INTO SOMETHING RICH AND STRANGE:
EARLY MODERN ENGLISH ROMANCE AND ECO THEORY

A dissertation presented

by

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This project argues that the genre of romance in the early modern period is both deeply concerned with and profoundly shaped by materiality. Where magical objects, allegorical creatures, and fanciful geographies used to suggest romance as bracketed from the real world, my reading of these texts through ecomaterialism brings into focus the materiality of romance objects and the agency of romance’s strangely familiar landscapes and elemental combinations.

I contend that our reading practices must fundamentally change if we take literally the materiality of early modern romance. In this project I claim that the material base of romance ecologies and allegorical entities, what I term base matter, is an active force in crafting meaning at every level of these layered narratives. Where traditional allegorical exegesis moves upwards and away from the literal or the material, my project redirects focus back to the foundation of these elements. I argue that early modern romance is the locus of a multi-directional system where the material, the representational, and the discursive persistently have effects on and between each other.

Base matter owes a debt to political theorist Jane Bennett’s “vibrant matter.” Bennett’s vibrant materiality reinvigorates matter as a lively substance that may become what Bruno Latour in his actor-network-theory terms an actant. In my project base matter is the vibrant matter at the foundation of allegorical entities: as matter it has the agency to interact with its surrounding elements and as base matter it has the agency to inform all of the readings within its allegorical network.

Interrogating early modern romance on a material level reveals how ecological matter is implicated in questions of gender, agency, and history. Following Latour’s reimagining of the assemblage, Bennett’s vibrant materiality, Stacy Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality, and the
work of other interdisciplinary scholars, including feminist and quantum physicist Karen Barad, this project focuses on the various combinations of human and nonhuman agencies found in early modern English romance: from the maternal materiality of Error in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* to the various human, mineral, vegetable, animal, textual, liquid, fiery, and even planetary assemblages in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*, Mary Wroth’s *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, Michael Drayton’s *The Poly-Olbion*, and Francis Godwin’s *The Man in the Moone*. By focusing on the base matter of these diverse romance texts, my project works to break down the boundaries between nature and culture, registers the ways in which the material of romance is inescapably gendered, and makes visible productive collaborations of human and nonhuman entities. Base matter illuminates shared elements, enmeshed being, and interconnected meaning.
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Monsters, knights, talking trees, river nymphs, gods and goddesses. These are just some of the elements found in the fantastical world of early modern romance. Romance seems to be the genre as far away from literal landscapes as one can get. The romance ecologies I explore in this project exist in faerie-land in Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, on the nonexistent shores of Bohemia in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, on the magical island of *The Tempest*, in the anthropomorphized landscape of Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*, and in the lush forests imagined in fictional early modern voyages to the moon. Despite these settings, early modern romance pays a deep and persistent attention to the material make-ups of these made-up worlds. Materiality is present and important even when expressing abstract representations. Characters in early modern romance are often hybrid entities that blend the animal, vegetable, and mineral with the human. These varied morphological elements are minutely articulated and early modern authors obsessively draw attention back to the material of embodiment. The environments of early modern romance are also materially rich. Landscapes are active elements that are parsed out not only in descriptors, but in the way they enact engagements between material entities.

Yet the material of early modern romance is also highly allegorical. Steeped in the four-fold exegetical levels of allegory there are no literal stones in these romances that can’t be turned into something typological, moral, or anagogical. While it may seem counter-intuitive to search for—with apologies to Marianne Moore—real toads in these imaginary gardens, I argue that by
examining the material base of the allegorical elements of early modern romance we may
develop richer readings and better understand how the material informs meaning at every level.

My term for the material in early modern romance, the bottom level of the exegetical
chain, is *base matter*. Base matter is both the supporting foundation, the basic constituent of a
combination of elements, the home base from which meaning is deployed, and the formative
substance that may be represented as gendered, human, or nonhuman at its most basic elemental
level. The term ‘base’ inherits the bias against matter as lowly and overlooked: the unlovely
roots, generative parts, or mere matter that is unheeded in favor of the less tangible. By focusing
on base matter my project works to break down the boundaries between nature and culture and to
make visible productive collaborations of human and nonhuman entities. Base matter
illuminates shared elements, enmeshed being, and interconnected meaning.

Base matter owes a debt to political theorist Jane Bennett’s “vibrant matter.” Bennett’s
vibrant materiality reinvigorates matter as a lively substance that may become what Bruno
Latour in his actor-network-theory terms an actant, “a source of action that can be either human
or nonhuman [...] which has efficacy, can do things [...] and produce effects” (viii). Vibrant
matter has an agency divorced from intentionality. My term base matter is the vibrant matter at
the foundation of allegorical entities in early modern romance. As matter it has the agency to
interact with its surrounding elements and as base matter it has the agency to inform all of the
readings within its allegorical network. Where the allegorical exegesis of Aquinas or Dante
suggests that the reader move continually up and away from the literal or the material, I am
interested in exploring early modern romance as the locus of a multi-directional system where
the material, the representational, and the discursive persistently have effects on and between
each other. Base matter, as the foundation of this multi-directional system, grounds the
allegorical entity in the literal. Ecomaterial readings of these allegorical figures bring the polyvalent agency of base matter to the forefront.

The concept of base matter may also be applied to an understanding of the genre of early modern romance. Romance is famously protean. Classifying the genre, as nearly every scholar of romance notes, is remarkably difficult. It has become almost a critical commonplace to compare romance classification to the systems of division used in biology. Helen Cooper, in her work on premodern romance, initially resists this organic metaphor by asserting that the taxonomy of romance cannot be “drawn up with the precision that separates biological genera, six-legged insects from eight-legged spiders” (7) yet despite this disavowal she quickly returns to morphology, describing romance as a group of texts aligned in a lineage and recognized by their family resemblance. Sheila Cavanagh likewise borrows from scientific and environmental discourse in her description of early modern romance, suggesting its generic elements act like “waves and particles” (3) that coexist but cannot be simultaneously viewed. She continues with another common ecology-inflected description elucidating how romance narratives flow like rivers: pulling together multiple individual streams into a larger narrative while also eddying and meandering along the way. The base matter of the genre of romance, its recognizable qualities that define it as romance, is lively and fungible. Early modern romance, drawing from a wide range of discursive influences, is a recombinant literary entity with powerful effects on the literary ecologies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Nature in romance and the nature of romance are well-known critical themes in the field. Yet many of these discussions focus on nature as personified, allegorized, and limited to and productive of the human subject. Critics turn to using the language of nature to describe romance in part because the setting of romance in nature is taken for granted. The oikos (the root
word of both home and ecology) of romance is the natural world, yet after the work of scholars that blend medieval and early modern studies with ecotheory, like Corinne Saunders, Carolyn Merchant, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Lowell Duckert, Gabriel Egan, Daniel Brayton, Lynne Bruckner, Todd Borlik, Sylvia Bowerbank, Steve Mentz, and Gillian Rudd, the natural is no longer seen as merely a backdrop or a testing ground for errant knights, but rather as a true ecology of interconnected human and non-human participants.

Romance has traditionally been situated in the domain of the anthropocentric and the epistemological; the search for truth and the quest of knowledge are ostentatiously the purpose of many early modern romances. If we read the various material elements found in romance ontologically, however, a plethora of human and non-human entities are given meaning and agency outside of the merely allegorical. Adding an ontological register to the many objects of romance reveals tensions within allegorical readings and provides space for more narrative energy inside the text as prospectives independent of the human protagonists are considered. Ecocritical readings are more sensitive to seeing organic and inorganic material as more than mere use-objects or allegorical fodder. Ecocritical readings also have the potential to recoup and reinvigorate an analysis of the early modern relationship with matter: informed by a long medieval heritage of vibrant objects and a burgeoning fascination with the material of the world through new scientific innovations.

This dissertation seeks to bring early modern English romance texts in conversation with new developments and debates in the fields that fall under the category of ecotheory: including ecocriticism, ecomaterialism, and animal studies. Ecocriticism, first coined by William Rueckert, as the application of ecology as the application of ecology and ecological concepts to
literature\textsuperscript{1} is now more widely defined by scholars and the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) as the study of the \textit{relationship} between literary and cultural artifacts and the natural environment. The shift from application to relationship is an important one as current ecocritical scholarship, influenced by other disciplines, is now more invested in the effects of literary and ecological entanglements.

Ecomaterialism differs from a traditional ecocritical mode that interrogates the connections between the human and the landscape and instead, as Jeffery Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert propose, is “interested in reconceiving ecomaterial spaces and objects as a web of co-constitutive and hybrid actants.” Ecomaterialism has many debts to postmodern thought and especially to ecological postmodernism, which, as Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann note, regards “language and reality, nature and culture, and discursive practices and the material world as complexly intertwined” (78). Major postmodern thinkers, such as Deleuze and Guattari, make no distinction between human and nature and see them as embodying the same reality. Ecological postmodernism attempts to “re-enchant” reality, “claiming that all material entities, even atoms and subatomic particles have some degree of sentient experience and that all living things have an agency of their own” (Iovino 78). For ecomaterialists, all matter possesses or enacts agency: an agency disassociated with intentionality. The term “actant” is borrowed from Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory (ANT), a method that maps relations that are

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\item[1] William Rueckert, in his 1978 article “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” coined the term “ecocriticism” to mean “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature” (107).
\item[2] Note here the pun on “mayle/male/mail” pitting male against female.
\item[3] In this way, even the straightforward allegory of being morally lost is complicated by agentic accountability. If the rain drives Redcrosse into the wood and the wood leads him to Errour, who is really responsible?
\item[4] From Arthur Golding’s contemporary 1587 translation:
\begin{quote}
The lustie earth of owne accord soone after fowrth did bring,
According to their sundry shapes each other liuing thing,
\end{quote}
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
simultaneously material and semiotic. In other words, social action is a dynamic relationship between and among a collective of things and concepts. The agency of matter is also a key point for feminist and quantum physicist Karen Barad. In developing her theory of agential realism, Barad introduces the notion of “intra-action” which proposes that, in contrast to “interaction” which assumes there are agencies that precede entanglement, agencies only emerge through mutual entanglement: they don’t exist as individual elements. (33). Barad argues that “the primary ontological units are not “things” but phenomena [and] the primary semantic units are not “words” but material-discursive practices through which (ontic and semantic) boundaries are constituted” (141). For Barad, matter and discourse are entangled; our material-discursive practices create boundaries between and among phenomena, which form the meaningful things of our world.

Another important concept for ecomaterialists and for this project is the assemblage. Developed out of the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, assemblages are the base matter of Latour’s actor-network-theory. Jane Bennett similarly roots assemblages at the core of vibrant materialism. “Assemblages,” states Bennett, “are ad hoc groupings of diverse elements of vibrant materials of all sorts. Assemblages are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within” (24). The effects generated by an assemblage are emergent and distinct from the sum of the vital force of each materiality considered alone. Citing blackouts, theoretical movements, hurricanes, and ideological wars, Bennett highlights agency as distributed throughout human and non-human confederations and challenges established notions of moral responsibility and political accountability.
Along with Latour’s actor-network theory, Bennett’s vital materialism, and philosophies from scientific theorists like Karen Barad and Donna Haraway, ecomaterialism is informed by the speculative realism, new metaphysics, and new materialisms of Graham Harman, Quentin Meillassoux, Timothy Morton, Ian Bogost, Iain Hamilton Grant, Ray Brassier, and Levi Bryant. In 2002 Harman introduced the subset of speculative realism, “object-oriented philosophy,” a re-working of Martin Heidegger’s tool analysis from *Being and Time* that was later renamed object-oriented-ontology (OOO) by Bryant. Bogost describes how “OOO puts things at the center of being. We humans are elements, but not the sole elements of philosophical interest. OOO contends that nothing has special status, but that everything exists equally […] To put things at the center of a new metaphysics also requires us to admit that they do not exist just for us” (7-9).

An important aspect of object-oriented-ontology, especially to Harman and Morton, is the concept of withdrawal. Harman states that “contrary to the dominant assumption of philosophy since Kant, the true chasm in ontology lies not between humans and the world, but between objects and relations” (2). Objects withdraw from human beings and (a crucial point for Harman) from each other: they are never fully present or truly knowable. Objects recede from relations and they exceed any of their interactions with others (human and non-human): what is encountered is always just the tip of the ontological iceberg.

Just as the boundaries of what demarcate the human from other animals are permeable and contested, the field of animal studies has many crossovers with ecocriticism, ecomaterialism, new materialism, speculative realism, and posthumanism. Recent publications, such as Karen Raber’s *Animal Bodies, Renaissance Culture* (2013), show how the material conditions of the early modern period brought humans and animals into complex interspecies relationships. These relationships are revealed to be violently intermingled and interchanged in Andreas Höfele’s
The fascinating and disturbing *Stage, Stake, and Scaffold: Humans and Animals in Shakespeare’s Theatre* (2012). Höfele addresses the ways in which the early modern theater, animal baiting, and corporeal punishment share the same material and semiotic spaces. Major players in the field such as Raber, Höfele, Laurie Shannon, Erica Fudge, Susan Crane, Jean Feerick, Vin Nardizzi, Bruce Boehrer, and Karl Steel shape critical understanding of the early modern animal through questions of materiality, hybridity, and shared experience.

Ecotheory, in all of its instantiations, including ecomaterialism, is uniquely situated to address considerations of gender and sexuality. Because of its commitment to making connections between how one treats women, people of color, and the underprivileged, feminism lays the groundwork for an ecocriticism that also considers how one treats the nonhuman and the natural environment. Carolyn Merchant’s seminal work in *The Death of Nature* (1980) forever changed the field by showing the implications of viewing nature as an inert substance that may be atomized, dissected, and subjugated. The mechanistic worldview championed by the Scientific Revolution sanctioned the exploitation of the natural world and a socioeconomic order that subordinates women. Merchant’s work is still resonant: attending to the natural nonhuman world as lively and agential disrupts destructive social and economic processes.

The critical field of ecofeminism, while threatened by claims of essentialism since the 1990s, has recently been re-examined and re-galvanized by scholars such as Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen, asserting that many of the connections among racism, sexism, classism, colonialism, speciesism, and the environment made by early ecofeminists are still highly relevant and insightful. Ecomaterialists look to the work of Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman in their collection *Material Feminisms* (2007) for productive entanglements of matter, gender, and theory. Alaimo and Hekman state that a “central element of the attempt to move beyond
discursive construction and grapple with materiality is to build on rather than abandon the lessons learned in the linguistic turn[: a deconstruction of the material/discursive dichotomy that retains both elements without privileging either” (6). Current ecofeminism takes a material turn, revising the “paradigms of poststructuralisms, postmodernism, and cultural studies in ways that can more productively account for the agency, semiotic force, and dynamics of bodies and natures” (6). In early modern studies, and in more traditional cultural and ecocritical modes, critics such as Sylvia Bowerbank in her 2004 book *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England* also work to bring historical interactions between gender and ecological consciousness to light.

Many of the concepts and contours of ecomaterialism and its related fields, touched on briefly in the summary above, resonate strongly with early modern romance—even those that seem the most esoteric and scientific. Take Timothy Morton’s concept of the mesh from *The Ecological Thought* (2010), for instance:

The ecological thought imagines interconnectedness, which I call the *mesh*. Who or what is interconnected with what or with whom? The mesh of interconnected things is vast, perhaps immeasurably so. Each entity in the mesh looks strange. Nothing exists all by itself and so nothing is fully “itself.” There is curiously “less” of the Universe at the same time, and for the same reasons, as we see “more” of it. Our encounter with other beings becomes profound. They are strange, even intrinsically strange. Getting to know them makes them stranger. When we talk about life forms, we’re talking about *strange strangers*. The ecological thought imagines a multitude of entangled strange strangers. (14).
If one removes the terms “ecological,” “Universe,” and “life forms,” this account reads like an apt description of *The Faerie Queene* or *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*. Romance narratives with their vast landscapes and interconnected human and hybrid characters sometimes feel like endless encounters of “entangled strange strangers.” The multi-layered allegorical nature of romance also means that by getting to know these enmeshed entities they become even stranger. Ecomaterialist and medievalist Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, notes that object-oriented philosophy is a form of realism, “Yet its realism is weird, meaning that this world is not reducible to common sense, the evidence of the mind, or other modes of imposing human order. It thereby shares expressive affinities with speculative fiction—science fiction, horror, and fantasy. Medieval versions of these wonder-inducing genres include romance, lays, and lapidaries, providing those who study the Middle Ages rich entrance into this critical conversation” (45). The same may be said for the early modern period. Romance, and the base matter of its allegorical underpinnings, allows early modernists into the ecomaterial conversation.

Base matter allows for a theory of representation in which to better navigate the current field of ecomaterialism with early modern texts. The material of early modern romances are twice removed: first by their allegorical constructions and second by their distance in history. In this project I contend that represented matter and “real matter” each have potential to impact real and fictional networks of meaning. Additionally, ecomaterialist readings open up a wide range of textual and physical materials from which to build a historical understanding. As Cohen’s reading of the weird realism of object-oriented ontology suggests, both literary genres such as romance and philosophies that highlight the strangeness of objects approach the material world similarly. Object-oriented-ontology and early modern romance take the multiple meanings of
objects for granted and assume that some may remain inscrutable. Base matter widens the possibilities for registering the agency of textual objects. By centering on the material as the site of meaning an interrogation of base matter does more than look at how material entities in texts are described. Base matter, as the material foundation of a range of semiotic and discursive meanings may be textually or physically composed. The truth at the bottom of material is that substances move in unexpected ways. The strangeness of objects, their ability to defy reliable classifications and expected behaviors, is what makes them vibrant in their networks of physical collusions and discursive meanings.

To see base matter in action, let us turn to one of the many allegorically and materially composed figures in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*. In Book I, Redcrosse Knight makes a fateful stop with the disguised Duessa to refresh himself by a fountain. Within the fountain resides a nymph, who, “Was out of Dianes fauour” (1.7.4.8). The narrative describes:

The cause was this: one day when *Phoebe* fayre
With all her band was following the chace,
This Nymph, quite tyr’d with heat of scorching ayre,
Sat downe to rest in middest of the race:
The goddess wroth gan fowly her disgrace,
And bad the waters, which from her did flow,
Be such as she her selfe was then in place.
Thenceforth her waters waxed dull and slow,
And all that drunke thereof, did faint and feeble grow. (1.7.5.1-9).

The nymph, on one level, is an analogue for Redcrosse Knight, who too has stopped “in middest of the race” (1.7.5.4), and who is also tired with “scorching ayre” (1.7.5.3). Redcrosse’s quest is
such that he cannot halt or let down his guard without breeding more mistakes. In this scene the material profoundly impacts the semiotics of the languid nymph. Her base matter, water, is a material that quickly shapes different kinds of meaning. Diana, in her curse, thinks allegorically and materially: the nymph’s slothfulness is registered in base matter. The nymph’s action, made into base material in her waters, makes her an allegory for idleness. The nymph’s stillness fixes the her to the landscape while her waters “waxed dull and slow” (1.7.5.8). The water nymph is then materially in conversation with Redcrosse. By drinking her lethargic waters, Redcrosse knight ingests the material distillation of the allegory and becomes himself “faint and feeble” (1.7.5.9). The material properties in this scene vie with allegorical qualities to create a material-discursive assemblage. The act of sluggishness, performed by both Redcrosse and the nymph is reflected by the idle waters of which the nymph is made and to which the knight is drawn. The drinkable nature of water allows Redcrosse’s body and the nymph’s body to become thoroughly enmeshed. Material readings of the base matter expand into further networks of exegesis. Redcrosse’s duplicitous companion Duessa is implicated in the material properties of the fountain. The nymph’s water is a perversion of the expectations of a natural element: water is supposed to be restorative, not enfeebling. Mixing company with Duessa, Redcrosse is unknowing of her poisonous base matter, and is undermined by her presence. In drinking the water, Redcrosse also becomes watery:

Hereof this gentle knight vnweeting was,
And lying downe vpon the sandie graile,
Drunke of the streame, as cleare as cristall glas;
Eftsoones his manly forces gan to faile,
And mightie strong was turnd to feeble fraile.
His chaunged powres at first them selues not felt,
Till crudled cold his corage gan assaile,
And chearefull bloud in faintnesse chill did melt,
Which like a feuer fit through all his body swelt. (1.7.6.1-9).

Redcrosse’s cheerful sanguine blood turns chill and faint, like the streame “cleare as cristall glas” (1.7.6.3). The knight is shaped by the action, allegory, form and even color of the watery material. Humorally, Redcrosse knight has been feminized. In the widely practiced framework of bodily humanism, men were construed as hot, sanguine, and dry while early modern Galenic physicians thought women to be of a cold, moist, and watery nature. The fountain-nymph is especially phlegmatic. By mixing with her bodily matter, Redcrosse’s humored gender becomes fluid. The base matter of water in this scene is inescapably gendered.

While the water in this scene is textually created, it is shaped by empirical knowledge (even when it perverts expectations) along with a large discursive network of symbolic, medical, and aesthetic properties. The base matter in this scene is gendered, not only because the allegorical nymph built up from the water is a woman, but by an early modern understanding of gendered material qualities. Water is understood within an early modern context as especially agentic. As base matter in this allegorical example it effects the readings of the character and her interactions on all levels.

In the chapters that follow, I will use the strategies suggested in this example in order to examine a wide range of early modern romance elements: from the maternal materiality of Errour in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* to the various human, mineral, vegetable, animal, textual, liquid, fiery, and even planetary assemblages in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*, Mary Wroth’s *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, Michael
Drayton’s *The Poly-Olbion*, and Francis Godwin’s *The Man in the Moone*. By focusing on the base matter of these diverse romance texts, my project works to break down the boundaries between nature and culture, registers the ways in which the material of romance is inescapably gendered, and makes visible productive collaborations of human and nonhuman entities.

My first chapter, “The Ecology of Error: an Ecomaterial Reading of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*,” reads the half-serpent half-woman Errour in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* through her various forms of base matter. Errour, as the first challenge of Redcrosse Knight in Book I, is the foundation for the rest of Spenser’s romance epic. Errour is also base in that she is represented as vile. The repugnance that surrounds the character of Errour is not only because of her eponymous significance as an allegorical representation of error, but is a direct response to her materiality. Errour’s base matter elicits an ecophobic response, what Simon Estok defines as a “groundless fear or hatred of the natural world” (4). Furthermore, Errour is base matter in that she is maternally and textually productive. Errour is represented as a matrix: a generative womb, a productive point of origin, and a mesh of interconnected elements. Errour’s base matter, understood through ecomaterialism, is a dynamic material-discursive element. Errour is constantly being recomposed as an allegorical being as different aspects of her base matter are expressed. In this way she is at once monster, mother, animal, foe, fructifying fluid, and porous printing press. Errour’s base matter in each of these instantiations has an agency within the ecology of the text and material resonances with an early modern readership. This chapter looks at Errour’s maternal, material, and textual production from the ground up.

Chapter two, “Into a Cloven Pine”: Ecomaterial Assemblages in Early Modern Romance” offers a study of human and nonhuman characters in entrapped assemblages. Entrapped characters in romance are lively entanglements of matter and discourse, what Barad would term
phenomena. This chapter follows three elemental categories: vegetable, mineral, and animal, to determine what kind of material negotiations occur when human and nonhuman are directly enmeshed. Within the vegetable section I focus on arboreal assemblages: humans and quasi-humans entrapped in trees, including Fradubio in the Faerie Queene, Ariel in The Tempest, and actors within Shakespeare’s wooden stage. Notably, in re-writing the tree/human scene from Dante’s wood of the suicides, Spenser invests his characters with a subjectivity and environmental empathy that highlights ways in which viewing humans and nonhumans as equal actants leads to ethical practices. In the mineral section I focus primarily on Hermione in The Winter’s Tale. By taking on the qualities of stone: stillness, dignity, silence, memorialization, Hermione is able to more effectively impact the hard heart of her husband and shape the actions of those around her. Lastly, in the animal section I investigate characters encircled by homogenous creatures in pastoral spaces, such as Perdita or Urania in The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania. Foundling princesses in romance often become temporary shepherdesses, surrounded by an idealized flock, while young princelings are unwittingly disguised as woodsmen and encircled by deer. In reading these romance tropes through human and nonhuman entrapment, I show how the base matter of animal and human inform each other and shape the narrative.

The third chapter looks at the base matter of Michael Drayton’s anthropomorphized landscape in Poly-Olbion. Ecocritics are turning their attention toward Poly-Olbion as a literary example of early modern environmental ethics. Where many of these readings focus on the forests of Poly-Olbion, this chapter offers an ecomaterial reading of its rivers, streams, and pools. Poly-Olbion’s narrative of nationhood is primarily voiced by a flood of garrulous feminine watery bodies contesting for regional recognition. Drayton uses the material and gendered
nature of the *Poly-Olbion*’s water nymphs to mediate between the versions of history and romance that make up the matter of Britain and to secure the narrative firmly to its landscape. This chapter ends with the queenly river Severn, a key figure who holds court in multiple disputes between England and Wales, and whose history and ontology illustrate an active collusion of human and non-human elements. Drayton’s Severn is an example of Alaimo’s trans-corporeality: the single “body” of the Severn there resides a historical body, a romance story, an actual river, a nostalgic image of the deceased Queen Elizabeth—bodies that are human, nonhuman, humoral, historical, and material. The porousness of Severn’s female body is a gendered power that allows her body to be registered as recognizably womanly, yet ultimately uncontrollable. By depicting the Severn as such, Drayton enthrones the land, subsumes a questionable origination myth of Britain into a larger narrative, and melds human and non-human bodies into an indistinguishable new phenomenon with a literary, historical, political, and ecological agency.

The fourth chapter takes the concerns of the entire dissertation off world to ask how the moon as a material and allegorical figure affects the ecologies of early modern romance environments and how the moon eventually becomes a place where, through romance, early modern writers imagined and filled out ideal ecologies. The moon is a polyvalent figure in the early modern period, and is particularly useful for tracing developments in early modern romance as narratives of fantasy shift from allegorical realms to potential new worlds. The moon in the early modern period is an ecological force, with the power to influence oceans, environments, histories, mental states, and bodily humors. Outside the geographical boundaries of the earth, the moon nevertheless reaches into earthly concerns. This chapter begins by proposing the man in the moon, as mocked in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as a paradoxically
more fitting picture for an interconnected ecology. From there, this chapter traces the lunar iconography of Queen Elizabeth as the chaste moon goddess Cynthia through Walter Ralegh’s poems “The Ocean to Cynthia” and John Lyly’s *Endymion*. After Elizabeth’s death, the Cynthia motif was eclipsed by a new obsession with the moon. New discoveries in astronomy, along with the establishment of the travel narrative as a popular genre, inspired fictional voyages to the moon, including Francis Godwin’s *The Man in the Moone*. The man in the moon shifts from an allegorical figure to an everyman actively exploring new territory in the moon’s landscape. Godwin’s goose-powered lunar landing offers a multi-species collaboration in planetary discovery. This chapter argues that the moon romances of the early modern period offer critical moments for romance characters to look back on the earth and see it as a new global ecology.

This chapter ends by taking a giant leap forward in lunar literature and romance. Closing with a discussion of James Cameron’s film *Avatar*, I argue that the science fiction romances of our era reimagine much of the same material as the lunar romances of the early modern period. The salient difference is that these twenty-first century narratives are ecological romances, enacting environmental fantasies by leaving a human-ruined world behind for new pristine paradises on other planets.
Chapter One

The Ecology of Error: an Ecomaterial Reading of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*

In this chapter I propose to read the character of Erreur in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* literally. That is, to read Erreur on the level of the material through ecocriticism, actor-network-theory, and object-oriented-ontology. Most critical readings of Erreur have focused on three aspects: her bodily functions and output as an analogue for the early modern printing press, her gender and monstrous motherhood, and her significance as an allegorical figure. Reading Erreur through a gender-conscious ecomaterialism interrogates Spenser’s authorial choices on a material level: why does he choose to embody the printing press—a manmade mechanical object—in a hybrid human/animal, feminine, gestating body? The material and textual interactions that inform the assemblage of Erreur are not only what Stacy Alaimo has termed trans-corporeal, or across numerous bodies, but multi-corporeal, in which multiple textual and material corpuses emerge from the same entity. In employing these multiple bodies at once, Erreur highlights the ways in which allegories in early modern romance are made up of material amalgamations that simultaneously enrich and confound their symbolic significance.

Allegories such as those found in the *Faerie Queene* create a kind of ecology: they provide a literary space—a home environment—where multiple meanings may cohabitate. Allegories become confederations of material objects, meanings, histories, and discursive forces. The allegorical organism sustains itself on historic associations, literary and cultural traditions, and real and imagined experiences. In this way, an allegory may be seen as an entity that has subordinate parts that are essential to its understanding. The Spenserian allegory seems to be especially ecological as systems of meaning accrete and respond to each other. The personified
allegories in the *Faerie Queene* are treated as singularities, but they are more like superorganisms of meaning, composed of many kinds of subsidiary referential organisms.

While Spenser’s romance epic is thickly layered in the allegorical, tropological, and anagogical, it is the material foundation on which these interpretations are built that is most often neglected. The material is the site of contest: while moral and spiritual readings refine and resolve into overarching theological meanings, what the material means and how it matters remains disputed. Like any object under a microscope, material in a text refracts and multiplies with each degree of inspection. On the macro scale, it is easy to gloss Errour as a monstrous representation of spiritual degradation; on the micro, however, what each of her material elements represents becomes more critically contested and difficult to parse. The base matter of *The Faerie Queene* is a vibrant material: what Jane Bennett describes as a vitality that runs through and across human and nonhuman bodies. By understanding the various interactions between the organic and inorganic substances that comprise Spenser’s allegorical figures we can better grasp his project as a whole. My project in this chapter is to make the material of Errour present, to linger on her material substance and the associative bodies, objects, and environments contiguous to her self in order to open up a reading of Errour that acknowledges the material complexities of Spenser’s allegorical creations.

Errour in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* is represented as a matrix: a generative womb, a productive point of origin, and a mesh of interconnected elements. She is at once a self-reproducing mass of ill-formed beings and a splinter-cell of a larger allegorical and material organism. Errour is an allegorical figure, yet despite her name she remains a complex gestalt: a collection of erroneous elements that breed and invite missteps, and an assemblage that taps into deep early modern anxieties about the natural world, femininity, maternity, and textual
dissemination. Errour, following Karen Barad, is one of many phenomena, a dynamic material-discursive element, that is constantly being cut into different things through allegory: monster, mother, animal, foe, river, and printing press being just a few of them. Each of these instantiations has an agency within the ecology of the text and material resonances with an early modern readership.

In Errour’s motherhood, Spenser complicates what may have been a straightforward allegory of error-spawning-error and instead links Errour’s fecundity to Ovid’s characterization of the productive father Nile: a strange reversal of gendered generative material. The negative characterization of Errour’s children as gnats may be also linked to the comic romantic hero of Spenser’s own translation of Virgil’s Gnat (Culex). Errour’s maternity begs for an ecomaterial reading. Her procreative body is rarely singular. Errour and her children are not so much separate entities, but an assemblage of co-actants that include a legion of young ones, books, papers, frogs, toads, small serpents, poison, blood, and milk. Her body also seems to meld with the “darksome hole” of her den and the “weedy gras” of her parbreak/birthing place. Errour’s productive agency overflows a concrete subject and even a static gender: she becomes an expanding confederation of fertile materials, including the generative sources of Spenser’s romance itself.

Errour, is of course, a fictional creature, fully a creation of Edmund Spenser’s imagination and pen, and unlike many other nonhuman beings in literature, she has no direct parallel in the nonliterary world. We cannot observe the behaviors or understand the material existence of a specimen of “real” Errour the way we can lions, lambs, or other creatures that appear in Spenser’s epic in the nonliterary wild. Yet, as Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann make clear, all matter “is a material ‘mesh’ of meanings, properties, and processes, in which
human and nonhuman players are interlocked in networks that produce undeniable signifying forces” (1-2). The matter of Errour, though fictional, is caught up in a web of discursive elements, bodies, and materials both imaginary and tangible that make her a “[knot] in a vast network of agencies” (1). The various hybrid elements that make up the character of Errour entangle her in an abundance of narratives. These narratives are expressions of interaction between bodily natures and discursive forces. An ecomaterial reading of Errour ultimately reveals that the signifying force produced by Errour is uneasiness about uncontrolled and uncontrollable agencies: particularly those agencies that are nonhuman and/or feminized.

Errour, or better errare, is an assemblage of wandering agencies. Errour’s bodily processes and maternal production make her an ecology that is alien to the understanding of Redcrosse Knight and his companions. She likewise represents elements of the ecology of the romance genre that are outside of Redcrosse’s power. It is one of Redcrosse Knight’s failures to think that in killing Errour he has eradicated a species by destroying a specimen: this error is repeated on an ecological and a textual level. As an animal suited to her own environment, rather than merely a monster, Errour has agencies that are counter to Redcrosse’s desire to test his mettle as a knight errant. These agencies of animal and maternal preservation and propagation highlight Redcrosse’s flaws as he attempts to force her into the static role of monster. Errour is moreover a signifying force of the anxieties surrounding maternal reproduction, female agency, and sexual power. The naturalizing of the mechanical process of textual reproduction in the body of Errour suggests the ways in which texts have an organic agency that threatens the control of various human authorities including authors, printers, theological potentates, the monarchy, the aristocracy, and colonial powers. Errour highlights the semiotic and material networks from which texts are inseparable, thus troubling singular
narratives and desires for censorship. As an ecology of literary influence, Errour’s make-up reveals contradictory symbolic associations and literary inheritances that change her materially and agentically and mark her as a point of enmeshment within a larger network of Spenser’s literary heritage and moment in history. Errour’s materiality ultimately questions the role of matter in allegory. The seemingly endless allegorical ties to Elizabeth I suggest that Errour is also at the center of an allegorical mesh of materials and discursive forces that provocatively tie her to Spenser’s actual and literary Queen. The material and allegorical slippage in the character of Errour illuminates the bonds between text and solid material that create literary ecologies that ultimately extend into our own understanding of the world.

*The Animal Errour*

Errour is the perfect early modern nightmare. She is a visceral representation of the anxieties of the age: a combination of the apprehension over feminine reproductive power, the borders of the human, and the unpredictable possibilities of the printing press. She is also represented as a creature, living in a particular ecological niche, existing and breeding in the dark of a hollow cave in the midst of the thick woods in an environment described as “no place for liuing men” (1.1.13.9). In this “desert darkness” (1.1.16.8) it is made clear that the home of Errour is in a natural space: a wild place outside of the domestic domains of humankind. The naturalizing assumptions that the text encourages are strong enough to be almost passed over. Why is it not surprising that the allegorical embodiment of moral error lives in the desert wild? Gillian Rudd, in her analysis of the wilderness of Wirral in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, notes that wildernesses “are inevitably places of lawlessness and danger and, being wildernesses, are inhabited by godless men; the two concepts mutually reinforce each other and thus allow the
‘normality’ and civilization of the surrounding (and so contrasting) country to be taken for granted” (55). The Gawain poet notes that in the wilderness there are few to be found that love either God or other men with a good heart. The implication in this line, as Rudd highlights, is that “the wilderness-dwellers are not loved by God or good men either” (56). This binary is repeated in the Faerie Queene when Una warns Redcrosse that the space they are entering “is the wandring wood, this Errours den, / A monster vile, whom God and man does hate” (1.1.13.6-7).

Here the natural space is put in opposition to a moral high-ground: a performance of ecophobia that makes space for the allegorical error as well as the natural Errour. However, by immediately showing Redcrosse Knight make the catastrophic error of mistrusting Una and trusting the deceptive Archimago in the next scene, Spenser throws into question not only the easy assumption that Redcrosse has defeated all of error, but also that error only dwells in godless wildernesses.

The wrongness or the ecophobia of wilderness-dwellers for the Gawain poet seems to hinge on thinking of human beings existing out of place. Those men and women who decide to live in the forest wild go against cultural norms and are seen as monstrous. On the borderlands between human and animal, they are hybrid. Errour reflects this materially. Spenser describes that she is “Halfe like a serpent horribly displaide,/But th’other halfe did womans shape retaine (1.1.14.7-8). Errour fits neatly into Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s description of the ontological liminality of the monstrous: “disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration […]a dangerous] form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions” (6). Spenser clearly mines medieval bestiaries and ancient natural histories in his description of the half-woman half-serpent Errour. However, her hybridity seems more an allegorical flourish than a lasting morphology.
Throughout the scene, none of Errour’s actions belie that she has a partial human form. She is notably devoid of human voice—the quality that marks humanness most often in early modern romance—and has no interactions with her hands, another common symbol of humanity. She brays instead of speaks (1.1.17.5) and descriptions of her focus on her “beastly body” (1.1.18.3) and serpentine tail, rather than any of her more human aspects.

Spenser’s use of the word “retaine” also implies some kind of past process of morphing: a transition from a woman’s body to a partial horrible animal body. This narrative of transformation may be an allegorical one of error made flesh: a material shift from human to animal as a consequence of a change in geography from God-fearing society to godless wilderness. The teleology of this process is self-balancing, however. If a human is changed into a beast by dwelling in the wilderness, eventually, the beast is in the proper environment. If we focus on her agency as a mother animal in her home environment Errour loses her monstrosity in favor of her animality. Her destruction at the hands of Redcrosse makes her one more hunted animal rather than a monstrous hybrid whose destruction rights the social order.

Errour is the first major nonhuman creature in the *Faerie Queene* who has an agency that escapes her allegorical bounds. In Spenser’s epic romance all animals are allegorical, but some are more allegorical than others. Outside of the birds the protagonists hear in the woods, the animals mentioned before the Errour scene are brought to the reader’s attention for their allegorical significance, then just as quickly forgotten. Una’s mount, the “lowly Asse more white then snow” (1.1.4.2), a symbol of pure Christ-like humility, is transformed into the usual courtly palfrey within the same stanza (1.1.4.7) and mentioned only once more in the entire book. Even more insubstantial and allegorically constructed is the “milke white lambe” (1.1.4.9) who follows the lady “by her in line” (1.1.4.9). This traditional animal embodiment of
innocence is merely a projection of Una’s virtue. The lamb has no agency or use in the narrative outside of figuration and so melts into the fabric of the tale and is not seen again. Spenser’s use of synecdoche in describing the Gentle Knight “pricking on the plaine” (1.1.1.1) in the first stanza brings Redcrosse’s “angry steede” (1.1.1.6) level with his armor in a grouping that signifies him as a “Full iolly knight” (1.1.1.8). These animals are anthropocentric constructions made present only for their use-value as allegorical or descriptive reflections of their human companions. In contrast to the effervescence of the signifying ass and lamb, and even Redcrosse’s charger, Errour is actively and materially present. While Errour is always meant to be eponymously read as the embodiment of spiritual and secular error, her actions and inferred motivations seem to reveal traces of real animal encounters in the early modern period.

What would happen if we read Errour as simply an animal? Una warns Redcrosse to “Be well aware […] / Least suddaine mischief ye too rash prouoke: / The danger hid, the place vnknowne and wilde” (1.1.12.1-3). Una’s advice not to go poking around in dark caves seems sage to even the least savvy outdoor explorer. In fact, Errour reacts like any animal in the wild disturbed from their territory: especially an animal with still-nursing young ones. The violence of her reaction to Redcrosse’s intrusion evokes the actions of other den-dwelling and lactating animals.

Errour is clearly baited: Redcrosse Knight, interrupting the nursing of her offspring, lures Errour from her den where she puts on a show of intimidation: hurling her tail about her head and stretching forth its folds “at length without entraile” (1.1.16.4). This agonistic reaction is an animal instinct (like a cat arching her back and making her fur stand on end or a bear standing on her hind legs). Allegorically, Errour is also at her most clear in this moment. She is “without entraile” and in the light: no twists or darkness obscure her meaning. When she sees the knight,
“one in mayle / Armed to point” (1.1.16.5-6) she looks to retreat: “[She] sought back to turne againe” (1.1.16). Spenser makes clear that Errour does not begin the fight, but that Redcrosse, construed like an animal set upon a baited beast, attacks as her back is turned:

Which when [her desire to retreat] the valiant Elfe perceiu’ed, he lept
As Lyon fierce vpon the flying pray,
And with his trenchand blade her boldly kept
From turning backe, and forced her to stay: (1.1.17.1-4).

Significantly here Spenser reminds us that Redcrosse is no man, but rather a “valiant Elfe”, a creature un-categorized amongst the earlier invoked “God and man,” as well as like a “Lyon fierce.” Andreas Höfele argues that along with the anthropomorphic, we should recognize how portrayals of human characters are ‘theriomorphic’. Theriomorphism, he states, might be considered “merely to give anthropomorphism another twist, similar to the double cross-dressing of boy-acts-girl-acting boy in As You Like It or Twelfth Night: human construed as animal construed as quasi-human” (38). Yet this double-crossing of species, like that of gender, unsettles the categories being crossed. Höfele contends that if the cross-dressed characters of Shakespeare offer “glimpses of liberating potentialities beyond the strictures of their social and ideological framing, then […] zoomorphic blendings open up larger spaces of inclusion beyond the narrowly circumscribed ‘borders of the human’”(38). The messiness of sharing company, “this very taintedness, this being-close-to the renting, tearing, and killing, also offers a unique platform for mobilizing resistance to it, for evoking sympathy for the suffering fellow creature” (38). While Errour is constructed as almost exclusively animal, it is Redcrosse Knight who is

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2 Note here the pun on “mayle/male/mail” pitting male against female.
theriomorphically construed. Höfele’s insights into the blendings of species in the various entertainment centers of early modern England are especially applicable to this scene that is set up like a baited fight. In allegorical terms, this scene should be Redcrosse Knight bringing the monstrous Errour to justice. Yet, as Höfele explains, “The chain of signification which links baiting and the spectacle of justice operates in a loop: as whipping the blind bear mimics a ritual of corporal punishment inflicted on humans, this ritual in turn is rooted in practices of subjugating, taming, and controlling animals. The humanizing of the mercilessly thrashed animal and the beastializing of the human delinquent emerge as two sides of the same coin.” (12). Errour and Redcrosse are each zoomorphically and theriomorphically blended in the pit of combat. Reframing the encounter between Redcrosse and Errour as a baiting scene troubles the role of the knight as a humanoid dispenser of justice. Höfele reminds us that “the type of entertainment offered at the Bear-Garden was modeled on human punishment, resembling in both form and appeal the attacks on victims of the scaffold, the stocks, the whipping posts, and the pillory, which ‘depended for their efficacy on the active participation of the public’. The bear would have been perceived as the more human-like creature, yet it fell to the dogs to execute the violent impulses of the human audience by proxy” (10). If Redcrosse Knight takes on the role of the dogs in worrying Errour into defending herself, he loses some of his humanity while allowing her to be cast in the role of the human-like victim.

Reading Errour through animal studies complicates her allegorical status. By giving Errour recognizable animal qualities and potent markers of her gender, Spenser gives her a wide allegorical berth. Unlike other eponymous allegorical villains, such as John Bunyan’s Wanton or Giant Slay-Good whose meaning is clearly marked, Spenser’s personification of Errour evokes an animality that leaves room for a less anthropocentric interpretation. Errour is established as a
creature enmeshed within a natural environment who, unlike other allegorical figures, does not seek out the hero in order to make a tropological point.

Dirty Ecologies

Despite the many categories that Errour inhabits, she does not lose her material heft. Everything from her “huge long taile” (1.1.15.2), her den, her impish brood, and her unorthodox effluvia, has a material presence in the text that cannot be ignored. Errour has, to return to the discussion from the introduction, what art historians Karen Overbey and Anne Harris describe as a “lush materiality,” yet one that operates through the peculiar draw of repulsion rather than the intoxicating appeal of the beautiful. Who could wrench their eye away from such a lush monster: with her tail “in knots and many boughts vpwound” (1.1.14.3) her thousand young ones, her woman’s upper half, and her fertile mouth? Materiality, as Michael Ann Holly describes, “is that which halts transparency” (16). Materiality momentarily brings to a standstill the directive to look through the object to its multiple levels of meaning. The specifics of Errour’s bizarre anatomy delay the reader from immediately replacing her material body with her allegorical meaning. Overbey and Harris state, “it stops us seeing through, seeing past, the object to something else, to something beyond or besides. It keeps us focused, it slows us down and makes us play, gives us pleasure. We will rediscipline our eye to look more closely, more materially, to admit play and pleasure, and to be moved in and by the object’” (133). Errour’s materiality is meant to move the reader, and Redcrosse Knight, through a sense of horror that acknowledges the material and slows the narrative down. Errour is “horribly displeaide” (1.1.14.7): Redcrosse and the reader do not see an abstract concept, but linger in the “glooming
light” (1.1.14.5) to take in the shape of Errour’s body, her intricate tail, her thousand young ones, and her “poisonous dugs” (1.1.15.6).

The terms used to describe Errour are all employed to invoke disgust. She is an “ugly” “monster vile” living in a “darksome hole” resting on the “durtie ground.” A “serpent horribly displaide,” “most lothsom filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine” with a “hideous” and “speckled taile,” a “cursed” and “hatefull head,” and a “ beastly” “body full of filthie sin” (1.1.13-24).

Disgust is a key element of Simon Estok’s theory of ecophobia. Broadly speaking, Estok defines ecophobia “as an irrational and groundless fear or hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature as homophobia and racism and sexism” (4). The entity marked as disgusting is seen as wrong, and “the contours of this wrongness both define the boundaries of the human and imply limits to ethical considerability of all that lies beyond those boundaries” (85). Errour’s monstrosity is built on her description as “filthy” and any ethical consideration for her destruction is bracketed by Redcrosse’s and the reader’s disgust. While Spenser’s emphasis on the repulsiveness of error in his allegorical romance epic is not surprising, it is important that error/Errour is coded as a deeply entrenched natural entity. Errour’s actions, body, and home environment are all distinctly placed in the natural and animal world and this realm is seen as disgusting. Dirt and animality become markers for error and wrongness. Redcrosse’s allegorical aversion to spiritual and moral error is made material in his hatred toward the non-human Errour who exists in an anthropologically antagonistic ecology of storms, dense forests, and dark and “durtie” dens. Dirt has an important valance in ecomaterialism: it is a term like ‘nature’ that vacillates from the nurturing base of civilization to its repulsive antithesis. It also, as Ladelle McWhorter notes, acts: it aggregates and self-perpetuates. One source of uneasiness with dirt is its uncontrollable agency: the fact that one is usually uncertain
what exactly that dirt is composed of, where it came from, and in what kind of networks it is or was participating. Dirt, as Heather Sullivan articulates, is highly mobile and hybrid. It includes organic and inorganic matter, actively participates in small-scale ecological processes, and is integrated into larger assemblages. (516). By repeatedly reminding us that Errour is dirty, Spenser is not only making an allegorical claim towards religious uncleanliness and spiritual wrongness, but is prompting the reader to note Errour’s material connection to the world around her on a micro and a macro scale. Dirt as a natural substance that surrounds and pervades Errour is a salient material metaphor in this scene. Redcrosse is in opposition to Una, who covers up her pale skin from any hint of dirt: she rides “Vpon a lowly Asse more white then snow, / Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide / Vnder a vele, that wimpled was full low” (1.1.4.2-4) and she advises against going toward Errour’s den. The youthful knight “full of fire and greedy hardiment” (1.1.14.1), however, is eager to grapple in the dirt and potentially be soiled by Errour. Dirt is ecophobiaically marked as sin in this narrative; Una knows that dirt is everywhere and one must be well-wimpled against it. Redcrosse, however, makes a futile attempt to eradicate all dirt from one hole in the ground.

Errour not only exists in a site of pollution—how might a den be “durtie”? what would a clean hole in the ground look like? is it possible to have a dirt space that isn’t dirty?—but is herself a contaminating site. When Redcrosse’s grip on her throat forces Errour to vomit, “Her filthy parbreake all the place defiled has” (1.1.20.9) while when Redcrosse strikes her head “from her body full of filthie sin” (1.1.24.7) “A streame of cole black bloud forth gushed from her corse” (1.1.24.9). The fluids that emerge from her body defile what has already been marked as dirty. Estok, in his reading of the ecophobia that permeates Hamlet, notes that “the play consistently conceptualizes the disgusting as nature” (86). Disorder, excess, and difference are
marked as rot: things gross, weedy, and rank in nature. One reason rot is a concern to theories about ecophobia is, according to Estok, “its imagined unpredictability, its willy-nilly transgressions and blurring of borders, and its perceived alliance with an antagonistic nature” (87). The pollution caused by the permeability of borders that this form of ecophobia suggests quickly becomes a problem of gender. Estok observes that when pollution is defined as a transgression of cultural boundaries, “bodily orifices being one such set of boundaries, pollution becomes matter of both gender and environment” (87). Errour with her exchangeable alimentary processes and unbounded relationship to her surroundings is the ultimate figure for a permeable feminized ecology.

**Material Gender and Engendering Material: The Trans-Corporeal Errour**

The corporeal material of *The Faerie Queene* is generative matter. Not only is the monstrous Errour persistently generative as she produces and sustains various progeny from multiple sites of her body, but she exists in within a corpus of texts with longstanding traditions and generative effects: patterns of words and ideas that are continually reformed into new textual bodies. Errour can best be read through Alaimo’s concept of “trans-corporeality,” defined as “the time-space where human corporeality, in all its material fleshiness, is inseparable from “nature” or “environment”” (238). Instead of imagining the environment as inert, empty space, trans-corporeal thinking recognizes that it is “a world of fleshly beings, with their own needs, claims, and actions” (238). “Trans” indicates movement across different human and nonhuman bodily sites, opening up a contiguous epistemological space that acknowledges the material interchanges and interconnections between these varied actants. The Errour scene must be read as trans-corporeal not only over the multiple bodies immediately present (Errour, her children,
the frogs, toads, Redcrosse, etc.) but also over the bodies present in the contiguous epistemological space of literary bodies.

As we move toward the material of Errour, we should first take into account the materials and environments contingent to her body. The vibrant environmental spaces that act upon and surround Errour, Redcrosse Knight, Una, the Dwarf, and their animal companions are garnered from common romance natural elements that when operating together, offer a kind of “deus ex natura” or a device in which an omniscient author shapes the natural world in order to move along the plot. The smooth plain, which aids the hero in his pricking pace, is suddenly filled up with clouds and “an hideous storme of rain” (1.1.6.6) chases Redcrosse and company into the wandering woods, which eventually leads to Errour’s den. Lowell Duckert delightfully notes that in a sudden storm “rain catches us” (115), that rain itself is a lively matter that creates alliances with all it touches: “a living rain propels (non)human things into new relationships and new material embodiments: it showers becomings” (115). Along with the rain, which by itself provokes the main characters into action, the open plain, woods, and cave creates an assemblage: a collaboration of human and non-human actants. One of this assemblage’s myriad effects is to push Redcrosse and Una narratively toward the encounter with Errour. The combination of the travelling companions, the plain, the rainstorm, the sheltering errant woods, and the dark cave, fits Bennett’s description of an assemblage: no one material “has sufficient competence to determine consistently the trajectory or impact of the group” (24) and it has a distinctive history of formation as well as a finite life span (all within the time and space of the storm). This assemblage, as Bennett notes, has an uneven topography: “some of the points at which the various affects and bodies cross paths are more heavily trafficked than others” (24). While the deluge prompts the knightly party into the forest, it is their delight in new agents (birds, a
catalogue of trees, a promisingly worn path) that repeatedly and eventually nudges them toward Errour’s den. These new agents within the forest confound the assemblage from within: the lofty trees rebuff the storm while the birds “Seemd in their song to scorne the cruell sky” (1.1.8.4).

Each entity in the assemblage is distinct—they do not dissolve into a new organism—but rather there is an effectivity proper to the grouping as such: an agency of the assemblage” (24). The emergent effect or agency of this assemblage works to enable the characters to wander into error.

Patricia Parker, Barbara Fuchs, and other prominent scholars of romance agree that wandering and delay are hallmark characteristics of the genre. With the insights of new materialism, I contend that this distinguishing narrative strategy occurs from a close attention to the agencies of assemblages. Spenser’s opening scene: a knight and a lady moving from a hostile natural environment to becoming lost in a pleasant wood and about to encounter a monster is about as common a scene from renaissance romance as they come. Yet the dilation of this narrative is elicited by a number of elements working together. The essential wandering of the romance narrative is enabled by the revealing of agential meshworks and mutually influencing human and non-human bodies that propel the narrative along. While the human characters make important choices along their journey, the nonhuman assemblages that surround them frame those choices to the point where human and non-human agencies become diffuse emergent effects rather than singular and separate points of action.3

As the environmental elements combine to generate further plot, the opening scene is also dripping with the language of fructifying matter: a prefigure for the productive parbreak of Errour and the fertile slime of the Nile river to which it is compared.

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3 In this way, even the straightforward allegory of being morally lost is complicated by agentic accountability. If the rain drives Redcrosse into the wood and the wood leads him to Errour, who is really responsible?
And angry Jove an hideous storme of raine
Did poure into his Lemans lap so fast,
That euery wight to shrowd it did constrain,
And this faire couple eke to shroud themselues were fain. (1.1. )

A. C. Hamilton, in his edition of the *Faerie Queene* states that this scene originates in Virgil’s *Georgics*, noting, “the storm suggests the myth of the sky impregnating the earth, which marks the beginning of creation, as in Virgil […] and here of Spenser’s creation of faery land” (33). Hamilton also notes that “as initiates the action of Bk. I, ‘hideous’ anticipates Errour’s ‘hideous taile’ (16.2) to which the storm leads” (33). Lars-Haken Svensson argues that the elemental violence described in Spenser’s lines is contrasted with the joy in the description of the union in Virgil’s poem. In Virgil, and the Lucretian passages that underlie his hymn to spring, “the *hieros gamos* between the sky and earth is accompanied by mention of earth swelling, seeds begin sown, trees coming into leaf, and birds singing” (84). The sparseness of Spenser’s version suggests to Svensson a depiction of the fallen world. Where the Virgillian description intimates a prelapsarian paradise, Spenser’s poem presents an “irate godhead, terrifying natural forces, and unbridled sexuality” (84). In Spenser’s version, the generative rain isn’t seen to immediately benefit the open plain. Rather it soaks through the “plain” unerroneous space to the groundwater where it eventually finds its convoluted way to pool in the fecund well of Errour’s den.

Thinking through this scene trans-corporeality connects the plain that receives Jove’s seminal liquid with the material substance of Errour’s cave: both are common ground. Earthly matter in this scene is thrice reiterated as womb-like, from Juno’s lap, to the soil and weedy grass outside of Errour’s home, to the muddy banks of the swollen Nile river. All ground and all matter in this scene is to be read as fruitful and this production is either marked by violence or by
uncertainty in the potentially malformed spawn it may produce. What separates Spenser’s lines from the celebratory passages in Virgil’s *Georgics*, is the violent speed by which the fructifying liquid is discharged. Instead of a gentle Jove who showers his lover, we see an angry god who pours a torrent so fast into his Leman’s lap “That euery wight to shroud it did constrain” (1.1.6.8). The quickness of this burst of liquid echoes the later spewing of Errour’s parbreak in reaction to Redcrosse’s grip around her gorge. The next instance of the word “pour” occurs in Errour’s retaliation when “She poured forth out of her hellish sinke” deformed monsters from which Redcrosse attempts to shroud himself. Production is therefore weaponized and diffused. Forceful generation is not singular and phallic, but instead is disseminated or broadcast into a wide generative shower.

The earth of Spenser’s romance is seeded by multiple paternal figures: Jove and the Nile, as well as Ovid and Virgil. As the material ground of faerie land is intermingled with various generative elements, it is also a mixture of classical influences. The description of Redcrosse Knight’s encounter with Errour is interrupted by two main extended similes: both deeply rooted in literary tradition, romance, and in the natural world. The first likens Errour’s generative parbreak to the procreative flooding of the Nile:

As when old father *Nilus* gins to swell
With timely pride aboue the *Aegyptian* vale,
His fattie waues do fertile slime outwell,
And ouerflow each plaine and lowly dale:
But when his later spring gins to auale,
Huge heapes of mudd he leaues, wherein there breed
Ten thousand kindes of creatures, partly male
And partly female of his fruitfull seed;

Such vgly monstrous shapes elswhere may no man reed. (1.1.21.1-9)

Spenser draws directly on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* 1.416-437 for this scene.⁴ Shakespeare incorporates the same selection for Act 2.7.17-29 of *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Critics have noted other literary sources for Errour, including Hesiod’s account of Echidna.⁵ Errour’s porousness and fluidity may be inherited from her likeness’ Echidna’s mother, the nymph Callirrhoë whose name means “Beautiful Flow.” Hester Lees-Jeffries also convincingly argues that the description from the *Metamorphoses* of the origin of the great Python destroyed by Apollo, which immediately follows the section Spenser borrowed, could also be a significant influence.

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⁴ From Arthur Golding’s contemporary 1587 translation:

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The lustie earth of owne accord soone after fourth did bring,
According to their sundry shapes each other liuing thing,
As soon as that the moisture once caught heate against the sunne,
And that the fat and slimie mud in moorish grounds begunne,
To swell through warmth of Pheobus beames and that the fruifull seede
Of things well cherisht in the fat and liuelie soile indeed,
As in their mothers wombe began in length of time to grow
To one or other kinde of shape wherein themselues to show.
So likewise when the seuen-mouthed Nile the watrie fields forsook,
And to his ancient chanell est his brideled streames betooke.
So that the sunne did heat the mud the which he left behind,
The husbandmen that tild the ground, among the clods did find,
Of sundry creatures sundry shapes, of which they spied some,
Euen in the instant of their birth but newly then begunne,
And some unperfect wanting breast or shoulder in such wise,
That in one body oftentimes appears to their eies
That halfe thereof aliue to be, and all the rest beside,
Both void of life and seemely shape, starke earth to still abide.
For when that moisture with the heat is tempred equally
They strait conceiue, and of them twaine ingender by and by
All kinde of thing, for though that fire with water ay debateth,
Yet moisture mixt wyth equall heat all liuing things createth.
And so those discords in their kinde one striuing wyth the other,
In generation do agree and make one perfect mother. (1.416-437).
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⁵ “And in a hollow cave she [the nymph Callirhoë] bare another monster, irresistible, in no wise like either to mortal men or to the undying gods, even the goddess fierce Echidna who is half a nymph with glancing eyes and fair cheeks, and half again a huge snake, great and awful, with speckled skin, eating raw flesh beneath the secret parts of the holy earth” (*Theogony*).
on Spenser’s Errour. I believe that Spenser used more from Hesiod’s *Theogony* than just the Echidna description. Errour has a precursor in Cronus’ devouring and regurgitation of his children: the Olympian gods and goddesses Demeter, Hestia, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon (inverting gendered material once again). Errour’s fecund bodily fluids also echo the spontaneous generation of Uranus’ body: from his blood were made the Gigantes, Erinyes, and the Meliae, and the goddess Aphrodite was formed from the foam that rose when Uranus’ genitals were cast into the sea. Even the episode when Deucalion and Pyrrha are commanded to throw the “bones of their mother,” the stones of the earth, behind them to repopulate the world is a strange mixture of the projectile procreation and the use of mother’s bodies for the good of their children found in the *Faerie Queene*. In the literary traditions that influence the Errour scene, all material has the potential to be generative. Mud, stones, seeds, body parts, and bodily fluids, are all fertile, gender is fungible, and the birthing process is muddled with the digestive.

The peculiar dichotomy of fertile mother and “old father Nius” is paired with the oddness of the spontaneous generation of both flood and monster. Lees-Jeffries states that, in Echidna and the Python, “Errour's classical precursors […] add a dimension of horrific and depraved maternity to the monster's depiction as a parodic or infernal source. The Python, although male in the *Metamorphoses*, is threatening simply in its spontaneous generation from slime (a loaded word throughout *The Faerie Queene*: compare the description of Orgoglio as “this monstrous masse of earthly slime” in 1.7.9 and the stipulation in 3.6.3 that Belphoebe was born “Pure and vnspted from all loathly crime, / That is ingenerate in fleshly slime”). It is a type of disordered, unauthored creation. In other sources, however, the Python is explicitly

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6 Lees-Jeffries also argues that Errour is a parodic fountain: an inversion of the well of life from *Revelations* and *Genesis*.  

female, and acts as foster mother to another monster, Typhon” (151). Harry Berger, Jr. notes that “the comparison is puzzling because it compares a female monster to an “old father” and because it uses procreation as an analogue of regurgitation and displaces the comparison from the more obvious analogue, Error’s “thousand yong ones” (1.1.15). The image of the old father’s generosity and lavish spending is an apologia for male sexuality. But its insertion in the text only confuses Error’s muddle of functions—indiscriminate ingestion, inefficient digestion, regurgitation as a form of combat—by mapping procreation onto them, thus emphasizing her weird relation to her children, and narrowing attention from the loathsomeness of a monstrous female to that of a monstrous mother” (59).

Monstrous mothers are created through the intra-action of their bodies and their children. Karen Barad’s agential realism posits “intra-activity,” as opposed to interactivity, which “rejects an ontology whereby “things” precede their relations. Instead, “relata” (as opposed to discrete “things”) “do not preexist relations; rather, relata-within-phenomena emerge through specific intra-actions” (815). Literary mothers who are seen as monstrous, like Errour, do not preexist their children. Instead, the bodies of children and mother may be read as relata-within-phenomena that emerge through the intra-actions of birthing to create monstrous progeny and monstrous wombs. Fathers, however, escape this emerging monstrosity. The intra-action of male bodily generative material and female productive agencies is not discursively combined into the same phenomena. Ovid’s account describes creatures of all kinds gestating in the “fat and slimie mud” and “well cherisht in the fat and liuely soil” “as in their mothers wombe began in length of time to grow”. While there are sundry creatures of sundry shapes, and some “unperfect”, and even, in the later section “straunge and ougly shapes as never erst were sene” it is made clear “In that she [Earth] did such Monsters breede was greatly to hir woe” (1.416-442).
While the Earth laments her various miscarriages and “monstrous births,” she is not named as monstrous the way Errour is characterized. Errour’s errant offspring reflexively mark their mother with the monstrous. Errour’s den has been repeatedly described as “womb-like” and it is located in a “darksome hole” in the ground. The Egyptian workers who till the land and find the sundry creatures generated by the Nile flood (in what may be read as various fetal stages) disturb the lively soil in much the same way as Redcrosse turns out Errour from her earthy den. Likewise, Errour’s vomit is a birth-like breaking of the waters, but too early. She is forced by violence to release her children from her body. These “ugly monstrous shapes” also seem like fetal offspring—unperfect because they are not finished gestating in the warm dark of either soil or body. What is further troubling about the Nile/Errour comparison is that Nilus is allowed regality in his “timely pride” and the fact that his “fruitful seed” breeds out of the “huge heapes of mud” he leaves behind. As an “old father” Nilus replaces the ancient Isis tradition, where the river is characterized as a positive and fruitful mother figure. Nilus is a male figure who deposits his “fertile slime” and lets his progeny generate in the moist body of the riverbank, but who escapes any culpability if the children prove monstrous.

Spenser compares Errour’s “floud of poison horrible and blacke” (1.1.20.2) with the Nile’s “fattie waues” of “fertile slime” (1.1.21.3). The black poison and the fertile fluvial waters are both generative and life-giving substances. The poison’s blackness, registering as inky and night-shaded, is much like the cherished gardening compost “black gold”: a dark liquid distillation of organic material that coaxes maximum growth potential when poured into the soil. Poison and compost are both compared on the same natural register. Errour’s body also becomes Nile-like. When Redcrosse rifts her head from her body, “A streame of cole black bloud forth
gushed from her corse” (1.1.24.9). This is another flooding: Spenser’s flexible spelling puns “corpse” with “course” as the stream of Errour’s life-force breaks from its course.

The second major simile is pastoral. Spenser describes Errour’s children, both from her fertile parbreak and those that pour from her “hellish sink,” as “sore annoy[ing]” the knight as a shepherd is pestered by gnats in the evening:

As gentle Shepheard in sweete euen-tide,
When ruddy Phoebus gins to welke in west,
High on a hill, his flocke to vewen wide,
Markes which do byte their hasty supper best;
A cloud of combrous gnattes do him molest,
All striuing to infixe their feeble stings,
That from their noyance he no where can rest,
But with his clownish hands their tender wings
He brusheth oft, and oft doth mar their murmurings. (1.1.23.1-9).

The pastoral was seen as the highest treatment of the romance genre in the early modern period. Philip Sidney’s *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* had the same publishing date of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, but was circulated in manuscript form and was much admired and copied before it went to the printing press. The pastoral was a continuation of classical literary and philosophical traditions and often idealized its subjects and their surroundings; the use of the form to describe Errour’s children is surprising. Additionally, the connection between gnat and shepherd held a very particular meaning for Spenser. Having annoyed his patron Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, Spenser took it upon himself to pen a translation of Virgil’s *Culex* as an apology and homage to his sponsor.
Virgil’s *Gnat* begins with the dawn, rather than the evening, yet the shepherd follows his flock first “To an high mountains top” (73) and eventually to a shady wood with a catalogue of trees much like the arboreal list Spenser gives in Book I of the *Faerie Queene*, including oak, pine, holme (elm), cypress, yew, poplar, ash, and myrtle. The shepherd falls asleep, “Of trecherie or traines nought tooke he keep” (241). The “traines” foreshadows the Serpent that soon comes his way, as well as “Errour’s endlesse traine” (1.1.18.9). Spenser’s description of the Serpent also matches Hesiod’s Echidna with her glancing eyes: “And his bright eyes glauncing full dreadfullie, / Did seeme to flame out flakes of flashing fyre” (262-263). The Gnat is the hero of the poem, “A little noursling of the humid ayre” (282) who stings the sleeping shepherd in the eye, alerting him of the impending danger: “His little needle there infixing deep, / Warnd him awake, from death himselfe to keep” (287-288). The shepherd, “Wherewith enrag’d, he fiercely gan vpstart, / And with his hand him rashly bruzing, slewe” (289-290) the Gnat. No good deed goes unpunished. The Gnat comes back to the shepherd in a dream, traveling from the underworld and despairing his place among ancient Greek heroes and famous figures while the shepherd owes the small creature his life.

The Gnat, like Errour’s children, is a “noursling” that also strives to infix his feeble sting in the pastoral hero. In light of *Virgil’s Gnat*, Redcrosse Knight’s fault in destroying Errour and attempting to destroy her gnat-like children seems all the more certain. While Errour’s swarming brood are not trying to warn Redcrosse from their half-serpent mother, Spenser’s use of the pastoral gnat simile gives them a potential subjectivity, agency, and bathos-inflected nobility that Redcrosse, like the rash Shepherd, is sure to miss.
Errour in Her Piety

Redcrosse Knight’s penetration of Errour’s den has long been read as a clash between the male figure in “mayle” and the personification of dangerous feminine sexuality and fecundity. Her womb-like mouth, her abiogenetic bile, and the porousness of her body provide a humeral horror of generative excess. Heidi Breuer, invoking Lacan and Kristeva, describes Errour as a “classic phallic mother threaten[ing] to engulf Redcrosse, wrapping him in her voluminous tail, smothering him, and prompting Una to shout, “Strangle her, else she sure will strangle thee” (1.1.19.4)” (125). Redcrosse Knight escapes from “Errours endlessse traine” (1.1.18.9) by attempting to close down Errour’s means of production: “he grypt her gorge” (1.1.19.8). However, this only leads to an even more disturbing form of propagation as Errour spews out more progeny. While scholars have focused primarily on the hysterical and multiple wombs spread throughout Errour’s body and her environment—from her fruitful den, the weedy grass outside it, and her mouth—I want to take a closer look at her state as an actively breastfeeding mother.

Early modern medical practitioners and writers thought breastmilk to be whitened blood. This wasn’t actually too far off the mark. Prompted by the hormone prolactin, human milk ducts take proteins, sugars, and fat from the blood supply and make breastmilk. While not exactly whitened blood, the make-up of breastmilk is a composite of elements gathered from the bloodstream. Where early modern understanding differs is in a humeral understanding of breastmilk. As Victoria Sparey notes, breast milk was accredited many of the same influences over progeny that were associated with the nourishing uterine blood during pregnancy (782). Breastmilk was a distillation, or what may be called in the period, an expression, of the nursing woman’s character, bodily properties, diet, environment, beliefs, and responses: a tincture condensed from
a wide semiotic and material ecology. This potent liquid not only nourished the child, but had the potential to shape his or her health, appearance, mood, and character. In light of the latent dangers pertaining to the humeral effects of breast milk, medical literature urged nursing women to follow strict dietary and behavioral regimens similar to those recommended to women during pregnancy. Advice books also urged parents to choose a nurse with attributes that would not only ensure safety and nutrition, but that might have a positive effect on their children’s character and bodily development. Spenser was acutely concerned with the presumed transformative effects a nurses’ milk could have on an infant. In “A Vewe of the Present State of Ireland,” Spenser inveighs against the practice of English aristocrats using Irish wet-nurses, arguing that the children “drawe into themselves, together with their sucke, even the nature and disposition of their nurses” (42). The breastmilk of Irish wet-nurses, he argues, causes the bodies and hearts of English children to become Irish.

James Guillemeau, in his treatise “The Happy Delivery of Women” (1612) argued that a nurse must be prudently chosen for her lineage, that “there being none of her race, whether it be grandfather, or grandmother, nay, not so much as one of her great grandfathers, or ancient progenitors, that hath ever been stayned, or spotted, either in bodie or mind” (2). A good nurse should also be chosen for her appearance, “She must have a pleasing countenance, a bright and cleare eie, a well formed nose, neither crooked, nor of a bad smell, a ruddie mouth, and verie white teeth” (3). She ought to be of good behavior, “without being angry or fretfull: for there is nothing that sooner corrupts the blood, of which the milke is made, than choler, or sadness” (4), and she should refrain from all sexual relations (for these heat the blood too much), she should not be with child, and should be at least two months past her delivery.
Errour fails on all counts. She is outwardly and inwardly spotted, described as one hated by God and man, she is sexualized, is in a constant state of parturition, and most especially, she is described in terms employed to invoke disgust. She is an “ugly” “monster vile” living in a “darksome hole” resting on the “durtie ground.” A “serpent horribly displaide,” “most lothsom filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine” with a “hideous” and “speckled taile,” a “cursed” and “hatefull head,” and a “beastly” “body full of filthie sin” (1.1.13-24). In light of her humoral make-up her breasts are unsurprisingly denigrated as “poisonous dugs”. The only aspect of Errour’s nursing that would have been lauded is that she does not put her children out to wet-nurse, and thus circumvents any outside influence on her children’s physical, moral, and social shape. However, as a humerally imbalanced and monstrous mother her children are already in trouble.

Lactating women were urged to avoid strong smells or tastes. Guillemeau instructs women to “avoid all bad ayre, and all kind of ill and stinking smells: for such scents are too strong, are naught and hurtfull for her, because they infect and over-heat the spirits, and blood, whereof the milk is made” (8-9). Guillemeau and others also caution against eating too much meat. When meat is eaten, it should be in small portions it must be thoroughly boiled. In the scene in which Errour is forced to vomit, readers are privy to a unique look at Errour’s diet: one that includes the famous books and papers, along with poison, frogs and toads, and great lumps of raw meat: all of it stinking. While no one’s meal experienced twice is at all delectable, the regurgitated contents of Errour’s gullet are particularly foul and at extreme odds with the carefully moderated diets expected of nursing women.

The inclusion of books and papers in Errour’s unwholesome output allows Errour to be interpreted as an embodiment of the early modern printing press. The textual expulsions from
her gullet are usually glossed as heretical pamphlets or Catholic doctrine. While I will argue later for the continued reading of Errour as an analogue for the printing press, I want to think more about what it means for heretical texts to be on the menu for a monstrous nursing mother. If taken as objects of humeral potency the sacrilegious texts in Errour’s stomach are perhaps more dangerous than copies in a matrix. In a mechanical process of textual reproduction, new copies of heretical books and papers may be created and disseminated. These copies may influence the minds and actions of those who read them. As humeral objects of dissent and heresy, however, the essence of these texts aren’t copied but rather distilled through the breast into a powerful substance with the ability to transform bodies. It seems telling that when Redcrosse eventually kills Errour, by rifting her head from her body, “A streame of cole black bloud forth gushed fro[m]; her corse” (1.1.24). The black blood, like the black poison in her belly is a milk supply tainted by sin and humeral imbalance, but suggestively, her blood is transformed into ink: the material distillation of the words on a page. Errour’s children, by being fed daily on this humeral solution of loathsome books are all “Of sundry shapes, yet all ill favored” (1.1.). In this scene the power of texts to shape bodies is aligned with the uneasy narrative of breastfeeding women shaping bodies.

Breastfeeding becomes a matter of expression. Nurses, even monstrous ones like Errour, shape infant bodies with their humeral influence. Representations of nursing that are co-opted into other discourses work to build identities or align oneself to emblematic traditions. Breastfeeding’s lived experience in the early modern period and today are equally about identity formation. In these cases, the nursing body not only shapes the bodies of the children, but is discursively and ideologically shaped by the act of nursing. Alongside the medical treatise, the most common early modern texts on breastfeeding are tracts, pamphlets, books, and dialogues
persuading mothers to breastfeed their own babies. Often these are written by wealthy women who personally campaign for the practice. Elizabeth Clinton’s *The Countess of Lincolne’s Nursery* is one such text. These documents redefine the identity of mother as a woman who not only bears her child in her womb, but in her arms as well. In these documents, the naturalness of breastfeeding is repeatedly affirmed. The Countess of Lincoln cites God’s ordinance, Biblical precedent, and natural affection in her arguments. The most common objections to mother’s breastfeeding that these texts address are a husband’s disapproval (Valerie Fildes posits this is due to husbands wanting sexual access to their wives without having to wait until the weaning period, or it may be in hand with the pressure to produce more heirs as lactating has contraceptive effects), the inconvenience for women in demanding social structures, fears about bodily weakness, youth, or milk quality, and more trivially, the lack of fashionable clothing for nursing mothers. Addressing these concerns crafts the image of a nursing mother who is aligned with nature and God, who asserts authority even in the domestic sphere, and who overcomes fears and more ephemeral desires. Given the number of upper and middle class women who put their children out to nurse, this was a difficult ideal to obtain.

Presenting Errour as nursing her thousand young ones upholds the allegory of Errour producing error, as her erroneous progeny are sustained as well as produced from her body. Emphasizing Errour’s nursing at the beginning of the encounter also sets up the strange manner of her end.

In the beginning of the conflict, Redcrosse Knight intrudes into Errour’s maternal space and interrupts her in the process of feeding her young ones. Despite Redcrosse’s initial callousness towards (and eventual killing “without remorse” (1.1.24.8) of) Errour, he shows a glimmer of sympathy at her end. Yet this sympathy is yet another error: a misreading of the
motivations and circumstances of Errour’s children, and a telling misreading of a common emblem of the Elizabethan period. When Errour’s children burst after overfilling their bellies with her blood, the narrator comments, “well worthy end / Of such as drunke her life, the which them nurst;” (1.1.26.6-7). Redcrosse calls Errour’s brood “vnkindly Impes of heauen accurst” (1.1.26.2) and rebukes them for “Making [their mother’s] death their life, and eke her hurt their good” (1.1.25.9). The stanza that describes this scene is disturbing in part because of the material and social loss the yong ones endure:

Her scattred brood, soone as their Parent deare
They saw so rudely falling to the ground,
Groning full deadly, all with troublous feare,
Gathred themselues about her body round,
Weening their wonted entrance to haue found
At her wide mouth: but being there withstood
They flocked all about her bleeding wound,
And sucked vp their dying mothers blood, (1.1.25.1-8).

Here Errour is described as a parent “deare” whose children groan in terror and gather themselves about her. When they cannot find their usual entrance and escape from danger as we see them do in the beginning of the encounter with Redcrosse, they revert to their other wonted source of comfort from their mother, as the pun on “weening” seems to suggest. However, unlike the natural moderation of breastfeeding, Redcrosse has opened Errour up violently. Her once permeable body that continually fed, enclosed, and generated children, now fully ruptured becomes their death. What Redcrosse reads as a “well worthy end” is merely a continuation of the damage he has wrought.
Jean Feerick and Joan Fitzpatrick both locate the breastfeeding Erreur as resonant with Spenser’s anxieties over Irish cultural influence. Feerick reads Erreur as a vile nurse who offers poison at the teat: ultimately contaminating and contaminated by her offspring as they return to her mouth. Both Feerick and Fitzpatrick note the similarities to Erreur’s end in its unseemly exchange of blood and milk and strange reversals with the horrible account, related by Irenius in *A Vewe on the Present State of Ireland*, to the execution of Murrough O’Brien. As he is being drawn and quartered, O’Brien’s Irish foster mother drinks the blood of her decapitated foster son, exclaiming that “the earth was not worthie to drynke yt” (77). This reference doubly emphasizes Spenser’s claims of Irish savagery and unnatural motherhood.

As briefly noted by James Nohrnberg and Joseph Campana, the scene of Erreur’s scattered brood drinking her blood is akin to the long heraldic and bestiary tradition of the pelican in her piety. Spenser’s use of the term “brood” for Erreur’s children and describing that they “flocked all about her bleeding wound” (1.1.25.1-8) further suggests an avian connection. Pelicans were emblems of parental sacrifice: they were believed to peck at their own breasts to feed their young with their blood. This tradition most likely evolved from watching pelicans press at their chests in order to fully empty their gular pouch or to macerate the fish caught there for regurgitation to their young. Some species of pelicans also have blood-red pouches and red markings on their beaks and chest feathers. The vulning “pelican in her piety” became a symbol for Christ’s sacrifice and the Eucharist. In the early modern period the emblem of the pelican in her piety became markedly Protestant and played a role in the English Reformation. Henry VIII is said to have compelled Archbishop Cranmer to change the three cranes (a pun on his name) on his paternal crest to three vulning pelicans. Ralph Morice, Cranmer’s secretary, recounts: “The kyng declaring that those birds shoulde signifie to hym that he oughte to be redie as the pelicane
ys to shede his bloode for his yonge ones brought upp in the faith of Christe : for (saied to kyng) you arr like to be tested yf you stand to your tacklyng at lengeth” (2). Cranmer’s pelican arms were positioned on the great bible of 1540 and a depiction of the pelican in her piety was included in the frontispiece of the King James Bible (1611) (figure 1).

Figure 1: Close-up of the frontispiece of the King James Version of the Bible, engraving by Cornelius Boel, 1611. Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania.

As the mother of the Church of England, Elizabeth I also adopted the pelican as a potent symbol of faithfulness and sacrificial maternity. The pelican in her piety appears on many of Elizabeth’s official documents (see figures 2 and 3) and even the ship in which Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the globe was first named *The Pelican* in her honor. In the *Pelican Portrait* by Nicholas Hilliard (1575) the queen is shown wearing a noteworthy pelican pendant at her breast (see figures 4 and 5). The red stain on the silver breast of the wrought pelican makes the materiality of the symbol all the more arresting.
The pelican in her piety symbol as emblematized sanguine nursing is greatly distorted from the lived experience of early modern women. Male ecclesiastical figures appropriate images of breastfeeding as metaphors for Christian doctrine. Early modern pedagogical texts readily describe catechisms as milk: a first spiritual food. Elizabeth’s strategic deployment of the pelican in her piety symbol attempts to assert a powerful narrative of monarchical self-martyrdom or sacrifice and to control the image of herself as a mother to her state children. This symbol works on a religious register while also filling in for the uncomfortable lack of heirs whom she might physically feed with her body.
The bestiary tradition of the pelican has two major strains that are differently gendered. In one tradition, the pelican’s children pester and strike at the paternal parent. In an angry response, he strikes back at the fledglings and mortally wounds them. After three days of grievous mourning, he pierces his breast (or his side) and the sprinkling blood vivifies the offspring. This tradition makes for an easy comparison with Christian theology and also becomes an analogue for ungrateful children. In the female version however, which was more widely emblematized, the vulning of the pelican is a kind of sanguine nursing: a charitable act of nurture and self-sacrifice. There is also a third version of the bestiary tale, believed to date back to at least St. Jerome, where the chicks are slaughtered by one or many serpents and the parent bird (of either gender, but usually the mother) brings them back to life with his or her blood.
Shakespeare includes three references to the pelican bestiary tradition in his oeuvre. They are all gendered male, and follow the male pelican versions of the story. The first, in *Richard II*, comes in John of Gaunt’s scathing rebuke of Richard II:

> O, spare me not, my brother Edward’s son,
> For that I was his father Edward’s son!
> That blood already, like the pelican,
> Hast thou tapped out and drunkenly caroused. (2.1.131-4).

Richard II’s suspected murder of his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, is a type of self-wounding. Because Richard, Gloucester, and Gaunt share the same blood (descended from Edward III) the spilling of Gloucester’s blood makes Richard the violent and offending offspring of the male pelican and also a vulner pelican himself. By destroying the generation before him, Richard has wounded himself and “tapped out” (2.1.134) the honor that his grandfather’s blood has given him. He is a closed loop pelican: the son pecking his male forefathers, using up what sustaining royal blood they can offer, and leaving an irreparable wound to his own sovereignty.

In *Hamlet*, Laertes inverts the male pelican’s role in his desire to avenge his father. He states that “To his [Polonius’s] good friends thus wide I’ll ope my arms / And, like the kind life-rend’ring pelican, / Repast them with my blood” (4.5.167-9). He is willing to shed his blood in order to revivify his father’s honor: a reversal of the father’s desire to bring his children back to life. Laertes may also be referring to the serpent version of the story: his blood will be an antidote to those of his father’s friends poisoned by treachery.

Perhaps the most famous reference in Shakespeare to the pelican tradition is in *King Lear*. Mad on the heath and after encountering Edgar, Lear declares:

> […] Nothing could have subdued nature
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.
Is it the fashion that discarded fathers
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?
Judicious punishment! ‘Twas this flesh begot
Those pelican daughters. (3.4.76-81).

The mutual abuse of the male pelican’s relationship to his offspring is reflected in this passage. The pecking pelican daughters have little mercy on their father’s flesh, and he feels little mercy for theirs. The pelican image returns in part in the final scenes when Lear is reunited with his daughter. Lear suggests he and Cordelia will “sing like birds i’ th’ cage” (5.3.10) and then mourns, like the pelican who has wounded his children to death, until his heart breaks over her deceased body. This time, however, the father’s blood does not restore his progeny.

So the question is why does Spenser model the end of the monstrous Errour and her brood so closely with the pelican in her piety tradition? If the pelican stands for not only the Protestant Christian faith, but also for Spenser’s hoped-for patron and the Faerie Queene herself, Errour may be read as a kind of anti-Elizabeth. Elizabeth’s motherhood of church and country is life-giving, while Errour’s blood ultimately obliterates her children. Elizabeth’s use of the pelican is to identify her person as a source of truth who freely gives of herself, while Errour is a source of misinformation that is spread through a violence from an outside source. Much like the direct associations between Errour and Father Nílus in this scene, the association between the Elizabeth/Pelican and Errour are difficult to fully prize apart into coherent binaries. Nílus is a positive figure of generation while Errour’s productive flood invokes disgust. Here Elizabeth’s Protestant and monarchical motherhood and its positive associations is negatively echoed in Errour’s bodily excess.
The scene of Errour’s children drinking her blood sullies the emblem of the pelican in her piety with a misogynistic ecophobia. The female is a figure of liquid exchange, and in the Errour scene this excess is destroying rather than life-giving. The maternal form of pious self-sacrifice famously used by Elizabeth relies on the blood being a Christian panacea. Errour’s children drink her blood to excess: not unlike Richard II who has “tapped out and drunkenly caroused” the blood of his forefathers, they “satisfide their bloudy thurst” (1.1.26.4) on their mother, who is a personification of moral error. It is here where the material, specifically the volume of the material, disturbs the allegory. It is presumed that in the Christian allegory the pelican’s chicks are moderate in their intake of their parent’s blood: just as to gorge oneself on the Eucharist would be a form of blasphemy. And yet, there is no such thing in this theology as an excess of desire for the redemption of Christ’s blood—adherents are asked to thirst for true Christian knowledge as much as Errour’s children thirst for the milk and blood of her body. Gastronomic desire is separated from pious, philosophical, desire. By inverting the image of the pelican in her piety to Errour’s brood in their impiety Spenser works to disassociate the human connection to the animal. The animality of Errour’s children, the desire that makes them drink her blood, is difficult to allegorize, and the physical consequences of their over-consumption are bizarre and hyperbolic. The animality of the pelican, however, is almost entirely erased. The pelican is self-aware in the offering of her sacrifice and the feeling of pain as she is vulning, and her compassion and care of her children is a trait easily transferred as a human ideal. Strangely, Errour, despite the blood-drinking scene, is much more like an actual pelican than the emblematic one. Pelican’s feed their young by regurgitation at first, and then by catching fish in their pouch, mashing them up, and then offering their open mouths to their fledglings. Errour’s
parbreak full of “lumpes of flesh and gobbets raw” (1.1.20.3) may actually be appetizing to a young pelican.

Errour is already an ecology of excess, birthing and feeding her thousand young ones daily, yet Redcrosse knight disturbs this ecology and makes it run over and burst. What was once contained within a single dark cave and a single body has now “gush[ed] forth” (1.1.26.6) and “all the place defiled” (1.1.20.9). The destruction of the mother Errour, and the surety that error will reappear in the romance narrative seems to hint at another of Elizabeth I’s favorite symbols: the phoenix. Hilliard painted a companion *Pelican Portrait*, this time with a pendant of the fabled phoenix rising at Elizabeth’s breast (see figures 6 and 7). Instead of a fiery rebirth, the fertile liquid substances of Errour seep into the romance narrative to erupt again.

The most memorable portions of the Errour episode deal with the things that emerge from the half-woman/half-serpent’s mouth. When Redcrosse “grypt[s] her gorge with so great paine” (1.1.19.8) Errour retches:

Therewith she spewd out of her filthy maw
A floud of poyson horrible and blacke,
Full of great lumpes of flesh and gobbets raw,
Which stunck so wildly, that it forst him slacke
His grasping hold, and from her turne him backe:
Her vomit full of bookes and papers was,
With loathly frogs and toades, which eyes did lacke,
And creeping sought way in the weedy gras:
Her filthy parbreake all the place defiled has. (1.1.20.1-9).

Books and papers comingle with toads, gobbets of flesh, vomit, and poison in a list worthy of a “Latour litany” from object-oriented-ontology. Reading this selection through Ian Bogost’s description of object-oriented-ontology lists, this catalogue arguably “[abandons] anthropocentric narrative coherence in favor of worldly detail” (42), yet it offers what Steve Mentz, in his response to Bogost’s encomium of the list in literature, terms “a soupy brown challenge” (208) by simultaneously emphasizing amalgam over separation. As sudden and strange as the act of vomiting itself, the visceral connection to this jarring list of objects invites surprise and repulsion before any attempt at narrative interpretation. The difference between frogs and toads actively creeping away and regurgitated books and papers is enough to cause the moment of disjunction that Bogost admires in lists: an incoherence that “remind[s] us that no
matter how fluidly a system may operate, its members nevertheless remain utterly isolated, mutual aliens” (40). It forces us to consider whether we are meant to take each item in Errour’s parbreak as an allegorical singular: poison separate from a partially digested carnivorous meal, separate from live amphibians, separate from books and papers. It seems, however, that while the items are disjointed, they are mutually tainting and not isolated aliens at all: the poisonous valence and presumed sightlessness of early modern frogs and toads renders the books and papers equally pestilential and blind, the gobbets of flesh and the slick fetus-like bodies of the amphibians are mirror images of each other as the half-eaten and the half-birthed. The frogs are the textual progeny of one of Spenser’s sources in Revelations 17:13 “17:13: “And I sawe three vncleane spirites like frogges, come out of the mouth of ye dragon, & out of the mouth of the beast, & out of the mouth of the false prophete.” In Spenser’s version, the simile is made allegorical metaphor: here not only the movement but the material of the frog’s bodies is displayed. The material qualities of these amphibious bodies as they “creeping sought way in the weedy gras” (1.1.20.8) make the scene more potent as a materialized allegory. Early modern readers recognizing the Biblical imprint are now prompted to think about the material relationships and existence of these leggy creatures. While the “vncleane spirites” who only look like frogs are quickly moved up the exegetical ladder and are spread throughout the globe, “For they are the spirites of deuyls workyng miracles, to go out vnto the kynges of the earth, and of the whole worlde, to gather them to the battayle of that great day of God almightie,” the frogs that emerge from Errour’s mouth must first struggle through the weedy grass of their new environment. Their physical efforts, to scale with real-life frogs, invests their allegorical reading

7 The frogs and toads as fetal entities seem to be corroborated by the Nile simile, where fetal beings as well as amphibians are birthed from the fertile mud. This same Nile simile and language of “fertile slime” is used with both Orgoglio and Chrysogonee later in the poem.
with a jarring frission: are they frogs that must now go into the world and fit into the ecosystem, finding food and reproducing with other less-strangely hatched creatures? or do they retain their contamination with allegorical error—should all frogs found creeping in the woods be ecophobically suspect of moral taintedness? Spenser’s allegorical mode is to build ecologies of interconnected meaning and relations. As Mentz argues, “all things connect and cannot escape into separation” (209). Spenser’s allegories are not singular and are always in flux: they derive meaning through accretion and shared space.

The inclusion of books and papers in Errour’s foul output allows Errour to be interpreted as an embodiment of the early modern printing press. Elizabeth Spiller suggests that Errour’s maternity is “a bad textual reproduction” meant to remind Spenser’s readers “of the breeding of false doctrine that occurs in texts such as the “monstrous” Martin Marprelate tracts” (70). Errour is, as Heidi Brayman Hackel describes, a figure of the press “in terms of a quintessentially female “leaky body,” out of control and rampantly productive” (75). Hackel discerns that while the “image of the printing press as a great female monster is peculiar to Spenser, other writers use a similar vocabulary of flooding and breeding to express the dangers of an excess of printed books, [worrying] about pamphlets that “ouerflow” the age and the conditions that “hath bred the infinitenesse of books”; like Errour’s spawn, printed volumes are dismissed as “the Paper-brats of this Age.” (75). Errour’s children are described as “Her fruitfull cursed spawne of serpents small, / Deformed monsters, fowle, and blacke as inke” (1.1.22.7) which encumber Redcrosse, but cannot cause him much harm. Along with the books and papers that are discharged from Errour’s mouth, these small inky spawn suggest animated type: their collective “swarming all about his legs” (1.1.22.8) is an attempt to “press” themselves on the body of the hero like a type on a page. Errour’s “hellish sinke” (1.1.22.5) is a font in both senses of the word.
Errour’s vomit, full of books, papers, and poison makes for an easy allegory of vile textual dissemination. However, by focusing on the material conditions of Errour’s bodily printing press, the allegory is quickly muddled. Errour is not a printing press in the sense that she is a technologically productive device. Rather, she is an assemblage of vibrant materials whose effect in this particular configuration is to dramatize the collective and unpredictable agency of print technology. Errour is a digester and regurgitator of text, an alimentary matrix that nurtures and is nurtured by her progeny in a closed system. It is significant that the fears of bad printing and unruly textual production are displayed in a bodily and natural process. By transmogrifying the mechanical into the natural, early modern concerns about the printing press take on the inflections of ecophobia. The fears of uncontrollable textual agency are mapped on the preexisting fears of an un-subjugated natural world. Like a font, a full set of printable text, in a matrix, which has the potential to create and recreate any combination of text—be it wholesome or ill—Errour’s spawn, residing in her matrix/mouth, are the next generation of what is glossed as tainted production. The printing press makes material the ease and unruliness of speech. As female speech is the discourse that is most tightly controlled in the early modern period, with women chastised to be chaste and silent, the printing press is feminized as a dangerous entity that if not controlled will produce and reproduce wordy bodies. By transmuting the human enterprise of printing into a non-human body that is figured as female and loathsome Spenser belies his own ecophobia as well as a distrust of printing technology. The allegorical figure is not an evil machine or even a speaking character. Instead, Errour-as-printing-press is a maternal creature thoroughly invested in a natural world who only releases her books and papers when forced to vomit through violence. Her printed product is highly material—the half-digested contents of her gullet—but, while consumed, it is never truly meant to be read or
distributed. Once again, Redcrosse knight is the one in error: not the author of the bad texts, but the pressman. In this way, the mailed/male hero is also a force of ecophobia. In an attempt to eradicate the natural Errour and her maternal production, he instigates the creation of more copies of Errour through her erroneous organic and inorganic progeny.

Errour’s parbreak also succeeds in leveling the ontological playing field by placing the most prized object for a writer (the books and papers that immortalize human thought) on the same level as blind amphibians and “lumpes of flesh and gobbets raw” (1.1.20.3). If we focus on these as literal objects, rather than symbolic ones, the books and papers in Errour’s parbreak are unreadable, and therefore potentially less threatening. Stained by the “floud of poison horrible and blacke” these books become just so many more half-consumed gobbets of organic material in the mixture of living and once-living things that emerge from Errour’s gorge.

As books inscribed and portrayed within another book, the textual artifacts in the Errou scene are immaterial. Sarah Wall-Randell, in exploring other fictional books within romance narratives (including the books Arthur finds later in the *Faerie Queene*), notes that “because these books are “not ‘real’ they are unlimited in what functions they can perform within the text [and they may be able to tell us more] about the many and diverse ways in which early modern writers and readers thought about books” than material traces (3). Wall-Randell argues that these books, because of their immaterial potential, are useful objects for the early modern imagination. The books and papers erupted from Errour’s gorge may tell us a great deal about the horror early modern readers and writers imagined about printed texts and the uneasiness surrounding new genres and hybrid forms. The description of the material condition of Errour’s books as stained and drowned adds to their role as imaginative objects. The ignoble presentation
of these unnamed books makes their interiors blank pages on which to inscribe any number of suspect texts and genres.

Attempts to gloss the books and papers vomited from Errour’s gullet reveal some of these anxieties. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. defines the books and papers as “theological books, tracts, and pamphlets, debating often violently the nature of the one, true Church, that is, theological controversy which involves men in Error’s den” (1077) while Humphrey Tonkin suggests that they are “the filthy romances so roundly denounced by many of Spenser’s contemporaries, the ‘bawdrye’ identified by Ascham” (63). The distinction Spenser makes between “bookes and papers” may imply that both readings could exist at the same time: the so-called worst of literary output, heretical theological pamphlets and the popular books of romance. As the subject of literary anxieties, the new forms of popular romance in the early modern period would be good candidates for the texts in Errour’s upheaval.

The anxieties surrounding early modern romance fit the uncertain agencies of Errour’s textual and organic productions. The hybrid forms of romance in the Renaissance developed in response to the burgeoning literary market. Romance as a genre rapidly adapted to its environment: it cross-pollinated with other genres, rapidly enchanted a wide range of host entities (authors, buyers, booksellers), and most of all was produced on a mass scale. If this was a natural entity, rather than a cultural product, it would be akin to a new species invasion: a robust, adaptive horde that threatened to alter the landscape irreparably. If Errour’s progeny is horrific in part because of their scale (her thousand young ones) and their inferred ability to spread (as her parbreak all the place defiles while the frogs creep away into the unknown); romance offers a fitting hysterical analogue.
Chapter Two
“Into a Cloven Pine”: Ecomaterial Assemblages in Early Modern Romance

It is a common trope in early modern romance that characters become entrapped within the landscape. Through magic encounters they are turned into or imprisoned inside of trees, changed into beasts, enclosed in rocks, set alone in impassible deserts, or hidden in caves. Some examples of these obstructed characters are Astolfo in Orlando Furioso, Fradubio and Fraelissa in the Faerie Queene, Ariel in The Tempest, Hermione in The Winter’s Tale, and Cassiopeia, the heroine of Christopher Middleton’s Arthurian romance Chinon of England (1597). Entrapped characters in romance are lively entanglements of matter and discourse. New materialist Karen Barad describes these combinations of human/animal/stone/plant/land as phenomena “dynamic topological reconfigurings/entanglements/relationalties/(re)articulations of the world” (141) or what Jane Bennett borrows from Bruno Latour: an assemblage, “living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within” (23-4). As part of my project in this chapter, I will read instances of entrapped characters in early modern romance through current theories in object-oriented-ontology, agential realism, ecocriticism, and ecomaterialism in order to explore how this recurrent motif of romance combines human and non-human actants, blurs the boundaries between them, and highlights an enmeshment that troubles genre and interactions within real and fictional ecologies. With this inquiry, I would like to expand the work of current scholars exploring this ontological comingling. I will take up Jean Feerick’s challenge to provide “(measured) anti-anthropocentric readings and models of exchange that elucidate the range of actors and the complexity of networks that attach humans to nonhumans, “quasi-subjects” to “quasi-objects.” (5), but will
apply my efforts to examples in early modern romance. I choose to focus on entrapped characters not only because they are important to the plots of romance narratives, but in part because it is easier to think through the agencies of various human and non-human objects within an assemblage that is physically combined. Where it might be easy to ignore non-human actants as subsumed and obscured into a human agency, in these circumstances it is easier to see human and non-human actants having equal impress within the collective. Showing how a human’s agency, gender, and subjectivity are construed by entrapment within and among the non-human on a micro scale also leads to a better understanding of how humans are enmeshed within a non-human world of vibrant actants on the macro.

Gender plays a large part in the entrapments of characters in early modern romance settings. The perpetrators are often enchantresses; when the victims are women they are trapped because of steadfastness to their virtue, while male victims are often trapped because of their lust. Even when the gender roles are reversed, these generic tropes are so strong that they

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8 When the enchantresses themselves are trapped they are also often assemblages of human and non-human elements. Magic women of romance are marked bodily and the expectations of their commingled bodies survive into early modern travel narratives. One such instance is an episode from the *The Faerie Queene* compared with an episode from Martin Frobisher’s third voyage, written by George Best. In *The Faerie Queene* the witch Duessa is stripped by Arthur’s men and revealed to be an odd combination of human and animal parts. One of her feet is “like an Eagles claw” (1.8.48.6) while the other is “like a Beares vneuen paw” (1.8.48.9). In Best’s account of Frobisher’s voyage, the sailors attack a group of natives, many of whom leap off the rocks of a cliff and drown rather than be taken. Two women are unable to escape, however: one because of age and the other because she is carrying her young injured child. Best relates that “The olde wretch, whome diuers of ooure Saylers supposed to be eyther a Diuell, or a Witche, plucked off her buskins, to see, if she were clouen footed, and for her ougly hewe and deformitie, we let her goe : the young woman and the childe, we brought away” (23). The sailor’s assumption of the old woman’s magic status, based on her appearance, and the mariner’s immediate action to check her body for animal collusion are horrifying and ripe for an ecomaterial, feminist, and postcolonial reading. The sailor’s actions are in part informed by the assumptions learned from early modern romance and their folklore sources.
influence the perception of a character—for instance, in *The Tempest*, Ariel’s entrapment “Into a cloven pine” by the witch Sycorax where he “didst painfully remain / A dozen years [venting his] groans / As fast as mill-wheels strike” (1.2. 330-34) has a sexual energy that reverberates with its rhythms and sighs. Prospero’s revelation that Ariel “wast a spirit too delicate / To act her earthy and abhorred commands” (1.2.325-6) brackets Ariel in the traditional predicament of the unyielding virgin of romance. His release puts him in the hands of Prospero in the same way romance women become bodily indebted to their rescuers.

It seems reasonable to divide the material substances in which early modern romance figures become entrapped along elemental lines: separating them into vegetable, mineral, and animal. These various elements are themselves heavily shaped by their allegorical and metaphorical qualities and exert a semiotic as well as a material force on the early modern characters with which they are aligned. The influence of the elemental on the human runs both ways. A human figure caught in an assemblage of stone may borrow a lithic durability and solemnity while a character imprisoned in a tree may amplify the arboreal acoustics of wind and creaking boughs with human voice. Humans changed into nonhuman animals take on the common allegorical assumptions of the bestiary while also having to learn the material and psychological conditions of inhabiting a nonhuman animal body. Additionally, a human figure surrounded by a group of homogenous animals takes on a new identity merely by association.

The human trapped and enmeshed in the nonhuman is a new ontological and semantic unit that can’t quite be wholly pieced apart. The human/nonhuman phenomenon is perceived within the narrative as a connected entity that acts as a collective. These collectives are reconfigured so that their ontic and semantic boundaries are imprecise. The characters in early modern romance narratives that encounter combined human/nonhuman phenomena address this
ontological ambiguity. For instance, when Redcrosse Knight in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* accepts that he is speaking to an entity that is both tree and man he is uncertain how to address him: “Say on Fradubio then, or man, or tree” (1.2.34.1). Redcrosse is doubtful whether this entity still holds the name Fradubio, whether he is a man, or a tree. He is all three things at once and likewise fully none of them, and therefore there is no fitting name for the phenomena that he has become. Barad argues that “the primary semantic units” are not words, but “material-discursive practices through which (ontic and semantic) boundaries are constituted” (141). If we describe the scene through Barad’s theory, Redcrosse attempts to render Fradubio into discrete meaningful articulations but is thwarted by the dynamic agential entanglement of the Fradubio phenomena; through his discursive practice Redcrosse tries to make boundaries where there are none. This produces a sense of the uncanny. Todd Borlik names this passage as a prime example of what he calls the “ecological uncanny” in that “it erases the distinction between sentient human subject and callous natural object” (92) and suggests that human and tree share a common nature. Adding to Borlik’s insight that the ecological uncanny “entreats the reader to pity the person and the plant both” (92) I argue that it is in these moments of semantic ontological confusion, when the human approaches the nonhuman/human entity and asks it (them?) to “Say on then” the human speaker is prepared to receive a response from the nonhuman as well as the human. In this moment, the nonhuman is acknowledged as an equal agency with the human and the protagonist is prepared to listen to both. In Barad’s agential realism, the intra-action of Redcrosse Knight and Fradubio reconfigures the world within the text. Redcrosse’s intra-action with Fradubio also creates a new sense of responsibility within their relationship. While Redcrosse Knight typically, as the bad reader of situational texts that he is, does not apply Fradubio’s cautionary tale as a warning of his own deception by Duessa, his
encounter with the “living tree” (1.2.392) does alter his actions within the landscape and creates new subjects and objects. The proliferation of these kinds of uncanny intra-active moments in early modern romance marks it as a genre that is open to ideas of nonhuman agency and non-anthropocentric narratives.

As scientists, new materialists, posthumanist theorists, and scholars in animal studies have argued, the boundary of the human is highly permeable. Our animal bodies are infused with essential minerals and single-cell life forms, we ingest plant (and for omnivores, animal) material, exchange chemical exhalations, and cultivate a vast landscape of personalized biota. The entrapment of the human body amidst other mineral, animal, and vegetable bodies is always a matter of degree and the entrapment works both ways. Entrapped characters in romance narratives trouble the hermetic borderlines of the human. While the entrapped figure must be recognized as at least partially human, there is no singular reliable marker of humanity. The entrapped collective body must be interpreted by the protagonists in the narrative and humanity must be inferred: through voice, blood, semblance, action, or sensibility. The notion of entrapment suggests a singular essence enclosed in foreign matter yet romance narratives often switch between descriptions of enclosure and self-identical transformation. Fradubio is at once “transformed” (2.33.6), “now a tree” (2.33.3), and his former lover “turnd to treen mould” (2.39.9) but he is also “in this rough rynd embard” (2.31.3) and “enclosd in wooden wals full haste” (2.42.8): both simultaneously transfigured and entrapped.

My reading of entrapped figures in early modern romance hinges not so much on the degree of entrapment, from imprisonment inside a foreign essence to self-identification with that material, but rather the effects the collective generates: what occurs that would not have if the human (or human-like in the case of spirits like Ariel in The Tempest) was not contained within
the nonhuman. The amalgamation of the human and nonhuman produces a queer energy that aligns human and nonhuman desire, fate, and identity. This energy, materializing in an acknowledgement of human and nonhuman interconnectedness, is expressed through material means.

The parameters for how I am defining entrapment are fivefold: 1) the human element of the collective may only be released by an outside force, 2) while agency may shift in primacy, no one element of the collective has complete power over the other, 3) the collective is limited to one geographic location, 4) the human element is self-aware of his/her entrapment, and 5) at least one of the emergent effects of the entrapment is a change in identity or social status. The first of these constraints is important to the fabric of the romance narrative. Entrapped figures that can save themselves do not dramatically question the protagonists’ ethical responsibility. An entrapped figure is a moral quandary and a cautionary tale embodied. Some of the recurring emergent effects of entrapped figures in the romance landscape are the ways in which they morally parse the un-trapped characters by their responses. The first constraint—the release of entrapped characters must come from an outside source—also speaks to the second constraint; the human element in the collective cannot entirely disentangle themself from the whole because their agency is equal to or balanced by the agency of the nonhuman element(s). By repeatedly staging the power of the human over the nonhuman as thwarted in these entrapments, the romance genre acknowledges more agential parity in elemental relationships. By limiting my definition of the entrapped figure to one geographic location I separate these human and nonhuman collectives from blended figures like cyborgs whose relationship is one of augmentation and mobility. The figure fixed in the early modern landscape (either literally rooted or circumscribed in a small range of woods or pasture) shares not only a nonhuman
perspective but also a nonhuman timeline. Cyborg figures too easily scale their nonhuman components to an anthropocentric worldview and a human-like relationship to the natural world. In a genre invested in continual wanderings, entrapped figures are extraordinary in their stasis. Lastly, entrapped figures acknowledge their limitations and affinities with their surrounding material bodies and it is always implied that either the entrapment itself or the human figure’s release from it changes their social status. In this way entrapment has effects that are not only material but also social.

In the sections that follow, I will discuss examples of entrapped characters in early modern romance through the materialities of vegetable, mineral, and animal, with emphasis on human and humanlike-arboreal combinations, characters both turned into and imprisoned in stone, and through human characters transformed into nonhuman animals or set among them in order to change their social and material status.

VEGETABLE

*In this rough rynd embard* (1.2.31).

Arboreal entrapments or assemblages of humans and trees in early modern romance have a long precedent in classical and medieval traditions, appearing memorably in Ovid, Virgil, Dante, and *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. What does it mean to take on the vegetative? To coexist with the arboreal? To be rooted in place; to outlive a human lifespan; to expand and experience life in a slow ecology? Becoming a tree is to at once be incredibly vulnerable and yet durable enough to experience that defenselessness for potentially an excruciatingly long time. A blending of the arboreal and the human in early modern romance provides different narrative options and strategies than a person transformed or trapped inside stone or a nonhuman animal.
It may be worth outlying the particulars of an arboreal existence by defining what it is not. If changed into a nonhuman animal, one may autonomously traverse the landscape at a human or even greater than human speed. Animal existence in early modern romance often comes fully loaded with a range of instincts and desires that may or may not conflict with the narrative at hand. Furthermore, most nonhuman animals have a lifespan that is either less than or equal to that of a human. Lithic transformation, in contrast, is to become something that endures even longer than the arboreal. However, the substance of stone is in some ways more fungible and can be coopted into more kinds of anthropic coalitions. Stone may be carved and maintain its durability and unique liveliness. A tree, however, once cut down or extensively carved, is altered into wood: still an incredibly lively substance, but no longer enjoying the processes of photosynthesis and the exchange of glucose energy within living cells. A tree breathes, grows, and cohabitates in ways that are temptingly anthropomorphic. The dual usage of bodily terms between the human and the arboreal is telling of a metamorphic and longed-for kinship: trunk, arms, head, poll, heart, sap, blood, veins, limbs, etc. are all terms that traverse the human and vegetable divide. To be ensorcelled as a tree is to live an existence that is familiar in a timeline that is not.

Premodern authors knew that humans already have a tree-like system growing inside of them. Well-known early modern anatomists like Andreas Vesalius (fig. 1) follow a Galenic tradition that describes the veins and arteries of the human body as twigs and stems branching from a main trunk (fig. 2). What Leonardo da Vinci called a “tree of veins,” is a potent and vivid representation.
Figure 1: Vesalius, Andreas. “The declaration of the karacters of the holowe vayne.” 
*Compendios a totius anatomie delineatio, aere exarata: per Thomam Geminum.* London: By Nycholas Hyll dwellynge in Saynte Iohns streate, for Thomas Geminus, 1553.
The image of the arboreal running through the core of the anthropic suggests an early modern understanding that human bodies may be construed on a basic level as partially nonhuman: a mesh of animal, vegetable, and mineral coexisting within an assembled corpus. Lear’s appraisal of man as a “poor, bare, forked animal” (3.4.114-5) draws attention to not only human’s bipedalism but also to the forked branching patterns that make up our lifeblood and our limbs. Laurie Shannon indicates the term “forked” implies not only the vegetative but also the demonic, suggesting the term “introduces a more sinister gloss on the human body by evoking the useless “legs” of the mandrake root and the split tongue of devilish speech” (128). To call man “forked,” she states, “is to look askance at man, unpersuaded by claims about his bipedal uprightness or the ontological movement toward divinity it was alleged to index” (128). The combination of the vegetative and the cursed is a recurrent theme in medieval epic and early modern romance. Redcrosse Knight’s encounter with Fradubio, the man, “now a tree,” is a reworking of Dante’s meeting with Pier delle Vigne in the Wood of the Suicides in Canto XIII of the Inferno (which is itself a new planting of the Polydorus scene in the Aenied). Both Pier delle Vigne and Fradubio are revealed to be transformed humans through the breaking of one of their vein-like branches. In the Inferno, Virgil prompts Dante to tear off a tiny twig from a massive thornbush provoking the unfortunate Pier to cry out “Why do you break me!” (XIII, 33) while blood oozes out of the severed branch. In the Faerie Queene, Redcrosse, hoping to make a garland for his false lady, “pluckt a bough; out of whose rift there came / Small drops of gory blood, that trickled downe the same” (1.2.30.8-9) which are soon followed by the “piteous yelling voyce” (1.2.31.1) of Fradubio, “Crying, O spare with guilty hands to teare / My tender
sides in this rough rynd embard” (1.2.31.2-3). Words and blood pour from both tree-men and both Dante and Redcrosse are rooted to the spot in fright. Redcrosse’s terror briefly shifts the knight into the state of the mineral and vegetative: “Astond he stood, and vp his haire did houe, / And with that suddein horror could no member moue” (1.2.31.8-9). Become stone with fear, his hair upright like a tree’s new growth, Redcrosse mirrors Fradubio’s plight. Dante is also struck briefly immobile and tongue-tied in the company of the sentient thornbush.

In the *Faerie Queene*, Redcrosse significantly plucks a branch from Fradubio, not because he was instructed, like Dante, but because he is interested in “those braunches greene” (1.2.30.6) for their signifying value. Redcrosse wishes to use the living branches as an expression of his “gentle wit” to show his “falsed fancy” that she “be the fairest wight, that liued yit” (1.2.30.3-5). Redcrosse quickly reads over the branches’ material reality and sees it only for its allegorical valence. Tellingly, the matter forcefully responds with both an effusion of living blood and voice: a surprisingly literal instantiation of an entanglement of matter and discourse. As fantastical as a human-tree is, the materiality of Fradubio pulls Redcrosse out of a traditional allegorical romance mode and back into the tactile world of his physical reality.

Fradubio directly names his “secret vaines” (1.2.33.8) that are dried by the scorching sun and frozen by bitter winds as the remainder of his selfhood. These secret veins, branching within his arboreally enclosed body, are paradoxically what mark him as human. He implies that it is these vessels for his blood that allow him to experience the world as a vulnerable man even as an outwardly impervious tree: “For though a tree I seeme, yet cold and heat me paines” (1.2.33.9). The tree-like veins from medical depictions cordon the human portion of Fradubio from his “wooden wals” (1.2.42.8). Before his tree-change, Duessa preps Fradubio like a corpse for dissection. Fradubio describes: “With wicked herbes and ointments did besmeare / My bodie
all” (1.2.42.3-4). Through her “hellish science” (1.2.38.4), Duessa strips Fradubio down to a poor, bare, forked humanity that is remarkably tree-like. The echo of the influence of anatomical illustrations is also in the *Inferno*. Pier tells Dante that the suicide-trees will eventually gather their resurrected former human bodies, yet instead of re-inhabiting them they will be forced to hang them in their thornbush branches. This posture of the suicide-trees holding aloft their shed bodies is much like the flayed anatomical figures in medical woodcuts who hold their own removed skin in an outstretched hand (fig. 3).

![Figure 3: Juan Valverde de Amusco. *Historia de la composicion del cuerpo humano*. Rome: 1560.](image)

When Fradubio’s tale eventually coagulates to its end, when “all this speech the living tree had spent” (1.2.44.392) Redcrosse makes a material gesture of appeasement with the man-tree. Full of “sad feare and ghastly dreriment” (1.2.44.3) he thrusts the bleeding bough into the ground so “that from the bloud he might be innocent” (1.2.44.7) and “with fresh clay did close the wooden wound” (1.2.44.8). Although Fradubio’s warning is “in vaine” (1.2.44.2), a pun on
both wasted words and wasted blood, and Redcrosse knight does not correctly read Fidessa as the duplicitous Duessa of Fradubio’s story, the encounter radically reshapes Redcrosse’s sense of responsibility toward the nonhuman. In the intra-action between Redcrosse and Fradubio, what constitutes violence, guilt, and innocence is redefined. Redcrosse takes responsibility for the violence perpetrated on the arboreal body of Fradubio: a violence that, if the living tree had not bled or cried out, would not have been recognized. Redcrosse attempts to make right his action, but notably not from within the usual human discursive practices. He does not apologize to Fradubio or endeavor to explain away his reasons for initially tearing the branch. Instead, his conciliation is far more material, and follows vegetable rules. Fradubio patches up Fradubio’s wooden wound with fresh clay: covering his secret vaines with the beginning matter of Biblical personhood. In thrusting the bleeding bough into the ground, what new entity has Redcrosse created? Is it an arboreal child? A partially-human sapling? Will the branch take root? And if it does, will it still have blood and voice? In hoping to become innocent of the wounding of Fradubio, Redcrosse materially and discursively enlarges the phenomenon of Fradubio’s being. Redcrosse’s action is a thoughtful approach to his own place in the moral and material ecosystem of the romance. After his offer to take on the quest to find the living well that will restore Fradubio and Fraelissa to their former kinds is gently declined, Redcrosse’s parting action is a nuanced response to both human and nonhuman sensibilities. On the human side, the violently torn limb is given a proper burial: the blood hidden and laid to rest. Yet on the other side of the branch, the arboreal is also given justice. By re-planting the bleeding bough, Redcrosse gives the nonhuman aspect of Fradubio a chance for renewal and saves the secret veins of the branch from drying out completely. The anthropomorphization of the tree shifts the usual anthropocentric
parameters of responsibility into considerations of both human and nonhuman needs as part of a new articulation of entangled cohabitation.

American Romantic poet Bayard Taylor in his poem “Ariel in the Cloven Pine” (1849) imagines an Ariel fully integrated into the sensory experience of the pine tree, watching and being watched by the other creatures on the island: “All is life that I can spy, / And my own the only pain / Within this ring of Tyrrhene main” (29-31). At the crux of the poem, it is the flourishing network of agents that supports the venous system of the tree that causes him the most agony:

All this orb of cloudless shine,
All this youth in Earth’s old veins,
Tingling with the Spring’s sweet wine,
With a sharper torment pain me.
Pansies, in soft April rains
And April’s sun, from Thea’s lap
Fill their stalks with honeyed sap,
But the sluggish blood she brings
To the tough Pine’s hundred rings,
Closer locks their cruel hold,
Closer draws the scaly bark
Round my prison, lightning-riven; (34-45).

Here the prospering of the pine further circumscribes Ariel. The sun’s “orb of cloudless shine” and the “youth in Earth’s old veins,” poetically characterize the ecosystem that sustains the cloven pine. The tree’s sap, “Spring’s sweet wine,” and its “sluggish blood” that fortifies and
draws the pine’s bark closer and thicker is the endpoint of a large exchange of agencies over multiple bodies that eventually, slowly, affect Ariel’s body. This trans-corporeal movement of sunlight and water through air, earth, and root systems is not singularly bent on imposing a will upon an anthropomorphic body, yet their collective agency has the emergent effect of further entrapping Ariel. The horror of arboreal entrapment is the realization that the systems in which you are enmeshed are not anthropocentric: Ariel is one human-like agent in a rich matrix of vibrant bodies. Moments of entrapment in trees in early modern romance linger on nonanthropocentric narrative possibilities. Fradubio and Fraelissa are not saved by Redcrosse or another errant knight, but must wait for “Time and suffised fates” to restore them to their “former kind” (1.2.43.8). Their plight must be resolved on a nonhuman timeline as their agency is distributive as a human-tree collective.

While Taylor’s poem highlights the horrors of Ariel’s entrapment, it also opens a window for ecological contemplation. Ariel’s view and experience of the world is cropped to what he can perceive through the rift in the pine. This restriction allows for a deep, comprehensive, and intimate knowledge of the microclimate in which Ariel is now an unwilling participant. In the poem Ariel describes astronomical sightings, seasonal change, birds, beasts, and a herbologist’s delight of flowers, plants, and trees. Ariel’s stasis and time-lapse observation (albeit not his groans) puts him in the place of popular author, biologist, and ecologist David Haskell, who promotes the idea of a “forest mandala”: a constricted ring of forest ecology to contemplate and observe throughout multiple seasons. Haskell’s forest mandala is about a meter wide and is a modern take on the old concept of the book of nature that rejects anthropocentrism in favor of ecological understanding. The forest mandala still relies on an artificial separation between the observer and the observed, yet it is a step toward a contemplative slow ecology.
Ariel “pines away” a dozen years in the rift of a cloven pine. Apart from the apt pun, it is notable that Ariel’s prison is specifically named a pine tree. A rift in a pine would surely produce pine resin, specifically an oleoresin (a resin that includes a natural oil) that is high in turpene. From pine resin, one can make turpentine for oil painting and varnishing; rosin used for string instruments, sealing wax, varnishes, medications, and foods; pine tar used as a wood preservative and water sealant, soaps, and medicines; and pitch, most commonly used for nautical waterproofing. Pine resin is a highly flammable substance. Pitch, in its blazing state is invoked in the opening act. Miranda, in her plea to her father, describes “The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch, / But that the sea, mounting to th’ welkin’s cheek, / Dashes the fire out” (1.2.3-5). This fiery pitch, quenched by the high seas, is matched with Ariel’s description of his tempest performance: “I flamed amazement. Sometimes I’d divide / And burn in many places. On the topmast, / The yards, and bowsprit would I flame distinctly, / Then meet and join” (1.2.234-7) until eventually he terrifies Ferdinand by becoming “all afire” (1.2.250). Sealing a spirit with such fiery materiality into a combustible pine trunk seems to invite an epic elemental battle. This elemental struggle is hinted at through the word “vent” in Prospero’s description of Ariel’s imprisonment “where thou didst vent thy groans / As fast as mill wheels strike” (1.2.333-4). ‘Vent’ implies not only a vocal release of Ariel’s pain, but also a material release of steam from an enclosed superheated space. By reimagining Ariel’s imprisonment as a slow pitchy boil within the pine tree, Shakespeare combines the fiery wroth of hell with classical precedent of punishment by tree, truly, as Prospero notes, “a torment / To lay upon the damned” (1.2.343-4). Dante’s description of Pier della Vignié’s speech in the Inferno compares Pier’s voice and blood issuing from the break in the branch to a green log on fire that drips with sap and hisses with escaping air. Ariel’s groans, venting from the rift in the pine tree, seem to have
borrowed some of their tormented voice from the wood of Canto XIII. Yet while Pier and his arboreal companions may not be released, Ariel is saved by Prospero who, when he heard Ariel’s groans, “made gape / The pine and let [him] out” (1.2.346-7).

A corrective to this fiery reading may be in Prospero’s threat to Ariel. For what could be worse than imprisonment in the rift of a cloven pine? Prospero ups the taxonomic ante, declaring: “If thou more murmur’st, I will rend an oak / And peg thee in his knotty entrails till / Thou hast howled away twelve winters” (1.2.349-51). In Prospero’s logic, if a pine was bad, an oak is worse. The punishment seems to be the same: twelve years trapped in a tree, but this time instead of in a rift, even one potentially full of sap from the pine’s arboreal veins, Prospero threatens to peg Ariel into the very bowels of an oak. It is the oak’s famed stoutness and hardness that gives his threat power, but it may also be the anatomical ignobility of being caught in “his knotty entrails” rather than in a rift of a pine. Prospero threatens that Ariel will be even more fully incorporated into the tree: not a discrete foreign essence within a pine, but a partially-ingested, potentially even excremental object, within the oak’s figurative body. There may also be a gendered element to these two imprisonments. Inside a cloven pine or a rift, Ariel’s insertion may be pseudo-gestational or pseudo-sexual: a painful yet more recognizable return to a feminized nature. Yet being pegged in a hard oak’s digestive tract, inside a tree marked as male by Prospero, Ariel would be monstrously conceived.

The plant imagery that surrounds the scene depicting Ariel’s entrapment shifts to other characters as well. Sycorax is characterized by language that suggests the vegetative. Prospero’s famous description of Caliban’s mother, “who with age and envy / Was grown into a hoop” (1.2.309-10) imagines Sycorax’s slow change into a hunched-over old woman as a life-span of a plant stalk that, with a vegetable envy, grows too tall to sustain itself and circles back into a
hoop. Medieval and early modern gardening techniques employed hoops to train creeping vines and ornamental shrubbery into circular shapes.

While undeniably rescuing Ariel from a terrible torment, Prospero taps the resource of Ariel and “all his quality” (1.2.228) when he splits the pine. Ariel is arguably the island’s most powerful resource: released after long distillation from his arboreal prison. Figured this way, Ariel is a potent indigenous commodity that Prospero uncovers and uses to heal the political body of his dukedom. Ariel’s spriting is without question what makes Prospero’s plan a success.

It is likely that Shakespeare, a reader of many of the travel narratives collected in Richard Hakluyt’s anthologies and translations, would have encountered another story of a European colonial expedition saved by rending a pine tree. John Florio’s English translation of Jacques Cartier’s two voyages to North America (the first in 1534, the second from 1535-1536) was sponsored by Richard Hakluyt and published in 1580 by Henry Bynneman. Cartier’s search for the Northwest Passage brought him into close contact with the Iroquoi. During the second voyage, Cartier and his crew wintered near the Iroquoian capital of Stadacona (present site of Quebec City), led by Chief Donnacona. A “strange and cruell disease” (64) broke out among the people of Stadagona which soon after overtook the Europeans. The account of Cartier’s crew during their winter at Stadagona is one of the best-recorded outbreaks of scurvy in the early modern period:

[...] the said unknowen sicknes began to spread itselfe amongst us after the strangest sort that ever was eyther heard of or seene, insomuch as some did lose all their strength, and could not stand on their feete, then did their legges swell,

— Florio also translated Montaigne’s “Of the Caniballes” in 1603 from which Shakespeare lifted Gonzalo’s speech on utopia.
their sinnowes shrinke as blacke as any cole. Others also had all their skins spotted with spots of blood of a purple colour: then did it ascend up to their ankels, knees, theighes, shoulders, armes and neck: their mouth became stincking, their gummes so rotten, that all the flesh did fall off, even to the rootes of the teeth, which did also almost all fall out. (64).

The insults that Caliban and Prospero hurl at each other, and the descriptions of Prospero’s past magical plagues on Caliban’s body, with their emphasis on pinching and spotted skin are remarkably like the descriptions of scurvy from Cartier’s narrative. Caliban curses “A southwest blow on you / And blister you all o’er” (1.2.387-8) to which Prospero threatens:

For this, be sure, tonight thou shalt have cramps,
Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up. Urchins
Shall forth at vast of night that they may work
All exercise on thee. Thou shalt be pinched
As thick as honeycomb, each pinch more stinging
Than bees that made ‘em. (1.2.389-94).

Later he menaces “I’ll rack thee with old cramps, / Fill all thy bones with aches” (1.2.444-5).

The severe vitamin C deficiency known as scurvy (the chemical name for vitamin C, ascorbic acid, is derived from *scorbutus*) causes a wide range of symptoms, beginning with fatigue and irritability, moving towards a swelling of limbs, bleeding gums, loosening and loss of teeth, ocular haemorrhages, loss of hair, psychological disturbances, and “scorbutic arthritis, which is clinically similar to rheumatoid arthritis with pain, swelling, joint effusions, and limited motion” (Durzan 2009). Old wounds re-open, legs and arms become grotesquely swollen, and in later
stages, scurvy victims are plagued with hallucinations. When Prospero drives off Caliban and the shipmates Stephano and Trinculo he cries:

Go, charge my goblins that they grind their joints
With dry convulsions, shorten up their sinews
With agèd cramps, and more pinch-spotted make them
Than pard or cat o’ mountain. (4.1.285-9).

The description in Cartier’s narrative of shortened sinews, swollen joints, skin spotted with bruises, and the slow spread of the illness matches the plagues of Prospero and Caliban that make the body “by inchmeal a disease” (2.2.3).

I propose that Shakespeare partially assembled the creature Caliban, “not honored with a human shape” (1.2.336) from the harrowing accounts of traveling European and native American bodies burdened with scurvy. Caliban is a diseased body reconstituted as a virile subject. Scurvy is the unnamed phenomenon that pulls together Caliban, Prospero, and the other sojourners of the isle into various intra-actions with effects that include the performance of magic, repulsion, curative substances, murderous intents, bondage, and sovereignty. As a disease divorced from a human host, Caliban can be reconfigured by the other characters in the play as a pestilential monster. It is unclear whether Prospero truly can conjure up the urchins and sprites that afflict a fearful Caliban with cramps and pains, or whether Caliban’s concern over them is the manifestation of a scurbutic neuropathy only exacerbated by the vitriolic language of Prospero’s curses. The marks on his body, the pinches that leave him bruised and purple, may not be the action of otherworldly entities, but the hemorrhages common to scurvy patients.¹⁰

¹⁰“Scurvy” is mentioned four times in The Tempest: twice in reference to Stephano’s drunken songs and twice as insults between Trinculo and Caliban. All of these instances do not reference
Additionally, if Caliban is figured as a scorbutic body, it would make sense that Trinculo’s first impression of Caliban is his rotting “ancient and fishlike smell” (2.2.26-7), the most common and most commented-upon first sign of scurvy in early modern accounts. Stephano, likewise, after remarking on the “monster of the isle with four legs” instantly diagnoses the creature as “hath got [...] an ague” (2.2.66-7). Stephano’s wine, a distillation of grapes, is not unlike the cure that saves Cartier’s shipmates.

Cartier’s crew is eventually cured with the help of the locals from Stadacona. Cartier ventures out of the fort, and walking upon the ice, sees a group of men coming from the village, one of whom he recognizes as Domagaia, “who not passing ten or twelve dayes afore, had bene very sicke with that disease, and had his knees swolne as bigge as a childe of two yeres old, all his sinews shrunke together, his teeth spoyled, his gummes rotten, and stinking” (67). Elated, the captain asks about the cure and Domagaia “answered, that he had taken the juice and sappe of the leaves of a certain Tree, and therewith had healed himself” (67). When Cartier asks if he might have some, “Domagaia straight sent two women to fetch some of it, which brought ten or twelve branches of it, and therewithal shewed the way how to use it, and that is thus, to take the barke and leaves of the sayd tree, and boile them togethuer, then to drinke of the sayd decoction every other day, and to put the dregs of it upon his legs that is sicke : moreover, they told us, that the vertue of that tree was, to heale any other disease : the tree is in their language called Ameda” (68). The cure is so successful that all of the remaining crew recover their health. The author

the disease, which would have been known by the time of The Tempest’s first performances, but rather in its valence as a slur. Scurvy seems first to have been an offensive term for being covered with scurf or scabs, to be flea-ridden, or to be sorry and contemptible. The first English use of scurvy as a noun, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is Robert Baker’s rather apologetic definition in Richard Hakluyt’s Principle Navigations (1589), “Our legs now swolne euery joiunt withall, With this disease, which, by your leaue, the Scuruie men do call” (139).
boasts that the cure also eradicated other sicknesses, saying “that there were some had bene diseased and troubled with the French Pockes foure or five yeres, and with this drinke were cleane healed” (68). While the Ameda concoction almost certainly did not cure syphilis, the indigenous tree held enough of a concentration of vitamin C, arginine, and other essential amino acids to save the critically ill sailors. To administer the cure, “a tree as big as any Oake in France was spoyled and lopped bare, and occupied all in five or sixe daies” (68). The author of Cartier’s narrative remarks that “it wrought so wel, that if all the phisicians of Mountpelier and Lovaine had bene there with all the drugs of Alexandria, they would not have done so much in one yere as that tree did in sixe dayes, for it did so prevale, that as many as used of it, by the grace of God recovered their health. (68).

Stephano’s cure for Caliban’s ague is similar to the decoction that saves Cartier’s crew: an *aqua vitae* replacement for the Cartier’s *arbor vitae*. They are comparable materially: each are a liquid concentration of a plant product and both contain anti-scrobutic levels of vitamin C. When Cartier first brings back the curing drink, “there was none durst taste of it, excepte one or two, who ventured the drinking of it, onely to taste and proue it: the other seeing that, did the like; and presently recouered their health” (68). The narrative recounts that “after thys medicine was founde and proued to be true, there was suche a strife aboute it, who shoulde be firste to take of it, that they were readye to kill one another” (68). Caliban’s initial resistance to Stephano’s liquor and then his devout dedication to it mirrors the transformation of Cartier’s men. Lastly, a detail about Stephano’s bottle is often overlooked. Stephano asks Trinculo to swear by his bottle, which he “made of the bark of a tree with mine own hands” (2.2.127). Stephano’s

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11 The *arbor vitae* has traditionally been misidentified in European records as *Thuja occidentalis* the eastern white cedar but has now been identified as the white pine the “ohnehta” in Iroquois (Don Durzan 2009).
ingenuity in crafting a bottle out of the bark of a tree borrows from a well-known technique among the Iroquois. While birch-bark vessels are far more common, pine bark was also used.

The curative wine contained within the bark of Stephano’s bottle, the powerful entity of Ariel trapped within the pine tree, and the miraculous pine concoction of the Iroquois highlight the porousness of human-vegetable entanglements. Prospero’s power in the play is one of mastery over these bodily entanglements: he is the one who can split the tree to reap its curative powers, imprison servants like Ariel, or reverse the cures of the pine tree and inflict curses, agues, and servitude on Caliban. It is no accident that Prospero instructs Ferdinand to endlessly pile “some thousands” (3.1.10) of logs. Prospero has the power to peg Ariel in the knotty entrails of an oak for twelve winters and to make Ferdinand a “patient log-man” (3.1.79). Both are a type of arboreal entrapment that blend take on the “patient” time-scale of a tree. It is the movement of and between arboreal and human bodies that buttresses Prospero’s structures of power. Vin Nardizzi notes the insistence of logs and wood in Ferdinand, Caliban, and Ariel’s servitude toward Prospero while also connecting Prospero’s “rough magic” with Ovid’s Medea. While describing his magical acts, Prospero elaborates Medea’s boast “Whole woods and forests I remove” (273) in Arthur Golding’s translation of Book 7 by more specifically claiming that he “rifted Jove’s stout oak / With his own bolt” and “by the spurs plucked up / The pine and cedar” (5.1.45-6, 47-8). Naming Prospero a “magical lumberjack” (122) Nardizzi argues that Prospero’s tree-splitting makes the labor of New World colonization forest-clearing obsolete while erecting other forms of “wooden slavery” (3.1.74). The final human-vegetable entrapment is Prospero’s own in the epilogue: “Now ‘tis true / I must be here confined by you” (Epilogue 3-4). Gestured toward in Nardizzi’s title, Wooden Os: Shakespeare’s Theaters and England’s Trees, Prospero is left patiently waiting to be released from the “wooden o” of the theater,
rounded like the bark of a tree. Prospero seeks the relief of indulgence from the crowd “Let your indulgence set me free” (20). The clapping of their hands is akin to the clap of thunder that prefigured the original rending of the cloven pine tree. The power of the audience is a material-discursive power. The play’s action and meaning are trapped within the material wooden substance of the playhouse and released through the enjoyment and physical action of the human bodies within it. Prospero’s entreaty through the fourth wall gestures toward a shift from representations of human and nonhuman entanglement toward an uncanny realization of the reality of that enmeshment.

The playhouse is a space where human bodies are briefly contained in a wooden structure and where stories and histories are acted out. They are enmeshments of narrative, wood, and human animal. Though the playhouse is not living wood, the repetition of the stories acted within it, the invocation of the playhouse’s transformation into various landscapes, and through the metonymy of the wooden playhouse for the active bodies of the audience, the structure is given a very particular kind of liveliness. Throughout Britain and Ireland there are a number of ancient trees grown into wide hollow rings—living wooden o’s—which also entrap narratives and human bodily experience. The Woodland Trust, the Tree Council, the Ancient Tree Forum, and The Tree Register of the British Isles are all organizations that work to catalogue and preserve these natural and national treasures. One such named tree, categorized as a “monumental tree” and listed as one of fifty Great British Trees by the Tree Council is the Queen Elizabeth Oak, a large sessile oak in Cowdray Park (figure 4). The dendrologists of the British Tree Register have suggested the tree may be nearly a thousand years old. Part of the Queen Elizabeth Oak’s charm, and a selling point for its preservation by governmental bodies, are the legends and pieced-together histories that suggest Queen Elizabeth I might have either taken
shelter under the oak, taken aim at a stag from underneath it as part of a royal hunting party, or lost some incidental jewelry from her dress during a picnic around the oak’s base. The nostalgic body of the beloved queen, reenacting these potential moments, is forever entrapped within the bounds of the oak. The oak’s preservation is in part due to this entanglement with human history and the desire to maintain a living witness to a longed for past. While most of the ancient trees of Britain have narratives hoarded around them, some are even more connected to a literary or legendary nostalgic past. Another “Tree of National Special Interest” is the Major Oak in Sherwood Forest (figure 5). Nearly every famous ancient tree gathers in stories from premodern literature or boasts a connection to major figures in the medieval and early modern periods.

Figure 4: Queen Elizabeth Oak, photograph by Pam Fray 2008, licensed under Creative Commons.
Does not the stone rebuke me / For being more stone than it? (5.3.43-44).

The most famous elemental transformation in Shakespeare’s plays comes from one of his late romances, *The Winter’s Tale*. In the story of an unjustly scorned wife, the previously lively Hermione is calcified into a stony combination of woman and statue. After a sixteen-year interlude, Hermione comes back to life onstage at the end of act five. Hermione’s transformation into a statue, a stone-woman, is a material response to Leontes’ accusations. Hermione takes on the qualities of stone in response to the liveliness, warmth, and fertility that irk Leontes into his jealous rage. Leontes perceives his wife as “too hot!” (1.2.140): too vivacious, too vocal, and too open. Hermione and Paulina’s revenge on Leontes is a just kind of elemental martyrdom: by
taking on the qualities of stone, Hermione is, to Leontes’ chagrin, in act five, cold, still, silent, closed off, and removed: a material rebuttal of *too hot*. Hermione as a statue makes Leontes’ initial complaints against her literal. The transition from warm to cold flesh is a gendered trope of the romance genre, as is a metaphorical description becoming a material reality. Autolycus prefigures this recurring romance theme in its less lofty form in the description of one of his ballads:

Here’s another ballad, of a fish that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday the fourscore of April, forty thousand fathom above water, and sung this ballad against the heart hearts of maids. It was thought she was a woman, and was turned into a cold fish for she would not exchange flesh with one that loved her. The ballad is very pitiful, and as true. (4.4.312-319).

Hermione’s entrapment or transformation to stone radically restructures the gendered power dynamics of these “cold flesh” material transmogrifications. In Autolycus’ ballad, the hard-hearted woman is punished for not sexually satisfying a would-be suitor by being changed into a literal cold fish. Hermione’s transformation into a stone woman is meant to admonish Leontes. She is still converted because of the steadfastness of her virtue, much like the fish/woman, but in Hermione’s case her presence is not invoked as a misogynistic warning to women but as a tangible rebuke to the violent hardness of her husband. In the case of the fish/woman, the material blending of fishy matter with human is focused much more on cultural innuendo: both the sexual withdrawal of “cold flesh” and a proliferation of sexual images and euphemisms
surrounding fish and women’s bodies (including Shakespeare’s line “groping for trouts in a peculiar river” (1.2.87) spoken by the clown from Measure for Measure). Where the fish/woman sings her own tale to create a narrative that is both “very pitiful” and “true” Hermione performs her own true tale by more fully interacting with her co-material of stone. She does not sing her story, but rather allows her stony silence to evoke emotion in her intended audience and allows Leontes’ words to echo from her hard surface and back to him. Where the maids (and the hearers of the ballad) may feel sympathy for the singing fish, there is a pitiful bathos that accompanies the human voice emerging from the downturned gaping mouth of a gasping fish (think of the longstanding humor of thousands of novelty animatronic singing bass mounted in offices and on mantelpieces in the early 2000s). Hermione’s tale, in contrast, takes on the full dignity and silent solemnity of stone.

Hermione is unique among her stony predecessors who transition to or from the lithic. She is an entrapped character insomuch as she is a human entity that becomes a co-actant in an assemblage of human and stone—an assemblage with an awesome emergent power—and then, through Paulina’s theatrical directions, is able to disentangle from the assemblage to become human again. Her transformation from human to stone to human again allows her to turn misogynistic traditions of lithic transformations back on themselves. Unlike Pygmalion’s statue, made to fulfill the desire of her maker, or figures such as Lot’s wife or the Propoetides who are cursed into an everlasting rocky existence, Hermione’s statuesque presence is a true assemblage: a grouping with a finite span of existence that does not privilege the human or the nonhuman and which generates a queer power. This confederation is, in Jeffery Jerome Cohen’s words, a “time and context-bound meshwork[…] of alliance” that makes “lithic pliancy and resistance visible” (33). It is a performance in every sense. The stone and Hermione are, as Barad’s agential
realism suggests, in a state of becoming together. Because Hermione and her stony material are mutually entangled or entrapped, rather than becoming permanently either one substance over another, the audience in Paulina’s home gallery is equally affected by her stony materiality as by her human presence.

*The Winter’s Tale* is a chiasmus of motion and stillness. Leontes urges Hermione into motion to stay Polixenes from leaving; he then becomes jealous of her vibrant energy and her movements around his lifelong friend. Leontes dooms Hermione to greater and greater stillness; her movements are confined first in prison, then she loses her motion and speech when she faints at her trial, then lastly she becomes a statue. Leontes’ desire to constrain the movements of his wife is striking compared to Florizell’s wooing of Perdita. Florizell would like his love to always be in motion: to speak, to sing, to dance. He wishes that she might ever do:

Nothing but that move still, still so,
And own no other function. Each your doing,
So singular in each particular,
Crowns what you are doing in the present deeds,
That all your acts are queens. (4.4.168-172).

Where Leontes’ wishes for his wife’s movements to cease, and suspects that her acts make bastards, Florizell declares all of Perdita’s acts legitimate and wants her never to stop. As a statue, Hermione, with the patience and stillness borrowed from her co-actant of stone, motivates Leontes to move toward her and to be content to see her move and hear her speak. It is Hermione’s stony inhumanity that restores Leontes’ humanity.

The material of Hermione’s transformation is an important aspect of the human/nonhuman assemblage that she has become. She is presented as a marble statue, one
“newly performed by [a] rare Italian master” (5.2.104). The best marble for statuary is the white or blue-gray Carrara marble from Tuscany, known for its purity. High-quality marble like Carrara, favored by ancient, renaissance, and modern sculptors, is a remarkably vibrant substance. It has a translucency that is comparable to that of human skin. This translucency or subsurface scattering occurs when light penetrates the surface of an object, is scattered by interacting with the material of that object, and exits the surface at a different point. Fine marble has a long geological history that blends the organic with the lithic. A metamorphic rock, marble is created when biological material has been fossilized into the calcite of limestone. Under pressure and intense heat (such as that from hot magma bodies), the calcite crystals become larger and longer and any clay minerals in the original limestone alter to micas and more complex silicate structures. Although marble, like most mineral substances, has witnessed much of the long geological history of the world, when marble is quarried it undergoes tangible property changes that can be seen on a human scale. Remarkably, when marble is first quarried it is relatively soft and easy to work, refine, and polish. It becomes harder and more durable with age. Hermione’s mineral surface is already the most human-like: supple, slightly translucent, and uniform, her lithic skin is as close to her human skin as stone can be. Marble is also susceptible to touch and will absorb the oil of human skin into its own porous surface. When Paulina stops Leontes from kissing the statue, declaring “You’ll mar it if you kiss it, stain your own / With oily painting” (5.3. 102-3) she not only dissuades him from marring the illusion (painted or performed), but suggests a real material exchange between vulnerable stone and organic touch.

Marble is ensconced in its own allegorical hierarchy. Hermione’s marble substance places her at the height of art and culture as well as sepulchral reverence. The beauty of the
stone is an important part of the agency of her assemblage. Cohen argues “a diamond becomes a precious gem because its rarity, lucidity, and density can sustain strong confederation with human and inhuman forces, tools, economic and aesthetic systems—coalitions friable stones cannot support” (33). Like the diamond, the beauty and rarity of pure marble can sustain a stronger confederation with human narrative interests than other minerals. In stories of women changed into or from stone, one material allegorically colonizes the other. The stone either becomes anthropomorphized with human-like beauty, or the woman is lithicized with stone’s alien qualities. The Propoetides in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, are turned to flint because they have lost their ability to blush. Their stony skin does not have the same subsurface scattering that makes the marble Hermione or the ivory Galatea beautiful and human-like to their male observers. Lot’s wife, turned into the material residue of tears is a pillar of crystalline structures no longer recognizable as human, and the cragginess of Mount Sipylus with water rivulets running through its limestone tells a story of broken humanity, not its preservation.

Hermione’s “rescue” on the terms of her female preserver and midwife-figure Paulina arguably places her in a position of power far different than when she is last seen on stage. As an immobile statue, she has an alabaster agency that moves the characters, primarily Leontes, towards her, and on her own terms. Critics, especially the editors of extensively taught editions, such as Barbara Mowat, Stephen Greenblatt, and Stephen Orgel have traditionally focused on the theatricality of Hermione’s transformation, and what it means for the art and nature divide, rather than the status of her materiality. Here, I would like to suggest an ecomaterial reading of the statuesque Hermione within the assemblage of her surrounding human and non-human actants and to show how her ontology as stone/woman changes the assemblage and provides her with a different kind of nonhuman agency. While a reading that takes the calcified material of the
Hermione statue for granted opens up interesting possibilities for teasing out human/stone relationships, an ecomaterialist reading of this scene need not suspend belief entirely. As Raphael Lyne astutely points out, the audience’s “irresistible temptation throughout the scene to stare at the actress playing Hermione and to watch for a flicker or fidget […] is actually a significant part of the scene, as the audience’s lack of belief that Hermione is a statue about to come to life is in curious harmony with an awareness that no actor can truly become a statue” (40). Like Höfele’s reading of ‘theriomorphic’ Shakespearean characters: humans construed as animals construed as quasi-humans (38), Hermione is ‘lithiomorphic’: a quasi-human that asks the audience members to think empathetically by intermingling the subjectivity of human and stone. This lithic trans-corporeality is powerfully not lost on Leontes in the end, especially when he states: “Does not the stone rebuke me / For being more stone than it?” (5.3.43-4). An ecomaterial reading of this scene asks what kind of agency is revealed when humans position themselves on the same scale as the nonhuman. The agency that Hermione has as a stony assemblage brings together new assemblages of humans and non-humans on the stage, in the theater, and in the world.

Part of what makes this scene from The Winter’s Tale recognizably in the romance genre is Shakespeare’s careful balance of wonder. For the scene to work, the audience in the theater as well as the audience in Paulina’s gallery has to awaken their faith: even if that “faith” is just an acknowledgement of a pleasurable suspension of disbelief. The scene is still powerful and poignant whether we believe that Hermione is truly a statue transformed or whether we believe that Hermione briefly acts as a stone and has been human all along. By taking on the qualities of stone literally or figuratively the material of human flesh and stony matter are powerfully invoked and their entanglement for this moment highlight a resonant and active partnership. In
this dissertation, I have asked that we re-examine allegorical figures for the role that their human and nonhuman materialities play in meaning-making and how these materialities effect and are shaped by fictional and real environments. Hermione’s stony performance has the same effects whether read as a true mingling or as a suggested one. Hermione’s performance/ontological shift highlights the active vibrancy of stone and its strange familiarity with the human on allegorical and tangible registers.

Hermione the statue has been in a state of becoming for sixteen years. The gentlemen conversing in the beginning of act five describe the statue as “a piece many years in doing and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano” (5.2.103-5). Rogero (the Second Gentleman) notes Paulina’s part in this “doing,” relating: “I thought she had some great matter there in hand, for she hath privately twice or / thrice a day, ever since the death of Hermione, / visited that removed house” (5.2.112-114). The great matter is both the situation and the material of the queen’s body: Paulina’s ministerings suggest the human social pattern of mealtimes, but the length of Hermione’s remove suggests the timeline of stone. Her reunion comes after a long lonely patience—a stony resolve. The removed house that Paulina visits is not only a location, but is also a clue that she visits the removed dynasty: the queen as the house that produces Sicily’s heirs, set aside for all these years. Paulina emphasized that she keeps the statue “Lonely, apart” (5.3.21). Hermione’s remove, her enclosure in a removed building, and her literal or figurative encasement in stone make her a secular anchorite, and her entrapment and co-alignment with rocky material makes her voice sought-after and weighty. Those who speak to her “stand in hope of answer” (5.2.109) and “implore her blessing” (5.3.51). The religious power of the anchorite is built on a commitment made materially present by her stony enclosure. The Hermione statue’s power to silence and draw those in the room toward her is also built from
a confederation with the lithic. Both existences, though powerful, crackle with uncomfortable tension: to live a stony life is to live a kind of death.

An element of the statuesque may be rooted within Hermione’s name. John Pitcher notes the many ways that Hermione’s name may be interpreted, including John Ruskin’s suggestion that Hermione may originate in the word *herma*, the Greek term for “stone” or “rock” which became the name for the many sacred pillar-like statues scattered over ancient Greece and Italy. While Pitcher partially dismisses these etymologies as “intriguing but esoteric” (141) the role of ancient *hermas* in human and nonhuman social, physical, and imaginative meshworks may help navigate the complex range of interactions Shakespeare may have imagined between his cast of classically influenced Sicilians and the Hermione statue. Ancient Greek herms were quadrangular block statues of human height with a head and sometimes a torso carved on the top, while genitals (usually male) were prominently displayed protruding from the otherwise blank square pillar base. The heads most often depicted Hermes (whose name may have originated from these statues), who was originally a fertility god. Hermae were originally placed at road crossings, boundaries of lands, and as protection in front of temples, tombs, gymnasia, and other public places. Travelling passerby paid their respect to the hermae statues by adding stones to the base of the statue, much a like a cairn. While it is Perdita, not Hermione, who is figured like a fertility goddess in the play, two attributes of the herm resonate with the Hermione statue. For one, she is placed at a narrative crossroads. The Hermione statue is at the borderlands between life and death and between human and nonhuman materialities. Her appearance is at the moment when all of *The Winter’s Tale*’s narrative threads intersect and resolve. Secondly, the relationship between human and stone that occurs between ancient traveler and herm is figuratively recreated between Hermione and her reunited family. When a traveller places a
stone at the base of another stone, the human metonymically extends their reach into the lithic. In offering stone for stone, the traveller acknowledges the material of the herm and its active force and vitality over the representational power of the statue. The human imagines themselves as the stone they set down: a graspable rock co-existing and enduring with the central obelisk. Through human-petric alliance, a herm gathers daughter stones around it. By becoming stone, Hermione gathers her daughter and husband around her in a stony union. Leontes figures himself as more stone than the statue, and remarks how Hermione as statue has “From thy admiring daughter took the spirits, / Standing like stone with thee” (5.3.48). Paulina encourages this lithic becoming: knowing that to be affected by wonder is to become mineral-like (in the way that to be astonished is to be stone). When she reveals the statue she first remarks, “I like your silence. It the more sho... / Your wonder” (5.3.24-25) and the pun is not lost when she commands Hermione to “Be stone no more” (5.3.125) and to “Strike all that look upon with marvel” (5.3.126). The statue coming to life, like a joyous Medusa strikes all that look upon her with marvel/marble.

ANIMAL

“shee betooke her selfe to carefull keeping of some simple natured sheepe” (Middleton, 42).

Characters in romance are often entrapped, lost, abandoned, or hidden in the pastoral. While there is no shortage of renaissance hybrids that blend the human animal with the nonhuman animal (such as Grille in the Faerie Queene with his “hoggish mind” or Bottom as an ass in A Midsummer Night’s Dream) the early modern pastoral romance provides a unique assemblage of human and nonhuman animals and an instance of entrapment that, while slightly
different than the vegetative or mineral entrapments discussed earlier, is still a provocative example of vibrant nonhuman agencies in tight material and semiotic confederation.

In pastoral romance, the human figure is surrounded by a group of homogenous animals (usually sheep or deer). Young women destined to become queens become temporary shepherdesses, surrounded by an idealized flock, while young princelings are unwittingly disguised as woodsmen encircled by a cadre of wild game. In this section I would like to reframe the trope of the royal princess amongst her flock as a kind of human and nonhuman entrapped assemblage. Examples of these assemblages are Perdita in *The Winter’s Tale* and her originating character Fawnia in Robert Greene’s *Pandosto*, Cassiopea in Christopher Middleton’s *The Famous Historie of Chinon of England*, and the titular character in *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* who, as Sarah Wall-Randell delightfully puts it “has sustained the classic romance trauma of being kidnapped as a baby and brought up humbly, in ignorance of her true origins” (113). My project in this section is to acknowledge the allegorical functions of the royal shepherdess motif and show how these allegorical assumptions are built on a material base, bring readers’ attention to more materially present human and nonhuman bodies in the pastoral landscape, and to query the emergent effects these multi-species material-semiotic confederations produce.

The shepherdess and the huntsman are allegorical figures in early modern romance and their meaning is made through an amalgamation of human and animal bodies in a restricted landscape. Taking early modern notions of essential nobility at face value and allowing that what Belarius in *Cymbeline* declares is true, “How hard it is to hide the sparks of nature!” (3.3.85)—or that royalty in bucolic or wild settings, like Perdita’s in *The Winter’s Tale*, is easily detected as “Too noble for this place” (4.4.188), the royal person entrapped in the shepherdess or
hunter assemblage becomes an interesting test case in illustrating the emergent effects of these pastoral assemblages. Royal figures who take on pastoral roles (or who have these roles thrust upon them) show how early modern audiences and readers perceived the effects between these human and animal confederations. These assemblages also provide important narrative functions for early modern romance. Sheep for a royal shepherdess provide a woolly buffer. They protect her from potential suitors by marking her as lower class, but give her a soft place to remain until her story demands movement. The shepherdess profession is allegorically “pure” with a long classical tradition and it is easy to overlook her labors once her royalty is re-established. Male heirs, in contrast, are figured as using their time as huntsman as a kind of training ground for becoming leaders in war. These young men are also taught to politicize the natural landscape.

The forest environment and their actions within it prefigure their eventual governance.

In pastoral romance, the characters are not as physically confined as in chivalric romance, yet they are in social stasis, unable to fully exert their royal prerogatives. Entrapment in the pastoral, as shepherdess or woodsman, is an amalgamation of the human and nonhuman that produces a queer energy: aligning human and nonhuman desire, fate, and identity. This energy, materializing in an acknowledgement of human and nonhuman interconnectedness, is expressed in the ways the material collective is invoked. The bodies, needs, and fates of the pastoral figure’s animal counterparts (sheep in the case of the shepherdess’s companion species) are now intermingled with the human figure’s own body, identity, desires, and destiny. For the romance figure, this intertwining is notably finite: eventually the animal elements of the assemblage are forgotten, discarded, or left behind as the assemblage is dissolved. However, because the grouping is temporary it is easier to see the effects of this confederation. Analyzing the princess who takes on the role of shepherdess (a foreign actant) more readily reveals the bonds and effects
of the network than analyzing an early modern literary shepherdess who is figured as inherently enmeshed in the pastoral assemblage.

Royal princesses and princes outside of their aristocratic domestic spaces remain in rustic settings until their true identities are revealed when the proper marriage or martial need looms. The revelation of their true social selves works as an enchanted speech act that rescues them from lower-class identities and entrapment within the geographical and domestic spaces of pasture and forest. Thus, characters such as Perdita or Fawnia are entrapped within the pastoral space, only to be released by an outside force (the first parameter in my initial guidelines for entrapment). Yet in early modern romances, it is most often nonhuman objects that ultimately speak for the entrapped human and prove their high parentage. The objects found or brought with the lost royal infants are notable for their recognizability, their value, and their connection to a specific place and time. The objects work collectively as a time capsule that represent and recreate royal lineage and secure identity. Most often these objects are gold, cloth, and textual documents: clothing and materials of exchange. Textiles, texts, precious minerals, and currency are objects woven, written, wrought, and stamped with human worth. They are ubiquitously common but may also be highly personalized. The infant Fawnia is found by her shepherd adoptive father “wrapped in a mantle of scarlet, richly embroidered with gold, and having a chain about the neck” along with jewels and “a very fair and rich purse, wherein he found a great sum of gold” (421). The material proofs of Perdita’s parentage are the “mantle of Queen Hermione’s, her jewel about the / neck of it, [and] the letters of Antigonus found with it, / which they know to be his character” (5.2.36-7). Perdita is not the only person in The Winter’s Tale to be known by her effects. All that remains of Antigonus are “a handkerchief and rings of his that Paulina / knows” (5.2.70-1) that were saved by the shepherd’s son. Just as Perdita and
Antigonous’ identities are ascertained by clothing and personal objects, Leontes and Polixenes, in their joyful reunion are “with / countenance of such distraction that they were to / be known by garment, not by favor” (5.2.50-2). In Cymbeline the two brothers are proved to be the king’s sons by similar means. The elder brother has an undeniable star-shaped mole, a “natural stamp / It was wise Nature’s end in the donation / To be his evidence now” (5.5.444-6), but the younger is known by a swaddling garment: “a most curious mantle, wrought by th’ hand / Of his queen mother” (5.5.437-8).12 The rescuers of entrapped pastoral heroines and heroes are in the end not only the people who notice, find, or raise them, but primarily the objects placed with them as children. Even Perdita, who is arguably rescued from a pastoral entrapment by fleeing with Florizell is still identified within the pastoral matrix until her dowry of royal objects is revealed.

These objects (in The Winter’s Tale bundled together as a fardel) become an archive of identity. The objects in these collections are gendered and multi-temporal. Gold and coinage decry station, but often the jewels and always the cloth objects that accompany the foundlings are material representations of maternal or feminine connection. The mothers of romance foundlings are able to reach forwards and backwards in time to secure the identity of their lost children. The mantle not only serves as a wearable heraldic flag, but it is a protective garment personalized by mothers and meant to be wrapped around their child. It is difficult to think of a more fitting object to stand in for a queenly mother or a better item to declare matrilineal

12 Cymbeline, with the headless Cloten dressed in Posthumous’ garments, troubles the idea that one might be known by one’s clothes. Shakespeare mocks the “clothes make the man” theme in The Winter’s Tale when the Shepherd and his son encounter Autolycus newly dressed in gentlemen’s garments. The Shepherd’s Son eggs on Autolycus, saying “See you these clothes? Say / you see them not and think me still no gentleman / born. You were best say these robes are not gentlemen / born. Give me the lie, do, and try whether I am / not now a gentleman born” (5.2.140-4).
parentage. When the child is initially ensconced in the pastoral, the rich maternal cloth is replaced with homespun garments of a different sort.\(^\text{13}\) The rustic wool garment that replaces the rich mantle encircles the child in an altered social status and becomes a stand-in for her new environment and adoptive mother. The stately setting of the court is replaced with the bucolic surround of sheep and field: embroidered mantle for homely blanket. The two materials have a distinctly different functioning agency: the maternal garment of the queen is particular and memorable, while the subsequent swaddling clothing is anonymous and only works as a foil to the child’s natural beauty. The rich mantle is able to sustain a more durable connection to the past and to the non-present body and care of the mother. The homely blanket, like the sheep that surround the child/adolescent, is an object that is rarely made visible. Instead blanket and sheep work as mere signifiers for social state and lose the forceful and present agency of the overdetermined mantle. Sheep and rustic blankets are many and interchangeable while royal mantles are singular. The mantle is a vibrant material in part because of its historical realness and usefulness as an object that once physically touched both mother and child, but also its strong social, narrated, and aesthetic existence. This gives it the power to narratively disrupt the assemblage of the princess/shepherdess entrapped in a pastoral life.

The foundling mantle is an object that materializes a polychronic and multi-temporal relationship between past, present, and future.\(^\text{14}\) When the mantle is revealed in the present of the narrative, it is the catalyst to the phenomenon of the “found heir.” The mantle rematerializes

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\(^{13}\) In *Pandosto*, the shepherd’s wife “learned to sing lullaby at home with her young babe, wrapping it in a homely blanket instead of a rich mantle, nourishing it so cleanly and carefully as it began to be a jolly girl, insomuch that they began both of them to be very fond of it” (422).

\(^{14}\) For an extended discussion of early modern multi-temporal and polychronic objects, see Jonathan Gil Harris’ *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (2009).
and makes known the intra-actions that move across space and time, connecting mother to child and redefining social identities in the past, present, and future. The mantle is a storied object, and in pastoral romance it usually prompts narratives of three moments in time: the remembrance of the child in her true mother’s arms, how the child and her accompanying mantle and other signifying objects were found, and how the objects were preserved and brought forth in the present moment. Sheep, rocks, sea, shepherds, wives, mothers, children, mantles, gold, social hierarchies, and diverse moments of time are all bundled together in this enmeshed phenomenon. The mantle invokes the remembrance of multiple bodies: the mother and child, the lost sheep that usually instigates the discovery of the child, the shepherd who finds her and his wife who takes her under her care, and the grown child who is given the mantle as an object of knowledge. The sheep is an important part of this storied assemblage. Not only is the lost sheep a plausible prompt for the child’s discovery, but the lost sheep becomes the allegorical motif of the lost child herself. The adoptive-father shepherds in Pandosto and The Winter’s Tale both find the infant princess while looking for lost sheep they think may have wandered to the seaside “browsing on the sea-ivy” (421). Antigonus plants the baby Perdita on the seaside, calling her “Blossom” (3.3.50). The frightened sheep are assumed by the shepherds to eventually fall back into their grazing routines and to search out their favorite edibles. The shepherds then ultimately search for the plant material favored by their errant sheep rather than the sheep themselves. Instead of sheep or plant, they find a human “blossom”: a delicate babe in danger of being browsed by sea, storm, or bear. The infant Perdita/Fawnia is taken up in place of the sheep. The Shepherd in Shakespeare’s play states “Let my sheep go” (3.3.123) while in Greene’s narrative the shepherd “left seeking of his sheep” (422) to bring the baby home.
The lost sheep that becomes the lost child tradition is inverted in *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*. Published in 1621, Wroth’s narrative is already well steeped in the tropes of pastoral romance. In a twist on the genre, Wroth begins the tale of her heroine at the point where most romances conclude. In the first section, Urania has been presented with her own foundling objects (a rich mantle, a purse of gold, and written instructions) that speak to her rich parentage, but she is left to discover her own path to restoration.\(^1\) Here the presentation of the objects releases her from a pastoral entrapment, but they don’t complete her tale. Soon after the discovery of her past, Urania comforts a lost lamb and contemplates their similar position as having lost their mothers:

Poore Lambe, said she, what moane thou mak’st for losse of thy deare dam?

What torments do I then suffer which neuer knew my mother? Thy misse is great, yet thou a beast may’st be brought vp, and soone contented hauing food; but what food can bee giuen me, who feede on nothing but Despa, can that sustaine me?

No, want of knowledge starues me, while other things are plentifull. Poore innocent thing; how doth thy wailing sute with mine? Alas, I pitie thee, my selfe in some kind wanting such a pitie” (16).

\(^{1}\) For my selfe I can say nothing, but that my name is *Vrania*, an old man and his wife hauing bred me vp as their owne, till within these few daies they told me that, which now more afflictts me, that the pouertie of my estate did before trouble me, making me so ignorant of my selfe as I know no parents. For they told me that I was by them found hard by the sea-side, not farre from these rocks, laid in a cradle with very rich clothes about me, a purse of gold in the cradle, and a little writing in it, which warn’d them that should take me vp to looke carefully to me, to call me *Vrania*, and when I came to sixeteene yeeres of age to tell this to me, but by no means before, this they have truly performed, and haue deliuered me the mantle and purse, that by them, if good fortune serue, I may come to knowledge ; inioyning me besides, not to keepe this my story secret from any, since this sweet place intising many into it, may chance to bring some one to release me from this torment of Ignorance” (18-19).
A wolf threatens both Urania and the lost lamb, but is suddenly killed by the two sons of the exiled king of Albania. Released from pastoral entrapment by the knowledge of her foundling status, Urania makes choices that further her symbolically from the identity of the lost lamb. While she identifies with the lamb’s despair, she separates herself from the lamb by declaring the lamb may be comforted by food, while she may only be made happy by knowledge. After the Albanian princes rescue her, she quickly converts the lost lamb into food: offering her former companion in misery as a comfort to the sick king. While the king eats the lamb, Urania sups on information and discovers that she is the lost princess for whom Parselius has been searching. As Urania is no longer a shepherdess or allegorically the lost lamb, the material body of the lamb is rapidly exchanged as a useful commodity and the companionship of the human/nonhuman pastoral assemblage is exchanged for a new grouping of characters and entities.

Julian Yates, in his essay “Sheep Tracks,” which rearticulates a portion of Donna Haraway’s work in *When Species Meet*, proposes, “what we know of sheep derives almost completely from the way they have been rewritten” (184). Sheep have been re-written genetically and environmentally as well as re-inscribed by their allegorical, symbolic, or functioning roles in discursive representations. Primatologist-turned-sheep-farmer Thelma Rowell, whom Haraway visited, argues, “the selective breeding of sheep, their modeling and manipulation as livestock or living capital has essentially rendered sheep “sheepish.”” (184). Rowell takes a new approach and, with a special breed that has been isolated from significant breeding and genetic changes, studies sheep as she would apes: allowing them the agency to organize themselves and to observe the results. Rowell wishes to eschew “several thousand years of botched or abusive ethology” (185) by allowing sheep to decide for themselves which questions and actions are interesting. Yates describes that the ethology Rowell writes off
“amounts to the story whereby the human / sheep / dog / goat multi-species came to write the discourses of pastoral and pastoral care under whose rubric we still essentially make do” (185). What Rowell’s defamiliarizing of sheep makes legible for Yates is: “the way rhetorical routines we might figure as anthropomorphic play host to a mutually extensive zoomorphism. That is to say, the process that renders sheep “sheep,” or “sheepish,” and human persons “not sheep,” or only sometimes sheep for a “not-sheep” shepherd or a “not-sheep” wolf, rebounds on us in all sorts of “sheepy” ways. The biopolitics of pastoral and the networks of pastoral care with which they are allied trade on a sheepy metaphorics in which all human persons oscillate between the roles of shepherds and their four-legged charges” (185). The human / sheep / dog / goat multi-species that Yates describes is a shifting carousel of metaphorical identities. The human in the multi-species assemblage at any point may be aligned with the sheepish, the wolfish, or even, if we expand the species, with the vegetative fodder of the ruminant sheep. The lost infant in this multi-species is easily coded as sheepish: a lost lamb, that when recovered brings wealth to the sheepcote. The relationship between young women and infants to sheep is consistently repeated in early modern romance because their allegorical qualities are complimentary. Softness, whiteness, docility, and innocence are seen in pastoral literature as ideal qualities of both. These complimentary allegorical qualities are built in part from similar material understandings that make these human/nonhuman confluences both familiar and unsettling.

Sheep, especially those existing in early modern literature, are over-burdened by the metaphorical and allegorical. Animal studies scholars of the early modern period have found it incredibly difficult to shear actual living ruminants from their allegorical meanings. Bruce Boehrer, in taking up Erica Fudge’s challenge in *Brutal Reasoning* to read early modern animals “as animals and not simply as symbols of something else” (4), finds that evidence of actual sheep
“practically disappears beneath the accumulated sediment of ovine metaphor, allusion, anecdote, and cliché” (165). Boehrer’s conclusion in his chapter is an admission that it may be impossible to fleece the metaphorical from the actual animal. He notes “one is forced to conclude at last that there is no sustainable distinction between the literal and the figurative capacities of early modern animals—that these beasts are nowhere more themselves than when standing for what they are not” (186). Boehrer’s conclusion does not shut down the agency of the actual animal. Rather, he allows that animals such as sheep may participate “as animals” in networks of meaning that, in Latour’s words, are “simultaneously real, social, and narrated (7).” The relationships between the human animal and the ovine animal are shaped by allegorical understandings that have material, social, and genre effects.

The sheep/human assemblage functions mainly to protect the heroine of the pastoral romance, to give her a figurative “soft place” to land where she can be safely hidden and thrive until she is brought back to her proper sphere. Yet entrapped amongst her sheep, the royal shepherdess is given a new kind of agency and position to speak from. Within the assemblage, the shepherdess has the power to deflect advances and to make other nonhuman objects and entities speak for her. In similar ways in which her mother Hermione acquires a new stony kind of power emanating from being entrapped in marble, Perdita has a new agency from within her woolly surround. One example of this agency is her ability to deploy and shut down various kinds of figurative language. In a scene with much scholarly attention, Perdita uses the metaphorical language of flowers to order the guests at the sheep-shearing festival and to open up a discussion of social miscegenation through flowery bodies. As the “blossom” of Hermione and Leontes and Flora to Florizell, Perdita’s figurative speech quickly takes on the literal. Her role as a shepherdess allows her all of the discourse of spring and gives her an expert knowledge
of animal husbandry and gardening. As a shepherdess, Perdita employs this kind of figurative language and expert knowledge, but she is able to dispel the advances of others through practicality. When Camillo expresses “I should leave grazing, were I of your flock, / And only live by gazing” (4.4.129-130), she exclaims, “Out, alas! / You’d be so lean that blasts of January / Would blow you through and through” (4.4.131-33). Perdita has some control over the rotating metaphorical exchange in the sheep/human multi-species that makes sheep human and humans sheep and pushes back against the reduction of her profession to poetisms. When Camillo attempts to zoomorphically inhabit a sheepish identity, Perdita invokes an actual sheep whose existence depends on grazing and is not swayed by the beauty of shepherdesses. It is this non-regard that is the most important element in the sheep/shepherdess assemblage. The sheep never become wolfish; the sheep to the shepherdess are companion species. Together they move through the pastoral landscape: the one protecting the other from wolves, the other from humans-in-sheep’s-clothing.

Haraway notes in her discussion of companion species that the otherwise generous, careful, and curious Jacques Derrida commits a slight falter in “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow).” In the moment of his nakedness in front of his cat, Haraway states Derrida “failed a simple obligation of companion species; he did not become curious about what the cat might actually be doing, feeling, thinking, or perhaps making available to him in looking back at him that morning” (20). Haraway notes he “came right to the edge of respect, of the move to respecere, but he was sidetracked by his textual canon of Western philosophy and literature and by his own linked worries about being naked in front of his cat” (20). Respecere, for Haraway begins at the root word of species “to look” or “to behold.” Respecere is to “hold in regard, to respond, to look back reciprocally, to notice, to pay attention, to have courteous regard for, to
esteem: all of that is tied to polite greeting, to constituting the polis, where and when species meet” (19). In Haraway’s take on Barad’s agential realism, to “knot companion and species together in encounter, in regard and respect is to enter the world of becoming with, where who and what are is precisely what is at stake” (19). Almost all entities are involved in a continuous act of becoming. Haraway describes the positive outcomes of this becoming as hinging on the continuous series of respectful exchanges that shape species interdependence. She describes “I am who I become with companion species, who and which make a mess out of categories in the making of kin and kind” (19). The discrete boundaries of sheep and shepherdess are less relevant as both are intricately implicated in each other’s experience and being in the world. The royal shepherdess is in the act of becoming with her companion species. Who she is/becomes depends in part in how she responds when the sheep look back.

How would a sheep in *The Winter’s Tale* or *Pandosto* respond? A major problem with reading sheep in *The Winter’s Tale* (one that I have been side-stepping all along) is that there are no stage directions or dialogue that require a sheep to be onstage. We have “two of [the Shepherd’s] best sheep” (3.3.71-2), that prompt the elder shepherd to go searching in the storm, but they are always invoked as somewhere else. These sheep are left roaming after the discovery of the infant Perdita. Sheep are presumed present at the sheep-shearing festival, but the audience’s attention is never brought to a specific one. Multiple shepherds and shepherdesses are bodily present on stage, but their accompanying sheep are nowhere to be found. The shepherdess/sheep multi-species relationship is one wherein only the shepherdess and the sheep seem to practice *respecere*. The shepherdess watches her flock and the sheep may gaze back while they graze, but no outside entity seems to need to see the physical flock or even a single representative of their kind in order to address the shepherdess as a multi-species assemblage.
Camillo implies in his compliment to Perdita, that her relationship to her flock is one more construct wherein she is surrounded by doting admirers of her beauty. Perdita’s deflection suggests that, while she might herd her sheep, the relationship and *respecere* that occurs between the relationship may be more equitable. If the sheep are companions instead of admirers, their own grazing needs (and other animal prerogatives) are acknowledged, while Perdita’s beauty, like Derrida’s nakedness in front of his cat, is not registered in a human way. Sheep provide companionship and an industrious cure for idleness.

The main plot of the 1597 Arthurian romance, *The Famous Historie of Chinon of England* centers on the offences of the treacherous Perosus against the family of Bessarian. Perosus is in love with Bessarian’s high-born daughter Cassiopea. When he realizes that none of his advances are succeeding he “secretly gins worke with an old Witch […] who, hyred by him, hammered about to work some meane how she might change the setled affections of her maidenlyke minde somewhat to encline themselues to his intent” (40). When all else fails, the witch decides to “remoue [Cassiopea] quite from all companie, to liue on the vnpeopled Plaines among brute beasts” (40). Cassiopea is at first dismayed, however:

> at last, after shee had long remained there in that people wanting world, to eschue the occasion of harme and the effect of idlenes shee betooke her selfe to carefull keeping of some simple natured sheepe, where of that place was stored, of whose wooll she now begins to spinne her selfe some homely atire, that was wont to be robed in the richest aray that nature and Arte could afford; (42).

The last resort of a princess left by herself is to become a shepherdess. For Cassiopea, the sheep save her from harm, keep her from a moral and mentally dangerous idleness, and provide her with new clothing. In the “people wanting world” the sheep become her companions. The
witch’s plan to make Cassiopea miserable for lack of human companionship backfires in the face of sheepish coalition. The sheep appear when metaphorical and physical need occurs. They are “stored” in the empty desert to await a princess-turned-shepherdess in need. Middleton understands the stability of the royal shepherdess motif. The multi-species assemblage secures his heroine from danger and allows her virtues to shine against the foil of the simple sheep and homely attire. The royal daughter’s entrapment in the pastoral is the safest allegorical place for her to be in danger. In Middleton’s romance, the royal shepherdess is not saved from pastoral entrapment, but rather further constrained in a rocky one. Conflating the traditions that may have influenced the characters of Perdita and Hermione, Cassiopea is first a deserted shepherdess and then is imprisoned in “the ruin of an olde Rocke” (45). The material companionship of the sheep is replaced with the cold comfort of the enclosing rock.
Chapter Three

Curls to Curled Waves: *Poly-Olbion* and Michael Drayton’s Female Rivers

Ecocritics are beginning to turn their attention toward Michael Drayton’s prodigious *Poly-Olbion* as a literary example of an early modern environmental ethics. The most striking feature of the chorographical poem is its lack of human characters as primary speakers. The landscape is peopled entirely by personifications of local rivers, hills, pools, and forests who each add their voice to the poem. This defining characteristic of Drayton’s work, which is beautifully illustrated in the accompanying maps by William Hole, gestures toward an environmentally conscious and non-anthropocentric perspective on the landscapes of Britain, even as it reforms nonhuman elements into human figures. Sukanya Dasgupta highlights Drayton’s use of nonhuman voices and his poignant awareness of landscape change in the face of Jacobean deforestation, enclosures, and the draining of the fens as evidence for describing *Poly-Olbion* as “a rich hinterland for ‘green studies’” (153). Todd Borlik and Andrew McRae focus their ecocritical readings of *Poly-Olbion* on the recurrent laments concerned with the loss of forests and local woodlands. These frequent and strongly worded arboreal eulogies offer an affective commentary on the early modern material economies of timber and the cultural and ecological devastation of woodland depletion. Current ecocritical scholarship on *Poly-Olbion*, such as Dasgupta’s, offers a clear path into the text by locating songs describing ecological loss from the poem alongside concurrent practices of widespread human-activated landscape change in the decades in which Drayton wrote the two parts of *Poly-Olbion*. While there is still much to be said about the role of Drayton’s poem as a critique of the ecological recklessness of his time (and as a critique that may easily extend into our own age) through a traditional ecocritical mode,
I am concerned with how Drayton employs the genre of romance to shape his chorography and how the material objects of his topographical romance add to an ecomaterial critique. By employing romance, Drayton is able to blend historical narrative with the landscape of Britain and give it both impress and agency by embodying the land into various nymphs and representational figures who sing of themselves and the history they witnessed.

Borlik notes that *Poly-Olbion* is one early modern text that meets all of pioneering ecocritic Lawrence Buell’s requirements for an environmental text. The elements of the landscape, being turned into anthropomorphized figures, are, as Borlik argues, made into “a confederacy of historians” (6) that fulfill Buell’s condition that in eco-minded narratives, “1) The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history” (7). Buell’s second requirement, “human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest” (7), rings resoundingly true through the voices of the nonhuman elements in the poem in place of human voices that express interests outside of human desires. The third requisite condition is “accountability to the environment” (7) a responsibility clearly indicated by Drayton’s warnings about the consequences of the depletion of natural resources. Buell’s last constraint is “Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a giving is at least implicit in the text” (7). Borlik indicates that this is fulfilled through Drayton’s advocacy of bioregionalism and self-sustained local economies, and that environment as process is also a notion “engrained in many early modern texts through the topos of mutability, which spurred Drayton’s muse as much as it did Spenser’s” (7).

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I would like to add to Borlik’s insight and suggest that Buell’s environmental requirements are most often met in early modern texts through the longstanding traditions of romance. For instance, Borlik’s own example illustrating how *Poly-Olbion* shows how human history is implicated in natural history is Robin Hood, whose fame “fuels Drayton’s plea for the forest’s preservation” (7). The romance narratives of local heroes work to preserve their adventuring locales. In response to the second imperative that allows for nonhuman interest, romance provides the structure for which the hills, forests, and rivers of *Poly-Olbion* play out their cares and intrigues. The correlation between romance and environmental interest is not a causal relationship; however, the patterns and topos of romance narratives make the agency of nonhuman elements more visible. Drayton’s unique prosopopoeia allows for accountability to the environment to be an emergent effect of an encounter with a romance heroine in distress. In one of the most explicit critiques of deforestation, *Gillingham Forest*, in the second song, mourns her bereft state to her confidant the River *Stour*:

The Forrest her bespoke; How happie floods are yee,
From our predestin’d plagues that priuiledged bee;
Which onelie with the fish which in your banks doe breed,
And dailie there increase, mans gurmandize can feed?
But had this wretched Age such vses to imploy
Your waters, as the woods we latelie did enjoy,
Your channels they would leaue as barren by their spoile,
As they of all our trees haue lastlie left our soile.
Insatiable Time thus all things doth deuour:
What euer saw the sunne, that is not in Times power?
Yee fleeting Streames last long, out-liuing manie a day:
But, on more steadfast things Time makes the strongest pray (26).

Here human avarice has left *Gillingham Forest* despoiled and despairing. *Gillingham* uses the register and modes of a poetic romance heroine but in reverse. Instead of a maiden alone in the woods, the woods herself are alone in the deserted soil. Like Una in the *Faerie Queene*, or Urania and Pamphilia in *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, *Gillingham* compares her woe to the blissful happiness of the world outside her surroundings or to her companion (in *Gillingham Forest*’s case, both). This cry for environmental responsibility in *Poly-Olbion* comes directly through the plea of the victim instead of a more indirect ideology. The reader’s desire to address environmental accountability is built on empathy for *Gillingham Forest* as a nonhuman romance character. In this way, the reader of Drayton’s chorographical romance is ascribed the role of the knight errant: entreated to rescue a host of environmental damsels from ravishment.

The romance elements of Drayton’s poem, while noted, have not been fully explored. Stella Revard is the only critic to directly comment in an extended fashion on the romance characterization of the natural features of Britain in *Poly-Olbion*. In describing these romance narrative moments in Drayton’s poem, Revard states: “*Poly-Olbion* consistently tempts the reader to view it as a pastoral masque in which “hills” and “rivers” are merely human beings in fancy dress” (106). Citing the love triangle between the hill *Clent*, the forest *Feckn’ham*, and the river *Salwarpe*, she argues:

Momentarily, we see in Feckn’ham the fleeing maiden of *Orlando Furioso* or *The Faerie Queene*, who loves one knight distractedly only to be pursued by another. But only momentarily. What we really see is that the forest has left the hill-top barren of trees, which cluster instead about the nearby river. Feckn’ham,
however fugitive her appearance, is not meant as the successor to Angelica or fair Florimell […] How far from the world of romance we are as we hear a hill, vowing to forsake all pleasure, upbraid a “fallen” forest and threaten a river with vengeance (106).

I argue, rather, that in *Poly-Olbion* the world of romance is directly under our feet and all around us. Revard’s 1977 article reflects a cultural disposition toward the relationship between the environment and literature that current ecotheorists are still working to overcome. Two such ecotheorists, Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, ask us to read the material world as storied matter: “intermingled agencies and forces that persist and change over eons, producing new forms, bodies, and natures” (1). Entangled in endless ways, material forms are in constant processes of shared becoming that tell stories about their natures, their histories, and their associations.

Drayton’s narrative of natural interconnectedness is shaped through the genre of romance. Hills, forests, and rivers, are active participants in their own stories and there is no generic edict that forbids casting natural elements as romance characters. Drayton does not tempt readers to see his landscape as either human or nonhuman. We don’t “really see” the forest, hilltop, river, or their anthropomorphized representations; rather, we see them both at the same time. Drayton does not ask us to choose between representation and represented, but to view the human and nonhuman as a palimpsest. By embodying the landscape in human form, he brings attention and empathy to the landscape’s potential for agency and desire and exemplifies the idea of Britain as a material that is heavily mediated by history and romance.
Revard’s account of Drayton’s anthropomorphized landscape is riddled with the dangers of both disregarding romance as a potent genre for ecological understanding and of romanticizing nature. Revard declares:

[the hill] Clent, of course, cannot carry out his threats; like the lover on Keats’s storied urn frozen by art, Clent is frozen by nature. Drayton has created this little drama perhaps for the sheer fancy of it, perhaps to glance wryly at the absurdities of romance that it mimics. What is most important, however, is that in telling his story of rivalry and rejected love, he has taken care to “ground” it in topological truth. We see the landscape better, not worse, for Drayton’s story. Consistently Drayton aims to transcend nature, to heighten it, to render it—as Sidney said the artist must—yet more golden, but never to deny it (106-107).

By comparing the active vibrant landscape to a static scene from a work of human art, Revard sublimates a living active ecology for a singular manmade object and attempts to further cement the art and nature divide. The romanticization of nature as something that needs to be rendered, transcended, heightened, and made more golden is highly anthropocentric, while Revard’s topological truth seems to be only an assumption of the landscape’s immovability and immutability. Ecocritical readings of Poly-Olbion like McRae and Borlik’s rather highlight Drayton’s concern with landscape change and the shifting of its features. Without the forest roots holding the hilltop together, Clent may very well carry out his threats and landslide destructively into both forest and river. Revard’s dismissal of Drayton’s topological drama as created for sheer fancy or to highlight absurdities is also a familiar disregard that denigrates
romance as a serious genre. Lori Humphrey Newcomb notes that “for 250 years, mockery of popular romance lent prestige to one emerging literary genre after another—the prose character, the Shakespearean romance, the royalist ballad, the comic opera, the novel—establishing new forms and aspirant writers as fit for the cultural elite” (9). Revard’s reliance on Keats and Sidney for authority participates in an almost subconscious rejection of popular romance tropes for more sanctified forms of romance (or Romantic) fiction. Drayton’s persistent usage of familiar romance relationships between his elemental characters resists Revard’s reading of the Feckn’ham scene as a singular ironic fancy.

Revard’s depiction of Drayton’s anthropomorphized landscape highlights the difficulties of reading allegory and material as a mutually influencing palimpsest. However, Drayton’s Jacobean audience were used to being in the company of personified landscape figures. In B. Jon: His Part of King James his Royall and Magnificent Entertainement (1604) the reader is privy to a textual account of Ben Jonson’s contribution to the festivities that accompanied King James’ entry into London. The River Thames, embodied as Tamesis, is an important guest in the processional masque. Tamesis is made to be like the “Riuer, as running along the side of the City” and is dressed “in a skinne made like flesh, naked, and blew” with a sea-green mantle blown out like a sail, bracelets of willow, and “a crowne of sedge and reede vpon his head, mixt with water-lillies; alluding to Virgills description of Tiber” (7). He is presented with his “beard, and haire long, and ouergrowne. He leanes his arme vpon an earthen pot, out of which, water, with liue Fishes, are seene to runne forth, and play about him” (8). His word, “FLVMINA SENSERVNT IPSA. A Hemistich of Ovids” is described as “Affirming, that Riuers themselues, and such inanimate Creatures, haue heretofore been made sensible of Passions, and Affections,

17 See Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England (2002).
and that hee, nowe, no lesse pertooke the ioy of his Maiesties gratefull approach to this Citty, than any of those persons, to whome he pointed” (8). The difference between Drayton’s personified rivers and Jonson’s version of Tamesis is one of bioregionalism versus generalism. Jonson’s version of the Thames is a personification of any great river that runs next to a prominent city. Tamesis carries all the appropriate accouterments needed to be read as an authoritative watery figure, but nothing about him marks him as reflecting the particular nature of the actual River Thames. In fact, important elements of the material proof of his river status are specifically meant to allude to another river, the River Tiber. Jonson’s river Thames is concerned more with narratives of sovereignty and power rather than local exceptionalism.


Drayton’s *Tames*, in contrast, is still idealized “Bankt with imbrodered Meads, of sundry sutes of flowres, / His breast adorn’d with Swans, oft washt with siluer showres” (257) but is made notable by the actions he takes on his way toward the sea. His greatness is not figured by age, but rather, because he is enmeshed within a network of familial relationships he is
personified as a young prince coming of age. Sent from his parents Isis and Tame to meet his betrothed Medway and join the Court of great Oceanus, he lingers and dallies like a wayward youth, stopping to court a rustic lass the Mole and turning back to gawk at the city of London along the switchbacked and tide-influenced course the actual River Thames takes. Drayton’s Tames is made present by the action of his elemental liquid body on a geographic scale, rather than the material signifiers of riverhood. Jonson’s form of allegorical personification is the same that Shakespeare mocks in A Midsummer Night’s Dream. The rude mechanicals personify their stage props akin to traditional personifications of the Thames. Moonshine is known by his bush of thorns and lantern; the wall is made present by having “some plaster, or some loam, or some / roughcast about him to signify wall” (3.1.67-68). Tamesis’ blue skin, sea-green mantle, live fish, and sedgy adornments are in this category of material signifiers.

The salient difference between Jonson’s Tamesis and Drayton’s Tames is in the performance of allegorical anthropomorphized bodies. In material representations such as Jonson’s, human bodies are adorned with the allegorical markers of the nonhuman. The human performs a series of ritualized movements that actively link the materialized presence of the nonhuman with the human audience. These gestures, allegorical markers, and situational performance coopt the nonhuman into a network of human interest and meaning. By bringing the River Thames out of the blue and into the ecology of performance situated around King James’ arrival, the Thames is made to speak for the nonhuman world in praising the naturalized kingship of James. The movement of the Thames is artificial: it has left its banks to be present at the appropriate triumphal archway. In this sense, the personification of the Thames is a timeless entity, called to be present for the particular moment of the pageant. The phenomenon of James’ processional recasts the nonhuman River Thames as the “Site” of the city, alongside a varied cast
of personified worthies said to be the “Fabricke, Strength, Policie, Dignitie and Affections of the Cittie” (12). As a river made sensible of passions, partaking in the joy of the King’s approach, the River Thames fulfills a pathetic fallacy in reflecting the approving festivities of London’s people in the land. The River Thames’ uniqueness is dissipated into a larger collective entity of the “Site” of London.

In comparison, Drayton’s humanly-clothed rivers and landscape elements perform their own material dramas overlaid with human intentions. Here nonhuman bodies are adorned with the desires of the human while still acting in ways congruent to their nonhuman identities. Where the processional masque performance is highly situational: attuned to a particular time and audience, the performance of Drayton’s rivers, hills, and forests are highly spatial. They enact their meaning along a predetermined geography and therefore any human network they are associated with must be tied to that geographic reality. The landscape elements of Drayton’s chorographical epic are anthropomorphizations that remain materially nonhuman. Since they remain materially nonhuman, Drayton’s landscape elements as described in the poem do not need universal markers of their river-, hill-, or forest-ness. Hole’s representations on the maps include these consistent markers (forest headdresses, naked water-nymphs, and hilltop walking sticks), but in the poetry the elements are only marked by specific local features and by their actions. Instead of being timeless representations, these landscape figures act on a geologic and liquid timescale that includes both rushing rivers and slow topographical change.

Revard depicts Poly-Olbion as a “pastoral masque” where landscape elements are human figures in fancy dress. This is certainly true of the first representational figure in Poly-Olbion, but I argue that it does not apply to the others. William Hole’s exquisite frontispiece of Drayton’s poem famously depicts the allegorical figure of Albion. The island’s representation
sits serenely in state barefoot on a rocky throne, surrounded by the sea and actively sailing ships. She holds the scepter and cornucopia, the symbols of power and plenty, and is adorned with laurels by cherubs. Her four “suitors,” Brut, Caesar, Hengst, and William the Conquerer, regard each other warily from the surrounding columns. The accompanying “Vpon the Frontispice” casts Albion as a romance queen who changes her love from one ambitious “prince” to the other. Albion is purposefully cast in the same posture found in the portraiture of Elizabeth I as well as traditional images of the Madonna. In Albion the beloved queen is aligned with the land of Britian itself while Albion’s natural bounties, represented in the cornucopia, take the place of the Christ-child. What is most interesting about the image, however, is Albion’s fancy dress. Her robe, as Barbara C. Ewell points out, on “closer inspection reveals it to be actually a map of England, pictorially detailed with the very geography that crowds the pages of the poem” (299). Albion is a human figure literally dressed in the cartography of Britain. If we read her as a masque figure, she gives authority to the landscape by her presence and is adorned with multiple signifying features that allow her to be read as a unified body of Britain. Albion is also importantly, a living figure. As Richard Helgerson argues, Albion is a living embodiment of nature, as opposed to the artifacts of stone, the statuesque “trophies” of the conquerors in the columns. (64). Her bodily presence, just like that of the actor in a masque, is important in that it creates a timeless deification of Britain. Where the human conquerors may be memorialized, Albion is perpetually queenly, beautiful, and prosperous. In the figure of Albion we don’t “momentarily see” an idealized queen from romance and then “really see” the island country of Britain itself. Rather, Albion remains a representation, cloaked with another form of representation—a cartographical sign of the land. Other than Albion’s rocky foundation in the
sea, the land itself, while living, is not figured as actively moving through the environment.

Instead, Albion’s silent repose suggests stability: an unchanging nature and a secure nation-state.

The difference between Albion as a stately allegorical figure in fancy dress and an active material romance figure is best illustrated in a comparison with the Albion of the frontispiece and when the personification of Britain appears again as Albyn in the second song. No longer a static feminine symbol of natural and political unity, when Albyn is conscripted into the romance action of Drayton’s text, the land of Britain is reimagined as a virile male suitor.

Albyn woos the “lustie Sea-borne Lass” Poole and begets her with three “mayden Iles, his
darlings and delight” (26). The elemental exchange between enclosed bay and sedimented shoreline is refigured as a love story that ends productively with children. Moreover, Albyon becomes the protective husband and father to Poole and her daughter islands. Poole is described as having been one of Thetis’s virgin train. When, through this elemental island-producing copulation, Poole is a virgin no longer, she is in danger from the queen of the sea (named both Thetis and Amphitrite in the poem) and Albyon moves materially in order to keep her and their earthy children safe:

Great Albyon (that fore-thought, the angrıe Goddess would
Both on the Dam and brats take what reuenge shee could)
I th bosome of the Poole his little children plac’;
First, Brunksey; Fursey next; and little Hellen last;
Then with his mightie arms doth clip the Poole about,
To keepe the angrıe Queene, fierce Amphitrite out.
Against whose lordlie might shee musters vp her waues;
And strongly thence repulst (with madness) scoulds and raues. (26).

Albyon is made an active agent in a local drama on a geologic time scale. The islands, now called Brownsea, Fuszey, and Green, are built up from bare sand and mud bank from the shallow harbor of Poole. Ecological succession has allowed the small landmasses to generate a rich topsoil that sustains varied ecosystems. The birth of the islands in the waters of the Poole is a slow germination from Albyon’s silty influence: a gradual accumulation of sand and soil over water re-read as an ecomaterial gestation. Similarly, the slow extension (or in truth, erosion) of the land’s arms encircling the bay, is turned into a storied action. The battering of the sea is personified into the actions of an angry oceanic goddess who is unable to break down Albyon’s
strong arms. The protective effects the harbor’s arms have on the islands are re-inscribed as intention in a bioregionally-contained family drama on an elemental scale. Here, unlike Revard’s argument that the hill Clent is frozen by nature like the lover on Keat’s urn is frozen by art, the drama of the romance scene of Albyon and Poole is overlaid on actual environmental movement and change.

Figure 5: William Hole, Poole and her daughter islands. Poly-Olbion, 1612. Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 6: Poole Harbor. Google Maps, 2016.
Poole Harbour and its isles are named as official Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty by the Landscapes for Life organization in the UK, as Special Protection Areas by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, and as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. A large portion of Brownsea island is a nature reserve leased from the National Trust by the Dorset Wildlife Trust. Archeological evidence also suggests that Green Island (St. Helen’s island) was once twice its current size and a major trading hub of southern England. Beauteous and worth protecting, the daughter isles of Poole and the land of Britain are part of an ongoing story of environmental preservation inflected with romance.

Where Dasgupta, Borlik, and McRae’s ecocritical readings focus on the forests of *Poly-Olbion*, I would like to offer an ecomaterial reading of its rivers, streams, and pools. While throughout the poem, Drayton’s characters often lament the loss of woodlands, the narrative is flooded with intertwining rivers. A glance at the maps confirms this: the cartographic space is crowded with waterway nymphs with only a handful of forest figures interspersed among them. Drayton’s topographical histories are not family trees, but branching rivers. As the most active participants of the poem, rivers are central both to the meaning, action, and genre of Drayton’s epic. Importantly, these integral elemental figures are, with a few notable exceptions, all women. Raphael Falco argues that this gender imbalance makes *Poly-Olbion* “uniquely concerned with women—that is, with mythicized female figures standing as forests, coursing as rivers through the land, thriving, suffering, collaborating with each other, rebelling, having sexual relations (both homosexual and heterosexual), giving birth, and transforming history. Moreover, because they are as humanized, or anthropomorphized, as the male figures, the females exercise considerable power in the poem’s complicated genealogical equations and in the vice-regal positions that emerge” (242). The profusion of watery women in *Poly-Olbion*
speaks to the fact that materials and ecologies are often understood to be gendered entities. In *Poly-Olbion*’s many women rivers, however, we see a different kind of feminized nature. Drayton’s rivers are not passive personifications of a landscape colonized by male interests, but rather are active sovereign individuals that resist essentialization and exploitation.

Part of this project also situates the rivers of *Poly-Olbion* in what Steve Mentz has crafted a “blue cultural studies,” “blue humanities,” or the “new thalassology” (from the Greek *thalassos*, the sea). Mentz’s watery approach “does not view the oceans simply as bodies to be crossed, but as subjects in themselves” (997). A blue cultural studies acknowledges watery bodies as agents in powerful and highly changeable networks of ecological relationships. Blue cultural studies recreates, for scholars of the early modern period, a horizon of expectations that is offshore, and reconnects the present day with an early modern experience that understood the sea to be an important part of daily life and an integral part of an interconnected existence. The sea, as well as rivers, coastlines, islands, and harbors, shaped and linked an early modern global world. In *At the Bottom of Shakespeare’s Ocean*, Mentz describes:

> Reading Shakespeare for the sea thus launches the vast and slightly quixotic project of a blue cultural studies, a way of looking at terrestrial literary culture from an offshore perspective, as if we could align ourselves with the watery element. It’s true that we always need new stories, responsive to the radical changes underway in our natural environment. But Shakespeare’s plays remind us that we also need to retell the old stories differently, to find in Edgar’s imaginary cliffside and Marina’s wayward journeys and Ariel’s salt-infused music a painful and joyful history of coming to terms with a world of flux. […] as the world grows bluer and less orderly, these are the stories we need. (99).
Drayton’s world was rapidly changing; as Richard Helgerson has argued, Drayton and his generational peers were already nostalgic for the recently past Elizabethan court and, through innovations in cartography and a desire for antiquarianism, began looking toward the land and English and Welsh chronologies for stability. Human impacts on the environment were rapidly increasing; forests were depleted for the perpetuation of city life, for ironworks, saltworks, and shipbuilding. Rivers became appropriate voices for narrating past history and bemoaning recent changes: elements in flux themselves, as well as primeval witnesses.

*Poly-Olbion* participates in blue cultural studies by making subjects out of rivers, and by refocusing human history from a fluvial perspective. The ‘old stories’ of Arthur and Brutus, the stories of conquest and royal lineage, and the ever-recurring romance stories of pastoral flirtations, wanderings, and marriages, are retold through the actions and songs of Britain’s rivers. *Poly-Olbion* is in many ways a nonhuman pastoral romance, one that attempts to present national order and stability to a poly-vocal, multicultural, and often fractious Britain under James I through the cohesion of Britain’s natural elements. Britain’s rivers may quarrel and rebel, snub each other and gossip about their neighbors, but they ultimately respect the most sovereign rivers and sort themselves into a pastoral accord. Mentz proposes that blue cultural studies, which highlights the tropes of oceanic disorder and peril, troubles the tranquility of pastoralism and other representations of landed stability prevalent in the early modern period. Where the land is reliable, the sea is inconstant and uncertain. *Poly-Olbion* manages to bring the discord of the oceanic to the relative stability of the meadowed midlands, in other words, bringing the active and changeable waters of a blue humanities into pastoral networks on the land. However, the oceanic is still a threatening and assimilating force. The myriad rivers present in Drayton’s chorography enact genealogical and aristocratic hierarchies as they materially pay tribute to each
other and become family units by combining fluvial forces, but no matter how stately and powerful the river-nymphs and water-princes become, they ultimately are all dumped into the sea.

*Poly-Olbion* takes the matter of Britain literally. That is, the legends and histories that discursively create a tale of national unity are sung by the material features of the land itself. The rivers, hills, and forests champion their local heroes and in multiple instances the figures of Britain’s legendary history are embedded within the material landscape: human and nonhuman coexisting in a mesh of shared experience.

In Drayton’s poem there are four layers at work in creating a cohesive poetic Britain: the material reality of the landscape, the personifications of its natural elements, the physical and psychological entity of the map, and the discursive fabric of the land: those histories, legends, and local forms of knowledge that make the place present. Drayton’s particular combination of romance and chorographical topography addresses the world in a way fundamentally different than traditional four-fold allegorical or roman-a-clef traditions. Where the allegorical exegesis of Aquinas or Dante suggests that the reader move continually up and away from the literal or the material, *Poly-Olbion* is a multi-directional system where the material, the representational, and the discursive persistently have effects on and between each other.

Take for instance the unfortunate river *Camell* in the first song, driven to hysteria by her connection to the death of King Arthur. The poem describes she has been “frantick, ever since her British Arthurs blood / By Mordreds murderous hand was mingled with her flood” [...]“careless ever since how shee her course doe steere, / [she] muttreth to her selfe, in wandring here and there” (First Song). Here *Camell*’s watery material, mixing with the blood of Arthur has a physical effect on the course of the river, which meanders and burbles over changeable
banks. This topographical backformation is a pathetic fallacy, but one that highlights the river’s agency as much as Arthur’s discursive potency. Camell’s material connection to a historical story changes her representation as a nymph. Instead of a generic allegorical symbol of a wandering river, she is a romance figure quite literally touched by national tragedy who commemorates that event with physical action. The mixing of blood and water is a commingling of material, romance, and history, as well as a blurring of boundaries between human bodies and watery bodies. The core of Camell’s lament is materially-based. She argues that, in most cases, material traces of that which was beautiful, or grand, may still be seen even after the ravages of time:

Euen in the agedst face, where beautie once did dwell,
And nature (in the least) but seemed to excel,
Time cannot make such waste, but something will appeare,
To shewe some little tract of delicacie there.
Or some religious worke, in building manie a day,
That this penurious age hath suffred to decay,
Some lim or modell, dragd out of the ruinous mass,
The richness will declare in glorie whilst it was:
But time vpon my waste committed hath such theft,
That it of Arthur heere scarce memorie hath left: (5-6).

All that is left of Arthur is his blood, diluted in Camell’s waters to the point of imperceptibility, and the river’s memory of his grandeur and his bodily end. The elemental make-up of the river allows Camell to be a living memorial for the loss Britain’s mythic founding figure in a way that employs an empathetic logic but that produces no tangible evidence other than the natural
material already present in the landscape. *Camell* forever changes her course because of her bodily intersection with the life-blood of Arthur’s human and literary corpus. Yet if you search for Arthur the way you might search for remnants of youth in an elderly face or a decorative molding from a ruined church, all you get is a bucket of cold water. In this multi-directional allegorical system found in *Poly-Olbion* and other early modern romances the material is present and meaningful at every level. The actual tidal and wandering river Camel is represented by the nymph *Camell*, but her story relies on a material interaction that draws us back to blood and water.

The desire to memorialize human existence in a changeable nonhuman substance is not a new concept in the renaissance. A poetic quest for sandy permanence is the opening conceit of Spenser’s *Amoretti* 75, in which the speaker, the author, writes the name of his beloved Elizabeth Boyle, “upon the strand, / But came the waves and washed it a way” (1-2). Mentz reads this poem as an ecomaterial challenge to poetic permanence and stresses that in ecological terms, the poem “is less about the putative success of poetic eterniz-ing and more about the human blending with the inorganic world” (196). The beloved rebukes the speaker’s attempts:

Vayne man, sayd she, that doest in vaine assay,

A mortall thing so to immortalize.

For I my self shall lyke to this decay,

And eek my name bee wiped out lykewise. (5-8).

Mentz notes the lady’s argument is a mixing of living and dead bodies, not unlike the sandy mix of shellfish particles and the biotic remnants of dust and soil. By clarifying that neither her body or her name can persist on the beach, “the essentially physical connection between written name
and living body subjects both to dissolution” (197). Mentz suggests the poet works out a middle ground, not the eternity Elizabeth rejects, but rather a love and lineage that endures past death.

Spenser’s poem is about a human figure who imprints a name into a nonhuman environment. The environment works to obliterate the material and semiotic permanence of the human. In the end, it is human desire, procreation, and poetic discourse that ensures the human figure’s memorial. In Drayton’s poem, the actants are shifted and take on further poetic responsibilities. Here the environment is touched by the human: both the physical body of Arthur as well as the history and story from which he cannot be separated. The material remains of both humans in the two poems are washed into a watery body. Where Spenser’s tide obliterates the name of his beloved and makes the poet’s “paynes his pray” (4), the river Camell takes up the full brunt of poetic memorialization. In Drayton’s Poly-Olbion, nature is not outside of human interest or a hostile force to prey on human bodies and efforts. Instead, it is a co-actant in telling stories through material contact. The mixing of human bodies and watery bodies produces a material change in both and elicits poetic force from a wider range of potential voices. Drayton’s project also acknowledges that the nonhuman experiences time. Spenser’s Amoretti 75 posits a nonhuman world that is indifferent to the changes in the human and to death. By placing the lament for change in the watery mouth of the Camell, Drayton allows for ecological considerations of nonhuman experiences of death and mutability.

Because the material is as equally important to the meaning of the poem as the semiotic or the discursive, Poly-Olbion offers a more generous view toward the agency of the nonhuman. In one sense, Poly-Olbion is the ultimate anthropomorphic fantasy. The land is turned into a collection of human figures with human desires, ambitions, kinships, strengths, and failings. We understand and sympathize with these nymphish representations of landscape features because
their form and experience mirror our own. In ecocritical scholarship, concerned with recuperating nonhuman perspectives, anthropomorphization is often seen as a problem. However, this anthropomorphization may not be such a negative impulse. Jane Bennett argues that “maybe it is worth running the risks associated with anthropomorphizing (superstition, the divinization of nature, romanticism) because it, oddly enough, works against anthropocentrism: a chord is struck between person and thing, and [the human is] no longer above or outside a nonhuman “environment.”” (120). The end-point of this proposition is what Stacy Alaimo has termed trans-corporeality: “the time-space where human corporeality, in all its material fleshiness, is inseparable from ‘nature’ or ‘environment’” (9). Recognizing a kinship between nonhuman elements and ourselves also draws attention to the systems that enmesh human and nonhuman bodies together in an active hybrid environment of co-participants. The speaking rivers, trees, and hills of Poly-Olbion are certainly given agency: the power to have effects upon and to shape the complex networks and interrelationships of which they are a part. But what I would like to suggest, through an ecomaterial reading of the poem’s rivers, is that the material base of these anthropomorphized figures is equally agentic. The stone, timber, and water that compose the anthropomorphized representational and vocal figures of Drayton’s chorography have effects that echo through every level of the poem.

There are a number of people who are asking us to rethink what we mean by the nonhuman. Inspired by recent research in the physical and social sciences, new materialists propose seeing all matter in terms of its capacity for agency: an agency disassociated with intentionality. Recognizing this agency, or “vibrant materiality” as Bennett terms it, breaks down the notion that objects are always inert and passive while humans are the only active subjects in the world. Rather, human and nonhuman elements may be what Bruno Latour (the
originator of actor-network theory) names “actants,” entities that come together in dynamic configurations to enact emergent effects. New materialists also argue for a “theory of distributive agency” wherein effects are not caused by an isolated subject, but rather, as Iovino and Oppermann articulate, “a material-semiotic network of human and nonhuman agents incessantly generating the world’s embodiments and events” (3). Furthermore, new materialists contend that all matter (even textually represented matter) forms narratives. Objects have stories to tell through their journeys through space and time, their creation, and their influences on other objects. The narratives of matter are material and discursive: the stories of physical properties and movements interlaced with stories that are culturally constructed.

As composite actants, the river nymphs of Drayton’s chorographical romance are composed of the perfect element to narrate the contested versions of Britain’s legendary history. Water, with its widely varying physical and iconic properties is a slippery material. While a timeless symbol for purity, water may also be sullied. Its permeability is suspect, while its essence is cleansing. Rivers are recognizable borders, tracing through maps and cultural topographies with strong clear lines. Nonetheless their edges are ambiguous littoral spaces: a gradual and changeable negotiation between water and shore. When gathered in a pool or seen as a vast ocean, water may be equated with stability. Yet water is equally uncertain. Its flow from trickle to torrent has an energy that quickly moves from delightful to dangerous, from weakness to overpowering volume, depending on the narrative.

The material element of water and the gendered aspect of the river nymphs mutually inform each other. The inescapable agency of water is its ability to move. Bernhard Klein notes that this quality is what makes rivers a “dominant descriptive convention in the chorographical tradition,” stating that they “produce the movement and fluidity chorography requires in order to
overcome the impression of representation stasis” (207). Drayton’s water nymphs are ceaselessly active while the few male hilltops in the poem are notably static. The rivers move in stately trains, rush into disputes, joyfully meet each other, and solemnly depart. Drawn and described as female figures the nymphs impart womanly aspects to watery bodies: pools give birth to daughter islands, handmaiden rills attend to queenly rivers, and lovely waterways are continuously wooed by everything from hills to sea orks.

The contradictory properties of water are equally in play in early modern constructions of feminine bodies, female speech, and feminized literature. Humerally construed, women’s bodies in the early modern period were seen as permeable and fluid: either vessels of purity or tainted fountains.

Figure 7: William Hole, *Poly-Olbion*, 1612. *Itchin* telling the tale of *Sir Bevis of Southhampton*. Folger Shakespeare Library.
In *Poly-Olbion*, the actions of waterways are often used as metaphors for speech. The Muse follows the course of rivers as she attends to the course of their narratives. Lines of argument are strengthened as tributaries add their support while rivers who become carried away with their own stories risk being called floods. This is the case for the river Itchin who excitedly and at length expounds the popular exploits of Sir Bevis of Southampton. The eager river challenges the proud New Forest with a catalogue of her local hero’s feats. Eventually, she is cut off by her peers:

*New-forrest* cry’d enough: and *Waltham* with the *Bere*,

Both bade her hold her peace; for they no more would heare.

And for shee was a flood, her fellows nought would say;

But slipping to their banks, slid silentlie away. (31-2).

This moment is a performative scene that allows Drayton to escape the associative indictment of popular and feminized fictions by roundly denouncing Itchin’s narrative. John Selden in his illustrations remarks: “What credit you are to giue to the Hyperbolies of *Itchin* in her relation of *Beuis*, your owne iudgement, and the Authors censure in the admonition of the other riuers here personated, I presume, will direct” (37). Itchin’s hero would have been well known to Drayton’s audience. *Sir Bevis of Hampton* is arguably one of the most popular verse romances in the vernacular; having been continuously in circulation in manuscript and print from its Middle English versions in 1300 to at least seventeen known early modern English printings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. William Tyndale, in his argument for an English bible, listed *Bevis* alongside Robyn Hood, Hercules, Hector, and Troilus, establishing its popularity as well as its reputation for ribaldry and wantonness:
Fynally, that this threatening and forbyddynge the laye people to rede the scripture is not for loue of your soules (whiche they care for as the foxe doth for the gese) is euydent and clerer than the sonne in as moche as they permytte and suffer you to reade Robyn hode and Beuys of Hampton: Hercules, Hector and Troylus, with a thousand hystoryes & fables of loue and wantones, and of rybaudrye, as filthy as harte can thynke: to corrupte the myndes of youth with all: cleene contrary to the doctrine of Chryst and of his apostles. (17).

The exasperation of *New Forrest, Waltham* and the *Bere* may be doubly warranted: the exploits of Sir Bevis may be common knowledge already and not worth the spilling of watery voice, while they also, as Tyndale suggests, may tend toward the more salacious side of popular romance. That said, while bracketing the relation of Sir Bevis with performative contempt, Drayton may be banking on his audience enjoying a retelling of a popular legend: essentially sneaking in a known best-seller in a discursively-constructed space of guilty pleasure. In eschewing Itchin’s negatively feminized speech, Drayton also safeguards the other narratives sung by watery women throughout the text. While Selden warns of the “truth-passing” and “fictitious” legends of Brutus and King Arthur these romance histories are recounted and received with gravity and power by the more sober and queenly rivers such as the Severn and the Dert. The double-standard of approved Arthurian romance versus disavowed popular Arthurain romance, such as *Sir Bevis*, is made even more striking when one remembers that the entire argument of the Welsh side in the musical battle of song four is a re-telling of Arthur’s story from Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regnum Britanniae*.

In the bardish debate between Wales and England over historical precedence, the various rivers that empty into the Severn rush toward the conflict to add their voices and their presence.
The landscape supports the rivers as representative heroes in the debate: “Each Moore, each Marsh, each Mead, preparing rich array / To set their Riuers forth against this general day” (56). In this instance, being a vocal flood is beneficial and powerful. The volume of the gathering rivers literally gives weight to their arguments. In this representative section, water bodies are increased and swollen with their desire to speak, and bring with them such an elemental force that they carve a wider berth toward the Severn:

A troupe of stately Nymphs proud Avon with her brings
(As she that hath the charge of wise Minervas Springs)
From Mendip tripping downe, about the tinny Mine.
And Ax, no lesse implo’ed about this great designe,
Leads forth a lustie Rout; when Bry, with all her throng
(With very madness swolne that she had stai’d so long)
Comes from the boggie Mears and queachy fens below:
That Parret (highly pleas’d to see the gallant show)
Set out with such a traine as bore so great a sway,
The soyle but scarcely serues to giue her hugeness way. (56-57).

When a single river floods rhapsodic over her favorite romance hero, she is abandoned by her peers and shunned for her overflowing speech. Itchin’s account of Sir Bevis is related for her personal enjoyment: “And shee (to please her selfe that onely seem’d to care) / To sing th’atchieuement great of Bevis thus began” (29). The story of the knight of Southampton is characterized not as a useful legend for nation-building, but rather a narrative of pleasure for an enthusiastic woman reader. In reciting the popular Sir Bevis romance, Itchin is denigrated as a naïve consumer of romance who “to her owne wrong, and euery others griefe, / Would needs be
telling things exceeding all beliefe” (28). The anxieties that surrounded reading popular romances for pleasure, and especially the concerns over women consuming romances for their own gratification, inflect the treatment of the river *Itchin* in Drayton’s poem.

The river *Itchin’s* recitation of the romance of *Sir Bevis* for her own pleasure isolates her and shapes her tale as awkwardly belief-stretching and frivolous. *Itchin’s* speech is watery and ephemeral: when her fellow rivers silently slip away from her, her flooded story quickly evaporates. In comparison, when the subject matter of the river discourse is deemed weighty, as in the case of the collected throngs of Welsh rivers who tell the legendary history of Arthur not for personal indulgence but to secure the Cambrian right to the isle of Lundy, their material presence is also weighty and long-lasting. Drayton takes the base matter of the rivers as correlating to their poetic purpose. As vastly swollen water bodies, near to emptying into the Severn estuary, these rivers have a dramatic impact on local landscapes. Their discourse and their base matter effect the shaping of Britain as land and as nation. Instead of troublesome readers, these rivers become poetic viragos:

> But of the weaker sex, the most part full of spleene,  
> And onely wanting strength to wreake their angry teene,  
> For skill their challenge make, which euerie one profest,  
> And in the learned Arts (of knowledges the best,  
> And to th’heroick spirit most pleasing vnder skie)  
> Sweet Musick, rightlie matcht with heauenlie Poesie,  
> In which they all exceed: and in this kind alone  
> They Conquerers vow to be, or lastlie ouerthrowne. (56).
The female rivers become bard-like warriors. Drayton’s muse declares there “was ne’re such heaue and shoue / Since Albion weelded Armes against the sonne of loue.” In his letter to the reader for the second part of Poly-Olbion, Drayton terms his undertaking of the poem as a “Herculean labour” (A2). In song four, the female rivers musically combat with the brawn of Hercules and Albion and their undertaking in telling the story of their lands is meant to be as impressive as Drayton’s own. These rivers, full of weighty matter, are as sizable as gods.

Where the solution to Hercules fifth labor required him to re-direct a river, here the rivers’ own agency in directing themselves toward the conflict makes them legendary.

The usefulness of Brutus and an Arthurian pre-history to the project of crafting the nation of Britian, even as this history uncomfortably rests on romance and legend, is undeniable. The two “floods” of narrative highlight two kinds of reading described by Michael Drayton’s encyclopedic collaborator John Selden in his “From the Author of the Illustrations”:

To Gentlewomen & their Loues is consecrated all the wooing Language, Allusions to Loue-Passions, and sweet Embracements fain’d by the Muse mongst Hills and Rivers Whatsoever tastes of Description, Battell, Story, Abstruse Antiquity, and (which my particular Study caus’d me sometime remember) Law of the Kingdome, to the more Seuere Reader. To the one, Be contenting Enioyments of their Auspicious Desires; To the other, Happy Attendance of their chosen Muses.

(A5).

The readers who wish to be content in their enjoyment are like the river Itchin, who find pleasure in romances and poetic fancies. The matter of Britain as told by the rivers in song four, with its descriptions of battle, story, obtuse antiquity, and law, however is meant for the “more Severe Reader.” Selden consistently troubles a reading of Arthurian legend as British history, even as
Drayton slides past culpability through an invocation of poetic license. Anne Lake Prescott famously describes a smiling Selden undoing *Poly-Olbion’s* mythology “from its margins like acid eating a book from the edges” (309). In Selden’s opening letter, he alerts the reader that he “insert[s] oft, out of the British story, what I importune you not to credit. Of that kind, are those Prophecies out of Merlin sometime interwouen : I discharge my selfe ; nor impute you to me any serious respect of them” (A3). While the British story as a whole may be useful for the severe reader, the particulars may not be worthy of serious respect.

Raphael Falco and Anne Lake Prescott bring our attention to Drayton’s attitude toward a potential women audience in his epistle to the reader where he notes (in Prescott’s words) “irritatingly” that his “unusuall tract may perhaps seeme diffi- cult, to the female Sex” (13). Offering a varied and gendered reader experience was a technique practiced by authors of romance in order to negotiate a heterogeneous readership and to mitigate criticism. When pressed, romance authors could declare their works as mere “trifles” meant for the entertainment of gentlewomen in idle moments. Critics tend to agree that men writing romances in the early modern period, while perhaps hoping to capitalize on a potential female readership, were more interested in having their work perceived as directed toward women. Helen Hackett argues that by addressing their work to women, these authors were signaling to a male readership that their literary product was “racy, lightweight, and fun.” By including romance elements in his chorographical poem as well as those genres reserved for the more severe reader, Drayton can easily deflect censures of suspect histories and recast them as mere enjoyments. Drayton’s epistle to the reader also includes an invective raised against those that “had rather read the fantasies of forraine inventions, then to see the Rarities & Histories of their owne Country delivered by a true native Muse” (13). In *Poly-Olbion*, then, local romance reigns supreme. Yet
Drayton doesn’t convince all readers. Selden’s illustrations on the river Camell episode, for instance, retells the complete story of Arthur’s birth from its source in Geoffrey of Monmouth, yet ends saying “Here have you a Jupiter, an Alcmena, an Amphityo, a Sofias, and a Mercury; nor wants there scarce any thing, but that truth-passing reports of Poetical Bards haue made the birth a Hercules” (36). Drayton’s inclusion of Arthur may be “truth-passing” but at least it puts him in respectable company with classical mythology and the bards of the past.

Figure 8: William Hole, Poly-Olbion, 1612. The musical battle of song four. Folger Shakespeare Library.

Patricia Parker and Barbara Fuchs’ suggest that the category of romance is better expressed as a strategy rather than a genre: a collection of interchangeable elements that may be found across multiple genres and employed for various effects. While it is impossible to tease out which came before the other, the elements of romance both seem to be shaped by the material and gendered movements of Poly-Olbion’s rivers and employed by the author in order
to set the rivers in motion. Romance is the early modern genre in which women are the most mobile: pursued heroines flee through wild landscapes, maidens venture out to find delight, and would-be sovereigns travel to fulfill dynastic requirements. The lively agency of water funneled into human form finds the justification for travel in the familiar cycles of romance.

Romance, I would argue, is also the genre that is most receptive to an ecomaterial reading. In romance, the strict bonds that would seem to separate humans as subjects and nonhumans as objects are already loosened. A reader of early modern romance is on the lookout for allegorical layers in all elements of a scene: from human protagonists to hybrid trees, marvelous animals, and potent waters. Additionally, figures in romance are not the flat representational figures of strict allegory, where characters and features in the narrative may be distilled into a singular and often eponymous meaning. Instead, they are accretions of material and semiotic elements. Their meaning is changeable and complex and multiple meanings and materials may be present at the same time. In these amalgamations of materials and meanings the human and nonhuman exist in shared representational space.

One such assemblage is the river Severn. While historians and critics have richly described her literary and political role in *Poly-Olbion* as a figure for a united Britain and her powerful presence as a virgin, I would like to draw attention to the coalition of vibrant materials that make the Severn present and the ways in which the human and nonhuman collide.

A recurrent figure in *Poly-Olbion*, the queenly river Severn, holds court in the dispute between England and Wales over the island of Lundy in the fourth and fifth songs, and whose

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full tale is told in the sixth song. The Severn is an assemblage of cultural and material elements that are important to the history and topography of Britain. She is a young girl, drowned, whose body becomes part of the river and gives it its name. Her being shifts from human body to river body; then in *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton and Hole re-embody her as a queen with the full form of a woman as well as the impress of a river. In the single “body” of the Severn in *Poly-Olbion* resides a historical body, a romance story, an actual river, a nostalgic representation of the deceased Queen Elizabeth, and a sense of movement and place, death and quickness—a body that is human and not-human, historical and ahistorical, tangible, and a liquid that slips through your fingers. The porousness of Severn’s female body is a gendered power that allows her body to be registered as recognizably womanly, yet ultimately uncontainable. By describing the Severn as a queen “wondrous wise” (56) Drayton enthrones the land, subsumes a questionable British legend into a larger narrative, and melds human and nonhuman bodies into an indistinguishable new phenomena with a literary, political, and ecological agency.

The history of the Severn’s name has all of the elements of romance: including desire, jealousy, beauty, and virginal innocence. Her story is yet another tale, as Philip Schwyzzer notes, of affinities “between maidens and fresh water, two basic and all but timeless images of purity” (61). While the story is a tragedy, Severn (or Habren in Old Welsh, Sabrina in Latin), is recouped as a romance character by her transformation into a natural power with the sovereignty of a river queen—an ecomaterial happy ending. The story of Severn, Brutus’ illegitimate granddaughter, thrown into the river alongside her mother Estrilda by her father’s scorned wife Gwendolen is repeated in many sources, but is notably found in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s histories, Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, and Milton’s *A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle* or *Comus*. In Spenser, Drayton, and Milton’s tellings, Severn is materially changed into liquid
when met with her watery fate. In Spenser, the avenging Guendolene takes “the sad virgin innocent of all, / [and] Adowne the rolling river she did did poure, / Which of her name now Severn men do call” (2.10.19.6-8). In Comus Sabrina is a nymph and river goddess. Milton emphasizes her virginity and follows a later tradition that has Sabrina committing suicide, “[commending] her fair innocence to the flood” (831). She is taken in by sympathetic water nymphs and quickly brought “straight to aged Nereus Hall” (835) where she endures a strange chemical conversion, bathed in “nectar’d lavers strew’d with Asphodil” (838) and with ambrosial oils dropped “through the porch and inlet of each sense” (289), “till she reviv’d, / And underwent a quick immortal change / Made Goddess of the River” (840-2).

In Drayton’s version the moment of Severn and Estrilda’s end is made beautiful and terrible as the bodies of mother and daughter are infused into the landscape:

Woe for thee

Faire Elstred, that thou should’st thy fairer Sabrine see,

As Shee should thee behold the prey to her sterne rage

Whom kinglie Locrins death suffic’d not to asswage:

Who from the bordering Cleuees thee with thy Mother cast

Into thy christened Flood, the whilst the Rocks aghast

Resounded with your shriekes; till in a deadlie dreame

Your corses were dissolu’d into that crystall streame,

Your curles to curled waues, which plainlie still appeare

The same in water now, that once in locks they were:

And, as you wont to clip each others neck before,

Yee now with liquid armes embrace the wandring shore. (91).
In the three instances that follow Geoffrey’s account Severn is first poured, then dissolved, then bathed and permeated with oils until immortally changed. Her material conversion from flesh to fluid is somehow more disturbing than other romance hybrids of human and nonhuman, such as Hermione’s from human to stone in *The Winter’s Tale* or even Fraelissa’s transformation into a tree in *The Faerie Queene*. In order to interact with Severn post-riverchange, she must be bodily recollected into a nymph: a phenomenon parsed out for human understanding. The vastness of her transformation is reflected in her new name—no longer Habren, Severn, or Sabrina, she is *the* Severn—a singular body, but one so huge and outside of human scale that it denotes the almost honorific “the”.

Drayton’s version is so striking because of the way the nonhuman material landscape reacts to the murder of mother and daughter. All the varying actants, from the echoing cliffs, the crystal stream, the waves, the curled hair, and the lingering embrace come together to create a powerful emotive effect. The description in *Poly-Olbion* of Severn’s dissolving and immortalization into the river truly takes on an equal blending of human and nonhuman. Corses, or corpses, take on river courses. Severn’s human shape changes the river: aspects of her (and Elstred’s) bodies “plainlie still appeare” yet they are utterly aspects of the river’s body as well. Both realities are true at the same time. A visitor to the Severn river who has read Drayton’s transfixing account may look for Severn’s curled locks in the waves and imagine her mother and her own liquid arms embracing the shoreline. Instead of imagining Severn’s body interacting with the space, we search for traces of her *actual* body still present within and indistinguishable from the natural environment.

One can’t but help notice the similarities of Severn and Estrilda’s “deadlie dreame” to Clarence’s deathly oceanic dream in *Richard III* and Ariel’s “sea change” song in *The Tempest*. 
Yet the assemblage of human and nonhuman is much more balanced in *Poly-Olbion*. In Ariel’s song, Alonso’s body is imagined as replaced by marine material: his bones to coral and his eyes to pearls. Even post sea-change, however, Alonso’s body is a distinct entity. In *Poly-Olbion*, the crystal stream breaks down the boundaries between human and water bodies while waves take on human features: locks of curled hair are caught in river locks—and human arms expand their reach to include the nonhuman. By strategically employing romance and a multi-directional allegorical system that highlights the material, *Poly-Olbion* opens up new ways of imagining embodied histories.

Severn makes one last corporeal transition after altering from human body to river body to sovereign body. In song five (here spatial constraints manipulate a linear chronology), as the marginal notes tell us, the Severn is “turn’d Sea”:

Thus, haue we ouer-gone the *Glamorganian Gowre,*

Whose promontorie (plac’t to check the Oceans power)

Kept *Seuern* yet her selfe, till beeing growne too great,

Shee with extended armes vnbounds her ancient seat:

And turning lastlie Sea, resignes vnto the Maine

What soueraigntie her selfe but latelie did retaine. (77).

As the Severn has grown into a great river, the collective actants of her story are also enlarged. Where in her initial transition from human to river, the echoing cliffs respond to the Severn and her mother’s shrieks, here the cliff becomes a mighty promontory peninsula. The mother and daughter’s liquid arms, who post-river transformation embraced the wandering shore, now extend and surrender into the sea. The collective of actants has shifted in scale, but elementally they remain the same: human, history, water, and stone. The *Glamorganian Gowre*
is another protective landmass sheltering a daughter from the violence of the ocean. Much like *Albyn* in the second song, who “with his mightie arms doth clip the *Poole* about, / To keepe the angrie Queene, fierce *Amphitrite* out. (19), the *Glamorganian Gowre* is placed to protect a daughter from oceanic annihilation. Severn’s unique bodily history, genealogical inheritance as Locrin’s daughter, and her sovereignty as a massive border-shaping river body are all eventually washed into the sea when the virginal and queenly river is grown too great. Extending her arms, she is willingly unbounded: commending her fair sovereignty to the main as Milton’s Sabrina offered her innocence to the flood. The main becomes the place where all power and elemental bodies flow. In creating a Britain populated by a watery aristocracy, Drayton creates a material and allegorical poetics that is finally drowned.

This moment where the Severn “unbounds” is where the assemblage between human, history, watery matter, and rocky shore comes apart. The verb is a strange one, with multiple meanings. The Severn dismantles her “ancient seat” taking apart her prestigious role and resigning it to the sea; additionally, she bounds out of her riverbed, the seat of her power and of her river body. Severn’s “ancient seat” is also a material object, a regal throne, described in the opening lines of song five. To judge the English and the Welsh claims on the island of Lundy (and consequently, the richness of their various histories), Severn, as a Queene:

Is absolutelie plac’t in her Emperiall Chaire
Of Crystall richlie wrought, that gloriously did shine,
Her Grace becoming well, a creature so Divine:
And as her God-like selfe, so glorious was her Throne,
In which himself to sit great *Neptune* had been known;
Whereon there were ingrau’d those Nymphs the God had woo’d,
And every seuerall shape wherein for loue he su’d;
Each daughter, her estate and beautie, euery sonne;
What Nations he had rul’d, what Countries he had wonne.
No Fish in this wide waste but with exceeding cost
Was there in Antique worke most curiously imbost. (77).

Severne’s ekphrastically wrought throne, borrowed from Neptune, is itself an assemblage of materials, bodies, and histories. Brought together in crystal, the mineral equivalent of Severn’s “wondrous cleere” (75) bodily element, are the representations of the sea-god’s romantic exploits, genealogical progeny, and every fish in the sea. The throne is a metonymic extension of the royal power to make judgments, but it is also a highly storied object. The “Emperiall Chaire,” as an artistic undertaking, is a similar project to Poly-Olbion. Where Drayton’s chorography brings the elements of Britain’s landscape, primarily its rivers, into a cohesive whole based on mutual tribute and genealogy, the throne tells the story of the sea through the romance frame of Neptune’s legacy. Both projects are political and express watery bodies as active agents in nation building. They also strive for comprehensiveness. Just as no river goes without mention in Drayton’s England and Wales, each fish in Neptune’s ocean is curiously represented in “Antique worke.” The stories on the Imperial Chair also transfer the watery movement from sea to land instead of from land to sea as Neptune comes ashore while the rivers of Poly-Olbion traverse toward the sea. Here Neptune, as he shifts his liquid form into several shapes in which to pursue nymphs, pushes his oceanic influence upriver and onto the land, producing earth human or monstrous children who ruled nations and won countries. The various river nymphs in Poly-Olbion produce liquid children through their fluvial confluences. These
watery progeny shape and characterize the borders of nations, but eventually give up their royal seats to the sea.

To unbound is to become without boundaries. By unbounding herself, Severn relinquishes her role as a material and cartographical marker of bounded space. She no longer separates land bodies, nations, or local landmarks. To unbound is to give up individuality and selfhood: the *Glamorganian Gowre*, in keeping the ocean at bay, “[k]ept Seuerne yet her selfe” (77). The Severn gives up not only political sovereignty, but autonomy and selfhood, “What soueraignty her selfe but latelie did retaine” (77). This salty surrender is bittersweet.

To unbound, to move from human body and human connections (like Severn and her mother Estrilda), to river body and nymph body implicated in border tensions and questions of nationhood, to finally entering a global network of the sea, is, to return to Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality: where “the material self cannot be disentangled from networks that are simultaneously economic, political, cultural, scientific, and substantial […] a new materialist and posthumanist sense of the human as perpetually interconnected with the flows of substances and the agencies of environments” (187). The Severn river, along with other agential rivers in *Poly-Olbion*, give us a model for how to think through this material, cultural, and political entanglement. The shifting motion and ever-replenishing state of rivers (as they are connected to vast water-cycle systems) speak to Barad’s influence on Alaimo’s construction of trans-corporeality. Alaimo contends “the subject cannot be separated from networks of intra-active material agencies” (187). Constantly in the midst of intra-action, rivers are, to use Barad’s terms, “always already” in a state of becoming. The Severn is always already a new body of water, but the historical-literary bodies of Severn and Estrilda, the political bodies of Wales and England, and the royal bodies of Elizabeth and James, are always already there as well.
Drayton’s use of romance elements and his multi-directional allegorical system where the material, the representational, and the discursive continually affect each other helps the reader to see trans-corporeal existence at work. In each of her instantiations: human, nonhuman, child, daughter, princess, virgin, river, nymph, goddess, queen, judge, border, etc. Severn is entangled within complex material, cultural, political, historical, and literary networks. As the final assemblage of human/river/queen before she reaches the sea, Severn doesn’t lose her place in any of those intricate networks. The literary traveller still “sees” the arms of Severn and her mother hugging the shoreline and her curls in the waves at the same time as this explorer/reader also sees the physical body and cartographic place of the river. The reading of the Severn as a complex political border is as equally valid as the reading of Severn existing in a pseudo-historical genealogical network that connects her to the matter of Britain. All of these connotations are at play at once and figured in Drayton’s chorography and Hole’s maps. Trans-corporeality describes the state of being caught up in various material and discursive sets of meaning that effect each other even as the assemblage is differently refracted at any given moment. Whereas in social networks it is fairly easy for one to trace top-level linkages and networks, when you add the material and the nonhuman into the range of actants in the network it is more difficult. Drayton’s chorography links the material and nonhuman into social networks and highlights the exchanges between them in ways that promote responsibility in acknowledging their agency.

Severn’s unbounding into the sea complicates this trans-corporeal image of a mosaic of interconnected meanings and materialities centered on an embodied entity. Alaimo notes, in describing trans-corporeality and the dilemmas of toxic waste and the ocean, “the persistent (and convenient) conception of the ocean as so vast and powerful that anything dumped into it will be
dispersed into oblivion makes it particularly difficult to capture, map, and publicize the flow of toxins across terrestrial, oceanic, and human habitats” (187-8). In losing bodily wholeness in favor of interaction in the global networks of sea currents, what happens to the Severn of the poem in the sea? The Severn river’s importance in geographical, historical, and cultural scale is enough that it/she has become enmeshed in the networks of British colonialism. Re-“bounded” across the ocean, there are now seven Severn Rivers outside of the original water body. These rivers are all in post-colonial British holdings: Two in Australia, two in Canada, one in New Zealand, and two in the United States (near early colonial settlements in Virginia and Maryland). All of these rivers are connected to conservation projects for their unique ecologies. The renaming of each of these rivers imagines a new embodiment of a Cambro-Britain space in the foreign climates of the extended British Empire. With the name also come the stories and authorities of the Severn figure.

The most important part of Alaimo’s project is responsibility. Trans-corporeality is a mode of analysis that takes “responsibility for human actions within, and as part of, the world” (192). We are now in the midst of the Anthropocene, the epoch characterized by significant human impact on global geology and ecosystems. At this point, we all have been thrown off the cliff: the changes are so great there is no going back to a pre-anthropological world state. What is important is finding a trans-corporeal collusion with the nonhuman elements around us. We must listen to the echoing cliffs of glacial calving and other phenomena of climate change and see our histories, actions, and bodies as dissolved within a fluid world of interconnection. We must embrace the wandering shorelines and their diverse ecological actants and unbound our seats as sovereigns of our world. In following Drayton by widening the cast of actors in a larger
ecological romance we may craft stories that change the material realities of our embodied world.
Chapter Four
Romancing the Moon: Early Modern Lunar Ecologies

“there liveth none vnder the Sunne, that knows what to make of the Man in the Moone”

—John Lyly, Endimion

The problem of the man in the moon is an intersection between allegory and ecology. Theseus and Demetrius, in act five of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, point out the paradox of the figure’s separated elements. When Starveling, as Moonshine, presents the lanthorn and declares, “Myself the man i’ th’ moon do seem to be” (5.1.259), Theseus contends, “This is the greatest error of all the rest; the / man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else / “the man i’ th’ moon”?” (5.1.260-2). A flustered Starveling tries to make clear that “the lanthorn is the moon, I the man i’ th’ / moon, this thornbush my thornbush, and this dog / my dog” (5.1.272-4) to which Demetrius interjects, “Why, all these should be in the lanthorn, / for all these are in the moon” (5.1.275-6). Thisbe’s entrance in the play-within-the-play calls for silence, and the matter remains unresolved. When literalized, the man in the moon falls apart and is no longer a cohesive signifier of a lunar body. The defining features of the man in the moon are crafted from the physical geography of the moon’s surface. The dark indented areas of the lunar craters and maria against the moon’s lighter highlands create, in a full moon, pseudo-images of a human face or a human figure with a load upon his back and perhaps a dog at his feet. The random elements of a lunar topography compose an embodied figure and companion animal, which then must be further fleshed out with meaning. For the image to be legible as representing the reflective bright body of the moon, the human figure must also hold a light source: Starveling’s lanthorn. Yet this very legibility, the key to understanding the figure as an astral body, is what
undoes the material-allegorical composition. The man in the moon cannot be separate from his environment. While representative of the moon, he must also exist in it. The man in the moon is a fantastically problematic figure: he is a personification of the moon that is also at the same time inside himself. The man in the moon is a different kind of personification than Dame Nature: the womanly embodiment of Nature stands in for the nonhuman world but is philosophically separate from it. She is not expected, like her lunar counterpart, to be encompassed within herself. It is this distinction—a Nature separate from environment—that plagues ecological understanding. Timothy Morton argues that it is this idea of Nature (with a capital ‘N’) that is “getting in the way of properly ecological forms of culture, philosophy, politics, and art” (1). When nature is a separate entity, often personified, glorified, or vilified, it is no longer the immediate sustaining world around us and of which we are a part. Nature exists, as current ecomaterialist scholars remind us, not only in the green spaces of the world, but in every space, regardless of hue or human involvement. The man in the moon, in contrast to the personification of Nature, is a better poetic model for the representation of an ecology. He is more realistic while also more existentially troubled. He is a representation of his nonhuman world while still being explicitly in that world. In finding new representations of nature that provoke ecological forms of art and literature, we might look toward the man in the moon’s auto-embodiedness as an example.

Implicit in the man in the moon figure is also the understanding that his features are only present from a particular perspective. The combination of man, thornbush, dog, and lantern are collectively agreed upon as a cultural image of the moon, but they may only be seen when the moon is in a certain phase, if the viewer is on Earth and in the Northern Hemisphere, and if the
viewer knows what shapes to combine into the picture. Out of the material elements of the allegorical collective, only the lantern has any ready application to the properties of the lunar body. This makes the man in the moon different not only from personified images of Nature, but also the representational bodies of continents, such as those on the title-pages of Ortelius’ *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* and the second volume of Mercator’s *Atlas*. In these figures, the continents are young women adorned with the signifying goods and cultural assumptions supplied by Europeans. The random Rorschach-quality of the man in the moon personification makes him more impervious to allegorical conquest and his meanings must be surmised after the fact. Unlike easily glossed symbols of power or bounty, the thornbush and dog are contested enigmas.¹⁹ The man in the moon is only one way of seeing and representing the lunar environment. While solidified into a repeatable iconic image, the man in the moon is a figure revealed by orientation.²⁰ The human viewer sees, from a perspectival point in a matrix of possibilities, an image of a man carrying a stack of sticks, and a dog. The representational image emerges from the environment rather than, like the continents of Africa or America, being ascribed to the lunar body after the landmass’ appraisal and potential commodification. The man in the moon is what we imagine we see, when we look at a full moon from a vantage point in the Northern hemisphere. It is a poetic play between the viewer and the heavenly object and it replicates the experience of a curious rather than a conquering gaze. Material lunar body and the gazing human come together to offer story and meaning. The moon and stars are always storied objects. In seeing humanity in the skies, one is made human.

¹⁹ In some traditions (repeated in Dante’s *Inferno* and *Paradiso*) the man in the moon is Cain, the dog is the fiend, and he carries the burden of his sin on his back.

²⁰ My use of the term “orientation” is a nod to Julian Yates’ employment of it in “Sheep Tracks” *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral*.
The moon is a polyvalent figure in the early modern period, and is particularly useful for
tracing developments in early modern romance as narratives of fantasy shift from allegorical
realms to potential new worlds. The moon in the early modern period is an ecological force,
with the power to influence oceans, environments, histories, mental states, and bodily humors.
Outside the geographical boundaries of the earth, the moon nevertheless reaches into earthly
concerns. The romance storylines of the seventeenth century were highly influenced by the
proliferation of travel narratives. As travel narratives borrowed from romance, especially the
genre’s models for descriptions of wonder and gratifying material excess, romance began to
include alternate forms of authorial authority, explore new forms of literary pleasure, and to look
ever further outward for fantastical experiences. By the time Francis Godwin’s partially-
picaresque moon voyage *The Man in the Moone* is published in 1638 the readership of romances
are, as Mary Baine Campbell articulates, accustomed to accounts of travel to a new world and to
having their fiction inflected with new scientific discourses, discoveries, and experiments. The
moon moves from an allegorical figure to an imagined reality. The man in the moon, or the
woman as the moon, in the case of queenly figures like Cynthia—figures who look down upon
and influence protagonists benighted by romantic desires—are replaced in the lunar romances of
the seventeenth century by the idea of an actual man in the moon: a human figure who explores
the environments and cultures the new world moon may offer.

This chapter takes the concerns of this dissertation off world to ask how the moon as a
material and allegorical figure affects the ecologies of early modern romance environments and
how the moon eventually becomes a place where, through romance, early modern writers
imagined and filled out ideal ecologies. The project of early modern romance authors such as
Francis Godwin and Margaret Cavendish to search out ideal environments in other worlds is a
continuing romance obsession in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Many of the science fiction romances of the Anthropocene enact ecological fantasies by leaving a human-ruined world behind for new pristine paradises on other planets.

Moon Power

In *The Tempest*, Caliban recalls his own kind of taming or humanizing at the hand of Prospero, who taught him “how / To name the bigger light and how the less, / That burn by day and night” (1.2.400-3). But it isn’t necessarily the taxonomic astronomy lesson that sticks. When Caliban mistakes Stephano for a god, asking “Hast thou not dropped from heaven?” (2.2.142), the butler jokingly and alluding to his drunkenness, replies: “Out o’ th’ moon, I do assure thee. I was the man I’ the’ moon when time was” (2.2.143-4). Caliban in wonder states, “I have seen thee in her, and I do adore thee. My mistress showed me thee, and thy dog, and thy bush” (2.2.145-7). Prospero taught Caliban the names of the sun and the moon, but Miranda taught him to look for the storied figure within the moon. These efforts initially meant to humanize Caliban. However, by stressing this folk knowledge of the moon rather than perhaps a more material or magical knowledge, Prospero may have been doing exactly what Caliban accuses him of doing: obstructing his inheritance from his mother Sycorax. Near the end of the play Prospero reveals that Caliban’s “mother was a witch, and one so strong / That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs, / And deal in her command without her power”

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21 If he may be believed. We hear of the relative powers of Sycorax and Prospero by conflicting accounts. Caliban believes that Prospero’s “art is of such power / It would control my dam’s god, Setebos, / And make a vassal of him” (1.2.448-50). Sycorax could also not undo her torment on Ariel: it took Prospero’s “art” to free him from the cloven pine. However, here, Sycorax seems to have been able to influence the seas through her own power, not through spirits, like Prospero.
Sycorax takes on aspects of the sinister version of the moon goddess, Hecate, who specializes in witchcraft. Sycorax, able to “deal in her [the moon’s] command without her power” is, through her magical strength, able to control the moon’s pull on water bodies without being expressly empowered to do so by the moon. In other words, she could disrupt the natural order of things and take over the authority and influence of the moon. Caliban’s understanding of the moon as a figure of a man entrapped within a lunar landscape instead of a powerful ecological force that may be manipulated by human magic is an overlooked aspect of Prospero’s narrative control over Caliban. The image of the exiled man, condemned to perpetually bear his burden of sticks is remarkably similar to Caliban’s never-ending log-bearing servitude to Prospero and Miranda. In a Foucauldian moment of knowledge-making, Prospero and Miranda’s language (discourse) recodes the moon from what, for Sycorax, was a material element open to manipulation, to a representation of Caliban’s own imprisonment.

As this reading of the moon and Caliban in The Tempest illustrates, the ways in which the moon’s agency is constructed through language, including allegory, personification, and symbolism are important to how humans conceive their interactions within nonhuman ecologies. Sycorax’s relationship with her nonhuman environment is one of contested agencies; she may wrest control from the moon, rend pine trees, and other “earthy” and “grand hests” (1.2.326-7) but her control isn’t absolute: in all the twelve years before she died she was unable to undo her curse on Ariel. She could control the moon, but could not gape the pine. Prospero’s interaction with the natural world is through a form of social dominance and an understanding of the enmeshment of agency through productive networks. He is aided by the “elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves, / And you that on the sands with printless foot / Do chase the ebbing
Neptune” (5.1.42-3). He names these elves “demi-puppets” (5.1.45) and declares that, while they are “Weak masters” (5.1.50) on their own, through their aid he has performed great feats: dimming the sun, calling forth winds, provoking storms, splitting oaks with lightning, and uprooting trees and dead men alike from their earthy beds. Prospero’s magic may be rough in its violence, but it is also rough in its use of biopower and biopolitics: his magic is the coarse uneven power of a multitude of bodies. Another way to look at Prospero’s interaction with his nonhuman environment is as a puppet-master of ecological processes. He has figured out a way to control an unspecified number of nonhuman “weak masters” within their respective ecological niches in hills, brooks, lakes, groves, and shorelines and is able to agitate them into collective action. The accumulations of these small actants into a larger collective gain the power to wreak mass havoc. In the early modern period, the moon was believed to hold a magnetic power over the oceans and could control the movements of the waves. Prospero’s rough magic holds an influence over all movements within the island’s ecosystems: a kind of ‘super moon’ of ecological control. Prospero admits that his direct personal power is slight, “what strength I have’s mine own, / Which is most faint” (Epilogue 2-3). It is his power as an ecological organizer and instigator makes him extremely potent. For current ecological thought, Prospero is a good model for the unnamed cause—not the ghost in the machine but the wizard in the ecosystem—that can trace and activate the myriad intra-actions between entities on a micro scale that influence climate change and ecological disasters on a macro scale. Our modern tempests emerge from a dizzying array of economic, social, and political choices and actions, but there is no single Prospero figure behind them. Similarly, there is no entity of knowledge that might outline all the world’s enmeshments that isn’t already drowned and overwhelmed by the

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22 See Jonathan Goldberg’s *Tempest in the Caribbean.*
burgeoning actants of global change. This isn’t to say that we should not continue to seek out the networks of influence that enact environmental change in order to mitigate further disaster, but like the end of *The Tempest*, we must give up the idea of a singular actant culpable for ecological change in order to move forward from an ending of despair: “As you from crimes would pardoned be, / Let your indulgence set me free” (Epilogue 19-20).

*Cynthia*

The moon imagery of the Elizabethan era consistently reflects back to the monarch herself. Queen Elizabeth quickly appropriated the image of the virgin moon goddess as part of her cosmic iconography. As a Virgin Queen, Elizabeth reorganized the heliocentric structures of kingly “sun in his splendor” traditions to arrange a court of admirers positioned towards herself as a chaste and powerful lunar deity. Poets and aristocratic favorites encouraged this association, and routinely equated Elizabeth with Cynthia, Luna, Phoebe, and Diana. William Carroll points out that the cult of Cynthia may also be seen in royal entertainments, including the elaborate water sports put on in 1575 at Kenilworth Castle, where Elizabeth was greeted by an array of watery figures, including an Arthurian Lady of the Lake, Neptune, Triton, and Proteus. At the same entertainments, the queen was presented with a play about Diana. Carroll also notes the artificial lake carved in the shape of a half moon at Elvetham in 1591 where allegorical figures addressed the queen as “Faire Cinthia the wide Ocean’s Empresse” (qtd. in Carroll 9).

Sir Walter Raleigh’s poem cycle “The Ocean to Cynthia” makes Elizabeth’s connection to the moon goddess even more personal. Punning on Walter/water, Raleigh creates a private iconography that shapes him as a watery element controlled by the influence of the queen, imagined as a mutable moon. Raleigh’s Cynthia poems are noted in Spenser’s prefatory letter to
the *Faerie Queene*. Spenser’s letter to his friend Raleigh remarks that in some places he fashions “the most excellent and glorious person of our soueraine the Queene […] according to your owne excellent conceipt of Cynthia, (Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana)” (16). In 2013, conservators at the National Portrait Gallery uncovered a small painted symbol of wavy blue water underneath the emblem of a crescent moon on Raleigh’s famous 1588 portrait (figure 1). Roy Strong notes that Raleigh’s painting is “deliberately complimentary to the Queen” (74). Along with the Cynthia symbol of the moon and the newly detected waves, the motto *Amor et Virute* adorns the corner, while Raleigh is notably bedecked in the Queen’s colors of black and white and an abundance of signifying virgin pearls. Andrew Hadfield notes that the revelation of the blue waves “is a fascinating discovery which suggests that Raleigh was at work on his strange Cynthia poems in the late 1580s and that he may have regarded his position at court as perilous and unstable well before his secret marriage. We know that he had a literary friendship with Edmund Spenser, an equally complicated and conflicted figure, and they may have been developing their poems about the queen together in the 1580s” (NPS). While both men may have been crafting lunar allegories about Elizabeth, the way in which the material base of their figures comes into play is quite different.
Raleigh dissolves the complex interplay of patronage, imperial expansion, and monarchical power into an elemental relationship between moon and sea. Early modern natural scientists and laypeople alike associated the moon with control over the tides and other watery bodies (including the watery humors of human bodies). Nearly every almanac of the period included various moon charts and described the moon’s influences. One common almanac, *The Shepardes Kalender*, attributed to Robert Copland and printed in 1570, describes “the Moone is Lady of moisture, and ruleth the sea by ebbe and fludde” (85). In his conceptual paradigm, Raleigh takes on traditional feminine characteristics associated with water, while sustaining Elizabeth in a clearly feminine yet powerful and influential role as the moon.

While the image in the 1588 portrait shows the moon and ocean waves as a satisfying pair, removed from an interconnected world, Raleigh’s use of the conceit opens up a psychological and material ecology that includes the landscape ravaged by the imbalance of the sea and its lunar mistress. The fragment of Raleigh’s poem, “The 21st and Last Book of the
Ocean to Cynthia” is a pastoral complaint touched by what Steve Mentz would call shipwreck poetics or the salty disorder of blue humanities. Mentz argues that “in the Anglophone context, the early modern period gets wetter as it gets more modern” (xiv). Who better to describe this oceanic upheaval than Raleigh: a prime witness to exploration on the high seas and the changeable moods of his sea-style queen? Raleigh’s poem describes a pastoral landscape in ruin: “fruitless” (21), “healthless” (26) trees devoid of sap dot a countryside without birds, feeding flocks, or shepherds (28-9). Raleigh’s desires are “Lost in the mud of those high-flowing streams” (17) and he “seek[s] fair flowers amid the brinsh sand” (24). Raleigh, styled by Spenser in Colin Clouts Come Home Again (1595) as the “Shepherd of the Ocean” imagines himself not as a masterful shepherd of a flock of ships as one might expect, but as a bereft lover in a flooded landscape: a shepherd of poetic ecological destruction. In a poetic turn, the lover’s heart23 is figured as an enclosed pastoral space, a “fold,” where flocks of lover’s joys once subsisted and were brought home:

Thy heart which was their fold, now in decay
By often storms and winter’s many blasts,
All torn and rent, becomes misfortune’s prey,
False hope, my shepherd’s staff, now age hath brast. (175-8).

The decayed space of desire, “All torn and rent” by storms and blasts with a broken staff, is both a shipwrecked environment as well as a leaky vessel open to become “misfortune’s prey” (177). The world of “the Ocean to Cynthia” is a sister vision to Raleigh’s “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” in its images of a ravaged pastoral environment and commitment to imminent change:

Time drives the flocks from field to fold,

23 Ralegh’s heart, but also Leander’s if Hero “hath left no lamp to guide her love” (162).
When Rivers rage and Rocks grow cold,

And *Philomel* becometh dumb,

The rest complains of cares to come. (5-8).

Where Marlowe’s Passionate Shepherd sees rivers as shallow and melodious, Raleigh’s response brings the oceanic to the fertile pleasures of valleys and fields: where rocks grow cold and rivers have the potential to become inconstant and dangerous tidal waves. Raleigh’s verses apprehend the project of Mentz’ blue humanities which uses the power of language to grapple with an unstable environment. Mentz advocates, “Shifting our focus from the supposed stability of land, with its pastoral and georgic master narratives, to a broader vision that embraces the maritime world and what Melville calls “this terraqueous globe” will mean abandoning certain happy fictions and replacing them with less comforting narratives. Fewer gardens, and more shipwrecks” (98). The happy fiction of Marlowe’s pastoral poem is submerged by the ecological destruction and poetic cynicism of Raleigh’s “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” and “the Ocean to Cynthia.” Raleigh’s poems to Cynthia figure the moon as an actant in the moon-ocean-land assemblage. Raleigh’s allegorical place in this triad follows a “man in the moon” kind of logic. He is represented as the ocean, but he is also the man caught in a landscape of oceanic turbulence.

The moon, goddess of the night and attuned to emotion, is an active participant in lover’s quarrels in early modern fiction. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the debate and dissention between Titania and Oberon incites a watery, sodden, season-disrupting ecological breakdown. Titania outlines a chain of events that ends in natural disaster. Oberon disrupts Titania and her entourage's dancing exchange with the wind, which sets off a series of responses within the ecosystem that are anthropomorphized as jealousy: the abandoned winds suck up from the sea
“contagious fogs” (2.1.93) which fall to land, making rivers “over[bear] their continents” (2.1.95). This flooding destroys the production of field and pasture: corn rots, the “fold stands empty in the drownèd field” (2.1.99) and “crows are fatted with the murrain flock” (2.1.100). Pastoral pleasures, such as nine-men’s-morris and maze walks are abandoned and “no night is now with hymn or carol blessed” (2.1.105):

Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter (2.1.106-10).

The “rheumatic diseases” are the material equivalent on human bodies to the destructive flooding that ravages the bodies of the land. Rheumatic diseases are characterized by painful swelling and can become more acute during atmospheric pressure changes before a storm. Hence the links between diseases like rheumatoid arthritis to the weather. The sufferers seem to have a prognostic bond between their bodies and climate disruptions: they can “feel the storm in their bones.” The moon’s stormy influence floods the body and disorders seasonal progression: all entities swell and become changeable akin to lunar phases.

Shakespeare’s angry moon is the subject of the second “therefore” in Titania’s speech. First, the winds do not get their due dances, and respond by flooding the land with rain-laden sea fogs, then the moon does not receive her proper songs, and in retribution spreads disease and alters the seasons. Wind and governing moon are refigured in Shakespeare’s fantastical comedy as incensed deities or queens not properly honored by the expected rituals and royal entertainments. Here Titania and Oberon are not like Prospero, the puppet-master of collective
ecological upheavals, but rather they are figured as active semiotic and discursive participants in the material ecology of the world. Titania’s dances and songs, her “ringlets to the whistling wind” (2.1.89) and her hymns and carols to the moon, are an essential part of the healthy ecosystem of the play’s biosphere. This scene works to stress the importance of proper obsequies to monarchs and deities, but it also works to naturalize the patronage system. Poetry and music are an indispensable part of the negotiation between human/faerie and the nonhuman environment. Titania’s dialogue highlights musical and literary production as part of the natural worldly order. The work of the faeries, in their dances, hymns, and carols, to wind and moon also emphasizes the appropriateness of acknowledging nonhuman entities. The creative efforts of Titania’s retinue are ecocritical in that they use the liberal arts to engage with a nonhuman world: even placing the nonhuman as the audience.

Raleigh, explorer of the waves and figured as the ocean, positions himself as the unlucky devotee and lover of Cynthia, the moon goddess. His songs to her, unlike Titania’s, do not appease and the absence of the moon’s love wreaks destruction on his psychic landscape. Yet what happens when the moon loves back? Early modern readers and attendees of courtly masques were well acquainted with the classical Greek myth of Endymion, who was so beloved of the moon goddess, that he is granted eternal sleep rather than death so that she might visit and admire him. John Lyly, with his play Endimion, The Man in the Moone, reworks the legend for Elizabeth’s court, using the moon goddess as a conceit, but radically adapting Cynthia’s role in order to make her affections appropriate.24 In Lyly’s version, Endimion is more of a courtier,

24 Printed in 1591, the play was “playd beore the Queenes Maiestie at Grennewich on Candlemas day at night, by the Chyldren of Paules” (title page). The setting of the play was particularly appropriate: at night, and on Candlemas, a holiday associated with vestal virgins, spring renewal, and moon-shaped crepes.
feverishly in love with his lunar sovereign. Endimion is enchanted into a deathly sleep by the machinations of a jealous lover and can only be awakened by a chaste kiss from Cynthia. The moon queen acquiesces for the sake of her people and their happiness and the play resolves in marriages for all the characters but Endimion, whose love Cynthia is socially and physically far above him.

What is striking about the moon and Cynthia in Lyly’s play and other representations, is the dedication to the material aspects of the personification. The characteristics and qualities of Cynthia are explained through the material (or at least visual) realities of the onlooker’s experience of the moon. Lyly works out the two most problematic aspects of styling Queen Elizabeth as the moon: the moon’s inconstancy and the competing mythological traditions of the moon being sexually productive and desiring as well as fiercely chaste and virginal. Lyly importantly begins with Endimion in love with the lunar object first before the personification of the moon in goddess form arrives on stage. This allows Lyly to use the material features of the moon as counterarguments to the problems of the lunar personification of the queen. The moon first is taken literally as a nonhuman body that cannot be paramour to a human lover. Troubled at his friend Endimion’s passion for the moon, Eumenides argues “There was neuer any so peeuish to imagin the / Moone eyther capable of affection, or shape of a Mistris” (1.1.25-6). In her lunar state, the moon is an alien body and this alterity is expected to persist, even as the moon shows herself in human form as Cynthia.
Endimion’s argument against “iniurious tyme, corrupt manners, vnkind men” who have “christened [Cynthia] with the name of wauering, waxing, and waning” (B1) is twofold. First, Endimion praises the moon’s course: “Is shee inconstant that keepeth a settled course, which since her first creation altereth not one minute in her mouing?” (B1). Secondly, Endimion unpacks the allegorical figure of the moon as an assemblage of moments in time. The singular body of Cynthia represents all of the phases of the moon, but this should not dub her inconstant. He states: “There is nothing thought more admirable, or commendable in the sea, then the ebbing and flowing, and shall the Moone, from whom the Sea taketh this vertue, be accounted fickle for encreasing & decreasing? Flowers in theyre buds, are nothing worth till they be blowne, nor blossomes accounted till they be ripe fruite, and shal we then say they be changeable, for that they growe from seedes to leaues, from leaues to buds, from buds to theyr perfection? Then, why be not twigs that become trees, children that become men, and Mornings that grow to Euenings, termed wauering, for that they continue not at one stay?” (B1). The
moon’s most notable characteristic is its movement between phases and any personification of this planetary body must address the quality. However, Cynthia cannot be an allegorical figure for inconstancy without undermining the authority of Queen Elizabeth’s most potent symbol. Therefore, Lyly crafts a symbolic logic that apprehends this problem and turns it into a virtue. The rest of Eumenides speech would have been especially appealing to the queen, whose youth needed to remain semi-constant in order to fit the emblematic image of a virgin: “Tell mee Eumenides, what is hee that hauing a Mistris of ripe yeeres, & infinite vertues, great honors, and vnspeakeable beauty, but would wish that shee might grow tender againe? getting youth by yeeres, and neuer decaying beauty, by time, whose fayre face, neyther the Summers blase can scorch, nor VVinters blast chappe, nor the numbrong of yeeres breede altering of colours. Such is my sweete Cynthia, whom tyme cannot touch, because she is diuine, nor will offend because she is delicate” (B1-2). The queen’s quest for a moon-like timelessness and renewal of beauty may be seen in her portraiture. The face pattern presented in the famous Darnley Portrait is replicated throughout the rest of her life in order to preserve an ageless beauty. The Rainbow Portrait (figure 2) is one example. Painted when the queen was in her sixties, the heavy symbolism of youthful flowers, virginal pearls, and the crowning scepter moon on her headdress work to sustain Elizabeth I as enjoying a moon-like rejuvenation of splendor.

Waxing and Waning: From Figure to a New World

The personification of the moon flourished in the Elizabethan period and the particulars of Cynthia became more and more materially and symbolically inflected as multiple poets and playwrights took on the challenge of channeling the lunar goddess and physical planetary entity into a composite and complimentary depiction of their queen. However, with Elizabeth’s death
in 1603, the discourse surrounding the moon quickly charted a new course away from monarchal symbolism and toward scientific realism. The work of Galileo Galilei and the invention of the Galilean telescope in 1609, closely followed by an improvement on the design by Johannes Kepler in 1611, brought the moon closer than ever before. It was Galileo’s artistic training, particularly his expertise in chiaroscuro, the use of high contrast between dark and light to achieve a sense of volume in images of three-dimensional figures, which allowed him to understand the spots on the moon (noted by other observers, including Thomas Harriot) as evidence of topographical mountains and craters. Newly observable as a landmass, the moon became increasingly described as an unexplored territory. As Carroll relates, “no longer distant, remote, and female, the moon now was something entirely different, “a new world”, and the language of the European voyages of discovery to the New World of America merged with the rhetoric or astronomy in trying to account for this phenomenon” (16).

The only genre in the early modern period truly equipped to adapt to the change in the moon’s discursive signification is romance. In Lyly’s *The Man in the Moone*, Eumenides captures the difficulty of making the moon fit a desired meaning, describing the task as difficult as tailoring “a coate to her forme, which continueth not in one bignesse whilst she is measuring” (B). Romance is one such wondrous coat. In its cross-pollination with other genres, romance naturally expanded and reformed to be a vehicle that included all the ways the moon was understood in the early modern period: from allegorical figure to celestial queen to a new found land. By the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth, romance could be fitted to a range of burgeoning discourses and genres with both popular and courtly audiences. Romance became intermingled with the types of reading potential early modern buyers were interested in: news (including gossip and scandal), histories, travel narratives, translations from the continent
or classical sources, autobiographies, picaresques, satires, medieval legends, and scientific discourses. The extra-planetary romances of Francis Goodwin, Cyrano de Bergerac, and Margaret Cavendish melded utopian fiction, travel narratives, and cutting-edge scientific theories with the allegorical influences of earlier romance. While many scholars have focused on the ways in which these authors replicate early kinds of ethnography through these fictional extra-terrestrial encounters, my project is to investigate how these lunar and extra-planetary romances refashion and expand notions of early modern ecologies.

*Looking Back*

Figure 3: Crescent Earth, photographed from the Apollo 11 mission return trip, 1969, NASA.

Greg Garrard begins his final chapter in his introduction to ecocriticism with the image of the earth from space. Citing similar moves from Jonathan Bate, Stephen Yearley, media analyst John Hannigan, and popular culturist and ecocritic Andrew Ross, Garrard suggests that the image of the singular blue and green ball existing in the vastness of space evokes a powerful environmental message of fragile totality. The 1969 view of the earth from the moon was indeed a spectacular moment in history. The photographs taken by the astronauts from the Apollo 11 mission evoke a strong protective response toward our beautiful and vulnerable *oikos*, our home.
The images looking back at the earth from the moon from that twentieth-century landing have been effective visuals for sparking environmental conversations and have shaped the discourse of globalization and a world ecology. Yet, while this was the first time it was actualized, this was not the first time the vantage point of a lunar perspective was imagined.

Fictional lunar voyages have been crafted since antiquity. The ironist Lucian of Samosata, who lived c. 125-180, wrote two lunar travel narratives: *Icaromenippus*, and *The True History*. The *Icaromenippus* features flight by means of bird’s wings and influenced Ben Jonson’s lunar masque *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon* (1620). Jonson’s masque included a memorable dance of the Volatees, the lunar bird-men first sketched out by Lucian. In Lucian’s *True History*, the travelers meet Endymion who, after his long sleep, has been made King of the moon. Lucian was an immensely popular author in England in the early modern period in part, as William Poole notes, because Erasmus names him as a primary example of Greek prose style to be imitated by schoolboys. It is highly likely that the English authors of early modern moon voyages first caught their lunar wanderlust as young students encountering Lucian’s wildly fantastical *True History* in its original Greek. The first translation in English was published by Francis Hickes in 1634 and was therefore accessible to more readers as lunar fictions were on the rise in the mid-1600s.

Lucian’s voyage takes his lunar explorers to the moon by means of a ship blown off course and up into the atmosphere: “upon a suddaine a whirlewinde caught us, which turned our shippe round about, and lifted us up some three thousand furlongs into the aire” (111). For seven days and nights they are driven by a mighty wind until:

wee came in view of a great countrie in the aire, like to a shining Island, of a round proportion, gloriously glittering with light, and approaching to it, we there
arrived, and tooke land, and surveying the countrie, we found it to be both
inhabited and husbanded: and as long as the day lasted we could see nothing
there, but when night was come many other Islands appeared unto us, some
greater and some lesse, all the colour of fire, and another kind of earth
underneath, in which were cities, & seas, & rivers, & woods, and mountains,
which we conjectured to be the earth by us inhabited” (111).

Landing on the moon places the protagonists within a literal space of topsy-turvy. At night, the
earth rises underneath them. The alterity of this position provides a productive moment of
uncertainty, where Lucian’s voyagers must conjecture that the “kind of earth” underneath them
must be their own home. The earth, once a stable location, becomes an object that must be re-
encountered and recognized: a “kind of earth.” Seen from the moon, the adventurers must re-
interpret their home world from a new perspective.

Godwin’s posthumous The Man in the Moone (1638) and Cyrano de Bergerac’s Histoire
Comique le Estates & Empires de la Lune (The Comical History of the States and Empires of the
World of the Moon) (1657), both take time in the narratives to look back at the Earth from their
lunar positions and replicate this disorienting moment from Lucian. As soon as he is set “upon
the top of a very high hill in that other world” (F1), the first thing Godwin’s protagonist,
Domingo Gonsales (the Spanish dwarf diminutive in size but great in exploratory enthusiasm),
does is look backward: “For first I observed, that […] the Globe of the Earth shewed much
bigger there then the Moone doth unto us, even to the full trebling of her diameter” (F2).
Godwin and Cyrano each note the perceived exchange in planetary sizes as their characters move
from the attractive force of the Earth to the moon. Cyrano’s narrator in the 1659 English
translation expresses: “truly, I found that I did not tumble towards our World, for though I found
my self betwixt two Moons, and that I noted how I in going from the one, approached the other, yet I was certain that the biggest was our Globe” (20). For both lunar travellers, while the Earth is still the larger planetary body, its position in the sky where the moon is expected from a terrestrial perspective is something noteworthy: a startling uncanny moment that alienates the Earth as a familiar other.

Figure 4: Earth as seen from the moon, Apollo 11 mission 1969, NASA.

Timothy Morton, in *The Ecological Thought*, uses the otherworldly perspective of viewing the Earth from the moon to show how it decenters the human from supreme importance. The “Earthrise” image from the Apollo 11 mission is an icon, Morton suggests, that “displaces our sense of centrality, making us see ourselves from the outside” (24). Morton argues against thinking of ecology as earthbound and locational. Instead, Morton offers an ecological outlook he terms “thinking big” that emphasizes an acknowledgement of profundity and vastness that leads toward a realization of interconnectedness. This interconnectedness promotes ecological responsibility as well as suggesting the humility of perspective.

Morton uses the angel Raphael’s conversation with Adam in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* as a moment that inspires this form of “thinking big.” The scene Morton chooses is the speech
wherein Raphael suggests to Adam that the earth may not be the only inhabited world. Raphael’s first example is the moon, which is presumably visible to Adam from his earthly viewpoint in Eden:

What if that light
Sent from her through the wide transpicuous aire,
To the terrestrial Moon be as a Starr
Enlightening her by Day, as she by Night
This Earth? reciprocal, if Land be there,
Fields and Inhabitants: Her spots thou seest
As Clouds, and Clouds may ran, and Rain produce
Fruits in her soft’nd Soile, for some to eate
Allotted there; and other Suns perhaps
With thir attendant Moons thou wilt descrie (8.140-9).

The relationship between the Earth and the moon is reciprocal. The sun’s rays give light to the moon, sustaining potential fields, inhabitants, rain, soil, and fruit and making the terrestrial moon another Earth. The Earth is also a moon to the Moon. Raphael suggests that there are other worlds and perhaps even other Edens within a wide universe. Yet he also offers a warning to Adam against the dangers of speculation: of focusing on unknown and unknowable things instead of remaining dedicated to just and temperate action on Earth. He enjoins the first couple to be “lowlie wise” (8.173) and to:

Think onely what concernes thee and thy being;
Dream not of other Worlds, what Creatures there
Live, in what state, condition or degree,
Contented that thus farr hath been reveal’d
Not of Earth onely but of highest Heav’n. (8.173-8).

Of course, as Morton points out, by the time Raphael tells Adam not to think of other worlds it is too late: “we, and Adam, have already thought of […] other possible Edens on other planets, other atmospheres, other ecosystems” (21-22). Morton sees this moment as extraordinary in the history of ecological thought. Raphael, he argues, “offers a negative image of human location, suggesting that humans shouldn’t think that their planet is the only important one” (22). The possibility of other worlds disrupts the idea of mankind’s uniqueness. Milton achieves the ecological thought, according to Morton, by providing a different way of imagining what ecology means. Doing away with the “coziness of Noah’s ark” (23), Milton’s Raphael suggests an expansion of the biosphere into open space.

Milton’s description of the terrestrial Moon echoes the lunar romances that preceded Paradise Lost. I argue that the lunar fictions of the first half of the seventeenth century also bring an expansive perspective to early modern thoughts on ecology.

The (New) New World

In worlding the moon, both Godwin and Cyrano strive to make the moon more Earth-like. In order to explore the various continents of the moon, the authors of these romances must bring these continents into relief: breaking through the long-held traditions of the moon’s surface as flat, of a single color with spots, and bright. Both Cyrano and Godwin explain away the flattening and monochrome quality of the moon by applying the same homogenizing factors to the Earth as they move away from it. As Gonsales moves closer to the moon than the Earth, he notes: “the first difference that I found betweene it and our earth, was, that it shewed it selfe in
his natural colours: ever after I was free from the attraction of the Earth; whereas with us, a thing removed from our eye but a league or two begins to put on that lurid and deadly colour of blew” (63). Rebecca Solnit describes this color of distant blue as “the color of an emotion, the color of solitude and of desire, the color of there seen from here, the color of where you are not” (29). Once free from the Earth’s influence, the moon is no longer the faded blue of distance but rather shows its true colors.

Cyrano’s narrator, part-way through his journey illustrates how, through a trick of the light, the Earth seems as uniform and smooth as the moon: “because after one or two days Journey, the remote Refractions of the Sun, confounding the diversity of Bodies and Climates, it appeared to me only as a large Plate of Gold” (21). In the earlier translation, Cyrano’s narrator describes the Earth as looking like “a large Holland-Cheese gilded” (20). Whether cheese or plate of gold, the Earth takes on an even color and texture that negate the visible presence of continents and seas.

By making the Earth with its known continents and variety of colors appear moon-like, the authors of lunar romances make an inhabited moon with a rich array of ecologies more plausible. Godwin’s narrator Gonsales relates:

Againe, the Earth (which ever I held in mine eye) did as it were mask it selfe with a kind of brightnesse like another Moone; and even as in the Moone we discerned certaine spots or Clouds, as it were, so did I then in the earth. But whereas the

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25 Rebecca Solnit describes a similar blue in “The Blue of Distance” from A Field Guide to Getting Lost (2006): “The world is blue at its edges and in its depths. This blue is the light that got lost. Light at the blue end of the spectrum does not travel the whole distance from the sun to us. […] This light that does not touch us, does not travel the whole distance, the light that gets lost, gives us the beauty of the world, so much of which is in the color blue. […] The color of that distance is the color of an emotion, the color of solitude and of desire, the color of there seen from here, the color of where you are not. And the color of where you can never go” (29).
forme of those spots in the Moone continue constantly one and the same; these little and little did change every hower. The reason thereof I conceive to be this: that whereas the Earth according to her naturall motion, (for that such a motion she hath, I am now constrained to joyne in opinion with Copernicus,) turneth round upon her owne Axe every 24. howers from the West unto the East (56).

Godwin takes the opportunity to use his narrative to support current theories of the diurnal rotation of the earth. While it would take the influence of Galileo, Johannes Kepler, and Isaac Newton and the experiments of later generations to cement diurnal rotation as fact, Godwin positions Gonsales as an eye-witness to this phenomenon, describing, “it seemed unto me no other then a huge Mathematicall Globe, leasurely turned before me, wherein successively, all the Countries of our earthly world within the compasse of 24 howers were represented to my sight” (57-58). Kepler’s own dream-vision lunar narrative, Somnium (written in 1608 and published in 1634), portrays the earth’s diurnal rotation as a clock.

Gonsales describes the continents and oceans of the Earth as if he were looking at the moon with a full cartographic knowledge. The Earth with its borrowed luster he calls “this new starre” (57) and constrains his descriptions of the Earth within the lunar binaries of spots and areas of brightness. He describes “a spot like unto a Peare that had a morsel bitten out upon the one side of him […] This no doubt was the maine of Affrike” (57). After the continent of Africa shifts out of view he notes:

Then should I perceive a great shining brightnesse to occupy that roome, during the time (which was undoubtedly none other then the great Atlantick Ocean). After that succeeded a spot almost of an Ovall form, even just such as we see America to have in our Mapps. Then another vast cleernesse representing the...
Gonsales reinterprets the Earth within a lunar context. Africa, America, and the East Indies, each their own places of foreign exploration for Europeans, become reinscribed as Earth-spots floating within the bright wide expanses of the Atlantic and west oceans. With this shifting of ontological frameworks Godwin prepares us for Gonsales’ description of the moon. By defamiliarizing the ways in which the geographies of the Earth are understood he makes the features of the moon recognizable as continents and seas. Like the surface of the Earth, Gonsales observes the moon as an exchange of shining oceanic bodies and darker landmasses:

Then I perceived also; that it was covered for the most part with a huge and mighty Sea, those parts only being drie Land, which shew unto us here somewhat darker then the rest of her body (that I mean which the Country people call *el hombre della Luna*, the Man of the Moone. As for that part which shineth so clearly in our eyes; it is even another Ocean, yet besprinckled heere and there with *Islands*, which for the littlenesse, so farre off we cannot discern. So that same splendor appearing unto us, and giving light unto our night, appeareth to be nothing else but the reflexion of the Sun beames returned unto us out of the water, as out of a glasse. (63-64).

Godwin makes the idea of “the Man in the Moon” newly strange and opens up the potential for speculation. Might lunar observers see “the Half-Eaten Pear in the Earth” or some other image that may define our globe? The Man in the Moon, in Gonsales’ narrative, also importantly becomes the lunar equivalent of the continents of Africa and America. The lush
environments of Africa and America, rich with exportable goods from a European colonizer’s perspective, are now mapped onto the lunar worldscape.

Mary Baine Campbell argues, “America changed the moon forever” (152). By the seventeenth century the new world of the moon was always going to be a reflection of the New World on Earth. Heavily influenced by the language and structure of travel narratives, early modern lunar romances like Godwin’s and Cyrano’s were also shaped by the literary genre of the picaresque. Campbell notes, “Godwin’s choice of a picaresque narrative structure was not so much inspired as inevitable. New worlds are the only worlds in which a poor, bare, unaccommodated *picaro* can hope to succeed, or “rise,” and the new American world was turning out to be a godsend for “youngest sons” (like Gonsales, youngest of seventeen!) and commoners on the rise (Cortez, for instance, or Thevet, or Walter Ralegh, whose book on Guiana it would seem Godwin had read)” (156). Godwin’s narrator is the youngest son of a noble but financially strained family. He is initially intended to go into the Church, but as Gonsales neatly puts it, “But our Lord purposing to use my service in matters of farre other nature and quality, inspired me with spending sometime in the warres” (2). Gonsales dodges a clerical life for a more exciting and more lucrative military one. He quickly moves up the ranks, gains a certain share of fame and money, and returns to his parents, who receive him with joy, especially when they “saw I brought with mee meanes to maintaine my selfe without their charge, having a portion sufficient of mine owne, so that they needed not to defalke any thing from my bretheren or sisters for my setting up” (7-8). Gonsales marries and settles down, but “some disagreement happened between me and one Pedro Delgades a Gentleman of my kinne, the causes whereof are needless to be related, but so farre this dissention grew between us as when no mediation of friends could appease the same, into the field wee went together alone with our Rapiers, where
my chance was to kill him, being a man of great strength, and tall stature. But what I wanted of
him in strength, I supplied with courage, and my nimbleness more than countervailed his
stature” (8-9). A kinsman of Delgades pursues a case against Gonsales, and our hero decides to
leave for the Indies, since “I had by this time (besides a wife) two sons whom I liked not to
beggar by satisfying the desire of this covetous braggart” (13). Success in trading jewels in the
Indies and a grave illness leaves Gonsales recovering on the paradisiacal stopping point in the
East Indies trade route, the island of St. Helena, with the time, space, and means to devise the
traveling method that eventually allows him to reach the moon.

I relate the early portion of Gonsales’ narrative because I agree with William Poole, the
editor of the Broadview edition of the text (2009), who argues, “Gonsales is not really a rascal,
and certainly not consistently so” (27). The protagonist laments being parted from his wife and
children three times in the narrative, he is not deceitful, and he is empathetic toward those around
him. Poole posits “The Man in the Moone does not sustain picaresque, then, but it sounds
enough quasi-picaresque notes in its opening stages to evoke such a generic context, and thus to
encourage the reader to register its departure from that context, just as Gonsales departs from
Europe. Indeed, as has been argued, The Man in the Moone is thus more generically
sophisticated than one of its most famed progeny, Cyrano’s Histoire Comique, which reinstated
and embraced picaresque, thereby upsetting Godwin’s delicate counterpoint and his sense of
generic transformation” (28). Gonsales is a very modern character—a person within a difficult
to navigate socio-economic environment who makes his own successes despite his
disadvantages. In his military service, Gonsales gains favor with a Duke:

who sometimes would jest a little more broadly at my personage than I could
well brook. For although I must acknowledge my stature to be so little, as no man
there is living I thinke lesse, yet in as much as it was the work of God and not mine, hee ought not to have made that a meanes to dishonor a Gentleman with all.

And those things which have happened unto mee, may bee an example, that great and wonderfull things may be performed by most unlikely bodies, if the mind be good, and the blessing of our Lord doe second and follow the endeavours of the same” (6-7).

In Gonsales’ description of himself, Godwin presents a compassionate look at disability and a worldview that allows for the agency and dignity of “unlikely bodies.” This nuanced understanding influences Godwin’s treatment of other peoples, animals, and ecologies in *The Man in the Moone*. Gonsales’ picaresque movements are tied to maintaining and bettering the health of his social units. Choosing the military over the clergy, Gonsales brings more financial stability to his parents and their family of 19. Gonsales kills Delgades not in a debased brawl, but an agreed-upon duel over honor: a fight in which Gonsales is disadvantaged by size and strength. Gonsales flees the country, not in cowardice, but in order to sustain his wife and son’s future. Godwin keeps the basic structure of picaresque plotting, but changes the genre within itself by providing sympathetic reasons for Gonsales’ actions. Gonsales also has a very modern sense of self and self-preservation. The pertinent phrase that occurs twice in Gonsales’ narrative that marks it as picaresque is his vocalization of this self-preservation, his decision to “shift for my self”: “whereupon discerning it to be high time to shift for my selfe” (36) and “I thought it high time to bestirred mee, and shift for my selfe” (41). Gonsales is a canny reader of his situation and knows when to cut and run. Yet in both of the situations where this phrase is used, he weighs other responses first. When the ship he is on is most likely going to founder on the rocks on its present course, he presents his concern to the captain. Only after the captain decides
to continue against Gonsales’ counsel does he commit to “shifting for himself.” In the second situation he is pursued by native peoples on Tenerife who hate Spaniards. Gonsales weighs the odds of encountering them and decides to avoid confrontation as he is outnumbered and undersized.

*The Man in the Moone*, then, is a modified picaresque: a more empathetic take on the genre. Gonsales is self-interested and self-promoting, but not at the cost to others. The material constraints of the narrative also make it less colonially-minded than other travel narratives and picaresques. Campbell notes, “the temptation to commodify the life of the other world, as the protoethnography of Hariot does, is undermined by the technical impossibility of exploiting the resources of another planet. So the self-centered protagonist has a more humanized ethnography to offer: he meets lunar people as characters in his personal drama rather than as substances or systems to be catalogued” (158). Gonsales’ tale is a story of relationships, encounters, and endeavors, “great and wonderfull things” (6) performed by “most unlikely bodies” (6) and good minds. *The Man in the Moon* pulls the picaresque genre back from the sharp edges of satire and the literature that follows the exploits of rogues and scoundrels and is shaped more by earlier romance and utopian narratives. Gonsales’ romance follows a Heliodoran model of wandering resolved in restitution with home and family. Gonsales is much more the figure of the heroine of Heliodoran-style romance: the protagonist who keeps a sense of honor, is buffeted by a series of mishaps, who is treated like royalty while staying with various peoples, whose perspective and inner thoughts are articulated, and who continually drives the narrative onwards both spatially and discursively. While Gonsales’s narrative is truncated—we leave him in China from which he is hopeful he will make it back to Spain—the structure of the romance suggests a positive conclusion for all parties.
The Man in the Moone is most memorable for the mode of transportation Gonsales takes to the moon. Its depiction in the original engraving that accompanies the text as illustration and frontispiece is surprising, beautifully rendered, and charmingly ridiculous (Figure 5). Gonsales, dapper in his gentleman’s clothing, sits on a contraption just off of a Babel-esque tower of a mountain, gazing lovingly at the moon. A flock of geese fly in formation above Gonsales, displaying their morphological luck in being able to fly above human aspirations. Superimposed between the flying-V of the geese and the patient gentleman is an elaborate series of ropes, balanced pulleys, and a sail, connecting each goose to Gonsales and propelling him upward. In this image, the hubris of gaining heavenly knowledge is made literal. Animal and human work together in a literal and materially enmeshed assemblage in order to reach the moon. Made diminutive in the lower left corner, the tall-ships of Empire, the vessels that enabled travel to the New World, are rendered impotent in the quest for the skies.
Gonsales is set on the island of St. Helena to convalesce after he becomes ill at sea. He notes “upon the Sea shore, especially about the mouth of our River, I found great store of a
certain kinde of wild Swan [...] feeding almost all together upon their prey, and (that which is somewhat strange,) partly of Fish partly of Birds having (which is also no lesse strange) on one foote with Clawes, talons, and pounces, like an Eagle, and the other whole like a Swan or water fowle” (22-23). Seein that they breed there in “infinite numbers” (23) he takes “some 30. or 40. young ones of them, and bred them up by hand partly for my recreation, partly also as having in my head some rudiments of that device, which afterward I put in practice” (23). The birds’ meat-eating nature fulfills a Plutarch-esque (the original citation is now lost) declaration that carnivorous animals are more teachable than any other kind and the birds quickly become Gonsales’ training companions in various experiments. Gonsales teaches the gansas, as he names these wild birds, to fly with burdens, recognize a white sheet as a signal for take off, deliver goods across the island between Gonsales and his companion Diego, to lift up a lamb, and eventually, to carry himself into the air.

It is significant that Godwin paves the way to a lunar landing with a confederation of avian, human, elemental, and mechanical agencies. Enmeshed in the new science, Godwin easily could have constructed a purely mechanical form of propulsion for his protagonist, but it is fitting with the inclusive nature of his romance to make the way to the moon dependent on an interconnected coalition of disparate energies. Gonsales’ success depends on a positive working relationship between the gansas and himself. This relationship takes time and commitment. The relationship amongst the birds as peers and between the gansas and the contraption are also integral to the operation. The gansas are hand-fed as fledglings and it isn’t until multiple attempts of increasing complexity and various configurations and numbers of birds (“after divers tryalls” (26)) that the avian-human flying machine is realized.
The theorist best suited to analyze the working companionship between Gonsales and his gansas is Donna Haraway’s work on multispecies engagements across ontological contact zones. Haraway, in “Training in the Contact Zone” describes her own training with (an important distinction from of) her working sport dog as they both navigate the complex play of agility trials. The concept of contact zones was first developed by Mary Louise Pratt to refer “to the social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (34). Power is negotiated through linguistic and bodily struggle. Haraway’s work brings the contact zone to human and animal relationships (or, more accurately, the relationships between human animals and the nonhuman animals). For Haraway, there is no divide between nature and culture. Rather there are ever-changing combinations of naturecultures: relationships that are ecologically and technologically intermixed.

Gonsales is a behaviorist trainer in an ideal environment. On the idyllic island of St. Helena, Gonsales describes “no creature there doe any whit more feare a man, then they doe a Goate or a Cow; by reason thereof I found meanes easily to make tame divers sorts both of Birds and Beasts” (19). Gonsales domesticates animals on the island by disrupting and redirecting their food sources. He does this “by muzzeling them, so as till they came either unto me, or else Diego, they could not feede” (19). Domestication usually begins with some form of violence. Gonsales first “tooke great pleasure in a kinde of Partridges, of which I made great use, as also of a tame Fox I had” (19). The partridges Gonsales trains become essentially carrier-pigeons: he communicates with Diego across the island by tying a message to a hungry bird, then sends her to Diego to be fed. In the contact zone, Gonsales oppressively communicates with the animals he is domesticating by withholding and giving food. This human/animal communication, built on action and desire, is employed in order to facilitate speedier communicate between humans.
In the case of the gansas, Gonsales takes them from their breeding grounds: disassociating them from their original social networks, and replaces parental care, “bre[eding] them up by hand” (23). There is no doubt that the initial contact between Gonsales and the animals he trains with is oppressive in that he controls access to food in order to elicit animal actions and takes young animals from their familial relationships. Though Gonsales’ domestication methods are certainly not outside the general ethical standards of the early modern period, or even the twenty-first century, for that matter, it is still a practice that forces an asymmetrical relationship of power between human and nonhuman. Domestication is tricky business. Haraway observes:

some radical animal people are critical of any human training “of” another critter. (I insist “with” is possible.) What I see as polite manners and beautiful skill acquired by the dogs I know best, they regard as strong evidence of excessive human control and a sign of the degradation of domestic animals. Wolves, say the critics of trained animals, are more noble (natural) than dogs precisely because they are more indifferent to the doings of people; to bring animals into close interaction with human beings infringes their freedom. From this point of view, training is antinatural domination made palatable by liver cookies. (222).

There are surely better ways of domesticating animals, better ways to open up cross-species conversation than sustenance-control and infant re-culturing, but what I find interesting in *The Man in the Moone*, and what motivates Haraway to train with her dog Cayenne, is the pleasure and trust of multi-species collaboration. Gonsales takes pleasure in the alliances he builds with his tame partridges, fox, and gansas. He raises the gansas “partly for […] recreation” (23) but also to involve them in his exploratory aspirations. First he teaches the gansas to “come at call affarre off, not using any noise but onely the shew of a white Cloth” (23). Then little by little he
teaches the gansas to take off at once with a large burden, the weight of which is distributed between the series of ropes and pulleys attached to each bird. The restraints of the experiment, worked out through trial and error, are artificial. Gonsales and the birds communicate with a white flag, a symbol for the birds to make a collective effort. The intimacy that allows Gonsales to harness large carnivorous birds with “Clawes, talons, and pounces, like an Eagle” (23) must not be disregarded. Gonsales’ pleasure in the intelligence and successes of his gansas must be in some way reciprocated. Gonsales and his gansas engage in the subject-making connection of *response*. For Haraway, response is what companion species enjoy: being “face-to-face in the contact zone of an entangled relationship” (227). The artificiality of working together to create the flying machine is much like the artificiality of training for a sport with a dog. Agility training is rule-bound and arbitrary for human and canine participants. This makes it a naturalcultural art. The human and the nonhuman bend their natures together to enact a cultural project. An important part of the naturalcultural project of human and nonhuman collaboration is trust. Multiple times in the narrative, Gonsales displays trust and concern for his gansas. When they arrive at the top of *El Pico*, Gonsales first looks to his “poore Gansa’s” who have fallen “to panting and blowing, gaping for breath, as if they would all presently have died: wherefore I thought it not good to trouble them a while” (45). Gonsales notes “it was now the season that these Birds were wont to take their flight away, as our Cuckoes and swallowes doe in Spaine, towards the Autumnne” (45) and when they “stroke bolt upright” (46) flying straight up to follow their migratory pull, he makes no move to stop them. Later, he discovers that the migratory home of the gansas *is* the moon. His trust in his gansas is so strong that he even sleeps on his way to the lunar planet: “I durst commit my self to slumbring enough to serve my turne, which I took with as great ease (although I am loath to speake it, because it may seeme
incredible) as if I had been in the best Bed of downe in all Antwerp” (62-63). After landing on the moon, Gonsales’ follows his gansas’ lead in finding sustenance from the vibrant landscape:

I heard my Gansa’s upon the sudden to make a great fluttering behind me. And looking back, I espied them to fall greedily upon a certain shrub within the compasse of their lines, whose leaves they fed upon most earnestly; where heretofore, I had never seene them to eat any manner of greene meate whatsoever, Whereupon stepping to the shrubb, I put a leafe of it between my teeth: I cannot expresse the pleasure I found in the tast thereof; such it was I am sure, as if I had not with great discretion moderated my appetite, I had surely surfetted upon the same. In the mean time it fell out to be a baite that well contented both my Birds and me at that time, when we had need, of some good refreshing. (69-70).

In entering the utopian landscape, birds and man become vegetarian. Their shared “green meat” makes them what Haraway articulates as companions (from the Latin cum panis “with bread”): messmates at an equalizing table.

What is most striking about the assemblage of Gonsales, his gansas, his engine (the contraption that includes the connecting lines to the birds and Gonsales’ seat) and the elemental pull from Earth and moon, is the democracy of its participants. Looking at the flying assemblage through Actor-Network-Theory, each of the participants in the collective has agency: Gonsales designed and constructed the Engine and connected it physically to the gansas; the gansas and Gonsales trained with each other to participate in a system of signs and cultural understanding that translates into motion and direction; instinct, environment, and seasonal cues prompt the gansas to coopt the flying machine into patterns of migration; and, once free of the Earth’s influence the attractive force of the moon propels the motion of the assemblage toward the lunar
body. These are just some of the network relations that are traceable through the assemblage with Actor-Network-Theory. Gonsales’ agency is minimized far more than one might expect as the hero of a remarkable voyage. It is the gansas that choose, through a cross-wind of instinctual and environmental agencies, to fly to the moon. Gonsales provided the means for this productive assemblage to come together, but he is not truly at the helm of its motion.

The assemblage of Gonsales’ gansa-powered flying machine is an appropriate model for human progress within a varied ecology of agential relations. Part human aspiration and human/nonhuman trust, mutual training between companion species, technological and scientific knowledge put to material use, and environment and elemental influence, the romance of world expansion is propelled by mutually-dependent and uneven agencies coming together at the right time and place.

_Lunar Ecologies Lost, Found, and Regained_

The moon ecology is one of largeness. Gonsales pronounces, “yet all manner of things there were of largenesse and quantity, 10. 20. I thinke I may say 30 times more than ours. Their trees at least three times so high as ours, and more than five times the breadth and thicknesse” (67). Cyrano’s narrator’s first encounter with the lunar ecology is also marked by large trees. In a situational jest, Cyrano’s protagonist makes an abrupt fall into Eden and inadvertently eats an apple. Cyrano remarks, “I found my self intangled upon a tree, with two or three large boughs which I in my fall had broken, and my face plaistered with an Apple” (21). Lunar ecologies in the early modern period are paradises on an enormous scale. The lunar peoples of both romances are taller than Earthlings. In Godwin’s romance, their stature is “for the most part, twice the height of ours” (70) many Lunars are 27 feet tall or higher. Their age, intelligence, and
status in the society are built on this height, which makes their acceptance of the slight Gonsales somewhat remarkable.

Cyrano’s narrator first observes a remarkable idyllic ecology that is literally made comfortable and inviting. Flowers perfume the air and he finds, “that the stones were not hard nor craggy, but did carefully soften, when feet opprest them” (21). The trees in the lunar world, “kiss’d the Heavens with their lofty Foresterial tops; sending my eyes post from their feet to their heads, and then recalling them the same way back, I was in doubt, whether the Earth bore them, or whether they did not rather hang by the Roots : their elevated fronts seemed to groan under the weight of the Coelestial Globes, and their arms stretcht to Heaven, imbracing to beg of the Stars the pure benignity of their influences, & to receive it in the bed of the Elements” (22). The season is endless spring, brooks murmer delightfully while “a thousand plum’d Chorsiters fill the Forest with Ecchoes of their melodious tunes” (22) and by the forest is a meadow that could be taken for “the Ocean, for it was like a Sea, which affords no shoar to the sight” (22). Cyrano’s paradisiacal lunar landscape is hyperbolic in its pastoral perfection.

The immense Edenic landscapes of Godwin and Cyrano’s moons are perhaps reflected from an early Renaissance lunar journey in Ludovico Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso. The English knight Astolfo travels to the moon to recover Orlando’s lost wits. He rides with the prophet Elijah on his flaming chariot, through the medieval version of the atmospheric region of eternal fire (suspended briefly by the saint) and sees the lunar topography below him:

Here other river, lake, and rich champaign
Are seen, than those which are below descried;
Here other valley, other hill and plain,
With towns and cities of their own supplied;
Which mansions of such mighty size contain,
Such never he before or after spied.
Here spacious hold and lonely forest lay
Where nymphs for ever chased the panting prey. (LXXII.).

Astolfo “Pauses not all these wonders to peruse” (LXXIII) but follows Elijah to “a spacious vale […] / A place wherein is wonderfully stored / Whatever on our earth below we lose” (LXXIII).

The wonders of the sublime “other” landscape are disregarded for the spacious vale of lost things: the archive of abandoned treasures and the landfill of wasted opportunities and broken dreams. In Godwin and Cyrano’s adventures, the protagonists are not on a recovery mission, but out to explore. They land in the lonely lunar forest and head straight for the towns, cities, and mansions of mighty size. The idea of the lunar landscape as a rich ecology of large-scale natural entities is persistent. Yet the question remains: why would the ideal ecology of a new lunar world for an early modern audience be large water bodies and massive forests with enormous trees? The scale of a towering forest may have been imagined as equally imposing and reassuring. To an early modern readership, concerned with deforestation, enclosures, and an increasingly smaller globe, the luxury of a gigantic virgin forest would have been appealing. On the other hand, the stature of the lunar landscape may echo the effect the new astronomic discoveries had on a reader’s sense of place. As the human individual becomes ever smaller in relation to a universe of massive and multiplying planetary bodies in motion, the new world on the moon must also be amplified. In the imagined future of the moon, early modern writers regained a titanic past.

*Avatar and Desired Other-Worldly Ecologies*
The search for new worlds as articulated by early modern lunar romances continues into the twenty-first century, but with even more of an ecological impetus. Writers and film directors working today are well ensconced within the undeniable effects of the Anthropocene. The epoch we live in, a new name with the ring of scientific finality, is the era that begins when human activities started to have a significant impact on the Earth’s geology and on global ecologies. Many science fiction narratives of the twenty-first century imagine the end of this epoch, a dismal view of human-caused world destruction or crisis that inspires the search for new, idyllic worlds to inhabit. The science fiction of this century has in many ways become a romance of ecology. Individual heroes quest for scientific and pseudo-magical cures for a sick and dying planet or champion the discovery and safeguarding of new Edens. One such narrative is the 2009 film *Avatar* directed by James Cameron.

*Avatar* is a revisionist re-telling of the early modern Pocahontas story set in the year AD 2154 and is yet another lunar voyage. Jake Sully, a futuristic John Smith reimagined as a paraplegic adventuring ex-Marine, encounters Neytiri, a native Na’vi woman of the inhabited
forest moon Pandora. In the world of the film, humans have depleted Earth’s natural resources. To solve their energy crisis, they are in desperate need of a valuable mineral, called “unobtanium,” found in rich supply on the moon planet. The ecology and native people of Pandora are closely linked to their early modern lunar predecessors. The Na’vi are roughly ten feet tall, blue-skinned, elegant, and live in a gracious utopian society. The moon is thickly forested with colossal trees, including “Home Tree,” the Na’vi’s sacred arboreal residence. Pandora also harbors floating islands, large oceans, and a vast panoply of fantastic plants and creatures. Godwin’s lunars, twice as tall as Earthlings and “of a color and countenance most pleasing” (70-71), are surprisingly akin to the Na’vi. The color of the lunar’s clothing and their skin is “neither blacke, nor white, yellow, nor red, greene nor blew, nor any colour composed of these. […] a colour neuer seen in our earthly world” (71). Gonsales remarks “for as it were a hard matter to describe unto a man borne blind the difference between blew and Greene, so can I not bethinke my selfe any meane how to decipher unto you this Lunar colour” (71-72). At night, much of the moon world of Pandora (its flora as well as its fauna) is lit with biophosphorous light that renders the color of the moon’s inhabitants as lustrous and difficult to describe as Gonsales’ lunar hue.

The main point of the film Avatar is enmeshment. Sallie Anglin argues “the film does more than expose the artificial distinction between subject and environment. It injects the concept of the cyborg—the Na’vi’s relationship to their ecological system is like a computer plugged into a network system—into a hyperideal natural environment, thus rejecting any artificial binary between the natural and the technological or virtual. Pandora’s ecosystem is a mesh of relationships connecting the Na’vi to plants and animals by emphasizing the materialism explicit in living (and nonliving) things” (348). Anglin posits that Cameron’s 3-D
gesamtkunstwerk seeks to immerse the audience into the lived experience of Pandora in the same ways human consciousnesses are uploaded into Na’vi avatars. The film challenges a bounded construction of identity and instead imagines a world where body is directly and biotechnologically connected to environment.

*Avatar* takes the trajectory of lunar romances I have sketched out throughout this chapter full circle. From a man in the moon symbol, to a Cynthia reimagined as a lunar Gaia, to the exploring man in a moon ecology, to finally the sentient body intrinsically enmeshed in a lunar environment, *Avatar* brings lunar utopia home. Jake Sully, unlike the homeward-bound Gonsales of *The Man in the Moone*, finds the arc of his lunar romance concluding on the moon’s surface. In an ecological fantasy the capitalist forces of the Resources Development Administration and their military contractors are defeated as vibrant assemblages of human, humanoid, animal, vegetable, and mineral entities unite to rebuke colonial invasion. The interconnected world of Pandora becomes its own agent in ecological preservation. Sully, as the everyman hero of the lunar romance, becomes an active agent within the ecology of the moon world and helps bring about a conclusion of radical harmony.
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