

**Moveable Text: Mutability, Monumentality, and the  
Representation of Motion in British Renaissance Literature**

**Meredith Jane Donaldson  
Department of English  
McGill University, Montreal  
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## Table of Contents

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Dedication  | ii      |
| Abstract  | iii     |
| Résumé  | v       |
| Acknowledgements  | vii     |
| List of Figures   | ix      |
| <br><i>General Introduction</i>   | <br>1   |
| <br><i>Part I: The Motion of Objects</i>  |         |
| Introduction  | 24      |
| Chapter 1: A History of Ekphrasis   | 33      |
| Chapter 2: Spenser's Metamorphic Ekphrases  | 70      |
| <br><i>Part II: Plotting a Course: Narrative and Wayfinding</i>                           |         |
| Introduction  | 110     |
| Chapter 3: The Experience of Motion<br>in Renaissance Cartography and Chorography         | 119     |
| Chapter 4: Spenser's Cartographic Ambiguity   | 193     |
| <br><i>Part III: The Motion of Vicissitude and Patterns of Change</i>                     |         |
| Introduction  | 235     |
| Chapter 5: "Omnium rerum vicissitudo est":<br>Mobility and Commonplaces                   | 241     |
| Chapter 6: John Milton and the Poetics of "Grateful Vicissitude"                          | 273     |
| <br><i>Conclusion: "Oft greatest comfort growes by grievous things": Rivers and Ruins</i> | <br>326 |
| <br><i>Bibliography</i>   | <br>332 |

**For David**

**I give you my hand**

### Abstract

The representation of movement and change in English Renaissance literature was a site of negotiation between conflicting views of the value and efficacy of motion. Renaissance poets made motion visible by referring to other arts, discourses, practices, and disciplines of study where motion was either highly relevant or a topic of debate. Such visibility reveals the fraught nature of motion for Renaissance minds: in the epics of Spenser and Milton, objects move that should be motionless or are described as static when they should be mobile. Such unexpected reversals are appropriate for a period when the whole status and value of motion and stillness was in question. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, motion was seen concurrently as a force of mutability, bringing eventual ruin to all human monuments, as a force of progress, improving all things, and as a force of equilibrium, maintaining a continual cycle of decay and renewal. Motion gave Renaissance poets, including Edmund Spenser and John Milton, a subject not only to think about, but to think with, as motion provided a unifying framework for disparate ideas.

The three parts of the dissertation, each consisting of two chapters, consider motion in increasingly larger dimensions of space and human experience. Part I explores the puzzling frequency with which static artwork in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* appears to move. Chapter One argues that motion was a chief feature of the classical rhetorical practice of "ekphrasis" (meaning "description"), and as Renaissance poets adapted ancient forms for English verse, they incorporated motion as an essential element of description. Yet they also

isolated verbal descriptions of visual art (the modern definition of “ekphrasis”) as a separate poetic mode. Chapter Two applies the distinctly Renaissance practice of ekphrasis outlined in the previous chapter to Spenser’s poetry, and argues that the ability of ekphrasis to accommodate the tension between flux and fixity present in stories of metamorphosis offers a possible explanation for the centrality of Ovidian episodes as subjects for Spenser’s ekphrases. Part II considers the relationship between plotting space and plotting narratives during the Renaissance. Chapter Three argues that, on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century maps, dynamic, narrative features and a lack of roads contributed to an experience of motion, but did little to facilitate actual travel. Chapter Four explores how the narrative features and lack of roads may explain certain discontinuities present in Spenser’s description of travel. Part III argues that Milton’s image of “grateful vicissitude” (*PL* 6.8) responds to the contemporary debate over universal decay (Chapter Five), and indicates a larger poetics of motion which Milton developed throughout his career (Chapter Six).

## Résumé

La représentation du mouvement et du changement dans les œuvres littéraires anglaises de la Renaissance constitue une négociation entre les opinions divergentes sur la valeur et l'efficacité du mouvement. Les poètes de la Renaissance illustrent le mouvement par l'entremise d'autres arts, discours, pratiques et disciplines, où il était soit hautement pertinent soit matière à débat. Sa visibilité révèle la nature riche de sens du mouvement aux yeux des littéraires de la Renaissance: dans les épopées de Spenser et Milton, des objets censés être immobiles se meuvent, ou sont qualifiés de statiques alors qu'ils sont mobiles. De telles inversions sont tout à fait pertinentes à une période qui remet en question l'état et la valeur du mouvement et de l'immobilité. Le mouvement aux seizième et dix-septième siècles est perçu simultanément comme une force de mutabilité qui, tôt au tard, entraînera la ruine de toutes les réalisations humaines, comme force du progrès qui perfectionne tout ce qu'il touche, et comme force d'équilibre qui maintient un cycle perpétuel de dégradation et de renouveau. Le mouvement fournit aux poètes de la Renaissance, dont Edmund Spenser et John Milton, matière à réflexion aussi bien que matière à action, car le mouvement leur offre un cadre unificateur leur permettant de concilier des idées divergentes.

Les trois parties de la thèse, se composant chacune de deux chapitres, étudient le mouvement dans le contexte de plus en plus large de l'espace et de l'expérience humaine. La première partie se penche sur la fréquence curieuse selon laquelle les œuvres d'art statiques dans *Faerie Queene* de Spenser paraissent se mouvoir. Le premier chapitre soutient que le mouvement est une caractéristique

essentielle de la pratique rhétorique classique nommée « ekphrasis » (au sens de « description animée ») et qu'à mesure que les poètes de la Renaissance adaptent d'anciennes formes littéraires aux vers anglais, ils incorporent le mouvement à leurs ouvrages, à titre d'élément essentiel de la description. Ils utilisent aussi, toutefois, des descriptions verbales des œuvres d'art visuelles (la définition moderne du terme « ekphrasis ») comme mode poétique distinct. Le deuxième chapitre applique la pratique singulière d'ekphrasis de la Renaissance, énoncée dans le chapitre précédent, à la poésie de Spenser et soutient que la capacité de l'ekphrasis à concilier la tension entre le flux et la fixité retrouvés dans les récits de métamorphose offre une explication possible du rôle central joué par les épisodes ovidiens qui inspirent les ekphraseis de Spenser. La deuxième partie se penche sur la relation entre le développement de l'espace et des intrigues pendant la Renaissance. Le troisième chapitre fait valoir que les éléments dynamiques et narratifs des cartes géographiques des seizième et dix-septième siècles, ainsi que l'absence de tracés de routes, concourent à une expérience du mouvement, mais comportent très peu d'éléments facilitant les voyages réels. Le quatrième chapitre propose que les caractéristiques narratives et le manque de tracés de routes expliquent éventuellement certaines discontinuités retrouvées dans les descriptions de voyages de Spenser. La troisième partie soutient que l'image de Milton de « vicissitude agréable » (*PL* 6.8) fait écho au débat contemporain sur la dégradation universelle (cinquième chapitre) et laisse entrevoir la poésie plus vaste du mouvement que Milton a perfectionné tout au long de sa carrière (sixième chapitre).

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### List of Figures

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1. Christopher Saxton. Map of Essex from <i>Atlas</i> (1580)<br>By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library   | 135 |
| Figure 2. Detail from Saxton's map of Essex. <i>Atlas</i> (1580)   | 142 |
| Figure 3. Detail from Saxton's map of Essex. <i>Atlas</i> (1580)   | 142 |
| Figure 4. John Norden. Map of Hartfordshire from <i>Speculi Britanniae<br/>Pars: The Description of Hartfordshire</i> (1598). By Permission of the<br>Folger Shakespeare Library | 147 |
| Figure 5. Detail from Norden's map of Hartfordshire (1598)   | 152 |
| Figure 6. <i>Civitas Londini</i> , engraving by John Norden, 1600, De la Gardie<br>collection nr.89, National library of Sweden. Used by permission                              | 160 |
| Figure 7. Detail from Norden's <i>Civitas Londini</i> (1600).  | 164 |
| Figure 8. Detail from Norden's <i>Civitas Londini</i> (1600).  | 164 |
| Figure 9. John Speed. Map of Hartfordshire from his <i>Theatre of the Empire<br/>of Great Britain</i> (1616). By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare<br>Library                 | 178 |
| Figure 10. John Ogilby. Map of London to Holy-head from <i>Britannia</i> (1675).<br>By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library  | 183 |
| Figure 11. Frontispiece to Ogilby's <i>Britannia</i> (1675)  | 187 |
| Figure 12. Christopher Saxton. Map of Hartfordshire from <i>Atlas</i> (1580).<br>By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library   | 226 |
| Figure 13. Detail of St. Albans from Saxton's Hartfordshire map (1580)   | 227 |
| Figure 14. Detail of Verlame from Norden's Hartfordshire map (1598)  | 227 |
| Figure 15. "Verolanium" sketch and cartouche from Speed's <i>Theatre</i> (1616)  | 227 |
| Figure 16. Detail of St. Albans from Ogilby's <i>Britannia</i> (1675)  | 229 |

### **General Introduction**

The spatial discontinuities of the opening scene of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* inspired this project. The familiar "gentle knight" is "pricking on the plaine," accompanied by "a louely Laide" riding "Upon a lowly Asse" (I.i.1.1; 4.1-2).<sup>1</sup> Although the account pauses long enough for a description of their attributes – Redcrosse a novice knight in well used armour, Una fair but downcast in her mourning clothes – this episode describes travel, questing, and moving together through the landscape of Faeryland. However, two details complicate this straightforward reading: Una sits so "heauie [. . .] upon her palfrey slow" that she is able both to lead a "milkewhite lambe" with a leash and to be followed from afar by a dwarf, "wearied with the bearing of her bag" (I.i.4.9; 6.1-3). How can such an ensemble travel together throughout the opening canto, as we are told they do? We can visualize this scene only as a motionless tableau, but once the flowing element of time is added, the knight's steed will outpace the lamb and dwarf, and this cohesive group should immediately disengage as they move at their varying speeds. We know that these companions somehow "past" from the "plaine" to the "shadie groue" (I.i.6.4, 1.1, 7.2), yet Spenser elides the description of their travel, interrupting this unfeasible journey with its completion. Faced with the impossibility of continuous motion, readers imagine this scene instead as both moving and still, a progression of static images.

This scene has proved problematic to generations of Spenser's readers.

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations from *The Faerie Queene* are taken from A. C. Hamilton's Longman edition (2001). Unless otherwise noted, quotations from the shorter poems are from *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*.

John Upton, in his 1758 edition of *The Faerie Queene*, expressed concern for the “no small inaccuracies” of the scene, and asked, “Shall we apologize for our poet as for painters, who usually draw their knights in full career, notwithstanding any subsequent improprieties?” (Spenser, *Works* 1.176). Upton’s recourse to similar “improprieties” in visual art includes him in a long tradition of reading Spenser as the “painter of the poets.”<sup>2</sup> For Upton, the solution lay in unifying the various motions by interpreting ‘pricking’ as describing control over the horse rather than the speed of riding: “‘pricking on the plaine’ means here that the knight’s spurring his horse to bring him to order, to teach him proudly to pace on the plain” (Spenser, *Works* 1.176). Others have suggested an allegorical reading of speed in Spenser’s epic, where a knight’s horse, like Orlando’s in Ariosto’s epic, represents the passions.<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Gottfried calls Spenser’s opening “one of the most telling of his lapses,” and suggested that the only

explanation lies in the moral meaning of the figures: Red Cross spurs forward because he represents Religious Zeal, Una rides slowly as becomes the quality of Truth, and the dwarf must lag behind, being the symbol of Prudence. In general, we may say, Spenser subordinates the pictorial element to the moral allegory. (210)

D. K. Smith, following Gottfried, argues that “the visual impossibility of the scene” indicates that “we are necessarily immersed [. . .] in the allegory of the poem” (85n34). Noting the “visual consternation” of the opening scene, Judith

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<sup>2</sup> The phrase is from Leigh Hunt (72), who matched passages and themes from *The Faerie Queene* to particular painters (77-96).

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g. entries for “temperance” and “psychomachia” in *The Spenser Encyclopedia* (hereafter called *SE*).

Anderson proposes that Spenser's desire to evoke the Chaucerian "association of sexual appetite and desire with nature's pricking" trumps any commitment to realism ("A Gentle Knight" 167-68). John Bender suggests that such "discontinuities are familiar to most readers of *The Faerie Queene*" (109). With the invention of film, the discontinuity of Spenser's opening scene has become yet more jarring to readers shaped by cinematic expectations. Humphrey Tonkin, for example, would ask his Spenser seminar students "to imagine the difficulties that a film director would have in shooting the opening sequence of the poem, with the ass running hard to keep up with the horse, and the dwarf's legs comically spinning behind."<sup>4</sup> Contrary to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's distinction, Spenser's opening scene seems to present more an art of space than an art of time.<sup>5</sup> What troubles readers is that Spenser's opening scene, by being both slow and fast, defies expectations which have been shaped not only by Lessing's division between the spatial and temporal arts, but by common-sense experience of a world in which this scene cannot materialize.

Spenser's epic contains many other representations of motion that are similarly ambiguous, discontinuous, incongruous, and transgressive. Sometimes it is the absence of motion itself that is unexpected. Objects move that should be

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<sup>4</sup> My thanks to Robert Stillman for sharing this anecdote over the Spenser-Sidney listserv, 25 May 2005, and for granting me permission to quote it here.

<sup>5</sup> Lessing writes, "in its imitations painting uses completely different means or signs than does poetry, namely figures and colors in space rather than articulated sounds in time, and if these signs must indisputably bear a suitable relation to the thing signified, then signs existing in space can express only objects whose wholes or parts coexist, while signs that follow one another can express only objects whose wholes or parts are consecutive" (78).

motionless, or remain static when they should be mobile. Characters in one location appear suddenly in another, with little or no indication of time or effort needed for the journey between. Even Spenser's two great models of cosmic motion seem contradictory: the Garden of Adonis is "eterne in mutability, / And by succession made perpetuall" (III.vi.47.5-6), while the epic's final vision is the "stedfast rest of all things firmly stayd / Vpon the pillours of Eternity, / That is contrayr to *Mutabilitie*" (VII.viii.2.3-5).<sup>6</sup>

Not only can such surprising literary depictions of motion elucidate the conceptualization of movement and stasis during the Renaissance, but such passages point to an implicit poetics of motion, with distinct techniques, assumptions, conventions, and cultural values relevant to its specifically Renaissance context. Alastair Fowler argues that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature and art display a "distinctly Renaissance picturing of the world," and, although Fowler does not discuss motion specifically, anomalous representations of motion contribute to such distinctiveness (*Renaissance Realism* v). I read incongruities in these poetic depictions not as "lapses," but rather as thoughtful, deliberate reflections on the creative leaps – and limitations – inherent in translating motion into verbal art.

Representations of motion in Renaissance poetry, particularly in epic, make motion visible by drawing on other arts, discourses, practices, and disciplines of study where motion was either highly relevant or a topic of debate.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Quinones 288.

<sup>7</sup> My argument that Renaissance writers turn to other arts and practices in order

Often, these other fields, such as cartography, were themselves in flux, as practitioners experimented with forms and conventions. More recent readers often inadvertently overlook earlier ways of seeing and writing, so that they judge Renaissance texts by expectations which are anachronistic. For example, as I will argue in Part II, recent cartographical approaches to Spenser's representation of space in *The Faerie Queene* often seek to assess Spenser's literacy and interest in cartography by determining whether or not his characters are equipped with maps for wayfinding. However, as some historians of cartography have maintained, using maps for navigating land journeys arose at least a century after Spenser. The representation of movement and change in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poetry reveals past values, assumptions, and ideas about motion itself.

The literary representations of motion from the Renaissance that jar later readers are frequently those which interact with other fields, and thus with those other practices and conventions. An alertness to apparent incongruity, then, can reveal such broadened poetic explorations of motion. To investigate that territory of expressions, this three-part dissertation progresses through increasingly larger dimensions of space and levels of human experience. I begin with poetic descriptions of art objects, now commonly called the technique of "ekphrasis," and consider why Renaissance literature frequently depicts visual art in motion,

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to make motion visible is indebted to Rayna Kalas's aim in *Frame, Glass, Verse: The Technology of Poetic Invention in the English Renaissance* to study "poetry's ability to make visible things that might otherwise remain unseen" (ix). She considers the pervasive use of "figures of framing and images of glass" in order to recapture a Renaissance model of poetic creation which viewed poetry as a craft, where "the crafting of language is related to the crafting of things" (ix, xvi).

with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* serving most frequently as the subject. Next, I compare the inclusion of dynamic and temporal features in British Renaissance maps with the representations of travel and navigable terrain in *The Faerie Queene*, in order to evaluate the potential that maps and chorographies held for Renaissance readers as models for narrative form and motion through space and time.<sup>8</sup> Finally, I turn to motion in the representation of the cosmos and in patterns of time. I reconsider John Milton's image of "grateful vicissitude" in *Paradise Lost* by tracing the currency of the term "vicissitude" within the debate over the value and efficacy of motion itself. This dissertation appropriately ends with Milton because he takes up the central tension between motion and stasis found in Spenser's poetry, transforming it into a structural feature of the created universe in *Paradise Lost*. "Grateful vicissitude" is Milton's answer to the troubling motion of

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<sup>8</sup> The basic definition of "chorography" is "[t]he art or practice of describing, or of delineating on a map or chart, particular regions, or districts" (*OED* 1). "Chorography," as regional description, is often contrasted to "geography" (i.e., "the whole earth, and all the places contained therein") and "cosmography" (i.e., "the whole world, that is to say, of heaven and earth") (definitions from Blundeville 134). Peter Apian presented the contrast of geography to chorography as the contrast of a whole human head to an eye or an ear (see Bernard Klein, *Maps* 26-28). This distinction came from Ptolemy's *Geographia*, although Renaissance chorography was also influenced by Strabo's model of "descriptive geography" (William Camden, for instance, was called "the British Strabo" by his continental correspondents [Stan Mendyk 49]). Lesley Cormack describes the "three main divisions [. . .] in the study of geography" as "mathematical geography" (which includes the practical art of cartography), "descriptive geography," and "chorography," although, as we will see in Part II, chorographies did include the other two types of geographical study (*Charting* 37-38). Chorography also included interest in history, antiquities, local flora and fauna, genealogy, and heraldry. On chorography, see Cormack, *Charting* 37-9, 163-202; Mendyk (esp. 3-38); Klein, *Maps* 26-8, 137-48; Andrew McRae, *God Speed* 231-61; Richard Helgerson 107-47; Denis Cosgrove, "Mapping New" (esp. 65-67); Howard Marchitello 78-82; Bart van Es, *Spenser's Forms* 49-78.



mutability which underlies Spenser's representation of motion at all levels of human experience.

Each of the dissertation's three parts connects the representation of motion in Renaissance poetry to an area which itself was undergoing significant revisions, changes, and experimentation during this period: the rhetoric of describing art objects, the practices of surveying and cartography, and the debates in natural philosophy over the nature of mutability. As Renaissance poets considered classical rhetorical principles of description, they adapted particular conventions and figures to suit English verse. Yet such an adaptation was a process, as some conventions were eventually replaced, while others, like Ovidian metamorphosis, were amplified and embellished. Representations of statues and artwork that move engage with this process of reimagining and revising classical poetic forms. Similarly, new cartographic forms and practices revealed the space of Britain in a visual, tactile way that changed landscape writing. Yet in the late sixteenth century, during Spenser's writing of *The Faerie Queene*, the utility and purposes of maps remained in many ways an open question, as maps made a slow transition from representing space to navigating space. Finally, new astronomical observations and data altered the understanding of superlunary motion and change, which in turn greatly affected ideas of history and progress.

Each of these three areas – rhetoric, cartography, cosmology – intersected with the debate between the ancients and the moderns.<sup>9</sup> Renaissance thinkers struggled with questions arising from this growing engagement with classical

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<sup>9</sup> The classic account of the debate is Richard Foster Jones's *Ancients and Moderns*.

practices. Could English literature rival – or even surpass – classical models? When new scientific observations failed to confirm ancient calculations, did this indicate a triumph of modern measurement or the universal decay of all things? Does the motion of change truly indicate imperfection, as Aristotle thought, or is change necessary for progress towards perfection? Commonplace *exempla*, many involving motion and mutability, could support either side of these debates, as I argue in chapter five.

My initial conviction was that reading Spenser's opening scene with a literal attentiveness to spatiality has much to teach us about the value and meaning of motion during this period. Many of the specific examples I discuss in this dissertation demonstrate an interconnectedness between different degrees of motion: in the Renaissance, simple, everyday movements like walking were not conceptually distant from the motion of mutability. Motion and change represent adjacent strata of a single conceptual formation. Seemingly extraneous cartographical elements, such as allegorical figures, reflect broader themes of decay, permanence, progress, and change. Descriptions of moving objects – including the moving object of the traveller – reveal a fascination with the paradox of capturing motion in language. Ancient literary descriptions of artwork lost to the passage of time engendered in Renaissance artists sorrow and fear before the prospect of mutability while also allowing a renewed and triumphant sense of confidence in the power of words to create “monuments more lasting than brass” (Horace, *Odes* III.30), and this dual response had profound effects on the creation of Renaissance literature and art.

The representation of motion in Renaissance literature is an area of critical interpretation that has largely been overlooked. Perhaps this is because motion itself is a basic function of everyday life and being alive. Henri Bergson began his 1911 lectures at the University of Oxford on the “Perception of Change” with the assertion,

if one were convinced of the reality of change and if one made an effort to grasp it, everything would become simplified, philosophical difficulties, considered insurmountable, would fall away. Not only would philosophy gain by it, but our everyday life – I mean the impression things make upon us and the reaction of our intelligence, our sensibility and our will upon things – would perhaps be transformed and, as it were, transfigured. The point is that usually we look at change but we do not see it. We speak of change, but we do not think about it. (248)

Scholars in other disciplines have noted a similar lack of attention to motion. E. H. Gombrich observes that “the representation of movement has been strangely neglected” in the field of art history in that “no systematic treatment has even been attempted” (“Moment” 293). James Akerman prefaces a collection of essays on travel and navigation with his surprise that “astonishingly little scholarship has examined the historical relationship between travelers, navigation, and maps” (vii). Writing in the field of landscape architecture, Michel Conan asks, “why is there so much silence with respect to the experience of motion in books on garden and landscape design?” (1). Yet Conan’s assertion that “motion is so central an aspect of landscape design, setting it apart from sculpture, painting, or literature” (1), considerably underestimates the significance of motion for these

other arts. In the case of literature, motion is indeed central, especially in epic poems structured on questing and travel that reflect the cultural value placed on movement and stillness. Motion structures narrative, though, as Bergson observes, “we look at change but we do not see it.”<sup>10</sup>

One area where motion has received attention is the field of spatial theory, particular in studies of the everyday and the production of social space. Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* offers a triadic structure of “spatial practice,” “representations of space,” and “representational space,” which presents space as a dynamic, complex interaction of various social, political, economic, artistic, and individual vectors, all of which are subject to change (38-39). Motion and change are a definitive component of space, he argues: “physical space has no ‘reality’ without the energy that is deployed within it” (13). In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau presents a relationship between space (which is “composed of intersections of mobile elements”), motion, and narrative, asserting that “[e]very story is a travel story – a spatial practice” (117, 115). His emphasis is on space as something made or produced (“a *poiesis*,” or a kind of poetry) by everyday practices and individuals (xii).<sup>11</sup> Like Lefebvre, de Certeau argues that space is created by dynamic forces, multiplicity, regulation

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<sup>10</sup> Angus Fletcher writes, “Whatever the content of literature may be, its form, which determines the force of that content, appears to us as symbolic movement. We say stories and poems ‘move along’” (7-8).

<sup>11</sup> Rose Marie San Juan offers this helpful summary: “De Certeau argues most eloquently for the different vantage point of the street, a vantage point produced by bodies that move, intersect, collide, and in the process rework urban space in ways that can never become legible from any single viewing point” (13-14).

and subversion (in his words, “strategies” and “tactics” [xix]). Motion, particularly through an urban space, has a grammar and rhetoric all its own (100-02).<sup>12</sup> In declaring that the “present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space” (“Of Other Spaces” 22), Michel Foucault encourages critical attention to what he calls “heterotopias,” or, as Edward Soja describes them, “actually lived and socially created spatiality, concrete and abstract at the same time, the habitus of social practices” (18). In *Postmodern Geographies*, Soja calls for “the reassertion of a critical spatial perspective in contemporary social theory and analysis” (1). Both Soja and Foucault challenge the modernist emphasis of time over space, particularly in Bergson’s formulation, in which “space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic” (Soja 10, quoting Foucault). The “reassertion of a critical spatial perspective” was intended to recover the dynamic, mobile, and vital elements of space, and to return the messy, disordered, and changing elements of everyday life back into unpeopled, abstract representation of, particularly historical, spaces. In its reorganization of the dynamic elements of space, contemporary spatial theory assists my inquiry into the “experience of motion” in Renaissance cartography and literature<sup>13</sup>; however, Lefebvre, de Certeau,

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<sup>12</sup> Cynthia Wall’s “Grammar of Space” and San Juan’s *Rome: A City out of Print* both apply spatial theory (particularly Lefebvre’s and de Certeau’s) to Renaissance literature and culture.

<sup>13</sup> The phrase “experience of motion” comes from the title of Michel Conan’s collection of essays (*Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion*), but I use it in the context of cartography and chorography to refer to the inclusion of dynamic, temporal, and narrative signs, and the degree to which maps facilitate travel.

Foucault, and Soja discuss motion only insofar as it is a defining feature of space, not independently.

Notable exceptions to the elision of motion in Renaissance literary studies include Michel Jeanneret's *Perpetuum mobile: Métamorphoses des corps et des œuvres de Vinci à Montaigne*. Renaissance literature and art, he argues, was far more invested in transformation, change, metamorphosis, incompleteness, malleability, and fluidity than with order, fixity, or stability.<sup>14</sup> As evidence of “a sixteenth century swept up in change and fascinated by genesis and metamorphosis” (1), he cites the various types of change and transformation which frequently serve as the subject of Renaissance art: chaos, creation, Ovidian metamorphoses, grotesques and monstrosities, discoveries and inventions, natural disasters, weather, and history. Most of the texts Jeanneret includes in his survey were themselves, at various points, presented as unfinished or subsequently revised and enlarged.<sup>15</sup> Flexibility of a work's form reflected its fascination with change. Jeanneret's archive is mainly French and Italian from 1480-1600, and he acknowledges the necessarily selective nature of his sources, admitting he “could have included an analysis of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*” (7). However, whereas in Jeanneret's account, motion is positive, creative, generative force, so that the possibility of new forms

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<sup>14</sup> Leonard Barkan's *The Gods Made Flesh* (particularly Chapter 5: “Metamorphosis, Paganism, and the Renaissance Imagination”) also argues for the prevalence of metamorphoses in European Renaissance art and literature.

<sup>15</sup> Many of the texts I include in my dissertation were likewise left unfinished (e.g. Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Norden's *Speculum Britannia*, Norden's *Vicissitudo Rerum*, Ogilby's *Britannia*), published in installments (e.g. *The Faerie Queene*, Saxton's *Atlas*), or subsequently revised, expanded and republished (e.g. Camden's *Britannia*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*).

emerging from the ruins of time's destructive power diverted attention from the ruins themselves, I will argue that Renaissance representations of motion, are more conflicted and uneasy, just as motion could be a source of fear, anxiety, and melancholy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

P. A. Skantze's *Stillness and Motion in the Seventeenth-Century Theatre* considers the performative aspects of movement and rest. Theatre incites reactions, emotions, and silences, leading Skantze to explore how historians of the theatre can employ printed works and reception history to recover traces of past bodies in motion. Skantze, in a chapter devoted to Milton's *Comus*, notes that "Milton does not generally make an appearance in books about performance" (59). While I differently argue that it is Sabrina, rather than the Lady, who "figures an extraordinary collaboration of the aesthetic of stillness and motion present in the traditional form of the masque" (60), I adopt Skantze's emphasis on the importance of the performative aspects of motion. Indeed, I argue in Part II that the experience of motion in cartography, chorography, and actual travel is a performance of space. Moreover, I agree with her premise that "throughout history the categories of the still and the moving gain value according to the cultural weight given to the permanent, the stable and the elapsing, the ephemeral" (i). However, while Skantze considers the discourse between stillness and motion to be "always articulated by metaphors of gender" (i), my dissertation focuses on the expression of this discourse through tropes of monuments, mutability, and progress.

Alastair Fowler's *Time's Purpled Masquers: Stars and the Afterlife in Renaissance*

*English Literature* and Angus Fletcher's *Time, Space, and Motion in the Age of Shakespeare* both consider the implications of the "new astronomy" on Renaissance literature. Fowler's book links cosmic motions with Renaissance representations of immortality, while considering the changes wrought by the gradual shift from the geocentric to heliocentric cosmology. He demonstrates the pervasiveness of astronomical imagery in Renaissance literature, and indicates the shifts and developments of competing scientific models of the universe. Fletcher emphasizes that clarity regarding "stability and instability" and attention to "the problem of motion" are necessary but often overlooked in scholarship on Renaissance literature (5, 8). Accordingly, he reads Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe, Donne, Milton and others alongside the history of science. Fletcher approaches "the problem of motion" by asserting that "the most important question we will ask in the following chapters is not, 'What *things* are moving in this passage of poetry or drama?' but rather, '*What is the nature of motion itself*, when its principles animate the material things that are actually moving?'" (7). Unlike Fletcher, I am interested in what moves, because that clarifies the often unusual, discontinuous, or ambiguous representation of motion in the Renaissance, and hence how it was perceived. Like Fletcher, I refrain from offering any functional definition of space, motion, and time, since much of the material I discuss is itself wrestling with the very meaning of these shifting concepts.

The paradoxical relationship between motion and stasis has been the subject of several recent works from various disciplines. The representation of motion in Renaissance literature reveals a shared attention to both mutability and



monumentality. The discovery of ancient sculpture depicting Ovidian episodes, for example, provoked both a fascination with the flux of metamorphosis and a desire for the permanence of monumentality. Barkan's *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* accounts for the effect of such discoveries on Renaissance art and culture. Philip Schwyzer's *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature* traces the effect of similar discoveries and antiquarian interests in Renaissance poetry. David Rollison notes that motion and stasis form a "basic dyad" in early modern historiography, where "[m]ovement and mobility are seen as 'real-life activities', and settlement is conceived as a long-term 'discursive formation'" (1). What moves and what is still was not only a pressing topic for Renaissance thinkers, but is a significant question in approaching the Renaissance as a historical period.

Throughout this dissertation, motion connects seemingly disparate texts: epics, shorter poems, rhetorical treatises, letters, maps, surveying manuals, chorographies, manuscripts, treatises on history, a sermon, and an ancient city. Underlying the various strands of my argument is the assertion that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, motion, and more specifically the challenges and creative ingenuity necessary for the poetic representation of motion, became a subject of public interest and debate. I use the term "public" to denote an assemblage "of people, things, and forms of knowledge," where

forms of association [. . .] allowed people to connect with others in ways not rooted in family, rank, or vocation but rather founded in voluntary groupings built on the shared interests, tastes, commitments, and desires of individuals. (Wilson and Yachnin 1)

The question of motion's efficacy became itself a public around which natural philosophers, antiquarians, cartographers, mathematicians, and poets coalesced. Commonplaces circulated from one discipline to another, and appeared in Spenser's and Milton's epics. Epics themselves were meant to be compendia of multiple genres and forms which incorporated other practices of knowledge for subject matter, imagery, and figurative language.<sup>16</sup> Understanding motion as a topic of keen public interest and inquiry provides a means of explaining how such a wide swath of sources were implicated in the representation of motion in Renaissance literature.

Motion gave Renaissance poets such as Spenser and Milton a subject not only to think about, but to think with, as motion provided a unifying framework for disparate ideas. The public currency of the representation of motion appears most overtly in chapter 5, where I consider the image of "vicissitude" within contemporary debates in natural philosophy. The question of motion was debated using commonplaces, usually brief facts or descriptions, removed from their original context, and circulated on both sides of the debate. For example, both Louis Le Roy and Spenser cited the sun's gradual descent towards earth, yet for opposite conclusions: the latter argued for intensifying decay, the former for vicissitude as a sustaining force of the universe. In chapter 4, I argue that the ruined Roman city of Verulamium became a public image, elaborated and

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<sup>16</sup> E.g. In *Spenser's Forms of History*, van Es has shown how Spenser incorporated various forms of history writing (chronicle, chorography, antiquarianism, euhemerism, analogy, and prophecy) into *The Faerie Queene* (and other writings including the *Complaints* and *A View*).

enlivened by poets, map makers, and chorographers who were themselves fascinated by the motion of mutability. As John Shrimpton's regional history *The Antiquities of Verulam and St Albans* (ca. 1630) reveals, this publicly constructed image of Verulamium had profound effects even on its local residents. Commonplaces were public "forms of knowledge," available to anyone and easily transferred from one discipline to another, a conceptual relocation which itself constituted a form of motion. The mechanism by which ideas of motion spread was itself mobile.

Finally, attention to the "public" dimension of motion allows me to uncover the role of apparently minor and often overlooked figures like John Norden, Robert Ashley, or John Shrimpton in the transmission of ideas about the poetic value of motion. In a study of Spenser's cartographic imagination, Smith argues that Spenser saw in Saxton's atlas what the chorographer and map maker John Speed would later see as well: the potential of a spatial form in which to invest "the mythic narrative and allegorical virtues of the English past" (*Cartographic* 75). Yet Norden is also relevant here, for his unfinished *Speculum Britannia* introduced many of the dynamic, temporal, and narrative signs able to fill the white spaces of emergent cartography, and which Speed incorporated and elaborated. In translating Le Roy, Ashley was likely instrumental in introducing to England many of the commonplaces regarding motion. Like Spenser several years before him, Norden in *Vicissitudo Rerum*, reversed Le Roy's conclusion that motion was necessary for progress. Whether Spenser read Ashley, or Norden read Spenser, or they were all simply responding to similar sources and

commonplaces, the argument for the public interchange of images, assumptions, and values about motion provides us with an explanation both for the pervasiveness of these representations of motion and for how change happens over time.

Part I, “The Motion of Objects,” explores the surprising frequency with which static artwork in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* appears to move. Its first chapter, “A History of Ekphrasis,” challenges the prevailing critical trend of applying the term “ekphrasis” to descriptions of visual art in Renaissance epic without considering the classical sense of the term, which was applied to any type of description created by the rhetorical figures of *enargeia* (vividness) and by what Aristotle called *energeia* (activity). Ancient rhetoricians looked to Homer’s *Iliad*, particularly the description of Achilles’ shield, as the primary *exemplum* of ekphrasis, and the reception of Quintilian made Renaissance poets fully aware of its component parts of vividness and activity. The term “ekphrasis” was absent from Renaissance poetic theory and appeared only in editions of ancient *Progymnasmata* treatises. However, the recognition of descriptions of visual art as a distinct category for poetry, (as by Erasmus, Chapman, and others), together with the prevalence of motion in such descriptions, indicate that Renaissance poetic practice crystallized the classical definition even as it anticipated the modern one. According to Janice Hewlett Koelb, Leo Spitzer’s designation of the term “ekphrasis” to poetic descriptions of visual art,<sup>17</sup> notably John Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” was a *mistaken* analysis that “spawned a minor industry” and

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<sup>17</sup> In “The ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn,’ or Content vs. Metagrammar.”

solidified the now-modern usage of the term (2). Yet at least in practice, if not theory, this bifurcation of ekphrasis as “vivid description” and ekphrasis as “description of visual art” in fact began during the Renaissance, as poets measured the capacity of the English language for classical poetic forms and recognized the rhetorical capacity of the written word to outlast works of stone, brass, and paint.

Chapter Two, “Spenser’s Metamorphic Ekphrases,” applies the distinctly Renaissance definition of “ekphrasis” outlined in the first chapter to specific passages from Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* and his epyllion “Muiopotmos.” Building on the argument from Chapter One that Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is a literalization of Homer’s use of *enargeia* and *energeia*, this chapter suggests that the centrality of metamorphosis in Renaissance descriptions of visual art in part explains the prevalence of Ovidian art as a subject matter for Renaissance poetry. To refine a particularly Renaissance definition of ekphrasis further, this chapter concludes by arguing that the ekphrasis of that time is primarily a poetics of monument-making rather than, as Philip Hardie has proposed, a “poetics of illusion” or an “absent presence” (Hardie 173). Poets such as Spenser were fascinated by the potentiality of text as a “monument more lasting than brass,” and ekphrasis, particularly in the Renaissance context of the *paragone* between the arts, highlighted the permanence of textual description against the fragility of material art. It is at this intersection of ekphrasis and monuments where the influence of Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, that storehouse of ekphrases and ruins, is felt most strongly.

Part II, “Plotting a Course: Narrative and Wayfinding,” considers what English Renaissance maps, particularly their facilitation of motion and their encoding of mobile, dynamic, and temporal signs, can tell us about the challenge of depicting motion both spatially and temporally through poetry. Rather than reading *The Faerie Queene* in order to find clues as to the influence of contemporary maps on Spenser’s writing, this section begins with maps and their means of usage in the period, and then turns to Spenser’s epic. Chapter Three, “The Experience of Motion in Renaissance Cartography and Chorography,” examines a number of surprising features of national maps from Saxton to Ogilby – their common exclusion of roads, their use of white space, their inclusion of narrative signs – and considers to what degree these maps presented a narrativized landscape and facilitated actual motion. Early modern maps, we find, cannot be aptly understood according to twenty-first-century expectations of cartographic utility.<sup>18</sup> Chapter Four, “Spenser’s Cartographic Ambiguity,” closely attends to Spenser’s “aesthetics of motion,”<sup>19</sup> by assessing his poetic techniques

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<sup>18</sup> The recent technology of Google street-view offers an instructive point of comparison. Street-view reveals a dynamic view of space: it allows us to see individuals driving, walking, shopping, talking, arguing, exercising, and conducting many other activities ingredient to everyday life. Sites are not marked merely with signs, but rather with photographs of the place itself, presenting a heterogeneous picture of space. The experience of motion is intertwined into the still images which comprise the map itself, and with the touch of a cursor, we move along the streets, replicating the experience of motion. As I will show, this is in fact, a return to an early modern paradigm of mapping which represents quotidian activity. Google street-view puts the messy, everyday, human dimension back into the map, yet is itself a clumsy tool for wayfinding, and rather better suited for the armchair traveller.

<sup>19</sup> Borrowing Shirley Adams’ phrase from a different context.

for conveying motion. Spenser commonly elides the motion of travel into the inter-stanzaic white space of his cantos. Knights depart a location at the end of one stanza, and arrive at the beginning of the next one. Adapting Theresa Krier's notion of Spenser's white space as a "sojourn," I argue that the motion of travel takes place in Spenser's white space, allowing him to bypass the difficulties inherent in translating movement into words. His stanzaic structure represents motion in a way similar to Saxton's atlas, which shows points of origin and destination with only white space in between. Moreover, as in the mapping projects of Saxton, Norden, and Speed, Spenser emphasizes the motion of time over motion through space. Spenser distils the antiquarian impulse to preserve the past into his description of "Briton monuments" (*FQ* II.x), which finds a contrast with the destructive power of time in *The Ruines of Time*, his poem about Verulamium. This oscillation between monument and mutability, as I argue throughout the dissertation, represents an essential feature of the Renaissance representation of motion. Together with Spenser's poem, chorographies created an image of Verulamium as a symbol for mutability and monumentality, and this image's power reveals itself most strikingly in how John Shrimpton, an antiquarian writing nearly forty years after Spenser's *Complaints* volume was published, superimposes the poetic and chorographical accounts of Verulamium onto his own experience of his hometown.

Part III, "The Motion of Vicissitude and Patterns of Change," traces Milton's image of "grateful vicissitude" (*PL* 6.6-8) first within the contexts of natural philosophy (Chapter Five) and then in Milton's *Comus* and *Paradise Lost*

(Chapter 6). Chapter Five, “‘Omnium rerum vicissitudo est’: Mobility and Commonplaces,” considers the contemporaneous currency of the term “vicissitude,” particularly within the debate over universal decay, by looking at Louis Leroy’s *De La Vicissitude* (1575), its English translations by Robert Ashley (1594) and John Norden (1600), Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, Sir John Davies’ *Orchestra* (1596), Milton’s *Naturam non pati senium* (ca. 1630), and Hakewill’s *Apologie* (1635). These writers use “vicissitude” to refer to changes at all levels of the universe, from elements to planets and from temperaments to civilizations, and examples of such change become commonplaces used either to defend or refute the claim that change and motion are destructive forces, a claim central to the debate between the ancients and the moderns. Chapter Five also suggests that such commonplaces may have influenced specific sections of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, including the Garden of Adonis episode, the proem to Book Five, and the *Mutabilitie Cantos*. Chapter Six, “John Milton and the Poetics of ‘Grateful Vicissitude,’” argues that “grateful vicissitude” is a concept that Milton explores throughout his career, from *Naturam non pati senium* to *Comus* and finally to *Paradise Lost*. In the latter two works especially, Milton defines “grateful vicissitude” against its opposite, what I term restless stasis. The image of “grateful vicissitude” also reveals Milton’s own understanding of the pattern of history as one of progress and change rather than decay or cyclical return.<sup>20</sup> In *Paradise Lost* and elsewhere, Milton denies the impulse for monumentality and permanence in

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<sup>20</sup> Aschah Guibbory traces these three “shapes of history” throughout the work of several seventeenth-century poets, including Milton (1).



favour of artistic, intellectual, cultural, political, and personal forms which can change and grow.

Each of Parts I to III connects the representation of motion in English Renaissance epic to a different discipline, yet are nonetheless complementary. The history of the poetics of description and the challenges inherent in describing intangible states, such as motion, extends throughout this inquiry, so that it closely attends to the historical nuances of words such as ‘ekphrasis,’ ‘plot,’ ‘space,’ and ‘vicissitude.’<sup>21</sup> Parts I and II are both concerned with a “bringing before the eyes,” either by ekphrasis or by map-making.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, written chorographical descriptions can appear as ekphrases of cartographical images. Moreover, Ruth Webb notes that Greek rhetoricians commonly drew an “analogy between a speech and a journey in which the speaker leads the audience through space” (*Ekphrasis* 54). Also, the close reading of classical sources outlined in Part I ultimately contributed to the drive towards creating accurate descriptions of regions, nations, and the universe which are the focus of Parts II and III. Antiquity provided Renaissance writers with models of rhetoric, geography, and cosmology that invited wonder and astonishment, direction and formation, as well as points of divergence and development.

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<sup>21</sup> In this approach, I am influenced by the work of Brückner and Poole, R. A. Shoaf, and Patricia Parker.

<sup>22</sup> Variations on the phrase “Bringing before the eyes” was both the common definition for ancient ekphrasis (e.g., Webb, *Ekphrasis* 2) and frequently used in the Renaissance to praise the utility of maps (e.g. Blundeville, *Briefe Description* C4v).

## Part I The Motion of Objects

### Introduction

Representations of motion and stillness appear mutually constitutive in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Static art objects are described as if in motion: tapestries tell cinematic stories, statues speak, ivory transforms into water, monuments move, and paintings leap to life, while it is the reader who is transfixed, "astonied" by the Gorgon powers of the arts. Conversely, experiences of motion, such as Calidore's stolen vision on Mount Acidale, are conveyed through images of stillness:

All they without were raunged in a ring,  
     And daunced round; but in the midst of them  
     Three other Ladies did both daunce and sing,  
     The whilest the rest them round about did hemme,  
     And like a girlond did in compasse stemme:  
     And in the middest of those same three, was placed  
     Another Damzell, as a precious gemme,  
     Amidst a ring most richly well enchaced,  
     That with her goodly presence all the rest much graced. (VI.x.12)

A. Bartlett Giametti describes Mount Acidale as "a vision of perfect stillness and motion, symmetry and grace" (26). It is a moment of action and of movement: motion is described through the repetition of words like "round" and "daunce," as well as by the specific spatial relations established by "raunged," "ring," "midst," and "hemme." Yet it is equally a description of stillness. Spenser uses similes of static and reified "ornament[s]" to describe the motion of the dance: "a girlond," "a precious gemme, / Amidst a ring," Ariadne's bridal crown (VI.x.12-

13). Spenser's coinage of the verb "stemme," meaning "to encircle," comes from the Latin "stemma," meaning "a garlande of flowers" (VI.x.12.5*n*). Even the linking repetition of 11.9 and 12.1 turns the stanza form into a poetic garland or *corona*. The dance and its representation in Spenser's poetry is unified movement and ordered change, comparable to the perfect motion of the fixed stars around a central point (VI.x.13.6-9). The Renaissance delight in paradox, what Leonard Barkan calls "the tension of opposition and containment" (*Gods* 198), is evident in this image of simultaneous motion and stillness.

Part I argues that a paradoxical oscillation between motion and stillness is a fundamental component of Spenser's poetics. This assertion in part reassesses Harry Berger Jr.'s account of "Spenserian dynamics," where *discordia concors* is an essential irresolvability between "the moment of reconciliation" (e.g., order from chaos) and the "sustained process of control which cannot ever stop" (e.g., the generative power of the four elements in constant motion).<sup>1</sup> In Spenser's poetics, as I will argue, stillness always dissolves into motion and motion gives way to stillness in a never-ending *discordia concors*.

Spenser's frequent descriptions of visual art, which recreate material objects through words, demonstrate this paradoxical oscillation. By representing the interplay between motion and stillness, Spenser's representations of art objects create a tangible marker for motion; they are motion made visible. Rayna

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<sup>1</sup> Berger 21. Berger illustrates the "Spenserian Dynamics" with a close reading of *FQ* IV.x.32-35). His argument refutes Thomas P. Roche's assertion that the entire purpose of *discordia concors* in Spenser's poem, particularly Book IV, is to reveal "the emergence of order from chaos and of friendship from enmity" (*The Kindly Flame* 17).

Kalas, who aims in *Frame, Glass, Verse* to study “poetry’s ability to make visible things that might otherwise remain unseen” (ix), argues that,

[i]n the Renaissance, the poetic conceit distinguished itself as a thing in motion, against the pretense of eternal stasis or fixity of idea that is staged by an iconic or pictorial image. The novelty of the poetic conceit as a thing in motion and in time belonged not to the wit or ingenuity of a given writer but to the technical craft of poesy. (3)

During the Renaissance, the theory of “the technical craft of poesy” was being written alongside the poesy itself, by figures such as George Puttenham and Philip Sidney, who looked back to classical forms as they weighed the capabilities and parameters of English poetry. “The poetic conceit as a thing in motion” has precedent in the ancient epics, and the figurative language of ekphrasis is a fertile site of inquiry for both *how* Renaissance poets like Spenser represented motion in verse, and how such representations reimagined and reinterpreted the similarly dynamic elements they found in Homer, Virgil, and Ovid.

Reading the representation of objects in motion as a reimagining and reinterpretation of the poetics of classical epics provides a possible solution to the problematic terminology of “ekphrasis” for Renaissance scholarship. Since Leo Spitzer’s influential article “The ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn,’ or Content vs. Metagrammar” (1955), scholars typically use the term “ekphrasis” to refer to the “verbal representation of graphic representation,” to borrow James Heffernan’s oft-quoted definition (*Museum* 3). Any written description of art, from Homer’s Shield of Achilles episode in the *Iliad* (Book 18) to John Ashbery’s “Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror” (1975) can be termed “ekphrasis,” and some scholars have

gone as far to call it an independent “genre” or “mode” of poetry (Krieger “Ekphrastic” 107; Heffernan *Museum* 2). Yet as Ruth Webb has shown, the definition of “ekphrasis” in ancient rhetorical treatises was “a speech which leads one around, bringing the subject matter vividly before the eyes” (“*Ekphrasis* ancient and modern” 11). While ancient ekphrasis could include descriptions of painting and sculpture, it also included descriptions of places, times events, and battles.

Such a discrepancy in terminology complicates the application of the term “ekphrasis” to Renaissance poetry, particularly since such an “obscure Greek rhetorical term” was “hardly known to Renaissance scholars and the few who did know it used it in the broader ancient sense which it had in Byzantine Greek” (“*Ekphrasis* ancient and modern” 9). Some scholars, like Kelly Quinn, have acknowledged the classical definition, and use the term “guardedly,” even adopting the spelling “ecphrasis” to distinguish the modern usage from the classical (31). Quinn supports this approach by arguing that “the ecphrasis of works of visual art was conventional to epic poetry both classical and medieval, and the practice, if not the name, would have been familiar to” Renaissance poets (19). Janice Hewlett Koelb argues for a sharper distinction, suggesting that “Spitzer had not got it quite right,” and that his and others’ “misreading” obscured “the actual history of ecphrasis as it developed in antiquity and flourished until at least the Romantic period,” particularly with regards to the

“depiction of places” (2-4, 16, xii).<sup>2</sup>

The following two chapters offer a reading of descriptions of visual art in Renaissance poetry within the contexts both of the classical definition of ekphrasis, and of the distinctly Renaissance interest in art objects as subjects for poetry. When poets like Spenser included descriptions of visual art in their poetry, I will argue, they adhered to the rhetorical principles of *enargeia* (vividness) and *energeia* (vitality) which not only formed the basis of classical ekphrasis, but which were also present in classical representations of visual art.<sup>3</sup> *Enargeia* and *energeia* were poetic “ornaments” that were much confused in the poetic theory of the Renaissance (Puttenham 227), but clearer in the poetic practice. Renaissance

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<sup>2</sup> Koelb writes: “For students of the Romantic colloquy with nature, place ecphrasis as developed from antiquity onward is unquestionable of central historical importance. Nearly all recent treatments of ecphrasis have, however, lost sight of the concept as understood and practiced by writers of earlier periods” (16).

<sup>3</sup> The gloss of *enargeia* and *energeia* as “vividness” and “vitality” are Joseph Campana’s (36). Claud A. Thompson, in one of the few scholarly works which apply the distinct terms *enargeia* and *energeia* to Spenser’s poetry, prefers “vividness” and “vivacity” (“Spenser’s” 24). Thompson argues that “*enargeia* – and more importantly, the rhetorical tradition from which it emerges – [. . .] offer[s] the clearest explanation of how Spenser came to be known as ‘the painter of the poets’” (23). (Thompson, and many others involved in this debate, reverse, perhaps unknowingly, Hunt’s original praise of Spenser as the “poet of the painters”). Thompson recognizes the difference between *enargeia* and *energeia*, surveys commonplaces on rhetorical persuasion from Aristotle, Quintilian, Longius (although he overlooks the *Progymnasmata* treatises), and applies these rhetorical principles to Spenser’s descriptions of tapestries. Thompson argues that it is the Spenser’s “living voice,” through “exclamation, apostrophe, interrogation, and parenthesis” that creates the impressions of “verisimilitude” and motion, of *enargeia* and *energeia* (26-27). *Energeia* also serves as the rhetorical and etymological foundation of Stephen Greenblatt’s concept of “social energy”: “[w]e identify *energeia* only indirectly, by its effects: it is manifested in the capacity of certain verbal, aural, and visual traces to produce, shape, and organize collective physical and mental experiences” (6).

poets were familiar with the principles of classical description through Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, and with the term "ekphrasis" itself through treatises like Reinhold Lorich's sixteenth-century edition of Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata*.<sup>4</sup> Yet the rediscovery of ancient texts, ancient art, and ancient descriptions of art long since lost instilled in Renaissance poets a curiosity for the capacity of verbal arts to emulate and challenge the representative capabilities of other art forms. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, descriptions of visual art became a standard poetic practice, and could even stand alone as set pieces. In his *De Copia*, a work strongly influenced by Quintilian, Erasmus included descriptions of "paintings and other representations [. . .] and the similar expositions of tapestries, carvings, and suchlike" (581) as a separate category under "descriptions of things." George Chapman published a translation of *Achilles Shield* (1598), excerpting it from its original context, and comparing it to the episode of Aeneas's shield in Virgil's *Aeneid* (A2v). Koelb is too hasty in attributing Spitzer's revival of the term ekphrasis to a misreading or a mistake. In poetic practice, the divergence between the ancient and modern definitions of ekphrasis intensified during the Renaissance, and such duality explains the surprising representations of motion and stillness present in Renaissance poetic depictions of visual art.

Attention to the representations of motion and stillness that comprise ekphrastic descriptions in Renaissance poetry also provides a new approach to Renaissance Ovidianism, and suggests another possible answer to why the most common subjects of the visual art described in ekphrastic passages are episodes

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<sup>4</sup> See Koelb 21.

taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Ovid's stories are as much about stillness and fixity as they are about motion and change: Daphne's metamorphosis turns a fleeing, frantic girl into a solid, immobile, impenetrable laurel tree, while Aglauros, Niobe, the Propoetides, Anaxarete, and all the victims of Perseus's Gorgon shield are turned to stone.<sup>5</sup> When Spenser recreates these episodes in his own poetry through ekphrasis, his descriptions oscillate between the motion of metamorphosis and the stasis of the fixed form of both the art object and the irreversible end point of the change. It would be straightforward to argue that the patterns of motion and stillness present in ekphrastic descriptions of Ovidian episodes are there because they echo the patterns present in the source material. But the inverse is also true: the figure of ekphrasis is itself metamorphic, transforming objects into words, stillness into motion, arts of space into an art form which must unfold in time. Ekphrasis perfectly accommodates the tension between flux and fixity present in stories of metamorphosis, and so when Renaissance poets like Spenser turn to this classical convention in their own writing, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* serves as the ideal source text.

Ekphrasis, the following two chapters argue, is a poetics of monument-making, the creation in "marble verse" (Herrick, "On Himself (H-952)" 3) of a "monument more lasting than brass" (Horace, *Odes* 3.30 [*monumentum aere perennius*]). This verse from Horace's *Odes*, like *ut pictura poesis*, widened during the Renaissance into something akin to a poetic principle, which Marlin Blaine calls

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<sup>5</sup> On the element of fixity in Ovid's poetry, see, e.g., Barkan, *Gods* 90; Burrow, "Spenser" 229; Kilgour.



the “monument topos.” That monument topos directly confronts the conflict that inevitably arises between the poetic desire for immortality and the awareness of mutability. There is a tension in Ovid’s poem between monuments (both as tributes and as warnings) and motion, between permanence and mutability, between change itself and the change that ends all other change. Ovid’s “book of changes” ends with a nearly incantatory closing: “my lines / will be on people’s lips; and through all time– / if poets’ prophecies are ever right– / my name and fame are sure: I shall have life” (1.2, 15.878-79).<sup>6</sup> The “poets’ prophecies” contain within themselves the mechanism for their own fulfillment because they create an everlasting monument from the text itself. The ekphrastic nature of Ovid’s poetry reveals itself most clearly in the fact that his representations of objects – trees, statues, rocks, birds, flowers – themselves become a monument which can stake a position of constancy against the forces of mutability: the “wrath of Jove,” “fire,” “sword,” “time,” and any power able to “erode / all things” (15.871-72).<sup>7</sup> Ekphrastic descriptions of Ovidian episodes by Renaissance poets invariably participate in Ovid’s oracular impulse for monumentality. A. Bartlett Giamatti reads a dialectic between the “monument” and the “ruin” as a central pattern of

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<sup>6</sup> Quotations from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* are taken from Allen Mandelbaum’s translation which has no line numbers. All references are to the Latin text (from the Loeb edition). On Ovid’s “Now my work is done” [*Iamque opus exegi*] as an echo of Horace’s “I have raised a monument more lasting than brass [*exegi monumentum aere perennius*] see Hardie, *Ovid’s Poetics* 95-6.

<sup>7</sup> Barkan writes: “Above all, the heritage of the *Metamorphoses* is a vision of the universe under the metaphor of *things*. Metamorphosis becomes the quintessential corporeal metaphor, the belief that the nature of a thing can be read in its shape. That may explain why Ovid’s poem was such a magnet for visual artists” (*Gods* 88).

Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (69). I want to suggest that the representation of motion in Spenser's epic provides a third alternative, that of the living monument, which has precedent in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and can offer a possible solution to the tension between the monumental impulse and the reality of mutability.<sup>8</sup> It is John Milton, in his poem "On Shakespeare," who recognizes the full potential of the living monument for artistic permanence.

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<sup>8</sup> Julia Walker writes: "Spenser's Elizabeth portrait surpasses all the painted panels, however richly encoded with meanings, because through the force of epic narrative it can present a changing image, one confronted by physical and political realities and altered by those confrontations. Because the changing portrait of ink on paper is linear, it presents the identity of its central figure to the eye only gradually" (173-4). Walker's argument is behind Adam McKeown's own assertion that the poetic image created by *enargeia* "is unstable, alterable, and contingent; its function and meanings depend on the ability of the reader to engage with it, to construct and deconstruct it, and to bring competing discourses to bear on it" (44).

**Chapter 1: A History of Ekphrasis**

In the meditation which opens Book III, Canto 3 of the *Faerie Queene*, Spenser praises Love as a “God” of “Antiquity,” whose “secret might [. . .] stirredst vp th’Heroes high intents, / Which the late world admires for wondrous monuments” (III.iii.2). Yet to illustrate Love’s sway over heroes, Spenser turns most often to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, an epic which revels in the dangers and delights of change, alteration, and transformation, and which fundamentally resists the steadfastness suggested by the term “monuments.” Certainly, actual monuments from classical epics do appear in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, such as on the walls of Ate’s house, where “ragged monuments of times forepast [...] Of fatall Thebes, of Rome that raigned long, / Of Sacred Salem, and sad Ilion” are prominently displayed (IV.i.21). But how are we to reconcile Spenser’s attribution of monumentality with Ovid’s epic itself, which, by its very aim to “sing of metamorphoses,” of “bodies becoming other bodies,” seems to deny the permanence required to establish any kind of monument (1.1)? Moreover, any monument that enters Spenser’s epic, such as the “ragged monuments” on Ate’s walls, cannot be taken in at a glance, but must be expressed through words unfolding in time. When the art of poetry seeks to emulate the materiality and monumentality of other arts such as sculpture, it can only do so, paradoxically, through motion.

Descriptions of visual art in Renaissance poetry are rarely straightforward, and predominantly combine both motion and stasis. In Sidney’s *New Arcadia*,

when Kalander gives Palladius a tour of his art gallery, they see “a naked Venus of white marble, wherein the graver had used such cunning that the natural blue veins of the marble were framed in fit places to set forth the beautiful veins of her body” (74). Sidney draws attention to the nature of the material and the “cunning” of the artist, in order to point to the “literal naturalism” of the art, the illusion of lifelikeness, and the mystical harmony of art with nature (Land 6). The description of the statue then breaks into narrative: Venus nurses baby Aeneas, her “breast running” with milk, she smiles at her child. The gallery also contains many “delightful pictures” of episodes from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: Diana and Actaeon, Helena, Omphale and Iole, and Atalanta, whose posture was so lifelike, “one would have sworn the very picture had run” (74). The repetition of the verb “run” in the descriptions of Venus and of Atalanta points to the power of ekphrasis to unlock the narrative and dynamic potential within the still image. Francesco Colonna’s descriptions of art in his *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* similarly oscillate between the motion and stasis of the art object: e.g., “carved in perfect imitation of their lively turning motions and wafting garments, so that one could not reproach the noble sculptor of anything but having omitted to give voices to some, tears to others” (34). Spenser’s descriptions of art also include moving statues, transforming tapestries, and metamorphosing materials. Yet herein lies a problem: since sculptures and painting are static images, how and why do they appear so lifelike that they are in motion? Why is motion often seemingly misplaced in Renaissance descriptions of visual art?

A possible answer lies in the context of the classical definition of

ekphrasis, known to Renaissance poets, which emphasizes the rhetorical quality of the description over its referent.<sup>1</sup> Modern scholars, accustomed to identifying any description of visual art as ekphrasis, can find themselves at an impasse when discussing descriptions of visual art in Renaissance poetry, or in any pre-twentieth-century literature, mainly because it was a common but nameless literary practice. As Webb has shown in her influential taxonomy of ancient and modern ekphrasis, “the absence of the term from the type of contexts in which one would now expect to find it is striking”: ‘ekphrasis,’ meaning the verbal representation of a work of art, did not appear in rhetorical manuals, literary or art criticism until the late nineteenth century, and it took a further half-century or more until it was a common term (“*Ekphrasis*” 10; see also 15). In its ancient usage, the figure of ekphrasis was one of the required *Progymnasmata* exercises in a standard Greek rhetorical education (Webb, “*Ekphrasis* ancient and modern” 9).<sup>2</sup> As a skill of oratorical persuasion, “*ekphrasis* was an evocation of a scene, often a scene unfolding in time” and it was considered separate from the exercises of narrative and static description, although it could incorporate either one (Webb,

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<sup>1</sup> See Webb *Ekphrasis* 38. Aphthonius’s *Progymnasmata* were taught in grammar schools such as Merchant Taylors’. Of the many references to Aphthonius in Baldwin, see 2.288-93 for details on its inclusion in the curriculum; see also Fletcher, *Intellectual Development* 208. Aphthonius was available in numerous editions, with varying amounts of scholarly scolia. Even in Lorch’s Latin edition (1537, expanded 1546 with many subsequent editions), the word “ekphrasis” appears in its Greek form, and it is then translated as “descriptio” (181v). Richard Rainolde’s *A Booke Called the Foundation of Rhetorique* (1563) is an English adaption of Aphthonius. See Johnson, “Two Renaissance Textbooks.”

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Webb’s article has been immensely influential in sharpening the terminology of ekphrasis. Most critical works on *ekphrasis* written since its publication reference her work directly with regards to the importance of defining the terms used. See also Andrew Becker’s “Contest or Concert?” and McKeown.

“*Ekphrasis* ancient and modern” 14).<sup>3</sup> Certainly, visual art could serve as possible subject matter for an ekphrastic speech, but art was not the only, nor even the most common, choice.<sup>4</sup> However, there was an epic and romance convention of representing works of visual art in poetry, which Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and other Renaissance writers would have encountered in their reading of classical and medieval literature.<sup>5</sup> Descriptions of visual art in Renaissance poetry intersected the history of ekphrasis at a pivotal moment: their representation of static objects in motion encapsulated the practices of ancient ekphrasis, while the proliferation of such descriptions as set pieces included in a poet’s *copia* anticipated the modern definition.

### Modern Approaches to Ekphrasis

The modern, and more universally familiar, definition of ekphrasis first gained widespread attention with the publication of Leo Spitzer’s “The ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn,’ or Content vs. Metagrammar” (1955) and Jean Hagstrum’s *The Sister Arts* (1958). In the mid-twentieth century, ekphrasis underwent its “radical

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<sup>3</sup> See Don Fowler’s “Narrate and Describe” (66-67). Fowler’s article goes on “to challenge this Aristotelian opposition of ‘narrative’ and ‘description’” (67). See Aristotle’s *Poetics* 3.1, and for the use of narrative in oratory, see *On Rhetoric* 3.16.

<sup>4</sup> It is evident, then, that when the term was revived it had only a subcategory of its original usage left intact. However, the transformation of the one usage to the other should be clear; it is not the case, as Frank D’Angelo suggests, that each usage “had a separate development” (442).

<sup>5</sup> The most famous examples are certainly Achilles’s shield in Homer’s *Iliad*, Aeneas’s shield in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Arachne’s tapestry in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Other examples include Apuleius’s *Metamorphoses* or *The Golden Ass*; Achilles Tatius’s *Leucippe and Clitophon*; Philostratus’s *Imagines*; Chaucer’s *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Parliament of Fowls*, *The House of Fame*, and *The Knight’s Tale*. See Hagstrum 57-8, 71, 81-2.

redefinition” (Webb, “*Ekphrasis* ancient and modern” 17) as, in Spitzer’s account, a “genre, known to Occidental literature from Homer and Theocritus to the Parnassians and Rilke, of [. . .] the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art, which description implies [. . .] the reproduction, through the medium of words, of sensuously perceptible *objets d’art* (‘ut picture poesis’)” (207). Spitzer assumes his statement is “generic,” in both the senses “obvious” and “denominating a genre” (207), yet neither of these assumptions are necessarily self-evident.<sup>6</sup> When Jean Hagstrum published *The Sister Arts* three years later, his use of the term “ekphrasis” was surprisingly scarce, usually consigned to footnotes (e.g., 18n34). Working from the etymology of *ekphrasis* as *ek* [out] + *phrazo* [speaking], Hagstrum gave the term the additionally narrow definition of “that special quality of giving voice and language to the otherwise mute art object” (18).<sup>7</sup> Hagstrum, like Spitzer, noticed a “genealogical link between ekphrasis and sepulchral epigrams,” a link which Keats’s *Ode on a Grecian Urn* perfectly exemplified (Heffernan “Ekphrasis” 302). It is therefore not surprising that the newly delineated genre of ekphrasis, with Keats’s *Ode* as its touchstone, appealed most readily to New Critics, since their “interest [was] in the poem as artifact” (Webb, “*Ekphrasis* ancient and modern” 17), and they found in Keats’s “Ode” a self-conscious preoccupation with its own aesthetics that suited the new usage of the term “ekphrasis.” Murray Krieger’s work then pushed ekphrasis

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<sup>6</sup> For a critique of the modern definition of “ekphrasis,” see Koelb 1-12.

<sup>7</sup> Claus Clüver argues for a much wider definition of ekphrasis as “*the verbalization of real or fictitious texts composed in a non-verbal sign system*,” blaming “the veneration for Jean Hagstrum’s *Sister Arts* [for] still engender[ing] repetitions of his misunderstanding of *ekphrasis* as a form of *prosopopeia*” (“Quotation” 49, 36).

from a genre to a principle.<sup>8</sup>

Krieger viewed ekphrasis as a process by which a poem's representation of the plastic arts stands in for the poem itself. His essay "The Ekphrastic Principle and the Still Movement of Poetry; or *Laokoon* Revisited" argues that

the ekphrastic dimension of literature reveals itself wherever the poem takes on the 'still' elements of plastic form which we normally attribute to the spatial arts. In so doing, the poem proclaims as its own poetic its formal necessity, thus making more than just loosely metaphorical the use of spatial language to describe—and thus to arrest—its movements. (107)

According to Krieger, ekphrasis is a principle that any poem could exhibit, rather than a narrow convention of representation. The ekphrastic principle creates a static, spatial form (the poem) from the movement of the poetry. The shift from ekphrasis to an ekphrastic principle is at a far remove from the oratorical exercises of classical ekphrasis, but Krieger's argument that ekphrasis oscillates between motion and stasis provides a theoretical framework for us to account for the representation of motion and stillness in Renaissance ekphrases.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Krieger acknowledges the formative influence of Hagstrum and Spitzer in the Foreword to *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (xiv).

<sup>9</sup> Since the work of Spitzer, Hagstrum, and Krieger in the mid-twentieth century, theorists have offered further redefinitions of ekphrasis which accommodate media beyond the traditional sister arts of poetry and painting. Such "interart" or "intermedial" studies explore the entire family of arts, including sculpture, music, photography, film, temporary installation exhibits, and theatre. What sets these studies apart from the previous work by Krieger, or even by Heffernan, is that they are usually collections of case studies, essays which explore the interrelatedness of two or more particular works of art. Although the introductory or concluding chapters of these books often have titles such as "Towards a New Theory of the Arts," they are not meant to have the exhaustive applicability of Heffernan's definition. These works are interested in specific



Representations of visual artwork in Renaissance texts such as Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* alternate between motion and stasis: a still object such as a statue moves and changes so as to appear alive, while living spectators are frozen in a posture of astonished observation. Like Krieger's theory of ekphrasis, Renaissance literature oscillates between motion and stillness, but Krieger's theory does not properly account for *where* stillness and movement are found in the Renaissance examples, nor in the classical texts they imitate. As Webb describes the account of ekphrasis by Krieger and his contemporaries, "movement was found only in the flow of language, whose subject-matter was still, objectified, making the poem itself an object of detached interpretation rather than an active stimulus to imaginative involvement" (Webb, "*Ekphrasis* ancient and modern" 17).<sup>10</sup> Krieger's approach has been similarly criticized by theorists like James Heffernan for being indistinguishable from formalism, and for "hermetically seal[ing] literature within the well-wrought urn of pure, self-

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similarities and differences rather than in sweeping generalizations. See, for example, works by the following editors and authors in the bibliography: Adams and Clark; Amy Golahny; Sabine Gross; Ann Hurley and Kate Greenspan; Ulla-Britta Laggeroth and Erik Hedling; Jeffrey Morrison and Florian Krobb; Valerie Robillard and Else Jongeneel; Mack Smith; Peter Wagner. Moreover, since at least the 1970s, there has been an ongoing collaborative discussion on the relationship between literature and the other arts. This has opened up a huge (and very active) forum for interdisciplinary work. This forum includes new academic journals (e.g. *Word & Image*, which started in 1985), or certain issues of more general journals dedicated entirely to the topic (e.g. *New Literary History* 3.3 [1972]), or published proceedings from conferences (e.g. see Mark Lussier and S. K. Heninger in the bibliography).

<sup>10</sup> See also Rapaport 158. Rapaport's article is a critique of Krieger's theory from the perspective of phenomenology and psychoanalysis using the ekphrases encountered by Britomart as examples.

enclosed spatiality” (“Ekphrasis” 298-9).<sup>11</sup> “Objectified,” “self-enclosed,” “sealed,” “detached”: such adjectives do not account for the lively transaction between artefact and observer that occurs in *Hypnerotomachia* or *The Faerie Queene* when there is a description of visual art. The presence of other art forms in Renaissance poetry is ambiguous, fluctuant, fragmentary, and unstable, yet such presence creates “site[s] of interpretive possibility” (McKeown 59) and the chance for “imaginative involvement” (Webb, “*Ekphrasis* ancient and modern” 17). Moreover, the quality of liveliness present in the pervasive oscillation between motion and stasis in Renaissance poetry, and in descriptions of visual art in particular, correspond more closely to the classical practice of ekphrasis taught in rhetorical treatises, most often citing examples from Homer’s epics.

### **Homer’s Shield of Achilles**

Homer’s description of the Shield of Achilles initiates the ancient, as well as the modern, usage of the term “ekphrasis.” Those modern accounts of ekphrasis which view it as a genre or a mode cite the Shield of Achilles as the foundational example.<sup>12</sup> With regard to the ancient definition of ekphrasis, passages from Homer’s epics appear in the *Progymnasmata* texts by Theon, Ps.-Hermogenes, and Aphthonius to illustrate vividness of language, or *enargeia*, which, as Webb has shown, “is at the heart of *ekphrasis*” (“*Ekphrasis* ancient and

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<sup>11</sup> Heffernan prefers to see ekphrasis as a “mode.” His theory of ekphrasis requires that “the definition must be sharp enough to identify a distinguishable body of literature and yet also elastic enough to reach from classicism to postmodernism” (*Museum* 3).

<sup>12</sup> E.g., Heffernan, *Museum*.

modern” 13).<sup>13</sup> Theon’s first-century *Progymnasmata*, which refers to passages from Homer and Thucydides most frequently as examples of this figure, cites the making of the Shield of Achilles as an example of “ekphraseis of the manner (*tropos*)” in which objects “were prepared” (Webb, *Ekphrasis* 197). Theon does not include the shield in his list of subjects for ekphrasis because it is a work of art, but because it describes a process: its *enargeia*, or vividness, appears in the process of describing something wrought. As Webb argues, “Theon’s classification system [. . .] is a useful reminder that categories like ‘work of art’ are neither universal nor immutable” (Webb, “*Ekphrasis* ancient and modern” 11). The modern strand of ekphrasis emphasizes a feature of Achilles’ shield that is not even recognized by the ancient strand, yet each strand identifies the shield as the earliest example of ekphrasis. Achilles’s shield, therefore, is ekphrastic, both in the ancient sense of a description of a process which appears lively before the audience’s eyes, and in the narrower, modern sense of a verbal description of visual art.

The Shield of Achilles does not appear in *The Iliad* fully formed. Instead, the act of reading Homer’s description of the divine armour mimics the processes inherent in the shield’s forging. The reader’s eyes moving along the verses follow Hephaestus’s hands creating “a world of gorgeous immortal work” (18.564). Homer’s description of the shield is an interplay of stillness and motion. In the epic plot, the forging of the shield marks a transition from stasis to activity. Until

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<sup>13</sup> For the translation of these *Progymnasmata* treatises, see “Appendix A” in Webb’s *Ekphrasis*, 197-211 (especially 197, 200, 201 for the Homeric examples). On ekphrasis in *Progymnasmata* treatises, see also Koelb 19-42

Patroclus is killed, Achilles broods in the Greek camp, choosing the stillness of inaction and restraint as a show of strength against Agamemnon. Hephaestus's creation of the shield at Thetis's request marks Achilles' emergence into the battle, his return to motion and action. The shield description serves as what Page duBois calls a "milestone" in the epic narrative, one of the "significant junctures in the epic plot line" where a "crucial moment in Achilles' career is strongly emphasized by this digression in the poem" (6, 18).

The swift-moving narration of the Trojan war pauses to depict the forging of the shield, but it never stops completely: the ekphrastic description of the shield blends together Hephaestus's dynamic process of making the shield – firing, hammering, burning, forging – with the liveliness of the images being forged on the surface of the shield, images that form a compendium of all human activity. Through either the magic of Hephaestus's forging or the magic of poetic ekphrasis, what appears on a shield as static ornament changes into motion, life and sound. Homer's description depicts the motions of ceremony, the pulsating energy of a public dispute, the clashing tumult of a battle fought along a river bank, the quotidian rhythms of planting and harvesting, of vineyards and cattle herds, and the music and dancing of pastoral youths.

Just as the process of making the shield mimics the activities represented by the shield, so too in a type of artisanal pun, do the materials of the shield blend referent and representation. The metals Hephaestus chooses to use – bronze, tin, gold, silver – and the finishing touches of paint and oils all constitute both the materials of the shield and its subjects. Numerous examples of a blurring between

material and subject populate the surface of the shield: soldiers “wrapped in glowing bronze” (18.607, see also 554, 622), “polished stone benches” (588), the “prize” of “two bars of solid gold” (591-2), Ares and Pallas “both burnished gold, gold the attire they donned” (601-2), “silver vine-poles” (656), the ditch of “dark blue enamel” fenced with tin (657-8), the “tunics rubbed with a gloss of oil” (697), and the “golden daggers hung on silver belts” (699). Heffernan describes this duality as “subtle allusions to sculptural stasis and to the inorganic condition of the figures on the shield,” where “Homer thus reminds us that he is representing representation” (*Museum* 19). Heffernan terms this ambiguity “*representational friction*, which occurs whenever the dynamic pressure of verbal narrative meets the fixed forms of visual representation and acknowledges them as such” (*Museum* 19).<sup>14</sup> “Representational friction” is a friction between motion and stasis, where “dynamic pressure” meets “fixed forms.” The figures on the shield seem to collapse the difference between nature and art just as the forging of the shield collapses the distinction between motion and stillness.

Nevertheless, Homer also jolts his readers with the strange alchemy occasioned by a discrepancy between material and reference. “Golden daggers hung on silver belts” made from both gold and silver do not transgress the boundaries of representation, but rather compress them – gold represents, and *is*, gold. However, in the description of a team ploughing a fallow field, “the earth

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<sup>14</sup> Like Grogan, however, I too question the aptness of the term “friction” – “friction seems not a particularly accurate way of describing this imperceptibly smooth interchangeability of referent” (“So lively” 170n16) – although the emphasis on “representation” reminds us that the materials and the words used to describe them are both representational.

churned black behind them, like earth churning, / solid gold as it was – that was the wonder of Hephaestus’ work” (18.637-38). This is Heffernan’s chief example of Homer’s “representational friction” (*Museum* 18-19), but gold churned black is fundamentally different in kind from gold made gold. In the description of “grapes in gold, ripening deep purple” (655), gold takes on yet another form. Andrew Laird calls such examples “disobedient ecphrasis,” where the description “breaks free from the discipline of the imagined object and offers less opportunity for it to be consistently visualized or translated adequately into an actual work of visual art” (19).<sup>15</sup> Jane Grogan notes a tension at the heart of such “disobedient” ekphrases: while rhetorically, the figure of ekphrasis “flagrantly reveals” what it describes, “[t]he confusion between the material object, its referent and the effect of liveliness [. . .] remains, nevertheless, impossible to imagine precisely” (“So lively” 170). Perhaps the most startling example of a “disobedient” ekphrasis on Achilles’ shield is the description of the soldiers on the battlefield – fighting, wounded, and dead – as “living, breathing men” (628).<sup>16</sup> By some unexpected magic, ekphrasis can bring the dead to life.

By emphasizing that the shield incites the reaction of “wonder,” “astonishment,” and “amazement” in Achilles, Homer creates the effect of vividness through stillness, as well as through motion. The reader has access to

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<sup>15</sup> Laird, a classics scholar, applies the modern definition of ekphrasis to classical poetry, arguing that the “great benefit of considering ‘ecphrasis’ in the modern sense is that it forces us to confront both the nature of the visual artistic medium and that of the verbal medium describing it” (18).

<sup>16</sup> See Barkan 292n26, where he calls such effect a “pun” or “*Verfremdungseffekt*”; also see, Heffernan 19.

Achilles' shield on two levels: first, through Homer's ekphrastic description which presents it in motion, and second, through the reaction of Achilles (and other viewers) recorded in the epic. The rhetorical aim of ancient ekphrasis is to reproduce in the reader's mind the experience of seeing. When Achilles receives his mother's gift of armour,

the gear clashed out in all its blazoned glory.  
 A tremor ran through all the Myrmidon ranks – none dared  
 to look straight at the glare, each fighter shrank away.  
 Not Achilles. The more he gazed, the deeper his anger went,  
 his eyes flashing under his eyelids, fierce as fire –  
 exulting, holding the god's shining gifts in his hands.  
 And once he'd thrilled his heart with looking hard  
 at the armor's well-wrought beauty,  
 he turned to his mother. (19.15-23)

Homer depicts an affinity between Achilles and his armour: the “glare” of the shield reflects the “flashing” of Achilles' eyes, whose “fire,” in turn, reflects back the “fiery heat” of the shield's forging (18.550), and Achilles' actions of “gaz[ing],” “thrill[ing] his heart” and “looking hard” suggest that the “well-wrought beauty” of the shield and the “wonder of Hephaestus' work” prompt a posture of fixed astonishment in anyone who views the shield (18.638). As Hephaestus himself foretells, he will create “armor / that any man in the world of men will marvel at / through all the years to come – whoever sees its spendor!” (18.544-46). Norman Land calls this reaction to a piece of artwork an “ekphrastic response,” where viewers, although aware that an object is an artwork (as Achilles does as he hold the armour in his hands), will nevertheless be amazed at the

“lifelike representation of nature,” and assert that figures “*seem* to breathe or speak and trees *appear* to sway in the wind.” This response can reach such a pitch that the beholders’ “imagination overrides their reason” and they “may feel a certain *stupore*, or astonishment” and “lose awareness of the work’s medium and view it as if it were life itself” (180). Achilles’ reaction, and the ekphrasis of the shield which precedes it, both adhere to Land’s description of the ekphrastic response.

As Land’s description suggests, the posture of stasis in the viewer is directly linked to the vivid and metamorphic qualities of ekphrasis. Only once does the ekphrasis of Achilles’ shield refer directly to the “wonder [θαύμα] of Hephaestus’ work,” and this occurs after the description of gold churned to black soil. It is precisely the strange vividness, the metamorphic properties of the description that causes the viewers’ “imagination to override their reason.” Becker argues that the term θαύμα (“wonder”) denotes “the expressions of marvel, and amazement in ecphrases” (9): “θαύμα is a way of admiring the work precisely because it is *not* what it represents” (“Contest” 10). Motion in ekphrasis is a clue to such a discrepancy between what is described and what it represents, and, as Homer shows, the appropriate response is wonder and astonishment. This interplay between motion and stasis was precisely the aspect of Homer’s epic which shaped the ancient rhetorical practice of ekphrasis.

### **The Low of the Brazen Cow: *Enargeia*, *Energeia*, and the Ancient Definition of Ekphrasis**

Cicero, amazed that reading Homer was more like seeing art, declared that



what the poet created was “virtually painting, not poetry” (Hagstrum 57).<sup>17</sup> Similarly, when Alexander Pope read scenes from Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* aloud to an elderly woman, she responded that he had shown her “a gallery of pictures” (Alpers, *Edmund Spenser* 96). A “gallery of pictures” was also what the nineteenth-century poet Leigh Hunt found in Spenser, whom he called “the Poet of the Painters,” as he matched specific passages to the art of Raphael, Correggio, Michaelangelo, Romano, Titian, Rembrandt, Poussin, Rubens and others (72, 77-96).<sup>18</sup> Yet Cicero’s response to reading Homer, and Pope’s and Hunt’s responses to reading Spenser, echo the ancient definition of ekphrasis, where vivid descriptions were meant to take their cues from the visual arts and the effect of the ekphrastic language was analogous to that of painting and sculpture, “mimic[king] the act of seeing” (Webb, *Ekphrasis* 38).<sup>19</sup> Ekphrasis can even go beyond the visual arts by describing objects so vividly that it appears to the audience as if they move. In the first century AD, the rhetorician Ailius Theon

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<sup>17</sup> Cicero’s original statement is from *Tusculan Disputations* V.39.114: “There is the tradition also that Homer was blind: but it is his painting not his poetry that we see; what district, what shore, what spot in Greece, what aspect or form of combat, what marshalling of battle, what tugging at the oar, what movements of men, of animals has he not depicted so vividly that he has made us see, as we read, the things which he himself did not see?” (538-41 in Loeb edition). See also Heninger “Speaking Pictures” (12).

<sup>18</sup> Hunt’s attribution, repeated by Hard and elsewhere, sparked a debate over Spenser’s imagery in mid-twentieth century Spenser criticism. Gottfried challenged Hunt’s assessment, arguing that Spenser’s poetry is discouragingly difficult to illustrate, Spenser had limited knowledge of paintings, painters, and the techniques of visual art, and that “his visual imagination was subordinate to other faculties and relatively weak” (209), all demonstrated by the “lapse” which opens Book I, as well as other “ineptitude[s]” and “absurdit[ies]” (210). Gottfried’s argument was rebutted by Sonn, Dundas, and Thompson.

<sup>19</sup> See Webb *Ekphrasis* 53.

defined ekphrasis as “a descriptive (*periēgēmatikos*) speech which vividly (*enargōs*) brings the subject shown before the eyes” (translated in Webb, *Ekphrasis* 197). Writing his *Progymnasmata* treatise four centuries later, Nikolaos clarifies that “‘Vividly’ (*enargōs*) is added because it is in this respect that ekphrasis differs most from *diēgēsis* [narration]. The latter sets out the events plainly, while the former tries to make the listeners into spectators” (translated in Webb, *Ekphrasis* 203). Vividness of language, *enargeia*, is the defining feature of ancient ekphrasis, rather than visual art as its subject matter.<sup>20</sup>

Theon’s inclusion of Achilles’ shield as an example of his category of “ekphraseis of the manner (*tropos*)” implies, subtly, that the representation of motion can be a significant feature of ekphrasis, although *tropos* as a subject of ekphrasis is included in no other *Progymnasmata* text. Much of Aristotle’s writing on poetics and rhetoric lies behind the program of education set forth in the *Progymnasmata*, and his concept of *energeia* (vitality) can illuminate this suggestion of motion in ekphrasis. Aristotle, like the *Progymnasmata* writers later on, turned to Homer’s epics both as determining foundational texts and as chief exemplars for formulations of poetics (just as Virgil and Ovid would later be for Renaissance poetics). In Homer, Aristotle found that the capacity of language to represent motion is the means by which it can bring a subject before the eyes.

What is common to all ancient definitions of ekphrasis is indeed the

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<sup>20</sup> See Webb, *Ekphrasis* 38. However, Nikolaos cites “paintings and sculptures” as one of many possible subjects, and the Byzantine commentary on Aphthonios’s *Progymnasmata* point out the absence of visual art as possible subjects in his treatise (Webb, *Ekphrasis* 81). On Spenser’s *enargeia*, see McKeown; Grogan, “So Liuely”; Hazard.

assertion that the vividness, or *enargeia*, of the language constitutes a “bringing-before-the-eyes.” As Webb observes, “the idea of ‘placing before the eyes’ goes back in rhetorical theory to Aristotle who discusses [in *On Rhetoric*] the power of metaphor to place its subject *pro ommatōn*” (*Ekphrasis* 51). However, it is in his *Poetics* that Aristotle links *enargeia* to *pro ommatōn*:

When a dramatist is constructing his plot and elaborating it by putting it into words, he must visualize the incidents as much as he can; he will then realize them vividly [*enargestata*] as if they were being enacted before his eyes [*pro ommatōn*] (*Poetics* 1455a).

These qualities of vividness and bringing-before-the-eyes that Aristotle argues are essential for composing drama are later applied by Theon and others to ekphrasis, which, in *Progymnasmata* treatises, most often forms a part of a rhetorical oration intended to persuade. The distance between theatre and oratory is not far. Webb notes the frequent analogies to theatrical performance in the *Progymnasmata* texts, particularly with regard to vivid language, as well as in an anonymous “scholia to the Shield episode in *Iliad*, 18 where Homer is said to ‘roll out (*ekkekuleō*) the maker [Hephaistos] as if onto a stage and show us his workshop in the open” (*Ekphrasis* 54). Theatre actualizes what language alone never can: bringing the subject to life and before the eyes.

In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle offers *energeia* (motion), not *enargeia* (vividness), as an alternative definition of *pro ommatōn*. In his discussion, Aristotle distinguishes a particular property of *pro ommatōn* (before the eyes) in which the image described is set in motion. It is this passage from Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric* that is perhaps behind Theon’s “ekphraseis of the manner”:

I call those things ‘before the eyes’ that signify things engaged in an activity [*energounta*]. For example, to say that a good man is ‘foursquare’ is a metaphor, for both are complete; but it does not signify activity (*energeia*). [. . .] And (*energeia* is,) as Homer often uses it, making the lifeless living through the metaphor. In all his work he gains his fame by creating activity, for example, in the following: ‘Then to the plain rolled the ruthless stone’ and ‘the arrow flew’ and (also of an arrow) ‘eager to fly’ and (of spears) ‘They stood in the grounding longing to take their fill of flesh,’ and ‘The point sped eagerly through his breast.’ In all of these something seems living through being actualized. [. . .] He makes everything move and live, and *energeia* is motion. (*On Rhetoric* 1411b-1412a)

In Aristotle’s definition of bringing-before-the-eyes, motion is central. Activity, vitality, actualization, and the property of making the lifeless living, these are the definitions of *energeia*, which Aristotle finds essential to Homeric poetics. Moreover, one of Aristotle’s examples of *pro ommatōn* evokes the quintessential object that is paradoxically both static and in motion, the moving statue:

And (consider) Lycoleon speaking on behalf of Chabrias: ‘not ashamed of his suppliant attitude in that bronze statue’; it was a metaphor at the time it was spoken, but not at all times, but it was a bringing-before-the-eyes, for (then) when he was in danger, the statue (seemed to) supplicate, the lifeless for the living, the memorial of his deeds for the city-state. (*On Rhetoric* 1411b)

The moving statue, the living lifeless, this is the power of *pro ommatōn* and the power of *energeia*. When Theon proposes “the manner in which something is done” as a subject for ekphrasis, he implicitly acknowledges that motion can bring the subject before the eyes as much as vividness can.

The qualities of vitality (*energeia*) and vividness (*enargeia*) are closely linked, but they are separate. A static object can be “brought before the eyes” just as vividly as an object in motion. The wit of Ausonius’s Epigram 67 hinges precisely on this difference:

Myron’s bronze cow could have bellowed a ‘moo’  
 But was too afraid of detracting from her artist’s skill;  
 For it is greater to sculpt a *lifelike* than a *living* cow:  
 The miraculous creation isn’t god’s but the artist’s. (emphasis added)<sup>21</sup>

This epigram extends into the 4th century a conventional poetic tradition of celebrating this sculptor’s heifer for its peerless verisimilitude: in other instances, Myron’s cow is unsuccessfully herded by shepherds, mounted by bulls, and suckled by calves. Myron’s bronze cow is something *wrought* rather than *born*, and its *enargeia* (“lifelike”) springs precisely from its denial of *energeia* (“living”): the sculpture appears more vividly before our eyes precisely because we are told that it could move, but does not. Like Zeuxis’s grapes, the “literal naturalism” of Myron’s statue has the “miraculous” ability to deceive both people and nature while reminding the audience of the limits of representational art (Land 6; Lee 9). Certainly Myron’s heifer does not low, but we hear a “moo” behind Ausonius’s words. Verbal creations can make sounds – visual creations, however lifelike, cannot. However, visual creations – unlike verbal ones – can trick nature. The *enargeia* of Ausonius’s epigram works in two ways: as an ekphrastic passage, the epigram brings before our eyes a statue we can now never see, the statue of Myron’s bronze cow. But the “moo” we hear behind the ekphrasis is also a poet’s

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<sup>21</sup> With thanks to David Clark for this translation.

response to the plastic arts, a reminder that motion and animation may detract from a sculptor's skill, but never from a poet's.

The distinction between *enargeia* and *energeia* appears even more sharply when we compare Ausonius's cow with Homer's, in Hephaestus's creation of Achilles' shield:

he forged on the shield a herd of longhorn cattle,  
working the bulls in beaten gold and tin, lowing loud  
and rumbling out of the farmyard dung to pasture  
along a rippling stream, along the swaying reed.  
And the golden drovers kept the herd in line,  
four in all, with nine dogs at their heels,  
their paws flickering quickly – a savage roar! –  
a crashing attack – and a pair ramping lions  
had seized a bull from the cattle's front ranks –  
he bellowed out as they dragged him off in agony. (*Iliad* 18.670-79)

Where Myron's cow is silent, Homer's cows move and moo. They appear before the reader's eyes not only by their vividness (*enargeia*), but by their activity (*energeia*). Conversely to Ausonius's epigram, in Homer's description, *enargeia* springs precisely from the affirmation of *energeia*. This passage exemplifies Aristotle's account of Homer's poetics from *On Rhetoric*: "he gains his fame by creating activity, [. . .] something seems living through being actualized" (1411b-1412a). Equally, this passage demonstrates why Theon chose Homer's description of Achilles's shield to serve as an example of "ekphrasis of the manner (*tropos*)": Hephaestus's process of "working" the bulls seamlessly

transforms into the herdsmen's process of "working" the bulls.<sup>22</sup> It is the motion of this passage that gives it its vividness, as Theon's category of "ekphraseis of the manner" seems to suggest. Webb compares the ancient definitions of ekphrasis in the *Progymnasmata* texts with Aristotle's claim "in *Rhetoric* (1411b 24-5) that subjects in action (*energeia*) are more vivid (*pro ommatōn*)," and concludes, "it seems that there was an association between movement, and its rendering of space through time, and vividness; between *energeia* and *enargeia*" (*Ekphrasis* 85-6).<sup>23</sup> Descriptions of art in Virgil and Ovid continue to experiment with this relationship between movement and vividness.

### **Astonishing and Metamorphic Ekphrasis: Virgil, and Ovid**

Virgil's use of ekphrasis in the opening book of his *Aeneid* incorporates the Homeric interplay between moving images and a stationary viewer.<sup>24</sup> Waiting for Dido in Carthage's temple, Aeneas views the mural depicting the Trojan War. There Aeneas faces a truly "absent presence" of fallen friends, comrades, and foes, of the city of Troy, of a way of life (Hardie 173). The ekphrastic description

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<sup>22</sup> This is supported by two serendipitous puns in Fagles's English translation: Hephaestus's "forging" ultimately creates a forgery, and it is from his blacksmith bellows that the cattle's "bellowing" is formed.

<sup>23</sup> Hardie's definition of ekphrasis suggests something similar: "ecphrasis tests the writer's powers of *enargeia* [. . .] in creating a textual illusion of visual images. If the writer is successful, we will 'see' the artwork, 'before our very eyes,' perhaps in an imaginary likeness more lifelike than any actual painting or statue could ever be. *The writer has the power to break through the obstacles of immobility and externality that separate any statue or painting from the reality it represents, since words can both narrate physical movement over time, and provide scripts for the expression of internal, psychological, movement, of emotion*" (Hardie 173, emphasis added).

<sup>24</sup> See Barchiesi 273-76.

unfolds like the *Iliad* in miniature, a forty line narrative epic: Achilles' attack, the rage of Diomedes, the deaths of Troilus and Hector, Athena's silence, Priam's meeting with Achilles, Aeneas's own battle with Achilles, Penthesilëa's death. Aeneas's response to the art suggests his astonishment: "staring amazed," he "feast[s] his eyes and mind on a mere image," "Enthralled, devouring all in one long gaze" (1.616, 633, 675). If Becker is right, and wonder "is a way of admiring the work precisely because it is *not* what it represents" (Becker, "Contest" 10), no one knows this more than Aeneas, for whom the murals are truly, tragically, not what they depict. His own wonder and amazement are incited by the realization that there may be no "spot on earth, [. . .] not full of the story of our sorrow" (1.624-26). Moreover, what Aeneas experienced in time, the murals present in space; although the ekphrasis describes the images as narrative actions unfolding chronologically, for Aeneas, his past appears to him as a "single timeless present," to borrow Burrow's phrase ("Original Fictions" 108), which Aeneas must absorb "in one long gaze."

Aeneas reacts with similar astonishment to his armour, crafted by Vulcan, which reveals his future. The shield ekphrasis in Virgil's *Aeneid* mimics not the process of creating the armour, but instead, Aeneas's first sight of his mother's gift. Unlike in the *Iliad* 18, where the motion of the figures on the shield is concurrent to their forging, Virgil's ekphrastic description follows Aeneas's eyes as he "scanned each piece / *In wonder* and turned over in his hands / [. . .] the fabric of the shield / Beyond description" (8.838-39, 846-47, emphasis added). The images on the shield "were wonders to Aeneas," and it is his wonder at the



shield which orders the sequence of the ekphrasis (8.988). The ekphrasis narrates the events of the future: “the Lord of Fire, / Knowing the prophets, knowing the age to come, / Had wrought the future story of Italy, / The triumphs of the Romans” (8.848-51). Although Virgil continually reminds the reader that the shield and its scenes are “wrought” (8.850), “imaged” (880), and “pictured” (902), his shield ekphrasis goes far beyond the parameters of the visual arts by representing the most climactic moments of Rome’s history (or history of the future, from Aeneas’s perspective) in full motion: battles, Tartarus, the sea, the gods, the triumph of Caesar, and ritual ceremonies are all “imaged there / To the life” (880-81). The shield itself is “Beyond description” (8.847), but Virgil’s ekphrastic description is also beyond the shield, depicting the climactic motions of the future that remain pleasurably mysterious to Aeneas: “Knowing nothing of the events themselves, / He felt joy in their pictures, taking up / Upon his shoulder all the destined acts / And fame of his descendants” (8.989-92). The shield is a monument to the future; in its interplay between stillness and motion it depicts both historical outcomes and historical processes. In his shield ekphrasis, Virgil surpasses Homer: while Homer affirms that Achilles’ shield occasioned wonder in all who saw it, Virgil incorporates the viewer’s experience of wonder into the ekphrastic description itself.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid literalizes the oscillation between motion and stasis present in classical ekphrasis, and expands it into an organizing principle of his epic. Gianpiero Rosati suggests that the capacity present in Ovid’s language for visualizing unfolding events corresponds to the language of ekphrasis: Ovid’s

poetics, Rosati argues, are “quasi-ecphrastic” (translated and quoted by Hardie in *Ovid’s Poetics* 173). Ovid found in Homer’s description of Hephaestus’s forging of Achilles’ shield a model of poetic creation; just as the figures of artists or artistic power – Arachne, Pygmalion, Medusa – prove closely aligned to the author himself,<sup>25</sup> so too do descriptions of the creation of tactile art mirror Ovid’s metamorphic poetics.

In Homer’s description of the Shield of Achilles, “disobedient” ekphrases yoke disparate objects and phenomena together: gold and black earth, gold and ripening grapes, stillness and motion, death and life. Yet this yoking of disparate objects together is also the principle of metamorphosis: form changes, matter remains.<sup>26</sup> Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* contains many echoes of the “disobedient” ekphrasis that take place on Achilles’ shield: “the stones the man had thrown were changed to men” (1.412), Midas “touched a clod; / beneath the spell his finger held, that soil / became a chunk of gold” (11.110), Venus “transform[ed] blood into a flower” (10.735-36). Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* contains a few conventional ekphrases – Vulcan’s door carving at the Palace of the Sun (2.1-18), Minerva’s and Arachne’s tapestries (6.1-145) are the two main examples – but in

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Kilgour ““Thy perfect image”” 316-8.

<sup>26</sup> Versions of this commonplace, such as Ovid’s statement *Omnia mutantur, nihil interit* (*Met.* 15.165) were ubiquitous in English and continental Renaissance literature, as Jeanneret argues (e.g., 30-31). The foundational premise of Jeanneret’s book is that the sixteenth century was “fascinated not only by transformation itself but also by the aptitude of an object to turn into another,” as well as “the charm of origins, the privileged moment when anything can be invented or fashioned anew because everything seems possible. If creation, and preferably the ever-renewing continuous creation, mobilized Renaissance thought, it was precisely because it crystallizes the magic of the inchoative” (2).

its reimagining of the epic genre, the *Metamorphoses* takes a single feature, the shield description, and extrapolates from it an entire poetics based on the features of ekphrasis as they appear in Homer's *Iliad*.

Ovid's poetics are ekphrastic not only because they take metamorphoses as their subject, but because their aim echoes the cosmic totality of Achilles' shield: like Hephaestus's art, Ovid's poetics are etiological, seeking to account for the nature of things "from the world's beginning to our day" (1.3).<sup>27</sup> Achilles' shield begins with the cosmos from which Hephaestus proceeds to include the universal patterns of human life. Homer's description of the shield can be easily mistaken for a description of the cosmos. Similarly, Ovid begins from a time "Before the sea and lands began to be" (1.5) and recounts the origins of all life rooted in transformation and change: snakes from mud; birds, stones, rivers, trees, and stars from people.

For Barkan, the relationship between ekphrasis and metamorphosis hinges on Homer's representation of the cosmos:

The clearest key to metamorphosis in ekphrasis may well appear in the source of the whole topos: Homer's account of the shield of Achilles in Book XVIII of the *Iliad*. That great locus classicus makes of the work of art a whole universe: cosmos, society, polis, family nature; and we are so convinced of the authenticity of the artistry that, lost in the middle of the long description, we forget we are on a shield and think instead of the real cosmos itself. (*Gods* 10)

The nature of the world in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* emerges as a literal retelling of

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<sup>27</sup> See Barkan *Gods* 27-37.

Homer's artistic rendering of the cosmos in Achilles' shield. The images and figures on Achilles' shield receive a narrative just as objects and species in the *Metamorphoses* receive genealogical accounts. Moreover, the artisanal pun that sees bronze-clad soldiers cast in bronze on the face of the shield becomes, in Ovid's epic, what Barkan calls "protometamorphoses": hints, similes, or preconditions which "rhetorically [point] out the direction in which an individual will literally travel when his transformation takes place" (*Gods* 20-21). Arachne the weaver transforms into a spider; an epic simile compares Hyacinthus to bending flowers whose "withered heads [have] grown heavy" before he himself is transformed into a purple flower (10.190-93). Both are predisposed to take the form their metamorphoses will provide. The patterns and dynamics of ekphrasis are significant for Ovidian metamorphosis. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the cosmos of Achilles' shield is writ large.<sup>28</sup> As a figure of speech, ekphrasis perfectly accommodates metamorphosis.

Ovid's approach to the ekphrastic response of wonder and astonishment also literalizes the metaphor of stony stasis through metamorphosis: art has the power to transform living, breathing people into art, just as the artist can transform still figures into living, breathing people. Stasis can be a negative side-

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<sup>28</sup> Hardie argues that Ovid's ekphrastic description of doors to the Palace of the Sun (2.1-18) reiterates the description of the creation of the universe which opens Book 1, and both show "Ovid's use, as model for the narrative of creation itself, of the first and greatest of ecphrases in the Greco-Roman tradition, the Shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18, which in antiquity was commonly read as an image of the universe. Ovid's universal narrative allusively launches itself under the guise of ecphrases [. . .]. If this universe is a work of art, of that magical, Hephaestean and Daedalean, kind *endowed with the power of movement*, then *all particular narratives and descriptions within the universe are examples of ecphrasis*" (177, emphasis added).

effect of creation. Hardie calls this oscillation between motion and stillness “statuesque reciprocity,” or, and here he borrows a phrase from Henry Fielding, the “Statue of Surprise” (181-82). Hardie’s prime example is Astyages, who tries to fight Perseus’s friend Aconteus after he is mistakenly turned to stone:

Astyages, who thought Aconteus still  
a living man, struck hard with his long sword  
against the stony form. The sword gave out  
a clanging sound; and while Astyages  
was still dismayed by that, the very same  
force overcame him, too; and on his face—  
now stone—the look of wonder still remained. (5.200-06)

What in Homer and Virgil is metaphorical – the stilling power of wonder at a work of art – becomes literal in Ovid.<sup>29</sup> Ovid also makes explicit what is only implied by Homer and Virgil: the destructive and ominous side of art. Achilles’ bearing of his shield leads inevitably to his own death (and, as Ovid will later show us, to the shame of Ajax), while Aeneas’s wonder at the Temple of Juno leads quickly to his wonder at Dido, and her own destruction. As Kilgour argues, “Perseus’s transformation of Phineas into a ‘mansura monumenta per aevum’ (*Metamorphosis*, 5.227) (a monument that shall endure for ages) is a more permanent and sinister version of the poet’s own proclaimed power to capture nature and achieve immortality” (317). The ekphrastic poetics of the *Metamorphoses* offer a possible explanation for why Ovid’s epic is such a common

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<sup>29</sup> According to Hardie, “Astygas’ emotion reaction, is, however, orthodox, the *stupor* (in Greek *ekplexis*) expected of the viewer of a marvellously lifelike work of art, like Aeneas stunned in front of the reliefs in the Temple of Juno” (180-81).

source text for so many ekphrases that follow.

### **Ekphrasis and *ut pictura poesis* in the Renaissance**

The descriptions of visual art in Renaissance poetry, such as in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* and *The Faerie Queene*, reflect both the modern and the ancient usages of ekphrasis. In an anticipation of modern theories of ekphrasis, Renaissance poets did recognize a convention of describing visual art in poetry, and their representations of paintings, sculptures, and tapestries respond to other examples found in the epics of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid. Moreover, the prevalence of visual language and motion in these descriptions suggests that Renaissance poets imitated the classical rhetorical principles of *enargeia* and *energeia*. Although these two terms were often confused or misunderstood in Renaissance literary *theory* (e.g. Puttenham), they were nevertheless emulated in the *practice* of describing visual art. While the bifurcation of ekphrasis into “vivid description” and into “description of visual art” intensified during the Renaissance, at the same time, both these qualities of poetic innovation were subsumed into the prolific discourse of *ut pictura poesis*.

During the Renaissance, the description of visual art burgeoned into a separate and self-contained category of poetry. At a young age, Spenser, together with many other sixteenth-century schoolboys, likely would have learned Erasmus’s *De Copia*, in which a subcategory of *Descriptione Rei* (“the description of things”) groups together descriptions of paintings and sculptures, citing examples from Pliny, Lucian, Arachne’s tapestry in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Achilles’ shield, Aeneas’s shield, and finally monuments and pyramids (581). Though not named

as “ekphrases,” such a grouping suggests that to a Renaissance reader, there was continuity between verbal representations of visual art, a continuity they responded to with their own descriptions of paintings, sculptures and tapestries. Erasmus selected many of the same examples from antiquity that James Heffernan did for his *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*, nearly five hundred years later.

An example of this recognized continuity was the 1598 publication of George Chapman’s translation of the Shield of Achilles episode from Homer’s *Iliad* as a stand-alone piece. This edition suggests that Renaissance readers began to read descriptions of visual art in classical poetry as self-contained. Yet Chapman’s edition is also significant for its recognition of the qualities of motion and metamorphosis present in Homer’s original. His preface is worth quoting at length:

what is here prefigurd by our miraculous Artist, but the universall world, which being so spacious and almost unmeasurable, one circlet of a Shield representes and imbraceth? In it heauen turnes, the starres shine, the earth in enflowred, the sea swelles and rageth, Cities are built: one in the happinesse and sweetnesse of peace, the other in open warre & the terrors of ambush &c. And all these so *linely* proposde, as not without reason many in times past haue believed, that all these thinges haue in them *a kind of voluntarie motion*. [. . .] [F]or so are all things here described, by our diuine Poet, as if they consisted not of hard and solid mettals, but of a truely, *living, and moving* soule. [. . .] [Homer intended] by the Orbigitie of the Shield, the roundnesse of the world: by the foure mettalles, the foure elementes: viz, by gold fire: by brasse earth for the hardnes: by Tinne

water, for the softnes, and inclination to fluxure: by siluer, Aire, for the grosnes & obscuritie of the mettall before it be refind. (A2r-v, emphasis added)

Chapman, while isolating the shield description as a self-contained unit, also praises it for the lively and mobile qualities inherent in the classical definition of ekphrasis. He recognizes that the shield is a microcosm of the universe, but, more than that, that the materials of the shield have metamorphic qualities. The shield is “more then Artificiall and no lesse then Diuine” (A2r), and its four component metals transform into the four elements that make up the universe. Chapman reads Homer with Ovidian eyes.

Chapman uses “lively” to refer to the same quality described by the term *energeia* in classical texts.<sup>30</sup> While the term *enargeia* (Lat. *evidentia*) and, less frequently, *energeia* do appear in Renaissance poetic theory, to Renaissance writers on rhetoric and poetics, Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* would have been a more familiar source than the Greek *Progymnasmata* texts. Defining *enargeia*, Quintilian finds it as a figure that “makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence” (*Inst.* 6.2.32); whereas *energeia*, he argues, refers to “vigour [. . .] which derives its name from action and (ensures) that nothing that we say is tame” (8.3.89).<sup>31</sup> Sidney’s assertion that *energeia* is a “forcibleness” that allows readers to “feel those passions” (“Defence 385), and Chapman’s

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<sup>30</sup> On the range of the term “lively” in Renaissance literature and literary theory, including its overlap with *enargeia* and its application to descriptions of visual art, see Hazard.

<sup>31</sup> Both quotations are taken from Vickers 225n59.



definition elsewhere of *enargeia* as “clearness of representation” (“Ovids” 393), seem close to their classical counterparts.<sup>32</sup>

However, confusion between the terms *enargeia* and *energeia* was common, both in antiquity and the Renaissance, on account of their etymological similarity and their shared association, in Aristotle and elsewhere, with the poetic processes of *pro ommatōn* (bringing-before-the-eyes).<sup>33</sup> For example, Erasmus begins the section of his *De Copia* addressing descriptions of things, persons, places, and times, with “[t]he fifth method of enrichment primarily involves *ἐνάργει* [*ἐνέργει* in the original], which is translated as *evidentia* ‘vividness’” (577).<sup>34</sup> George Puttenham’s *The Art of English Poesy* defines *enargeia* and *energeia* in ways that seem to be far removed from the ancient sources:

This [poetical] ornament then is of two sorts: one to satisfy and delight the ear only by a goodly outward show set upon the matter with words and speeches smoothly and tenably running; another by certain intendments or sense of such words and speeches inwardly working a stir to the mind. That first quality the Greeks called *enargeia*, of this word *argos*, because it giveth a glorious luster and light. This

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<sup>32</sup> On Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* as evidence for how ekphrasis was used in oratory, and as a wider source on classical *enargeia* than is found in the *Progymnasmata* texts, see Webb *Ekphrasis* 87-130. As Webb argues, Quintilian, “Theon’s contemporary,” “was clearly familiar with Greek rhetorical theory and many details of his teaching can be directly compared with Greek examples. What Quintilian adds in particular is the practical, personal perspective of the seasoned speaker, telling us how vivid language could actually be used, and what he knew its effect on an audience could be” (87).

<sup>33</sup> For examples of confusion in ancient sources, see Becker *The Shield* 82n143. For examples of confusion continuing into the nineteenth century, see Laird, 19n9.

<sup>34</sup> In *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, the editors have silently amended Erasmus’s erroneous *ἐνέργει* to the correct *ἐνάργει*. See also Galyon 32.

latter they called *energeia* of *ergon*, because it wrought with a strong and virtuous operation. And figure breedeth them both: some serving to give gloss only to a language, some to give it efficacy by sense, and so by that means some of them serve the ear only, some serve the conceit only and not the ear. There be of them also that serve both turns [. . .]. (227)

Puttenham's definitions shift the effect of *enargeia* and *energeia* from the visual (a bringing-before-the-eyes) to the ear and the mind.<sup>35</sup>

Although the instability of these terms during the Renaissance complicates their application to poetry of that time, Renaissance poetic *practice* incorporated the subtleties of ancient ekphrasis far more readily than its poetic *theory*. While the modern sense of ekphrasis (verbal representations of visual art) can apply to Renaissance poetry, the representation of motion in the poetry of this period nevertheless requires recourse to the ancient sense of ekphrasis as a "bringing-before-the-eyes" with the defining features of *enargeia* and *energeia*. Renaissance ekphrasis is Janus-faced. As we will see in Chapter 2 with the example from Spenser's Busirane episode, poetic descriptions of visual art self-consciously reimagine and respond to other, earlier examples that can befit the narrow modern definition of ekphrasis while still exhibiting the features of vividness and motion which were the key components of classical ekphrasis. A brief example

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<sup>35</sup> Whigham and Rebhorn note in their gloss to this passage from Puttenham that "Puttenham's declaration that *enargeia* is a matter of giving satisfaction and delight to the *ear* is either a misunderstanding of the term, or, since the etymology he presents here is quite clear, a deliberate transformation of it in keeping with his idiosyncratic conception of figures of speech as falling into three categories: those that affect the ear, those that affect the mind, and those that affect both" (227n1). See also Galyon.

from Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* illustrates this biplicity. E.K.'s argument to "Februarie" specifies that "the olde man telleth a tale of the Oake and the Bryer, *so lively and so feelingly*, as if the thing were set forth *in some Picture before our eyes*, more plainly could not appear" (39, emphasis added). McKeown, following Bender, argues that "E.K.'s statement says nothing original but merely rehearses a familiar definition of *enargeia*" (44).<sup>36</sup> The vividness to which E.K.'s argument alludes certainly suggests *enargeia*, but the adverbs "lively" and "feelingly" suggest the motion and activity constituent of *energeia*.<sup>37</sup> As a verbal narrative and not a description of visual art, the inset story in "Februarie" at first seems to fulfill the parameters of the ancient definition of ekphrasis. However, the relationship between Thenot's tale of the oak and the briar and the preceding woodcut which gives a visual version of the tale also evokes the definition of modern ekphrasis and its concern with the cooperation and the contest between art forms.

In the Renaissance, the conventional assertion that vivid poetry could create images before the eyes became conflated with the discourse of *ut pictura poesis* ("as is painting, so is poetry"), Horace's dictum from *Ars Poetica* which became an aesthetic principle during the Renaissance, alongside Simonides's earlier "painting is mute poetry, poetry a talking picture."<sup>38</sup> There were no formal

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<sup>36</sup> See Bender 11-12.

<sup>37</sup> On the "conflation of *energeia* and *enargeia*" in Renaissance (and classical) literary theory and on *energeia* as a key feature of Spenser's poetics, see Campana (quoting from page 36).

<sup>38</sup> The original text of this statement is lost, but it is quoted in Plutarch's *Moralia* (346f). It was through Sir Thomas Hoby's 1586 translation of Coignet's *Politique Discourses* that Simonides' comparison was first heard in English (Hagstrum 58).

treatises on ekphrasis during the Renaissance, but the phrase *ut pictura poesis* appeared “in virtually every treatise on art or poetry from the early Renaissance to the close of the Enlightenment” (Braider 168) as shorthand for acknowledging a relationship between poetry and painting, the “sister arts.”<sup>39</sup> This relationship received its shape through the discourse of the *paragone*, as both an emulation and a rivalry, the *paragone* established the limits of representation, whether by setting art against nature in emphasizing art’s capability for enchantment and deception, or by setting one art against another in emphasizing what one art can do that another cannot.<sup>40</sup> While Leonardo’s denigration of poets as “collector[s] of goods stolen from other disciplines,” and his assertion that if “painting is dumb poetry” then “poetry is blind painting” are extreme examples of the rivalry (38-39, 41), *ut pictura poesis* could also focus more positively on the shared aspects of the arts.<sup>41</sup> *Ut pictura poesis* acknowledged a relationship between the verbal and visual arts (like the modern definition of ekphrasis), while also setting parameters for realism, accuracy, and liveliness (like the ancient definition).

Besides Horace’s and Simonides’s remarks, other pertinent *loci* from

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<sup>39</sup> The phrase itself has an important history: contextually, it is an offhanded comparison between the reader’s engagement with poetry and the viewer’s experience of painting. The speaker in Horace’s poem compares the combination of the general impressions of a work of art as a whole with scrutiny of fine details to how a work of great literature should be read. In this context, then, *ut pictura poesis* should be understood as “poetry can sometimes be as a painting” (Hagstrum 9, 59). But the misleading translation “let poetry be like a painting,” which was subsequently amplified and solidified by generations of commentaries (see Trimpi), inflated the phrase *ut pictura poesis* to a principle of literary theory.

<sup>40</sup> See Hagstrum 66ff; Hulse *Rule* 8; Lee 56-57; Hunt, *Garden* 90-99.

<sup>41</sup> On classical ekphrases as demonstrating a appreciation rather than a rivalry between the arts, see Becker “Contest or Concert.”

classical literature, such as the epigrams on Myron's bronze cow and the stories of ancient painters Zeuxis and Apelles, swirled among the letters and treatises of artists and poets, fuelling the discourse of the *paragone*. These stories and sayings, largely taken out of their original contexts, had self-reflexive aesthetic and mimetic concerns.<sup>42</sup> For instance, expressing the difficulty in "draw[ing] the semblant trew, / Of beauties Queene" (Dedicatory Sonnet 17.5-6), Spenser considers adopting the method of "The Chian Peincter, when he was required / To pourtraict *Venus* in her perfect hew" (1-2). Apelles of Chios did paint Venus, but Spenser incorrectly attributes Zeuxis's method of selecting the best features of many women to portray Helen of Troy to Apelles's painting of the goddess. Spenser's mistake points to what Norman Land sees as the unmethodical and error-prone classical inheritance of Renaissance art theory, which "is derived from such unsystematic, almost casual parallels of poetry and painting to be found scattered throughout the literature of Antiquity" (3).

Spenser's error is even more understandable when we acknowledge that most of these scattered parallels between poetry and painting are built on absence: stories of Myron, Apelles, Zeuxis, and Parrhasius remain, but the sculpted bronze cow, or the paintings of Venus, grapes so real that birds tried to eat them, and curtains so lifelike that another artist attempted to move them aside no longer remain.<sup>43</sup> Spenser knew the stories, not the artifacts; the "Chian

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<sup>42</sup> See Braider, "Paradoxical Sisterhood"; Hulse's discussion of Raphael's correspondence with Castiglione (*Rule* 86-93); Hagstrum 57-92; Lee, Introduction to *Ut Pictura Poesis*; Land, *Viewer*.

<sup>43</sup> Pliny *Natural History* 35.36; Land 6; Lee 9-10; Bann *True Vine* 27-40.

Peicter” stands in for multiple classical examples of “literal naturalism” (Lee 9). To Renaissance poets, such examples supported the monumentalizing power of poetry: the durability of the written word when compared to time-ravaged stone and paint. When English poets harmonized such excerpts and anecdotes from antiquity into a body of poetics, their sources for the most part were *texts*. Barkan reminds us that “the real level of visual culture in Elizabethan England was astonishingly low” apart from portraiture and architecture, and so “[i]t is with an awareness of these gaps in visual literacy that we must revisit the enormous treasury of pictorialism that appears in Elizabethan writing” (“Making” 331-2).<sup>44</sup> In the English Renaissance, the trope of *ut pictura poesis*, or Sidney’s full-throated assertion that poetry is “a speaking picture - with this end, to teach and delight” (345), receive their evidence more from written accounts than from visual art itself.<sup>45</sup>

This textual basis of the visual elements of English Renaissance poetry is particularly significant for the study of ekphrasis. As Barkan argues:

Ekphrasis – however influenced by art works or influential upon them – is passed on in an inheritance more from Homer, Ovid, and Petrarch than from Zeuxis, the Domus Aurea, and Botticelli. It is not a visual figure so much as a figure of speech. (“Making” 332)

The Venus and Adonis tapestry that Spenser presents to the reader ekphrastically receives its meaning more from its Ovidian source text than by the particularity

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<sup>44</sup> See also Gent, *Picture and Poetry*.

<sup>45</sup> However, Sidney did travel on the continent, and was exposed to more visual art than his contemporary Spenser.

of its detail.<sup>46</sup> Although twentieth-century critical theory on ekphrasis recognized that an oscillation between motion and stasis is an essential component of all ekphrases, and Renaissance literary theory formulated an intricate affinity and rivalry between the visual and verbal arts, neither approach sufficiently explains the recurrence of the formulaic assertions of lifelikeness and motion in ekphrasis. Instead, such conventions form a small part of the transmission of the epic from ancient Greece to Rome, and then, much later, to England. As Colin Burrow argues, “Ovid’s Renaissance imitators took up [. . .] cues left by Ovid to his readers. Their readings and imitation of Ovid are acutely influenced by Ovid’s own reflection on imitation and re-embodiment” (“Re-embodiment” 302). In Spenser’s ekphrasis, as we will see in the next chapter, texts picture texts.

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<sup>46</sup> McKeown writes: “we are able to envision the pivotal scene on this tapestry more because it recalls another poem than because it recalls visual experience. We inscribe into Spenser’s poetic image something that his poem does not put there. We can *see* the tapestry clearly only because we have *read* Ovid” (56).

**Chapter 2: Spenser's Metamorphic Ekphrases**

When, in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Britomart enters the second room of Busirane's house, she sees walls of "pure gold [. . .] / Wrought with wilde Antickes, which their follies playd, / In the rich metall, as they liuing were" (III.xi.51). Initially, this description appears straightforward: grotesque gargoyles in mid-action have been "wrought" out of gold. But, as Leonard Barkan reminds us, the likely source of this image are actual classical gold statues, called *grotteschi*, depicting metamorphoses: antique "Antickes" (*Gods* 234). Spenser's description evokes a paradoxical tension between material stasis (art that is "wrought") and realistic, but illusory, motion ("playd" and "liuing"). By describing the *antics* of these antique Antickes as "follies playd, / In the rich metal," Spenser suggests both that they closely represent their classical (antique) sculptural antecedents, and that they seem to be moving. His phrase "as they liuing were" nudges the reader's imaginative capacity because it implies both that the grotesques appear as the classical statues do *in real life*, and that they appear themselves to be living. Spenser's "brilliant pun," as Barkan calls it, requires the reader to shift between material and representation, motion and stasis (*Gods* 234).

Many descriptions of visual art in Renaissance literature contain a variation of these two details: the work of art is described as so perfectly "wrought" as to appear life-like, and the scene represented in the visual art is described dynamically, as if it were actions unfolding in time. This chapter argues that formulaic statements which draw attention to both the solid materiality and



impression of motion of a described piece of artwork, such as Spenser's phrase "wrought, as if it liuely grew" (III.i.38.9), allow us to trace the process of imitation and reinterpretation fundamental to the epic tradition: Renaissance ekphrases crystallized an Ovidian poetics which encoded the dynamic elements found in the verbal representations of visual art in Homer, Virgil, and others. The qualities of lifelikeness and motion correspond to the classical rhetorical figures *enargeia* and *energeia*, which, although confused in Renaissance literary theory, were nevertheless imitated and used in literary practice.

The distinct ancient and modern definitions of ekphrasis outlined in the previous chapter converge in their mutual consideration of poetry's ability to create visual imagery, either as an effect or as a subject of the words themselves.<sup>1</sup> In an article written two decades after the initial publication of his "The Ekphrastic Principle; or the Still Movement of Poetry," Murray Krieger called the Renaissance the "first major extended moment – and the most complex – in the history of the subject [of ekphrasis]" ("Problem" 13). Such complexity emerges, I argued in the previous chapter, from the bifurcation of Renaissance ekphrasis. On one hand, Renaissance poets recognize a convention of extended descriptions of tactile art which stretches back to Homer's Shield of Achilles, and their

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<sup>1</sup> Webb writes: "There is therefore a genealogical connection between the ancient and modern definitions, a connection reflected in the primacy of the visual in both. But the different role of the visual is key to the profound differences between the conceptions underlying the two definitions. For the modern definition the visual is a quality of the referent, which in some definitions is already a representation of reality. For the ancient rhetoricians the impart of ekphrasis is visual; it is a translation of the perceptible which mimics the effect of perception, making the listener seem to see" (*Ekphrasis* 37-38).

practice of this convention overlaps with the concerns of *ut pictura poesis*. Where is poetry more like a picture than when it describes a picture, and where else can poets showcase precisely what the verbal arts can do that the visual arts cannot? Yet on the other hand, Renaissance poets' frequent use of the commonplaces of activity, vividness (bringing-before-the-eyes), and astonishment – succinctly summarized in Spenser's phrase "so liuely and so like that liuing sense it fayled" (III.xi.46.9) – indicates an inheritance from the ancient rhetorical figures of *enargeia* and *energeia*, the building blocks of classical ekphrasis.

This chapter focuses on individual passages of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* in order to demonstrate the imbrications, in Renaissance descriptions of visual art, of the ancient and the modern definitions of ekphrasis. Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* was an important intertext for this aspect of Spenser's poetry.<sup>2</sup> The pervasive presence of lifelikeness and motion in both Colonna's and Spenser's descriptions of visual art demonstrates the deep internalization of classical forms and rhetoric by Renaissance poets. While typical scholarly approaches to episodes such as Spenser's House of Busirane or Shakespeare's depiction of Lucrece standing before a tapestry forgo the ancient definition of ekphrasis in favour of the modern definition (if the ancient definition is even

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<sup>2</sup> Lucy Gent observes: "To sum up, then, what the *Hypnerotomachi* or its English translation gave to England in the 1590s, one may stress its imaginative stimulus and its extreme regard for art. Although too dream-like, and indeed too peculiar, for poets to follow it closely, it provided them with a rich collection of images and material. Their fascination with vision, with the vividness of external appearance and the problem of conveying it in words, meant that Colonna's descriptions of buildings, places, and figures, in excited and hyperbolic terms, were relevant to their own aims" (*Hypnerotomachia* xiv-xv).

acknowledged at all),<sup>3</sup> representations of visual art in Renaissance poetry were still shaped to varying degrees by the rhetorical principles underpinning ancient ekphrasis. Reading an extended ekphrasis like Spenser's House of Busirane episode with attention to its explicit evocation of vividness, vitality, astonishment, and materiality explains not only Spenser's surprising insistence on representing motion and metamorphoses in his depictions of visual art, but it also suggests a relationship between the two antechambers of Busirane's House as a jointly intensifying literalization of the rhetorical principles of *enargeia* and *energeia*. Yet ultimately, Renaissance ekphrases express neither an illusion nor an "absent presence" (Hardie 173), but a "monumental impulse" (Trapp). The idea of the monument in the Renaissance was a multivalent and pervasive one, employed across a surprising breadth of genres, and it provided a form, both physical and cognitive, for a wide constellation of concepts associated with permanence, decay, history, and the debate between the ancients and moderns. Ekphrastic descriptions of sculptures, engravings, tapestries, and precious artefacts in Renaissance literature share with monuments a desire for immortality.

### **Ekphrases in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili***

Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* is a storehouse of ekphrases,<sup>4</sup> a dream vision told by a narrator whose love of Polia and love of architecture and

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Quinn, Rappaport.

<sup>4</sup> *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* was first printed in Venice 1499, and an English translation of the first part by RD (likely Robert Dallington), dedicated "To the Thrise Honourable and Ever Lyving Vertues of Syr Phillip Sydney Knight," was published in London in 1592 (STC 5578). See bibliography entries by Pinkus, Semler, Sorelius, and Trippe.

sculpture meld indiscriminately until it is impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins.<sup>5</sup> His ekphrases all share similar features: the sculpted or painted figure seems to move; all that is lacking is breath; the visual image is very life-like; the perfection of the visual art is indescribable (although he will attempt to describe it anyway); and the result of seeing the art leaves the viewer astonished, frozen, awestruck, literally *astomied*. For instance, the first extended description of art in the *Hypnerotomachia* is of a sculpted “brutal gigantomachy” which was

marvellously carved, excellently worked and lacking only the breath of life. Its vast bodies had more movement and speed in them than I can ever describe. The imitation of nature was so well executed that the eyes as well as the feet seemed to be struggling and striving as they eagerly swerved to this side or that. [. . .] Many gave the impression of dying, true to nature in every detail, while others were already dead [. . .]. Alas, such unremitting variety tired my spirits, confused my mind and disordered my senses, so that not only am I unable to tell of the whole, but cannot thoroughly describe even a part of this masterpiece of stone-carving. (28-29)

Elsewhere, the astonishment of the spectator is even more marked. When Poliphilo enters the portal and views the painted scenes from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, he relates, “I gazed intently at this with my lips agape, my fluttering and mobile eyelids motionless, my soul enraptured [. . .]. I was so amazed and absorbed that I was as though lost to myself.” Yet he also recounts how he

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<sup>5</sup> E.g., “a sudden dire thought struck me cruelly in my loving heart, and I said: ‘Alas, you imprudent and unhappy wretch! Oh, how importunate is my research and unbridled curiosity about things of the past, my quest for these broken stones I have been pondering, if by so doing my fairest Polia should have been snatched from me, and I should have lost through my carelessness a thing more precious than anything here, or than all the treasures in the world!’” (272).

“moved along step by step” through the gallery, like a moving stone, looking at the friezes that themselves were both moving and still (61). Motion and stillness are mutually constitutive: Poliphilo must move to see the art, but seeing the art freezes him in a posture of amazement; the visual art is static, but its lifelikeness spurs the poet to describe it as if it were mobile. Moreover, the source of the images is a text, the *Metamorphoses*, which contains the stories of Medusa and Pygmalion, themselves models for the ability to freeze life into art and to transform art into a living, moving, being.<sup>6</sup> The formulaic expressions of lifelikeness, motion, inexpressibility and astonishment inherent in ekphrases must relate to their source in metamorphosis.

The interplay between visual art, words, nature, and viewer in Colonna’s ekphrases can be more complex still. When, for example, Poliphilo encounters four triumphs, his ekphrastic descriptions slip between describing the visual images carved on each chariot’s panels, and the scenes of the triumphal procession moving past him. Each procession consists of a six-yoked chariot (pulled by centaurs, elephants, unicorns, or leopards) with four panels, atop of which is a figure from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (Europa, Leda, Danae, and an elaborate Bacchic vase containing the ashes presumably of Semele). The ekphrases of each triumph unfold similarly. For the first triumph, Poliphilo describes the exotic materials of the chariot (“greenest Scythian emerald,” “Indian

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<sup>6</sup> Fowler writes: “Pygmalion’s and Medusa’s metamorphoses became paradigmatic metaphors for the reciprocity of art. Viewers imagined statues moving, or were made stone themselves” (*Renaissance Realism* 77); see also Hardie *Ovid’s Poetics* ch. 6; Barolsky “As in Ovid.”

diamond” which “becomes soft and malleable in hot goat’s blood,” “pure gold”), and then provides an ekphrastic description of the art painted on the chariot’s four panels (158). The first triumph follows the story of Europa, and two of the four panels depict scenes from Ovid’s account: Europa decking the bull with flowered garlands, and the bull “carrying the frightened maiden across the swelling sea.” The other two panels depict Cupid’s arrows striking Mars and Jupiter (159). Then, after describing the chariot’s carriage in minute, architectural detail (e.g. “on each corner between the plinth and the cornice was affixed a harpy’s foot, with a moderate curve and a striking metamorphosis on either side into acanthus leaves”), Poliphilo describes the figures atop the chariot:

there lay a fateful, tame, white bull, decked with many flowers and ritual ornaments of consecration. A royal virgin was sitting upon its broad back, holding fast as a crab and embracing its pendulous dewlaps with her long bare arms. She was exquisitely dressed in fine cloth of green silk and gold [. . .]. Her jewels were both many and various, and she wore a crown of gold on her hair” (161).

The stillness of these figures contrasts sharply with the motion of the procession: the elaborately ornamented centaurs pulling the chariot each carry a nymph who played music and sang, while the “revellers celebrated by leaping up and making a rapid, controlled spin,” waving banners, thyrsi, caducei, and tree branches. Such stillness against such motion makes the figures on the chariot more ambiguous: are they a truly living nymph and bull, or are they, like the chariot itself, creations of a craftsman’s great skill?

Moreover, Europa and the bull on the chariot are static figures while their

story unfolds in narrative (“decking,” “carrying”) on the carved panels which are unambiguously art. The carved figures are more mobile than the supposedly live figures on the chariot. Between the panels and the procession, motion and stillness cast each other in relief. That the themes of each procession are episodes from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* only serves to intensify the interplay between motion and stillness, nature and art, present in Poliphilo’s ekphrastic descriptions. Even the design of the chariot embraces metamorphosis, as the harpy’s foot transforms into an acanthus leaf. Yet there is even a further layer of art and nature present: woodcut drawings of both the panel carvings and the procession are embedded into Poliphilo’s account of them.<sup>7</sup> While for Poliphilo, the procession is real (or as real as a dream vision can be) and the panels are art, for the reader, both are equally created by word and image, as a kind of elaborate emblem. The woodcuts reveal the *ars adeo latet arte sua* (*Met.* 10.252), the “art concealed beneath its own art,” as neither the ekphrasis nor the art it describes exists beyond the realm of the text.<sup>8</sup> The ekphrastic triumphs in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* echo and reimagine the major events (Jupiter’s loves, Bacchanal festivals) and overriding themes (metamorphosis, the cyclical “universal cosmology of love”) of Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* (Barkan *Gods* 226-8). Renaissance ekphrases seldom provide a

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<sup>7</sup> On the relationship between word and image in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, see Trippe.

<sup>8</sup> For Barkan, such layered complexity leads to the ultimate conclusion that “like all tropes it [ekphrasis] is a lie [. . .]; and the larger lie is that these pictures have a prior existence independent of the poet, who is ostensibly merely ‘describing’ them” (“Making” 332). Yet the suggestion that ekphrasis is a “lie” can cast ekphrasis as suspicious or duplicitous trickery, and does not adequately explain the “appreciative reaction [. . .] of wonder and inexpressibility” elicited by ekphrases (Becker “Contest” 9). See also Leach.

straightforward description of visual art.

### The Still-Moving Art of Spenser's Ekphrases

The ekphrases in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* closely follow the pattern of those in *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*: the referent of the ekphrases similarly slips between art and nature, the visual art appears life-like, the images it creates are in motion, and the viewer/poet becomes astonished, unsure whether the power of the visual image can be conveyed in words.<sup>9</sup> The first and shortest ekphrastic description in *The Faerie Queene* is of the ivory gate, and its depiction of the story of Jason and Medea, at the entrance to Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, where "natures worke by art can imitate" (II.xii.42.4):

Ye might haue seene the frothy billowes fry  
 Vnder the ship, as thorough them she went,  
 That seemd the waues were into yuory,  
 Or yuory into the waues were sent;  
 . . . . .

All this and more might in that goodly gate  
 Be red; that euer open stood to all,  
 Which thether came (45.1-4, 46.1-3).

Stanza 45 invites the reader to share the position of spectator with Guyon and the poet ("Ye might haue seene"), yet the end of the ekphrasis highlights the fact that more can be seen than the verse expresses ("All this and more might in that

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<sup>9</sup> Little has been written on the influence of the *Hypnerotomachi Poliphili* or Dallington's 1599 translation on Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. See *SEnc* 385-6; Gent's introduction to Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia* vi-xvii; Sorelius; Cummings "A Note." On the 1562 French translation as a source for Leicester's Kenilworth entertainments, see Elizabeth Woodhouse.



goodly gate / Be red"). In the verb "Be red," the verbal and the visual arts are merged, as they are when the poet tells us that the story of Jason and Medea are "ywritt" on the ivory gate (44.4).

There is similar confusion in the material of the gate: moving waves seem to be ivory, or ivory seems to be moving waves. Spenser's ekphrasis does not make clear which is true, but the ambiguity highlights the duality between the materiality and mobility of the ekphrastic image: the gate *seems* to be wrought of ivory that can move. This ivory both is and is not a referent in the physical world.<sup>10</sup> Spenser's ekphrastic descriptions remind us of the artist's materials (thread, metal, stone) as they supersede in words precisely what the visual artist can do with these materials. This ekphrastic materiality mirrors what Christopher Burlinson describes as Spenser's representation of material objects in general:

we come to find material excess, material intrusions, throughout the poem, along with a descriptive method that, conversely, evades material specificity, that refuses to allow us to see the poem as a straight-forward description or transformation of the sixteenth-century world" (6).

"Images in the poem," he goes on to argue, "[are] fragmented; their contact with the physical world fluctuates" (15). Similarly, Spenser's ekphrasis provides a fluctuating representation of the materiality of art.

Moreover, such fluctuation and fragmentation arises when there is

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<sup>10</sup> Page duBois writes: "How can these substances, ivory and water, be mistaken for each other? The moving and static, too, are held together in the two lines. The paradoxical nature of plastic art is emphasized; it represents falsely the material of the world, both through illusion and through its inability to show true change, which cannot be fixed" (76).

slippage between the proximity of images in the visual art and the chronology of events in the verbal representation. In the opening canto to Book III, as they pass through rooms in Malecasta's Castle Joyeous, the "stranger knights," including Britomart and Redcrosse, wonder at "the image of superfluous riotize" they see on a tapestry wall-hanging, and it is no wonder why (III.i.33). The story of Venus and Adonis depicted by the four-panelled tapestry pushes the parameters of visual art, as the ekphrastic description of what the knights see propels what should be a static image into motion.<sup>11</sup> Venus is "Now making girlonds," "Now leading him into a secret shade" (III.i.35), which could simply suggest that the four panels of the tapestry are meant to be read in order as a pictorial narrative unfolding through a series of still images.<sup>12</sup> Yet the subjunctive verb tenses ("she ouer him *would* spred," "she *would* search") and the permanence of her "endless mone" as she "euermore / [. . .] wipes away the gore" (III.i.36, 38) reminds the reader that the story repeats each time the tapestry is viewed. Thompson argues that "endless" and "euermore" suggest "an impression of stasis rather than activity" ("Spenser's" 27), but as Colin Burrow points out, the "repeated 'Now' followed by timeless participles ['making,' 'leading'] suggests not a listed sequence but a conflation of different actions into a single timeless present" ("Original

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<sup>11</sup> On Spenser's tapestry descriptions as influenced by real-life Elizabethan tapestries as well as by literary precedents in classical and medieval poetry, see Hard.

<sup>12</sup> On continuous narration in visual art, see Fowler *Renaissance Realism* 20-24; Andrews.

Fictions” 108).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the phrase “Now leading” introduces two separate possibilities which branch the linear narrative: “him to sleepe she gently would perswade, / Or bathe him in a fountain by some couert glade” (35.8-9). Are both possibilities present on the tapestry, or is the poetic description showcasing the ability of the verbal arts to represent contingencies and hypothetical situations? Even more of a challenge for the art of tapestry is the depiction of the scene in which “She oft and oft aduiz’d him to refraine / From chase of greater beasts” (37.6-7): to create such an image would require the use of flashbacks, repetition, and sound. Instead, Spenser’s ekphrasis re-weaves an assortment of woven images into a “single timeless present” in which Venus is both eternally wooing and eternally mourning Adonis, and emphasizes the motion and transformation implicit but impossible to depict in the frozen images on the tapestry.

Spenser ends his ekphrastic description of the Venus and Adonis tapestry in the Castle Joyeous with the affirmation that “in that cloth was wrought, as if it liuely grew,” the flower into which Aeneas was transformed (III.i.38.9). Here Spenser distinguishes between the materiality of the tapestry (it is “wrought,” made by an artist’s hand) and its realistic life and motion (“as if it liuely grew”). This duality appears also in the previous example of the ivory gate: before we are told that the carved waves appear to be foaming and frothing as the ship cuts through them, Spenser introduces the gate as “*wrought* of substaunce light”

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<sup>13</sup> For a different view, see Grogan: Jane Grogan argues that Spenser uses such narrative details and deictics to help “the reader to re-create the tapestry in his or her mind” (“So liuely” 172), and that this tapestry description is the “exception” in *The Faerie Queene*, where the rest of the ekphrases are “unimaginable” (“So liuely” 171).

(II.xii.43.8). Each of Spenser's ekphrases contains a variation of these two details: the work of art described as so perfectly "wrought" as to appear life-like (e.g., ivory seems to transform into the actual waves it depicts), and the scene represented in the visual art described dynamically, as if it were actions unfolding in time.

Spenser's *Muiopotmos: or The Fate of the Butterflie* provides a concise example of how Renaissance poets maintained, if not amplified, the wonder of the viewer depicted in ancient ekphrasis, not least because of the serendipitous English verb "astony." *Muiopotmos* takes the form of an epyllion, or a minor epic, that elusive, "experimental" genre which seeks "to compress the qualities of the *Metamorphoses* into [a] short form" (*SEnc* 523). Although a short epic about a butterfly trapped and killed by a spider superficially suggests a parody of Virgilian epic, *Muiopotmos*, like the rest of Spenser's *Complaints* volume, meditates on ruinous mutability and the vanity of earthly life. It also demonstrates that the oscillation between motion and stasis, which is such a key feature of classical ekphrasis, is also a vital feature of epic, significant enough to warrant inclusion in the genre's compressed form.<sup>14</sup>

Ekphrasis is a central feature of *Muiopotmos*, both literally (a retelling of the story of Arachne and the tapestry weaving contest occurs at lines 265-352) and thematically. The scene of the butterfly Clarion taking up arms alludes to classical ekphrases: his breastplate is "No lesse than that, which *Vulcane* made to shield / *Achilles* life from fate of *Troyan* field" (63-4), and his shiny wings are "Painted with

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<sup>14</sup> On the metamorphic features of minor epic, see Hulse *Metamorphic*, esp. chapters 2 (on the minor epic as a genre) and 6 (on Spenser's minor epics, including *Muiopotmos*).

thousand colours, passing farre / All Painters skill” (90-91). However, Spenser reserves the extended ekphrastic passage for the genealogy of the spider Aragnoll and the history of spiders’ ancient grudge against butterflies. Aragnoll is the son of Arachne, that “presumptuous Damzel [who] rashly dar’d” to challenge Pallas Athena (269), and Spenser includes the story of their weaving contest from *Metamorphoses* 6, with several major changes: Arachne’s tapestry is described first, she weaves only a single tale (that of Jove and Europa), and Athena’s tapestry depicting the council of the gods contains a butterfly so lifelike that upon seeing it, Arachne realizes she has lost the contest and in her shock she is “dismayd,” transformed by her own “poysonous rancor” into a spider (341-43).

Spenser’s ekphrastic description of the weaving contest contains all the elements inherited from the descriptions of tactile art in classical epics – lifelikeness, motion, materiality, and astonishment – and, since in this episode Arachne and Pallas Athena are both artists, their creation reflects the work of Spenser and of his Ovidian source. Like Spenser’s ekphrases in *The Faerie Queene*, his description of Arachne’s tapestry goes beyond assertions of lifelikeness (“so lively seene, / That it true Sea and true Bull ye would weene”) to describe outright motion (Europa “in everie member shooke” [. . .] “Then gan she greatly to lament and weepe”) (277-88).<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Pallas Athena’s tapestry includes

a Butterflie,  
With excellent device and wondrous slight,  
Fluttring among the Olives wantonly,

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<sup>15</sup> On these and other Spenserian inventive additions to the Ovidian myth, see Barkan *Gods* 203-4.

That seem'd to live, so like it was in sight:  
 The velvet nap which on his wings doth lie,  
 The silken downe with which his backe is dight,  
 His broad outstretched hornes, his hayrie thies,  
 His glorious colours, and his glistering eies. (329-337)

Here again, Spenser's ekphrasis draws attention to the lifelikeness of the butterfly, its motion, and its materiality ("excellent device and wondrous slight"). With a nod to Homeric artisanal puns, the butterfly's "velvet nap," "silken downe," and "glorious colours" refer to both the tapestry's materials and its subject. As Hulse observes, it is precisely these artistic details which ensure "the victory of the goddess is beyond question" (*Metamorphic* 257).

Although in Ovid's version, Arachne appears to win the contest and is transformed by Minerva's envious anger, in *Muiopotmos*, she immediately recognizes her defeat when she sees Minerva's "workmanship so rare":

She stood astonied long, ne ought gainesaid,  
 And with fast fixed eyes on her did stare,  
 And by her silence, signe of one dismaid,  
 The victorie did yeeld her as her share:  
 Yet she did inly fret, and felly burne,  
 And all her blood to poysonous rancor turne.  
  
 That shortly from the shape of womanhed,  
 Such as she was, when *Pallas* she attempted,  
 She grew to hideous shape of dryrihed,  
 Pined with grieve of folly late repented:  
 Eftsoones her white streight legs were altered  
 To crooked crawling shankes, of marrowe emptied,  
 And her faire face to fowle and loathsome hewe

And her fine corpses to a bag of venim grewe. (337-52)

Arachne's "astoni[ment]" is the cause of her metamorphosis; first her eyes are "fast fixed," and then her body becomes trapped in its new form, just as Astyages' wonder at the lifelikeness of Acontus precipitates his own metamorphosis. From Ovid, Spenser has learned that "statuesque reciprocity" can also be a curse; as Hardie explains, such metamorphoses are "a dreadful warning of the consequences of too intense an identification with a work of art or literature: once inside, you may never escape" (181). Or, in Burrow's terms, "Metamorphosis stops you dead" ("Spenser and Classical Traditions" 229). Ovid provides Spenser with an alternative model for artistic permanence, but we must wait and read Milton to discover its full implications.

Finally, the lifelikeness and motion of Pallas Athena's butterfly reflects back on Spenser's creation of an equally lifelike and mobile butterfly: the description of the tapestry reminds readers of Spenser's description of Clarion himself (57-90). The repetition of the word "workmanship" should remind readers that they are trapped in a finely wrought web of Spenser's own weaving; all is the work of a craftsman, from the "workmanship of heavens hight" (45), to Arachne's "prais-worthie workmanship" (268), to Minerva's tapestry "mastered with workmanship so rare" (338), to Aragnoll's web, which surpasses "anie skil'd in workmanship embost" (365), and is thus the true winner of the weaving contest. The identification of the woven butterfly with the textual butterfly emphasizes their congruence: they both can move because they are both, ultimately, created by words. In *Muiopotmos*, Spenser's imitation of the lifelikeness

and liveliness (*enargeia* and *energeia*) found in classical descriptions serves to accentuate the power of the verbal arts over the visual. The qualities of vividness and vitality which were taught as rhetorical tools expand in Spenser's poetry to exemplify an entire poetics of motion.

### **Ekphrasis in the House of Busirane**

As in *Muiopotmos*, Spenser's House of Busirane episode also features a retelling of Arachne's tapestries from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; yet instead of reimagining the weaving contest itself, Spenser places Arachne's finished tapestries on Busirane's walls. Spenser's description of these tapestries echoes many of the surprising features present in Malecasta's Venus and Adonis tapestries. Just as the material cues of the weaver's "cunning hand" and the "wrought" nature of the "cloth" bookend the description of the tapestry which depicts the images in motion (III.i.34.3, 38.9), so too does the description of Busirane's tapestries begin with the materiality of the cloth ("Wouen with gold and silke so close and nere") and end describing the tapestry's border (III.xi.28.3, 46.6-8).<sup>16</sup> The description of the tapestry images, however, oscillates between the stasis of the tactile art of tapestry (e.g. "*Phoebus*, in thy colours bright / Wast there envouen," "Next vnto him was *Neptune* pictured" [III.xi.36.1-2, 40.1]) and the motion of metamorphosis (Jove "leauing heavens kingdome, here did roue / In straunge disguise [. . .] Now like a Ram [. . .] Now like a Bull" [III.xi.30]).

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<sup>16</sup> Burlinson suggests the description of the tapestries as a "heap" (III.xi.46.2) provides clues as to the materiality and placement of the tapestries in the room (50-51, 60).



Throughout the description of the scenes depicted in the tapestry, Spenser's narration is temporal rather than visual, a sequential and gradual unfolding of the stories which must be imposed onto the images themselves. The repetition of the word "Next," which is a spatial as well as a temporal marker, moves the reader through the metamorphoses of Phoebus, Neptune, Saturn, Bacchus and Mars. Yet there is no chronology nor causation suggested by the ordering of the metamorphoses. Instead, like the art pieces that contain them, the images are "heap'd together [ . . . ] / And mingled" (III.xi.46.2-3). By exceeding the tapestry's potential for narrative representation, Spenser's ekphrasis circumvents this form of art and thus effectively describes the poem that inspired it. In other words, Spenser's ekphrastic descriptions of the tapestries depend more upon the classical poem and myths that stand behind them than on the visual and tactile art itself. The relationship between the moving images on the tapestry and the statue of Cupid at the end of the room, a solid creation "Of massy gold," imitates the fundamental Ovidian tension between motion and stasis in metamorphoses. As Andrew Escobedo suggests, "Spenser presents Cupid as a stone statue at this point to signal the threat of daemonic compulsion: desire can turn you into stone" ("Daemonic Lovers" 219). Renaissance poets found in the ekphrastic poetics of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which itself literalized the motion and stasis found in Homer's and Virgil's representations of art, an ideal model for their own ekphrastic descriptions.

The tapestries in the House of Busirane demonstrate the Ovidian underpinning of Renaissance ekphrasis. As Barkan suggests, "[i]n every way this

episode is a locus of metamorphosis” (*Gods* 234). Not only do the tapestries feature metamorphic tales, but they also yoke material and subject together in a sinister artisanal pun which echoes Ovid’s ekphrastic poetics. Such an example of “representational friction” appears in Spenser’s initial description of the tapestries:

Wouen with gold and silke so close and nere,  
That the rich metal lurked priuily,  
As faining to be hidd from enuious eye;  
Yet here, and there, and euery where vnwares  
It shewd it selfe, and shone vnwillingly;  
Like to a discolourd Snake, whose hidden snares  
Through the greene gras his long bright burnisht back declares. (3.11.28)

The gold and silk of the tapestry are “*like* to a discolourd Snake”; this simile suggests a different effect of the materiality of the art than the gold churned to black earth on Achilles’ shield. Nevertheless, within the larger context of the canto, the gold and silk slip between the referent and the representational medium. Certainly, the “greene gras” of the simile is also a feature of the tapestry, as the details of Leda resting in a bed of daffodils, Ganymede snatched from Ida hill, and the transformation of Hyacinth and Coronis into pansies and briars all suggest.

Moreover, snakes *do* appear elsewhere in the canto. The snake-like threads glinting through the tapestry despite their feigned concealment link the tapestry to the “Hatefull hellish Snake [. . .] from balefull house of *Proserpine*” which opens the canto (III.xi.1.1-2). This description of “Fowle Gealosy” as a snake links this

canto to the preceding one, which ends with the metamorphosis of Malbecco.<sup>17</sup> It is the “Hatefull hellish Snake” that is on display in the images of dark, violent sexuality on the tapestries: they depict “all *Cupids* warres [. . .] / And cruell battailes, which he whilome fought / Gainst all the Gods,” rather than any episode of mutual love from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (III.xi.29.5-7).<sup>18</sup> The images of metamorphoses and rape on the tapestries are created by these secret threads: the gold and silk badly hidden just beneath the surface of the weaving portray Jove, Neptune, and Saturn, their divinity scarcely hidden beneath the forms of rams, bulls, golden showers, swans, satyrs, vines, and stars. Deceptive threads create images recounting tales “of such deceit” (31.6) which in turn deceive the viewer (46.9).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, although the effect of the gold and silk threads is “Like to a discolourd Snake,” a snake itself is woven into the tapestry: Jove appears “like a Serpent to the *Thracian* mayd” (35.4). This detail, present also in Ovid’s account of Arachne’s tapestry (6.114), is even more troubling than the other episodes depicted in the tapestries, as the Thracian maid refers to Proserpina, the daughter of Jove.<sup>20</sup> Such an association between Proserpina and a snake connects the tapestry to the image of the “Hatefull hellish Snake” with which the canto

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<sup>17</sup> On the transformation of Malbecco into “Gelosy” as an imitation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* while also an example of Spenser’s “original fictions,” see Burrow, “Original Fictions.”

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Fowler *Renaissance* 88-9.

<sup>19</sup> For a reading of the *enargeia* in Spenser’s tapestry ekphrases in the context of the sexual challenges to Britomart as the Knight of Chastity, and Spenser’s didactic poetics, see Grogan, *Exemplary Spenser* 121-26.

<sup>20</sup> McKeown (58) and Rappaport both read the story of Myrrha as a subtext for Britomart’s exposure to ekphrasis in Book III.

opened.

Spenser's artisanal pun is subtle: the snakelike threads both depict a snake and reflect, in tactile form, the deceitful, secret, and cruel machinations of Busirane's "idle shewes" and "false charmes" (III.xii.29.9). The metamorphic artisanal pun which in classical epic turns bronze into bronze-clad soldiers, becomes, in Spenser's figure of snakelike threads depicting snakes, inextricably woven into the deceptive nature of the art itself. The snake details of the tapestry also anticipate the "wounded Dragon" at the base of the statue of Cupid, "Whose hideous tayle his lefte foot did enfold" (48.6-7).<sup>21</sup> Mortals are vulnerable to the deceitful ravishment of the gods, shown by the prevalence of the snake image on the tapestry; but the gods are ultimately subject to the power of Cupid, who, in the absence of Jove "did thrust into his throne, / And scoffing, thus vnto his mother sayd, / Lo now the heuens obey to me alone" (35.6-8).

A further relationship emerges between the first room (with its tapestries and statue of Cupid) and the second room (with its golden antique "anticks" and the Masque of Cupid) when we read them as Spenser's engagement with the convention of *pro ommatōn* underlying the rhetoric of ekphrasis. With phrases such as "ye mote have liuely scene / The God himself rending his golden heare" (37.6-7), Spenser attempts to mimic Britomart's own experience of viewing the rooms with her "busie eye" for the reader (50.1). As we have seen from the rhetoric of ekphrasis in classical epic, claims to motion and lifelikeness (or *energeia* and *enargeia*) are the means by which images can be brought before the eyes. Motion is

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<sup>21</sup> See Berger 177.

present in ekphrasis in order to ensure the immediacy of the rhetorical effect. When Spenser reassures his reader that images “in that faire arras [were] most lively writ” (39.9), such as Europa, who “Did liuely seem to tremble” (30.8), he is attempting to emulate for readers of ekphrasis an identical response to that of hearing an ekphrasis. As Nikolaos teaches in his *Progymnasmata* text, *enargeia* (vividness) “tries to make the listeners into spectators [*theatas*]” (translated in Webb *Ekphrasis* 203-4).<sup>22</sup> Within the text, Britomart is already a spectator (although her relationship to the describer of the art is an ambiguous one), but the reader has more in common with the audience of an orator than with the viewer of the tapestry. As Britomart moves from one room to the next, the lifelikeness of the images increases: two-dimensional woven figures give way to statues and grotesques, yet still Britomart sees no “liuing creature” (55.2), until the final door of Busirane’s house flies open “And forth yssewd, as on the readie flore / Of some Theatre, a graue personage, / [. . .] fit for tragicke Stage” (III.xii.3.9).<sup>23</sup> The Masque of Cupid, therefore, performs a similar function to what Barkan sees in the Elizabethan stage generally, where “the central dream of all ekphrasis can finally be realized, that is, that the work of art is so real it could *almost* come to life. Theater removes the *almost*” (“Making” 343).

As Britomart moves through the House of Busirane, the reader

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<sup>22</sup> On this theatrical metaphor in classical ekphrasis, see Webb *Ekphrasis* 52-54, 104 (for examples in Quintilian).

<sup>23</sup> In his article “Busirane” in *SEnc*, Thomas Hyde writes that “Busirane’s artifices increase in verisimilitude, historical proximity, and inwardness. The tapestries depict the gods in their ‘divine resemblance wondrous lyke,’ though in two dimensions; the reliefs, adding a third dimension, are wrought ‘as they living were.’ The masque brings a dramatic mode, the most lifelike of all” (124).

experiences an increased literalization of the conventions of visuality underpinning classical ekphrasis (which survived in the epic tradition, even if the rhetorical theory of classical ekphrasis became obscure).<sup>24</sup> The assurance “ye mote have liuely seene” from the tapestries becomes actualized in the masque. Moreover, just as Quintilian called the mental images wrought by *enargeia* “*phantasiai*,” so are the images in the masque compared to “phantasies / In wauering wemens witt” (III.xii.26.4).<sup>25</sup> Judith Anderson reads the House of Busirane as a “House of Rhetoric” where “*abusio*, a Renaissance term for catachresis, a wrenched or extravagant use of metaphor [. . .] reigns, or ‘ranes,’ supreme” (133), and she supports this position with specific reference to Spenser’s tapestry ekphrases. I argue that the rhetorical conventions of ancient ekphrasis underlie Spenser’s depictions of visual art in *The Faerie Queene* and elsewhere. What motion in these descriptions of visual art ultimately demonstrates is that for Renaissance ekphrasis, the ancient and the modern definitions cannot be easily separated.

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<sup>24</sup> The prevalence of these conventions is evident in Spenser’s proem to Book III: “formd so liuely” (1.5), “liuing art” (1.9, 2.1), “life-resembling pencil” (2.2), “liuing colours” (4.1), “more liuely, or more trew” (4.3), “And with the *wonder* of her beames bright, / My *sences lulled* are in slomber of delight” (4.8-9). Hazard argues “Renaissance rhetorics are a rich lode for” the language of liveliness. “Not only do they praise the same vivid qualities in common, they also echo each other’s examples and even their phraseology, allowing us to trace the stream of their argument to its common source in classical rhetoric” (408).

<sup>25</sup> Quintilian *Inst. Ora.* 6.2.29-30. Obviously, this is not a positive comparison, and it suggests that the masque is a product of Britomart’s own mind, but Spenser’s use of the term “phantasie” suggests that the masque has a similar effect on the viewer as *enargeia* does on the hearer/reader. On the language of *phantasia* in ekphrasis connected to memory and absence, see Webb, *Ekphrasis* 107-30; Hardie, *Ovid’s* 5, 10-11.

When read against the context of classical ekphrasis, Britomart's response of astonishment to the art she sees is inevitable, and a further example of the oscillation between motion and stillness which structures the whole episode. Her responses to the first and second room are nearly identical:

That wondrous sight faire *Britomart* amazd,  
 Ne seeing could her wonder satisfie,  
 But euermore and more vpon it gazd,  
 The whiles the passing brightnes her fraile senses dazd.  
 . . . . .

The warlike Mayd beholding earnestly  
 The goodly ordinaunce of this rich Place,  
 Did greatly wonder, ne could satisfy  
 Her greedy eyes with gazing a long space (III.xii.49.6-9, 53.1-4).

As we have seen, Britomart's static posture of aesthetic response, her *stupore*, which Lee Patterson translates as an "entranced gaze," is a significant feature of the ekphrastic convention in epic poetry and one way by which motion and stasis mutually constitute their poetic representations (458).<sup>26</sup> Addressing Aeneas's response to the Carthage murals in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Patterson argues that it is in ekphrasis, "in the pictures that solicit his eye only to deaden his attention, that paradoxically resides a saving knowledge. The pictures interpret as well as represent the past, and in their interpretation provide and salutary premonition of the future" (256). Critics have tended to agree with Patterson's emphasis on vision and knowledge, focusing on the House of Busirane and the art on its walls

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<sup>26</sup> See also Thompson, "Spenser's" 28.

as a “site of interpretive possibilities” (McKeown 59). In his survey of ekphrasis in Virgil, Chaucer, and Spenser, John Watkins notes that in all three, the “discovery of the ekphrasis marks a point of hermeneutic crisis,” where the viewer’s abilities as a reader are tested (353). The presence of motion in what is assumed to be motionless art subverts any “attempt to impose stable meaning on an image” (McKeown 51). Subsequently, critics such as Grogan have tended to read the House of Busirane as a test of Britomart’s abilities both as a reader and as the knight of Chastity (“So liuely”; *Exemplary* 121-26). Certainly, encountering Ovidian imagery of Cupid’s wars and of human suffering at the whims and desires of the gods is a true test for such a Christian knight. However, Britomart’s response of stasis is also Spenser’s own commentary on Ovid’s model for artistic permanence with which he closes his *Metamorphoses*. We must first spy on Milton reading Shakespeare in order to discern the monumental impulse that lies behind motion and stillness in ekphrasis.

### **The Motion of Monuments in Milton’s “On Shakespeare”**

Milton’s first published work was an epitaph to William Shakespeare, printed with the prefatory material in the 1632 Second Folio of Shakespeare’s works:

What needs my Shakespeare for his honored bones  
To labor of an age in piled stones,  
Or that his hallowed relics should be hid  
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?  
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,  
What need’st thou such weak witness of thy name?



Thou in our wonder and astonishment  
 Hast built thyself a live-long monument.  
 For, whilst, to the shame of slow-endeavouring art,  
 Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart  
 Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book  
 Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,  
 Then thou our fancy of itself bereaving,  
 Dost make us marble with too much conceiving,  
 And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie  
 That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

Shakespeare has no need for “piled Stones” or “a Star-ypointing *Pyramid*,” Milton’s epitaph for him claims, when his book provides him with “a live-long Monument” for which “Kings [. . .] would wish to die” (2, 4, 8, 16). Here Milton adopts the trope of the funeral monument, or the “monument topos,” as Marlin E. Blaine has called it: the commonplace assertion that the deceased’s life or art has created a monument more lasting than stone or marble. By speaking out on behalf of a deceased poet, or on behalf of one’s own future deceased self, a poet imagines a body of work as a “living stone,” in Herrick’s phrase, which is “Ne’er to be thrown / Down, envious time, by thee” (“His Poetry His Pillar” 17-20). Even frozen marble is subject to the ravages of time, but the flowing lines of “marble verse” have a permanence that transcends such decay (Herrick “On Himself” 3). Ovid’s own concern with monumentality stands behind this convention: when Perseus declares Phineas to be “a monument that always will endure,” the truth to his claim lies in Ovid’s assurance that “no wrath of Jove / nor fire nor sword nor time, which would erode all things, has power to blot out

this poem,” rather than in a marble statue still standing (5.227, 15.871). “On Shakespeare” mirrors the oscillation between motion and stillness that is common to Renaissance ekphrasis: motion exists in the art object, while stillness features in the aesthetic response. Milton’s poem *is* an ekphrasis, and it also comments helpfully on the textual transmission of the conventions of ekphrasis. Moreover, Milton’s exploration of the central tension between a static body and a dynamic mind in “On Shakespeare” suggests an alternative reading of Britomart’s own astonishment in the House of Busirane.

Milton’s epitaph stands out from the other epitaphs to Shakespeare in the First and Second Folios precisely because it does not conform completely to the monument topos. First, Milton locates Shakespeare’s lasting monument not in his works but in his *readers*, whose reading occasions the “wonder and astonishment” which transforms them into “marble” and “sepulchre[s],” a literal *astoniment*. Second, Milton’s epitaph does not depend upon a corresponding mutability topos, the awareness that neither stone nor marble can be permanent markers of fame, safe from the corrupting destruction of indiscriminate time. For instance, Milton describes the “piled Stones” as a “weak witness.” The weakness of stone hints at the familiar mutability topos so often incorporated into the monument topos, but Milton overturns expectations by instead invoking the forensic sense of “weak” as “unconvincing evidence.”<sup>27</sup> Stones and pyramids make ineffective monuments not because they are fallible and subject to decay, but because they are unreliable memorials to one who is the “son of memory, [and] great heir of

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<sup>27</sup> OED 13.b, citing this verse.

Fame.” They form only a “weak witness” to Shakespeare’s name, particularly when compared to the “pomp” inherent in the “live-long monument” of his readers’ bodies.

In the mutability topos, mutability is most often connoted by its kinetic properties, the flux and ceaseless motion that finds their antidote only in the eventual cessation of change. Shakespeare’s sonnets, which themselves often invoke the mutability topos within the monument topos, describe time as “never-resting” (5.5) and a “bloody tyrant” (16.2) who makes “thievish progress” (77.8) with a “swift foot” (19.6, 65.11) and an “injurious hand” (63.2). Ovid imagines his verse safe from fire, sword, and time “which would erode all things” (15.872). Leonard Digges’s epitaph in the First Folio repeats what “Naso said,” and imagines a future time when Shakespeare’s monument in Stratford will be “rent” and “dissolve[d],” but his name and book will make him “look / Fresh to all Ages” and “live eternally” (11, 3-7, 22). Unlike Digges, Milton never intimates that stones will turn to dust or that pyramids will crumble. Neither does Milton vilify time and change in his monument topos. Instead, even as Milton rejects the mutability topos with its pessimism and despair, he recasts its central feature, the oscillation between movement and stillness, as the model of negotiation between text and readers that results in their monumentalization. Shakespeare’s verse must “flow” in order to astonish; the reader’s heart must be still enough to take a “deep impression,” yet must continue to beat in order to be a “*live*-long monument” (emphasis mine).

Shakespeare’s readers transform into monuments by stages, and Milton’s

description echoes Ovid's accounts of metamorphoses. Just as Daphne's limbs, then skin, then hair, then arms, then finally feet are "gird[ed]" and "held fast" (1.549-554), so too are readers' hearts first engraved "with deep impression" by the "flow" of Shakespeare's "Delphick" and "easy" verses. Only then does the excess of "too much conceiving" make them "Marble." The value Milton attributes to stillness has been a point of contention among the poem's readers. As John Guillory argues, "the poem works toward its climax by opposing the fluid motion of Shakespeare's verse to the condition of stasis he induces in his hearers" (*Poetic Authority* 19). But as Paul Stevens has noted, Guillory errs in his reading of the hearers' stasis as total, debilitating, and "morally suspect" (Guillory 19). Milton's human monuments should be read against his instructions to "divinest Melancholy," that "pensive Nun" with a "rapt soul": "There held in holy passion still, / Forget thy self to Marble, till / With a sad Leaden downward cast, / Thou fix [thine eyes] on the earth as fast" (12, 31, 40-44). Stevens reads Milton's two human-to-marble metamorphoses not as stasis but as *ex stasis*, intense contemplation resulting in quasi-religious ecstasy (383). In the act of reading, then, the oscillation between motion and stillness contracts into the human body, where a marble exterior enshrines an active mind at work, just as Daphne still has a "heart that beats beneath [her] new-made bark" (1.554).

It is significant that Milton changed the phrase "lasting monument" in line 8 to "live-long monument" after the 1632 printing: such a change emphasizes that the stillness present in "On Shakespeare" cannot be the result of "paralyzing magic" (Guillory 19), but rather is everywhere "imaginative activity" (Stevens

384), entirely dependent upon the *life* of future readers, especially those not yet born. Critics have observed that Milton's and Jonson's epitaphs take cues from Shakespeare's poetry and plays. Leontes's cry in *The Winter's Tale*, "does not the stone rebuke me / For being more stone than it" (5.3.37-8), voices the interplay between one inwardly and one outwardly enmarbled.<sup>28</sup> Shakespeare's own use of the monument topos moves beyond Horace's *monumentum aere perennius* ("a monument more lasting than bronze," *Odes* 3.30), or the sepulchral epitaph "I am the tomb of famous Glaucæ,"<sup>29</sup> where the monumental status of the object is emphasized and where any participation on the part of the reader or observer is only implied or entirely absent. Milton derives the phrase "live-long monument" from Shakespeare's own sense that any permanence his work possesses, particularly his sonnets, is entirely dependent upon its transaction with future living readers, its status as a "living record" (*Sonnets* 55.8). Shakespeare's most extended consideration of this negotiation between texts and future readers is Sonnet 81, where the monumental verse becomes a living monument when it is "rehearse[d]" and given "breath" from the "mouths of men" not yet born, so that the young man "still shall live" (11-14). Certainly "still" is meant here to be read in both its senses: the young man is both unmoving in death and continuing to live *as long as* Shakespeare's verse is read and enacted.

Such emphasis on speech unites the monument topos to prosopopoeia, which is "the bestowing of a voice upon a mute object," a rhetorical trope often

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<sup>28</sup> See Blaine; Barkan, *Unearthing* xxiv-v; Lanier.

<sup>29</sup> An epigram of Theocritus, quoted in Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 43.

used in sepulchral epitaphs (Barkan “Making” 332). Moreover, it “recall[s] the genealogical link between ekphrasis and sepulchral epigrams” (Heffernan “Ekphrasis” 302). Milton’s “On Shakespeare” is a pseudo-inscriptional epitaph, engraved not on a funeral monument but rather prefaced to a monumental book.<sup>30</sup> It is not affixed to a monument or a representational sculpture, nor does it describe an existing or an imagined monument in detail, and it does not speak for the deceased Shakespeare, but rather speaks *to* him (“What need’st *thou* such weak witnes of *thy* name?” emphasis added). Moreover, Milton’s epitaph does not engage in the conventional ekphrastic debate between the verbal and visual arts; it plainly asserts the superiority of readers’ hearts over grand royal tombs, yet without touting the triumph of one art over the other. Hence Milton’s epitaph contrasts with Jonson’s overtly ekphrastic prefatory poem in Shakespeare’s Second Folio, “To the Reader,” which accompanies the Droeshout portrait. In Jonson’s poem, Shakespeare’s person has become the site of a struggle between the arts over who can best represent him, a struggle made more urgent by the reality of his death, stressed by the pun on the Droeshout portraitist as “the graver” (3). Although Milton’s epitaph eschews the conventions of ekphrasis adopted by Jonson’s poem, both poems move towards the same conclusion. Just as Jonson implores the reader to “look / Not on his picture, but his book” (9-10), so does Milton locate Shakespeare’s true monument in those who turn their eyes to “the leaves of thy unvalu’d Book.”

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<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of “pseudo-inscriptional epitaphs” which took the form on the page of “various monumental shapes, including pyramids, pillars, and altar-tombs,” see Scodel 44; on “monumental books,” see Chernaik.

Nevertheless, Milton's "On Shakespeare" remains fundamentally ekphrastic. First, it accords with Krieger's definition of ekphrasis, where the "poem takes on the 'still' elements of plastic form which we normally attribute to the spatial arts" (Krieger "Ekphrastic Principle" 107). Milton's epitaph announces the true monument, thereby producing ekphrastic spatiality: the epitaph itself, the monumental book it prefaces, and the reader each in turn occupy the space, the shape, and the stillness of the monument. Second, as a "verbal representation of graphic representation" (Heffernan *Museum* 3), Milton's epitaph emerges as an ekphrasis not of an actual sepulchre, marble monument, or funereal statue, but rather of the reader-as-monument, Shakespeare's literary audience, marmoreal in astonishment. Like so many other Renaissance ekphrases, Milton's epitaph depicts a metamorphosis, a reader turned to stone by the power of art.

Just as Spenser's ekphrases of tapestries are less a representation of the tapestries themselves than an engagement with the Ovidian texts they depict, so too can we read Milton's fictional monument as the site for his own engagement with the antecedent Shakespeare. Ekphrasis is acutely aware of the parameters of the art it describes. Spenser's tapestry ekphrases point to their textual source precisely because the visual art of weaving cannot display the movement present in Spenser's description. Similarly, Milton's ekphrasis of Shakespeare's statue-readers engages with the poetic source of their living marmorization; the trope of "astoniment" and the metaphor of the living monument are both favoured by Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale* and elsewhere. Though "On Shakespeare" describes readers using the metaphor of the funeral monument, sculptural art

alone cannot achieve the status of a “*live*-long monument.” This only arises if the ekphrasis continually points beyond itself to Shakespeare’s poetic art that precedes it. “On Shakespeare” transmits Milton’s response as a reader to Shakespeare’s work. The poem appears at the doorway to Shakespeare’s canon, and the focal ekphrasis holds up a mirror to readers in anticipation of their imminent encounter with the monumental text. What Milton has experienced in his own encounter with Shakespeare is reflected to future readers through ekphrasis.

“On Shakespeare” clarifies that “too much conceiving” causes the static posture of “wonder and astonishment” which is a frequent response to art from Homer onwards. This internal tension between a motionless body and a mobile mind explicates elements of ekphrasis that are latent elsewhere: for instance, Britomart’s amazed “gazing a long space” receives little explanation beyond her desire to “satisfy / Her greedy eyes” (*Faerie Queene* III.xi.53.3-4, cf. *Aen.* 1.464 “animum [. . .] pascit”), although critics have interpreted her immobility as desire (Grogan, “*Enargeia*” 175), “fear” (Oram, “Spenserian Paralysis” 60), “puzzlement” (*SEnc* 124), and even “daemonic possession” (Escobedo, “Daemon Lovers” 220). However, Milton’s verdict that Shakespeare’s art “Dost make us marble with too much conceiving” encourages us to reread this scene with attention to Britomart’s cognitive process behind her stasis, and suggests an alternative reading of Britomart’s experience in the house of Busirane. Britomart’s stasis is paired with evidence of her confusion regarding the signs “*Be bold*” and “*Be not too bold*”: in the first room, “she oft and oft it ouer-red, / Yet could not



find what sence it figured,” while in the second “she muz’d, yet could not construe it” and “though she did bend / Her earnest minde, yet wist not what it might intend” (III.xi.50.5, 54.4, 8-9). In Busirane’s House, the perils of desire are writ large, and every once in awhile the knight of Chastity must pause and be made “marble with too much conceiving” before moving forward.

This reading, which relocates into Britomart’s body the oscillation between motion and stillness that is an inherent ekphrastic response, suggests additionally that the Masque of Cupid is not only a literalization of the *enargeia* and *energeia* inherent in the verbal descriptions of the tapestries, but also a literalization of Britomart’s cognitive response to the tapestry, the externalization of the “phantasies / In wauering wemens witt” (III.xii.26.3-4). The emblematic figures that Britomart sees in the masque are all implicated in the Ovidian tales depicted in the tapestries. Yet Fowler, who argues that “an imaginary performance that Britomart attends must be her imagining,”<sup>31</sup> also suggests that “Britomart’s fantasies draw fearful imagery from anywhere and everywhere: from horrific folk-tales and Humanist marriage-tracts, Ovid’s warfare and Petrarch’s cruel wounds” (*Renaissance Realism* 90-91). If, like the House of Alma, the House of Busirane is an externalization of a mental place, what it dramatizes is the “conceiving” of a mental image, by means either of the persuasive and descriptive art of ekphrasis or of viewing and understanding a visual image.

Moreover, by taking a convention common to the literary depiction of a

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<sup>31</sup> William Oram agrees: “Busirane lives in Britomart’s imagination as well as in Amoret’s” (“Spenserian Paralysis” 60).

viewer's response to visual art (astonishment) and applying it equally to the experience of reading poetry, Milton suggests an equivalent between the two experiences of art.<sup>32</sup> The House of Busirane thus emerges as a site of Spenser's own reading of Ovid. We are prepared for Britomart's response of wonder because it is shared by the narrator of the ekphrasis who points out the "wondrous skill, and sweet wit" of the artist (3.11.32.3) and the "wondrous delight" (34.6) of viewing the art. Recent approaches to the relationship between Spenser and Ovid have sought to refute the longstanding critical consensus that Spenser is primarily a Virgilian poet, whose allusions to Ovidian material serve simply as ornamental diversions or darkly erotic undercurrent to be overcome by virtuous knights. Syrinth Pugh, for example, reads Ovid, rather than Virgil, as the "systematic" model which Spenser's work follow (1). My aims in reading Spenser alongside Homer, Virgil, and Ovid throughout this chapter have borrowed something of Colin Burrow's reading of Spenser as "continuing Ovid's project of making Virgil appear to be trying to be a metamorphic poet" ("Spenser" 228). Motion in Spenser's ekphrases points beyond itself to the Ovidian source text, but also to motion in the *Metamorphoses* as a literalization of elements in earlier epics.

## Conclusions

The goal of ekphrasis in both its ancient and modern definitions is to make an absent object or event present by mimicking the experience of seeing. It

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<sup>32</sup> Milton's epitaph gains much of its efficacy from the fact that the posture it describes – body at rest, mind in motion – is the posture of reading.

is not surprising, then, that Hardie characterizes ekphrasis as an “illusion,” or that Barkan sees it as a “lie” (see fn.8).<sup>33</sup> Insofar as ekphrasis typically describes actions and objects in motion, that effect contributes paradoxically both to the reality of the subject described and its impossibility – how can ivory really trick us into seeing waves? When we look closely at the gates leading into Acrasia’s bower, they are made solely of words. Hardie’s and Barkan’s charge that ekphrasis is deception suggests that it is a fantasy, intangible and immaterial. However, interpreting ekphrasis as simply a textual illusion does not account for the rich and multivalent materiality of ekphrasis in Renaissance poetry. Milton’s “On Shakespeare” suggests an alternative reading. Rather than a “poetics of illusion,” Renaissance ekphrasis is a poetics of monument-making. Monuments, too, are a kind of absent presence: as a memorial of a person, place, or event now past, or as an admonition, they stand as a tangible marker of absence. Spitzer and Heffernan both emphasize the historical connection between ekphrasis and monuments, and the monument topos, like ekphrasis, suggests that the written word can obtain more permanence than marble. “Monument” was a favourite word of Spenser’s: his usage of it covers the much wider semantic range the term

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<sup>33</sup> Hardie writes, “Literary ekphrasis incorporates a double structure of absent presence. At the first level it exploits the power of the visual arts to create an illusion of presence, as the painter or sculptor deceives the beholder into believing that what is represented is really present. At the second level, in a *paragone* between the powers of verbal and visual arts, ekphrasis tests the writer’s powers of *enargeia* in creating a textual illusion of visual images. If the writer is successful, we will ‘see’ the artwork, ‘before our very eyes’, perhaps in an imaginary likeness more lifelike than any actual painting or statue could ever be” (173).

had in the Renaissance,<sup>34</sup> and his preferred spelling “moniment” suggests the similarly evocative terms “admonishment” and “astoniment.” Monuments, Spenser could have learned from the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* as much as from Ovid, cause astonishment, particularly when they are set in motion either by decay or by the magic of art.<sup>35</sup> Ekphrasis creates monuments in motion.

The conclusion to Book Three of *The Faerie Queene* dramatizes ekphrasis as monument-making. Whether the House of Busirane was a mental place, an actual place, or a combination of the two, Britomart’s defeat of Busirane causes the house to crumble at their feet. It is not the danger that dismays Britomart – “she gan perceive the house to quake, [. . .] Yet all that did not her dismaied make” (III.xii.37.1, 3) – but rather the destruction of the art. When she returns to see

those goodly rooms, which erst  
She saw so rich and royally arayd,  
Now vanish utterly, and cleane subverst  
She found, and all their glory quite decayd,  
That sight of such a change her much dismayd. (42.1-5)

For Grogan, details such as Britomart’s dismay at the destruction of Ovidian art are part of Spenser’s larger and complex didactic project: like Milton, Grogan reads Spenser’s method of “fashioning a gentleman” as giving his readers tools “to see and know and yet abstain” (*Exemplary Spenser* 17-18). Yet Spenser’s aims in the closing canto of the 1590 *Faerie Queene* may be more closely aligned to Ovid’s than Grogan’s reading suggests. The two poets share a concern with

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<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., Griffith; van Es, *Spenser’s Forms* 30-36; Lyne 91-93.

<sup>35</sup> On the *Hypnerotomachia* as an influence on Spenser’s and Shakespeare’s poetic motif of the ruin, see Sorelius.

artistic permanence. Ovid ends the *Metamorphosis* with the assurance that his art is safe from the “wrath of Jove,” “fire,” or “sword” (15.871-72), while Spenser ends Book III with a depiction of art destroyed precisely by these dangers: Busirane’s fire-guarded house falls as Britomart “did extend / her sword high over him” (36.8-9). Spenser literalizes the destruction that Ovid is confident to avoid. However, the ekphrastic description of the tapestries and gold statues remains, as does Ovid’s epic, both confirming Shakespeare’s later declaration that “Not marble, nor the *gilded monuments* / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rime” (*Sonnet* 55.1-2, emphasis added). Ovid’s poetics are ekphrastic because they self-consciously confirm the poet’s confidence in his own permanence. As the examples of Zeuxis and Apelles from antiquity show, ekphrasis can sometimes create the sole lasting monument.

In its original version, Book Three ends with a monument (III.xii.45a.1-4). Once Britomart has pondered the ekphrastic images in the House of Busirane, and defeated their tortuous artist, she reunites Scudamore and Amoret, and

Had ye them seene, ye would have surely thought,  
That they had beene that faire Hermaphrodite,  
Which that rich Romane of white marble wrought,  
And in his costly Bath causd to bee site [. . .]. (45a.1-4)

The marble statue of Hermaphrodite has its source in Ovid’s account of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (4.285-388.). After all the Ovidian art has fallen around her, Britomart still refers to the Ovidian tale to make sense of what she sees. The description of the statue uses familiar ekphrastic language: “Had ye them seene” attempts to convey the immediacy of *pro ommatōn*, while “of white marble

wrought” reminds the reader of the statue’s materiality precisely as it attempts to surpass it. Donald Cheney argues that no known source for the statue seems to exist (194), and A.C. Hamilton, in his gloss on this passage, suggests that might be Spenser’s point. The absence of the physical statue does not detract from the ability of the ekphrasis to create a monument. The decay of the physical trace can be preserved by the textual trace. Barkan sees poetry’s impulse for monumentality (seen particularly in Milton’s “On Shakespeare”) as representative of the Renaissance’s discovery, “unearthing,” and reimagining of its own past: “If the inanimate are permitted to speak, then, symmetrically, the living must be turned to stone” (*Unearthing* xxiv-v). This oscillation between motion and stillness in the Renaissance’s engagement with its own past is also the oscillation present in ekphrasis itself, particularly with regards to its Ovidian source texts. In the passage from *The Faerie Queene* which opened Chapter 1, Spenser writes that ancient heroes’ “high intents [. . .] the late world admires for *wondrous moniments*” (III.iii.2.8-9). Through the figure of ekphrasis, Spenser is able to reconcile the monumental nature of Ovid’s epic with the motions of change it contains.

It is perhaps paradoxical that a chapter which began with the representation of motion in Spenser’s epic ends with the Renaissance’s affirmation of poetry’s impulse towards monumentality. However, this is precisely the relationship between motion and stillness that underlies Spenser’s poetic vision. Attention to motion in ekphrasis reveals distinctive elements of the transmission of the ancient epic to the Renaissance. Classical epics provided Renaissance poets with a model, both to imitate and surpass, for how ekphrasis

can represent motion and stillness verbally; how the capacity of ekphrasis for vividness and vitality often includes the poet's or viewer's astonishment at the lifelikeness of the art object; and how the poetics of ekphrasis can transform the art object into a monument.

## Part II

### Plotting a Course: Narrative and Wayfinding

#### Introduction

For eighteen days in July 1575, a Renaissance tapestry sprang to life. On the occasion of Queen Elizabeth's visit, Sir Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, transformed his Kenilworth estate into an Ovidian and Arthurian pageant, complete with the Lady of the Lake, nymphs, sibyls, a Salvage Man, and lovers metamorphosed into trees and shrubbery. As Elizabeth moved through Leicester's artfully constructed landscape, she encountered literal speaking pictures, figures from art and mythology ready with speeches and moral choices fit for a queen.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere is Leonard Barkan's argument that theatre actualizes "the central dream of all ekphrasis" by bringing art to life more true than in the entertainments at places like Kenilworth, Wanstead, and Bisham Abbey where art and audience interact ("Making Pictures" 343). Bruce Smith observes, "[a]s no formal occasion delimits Queen Elizabeth's country-house revels, so, too, no place constricts them" (61). At Kenilworth, players surprised Elizabeth when she

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<sup>1</sup> A letter by Robert Langham (Laneham), published in 1575 provides the most detailed description of the Kenilworth entertainments. Kuin's 1983 edition has a thorough introduction and helpful annotations. Texts of the speeches written by George Gascoigne and others were printed in *The Princelye Pleasures at the Courte at Kenelwoorth* (1576). On the influence of Italianate gardens at Kenilworth and the influence of the Kenilworth entertainments on Spenser's gardens in *The Faerie Queene*, see Leslie, "Spenser"; on spatial approaches to the drama of Elizabeth's entertainments, see Smith, "Landscape with Figures"; on Kenilworth's garden, see Woodhouse, "Kenilworth"; Hunt, *Garden* 104-05; Strong 50-51, 125; on a reconsideration of Robert Langham as the author of the *Letter*, see Goldring, "Authorship"; on the "Oake" in Spenser's "Februarie" representing Leicester (an argument strengthened by the fact that *Deepdesire*, played by Leicester, was metamorphosed into an oak during one of the Kenilworth entertainments), see McLane. On the politics of Kenilworth, see Frye, *Elizabeth I* 56-96.



arrived, went for a walk, finished a meal, or went on a hunt. The drama could be unpredictable: when George Gascoigne, dressed as the Salvage Man, broke his oaken staff and “cast the top from him, it had almost light upon her Highness’s horse’s head; whereat he startled, and the gentleman much dismayed.” The line between actor and audience blurs here: in a letter describing the Kenilworth entertainments, Robert Langham reports that the Queen’s reassuring words “No hurt, No hurt” were “the best part of the play” (*A Letter Whearin* 22). Gascoigne’s dismay at Elizabeth’s startled horse emphasizes that the capacity of the art of country-house revels for immediacy and actualization surpasses even that of the theatre.

Langham calls the Kenilworth entertainments “play[s],” but in fact they are an art form where time and space are undemarcated, and where motion is fully realized, rather than represented.<sup>2</sup> In country-house revels, motion within the fiction is identical to the motion of the audience. For example, near to her departure, as Elizabeth and her retinue hunted for the last time in Leicester’s

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<sup>2</sup> This is different from the theatre, where distances (as well as the time and movement it takes to transverse them) contract into the dimensions of the stage, circumscribing several days’ travel into the length of several footsteps. Regarding Imogen’s questions about traveling in Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, Sullivan notes: “Arguably, Imogen’s questioning represents a witty bit of metatheatre. We know that in one sense she could as effortlessly pass from Lud’s Town to Milford Haven as she (or he, the boy actor) crosses the flat stage; Imogen’s concern with how to get from one to the other can be seen as laughable in the context of Shakespearean romance, with its easy and fantastic negotiation of far flung places. However, this fact only makes the difficulty that Imogen has in locating Milford Haven all the more striking” (*Drama* 128). Sir Philip Sidney, however, protests such truncation: “the stage should always represent but one place [. . .] where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Afric of the other, and so many other underkingdoms, that the player, when he cometh in, must ever begin telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived” (“Defence” 381).

property, Leicester himself commissioned Gascoigne “to devise some Farewel, worth the presenting” (*Princeley* 21). Dressed this time as “Sylvanus, God of the Woods,” Gascoigne met the Queen with a speech imploring her to grant favour on *Deepdesire*, a mortal metamorphosed into a particular holly-bush on Leicester’s land. Pleading in poulter’s measure from his hiding place in the shrubbery, “Live here, good Queene, live here! you are amongst your friends,” *Deepdesire* is a transparent guise for Leicester himself (27). But the Queen stopped only out of concern for Gascoigne/Sylvanus:

Here her Majestie stayed her horse, to favour Sylvanus, fearing least he should be driven out of breath, by following her horse so fast. But, Sylvanus humbly besought her Highnesse to goe on; declaring that if hys rude speech did not offend her, he coulde continue this tale to be twenty miles long. (23)

In Gascoigne’s speech-making, metrical feet and physical feet are indistinguishable: both carry him forward through the space of Kenilworth.

Gascoigne’s farewell speech to the Queen is plot-driven, in the nuanced, multivalent, sixteenth-century definitions of the word “plot,” where the practices of cartographical surveying and literary creation overlap.<sup>3</sup> While Gascoigne’s feet plot a course through Leicester’s land, his words unravel a plot of mythological

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<sup>3</sup> Brückner and Poole argue that the word “plot” “increasingly implied structures imposed upon both land and text” and whose origins reveal “the degree to which concepts of narrative organization emerged from a sixteenth-century movement to impose geometric order upon the land.” The pervasive and ambiguous use of “plot” in Elizabethan and Stuart drama goes far beyond punning: “rather, ‘plot’ synthesizes and explodes with the competing and yet fundamentally collusive significance of land, narrative, and corruption” (618-19, 643). On the spatial elements of the term “plot” in the development of prose fiction, see Hutson.

deities and metamorphoses, of Diana's most beautiful nymph Zabeta and the lovers she rejected. Gascoigne plots a double survey by describing metamorphosed lovers both in the narrative and in the features of the landscape through which he travels: "Behold, gracious Lady, this old Oke," Gascoigne-as-Sylvanus instructs, "The same was many yeeres a faithfull follower and trustie servant of hyr's, named *Constance*." Similar metamorphoses apply for Inconstancie as "yonder poplar," Ambition as "this braunch of Ivy," and "Duedesert into yonder same Lawrell-tree" (25). Moreover, Gascoigne's plotting of his narrative must coincide with the plotting of landscape, because at the exact moment that Gascoigne and the Queen arrive at the holly-bush where Deepdesire is hidden, so must the story arrive at Deepdesire's metamorphosis. Finally, Gascoigne's disguise, the story of Deepdesire, and the entirety of the Kenilworth entertainments are also an elaborate plot to persuade Elizabeth to marry.<sup>4</sup> Gascoigne's running lines are at once a geometric schematic, a romantic scheme, and a dramatic scene: these imbricated definitions of "plot," illustrated so clearly by the Kenilworth entertainments, form a constellation of associated meanings linking lines on a map with lines of a narrative. Both types of lines suggest trajectories, the movements of a journey or a story. Michel de Certeau's assertion that "every story is a travel story – a spatial practice" (115) complements the semantic instability in the early modern term "plot," where it can refer to an area of ground, to a *representation* of an area of ground such as a map, and to the progression of a narrative.

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g. King 45-47.

I begin with Gascoigne's storytelling because it is a clear example of how motion and narrative can constitute each other: readers expect a story to "go somewhere," and that it will take them with it. There is a natural affinity, therefore, between stories and maps. Both are an art of wayfaring. In recent years, a textual approach to maps in the history of cartography and a spatial approach to literature in studies of Renaissance literature have proved mutually beneficial. As Arthur F. Kinney argues, "Tudor mapmakers can function like poets; Tudor poets make maps images" (200). The results of this exchange between the textual and the spatial have illuminated many shared features between English Renaissance maps and poetry: both played a role in nation-building, both demonstrate ambivalence towards forms of power, both reveal themselves through symbolism and allegorical meaning, both are open to contradictory and varying interpretations, and both facilitate a study of relationships, whether spatial, temporal, moral, or personal. Richard Helgerson shows how the endeavour of "new chorographical m[e]n" to take "effective visual and conceptual possession of the physical kingdom in which they lived" was linked to "a concerted generational project," shared particularly by poets like Spenser, Shakespeare, and Drayton, "to have the kingdom of their own language" (147, 107, 1). John Gillies draws attention to the dialogical relationship which existed between Ortelius's atlas entitled *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* and Shakespeare's theatre named the "Globe": "Each 'reads' the other. Each builds itself in the form of the other" (*Shakespeare* 70). When Gascoigne measures his speech spatially, he conveys, albeit obliquely, an affinity between space and landscape, and, perhaps,

evidence of the emergent “mapmindedness,” as P.D.A. Harvey called it (15), or “spatial consciousness,” to use Donald Kimball Smith’s phrase (10), which refers to the widespread uptake in the sixteenth century of cartographic models of thought.

The following two chapters will engage with this shared territory between maps and words in order to address a particular crux in Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*: the indeterminate representation of the motion of travel. Questing and travel are central to Spenser’s romance epic, and a great deal of ground is covered by the journeying knights: England, Wales, Cornwall, Ireland, Scotland (Pictland), France, the Low Countries, which all overlap with the allegorically charged locales of Faeryland, are traversed with varying degrees of difficulty throughout the epic.<sup>5</sup> When Spenser addresses his reader in his authorial persona, it is unsurprising that he chooses the persona of a traveller, most often a mariner,<sup>6</sup> but occasionally a wayfarer by land.<sup>7</sup> However, when Spenser describes his characters travelling, the representation of motion is often severely truncated. The following example, from Arthur’s and Guyon’s journey to the House of Alma, is typical of Spenser’s representation of the motion of travel throughout his epic:

So talked they, the whiles

They wasted had much way, and measurd many miles.

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<sup>5</sup> On the multivalent spatial, temporal, mythological, and allegorical geographies of the poem, see Erickson.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. “Behold I see the hauen nigh at hand, / To which I meane my wearie course to bend” (I.xii.1.1-2), and “Now strike your sailes yee iolly Mariners, / For we be come vnto a quiet rode” (I.xii.42.1-2). See Dees.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. “Guyde ye my footing, and conduct me well / In these strange waies, where neuer foote did vse” (VI.pr.2.7-8)

And now faire *Phoebus* gan decline in haste  
 His weary wagon to the Westerne vale,  
 Whenas they spide a goodly castle, plaste  
 Foreby a riuer in a pleasaunt dale,  
 Which choosing for that euenings hospitale,  
 They thether marcht. (II.xi.9.8-10.6).

Like Gascoigne's Sylvanus, Guyon and Arthur measure their speech in land miles. Unlike Gascoigne, who points out landmarks and landscapes along the way, travel in *The Faerie Queene* typically marks only the point of departure and the point of arrival. What happens in between is glossed by one of Spenser's favourite verbs, "to travaile," whose spelling denotes both labour and journeying. Christopher Burlinson observes that Spenser's "narrative simply passes from one event to the next, rather than providing a detailed, mimetic account of the protagonists' passage through a world. [. . .] [T]he journey is imagined in no spatial detail, and is only described as the antecedent to the event that is about to happen" (26-7). References to journeys begun and destinations reached usually occupy the end of one stanza and the beginning of the next. Commonly, as in the passage quoted above, the time and action of the travel are absorbed into the white space between the stanzas.

Part II will read these lacunae of motion within the context of sixteenth century map making and map using, and, more specifically, alongside the white spaces of Renaissance maps. This seemingly small detail has, in fact, much to tell us about the cartographic influences on narrative form. Most scholars who have turned to Spenser's *Faerie Queene* for evidence of the Renaissance's

“mapmindedness” have been disappointed, commenting instead on the “unchartedness of Faerie land’s literary, moral and geographical territory” (Grenfell, “Do Real Knights” 236), or on the “anti-cartographic” nature of the poem which everywhere “undermines the impulse to pull out a map and ground the action of the romance plot in geographical space” (Klein, *Maps* 165). Even the rare reader who argues for Spenser’s “cartographic imagination” must account for the complete absence of maps in *The Faerie Queene*: Smith, for instance, suggests that “cartographic precision didn’t require the immediate presence of a map in order to think cartographically” (*Cartographic Imagination* 89). However, each of these readings approaches *The Faerie Queene* and Renaissance maps, such as those by Saxton, Norden, and Speed, with twenty-first century conventions and assumptions of map functionality, namely the expectation that the primary use of maps is to guide travel. As Catherine Delano-Smith has shown, sixteenth-century topographical maps, such as those by Saxton, were rarely used for wayfinding: travellers turned instead to written itineraries, and there “is no known sixteenth-century or early seventeenth-century road book with a map of a road or a road network” (“Milieus of Mobility” 41). Roads on maps were by and large a late seventeenth-century innovation. I argue that the representation of motion in *The Faerie Queene* was shaped by cartographic ways of seeing, but that the spatial perception at work in the poem must be rediscovered; it has since been overwritten by newer expectations placed on the cartographic form. The fluidity of cartographic forms and of expectations for their functionality in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries underscores the difficulty of finding a normative

example of “map consciousness.” The development of “mapmindedness” which Harvey sees occurring from 1500 onwards was a process: to impute full knowledge of the functionality of maps to any point along this spectrum is to risk eliding the journey towards modern cartographic literacy just as Spenser compresses the travel through Faeryland. Allegory, history, narrative, motion, mutability, and white space are as present in Renaissance cartography and chorography as in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*.



### **Chapter 3: The Experience of Motion in English Renaissance Cartography and Chorography**

Before considering what Renaissance maps can show us about the anomalous, discontinuous, and absent travel accounts in *The Faerie Queene*, we must first consider what I would like to call the experience of motion in cartography and chorography. That is, do English Renaissance maps incorporate motion into their visual registers? Is the experience of motion present in the written descriptions that often accompany the visual images? And to what degree do maps facilitate motion? To seek answers, I have consulted maps from Christopher Saxton's atlas (1579) to John Ogilby's *Britannia* (1675), as well as regional prose descriptions from that period, including William Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent* (1576), William Harrison's *An Historicall Description of the Islande of Britayne* (1577), and John Stow's *Survey of London* (1598). Motion appears in the maps' representations of rivers and roads, as well as their rhetoric, perspective, and inclusion of extra-cartographical figures. Though rarely discussed as images displaying traces of motion, maps do so in representing human practices and activity, as well as in their encoding of cartographical functionality. Yet other expected markers of motion on maps are decidedly absent: national and county maps did not show roads until the late-seventeenth century. In drawn maps, the depiction of motion ranges from being virtually absent except for the implied flow of a river, to being clearly visible in delineated routes. Similarly, in written topographical descriptions, the rhetoric can be static and fixed, creating a view from above rather than a view from the ground, almost like a "cartographic

ekphrasis” (Klein, *Maps* 138). Or such written accounts can present motion vividly, with the rhetorical impact of two friends walking along the road.

### **Renaissance Maps and their Readers**

We learn much about the functionality of the earliest British printed maps by what their makers and users wrote about them. As Delano-Smith asserts: “One thing is clear. Whatever early maps were used for, it was not for finding the way in the manner in which most people today use topographical maps or road maps and atlases” (*English Maps* 142).<sup>1</sup> John Dee’s preface to his translation of Euclid’s *The Elements of Geometrie* (1570) reviews how his contemporaries used maps:

While some, to beautifie their Halls, Parlers, Chambers, Galleries, Studies, or Libraries with: other some, for thinges past, as battels fought, earthquakes, heauenly fyringes, & such occurentes, in histories mentioned: and such other circumstances. Some other, presently to vewe the large dominion of the Turke: the wide Empire of the Moschouite: and the little morsel of ground, where Christendome (by Profession) is certainly knowen. [. . .] Some, either for their owne iorneyes directing into farre lands: or to vnderstand of other mens trauailes. To conclude, some, foreone purpose: and some, for an other, liketh, loueth, getteth, and vseth, Mappes, Chartes, & Geographical Globes. Of whose vse, to speake sufficiently, would require a booke peculiar. (sig. a4r)

Wayfinding is one of Dee’s catalogued uses of maps, but only in regard to

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<sup>1</sup> See also Delano-Smith, “Milieus.”

“iorneyes directing into farre lands,” not local or domestic travel.<sup>2</sup> While Dee wrote this list nearly a decade before Saxton’s atlas, printed maps of Britain, such as ones by George Lily (engraved and printed in London in 1555 by Thomas Geminus), Mercator, Humphrey Lluyd, or even Dee himself,<sup>3</sup> were available and theoretically could have been used as a supplement for itineraries and oral directions in wayfinding. Sullivan argues that “Dee’s account understands the social utility of maps” and that “both the reading and the ownership of maps help to fashion a gentleman and the spaces of his home” (*Drama* 99). Dee documents the various groupings of people with shared interests which formed around cartographic instruments for no other reason than that they “liketh, loueth, getteth, and vseth, Mappes, Chartes, & Geographical Globes.” Map ownership was certainly widespread: Delano-Smith and Kain note that “[f]rom the 1530s, maps printed on separate sheets were being acquired by the poorer student as well as the rich house-owner” (49-50). Yet in Dee’s account, regional wayfinding is not one of the expressed purposes of maps. “Mapmindedness” incorporates a much broader range of conceptual and practical purposes.

Delano-Smith’s recent work on maps and mobility has revealed an instructive “paradox”: “what today constitutes by far the commonest use of the commonest types of maps (the printed topographical sheet of middling scale and the road map or road atlas) is the one purpose for which maps were not used in

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<sup>2</sup> On literary accounts of domestic travel, see McRae, *Literature*; on alternatives to maps for domestic wayfaring, such as itineraries, oral directions, and landmarks, see Delano-Smith “Milieus.”

<sup>3</sup> Delano Smith and Kain 64.

premodern times” (“Milieus” 16). What accompanied the early modern explosion of cartographic forms and the conceptual shift towards “mapmindedness” was a working-out period, where map makers experimented with the conventions, utility, and forms of maps. This unfixed nature of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cartographic and chorographic enterprises in England reveals itself most strikingly in prefaces and handbooks, where the chorographers and mapmakers discharge their debts to the mapping projects which preceded theirs, but also advertise their own novelty. In the prefaces and handbooks, there exists a binary between the armchair and the dusty road. Chorographers and cartographers promote their works to either the reader at home in his (or her) study, or the traveller out on a journey. This binary bears significantly on a map’s or chorographical description’s capacity to represent the experience of motion.

Even as early as 1531, long before the huge shift in spatial conception wrought by works like Ortelius’s *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570), Braun and Hogenberg’s *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (1572-1617), Saxton’s atlas (1579), and Mercator’s *Atlas* (1578-1595), Thomas Elyot, in his *Boke Named the Governour* (1531), advocated the didactic functionality of maps in the study. Maps could “prepare the childe to vnderstandyne of histories” by showing them “the olde tables of *Ptholomee*, where in all the worlde is paynted” (37r).<sup>4</sup> They were also an educational tool for all ages:

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<sup>4</sup> Lesley Cormack sees Elyot as one of a “number of sixteenth-century educational reformers [who] stressed the importance of a liberal arts education, sometimes explicitly mentioning the need to teach these young gentlemen geography and navigation” (*Charting* 22).

For what pleasure is it, in one houre to beholde those realms, cities, seas, ryuers, and mountaynes, that vneth in an olde mannes life can nat be iournaide and pursued: what incredible delite is taken in beholding the diuersities of people, beastes, foules, fishes, trees, frutes, and herbes? To knowe the sondry maners & conditions of people, and the varietie of their natures, and that in a warme studie or perler, without peril of the see, or daunger of longe and paynfull iournayes? I can nat tell, what more pleasure shulde happen to a gentil witte, than to beholde in his owne house euery thyng that with in all the worlde is contained. (37v)

Elyot's image of the "armchair geographer" (Morgan 146; Klein, *Maps* 86), who delights in the power of maps to bring the whole world into the comfort of the study, was repeated throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Robert Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1651, 6<sup>th</sup> ed.), used the same verb, "behold," to describe the act of map reading:

To some kind of men it is an extraordinary delight to study, to looke vpon a Geographicall mappe, and to behold, as it were, all the remote Provinces, Townes, Citties of the world, and never to goe forth of the limits of his study, to measure by a Scale and Compasse, their extent, distance, examine their site, &c. What greater pleasure can there be then to view those elaborate Maps of *Ortelius*, *Mercator*, *Hondius*, &c. To peruse those books of Citties, put out by *Braunnus*, and *Hogenbergius*. (II.89)

Sullivan argues that the term "behold" in such contexts maintains the connotation of tangibility suggested by its etymology: in maps, space is grasped, both cognitively and materially. Moreover, the term blurs the distinction between the map as a representation and the map as reality: the "map reader 'beholds' the

world's bounty, as if he has traveled across the globe depicted in the map; the map brings to its reader the knowledge usually gleaned from travel, from experience" (*Drama* 97). With the map, all the riches and diversity of the world can flood into the study: "with your eie you shall *beholde*, not onely *the whole world at one vew*, but also euery particular place contained therein. Which to describe at the ful, in writing would require a long time," was how Blundeville described maps (*Briefe Description* C4v, emphasis added). For him, the map picture was worth a thousand words. John Speed echoed Blundeville when he described the British Isles as "proposed in one view" in the map which prefaced his *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* (1r).

The novelty of the Renaissance map became a substitute for travel; rather than facilitating a journey from one part of Britain to another, maps allowed those who used them to remain motionless readers, travelling only in their imagination, and discovering with surprise the spatial relationships between disparate places. The experience of motion in this approach to map reading is contracted to the finger moving across the surface of the page (Klein, *Maps* 88). Elyot commended maps for their power to preclude risky "travails": the study is made all the cosier compared to the "peril of the see, or daunger of longe and paynfull iournayes" (37v). Cuningham similarly praised maps for "deliver[ing] us from greate and continuall travailes. For in a pleasaunte house, or warme study, she sheweth us the hole face of all th' Earth, withal the corners of the same"

(A6r).<sup>5</sup> William Shute, in extolling the virtues of translation, compared translated texts to the function of maps, which “saue us the labour of trauaile, by transporting other countrys to us, and not exiling us to them, making remotest kingdoms as domestick and cheape as mapps, greatest Princes as familiar as books, and our farthest iourney but to Paules Church-yard” (A4r). Burton, writing in the persona of Democritus Junior, declared: “I never travelled but in map or card, in which my unconfined thoughts have freely expatiated, as having ever been especially delighted with the study of cosmography” (I.18). Harrison, consulting other traveller’s accounts and maps, completed his *Historicall Description of the Islande of Britayne* (1577) by “sayl[ing] about my country within the compasse of my study” (36r), never needing to travel himself. In 1607, John Norden heralded the advantages of the estate survey for the land owning nobility, “who can not afford time nor paynes to view their owne lands themselves”: instead,

a plot rightly drawne by true information, describeth so the likely image of a Mannor, and euery branch and member of the same, as the Lord *sitting in his chayre*, may see what he hath, where and how it lyeth, and in whose vse and occupation euery particular is vpon the suddaine view. (*Surveyor’s Dialogue* 21, 16, emphasis added)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Smith, *Cartographic* 8. In order to commend the use of maps as an alternative form of travel, Cuningham proceeds to describe the miseries of travel: “the inclemencie of th’Aere, boysterous windes, stormy shoures, hail, Ise, & snow” on the road. The “churlish & unknowne hoste” at the inn typically serves “meate twise sodden, stinking fish, or watered wine,” while the “lowsy beddes” have “filthy sheates.” The armchair traveller is also saved from the summer “sone with his fierye beames,” and the winter storms, not to mention “dread Pirates,” “greate windes,” or suffering “a sicke stomacke through vnholsome smelles” (A6r).

<sup>6</sup> On *The Surveyor’s Dialogue* as a defence of the practice of surveying, see Sanford 78-82; Klein, *Maps* 45-57 *passim*; McRae, *God speed* 176-79; Edwards, *Writing* 79-

Although the map encoded spatial relationships and indicated “how one place lieth from another” (Blundeville, *Briefe* C4v), the appeal of visual immediacy trumped the functional use of maps for travel. Helgerson observes that the first large-scale national mapping projects allowed Renaissance men and women to take “effective visual and conceptual possession of the physical kingdom in which they lived” (107). This “visual and conceptual possession” developed “mapmindedness,” but it did not immediately translate into maps becoming widespread wayfinding tools.

While written chorographies often address readers as if they are companions on a journey, this textual form also facilitated such vicarious, motionless travel, serving to supplement the armchair study of maps. For example, consider William Lambarde’s rhetorical style in his *Perambulation of Kent* (1576): “having somewhat to say of Eastry, I trust it shalbe no great offence, to turne oure eye a little from the shoare and talke of it, in our way to [the town of] Deale” (114). Transitional sections such as this one include the reader in the itinerary of the journey. Lambarde’s rhetoric, or his “grammar of space” to borrow Cynthia Wall’s term (*Literary* 102), seems to imply that a traveller through Kent could use his book as a wayfinder, reproducing the “perambulation” that structures the stories Lambarde tells. On the walk from Eastry to Deale, for instance, the traveller following Lambarde’s text would read the story of the

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82; Smith, *Cartographic* 50-52. The latter four all read Norden’s *Dialogue* as an ambivalent text, attempting to balance the old order of land management and the new empirical practices of measurement.



murder of Ethelbert and Etheldred, relatives of King Egbert, which took place nearby. Like Gascoigne's tale measured in land miles, Lambarde's localized account of a murder is meant to occupy the six miles from Eastry to Deale. Much of the content of Lambarde's *Perambulation*, however, is superfluous for wayfinding, covering such topics as genealogies of the gentry in Kent, the history of English law, etymologies, transcriptions of historical documents, a description of customs, and the history of the county. The prefatory remarks in Lambarde's work, written by one J.W., dedicates the work to "his Countriement, the Gentlemen of the Countie of Kent," and states that the aim of Lambarde's *Perambulation* is to serve as a kind of mirror: "and thus, as of your selves, doe you see what they are now, and thus as of this booke, may you knowe why they were, and by whome they were, and what they were long agoe" (fol. ¶iir). The main purpose of Lambarde's chorography was not wayfinding.

Nevertheless, in their praise of the efficacy of maps, some writers did encourage the use of maps on the dusty road (or on the open sea). Cuningham lists the beneficiaries of cartographical knowledge:

Mariners & trauailers on the seas (without which no realme can long stand, or mans life be sustaind) are bound to acknowledge Cosmographies benefites. For it setteth forth the portes, it sheweth the course, it declareth the ordre of windes, it warneth them of rockes, shaloues, sandes, & infinite like dangers. In trauailing by land, her tables poynteth which way to follow, that the iornaay may be speedier, safe, short, & pleasant, wher you shall ascend vp to hills, wher to passe ouer waters, where to walke through woodes, and wher most aptly to remaine at night" (A5v).

However, it is difficult to determine what maps or cosmographies Cuningham had in mind when he cited “her tables.” Published in 1559, Cuningham’s *Cosmographical Glasse* preceded the atlases of Ortelius and Braun and Hoyerburg by over a decade, and Saxton’s atlas by two. As a treatise which “summarized standard continental knowledge” (Klein, *Maps* 42), the *Cosmographical Glasse* could have been referring to early sixteenth-century German or Hungarian maps which were “some of the earliest printed topographical maps [and which] were clearly intended to be used in connection with travel” (Delano-Smith and Kain 160). For the English land traveller, however, Cuningham’s confidence in the value of “tables,” if he meant maps, outstripped the resources at hand. As with the semantic overlap we have seen with terms like “chart,” “plot,” and “card,” the term “table” could refer to a variety of cartographic forms beyond a straightforward map. “Tables” could refer to the tables of longitude and latitude that were included in Ptolemy’s *Geographia*, but the types of maps produced from Ptolemy’s data (such as Sebastian Münster’s 1540 world map in his edition of Ptolemy) were nowhere near on the kind of scale to show the “innumerable forms of Beastes, Foules, Fishes, Trees, Frutes, Stremes, & Meatalles,” which Cuningham confidently boasted one could see in the “Cosmographicall Glasse” (fol. 120). “Tables” could also refer to the itinerary lists included in almanacs; but, like the Ptolemaic maps, itineraries were not a visual form that could show hills, waters, woods, or lodgings. Cuningham’s praise of maps for seafaring is more readily supported by the Portolan charts, rutters, coastal maps extant in mid-sixteenth century Britain. In another example, Blundeville’s praise of maps for

travel is vague enough that it could be referring solely to sea travel: maps, he declares, allow a reader “to know how one place lieth from another, and with what wind you haue to saile from one place to another. And finally how to finde out the true distaunce betwixt place and place, in which things the chiefe use of Mappes doth consist” (*Briefe Description* C4r). It was not until several decades into the seventeenth century, and thus several decades after Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, that various cartographic forms emerged which were specifically for land travel. But these later enterprises, by Norden, Speed, Ogilby, and others, required the groundwork of Saxton’s atlas in order to unlock and expand the map form’s potential.

### **Christopher Saxton and the First British Atlas**

It is difficult to overestimate the impact Saxton’s maps had on the British map reading public. Individual maps were drawn, engraved, and printed between 1574 and 1578, and an atlas, beginning with a map of “Anglia” (England and Wales) and followed by thirty four maps of fifty two counties, was published in 1579. Saxton’s map images had a rapid and intense effect, quickly appearing in paintings, tapestries, plays, poems, book illustrations, cabinets of curiosity, and playing cards.<sup>7</sup> As so many scholars have noted, for the first time a map of

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<sup>7</sup> This list is frequently repeated: e.g., Harley (“Meaning and Ambiguity” 39); Helgerson (114); Gillies and Vaughan (*Playing* 22); Smith (*Cartographic* 67). Details and examples of all these cultural artefacts can be found in Morgan. Morgan notes, for example, the fortuitous coincidence between the fifty-two counties of England and Wales and the necessary number of playing cards in a deck (151). On the cartographical playing cards, see Hind.

England and Wales, surveyed by an Englishman and printed in London, was available to a broad audience. The circumstances, practices, scientific techniques, patronage, publication history, and reception of Saxton's maps is territory well-trodden by others.<sup>8</sup> Instead, what I will focus on is the oscillation between motion and stasis which takes place on the surface of the map, and which, I will argue in chapter 4, provides a cartographical context which helps to account for Spenser's representation of travel in *The Faerie Queene*.

This oscillation occurs on multiple levels, with respect to both the making of the map and the signs it employs. The first example of an oscillation between motion and stasis takes place on the map's technical level: Saxton's maps do little to facilitate the kind of movement through the land which was necessary for the their creation in the first place. A "finger running along the map" does "imitat[e] the body moving through the landscape" (Klein, *Maps* 88), but by not showing roads, Saxton's maps provide little guidance for the wayfinder, and instead can only recreate motion for an armchair traveller.<sup>9</sup> The difficulty that the armies on both sides of the English Civil War had with maps based on Saxton's surveys clearly demonstrates this inadequacy.<sup>10</sup> The definitive features of Saxton's maps

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<sup>8</sup> On Saxton's mapping project, see Lynam 12-14; Tyacke and Huddy; Evans and Lawrence (esp. 9-44); Klein, *Maps* 100-110; Delano-Smith and Kain 66-71; Cormack, *Charting* 172; Helgerson 107-147, esp. 107-114; Barber, "England II" 64, 74-77; *History of Cartography* 3:1623-631; Ravenhill.

<sup>9</sup> Delano-Smith and Kain suggest Burghley may have used Saxton's map and a pair of compasses to determine lengths of roads which were not, in fact, drawn on Saxton's maps (161).

<sup>10</sup> Helgerson notes that "both sides of the civil wars" used a reduced and re-engraved map originally by Saxton (108). Paul White emphasizes the insufficiency

are boundaries and placements. Boundaries of counties, estate properties, and sometimes of hundreds are clearly marked, and mimetic signs indicate the placement of both natural and manmade features. The fact that cartographic signs on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century maps often resemble what they indicate – a single tree represents a forest, for example – meant that legends were a relatively late feature of mapmaking.<sup>11</sup> Extensive travel was required for Saxton to determine such boundaries and placements. While historians have debated Saxton's precise methods, he certainly spent considerable time travelling and surveying from place to place throughout England and Wales,<sup>12</sup> and “can thus claim to be the only person in sixteenth-century Britain whose real-life visual experience approximated the comprehensive utopian view of the atlas” (Klein, *Maps* 99).<sup>13</sup> The relatively new practice of triangulation (surveying by means of

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of Saxton's maps for travel: “armies and individual soldiers [. . .] blundered about without useable maps, attempting in many cases to draw their own as an aid to colleagues who might follow them” (16).

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Harley “Meaning” 35-6. On the range and variety of signs on printed topographical maps, including a visual glossary, see *History of Cartography* 3:528-89.

<sup>12</sup> Camden's prefatory remarks on the making of his *Britannia* (1610, English translation by Philemon Holland) conveys the kind of *travail* required for chorographical work, even though Camden based his maps on the surveys of others: “I have travailed over all England for the most part, I have conferred with most skillfull observers in each Country, I have studiously read over our owne countrie writers, old and new; all Greeke and Latine authors which have once made mention of Britaine. I have had conference with learned men in other parts of Christendome: I have beene diligent in the Records of this Realme. I have looked into most Libraries, Registers, and memorials of Churches, Cities, and Corporations” (4r-v).

<sup>13</sup> De Certeau argues that the “desire to see” the totality of a space “preceded the means of satisfying it. Medieval or Renaissance painters represented the city as seen in a perspective that no eye had yet enjoyed. This fiction already made the

angle measurements from elevated points) required less in the way of “tramping,” but for such an ambitious project as Saxton’s, considerable travel would have still been required (Bennett, “Geometry” 346).<sup>14</sup> The product of Saxton’s motion was stasis,

an act of instantiation [. . .], an attempt not just to know the outlines and layout of the country, but to fix them, to stabilize them beyond the reach of varying opinion or custom or traditional local knowledge and to invest them with a sense of certainty and objective rendering.  
(Smith, *Cartographic* 63)

Saxton plotted the landscape so that the map could appear “plotless,” dependent on neither temporal nor directional specificity.<sup>15</sup> Motion through the land was necessary for a visualization of the boundaries and placements of the land.

Practical surveying manuals conveyed both the necessity of motion required for mapmaking and the unpredictable, shifting, and dynamic work environment of the surveyor. Leonard and Thomas Digges’s *A Geometrical Practice, Named Pantometria* (1571), one of the earliest manuals in England to teach

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medieval spectator into a celestial eye. It created gods” (92). Lestrigant recognizes this desire as underpinning the entire cosmographical enterprise: “The cosmographical [. . .] presupposes that one can assume the ideal gaze of the Creator upon his world, or that one can transport oneself [. . .] into the lunar realms” (19); Nuti calls this “the search for a total vision” (101).

<sup>14</sup> See Delano-Smith and Kain 58-61; *History of Cartography* 3:477-508.

<sup>15</sup> Klein describes the “basic [. . .] structure of Saxton’s cartographics” as “plotless” (*Maps* 107). They also appear plotless, as Howard Marchitello observes, because they appear “natural” and “seem not to work (labour) at all.” They “seem not to tell stories, [. . .] not to narrate, but rather appear to describe objectively the phenomenal world” (85). However, as Harley has shown, and as Marchitello goes on to argue, maps “attempt to deny this same narrativizing of the world, but this denial does not succeed” (87).

triangulation, shows that motion between two or more set points was essential for the angle measurements needed to calculate distance.<sup>16</sup> *Pantometria* demonstrates the principles of triangulation not only with abstract formulas or diagrams of angles, but with illustrations depicting a surveyor taking angle measurements in the field. As the drawings make clear, the surveyor must be able to work amid the motion of daily sixteenth-century life: continuous processions of knights, pastoral figures hunting and farming, boats sailing along the rives, lovers promenading together in the meadow, full cavalry regiments assembling or hiding in forests, and the transporting of military equipment, such as cannons. In *Pantometria*, Digges placed the figure of the surveyor into a landscape that is alive, brimming with the motions of rivers, of people and animals, of industry and commerce, of military power. The inclusion in surveying treatises of agriculture, husbandry, seafaring, and defence – all various practices of everyday life – also emphasized that these are the main beneficiaries of advances in surveying. In both surveying treatises and in actual practice, the surveyor worked alongside farmers, livestock, import and export commerce; he was integrated within the vitality of the country itself. By not including roadways, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century country and county maps conceal the very feature – mobility – which brought them into being in the first place.

Turning to the appearance of Saxton's maps themselves and their visual vocabulary, we can observe an oscillation between stillness and motion on display

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<sup>16</sup> On Digges, see, Klein, *Maps* 50-53.

amid the engraved signs and lines themselves (Figure 1). Perhaps the most immediate is the tension between the fixed topographical signs of boundaries and placements and the representation of rivers. On first glance, the country and the counties do seem crisscrossed with networks of routes, but these are rivers rather than roads. As Klein observes about Saxton's maps,

[r]ivers are the most prominent features, giving the land the fluency and progress it otherwise lacks. If the map needs to arrest all movement in the land, freezing it in time and representational stasis, it reinvests in the dynamics of landscape by foregrounding rivers as the pulsating 'veins' of the country. (*Maps* 102)

The dynamic and imaginative potential of rivers was fully available to Renaissance cartographers and chorographers. More than three decades after Saxton's atlas, John Speed prefaced his *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* with the declaration that the kingdom "seems to me to represent a Humane Body" and that in his atlas "first wee will (by Example of best Anatomists) propose to the view the whole Body, and Monarchie intire (as far as conueniently wee could comprise it) and after will dissect and lay open the particular Members, *Veines* and Ioints, (I meane the Shires, *Riuers*, Cities, and Townes" (fol. 1, emphasis added).<sup>17</sup> Rivers

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<sup>17</sup> Read in light of these prefatory remarks, the "Theatre" of Speed's title may allude to an anatomy theatre in addition to a playhouse. His method of "dissect[ing] and lay[ing] open" appeals to the objective scrutiny of the anatomist (see, e.g., Klein, *Maps* 40). John Gillies has notably delineated the dialogical relationship between maps and playhouses where both present a narrativized view of the world (*Shakespeare* 70-98), while Jonathan Sawday has outlined the "cultural conjunction" between playhouses and anatomy theatres (39-53, quoting from 42). Speed's *Theatre* suggests a "cultural conjunction" of all three where each attempts to convey a universal view somewhere on the spectrum between narrative and empiricism.



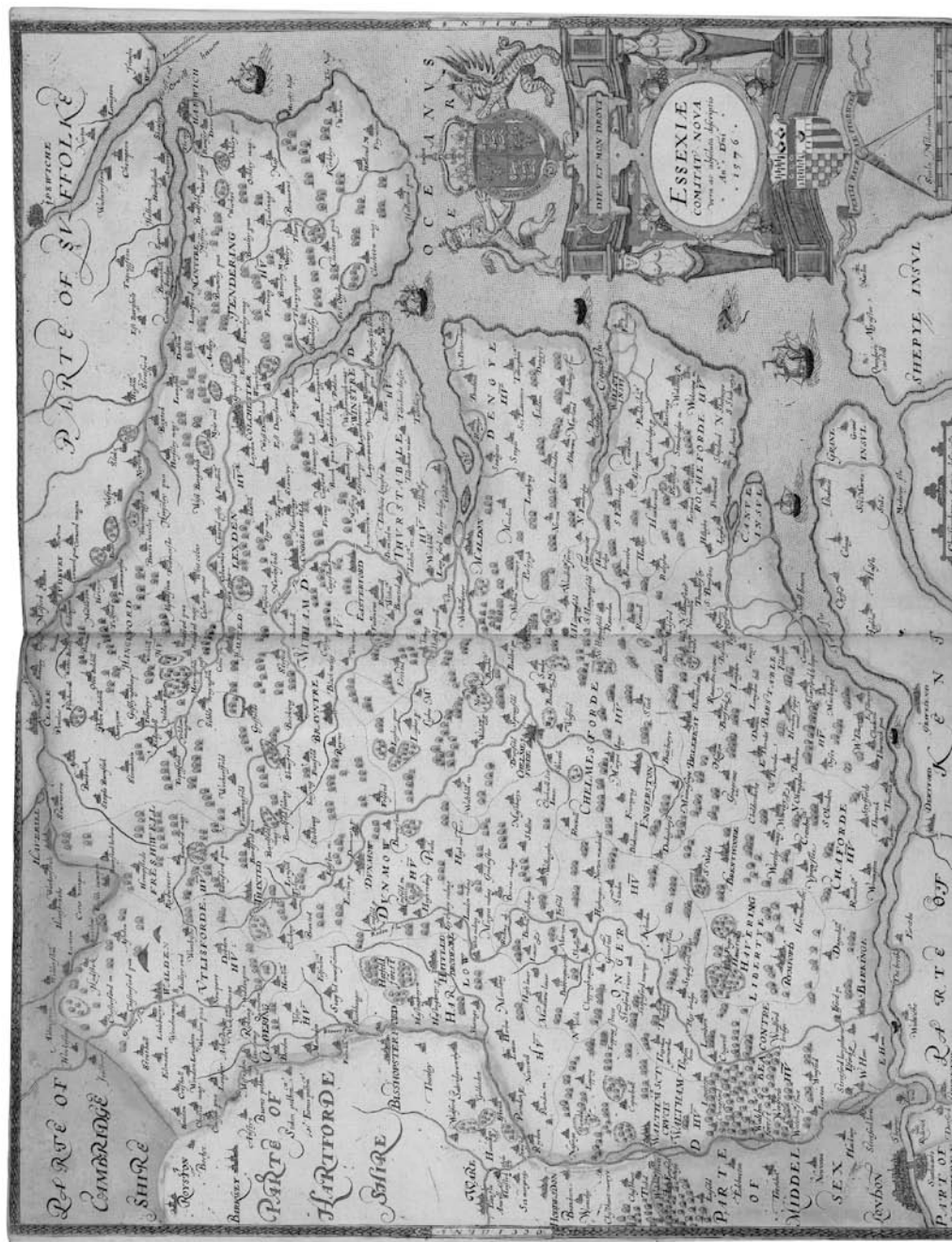


Figure 1. Christopher Saxton. Map of Essex from *Atlas* (1580). By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library

enliven the landscape through circulation, just as veins do the body. Speed, here, seems to respond to a certain visual effect prompted by Saxton's maps by literalizing and explicating its implied metaphorical impact. Rivers, representing

transit routes, lines of commerce, and a moving, changing landscape, contribute mobility to an image of the nation which would be otherwise static.

The topographical signs on the surface of Saxton's maps also oscillate between variety and "homogeneity" (Delano-Smith and Kain 70). The mimetic signs used on the maps indicate the placement of a wide range of features, both natural and artificial: coasts, rivers, estuaries, lakes, forests, hills, rocks, towns, cities, towns, villages, estate houses, parks, bridges, and other sites of interest. There is a wealth of detail on each county map, bespeaking the rich variety of locales encompassed by the map image and creating the illusion that the country could be fully knowable. The diversity of signs suggested to a contemporary map-reader that the spatial relationships throughout England and Wales could be universally delineated and fixed. Smith suggests that a map's claim to accuracy and universality meant that it "could stand in for the land in ways that hadn't been possible before" (*Cartographic* 52). However, limitations of size and scale meant that a map could not be the land, a fact that did not elude some of Saxton's earliest users.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Samuel Daniel advocated an approach to history which contrasted the elisions he found in cartographic representations: "We must not looke vpon the immense course of times past, as men ouer-looke spacious and wide countries, from off high Mountaines and are neuer the neere to iudge of the true Nature of the soyle, or the particular syte and face of those territories they see. Nor must we thinke, viewing the superficial figure of a region in a Mappe that wee know strait the fashion and place as it is. Or reading an Historie (which is but a Mappe of men, and dooth no otherwise acquaint us with the true Substance of Circumstances, then a superficial Card dooth the Sea-man with a Coast neuer seene, which always prooues other to the eye than the imagination forecast it) that presently wee know all the world, and can distinctly iudge of times, men, and maners, iust as they were" (G4r). Compare this response to that of John Norden's farmer in

The cartographic accuracy suggested by the variety of signs on Saxton's maps is also undercut by the atlas's homogeneity. Each map, whether of a single county or of multiple counties on a single sheet, is the same size, which, although the scales vary, gives a sometimes skewed sense of uniform proportion to the administrative units of the country.<sup>19</sup> Each map has a coat of arms with heraldic symbols, a scale bar with a pair of metal compasses (also called dividers), a cartouche with a Latin description of the county/counties, and the cardinal points, with north (septentrio) at the top, included in the decorative frame drawn around the map. Each permutation of a given feature receives the same sign: a town is a town whether it is in Lancashire or Kent. J.B. Harley identifies this uniformity as one type of "silence" exhibited by the map form:

In many of the topographical atlases of early modern Europe, especially those of the seventeenth century, but even in Mercator's and Saxton's, much of the character and individuality of local places is absent from the map. Behind the facade of a few standard signs on these atlases, the outline of one town looks much the same as that of the next; the villages are more nearly identical and are arranged in a neat taxonomic hierarchy; woodland is aggregated into a few types;

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his *Surveyor's Dialogue* who asks "is not the Field it selfe a goodly Map for the Lord to look vpon, better then a painted paper? And what is he the better to see it laid out in colours?" (15). Of course, in Norden's *Dialogue*, the farmer is promptly set right by the Surveyor.

<sup>19</sup> The Welsh surveyor George Owen complained on one hand that Saxton's maps "forced" multiple Welsh counties "soe neere together – thrustinge on Townedd uppon another" (quoted in Tyacke and Huddy 31-2), and that on the other, his own county of Pembrokeshire was unreasonably taxed due to the fact that in Saxton's atlas, Pembrokeshire had "the rome and place of a whole sheete of paper allowed to it selfe" (quoted in Klein, *Maps* 89); see also *History of Cartography* 3:1626-27, Morgan 138.

even rivers and streams become reduced into a mere token of reality; objects outside the surveyor's classification of 'reality' are excluded. [. . .] The net result was that the cartographic landscapes of Europe became more generalized, more abstract, and less differentiated in the mode of their representation. Their silences are those of the unique. ("Silences and Secrecy" 65)

Such uniformity of structures and signs gives the impression that every county is merely a rearrangement of the features of every other county; Saxton's cartographic vocabulary, or "internal morphology" gives little scope for expressing the uniqueness and regional distinctiveness of a given county (Morgan 153).<sup>20</sup> This homogeneity can be disorienting, as can be the difficulty in establishing spatial relationships and actual distances between places in non-adjacent counties depicted on different pages of the atlas.

The visual impact of each county map in Saxton's atlas also oscillates between placements (topographical signs) and white space. Some white space is filled in by toponyms, decorative features, attributions, and symbols of authority, but much of the surface of Saxton's county maps "is almost devoid of detail, consisting largely of gaps and vacant land" (Klein, *Maps* 103). The maps establish

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<sup>20</sup> As Klein observes, "none of these symbols allow much internal differentiation. [. . .] In a sense, these maps do not chart regional idiosyncrasy but a levelling sameness, a repetitive similarity. Looking at them in sequence tells you little beyond the fact that the land of England and Wales is the same wherever you happen to be" (*Maps* 104). Although in the passage quoted above, Harley argues that uniform map signs elide the uniqueness of places, elsewhere he sees regularized symbols as an advantage in developing map literacy: "To an Elizabethan who had lived all his life in Surrey but was entirely ignorant of the geography of Northumberland, the fact that the latter county was depicted in the atlas of 1579 by means of hills, forests, rivers, towns, churches, and parks, *ipso facto* made it a more immediately credible landscape" ("Meaning" 25).

spatial relations between places within a given county, but provide little or no information about the intervening zones. Together with the uniformity of map symbols discussed above, the white spaces reveal a given map's potential to represent the experience of motion and to facilitate wayfinding. These blank spaces are indicative of "the map's double function of opening up and closing a territory. The syntax of this activity is based on the two paradigmatic moments that generate the tension and drama of any journey: a point of departure and a point of arrival" (Boelhower 483). What is missing from Saxton's maps is what happens in between: the actual practice and work of travel (*travail*). The places of origin and destination receive priority over the experience of motion that lies between them.

Often the white space exists where presumably roads would be. Andrew McRae has noted that during the Renaissance, "unlike rivers, roads were not considered poetic" (*Literature* 69), but if this were true for cartographers like Saxton, it points to a poetic or an ideological motive for mapmaking separate from wayfinding. A resident of Essex, looking at the map of his own county in Saxton's atlas, would superimpose his own lived experience over the white spaces, filling them with the data of everyday life and the minutiae of quotidian observation. But for this same map-reader, turning the page to Lancashire where he has never travelled, the space between, for example, Lancaster and Clough-hoo-hill is *terra incognita*, possibly containing something as mundane as a dusty road or a field, or as subversive as a Catholic bishop's see, or as dangerous even as a dragon. As Harley observes, "[t]here is no such thing as an empty space on a

map” (“Silences” 71). The white spaces between marked sites are all decisions: they need not all be “political silences,” ideological choices driven by the desire for “the acquisition and maintenance of power,” but rather examples of “silences which arise from geographical ignorance, lack of data, error, the limitations of scale, deliberate design or [ . . . ] technical limitation” (Harley “Silences” 57). The limitations of scale certainly dictate the level of detail possible for a map. However, by including so much white space, and by omitting prescriptive transit routes, maps like Saxton’s open up the territory to an infinite combination of routes. Such a reading of the maps overlays a temporal dimension over the spatial one. Boelhower describes this as “the map’s Olympian desire to achieve a maximum degree of stasis in terms of total movement, which it pretends to do by simultaneously representing all possible journeys” (484). The possibility of any and all journeys is another kind of stasis. In this way, the oscillation between homogeneous topographical signs and the white space surrounding them enacts an oscillation between motion and stillness.

One final system of signs participates in the atlas’s representation of the experience of motion: the extra-topographical material, such as cartouches, decorations, Latin descriptions, symbols of authority (the arms of Elizabeth and the arms of Thomas Seckford, patron of Saxton’s surveying work), and symbols of human mobility and of industry. The maps also include less overtly political symbols: sailing ships, fishing vessels, sea monsters, fish, fruit, animals, insects, flowers, allegorical and mythological figures populate the white space beyond the

county borders.<sup>21</sup> While older historians of cartography viewed such details as “embellishment,” “peripheral,” “obfuscat[ing],” and “decoration for decoration’s sake” drawn by mapmakers “handicapped by many deficiencies of knowledge,” more recently scholars like Harley have read them as a code participating in the wider cultural project of nation-building, and present in the maps as a “celebration and deliberate mystification of an English empire and golden age” (Harley “Meaning” 36). These visual details also denote human activities of travel, industry, husbandry, and mythology.<sup>22</sup> They are dynamic, narrative features, encouraging the map reader to integrate the visual code with the geographical information in order to attain a multifaceted, complex representation of the nation. These symbols cannot be reduced to a single interpretation, but remain ambiguous, undercutting from the margins the seemingly empirical objectivity of the county maps at the centre of each page. While some symbols clearly reinforce systems of authority and power, others “foster an almost poetic sense of

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<sup>21</sup> Such figures are not original to Saxton’s atlas; they appear in earlier maps, such as Ortelius’s maps in his *Theatrum* and Lily’s map of Britain.

<sup>22</sup> De Certeau traces the decline of such figures alongside the rise of the mathematically accurate map: “Between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the map became more autonomous. No doubt the proliferation of the ‘narrative’ figures that have long been its stock-in-trade (ships, animals, and characters of all kinds) still had the function of indicating the operations – travelling, military, architectural, political or commercial – that make possible the fabrication of a geographical plan. Far from being ‘illustrations,’ iconic glosses on the text, these figuration, like fragments of stories, mark on the map the historical operations from which it resulted. Thus the sailing ship painted on the sea indicates the maritime expedition that made it possible to represent the coastlines. It is equivalent to a describer of the ‘tour’ type. But the map gradually wins out over these figures; it colonizes space; it eliminates little by little the pictorial figurations of the practices that produce it” (121).

attachment to place” (Harley “Meaning” 38). The evidence of individual human action, which is largely erased from the maps due to the limitations of the scale in which they are drawn, returns symbolically with these decorations. The mobile elements of human life, shown most strikingly in the boats and galleons which sail off the coast and up the estuaries, cast the motionlessness of the land into relief (Figures 2 and 3). The interplay between stillness and motion in Saxton’s atlas resonates with the wider performative aspect of Renaissance cartography, and it also strongly influenced the national mapping projects which would follow.

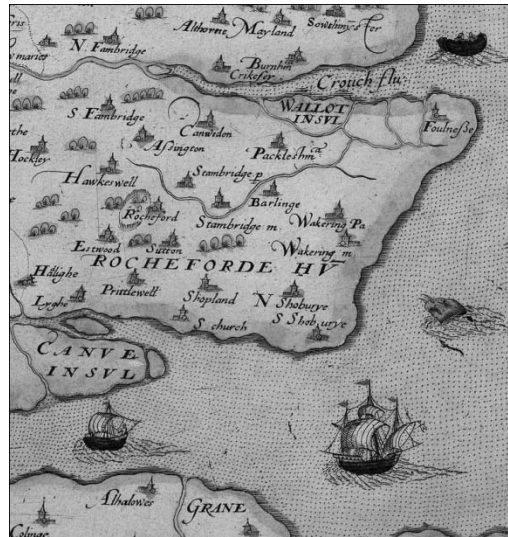


Figure 2. Detail from Saxton’s map of Essex. *Atlas* (1580). By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library



Figure 3. Detail from Saxton’s map of Essex. *Atlas* (1580). By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library



### John Norden's Mirror of Britain

A little over a decade after the publication of Saxton's complete atlas in 1579, a surveyor, topographer, and devotional poet named John Norden embarked on a new project entitled *Speculum Britanniae* ("The Mirror of Britain").<sup>23</sup> His "intended labours," he wrote in the dedication to William Cecil, Lord Burghley which prefaced the first published installment, were to produce "the description of famous England" (*Middlesex* n.p. fol. 3r). With this ambitious enterprise, Norden aimed to create a more functional map for "the publike ease of many" (*Middlesex* n.p. fol. 3v). His proposed project would amend errors and limitations found in Saxton's atlas, increase the topographical detail included for each county, sharpen the geographical specificity, and unite the cartographic image of each county with text combining antiquarian accounts and practical information. However, due possibly to Burghley's death, a lack of governmental support, a shortage of resources, the daunting immensity of the project, or his unlucky choice of a patron and dedicatee in the hapless Earl of Essex, only two county maps were published during his lifetime: *Speculum Britanniae the first parte: An historicall & chorographicall discription of Middlesex* (1593) and *Speculum Britanniae pars: The description of Hartfordshire* (1598). Other installments of the *Speculum* were

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<sup>23</sup> The most detailed account of John Norden's life and work is Kitchen's unpublished 1992 dissertation ("Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher: An analytical account of the life and work of John Norden, 1547?-1625"); see also Kitchen, "John Norden." On the *Speculum Britanniae* project in the context of English cartographic history, see Lynam 15-23; Mendyk 57-74; Klein, *Maps* 145-48; Delano-Smith and Kain 71-4, 188-89; *History of Cartography* 3:1632-34; Cormack, *Charting* 172-73; Barber, "England II" 64; Helgersen 114-18, 126-28.

published centuries later: *Speculi Britanniae pars altera: or, a Delineation of Northamptonshire* (1720), *Speculi Britanniae pars: A Topographical and Historical Description of Cornwall* (1728), *Speculi Britanniae pars: An Historical and Chorographical Description of the County of Essex* (1840). A compilation of maps and descriptions presented to Queen Elizabeth in 1595, entitled *Speculum Britanniae: A Chorographically description of the Severall Shires & Islands of Middlesex, Essex, Surrey, Hamshire, Sussex, Weighthe, Garnesey and Jersey* (BL Add. Ms. 31853), has never been published. The intensifying desperation with which Norden dedicates his work to Cecil and Elizabeth reveals not only the financial, but also the personal cost of effecting his project with minimal support:

I was promised sufficient allowance and in hope thereof only I proceeded. And by attendance on the cause and by travail in the business, I have spent above a thousand marks and five years' time. By which, being dangerously indebted, much grieved, and my family distressed, I have no other refuge but to fly unto your majesty's never failing bounty for relief. (Norden's handwritten note to the Queen in her presentation copy of *Hartfordshire*; quoted in Helgerson 125)

Similar complaints of his unworthiness and need punctuate the other *Speculum* volumes and some of Norden's devotional writings.<sup>24</sup> Norden published his *Preparative to his Speculum Britanniae* (1596) in order to refute various criticisms about his practices and address a number of problems inherent in county

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<sup>24</sup> One work in particular, his *Vicissitudo Rerum* (1600) is considered at length in chapter 5. Mendyk attributes the tone of this work to "the author's melancholy," due, among other factors, to the failure of the *Speculum* project (69, see also 264n9).

cartography, but, in his dedication to Cecil, he specifies his “want,” “neglect,” and “sorrow” and hopes “to moue your Honour to effect what you haue begun” (A3).<sup>25</sup> *Speculum Britanniae* never received the government support it needed to succeed, and Queen Elizabeth herself disregarded Norden’s pleas.<sup>26</sup> However, regardless of the fact that *Speculum Britanniae* remained unfinished, the maps that Norden did complete were a major advancement in mapping practices. Norden’s level of topographic specificity and his emphasis on the utility of maps for navigating counties, not just viewing them, was an improvement over Saxton’s maps. Even though his cartographic conventions were not universally accepted at first, they now dominate the modern conception of a map’s functionality.

While he followed Saxton’s basic organizational divisions by county, Norden’s many innovations to this cartographic form and its system of representation were aimed to improve a map’s utility for wayfinding and enhance

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<sup>25</sup> The two figures pictured in the frontispiece of Norden’s *Middlesex* volume can be read as a delightful piece of self-fashioning. Kitchen writes: “Burghley stands to the right, with learned books and martial implements – bows, arrows, halberds and the like – hanging above him. Norden stands on the left with surveyor’s instruments over his head. He is elegantly dressed with a tall hat and a wide ruff; a rich cloak hangs over his shoulders and a chain round his neck. His face is adorned with a neat beard and a large moustache: no shrouded puritan here and his social status as a gentleman is boldly stated by the left hand advancing a large sword. (Is it fanciful to see Burghley’s hand being shown venturing into his pocket hinting at a ‘hand out?’)” (“Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” 44-45).

<sup>26</sup> Peter Barber reads this silence as indifference to maps themselves: “perhaps the most significant indicator of Elizabeth’s lack of cartographic interest is to be seen in her failure to respond in any way to John Norden’s direct address to her for patronage of his *Speculum Britanniae* series [. . .] which provided far more administrative and economic information (such as the location of ironworks) than had Saxton’s of two decades earlier” (“Was Elizabeth I Interested in Maps” 190).

its dynamic elements (Figure 4).<sup>27</sup> An alpha-numeric ruler serves as a frame to each map and establishes both the scale of the map (two miles per division), so that one can “know the distance between places in the Map without compasses,” and a spatial grid of letter and number combinations that corresponds to a list of place names in alphabetical order, “[a] matter of so great facilitie as needeth no example” (*Middlesex* fol. 4r). Apart from the chorographical descriptions and regional antiquarian histories, the extra-cartographic information incorporated into each volume includes multiple lists, such as the county divisions, the market towns with scheduled market days, scheduled fairs held in particular towns, the houses of law, places of notable battles, the royal parks, the locations of beacons, names and houses of the gentry, ancient buildings and monuments, and natural features such as rivers, forests, and minerals. Many, if not most, of these listed items appear on the county maps themselves. Such addenda, by revealing evidence of human activity in and on the land, contribute a sense of the dynamic, lived environment to the representation of each region.

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<sup>27</sup> Lynam writes that Norden “had noted that Camden’s ‘Britannia,’ being in Latin, was not for the general public, that Saxton’s maps showed no roads, had no index by which places could be easily found, often included three or more counties on one sheet and that both works were large and heavy tomes. He determined to write a series of brief county chorographies illustrated by small but practical maps, to be published as duo-decimo books easily carried in a pocket” (15). However, these observations lack archival documentation, so whether Norden actually made such declarations in correspondence or whether Lynam extrapolated such motivation based on what Norden’s maps include remains unclear.

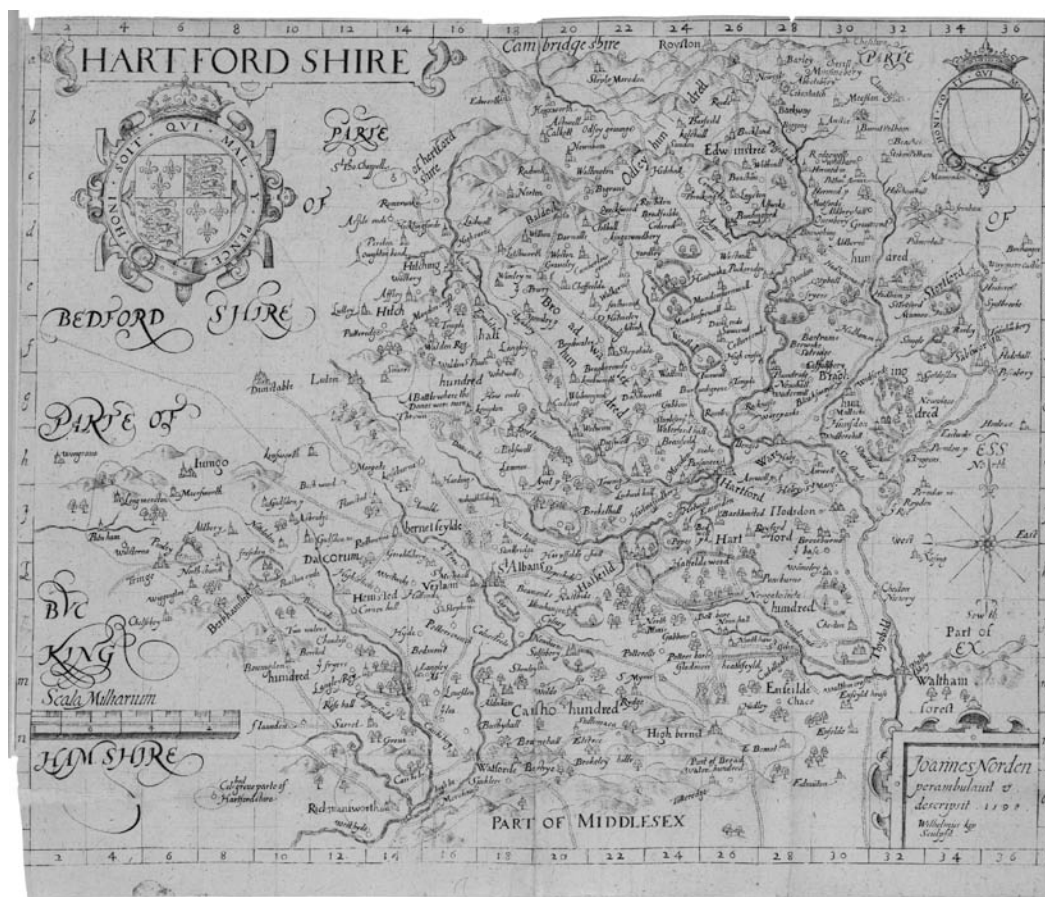


Figure 4. John Norden. Map of Hertfordshire from *Speculi Britanniae Pars: The Description of Hertfordshire*. London: Thomas Dawson, 1598. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library

Where white space prevails on Saxton's maps, both of Norden's sixteenth-century published maps (and some of his manuscript maps) are crisscrossed with a network of roads, thus changing the functionality of the map. Saxton's maps present the county; Norden's maps navigate it. This difference is evident from the terms each map-maker used to describe his project. Where Saxton inscribed his maps "Christophorus Saxton descripsit" ("Christopher Saxton described"), Norden specified "Joannes Norden perambulavit & descripsit" ("John Norden walked around and described"). The degree of detail on

each map, the length of time that elapsed between his publication of one map and the next, and the inclusion of roads all testify to his meticulousness. The term refers to the experience of motion essential for such a detailed survey in the first place. “Perambulavit” also suggests the purpose of the map. The inscription on a 1603 map of Warwickshire, long considered anonymous but recently attributed to Norden’s friend William Smith, further indicates the intended beneficiaries of maps with roads: “Christopher Saxton drew this map first in the year 1576, but it is newly corrected, augmented, and restored, with the addition (nearly sixty places which before were lacking) of the individual hundreds, major roads, which can accommodate the needs of a traveler” (BL Maps C.2.cc.2 (23)).<sup>28</sup> Roads, boundary, and landmarks benefit the traveller.

The plotting of roads in relation to the placement of landmarks allows travellers to orient their journeys; Norden’s maps can serve as a useful tool for wayfinding. Roads also make the map more overtly narrativized. No longer are sites only points of origin or departure, but the journey between is measured and marked. Norden’s maps still have white space – not all places are connected by roads – but such deviations from the major routes can be navigated on the

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<sup>28</sup> “primus aedidit Christophorus Saxton, Anno 1576. Nunc de integro correcto, aucta, et restituta. Cui adduntur (praeter 60. locos qui priore desiderabantur) Singula Hundreda, Viae notiores, in usum itinerantium accomodatae” (author’s translation). Norden and Smith likely knew each other, but the degree to which Smith’s exposure to German map-making practices (which included features such as the grid, the characteristic sheet, and roads) influenced Norden, and the degree to which Smith’s later foray into county map-making was influenced by Norden both remain unresolved. See Kitchen, “Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” 196-100; Delano-Smith and Kain 73-75, 188; *History of Cartography* 3:1634.

ground, with the aid of oral directions and signage in the field. Roads on a map convert the map into an itinerary, rigid, homogeneous signs “dissolve into story” (Helgersen 110), and these narratives, to borrow de Certeau’s phrase, “carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces” (118). By opening the space of the county up to navigation, the roads on Norden’s maps intensify their representation of the experience of motion.

Norden’s use of a complex system of topographical signs was another feature which allowed him to capture the more dynamic features of each county and to break with the impression of homogeneity that permeated Saxton’s atlas. One of Norden’s innovations was the “characteristic sheet” which appears on several of his maps (Middlesex, Essex, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire), now more commonly called the map’s “legend.”<sup>29</sup> Kitchen explains how Norden’s signs were an improvement over Saxton’s:

Although Saxton attempted a differentiation for classes of settlement on his maps, he included no key to the meaning of his symbols. Norden extended Saxton’s tentative classification which enabled him to get a wealth of detail onto a small map with a scale of about 1:192,500. He also provided a table to explain the ‘Characters distinguishing the difference of places.’ In so doing, he introduced the characteristic sheet to English cartography. (“Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” 49-51)

No two “characteristic sheets” in Norden’s maps are identical – each county possessed different features, and Norden also made changes to improve the

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<sup>29</sup> See Campbell; Kitchen, “Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” 49-51, 73-78.

functionality of his sign systems – but they all share similar types of places. Norden classified different sizes of settlements (e.g. market towns, parishes, hamlets, villages), different types of property belonging to nobility (e.g. houses and palaces of Queen Elizabeth, houses of nobility, houses of knights and gentlemen), various religious establishments (e.g. monasteries or religious houses, chapels of ease, bishops' sees, hospitals), natural places (e.g. mines, woody places, parks), sites of human industry (e.g. mills), and types of historical places (e.g. places where battles have been, ruinate or decayed places, castles, old trenches and forts). Comparing Saxton's map of Hartfordshire to Norden's reveals how much more detailed the latter map is, and how Norden was able to build on the conventions established by Saxton to create a representation of the dynamic, temporal, and varied features of each county.

Norden's attention to antiquities, ruins, and places of battles also sets his project apart from Saxton's. Where Saxton's maps attempt to convey an atemporal representation of land, Norden presents the land *in time* (for instance, he lists the current occupants of noble estates), and presents the effects of time on the land. Norden's preface to his *Middlesex* volume gives us a clue as to his motivation in recording ruins and decayed places:

Also in this commencement of my travailes, I have observed certain funeral monuments with the armes (if any thereon rest undefaced) which if it may be favorably conceived, I shall with more diligence observe the like hereafter, whereby may be preserved in perpetuall memory, that which time may deface, and swallow up in oblivion. (n.p. fol. 4r)



Norden understood the duty of a chorographer was to fight against the devouring power of time, and to fight to preserve local knowledge “in perpetuall memory.”

There is a paradoxical combination between motion and stillness here: the map is created through Norden’s “diligent” motion through the county and the map represents the county as a navigable space where his travels can be duplicated, but the map signs and the accompanying written chorographical descriptions aim to monumentalize the county’s history, making the *Speculum* a monument of monuments, in order to save England’s record’s from oblivion. As a citizen of the sixteenth century, Norden’s travels through England and his antiquarian interests would have brought him face to face with not only the destructive force of time, but also the premature destruction of human structures by human beings. Words can easily create “a monument more lasting than brass” when plaques are in danger of being razed beyond legibility. F.J. Levy notes Norden’s “strong visual sense” which responded to “the vicissitudes of time as shown in ruins,” and that “[u]nlike almost everyone else in the sixteenth century, he went beyond describing a ruined castle merely because it was there: Norden almost automatically saw it peopled and thriving, as it must once have been” (162). This desire to see an historical site as “peopled” creeps into the cartographic space of the map: in the map of Hartfordshire, Norden included three miniature battle scenes, each with two regiments facing each other, swords drawn. These figures mark two battles from the War of the Roses – Bernard Hill (k16) at the second battle of St. Albans (1461), and the Gladmore heath field (m26) where the Battle of Barnet occurred (1471) – as well as Dane-ende (h16),

where there was, as Norden wrote in the white space of the map, “A Battle where the Danes were over Thrown.”<sup>30</sup> These scenes suggest that Norden’s *Speculum* serves as a living monument, history reanimated by chorography (Figure 5).

With the exception of the minuscule battle scenes on the Hartfordshire map and the small boats sailing the river Thames on the Middlesex county map, the scale of Norden’s county maps does not allow for the inclusion of human figures. Instead, Norden “peoples” his city maps with representations of



Figure 5. Detail from Norden’s map of Hartfordshire (1598). By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library

<sup>30</sup> See Kitchen, “Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” 139.

quotidian human activities. Although city maps were part of the proposed *Speculum* project,<sup>31</sup> Norden produced only a limited number of them, sometimes within a larger county map. Nevertheless, the extant city maps epitomize the capacity of cartography to represent the experience of motion. Norden's *Middlesex* volume contains three urban maps. On the county map, he marked London's placement not by a sign but by a miniature, angled, panoramic view.<sup>32</sup> London bridge is clearly visible, as are recognizable landmarks, small piloted boats on the Thames, and the slightest hint of streets winding between the outlines of buildings. *Middlesex* also contains larger bird's-eye-view maps of London and of Westminster. Although these two maps are separated by fifteen pages of text, they present a more or less contiguous view of the urban space along the Thames. Both maps adopt a bird's-eye-view of the urban landscape: the perspective is from above at an oblique angle so that while the façades and outlines of buildings are clearly visible, the roadways are not concealed. The open and navigable network of roads invites map readers to position themselves, imaginatively, into the urban space.<sup>33</sup> Norden introduces several cartographical features in these

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<sup>31</sup> In Burghley's copy of the *Northamptonshire* manuscript, Norden asks him "to consider whether it might be expedient, that the most principall townes, Cyties and castles within every Shire, should be briefly and expertly plotted out" (quoted in Delano-Smith and Kain 188).

<sup>32</sup> On mimetic signs for cities, ranging from side view (panorama) to plan, and from realistic to schematic signs, see *History of Cartography* 3:541.

<sup>33</sup> William Cuninghame's map of Norwich perhaps introduced many of the conventions for city maps to the English reading. Smith writes: "In Cuninghame's cityview of Norwich, for instance, the complex paths [. . .] roads, [and] open spaces all promote a sense of available movement, what one critic has called 'locomotion,' which provide the viewer with a means of imaginative participation,

maps to aid in traversing the urban landscape: a scale of paces, names of landmarks and major streets, an alphanumeric key to other major sites,<sup>34</sup> and directional labels on each major thoroughfare out of the city (e.g. “The way to Hampsted”). The London map is framed by the coats-of-arms of the twelve London guilds, which provides a separate, non-cartographic, framework for the activity of the city. The size and scale of both the city maps allow Norden to represent these activities mimetically: human figures walk through Moorfield and other open spaces on the outskirts of the city, deer graze in St. James’ Park, while the fields to the north west of Westminster are populated by cattle and horses, and the Thames is crowded with swans and occupied boats of all sizes (with many more vessels moored along the shore). Saxton’s county maps intimated dynamic human activity by, for example, images of ships, mythological figures, and surveying instruments, but Norden’s city maps are able to represent such scenes of daily life in the very locales where they take place.

Norden’s map of Sussex (1595) is the only county map to contain an inset city map. Placed in the bottom right hand corner of the map sheet, this small map of Chichester occupies what otherwise would be ocean (Saxton’s map of Sussex

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offering both a sense of spatial organization and an implicit invitation into the scene. In this way even the roads and vacancies behind the buildings, which are never actually seen, draw the viewer in, providing an implicit, imaginative means of negotiating the space” (*Cartographical* 60). On city map views, see Nuti; Kinney 182-89.

<sup>34</sup> London’s key is on the map itself, while Westminster’s key is embedded in the chorographical text which follows.

placed the allegorical scene of Mars ravishing Venus in this blank space).<sup>35</sup> In order to remind his viewers that Chichester cannot be found by wading into the English Channel, Norden inserts the town map as a cut-out map, a *trompe l'oeil*: along the left-hand side of town map, where the fields to the west of Chichester would otherwise perplexingly meet the ocean, the ocean-edge rolls away from the inset map like a parchment, reminding the viewer that the “map is not the territory” (Korzybski 750-51), but only an image on paper. Despite its small size, the Chichester map is quite detailed. Various landmarks are marked on the map itself, with a separate key identifying twenty-four more sites. Norden drew this map with the same bird’s-eye-view angle he used for the London and Westminster maps, clearly showing the appearance of homes, buildings, and churches. People are also present in this tiny map: walking along the streets, labouring in the fields, going about their daily activities. These figures stand in for the “ordinary practitioners of the city” described by de Certeau, “whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it” (93). By including the practices which are circumscribed within the city, Norden’s maps transform topographical places into spaces, where space, according to de Certeau, is “practiced place” (117). These images and figures on the city map are examples of the

practices that are foreign to the ‘geometrical’ or ‘geographical’  
space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions. These

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<sup>35</sup> On Norden’s Chichester map, see Kitchen, “Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” 94-7; Delano-Kain 188-89; *History of Cartography* 3:1657.

practices of space refer to a specific form of *operations* ('ways of operating'), to 'another spatiality' (an 'anthropological,' poetic and mythic experience of space), and to an *opaque and blind* mobility characteristic of the bustling city. (de Certeau 93).

As temporal, narrative figures signifying "another spatiality," one of poetics, or of quotidian routines, the dynamic elements of Norden's city maps demonstrate the potential maps have for representing the experience of motion.

The bird's-eye-view plan that Norden adopted for his urban maps of London, Westminster, and Chichester, emulates the Copperplate Map of London (ca. 1553-1559) and its derivative, the Agas (also known as the Woodcut Map or the *Civitas Londinium* Map) (ca. 1561-1566).<sup>36</sup> In these maps, the dynamic and temporal traces of human activity are everywhere: the map depicts figures engaged in archery practice, husbandry, farming, cloth drying, travel on foot, horseback riding, boating, bull and bear baiting, and socializing. Smith notes that the Copperplate Map unites the illusion of an actual city view with the accuracy of a scale map: "The map's audience could take in the entire city at once, but with enough detail to imagine the buildings as houses, churches, and taverns rather than simply locations on the map, creating an illusion of volume into which the imagination could insert itself" (*Cartographic* 61). The Copperplate and Woodcut maps combine representations of locations – sometimes buildings and structures

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<sup>36</sup> Only three plates from the Copperplate map are still known to exist. The Woodcut Map, long credited mistakenly to Ralph Agas, is extant, and provides a rare, detailed glimpse into the urban space of early Elizabethan London. On these maps, see Delano-Smith and Kain 190-91; Sanford 103-05, 118, 123-24; Smith, *Cartographic Imagination* 61.

crowded tightly together – with white space – roads, open fields, the Thames. The white space signals the potential for motion and activity: some figures are already depicted engaged in spatial practices, but the map view encourages the viewer to enter and navigate the map themselves. These London maps miniaturize the practices of everyday life undertaken daily by the city's inhabitants.

Norden took a novel approach to city views with his “A View of London Bridge from East to West” (1597).<sup>37</sup> Less a map, and more an architectural drawing, Norden represented the Thames and the bridge using two different perspectives. The river and boats are drawn as viewed from above, but at the bridge the perspective jarringly shifts to a panoramic view, facing upstream. Buildings along the shore where the Thames curves towards Westminster are visible faintly through the arches of the bridge. The visual impression is of London Bridge built on the crest of a waterfall, with small boats defying gravity and rowing along the cascading water. Though Lynam calls the drawing “crude, [and] inartistic” (21), I would suggest that “A View” is an experiment in combining perspectives that allows Norden to represent both the motion of

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<sup>37</sup> This date, given in Lynam (21) and Kitchen, “Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” (128), is nowhere on the engraving itself, but rather extrapolated from the dedication to Richard Saltonstall, Lord Mayor in 1597. This engraving is rare, although two copies are held by the Folger Shakespeare Library. A more common version dates from 1624 with slight changes: Elizabeth's insignia have been exchanged for James's, the Lord Mayor's name is changed, and the representation of the Thames has been foreshortened to allow for more text. Included is Norden's intriguing description: “I described it in the time of Queen Elizabeth, but the Plate hauing bene neere these 20 yeares imbezled and detained by a Person, till of late unknown, and now brought to light” (quoted in Lynam 21).

boats on the Thames and the solid monumentality of the bridge itself.<sup>38</sup> Norden does not omit quotidian details or the everyday activities taking place at the bridge. Three boats attempt to pilot the treacherous water near the bridge where the flow is restricted by the massive bridge supports; one has capsized, leaving its occupants bobbing in the river awaiting rescue. Above the bridge, more than a dozen heads on stakes caution civic prudence. On the bridge, which is the major thoroughfare in and out of the city, a stream of foot-traffic can be seen in the gaps between the buildings. As Norden described the bridge in a cartouche, the “houses are on either side so artificially combined as the bridge seems not only a continual street but men walk as under a firm vault or loft.” These groups of people and even a coach are nearly invisible compared with the dominant form of the bridge.

Norden’s most elaborate, complex, and masterful city map is his *Civitas Londini* (1600) (Figure 6),<sup>39</sup> which depicts London Bridge and incorporates three

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<sup>38</sup> In the cartouche in the bottom left hand corner, Norden writes:

Among manie Famous monuments within this Realme none  
Deserueth more to be sett before the worlds uiew by demonstration  
Then this londen bridge. And yet it hath not found so much  
Grace amonge the more sufficient artists. And therefore, I the menest  
Being thereunto moued Have under your garde aduentured to  
Publish this rude Conterfeite thereof to the end that as by reporte  
The fame of it is spred throwgh manie nations. So by this picture  
It may appeare to such as haue heard of it and not reallye  
Beheld it to be lesse prays worthy then it hath bene sayed to be.

<sup>39</sup> The only known original printing of this map is housed at The Royal Library, National Library of Sweden (de la Gardie Collection). My thanks to the staff at the British Library, Map Room, for providing me with a large-scale reproduction of their facsimile edition. On the map’s print history and known copies, see Kitchen’s “Appendix 2: Bibliographical Discussion of Topographical Works” in



city views. The majority of the cartographical space is taken up by a long panorama of the city and outlying villages, stretching from Whitehall in the west to Blackwall in the east. The Thames dominates the central space of the map. The panorama is not drawn straight on, which would create a view of the city as a solid, monolithic wall, but rather it is drawn on an angle from above, as if from an elevated point to the south of Southwark, giving the city depth and volume. The buildings in Southwark, at the bottom of the panorama, are the largest, and most clearly demarcated, and they become more densely packed and crowded to the north, east, and west, although major landmarks are easily distinguishable and labelled.

Norden experimented with contrasting images of the city in the white space of the map. The “curvature of the earth is wildly exaggerated,” which means not only that the western city of Westminster is completely obscured, but that there are blank spaces in each of the four corners of the map (Gordon 81). The upper two corners are filled conventionally with signs of authority: Queen’s Elizabeth’s coat-of-arms to the west, and the crest of London with pennants and a laurel wreath to the east. The words “Civitas Londini” appear in the top center,

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“Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” 374-75. On the map image itself, see Kitchen, “Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” 173-83 (this includes a highly detailed description of *Civitas Londini*, and my description is indebted to his); Gordon 81-3; Sanford 107-08. Since both the panorama and the inset London map depict multiple playhouses on the south bank (including the Globe), Norden’s *Civitas Londini* played a major role in the Globe reconstruction project: as the chairman the advisory board argued, “If we are to trust anyone’s picture of [Shakespeare’s] Globe, it must be his” (quoted in Kitchen, “Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” 183).

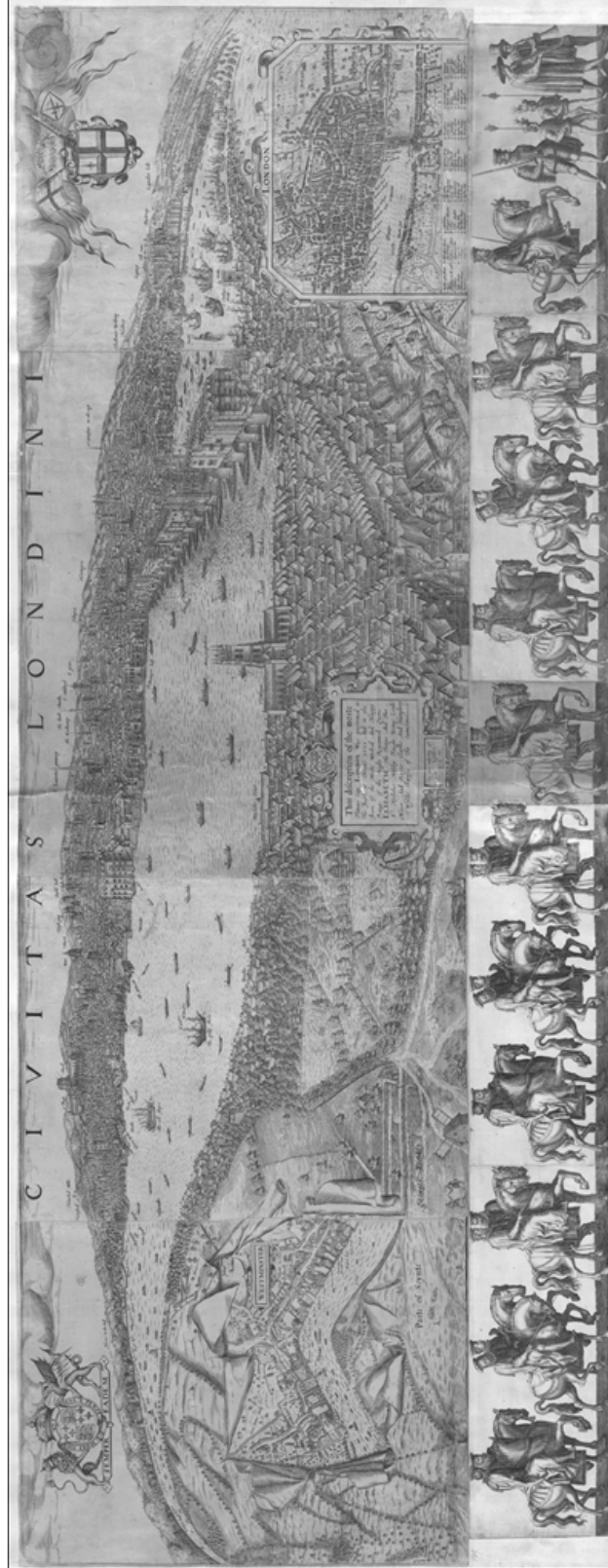


Figure 6. *Civitas Londini*, engraving by John Norden, 1600, De la Gardie collection nr.89, National library of Sweden. Used by Permission

perhaps declaring an affinity to the Woodcut Map's title "Civitas Londinium." In the blank spaces of the lower corners, Norden has inserted slightly modified versions of his bird's-eye-view plans of London and Westminster from his *Middlesex* volume. To the west, the plan of London is enclosed in strapwork and set apart from the panorama's field of view, so that it appears much nearer to the viewer. Eleven new sites have been added to the key, and all the extra-topographical details are missing (the guild arms, the royal and civic insignia, the scale of pases). To the east, in another *trompe l'oeil* similar to the inset Chichester map, a cut is made into St. George's Field, and the paper is seemingly torn away to reveal a map of Westminster beneath the surface. The "exaggerated curvature" of the earth is such that Westminster is almost completely obscured to the west, so the cut away map restores Westminster to the urban space; although certain sites are marked on the map, Westminster does not have a reference key, as London does. Gordon argues that Norden's displacement of "the monarchic ceremonial city from the map" identifies "Westminster, in contrast to the city of London, as a place of exclusive, internal spaces," and "as a non-city, unable to perform its own image" (82-3). The depiction below the panorama view of twenty-one aldermen in the Lord's Mayor's procession supports Gordon's reading of Norden's map as presenting London as a dynamic, navigable, performative space over and against a static view of Westminster. Such a reading relies on the capacities of varying cartographic views to represent the experience of motion, which *Civitas Londini* illustrates much better than Norden's combination of two different perspectives in "A View." Each type of view creates

a difference impression.<sup>40</sup> The bird's-eye-view, when it contains little in the way of directional markers, can transform a familiar urban space into an impenetrable, disorienting maze; with a key and clearly distinguishable buildings, it reveals the potential for motion through the city. The panoramic view, while it obscures most of the streets, possesses a realism that the other views do not, and is able to capture actual, rather than simply potential or representative, urban motion. Ground-plots invite the viewer to occupy the space; panoramas turn the city into the object of the viewer's gaze.

The panoramic view, the only potentially actual view of the three in an age before aerial photography and flight, presents the city in motion by far exceeding the number of quotidian activities shown on the other maps. The most immediately striking activity is on the Thames, which is crowded with water taxis, pleasure crafts, sailing ships, the "gally furst" (the Lord Mayor's ceremonial barge), and "Eell ships." The occupants of the boats are clearly seen, some so closely that it is possible to make out their facial expressions. On land, motion is more subtle, but it is everywhere. Courtly, courting couples walk together in St. George's field among livestock and herdsman, while nearby a duel is fought with daggers. A group on foot and horseback follow a horse-drawn wagon along Long

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<sup>40</sup> Hyde summarizes Skelton's classification of four types of views: "First, there were stereographic views or profile views. In these the town presented itself to the eye of an observer at a point on the ground or not far above it. Second, there were prospective views, bird's-eye views, and balloon views. These depicted the town as seen obliquely from a more elevated point of view. Third, there were linear ground plans, which showed the town from a theoretically vertical viewpoint. And finally, there were map views, in which the ground plan was enriched by delineations of detail in bird's-eye view. Map views had no vanishing point and therefore, strictly speaking, no perspective" (11).

Southwark street and towards London Bridge (Figure 7). Above the Stone Gate of the bridge, sixteen severed heads are raised on stakes, both a symbol and a warning to those entering the city. The many labelled stairways on the north side of the Thames indicate other possible access points to the city, and groups of people can be seen disembarking all along the shore, most clearly at Three Cranes Wharf near to the Vintry. On the north side of the Thames, the cityscape is so densely packed that individuals are invisible, but clearly drawn and labelled sites – St Paul’s, the Guildhall, the Royal Exchange, the Dutch Church, the Tower – all demarcate various types of activities taking place within the city. One figure is still amid all this motion: at the top of St. Mary Overie (later Southwark Cathedral), just to the west of London Bridge, stands a solitary figure raising a pair of compasses above his head (Figure 8). The figure is marked “*Statio prospectiva*” (“the station furnishing the prospect”). Is this a self-portrait of Norden himself, in “an uncharacteristic display of levity” (Kitchen “Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” 177)?<sup>41</sup> This central static figure creates an interesting tension with the motion unfolding all around him. In order to represent the experience of motion in a city, the surveyor must be placed in “*statio*” (lit. “a standing still”). Stillness is necessary to create this dynamic urban image, whereas for the county maps, the surveyor must be constantly moving to create what is chiefly a static representation. Norden’s representation of the quotidian activities of the city-dwellers confers the experience of motion to his maps.

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<sup>41</sup> Sanford, 107-08, also reads the figure this way.

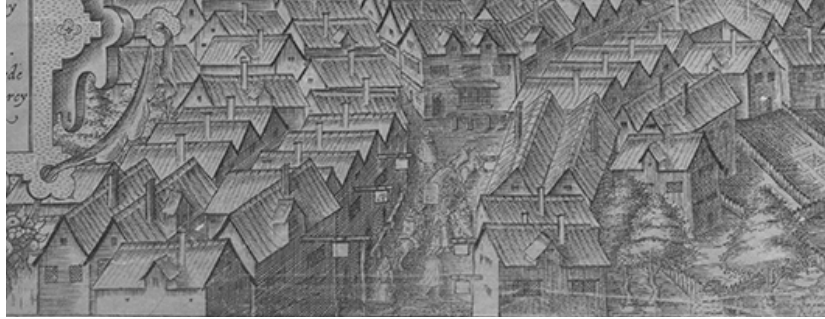


Figure 7. Detail from Norden's *Civitas Londini* (1600). Used by Permission



Figure 8. Detail from Norden's *Civitas Londini* (1600). Used by Permission

When Norden used the word “performed” in his inscription to *Civitas Londini* (“this description of the moste Famous Citty London was performed in the yeare of Christe 1600”), he chose a word that he used only rarely, but one which has a strong resonance for the experience of motion in Renaissance chorography. Norden’s use of this verb to describe his act of map-making bookends the entire *Speculum* project. Initially, in his dedication to Burghley which prefaces his *Northamptonshire* volume, he described his motivation for the work: “I tooke occasion in my travayle in those parts to *performe* it after this poore sort, being otherwise employed in surveyes theare” (quoted in Morgan 135, emphasis added). Seven years later, in a last attempt to interest Elizabeth in the *Speculum*, Norden begged: “[o]nly your Majesty’s princely favor is my hope, without which I

myself most miserably perish, my family in penury and the work *unperformed*” (quoted in Helgerson 125, emphasis added). The *OED* categorizes uses of the verb “to perform” in mapping contexts under the definition “to make, construct, or build; to create” (5a; quoting Speed’s *Theatre*). However, Norden’s usage is more nuanced than simply an authorial self-identification, and it reveals the experience of motion implicit in cartographic enterprises. “To perform” has an additional range of meanings under the heading of “to complete, finish”: “to complete or make up by means of an addition” (7b), “to make up or supply (what is wanting)” (7c), and “to complete by the addition of an ornament” (8b). Kitchen argues that since Norden uses the verb in *Civitas Londini* and in his 1607 survey of Windsor, both of which projects possibly “incorporated drawings by other hands,” the verb specifies that Norden was the compiler and completer, rather than the sole artist (182). This is a probable interpretation of “performed,” but it is not exhaustive, nor does it account for Norden’s usage in his dedications to *Northamptonshire* and *Hartfordshire*.

Instead, Norden’s rare use of the verb “to perform” connotes the *performative* aspects of his projects, in the theatrical, ceremonial, and dynamic senses of the word. An additional range of meanings for “to perform” include “to do, carry out, or execute formally or solemnly” (4a) and “to present [. . .] to an audience (4b). When Norden presented the *Speculum* to Burghley and Elizabeth as a kind of performance, he proposed his mapmaking project as an enacting of

space, and one which was in danger of being “unperformed.”<sup>42</sup> If Norden chose this verb in order to align his mapmaking with other types of theatrical or ceremonial performances, then this usage creates a strong affinity between the two panels of *Civitas Londini*: the various views of the urban space, and the civic progression below. All the map’s flourishes – the layer peeled back to reveal Westminster, the elaborate strapwork plaques, the static figure surveying from high atop his *statio prospectiva* panopticon – transform the city of London into a theatre. Gordon argues that “civic ceremony and city mapping” aligned to create “a belief in the city as an inherently spatially performed entity”: “The city was enacted before it was visualised, it walked before it was drawn, and the early modern viewer or imager pictured a city in terms of the organised spatial practices which were the first statement of the city as concept” (70). Yet a performance has a temporal dimension: plays, civic processions, perambulations all come to an end. Norden’s maps, on the other hand, are more permanent, unchanging, and monumental than even the metal plates which engraved them. The performance of space enacted by all his city maps is both inherent in his activity of creating them, and in the dynamic, narrative figures he includes: the duelling youths, the capsized boat, the coach and pedestrians entering London. These figures also performed the city; now long absent, their traces remain

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<sup>42</sup> Brückner and Poole note that Ralph Agas describes the complex processes involved in surveying as a “performance of the premisses” (Agas 14). They argue that in surveying, the “land, in fact, is not merely measured, but, as Agas phrases it, fully ‘performed.’ The act of surveying is thus one which entails entering into and profoundly engaging with a designated performative sphere” (621-22).



monumentalized by Norden's map. For Norden, the city unit was a microcosm of the county: the dynamic elements he introduced in the *Speculum Britanniae* county maps provided a model for representing urban space.

### **John Stow, William Camden, and John Speed**

John Stow's and William Camden's prose chorographies and John Speed's *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain*, a chorographical combination of prose and maps, all contain many of the temporal, dynamic, performative, and narrative features found in Saxton's and Norden's maps. A friend of Lambarde's, an active member of the Society of Antiquaries, a resident first of Aldgate ward and later of Limestreet, and member of the Merchant Taylor's, Stow in his *Survey of London* performs a representation of London which oscillates between stasis and movement, continuity and change.<sup>43</sup> On one hand, he presents a unified picture of the city, by relating a single history and charting the customs, practices, and structures which have existed for generations. On the other hand, his nostalgia and his silences betray a separate commentary on the changing nature of London, and Stow's discomfort with its transformation. The *Survey* consists of a narrative perambulation through London, ward by ward, bookended by descriptions of London's antiquities, landscape, infrastructures, customs, and administrative units. Stow balances the bird's-eye-view of the city's ground plot, establishing

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<sup>43</sup> On Stow's *Survey*, see Merritt, ed. (esp. chapters by Merritt, Collinson, and Harding); Smith, Strier and Bevington, eds. (esp. chapters by Archer and Manley); Sanford 108-112; Wall *Literary* 95-102; Harding "Recent Perspectives"; Cormack, *Charting* 181-82.

boundaries, placements, and relationships between sites, with a tangible, human perambulation through all the hidden corners of the city. Stow demonstrates both types of spatial narrative defined by de Certeau: a map (“the knowledge of an order of places,” a “*tableau*”) and a tour (“spatializing actions,” “organizing *movements*”) (119). This duality is most evident in the descriptions of the wards, the urban equivalent of counties, which Lawrence Manley calls Stow’s “most original [. . .] achievement” (36). Each begins with an overview of the boundaries of the ward, often listing important landmarks and monuments, and ends with a list of the civil servants and the rate of taxes. Stow also offers a bird’s-eye view of time, describing the history of the ward itself and the etymology of its place names. But in between, the perspective changes, and Stow walks the major and minor streets of the ward, describing all that is observable to him as well as relating the locations of landmarks that had already vanished before his survey.<sup>44</sup> The majority of his routes would have been, at one time, replicable<sup>45</sup>; Vanessa Harding notes that “Stow’s *Survey* was written at about the last date that it was possible” to “know the whole metropolis [. . .] comprehensively and reasonably succinctly” (“City” 140).

Stow’s *Survey* moves from the rhetoric of a map to that of a tour by

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<sup>44</sup> See Rollison 8.

<sup>45</sup> When I looked at various early editions of the *Survey* held at the Bodleian (e.g. Douce S 219, Douce S 231, Gough London 134 [Munday’s 1633 version]) it was evident that readers used the *Survey* not only to navigate their city but also to contrast their own experience of it. Marginalia corrects Stow’s naming in various places, as well as augments his descriptions with recent constructions and destructions of buildings. The *Survey of London* became a collaborative enterprise between Stow and his readers.

including his own experiences of the city. Not a solitary, static figure high atop a tower, Stow lives and moves at ground level, interacting with all the sensory, tactile, messy, and human elements of urban life. The representations of mobile elements of the city shown on maps like Norden's *Civitas Londini* expand into complete narratives in the genre of the survey. Stow pays close attention to the motion in and out of London. Noting the various docking points along the Thames, he describes the culture of the shipyard as a kind of liminal, transitory space. He also conveys how changes to London have affected the experience of walking through the city: for example, purprestures have made pedestrian travel crowded, noisy, dusty, and dangerous (Stow 1.83). Stow's grudging conclusion that "the world runs on wheels with many, whose parents were glad to go on foot" exemplifies the nostalgia that scholars such as Kingsford, Collinson, Archer, and Maney have observed in Stow's *Survey* (1.84). Norden's "A View of London Bridge" offered a glimpse of a coach entering the city, hinting at its capacity to communicate temporality and narrative; Stow fills out this narrative, bringing the coach – in all its dusty, noisy, inconvenience – to life, by telling the stories of his own life. Elsewhere, in an example which conveys the proximity of civil punishment to the patterns of everyday life, Stow recounts the unjustified execution of a well-liked bailiff from Romford. Stow is able to quote his last words on the gibbet, because, as he tells us "he was executed vpon the pauement of my doore" (1.144-45).<sup>46</sup> Such a story points to the limitations of the surveyor

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<sup>46</sup> See Beer 355-56.

perched at the top of St. Mary's: in his view of the city, many sites were either obscured by the crush of buildings overshadowing the winding streets or purposefully left silent. Actions such as civil punishment were not invisible to the passerby on the street, however: a person going through the motion of everyday life could suddenly come across another person frozen in pain, suffering a very public punishment. Here, motion and stasis meet.

Throughout Stow's *Survey*, there is an acute awareness of a different kind of motion: the motion of time. This motion can be tangible: in his account of the 1576 discovery of an ancient burial beneath London's Spitalfield, Stow specifies that from this unearthing of bones, ashes, urns, nails, and vials, he "reserved amongst diverse of those antiquities there, one *Urna*, with the Ashes and bones, and one pot of white earth very small" (169). By taking several of these artifacts, Stow possessed a physical reminder of his city's past. This past gets woven into the stories Stow tells about particular places, but the passage of time and the destructive powers of human conflict have created absences which Stow attempts to remedy by documenting what has been lost. In describing the parish church of St. Peter upon Cornhill, for example, Stow notes the "[m]onumentes of the dead in this Church defaced" (1.195), and then proceeds to fill in as many blanks as possible. In a gesture which perhaps reflects on his antiquarian sensibilities, Stow quotes in full the epitaph of the monument, now gone, to Robert Fabian, buried in 1511:

Like as the day his course doth consume,  
And the new morrow springeth againe as fast,  
So man and woman by natures custome,

This life to passe, at last in earth are cast,  
 In joy, and sorrow which here their time do wast,  
 Neuer in one state, but in course Transitory,  
 So full of change, is of this world the glory. (1.197)

This epitaph, which exists no longer on its monument but rather as a quotation in history books, speaks to the transitory nature of existence itself, and identifies mutability as a dynamic force shaping the practices and routes of everyday life. De Certeau describes how everyday life necessarily entails such a recognition of absences:

Objects and words also have hollow places in which a past sleeps, as in the everyday acts of walking, eating, going to bed, in which ancient revolutions slumber. [. . .] It is striking here that the places people live in are like the presences of diverse absences. What can be seen designates what is no longer there: “you *see*, here there used to be ...,” but it can no longer be seen. (108)

Yet for Stow, such “revolutions” are not “ancient,” but rather within living memory. Stow’s perambulatory motion through the city works to thwart the destructive power of mutability. Moreover, by incorporating multiple vectors of motion within his representation of urban space, Stow superimposes the dynamics of history onto the rhythms of everyday life. Narrative figures on Saxton’s and Norden’s maps suggested such a multifaceted spatiality, and Stow’s *Survey* writes the experience of motion directly in to his perambulation of London.

William Camden, Stow’s friend and fellow-member of the Society of Antiquaries, shared Stow’s enthusiasm for recovering the ancient past buried

beneath the everyday. His *Britannia*, which incorporated Saxton's and Norden's maps from 1607 onwards, reveals not only how these maps were received by contemporaries, but also what aspects were deemed useful for various purposes. *Britannia* (1586, subsequently revised and enlarged until 1607) is a compendium of historical, geographical, archaeological, antiquarian, etymological, cultural, and administrative information about England, Scotland, and Ireland.<sup>47</sup> It begins with an overview of British geography, history, known antiquities, and customs, then provides a detailed account of each county. However, the organization of the fifty-two English and Welsh counties in *Britannia* roughly corresponds to the groupings of the Saxon Heptarchy (Wessex, Sussex, Kent, Essex, East Anglia, Mercia, Northumberland), rather than to a prescriptive itinerary through the landscape. Within each county description, Camden organized the material following the river networks, like Harrison did before him in his *Historicall Description* (1577).<sup>48</sup> Roads are completely absent from *Britannia*, except with

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<sup>47</sup> On Camden and his *Britannia*, see Cormack, *Charting* 177-80; Mendyk 49-56; Helgerson 107-139, *passim*; Klein, *Maps* 143-45; Mayhew, "Introduction."

<sup>48</sup> Camden, Harrison and many other antiquarians relied on notes made by John Leland (1506?-1552) in preparation for his never-published description of England. Leland's inability to organize his voluminous notes into a coherent structure eventually drove him to insanity (see, e.g. Mendyk 44-47). Counties and rivers provided later antiquarians like Camden and Harrison with a manageable framework for their information. While following the paths of the rivers is a dynamic organizational scheme which "produce[s] the *movement* and *fluidity* chorography requires in order to overcome the impression of representational *stasis*," Klein notes a marked difference between Camden's and Harrison's approaches: "in contrast to the *mobile* landscape of Harrison's *Description*," in Camden's *Britannia*, "[e]ven when the description follows a county's rivers, these are shown to be flowing exclusively around stately mansions, ancient castles and private parks. The equation of national space with the realm of a social elite, of

reference to Roman roads which are still visible as antiquarian artefacts. Antiquarian interests are foregrounded in *Britannia*. As Camden describes it, he was encouraged to pursue his “chorographicall description” by the geographer, mapmaker, humanist and antiquarian Abraham Ortelius, who urged him to “restore antiquity to Britaine, and Britain to his antiquity” (A4).<sup>49</sup> Ortelius desired that the map of ancient Britain included in his *Parergon* “be glossed by a topographical essay by Camden. It was pursuant to this task that *Britannia* was born” (Mayhew, “William Camden” xiv). The influence of Camden is hard to overstate: Cormack asserts that “Camden defined and stabilized the genre of local history” (*Charting* 177), while Robert Mayhew declares that Camden “provided the benchmark by which later chorographers defined themselves” (“William Camden” xviii). Camden is notable not only for *Britannia* itself, but for the process by which he worked to create it. Camden paired studies in the field with studies in the library, consulting both material and textual sources. His wide network of friends, acquaintances, and correspondents extended throughout Britain to the continent, including Ortelius, Mercator, Casaubon, and others.<sup>50</sup> *Britannia* synthesized a vast array of humanist knowledge pertaining to historical and contemporary Britain.

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which a historicized landscape bears witness, guarantees the *stability* of a political order and allows its translation into the *static* coexistence of individual plots on the imaginary plane surface of cartographic projection” (141-44, emphasis added).

<sup>49</sup> This quotation is taken from Philemon Holland’s 1610 English translation of the 1607 edition of *Britannia*, which Camden wrote in Latin.

<sup>50</sup> See Mendyk 50; Cormack, *Charting* 179. On Renaissance networks, the Republic of Letters, and scientific innovation, see Lux and Cook.

When he decided to incorporate maps into his 1607 enlarged edition of *Britannia*, Camden turned to the pinnacles of British map-making to illustrate each county: Saxton's atlas and Norden's surveys. Saxton's atlas was comprehensive – Camden could have included it wholesale – but his choice of Norden's maps over Saxton's whenever Norden's were available points to a contemporary perception that the accuracy of Norden's maps was superior to Saxton's. There was a reciprocal influence between Camden and Norden. The aim of Norden's *Speculum Britanniae*, as he presented it to Burghley in 1591, seems to have been a vernacular, accessible chorography similar to Camden's Latin *Britannia*, which was by then five years old, but expanded by maps and travellers' aids.<sup>51</sup> *Speculum Britanniae* never reached completion, but in the extant maps, Camden found a visual representation of the nation which complemented his written description.

The changes Camden made to Norden's maps are significant, and reveal a contemporary estimation of the maps' utility. First and foremost, Camden removed the roads from Norden's maps. This increased the amount of white space on the maps themselves, which was then readily filled by additional toponyms, sites, and antiquarian information (e.g. Camden notes the Roman ruins at St. Alban's using both the names Verulamium and Verlame, and the

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<sup>51</sup> Kitchen notes that "Holinshed's *Chronicles*, published in 1577, was prefaced with a monumental *Description of England* written by William Harrison. This, or Camden's 1586 *Britannia*, published as Norden ruminated upon his project, would have answered many of the enquiries that the curious traveller might make. However, until 1610, the latter was only available in Latin and it concentrated on antiquities, seeing the present scene only when it reflected the Roman past. Also, like the *Chronicles*, it was a large folio: neither were volumes for the pocket or saddle-bag" ("Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher" 6-7). See n.28 above.



miniature panorama view of London is much more built up, accommodated by the removal of roads leading in and out of the city). Moreover, Camden removed many of the dynamic, narrative figures. London still has boats on the Thames, but the miniature regiments indicating sites of historical battles have disappeared. Camden used Norden's map of Sussex, but he removed the inset town of Chichester. In this cartographic space of open sea, Saxton had included an allegorical image of Mars and Venus, but Camden chose to fill the space with boats, sea-creatures, and an elaborate strap-work plaque attributing the map to Norden. In his preface, Camden explains his decision to incorporate maps:

Many haue found a defect in this worke that Mappes were not adioined, which doe allure the eies by pleasant portraiture, and are the best directions in Geographicall studies, especially when the light of learning is adioined to the speechless delineations. Yet my ability could not compasse it, which by the meanes and cost of George Bishop, and Iohn Norton is now *performed* out of the labours of Christopher Saxton, and Iohn Norden most skilfull Chorographers.  
(3v, emphasis added)

Camden employs the language of maps as a performance of space, but his usage of the maps within *Britannia* suggests that "performed" means simply "created" or "completed" rather than "enacted," or "ornamented." Camden diminishes the performative and dynamic aspects of space, using the maps to represent a stable, static image of the nation which can accommodate its history. Camden's *Britannia* is for the armchair geographer rather than for the dusty road.

Contrary to Camden, who eliminated many of the dynamic aspects of Norden's maps in his *Britannia*, John Speed enlarged and multiplied the

performative features Norden had incorporated into *Speculum Britannia* and *Civitas Londini*. A fellow member of the Society of Antiquaries, and under the patronage of Sir Fulke Greville, Speed published his *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* in 1611.<sup>52</sup> Following the same basic structure as Camden's *Britannia*, Speed's *Theatre* includes a map and written description for each county in England and Wales, for Scotland, and for four separate regions of Ireland. The work ends with a lengthy historical survey and a comprehensive index. Speed's title alludes to continental atlases such as Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, but it is also a wholly appropriate title for the dynamic, temporal, and performative elements that he incorporates into his maps. The subtitle of Speed's *Theatre* promises to present an "exact geography," but such a claim for objectivity and atemporality made by many early modern map collections jars with the dynamic elements of human activity present on the maps themselves.

In his preface, Speed confesses "I haue put my sickle into other mens corne, and haue laid my building upon other mens foundations" (3r), an acknowledgement that his county maps rely heavily on previous maps by Saxton, Norden, and Smith. However, although he learned from Saxton, and especially Norden, how to utilize the map's blank spaces to include historical and dynamic features, Speed's maps go far and beyond either of his predecessors. Harley suggests that Speed's "cartographic images helped project a sense of time as well as of place into the landscape" ("Meaning" 37). The wide range of extra-

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<sup>52</sup> On Speed's *Theatre*, see Mendyk 78-81; *History of Cartography* 3:1635-37; Delano-Smith and Kain 75; Cormack, *Charting* 172-73; Klein, *Maps* 105-111.

cartographic detail included in each map produces this effect (Figure 9). Likely influenced by Norden's inset map of Chichester, Speed included inset maps of major towns on every one of his maps, often encompassed by *trompe l'oeil* strapwork that creates a three dimensional image. Regiments of fighting soldiers recreate historical battles, and these images are often accompanied by a caption providing an account of the conflict. Other such details include the coats-of-arms and titles of the county's notable gentry, images of ancient coins, monuments, and ruins, architectural representations of significant estates, castles, churches, and colleges, historical personages, and decorative cartouches featuring allegorical figures with representations of books and cartographic instruments.

Speed incorporated a number of overtly theatrical and performative elements into the borders of his county maps (Figure 9). Portraits of various personages populate the margins: narrative scenes taken from the history of the Saxon Heptarchy, likenesses of types from a range of districts and ranks (a nobleman and a lady, and gentleman and gentlewoman, a citizen and his wife, a countryman and his wife), sketches of historical figures, pictures of scholars and surveyors, portraits of monarchs, and examples of types of Irish dress (for gentlemen and women, "civil" men and women, and "wilde" men and women). Anonymous figures also appear in the smaller inset maps of cities and sites of interest. In his drawing of Stonehenge, for example, Speed includes a well-dressed couple with a dog, two antiquarians appearing to discuss what they see, and someone measuring his height against the stones, perhaps wondering what giants



Figure 9. John Speed. Map of Hartfordshire from *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* (1616). Use by Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library

placed them there. On the outskirts of towns, farmers, husbandmen, and labourers toil in fields. These extra-cartographic features are theatrical because

they all suggest an underlying narrative. As Klein explains it, Speed's *Theatre* demonstrates the "immediacy of a narrative presence" (107). The cartographic images refract into a multiplicity of stories, enlivening the landscape with motion, change, and variety.<sup>53</sup>

Although many of Speed's county maps, when they acknowledge the work of another cartographer, use the formula "Described by the travills of John Norden Augmented and performed by John Speede" (map of Surrey), he has a prior debt to Saxton. By weaving so many disparate elements together, Speed's maps are certainly a performance of space in the dynamic, theatrical sense. Although Klein suggests that Speed's "maps move beyond the basic 'plotless' structure of Saxton's cartographics" (*Maps* 107), Speed emphasizes the dynamic features already present in Saxton's maps, which were first more fully articulated by Norden's maps. Each of these major British mapping enterprises has a plot structure, and the county map's capacity for plot and narratives revealed itself first, I have argued, in the dynamic elements of Saxton's atlas. Smith has suggested that "we can see in Speed's use of Saxton's work – the way he adapts these maps as an evocative context for organizing complex ideas – their intrinsic potential" (*Cartographic* 77). But even Smith overlooks the important contribution of Norden's county and urban cartography for shaping the narrative and dynamic

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<sup>53</sup> Nuti: "The search for totalizing knowledge of the town had also developed in a quite opposite direction during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Once it was realized as graphically unattainable in a single image, totality was pursued by multiple views, each exploring a different experience in time or space" (104). Speed's county maps are an example of such "multiple views."

potential of maps. As much as Speed's maps are a performance, they omit the one feature of Norden's maps which transforms the county into a navigable, mobile network of interconnected points: Speed does not show roads. It was nearly another sixty five years before roads appeared on a national atlas. But first John Norden experimented with another cartographic form for wayfinding.

### **Wayfinding Guides and John Ogilby's *Britannia***

In 1625, Norden published *England. An Intended Guyde*, which consists of charts for every county, listing the distance between major towns.<sup>54</sup> In his preface, Norden presents Speed's *Theatre* as if it completed Norden's own failed *Speculum*: "mine owne Maps [. . .] now totally finished by the laborious trauailes of Mr. *Speede*" (1r). The aim of Norden's triangular distance charts was to amend the absence of roads found in popular publications like Speed's *Theatre*. Yet Norden's *Guyde* is a clear example of how the efficacy and form of maps for wayfinding had not yet crystallized. Nor was there yet consensus on what information was required for a useful wayfinding guide. Norden asks his reader's forgiveness for "some errorrs of necessitie," which were caused "by reason of hills, dales, woods, and other impediments, which intercept the view from station to station." The "distances [were] neuer so truly taken," he elaborates, "by reason of the curuing crookedness, and other difficulties of the wayes" (1v). For Norden, a distance "truly taken" is the distance seen from above, as on a map, not the distance

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<sup>54</sup> On Norden's *Guyde*, see Delano-Smith and Kain 160-61; Delano-Smith "Milieus" 55-56; Sullivan, *Drama* 129-34.

actually covered on winding, indirect roads. Sullivan notes that in Norden's *Guyde*, "miles are measured as the crow flies, not as the wayfarer walks," and "the distance actually covered by the traveller is understood by Norden as a corruption of his true measurements" (*Drama* 129). It is a mistake, Sullivan cautions, to assume the seventeenth-century road book will fit neatly into modern conventions and expectations of utility. Norden complained that "dimensuration" throughout the whole "Kingdome" would be "more than tedious" (1r), but this was precisely what was required to create the first road map of Britain, and, ultimately, a visualization of narrative motion.

In 1675, John Ogilby printed and published *Britannia*, the first ever road atlas of England and Wales, and the first and only volume ever completed of a proposed three volume atlas called *Britannia*, meant to form a part of his multi-volume "Atlas of the whole world."<sup>55</sup> Appearing many decades after other "Britannias" and works of national definition by Saxton, Camden, Norden, and Speed, Ogilby's distinctive strip maps were an innovative genre of spatial representation. In the Introduction to his facsimile edition of *Britannia*, J.B. Harley argues that Ogilby's road map, both its form and its regularization of the statute mile as 1760 yards, "marked the first big advance in English cartography since Tudor times." It was a "landmark," "brilliantly novel," and "the founding

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<sup>55</sup> The three volumes, which Ogilby called "a Triple Illustration of the Kingdom," were meant to be: first, An Ichonographical and Historical Description of all the Road-ways in England and Wales (published); second, A Description of the 25 Cities; third, A Topographical Description of the Whole Kingdom. Ogilby had already published atlases of China, Africa, Japan, America, and Asia. See Wadsworth; Van Eerde (esp. chapters 5-6); Mayhew *Enlightenment* 66-85.

publication of a distinctive and enduring cartographic *genre*” (v).<sup>56</sup> Whereas Saxton’s cartographic model emphasized origins and destinations, leaving blank space ready to be filled by historical, cultural, and theatrical diversions, Ogilby’s maps minimize origins and destinations, instead devoting the maximum cartographic space to the journey itself, the white space in between.<sup>57</sup>

Ogilby’s road maps chart motion, complete with new symbols and rules for reading (Figure 10). Each strip reads from bottom to top and has its own orientation shown by a compass rose. The features on the map are mimetic; they inform travellers the distance between towns, the location of cross streets, various features of the geography that they will pass along the way, the type of road and its conditions. The aesthetic appeal of these maps is remarkable: each strip appears connected to the one before, except the first and the last which are the ends of the roll, thus emulating the appearance of papyrus or of long, narrow parchment. The strips are a literal unfolding of linear motion. They also map a narrative: each map tells one story, plots one course. The road directs the

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<sup>56</sup> In an unpublished paper, “The Atlas as Literary Genre: Reading the Inutility of John Ogilby’s *Britannia*,” Garrett Sullivan argues for restraint in assuming that the “genre” *Britannia* founded was the travel aid rather than a new form of atlas for “armchair travel.” Prof. Sullivan’s reading of *Britannia*’s “inutility” has greatly helped my own reading of *Britannia*, and I thank him for generously sharing this paper with me.

<sup>57</sup> Marchitello notes, however, that the form of the itinerary map creates a new kind of white space. Since these are maps in which “the frames correspond not with directions, but simply with the outer edge of concern,” the trajectory of each map “exists in the very midst of what is evidently blank space – a white noise of sorts, just out of earshot, just off the map” (87). Marchitello makes no mention of Ogilby’s *Britannia*. For an application of Marchitello’s argument on narrative in itinerary maps to *Britannia*, see Wall, *Prose* 55-59.



itinerary, and although cross roads are marked, they do not unfold. If a traveller wants to turn at any point from the course, he will need another map.

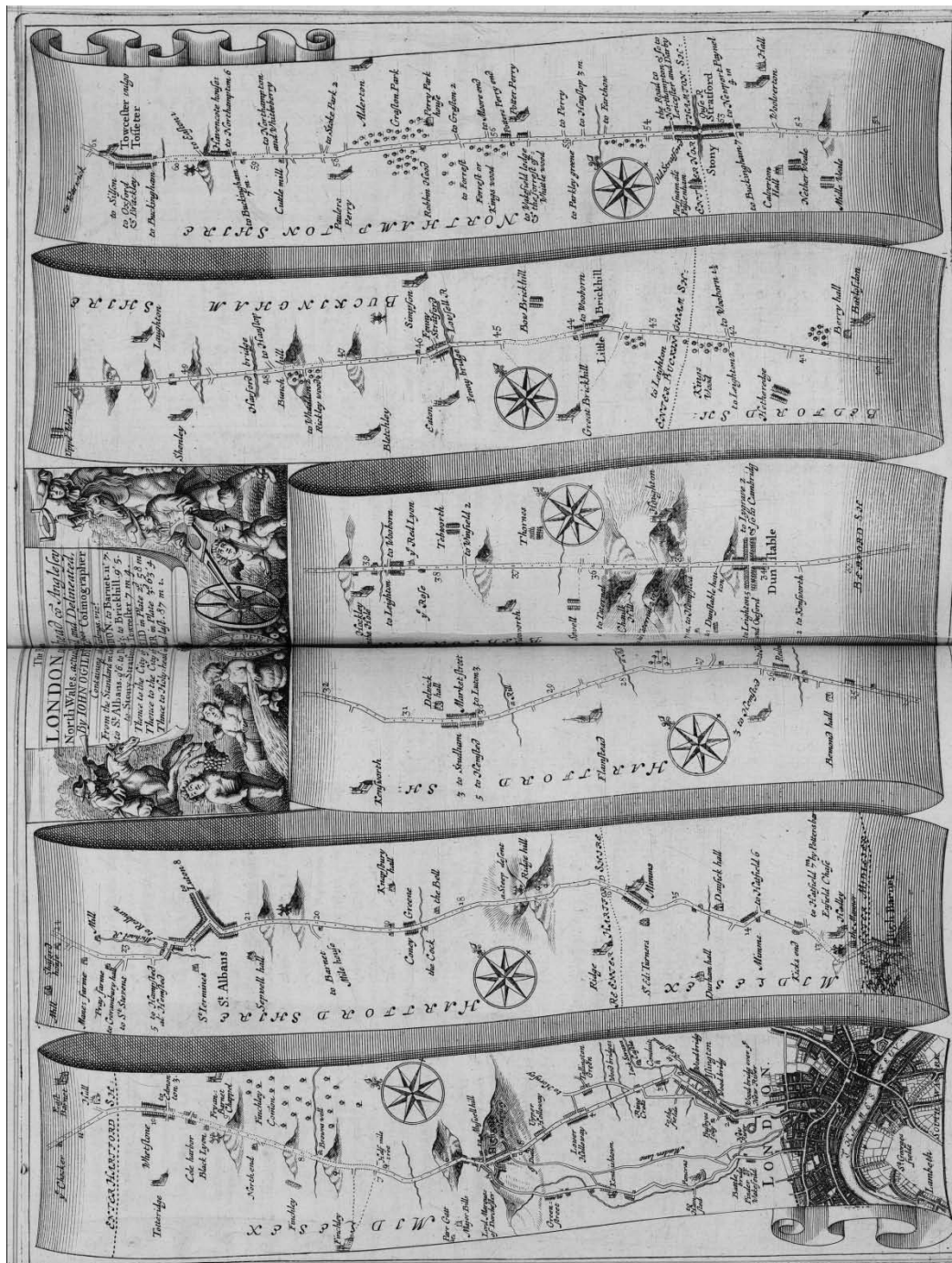


Figure 10. John Ogilby. Map of London to Holy-head from *Britannia* (1675). By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library

Occasionally an urban space will burst beyond the borders of the map but on the whole these strip maps are set plots. As Marchitello suggests, “trajectory becomes the equivalent of plot” (87). There is a pragmatic purpose to Ogilby’s design, which was meant to amend errors he found in previous mapping projects: “each road could be plotted independently” and so “there [could be] no possibility of cumulative error” (Harley “Introduction” xvi). The one hundred copper-engraved maps are accompanied by two hundred pages of chorographical description which clarifies the symbols on the maps and provides local information.

Ogilby’s prefatory remarks to *Britannia* emphasize his dependence upon the ancient itinerary form, which reached its greatest heights, he argues, in the Peutinger map, rather than on previous mapping projects.<sup>58</sup> Ogilby is by no means the first British cartographer who knew about the Peutinger map – Camden references it several times in his *Britannia* (e.g. 330) – but he is the first who recognized in ancient itineraries a suitable, reliable, cartographical form for the nation. Ogilby described his precedent for “Registring *and* Illustrating *Your Majesty’s* High-Ways,” in terms which highlight the debate between the ancients and moderns:

*Antiquity* and the Practical Succession of *Geography* has more especially commended to Us the *Itinerary Way* as the most Regular and Absolute;

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<sup>58</sup> On the Peutinger map, see Salway “Travel”; Salway “Nature”; *History of Cartography* 1:234-57; Talbert. On Ortelius’s influential facsimile edition and the development of the strip map form, see Meurer; Gautier-Dalché; MacEachern and Johnson. On the ways in which Ogilby utilized the networks of the Royal Society to gain the information required for his *Britannia*, see Van Eerde; Stagl 152; Hunter, “Robert Boyle”; Wall, *Literary* 89.

and the greatest Height the *Prosecution* of this Method hath arriv'd to beyond the common *Itinerary Tables*, are those *Chorographical Charts* or *Tabulae Peutingerianae*. (A1v)

Yet the Peutinger map “*appear[s] too faint a Resemblance, whereby an Idæa might be Fram'd, of what We have Wrought This Our Essay to, by Actual Dimensuration*” (A1v). *Britannia*, in Ogilby's estimation, represents the triumph of modern measurement and industry over the ancients, and the Peutinger Map afforded Ogilby an ancient model to surpass. Ogilby presented his work, which mapped the roads of England and Wales using “actual dimensuration” (perhaps a jibe at Norden's complaint of the tedium of dimensuration) as a new height in the field of geography. The ancients “were infinitely short in their Performances” of geography, he wrote, and the moderns, like Saxton, Norden, and Speed, produced maps that were merely “*Guess-Plots*,” and where “*Perambulated Projections*” were “much inferior to what might have been done by a strict *Dimensuration*” (B1r). “Actual dimensuration” meant the exact measurement of roadways, using an instrument called a “wheel dimensurator” or a “waywiser,” and illustrating the roads using the scale of one inch to one mile.<sup>59</sup> According to Ogilby, modern maps had not yet come close to the “most Regular and Absolute” way of mapping shown by ancient maps, but ancient maps themselves did not have the accuracy of “actual dimensuration”; Ogilby believed his *Britannia* triumphed over

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<sup>59</sup> On Robert Hooke's involvement with designing the waywiser, see Taylor 534. Numerous mentions of Ogilby in Hooke's diary testify to his involvement in *Britannia*: e.g. Thursday, January 15, 1674, “Contrived pacing saddle with waywiser.” See Hooke *Diary* 80. On the waywiser, see Bennett, *Divided* 89.

both the ancients and the moderns.

*Britannia's* frontispiece, engraved by Wenceslaus Hollar, overtly displays the types of motion necessary to produce a map whose stated purpose is for wayfinding (Figure 11). If, as Helgerson, Cormack, and Klein have argued, Renaissance frontispieces serve as representative shorthand for the idea of the nation, then Ogilby's *Britannia* presents Britain as vivified by practices and processes, by movement, travel, and circulation.<sup>60</sup> The figures on the frontispiece all engage in activities: the central figures are men on horseback who are about to set out on a journey making use of a strip from Ogilby's map. Another group, consisting of a man on horseback and a coach, continue further along the road which winds until it disappears at the right margin.<sup>61</sup> Like the scenes of archery practice and laundry on the early London maps, here there are scenes of travel, maritime trade and commerce, agriculture, husbandry, hunting, and fishing. In amongst such scenes of everyday life, surveyors are at work: they are trekking across fields and along roads, they are huddled around a table of surveying equipment, they are discussing Ogilby's work amongst themselves, we even get to see one using a waywiser. Like in *Britannia's* prefatory remarks, the frontispiece declares the triumph of Ogilby's map over the ancients by featuring an array of surveying instruments in the right foreground: a cross-staff, magnetic compass,

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<sup>60</sup> Helgerson 111-124; Cormack, "Britannia"; Klein, *Maps* 97-111.

<sup>61</sup> My thanks to Elena Napolitano for pointing out that the winding appearance of this road matches the strip map form, which unrolls like a ribbon from one page to the next.



Figure 11. Frontispiece to Ogilby's *Britannia* (1675). Used by Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library

Gunther's (surveyor's) chain, simple theodolite, portable quadrant, protractor, compass for drawing circles, surveyor's rule, and globe.<sup>62</sup> The watchtower is absorbed into these scenes of activity – it does not exist as a representational stasis off to the side of the frontispiece – it becomes a vantage point for the surveyors at work, an echo of *Civitas Londini*, where the surveyor is atop St. Mary's in Southwark. The two modes of experiencing space that de Certeau understands to be distinct – the “theoretical” view from above and the experiential on-the-ground practice of walking – are both necessary for the practice of surveying (93). *Britannia's* title-page displays the processes that brought it into creation: travel, public discourse, the use of scientific instruments, and the transfer of knowledge across space and time.

In its depiction of motion, *Britannia's* frontispiece differs markedly from other frontispieces of chorographical works. The frontispiece of Speed's *Theatre* is typical of the genre: it consists of an architectural construction of vaulted arches and likenesses of a Britaine, a Roman, a Saxon, a Dane, and a Norman. The gated watchtower on *Britannia's* titlepage, with its statues of ancient worthies, is the only feature of Hollar's engraving that evokes such conventional architectural frontispieces.<sup>63</sup> The watchtower exists almost as a visual quotation of Speed's frontispiece; yet it is drawn angled outwards, thereby appearing as if the

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<sup>62</sup> For descriptions of these surveying tools, see Bennett, *Divided Circle*, chs. 3, 4. My thanks to Mario Biagioli for drawing my attention to the triumph of modern measurement depicted in the frontispiece, and to Lesley Cormack for identifying the instruments.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Corbett and Lightbown 4-8.

frontispiece to Speed's *Theatre* has shifted aside and opened to reveal the dynamic, active landscape of the nation that lies just behind. A similar visual quotation appears in the depiction of the surveying team using a waywiser to measure a road. This image imitates portrayals of the surveyor at work in practical manuals: Digges's surveying treatise showed the surveyor at work within a busy, crowded, dynamic landscape. *Britannia's* frontispiece shows this landscape writ large, and the act of surveying and the figure of the surveyor have become symbols of the nation.

"A novel is a mirror walking down a road" (Ondaatje 91), but so too is the strip map form, which mimics the experience of motion along England's and Wales's major roads. Ogilby presents Britain as a narrativized space and presents narrative as the necessary form for depicting a dynamic and mobile nation. Each map plots a single course, and tells a single story. The chorographical material echoes the linear, narrative thrust of the maps:

We proceed then, as in all Direct Roads, from the Standard in Cornhill, London, through Cornhill, Cheapside, Newgate-Street, Newgate, Snowhill, and Holborn [. . .] leaving the Lord-Mayors Banqueting-house on the Right [. . .]. You come to a Descent sprinkled with Woods, whence by Loudwater, a small village, (A Brooke accompanying your Road on the Left) at 32'3 you enter High-Wickham, seated in a pleasant Vale, a large and Well-built Town, numbring near 200 houses, with several good Inns, as the Cathern Wheel, etc. Is govern'd by a Mayor, Recorder, etc. Sends Burgesses to Parliament, hath a well-frequented Market on Fridays, and two fairs annually. (2)

The narrative of *Britannia* is the narrative of the everyday. Ogilby's "you" is

inclusive – as Cynthia Wall argues, “the well-acquainted traveler (or reader) colors in the map spaces with personal reality, personal history, or personal possibility” (*Prose* 56) – and the details that feature in his maps and chorography, such as landmarks, bridges, fields and forests, seasonal events, and lodging houses are all features universally recognizable to the traveller. Gone from the maps themselves are the allegorical and symbolic figures, the representations of human industry and travel, the narrative figures which populated the maps of Saxton, Norden, and Speed. Instead, Ogilby’s travellers and readers, whose “paths [. . .] correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poem” (de Certeau 93), wrote these dynamic, narrative features themselves with their bodies. Wall connects Ogilby’s *Britannia* with the narrative form of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* insofar as Ogilby’s mapping allows for the descriptions of travel present in Bunyan’s spiritual pilgrimage: “the landscape of England was becoming visually realized and experientially realizable for more of its citizens” who had a “market hunger for topographical descriptions of its spaces” (*Prose* 69). These everyday partakers of Ogilby’s *Britannia*, who recognized their own experience of Britain in the mimesis of motion present on the strip maps, are elusive figures of history, they are the “ordinary man,” the “common hero” of de Certeau’s dedication, “walking in countless thousands on the streets” (v).<sup>64</sup> *Britannia*, in its representation of motion, brings to life these past bodies in motion, these ephemeral, transitory elements of the past. It allowed individual citizens to visualize, navigate, and

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<sup>64</sup> Although I have not cited her work directly, this reading is indebted to the aims and approach of Rose Marie San Juan’s *Rome: A City out of Print*.



possess their own neighbourhoods.

## Conclusion

As this survey of the representation of motion in British cartographic forms from Saxton to Ogilby has shown, the modern understanding of maps as tools for wayfinding was a relatively late development. Early national mapping projects by Saxton, Norden and Speed experimented instead with the map form's capacity for narrative and temporal representation. These maps exerted their storytelling capacity by including supplementary, superfluous detail, symbols of activity, motion, progress, and authority. In cartouches, emblems, and heraldic devices, "the stasis of a fully articulated system dissolves into story" (Helgerson 110). Sailing ships, surveying instruments, and scenes of historical episodes narrate the exploratory, scientific and political forces that contributed to map making. Inset maps of towns, drawings of local monuments, and scenes of everyday life – such as archery practice, husbandry, farming, and cloth drying – create a narrativized map, enlivened by the human cycles of work and rest, life and death, fame and memory.

Sullivan warns that "[o]ne must be careful not to discount the multiple ways in which maps could (and can) be used and understood" (*Drama* 102). For instance, even Ogilby's claim for his maps' functionality was at odds with the immobility of the large, expensive and heavy leather bound atlas which contained

them.<sup>65</sup> Although a cheaper edition of the maps alone, entitled *Itinerarium Angliae*, was published at the same time, it took another forty-five years before Ogilby's maps were published in a compact, travel-friendly form<sup>66</sup>: Thomas Gardner's *A Pocket-Guide to the English Traveller* (1719) contains re-engravings of all the strip maps, and its preface complains that Ogilby's originals were far more suited to be "Entertainment for a Traveller within Doors, than a Guide to him upon the Road" (ii). Ogilby's *Britannia* appeared nearly eighty five years after Spenser's *Faerie Queene* was first published. Its claims for novelty in depicting roads and its experimentation with the most useful surveying practices and cartographic forms for wayfinding reveal that the expectations, conventions, and utility that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century map readers found in the earliest published maps of Saxton, Norden, and Speed are much more unfamiliar to modern readers than they are sometimes prepared to acknowledge. Any cartographical and spatial approach to literary texts prior to Ogilby, such as Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, must take into account the foreignness and diversity of Renaissance cartographic forms which privileged representativeness, narrative, temporality, and an alternation between stasis and movement above the more immediately functional purpose of wayfinding.

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<sup>65</sup>Alternative purposes besides wayfaring have been suggested: see See Delano-Smith and Kain 168-72; Sullivan, "Atlas"; Delano-Smith, "Milieus" 52; Mayhew *Enlightenment* 78.

<sup>66</sup> See McRae, *Literature* 77-82, 106-10.

### Chapter 4: Spenser's Cartographic Ambiguity

"Mapmindedness," we have seen, does not simply refer to how well an individual understands the utility of maps for wayfinding, and *The Faerie Queene* provides a snapshot of cartographic literacy at a stage when the cartographic language itself was still developing. As the flexible linguistic "networks" formed gradually around the usage of words like "plot" during the sixteenth century suggest (Parker, *Shakespeare* 1), writers and mapmakers increasingly recognized the potential that this developing cartographic language held for narrative structure. Spenser's representation of the motion of travel clarifies this intersection between plotting maps and plotting stories.

The main challenge for readers attempting to evaluate a Renaissance writer's "mapmindedness" is that the development of cartographic ways of thinking and map literacy developed gradually and unevenly. For every Renaissance instance of agile map reading,<sup>1</sup> there are equal and opposite examples of difficulty and illiteracy.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, readers of our present time, for whom map literacy is so ingrained that it seems almost innate, bring twenty-first century

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<sup>1</sup> Barber describes William Burghley, Lord Cecil as a capable and avid map reader ("England II" 68-77). Shakespeare's sophisticated use of a map in *King Lear* has been noted by many scholars, including Avery, Sullivan, *Drama* 92-123, and Gillies, "Scene" 109-137.

<sup>2</sup> Blundeville: "I Daylie see many that delight to looke on Mappes [. . .] but yet for want of skill in Geography, they knowe not with what maner of lines they are traced, nor what those lines do signifie, nor yet the true use of Mappes in deed" (*Brief Description* A2v). Handwritten on the map accompanying Ogilby's *Mr Ogilby's and William Morgan's Pocket Book of the Roads* (1698) in the British Library are detailed instructions for finding places on maps using an alphanumeric grid (Maps C.21.b.15). See also Barber, "Was Queen Elizabeth."

assumptions about the functionality of maps to their interpretation of cartographic references in literature, thus skewing the interpretation of cartographic details.

For example, scholars have often turned to Britomart's own admission that she travels "[w]ithouten compasse, or withouten card" in order to assess Spenser's attitudes towards cartographic practices and the utility of maps for wayfinding and land travel (III.ii.7.7).<sup>3</sup> Regardless of whether they believe Britomart's lack of compass and card indicates Spenser's anti-cartographic leanings (Klein), the unchartedness of Faeryland (Grenfell), or Spenser's expectation of his reader's familiarity with maps (Smith), each of these readings presupposes that the primary function of maps is to guide travel on land. Whereas Grenfell asks "why Spenser's titular knights must proceed without cartographic aids?" (224), Smith argues that Spenser's "reader understands [the characters'] diverse travels and wanderings in the coherent and comprehensive way that a map allows" (79),<sup>4</sup> while Klein suggests that for Spenserian knights, maps are "unimaginable shortcuts" (74). However, we should rather consider

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Klein, *Maps* 74, 166; Grenfell, "Do Real Knights" 224; Burlinson 25; Kinney 202; Smith, *Cartographic* 88-89; *History of Cartography* 3:415.

<sup>4</sup> Also, later in his argument Smith applies the "compasse and card" image to Guyon's approach to the Bower of Bliss: "In naming the Gulf and the Rock, and in highlighting the way the boat carefully avoids the dangerous shoals that have claimed others, Spenser conjures up these dangers as if they were names and locations on the 'card and compass' he had previously invoked. Their positions are known." And again, "[w]ithin the context of that 'card and compass,' every name, every allegorical label, serves double duty, both as a means of evoking the moral landscape and as a cartographic referent that organizes the site within an imaginatively mapped space" (*Cartographic* 103, 104).

what meanings compass or card have within the poem itself in relation to the context of sixteenth-century map practices.

It is likely that the terms “compass” and “card” refer not to instruments to facilitate land travel, but rather to navigational instruments for sea voyages. Both of the other examples of the term “card” in *The Faerie Queene* occur in the context of marine travel. The Fisher who threatens Florimell travels in a boat “withouten card or sayle” (III.viii.31.2). And in the epic simile which opens Canto Seven of Book II, Guyon, “hauing lost his trustie guyde” the Palmer, is like a “Pilot well expert in perilous waue,” who “Vpon his card and compass firmes his eye” when “foggy mistes, or cloudy tempests” hide his “stedfast starre” (1-2). The nautical context of Britomart’s reference to compass and card also makes sense when considered in light of Britomart’s self-presentation. She claims to seek adventures “By *sea*, by land, where so they may be mett” (III.ii.7.3, emphasis added), and in making her complaint to the “God of windes,” she compares her plight to that of a “feeble barke” “tossed long” in a “[h]uge sea of sorrow” and piloted by love and fortune who sail “withouten starres” (III.iv.8-10).<sup>5</sup> In sixteenth-century technical usage, a “compass card” is “[t]he circular piece of stiff paper on which the 32 points are marked in the mariner’s compass” (*OED* “card n<sup>2</sup>” 4a). Jim Bennett’s study of the history of navigational, astronomical, and surveying instruments defines “card” as a part of the magnetic compass: “the

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<sup>5</sup> Kinney reads “[w]ithouten compasse, or withouten card” as a reference to sea travel: “By setting herself apart from those voyagers away from Britain who make use of maps to discover the material riches of the New World, Britomart relies on hard adventures; her motives are honor for herself and high regard of herself and others” (202). On the complexity of this complaint, see Dees 218-220.

needle was concealed beneath a circular card or ‘fly,’ decorated in a manner similar to the wind roses already used to indicate bearings on charts” (*Divided Circle* 29). Henry Turner relates Spenser’s use of “card” to “a chart used for navigational purposes,” and documents other nautical usages of compass and card (*History of Cartography* 3:415). Thomas Blundeville’s *Exercises* (1594) include a paper cut-out and instructions for constructing a “mariner’s carde” (325). There was an evident degree of slippage between the terms “card,” “chart,” and “map” during this period: the *OED* defines both “card” and “chart” as “map” in addition to the technical and navigational definition. Blundeville elsewhere used “card” to refer to maps (e.g., *Briefe Description of Vniversal Mappes and Cardes*, 1589). Yet even if “carde” is meant to refer to topographical maps, as in Blundeville’s usage, this does not automatically mean that had Britomart been in possession of a compass and a topographical map, she would have used them to plot her course. Itineraries, rather than visual, graphic maps, were the “normal guide to wayfinding” (Delano-Smith “Milieus” 34). Britomart’s lack of compass and card probably has little bearing on Spenser’s attitude towards the utility of maps for travel through the landscape of Faeryland.

### **Critical Approaches to Spenser’s Representation of Motion**

The ambiguities of Britomart’s lack of navigational instruments suggests that the relationship between maps and travel in Renaissance literature needs re-evaluation, and encourages us to attend closely to Spenser’s nuanced presentation of the motion of travel. Spenser’s aesthetics of motion in *The Faerie Queene*, particularly the motion of travel, has largely remained on the fringes of other

scholarly inquiries into, for example, the narrative structure of the quest (guided perhaps by Spenser's assertion from his Letter to Raleigh that in his poem "many other adventures are intermedled");<sup>6</sup> the pacing of the action;<sup>7</sup> and the influence of travel literature.<sup>8</sup>

One exception is John Bender's discussion of a poetic technique he calls "Scanning" which, he says, "is most apparent in passages [of *The Faerie Queene*] involving movement" (105). There are two kinds of scanning, according to Bender. The first type, "frontal" scanning, "involves an observer moving towards a fixed object, person, or scene, or an object or person moving towards a fixed observer" (134-35). He cites Arthur's approach seen by Una (I.vii.29-32) and Redcrosse's approach to Lucifera (I.iv.6-13) as examples (112-17, 123-34). The second type is "lateral" scanning, or movement "through or across, rather than straight toward, a scene or place" (135). In both, the aesthetic of motion "is rendered in broken, overlapping, perceptual fragments":

Scanning is a halting, fragmenting process, but its progressive or cumulative nature is also important; for we must remember that analysis of pictorialism in literary works invokes analogies – not identities – with the cinema, the continuous narrative method in painting, or the process of our visual perception" (134-35, 106).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Parker, *Inescapable Romance*; "quest" in *SEnc*; Dees.

<sup>7</sup> Cory notes: "One feels the unfaltering conviction of the first book not only in the coherence of the main strands of allegory, but in the swiftness of its movement" (Spenser, *Works* 1.175).

<sup>8</sup> See Whitney.

<sup>9</sup> Bender acknowledges a similar argument made by W.B.C. Watkins in *Shakespeare and Spenser*. Spenser's "pictorial effects in time sequence can be made to dissolve so rapidly into others that the actual series, unlike narrative panels in a triptych or

The analogy between Spenser's representation of motion and movies (moving pictures) is an instructive one: in *The Faerie Queene*, small shards of stillness – glinting armour, a shining shield, the glimpse of a jewel, the shaking of a feathered crest – combine to give the sense of gradual movement through a landscape or towards an object, just as in a movie individual still pictures with slight variations cumulatively create movement. As Part I argues, a mutually constitutive relationship between motion and stillness is a fundamental component of Spenser's poetic.

Bender argues that scanning “is most apparent in passages involving movement,” but his is not an exhaustive account of how motion is represented in *The Faerie Queene*. As my discussion of ekphrasis in the earlier chapters shows, Spenser persistently transforms objects which the reader expects to be still into moving, changing forms.<sup>10</sup> Static objects do not stay motionless in his poetry for long. Certainly there are many scenes where he creates an impression of motion rather than representing motion outright, but the poet undercuts this process of scanning as often as he uses it. For example, when Arthur, Guyon, and Britomart first see Florimell, Spenser indicates Florimell's speed by denying the possibility of scanning:

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mural, is lost in an illusion of movement which has no analogy until the discovery of the movie fadeouts” (Watkins “Spenser's” 254).

<sup>10</sup> The opposite is also true: Spenser artificially stills Belphebe's chase through the forest in order for her to pose for a “heuenly pourtraict” (II.iii.22.2) which lasts ten stanzas (22-31). Bender calls this technique “framing” (69-104), which he defines as “images [which] suspend our attention within the narrow visual range of a formerly coherent spatial configuration or some other formally closed encounter with the perceptual world” (69).



All suddenly out of the thickest brush,  
     Vpon a milkwhite Palfrey all alone,  
 A goodly lady did foreby them ruch,  
 Whose face did seeme as cleare as Christall stone,  
 And eke through feare as white as whales bone:  
 Her garments all were wrought of beaten gold,  
 And all her steed with tinsell trappings shone,  
 Which fled so fast, that nothing mote him hold,  
 And scarce them leasure gaue, her passing to behold. (III.i.15)

The stanza mostly fits Bender's description of scanning: it begins with a general outline of the figures ("a milkwhite Palfrey," "A goodly Lady"), then moves to more specific details ("face [. . .] as cleare as Christall stone" and "as white as whales bone"), and finally to miniscule details ("garments [. . .] wrought of beaten gold," "tinsell trappings shone"). Through these mimetic details, each smaller than the last, Spenser's poetry creates the illusion that Florimell is riding ever closer. Yet the final line overturns the entire effect: Florimell is, in fact, travelling so quickly, that the knights do not have the leisure to observe her passing. Scanning, according to Bender, is meant to mimic visual perception (i.e. the "behold[ing]" of "her passing"). Spenser indicates her speed precisely by denying this perception.

Three cantos later, when Arthur finally is within sight of Florimell, scanning is completely absent:

At last of her far off he gained vew:  
     Then gan he freshly pricke his fomy steed,  
 And euer as he nigher to her drew,  
 So euermore he did increase his speed,

And of each turning still kept wary heed:  
 Alowd to her he oftentimes did call,  
 To doe away vaine doubt, and needlesse dread:  
 Full myld to her he spake, and oft let fall  
 Many meeke words, to stay and comfort her withall.

But nothing might relent her hasty flight;

. . . . .

And though oft looking backward, well she vewde,  
 Her selfe freed from that foster insolent,  
 And that it was a knight, which now her sewde,  
 Yet she no lesse the knight feard, then that villain rude.

(48.1-49.1, 50.6-9)

In these stanzas, Spenser creates the impression of a high-speed chase through the forest by precisely avoiding specific, close-range details, instead focusing the reader's attention on Arthur's futile calls, the horse flecked with foam, and Florimell's fearful glances over her shoulder. Elsewhere, Spenser uses similar techniques of visual or auditory cues to imply speed. Pyrochles's squire runs towards Guyon and the Palmer with "flying feet so fast their way applyde, / That round about a cloud of dust did fly" (II.iv.37.3-4). Corflambo, in pursuit of Placidus, hurls curses at him, "none of them (so fast away he flew) / Him ouertooke, before he came in vew" (IV.viii.40.4-5). Scanning is only one of numerous methods Spenser uses to convey the impression of motion.

However, the aim of this chapter, is to account for, with reference to Renaissance cartography, representations of motion that seem anomalous, discontinuous, or absent rather than simply to document the techniques Spenser

uses to create the impression of motion. I have already discussed the discontinuities of Spenser's opening scene in detail, but what Judith Anderson calls the "logical distraction" and "visual consternation" of Redcross, Una, the lamb, and the dwarf also appear elsewhere in Spenser's epic. In these moments, Anderson elaborates, "time is out of joint, or if not the narrative time, then surely the narrative distance and rate" ("A Gentle Knight" 167). For instance, when Redcross first encounters Sansfoy, it seems as if the two figures are quite close together: Redcross can read the letters on Sansfoy's shield, and can distinguish the smallest details on Duessa's clothing (I.ii.12-13). Yet in order to meet each other, the two knights must each spur their horses and ride so hard that blood trickles down one horse's flank (14-15). Hamilton's note argues that Redcross and Sansfoy are mirror images, which is why we must learn Sansfoy's name before we are given Redcross's, and why the two knights must each be pricking their horses with rage (15.1*n*). The ambiguity here, whereby either Redcross or Sansfoy could be "Spurring so hote with rage" (15.2), strengthens their mutuality, and is significant for the psychomachia. Yet the space between them remains discontinuous: contracting close enough to discern engravings and embroidery, then expanding to accommodate galloping horses.

Similarly, the Palmer and Guyon must creep "Through many couert groues, and thickets close" before finally finding Acrasia in the Bower of Bliss (II.xii.76.6); but only a few stanzas earlier the Palmer had declared "here the end of all our traueill is: / Here wonnes *Acrasia*," and both the Palmer and Guyon had heard the music coming from where "the faire Witch her selfe now [was]

solacing” (69.7-8, 72.2). As R. Rawdon Wilson describes “space” in *The Faerie Queene*, “[t]he distances between places are, like the local spaces themselves, open to transformation. In *The Faerie Queene*, space is plastic and metamorphic” (*SE* 667). The suggestion, first, that space in *The Faerie Queene* is plastic, and second, that while this is an impossible feature in the actual world, it is valid within the world of the poem, is one possible explanation for the discontinuities of motion in *The Faerie Queene*.

This Spenserian plasticity of space also manifests itself as distances which vary from one character’s experience to another’s. For example, in order to find help for Redcross after he was captured by Orgoglio, Redcross’s dwarf, we are told, “had not trouaild long, when on the way / He wofull Lady, wofull *Vna* met” (I.vii.20.1-20). Not only were Una and Redcross geographically close to each other (even though Una, looking for Redcross, had travelled “from one to other *Ynd*” [I.vi.2.7]), but when the dwarf leads Una back to the place where Redcross had been taken, their route is treacherous: “Long tost with stormes, and bet with bitter wind, / High ouer hills, and lowe adowne the dale, / She wandred many a wood, and measurd many a vale” (I.vii.28.7-9). The dwarf’s *travel* does not agree with Una’s *travail*. A similar inconsistency occurs at a critical moment in Book II. Atin, Pyrochles’s valet, sees his master fall by Guyon’s sword and realizes he needs to call reinforcements. No sooner do we learn that Atin “Fledd fast away” but we find him at Acrasia’s Bower of Bliss, reviving the concupiscent Cymochles (II.v.25.8). However, Guyon, instructed at Gloriana’s court to seek out and subdue Acrasia (II.ii.44), will not arrive at the Bower of Bliss until after a long,

arduous journey, past the Idle Lake, the Cave of Mammon, the House of Alma, the Gulfe of Greedinesse, the Rock of Reproach, the Wandering Islands, the Quicksand of Unthriftyhead, and the Whirlpool of Decay. In both cases, how is it possible for one character to arrive so quickly while the other must travel through such varying landscapes? Finally, plasticity of space appears nowhere more readily than in the Wandering Islands, those “stragling plots, which to and fro doe ronne / In the wide waters” (II.xii.11.5-6). Such flux would seem to work against the cartographic impulse: as Bernard Klein argues, “[i]t is hard to imagine practically how a map could be drawn of a perpetually changing landscape that includes such topographically unstable elements” (*Maps* 165).

Some scholars have approached the anomalous spatiality in *The Faerie Queene* as a generic marker of romance. Patricia Parker recognizes a definitively romantic tension in *The Faerie Queene* between “the forward movement towards an ending and the delightful, and seductive, dilation which is also the poem itself” (63). There is a dialectic in romance not only between questing and resting, but also between direct and indirect travel. Leisurely, indirect, discontinuous, unguided travel can also be a type of rest. Guyon’s journey, which is so much longer than Atin’s, is thus a dilation of the narrative, “the interval of ‘wandering’ between vision and fulfillment, between the initiation of the quest and its end, in both senses” (59-60). Romance, Parker argues, involves the poetics of *errare*, meaning “to wander” both morally and spatially. Smith, although he ultimately argues for Spenser’s sophisticated “cartographic imagination,” nevertheless initially compares the motion of travel in *The Faerie Queene* to that of medieval

romance, where the “journey is rendered without the attempt to organize it within the landscape. The characters ride in an unstated direction until they get wherever they’re going. They reach the next moment in the plot rather than the next point in space” (*Cartographic* 81). The continuous deferral of closure and the ambiguous destinations are markers both of the romance genre and of the endless endeavour of interpretation. Erickson argues that mapping *The Faerie Queene* is the impossible task of “mapping multiplicity,” because

an analogous relationship exists among the multiform nature of Spenser’s setting, the polyphonic nature of his narrative, the interpenetrative nature of his characterizations, and the polysemous nature of his allegory: all demand an ongoing process of interpretation. (*Mapping* 11)

In this reading, Spenser, his characters, and his readers all journey on parallel tracks, and the description of “weary steps,” “tedious trauell,” and “this delightfull land of Faery” applies to them all (VI.pr.1).

Others account for the discrepancy between Guyon’s and Atin’s journeys, and other examples of anomalous travel, according to the necessities of allegory. Wilson argues that “[p]laces in *The Faerie Queene* are always allegorical. They are determined by the conceptual demands of the larger purposes of the book in which they appear and must be interpreted in light of these demands” (*SE* 666). Therefore, Guyon’s travel to the Bower of Bliss must take him past the landmarks it does because such trials are necessary for his fashioning into a Knight of Temperance. He cannot confront the Bower without first successfully triumphing over, for instance, the Whirlepool of Decay. Atin and Cymochles

have no such allegorical demands. When, for example, Arthur and Guyon meet Britomart on an “open plaine” (III.i.4.1), and then they together all “thus traueiled in friendly wise, / Through countreyes waste, and eke well edifyde, / Seeking aduentures hard” until “At length they came into a forest wyde” (14), the Knight of Chastity and her companions retrace the landscapes of Holiness and Temperance. Britomart alone exits the woods and finds a castle “most goodly edifyde, / And plaste for pleasure nigh that forrest side,” where she meets Redcross (20.4-5). To approach the representation of motion in *The Faerie Queene* generically is to stress that the allegorical demands on Chastity to encompass the lessons of Holiness and Temperance require such circumambulation.

Nevertheless, strict subordination of motion in *The Faerie Queene* to the supposed demands of allegory or romance risks eliminating the poem’s spatial world. Coleridge’s description of Faeryland is often repeated:

You will take especial note of the marvellous independence and true imaginative absence of all particular space or time in the Faery Queene. It is in the domains neither of history or geography; it is ignorant of all artificial boundary, all material obstacles; it is truly in land of Faery, that is, of mental space. (36)

Coleridge’s description is a logical response to the widespread absence of the motion of travel in *The Faerie Queene*. That Spenser provides no directional markers nor little description of the actual travel between places suggests the ignorance of “all artificial boundary, all material obstacles” that Coleridge finds in the poem. Each landmark appears suddenly, but also with a sense of inevitability, as if the traveller knew all along that it was the ultimate destination:

So long ye yode, yet no aduenture found,  
 Which fame of her shrill trompet worthy reedes:  
 For still he traueild through wide wastfull ground,  
 That nought but desert wilderness shewed all around.

At last he came vnto a gloomy glade. (II.vii.2.6-3.1)

It is not surprising that for nearly two centuries, readers have reinforced Coleridge's reading. Parker argues that "Spenser's 'faerie' has much less clear a geography than the cosmos of Dante or of Milton" (*Inescapable* 9). Harry Berger argues that

Spenser's world and its places are not actualized in advance like an *obstacle* course waiting to steer its assayers toward their preordained goal. They emerge out of the problems and actions of his characters. Spenserian landscape for the most part evolves from the projection of inscape. (23, emphasis added)

In Berger's reading, Atin does not need to travel past the Gulfe of Greedinesse because it is not an outward projection of his mental landscape. It is, however, of Guyon's. Similarly, Bender suggests that "space in the poem tends to be created *ad hoc* for special purposes in restricted settings which are arranged against a neutral, spaceless ground" (135). Bender's observation, that spaces are created and uncreated in the poem based on the needs of the narrative, suggests again the plasticity of space, but a plasticity so malleable that space can dissolve altogether.

### **Cartographical and Chorographical Readings of *The Faerie Queene***

The discussion of English Renaissance maps and chorographies in Chapter Three revealed a certain degree of plasticity in the cartographic space of



Britain: white space contains allegorical, temporal, and dynamic figures; maps simultaneously depict various points of time; and the cartographic image itself oscillates on numerous levels between motion and stillness. Spenser's representation of space and motion is more fruitfully read against the context of Renaissance mapping than "against a neutral, spaceless ground." Grenfell offers one possible model of reading Spenser cartographically. In answering her own questions "do real knights need maps," she observes "it is not that real knights don't use maps, rather that a map cannot be created until the territory becomes known and familiar" (236). The knights' travel (and travail) through Faeryland is a process of map making. On one hand, this suggests an analogy between narrative motion, which is necessary for familiarizing the reader with the landscape of the epic, and the systematic travel inherent in surveying and mapmaking. We can better understand Spenser's narrative structure by understanding the travel necessary to create a seemingly static cartographic image. The prevalence of high vantage points in *The Faerie Queene* – the view of the New Jerusalem (I.x.55-64), Mount Acidale (VI.x), or Arlo Hill (VII.vii) – suggests a resemblance to the hills and beacons used in surveying. Yet on the other hand, if Grenfell's reading means that the map of Faeryland is unknowable apart from the narrative process, this closes down the possibility for any correlation between the space of Faeryland and the space depicted on sixteenth-century maps of the British Isles.

Spenser was certainly familiar with English Renaissance maps and chorographies. His description of the river Thames appears as an ekphrastic description of the appearance of London on Saxton's county maps:

on his head like to a Coronet  
 He wore, that seemed strange to common vew,  
 In which were many towers and castels set,  
 That it encompass round as with a golden fret. (IV.xi.27.6-9)

Saxton's maps, by showing London in an oblique, prospective view from a slightly elevated position, depict London on the Thames "as a crowded cluster of towers arranged like a coronet" (Hamilton IV.xi.27.6-9*n*; see Figure 3). Grenfell cites this passage as an example of the overlap between poetic and cartographic representation: "[s]uch parallels between two different kinds of representation stress the possibility for seeing mapmaking and writing as working within a framework of similar concerns and interests with regard to a new geographical ordering of the world" ("Spenser"). Such a correspondence depends, however, on Spenser's own familiarity with maps. He was undoubtedly familiar with chorography, as he named William Camden "the nourice of antiquitie" (*Ruines of Time* 169); yet he would have only known Camden's Latin, and mapless, edition of *Britiannia*. Gabriel Harvey noted in his marginalia that Spenser was "not completely ignorant of globes and astrolabes," although he was "inexperienced in his astronomical rules, tables, and instruments" (Harvey, *Marginalia* 162).<sup>11</sup> In Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, Eudoxus consults a map in his dialogue with Irenius: "thoughe perhaps I ame ignorante of the places, yeat I will take the mapp of Irelande before me, and make myne eyes in the meane while my Schollemasters, to guide my vnderstandinge to iudge of your plott" (*Works*

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<sup>11</sup> "Pudet ipsum Spenserum, etsi Sphaerae, astrolabique non plane ignarum; suae in astronomicis Canonibus, tabulis, instrumentisque imperitiae" (English translation from *History of Cartography* 3.421).

10.152). Eudoxus's description of a map bringing an unknown place before one's eyes as a guide to understanding echoes Blundeville's praise of a map as a tool which brings "not onely the whole world at one view, but also euery particular place contained therein" (*Briefe Description* C4v).<sup>12</sup> Spenser's references to maps, his cartographic allusions, and Harvey's estimation of Spenser's astronomical and geographical knowledge, suggest that although the poet likely knew little about the practical and instrumental side of mapmaking, he was cartographically literate, and aware of the potentiality of maps as a representational tool.

In Chapter 3, I catalogued the dynamic, narrative, temporal, and mobile elements of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century maps of Britain, and noted an oscillation between motion and stillness inherent in the cartographic images of counties. This oscillation between motion and stillness reveals itself in the representation of rivers, the variety and homogeneity of the topographical signs, the presence of white space, and the use of allegorical, narrative, and temporal figures in the margins of the maps. Since Spenser was presumably somewhat familiar with the map images of Saxton's atlas, which were the most comprehensive, recognizable, frequently reproduced, and exact maps of the counties of England and Wales in the sixteenth-century, and had perhaps even seen Norden's maps, the remainder of this chapter will consider possible overlaps between Saxton's map images and Spenser's representation of landscape and travel.

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<sup>12</sup> On this passage, and Spenser's employment as a "colonial administrator" in Ireland, as evidence of Spenser's familiarity with cartographic forms and conventions, see Smith, *Cartographic* 89-90.

The dominance of rivers in chorography and cartography, as both organizing principle and striking visual feature, also appears in much of Spenser's poetry. *Prothalamion* and *The Ruines of Time* include the river Thames (or its absence, in the case of *The Ruines of Time*) as a structural feature. Spenser's lost poem *Epithalamion Thamesis*, now known only by contemporary remarks, was itself influenced by Harrison's *Description*,<sup>13</sup> and likely influenced Camden's *De Connubio Tamae et Isis*, verses of which are scattered throughout *Britannia*.<sup>14</sup> It is in the depiction of the marriage between the Thames and the Medway (*FQ* IV.xi) where Spenser's rivers perform the same mobile, prominent, and vital role afforded them in Saxton's atlas. Although Helgersson argues that Spenser's river marriage "can never have been truly chorographical," for it "violates the very premise of chorography, fidelity to the natural disposition of the land" (143),<sup>15</sup> others, like Sanford, note that "Spenser's catalog of English rivers seems to be a speculation on Saxton's composite map of the counties of England" (43).<sup>16</sup> While Spenser does "violate" or go beyond the representation of the exact geography of the rivers, he nevertheless includes features also present on Saxton's maps.

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<sup>13</sup> Spenser wrote to Harvey that "Master *Holinsbed* hath much furthered and aduantaged me, who therein hath bestowed singular paines, in searching oute their first heads, and sources: and also in tracing, and dogging out all their Courses, til they fall into the Sea" (quoted in Klein, *Maps* 164).

<sup>14</sup> On Renaissance river marriage poems, see Oruch; McRae, *Literature and Domestic Travel* 35-37; Sanford 35-36.

<sup>15</sup> Berger reaches a similar conclusion: "And Spenser does not simply 'copy' a map. Though his visualization in effect asks us to be aware of this model, it leaves maps far behind; the principle of meaning and visualization is rhetorical, not cartographic" (210-11).

<sup>16</sup> See also McRae, *Literature* 37-39; Klein, *Maps* 160-70.

Spenser's complaint which opens the catalogue of rivers seems to reflect on the difficulties inherent in both cartographic and poetic representation:

But what doe I their names seeke to reherse,  
 Which all the world haue with their issue fild?  
 How can they all in this so narrow verse  
 Contayned be, and in small compasse hild?  
 Let them record them, that are better skild,  
 And know the moniments of passed times:  
 Onely what needeth, shall be here fulfild,  
 T'expresse some part of that great equipage,  
 Which from great *Neptune* do deriue their parentage. (IV.xi.17)

Spenser seems to distinguish his art from antiquarian practices of recording moniments, but his poem's inclusion of "Briton moniments" (II.ix.59.6), and a long list of place and river names suggest that this is rather a humility topos, and that he does in fact have active antiquarian interests. The stanzas which follow include a dizzying number of toponyms and river courses, a similar reading experience to looking at one of Saxton's county maps. And, even more strikingly, Saxton's atlas includes mythological figures, including, in his map of Anglesey, the figure of Neptune embracing a naked woman. Ravenhill suggests that this decoration "symbolis[es] the union of land and sea" (*Christopher Saxton's* 19), but it could, in fact, symbolize any number of unions, including that of rivers and the ocean. Neptune's performance with the Lady of the Lake at Kenilworth suggests the richness and complexity that this mythological figure held in the Renaissance. Just as Spenser catalogues the rivers which are all offspring of Neptune, so too does Saxton's image of Neptune suggest a mythological source for the richness of

the nation's waters. Spenser's river marriage may go beyond maps by contravening the "fidelity to the natural disposition of the land," but its mythology, symbolism, and mobility cannot easily be read as a break with Saxton's cartographical form.

Spenser's representation of specific sites also demonstrates the combination of variety and homogeneity present on Saxton's maps. Though they include only a small range of topographical signs to indicate settlements, churches, estates, and other types of places, the atlas's sheer quantity of marked places prompted amazement from its earliest readers: John Gregory praised it as "exact and useful" and considered it to be so comprehensive "that the smallest Village may be turn'd to there; *Henxey* or *Botlie*, as well as *Oxford*" (quoted in Klein *Maps* 103). Similarly, *The Faerie Queene* includes a dizzying number of locations, spread over a vast geographic area and over multiple time periods.<sup>17</sup> Yet Spenser's characters travel as often through indeterminate locations as through highly specified ones. Vague identifiers, such as "plaine" (e.g., I.i.1.1) "forest" (e.g., IV.vii.3.5), "waste" (e.g., III.i.14.2) "desert" (e.g., IV.vi.36.1), "vale" (e.g., I.vii.28.9), and "dale" (e.g., V.xi.59.7), commonly denote areas of travel and destinations. Burlinson argues that these words are "often used in the poem to describe somewhere that characters go when they have left a location," and that "these in-between spaces exist in the poem only insofar as they are needed to describe an approach" (28). Yet reading this indeterminacy alongside Saxton's

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<sup>17</sup> Erickson (3-6) provides a helpful overview of the range, which he helpfully terms "multiplicity."

atlas challenges Burlinson's conclusion that "Spenser does not imagine locations within a coherent and continuous spatial plane" (29-30). These vague place markers function similarly to Saxton's topographical signs; a town is a town (marked by a tower and a circle) whether one is looking at Saxton's map of Essex or of Hartfordshire. The "plaine" which opens the *Faerie Queene* is likely a different plaine from where Guyon first meets Britomart (II.i.4.1), but in the poem they are both marked by the same sign.

The repetition of these indeterminate place names can, at first, make the landscape of each book and canto seem like a reiteration of every other, just as each county map in Saxton's atlas can look like a rearrangement of every other county, where the signs for towns and hills are all the same, just redistributed. Yet in the process of reading each canto, places emerge as distinct from each other, each with their own local uniqueness and cast of residents. Smith argues that as "the events of the poem accrue, [. . .] what is perceived by the characters as an itinerary, is retained in the reader's mind as a map" (*Cartographic* 87). For example, Guyon, Arthur, Timias, and Britomart move from the "plaine" to a "wood" which at first resembles the "wandering wood" of Book I: "Whose hideous horror and sad trembling sownd / Full grisly seemd" (III.i.14.6-7). Yet this is not the wood of Error's den, for "tract of liuing creature none they fownd, / Saue Beares, Lyons, and Buls, which romed them arownd" (14.7-9). Moreover, on the other side of the forest lies Castle Joyeous, and not Archimago as in Book I. What at first appears to be a reiteration of places from Book I becomes distinguished not only by increasingly specific details, but by the events that take place there. Vague

descriptors like “plaine,” “grove,” and “wood” are similar to uniform topographical signs whose homogeneity works to conceal the rich diversity of the places they signify.

Spenser uses words like “waste” or “vale” to indicate a region travelled by his knights, but more frequently he elides the representation of travel completely. Spenser specifies the point of origin, the destination, and occasionally the length of time, but any account of the terrain, the locales, or the experience of travel in between is absent: for instance, “Long time they thus together traueiled, / Til weary of their way, they came at last, / Where grew two goodly trees” (I.ii.28.1-3). The absence of roads on Saxton’s atlas offers a possible analogue for Spenser’s consistently absent representation of travel. Two distinct places on a county map have no routes connecting them. If Spenser depicts journeys in *The Faerie Queene* with a “cartographic imagination,” to borrow Smith’s phrase (1), then his representation of travel is the poetic equivalent of running one’s finger along the surface of the map from point of departure to point of arrival: neither direction nor route is specified. Boelhower’s description of “the map’s inevitable sutures and caesurae, its repeated recommencements through toponymic repetition, and its blank spaces – all of which call attention to the very journey of cartographic representation” (484) – could just as readily apply to Spenser’s representation of motion in *The Faerie Queene*.

By using the term “caesurae” to describe the open space between topographical signs, Boelhower introduces an affinity between poetics and cartography which is particularly apt for Spenser’s representation of travel. The



experience of travel itself often collapses into the interstanzaic white space, the caesurae between each metrical unit:

when she saw them gone, she forward went  
As lay her iourney, through the perlous Pace  
With stedfast corage and stout hardiment;  
Ne euil thing she feard, ne euill thing she ment.

At last as nigh out of the wood she came,  
A stately Castle far away she spyde. (III.i.19.6-20.2)

Spenser uses markers such as “at last” or “untill” at the beginning of stanzas to indicate distance and the passage of time, yet any representation of the travel itself disappears into the white space of the caesura.

Michael Murrin suggests that “[n]o one seriously wonders what road Arthur took from Orgoglio’s Castle to the area by Mammon’s vale” (86-87), but Spenser’s elision of travel suggests an affinity between early roadless maps and the structuring of narrative. A helpful precedent for such an affinity exists in the relationship between maps and poetry in the *isolario*, a literary form which matches short, episodic or chorographical poems, often sonnets, with images of islands, such as the Aegean archipelago: “the maps suggest that the sonnet, too, is a fragmentary – yet autonomous – form, an island of words adjacent to an island mapped, and that the text of fourteen lines might also have cardinal bearings and be an object studied as might a mariner’s chart” (*History of Cartography* 3:406). Spenserian stanzas, when depicting travel, stand in the poem like places on a map, self-contained and isolated, yet joined to adjacent places by white space. Theodore Steinberg suggests that the stanza numbers for Spenser’s cantos

“provide stable points of orientation,” thereby allowing readers to read *The Faerie Queene* as they would a map (in Krier 18n12). Yet this would not have been the case for Spenser’s earliest readers: neither edition of *The Faerie Queene* published in Spenser’s lifetime had stanza numbers, making each canto more like a disorienting labyrinth than a well-marked road map. McRae perceives a comparable isolation of places on Saxton’s maps, but suggests that the white spaces themselves are meaningful:

For all the maps’ apparent promise of potential connections, places are represented in varying states of isolation, surrounded by emptiness. The inert space between places – space, that is, that sets places apart and as a result makes them distinct – is thus just as important as the possible routes that might be imagined to connect these places. (*Literature* 32)

Spenser’s stanzas correspond to points of departure and arrival, the equivalent of topographical signs, while the white interstanzaic space corresponds to the blank spaces on the map. This white space is laden with movement, activity, and change.

Yet Spenser’s epic is more overtly narrative than Saxton’s county maps, and his stanzaic form, including the interval between stanzas, serves as a marker and regulator of narrative time. Other scholars have read Spenser’s stanzaic form as, in Kenneth Gross’s words, “an emblem of his attempt to order time and to discover the emergent orders *of time*” (“Shapes” 27). William Empson argues that the Spenserian stanza combines motion and stillness: “[t]he size, the possible variety, and the *fixity* of this unit” requires “you [. . .] to yield yourself to it very

completely to take in the variety of its *movement*” (34). Jeff Dolven suggests that the stanzaic form itself is a “mimesis of thinking,” and that “[i]n a poem so wary of rest,” the hexameter line “proposes itself as a moment of provisional rest” (“Method” 21-22). Theresa Krier finds in the white space a metonym for the Spenserian oscillation between questing and resting. She observes that “charismatic time-lords like Phoebus, Aurora, Tithonus, and Cynthia” mark the rise and fall of day and night in a rhythm which follows the stanza breaks, “[a]nd each of those rhythms relies on an underlying model of the sojourn: a lingering in a place, a lingering associated by its etymology both with the sense of a journey and with the turning of a day” (2). The interstanzaic white space, for Krier, is a place uniting motion and rest, where “a reader experiences suspension, that great Spenserian-romance condition, but this is an active condition of change and novelty and surprise, not a static or somnolent condition” (5). Reading white space as a “sojourn” unites the narrative experience of Spenser’s characters with the experience of the reader. Krier reads the temporal function of Spenser’s white space as a resting place paradoxically imbued with motion, while I read the *spatial* function of Spenser’s white space as a place of travel paradoxically providing the reader with a moment of rest, what Krier calls “breathing space for discontinuity” (7). These readings are not mutually exclusive – they each apply to different stanzas at different times – and they both read the stanzaic intervals as creating and controlling narrative time.

Saxton’s atlas is not completely devoid of narrative – it is not “plotless,” as Klein argues (107) – and its inclusion of human figures, symbols of national

flourishing, depictions of historical battles, and mythological characters suggested to Norden and Speed the potentiality of maps as narrativized space. Similarly, Spenser's representation of space in *The Faerie Queene* is heavily invested with historical events, etymologies, customs, and power structures. For example, Redcross's chosen place of "solace" after the House of Pride initiates a tale of the mythological origin of the waters' enfeebling powers (I.vii.4-5). Similarly, his parenthetical query "Who knowes not *Arlo-Hill*?" signals a shift to a chorographical mode, where Spenser "sing[s] of hilles and woods" in order to "tell how *Arlo* through *Dianaes* spights [. . .] Was made the most vnpleasant, and most ill" (VII.vi.36-37). Had Saxton mapped Ireland in his atlas with the area around Kilcolman Castle, he could have included the figure of Diana and her nymphs, just as he depicted Neptune off the coast of Anglesey.

Spenser's canto describing "Briton moniments" and the "Antiquitee of Faery lond" (II.x; quotations are from ix.59-60) is his most concentrated use of a chorographical and antiquarian poetics. Much of the canto links toponyms to the historical events or personages once present there: e.g., Cornwall named for Corineus, Devonshire for Debon, Kent for Canute (II.x.12), the Humber river named for the Hun who perished there (16), Glamorgan named for the death of King Lear's grandson Morgan (33), and so on. Spenser suggests a contemporary enthrallment with chorography: "Beguyld thus with delight of nouelties, [. . .] / So long they red in those antiquities, / That how the time was fled, they quite forgate" (77.1-4). As Sanford argues, "[i]n Spenser's creation, rivers and towns become transformed by what has happened there: these 'places' on the map

become the ‘spaces’ of the poem” (36). Although Smith argues that “Spenser could have imaginatively invested such maps with the mythic narrative and allegorical virtues of the English past” by turning to Speed’s *Theatre*, it was first published more than twenty years after *The Faerie Queene*’s first installment (*Cartographic* 75). “Speed’s imposition of such a variety of attendant historical and cultural imagery upon the cartographic arrangement of space,” Smith argues, “reflects the potential for Spenser to do something very similar” (77). Yet this is actually a roundabout way of arguing that Saxton’s atlas kindled chorographical interests and energies throughout Britain. Norden, Spenser, Camden, Speed, Drayton and very many others contributed to what Helgersson called a “concerted generational project” (1) of nationhood. Certainly Speed and Spenser both built on the potentiality perceived in Saxton’s atlas, as Norden did as well, but Speed and other chorographers also responded to the form of nationhood created by poets like Spenser.

Saxton’s atlas provided a template for the representation of a narrativized landscape. Gaston Bachelard suggests that “[i]n its countless alveoli space contains compressed time” (8). The space of a map or the space of a stanza exists as such “countless alveoli,” and the imprint of dynamic, temporal, and narrative figures within such space effects an expansion of time, as seen most clearly in Speed’s *Theatre*. The compelling image of the ruined Roman city of Verulamium created over decades, by chorographical work and by poems such as Spenser’s *The Ruines of Time*, provides a concise and persuasive example of the effect of these maps’ and poems’ ability to represent the motion of time.

### Spenser and the Making of Verulamium

The image of Verulamium contained in Spenser's *Ruines of Time* and the chorographies of Camden, Norden and Speed demonstrates that the representation of everyday motions like walking and the representation of the motion of mutability were closely linked in Renaissance thought. By all contemporary accounts, there was not much to see of the ancient, ruined, Roman city of Verulamium on the outskirts of St. Albans during the late sixteenth century. Camden reports that "there remaineth nothing of it to be seene, beside the few remaines of ruined walles, the checkered pavements, and peeces of Roman coine other whiles digged up there" (*Britannia* 408). Yet from the 1580s to 1630, chorographers and poets built on archaeological evidence, archival research, rumour, and personal experience to create a powerful image of Verulamium (also called Verulam or Verlame) as a paradoxical monument to mutability. As Richard Schell suggests, "Verlame's tragedy is also a particularly English one: despite her Roman connection, she is a large part of the little early English history Renaissance antiquarians knew" (226). Moreover, various strands of English history unite at Verulamium and the surrounding Hertfordshire countryside: besides the evidence of its Roman past, an abbey dedicated to the martyred St. Alban was built nearby, and three battles of the War of the Roses took place in its vicinity. The legend that the Thames once flowed through the town, repeated in Spenser's *Ruines of Time* (134-35), serves to heighten the implicit connection between Verulamium, a once powerful city, and powerful London, the New Troy, a city ever in danger of succumbing to the powers of mutability. The history of

Verulamium, and its fate, expand into a warning for the national as a whole. And, as we will see, the power of this chorographical image of Verulamium grew to affect even St. Albans's own citizens.

Camden's depiction of Verulamium depends upon other textual monuments, since it is a city with few monuments of its own. As Camden writes in *Britannia*, the Roman city had been "turned into fields" (412). He includes images of coins found on site, but for any other information, he turned to a historical archive which itself was frustratingly incomplete. Andrew Escobedo notes the fragility of the historical record:

Camden, writing about the scarcity of evidence about the nation's ancient past, notes that even if the early Britons did create records, 'in so long continuance of time, in so many and so great turnings and overturnings of States, doubtless of the same had been utterly lost, seeing that the very stones, pyramids, obelisks, and other memorable monuments, thought to be more durable than brass, have yielded long ago to the iniquity of time.' (*Nationalism* 48)

Camden inverts Horace's famous line, and suggests that if physical monuments have decayed, it is far more likely that paper records have "been utterly lost." Yet with work by antiquarians and chorographers like Camden, Verulamium became a site of keen contemporary interest. In William Vallens' *A Tale of Two Swannes* (1590), the swans pass "ancient Verolame" (A4r), and in Spenser's *Ruines of Time*, Verulamium becomes a trope which allows Spenser to mourn and monumentalize the recent losses of Sidney and Dudley alongside the fall of ancient civilizations and monuments, thus placing their deaths in the broader dignity of time's assault on all that would seem great and permanent.

*The Ruines of Time* opens with the speaker positioning himself beside the “silver streaming” Thames, near to where the ancient Roman city of Verlame or Verulamium once stood (2). There he sees a weeping woman, who tells him that she once was “that Citie which the garland wore / Of Britaines pride,” but has now become “but weedes and wastfull gras” (36-37, 42). With this declaration, the Genius of the ruined city of Verulamium fully embodies Helgerson’s “land [that] speaks” (105). She then recites a long complaint, locating the fate of Verulamium in the context of other fallen classical civilizations, as well as the more recent deaths of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester and Philip Sidney. The thrust of the genius’s complaint is a longing for earthly glory which recognizes the vanity and futility of human endeavour, “For how can mortall immortalitie giue (413)? She herself, lacking both name and body, lives and has a voice only because Camden, “the nourice of antiquitie,” wrote her “record in true-seeming sort” (168).<sup>18</sup> The poem then ends with a series of twelve images, “Like tragicke Pageants seeming to appear” (490). The first six, in the same mode as Spenser’s “Visions of Bellay,” depict human creations intended to be eternal monuments but which have not survived the ravages of time: such as statues, towers, the Colossus at Rhodes, and Xerxes’ bridge. The final six visions are images of resurrection and apotheosis, concluding with an Envoy to Philip Sidney, whose ascent to become “heavens ornament” is implicated in each of the preceding visions (674). The poem, as Spenser asserts in the final lines, is a “moniment of [.

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<sup>18</sup> On *The Ruines of Time* in the context of Renaissance historiography, and the possible ambivalence of the adjective “true-seeming,” see van Es, *Spenser’s Forms* 30-36, esp. 31-32. See also Lyne 91-93.



. .] praise” to Sidney (682). And with this word “moniment,” Spenser ends where he began. In the opening of the poem, the speaker declares he stands “Nigh where the goodly *Verlame* stood of yore, / Of which there now remains no memorie, / Nor anie little moniment to see” (3-5). Thus the poem moves from the tragic absence of a monument to becoming finally itself a monument.

*The Ruines of Time* exhibits a fundamental tension between the desire for monumentality and the reality of mutability. Decayed and ruined monuments show that any sculptural permanence was deceptive, for they reveal that the stone was in continuous but imperceptibly slow motion all along. Like the liquidity of glass, at any particular instant stone or brass appears static and unchangeable, but the accumulation of time alters and damages the seemingly solid form. If a monument is meant as a bulwark against obscurity, then a ruin is the intermediary between the monument and the dreaded state of nothingness, which is to be, as the genius of Verlame in *The Ruines of Time* expresses it, “Wasted [. . .] as if it never were” (119). Nearly sixty years later, in Sir Thomas Browne’s *Urne Buriall*, when he meditates on four small urns found in Walsingham field, which seem to him unsettlingly unidentifiable, his words could be hers: “Oblivion is not to be hired: The greater part must be content *to be as though they had not been*, to be found in the Register of God, not in the record of Man” (47, emphasis added). The urns contain bones buried with ashes, while the genius of Verlame declare that she has “in mine owne bowels made my grave” (26). The ruination of monuments can occur from something as benign as the weather to something as violent as war and conflagration, as is the case with Verulamium. Ruins present a crystallization

of time, paradoxically demonstrating stillness in motion. It is this fallibility that legitimizes the poetic convention of the monumental topos – the claim that only art can provide the desired escape from the destructive force of time.

Towards the end of her complaint, the genius of Verlame declares that, like monuments made of brass and stone,

deeds doe die, how euer noblie donne,  
And thoughts of men do as themselues decay,  
But wise words taught in numbers for to runne,  
Recorded by the Muses, live for ay;  
Ne may with storming showers be washt away,  
Ne bitter breathing windes with harmfull blast,  
Nor age, nor envie shall them ever wast. (400-06)

The verbal monument of Verulamium created by the poem has much in common with ekphrasis; and the final visions are each verbal representations of a material object. Ekphrastic descriptions of sculptures, engravings, edifices, gardens, and precious artefacts share with monuments a desire for immortality. The “wise words” which will “live for ay” are also the words of the chorographers. In the middle of the poem, the genius of Verlame praises Camden, who, “though time all moniments obscure, / Yet thy just labours ever shall endure.” These paired traits of the monumental impulse (“ever shall endure”) and the fear of what Andrew Escobedo calls “historical loss” (“all moniments obscure”) underpin and motivate a broad range of poetic and cartographic enterprises of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

In a point of departure from Saxton’s map of Hartfordshire (Figures 12 and 13), Norden, in the *Hartfordshire* volume of his *Speculum Britanniae* (1598)

includes Verulamium not only in his alphabetical catalogue of places, but on the county map as well (Figure 14). Material traces confirmed the existence and the former glory of Verulamium to Norden: “the sundry Roman coyns tumbled out of their obscure denns, by the painefull plough, doe, as it were, proclaim vnto vs, so many hundred years after her [Verulamium’s] fall, that it is no fable that is written of her antiquitie” (24). Moreover, he remarks that “[t]his auncient decayed Citie seemeth at this day to publishe her pristine state and strength [. . .] by the reliques of her defensive walles” (24). Norden conscientiously notes all the discovered antiquities there:

Besides sundry pottes of gould, brasse earth, glasse and other metal, some frawght with the ashes of the dead, some with the coyne of the auncient *Britons* and Romane Emperours. And in a stone were found certayne Brytish books, whereof one imported the historie of *Albans* martyrdome. (25)

Kitchen comments that Norden’s attention to antiquities and etymology at Verulamium was similar to Camden’s: “Norden was following Camden and indeed the spirit of his time, in finding Rome lying just under the surface of his own England with archaeological ruins in the language as well as in stone” (“Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher” 29). And, when Camden chose to include maps in his *Britannia*, he used Norden’s map of Hartfordshire, retaining its mapping of Verulamium. Norden, while intending his map of Hartfordshire to facilitate travel, includes a considerable array of antiquarian information. The mobility of travel is not far removed from the mobility of mutability: change is inherent in both. Yet in a possible gesture towards the continuity of nature, Norden ends his

account of Verulamium with the earthy detail that “[i]n the ruinous walles of this Citie groweth licoras” (25).

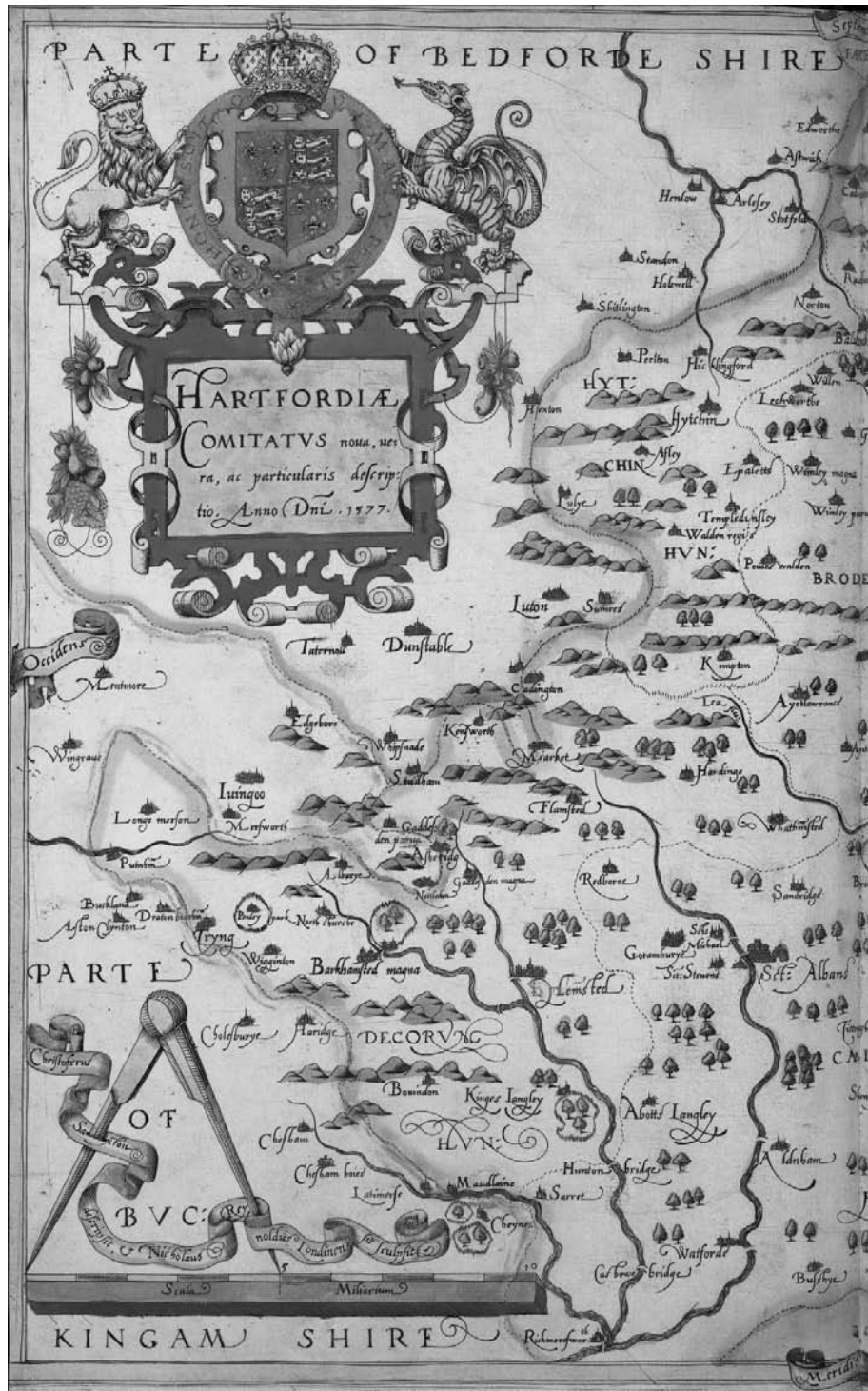


Figure 12. Christopher Saxton. Map of Hartfordshire from *Atlas* (1580). Used by Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library



Figure 13. Detail of St. Albans from Saxton's Hartfordshire map (1580). Used by Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library



Figure 14. Verlam on Norden's map of Hartfordshire (1598). Used by Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library

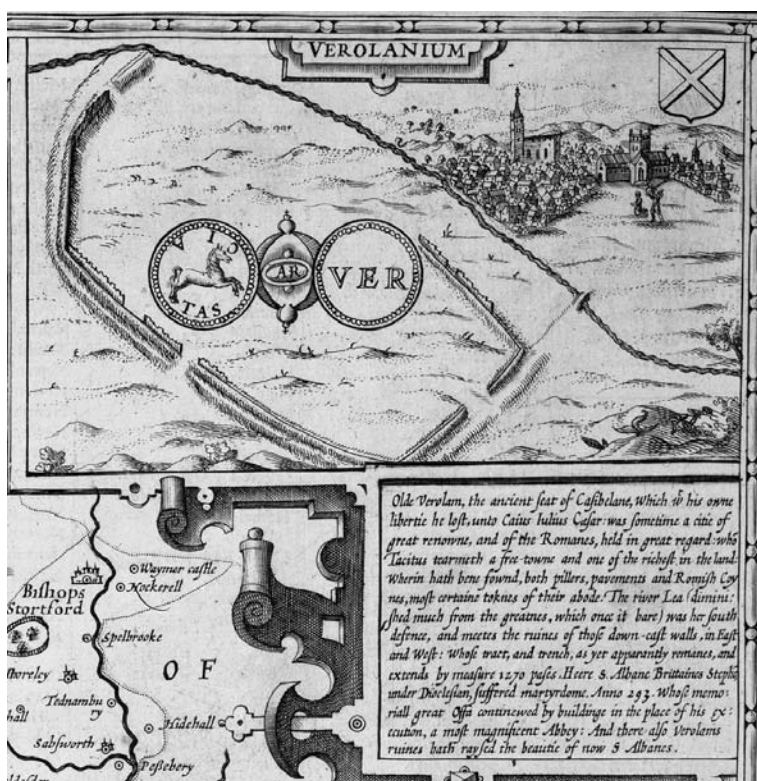


Figure 15. Detail of "Verolanium" from Speed's map of Hartfordshire (1616). Used by Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library

The map of Hertfordshire included in Speed's *Theatre* unites all the separate strands of historical events at Verulamium into a single, composite image (Figure 15). Speed labels the town view in the top right hand corner of the map "Verolanium" rather than St. Albans, although its buildings dominate the space, while a ruined wall is the only trace of the ancient city. In an elaborate strapwork cartouche, Speed describes the rise and fall of Verulamium, the battles fought there, and the martyrdom of St. Alban. Speed depicts the death of St. Alban in his town view: a robed figure kneels while another armoured man raises a sword above his head. Just below, miniature battle scenes represent the three battles of the War of the Roses, while another strapwork cartouche provides a historical summary. If, as Levy notes, Norden "went beyond describing a ruined castle merely because it was there" and rather "saw it peopled and thriving, as it must once have been" (162), then Speed translates this historical imagination into a visual image of simultaneity, where discrete historical periods occur as if contemporaneous. Verulamium thus stands as a image of mutability, an example of the extremities of change which can occur to a single place over a period of time. Speed's map image of Verulamium amplifies the narrative and dynamic possibilities suggested by Saxton's map and Norden's innovations. Such multiplicity begins to disappear by the time of Ogilby's *Britannia*. His road map from London to Holy-head includes St. Albans, but does not mark Verulamium (Figure 16). In the accompanying text, he notes that the "Town afford[s] a plentiful History" and is "a Place of good Antiquity, Rais'd out of the Ruins of that Ancient and Eminent *Roman City Verulam* (whereof the Name now onely

remains)” (42). It is up to travellers using this map to find St Albans to experience Verulamium as a monument to mutability for themselves.

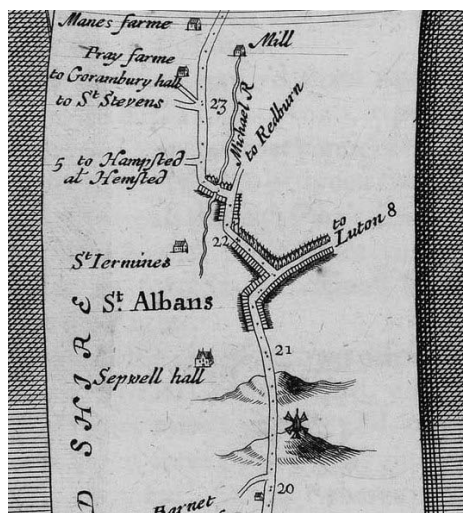


Figure 16. Detail of St. Albans from Ogilby's *Britannia* (1675). Used by Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library

John Shrimpton's manuscript *The Antiquities of Verulam and St. Albans* (1631?), provides a rare glimpse of how the poetic and cartographic image of Verulamium created by Saxton, Spenser, Norden, and Speed transformed a local resident's experience of his own hometown.<sup>19</sup> Combining paraphrases of medieval authors, observations of the physical condition of the Roman remains of Verulamium, anecdotes from his own life in St. Albans, and knowledge of local topography, Shrimpton's study exhibits all the hallmarks of early modern antiquarianism. But *The Antiquities* is also remarkable for Shrimpton's creative and

<sup>19</sup> Shrimpton's little-known manuscript is part of the Gorhambury papers housed at the Hertfordshire County Records Office (see Ritchie "Forgotten" 54). An edition edited by Carson I. A. Ritchie was published in 1966 by the St. Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society. Ritchie's introduction to this volume, and his two published essays are the only known scholarship on Shrimpton and his work.

poetic approach to his subject. He includes what seems to be an original river poem on the marriage of the small river Cott and the town of Verulamium, and prefaces the entire work with a brief meditation and verse which echo Edmund Spenser's *Ruines of Time*, a poem which Shrimpton elsewhere quotes explicitly.

Shrimpton's *Antiquities* provides an accurate portrait of how St Albans and the ruins of Verulamium would have appeared in the early seventeenth century: "nothing nowe remaines but a few fragments of the old ruinous walls with the trenches which went about it" (2), a description which matches Camden's Norden's, and Speed's accounts and images. *The Antiquities* also provides documentary evidence of late English Renaissance reading practices. Unable to consult many primary sources, Shrimpton instead relied heavily on contemporary published works by writers like William Camden, John Weever, and Michael Drayton, as well as classical and medieval historians including Tacitus, Gildas, Bede, Voragine, Florilegus, Neckham, records from St. Alban's Abbey. Shrimpton's other mysterious source was

An old Author, who writ about 7 hundred years since, who wrott more & better then all the rest, from whom I had a good part of my principal matter concer[n]ing Verulamium for so much as I could remember; the Author being stolen from me many years before the compiling of this worke, to my great discontent & hindrance. (1)

Likely a correspondent of Francis Bacon, the Baron Verulam,<sup>20</sup> Shrimpton's participation in the field of regional antiquarianism was otherwise mediated

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<sup>20</sup> On Shrimpton's connection with Bacon see Ritchie, "Forgotten" 54; Ritchie, "An Elizabethan" 233; Ritchie "Introduction" xiv. Ritchie suggests that the "friend" for whom Shrimpton compiled his manuscript was possibly Bacon.



locally by texts: he bought and read books, measuring them against his own observations. Antiquarian research allowed Shrimpton to supplement his own lived experience of the Roman city, which was largely an experience of absence.

The *Antiquities* allows us to “look over the shoulder of a local historian of the 1630’s as he bends to the task” (Ritchie “Introduction” iii), and in doing so, we can plausibly detect Shrimpton’s uptake of contemporary commonplaces circulating about Verulamium, including Spenser’s *Ruines of Time*. During the time of Abbot Eadmer, Shrimpton writes, “Verulamium was for ever layd in her grave,” and to illustrate this, he quotes Spenser’s *Ruines of Time* (36-42, missing verse 40). Shrimpton may have read Spenser directly, or he may be echoing Weever’s inclusion of these verses in his own *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631).<sup>21</sup> Weever quotes Spenser within a lengthy collection of commonplaces all illustrating how “bookes, or writings, haue euer had the preheminance” over built monuments “for worthinesse and continuance” (1). *The Antiquities* demonstrates how Shrimpton drew on these commonplaces, and others created by chorographers which provided a visual and historical account of Verulamium, for his own work. Shrimpton superimposed this constructed image of Verulamium, particularly its status as a monument to mutability, over his own lived experience.

Perhaps the best illustration of this superimposition occurs at the very opening of

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Shrimpton ends with the following statement: “Thus worthy Sir I have performed your command by presenting you the best notes I could possible collect out of most ancient & late writers concerneing the antiquity of Verulamium & the Towne & monastery of St. Albans with the Auncient Monuments & funeral Epetaphes drawne out in the forme of history hartely wishing it might give you as much content in reading as I had in the writing of it. Far well” (65).

<sup>21</sup> See Weever 4-5.

his work, where he remarks that, other than the “old ruinous walls,” all this ancient city is “buried in its own ashes, as if it had never been.” He then proceeds to include what seems to be an original verse:

Thus still devouring time to ruine brings  
 & changeth oft the greatest States that are  
 It doth not spare the Monuments of Kings  
 But makes them lye as if they never were  
 It layes the mountains level with the plaine  
 Makes sea dry land, and dry land sea againe. (2)

These verses imitate Spenser’s *Ruines of Time*: the genius of Verlame declares herself as “ruines now I bee, / And lye in mine owne ashes, as ye see,” and that the city is “Wasted [. . .] as if it never were, / And all the rest that me so honord made, / And of the world admired ev’rie where, / Is turnd to smoake” (39-40, 120-23). Shrimpton’s imagery of ashes paired so closely with the phrase “as if it had never been,” presents a close resonance that would seem too marked to be dismissed as accidental. Shrimpton transforms many of the commonplaces from Weever and elsewhere into an image of mutability which prefaces his entire work. Shrimpton’s *Antiquities* demonstrates that a simple, everyday practice like walking through one’s hometown or travelling through a familiar landscape is never a simple, straightforward motion. The representations of such motions in Renaissance texts are imbricated with the motion of mutability.

Shrimpton joins, ever so loosely, in the “intermediary social figuration” that Helgerson argues legitimizes comparisons between poetry and chorography during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (*Forms* 126). From the little we

know of him, Shrimpton was an amateur antiquarian, driven by curiosity about his own backyard to collect, as best he could, a history of St Albans and Verulamium. He is the historical manifestation of the miniature human figures included in Speed's *Theatre*, observing and discussing antiquarian sites like Stonehenge. In writing a local chorography, he incorporates the poetics of monumentality that motivates considerable literary production of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Stories of nation-building and historical consciousness are so often located at the upper registers of power and influence, but this short antiquarian study by Shrimpton shows that the tensions and debates inherent in British antiquarianism were sometimes no less palpable to the son of a brewer who participated in his nation's history within the context of his hometown.

This chapter has argued that the ambiguous, discontinuous, and absent representations of motion in Spenser's poetry are evidence of a mapmindedness which had not yet fully settled on the usefulness of maps for wayfinding, and saw maps instead as bringing the whole into a single view. Yet as the discussion of mapping projects by Saxton, Norden, and Speed has shown, this single view equally included a representation of the motion of time which could have a profound effect on an individual's experience of his or her own environment. In the *Faerie Queene*, the representation of travel both elides and dilates time. Moreover, Spenser's epic demonstrates the shared territory between poetic narrative and cartographic forms. Wayfinding and storytelling are intricately linked through the concept of plot.

Poetry and chorography can each demonstrate a “monumental impulse,” to borrow J.B. Trapp’s phrase, a desire for immortality, for remembrance, and for the restoration of what has been lost or threatened by the indiscriminate devouring of time. This monumental impulse, seen in poems like Spenser’s *Ruines of Time*, discloses an ambivalence towards the stone monument, which remains always in danger of becoming first a ruin, and then vanishing altogether. Renaissance poets and chorographers articulated the aim of supplementing and perfecting, and thereby preserving across time, the incomplete records that they witnessed. Bart van Es argues, in respect to *The Ruines of Time*, that Spenser’s poem “both creates and removes a monument. For the more the city’s genius denies her own substance, the more she comes into focus in Spenser’s art” (van Es, *Forms* 35). As Weever’s collection of commonplaces shows, this articulation of the impulse for monumentality was often paired with *exempla* of observed effects of motion and change, commonplaces demonstrating the power of mutability as equally destructive and generative. The practice of commonplacing and the question of mutability as a universal pattern of time, underpin Milton’s image of “grateful vicissitude,” which is the subject of the final two chapters.

### Part III

#### The Motion of Vicissitude and Patterns of Change

##### Introduction

Early mapmakers recognized a relationship between the observable shape of the world and the history of the world's creation. By naming his collection of world maps *Atlas, sive cosmographicae meditationes de fabrica mundi et fabricati figura* ("Atlas, or cosmographical meditations on the creation of the universe and the form of its creation"), Gerhard Mercator plainly expressed his belief that cosmography and geography could unlock the mysteries of God's creation of the universe, could, in fact, supplement the book of Genesis. Denis Wood notes that in Mercator's subtitle "lie the origins of the narrative tradition" of cartographic atlases ("Pleasure" 28). Maps, to Mercator, were not abstract, detached representations of physical space, but rather meditations, "contemplation[s] of created things," to borrow John Milton's phrase (*PL* 5.511). In fact, Mercator's subtitle could equally be Milton's to *Paradise Lost*, an epic structured on the divine narrative of creation, fall, and redemption. The narrative of the creation of the universe reveals the operation of the universe. A universe "ordered [. . .] in measure and number and weight" (Wis. 11:20), whose "heavens declare the glory of God" and whose "firmament sheweth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1), suggested to Renaissance thinkers "that temporal experience had shape and order, that history revealed a pattern that human beings could comprehend" (Guibbory 1). To understand this pattern of time, is to understand the operation of motion in the universe, whether the movements of celestial bodies and the changes wrought on earth reveal evidence of increasing decay, cyclical rises and falls, or increasing

progress.<sup>1</sup> Cosmography, geography, natural philosophy, and rediscovered classical texts all offered evidence, often taking the form of commonplaces, in support or opposition of each of these patterns of history. Milton's poetics of motion, developed throughout his literary career, is fundamental for understanding how his account of creation in *Paradise Lost* engages with contemporary debates over the decay of nature, and over the value of motion itself.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton represents motion and change on a cosmic scale, from the combining elements in the depths of the earth to the movement and music of the angels in Heaven. Near the center of Milton's epic, Raphael describes an alternation of light and darkness in heaven, an interchange noted for its pleasant effects. Its source is a "cave" located

Within the Mount of God, fast by his Throne,  
Where light and darkness in perpetual round  
Lodge and dislodge by turns, which makes through Heav'n  
Grateful vicissitude, like day and night;  
Light issues forth, and at the other door

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<sup>1</sup> Guibbory outlines these three prevailing patterns: "the idea of decay; the cyclical view of history; and the idea of progress" (5). She follows these patterns in the work of six major Renaissance writers and concludes that "the idea of decay appears most clearly in Donne and the cyclical view in Jonson and Herrick, [while] the idea of progress inspires Bacon, Milton, and, to a more limited extent, Dryden" (257). Like Richard Foster Jones in *Ancients and Modern*, Bacon is the key exemplar of the progress theory: "Bacon sensed that he was living at a time when the pattern of history could be changed. Though natural philosophy had degenerated throughout the past cycles of history, he was confident that the course of the future could be one of continuous progress in knowledge and power, if only men would begin anew and reform the method and goals of their knowledge" (257-58). By also advocating a model of progress, Milton is "perhaps the most Baconian poet of the seventeenth century" (Martin 231).

Obsequious darkness enters, till her hour  
 To veil the Heav'n, though darkness there might well  
 Seem twilight here. (6.4-12)

“Grateful vicissitude” strictly refers to the reciprocal succession of light and darkness, but throughout heaven there is evidence of the principle of change it represents. Milton’s heaven is neither static nor unalterable, and such variety is a source of pleasure. Moreover, the fact that the source of change is located beside the throne of God makes vicissitude and alternation “intrinsically associated with godhead itself” (Boesky 384). When Raphael later explains to Adam that “earth hath this variety from heav’n / Of pleasure situate in hill and dale” (6.640-41), we see that in *Paradise Lost* the pattern of “grateful vicissitude” emanates from heaven, and permeates creation, enlivening each level of the universe.

This pattern of “grateful vicissitude” forms Milton’s poetics of motion in *Paradise Lost*, a poetics which gestated in Milton’s early writings such as “Il Penseroso,” *Comus*, and *Naturam non pati senium*. In *The Muse’s Method*, Joseph Summers reads Milton’s description of heaven’s similitude of day and night as a metonym for the representation of motion in the poem as a whole. “In *Paradise Lost*,” Summers argued, “‘vicissitude’ is always ‘grateful,’” and this feature is crucial for understanding Milton’s overall method (71). Milton

organized *Paradise Lost* in terms of movement. Whatever passage we read, if we read and consider with care, we find that we have embarked on a segment of motion related to light, song, dance, and time. And that segment will relate to or reflect, mirror or oppose or continue other motions which lead us through the poem. (85)

“Grateful vicissitude” is the divine ideal and the model for prelapsarian earth: light and dark, work and leisure, male and female, spring and harvest, motion and stillness each form a perfected whole. Michael Lieb, taking Summers’s reading one step further, suggests that the image of “grateful vicissitude” articulates Milton’s conception of “holy rest.” Holy rest is not the fulfillment of a longing for eternal and ultimate stasis, but rather it is the paradoxical ability of “things at rest [to] express that rest through motion,” such as the “fixt Starrs, fixt in thir Orb that flies” (Lieb 323, *PL* 5.176). A condition of restless stasis, embodied by the devils, where constant motion produces neither change nor peace, is the infernal parody of “grateful vicissitude.” Fallen humanity and the fallen world are caught between these two models of motion: their motions are no longer in harmony with the divine pattern, but they are willing and able to repent. In *Paradise Lost*, the categories of motion and rest dramatize Milton’s “grand cycle of creation-fall-redemption” (Ittzés “Satan’s” 19). A world created by “grateful vicissitude” will be redeemed through “graceful vicissitude.”

The ensuing two chapters argue that motion is the central organizing and creative principle at work in both Milton’s Heaven and the universe. His positive representation of motion is utterly surprising: he denies both an Aristotelian confidence in the perfection of changelessness and a conventional despair at the troubling uncertainty of mutability. As Harinder Singh Marjara observes, Milton “lays no stress on corruptibility as the major characteristic of the sublunary world. In fact, the term ‘mutability,’ such a favourite with the poets before Milton, has not been even mentioned in *Paradise Lost*” (*Contemplation* 71). Instead of



associating motion with sublunary sinful decay and stillness with superlunary eternal perfection, Milton sees “the desire for inactive, unchanging being” as “a disguise for the desire for non-being” (Summers 86), and motion as essential to the wonder and permanence elicited by artistic creation.

Moreover, Milton’s rejection of mutability and his use of the term “vicissitude” connect his poetics of motion to the question of whether nature was undergoing intensifying decay. As I will show with reference to Louis LeRoy’s *De la Vicissitude* (1575), its two English translations, and George Hakewill’s *An Apologie of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World* (1627, enlarged in 1635), the word “vicissitude” had a particular currency in this debate. It served, along with evidence of sublunary and superlunary changes such as comets and the increased decline of the ecliptic’s obliquity, as a commonplace: a fact or a quotation, removed from its original context and employed in argumentation. These commonplaces moved far beyond their original contexts, appearing, as I will show, in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* and Sir John Davies’s *Orchestra*, as well as in Milton. Milton’s thematic image of “grateful vicissitude,” as a reconsideration of his early exercise *Naturam non pati senium* (“That Nature does not suffer old age”), importantly serves as his engagement with the debate over the decay of the world. By invoking a term so resonant with this debate and rejecting the destructive motion of mutability, Milton emphatically denies the premise that nature is in decay, and likewise affirms the concepts of creation, restoration, progress, and grace.

Grateful vicissitude provides a pattern for creation and redemption in *Paradise Lost*, including its infernal travesty as restless stasis.<sup>2</sup> Central to Milton's poetics of motion is the concept of progress.<sup>3</sup> Within *Paradise Lost*, constant motion is a creative and perfecting force, the means by which humanity may become "Improv'd by tract of time" (5.498). The desire for permanence and fixity that is so essential to the human impulse to monumentalize is denied by this model of "grateful vicissitude" in favour of "live-long monuments" which are dynamic, changeable, and alive ("On Shakespeare" 8).

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<sup>2</sup> On repetition and reiteration in *Paradise Lost*, see Schwartz.

<sup>3</sup> Guibbory writes, "From the early prose to the late poems he consistently contrasts the cycles of the past with the path of progress that people can forge in the future" (169).

*Part III: The Motion of Vicissitude and Patterns of Change*

**Chapter 5:**  
**“Omnium rerum vicissitude est”: Mobility and Commonplaces**

As his epic draws near to the narrative moment of the Fall, Milton expresses his concern that his “higher argument” may be hindered by “an age too late, or cold / Climate, or years” (9.42-45). Milton’s worry that the time for advancements in human arts and achievements had expired articulates a familiar commonplace taken from the contemporary quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, particularly from the debate as to whether nature and humanity undergo increasing decay.<sup>1</sup> He echoes a deep-set fear of belatedness and “modern inferiority,” articulated by Godfrey Goodman and John Donne among many others, which stems from the “belief that all nature was decaying in its old age” (Jones 24).<sup>2</sup> This is a “cosmic pessimism” that goes beyond the assertion that the perpetual alternation of birth and decay, death and regeneration is necessary for sustaining the universe (Fowler’s annotation to 9.44-7).<sup>3</sup> Instead, it maintains that

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<sup>1</sup> An early critic to comment on Milton’s use of this commonplace was Samuel Johnson, who observed that “There prevailed in [Milton’s] time an opinion that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of nature. It was suspected that the whose creation languished, that neither trees nor animals had the height or bulk of their predecessors, and that everything was daily sinking by gradual diminution. Milton appears to suspect that souls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without some fear that his book is to be written in ‘an age too late’ for heroic poesy” (413). Unlike Johnson, I read Milton’s use of the commonplace as a foil to which the whole of *Paradise Lost* discounts.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Foster Jones’s *Ancients and Moderns* is the classic study of the seventeenth-century articulation of the debate between the ancients and moderns. See also Baron; Williamson; Allen; Harris; Illife 434-36.

<sup>3</sup> The *locus classicus* for this assertion is Ovid: “For, tempering each other, heat and moisture / engender life: the union of these two produces everything. Though it

the universe will experience intensifying disintegration until the natural order on earth and in the heavens dissolves. Proponents of this position cited evidence including examples of natural disasters, wars, and changes in the superlunary heavens (previously thought to be incorruptible), classical and biblical authorities, and instances of the corruption of morality. Fowler notes that “notions of cosmic deterioration and historical apocalypse, intensified by astronomical discoveries, were hard to ignore” (9.44-7*n*).

Milton’s representation of the creation and Fall of the world serves as his answer to the question of the increasing decay of all things. The interpretation of the Fall and the right reading of Genesis were both at stake in the debate. As Ronald Hepburn explains, “[i]nvariably disagreements arose among interpretations, between belief in the virility of nature and in its contamination through sin: differences too (among those who admitted a Cosmic Fall) over the extent of the actual damage cause to the non-human world” (Hepburn 135). Godfrey Goodman titled his treatise supporting increasing decay *The Fall of Man, or the corruption of nature, proved by the light of our naturall Reason* (1616), while George Hakewill stated that his intention in refuting the decay argument was the “*vindicating of the Creators honor, the reputation of his wisdom, his iustice, his goodnes, and his power; being all of them in my judgment by the opinion of Natures decay not a little impeached and blemished*” (14). Whether arguing in support of the

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is true / That fire is the enemy of water, / moist heat is the creator of all things: / discordant concord is the path life needs” (1.429-32). In *Paradise Lost*, the elements repel each other by Strife in Chaos (2.894-906), but are held together by Love in the created world (4.180-84; 7.216-17).

decay theory or against it, an individual's position on the shape of history significantly affected the interpretation of the creation story in Genesis and the ramifications of the Fall. In telling the story of the Fall, Milton composed his epic largely after this debate had reached its peak, but his aim to "justify the ways of God to men" (1.26) required him to articulate a position of his own on the question of nature's decay. His use of the term "vicissitude" to refer to a heavenly pattern imprinted on earth at its creation resonates with the debate over the decay of nature, yet his qualification of "vicissitude" as "grateful" indicates its redemptive and sustaining power rather than attributing decay and dissolution to the force of change that brought order out of chaos in the beginning.

### **The Practice of Commonplacing**

The practice of commonplacing was "a quintessentially humanist method of reading and storing information [. . .] with a glorious ancient pedigree" (Blair "Humanist Methods" 541).<sup>4</sup> Commonplaces (Lat. *loci communes*; Gr. *koinoi topoi*) were "quotations (usually Latin quotations) culled from authors held to be authoritative, or, at any rate, commendable in their opinions, and regarded as exemplary in terms of linguistic usage and stylistic niceties" (Moss v). These quotations were collected into books, frequently organized by classification heads or topics. As Ann Blair argues, "[t]he commonplace book thus encompassed all the aspects of *inventio*, of the gathering of material for an argument, and became the crucial tool for storing and retrieving the increasingly unwieldy quantity of

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<sup>4</sup> See Lechner; Blair "Humanist Methods"; Blair "Reading Strategies"; Moss (esp. 1-23); Yeo.

textual and personal knowledge” (“Humanist Methods” 542). The pragmatic model for collecting commonplaces in the Renaissance was derived from the rhetorical instruction of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian<sup>5</sup>; the continuity of the practice of commonplacing with classical models appealed to Renaissance practitioners. Moreover, classical texts themselves served as the most potent and voluminous source of commonplaces.

Both classical and Renaissance practitioners used commonplaces in dialectical reasoning and in rhetorical persuasion. Dialectical reasoning “proceeds from generally accepted opinions, as distinct from reasoning which proceeds from premises which are true, primary, and apodictic” (Moss 4).<sup>6</sup> Commonplaces provided such “generally accepted opinions” from which to reason. Commonplaces used in oratory enhanced the orator’s mode of persuasion, allowing rhetoricians to “win their point by citing examples or by using enthymemes” (Moss 5). Students were encouraged, as Milton himself was, to keep commonplace books, which aided in the assembling of material for pedagogical exercises such as prolusions.<sup>7</sup> As passages excised from their original contexts, commonplaces were devoid of interpretation and stood as independent

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<sup>5</sup> Moss notes that “[w]hen the fifteenth-century humanists recovered Quintilian, they received this sense of ‘commonplace’ [as a moral theme] along with the rest of his usage and along with actual specimens of these school exercises, such as the *Progymnasmata* of a later teacher of rhetoric, Aphthonius” (10). The *Progymnasmata* model embedded in Quintilian taught the practice of commonplacing just as it taught the ancient usage of *ekphrasis*. In fact, the transmission of ideas of vividness and vivacity which so informed Renaissance description themselves circulated as commonplaces (see Hazard).

<sup>6</sup> See also Lechner 77-97.

<sup>7</sup> See Milton, *A Commonplace Book of John Milton*.

facts: Blair notes that “in being selected from their original source and entered into the commonplace book they have become self-evident truths” (“Humanist Methods” 544). Therefore, as Vera Keller has argued, “commonplaces could be employed to opposite and conflicting ends,” used to support either side of a debate (313). It is not uncommon to see the same commonplace used both to support and refute a single premise.<sup>8</sup>

Commonplaces function through metaphors of stasis and motion. As “places” (*loci, topoi*), they exist as fixed entities, unchangeable and self-contained. As places, commonplaces not only form the substantive topics of oratory, but also its form: as “finding-places” (Moss 6), commonplaces aided orators in organizing their material, while as “mental places,” commonplaces plotted the order of a speech using particular images (e.g., a tree) or sites (like a map) to aid in memorization (Moss 8).<sup>9</sup> By linking each textual commonplace to a mental place, orators could move through a speech ordered cognitively and rhetorically by places. Yet at the same time, commonplaces are exceedingly mobile, providing a mechanism by which ideas are transmitted across temporal, spatial, and disciplinary boundaries. For example, a catalogue listing inventions definitive of the modern age appeared widely in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in works published both in England and on the continent, such as by Giovanni

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Louis Le Roy cites the fact that current observations of the Sun locate it twelve degrees closer to the earth as evidence that motion is an essential and sustaining force in the universe (3 in Ashley’s translation), while Spenser cites the sun’s “declyn[ation]” as evidence that “the world is runne quite out of square” and “growes daily wourse and wourse” (V.Pr.7, 1).

<sup>9</sup> On the history of memory systems see Yates; Carruthers.

Tortelli, Le Roy, Polydore Vergil, Francis Bacon, and Johannes Stradanus.<sup>10</sup> Such mobility means that it is often impossible to trace commonplace *exempla* to their original source.

Commonplaces are “common” because they exist in a public that is “created by the reflexive circulation of discourse” (Warner 90). They enable collaborative thought among strangers. Commonplaces are available to anyone who also has access to print, and attention to them includes their readers and users in a public form of association, albeit an impersonal and one anonymous one.<sup>11</sup> Commonplaces work very much like publics do in Warner’s definition: they depend upon “uptake, citation, and recharacterization” and “tak[e] place not in closely argued essays but in an informal, intertextual, and multigeneric field” (144-45).<sup>12</sup> This dynamic “circulation of discourse” in part explains the difficulty of identifying original sources of particular *exempla*, facts, observations, and quotations. For instance, as I will discuss in more detail below, there has been much scholarly debate over whether Milton’s early poem *Naturam non pati senium* (“That Nature does not suffer old age”) was a direct response to Hakewill’s *Apologie*. Yet within the context of commonplacing, such a question is moot: Hakewill’s *Apologie* was itself a compendium of commonplaces, assembled with input from several collaborators.<sup>13</sup> Milton’s poem echoes many of the same

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<sup>10</sup> Gombrich “Eastern Inventions.”

<sup>11</sup> See Warner 65-124. I borrow the phrase “form of association” from the work of the Making Publics Research Team, see, e.g. Wilson and Yachnin 1.

<sup>12</sup> See also Keller 30, 313-15

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Feingold 137n82.



commonplaces included by Hakewill, but also by Le Roy, Donne, Spenser, and many others. The search for the sole original source misapprehends the means by which knowledge and ideas circulated in humanist circles through commonplaces.

### **“Vicissitude” as a Commonplace in the Debate over the Decay of Nature**

The debate over the decay of nature was argued in the pages of natural philosophy treatises, history books, sermons, and even poetry. Guibbory outlines “three major conceptions of the shape of history: the idea of decay; the cyclical view of history; and the idea of progress” (5).<sup>14</sup> An individual’s adherence to one of these patterns profoundly influenced how he or she interpreted the account of creation in Genesis, the effects of the Fall, and the shape of providential time. Moreover, belief in decay, cyclicity, or progress determined an individual’s interpretation of the relationship between the ancient and modern ages: whether the ancient age was the height of learning and morality from which humanity is ever in decline,<sup>15</sup> or whether the modern age heralded inventions and novelties unimaginable to the ancient world.

The value and efficacy of motion were central to this debate. For the decay theory, motion and change signified decay. Aristotle’s arguments that “there is truer pleasure in rest than in motion” and “just as a changeable man is faulty, so is a nature that needs change” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 189) supported the belief that stasis was perfection. But for the equilibrium and progress theories,

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<sup>14</sup> For a detailed account of these three models of history, see Guibbory 1-33.

<sup>15</sup> Jones argues that in the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, the belief in the decay of nature was the primary factor in the moderns’ sense of inferiority and their “worship of antiquity” (22).

motion was a stabilizing and even an improving force. The word “vicissitude” – meaning continuous, often reciprocal, alternation, motion or change at all levels of creation – was a commonplace. In his *Adages*, Erasmus, a strong proponent of the commonplace method, cites “Jucunda vicissitude rerum” (change in all things is pleasing), a phrase found in Euripides, Aristotle, Virgil, and elsewhere (I.vii.64). From Terence comes the more dispassionate “omnium rerum vicissitudo est” (there is change in all things) (*Eunuchus* 276). When Milton uses the word “vicissitude” to refer to the pleasing interchange of light and darkness in heaven, he selects a word with a rich and complex contemporary currency. Moreover, he selects a word with implications regarding the interpretation of creation, the implications of the Fall, and the manner of providential restoration at the end of time.

Louis Le Roy’s *De la Vicissitude ou variété des choses en l’univers* (Paris 1575) was one of the first books to contest the hypothesis of the world’s decay with the proposition that, although history moves through cycles of achievement and decay, progress and discovery are both possible and necessary.<sup>16</sup> Le Roy posits change and motion, variety and vicissitude as the sole constant in all levels of creation. As Jeanneret defines Le Roy’s vision, “[e]verything holds together, at least temporarily, by virtue of a sustained internal dynamics. This movement is the very condition of existence and [. . .] the only fixed and immutable law of life”

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<sup>16</sup> English passages from Le Roy’s *De la Vicissitude* are taken from Robert Ashley’s 1594 English translation. On Le Roy’s work, see Jeanneret ch.7; Iliffe 439; Allen “The Degeneration” 225-27; Baron 7-10; Jones; Harris; Guibbory 11, 13, 20-21. Le Roy builds on Jean Bodin’s *Methodus ad Facilem Historiarum Cognitionem* (1566).

(167). However, unlike those who equate change with increasing decay, Le Roy catalogues new inventions that benefit humanity (most notably the compass and the printing press [fol. 111r]) and cites recent geographic discoveries to argue that progress is possible, and even “if the perfection of [the arts] hath not hitherto bin found, it followeth not therof, that it cannot be found” (127v-128r).<sup>17</sup> In Guibbory’s estimation, Le Roy champions a “cyclical view of history [that] seems on the verge of yielding to a progressive one” (20). Le Roy’s work stands decidedly on side with the moderns in the quarrel between them and the ancients.

Le Roy took solace in the human capacity for discovery and in God’s benevolence. The “first mover moveable” (which is what Le Roy calls the *primum mobile*) is the cause of motion at all levels of creation, and “by [its] vertue and influence (governed by the divine providence) the corruptible things in this sensible world, are incessantly restored & renewed, through the meanes of generation” (fol. 3r). New stars, drooping ecliptics, trembling spheres, monstrous births and violent weather engendered in some a “metaphysical shudder”

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<sup>17</sup> This passage begins as follows: “I say, new lands, new seas, new formes of men, maners, lawes, and customes; new diseases, and new remedies; new waies of the Heauen, and of the Ocean, neuer before found out; and new starres seen? yea, and how many remaine to be known by our posteritie? That which is now hidden, with time will come to light and our successours will wonder that wee were ignorant of them” (127v-128r). Le Roy here is echoing Seneca’s commonplace: “The time will come when careful research over very long periods will bring to light things which now lie hidden [. . .] this knowledge will be unfolded only through successive ages. There will come a time when our descendents will be amazed that we did not know things that are so plain to them” (*Natural Questions* 7.25). Cf. Browne’s *Urn Buriall*: “Time hath endlesse rarities, and shows of all varieties; which reveals old things in heaven, makes new discoveries in earth, and even earth it self a discovery. That great Antiquity *America* lay buried for thousands of years; and a large part of the earth is still in the Urne unto us” (1).

(Williamson 121), but “[f]or Le Roy, the simple consolation that, although decay is inescapable, its date is not known and may be long postponed by human endeavor or Divine Providence, was strong enough to minimize those possible psychological effects” (Baron 9).<sup>18</sup> Cataloguing numerous examples from Egypt, Greece, Rome, Assyria, Persia, India, and elsewhere, Le Roy imagined history as both cyclical and progressive. While empires which rise in power inevitably fall (“since euery thing that can not go forward, or vpward, doth naturally discend, and retire,” fol. 32v), and old knowledge often must be rediscovered, learning may nevertheless increase and transfer forward from one cycle to the next.

Le Roy’s work had two English renderings at the close of the sixteenth century. The first, by Robert Ashley and entitled *The Interchangeable Course, of Variety of Things in the Whole World* (1594), was a faithful translation which maintained the structure of the French original and preserved Le Roy’s two assertions that the moderns surpass the ancients, and that although decay is inevitable, change produces progress. Ashley’s dedicatory preface indicates the popularity of Le Roy’s French work and the motivation behind his English translation. Ashley recognized a “great liking which [he] saw generally conceived of this work,” and prepared his translation “for the benefit of such as were not sufficiently acquainted with the French,” confident that his translation remains true to Le Roy’s text, even if it “wanteth much of the perfection of the Principal”

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<sup>18</sup> Baron argues that “the mere existence of [Le Roy’s] work raises grave doubts about the theory that the ascendancy of a ‘progressive view’ of culture, and the disavowal of passive imitation, had to wait for the idea of continuous scientific progress in the Baconian school” (10). For Le Roy’s dependence and reliance on Providence, see fol. 126v.

(A2). His translation's subtitle proclaims Le Roy's view: "And that we ought by our owne Inventions to augment the doctrine of the Auncients." History, civilizations, and all levels of creation are thus dynamic, subject to continuous motion and transformation. Motion is what sustains the universe: it is "tempered by alternative chaunges, and maintayned by contraries" (1).

John Norden's<sup>19</sup> *Vicissitudo Rerum: an Elegiacall Poem, of the interchangeable*

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<sup>19</sup> Despite a persistent false attribution in Norden scholarship of the surveying work to one John Norden and the devotional writing to a second John Norden, the author of *Vicissitudo Rerum* is indeed the same John Norden as the surveyor discussed in Chapter 3. Alfred W. Pollard, one of the editors of the *Short Title Catalogue*, made the case for "The Unity of John Norden" in 1926. Alarmed by the suggestion made by a colleague that there should be two separate author headings for the name "John Norden" in the *STC*, Pollard resolves the mystery by correlating the chronology and content of Norden's two genres, which generates enough evidence to support the collapsing of the two Nordens into one. Moreover, Pollard argues that the doubling can be traced back to a 1599 letter sent from Norden to Lord Burghley's son, Sir Robert Cecil, in which Norden complains that "I was by some unfortunatelic mistaken for another of my name, and her Ma[jesty] (upon surmise) enfourmed againste me, I being inocente, under couller of a Norden, I knowe not in what guiltie. The Norden pretender was a Kentishman, I, borne in Somersetshire. By which mistakinge I have susteyned much wrong, ignorante howe to salve it" (quoted by Pollard 235-36). Pollard concludes that this letter has led Norden scholars to attribute the surveying to the Somerset Norden and the devotional literature to the Kentishman. Kitchen's dissertation also argues for authorial unity, and makes the further claim that Norden's letter to Cecil was a deliberate attempt on Norden's part to distance himself from the fall of Essex (151-52). This is the source of the "biographical ghost," as Kitchen calls it ("Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher" 152), but upon thorough examination of the "Parallel Lives" of John Norden, Kitchen concludes that the "Pious Norden" and the "Surveyor Norden" are indeed one and the same, particularly in light of the posthumous preface to *A Good Companion for a Christian* (1632) written by Norden's son: "My deceased Father very often suruaied the Kings Lands, but now by me he humbly tenders himselfe to be suruaied by you" (quoted in Kitchen, "Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher" 165). For a detailed historical survey of the debate over the two Nordens, see Kitchen, "Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher" 153. My thanks to Lesley Cormack for first bringing this authorial debate to my attention; see also her *Charting an Empire* (172-73).

*Courses and varietie of things in this world* (London: 1600), most likely reworks Ashley's version of Le Roy's original.<sup>20</sup> Norden's work versifies (in rhyme royal) the first half of the first book in Ashley's *The Interchangeable Course*, using much of the same vocabulary and phrasing,<sup>21</sup> and nowhere in his text or prefatory material does Norden indicate a familiarity with the French work.<sup>22</sup> Norden's poem addresses subjects in much the same order that they appear in Ashley's translation: the motions of the heavens (2-12), their influence on earthly events

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<sup>20</sup> *Vicissitudo Rerum* was reissued in 1601 under the title *A Storehouse of Varieties*. This re-titling was perhaps an attempt to increase low sales: see Kitchen "Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher" 173; Pollard 245. However, the fact that only four copies of the first printing and two copies of the second printing survive suggests that neither edition was successful (Rusche 53). Moreover, the poem ends with the pledge that "This first approov'd, a second part I bring" (156.7), a promise which never materialized. Certainly, *Vicissitudo Rerum* did not enjoy the success of some of Norden's other devotional literature: *A Pensive Man's Practice* (1584) had over forty editions, selling "much better than the most successful of Shakespeare Quartos" (Pollard 238), and *A Poor Man's Rest* (1604) was on its eighth edition by 1620 and was published until 1684 (Kitchen "Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher" 169-70).

<sup>21</sup> Koller documents a number of examples of what she calls Norden's "plagiarism" (235), but many more can be found. For example, stanzas (14-16) from Norden's poem unmistakably echo Ashley's translation at 1v-2.

<sup>22</sup> Critical work on Norden's *Vicissitudo Rerum* is limited. The Shakespeare Association issued a facsimile edition in 1931 with an introductory essay by D.C. Collins. The sole full-length commentary is by Harry Gorden Rusche. On Norden's melancholy as typical for his time, see Williamson. For a comparison between the two English versions of Le Roy's work, see Koller. On stanza 96 as an echo of E.K.'s prefatory letter to Harvey in Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*, see Hard, "E.K.'s Reference" 122. On the possible reference to earth's motion in stanza 43, see McColley, "An Early Poetic Allusion." Although he refers to *Vicissitudo Rerum* as "a dull poem," Tillyard (50-1, 82) uses Norden's work to illustrate several trends in his *Elizabethan World Picture*. On Norden's place in the controversy over the decay of the world, see Harris 120-21. For Norden as one of "those Renaissance pessimists who foresaw the imminent disintegration of the whole natural order," see McAlindon, 160, 260, 288). For a consideration of *Vicissitudo Rerum* in the context of Norden's career, see Kitchen, "Cosmo-choro-poly-grapher" 170-73.

(13-45), the discord of the elements which produces variety and change (46-82), how such variety sustains everything in the world (83-108), the variety that can be found in the regions of the earth (109-140), the source of the arts in nature (141-46), the flourishing of some arts over others due to regional differences (147-51). However, all these vicissitudes and changes lead Norden away from Le Roy's original endorsement of cyclical progress, and instead towards asserting the destructive force of mutability and the increasing decay of the universe. Norden's closing six stanzas declare his pessimistic conclusion that the span of human life moves from corruption to corruption: "Man never standeth, but like waving tyde, / That comes and goes, now calme, then full of ire: [. . .] Grac'd now, then in disdaine, now in the sunne / Of sweetest favour: then eclips'd, undonne" (155). Norden's conclusion, rather than Le Roy's, was the more popular and commonly held one at the close of the sixteenth century;<sup>23</sup> as Koller states, "this melancholy awareness [. . .] colors the poetry of thoughtful courtly makers such as Raleigh, Sidney, Dyer, Bolton, Greville, and Spenser, and appears constantly in sermons, tracts, and works on natural science" (228, 231). Vicissitude does not suggest to Norden the potential for discovery and progress; instead, such "reciprocall exchange" (15.2), as he terms it, brings only change, decay, and destruction.

Koller presents a few possible explanations for the marked difference between Norden's treatment of the material and Ashley's translation: "Either

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<sup>23</sup> And its popularity persisted into the seventeenth-century, according to the subtitle of George Hakewill's *An apologie of the pover and prouidence of God in the gouernment of the world. Or An examination and censure of the common errour touching natures perpetuall and vniuersall decay* (1627).

[the] conception of progress which Le Roy enthusiastically presented was unacceptable to Norden, or he failed to see its significance, or he did not believe that it would receive popular approval” (236). Norden’s decision to versify Ashley’s *Of the Interchangeable Course* was likely due to the “popular appeal” of the “theme of mutability, and semi-scientific evidence for the decay of nature, and visible signs of the variableness of earthly affairs” (Koller 236). The reversal of Le Roy’s original optimistic vision was easy since the evidence lent itself equally well to Norden’s conclusions. Ashley’s and Norden’s different interpretations of the same evidence are also significant as they point to the mechanics of commonplacing. Norden’s title *Vicissitudo Rerum* alludes to the commonplace from Terence, while his revised title, *A Storehouse of Varieties*, alludes to the commonplace method: a “storehouse” (*thesaurus*) was a term used for the assembly of commonplaces (Yeo 159, 165). That Norden could take the identical evidence from Le Roy/Ashley and support the opposite position indicates the persuasive power of the commonplace.

As Victor Harris notes, Le Roy’s evidence for his position is “in many ways the same as that commonly employed in support of the world’s decay, to which Le Roy is specifically opposed” (103).<sup>24</sup> For instance, Ashley’s translation lists

the signes which within these fewe yeres have appeared in heaven, in the  
starrs, in the elements, and in al nature. Neuer were the Sunne and Moon

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<sup>24</sup> cf. Jones 280n12: Jones cites the simile of the modern age as a dwarf on a giant’s shoulders as an example of a rhetorical device used by both sides of the ancients vs. moderns debate.



eclipsed more apparantly; never were seene so many Comets, and other impressions in the aire; never did the Sea and the rivers so violently overflowe their bankes; never have bin heard such earthquakes; never were borne so many and so hideous monsters: Neither hath there ever bin seene since the memory of man, so many and so often changes to come to passe in Countries. Nations, Maners, Lawes, Estates, and Religions. The course of the sunne is no more such as it was wont to be in old time, neither are there the same points of the Solstices and Equinoxes: but within this fourteene hundred yeres since Ptolomey lived who was a most diligent observer of the course of the world, it is come neerer unto the earth then at that time it was, about twelve degrees. Moreover they say, that al the parts of the Zodiacke and the whole signes have chaunged their places; and that the earth is removed from his first scituation, being not entierly & absolutely (as afore it was) the center of the world. Some also (Hipparchus a famous Astrologer amongst the Grecians) have given out, that the celestial motions in time to come, shall go a contrary course, and that the course of the starrs shalbe changed, the East becomming West, and the South, North” (2v-3r).

To Le Roy, such vicissitudes do not mean decay, since all creation is providentially “restored and renewed” (3r); instead, vicissitude defines the kind of change to which the human mind in all its ingenuity will adapt. But when Norden versifies this list (stanzas 38-45), he frequently inserts the conclusion that all creation “Shall by Degrees alter, weare, and wast” (43.7): such signs in the heavens and on earth are evidence of “Nature’s fearefull alterations” (38.2) and they suggest that “Time’s wings beginne to frie, / Now couching low, that erst did soare so hie” (40.6-7). Ashley’s and Norden’s separate treatments of the same material are paradigmatic for the controversy over the decay of nature and wider

debate between the ancients and moderns: what was in question was not the evidence itself, but the interpretation of the evidence.

### **Dramatized Commonplaces of Vicissitude in Spenser and Davies**

Norden's interpretation of the evidence of change catalogued by Le Roy as indicative of decay seems to have been the more popular view, as Koller suggests: the same commonplaces and the same pessimism appear, for example, in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (e.g., the proem to Book V), in Donne's *Anniversary* poems, and in Goodman's *Fall of Man*. John Leon Lievsay argues that Ashley's translation of Le Roy's *De la Vicissitude* was an "immediate source" for Spenser's Proem to Book V of the *Faerie Queene*, citing the similarities between Ashley 2v-3 and Spenser's stanzas 2, 7, and 8, specifically the dual presence of references to Deucalion and Pyrrha, and the observation of the sun's declination 470-72). Lievsay also hears an echo of Ashley's "the sunne had foure times changed his accustomed course, arising twice in the west part, and setting also twice in the East" (38) in Spenser's "Foure times his place he shifted hath in sight, / And twice hath risen where he now doth west, / And wested twice where he ought rise aright" (V.Pr.8.5-7). As Ashley's translation was published in 1594, Lievsay concludes

if, as it has been suggested, the proems to the various books of *The Faerie Queene* were late compositions, polished off while the author prepared his poem for the press, we may also catch a glimpse of Spenser hungrily bringing himself up to date on current literature" (472).

Yet in trying to pinpoint an “immediate source,” Lievsay overlooks the potency of commonplaces.

The same commonplaces circulated in correspondence from Gabriel Harvey to Spenser. Harvey writes,

You suppose the first age was the goulde age. It is nothinge soe. Bodin defendith the goulde age to flourishe now, and our first grandfathers to haue rubbid thorowghe in the iron and brasen age at the beginninge when all things were rude and unperfitt in comparison of the exquisite finesse and delicacye, that we ar growen unto at these dayes. [. . .] There is a variable course and revolution of all thinges. Summer gettith the upperhande of wynter, and wynter agayne of summer. Nature herselfe is changeable, and most of all delightid with vanitye; and arte, after a sort her ape, conformith herselfe to the like mutabilitye. The moone waxith and wanithe; the sea ebbith and flowith; and as flowers so ceremonyes, lawes, faishions, customs, trades of livinge, sciences, devises, and all thinges else in a manner floorishe there tyme and then fade to nothinge. Nothing to speake of ether so resotrative and comfortable for delighe or beneficiall and profitable for use, but beinge longe together enioyed and continued at laste ingenderith a certayne satiety, and then it soone becumeth odious and lothsum. So it standith with mens opinions and iudgmentes in matters of doctrine and religion. (*Works* I.146, 148-149).

Although McCabe argues that Harvey’s letter is a “joke” (208),<sup>25</sup> nevertheless, the letter constitutes an illuminating context for Spenser’s account in the Proem of

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<sup>25</sup> We get a sense of Spenser’s original letter from Harvey’s reply. Harvey calls it a “bill of complaynte,” and describes how he first received the letter at an inn while he was “being fastheggid in rownde abowte on every side with a company of honest good fellowes.” Harvey describes how he first read the letter to himself,

Book V of the world as deteriorating “from the golden age, that first was named” to “a stonie one” (V.Pr.2.1-2).<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Spenser describes

men themselues, the which at first were framed  
Of earthly mould, and form'd of flesh and bone,  
Are now transformed into hardest stone:  
Such as behind their backs (so backward bred)  
Were throwne by *Pyrrha* and *Deucalion* (V.Pr.2.3-7).

While to some the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha signified a “regenerative gesture” where “in the ‘desert of empty wastes, living beings shoot up, and everything begins again’” (Jeanneret 35, referring to the writing of Ronsard), to Spenser, the myth of the metamorphosis of stones suggested that “being once amisse” the world “growes daily wourse and wourse” (V.Pr.1.9). Like Norden’s *Vicissitudo Rerum*, published four years after the 1596 *Faerie Queene*, Spenser’s proem to Book V suggests that Spenser relied on commonplaces cataloguing change in all things but, by citing the same commonplaces as evidence of decay, he in fact reversed the conclusion of cyclical progress advanced by Bodin and Le Roy.

Harvey’s list of examples supporting his claim for “a variable course and revolution of all things” reappears in Spenser’s *Mutabilitie Cantos*. In these final,

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but eventually “began to pronounce it openly in the audience of the whole assemblye.” Harvey’s letter includes replies from all these “good fellowes”: “ower finall resolution was, that an answer should incontinently be contrived amongst us all” (Harvey, *Works* 1.140-41). This correspondence demonstrates the public vitality of commonplaces and the debate over the decay of nature. Spenser’s letter, evidently itself consisting of numerous commonplaces, is read aloud and rebutted by a group of interested individuals, who reference others in the Republic of Letters (e.g., Bodin).

<sup>26</sup> Some have read this letter as a response to the *Mutabilitie Cantos*; see Meyer 115.

unfinished cantos of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser makes motion visible in the form of Mutabilitie, who attempts to usurp Jove's throne as the most powerful force in the universe. Spenser's many images of change in the *Mutabilitie Cantos* reveal the influence of Ovidian metamorphosis, but also contemporary debates over the nature of change, where Ovid's model of motion and change (particularly from Pythagoreas' speech in Book 15, but also from the epic as a whole) was one of many *exempla* circulating as commonplaces.<sup>27</sup> In the figure of Mutabilitie and her challenge, Spenser dramatizes the commonplaces frequently cited in the debate over the decay of nature. For example, once Mutabilitie passes from the sublunary to the superlunary realm through the "siluer gates" guarded by "Tyme," "the lower World [. . .] was darkned quite; / And eke the heauens" (VII.vi.14.1-3). Change entering the heavens causes this darkness, just as Le Roy lists examples of how celestial changes instigate "changes of heat and cold, winds, thunder, raine, haile, & snow [. . .] warres, dearthes, famines, plagues" (2r).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> On the Ovidian strains of Spenser's *Mutabilitie Cantos*, see Cumming; Freeman; Holahan.

<sup>28</sup> McCabe (201-2) and Meyer argue that these stanzas, where "the darkening of the world betokens a disruption of the natural order," allude to the reaction garnered by actual eclipses in 1572 and 1595 (quoting from McCabe). These eclipses, as evidence of superlunary change, had profound psychological consequences; see Williamson; Hepburn (145); Iliffe 438. Francis Shakelton's 1580 treatise reveals such effects in its full title: *A Blazying Starre or burning Beacon, seene the 10. Of October laste (and yet continenyne) set on fire by Gods providence, to call all sinners to earnest & speedie repentance*. A later anonymous example makes a similar connection: *A Blazying Starre seene in the West, at Totneis in Devonshire, on the foureteenth of this instant November, 1642; Wherin is manifested how Master Ralph Ashley, a deboyst Cavalier, attempted to ravish a young Virgin, the Daughter of Mr. Adam Fisher, inhabiting neare the said Towne. Also how at that instant, a fearefull Comet appeared, to the terrour and amazement of all the Country thereabouts. Likewise declaring how he persisting in his damnable attemt, was struck with a flaming-Sword, which issued from the Comet, so that he dyed a*

Moreover, pleading her case before Dame Nature on Arlo Hill, Mutabilitie catalogues the changes occurring continuously in the four elements, the seasons, the months, the cycle of human life, time, and the planets by repeating commonplaces. Earth, though “seem[ing] vnmov’d and permanent” is “chang’d in part, and eeke in generall” (VII.vii.17.7,9), waters ebb and flow (20-21), air “euery howre is chang’d” from “boyling hot” to “friezing deadly cold” (22-23), and fire is both consuming and self-consuming (24). All four seasons, day and night, and life and death each give way to each other in a cyclical return (27-46). The four seasons, the twelve months, day, night, hours, life and death each process before the assembly in Mutabilitie’s pageant of living commonplaces.

Sir John Davies’ *Orchestra* (1596) also catalogues various types of motion at all levels of the universe, from elements to planets. Davies’ premise for his poem is that Homer in his *Odyssey* neglected to recount the story of Antinous’s wooing of Penelope, which involved a lengthy speech persuading her to dance. Offering to be her Prime Mover, Antinous encourages Penelope to “Imitate heau’n, whos beauties excellent / Are in continuall motion day and night” (12.5-7). Her initial refusal, that she knows not the steps nor wishes to take part in “disorder and misrule” (15.2), only encourages him to string together commonplaces of the effects of motion in the universe in order to convince her that dancing is the creating and sustaining force of the universe. “Behold the world how it is whirled round,” Antinous instructs, “And for it is so whirl’d, is named so” (34.1-2). With this questionable etymology, Antinous catalogues

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*fearefull example to al his fellow Cavaliers.*

everything in the world that dances: stars, planets, elements, rivers, flowers, birds, human civilizations, religious ceremonies, governments, war, marriage, the seven liberal arts, and even Penelope's own body all demonstrate the motion of the dance.

Davies' poem has been read in various ways, from earnestly serious to a light-hearted joke.<sup>29</sup> Manning argues that such a lack of consensus

lies in the fact that the intellectual and rhetorical habits that lie behind the composition of *Orchestra* are largely foreign to us, and modern criticism is at best uneasy about passing judgment on a work which reveals such strong dependence upon them. (176)

Commonplaces are one such "rhetorical habit" which Davies used to structure his poem – Tillyard describes *Orchestra* as "combin[ing] invention with a mass of cosmic commonplaces" (104) – but they alone do not dictate his conclusion of cosmic order. Davies draws on many of the same commonplaces as Norden does, but in *Vicissitudo Rerum*, Norden concludes that everything "Shall by *Degrees* alter, weare and wast (43.7), whereas Davies concludes that motion (or in his terms, dancing) is "the child of Musick and of Loue [. . .] / The fair Character of the worlds consent, / The heau'ns true figure, and th'earths ornament" (96.2, 6-

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<sup>29</sup> For a good overview see Manning (esp. 175-77). Thesiger attempts to contextualize the poem within treatises on dancing and the philosophical history of music, dancing and love. Tillyard reads it "as pure didacticism, as perfect illustration of a general doctrine" (*Elizabethan* 106) and "central to Renaissance ways of thinking" ("Introduction" 12). Contrarily, Wilkins notes that rather than as "an exposition of the world order, the "fineness of the 'invention' is what the Elizabethans would have prized: the cleverness of the analogies, the ingenuity of their elaboration, the brilliance with which the whole undertaking is sustained" (289); Brown argues "that turning and dancing were never fully imaged as a principle of order, even at the height of the Elizabethan world view" (19).

7). While Davies makes a brief passing reference to “that fatall instant [. . .] / When all to nothing should againe resolute” (28.6-7), this hint at decay is quickly brushed aside by his more favourable view of motion, and his assertion that “all the world their motion should preserve” (17.7). Tillyard calls Norden’s *Vicissitudo Rerum* a “dull poem on the vicissitude of things” (55), while Davies’ *Orchestra* is Tillyard’s model for the “Elizabethan world picture” (103). Yet Tillyard seems not to recognize that Norden’s poem is written in the same meter as Davies’ *Orchestra* (rime royal) and uses the same commonplaces in much the same order as Davies, only reversing his conclusion.<sup>30</sup> Norden’s *Vicissitudo Rerum* does not fit Tillyard’s world picture, but his reversal of Le Roy’s and Davies’ conclusions provides us with a more accurate view of how the very concept of a “world picture” was a matter of debate during the Renaissance.<sup>31</sup>

Davies and Spenser each dramatize processions of commonplaces, and Davies’ representation of the motion of dancing, and his “throwaway lines” on

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<sup>30</sup> An interesting point of comparison is that both Davies and Norden make brief reference to the Copernican theory of the universe. Davies cites it as an aside: “(Although some witts enrich with Learnings skill / Say heau’n stands firme, & that the Earth doth fleete / And swiftly turneth vnderneath their feet)” (51.3-5). Norden seems more convinced: “Some eke affirme the earthly *Sphere* to erre: / First set the Center of the concaue *Spheres* / Now start aside, (supposed not to sterre). / If so, the *Power* that *Earth* and *Heauen* sterres, / But it foreshowes the purpose that he beares, / That all the *Creatures* that he made so fast, / Shall by *Degrees* alter, weare and wast” (43). The motion and decentralized position of the earth supports Norden’s conclusion of universal decay. See McColley. Jonathan Sawday argues that Norden, among others, provides “some sense of the means by which new science was now being promulgated (or challenged) amongst a wider audience” (142).

<sup>31</sup> Fletcher argues that “[w]hen Tillyard chose Sir John Davies’ *Orchestra: A Poem of Dancing* to illustrate the ideal Elizabethan world picture, he privileged a fundamentally static model of movement” (132).



Copernicanism “recall the much more serious ideas of Spenser in the Mutability Cantos, and we recall that mutability provides the new centering principle of the universe” (Fletcher 133). It is Spenser’s idea of mutability, developed throughout his writings but particularly in *The Faerie Queene* which most profoundly influences Milton’s image of “grateful vicissitude.”<sup>32</sup> “Grateful vicissitude” owes much of its poetic potency to the circulation of commonplaces on the subject of motion in the debate over the decay of nature, but it was Spenser who fully internalized the multiple sides of this debate, and explored its ramifications on the levels of the created universe, the whole race of humanity, and the individual. Spenser’s association between mutability and decay from the proem to Book V and Mutabilitie’s speech, together with the image of “eterne in mutabilitie” from the Garden of Adonis (III.vi.47.5), suggest to McCabe “that Spenser was arguing on both sides of the debate simultaneously, both for creative cyclical change and progressive natural decay” (51). Yet Spenser knows that cyclical change does not exempt the individual from decay: the prayer which ends the *Mutabilitie Cantos* and Spenser’s emphasis on “the ‘pity’ of the individual’s fate” in the Garden of Adonis (III.vi.39.9, 40.1, 40.5) both represent “time at its most destructive for the individual while engaged in its most supposedly beneficial operations for the race” (McCabe 151). Hakewill’s argument that “what was lost to one part, was gained to another; and what was lost in one time, was to the same part recovered

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<sup>32</sup> That the effects of Mutabilitie “are analogous to the Fall” suggests an important link between the *Mutabilitie Cantos* and *Paradise Lost* (Quinones 277). McCabe argues that Mutabilitie’s “genealogy directly associates her with the Christian myth of the Fall, a fall into criminal time and contingency” (200).

in another; and so the ballance by the divine providence over-ruling all, kept vpright” (C2r) is little consolation for the trials, sorrow, and despair effected by the human condition.<sup>33</sup>

The *Mutabilitie Cantos* subtly but profoundly shaped Milton’s image of “grateful vicissitude” which itself articulated the concept of “holy rest.” Holy rest is not stasis, but is one stage in a larger system, itself in constant motion, where motion and rest vacillate and where it is possible for “things at rest [to] express that rest through motion” (Lieb, “Holy Rest” 249). Quoting Richard Baxter’s *The Saints’ Everlasting Rest* (1650), Lieb explains that “‘rest’ is the ‘perfection of Motion,’ the appropriate emblem of God as the *Primum Movens*” (“Holy Rest” 249). In his depiction of holy rest as “grateful vicissitude,” Lieb suggests, Milton makes literal what Spenser’s “Sabaoths sight” only intimates: that the Sabbath vision is “a physics of motion by which indiscriminate ‘Change’ (the Chaos of ‘Mutabilitie’) gives way to a harmonious movement that is also a divine stasis (“stedfast rest of all things firmly stayd / Vpon the pillours of Eternity”)” (385n17). The paradoxical relationship between motion and stasis in holy rest is present also in Spenser’s characterization of “Great Nature, euer young yet full of eld, / *Still moouing, yet vnmoued* from her sted; / Vnseene of any, yet of all beheld” (VII.vii.13.2-4, emphasis added). “Grateful vicissitude,” as we will see in Chapter 6, is a pattern with which heaven, at creation, endows nature; as a thematic image responding to the debate over the decay of the world, it reiterates and revises

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<sup>33</sup> McCabe continues: “Elements of discord and dissolution are regarded as essential to the continuation of the life process, but are also recognised as sources of perpetual disappointment and disillusion” (151).

Milton's early poem *Naturam non pati senium*.

### Milton's *Naturam non pati senium* and the Commonplace Tradition

Those who adhered to the theory of nature's universal decay saw mutability writ large, heralding the dissolution of the universe. Others, like George Hakewill, understood vicissitudes in all things to indicate God's continuing work and sustenance of creation. Milton's early work *Naturam non pati senium* and his poetics of grateful vicissitude align him with this side of the debate. There are certainly echoes of Ashley's translation of Le Roy in Milton's work, in *Naturam* as well as in *Paradise Lost*. Milton may have read Le Roy or Ashley's translation,<sup>34</sup> or he may have been familiar with the debate through George Hakewill's *An Apologie of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World* (1627, enlarged in 1635), which was "the first significant defence of modernity in England" (Jones 29) and a work which cited Le Roy's *De la vicissitude des choses*.<sup>35</sup> Hakewill argues that Le Roy's work "more at large prove[s]" the theory that all things, even if they experience temporary decay, "returne to their former condition," a theory that is "*incompatible*" with the belief in universal "*perpetuall decrease*" (Hakewill 46). Moreover, by attributing this theory to Le Roy by the title of his work (*De la vicissitude des choses*), Hakewill's treatise subtly defines the

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<sup>34</sup> S.K. Heninger notices, but does not elaborate on, the similar use of "vicissitude" in *Paradise Lost* and in Robert Ashley's translation of Le Roy (he quotes fol. 2r). Vicissitude, as describing "all those generations and corruptions that constantly invigorate our world with ongoing vitality," forms a "composite and all-inclusive image" for the "actual operation of our universe" (*Cosmographical* 143).

<sup>35</sup> On Hakewill, the collaborative aspects of his *Apologie*, and its use of commonplaces, see Hepburn; Feingold 72, 137n82.

continuous cyclical return of all things as “vicissitude.” Hakewill himself adopts the term “vicissitude” to refer to any alteration that does not result in a permanent decline; for example, he describes the vicissitude between virtue and vice that can be observed in all nations (271), and he “assert[s] that elements were changed into other elements by a ‘reciprocall vicissitude’ [107] without there being any general linear decay” (Iliffe 439).<sup>36</sup> The term “vicissitude” had a significant, almost technical, resonance in the controversy over the decay of nature.

There has been a longstanding debate over whether Milton’s early works *Naturam*<sup>37</sup> and *Prohusion VII* (1632) are evidence that Milton read and was

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<sup>36</sup> Here Hakewill cites the commonplace of earth dissolving into water, which evaporates into air, which “rarifies” into fire, and which then descends downwards to earth in the same order. As authorities, he cites Philo, Plato’s *Timaeus*, Aristotle, and Gregory of Nyssa: “From the Earth the way riseth vpwrd, it dissolving into water, the water vapors forth into aire, the aire is rarified into fire; again they descend down ward the same way, the fire by quenching being turned into aire, the aire thickned into water, & the water into earth” (107).

<sup>37</sup> *Naturam non pati senium* is most commonly assumed to be an academic exercise arising from Milton’s time at Cambridge, but the exact date is unknown. A number of scholars have looked for temporal evidence in a letter, dated July 2, 1628, which Milton sent to Alexander Gil, describing a poem recently written for a Commencement Disputation. However, since Milton describes this poem as “*leviculas. . .nugas* (‘trivial nonsense’),” critics like Parker and “Carey plausibly conjectur[e] that M. in his letter is referring to the lighthearted *De Idea Platonica*,” and not to *Naturam*, which is more serious (Leonard 960). The similarities between Milton’s poem and Hakewill’s treatise certainly suggest a date not long after 1627, when the debate was still highly topical. Assuming that *Naturam* is directly influenced by Hakewill’s *Apologie*, if Dorian (117; also see below fn.39) and Haan (151) are correct in their assertions that it was Hakewill’s reference to Theodore Diodati in the second edition that first sparked Milton’s interest in the treatise, then the earliest composition date for the poem would be 1630. Parker (774-75) and Shawcross (263-64) support this later date, although for different reasons than Haan. Bush presents both sides—although he challenges Parker’s and Shawcross’s readings as “pure and questionable conjecture” (*Variorum* 210)—

influenced by Hakewill.<sup>38</sup> However, although these two works are explicit answers to the question of decay, neither have conclusively proven the link between Milton's writings and Hakewill's *Apologie*. William Riley Parker, in his *Milton: A Biography*, is the most cautious in his hesitation to identify any similarities in content:

The conjecture is ingenious, but it is only a conjecture; it may be true, but it is no more nearly true now as a result of nearly two centuries of repetition. [. . .] Against it is the fact (rarely stated) that *Naturam non pati senium* owes absolutely nothing to Hakewill's book unless it be the general subject—which was not even of Milton's choosing if the general conjecture be right. (773)

When we read Milton's image of "grateful vicissitude," and its earlier formulation in *Naturam*, as responding to circulating commonplaces, it is less pressing to identify the precise source. Milton's account of "grateful vicissitude" in *Paradise Lost* should be read against the term's wider usage in the period, particularly since "grateful vicissitude" is exemplary of Milton's poetics of motion, developed throughout his literary career.

Hakewill's *Apologie* was widely enough known in the seventeenth century that we can read it alongside Milton's work as an example of the commonplaces Milton engages with as he formulates his own position on the question of

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and concludes "[t]here seems to be no sufficient evidence for either a negative assertion like Parker's or for a positive one" (214). See also *Riverside* 218. On Milton's *Naturam* as rhetorical oratory, see Sessions.

<sup>38</sup> See Masson, vol.1 199-203; Jones, 36; Harris 160ff; Carey and Fowler 61; Leonard 960; *Riverside* 218.

universal decay.<sup>39</sup> *Naturam* is one of Milton's early experiments with his poetics of motion. *Naturam* depicts motion positively, as evidence of a progressive and divinely sustained universe, and it echoes many of the positive answers to the controversy over the decay of nature. *Naturam* echoes many of Hakewill's commonplace arguments, with one important difference: Milton "does not, however, touch upon man" (Jones 36).<sup>40</sup> *Naturam* begins with the complaint, "Oh, how persistent are the errors that drive man's wandering mind to

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<sup>39</sup> There is substantive evidence that Milton was familiar with Hakewill's *Apologie*; see, e.g. Haan 151-52. Hakewill cites a miraculous bloodletting performed by "Dr. Deodate" (Theodore Diodati, Charles Diodati's father), and includes a letter by Diodati which describes his procedure (242, 1635 edition). Dorian assumes that Milton's personal connection to the Diodati family would have roused his interest in Hakewill's treatise—and it is highly probable that if Milton had not yet read Hakewill's *Apologie* after its first printing, a reference to the Diodati family would encourage him to pick up the second edition. Masson's claim that Diodati's cure "was mentioned incorrectly in the first edition Hakewill's *Apology* [. . .] published in 1627; and in the Appendix to the second edition, published in 1630, Hakewill prints a letter from Diodati himself, dated Sept. 30, 1629, giving the exact particulars" (1.100n1) is wrong: both the incorrect version and the letter appear in the second edition. In the third edition (1635), the letter appears in the text proper (242-43). Unfortunately, this statement regarding the inclusion of Diodati's cure in the first edition has been repeated more recently (Dorian 59, 117-18) as a way to reconcile the theories that Milton wrote *Naturam* for the 1628 Commencement, and that Hakewill's text was brought to his attention by its reference to the Diodati family. If it was the mention of the Diodati family that first brought Hakewill's treatise to Milton's attention, this could not have happened before 1630. Of course, it is also entirely possible that Milton knew about Hakewill's treatise from the first edition (1627), particularly if it did achieve a "more than ordinary sensation" (Masson 1.201).

<sup>40</sup> For the most comprehensive account of the "affinities between [Milton's] *Naturam* and [Hakewill's] *Apologie*" (154), see Haan. Her most persuasive observation is that lines 33-65 in *Naturam* "constitute in effect a hitherto unnoticed Miltonic response to a passage from Arnobius's *Adversus Gentes* cited by Hakewill (in translation only) [*Apologie* 55-60] in support of his argument" (154). In the *Variorum* Bush observes that "Hakewill had ideas, and quotations ranging from Lucretius to Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas, that Milton might have used; yet he already had in his head quite enough for the embroidering of his central affirmation" (214).

exhaustion!” (1-2),<sup>41</sup> which reiterates Hakewill’s subtitle (“An examination and censure of the common errorr touching natures perpetuall and vniuersall decay”) and the opening statement of his Preface: “I resolved (*permissu superiorum* and none otherwise) to make [my work] publique for the publique good, and the encountring of a publique errorr” (C1).<sup>42</sup>

Milton’s poem then questions the barrenness of nature: “Will the face of Nature, overlaid with furrows of wrinkles, wither, and will the common mother of all things, her all-producing womb shrunk, become barren in old age?” (8-10). Nature’s barrenness was a commonplace, frequently cited and rejected by Hakewill,<sup>43</sup> and also rejected by Ashley in his translation of Le Roy (127v). Elaborating on the question of nature’s barrenness, Milton then asks whether the decay of nature will imminently manifest itself as, in effect, an undoing of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*:

Olympian Jove will fall from on high, and Pallas Athene, a frightening figure with the Gorgon’s head on her shield, will fall just as Juno’s son, routed from the sacred threshold of the skies, fell on Lemnos in the Aegean. You too, Phoebus, with your sun chariot rushing headlong, will imitate the fall of your own son Phaethon, down in a quick crash, and Nereus will belch steam as he puts out the sun, and the sea will hiss

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<sup>41</sup> The line numbers refer to the Latin text; the translations are all taken from the *Riverside* edition, pp. 218-20.

<sup>42</sup> On the common use of “error” in both texts, see Haan 158-59.

<sup>43</sup> For example, following Camden’s account of Gloucestershire in *Britannia* (357) quite closely, Hakewill argues that the reason there are no longer vineyards in England is not because “the earth is growne *weary* and *barren* with the excessiue plenty of former ages” nor because of “any defect or distemper in the *Climat*,” as “those grudging sloathfull husbandmen” would like to think, but rather because of “the *Lazines* of the Inhabitants” (19).

terrifyingly. Then will the highest peak of Haemus split, and its foundations be ripped apart, and the Ceraunian mountains, as they were when Dis threw them at the Titans, will be dumped into the deepest pit of hell as brother fights brother. (21-32)

The answer to such a fearful possibility is a resounding “No”: “The Almighty Father as he set the stars balanced the weights of destiny precisely and commanded each thing to keep an ordered course for all eternity” (33-38).<sup>44</sup> Milton then affirms that all the elements of heavenly bodies are as they originally were: neither is the sun cooler nor lower; neither have any of the planets changed their intensity; the winds are all as they were; metal is still able to be produced and discovered. *Naturam* then ends with the assertion that “the rightful order of things will rightfully proceed to infinity” until the final conflagration of the world (65-67; cf. *Apologie* 4.13.1-6).

*Naturam*’s premise that the heavens and the earth are ever the same echoes the conclusion of Le Roy’s treatise in Ashley’s translation:

Let vs not thinke that nature hath giuen them all her good gifts, that she might be barren in time to come [. . .]. She is the same that she was in the former famous ages: The world is such as it was before: The heauen and the time keepe the same order which they did; The Sunne, and thother Planets, haue not changed their courses; and there is no starre remoued out of his place: The Elements haue the same power; men are made of the same matter, & in the same sort disposed as they were in old time. And were not the maner of lyuing corrupted, which we vse, preferring idlenesse before diligence, pleasure before profit, and riches before vertue;

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<sup>44</sup> Milton’s Latin here echoes *Met.* ii 300, “where Earth begs Jove (*Pater omnipotens*) to place the public interest first (*rerum consule summae*) and kill Phaeton so as to save the world from conflagration” (Leonard 961).



nothing would let, but this age might bring foorth [. . .] eminent personages [. . .]. In such sort, that (if we consider it well) there was neuer age more happie for the aduancement of learning, then this present; if weying the shortnes of mans life, we resolute to employ our whole endeouour & industrie, on the studie of true knowlege. Wisdom hath not fulfilled her work; much remaineth, and will alwaies remaine: and there will neuer be wanting occasion to add therunto. (127v)

This passage, which could serve as a summary for Le Roy's entire treatise, resonates with *Naturam's* "Saturn is no slower than he usually is, and Mars, as fiery as he used to be [. . .]. The elements do not break faith [. . .]. Neither do you, Earth, lack your old-time vigor" (39-40, 51, 60-61). Moreover, Le Roy's conclusion, that wisdom remains to be perfected, is echoed by Milton's vision of transcendent wisdom in *Prolusion VII*:

What a thing it is to grasp the nature of the whole firmament and of its stars, all the movements and changes of the atmosphere [. . .]. So at length, my hearers, when universal learning has once completed its cycle, the spirit of man, no longer confined within this dark prison-house, will reach out far and wide, till it fills the whole world and the space far beyond with the expansion of its divine greatness. (*Riverside* 869)

*Prolusion VII* is a defence of learning and an assertion that a divine spark permeates humanity's endeavour to discover true wisdom. It is Ignorance, Milton argues, who desires worldly glory and who asserts erroneously that although "a long succession and course of years has bestowed glory on the illustrious men of old, we live under the shadow of the world's old age and decrepitude, and of the impending dissolution of all things" (871). Milton stands decidedly on the negative side of the question of universal decay.

The following chapter argues that Milton's thematic image of "grateful vicissitude" – the pleasing effect of alternating light and darkness which creates a similitude of day and night in heaven – allows him, in *Paradise Lost*, to revisit *Naturam*'s optimistic answer to the question of intensifying decay: that in all things there is a constancy of change. In *Naturam*, Milton describes "the Almighty Father" "command[ing] each thing to keep an ordered course for all eternity," a "rightful order of things [which] will rightfully proceed to infinity" (*Nat.* 33-36; 65-67), which explains "why the Primum Mobile spins in appointed daily movement, and takes with it the circling heavens" (*Nat.* 37-38). Raphael's recounting of the creation story echoes this divine initiation of celestial motion: "Now heaven in all her glory shone, and rolled / Her motions, as the great first mover's hand / First wheeled their course" (*PL* 7.499-501).<sup>45</sup> Just as *Naturam* asserts that the continuous motion begun at creation need not necessitate decay, so too in *Paradise Lost* is the constant and reciprocal motion of "Grateful vicissitude" a principle of creation, and an instrument in sustaining, and ultimately redeeming, what God has made.

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<sup>45</sup> Marjara explores whether descriptions such as this one were influenced by Buridan's and Galileo's theories of motion imparted to the planets at creation, see Marjara 153-56.

*Part III: The Motion of Vicissitude and Patterns of Change*

**Chapter 6:**  
**John Milton and the Poetics of “Grateful Vicissitude”**

Representations of motion in *Paradise Lost* are governed by Milton’s particular poetics of motion, a poetics P.A. Skantze’s terminology helps define: Milton’s “categories of the still and the moving gain value according to the cultural weight given to the permanent, the stable and the elapsing, the ephemeral” (i). The “categories of the still and the moving” in Milton’s poetics of motion are particularly nuanced. In *Paradise Lost*, both rest and stasis manifest themselves as immobility, although for Milton absolute fixity is troubling; the description of the Bridge over Chaos – “The aggregated Soyle / Death with his Mace petrific, cold and dry” (10.293-94) – associates fixity with sin. However, stasis can also express itself in restlessness and repetition without variation, such as the devil’s “annual humbling” (10.576) wherein they repeatedly metamorphose into snakes and reiterate Eve’s temptation.<sup>1</sup> Rest can likewise express itself in motion; Lieb cites the “fixt Starrs, fixt in thir Orb that flies” (5.176).<sup>2</sup> Examples of absolute fixity are rare – as Marjara says, “*Paradise Lost* is replete with motion” (145). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton fully develops ideas of motion from his earlier work: the model called “grateful vicissitude” both diametrically opposes that of

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<sup>1</sup> See Lieb, “Holy Rest” 253n37 for a brief account of “a corresponding pattern [. . .] of a world deprived of that rest.”

<sup>2</sup> Lieb also points to Milton’s Sonnet 19, which depicts “‘messengers of God’ ‘post o’er Land and Ocean without rest,’ [as] a motion that finds its counterpart in those who serve God by standing in active readiness.” Both the motion and stillness in this sonnet are examples of “holy rest” (“Holy Rest” 249n28).

“restless stasis,” and displaces the troubling motions of mutability.<sup>3</sup> In the concept of “rest,” motion and stillness collide – rest can express itself as motion and stasis can express itself as restlessness – and this collision is what develops in the epic as “grateful vicissitude.” This chapter explores Milton’s early formation of his poetics of “grateful vicissitude” in *Comus*, then traces its fuller expression in *Paradise Lost*.

The past century of Milton studies has not overlooked the representation of motion in *Paradise Lost*, but it is often approached through other topics: Milton and science; Galileo and the telescope; the motion of heavenly bodies and the Ptolemaic/Copernican debate; Milton’s depiction of chaos; the cosmographical specificity of Satan’s orbit; time; the visual arts (particularly Milton’s adoption of a Baroque aesthetic); travel; and the new world.<sup>4</sup> Motion is difficult to disengage from the closely related categories of space and time; the science of motion was hotly debated in the seventeenth century; and the question of which heavenly bodies were moving and which were still was central to cosmological inquiry.

Harinder Singh Marjara’s approach to Milton and science, a revision of Kester

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<sup>3</sup> As Marjara recognizes, unlike Spenser and Donne who “reiterate their belief in the mutability of the sublunary world as against the harmony and constancy of the superlunary world,” Milton “lays no stress on corruptibility as the major characteristic of the sublunary world,” and the “term ‘mutability,’ such as favourite with the poets before Milton, has not been even mentioned in *Paradise Lost*” (Marjara 71).

<sup>4</sup> On Milton and science, see Curry; Edwards, *Milton and the Natural World*; Konecný; McColley, *Poetry and Ecology*; Martin; McColley “Theory”; McColley “Milton’s Dialogue”; Nicolson; Poole; Rogers; Sarkar “Satan’s Astronomical Journey”; Sarkar “The Visible Diurnal Sphere”; Svendsen; Zivley “Satan in Orbit”; Zivley “Thirty Three Days.” On Milton and travel, see Cawley. On Milton and the visual arts, see Frye, *Milton’s Imagery*; On motion and change in general, see also Fuller; Ogden.

Svendsen's long-standing assertion that "it is the old science, rather than the new, which bulks the larger in Milton" (3), recognizes that Milton possesses "his own coherent vision of nature" which accords "with his moral and theological universe":

Milton's scientific ideas are neither an end in themselves nor on a par with those of the professional scientists [. . .], but they interlock into a complex structure, especially in relation to the overall poetic structure and meaning of the poem. Milton is assumed, in most cases, to be conversant with the issues and to be capable of judging the merits of a scientific idea in its total context, and of choosing the idea and the emphasis that seem to him appropriate for his purpose. (14)<sup>5</sup>

As we shall see, Marjara's account of Milton's general use of science as a judicious selection of scientific concepts "*that seem to him appropriate for his purpose,*" applies

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<sup>5</sup> An interesting crux in *Paradise Lost* that can be illumined by Marjara's approach is the surprising absence of any mention of Tycho Brahe and his system of the universe. Francis R. Johnson argues that Milton's astronomical knowledge came exclusively from Galileo's *Dialogue concerning the two chief world systems*, and so Milton's astronomical debate mirrors the two opposing systems in this text: Ptolemaic and Copernican (286-87). Some of Milton's commentators, David Masson and Alastair Fowler among them, credit Milton with far more sophisticated astronomical knowledge; in this case, the absence of Brahe can be explained as a conscious decision "that seem[ed] to him appropriate for his purpose." Catherine Gimelli Martin outlines his poetic "purpose" as follows: "Milton faced a cosmological dilemma in writing *Paradise Lost* that seems to have centered on choosing between Galileo's fully Copernican astronomy and Brahe's alternative, not on any lingering nostalgia for the mystification and confusion increasingly associated with the Ptolemaic model. Yet, since in either case the essential conflict was between geocentrism and heliocentrism, and since it was far easier to deal dismissively with the Ptolemaic model than with Brahe's, both Raphael's central question—"What if the Sun / Be Centre to the World, and other Stars / By his attractive virtue and their own / Incited, dance about him various rounds?"—and the details of his flight to earth seem designed, as Masson intuited, to favor both Galileo's telescopic discoveries and his fundamental Copernicanism" (Martin "Milton's Epistemology Reconsidered" 244).

equally to the narrower category of Milton's representation of motion, and his use of other disciplines and practices to make motion visible.

### **Graceful Vicissitude and Restless Stasis: Models of Motion in *Comus***

As in John Davies' *Orchestra*, Milton's *Comus* invites his followers to a dance modelled on celestial motion: "We that are of purer fire / Imitate the Starry Quire, / Who in their nightly watchfull Sphears, / Lead in swift round the Months and Years" (111-14). The masque genre itself emphasizes motion: the predictable sequence of "*poetic induction* / *antimasque(s)* / *masque* / *revels* / *epilogue*" intermingles "communal dance" (revels) with formal dance, and in performance, elaborate set machinery often simulated large-scale transformations and the motions of nature (Lindley 2-3, 13).<sup>6</sup> At the core of the Jonsonian masque is the opposition between the antimasque (or antic masque) and the masque proper; unruly discord in the antimasque gives way and resolves to harmonious concord. The term "antic masque" is particularly useful for *Comus*, since it invokes the grotesque miscreant beast-humans who dance in Bacchic frenzy until the appearance of the Lady. Such instability of form associated with the grotesques also suggests an Ovidian preoccupation with primeval energies, creation, and transformation. Yet *Comus* differs from previous masques in significant ways, not least of which is its denial of resolution through a conventional "transformation scene" and its deferral of any narrative resolution to the mysterious figure of Sabrina (Oram, "Invocation" 122-23). Jennifer Chibnall goes so far as to argue

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<sup>6</sup> See also Fowler, *Kinds* 60-1.

that Milton “shows his masquers in *Comus* failing to deal with the reality of [the antimasque’s] threatening chaos” (81). Although the final scene-change, communal dance, and presentation of the children to their parents all attest to the presence of narrative resolution, the epilogue spoken by a much-changed Attendant Spirit raises questions as to the efficacy of the conventional masque resolution. Rather than the antic masque giving way to the order of the masque proper, *Comus* oscillates between spontaneous, disordered motion and the controlled motion of the communal set dances, just as its characters oscillate between the conflicting states of motion and stillness.

In the figures of the Lady and Comus, Milton contrasts two extreme models of movement, which are reformed by a third model: Sabrina, a conduit for Heaven’s redemptive grace stooping to aid virtue on earth, demonstrates that latter model of “grateful vicissitude.” The models of movement enacted by Comus and the Lady each alternate between motion and stillness in turn. The Lady’s dominant quality in the masque is the virtue of her chastity – Comus senses its power (800-05), the Elder Brother finds reassurance in the constancy of its “hidden strength” (418), Sabrina can rescue her because her powers can only affect a fellow “true virgin” (905), and the Lady herself recognizes the “sun-clad power” and “serious doctrine of Virginitie” (782, 787). The Lady’s virtuous chastity is everywhere described as protective, immutable, and static: it arms her “in complete steel” (421) and protects her from the evils of the night (432-37), it exercises self-restraint and “unsuperfluous even proportion” (773), and, by definition, it is *inaction*. The example of “Antiquity from the old schools of

Greece” that the Elder Brother invokes “[t]o testify the arms of chastity” demonstrates chastity’s ability to turn her enemies to stone (439-40). It is not so much Minerva’s “snaky-headed Gorgon shield” that “freeze[s] her foes to congealed stone,” the Elder Brother suggests, as much as it is her “rigid looks of chaste austerity” that result in such “blank awe” (448-52). The static condition of chastity in the Lady renders others immobile not by means of “guileful spells” but through “sudden adoration” (452, 537).

However, when the Lady’s physical body is restrained, this only redirects further power to the work of the mind. Although Comus’s “charms” have “immanacled” her “corporal rind,” the true source of her being’s motion remains unfettered: “the freedom of [her] mind” (663-65). The sophistication and triumph of the Lady’s final speech indicate such a transaction. Up until now, the Lady has matched Comus in the “dazzling fenc[ing]” match of his “dear wit, and gay rhetoric” (790-91). But once she discovers his deception, she chooses to “unlock” her “lips” in order to counter Comus’s “false rules pranked in reason’s garb” by accusing him of being ignorant of “the sage / And serious doctrine of Virginity” (756, 759, 786-7). The Lady closes her speech with a demonstration of her mind’s ability to generate violent motions in the world which holds her still. Any attempt to disclose “this pure cause” of chastity to Comus, the Lady explains, would “shake” “the brute earth” and all of Comus’s “magic structures” would tumble around his “false head” (794-99). In an aside, Comus confesses to the audience that he “fear[s]” her “superior power” (800-01). Comus feels as if “a cold shuddering dew / Dips [him] all o’er” (802-3); the congealing freeze of virginity’s



“chaste austerity” described by the Elder Brother has begun to work (450). The Lady’s “very power comes from a combination of stillness and motion,” and this power reveals itself nowhere more clearly than in her final exchange with Comus (Skantze 59). Although she is physically motionless, restrained by her own unwillingness to act and Comus’s enchantment, her mind is dynamic, able to shake and still the forces that work against her.

In an attempt to disperse the power of her words, Comus attributes them to merely the “settlings of a melancholy blood” (810). In fact, the Lady here does resemble the model of Melancholy in *Il Penseroso*. Melancholy’s “rapt soul” and “holy passion” parallel the Lady’s “rapt spirits” and “sacred vehemence” (*IP* 40-1; *C* 794-95); the concentrated intensity of Melancholy’s active mind wherein she seems like “marble” (42), correlates with the “freedom” of the Lady’s “mind” despite her body “all chained up in Alablaster” (660).<sup>7</sup>

The masque earlier gives two clues as to the significance of such an oscillation between the Lady’s marmorealized body and the active workings of her mind. First, the Lady tells the audience in her initial speech, fears can “startle” her, “but not astound / The vertuous mind, that ever walks attended / By a strong siding champion Conscience” (210-12). Here, as elsewhere in Milton’s writings, behind “astound” and “astonish,” we are meant to hear “astone” and “astonie.” Comprising utter amazement and fear, astonishment is a paralyzing force, but cannot reach her mind protected by her virtue. Second, the disdain that

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<sup>7</sup> The similarities between Shakespeare’s readers in “On Shakespeare,” Melancholy in *Il Penseroso* and the Lady in *Comus* have been noted also by William Oram, “Invocation” 131.

the Lady shows for her “corporal rind” while she still possesses a free mind is the first stage in a process of transformation previously described by her Elder Brother. Chastity, he explains in order to assuage his younger brother’s fears, is so “dear to Heav’n,” that it protects the chaste body with a “thousand liveried angels” who “[t]ell her of things that no gross ear can hear.” Such holy discourse transforms the body, the “unpolluted temple of the mind” into “the soul’s essence, / Till all be made immortal” (453-63). When the Lady later rebuffs Comus for having “nor ear, nor soul to apprehend” the utterances of “sublime notion and high mystery” (784-85), she recognizes that she, unlike him, has begun to enter into *ex stasis* which requires such an oscillation between a motionless body and an active mind to transform the body into spirit (Stevens 383).

Comus’s contrasting model of movement, the Elder Brother declares in his same reassuring speech to his younger sibling, opposes that progressive transformation of virtue: an unchaste body allows “defilement” to reach “the inward parts.” Such corruption “[e]mbodies and imbrutes [the soul], till she quite lose / The divine property of her first being” (466-69). The *inaction* of chastity prevents any breach to the body which could defile the soul; this motionless body, then, is turned “by degrees to the soul’s essence” (462). The unchaste body which participates in “lewd and lavish *acts* of sin” corrupts even the soul, transforming it entirely to body and then to beast (465; emphasis added). The soul becomes choked and “clotted by contagion”; it becomes less than a beast, and comparable to relatively inert “thick and gloomy shadows,” “lingering, and sitting” “in charnel vaults and sepulchres” (467-72). The Attendant Spirit links

Comus's victims with such final stasis: "The visage quite transforms of him that drinks, / And the inglorious likeness of a beast / *Fixes* instead" (527-29 emphasis added). Whereas those who accept Comus's "orient liquor" are clotted and fixed in physical stasis, those who refuse his cup, maintain power over their minds, although their bodies are "immanacled" (65, 665).

Comus and the Lady both possess the power to render others immobile, but Comus is constantly in flux: dancing, moving, transforming, traveling. His first speech initiates a ritual dance which mirrors the whirling, mobile heavens. Before the group breaks into this "rude and wanton antic" dance, he invites them to perform what Margaret Hoffman Kale identifies as the "bacchic step": "Come, knit hands, and beat the ground, / In a light fantastic round" (143-4). Kale offers a reading of the contentious textual crux of the "gums of glutinous heat" – the enigmatic matter used by Comus to bind the Lady to her chair – that relies on Comus's father Bacchus's status as "the god who leaps and spurts," "the god of automatic or spontaneous movement" (87). The substance referred to as "gums of glutinous heat," then, according to Kale, is "the life force, the fertile and generating principle found in all things" (89). The fixity of the Lady's virginity is meant to contrast orgiastic energies of Comus and his "rout of monsters," who, in their chaotic miscreated matter, represent the grotesque, the antic, the wild instability of form that suggests both a primeval state and the state of Ovidian metamorphosis. They demonstrate the Elder Brother's image of a soul "linked [. . .] by carnal sensuality / To a degenerate and degraded state" (474-75). Armed with her virginity, the Lady is in no danger from such "defilement" (466), but

rather passes “unblench’t” even “there, where very desolation dwells / By grotts, and caverns shag’d with horrid shades” (428-30). The image of the grotto appropriately represents the oscillation between motion and stasis that qualifies Comus’s model of movement. In grottos, what at first seems to be petrified time, the immobility of stone sculpture, is actually a dynamic process of slow, continuous transformation. Yet there is equally a dynamism to such “grotts,” which “offer the symbolic spectacle of primeval energies and matter in gestation” (Jeanneret 127). Such is the motion of Comus’s monstrous rout who undergo continuous creation and recreation, their matter unfixed and fixed in turn, capable of taking on new forms. The “inchoative chaotic world” that is “act[ed] out” by grottos (Jeanneret 127), particularly its transformation and aggregation of matter, is also a suitable symbol for Comus, whose “gums of glutinous heat” are a “vital principle” capable of creating and sustaining new forms of life. Comus’s model of movement is primeval, bursting with instability and the energy of creation.

Nevertheless, motion which is in a constant state of creating and recreating with no sense of development or progress can become, in effect, restless stasis. When the Elder Brother assures his younger brother and Thyrsis that “Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt” (589) – echoing, in fact, the Lady’s previous confidence that frightening “thoughts may startle well, but not astound / The virtuous mind” (210-11) – he paints a comparative picture of those, like the “damned magician” Comus (602), who oppose themselves to virtue. They become trapped in repetitive, futile, ceaseless motion: “evil on it self shall back

recoyl, / And mix no more with goodness, when at last / Gather'd like scum, and  
 set'd to it self / It shall be in eternal *restless* change / Self-fed, and self-  
 consumed" (593-97, emphasis added). This is an alternative version of the Elder  
 Brother's account of the imbrutement of a lewd soul "clotted by contagion"  
 (467). Comus's model of movement, which initially appears akin to the processes  
 and energies of creation and metamorphosis, is actually inertial and impotent. It is  
 reiteration without variation and "eternal restless change" with no sense of  
 progress (596); this model of restless stasis is a closed, self-dependent system that  
 does not permit interaction or exchange.

The first encounter between Comus and the Lady showcases the contrast  
 between their two models of movement, but also displays the effects of one  
 model on the other. The Lady first enters the scene tentatively, guided by her  
 sense of hearing rather than sight or touch. Yet the qualities attributed to her feet  
 bear most directly on the action. She is lost "[i]n the blind mazes of this tangled  
 wood" and her "unacquainted feet" are hesitant; she knows only that she should  
 avoid the sounds "[o]f riot, and ill-managed merriment" (180-1, 172).  
 Unbeknown to her, it is precisely her "chaste footing" that stills the anti-  
 masquers' "wild, rude and wanton antic" (145-6). The Lady is silent when she  
 enters, but Comus can "feel the different pace" of her virgin feet and so  
 commands the dancers to "break off" (145). As Kale observes, the Lady's  
 concern "with how to move her feet in the beginning of Milton's mask"  
 demonstrates the central contrast between the two models of motion: "[o]rdered,  
 controlled dance and frenzied dance are placed in opposition in Milton's masque"

(87). Her feet also transform the metrical feet of the masque: the supernatural rhythms of Comus's catalectic trochaic tetrameter become the familiar, human gait of iambic pentameter when the Lady's presence is felt. Comus transforms his appearance as well as his language. Cautious, in case his "quaint habits breed astonishment, / And put the damsel to suspicious flight," Comus uses "magic dust" in order to "appear some harmless villager" in "country gear" (157-58; 165-67). As attuned as he is to the Lady's effect on his bacchic arts, he is also aware of his effect on her. Her reaction would be a combination of "astonishment" and "flight," of stasis and motion, the double energies of binding and fleeing depicted in the Apollo and Daphne analogue which Comus alludes to later on (661-62).

In many ways, the two models of movement presented by Comus and the Lady are mirrors of each other – each exists in both states of stasis and motion, and each has the power to transfigure and transfix the other – and so when the two models meet they play out a complex game of strategy and manipulation. But distinctions between their two models also emerge quite clearly. The Lady's *inaction* and virtue enable her progression to the "soul's essence," but such a transformation is dependent upon an oscillation between her motionless body and her active mind. However much Comus appears associated with "automatic or spontaneous movement" (Kale 87), his wicked actions paralyze him by trapping him in a condition of reiteration without variation, where, as the Elder Brother says, "defilement [of] the inward parts" effects "a degenerate and degraded state" (466, 475).

The process of transformation into pure spirit and the motions of ascent and descent characterizing these two models of movement and the role of Sabrina have Neoplatonic overtones.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, as William Oram, argues, Sabrina's presence in *Comus* remains a textual crux. Oram agrees with Sears Jayne that the Lady's virginity is presented, by her own accounts and those of her brothers, in Neoplatonic terms as a path to divine ecstasy. Her two-phase stasis is necessary for her ascent to God. However, Oram recognizes that Jayne's reading does not account for the alarm shown by the Attendant Spirit and the brothers when they see her ("Invocation" 130-31). The Elder brother had previously gleaned comfort from the assertion that virginity will be turned "by degrees to the soul's essence," yet when he sees his sister, he is prepared to attack Comus with haemony (462).<sup>9</sup> Jayne properly recognizes the Neoplatonic elements of the masque and that Milton organizes *Comus* according to the three motions thus attributed to the soul, but misjudges Milton's aims in doing so. Instead, as Oram argues, the Lady "has put herself into the [ecstatic] trance" as a *misguided* attempt at transcendence, and "instead of exalting it as the first stage of a blessed ascent Milton presents the ecstasy as a mistake – a state of fruitless opposition" ("Invocation" 131). The text subtly supports the reading that the Lady is capable of binding herself: virginity demonstrates a Gorgonian power of stasis; it is Comus who feels bound by "the chains of Erebus" (804); and Comus's use of the

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<sup>8</sup> Sears Jayne reads *Comus* as a Neoplatonic allegory; for critiques of Jayne, see Demaray; Neuse.

<sup>9</sup> Neuse provides a list of textual cruxes which are not resolved by Jayne's neoplatonic reading (58). See also Oram, "Invocation" 131.

Apollo and Daphne myth as a threat to the Lady undermines itself since it is Daphne who “wishes her own metamorphosis to preserve herself from the god” (Oram, “Invocation” 133). In rendering herself motionless, the Lady preserves herself from Comus and from “her own physical nature which shows itself, most obviously, in her power of movement” (Oram, “Invocation” 131).

Sabrina’s role is thus to heal what the Lady is attempting to dis sever. Rather than being the Lady’s guide in her Neoplatonic ascent to God, as Jayne supposes (540), Sabrina is, as Neuse defines her, “man’s lower nature [. . .] transformed” (58). Although she has undergone “a quick immortal change” to become “goddess of the river” (840-41), she has not lost her connection to the earth: Sabrina is a friend to shepherds, visiting cattle at sunset and remedying the havoc wrought by malevolent spirits. Nor has she lost her physical being: she may have “printless feet” (897) and “chaste palms moist and cold” (918), but such descriptors seem to indicate a corporeal nature.<sup>10</sup> She is not an exemplar of the achievement of perfected transcendence through virginity, but instead exists in the masque as the exemplar of pleasure reconciled to virtue, body reconciled to spirit, motion reconciled with stillness.

The Lady’s model of movement displaces Comus’s model of movement, both literally and figuratively: Comus disappears from the scene once his glass is

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<sup>10</sup> Jayne quotes Sabrina’s description of her “printless feet” and the flower “that bends not as [she] tread[s]” (897-99) as evidence that she is “immaterial” and is thus an analogue for the Platonic *mens* in the masque (541). However immateriality is not the same as non-corporeality, and it is important to note that Sabrina and the Attendant Spirit draw attention more than once to her physical being.



broken, but even before that point the Lady's powerful words chill and "chain" his propensity for both spontaneous motion and reiteration without variety (802-04). Comus's model of movement is rejected, but Sabrina emends the Lady's model, for Sabrina's presence realigns and reforms the Lady's desire for ecstatic transcendence. Sabrina unites the spiritual and the sensual; her model of movement alternates between rising and descending (889, 921), between motion and stillness (899, 860). If she represents divine grace, as a number of critics have suggested,<sup>11</sup> then it is the grace of heaven bending towards earth, the grace of accommodation. Sabrina's model of movement is one of "grateful vicissitude": of a pleasing and gracious alternation and interchange between opposites. That condition is also present in the image of heaven which closes the masque: "if Virtue feeble were, / Heav'n itself would stoop to her" (1022-23). Sabrina's rising performs the action of heaven stooping in aid of the Lady, enfeebled and immanacled; it is a "restorative action" (Hunter, *Milton Encyclopedia* 5.94). In *Comus*, as in *Paradise Lost* later, the motion of "grateful vicissitude" is also graceful.

The Attendant Spirit also evinces Sabrina's transformative power. Jayne argues that "the imagery of the Attendant Spirit's description is dominantly Platonic," as his movements recall the motions of the soul (542). In the opening section that Spirit contemplates his descent from God, while in the second section he occupies the body of the shepherd Thyrsis but his mind is set on reascent. Jayne observes that "except for the last six lines," the Attendant Spirit's

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<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Woodhouse, "The Argument of Milton's *Comus*"; Woodhouse, "*Comus* Once More."

speech in the epilogue demonstrates the soul's ascent to God (542). Yet the final six lines and the entire epilogue actually indicate a striking reformation of perspective relative to the Spirit's opening speech. The epilogue echoes the interchange between the spiritual and the sensual shown by the image of heaven stooping to earth. No longer returning "Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot / Which men call earth" (5-6), the Attendant Spirit will remain sublunary, venturing "Up in the broad fields of the sky" (979), but only as far as "To the corners of the moon" (1017). The Spirit's motion in the epilogue is more horizontal than vertical, as he states a desire to "fly" or "run / Quickly to the green earth's end, / Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend" (1013-15). This is also an image of the heavenly firmament ("welkin") bowing and bending towards the green earth; the Attendant Spirit describes motion towards the horizon. Likewise, the Attendant Spirit's home undergoes a transformation: "the starry threshold of Jove's court [. . .] where those immortal shapes / Of bright aerial Spirits live insphered" becomes in the epilogue the sensual Garden of Hesperus, and the Attendant Spirit draws attention to the delights the garden possesses for each of the five senses (1-3; 980, 983, 989, 993, 994). Finally, the Attendant Spirit adopts the meter of catalectic trochaic tetrameter that the supernatural personages of the masque use for incantations. By serving as the positive counterpart of Comus's ritual summoning of Cotytto (128-37), Sabrina emends this metrical form to articulate a restorative spell for the Lady.<sup>12</sup> The Attendant

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<sup>12</sup> see Oram, "Invocation" 124-5.

Spirit's use of this meter indicates that it too has been restored through the workings of Sabrina.

The movement of grateful vicissitude shown by Sabrina as an agent of heaven displaces the sole instance of the motion of mutability found elsewhere in the masque. The image of heaven stooping to aid virtue finds its opposite in an image of rottenness and decay: the Elder Brother is so confident that evil will be "Self-fed and self-consumed" that he declares, "if this fail, / The pillar'd firmament is rott'nness, / And earth's base built on stubble" (597-99). For Jonathan Dollimore, these lines express "an underlying and pervasive fear," a fear of "cosmic decay" and the "failure" of a providential, "self-regulating world" (*Radical Tragedy* 92). This is the motion of mutability which Sabrina's motion of grateful vicissitude supplants. The interchange of rise and descent at the close of the masque, an interchange characteristic of Sabrina, allays the threat of a decaying "pillar'd firmament": virtue "can teach ye how to climb" to heaven, yet if virtue is weakened, "Heav'n itself would stoop to her" (1020-22).

The two models of movement demonstrated by the Lady and Comus, and Sabrina's third corrective model of grateful vicissitude, deny any reduction of the states of motion and stillness to a simple binary. Both the Lady's self-inflicted stasis (a misguided yet genuine attempt at transcendence) and Comus's perpetual repetition without variation counter Guillory's statement that "the condition of arrest or paralysis is everywhere morally suspect in Milton's poetry" (19). Nor do the various states of motion and stillness in the masque adhere to Aristotle's opposite assertion: that "there is a truer pleasure in rest than in motion" since

“immobility” is the state of perfection and motion is the result of “a fault in our nature” (NE 1154b). The immortals in the masque take great delight in motion and show concern for the Lady’s state of motionless. Through Sabrina’s model of grateful vicissitude, Milton seeks to demonstrate that both motion and stillness are part of a larger system of divine interchange and the communion of heaven and earth.

### **The Poetic Patterning of Grateful Vicissitude in *Paradise Lost***

“Grateful vicissitude” is first and foremost a feature of the variety and interchange present in heaven. The description of “grateful vicissitude” as “light and darkness in perpetual round / Lodge[d] and dislodge[d] by turns” (6.5-6) completes Raphael’s account, begun in the previous book, of how night appears in heaven: “when ambrosial Night with Clouds exhal’d / From that high mount of God, whence light and shade / Spring both, the face of brightest Heav’n had changed / To grateful Twilight (for Night comes not there / In darker veil)” (5.642-45). The twilight and the very existence of vicissitude in heaven are both described as “grateful” not only because Milton assumes that motion exists as nature’s thankful response to God’s gift of creation, but also because the successive interchange of day and night is pleasing. Like the rest of God’s creation in *Paradise Lost*, “grateful vicissitude” is simply “good.”<sup>13</sup> As Raphael explains to Adam, change and variety are prevalent in heaven for no other

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<sup>13</sup> This double definition of “grateful” coincides with the two definitions cited in the *OED*. See also the annotations to 6.4-11 in Fowler’s edition and in the *Riverside* (p n5).

purpose apart from pleasure: “we have also our evening and our morn, / We ours for change delectable, not need” (5.628-29). Even the harmonious blending of hills and valleys is a landscape feature which earth inherited from heaven (6.640-1). “Grateful vicissitude” strictly refers to the alternation of light and darkness within the mount of God, but throughout heaven there is evidence of the principle of change, alteration, and variety it represents. Moreover, in the account of creation, God imprinted this pattern of “grateful vicissitude” upon each level of the universe.

When Raphael recounts to Adam how God created the “lights / High in the expanse of heaven” on the fourth day (7.339-40), it becomes clear how heavenly “grateful vicissitude” serves as the pattern for earthly creation. God set the sun, moon, and stars

in the Firmament of Heav’n  
To illuminate the Earth, and rule the Day  
In their vicissitude, and rule the Night,  
And Light from Darkness to divide. God saw,  
Surveying his great Work, that it was good. (7.349-53)

Here, with the epic’s sole other occurrence of the word “vicissitude,” Milton demonstrates that the cyclical motion of heavenly bodies not only orders the progression of time, but also reflects the vicissitude found in heaven and shares its source. It also becomes clear that Raphael’s definition of “grateful vicissitude” as “like day and night” is an accommodation to human understanding. The familiar reciprocal succession of day and night symbolizes the attributes of

heaven which are beyond human comprehension: eternity and holy rest.<sup>14</sup> Quoting Raphael's description of "grateful vicissitude," Heninger explains that together the sun and the moon (not unlike the other complementary pairings of youth and age, male and female) are "a two-phase system" that forms "the diurnal unit of time," which itself "becomes the integer of eternity, the unit which by infinite repetition generates eternity" (*Cosmographical* 3). While the interchange of day and night is a system in constant motion, a "durational process," as Heninger terms it, it is also a "process which leads to the stasis of totally reconciled opposites [. . .], [a] stasis which subsumes all change" (2-3). This is the stillness of eternity, but it is a stillness created from motion, a system which perfectly illustrates "the paradox by which things at rest express that rest through motion" (Lieb "Holy Rest" 249). In unfallen creation, the perfect succession of day and night becomes the model for all other processes of interchange, as Adam reminds Eve when he relates how "God hath set / Labour and rest, as day and night to men / Successive" (4.612-4; see also 4.633). Comparable to the temporal ordering of day and night, every alternation participates in eternity, in the divine interchange of "grateful vicissitude" which is both the source and the end of all earthly change.

When Adam asks "what cause / Mov'd the Creator in his holy Rest / Through all Eternitie so late to build / In Chaos" (7.90-93), he recognizes that the motion of creation was an extension of both holy rest and eternity. Raphael's response to Adam describes the process of creation as an oscillation between

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<sup>14</sup> On "holy rest" in *Paradise Lost*, see 6.271-73; 7.551-53; 7.591-634

motion and stillness. The act of creating most often imparts motion to matter; for instance, when the waters of the earth are gathered together, we are told of “such flight the great command impressed / On the swift floods” (7.294-5). Raphael’s account of creation in Book 7 is replete with verbs of movement and action. But the other necessary part of creation sets limits and establishes boundaries (7.231-2). The creation story is full of such images of fixity and stillness: the Son’s first command is for “Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace [. . .], your discord end” (7.216-17). In Uriel’s account, “wilde uproar / Stood rul’d, stood vast infinitude confin’d” (3.710-11), creation is described as a “frame” (7.275, 355),<sup>15</sup> the firmament exists as a “partition firm and sure” (7.267), and the final result is that “Earth now rests / Upon her Center pois’d” (5.578-79). Moreover, the process of bringing order out of chaos combines motion and stasis: when the Spirit of God “conglob’d / Like things to like” (7.239-40), the elements rushed together and “came to a heap” (3.709). As Uriel recounts it, “order from disorder sprung: / Swift to their several Quarters hasted then / The cumbrous Elements, Earth, Flood, Aire, Fire, / And this Ethereal quintessence of Heav’n / Flew upward” (3.713-17). Likewise, “the great receptacle / Of congregated Waters” (7.307-8) is formed from drops of moisture “Hasted with glad precipitance, uprowld / As drops on dust conglobing from the drie” (7.291-92). Even the creation of animals alludes to an Ovidian oscillation between motion and stasis, as matter flexibly changes from one solid form into another: “The grassy clods now calved, now half appeared / The tawny lion, pawing to get free / His hinder

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<sup>15</sup> On the complex concept of “frame” in the English Renaissance, see Kalas.

parts, then springs as broke from bonds, / And rampant shakes his brinded mane” (7.463-66). Even the syntax, shifting from “now,” to “now,” to “then,” suggests a process. The combination of motion and stillness so inherent in the process of creation is embodied by the “golden Compasses” used “to circumscribe / This Universe, and all created things” (7.225-27). The act of circumscribing is one of limiting and bounding, but the compass requires both motion and stillness to work properly: “One foot he center’d, and the other turn’d / Round” (7.228-29).

In Eden, the interchange of “grateful vicissitude” manifests itself in balanced days and seasons, natural variety, and constant change. Just as the likeness of day and night in heaven alternate by equal, measured “turns” (6.8), so too are day and night perfectly equal on earth (4.776-77; 10.668-72). This is due to specific features of Milton’s original, speculative prelapsarian astronomy, namely that the equatorial and ecliptic lines are coincident and that the earth’s axis of rotation is perpendicular to the equatorial/ecliptic plane.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, as Fowler explains, in Eden before the Fall “[t]here are no variations in solar declination, no equinoctial points, no precession, no difference between sidereal, natural, and civil days” (“Astronomy” 35). Yearly seasonal changes are also absent due to the fact that the distance between the sun and Eden never alters; instead, as the image of “blooming ambrosial fruit” (4.219) suggests, there exists a

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<sup>16</sup> In his annotation to 10.651-706, Fowler explains “[t]he cosmic system previously used in *PL* is not Ptolemaic - despite much scholarship to the contrary. Instead, it is an ideal, fictional model, in which ecliptic and equatorial planes coincide. On the ecliptic, every point is an equinoctial point; thus eliminating solstices and seasons.” See also Martin.



simultaneity of seasons, where “spring and autumn [. . .] /Danc[e] hand in hand” (5.394-95). The perfect equilibrium of day and night, labour and rest, springtime and harvest are earthly expressions of “grateful vicissitude”; as Fowler describes it, “[t]he pervasive equinoctial balancing of night and day, light and darkness, being dependent on the pattern of the prelapsarian cosmos itself, is highly thematic” (10.651-706n). However, these astronomical features unique to the prelapsarian universe do not create, as Fowler elsewhere suggests, a “Golden Age stasis” (“Astronomy” 35, 4.146-53n). Rather, all of creation is in perpetual motion and “ceaseless change” (5.183), as Adam and Eve’s morning hymn declares.<sup>17</sup> Recognizing that there is neither decay nor seasonal variance in Eden, Fowler identifies that prelapsarian state as stasis, but should acknowledge that motion and change exist at all levels of creations, from the sun, which “climb[s]” and “fall[s]” (5.173-74) to the stars, “fixed in their orb that flies” (5.176), to the living creatures who “glide,” “walk,” and “creep” (5.200-01). As Gábor Ittész observes, “Milton’s world is not static but dynamic. It is teeming with life and energy. More importantly, innocence and sin are not analogous to stasis and dynamism. Time is not evil in itself but a feature of prelapsarian eternity” (310).<sup>18</sup> Raphael’s reminder

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<sup>17</sup> For an analysis of the hymn (5.153-208) as a thematic representation of “grateful vicissitude,” see Summers 74-83.

<sup>18</sup> Ittész’s main contention is with Fowler’s claim that the sun in “Milton’s invented unfallen world [. . .] remains constantly in the same sign,” which is Aries, the sign of the vernal equinox under which the world was created (4.268, 10.329; see also Fowler’s note to 3.555-61). Ittész supports the premise that the prelapsarian sun moves through the zodiac along the ecliptic with two passages. First, while 10.673-77 charts the sun’s new path after the fall, it emphasizes that the sun now must “turn reins” and move up to Cancer and down to Capricorn; the phrase “turn reins” suggests the sun is already in motion. Second, descriptions

to Adam and Eve that “God made thee perfect, not immutable” (5.524) is as much an observation that they, like the garden they tend, express divine vicissitude, as it is a warning to avoid evil.

Like the presence of vicissitude in the garden, so too does the theme of “gratefulness” permeate through creation, reflecting the heavenly pleasure of variety and change. Evening in heaven and on earth is often described as grateful, both because night is a welcome alternative to day (4.647,654; 5.645; 6.406-07), and because the work of the day makes the “ease” of evening “More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite / More grateful” (4.330-31). Variety is so prominent in Eden because “change delectable” (5.629) increases pleasure; the labour of the day is sufficient to accentuate the delight of food and drink, whereas perpetual “ease” or perpetual work would induce only monotony and torpor. Evening is also described as “grateful” when it is in the context of the movement of celestial bodies: when Eve declares that “All seasons and their change, all please alike” (4.640), she includes “grateful evening mild” (4.647, 654) in her list, but it is not long until her thoughts turn upwards and she asks “But wherefore all night long shine these, for whom / This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes?” (4.657-58). Although Adam has yet to be instructed by Raphael, his answer points to the continuous motion of the stars and planets, who “have their course to finish, round the Earth” (4.661), and whose motion is a reflection of “grateful

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of the celestial bodies (3.339-42, 579-81; 8.126-7), which includes the sun, emphasize that their motions “compute / Days, months and years” (3.580-81). Never does Milton have us believe that in Eden years are calculated in any other way than the sun’s movement through the zodiac (Ittzés 308-09).

vicissitude” in heaven. Even Eve’s discourse with Adam is drawn into this thematic pattern. Later in the epic, Eve excuses herself from Raphael’s lesson because she prefers to learn from Adam alone: “he, she knew would intermix / Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute / With conjugal caresses, from his lip / Not words alone pleas’d her” (8.54-57). “Grateful” here means “pleasing” (“Not words alone pleas’d her”), but the digressions are pleasing precisely because of the variety inherent in the “intermix[ing]” of talk and “caresses.” Eve’s prelapsarian relationship with Adam is drawn into the divine pattern of “grateful vicissitude”; as Adam tells Raphael, their “Union of mind” is a “Harmony to behold in wedded pair / More grateful than harmonious sound to the ear” (8.604-06). God’s pleasure in His creation (“all was entirely good” (7.549)) is reflected by creation itself, whereby in “Answering his great idea” (7.557), each level of the universe (time, planets, garden, humans) can be described as “grateful.”

“Grateful” refers to creation’s reflection of heaven, but the term also refers to creation’s thankful response to its Creator. When Adam and Eve daily sing their morning hymn of praise, they join “all things that breathe” who “From the earth’s great altar send up silent praise / To the creator, and his nostrils fill / With grateful smell” (9.194-97). Here “grateful” refers doubly to the gratitude of all creation, and to the pleasure that such gratitude affords the Creator. The relationship between God and His creation operates with a reciprocal interchange of giving and receiving which mimics the pattern of “grateful vicissitude”: from God “all things proceed, and up to him return / If not depraved from good”

(5.470).<sup>19</sup> Even Satan bitterly realizes the freeing obligation of this cycle of eternal return: he laments he “understood not that a grateful mind / By owing owes not, but still pays, at once / Indebted and dischargd; what burden then? (9.55-57). The line between thankfulness and pleasure is blurred in the prelapsarian state; only with the Fall comes the burden of obligatory gratitude and the knowledge of what was lost. God intended for man to be “Magnanimous to correspond with heaven, / But grateful to acknowledge whence his good / Descends” (7.511-13). Humanity’s capacity for gratefulness, and the capacity of gratefulness to please arises simply from creation’s correspondence to heaven. Formed from the pattern of “grateful vicissitude,” the whole universe shows forth the principles of change, pleasure, and gratitude.

“Good / Descends” from heaven to earth, and praise in return ascends, but God’s plan for humanity is a dynamic process, a continuous development whereby the distance between heaven and earth will diminish. Raphael uses Adam’s simple question about the angelic diet to describe a future time “when men / With angels may participate” (5.493-94): “from these corporal nutriments perhaps / Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit, / Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend / Ethereal, as we, or may at choice / Here or in heavenly paradises dwell” (5.496-500). Such a transformation is only possible for a creation which is “perfect, not immutable” (5.524). God describes to the Son his plan for humanity’s progression in similar terms: “by degrees of merit raised / They open to themselves at length the way / Up hither, under long obedience tried, / And

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<sup>19</sup> cf. *FQ* 4.3.27; 6.*Pr*.7, 10.24.

earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth, / One kingdom, joy and union without end” (7.157-61). Both accounts emphasize the unity of earth and heaven: either earth will become as fitting a place for angels as “heavenly paradises” are, or any distinction between the two will dissolve and earth will be “changed to heaven and heaven to earth.” This progression reinforces Ittzés’s observation that in prelapsarian Eden, “innocence and sin are not analogous to stasis and dynamism” (310). Instead, dynamism and motion are built directly into creation and govern its culmination.

Eden is meant to teach Adam and Eve the proper and nuanced value associated with motion and stillness, rest and restlessness. Despite Raphael’s instruction, Adam understands his future development only partially. Reiterating the lesson Raphael has just taught him, Adam thanks the angel for teaching him about “the scale of Nature set / From center to circumference, whereon / In contemplation of created things / By steps we may ascend to God” (5.509-12). What Raphael described as a communion between heaven and earth, where humanity may either “winged ascend [. . .] or may at choice / Here or in heavenly paradises dwell” (5.496-500), Adam interprets as a unidirectional ascent to God “by steps.” Adam exhibits an overly simplistic grasp of the value given to motion which is based entirely on direction: ascent is good, descent bad. God’s design is meant to culminate in “One kingdom, joy and union without end” (7.161), but Adam does not appreciate the nuance implied by Raphael, but made clear by

God, which is that heaven and earth are meant to move towards each other, and “earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth” (7.160).<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Adam’s enquiry into the motion of heavenly bodies indicates he has not yet learned from the garden that motion does not necessarily signify waste and excess. He is troubled by the “disproportions” committed “with superfluous hand” by “nature wise and frugal,” specifically the “impos[ition]” of daily “restless revolution” on the spheres of the fixed and wandering stars. “Sedentary earth,” Adam believes, would be much more efficient to fetch her own “warmth and light” than to be “served by more noble then her self” while she sits still, “receiv[ing] / As tribute such a sumless journey” (8.26-37).<sup>21</sup> Adam’s question suggests a number of conceived notions regarding the universe he inhabits: he presupposes that kinetic energy is meant to be conserved, so any superfluous motion signals lavish expenditure; that his observations have revealed “a wasteful anthropocentric universe” (Fowler 8.15-38n); that motion is restlessness, stillness is stasis. Most basically, Adam’s question presupposes an Aristotelian model of movement, where bodies at rest wish to remain at rest and

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<sup>20</sup> cf. Lady in *Comus*: this seems to be quite similar to what the Lady *thinks* she should achieve in her stillness – the transformation of body to spirit – but in *PL* this seems to be only an option for the unfallen humanity.

<sup>21</sup> cf. the opposite use of “sedentary” for motion in Milton’s *Prolusion II*: “Why, I can hardly believe that those Intelligences of yours could have endured through so many centuries of sedentary toil of making the heavens rotate, if the ineffable music of the stars had not prevented them from leaving their posts, and the melody, by its enchantment, persuaded them to stay” (*Riverside* 851). But also from *Prolusion VII*: “Can we indeed believe [. . .] that the vast spaces of boundless air are illuminated and adorned with everlasting lights, that these are endowed with such rapidity of motion and pass through such intricate revolutions, merely to serve as a lantern for base and slothful men?” (*Riverside* 868)

where motion is an imposition. Raphael gently amends Adam's misapprehensions regarding size, position, and motion by suggestion and admonishment rather than conclusive fact ("great / Or bright infers not excellence"; "What if the sun / Be centre to the world" (8.90-91, 122-23).<sup>22</sup> Raphael reforms Adam's association of the earth's position with passivity, intimating instead that the earth is active while the sun is passive (the "barren" sun's rays, "unactive else," "in the fruitful earth [. . .] their vigour find" [8.94-97]). Furthermore, Raphael supplants Adam's assumption that the earth is sedentary with the possibility that "earth industrious of herself fetch[es] day / Travelling east" (8.137-8). If the earth is in fact in motion, it does not experience a "restless revolution day by day / Repeated" (8.31-2), which would simply mean participating in the "*sedentary* toil of making the heavens rotate," according to Milton's earlier *Prolusion II* (*Riverside* 851, emphasis added). Instead, its movement is a feature of the dynamic universe, and in "fetch[ing] day" and "meet[ing] night," the earth actively engages the pattern of interchanging light and darkness, the pattern of "grateful vicissitude" which emanates from the mount of God (8.137-38).

Raphael's suggestions for alternative interpretations of the categories of rest and motion also emerge when he places limitations on the appropriate arenas for scientific inquiry. The question of "whether heaven move or earth, / Imports not," Raphael claims, "if thou reckon right, the rest / From man or angel the great architect / Did wisely to conceal" (8.70-73). "[T]he rest," in this context, refers to any knowledge beyond studying the movement of heavenly bodies to

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<sup>22</sup> On Milton's cosmology with specific reference to this verse, see Martin.

learn the “seasons, hours, or days, or months, or years” (8.69), but it may also be a pun. All that “the great architect” has concealed from Adam includes which celestial bodies are actually at rest and which are in motion – rest itself is concealed, sometimes hidden within the experience of motion itself. The likelihood that the pun is intentional is reinforced by Raphael’s later query “what if seventh to these / The planet earth, so steadfast though she seem / Insensibly three different motions move?” (8.128-30).<sup>23</sup> If such a possibility is true, then it is a dictate of creation that a body in motion does not experience its motion, and so rest is concealed. Raphael further emphasizes that rest can express itself as hidden motion by describing the earth’s possible motion using adjectives of rest and sleep: “from west [earth’s] *silent* course advance / With *inoffensive* *pace* that spinning *sleeps* / On her *soft* axle, while she paces even, / And bears thee *soft* with the *smooth* air along” (8.163-66, emphasis added). If the earth moves, then it retrieves the light of day and the darkness of night for itself; if the earth moves, then it demonstrates the paradox of being in motion but not sensing it. These two characteristics are the earthly equivalents of God’s holy rest; “grateful vicissitude” is both the interchange of light and darkness and the paradox of motion as rest. Adam’s acknowledgement of the possibility that the earth may move, though its motion is undetectable by human sense, brings him closer to understanding the source of all motion and change. Such knowledge is the result of the “contemplation of created things” (8.511), but it is a “contemplation” that is everywhere restrained by right reckoning (8.71).

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<sup>23</sup> On earth’s three motions, see Marjara 128.



### Satanic Restless Stasis

Before the Fall, earthly rest expresses itself as the regenerative stillness which complements labour or as joyful motion and “constant change”; with the Fall comes the obverse relation between motion and stillness, where sin manifests itself as a hardening and fixing of what was once fluid and free, and *restlessness* expresses itself as stasis. In the epic’s portrayal of the devils, Milton’s readers have their first exposure to the effects of sin long before Adam and Eve eat the apple. In their hardening and fixity—the devils are described as “armed in adamant” (6.110, 6.255); “gross by sinning grown” (6.659-61); “obdured” (6.785, 6.790); “insensate” (6.787); “hardened” (3.200, 6.791)—they outwardly assume qualities that designate their inward “stony hearts” (3.189). They become “astonied,” as it were, just as the effect of their defeat in the face of God’s thunder and the “force of those dire arms” (1.94) is described repeatedly as “astonishment” (1.266; 1.317; 2.423; 6.838).

Such hardness is also an attribute of the devils’ intended residence. God made Hell adamantine (1.49; 2.436; 2.645-48), with its “dark foundations” “cast too deep” and “bound” “too fast” for any motion (6.868-70). The devils’ own architectural designs stand as monuments to sin’s hardening effect: Pandemonium is an “ascending pile [that] / Stood *fixed* her stately height” (1.722-23), and the description of the bridge between hell and earth is replete in imagery of stasis: “shoaling” (10.288), “aggregated” (293), “petrific, cold and dry” (294), “fixed,” “firm” (295), “Bound with Gorgonian rigor not to move” (297), “asphaltic” (297), “fastened” (300), “immovable” (303), “a ridge of pendent rock”

(313), “pins of adamant / And chains” (318-19), “all fast, too fast” (319), and “durable” (320). For all its “adamantine chains and penal fire” (1.48), hell is also a “frozen continent” (2.587) and “a region dolorous” (2.619), encompassing “many a frozen, many a fiery alp” (2.620). Their punishment an acclimatization, the devils become “immovable, infixed, and frozen round” (2.603), a complement to their inclement environment. But such solidity does not provide comfort: when Satan invites Beelzebub to the “seat of desolation” in order to find “rest, if any rest can harbour there (1.181, 185), dry land “[s]ublimed with mineral fury” burning with solid fire is the only “resting [that] found the sole / Of unblest feet. (1.235-38). Restlessness is symptomatic of this anguish, since “Hell is where peace / And rest can never dwell (1.65-66; cf. 2.526, 2.618, 2.802).<sup>24</sup>

When Raphael describes the fallen angels’ restlessness to Adam as “[f]ar in the dark dislodged, and void of rest” (6.415), he underscores how sin results in exclusion from the pattern of grateful vicissitude and the state of holy rest. Satan and his crew are no longer a part of the interchange of the “lodg[ing]” and “dislodg[ing]” of “light and darkness” that create the effect of day and night called grateful vicissitude (6.6-7); instead, they are only “dislodged” and “in the dark,” no longer participants in the joyful motion that expresses itself as rest, but rather entirely “void of rest” (6.415). Satan himself brought on this exclusion when he first conceived of rebellion: at “midnight,” the “dusky hour” (5.667), when darkness is dislodged “[f]rom that high mount of God” and “the face of

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<sup>24</sup> For instances of Adam and Eve’s “restlessness,” see 5.8-11; 9.1049-54; 9.1119-24; 10.773-82.

brightest heaven had changed / To grateful twilight (for night comes not there / In darker veil" (5.643-46), Satan "resolved / With all his Legions to *dislodge*, and leave / Unworshipped, unbeyed the throne supreme" (5.668-70, emphasis added). With this resolution, Satan commits himself to stasis, to the unchanging state of darkness and dislodgement which is permanently apart from the pattern of grateful vicissitude.

That this passage immediately follows a lengthy description of holy rest only serves to heighten the exclusion which results from sin in this poem. Such rest manifests itself as a "mystical dance," as "mazes intricate, / Eccentric, intervolved, yet regular / Then most, when most irregular they seem" (5.620-24); evening is described as present in heaven "for change delectable, not need" (5.629); God's eyes are "unsleeping" (5.647); some angels sleep "[f]anned with cool winds," while others "in their course / Melodious hymns about the sovereign throne / Alternate all night long" (5.655-57). Satan's false semblance of pleasure (5.617), his restless sleeplessness (6.671-74), and his desire "to dislodge, and leave, / Unworshipped, unbeyed the throne supreme" are all rejections of this heavenly holy rest and of God's pattern of grateful vicissitude which requires worship (in the dynamic forms of dance and song), obedience, and gratitude. Satan's exclusion from this pattern means that he cannot take pleasure in the manifestation of grateful vicissitude in creation: in Eden, Satan admits,

With what delight could I have walked thee round,  
If I could joy in aught, sweet interchange  
Of hill and valley, river, woods and plains,  
Now land, now sea, and shores with forest crowned,

Rocks, dens, and caves; but I in none of these  
 Find place or refuge; and the more I see  
 Pleasures about me, so much more I feel  
 Torment within me [. . .]. (9.114-21)

Satan's cadence mimics his quick-moving eye; "[n]ow land, now sea" replicates the variety and "sweet interchange" he sees around him. But he also knows that "earth hath this variety from heaven / Of pleasure situate in hill and dale" (6.640-1), and, as an imprint of heavenly grateful vicissitude, "sweet interchange" is a quality of Eden that Satan cannot participate in or enjoy.

Restlessness finds a complement in the condition of "ingratefulness" insofar as they are both the Satanic inversion of grateful vicissitude. Satan's exclusion from the pattern of grateful vicissitude is implied by Abdiel, who, when asking "Canst thou with impious obloquy condemn / The just decree of God," refers to Satan as "ingrate" (5.811-14). With this pronouncement, Abdiel echoes God's disappointment with humanity's ultimate fall—"Ingrate, he had of me / All he could have; I made him just and right" (3.97-98)—just as Adam, once fallen, will later refer to his wife as "ingrateful Eve" when her love, "expressed / Immutable," proves to be reproachful and recriminatory (9.1164-65). Beyond denoting the lack of gratitude inherent in both acts of sin, "ingrate(ful)"—which carries the additional meaning of "not pleasing or acceptable to the mind or senses; disagreeable, unpleasant, unwelcome; unfriendly" (*OED*)—emphasizes that sin is diametrically opposed to the workings of grateful vicissitude.<sup>25</sup> It is

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<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the less familiar definition of "ingrate" as "unpleasant" in the context of the prevalent imagery of taste and fruit, see Hardy.

significant that when Satan tempts Eve, he describes the tree as “[g]rateful to appetite, more pleas[ing to] my sense / Than smell of sweetest fennel” (9.580-81), thereby misleading her with an adjective she knows well. The tree may be “[g]rateful to appetite,” but it makes one who tastes of it an “ingrate,” “distance[d] and distaste[ful]” to God (9.8-10). Within *Paradise Lost*, pleasure, variety, “change delectable,” alteration, and gratitude—all that is contained in the thematic resonance of “grateful”—are undone and made “ingrate(ful)” in the presence of sin.

Satan’s restlessness is also necessary for the destruction wrought in his “week of uncreation” (Ittzés “Satan’s Journey” 19) as sin inverts the pattern of “grateful vicissitude” in creation. Just as the creative impulse required an oscillation between motion and stillness to set matter into motion, so does Satan’s perversion of creation use restlessness and darkness to harden and fix. Satan’s temptation of Eve is prefaced by his seven-day orbit around the globe: “compassing the earth, cautious of day [. . .] / The space of seven continued nights he rode / With darkness, thrice the equinoctial line / He circled, four times crossed the car of Night / From pole to pole, traversing each colure” (9.59, 63-66). Travelling continuously and entirely enshrouded in night, Satan here is again “[f]ar in the dark dislodged, and void of rest” (6.415). As a parodic week of uncreation, a perversion and a travesty of God’s hexameron, Satan’s week lasts a full seven days, with no Sabbath rest.<sup>26</sup> As Ittzés remarks, “after six days of God’s

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<sup>26</sup> Ittzés hears “clear verbal echoes between the ‘seven continued nights’ (9.63) of his trip and his awareness that God ‘six nights and days / Continued making’ (9.137-38) the world” (19).

activity, comes the crowning rest of the Sabbath when the almighty glories in creation; after seven days of Satan's search and brewing mischief comes yet another day of reckless activity" ("Satan's Journey" 19). Satan is in continuous motion; but rather than being the expression of his rest, his motion is anxious, restless, "full of anguish driven" (9.62).<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, as his path "travers[es] each colure," (9.66) – which are two great circles crossing at the poles at right angles from each other, with one intersecting the solstitial points, the other through the equinoctial points – Satan "delineates the fallen macrocosm" (Fowler 9.64-6n). Whether Satan travels north-south along each of the four 180° arcs which make up the two colures or he travels in a spiral with four trips around the globe, the "traversing [of] each colure" imputes a postlapsarian positioning of the planets to the unfallen universe, since colures presume tilted poles.<sup>28</sup> Most critics of this passage tend to

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<sup>27</sup> On Satan's peripatetic wandering, and the argument that "The Fall is directly related to Satanic motion" (36), see Knopp.

<sup>28</sup> Ittész has re-evaluated a number of the twentieth-century reinterpretations of *PL* 9.53-86, including Sarkar ("Satan's Astronomical"), and Zivley ("Satan in Orbit" and "Thirty Three Days"), which, he says, go out of their way "to invent complicated itineraries for the fiend" (18) and concludes that the "traditional view" is the "sound[est]": "Satan's sojourn fills seven twenty-four hour periods and takes place on earth" (12). Ittész's most striking return to the orthodox reading is his assertion that "crossed" and "traversing" (9.65-66) mean what the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century commentators Richardson, Newton, and Todd thought they did: "to *Traverse* the Colures is to go Athwart them Obliquely (from *Transversus*, Oblique)" rather than to "move *along* the colures (from end to end of their arcs)" (17). Satan's "four times crossed the car of Night / From pole to pole" (9.65-66) is therefore in the shape of a spiral. If "every point of the equator is equinoctial, *every* prelapsarian meridian is a colure," then "[a]s Satan winds his oblique way around the globe, he indeed crosses each colure even though there are, as yet, an infinite number of them" (18).

echo Fowler's explanation that "[s]ince the *colures* did not exist before the Fall, their mention is again prolepsis" (9.64-6n).

Soaring above and around the perfect world, Satan is already a fallen being, and, as such, he can only participate and negotiate with the universe's impending fallen qualities (cf. 9.114-22). He travels around the world as if "nature's concord" were already "broke[n]" (6.311), as if the stars were already "blasted" and "wan, / And planets, planet-strook," suffering "real eclipses" (10.412-14), as if "[t]he poles of earth" were already separated "twice ten degrees and more / From the sun's axle" (10.669-70). Just as the flowers Adam holds wilt in the presence of the fallen Eve even though Adam is not yet fallen nor is "mortal sin / Original" yet "complet[ed]" (9.1003-04), so too does the unfallen universe suffer Satan to compass his sinful, restless path and delineate the colures, fixing them into place. Furthermore, since time is calculated by the movement of heavenly bodies, which serve "for signs, / For seasons, and for days, and circling years" (7.341-42), when Satan circles the earth, his motion computes Satanic time, even in an unfallen universe. Satanic chronometry measures the experience of time (as punishment) in hell, where the devils

feel by turns the bitter change  
Of fierce extremes, extremes by change more fierce,  
From beds of raging fire to starve in ice  
Their soft ethereal warmth, and there to pine  
Immovable, infixed, and frozen round,  
Periods of time, thence hurried back to fire. (2.598-603)

Like heaven, hell experiences “periods of time” as vicissitudes, but these are “change[s] more fierce” which alternate between the extremes of “raging fire” and “ice.” The pleasing moderation and “change delectable” of grateful vicissitude gives way to a climate in hell where “the parching air / Burns froze, and cold performs the effect of fire” (6.594-95). Similarly, when Satan infiltrates Eden, where previously “spring and autumn” danced “hand in hand” (5.394-95), his presence will undo the pattern of grateful vicissitude which marks creation: the sun will receive “his precept so to move, so shine, / As might affect the earth with cold and heat / Scarce tolerable” (10.652-54). Satan’s travel in darkness for seven continuous nights around the globe proleptically anticipates this experience of time in the fallen world just as it also traces the position of colures which cannot yet exist.

The Satanic paradox of sin as hardening and restlessness expressing itself as stasis is evidenced nowhere more clearly than in the devils’ yearly metamorphosis into snakes. The physical transformation combines motion and stillness in the style of the Ovidian stages of metamorphosis:

His visage drawn he felt to sharp and spare,  
 His arms clung to his ribs, his legs entwining  
 Each other till supplanted down he fell  
 A monstrous serpent on his belly prone,  
 Reluctant, but in vain, a greater power  
 Now ruled him, punished in the shape he sinned,  
 According to his doom. (10.511-17)

The devils’ physical bodies are in motion, but the hardening and fixity of the “dire form” (10.543) which the devils will adopt each year as an “annual



humbling” (10.576). Satan is “punished in the shape he sinned,” and so his final metamorphosis reiterates all the earlier transformations: from when his body, “[p]urest at first, now gross by sinning grown” must “wind” in the squirming motion of a snake out of the “prison” of his armour (6.659-661), to the moment of “foul descent,” when Satan is “incarnate[d] and imbrute[d],” “*constrained* / Into a beast, and mixed with bestial slime” (9.164-66, emphasis added).<sup>29</sup> Once he has excluded himself from the pattern of grateful vicissitude and the rest it entails, Satan experiences only “wrest,” a twisting, turning motion which tightens and restricts as it moves.

The devils’ yearly re-enactment of eating the forbidden fruit is also an expression of restlessness as stasis. The devils approach the tree with single-mindedness—“on that prospect strange / Their earnest eyes they fixed” (10.552-53)—and persistently attempt to eat the fruit, even when they “instead of fruit / Chewed bitter ashes, which the offended taste / With spattering noise rejected” (10.565-67). This tree, with its “offended taste” is another Satanic inversion of the Edenic Tree of Knowledge, which Satan described as “[g]rateful to appetite” and pleasing to the senses (9.580). Their continued attempts to eat the fruit leave the devils restless and static: “plagued / And worn with famine, long and ceaseless hiss” (10.572-73). In their “fruitless” and restless repetition, the devils match the motion of the snake, and become a “labyrinth of many a round self-rolled” (9.183). The motion of rolling, recoiling, and in-turning so often associated with

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<sup>29</sup> See also 9.495-99; 9.631-33.

the snake in *Paradise Lost*, is, as *Comus* indicates, also the “eternal restless change” of sin (*Comus* 596).

*Comus*’s two closely related descriptions of sin as restless stasis are echoed by similar descriptions of sin in *Paradise Lost*. The Elder Brother describes sin as when “[t]he soul grows clotted by contagion, / Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite loose / The divine property of her first being” (468-70). And, slightly later, he affirms that “evil on it self shall back recoyl, / And mix no more with goodness, when at last / Gather’d like scum, and setl’d to it self / It shall be in eternal restless change / Self-fed, and self-consum’d (593-97). The imagery of these two passages shapes and is repeated by the representation of the motion of sin in *Paradise Lost*. When Satan first approaches the garden, the plan for “his dire attempt [. . .] / Now rowling, boiles in his tumultuous brest, / And like a devillish Engine back recoiles / Upon himself (4.15-18). Eve later argues with Adam that their foe’s “foul esteem / Sticks no dishonour on our front, but turns / Foul on himself” (9.329-31). When Satan describes his imbrutement into a snake—“constrained / Into a beast, and mixed with bestial slime” (9.164-65)—he is horribly aware of his debasement from one “who erst contended / With gods to sit the highest” (9.163-64), and he concludes with his realization that “[r]evenge, at first though sweet, / Bitter ere long back on itself recoils” (9.171-72). Finally, “the dire form” of the devils’ yearly metamorphosis is “[c]atched by contagion” (10.543-45), just as the Elder Brother’s phrase “clotted with contagion.” The model of movement for sin in *Paradise Lost* is akin to that displayed by *Comus*; and, like *Comus*, who disappears “Self-fed, and self-consumed,” so too will “the

mouth of hell” be “obstruct[ed]” and “seal[ed]” when it is full of “the draff and filth / Which man’s polluting sin with taint hath shed, / [. . .] crammed and gorged, nigh burst / With sucked and glutt[ed] offal” (630-37). The motion of sin in *Paradise Lost*, both as a hardening force and as restless stasis, is ultimately self-defeating; willingly excluded from both the rest and restoration of “grateful vicissitude,” it can only last temporarily.

### Seeking a Pattern in the History of the Future

In *Paradise Lost*, the Fall admits decay into the created world. Nature’s double “groan” at Eve’s and Adam’s transgressions (9.783, 9.1001) merely prefaces the manifold further changes (10.651-706). The Fall ushered in “A Platonic Great Year, a cycle of decay” (Fowler “Astronomy” 35),<sup>30</sup> a sinful

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<sup>30</sup> The “Great Year” referred to the period of time necessary for all celestial spheres to return to their original positions: calculated anywhere from 12,000 years to 49,000, the most common reckoning was Ptolemy’s estimate of 36,000, although Tycho and Copernicus (attributing it to earth’s axis) each calculated it closer to its actual value of approximately 25,800 years. Fowler “Astronomy” 35; Fowler 5.583n.

It was commonly called the “Platonic Great Year” because Plato was believed to have defined it with this assertion in *Timaeus*: “It is none the less possible, however, to discern that the perfect number of time brings to completion the perfect year at that moment when the relative speeds of all eight periods have been completed together and, measured by the circle of the Same that moves uniformly, have achieved their consummation” (39D).

The “Great Year” was also in accordance with the period of precession (also known as “trepidation” or “libration,”), a wobbling or balancing motion “of the oscillation of the sphere of the fixed stars in relation to the annual motion of the sun (or the earth)” (Marjara 205), which caused the equinoctial points to precess or advance along the ecliptic. The invisible crystalline sphere, usually positioned as the ninth sphere and located between the *primum mobile* and the sphere of fixed stars, was the sphere which accounted for this motion. For a schematic diagram, see Heninger (1977) 141. Precession is one of many examples of seemingly irregular motions that were restored to “mathematical regularity and harmony”

inversion of “heaven’s great year” (5.583) signalled earlier by the elevation of the Son. This cycle of decay, a “propagated curse” (10.729), subsumes all Adam’s descendants, and he learns the full repercussions of sin in the proleptic tableau closing *Paradise Lost*: “Oh miserable mankind, to what fall / Degraded, to what wretched state reserved!” (11.500-01). Nevertheless, the fall does not introduce motion and change into a universe that was previously still; rather, perfect motions in a dynamic prelapsarian universe are degraded and made oblique, while eclipses and the aspects of celestial bodies (their positioning in conjunction, opposition, and various degrees of separation) garner prognostic and judicial influence.<sup>31</sup> This cycle of decay never intensifies in the poem. Likewise, the creation and content of Milton’s epic dismiss his fear that the world’s late hour may hinder his writing.

Earthly creation also experiences fixity and restlessness upon the “completi[on] of the mortal sin / Original” (10.1003-04). Immediately there is

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through an addition to the geometrical model (Marjara 206) which “saved the appearances.” Other example cited in *Paradise Lost* are eccentric orbits and epicycles. See *PL* 3.574-75; 8.80-84.

For the popular (and sometimes humorous) belief that human history would repeat itself in each Great Year, see Henry Peacham’s *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622): “Two scholars in *Germany* having lain so long in an inn, that they had not only spent all their money, but also ran into debt some two hundred dollars; told their host of *Plato’s* great year, and how that time six and thirty thousand years the world should be again as it was, and they should be in the same inn and chamber again, and desired him to trust them till then: Quoth mine host, I believe it to be true; and I remember six and thirty thousand years ago you were here, and left just such a reckoning behind to pay, I pray you Gentlemen discharge that first, and I will trust you for the next” (59); see also Thomas Tomkis’s play *Lingua* (1607) Act 4, Scene 7.

<sup>31</sup> See Marjara 114-118

change rather than interchange; grateful vicissitude gives way to alienation, “distance and distaste” (9.9). Adam and Eve are now restless rather than at rest (9.1051-52, 1120-26), their hearts stony (3.189; 11.3-5). Change suddenly entails decay rather than variety and pleasure (9.892-93). As Adam rightly notes, all creation “needs with us must fail” (9.942), but this failure manifests itself in permanent alterations and “signs of woe” “through all her works” (9.783). Celestial motions, once perfect in their simplicity and balance, are now made crooked and oblique (10.668-78). Planets remain in regular motion, but with their regularity comes the harshness of seasons, unequal days and nights, and the “noxious efficacy” and “influence malignant” (10.660, 662) which threaten disorder on earth. The air, too, “[m]ust suffer change” (10.213); all such “changes in the heavens, though slow, produced / Like change on sea and land” (10.692-93), such as tempestuous weather, fierce climates of ice or heat, enmity among animals and between animals and humans, and psychological unrest. The account of fallen creation never suggests that after the first rupture of concord creation’s decay will intensify; instead, “day and night, seed-time and harvest, heat and hoary frost / Shall hold their course” and “so shall the world go on [. . .] / Under her own weight groaning” (11.898-900; 12.537-39).

In the cumulative history of the future which Michael presents in the two closing books, Adam seems to stand as a Benjaminian angel of history, seeing events to come as “one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet.” Like the angel, when Adam sees “all in view destroyed at once” (11.761), he too “would like to stay, awaken the dead,

and make whole what has been smashed,” as is shown by his pleas interposed in Michael’s narrative (11.461-65, 500-14, 526-29, 763-84; 12.64-79). Just as Adam recognizes that to change God’s “absolute decree / No more avails than breath against the wind, / Blown stifling back on him that breathes it forth” (11.311-13), so too, in Benjamin’s analogy, “a storm is blowing from Paradise; [. . .] [t]his storm irresistibly propels him [. . .], while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.” However, while Benjamin concludes “[t]his storm is what we call progress” (257-58), Adam, with his face towards the future rather than the past, receives an alternative definition of progress, an apocalyptic rather than retroactive vision which culminates in salvation and restoration. The darkness of the future and the power of Sin and Death are not the whole story. As Ittzés argues, Satan’s act of uncreation

is taken up into a larger cycle and is answered by the six ages of the world revealed to Adam by Michael in the closing books of the epic, followed by the seventh epoch of eternal rest. The three “weeks,” Gods hexameron, Satan’s week of uncreation, and the six ages of human history leading to the final Sabbath, thus represent the grand cycle of creation-fall-redemption, in which the episode of the archfiend’s darksome expedition is indeed but an intermezzo. (19)

The depiction of motion in *Paradise Lost* contributes to this “grand cycle.” After the Fall, natural motions sustain creation, while the forward motion of Adam and Eve indicates their desire to participate in “the race of time” in order to reach the point when “time stand[s] fixed” (12.554-55) and all is gathered up into holy rest, which is neither stasis nor fixity but joyful, pleasing motion. From Raphael, Adam learned that grateful vicissitude emanates down from heaven,

enlivening each level of creation; from Michael, Adam learns that the rupture in the pattern of creation caused by the Fall will be mended by a variation of the pattern itself, the descent of the Son, the agent of creation. Grateful vicissitude becomes *graceful* vicissitude.

With the Fall comes humanity's distance from God and changes to the order of nature, but ceaseless change is not absent from creation. Eve grieves at the thought of leaving her flowers, "[t]hat never will in other climate grow," but recognizes in her grief that variety and growth could still continue in the garden even without her and Adam's ordering hands: "Who now shall rear ye to the sun, or rank / Your tribes, and water from the ambrosial fount?" (11.273-79). Uriel's account of creation described how "[e]ach had his place appointed, each his course" (3.720), yet even with the Fall's impairment of equilibrium and symmetry, this order established at creation will continue. After Adam learns of the destruction of the earth by flood and God's "covenant never to destroy / The earth again by flood" (12.892-93), Michael reassures him that "day and night, / Seed-time and harvest, heat and hoary frost / Shall hold their course, till fire purge all things new" (11.898-900). Likewise, when Michael rushes ahead from the type (Joshua, David) to the antitype (Jesus, the Son), his enthusiasm is tempered by the orderly course of progressive time; he admits that "first a long succession must ensue" (12.331). These two assertions of the successive course of time (11.898-900; 12.331) punctuate Michael's narrative at the two exact points when Adam may misinterpret what he is shown and mistakenly believe he is witnessing the apocalypse: the flood and the prophecy of Christ. Instead, creation

is sustained by the pattern established at creation: the vicissitudes and interchange of “day and night, / Seed-time and harvest” which were once “grateful” and indicative of holy rest are now necessary and restorative. Humanity and the earth have been altered by the Fall; Michael describes how “so shall the world go on, / To good malignant, to bad men benign, / Under her own weight groaning” (537-39). Nevertheless, Michael’s account gives no indication that creation will experience intensifying decay; instead, the reassurance that vicissitudes “Shall hold their course, till fire purge all things new” (11.900) could come directly from Le Roy’s or Hakewill’s refutations of the decay of nature. Grateful vicissitude, which becomes graceful vicissitude, is everywhere opposed to the forces of mutability.

Milton borrows the term “vicissitude” from the natural philosophical debate over the decay of nature, and he retains the word’s narrower definition derived from the context of this debate, by using it to refer to the life-sustaining alternations which occur from the level of the elements right up to the planets. In so doing, Milton affirms that the fundamental pattern of the poetics of motion discernible in the universe and in his own poem is intrinsically connected to a vision of history that is both repetitive and progressive, not unlike the “ordered course” imagined earlier in his *Naturam* (35-36), or the cyclical progression described by Le Roy.<sup>32</sup> The story Michael tells to Adam in the two closing books of *Paradise Lost* has an aim similar to Hakewill’s *Apologie*: both the angelic and the human author wish to describe and defend “the power and providence of God in

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<sup>32</sup> See Guibbory 169-211, esp. 176-82.



the government of the world” (Hakewill’s subtitle). The Fall throws Adam and Eve into an unknown world: flowers wilt and decay in the hand (9.892-93), death is unknown but inevitable (11.462-65), and ominous “mute signs in nature” first appear, “impressed / On bird, beast, air” (11.194, 182-83). Michael’s history of the future introduces Adam and Eve to this new world, but it also reassures them that their lives initiate the “six ages of the world” which are part of the larger “grand cycle of creation-fall-redemption” (Ittzés 19). Similarly, Hakewill’s *Apologie* contradicts the commonly held conclusion of nature’s universal decay by considering the evidence from a “higher” plane:

when againe I abstracted and raised my thoughts to an higher pitch,  
and as from a vantage ground tooke a larger view, comparing time  
with time, and thing with thing, and place with place, and considered  
my selfe as a member of the *Vniverse*, and a *Citizen of the World*, I  
found that what was lost to one part, was gained to another; and what  
was lost in one time, was to the same part recouered in another; and  
so the ballance by the divine providence over-ruling all, kept vpright.  
(C2r)

Michael’s and Hakewill’s visions of history progress towards the same culmination, when God will “raise / From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined, / New heavens, new earth, ages of endless date / Founded in righteousness and peace and love” (12.547-50 cf. Hakewill 4.13.1-6).

At Michael’s description of “the world’s great period,” Adam declares: “Oh goodness infinite, goodness immense! / That all this good of evil shall produce, / And evil turn to good; more wonderful / Than that which by creation first brought forth / Light out of darkness!” (12.469-73). After the Fall, the

principle of change that was “associated with godhead itself” becomes the means of redemption (Boesky 384). The pattern of grateful vicissitude—which is what Adam is referring to when he describes “*that* which by creation first brought forth / Light out of darkness” (emphasis added)—is replaced by something “more wonderful.” The vicissitudes which began the world at creation will, by grace, sustain creation until earth’s final day. Graceful vicissitude replaces grateful vicissitude, but, as Adam suggests, the restoration of what is fallen is intimately connected to the motions of creation which “first brought forth / Light out of darkness.” It is now no longer only a creative pattern but further becomes embodied in the incarnate Son (11.90-91; 12.368-71). Boesky notes that “‘Grateful vicissitude’ is an intrinsic part of Milton’s vision of grace” (385). The motion of sin reversed the convergence of earth and heaven that was part of the prelapsarian plan, but through the motion of graceful vicissitude, heaven stoops to aid enfeebled creation.

It is necessary for Adam and Eve to leave the garden and “choose / Their place of rest” (12.646-47), because to them the postlapsarian garden is a place of restless stasis, and because they need to relearn the joy and rest that can come from the experience of motion. When Eve awakens on her first postlapsarian morning, she declares

the field

To labour calls us now with sweat imposed,  
 Though after sleepless night; for see the morn,  
 All unconcerned with our unrest, begins  
 Her rosy progress smiling; let us forth, [. . .]

Where'er our day's work lies, though now enjoined  
 Laborious, till day droop; while here we dwell,  
 What can be toilsome in these pleasant walks?  
 Here let us live, though in fallen state, content. (11.171-80)

Although Eve's relationship to the garden has changed—she now experiences “unrest” and the “day's work” is “laborious—she assumes that the garden's relationship to her (“unconcerned”) remains the same. However, the constancy of morning's “rosy progress” soon gives way to foreboding signs and eclipses (11.182-90). It is impossible to live in Eden, “though in fallen state, content.” Staying in the garden would allow them only an existence of restless stasis; Eve's desire “to spend, / Quiet though sad, the respite of that day / That must be mortal to us both” (11.271-73) and Adam's desire to turn the garden into a “memory, / Or monument to ages” in order to commemorate where God's presence once revealed itself (11.317-29) are both impotent, static desires. As Summers explains, in *Paradise Lost* “the desire for inactive, unchanging being,” and this is the desire expressed by Adam and Eve's yearning to remain in the garden, is “a disguise for the desire for non-being” (86); it is only a variation of their wish for premature death. Adam and Eve can experience true rest again, but it is a rest that must be won from labour (11.375). The Fall has also skewed Adam and Eve's understanding of the values of motion and stillness. Adam sees the world as a “race of time” and yearns for its completion, when “time stand[s] fixed: beyond is all abyss, / Eternity, whose end no eye can reach” (553-56). Fixity is associated only with the infernal in *Paradise Lost*; Adam and Eve must relearn the paradoxical experience of motion-as-rest. By carrying out God's

instructions to instruct and then expel Adam and Eve from the garden, Michael demonstrates that graceful vicissitude requires active participation: “only add / Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, [. . .] then wilt thou not be loath / To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess / A paradise within thee, happier far” (12.581-87).

### **Conclusion: Vicissitude and Monumentality**

*Paradise Lost* reveals Milton’s suspicion of the human impulse towards monumentality and shows that a desire for permanence works against the motions of grateful (and graceful) vicissitude. When Adam mourns God’s absent presence and describes his wish to raise “So many grateful Altars [. . .] / Of grassy turf, and pile up every stone / Of lustre from the brook, in memory, / Or monument to Ages” (11.323-26), Milton’s reader has long since learned that this impulse to monumentalize is associated with the fallen and the infernal. The two previous occurrences of the word “monument” refer to devilish artifices and edifices: Pandaemonium “easily out-do[es]” all human “monuments of fame,” and the bridge from earth to hell is a “monument / of merit high [. . .], a passage broad, / Smooth, easy, inoffensive down to hell” (10.258-59, 304-05). In emphasizing in both passages the ease of construction and use, Milton measures each of these monuments against human ambition, and the latter comes up wanting; the tower “Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,” which “in an age they with incessant toil / And hands innumerable scarce perform,” are bested by a mere hour of infernal labour (1.694-99), and Xerxes’s bridge over the Hellespont is “small” compared to the “great” bridge over chaos (10.306-11). Underlying these comparisons is a warning against the impulse to monumentalize.

The human desire for permanence is an exercise in futility: those “who in vain things / Built thir fond hopes of Glory or lasting fame” take up residence in the “Paradise of Fools” (3.448-49). Adam’s “grateful altars” would not be “grateful” at all, but rather static, no longer participating in the pattern of grateful vicissitude. This principle of creation and God’s “omnipresence” exist in “Land, sea, and air, and every kind that lives, / Fomented by his virtual power and warmed” (11.337-38). The “dangerously self-reflexive desire for monuments” in *Paradise Lost* is futile not because stone and marble are susceptible to decay in the new-fallen world (Alderman 184), but because their seeming permanence denies any participation in the holy change which springs from the “throne of God” and sustains the universe.<sup>33</sup>

Milton’s suspicion of monuments puts him at odds with Le Roy’s conclusion to *De la vicissitude des choses*. In Le Roy’s vision of history as cyclical progress, permanent monuments of knowledge are essential for allowing one civilization or nation to advance beyond those which have come before. The success of the future depends upon the work of the present: Le Roy writes, “[w]herefore, if all men do thinke that the future belongeth vnto them; they that are Learned must not be negligent in obtaining of that by the durable monuments of Learning” (Ashley’s trans. fol. 130v). Contrarily, Milton’s concern is with a heavenly, rather than earthly, future, where knowledge is stored in “sacred memory” (6.379). Milton expressed a suspicion for “monuments of learning”

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<sup>33</sup> On Adam’s monumental impulse in *Paradise Lost* as “inappropriate to a spirituality that will become interior and universal,” see Manley 566-82 (quoting from 570).

much earlier in *Prolusion VII*:

It is therefore to no purpose that we produce so many books and noble monuments of learning, seeing that the approaching conflagration of the world will destroy them all. [. . .] But we may hope for an eternal life, which will never allow the memory of the good deeds we have performed on earth to perish. (*Riverside* 871)

Like his archangel Michael, here Milton the student rushes ahead to the apocalypse. Aware that “first a long succession must ensue” (12.331), Milton denies the impulse of earthly monumentality in favour of heavenly permanence.

The diminished significance of the monument in *Paradise Lost* is in keeping with Milton’s poetics of motion, where grateful vicissitude finds its infernal travesty in restless stasis. The monument Adam desires at the end of *Paradise Lost* is too much like the “thin replica” or “slender copy” of Troy that Aeneas finds at Chaonia, where Hector’s cenotaph is “an empty mound of turf” and a “dry brooklet” is named Xanthus (*Aeneid* 3.408, 478, 412, 479). Monuments like these aspire to a permanence that is static. Milton’s denial of the monumental impulse in *Paradise Lost* should be read against Milton’s early thoughts about monuments in *On Shakespeare*, where the active participation of future generations becomes Shakespeare’s “live-long monument” (8). Also, earlier in *Prolusion VII*, slightly before the passage quoted above, Milton defines “eternal life” as attainable through contemplation and engagement with art:

eternal life, as almost everyone admits, is to be found in contemplation alone, by which the mind is uplifted, without the aid of the body, and gathered within itself so that it attains, to its inexpressible joy, a life akin to

that of the immortal gods. But without Art, the mind is fruitless, joyless, and altogether null and void” (867-68).

What Milton defines here is “a live-long monument,” which makes one “marble with too much conceiving” (*On Shakespeare* 8, 14). Stone monuments are monuments for mutability – Milton challenges the eroding power of time by recasting the monumental impulse with an impulse that can participate in the joyful motion of grateful vicissitude. Milton’s rejection of “monuments of learning” (which may be facetious in a speech during a university disputation) and his more serious rejection of monuments of human pride does not also reject such living monuments as his own epic endeavours to be. In their response to beauty, joy, art, creation, and all the workings of grateful vicissitude, such monuments are not “weak witnesses,” but are rather able to participate in a universe that is ever changing.

### Conclusion

#### **“Oft greatest comfort growes by grievous things”: Rivers and Ruins**

The final book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* consists mainly of a meditation, spoken by Pythagoras, on the nature of change. “I think there's nothing that retains its form / For long,” Pythagoras reflects: the “tremors of the earth / at times make rivers rush, at times obstruct / and curb a stream until it's seen no more” (15.252, 271-72). The river was a powerful symbol for Renaissance poets, historians, and chorographers, uniting flux and stasis, change and constancy, time and eternity, past and present, nation and land.<sup>1</sup> As a natural feature which is constantly in one place and yet constantly moving, the figure of the river exemplifies the paradoxical unity between motion and stillness which has been the focus of this dissertation.

Moreover, the image of the river flows through all the major texts discussed in the previous chapters. Sabrina in Milton's *Comus*, the emblem of “grateful vicissitude,” is a “Goddess of the River” (843). At the centre of Poliphilo's dream is a river labyrinth. In both classical and Renaissance descriptions of visual art, a representation of a river forms a frame. On Achilles' shield, Hephaestus “forged the Ocean River's mighty power girdling / round the outmost rim of the welded indestructible shield” (*Iliad* 18.708-09). Both a creation story and an ekphrasis, Homer's description of the shield's includes a river as the feature which provides shape, power, and containment. Spenser's river border is more sinister:

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<sup>1</sup> See Herendeen, “The Rhetoric of Rivers.”



round about a border was entrayld,  
 Of broken bowes and arrowes shiuered short,  
 And a long bloody riuer through them rayld,  
 So liuely and so like, that liuing sence it fayld. (III.xi.46.6-9)

The “bloody riuer” may be a warning, as Grogan notes, of the danger of “submit[ting] wholly to the world of the artist” (“So liuely” 177), but it also exhibits the three markers of classical ekphrasis (vividness, vitality, astonishment): “So liuely and so like, that liuing sence it fayld.” The river as both moving and still fittingly accommodates ekphrastic art.

Chorographers and historians found in British rivers a structure and a subject for their work: Camden, Harrison, and others organized their texts on the paths that rivers followed. This format allowed such chorographies “to overcome the impression of representational stasis” (Klein, *Maps* 142). Yet the river also provided them with a metaphor for the antiquarian enterprise itself. Camden reflected,

I am not ignorant that the first originalls of nations are obscure by reason of their profound antiquitie, as things which are seene very deepe and farre remote: like as the courses, the reaches, the confluents, and the out-lets of great rivers are well knowne, yet their first fountaines and heads lie commonly unknowne. (iv)

Such a metaphor points to both the arduousness inherent in seeking what is “very deepe and farre remote” and the confidence that the sources being sought can, in fact, be found. If the “origins of nations” are like the trickling sources of “great rivers,” then they must exist. Yet later Camden complains that contending with so

many false sources was like “striv[ing] with the streame and currant of *Time*” (6).<sup>2</sup> Rivers in these chorographical metaphors both reveal and conceal.

However, Pythagoras reflects not just on rivers, but on rivers whose course and current change drastically: earth changes “at times make rivers rush, at times obstruct / and curb a stream until it’s seen no more” (15.271-72). This prospect troubled Renaissance minds. Francis Bacon, in his essay “Of Vicissitude of Things,” notes that “matter is in a perpetual flux, and never at a stay. The great winding-sheets, that bury all things in oblivion, are two: deluges and earthquakes” (451). Water overflowing its natural bounds has the power to erase all human records. In *Paradise Lost*, the river Tigris flowed from “the foot of Paradise” and then descended underground until rising up as “a Fountain by the Tree of Life” (9.71-73). Satan, “involv’d in rising Mist,” enters Eden by means of this river (9.75), and as a result, the original “place” of this river is “Now not, though Sin, not Time, first wraught the change” (9.69-70).<sup>3</sup> Milton’s explanation of the river’s changing course acknowledges both that Sin is capable of producing marked, tangible effects on the land, and that natural rivers are all subject to the powerful river of Time.

In Spenser’s *The Ruines of Time*, the genius of Verulamium indicates “where the christall *Thamis* wont to slide / [. . .] There now no riuers course is to be seene, / But moorish fennes, and marshes euer greene” (134, 139-40). The river Thames once flowed through Verulamium, she explains, but it

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<sup>2</sup> See van Es, ““The Streame”” 209-11.

<sup>3</sup> The river’s “mazie error” (4.239) perhaps offers a proleptic clue to its eventual course change.

Seemes, that that gentle Riuer for great grieve  
 Of my mishaps, which oft I to him plained;  
 Of for to shunne the horrible mischiefe,  
 With which he saw my cruell foes me pained,  
 And his pure streames with guiltles blood oft stained,  
 From my vnhappy neighborhood farre fled,  
 And his sweete waters away with him led. (141-47)

The loss of the river Thames serves to heighten the genius's despair at the loss of all physical monuments pertaining to Verulamium. Yet the speaker's ambiguous location on the shore of the Thames, "Nigh where the goodly *Verlame* stood of yore," tempers this fear of oblivion. Which Thames is it, then, where the speaker finds solace: the Thames which coursed through Verlame or the present Thames, which doesn't? It is significant that we cannot easily answer this question, because here the flow of the river unites historical events that occur in the same place but in separate times. The Thames which once flowed through Verlame is the same Thames which flows through London. The two cities are united in this motion, and the Thames' disappearance serves as a forbidding warning to London: if the Thames has changed course before, it can do so again. The "fleeing Thames" destroys the final monument of Verulamium: "[r]ivers, in chronicle history, are frequently the monument of last resort – where all else has disappeared, there is in them at least a linguistic trace of past events" (van Es, *Forms* 35). Nothing, however, about the course of the Thames in Spenser's time indicates any connection with the ancient Roman city.

For Renaissance writers, rivers exist in the landscape as flowing monuments: always moving and always fixed. Yet rivers share with stone

monuments the propensity for imperceptible change. Rivers slowly change the shape of the natural landscape, or are slowly changed by it. Similarly, delicate decay separates a monument from a ruin, and this disjuncture between the intention of monumentality and the reality of decay underlies many representations in Renaissance literature of motion, mutability, and monumentality. Perhaps this is why in Renaissance literature we so often find the juxtaposition of “river and architectural ruin, or other images of human achievement, in order to locate [. . .] ideas about the effects of mutability and time, and about human access to a timeless dimension” (*SE* 607). John Norden, who in *Vicissitudo Rerum* observed that all things “Shall by *Degrees* alter, weare and wast” (43.7), saw rivers as “ornaments, / Vpon th’*earths* surface” (70.2-3) that are nonetheless capable of change:

Oft doe some *Riuers*, and some *fountaines* drie:  
 Oft doth the *earth* yeeld forth new water-springs:  
 Oft doth reuiue, *what* seemed erst to die:  
 Oft doubtfull ginning, sweetest *issue* brings:  
 Oft greatest comfort growes by grieuous things,  
 Nothing the same, and as the same abides,  
 But *God* the guide, nought standeth firme besides. (81.1-7)

This same Norden, who saw that “*Nature* her workes doth tosse like *Tennis ball*” (Epistle Dedicatory to *Vicissitudo Rerum*, l. 10), nevertheless spent much of his life seeking out “certain funeral monuments with the armes (if any theron rest undefaced)” so that they “may be preserved in perpetuall memory, that which time may deface, and swallow up in oblivion” (n.p. fol. 4r). The search for permanence reveals what moves and changes, just as the assessment of what is in

motion determines what is at rest.

The representation of motion in Renaissance literature often serves to cast stillness into relief: motion made visible also makes stillness visible. In the very act of defining mutability, such writing can create a monument. Ekphrastic descriptions of long lost sculpture adopt the monumentality otherwise lost to the mutability of time. Even Milton's denial of Adam's desire to raise a "monument of ages" (11.336) does not prevent him from suggesting that art can serve as a "live-long monument" ("On Shakespeare" 8). The separate disciplines, practices, and arts that Renaissance literature utilized in order to make motion visible reveal the paradox between motion and stillness implicit in Spenser's desire to make art "for short time an endless monument" (*Epithalamion* 433).

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