell may not be genuine. By seeming to disagree with Lodge he is drawing attention to the way that the earlier poem engaged with relics and the way that his will in some way be a sequel by engaging with a saint and future Pope.

latter phrase is taken not as a verb but as a noun.<sup>230</sup> The poem is presumably engaging with notions of 'saints' metamorphosed into 'brittle mould': 'after' the 'decease' of the martyr 'some other [body] gains' the 'golden earth remains', the body corporate of the Catholic church.<sup>231</sup>

It has already been noted that mossy 'weeds' moved by 'winds' 'from the channel's glide' reappear in Lodge's poem as Cupid's 'wings...that dallied with the wind.'<sup>232</sup> Equally, the 'mould' constitutes the flesh of this pagan version of the Christ-child 'with healing in His wings.'<sup>233</sup> The next time these heavenly substances are encountered, the moss is crowning this 'Conquering Son' and the 'mould' is furnishing his cup as 'nectar.'<sup>234</sup> The cup of nectar recurs in Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander.' In this poem, Mercury, the winged pagan counterpart of Christ, dallies with Froissart's Hero, a 'vermilion' and 'silver' flower maiden, who also represents the 'particoloured' mould.<sup>235</sup> When this representative of the 'mould' demands a 'draught of flowing nectar', she is like Christ ingesting his own blood or body and partaking in personally-earned 'immortality.'<sup>236</sup>

With this well-established link in the poem between 'mould' and the ambrosial body of Christ, it is unsurprising that the 'mould' is also consubstantial with the 'Jove-born' flesh of Leander.<sup>237</sup> This explains why 'Jove might have sipp'd out nectar from his hand' and why his flesh might be described as 'delicious meat...to the taste.'<sup>238</sup> In his *suasio* or seduction speech to Hero, Leander admits that 'I am but base,/Base in respect to thee.'<sup>239</sup> By this he may partly mean lower down the 'neck' of the well, which prevents him being put to the use he deserves.<sup>240</sup> It is only when riches have been retrieved from a mine-shaft that they can be put to use and it is no different with 'moulds' deep in a well-shaft: 'What difference between the richest mine/And basest mould but

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<sup>230</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.235, 1.245.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 1.246, 1.245.

<sup>232</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 52, 53, 49, 523-4.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 520; Cf. 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'

<sup>234</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 762. Cf. 'Thine be the Glory, Risen, Conquering Son'

<sup>235</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.305, 1.306; Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 523.

<sup>236</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 520; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.305, 1.427.

<sup>237</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.386; Musaeus, 'Hero and Leander', 1.

<sup>238</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.62, 1.63.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 1.218-9.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. the phrase 'red blood bottom' to describe the way that the algae deep in the well creates the allusion of a red floor in the poetry of Sion Ap Hywel ap Llewelyn Fychan, 'An *awdl* to Gwenfrewi and to her well, 1512', quoted in Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 74.

use?’<sup>241</sup> The way she can use him is by ‘kiss[ing].’<sup>242</sup> This impression is reinforced later in the poem: ‘when a token of great worth we send [to a friend],/We often kiss it.’<sup>243</sup> In both of these moments, Marlowe is making an elliptical allusion to the token of the ‘pebble-stone[s],’ often sent to those who were not equal to the physical demands of the pilgrimage, and which were an earthly way of receiving a heavenly kiss.<sup>244</sup> Shakespeare’s *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* describes the pilgrim ritual of ‘giving a gentle kiss’ to the relics of the ‘sedge’ and ‘th’enamell’d stones’ which in ‘Venus and Adonis’ is unequivocally compared to ‘drawing’ water from a well: ‘She will draw his lips’ rich treasure dry.’<sup>245</sup> Just like Lodge’s ‘moulds’, the ‘treasure’ ‘suck’d from’ the ‘lips’ in Shakespeare’s poem, later reappears as ‘nectar.’<sup>246</sup>

So far the reader has been asked to believe that there is a ‘mould’ which constitutes the saintly flesh of Leander, that seems like the lowest life-form in the neo-Platonic Chain of Being, but is actually a real treasure. There follows a litany of arguments, which some readers may have taken for sophistry. In fact, they are closer to the metaphysical meditations in Henry Hawkins’ recusant emblem book and intended to alert certain readers to the sacred nature of what is being described. The relic is not an ‘essence’ subject to the well itself, nor is it quantifiable by the material world of the ‘sense[s].’<sup>247</sup> If it ever had a ‘place of residence’ in the days when it was a saint on earth, the house is long gone.<sup>248</sup> Finally, it is not soil and it is not the body of Christ, since it is amorphous and ‘not capable of any form at all.’<sup>249</sup> In Marlowe’s view, the idolatry of kissing this botanic relic is justified, however, because it remains, in spite of all these things, an ‘idol.’<sup>250</sup> In many people’s view, such idolatrous behaviour was not justified, however, since Henry VIII’s 1538 injunctions expressly forbade the ‘kissing or licking’ of ‘relics.’<sup>251</sup>

Lodge describes the relic as ‘the idol which you term virginity’, which draws on the idea that the relic, like the ‘idle moss’ or ‘idle weeds’ that once

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<sup>241</sup> Marlowe, ‘Hero and Leander’, 1.232-3.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.309.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.80-9.

<sup>244</sup> Marlowe, ‘Hero and Leander’, 1.25.

<sup>245</sup> Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 2.728, 29; Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 552.

<sup>246</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 576.

<sup>247</sup> Marlowe, ‘Hero and Leander’, 1.270, 1.271.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.272.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.274.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.269.

<sup>251</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 101.

'crown'd' the heads of kings, is still a living, breathing incarnation of everything Saint Winefride represents.<sup>252</sup> It is even more worthy of kissing and worship than the 'well painted idol' mentioned in Shakespeare's poem, which possibly refers to 'the late-medieval image' of Saint Winefride at the well-shrine 'which survived certainly as late as the 1630s.'<sup>253</sup>

To tie all these points together, the 'brittle mould' of saints, their 'golden earth remains', and their 'virginity' are all the same 'essence', for two reasons. Firstly, as has been seen 'the relics *were* the saints, they were perceived as being alive.'<sup>254</sup> Secondly, the stains were believed to be the blood of a virgin, which, whether it was menstrual or not, was reputed to be more powerful than other kinds of blood.<sup>255</sup> However, there was a risk that since heaven has claimed Saint Winefride, 'down from th'enammell'd sky/All heaven would come to claim' her relics too 'and quite confound Nature's sweet harmony.'<sup>256</sup> This harmony was, presumably, the carefully balanced fusion between heaven and earth which Tom MacFaul argues is implicit in ideas about incarnation in Shakespeare's cosmology.

In 'Venus and Adonis', Shakespeare develops this conceit that the 'moulds' are so heavenly that heaven might want them back.<sup>257</sup> As has been indicated, this has been overlooked because of the assumption that 'moulds from heaven' referred to sculptural moulds.<sup>258</sup> However, 'forging Nature' is in the role of 'great creating Nature' and in classical and Christian tradition, figures are never created in a sculptural mould but always created from a substance.<sup>259</sup> This suggest that the reference to 'moulds...wherein she fram'd thee' is a reference to the raw materials in which Nature the Creator was working.<sup>260</sup> She shapes the raw materials into the shiny flesh of Adonis which comes to resemble the 'lovely skin...as pure as heaven's eternal mould' of gods in Lodge's earlier

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<sup>252</sup> Shakespeare, *Comedy of Errors*, 2.2.179; Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 4.4.3, 6; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.269

<sup>253</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 212; Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 305.

<sup>254</sup> William Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 306; Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 11.

<sup>255</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 11.

<sup>256</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.76, 1.245, 1.270.

<sup>257</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 730.

<sup>258</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 730.

<sup>259</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 729; Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4.4.88-9.

<sup>260</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 730-1.

poem.<sup>261</sup> This is her ‘curious workmanship’ and it does not seem to involve the kind of sculptural moulds that King Lear seems to refer to when he calls for the storm on the blasted heath to ‘crack Nature’s moulds.’<sup>262</sup> In fact, even this line from *King Lear* is open to reinterpretation. On one level, Lear’s words do suggest the breaking of a sculptor’s moulds, as in the story of the vain king who commissioned a ceramic chandelier and personally smashed the mould after it had been completed so that his *objet d’art* would remain unique. However, on another level, ‘crack Nature’s moulds’ seems to have a more enigmatic significance. One possibility is that Shakespeare is referring to the lightning to break open anything in nature that might make more of itself by means of a reproducing shape. Another possibility is that he is referring to ‘Jove-born’ substances that grow from seeds brought down by the ‘crack’ of lightning.<sup>264</sup> The first reading is only viable when the lines are read in isolation, the second more unusual interpretation seems closer to Shakespeare’s ultimate meaning, since it explains why King Lear then follows it by conjuring the lightning to ‘spill’ ‘all germens at once.’<sup>265</sup>

In ancient taxonomies, certain seeds were believed to be engendered by Jove’s lightning and were therefore literally ‘Jove-born’ (which, it will be recalled, is the word used by Musaeus of Leander and Hero’s blood and by Marlowe of Mercury, his pagan counterpart to Christ). This ‘Jove-born’ quality of plants engendered by lightning set them apart from all other plants which according to Pliny were born of dew.<sup>266</sup> ‘Jove-born’ botanic forms seem to have included the epiphytic polypody fern [*Polypodium vulgare*], the elder [*Sambucus nigra*] growing on the willow, the so-called ‘flying rowan’ [*Sorbus aucuparia*] growing out of the clefts of other trees but easily spotted by its blood-like red berries, and the houseleek [*Sempervivum tectorum*], referred to by the Elizabethan herbalist William Bullein as ‘Iovis Barba’ [‘Jove’s beard’].<sup>267</sup> This last botanic tradition is examined by Geoffrey Grigson:

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<sup>261</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 519-20.

<sup>262</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 734; Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 3.2.8.

<sup>264</sup> Marlowe, ‘Hero and Leander’, 1.386; Musaeus, ‘Hero and Leander’, 1; William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 3.2.8.

<sup>265</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 3.2.8.

<sup>266</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*,

<sup>267</sup> William Bullein, *Bullein’s Bulwarke of Defence against all Sicknes, Sornes and Woundes* (London: John Kingston, 1562), fol. xxxvii; Cf. Thomas Betson, *The Syon Abbey Herbal: The Last Monastic Herbal in England, c. AD 1517*, eds. John Adams and Stuart Forbes (London: AMCD Ltd, 2015), 88.



The Romans called it *Iovis caulo* ‘Jupiter’s plant’ or Diopetes ‘(the plant) fallen from Zeus’ or Jupiter. It had fallen to protect the house, an ever-living, evergreen badge of fire insurance, a plant given by Zeus to protect the house from the lightning he wielded...here is wide belief in its insuring, reassuring or protective powers—indigenous [British] belief, one may assume, reinforced by classical authority.<sup>268</sup>

Another of these Jove-born plants was mistletoe, the shining, zig-zag of a golden bough that grows into a bulbous shape, easily spotted by its semen-like white berries. This was long-believed to be a ‘germen spill[ed]’ by the lightning (and, in fact, it does come down from heaven in the excrement of birds). The antiquarian William Stukeley plausibly suggested that ‘the Druids had liked Mistletoe for its beauty, its unusual mode of growth, [and] its maturity in winter’ ‘when all nature lyes dormant’ which made it ‘a type of the expected Messiah.’<sup>269</sup> It was also ‘well-known to sixteenth-century apothecaries’ as ‘*Sanctae Crucis Lignum*, the wood of the Holy Cross’, though it remains unclear how people imagined such a tiny branch could accommodate a human-sized Christ.<sup>270</sup>

To sum up, the evidence suggests that King Lear’s allusion to ‘Nature’s moulds’ reflects an indigenous British belief that Jove-born seeds of botanic substances were brought down from heaven in lightning cracks. Musaeus explicitly reveals that Leander is ‘Jove-born.’ However, Marlowe merely hints that it was Jove’s ‘immortal fingers’ who created the zig-zag that ‘runs along his back’ recalling the ‘heavenly path’ of lightning, and ultimately draws a veil over the sacred mystery of his ‘shower-of-gold’ conception: ‘my rude pen/Can hardly blazon forth the loves of men/Much less of powerful gods.’<sup>271</sup> In general, when the poems engage with this secret matter of the divine conception of the lightning-born moulds as saintly relics in an earthly setting, they show appropriate respect for the privacy of God, by obscuring the details in a fable. Sometimes this was achieved by giving the earth agency in stealing the moulds

<sup>268</sup> Geoffrey Grigson, *The Englishman’s Flora*, London: Readers Union & Phoenix House, 1958, 202-3

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-3

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 204

<sup>271</sup> Marlowe, ‘Hero and Leander’, 1.67, 1.68, 1.69, 1.697-0.

from heaven, other times it was achieved by describing how they had fallen from heaven without specifying the involvement of Jove's lightning. The result was a fable with two different versions or paradigms. This study will term the first paradigm the Numenius Paradigm, because the account in these poems of how the moulds were stolen from heaven follows the same pattern as the account in Macrobius' commentary of how Numenius stole secrets from the priests of Eleusis.<sup>273</sup> The theft of the moulds is a translation of relics from a sacred realm to a profane one, just as the theft of the Eleusinian mysteries is a translation of secrets from a sacred setting to a profane one. The second paradigm will be termed the Diopetes Paradigm, because it hints that the moulds are 'Jove-born' blood ['Diotrephes Haima': Διοτρεφῆς αἷμα] by narrating how they are 'Jove-fallen' ['Diopetes': Διοπετής].<sup>274</sup> Although it was permissible for poets to hint at the origin of the moulds in fable, it seems never to have been explicitly revealed in any names applied directly to them. In fact, the moulds may never have been given a specific botanic name in the ancient Celtic languages of Europe (in medieval Welsh poems they are referred to as 'blood', as 'marks' or by the 'stones' on which they appear).<sup>275</sup> Appropriate names might have been displaced to other more common plants like the houseleek, which could operate as a similitude or 'type' of this ineffable botanic 'Messiah'.<sup>276</sup>

Fables that follow the Numenius Paradigm appear in Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' and Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander.' In Shakespeare's poem, 'Nature' is feigned to have stolen 'moulds from heaven', while in Marlowe's poem, Christ is feigned to have stolen 'nectar' from 'Jove's cup'.<sup>277</sup> This last narrative explains why the evergreen moulds are also a symbol for the resurrection of the flesh, since the expert in ancient languages Martin West translates 'nectar' as 'getting across...death', so that it can take its place alongside 'ambrosia', meaning 'food of non-dying'.<sup>278</sup>

A fable that follows the Diopetes Paradigm appears in Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis.' Shakespeare feigns that the heavenly moulds become incarnate on earth because 'the earth, in love with' Adonis, his 'footing

<sup>273</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, 2.19

<sup>274</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 386; Musaeus, 'Hero and Leander', 30.

<sup>275</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 70-77.

<sup>276</sup> Grigson, *Englishman's Flora*, 202-3.

<sup>277</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 730; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.434.

<sup>278</sup> Martin L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 157-8.

trips,/And all is but to rob thee of a kiss.'<sup>279</sup> No Protestant reader was likely to probe too deeply into this trashy idea that Adonis' kisses could take on material form and fall down from heaven. Even today readers are perhaps unlikely to have much sympathy for the notion that a 'touch of his lips' can become 'holy bread' in nature or that a 'maiden [saint]' can be a 'wafer' worthy of a place on a Catholic altar.<sup>280</sup> However, the Diopetes Paradigm can be found in indigenous myths which are widespread in Europe. In fact, it can be found in cultures as far-flung as that of the Siberian Koryak tribe, who believed that the spittle of their god Vahiyinin could dribble down to earth, presumably in the form of lightning, and become a heavenly part of earthly creation. Shakespeare's narrative following the Diopetes Paradigm may ultimately be derived from some lingering folk memory of a Celtic fable indigenous to the British Isles. It seems to have concerned a botanic form brought to earth in summer lightning storms only to grow to maturity in the winter of the year 'when all nature lyes dormant.'<sup>281</sup> At this dead time of year, by their sheer incongruity, the moulds become a powerful symbol of evergreen eternal life:

Long may they kiss each other for this cure,  
 O never let their crimson liveries wear,  
 And as they last, their verdure still endure  
 To drive infection from the dangerous year,  
 That the star-gazers, having writ on death,  
 May say the plague is banished by thy breath.<sup>282</sup>

These lines first puzzled Howard Staunton in 1874 and more recently they have puzzled Antony Mortimer. According to Mortimer, they 'present a serious difficulty in the apparent inconsistency between crimson and verdour.'<sup>283</sup> Since the nineteenth-century, scholars have struggled to resolve the question that this present chapter sets out to answer: 'how Shakespeare gets from the red of

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<sup>279</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 722-3.

<sup>280</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Bloomsbury, 2006, repr. 2015), 3.4.12-3. Sion Ap Hywel ap Llewelyn Fychan, 'An *awdl* to Gwenfrewi and to her well, 1512', quoted in Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 75.

<sup>281</sup> Grigson, *Englishman's Flora*, 202-3.

<sup>282</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 505-10.

<sup>283</sup> Anthony Mortimer, "'Crimson Liveries" and "their verdour": Venus and Adonis, 505-8', *N&Q*, 246 (2001), 274-5, 274; See also Howard Staunton, *Athenaeum*, (14 March 1874).

Adonis' lips to the greenness of the aromatic herbs strewn on the floor to ward off contagion.<sup>284</sup> The word 'verdour' is likely to be a word that carries more than one meaning, none of which need be contradictory, since significances concerning taste need not preclude significances concerning colour. Perhaps the simplest explanation would be that Shakespeare is drawing on an obsolete meaning of 'verdure' from the period when it could refer to a 'fresh taste' or 'savour', especially in fruits or liquor.<sup>285</sup> Although this seems to have been a rare meaning, it remains plausible nonetheless. Mortimer seeks to find some explanation in the way that the colour scarlet 'could be applied to cloth not only red, but also of blue, green and brown', though he ultimately fails to find any example in which crimson had been taken to mean green. He also concedes that 'since Venus is talking about the lips of Adonis there can be no doubt that redness is uppermost in the poet's mind' but suggests that green was somehow a secondary meaning via these ideas of cloth.<sup>286</sup> His intuition is that Shakespeare somehow prompts a leap between a 'longlasting' crimson colour in fabric and an 'evergreen' colour in nature, but he does not explore how lips might have a life in nature.<sup>287</sup>

This study will supplement these suggestions with a third that is by no means incompatible with the other two. This is that the way that Shakespeare 'gets from the red of Adonis' lips to the greenness of aromatic herbs' is simple: by metamorphosis.<sup>288</sup> 'Adonis' lips' are linked with botanic metamorphosis through two reworkings of the famous phrase that Ovid gives to Narcissus, 'inopem me copia fecit' ['lack of food makes me feel full']. 'Adonis' lips' are twice associated this Ovidian tag which is paraphrased at line 20 ('famish them amid their plenty') and line 545 ('he with her plenty press'd, she faint with dearth').<sup>289</sup> 'Adonis lips' are also linked with the botanic metamorphosis of coral by the gorgon's hair (thereby, uniting the bloody and hairy relics of Saint Winefride in

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<sup>284</sup> Mortimer, "Crimson Liveries", 274.

<sup>285</sup> *OED* s.v. 'verdure' II. †4. a. I am grateful to Andrew McRae for this suggestion.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>289</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 20, 545. The Ovidian tag that signposts this grammatical manoeuvring suggests a feeling of 'abundance' which staves off all desire to eat or drink, which presumably comes from taking the stained pebble-stones in the mouth. In Britain, the poor have probably always sucked pebble-stones to stave off hunger, but these pebble-stones from the well of Saint Winefride provided spiritual nourishment that banished all physical want.

the 'coral mouth' of Saint Winefride's well).<sup>290</sup> 'Adonis lips' are also the subject of a metamorphosis that occurs on the level of the grammar:

He with her plenty press'd, she faint with dearth,  
Their lips together glued, fall to the earth.<sup>291</sup>

The simplest explanation for the confusion of pronouns in this couplet, and one which is likely to satisfy most readers today, would be that singular and plural grammatical formations in the period were flexible. However, an alternative reading might stress that an Elizabethan poet like Shakespeare, drilled in Latin grammar at an early age, would know how to draw attention to grammatical details to create a playful Ovidian line in English. The singular pronouns 'he' and 'she', since they are never strictly united into 'they', cannot govern a plural verb. 'He' and 'she' are engrossed in their separate clauses; the sole plural noun is left to enact the final verb. So 'their lips' detach themselves from the divinities and 'fall to the earth'. The paraphrases of Narcissus' words and the mention of coral, both in connection with Adonis' lips, prepare readers for this fable of metamorphosis, enacted by the grammar alone. It is a fable that follows the Diopetes Paradigm, whereby heavenly crimson kisses fall into green nature, and reveal by their improbable colour their heavenly origin. This would more adequately explain why 'Shakespeare would want his readers first to be struck by the inconsistency between crimson and verdour and then to appreciate the ingenious way he reconciles them': to suggest the deified substance of moulds in an earthly setting. The phrase '[may] their verdure still endure' is parallel to Lodge's paradoxical notion of 'eternal mould', a 'verdure' that will forever 'endure' as if it were growing the Golden World where, Ovid insists, 'it was an *everduring* spring [*ver*].'<sup>292</sup> In Christian terms, as Tom MacFaul sensitively points out, it is a kind of Edenic unfallenness persisting in nature.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 542.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 545-6.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 507; Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 570; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.107: 'uer erat aeternum'

<sup>293</sup> MacFaul, *Natural World*, 30.

The full stanza quoted above connects red greenery, kisses and a cure that happens when the stained pebbles are raised to the mouth. This cure depended on the doctrine of signatures that recognised that the blood spots on the white pebbles were like mouths or lips and so could cure the mouth. It may also have been believed to be the remedy prescribed in the opening verse of the Song of Solomon: 'Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.' The prominence of kissing in the biblical model for Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' allows the poem to focus on the 'piteous lips' of Adonis which become 'piteous herbs' found on the banks of a 'piteous spring' in the form of moulds or algae from heaven.<sup>294</sup>

The Jesuit John Gerard describes how the therapeutic algae could be taken in the mouth for a cure.<sup>295</sup> This corresponds to Lodge's description of the pilgrim 'troops' of 'wandering geese' who take 'pebble-stone[s]' into their mouths at the 'wished waters' with 'wondrous' consequences.<sup>296</sup> It also corresponds to Shakespeare's description of the 'piteous lips', of pilgrims and pebbles, which will 'kiss each other for a cure':<sup>297</sup>

[A] good priest had taken from the stream one of those stones sprinkled with the blood that I have just described. At the time of Mass he used to place it on the altar with the other relics. When Father Oldcorne noticed it he took it in his hands and kissed it very reverently. Then going aside by himself, he went down on his knees and began to lick the stone and hold part of it to his mouth. He prayed silently all the time. After half an hour he got up: all his pain was gone and his cancer cured.<sup>298</sup>

What is extraordinary here is not only the priest's confidence that the algae will cure the mouth, but the way that Gerard casually associates it with 'the other relics.'<sup>299</sup> This suggests that he himself viewed it as the remains of a saint and believed that the odour of sanctity which it possessed confirmed this.

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<sup>294</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 504; Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 209, 209

<sup>295</sup> Gerard, *John Gerard: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, John Caraman (trans.), London: Longmans, 1951, 47-8

<sup>296</sup> Thomas Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 520, 230, 246, 247, 252 Christopher Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 1.25

<sup>297</sup> William Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 504, 504

<sup>298</sup> Gerard, *Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, 47-8.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-8

The flower at the end of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' has been described as 'a clutched, tear-stained relic', and it is literally 'stained' in the 'tears of his sad' lover's 'dye.'<sup>300</sup> It also corresponds to this real botanical 'relic.'<sup>301</sup> There are accounts of a pilgrim who 'took with him some of the spotted stones...tyed in cleane hankercher: the which as soon as he came to his lodging in Chester, he opened, and found the hankercher bloody, so fresh as if it had been newly all over spotted and wett with blood. This he afterwards shewed to divers catholiques and persons of worth, and kept it for many years after.'<sup>302</sup> John Weever's sonnet to Shakespeare describes his creations as having 'rosy-tainted features cloth'd in tissue.'<sup>303</sup> At no point are Adonis' rosy cheeks clothed in tissue unless they are seen as a synecdoche for those stones and the algae 'resembling well his pale cheeks, and the blood.'<sup>304305</sup> This must remain a distinct possibility. The only other option might be that this is not a specific reference to rose-cheeked Adonis or to rosy relics associated with a British saint, but to the materiality of the printed book of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. According to this ingenious reading of Andrew McRae, the 'rosy-tainted features' refer to the printed book possibly with a red fore-edge, or red leather binding with the rag-based pages.<sup>306</sup> As attractive as this reading is, it can seem a bit back-to-front to a modern mind, since we are used to thinking of books clothed in a 'cover' or 'jacket' rather than in their pages. It is possible, however, that such a description would not have seemed topsy-turvy to an early modern reader in a context relating to Shakespeare's literary 'issue'.

To return to the distinct possibility that Shakespeare's rosy features in tissue refers to algal stones, this supposition is supported by further accounts of the Elizabethan ritual use of the algae *Trentepohlia lolithus* which can explain other aspects of Shakespeare's poem:

In the well itself there are some very large stones, all red as if covered with fresh blood. When pieces are chipped off—the people of the place try their best to prevent pilgrims doing this—the fragments are the same

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<sup>300</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 9; Herron, 'War, the Boar and Spenserian Politics', 61

<sup>301</sup> Gerard, *Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, 47-8.

<sup>302</sup> Charles De Smedt, 'Documenta de S. Wenefreda', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 6 (1887), 312.

<sup>303</sup> Honigmann, *John Weever*, 109.

<sup>304</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 3, 1169-1170.

<sup>305</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 3, 1169-1170.

<sup>306</sup> Honigmann, *John Weever*, 109; I am grateful to Andrew McRae for this interpretation.

shade of red, and the place they are chipped from turns in time from white to red. Also lying on the bed of the stream can be found stones covered or at least sprinkled with blood. These the Catholics gather out of devotion and preserve reverently.<sup>307</sup>

This eyewitness account of a deified algal substance that ‘turns in time from white to red’ can be read alongside Shakespeare’s description of Adonis’ lips which turn ‘red and pale, with fresh variety’ and Venus’ cheek which remains ‘pale’ until ‘clapping makes it red.’<sup>308</sup> It provides a context in which the clapping of a cheek and the chipping of a stone begin to seem strangely parallel. Just as the Jesuit John Gerard distinguishes between white stones ‘covered’ and those ‘sprinkled with blood’ so the Prior Robert of Shrewsbury wrote that the white stones could either be completely ‘dyed’ or ‘spotted with drops.’<sup>309</sup> This last phrase in particular closely recalls Shakespeare’s description of Adonis’ ‘pale cheeks...and the blood which in round drops upon their whiteness stood.’<sup>310</sup> The changing of complexions from red to white becomes more intense as ‘passion on passion deeply is redoubled.’<sup>311</sup> This ‘couple-colour’ is what the poem terms ‘variable passions’ or ‘red and pale...variety’ to indicate that the ‘vario tegmine’ [‘pied garments’] of Macrobian allegory is operating in the poem.<sup>312</sup> The idea of red and white contending in a complexion also drew on Galenic medicine:

The indications of a moderate temperature [i.e. complexion] according to the whole habit of the body are, a mixed colour in the face of red and white, as though the lily and the rose strove for superiority.<sup>313</sup>

This was the golden mean of the ‘pure...heaven’s eternal mould’ of which Adam consisted before the Fall, a complexion that only martyrs could aspire to on earth (since it reflected the ‘white lilies and red roses for the feasts of the

<sup>307</sup> Gerard, *Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, 47-8.

<sup>308</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 468.

<sup>309</sup> Robert S. Miola, *Early Modern Catholicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 284.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>311</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 832.

<sup>312</sup> Gerald Manley Hopkins, *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 132; Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’ 468, 968.

<sup>313</sup> Nicholas Culpeper, *Art of Physick*, ch. 51.



martyrs’).<sup>314</sup> This could also be imagined in alchemical terms. In Arnold Villanova’s influential treatise *Rosarum Philosophorum* (1550), the union in alchemical liquid of a red king and a white queen, denoted by the symbol ‘that is shared by Venus’, is a way of representing the purification as lead is turned into gold.<sup>315</sup> This in turn is a symbol ‘for the even more desirable spiritual transformation of the earthly man into the divine.’<sup>316</sup>

However, to fully understand the divine nature ascribed to the moulds it is necessary to understand their earthly nature. According to the definitive reference-work, *Freshwater Algal Flora of the British Isles*, ‘*Trentepohlia iolithus* is common in the humid parts of the British Isles, where it produces red to dark orange patches on natural rocks and artificial substrata.’<sup>317</sup> Carl Linnaeus’ *Flora Lapponica* observed that the algae ‘propagates itself easily, making the stones on which it grows red as if smeared with blood’ and his contemporary Caspar Schwenkfeld knew it as ‘Steinblüten’ [‘Stoneblood’].<sup>318</sup> According to Linnaeus, ‘it disperses a rich odour of spring violets which comes from this fungus and not from the stone itself.’<sup>319</sup> He also noted that it ‘lasts all year round.’<sup>320</sup> Baron Albrecht Von Haller recorded that ‘it is administered for eruptive disorders.’<sup>321</sup> The odour of violets and the eruptive disorders are present in Shakespeare’s ‘Venus and Adonis’ in the description of Adonis’ ‘breath’ and in the description of the ‘strange eruptions’ of winds from the hollow earth.<sup>322</sup>

The odour of violets and winds emanating from the deep are also in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* in the famous opening speech beginning ‘If music be the food of love...’.<sup>323</sup> This leads to a consideration of another example of the Catholic strategy of redundant comparison in the opening speech of this Shakespearean comedy. It has been suggested that Lodge’s phrase ‘wet in the

<sup>314</sup> Landsberg, *Medieval Garden*, 41.

<sup>315</sup> Clifford Ronan, ‘Keeping Faith: Water Imagery and Religious Diversity in Othello’ in Philip C. Koln (ed.), *Othello: New Critical Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 286.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 286

<sup>317</sup> David M John, Brian A. Whitter, and Alan J. Brook (eds.), *The Freshwater Algal Flora of the British Isles* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 573-4: ‘It is popularly known as “red fungus” in Galway City.’

<sup>318</sup> Carl Linnaeus, *Flora Lapponica* (London: B. White and Son, 1792): *cryptogami fungorum* start at 369 and this is No. 528; Caspar Schwenckfeld, *Stirpium et Fossilium Silesiae Catalogus* (Albertus, 1600), 382.

<sup>319</sup> See Linnaeus, *Flora Lapponica*, No. 528.

<sup>320</sup> Carl Linnaeus, *Species Plantarum*, (Holmiae: Lars Salvius, 1753), vol. 2., 1169.

<sup>321</sup> Albrecht von Haller, *Historia Stirpium Indigenarum Helvetiae Inchoate* (Bernae: Sumptibus Societatis typographicae, 1768), no. 2090, pg. 103.

<sup>322</sup> Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 935-6; Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 3.1.25-6.

<sup>323</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 1.1.1.

tears of his sad mother's dye' and the notion of hairs stained red by the water of 'dying wells' are ways in which the poems engage with a subtext relating to 'dying saints.'<sup>324</sup> A similar subtext can be assumed for Orsino's phrase 'dying fall' in *Twelfth Night*. This phrase can admit of Macrobian ambivalence: the rude might take it to mean a cadence resembling an orgasm which in Elizabethan slang was called 'dying'; but the initiated might know that it alluded to the *de casibus* fall of a martyr.<sup>325</sup> The 'dying fall' introduces a redundant comparison in which, oddly, the 'sound' is compared to the 'sound' that 'breathes upon a bank of violets/Stealing and giving odour.'<sup>326</sup> A similar comparison, though not a redundant one, occurs in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* which claims that two princely inhabitants of a North Welsh cave are 'as gentle/As zephyrs blowing below the violet' so that they 'make [their cave] a quire...and sing.'<sup>327</sup> Readers today are likely to interpret these lines as straightforward descriptions of breezes blowing on flower-petals and it is likely that the greater part of an early modern audience would have interpreted them in this way. However, it is possible that an alternative reading would originally have circulated alongside this more general interpretation. According to this alternative reading, Shakespeare was not referring to just any old bank of *Viola odorata* but to the bank of violet-scented algae adjacent to the mouth of Saint Winefride's well and the winds 'blowing below' in its depths.

The *Twelfth Night* conceit of the dying fall, which encompasses 'stealing' and 'giving', dramatises the two mythic paradigms in Shakespeare's poem whereby the algae is a kiss stolen by Nature (the Numenius Paradigm) or that falls into Nature (the Diopetes Paradigm). The idea that things only became signed (or took on a reality that was able to be interpreted through the doctrine of signatures) after the 'dying Fall' of Man seems to be hinted at here.<sup>328</sup> However, the conceit of 'stealing' and 'giving' also suggests someone 'with herself at strife' and in this way identifies the two paradigms as forms of Macrobian fable, which Isidore of Seville famously claimed took as its subject anything 'against Nature', an idea refined in Shakespeare's description of the

<sup>324</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 285, 9.

<sup>325</sup> For these kind of cadences, which Shakespeare elsewhere calls 'delicate burdens of dildoes and fadings', see Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, 4.4.196-7.

<sup>326</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 1.1.5-6.

<sup>327</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.171-2; 3.3.43, 44.

<sup>328</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Signatura rerum: Sul Metodo*, Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008, 35. Quoted in Bellorini, *World of Plants*, 179.

goddess 'Nature...with herself at strife.'<sup>329</sup> It might also identify Saint Winefride as just another aspect of the Goddess Nature. According to this reading, the violets, as 'check'red' or 'particoloured' botanic forms, stand in for the 'secrets of Nature', just as the 'spring of pity', which symbolises 'the Blessed Virgin' in Bersuire's commentary is said to contain a personified figure of 'Nature.'<sup>330</sup>

If the words of Orsino imply that the song being played is the air 'Heartsease', named after the flower which is described by Robert Greene as 'the checkerd (Paunsie) or party coloured Harts ease', this would affirm the link with the 'check'red' growths beside the well of Saint Winefride.<sup>331</sup> Behind the musical 'sound' is a 'wind' or 'saint' whose breath emanates from a well and continually reanimates the relics of her martyrdom. Orsino's speech, like a line from 'Venus and Adonis,' brings together 'her windy sighs and golden hairs.'<sup>332</sup> A similar poetic elision of 'saint' and 'wind' is found in Thomas Carew's 'Elegy on the Death of Dr Donne', in which he prophesies that another race of libertine poets might 'with these/The silenced tales o' th'*Metamorphoses*/Stuff their work and swell the windy page.'<sup>333</sup> Of course, 'windy' can mean 'bombastic', but 'wind' also seems to have been an allegorical way that these poets alluded to a 'saint.' Carew is potentially comparing the 'leaves' of these fabulous verse narratives to the mossy 'weeds' around Saint Winefride's well, billowing with the divine breath of inspiration.

### **Moss and Algae in Cosmological Context**

Thomas Lodge's 'channel' leading to a 'wat'ry realm' and Christopher Marlowe's 'low coral groves' leading to an 'azure palace' can be read as responses to the fantastic architectural vision of Saint Winefride's 'well building.'<sup>335</sup> It was built as

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<sup>329</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis,' 11-12; Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. Stephen A. Barney, W. A. Lewis, J. A. Beach, Oliver Berghof and Muriel Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.44.

<sup>330</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1168; Thomas Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 523; Reynolds, 'The *Ovidius Moralizatus*', 214; Bersuire, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana*, IV.viii.

<sup>331</sup> John Lyly, *Mother Bombie*, ed. Leah Scragg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 1.3.139-41.

<sup>332</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 51.

<sup>333</sup> Thomas Carew, 'Elegy on the Death of Dr. Donne' in Helen Gardner (ed.), *The Metaphysical Poets* (London: Penguin, 1957), 141.

<sup>335</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 7, 399; Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.161, 2.165; Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 83.

a 'sacred grotto' to articulate a medieval belief that the breath of the well emanated from another more secret 'sacred grotto' deep within the earth.<sup>336</sup>

William Shakespeare's Globe theatre can also be seen to articulate what Kristen Poole identifies as a mid-sixteenth century belief in the hollow earth, with groundlings moving around like winds or restless spirits in the centre.<sup>337</sup> However, by the time this theatre was being built, such a cosmology was already being challenged. Kristen Poole describes the period as one of contested cosmologies and 'cosmic disorientation':

Transformations in religious belief brought about by the Protestant Reformation...profoundly affected understandings of the relationship between chthonic and supernatural geographies. As a centuries-old structure of cosmic and divine order pressed up against new cartographies and new theologies, the realities of earth, heaven, and hell warped. The confluence of multiple, often contradictory, spatial and theological epistemologies resulted in unsteady beliefs about the universe.<sup>338</sup>

Everything that has been observed about the fabulous verse narratives in this chapter would suggest that the perspectives of the poets were monkish and 'retrograde.'<sup>339</sup> Sure enough, the cosmology affirmed by the poems looks back to the mid-sixteenth century when divine realms were located in the centre of the earth.<sup>340</sup> The justification for this worldview is even more antiquated, since it comes from a syncretic reading of Christian sources (the Song of Solomon and Tertullian), classical sources (Aristotle, Pliny, Virgil and Ovid), and Celtic sources (mediated by Geoffrey of Monmouth).

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<sup>336</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 83.

<sup>337</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 268; Cf. Shakespeare, William, Henry V, 1.1.12-14: 'Or may we cram/Within this 'wooden O' the very casques/That did affright the air at Agincourt?' This seems suspiciously like the indigenous Celtic belief that helmed heroes lie crammed in hollow hills waiting till the end of the world when they will rush out and do battle. See Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 350. Cf. Kristen Poole, *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 8

<sup>338</sup> Kristen Poole, *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

These staples of 'monastic humanism' continued to contribute to the sixteenth-century debate about 'where Abraham's bosom is, and hellfire' by locating them firmly in the hollow earth.<sup>341</sup>

Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' also speaks to this debate.<sup>342</sup>

Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' spoke to this debate about the whereabouts of 'Abraham's bosom' but, according to Klause, it also 'spoke to the condition of the twenty-one-year old dedicatee', attempting to confirm the 'marriage-averse young earl' of Southampton in his 'voluntary celibacy.'<sup>345</sup> With this aim, the poem seems to engage with a work of the early Christian church father Tertullian, *On Marrying Only Once*, which discusses marriage in the flesh and in the spirit. Since, at the start, the 'voluntary celibate' Adonis does not yield to Venus' persuasions to marriage 'in the flesh', at the end, his bloody relic can be placed in her bosom in a marriage 'in the spirit.'<sup>346</sup> This act of placing him in her 'bosom' is accompanied by the words, 'here was thy Father's bed, here in my breast, thou art the next of blood.'<sup>347</sup> Critics have been puzzled by this 'incestuous' moment, suggesting that it echoes a 'father-daughter union' of Adonis' father Cinyrus and his botanic consort Myrrha.<sup>348</sup> However, since Adonis is literally the bundle of Myrrha or Mary he can be understood as her child, 'cradle[d]' in her 'bosom' in the nativity story, or as her lover in line with the Song of Solomon 1:13: 'A bundle of myrrh is my beloved, he shall dwell within my bosom.'<sup>349</sup> The so-called 'incestuous' line of Shakespeare links the

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<sup>341</sup> James G. Clark, *Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2011); Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, (1621), 219 quoted in Poole, *Supernatural Environments*, 97.

<sup>342</sup> James G. Clark, *Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2011); Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, (1621), 219 quoted in Poole, *Supernatural Environments*, 97.

<sup>345</sup> Poole, *Supernatural Environments*, 97; Tertullian, *De Monogamia*, 5.7 advocates single marriage or 'voluntary celibacy.' The notion that Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' engaged with the prospects of the twenty-one-year-old dedicatee was introduced by G. P. Akrigg, *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton*, (London: H. Hamilton, 1968), 33. It was picked up by Charles Martindale and Colin Burrow, 'Clapham's Narcissus: a pre-text for Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*?', *English literary Renaissance*, 22, (1992), 147-76, 151; See also Helen Payne, 'The Cecil women at court' in *Patronage, Culture and Power: The Early Cecils 1558-1612* ed. Pauline Croft (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 269; and Richard Wilson, 'A Bloody Question: The Politics of "Venus and Adonis"', in *Religion and the Arts* 5:3, (2001), 297-316, 307.

<sup>346</sup> Tertullian, *De Monogamia*, 5.7.

<sup>347</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 21, 1183.

<sup>348</sup> Anthony Mortimer, *Variable Passions: A Reading of Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis* (New York: AMS Press, 2000), 165.

<sup>349</sup> Patricia Parker usefully summarises the way that this erotic poem is revealed as a spiritual allegory in three sixteenth-century English bibles in Parker, 'What's in a Name: and More', 121 n.81: 'In Taverner's 1239 English Bible, "The Ballet of Balletes of Salomon: Called in Latyne,

divine bosom of Venus or Nature with the Father. This is consistent with John 1:18, in which the righteous are taken into the ‘bosom of the Father.’ It is also consistent with a reading of another work of Tertullian, this time *On the Soul*, which includes a description of the ‘bosom of Abraham.’<sup>350</sup> According to Tertullian, when Christ was in the tomb he descended deeper into hell and then deeper still into the bosom of Abraham ‘that he might there make the patriarchs and prophets partakers of himself.’<sup>351</sup> This presumably imagines a kind of holy meal of red wine and white bread (the blood and body of Christ) happening in the ‘very bowels’ of the earth.<sup>352</sup> In Shakespeare’s words, God ‘made those hollows, if himself were slain,/He might be buried in a tomb so simple;/Foreknowing well, if there he came to lie,/Why, there Love liv’d, and there he could not die.’<sup>353</sup> According to these Christian interpretations, the bosom of Abraham is located deep within the earth and much roomier than might at first be expected. This is why it can accommodate: a bundle of myrrh; a red flower ‘chequer’d with white’; the red blood and white body of Christ and the saints; the ‘particoloured’ winged figure of Love.<sup>354</sup>

In Lodge’s poem, when the botanic-headed Glaucus emerges ‘from forth the channel’, he is either leaving the virgin womb headfirst and ‘cry[ing]’ or entering the tomb to ‘shroud’ his ‘head.’<sup>355</sup> This means that in Lodge’s poem the narrator is not only the (potentially male) human soul beloved of Christ as dream vision narrator.<sup>356</sup> Lodge reveals that the narrator personally ‘repos’d’ Glaucus’ ‘head upon my faintful knee’ and so (she) can also stand for either the

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*Canticum Canticorum*” is introduced as “A mysticall device of the spirituall and godly love between Chryste the spouse, and the churche or congregacion his spousesse”; the Bishops Bible of 1568 introduces “The Ballet of Balletes of Solomon, called in Latin, Canticum Cantorum” as “The familer talk and mysticall communication of the spirituall love between Jesus Christ and his Churche.” The Geneva (1560) Bible—unusual among sixteenth-century translations in titling it as Solomon’s “Song” (rather than “ballet”)—similarly introduces it as follows: “In this Song, Salomon by moste swete and comfortable allegories and parables describeth the perfite love of Iesus Christ, the true Salomon and king of peace, and the faithful soule of his Church, which he hath sanctified and appointed to be his spouse, holy, chaste and without reprehension. So here is declared the singular love of the bridegroom towards the bride...Also the earnest affection of the Church which is inflamed with the love of Christ desiring to be more and more joined to him in love, and not to be forsaken for any spot or blemish that is in her.”

<sup>350</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima*, 7, 55.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 55.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 55.

<sup>353</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 243-6.

<sup>354</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 523.

<sup>355</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 523.

<sup>356</sup> The ‘lover’ of *The Romance of the Rose*, for example, can be interpreted in this way.

joyful mother in a nativity scene or the tearful mother in a pieta.<sup>357</sup> Similarly, in Shakespeare's poem, the 'clutched, tear-stained relic' in the 'hollows' of Venus' 'bosom' can be Christ in a 'hollow cradle' or in the 'tomb'; the son of God in the Bethlehem cave of a nativity scene or in the cave outside Jerusalem of an Easter garden.<sup>358</sup> There is also a significance more local to the British Isles folded into this rich allegory: both poems also suggest that the 'relic' stands for the botanic 'relics' in the 'sacred grotto' of Saint Winefride's well.<sup>359</sup>

Both Lodge and Shakespeare still seem to regard the plants around the well of Saint Winefride as indications that the well is an 'entrance' to an enchanted realm beneath the earth.<sup>360</sup> This Celtic belief, apparently integrated into monastic forms of Christianity, is common to many indigenous societies in which 'plants play a crucial role, for they are often the key that opens the door to the other world.'<sup>361</sup> As the Song of Solomon 7:13 relates: 'In our gates are all fruits: the new and the old, my beloved, I have kept for thee.' Lodge describes his botanic specimens forming 'a sweet and fruitful field' below the 'flood's repair' which, it has been suggested, ultimately derives from 'Celtic religious belief in Elysian lands below wells.'<sup>362</sup> Similarly, for Shakespeare, blood-red algae on the lip of the well can make it a 'ruby-colour'd portal' yielding 'passage' to a land of 'honey.'<sup>363</sup> It can also make it a 'coral mouth', a botanic substance linked with snaking hairs, like those of the Romano-British divinity who presided over the healing waters at Bath Spa.<sup>364</sup> All these lines can be read in the context of human beliefs in which 'portals to the next world could be fashioned from plants.'<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 7, 7, 374, 15, 16, 48.

<sup>358</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 9; Herron, 'War, the Boar and Spenserian Politics', 61. For Easter Gardens, or the earlier equivalent of 'Sepulchres' in which the host and the cross were entombed in medieval places of worship, see Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, 190-191.

<sup>359</sup> Gerard, *Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, 47-8.

<sup>360</sup> Memories of a belief in a world beneath, represented in the literature of the Middle Ages as Annwn in *The Mabinogion* and the 'lake under the earth' in Geoffrey of Monmouth, linger on in widespread reports and legends of 'tunnels.' These have a common currency in the folk memory of parts of Britain that were most closely associated with Celtic Christianity and the migrations of Welsh and Irish saints and are often associated with churchyards. There is a need for further research into these oral traditions because local tales of these 'tunnels' are generally dismissed as having no historical truth and so the possibility that they preserve some truth about what was once believed is overlooked.

<sup>361</sup> Balick and Cox, *Plants, People, and Culture*, 143.

<sup>362</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 395, 394, 396; Jones, *Holy Wells*, 52.

<sup>363</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 451-2.

<sup>364</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 542; Cunliffe, *Roman Bath Discovered*, 90.

<sup>369</sup> Balick and Cox, *Plants, People, and Culture*, 142.

If Lodge and Shakespeare inherited an indigenous British cosmology of this kind, it was probably partly derived from oral traditions associated with pilgrimage and partly derived from oral traditions accompanying the text of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* (which included *The Prophecies of Merlin*). Shakespeare refers to this as the work of 'the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies.'<sup>370</sup> This seems like a sceptical dismissal, until it is noted that he is promoting Geoffrey of Monmouth's own claim that the prophecies came from 'Merlin who was also called Ambrosius' ['Merlin qui et Ambrosius dicebatur'], of whom it was said 'numinous power is in him' ['numen esse in illo'].<sup>371</sup> Just as John Weever swore that Shakespeare's poem was solely a product of the numinous powers of Apollo, both Lodge and Shakespeare may have been prepared to 'swear' that Merlin 'got [*The Prophecies*] and none other.'<sup>372</sup>

Lodge describes 'wandering' pilgrim 'troops' following in the steps of Saint Winefride. They pass 'dangerous places of pursuit' in search of one of the Welsh 'desert vales' just as Saint Winefride was dangerously pursued before her beheading at 'Sych Nant' ['Dry Vale'].<sup>373</sup> The only thing missing to confirm that Lodge is describing the ritual landscape of Holywell is Saint Winefride's well itself. However, as will shortly be seen, by linking the ritual landscape with eagles 'gazing on the sun', he not only includes the well, but also the cosmology of Geoffrey of Monmouth.<sup>374</sup>

According to medieval bestiaries, the blind eagle is healed when 'the darkness of its eyes is burnt away by the sun's rays' but only after it 'seeks out a *fountain*' in a ritual landscape (*italics added*).<sup>375</sup> Lodge's 'eagle' in search of a 'fountain' suggests, in turn, Geoffrey of Monmouth's description of the second of two fabulous lakes: the first is a subterranean lake populated by two dragons, red and white, and reached by a single 'channel'; the second is a sexagesimal lake fed by 'sixty channels' and populated by 'sixty eagles' nesting on 'sixty crags' on 'sixty islands' (although one of the islands may actually be reserved for King Arthur, who may stand for Christ, and for nine ladies, who may stand

<sup>370</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 3.1.146.

<sup>371</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Kings of Britain*, 4.108.565-6.

<sup>372</sup> Honigmann, *John Weever*, 109.

<sup>373</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 248, 9.

<sup>374</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 242.

<sup>375</sup> Richard Barber, *Bestiary* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1992 repr. 2006), 119.



for the nymphs or saints who, in Lodge's terms, constantly 'recure his wound').<sup>376</sup> As has already been established, Lodge would later refer again to the second of Geoffrey of Monmouth's lakes by means of Glaucus' boast that 'a hundred swelling tides my mother spent/Upon my locks'; this is not quite empty boasting since 'sixty' is still an impressive number.<sup>377</sup>

The research of Anne Ross into Celtic cosmological traditions raised the possibility that, while it would be easy to assume that these are distinct geographical lakes, they were ultimately understood as two interchangeable ways of discussing a single cosmological lake.<sup>378</sup> According to this reading, just as Lodge used the 'Eurotas spring' interchangeably with the twin Arethusa spring in his poem, so he used the 'sexagesimal lake' interchangeably with the subterranean 'wat'ry realm' reached by a single 'channel.'<sup>379</sup> It seems likely that, by including the eagles 'gazing on the sun', Lodge was also implicitly including a 'fountain' which led to a 'wat'ry realm' under the earth. This suggests that the position of the red and white dragons in the earlier narrative is occupied by Lodge's red maiden-head 'fruits' on white 'pebbles' or gorgon-head 'fruits' of red or white 'coral.'<sup>380</sup>

Shakespeare alludes to the same British cosmology of Geoffrey of Monmouth in 'Venus and Adonis.' However, where Lodge tentatively alludes to 'eagles' in search of the bestiaries' 'fountain' and the innumerable tides of Geoffrey of Monmouth's sexagesimal lake, Shakespeare alludes directly to the

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<sup>376</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 242,252 where the 'gazing on the sun' and the 'waters of frequent', reveal it as the fountain-seeking eagle of the bestiaries. The mention the number sixty, incidentally, raises the possibility that this Celtic cosmological system may ultimately derive, from an even more ancient Babylonian source since the sexagesimal counting system, even in the division of hours and minutes still used in the west today, has been traced back to Ancient Iraq. Cf. Martin L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999, 312-16 on the ultimate origins of the classical myth of the Golden World in Ancient Iraq. For Arthur as Christ see Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 202.

<sup>377</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 361-2 The classical 'hundred rivers' of Ovid's text (13. 955) can be read in parallel synthesis with Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'sixty rivers' in the sexagesimal lake under the earth. Ovid's version may actually post-date the Celtic version, since Geoffrey of Monmouth's version seems to reflect an earlier sexagesimal counting-system.

<sup>378</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 365; This conclusion, that the sexagesimal lake, supposedly in Loch Lomond, and the subterranean lake, supposedly under Mount Snowdon, were misleading geographical ways of discussing cosmological beliefs in a single lake under the earth, was independently reached by Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 350. According to this research, by alluding twice to the sexagesimal lake, Lodge was not merely referring to the more famous subterranean lake by one remove (as he alluded to the 'Eurotas spring' to refer to her twin spring the Arethusa by one remove, for example) but referring to a lake that is the same as the 'subterranean lake'.

<sup>379</sup> Lodge, 'Scylla's Metamorphosis', 9, 7

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 341, 338, 761, 8.

red and white dragons, associated with Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'lake under the earth':

O, what a sight it was, wistly to view,  
 How she came stealing to the wayward boy,  
 To note the fighting conflict of her hue,  
 How white and red each other did destroy:  
 But now her cheek was pale, and by and by  
 It flash'd forth fire, as lightning from the sky.<sup>381</sup>

The 'fighting conflict' of Venus' cheeks, and the way that 'white and red each other did destroy' is a clear reference to the fight of the red and white dragons in Geoffrey of Monmouth's fable.<sup>382</sup> This is also why it is said that the cheeks 'flash'd forth fire', as dragons, of course, are feigned to breathe fire.<sup>383</sup> Shakespeare's phrase 'fighting conflict' is likely to be a direct translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's phrase 'terrible battle', 'baleful struggle' ['diram pugnam'] while his phrase 'flashed forth fire' is also likely to be a direct translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'breathing fire', 'begetting fire by breathing' ['ignem anhelitu procreabant'].

Geoffrey of Monmouth's fable of the warring dragons is most famous for inspiring the Welsh flag. This came to prominence in the Tudor period because Henry Tudor adopted it to signal his descent from Cadwallader. The flag with its red dragon on a green and white ground reflects the traditional gloss on this fable, which Geoffrey borrowed from the ninth-century *Historia Britonum*, although the fable itself almost certainly reflects more ancient cosmology. According to the traditional gloss in this written tradition, the red dragon stands for the Britons and the white dragon stands for the Saxons. One way of interpreting Shakespeare's metaphor, then, might be to note that Venus' cheeks have the blood of the red (British) and the white (Saxon) saints warring in them, just as Richard II imagines 'but now the blood of twenty thousand men did

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<sup>381</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 345-8.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 345-8.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 345-8

triumph in my face.’<sup>384</sup> The dragon-fire that they flash forth might represent their anger that they are not remembered.

It is worth pointing out that Geoffrey of Monmouth’s fable itself is almost certainly much older than this textual gloss, explaining it in ninth-century political terms at variance with the older cosmological import. This suggests that the textual gloss, so freely given, is intended to distract from an earlier oral gloss, not so freely given, consistent and contemporary with the fable itself, explaining the fable on its own cosmological terms.<sup>385</sup> It is for the reader to decide whether Shakespeare’s writing, plausibly enough, expects its readers to equate Geoffrey of Monmouth’s red and white dragons (associated with a ‘channel’ dreamed up out of the head of ‘Merlin Ambrosius’) with Nature’s red and white moulds (associated with the ‘channel’ out of the head of Saint Winefride).

If he did, this would explain why, in ‘Venus and Adonis’, he connects the ‘heaven’s eternal mould’ flaming red and white in Venus’ cheeks, with the fiery conflict of the red and white dragons.<sup>386</sup> It would also explain why, in *King Lear*, he brings together ‘Nature’s moulds’ and a ‘prophecy Merlin shall make’ at the start and end of the same scene.<sup>387</sup> In the context of the dragon stanza is found the phrase ‘as lightning from the sky’, and in the context of the *King Lear* speech, ‘Nature’s moulds’ are held to have come down ‘as lightning from the sky.’<sup>388</sup> These ‘Jove-born’ botanic forms, imagined as heavenly ‘bolts’, are bound up, in the ‘hollow womb’ of the earth which consequently ‘resounds like heaven’s thunder.’<sup>389</sup> From this perspective, the Celtic dragons trapped in a ‘lake under the earth’ might be interchangeable with the classical winds bound in a cavern under the earth in Virgil’s *Aeneid*.<sup>390</sup> The Celtic dragons might also be interchangeable with the biblical red-headed king bound in the channels in the Song of Solomon 7:5. Increasingly, it seems that Geoffrey of Monmouth had a flexible and cross-cultural monastic oral tradition at his disposal, precisely the kind of monastic oral tradition that the reformation ultimately succeeded in burying.

<sup>384</sup> Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 3.2.76-7. Shakespeare’s familiarity with Geoffrey of Monmouth is apparent from such allusions as the shape-changing of Uther in ‘The Rape of Lucrece’, 596-7.

<sup>385</sup> Faircloth and Thomas, *A Dictionary*, 6; Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, 4.2.72-3; Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1.2.10-11.

<sup>386</sup> Lodge, ‘Scyllae’s Metamorphosis’, 520.

<sup>387</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 3.2.8, 3.3.95.

<sup>388</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, ‘as lightning’; Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 3.2.8

<sup>389</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 268.

<sup>390</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*, 1.52-54.

If Geoffrey of Monmouth's text was accompanied by a monastic oral tradition that was buried by the reformation, it could have persisted underground, only to erupt onto the printed scene from time to time. Shakespeare's curious mention of 'Nature's moulds' can be understood as just such an eruption, as can the outlandish comment of an eighteenth-century religious antiquarian:

As late as 1725, Henry Bourne, a Newcastle curate, wrote that the custom of lighting bonfires on Midsummer Eve was derived from the desire to frighten dragons away: the monsters 'being incited to lust through the heat of the season, did frequently, as they flew through the Air, Spermatize in the Wells and Fountains.'<sup>391</sup>

This eighteenth-century curate may have understood why King Lear might conjure the lightning to 'spill' 'all germens at once.'<sup>392</sup> He also may have understood why King Lear appears to indicate that these 'moulds' are the raw materials used by 'Great Creating Nature' to form disobedient Mankind: 'Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once/That make ingrateful man.'<sup>393</sup>

Alexandra Walsham has argued that, when it comes to analysing the origins and aftermath of the reformation, it is impossible without a full-scale approach, the so-called *longue durée* championed by Fernand Braudel.<sup>394</sup> She has, accordingly, gifted scholars with a far-reaching survey of religious memory in the landscape of the British Isles from prehistoric times through to Elizabethan times and beyond (not to mention her isolated studies of the ritual landscape surrounding Saint Winefride's well from earliest times into the early modern period).<sup>395</sup> In her masterpiece, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, she argues that oral memories of 'Celtic beliefs' could be read interchangeably with written records of Roman beliefs 'attested by Ovid and Pliny' when it came to 'the

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<sup>391</sup> Samantha Riches, *St George: Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 141, citing John Brand, *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (Newcastle, 1777).

<sup>392</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 3.2.8.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.2.8-9.

<sup>394</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 17.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

notion that strange aberrations in the physical world like earthquakes, blood-coloured pools and plants that flowered out of season bore portentous warning and oracular witness to future events.<sup>396</sup> These ancient beliefs persisted into the medieval *Prophecies of Merlin*, in which the dragons buried in the 'lake under the earth' are still associated with earthquakes, blood-coloured waters and, arguably, plants flowering out of season. In fact, as late as Elizabethan times, Shakespeare was still shrewdly aware of 'how the world's poor people are amaz'd/At apparitions, signs and prodigies' and prepared to capitalise on it to promote his religion's claim to universal truth.<sup>397</sup> This results in a perceived link between a Christianised Celtic tradition surrounding a Welsh well and a medieval work advertising itself as *The Prophecies of Merlin*, which Shakespeare continues to consolidate hundreds of years later to spread anxiety about the way that his country was headed.

Firstly, as far as earthquakes are concerned, Saint Winefride's well provides a remedy since, according to Celtic traditions that inspire those beautiful descriptions in the poetry of Lodge and Shakespeare, it provides an outlet for confined 'winds', struggling to free themselves from where they are 'bound' in the 'channel.' These Celtic traditions can be read alongside Pliny's claim that 'in wells there is a remedy for earthquakes...for they provide an outlet for a confined breath [a Latin phrase that could also be translated as 'confined wind' or 'trapped spirit']'.<sup>398</sup> The Celtic and Roman sources come together in Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis'; the poem compares the leaping of Venus' eyes, or the waters of her 'eye-well', to disasters 'when the wind, imprison'd in the ground/Struggling for passage, earth's foundation shakes,' causing the waters to leap from 'the deep-dark cabins of her [well-] head.'<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>397</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 925-6.

<sup>398</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. Harris Rackham (London: William Heinemann, 1938)

<sup>399</sup> One obsolete meaning of the word 'eye' is 'an opening through which water wells up' (12a in the *OED*). It is used in this sense by the eighteenth-century travel-writer Richard Fenton in his account of a healing spring: 'The tradition is of this spring, as that of Holywell, that a Virgin was there murdered, and that on the spot a spring gushed out. The spring has two eyes...' See Richard Fenton, *Tours in Wales* (1804-1813) ed. John Fisher, (London, 1917), 60-1. The *OED* interprets this as a biblical term drawn from Deuteronomy 33:28. However, there is evidence to suggest that the association of wells with eyes predates the arrival of Christianity in Britain and that it is particularly strong in Celtic regions. In Scotland, for example, the word 'well-eye' for 'a bog where a spring rises' or 'a source' is attested. In Old Welsh the word *licat* (Modern Welsh *llygad*) can apply to an 'eye' or a 'spring' and features in a description of a healing well in the *Historia Brittonum* which used to be ascribed to Nennius. In Britain, the goddess of the sacred springs at Bath was called 'Sulis' which many scholars believe is cognate with the Old Irish word *suil* meaning 'eye.' See Bernhard Maier, *Dictionary of Celtic Religion and Culture*, trans. Cyril

Saint Winefride's Well provided a remedy for external disasters like earthquakes and internal disasters like diseases. Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV* teaches that 'diseased nature ...breaks forth/In strange eruptions' but the cult of Saint Winefride taught that red and white supernatural creatures incarnate in nature had powers to cure 'eruptive disorders.'<sup>400</sup> From this point of view, the notion that 'Venus and Adonis' takes curative 'moulds from heaven' as its subject as an urgent response to a particularly diseased time must remain a possibility. Anthony Mortimer has suggested that 'if, as most editors think, "Venus and Adonis" was written during an outbreak of plague in 1592-3, then there must have been an uncomfortable sense of relevance in the imagery that Venus uses to celebrate the [plague-curing] "piteous lips" of Adonis...'<sup>401</sup> Cures could be seen to highlight the importance of a particular religious stance in this time of crisis. This is pointed out by Alexandra Walsham who argues that 'the uninterrupted stream of cures wrought by St Winefride at her Flintshire shrine buttressed Catholicism's claim to be the sole possessor of Christian truth.'<sup>402</sup> It is likely that the impetus for writing of cures at a time of crisis was also a local one since the cult of Saint Winefride was popular in the place where Shakespeare was brought up and 'a record of some fifty cures at the well over the period 1556 to 1674 contains a disproportionate number of south Warwickshire examples.'<sup>403</sup> From this point of view the well became the focus of

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Edwards (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), 256; Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Munich: Francke Verlag Bern, 1959), 881. This reflects the fact that Celtic gods 'were seen as personifications of natural features [so that] Sulis was the hot spring at Bath, not simply its guardian or possessor.'<sup>399</sup> Miranda J. Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 24. If Shakespeare's metaphor reveals that he was aware of a Celtic link between wells and eyes, it seems likely that it was through a doctrine of signatures: 'springes of the water (if yee marke them) have the shape of eye in a man's body' and so could cure them. John Calvin, *Sermon on Deuteronomie cxcviii*, trans. Arthur Golding, (1583), 1233/1. On top of this many wells were believed to have sprung from tears (just as the herb rue is planted over the spot where the queen cries in Richard II) and may have been believed to be the tears of the gods. Shakespeare's conceit 'Dost thou drink tears?' makes good nonsense for a lover but might make good sense to a medieval pilgrim. Taken together, these points suggest that Shakespeare had inherited a living tradition that could comprehend the 'eye-problems evidenced at so many Celtic water-sites', and that the link between Adonis and Venus reworks an ancient 'link between a god of clear light and a curer of eye-disease.' Miranda J. Green, *The Gods of the Celts* (London: Sutton, 1986), 164. Certain phrases in Shakespeare's poem demand to be read in the context of eye-cures, for example: 'Mine eyes, but for thy piteous lips no more had seen.'

<sup>400</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 3.1.25-6; Shell, *Oral Culture*, 65; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 175.

<sup>401</sup> Anthony Mortimer, "Crimson Liveries", 274.

<sup>402</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 213.

<sup>403</sup> Robert Bearmann, 'John Shakespeare's "Spiritual Testament": A Reappraisal', *Shakespeare Survey*, 184-202, 200. This is why, according to Robert Bearmann, the inclusion of 'St Winefride's name' as a patron saint in a document linked with Shakespeare's father 'raises no

both widespread and local anxieties about the disastrous age and the place to find a remedy.

The remedy that Saint Winefride's well provided for earthquakes and diseases meant that Catholics would evoke it as a remedy for other forms of upheaval, including the reformation. Philip Schwyzer and Eamon Duffy, in their poignant readings of Shakespeare's sonnet 73, have affirmed a link between the phrase 'bare ruined choirs' and the reformation.<sup>404</sup> However, in a spooky twist, this link may date from a time when the reformation was still a long way off in the future. *The Prophecies of Merlin* predict that the secret of the buried red and white creatures will cause the destruction of the cult of religion when the 'ruina ecclesiarum patebit', 'the ruins of churches will be laid bare.'<sup>405</sup> Shakespeare's 'bare ruined choirs' potentially translates this Latin phrase of Geoffrey of Monmouth and reinforces the impression that it is linked with the reformation. By means of this neat translation, Shakespeare's sonnet attempts to persuade his readers of two far-fetched claims. Firstly, it contends that the twelfth-century *Prophecies of Merlin* had predicted the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the first part of the sixteenth century. Secondly, it maintains that the cosmology enshrined in this medieval religious work, ostensibly concerning the loss of Britain, still has urgent implications for the fate of Britain too.

Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV* also features a scene in which Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the King of Britain* is explicitly mentioned (as '*The Prophecies of Merlin*') and implicitly alluded to (in a mention of 'toppling towers' that recalls the fable of Vortigern's toppling tower at the outset of *The Prophecies*). The 'toppling towers' appear alongside the image of the 'mouldwarp that turned all up' which Alison Shell has revealed as a gloss on the reformation.<sup>406</sup> This suggests that when the speech describes 'unruly winds' within the hollow 'womb' of the earth erupting forth in earthquakes that 'topple

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real difficulties', although other aspects of the document have been seen to cast doubt on its authenticity (Ibid., 198). Other critics, such as Anna Swärdh have pointed out that it took 'almost two hundred years [for] scholars to understand what kind of text it was' which would be unusual if the document were inauthentic. See Anna Swärdh, *Rape and Religion in Renaissance Literature* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2003), 42-3.

<sup>404</sup> See Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 102; and Eamon Duffy 'Bare ruined choirs: remembering Catholicism in Shakespeare's England' in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, eds. Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay and Richard Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

<sup>405</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Kings of Britain*, 'Prophetiae', 112.35.

<sup>406</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 3.1.145; Shell, *Oral Culture*, 65; Walsham, *Providence*, 175.

down/Steeple and moss-grown towers' it is alluding to Vortigern's toppling tower as a proleptic allegory also relevant to the reformation.<sup>407</sup>

After her discussion of earthquakes Alexandra Walsham identifies blood-coloured pools and plants that flower out of season as two more 'Celtic beliefs' compatible with Roman beliefs 'attested by Ovid and Pliny.'<sup>408</sup> Again, these are found in connection with both *The Prophecies of Merlin* and Saint Winefride's well. The prophecies of Merlin describe how the subterranean struggle of the red and white dragons may cause strange signs on the surface, making 'the rivers in the [Welsh?] valleys flow with blood.'<sup>409</sup> Similarly, recusant accounts describe the Celtic miracle whereby Saint Winefride's well became a red well, just like the waters mentioned by the Roman poet Ovid in his speech of Pythagoras and his description of Castalian waters. The red-coloured waters in both sources may lie behind some curious lines in Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis.' On the day that Adonis' blood is shed Venus' 'eyes' 'leap' from 'their dark beds' and 'are turn'd...red' when they are usually clear as 'crystals,' just as on the day that Saint Winefride's blood was shed 'the water rises a good deal above its ordinary level and turns red as it rises...[when] on any other day [it] is so remarkably clear that you can pick out a [votive] pin lying on the bottom.'<sup>410</sup>

This leads to the third and final of Alexandra Walsham's Celtic beliefs compatible with Roman beliefs: the 'moulds' that flower out of season. Some readers may have already decided, plausibly enough, that Shakespeare's work encourages an equation of the red and white 'moulds from heaven' with red and white supernatural beings which came 'as lightning from the sky.'<sup>411</sup> The religious antiquarian from Newcastle, Henry Bourne, suggested that their seed came down on Midsummer Eve, which is the time of Saint Winefride's Martyrdom, but they presumably came to unseasonal fruition by November, which was the time of her Feast Day.

<sup>407</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 3.1.28,29, 30-1.

<sup>408</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 22.

<sup>409</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Kings of Britain*, 'Prophetiae', 112.35.

<sup>410</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1050, 1072-1073, 963; Gerard, *Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, 47.

<sup>411</sup> The carved 'Tudor dragon' in the well-buildings may reflect this belief. See Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 80.



Numerous fables hint at the way that the Celtic and medieval ritual years were ordered around the anticipation of a miraculous plant that would flower out of season in the dead of winter. There were early fifteenth-century legends that 'apple-trees flowered and bore fruit on Christmas night' which sound like similitudes or types for the birth of Christ, parallel to Shakespeare's fable that when 'that season comes/Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,/This bird of dawning [the cockerel] singeth all night long.'<sup>412</sup> Other traditions of unseasonal fruiting include the legend that Joseph of Arimathea's walking stick planted in Glastonbury is now a rosebush that blossoms each year at Christ's birth, just as the nearby hawthorns 'do burge and bere grene leauues [sic] at Christmas.'<sup>413</sup> Similar traditions occur in the play of *Joseph and the Midwives*, the *Cherry Tree* carol, the life of Saint Hadwigis and, most memorably, in Chrétien de Troye's Arthurian tale of *Sir Cleges* which features an unseasonal cherry-tree. Ad Putter writes of the 'medieval apprehension of the nativity as just such a "miraculous" fruition.'<sup>414</sup> He adds that 'on the season of Christmas, and on the precise liturgical hour of Christ's birth...one miraculous midnight fruit inevitably commemorates another.'<sup>415</sup>

The alternation of the seasons from June to November, and a 'flower' on the surface of the earth prefigured in a 'fruit' in the underworld, is also found in the classical fable of Persephone, which, it has been argued, underlies Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. When 'Celtic beliefs' are read in parallel synthesis with Classical sources, on the model of Alexandra Walsham, the Celtic Nature's moulds or Geoffrey's dragons of the 'hollow earth' seem to find a counterpart in a Classical fruit of the underworld. Persephone's pomegranate, which produced white flowers and red fruit, is perhaps the neatest expression of the syncretic links upon which these fabulous verse narratives are based and it can be traced back to Ovid and Claudian.

Shakespeare's poem likens Adonis' flower to cheeks ('A purple flower sprung up, checkred with white, resembling well his pale cheeks, and the blood/Which in round drops upon their whiteness stood').<sup>416</sup> In the *Song of*

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<sup>412</sup> Ad Putter, 'In Search of Lost Time: Missing Days in *Sir Cleges* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*' in *Time in the Medieval World*, eds. Chris Humphrey & W. M. Ormrod (York: York University Press, 2001), 119-136, 130. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.1.163-5.

<sup>413</sup> Putter, 'In Search of Lost Time', 130.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>416</sup> Shakespeare 'Venus and Adonis', 1168-10.

Solomon 4:3 the beloved's cheeks are compared to the pomegranate ('Thy cheeks are as a piece of pomegranate, besides that which lieth within').<sup>417</sup> Lastly, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the pomegranate's flower is seen as comparable to Adonis' flower (which is 'like the rich bloom [of pomegranates] which in stubborn rind/Conceal their seeds').<sup>418</sup> It is easy to see, then, how Shakespeare could have connected the flower of Adonis with the complexion of Adonis by reading biblical alongside classical texts as mutually-reinforcing sources of revelation. The final link in the 'rose-red chain' is the context of the pomegranate cheeks beside 'that which lieth within.'<sup>419</sup> This brings with it the association with a well or fountain which is sealed up so that 'none can drink of its waters, that is the graces and spiritual benefits of the holy sacraments, but those who are within its walls.'<sup>420</sup> Saint Winefride, in her botanic identity of the moulds, can be seen as a well 'sealed up', in that concealed in her head lies a channel to another world which is opened up when she is beheaded.

This leads back to the fabulous 'sacred grotto' of the 'well building' mentioned earlier.<sup>421</sup> By an odd amphibious logic, like toads returning to the place of their nativity, the pomegranates and dragons found their way back to Saint Winefride's well, the first in the stone-carved coat of arms of Katherine of Aragon, the second in the stone-carved Tudor embellishment over a door.<sup>422</sup>

### Relics of a Christian Saint in Apparently Pagan Fables

One eighteenth-century gentleman naturalist and travel writer, Thomas Pennant, may have made the link between the flowers of Adonis and Holywell completely independently of Shakespeare. The comparison may have been natural to an educated man who was more familiar with Ovid through his classical training than with Welsh language or culture. Interestingly, he chose to illustrate the comparison in prose and in a verse translation of Ovid where he substitutes the words 'Blest Maid' for the vocative form of 'Adonis':

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<sup>417</sup> Song of Solomon 4:3

<sup>418</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10.735-7; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, 248.

<sup>419</sup> Song of Solomon 4:3

<sup>420</sup> 'Canticle of Canticles', 4:12 (Rheims-Douai), commentary.

<sup>421</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 83.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 79, 90.

Her blood spotted the stones, which, like the flowers of Adonis, annually commemorate the fact, by assuming colours unknown to them before.

Luctus monumenta manebunt,  
Semper, *Adoni*, mei: repetitaque mortis imago  
Annua plangoris peraget simulamina nostri.

For thee, blest maid, my tears, my endless pain  
Shall in immortal monuments remain.  
The image of thy death each year renew;  
And prove my grief, to distant ages, true.<sup>423</sup>

However, when John Falconer dismissed tales of the red stones of Saint Winefride's spring as 'Ovid's Metamorphosing Fables' it may not have been independently of Shakespeare.<sup>424</sup> Or, alternatively, it may not have been. Where Walsham concludes that the Jesuit Falconer had a contrary opinion on the red stones to the Jesuit Oldcorne who believed they had cured him of throat cancer, it is also possible that Falconer was equivocating. In other words, he may have been drawing attention to the importance of the fable by affecting to reject it as out of hand. But irrespective of whether he was rejecting the fable or secretly embracing it, the fact remains that he was conscious of a perceived link between 'St Winefride's spring' and 'Ovid's Metamorphosing Fables.'<sup>425</sup> The reason that a perceived link existed in the period was because of the subtext of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis.' Whether or not he approved of this literary endeavour, it is interesting that the Jesuit John Falconer was one of the readers who seems to have understood this subtext. In fact, he not only understood it, he referred to the comparison as if it was a completely natural one to make and prudently avoided any explicit mention of Shakespeare's name.

If Shakespeare was the first to forge this link between the anonymous Celtic fable of Winefride and the Ovidian fable of Venus and Adonis he was still in a time-honoured tradition:

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<sup>423</sup> Thomas Pennant, *Tours in Wales* (London: Henry Hughes, 1778) vol. 1, 33. The English verse translation is presumably by Pennant himself and is substitutes 'Blest Maid' for the vocative 'Adonis' of Ovid's original.

<sup>424</sup> Walsham, *Landscape*, 213.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

In more literate parts of the [medieval] Church the lives of the saints were written down, compiled from oral tradition and modelled on the classical narratives of the ancient world.<sup>426</sup>

Shakespeare still seems to be following a similar procedure in his fabulous verse narrative, modelling the Celtic fable on the Ovidian fable to the point that the original prototype of beheading and virgin blood is almost completely eclipsed by the classical flowers of Adonis. Almost, but not quite. A potent subtext of the indigenous legend persists in Shakespeare's reworking, testament to his commitment to the tenets of monastic humanism that recognised that these fabulous narratives from such distinct cultures nonetheless shared an essential kernel of truth.<sup>427</sup>

However, it is unlikely that Shakespeare was committed to reconciling different mythic traditions for merely antiquarian reasons or in the name of art for art's sake. The research of Bill Pritchard demonstrates that the advent of these fabulous verse narratives coincides with the arrival of the Jesuit Mission in Holywell from around 1590.<sup>428</sup> The persistence of this same poetic tradition of fabulous verse narratives into the early part of the seventeenth-century demands to be understood in the context of the continuing interest in the unreformed well in the period.<sup>429</sup> Just as no poet would have written his fabulous verse narrative unless he had first courted the waters of Saint Winefride, so no gunpowder plotter could afford to launch his enterprise without courting the same waters.<sup>430</sup> The Celtic tale of Saint Winefride may have been time-honoured, but a reworking along classical lines was timely.

From the outset the Celtic fable reveals a monastic concern with keeping knowledge of the secrets of Nature restricted. In this it can also be seen to

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<sup>426</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 15.

<sup>427</sup> For monastic humanism see James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 221.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>430</sup> The early seventeenth-century wave of fabulous verse narratives includes poems by John Weever and Francis Beaumont. See Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 148.

maintain an earlier Celtic taboo, recorded by Caesar, on committing an oral tradition to writing:<sup>431</sup>

Here begins the life of St Winefride, Virgin and Martyr. If it is good to hide the secret of a king, no less is it irksome to refrain from publishing the great deeds of God. I have accordingly undertaken, by the help and favour of God, to write down what the tradition of older time has handed down to us regarding the Blessed Winefride...<sup>432</sup>

Here there is an acknowledgement of the importance of restricting knowledge of the secrets of God, alluded to as a King, but ultimately, it is contended, secret knowledge can remain restricted as long as it is published in an appropriate form, such as the form that Macrobius calls fables of the 'deeds of the Gods.'<sup>433</sup> In other words, a careful balance is to be struck between keeping and revealing divine deeds. The same balance between a 'secret' in the first half of the sentence and the idea of 'refraining from publishing' in the second half of the sentence is found in Shakespeare's phrase: 'All blest secrets, all you unpublished virtues of the earth.'<sup>435</sup> It is also found in Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' in the phrase 'Ne'er king more sought to keep...'<sup>436</sup> Here the informed reader, familiar with fables like that of Midas, may have expected Marlowe to complete the quotation with the words: 'his secret.'<sup>437</sup> Instead, he substitutes the earlier phrase for 'his diadem.'<sup>438</sup>

This suggests that the 'secret' mentioned in the anonymous life of Saint Winefride signifies Saint Winefride's 'inestimable gem' or 'sealed fountain'.<sup>439</sup>

The Celtic fable continues by establishing Saint Winefride's exclusive relationship with God. The other potential suitor Caradog arrives too late and since his name is the Welsh word for 'lover' or 'bridegroom' it seems reasonable to suppose that he was taken as a type of the delayed bridegroom or Christ. Caradog and Shakespeare's Adonis are both on a 'hunt'. When Shakespeare's

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<sup>431</sup> Among the pre-Christian Celts, according to Timagenes, there was a belief in the 'secrets of nature' and, according to Caesar, it was considered sacrilege to write them down. See Timagenes in Ammianus Marcellinus XV. 9, 8; Caesar, *De Bello Gallica*, VI.14.

<sup>432</sup> Anonymous, 'Life of Saint Winefride' in Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 16.

<sup>433</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary*, 85, 2.9. It may be relevant that the word 'King' is also an alchemical term.

<sup>435</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997), 4.4.15-17.

<sup>436</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.77.

<sup>437</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.77.

<sup>438</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.77.

<sup>439</sup> Marlowe, 'Hero and Leander', 2.78; Song of Solomon 4:12

poem comments that 'hunting he lov'd but love he laughed to scorn' it is implying that Adonis is not interested in the more common love that exists between a man and woman. The first appearance of Caradog and Shakespeare's Adonis strike immediate parallels:

Just then Caradog, son of Aalog, a prince of royal birth, who had been out hunting wild beasts...<sup>441</sup>

The opening of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' borrows this syntax where 'just then' corresponds to 'even as' and the hunting is rendered co-terminal with previous events relating to a saintly female figure:

Even as the sun with purple-coloured face/Had ta'en his last leave of the weeping morn,/Rose-cheeked Adonis hied him to the chase...<sup>442</sup>

The syntax is borrowed from the fable of Saint Winefride but the idea of the sun racing a purple-cheeked personification may be much more ancient. A similar idea may be present in Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval*, where the sun melts away the blood drops which have put the hero into an unusual meditative state.<sup>443</sup> In *Perceval* the drops of blood are likened to the fair and rosy complexion of a maiden and this is paralleled in the complexion of Saint Winefride. The fable describes 'the fair and rosy complexion of the maiden' which, in turn, corresponds to the 'white and ruddy' complexion described in the Song of Solomon 5.10 and to the 'snowy pallor and the blush[ing]' complexion described in Ovid's fable of Narcissus.<sup>444</sup>

The reason that Caradog seeks out Saint Winefride at all is his thirst:

Caradog...came weary with the chase, and very thirsty, to ask for a drink.<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 18.

<sup>442</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 1-3.

<sup>443</sup> Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, trans. William W. Kibler, (London: Penguin, 1991), 432; Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal ou le roman de Perceval* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990), 4139: 'Con ces .III. gotes de sanc furent/Qui sor la blanche noif paruent'.

<sup>444</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 18.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

This corresponds to a moment where the subtext is deliberately indicated by means of an apparently arbitrary metaphor in 'Venus and Adonis':

Never did passenger in summer's heat  
More thirst for drink...<sup>446</sup>

The 'thirst' that Caradog feels and which leads him to Saint Winefride reveals that she is in some sense already the well. As soon as Caradog realises that there is a 'sealed fountain' shut up inside her head, his thirst is forgotten. It is forgotten 'in the vehemence of his love', which is to say, in the abundance which takes away all desire for drink and food too. Caradog's plea that he may become a recognised suitor highlights that Caradog and Saint Winefride are interchangeable with the Heavenly Bridegroom and Bride of Christ. In fact, Venus and Adonis can also swap between these biblical roles. Shakespeare's Venus is 'like a bold-faced suitor' in line six because as the wooer or tester of Adonis' virginity she is playing the role of Caradog. Later, Venus' reflecting quality makes her like Saint Winefride, while Adonis is like Caradog, identified as the 'Lord' creating this earthly soul 'in his image':

Lord...how she looks for babies in his eyes...  
While hosts of floods drew dew from out her eyes...<sup>447</sup>

Look in mine eyeballs, there thy beauty lies,  
Then why not lips on lips, since eyes on eyes.<sup>448</sup>

Two glasses where herself herself beheld  
A thousand times, and now no more reflect.<sup>449</sup>

So is her face illumin'd with her eye...  
...Which through the crystal tears gave light

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<sup>446</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 91-2.

<sup>447</sup> Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 620, 644.

<sup>448</sup> Shakespeare, 'Venus and Adonis', 119-120.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, 1129-30.

Shone like the moon seen in water by night.<sup>450</sup>

At other times, no reflective qualities are mentioned, but either of the characters can be identified as a well in other ways. One minute, Venus identifies Adonis' mouth as the algae-red mouth of the well with the words, 'the tender spring upon they tempting lip.'<sup>451</sup> The next minute, Venus identifies herself as the well. She claims that her 'eyes are grey', (simultaneously, suggestive of the grey-eyed Morn or the grey-eyed Beloved of the Song of Solomon) and that they pay 'tributary gazes' like bountiful streams of light. Even more frankly, she elides her appearance and that of the well in the line: 'My beauty as the spring doth yearly grow.'<sup>452</sup> Perhaps the most interesting riddle for Saint Winefride in the poem is as a 'nymph, with dishevelled hair' who can 'dance on the sand and yet no footing seen.'<sup>453</sup> These phrases suggest a mysterious figure who is part saintly sealed fountain and part fairy with mossy elf-locks for hair: they combine an image of lapping waters that leave no footprints with the image of a fairy dancing in a fairy ring like the one examined in the third chapter in connection with book six of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.<sup>454</sup>

In the Welsh fable, the 'hunt' metaphor culminates in Caradog's 'pursuit' of Saint Winefride which clarifies that she is the object of the hunt until 'he reached her with his sword and cut off her head.'<sup>455</sup> The fate of Caradog, on the other hand, is interesting because it clarifies his identification as Christ in the fable:

The miserable man melted away.<sup>456</sup>

The melting and disappearance of Caradog mirrors the melting of the bride in the Song of Solomon 5:6: 'My soul melted when he [Christ] spoke: I sought him and found him not.' It also seems to inform the depiction of the vanishing corpse at the end of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*:

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 486, 491-2.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 140-1

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 147-8

<sup>454</sup> Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Bk. 6, pt. 10 sts. 11, 12.

<sup>455</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 19.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid., 19.



By this the boy that by her side lay kill'd  
Was melted...<sup>457</sup>

The fable of Saint Winefride continues:

And on the spot where her blood had flowed there was an earthquake, with a loud noise, and a great stream of water burst forth, and has continued to flow from that day to this. The stones in the stream have been ever since, and are still the colour of blood; the moss has the scent of incense, and is a remedy for various diseases.<sup>458</sup>

The earthquake and the noise that accompany this vanishing are the ringing in the ears of the martyr as they pass from the 'profane' into the 'sacred time' where it is always spring. This ancient belief may lie behind the notion which persists in Celtic areas, that a drowning person will experience in an instant their whole life passing before their eyes. The most perfect articulation of this comes in *The Mabinogion* where all the seasons are passed through in a moment: 'you will hear a tumultuous noise, and think that heaven and earth are trembling with the noise. And after the noise there will be a very cold shower—a shower of hailstones—and it will be difficult to survive it. And after the shower there will be fine weather. And there will not be one leaf on the tree that the shower will not have carried away. And then a flock of birds will alight on the tree, and you have never heard in your own country such singing as theirs.'<sup>459</sup> These sounds ringing in the ears are presumably what is experienced by anyone passing from the country of the living to a country on the other side and may have been what Iron Age people sacrificed in bogs were supposed to hear as they approached the next world.

But Saint Winefride does not pass straight into the next world. She is re-headed and restored to life by Saint Beuno, the figure for God in the fable. He then offers her some authoritative instructions that he expects her to carry out to the letter: 'I must go elsewhere, to the place where God has appointed that I am to end my days. I have a request to make to you, which is, that you will send me

<sup>457</sup> Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 1165-6

<sup>458</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 19.

<sup>459</sup> Sioned Davies (trans.), *The Mabinogion*, 'The Lady of the Well', 119-120.

every year a cloak made by your own hands.<sup>460</sup> If the words sound like King Arthur's dying words to Sir Bedivere ('I am going a long way...') before he is conveyed into the 'lake under the earth', this is surely not a coincidence.<sup>461</sup> Beuno is also going away into the 'bosom of Abraham' which sixteenth-century Welsh poets considered to be 'Beuno's place' in much the same way that Geoffrey of Monmouth seems to have considered it 'Arthur's resting place'.<sup>462</sup> It is in the hollow earth, a hidden place that God appointed for his saints, but Beuno is confident that a coat woven by Winefride could reach him even there. This is the way that the fable intimates that the well of Saint Winefride leads straight to the 'stagnum sub terra' or lake beneath the earth, mentioned by Geoffrey of Monmouth. All Saint Winefride has to do is put the cloak on a particular stone in the middle of the river on the Christianised Midsummer vigil of Saint John the Baptist and it will find its way to him.<sup>463</sup> Like Thomas Lodge's god, Beuno is identified as a character 'for whom the nymphs a mossy coat did frame.'<sup>464</sup> The fable of Saint Winefride ended with Beuno going away into the hollow earth but Lodge's 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis' begins with his god emerging 'from forth the channel' wearing the coat that has been woven by saintly nymphs out of moss, the iconic relic of Saint Winefride.<sup>465</sup>

Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* also imagines 'moss' on the grave of a father, which may allude to the story of a mossy cloak set on a stone as a kind of prayer or message that would be received in the realm of the saints. At a time when prayers for the dead were forbidden and traditional funeral rites were neglected, the fable of Saint Winefride's mossy-cloak reaching God merely by being placed on cold stone could bring comfort. In medieval tradition, Saint Winefride lying under Beuno's cloak recalled Christ in the tomb, and so a 'mossy coat' on a father's grave could make amends for a lack of 'monument.'<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 20.

<sup>461</sup> Tennyson, *Morte D'Arthur*, 256. Cf. Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, Bk 21 Ch. 5. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Kings of Britain*, 6.108.569.

<sup>462</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 20, 81; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Kings of Britain*, 9.179.80 cf. Tertullian, *De Anima*, 7, 55.

<sup>463</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 20; The feast of John the Baptist is a time associated with beheadings because it is reputedly when the native British plant Saint John's Wort 'beheads' itself.

<sup>464</sup> Lodge, *Scyllae's Metamorphosis*, 11.

<sup>465</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.228.

<sup>466</sup> Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.227; Tudor Aled, 'Stori Genfrwy a'r Ffynnon' quoted in Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 76; Lodge, 'Scyllae's Metamorphosis', 11.

The final mention of cloak in the fable is that ‘wherever Beuno wore it the rain never wetted him, nor the wind moved his hair.’<sup>467</sup> This suggests the lines of Shakespeare’s ‘Venus and Adonis’ which describe how ‘the wind would [once] blow [Adonis’ hairs] and play with his locks’ but now he has gone where ‘nor sun, nor wind will never strive to kiss you.’<sup>468</sup> The cloak becomes a metaphor for a world ‘where never serpent hisses’ that ‘feel[s]...not the penalty of Adam’ or any kind of ‘dying Fall.’<sup>469</sup>

Finally, Shakespeare’s poem inherits a poetic tradition in which the ‘honey secrets’ of Nature are understood to confer honied speech.<sup>470</sup> There are, of course, strong biblical resonances to milk and honey (e.g. Exodus 3:17), but the two were also ‘regarded as a sacred elixir in Celtic lands in pre-Christian times’.<sup>471</sup> The red-stained mouth of Saint Winefride was said to yield speech ‘sweeter than honey and purer than milk’, just as the ‘ruby-coloured portal’ of Adonis’ was said to yield ‘honey passage’ to his speech.<sup>472</sup> In setting out to dazzle by storied allegory and animated rhetoric, Shakespeare’s fabulous verse narrative itself provides proof of the grace and eloquence that such ‘Castalian waters’ as Saint Winefride’s can bestow.<sup>473</sup> To conclude, the poetic tradition can be seen to share themes and images relating to the moss and algae, to their place within indigenous cult and cosmology and to the legend of Saint Winefride that gave them their significance.

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<sup>467</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 20.

<sup>468</sup> Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 1082, 1089-90. Cf. Tennyson, *Morte D’Arthur*, 260-1.

<sup>469</sup> Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’, 17; Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 2.1.5; Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 1.1.4.

<sup>470</sup> Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 16.

<sup>471</sup> See Francis Jones, *Holy Wells*, 37.

<sup>472</sup> Pritchard, *St Winefride*, 20, 26; Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 451-2.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, epigram.

## Conclusion

To conclude, this study has reaffirmed that plants are present in Shakespeare's work to an extraordinary degree. It is difficult to explain away this aspect of his work as merely aesthetic or decorative, and theories that the plants fulfil some existential or 'timeless' poetic function also leave much unexplained. The critical consensus is that Shakespeare's plants are not only meaningful but symbolic. However, it is impossible to recover the meaning of Shakespeare's botanic symbolism unless it is located within its original context of the reformation. This is because, as Leah Knight has shown, plants in the period were inextricably tied up with reform and counter-reform. In order to set plants against the backdrop of religious polemic, this study has drawn on literary, historical and ethnobotanic approaches.

Firstly, as regards its literary approach, this study has contributed towards what Ken Jackson and Arthur Marotti have called the 'turn to religion'. It has been inspired by Alison Shell's research revealing how apparently harmless subjects, like plants and fairies, can get swept up in the religious debate about what constitutes 'idolatry.' It has also been inspired by Patricia Parker's

attention to wordplay, which can throw up serious issues regarding Christian attitudes to pagan material, theatre and nature in the period.

Secondly, as regards its historical approach, this study has been influenced by revisionist histories of the reformation. The Protestantised view that Catholicism in the period was either a vanishing memory or a terrorist threat from an exiled minority is looking increasingly old-fashioned. Revisionist historians are currently discovering a surprising continuity in non-orthodox religion in the period, and Shakespeare's oppositional forms and modes imply that a common thread runs through pre-reformation and counter-reformation material. He argues for a truth that can encompass the plant symbolism painted on the walls of medieval guilds and an indigenous plant symbolism in the British landscape corresponding to that discovered by Jesuits in the New World. A voice emerges that is defiantly Catholic and British and negotiates the competing temporalities which Philip Schwyzer has identified as a feature of post-reformation collective memory.

Thirdly, this study has drawn on ethnobotany to account for the culture of belief in the period. Since both the emblem and fable were evoked in post-reformation debate, ethnobotany can bring insight into the function of symbol and myth in indigenous societies. The ethnobotanic approach has helped challenge the assumption that Shakespeare ascribed to what E.M.W. Tillyard once called 'The Elizabethan World Picture', comprising merely the neo-Platonic Great Chain of Being. In so doing it has provided support for Kristen Poole's research into competing cosmologies in the Elizabethan age. Similarly, it has brought insight into indigenous plant-naming and taxonomies that seems enormously relevant to a period when, as Leah Knight demonstrates, old names were being dislodged and new classifications invented. Almost no-one today could identify with the zealous decisions of the individuals who suppressed these folk names, but everyone can take pleasure in rediscovering them and passing them on.

This study has demonstrated that, at a time when reformers were undermining ideas concerning the immanence of the divine in the natural world, Shakespeare remained loyal to a pre-reformation cosmology. Plants take on an importance in his work, because they have the status of evidence. His writings acknowledge that God and the saints have left imperishable traces on the face

of nature, which could continue to unsettle Protestants who believed in a God who was supremely celestial and relatively absent.

Information regarding supernatural and worshipful plants was being suppressed by orthodox herbalists in the period but is promoted in Shakespeare's counter-herbal discourse. This study has shown that, since Shakespeare inherited a version of Christianity which was still recognisably a fertility religion, his plant lore is often obscene. However, it is important not to be squeamish or puritan when encountering cuckoo spit, moulds from heaven, virgin bell-garlands, thorn-pricked breasts, roots like a Moor's testicles, plants stained by female bodies, saints with green hair. Shakespeare highlighted, in a visceral, bodily way, the ingrained taboos on which his society was built, insinuating that they were natural, rather than just a product of generations of British Catholicism. In this way, he found an emotive fault-line between opposed religious stances and pressed on it, driving home the differences.

As the Protestants devised emblems that could be pinned like butterflies in the pages of a book, Shakespeare and Henry Hawkins favoured emblems that were not only alive in the world but were perhaps not manmade at all. This aspect of the study highlights the importance of overcoming the unconscious bias of academia towards texts, since the Book of Nature was associated with oral tradition.

Hawkins seems to argue for the truth of Catholic symbols by using the Protestant form of the emblem book. However, Shakespeare makes no such compromises, drawing on the Catholic mode of fable that had been used for 'complaint' (i.e. debate) even before the reformation. This study has revealed that fable was also a controversial mode for other reasons. Fabulous forms associated with Musaeus and Ovid provided evidence that pagans had been able to access certain Christian truths which the universe had been muttering since the dawn of time. By acknowledging the revelatory tenor of these pagan fables, Shakespeare, Lodge and Marlowe laid claim to divine inspiration in their own fabulous verse narratives.

This study has shown that the fabulous quality of Shakespeare's plants is often linked to a moral significance. This is in keeping with the pre-reformation moralisations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that circulated under the name of Thomas Walleys. Critics today have to be prepared to encounter spiritual allegory persisting into Renaissance Ovidianism, where they might prefer to find

secular and literal interpretations of the myths. The presence of allegory means that Shakespeare studies might start seeing Christ-figures where it wanted to see lovers, sectarianism where it wanted the universal or global, and monkishness where it wanted a mind pregnant with modernity (or even with the future).

The study has demonstrated that Shakespeare and other writers incorporated botanic relics from a Welsh shrine into their fabulous verse narratives. The confidence of Shakespeare that the fables of Ovidian characters and the fables of Celtic saints have a place in the landscape of the British Isles should be shared by people today. There is no reason that anyone should feel that pagan or Catholic fable that lingers in the landscape is not for them, or that its meaning is irrecoverable or irrelevant today to all but a select few.

Shakespeare's plants are oppositional and bristling with importunate truths. They bear witness—like martyrs—to the presence of the sacred in the thorny world of botanic creation. In Shakespeare's work, the sacred does not remain tidily separate in its place; it can take over. It does not exist shut up in the bible but out in the universe, in the uncanny morphology of flowers that seems to anticipate human forms and in the more florid aspects of the human anatomy. Once it is granted that a plant can be obscenely human, it opens the door to the frightening notion that the human body can be commandeered by the sacred. In other words, Shakespeare recognises that to be created in God's image is to see that image everywhere, not merely in the state-endorsed pages of scripture.





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