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England's First Cosmopolitan Poet

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Review Essay

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Fumo, Jamie C. *Making Chaucer's Book of the Duchess: Textuality and Reception*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015. xii+244 pp.

Fumo, Jamie C. ed. *Chaucer's Book of the Duchess: Contexts and Interpretations*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018. xii+239 pp.

Strohm, Paul. *Chaucer's Tale: 1386 and the Road to Canterbury*. New York: Viking, 2014. xviii+284 pp. Published in England as *The Poet's Tale: Chaucer and the Year that Made The Canterbury Tales*. London: Profile Books, 2014. xiii+284 pp.

Turner, Marion. *Chaucer: A European Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019. xxii+599 pp.

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The five new books listed above present a more generously conceived, less theory-driven reading of Chaucer than we have seen in recent decades. In an essay included in Peter Brown's *New Companion to Chaucer* (2019), James Simpson is struck by how much his earlier contribution (2000) had been shaped by "late New Historicism" and Foucault (p. 372). Instead of seeing Chaucer's poetry in terms of our own sensitivity and concern, Simpson seeks to understand the poet's art as part of a dynamic historical continuum or evolving nexus of cultural experiments, where competing values and points of view are aired and contested through time. This approach makes possible a "larger, more mobile," though also messier and less confident kind of literary criticism (p. 373). All of the studies under review stress Chaucer's inventiveness and creative flexibility, his capacity to surprise and unsettle conventional expectations.

Marion Turner (2019), for instance, examines Chaucer's life and art not "through strict chronology," but by following him through the "spaces and places" in which he worked, lived and traveled (p. 3). She describes Geoffrey

Chaucer as a new kind of urban person, a native Londoner whose mother tongue was indeed English, but who was also exposed early in life to a multilingual, international community of merchants, aristocrats, clerics and people of all walks of life. This exposure gave Chaucer a precociously cosmopolitan – one might even say, global – perspective in his artistic imagination. In his poetry Chaucer looks not only across the Channel to France and Italy, but well beyond European Christendom to the Muslim realms of Turkey and North Africa, the Mongol empire of central Asia and the unconverted tribes of the eastern Baltic, as well as back in time to ancient Rome, Athens and Troy. He also looks up and down the social register of his own late medieval England. No English writer had been acquainted personally with so many different kinds of people from so many different places, both geographically and socially. This acquaintance only deepened over the course of six decades until his death within the precincts of Westminster Abbey in 1400 with an extraordinarily "grounded," but inclusive vision of human life on earth still open on his lap.

His experiences at home and abroad gave the mature Chaucer a kaleido-scopic variety of insights into human character – multiple competing compar-anda that he could mix and match and pitch against each other in his memory and imagination. Chaucer found in the General Prologue of his *Canterbury Tales* a glittering prism through which to observe the shifting refractions of his twenty-nine imaginary pilgrims – their virtues, idiosyncrasies, sins and insincerities. This "variation of perspective" (p. 8) is only multiplied throughout their pil-grim's portraits, prologues, tales, tales within tales and other interactions with the Host and each other. In these successive revelations the author could peel away layer after layer of his pilgrims' restless personalities and jostling thought-worlds. William Blake, another Londoner, believed the poet had captured every type of human being among his Canterbury pilgrims, but Chaucer's travelers resist easy type-casting. The poet may have been inspired by colorful caricatures like *La Vieille* 'The Old Dame' or *Fals Semblant* 'False-Seeming' from his beloved *Roman de la Rose*, but his own pilgrims just keep on talking and talking through endless, unexpected and self-contradictory disclosures. They are constantly un-covering new sides to themselves, like nested Russian dolls, up to their last utterance. Yet, we never quite penetrate to the core identities of the Canterbury pilgrims or see all the way into their souls, the final condition of which the poet gestures toward, but then discreetly occludes from sight. He withholds judgment on his own creations, leaving us to wonder whether an individual's character is not inborn at all, but rather open and "porous," the unfolding of "a connected and collaborative process," constantly evolving in dynamic interaction with others. Chaucer, Turner argues, "saw selfhood as inevitably and productively embedded in communities" (p. 169), even when those communities were as

steeply ranked, competitive and sometimes "antagonistic" as in his own four-teenth-century England.

If there is a caricature in the *Canterbury Tales* it is of the author himself – the short, plump, abstracted and seemingly inept pilgrim narrator, who is far from omniscient in his observations. Yet, from his lowly perch the pilgrim Chaucer offers a "worm's eye view" of his fellow travelers, seeing more of them from below than from above. In fact, the man behind this mask had been singularly well-placed in his own circumstances of life. He was a well-to-do vintner's son, serving first as a page, then as an esquire of the King's Chamber in the French-speaking royal household. He married a lady-in-waiting, Philippa Roet, daughter of a Hainaulter knight, with whom he had three children and valuable annuities from the Crown. The downside was that the couple's duties – hers with the Lancastrian family up in Lincolnshire, his as Controller of Customs in the port of London and government agent – kept them often apart. Chaucer had to work pretty hard to maintain his marginal welcome in a milieu which his wife had entered at birth. She was the socially significant partner in this marriage. Her husband made himself as useful as he could, a "go-along to get-along" kind of guy, a harmless persona that Chaucer exaggerates as the speaker of several of his poems, including his first big one, the *Book of the Duchess*, to be discussed below. Apparently, Job One for this upwardly-mobile parvenu was to make sure his betters at court didn't think him too uppity for claiming their attention with his poetry.

Not all went well for him all the time. He lost his long-standing Controller-ship of the Wool Custom at the end of 1386 with the fall of his patron and corrupt City boss Nicholas Brembre, four-time Mayor of London and Collector of Cus-toms – himself a creditor and cat's paw of the beleaguered king Richard II. Philippa died soon after in 1387 as Chaucer retreated south across the Thames into a kind of semi-retirement, just over the border in Kent where the Pilgrims' Way led to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket sixty miles to the east. This gave him an idea. Separated from his customary literary circles back in London, Paul Strohm argues in *Chaucer's Tale* (2014), the poet not only now had time on his hands, but also needed to find a new audience for his work – so, he just made one up. Chaucer imagines joining a company of pilgrims of varied backgrounds in a three-day tale-telling contest that would maximize his opportunities to re-create the different personalities, conversations and competing views of the world he had encountered during his career of service, study and devotion to his art. It seems he had often felt frustrated by so many interruptions to his pursuit of poetry – "The lif so short, the craft so long to lerne," he laments in the opening line of his *Parliament of Fowls*, another multi-vocal poem. But attention to his official duties is precisely where Geoffrey Chaucer had learned to speak – and

think – in other tongues. Ventriloquizing the voices of his many acquaintances, Turner suggests, is how the busy public servant "changed what poetry could do" (p. 9). And his pilgrims themselves would provide the "live" audience he needed, supplying the substitute social adrenaline that gives their stories so much freshness and immediacy.

The *Canterbury Tales* comprise twenty-four narratives, including fragments, of an originally imagined one hundred and twenty. This drastic shortfall would seem to be a failure of creative vision – a disappointment. But as Donald Howard once noted, Chaucer's project may be unfinished, but it is not incomplete (*The Idea of the Canterbury Tales* [1976], p. 1). The poet found his way to the very end of his imaginary pilgrimage, or almost so, and decided that he had just about accomplished what he was hoping for it after all. In the Parson's Prologue to the last Canterbury tale, the Host avers that he is now satisfied with one tale apiece on their way to Canterbury, rather than two there and two back again. This revision of the "game forward" allows the poet to avoid letting any single voice dominate his epic compilation. We never find out which pilgrim the author thought should win. Indeed, Chaucer's final storyteller declines to contribute a "fable" or fictional narrative at all. Over the last muddy mile into Canterbury, Chaucer's Parson reminds his fellow-pilgrims of the penitential purpose of their journey, that they are all actually both the authors and protagonists of their own life-stories. These are the real Canterbury tales, he suggests, and all of them can have a happy ending. The sun is setting behind them; the scales of Libra rise in the sky ahead with the inconstant moon, an apocalyptic conjunction Chaucer contrives to dramatize the cosmic uncertainty of this penultimate moment. Each pilgrim will soon have his or her own life's story to conclude. As the Parson ends his homily, the poet himself quietly drops his faux-naif pilgrim's mask and steps into the frame tale of the Canterbury pilgrimage, joining his own unfinished fictions on the cusp of time and eternity. He turns to us, his readers, and apologizes for any of his pilgrim's tales, or of his other works, that might have offended, but also insists that, like Scripture, "'Al that is writen is writen for oure doctrine,' and that is myn entente." He did his best. He included as many different people and points of view as he could think of for our consideration, but of course, we are the ones who get to decide what to make of it all.

Turner argues that Chaucer thus deliberately refrains from giving his readers "a clear moral or interpretive anchor in the text," leaving his own views "open and radically egalitarian" (p. 364). She celebrates his demotic inclusiveness as England's first modern poet. But the worldly social climber and tax-collector was just as deeply steeped in the medieval thought-world and religious culture of his own day as he was in the hustle-bustle of the Wool Quay or the sordid intrigues

of City finance and royal politics. His daughter Elizabeth was a nun at Barking. The year before she died, Philippa was inaugurated, as the only woman on that occasion, into the lay fraternity of Lincolnshire Cathedral, whose privileges would include perpetual prayers for her soul. Chaucer himself translated from Latin with considerable difficulty, but some pride Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, a work which led him to contemplate the radical partiality of all earthly perspectives. In addition, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 had long before enjoined regular confession upon all communicating Catholics, which practice had over two centuries a profound effect upon a general awareness of human subjectivity and an individual's unsettled inner life. Chaucer's tales of Canterbury are, in effect, the unwitting confessions of imperfect penitents. And while the poet's varied experience of life gave him plenty of material for his pilgrims' portraits, it is the devotional purpose of their pilgrimage that under-writes the egalitarian intimacy he is able to imagine between the different social classes. Theoretically, each member of the company is a precious human soul in the eyes of God, journeying from this world to that which is to come – a principle honored in the breach, of course, when Harry Bailly manipulates the straw-casting to make sure the highest-ranking pilgrim, the Knight, gets to tell his tale first. But it is the old-fashioned spiritual premise of the *Canterbury Tales* that enables the modern inclusiveness of the "game forward." None of Chaucer's pilgrims' perspectives are authorized because all of them are inadequate *sub specie aeternitatis*, the author's own just like those of his characters. Yet, the pending task of concluding his own life-story, Chaucer realizes, is still best accomplished in the supportive company of others. He thus includes us, too – his readers – in his fictive fellowship, asking for our prayers as he seeks to finish his own personal work-in-progress.

Jamie Fumo (2015) returns to Chaucer's first experiment with an impaired narrator and several voices, a poem whose shifting points of view unfold ob-liquely through tales within tales and a dream-vision of dubious significance to the dreamer. In particular, the *Book of the Duchess* dramatizes the misery of mental states from which there seems to be no escape, but which are not static, even in the face of unalterable circumstances, like the death of a beloved. This poem, Fumo argues persuasively, should not be considered part of the poet's juvenilia or journey-work, but rather illustrates Chaucer's early exploration of interior states of mind, their opacity and power to imprison an individual against his or her will, immuring us in ways that are as much cognitive as emotional. The poet shows how we live in considerable ignorance of ourselves and of the forces that beset us from both without and within. Chaucer's readers in the fifteenth century were as bemused by this poem as the dreamer by his dream, unsure what to make of it, at least when compared to the enthusiasm with which they copied

Chaucer's later works. Fumo sees this hesitant reception anticipated in the drea-
mer's own muddled midnight reading for relief from his inexplicable insomnia.
Yet, the poet-narrator's misappropriation of Ovid provokes a dream that none-
theless moves him to another place, involving a distant woodland hunt and
conversation with a mysterious man in black. The dreamer cannot see the forest
for the trees, but when he wakes, he is neither a completely different person nor
yet quite the same. The *Book of the Duchess*, Fumo shows, is where Geoffrey
Chaucer first learned the kind of psychological probing that not only reveals
deeper levels of uncertainty, but also the obscure movement of one's inner life
through time.

In her second volume (2018), Fumo and her eleven fellow-contributors thus
push back against Charles Muscatine's assertion that the *Book of the Duchess* is
the simplest of Chaucer's long poems, "the most homogenous in style and the
clearest in meaning" (*Chaucer and the French Tradition* [1966], p. 98). For in-
stance, in "The Shock of the Old? The Unsettling Art of Chaucer's Antique
Citations," Helen Phillips describes the edgy and (she would say) *avant-garde*
quality of the poem's language. Ardis Butterfield, too, insists that the poet's
depiction of silent reading in the dead of night is not a regressive shrinking from
the exigencies of the daytime world, but an active search, even a cry for help, that
prompts movements unanticipated either by the ancient author read or the
dreamer himself who has commandeered that reading for his own needs. Yet,
even so, the resulting dream conceals as much as it reveals, spurring a heuristic
impulse that is itself (in some sense) therapeutic, yielding incremental progress,
if not true healing. In the terms of Freudian psychoanalysis, the dreamer has
moved from "hysterical misery" to "ordinary unhappiness." The *Book of the
Duchess* anticipates much of Chaucer's later ability to create characters whose
interior lives remain "mobile" and "elastic," evolving before our eyes, a skill
which derives in part, Fumo thinks, from his engagement with "an increasingly
international sphere of cultural discourse that thrives on dynamic exchange and
encourages sophisticated reflection on authorial practice" ([2015], p. 3). In this
way, she and her colleagues confirm Turner's thesis that the poet's growing
sophistication is the result not only of his many personal and professional
contacts at home, but also of his knowing response to the most experimental
foreign authors of his own day and recent past.

Peter Brown picks up this theme of Chaucer's creative responsiveness to his
expanding world in the introduction to *A New Companion to Chaucer*, mentioned
above, supported by forty other scholars on thirty-six topics in Chaucer studies,
organized for convenience in alphabetical order. These chapters are probably too
many to cover systematically in a review essay, so the following paragraphs
comprise just a sampling.

Considering the expression of emotion in Chaucer' work, Sarah McNamer suggests that we simply dismiss his self-effacing pose as an "emotionally obtuse narrator, one who is forever on the outskirts of meaningful and refined emotional experience and is perpetually botching his efforts to depict, examine, or enact it" (p. 123). This is his trick, of course. The poet's pretended obtuseness serves to undermine his authority as narrator, but this very inadequacy is what allows him the perceptual slippage necessary to suggest more accurately ambiguous or unstable conditions of thought and feeling. The author's self-imposed limitations make possible a more nuanced and suggestive "range of emotional effects [...] including, especially, mixed feelings" (p. 123), an ambivalence he also conveys in his depictions of race and ethnicity, a much more tender topic to modern sensibilities. Kathy Lavezzo draws a distinction between the two terms – the former asserting essential biological or moral qualities believed to be inherent in certain human groups, the latter a more malleable situational construct based upon chosen identifications or affinities. Lavezzo acknowledges that neither term is used by Chaucer, but argues that moments in his work include one or the other's range of implications: "certain texts intimate how identity is performative, constructed, and changeable," while others offer "more explicitly racist" depictions of other groups. Few or none of these have anything to do with skin color; most negative stereotyping in Chaucer's work is of Muslims and Jews. Yet, even so, Chaucer's pilgrims upset confident pigeon-holing either as incorrigible "racists" or enlightened "progressives," in Lavezzo's admittedly anachronistic terms. Attitudes toward Others as voiced by various of Chaucer's characters are a key part of their own characterization. The Prioress's Tale, for instance, is one of the most anti-Semitic stories on record, yet it tells us more about her, its teller, than it does about medieval Jews. These latter had been expelled from England for over a century before Chaucer even thought of her, their role in the money-lending business taken over by foreign Flemings who suffered their own "pogrom" in the Peasant's Revolt of 1381. Yet, the poet himself had certainly acquired considerable knowledge of contemporary Jewish communities in Europe over the course of his career and perhaps even knew individual Jews while working abroad in his various financial negotiations for the Crown. The poet draws upon his wide experience of the world to create a character who moves from an amusingly sheltered but pretentious figure in his General Prologue to a much more disturbing one in the course of our acquaintance with her. He walks a fine line between virtuosity and parody in the lurid "miracle of the Virgin" he gives to this most fastidious mother superior, involving the full-frontal mutilation of a child, who sings at the top of his lungs through a slit throat from a pool of Jewish excrement. No Canterbury pilgrim offers an uglier, more violent image to the company, which falls so utterly silent in response "that wonder was to se," says the pilgrim

narrator. Yet, what their silence means is never explained. So, Lavezzo is quite correct that Chaucer reproduces "in microcosm the incoherence" of the racial and religious attitudes of his own day (p. 148), though this is one kind of diversity she cannot feel too comfortable celebrating.

Lynn Staley reviews Chaucer's exploration of personal identity, stressing his final insistence on an individual's agency and freedom of choice. Social constraints do not relieve Chaucer's characters from responsibility for being the people they are – or are becoming. The poet is keenly aware that our understanding of ourselves can only transpire amidst the tangled social relationships in which we find ourselves, most of which are largely imposed on us by others. He knows how difficult it is even "to articulate a fully realized personal identity apart from the webs of authority within which we conceive ourselves" (p. 319). His pilgrims' "voices thus emerge from the very contingencies that define their limits" (p. 328), struggling to make themselves heard among a press of others similarly constrained in their own ways. But while constraints upon personal identity are inescapable, their boundaries are nonetheless pliable, yielding, always up for renegotiation in changing circumstances. The poet shows how even the language we use to present ourselves to others is often merely a wishful projection of what we hope will pass as plausible, "a medium of self-justification" that can actually reveal "how little we choose to know about ourselves" (p. 328). In trying to be someone else, Chaucer shows, characters like the Reeve or Criseyde willfully retreat from self-knowledge, but that delusion itself becomes part of an identity that they themselves have chosen.

In contemplating "sexualities" in Chaucer, Masha Raskolnikov acknowledges that the poet's depiction of sex is "one of the indubitable pleasures of reading him" (p. 409). Yet, our own preconceptions about sexual identity and relationships, she suggests, are imperfectly applicable to understanding many of his characters and their stories, which she believes are more deeply concerned with a desire for dominance rather than physical gratification per se. Raskolnikov starts with what the pilgrim narrator says about the strangely effeminate Pardoner whom he believes must be a "gelding or a mare" – a castrato or congenital hermaphrodite – but then undermines confidence in this supposition by reporting later comments by the Pardoner himself that seem to contradict this impression. Raskolnikov concludes that the sexual identity of the Pardoner is indeterminate because he is designed to be quintessentially "queer," to represent an outsider from normative human society in almost every way. His character is thus unmoored from the social identities maintained in more traditionally stable communities. His queerness is "unknowable, difficult to diagnose, perverse, and impossible" (p. 413), yet no more unsettling to her mind than "the sexual violence at the heart of courtly love" that she perceives especially in Book III of *Troilus and*

Criseyde and elsewhere. The professed ideals of *fin'amor* are no more elevating than other attempts to control others through emotional manipulation and deceit. Even the most explicit "defense of sexual pleasure" for its own sake, given to the Wife of Bath, really just shows "a woman who demands to be a subject rather than an object of desire" (p. 415). Raskolnikov concludes her discussion by turning to Chaucer's own self-representations as a sexually inept person, "a rotund, bookish, unattractive gentleman who is himself too old" for love (p. 417). In his "Envoy to Scogan," she notes, the poet wryly compares his difficulties in composing poetry to erectile dysfunction and observes that nearly all depictions of erotic desire in Chaucer's works are deeply fraught with disappointment, violence, threats of violence and downright cruelty. No happy relationships, he shows, are ever achieved without considerable uncertainty, unhappiness and distress, so that even the most idealized of unions are undermined by our inescapable human vanities and instinctual desire for control.

In contrast, Helen Phillips offers a somewhat more positive and far-ranging view of erotic relationships in Chaucer's work. She notes that the Miller's "uncritical enjoyment of sexual pleasure and selfish cunning" for its own sake yields a happy ending to his "romance," intended to "quit" or critique the putatively noble, but far more destructive courtly love of the Knight's Tale that precedes it (p. 265). Chaucer delights in such implicit comparisons and contrasts. He offers them as food for thought, abstracting himself from judgment by the distance he creates through the evolving character of his tale-tellers. These are their stories, he pretends, not his, a technique that Nicky Hallett concludes is also essential to Chaucer's aggressively original characterization of women. She notes that Chaucer loves to problematize comfortable gender binaries with masculine women and feminine men, and some figures who are "normatively not quite either" (p. 515). His female characters, in particular, she sees as thought-experiments, designed in part to disrupt "the continuing powers of patriarchy" (p. 524), but then, all of Chaucer's fictional people are transgressive in one way or another – "nothing if not protean on the page" (p. 516).

Robert Swanson shows that this indeterminacy of character is true even of Chaucer's single most idealized pilgrim, the Parson, the figure with whom he concludes his *Canterbury Tales*. Even this worthy priest is compromised by questions about his presence on the pilgrimage in the first place. His portrait in the General Prologue seems to rise well above the satirical send-up the poet reserves for more variously flawed clerics – the Prioress, the Monk, the Clerk, the Friar, the Summoner and the Pardoner. The pilgrim Chaucer seems frankly to admire the Parson in just his own terms – "A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys" – yet leaves us with enough contextual inconsistencies to make us wonder. Swanson writes:

> The pilgrim Parson in the end appears to be an exemplary priest because he can afford to be one: he has the security of tenure and income that allows him to live up to the ideal – or, at least, to proclaim himself as one who lives up to it. When all is said and done, the fact remains that he is actually on pilgrimage, away from his parish, and in April, a month that, usually containing Easter, should have been one of the busiest for a conscientious shepherd of souls. His hireling is presumably running his parish. (p. 445)

In other words, the Parson is doing just what he says he never does. He is not "at hoom," keeping "wel his folde," but out and about on a springtime jaunt with other fun-loving folk who have been pricked by Nature in their hearts "to goon on pilgrimages." Does this contradiction undermine our confidence in the sincerity of the Parson's concluding sermon on the need for haste in repentance? We don't know. Chaucer doesn't tell us. The Parson may be imagined as having given this exact same homily many times before – it's his job, after all, as a father confessor charged with the cure of souls. Yet, it also centralizes his public role and thus his own personal importance to the other pilgrims. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* show that even the best of us construct our lives according to an all-too-human need for self-regard and social approbation, all contrived within the improvised realities of our ongoing communal world, constantly in negotiation for advantage and display among our fellows.

Students of religion sometimes argue that cultural conceptions of divinity project onto the universe as a whole the kinds of human relationships we can observe in own social worlds. From this perspective, we might reflect that Chaucer's England was rapidly changing during the course of his lifetime, becoming increasingly interconnected within itself and with countries across the sea. It was a crowded, often corrupt and always self-interested place, but also one filled with much sociability and mutual benefit, mingling upper class people with lower, urban with rural, religious with secular, men with women, seafarers with landsmen, soldiers with civilians, cooks with Crusaders, fellow-countrymen with foreigners. These international relations had their upsides and downs: they brought the Black Death to England in 1348 when Chaucer was a boy, but also great profit to his country as he grew up – wealth won from its wool, England's single most valuable export, the financial culling of which he personally oversaw at one of the nerve-centers of global exchange. This experience gave Geoffrey Chaucer what Paul Strohm calls a certain "impartial generosity" of vision, a "gently pointed equanimity" (p. 232) when contemplating in his poetry the naturally self-serving behavior of the many different kinds of people he knew. His accumulated insights were far from omniscience, of course, as only he knew best. He probably had to look the other way and *not* know many things in the execution of his duties, as Strohm explains in detail. Nor was he an indiscriminate multiculturalist, however much twenty-first-century Chaucerians would love to praise his

open-mindedness and celebration of diversity. Our shrewd, observant poet remained a devout Roman Catholic to the end of his days, looking forward to a world beyond where he could just glimpse how his flawed but often amusing fellow creatures might look to One who sees everything – the most canny, perspicacious and cosmopolitan Observer of all.

Review Essay

The Undreamed Shores of Early Modern Piracy

Ellinghausen, Laurie. *Pirates, Traitors, and Apostates: Renegade Identities in Early Modern English Writing.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018.

Lane, Kris; Arne Bialuschewski (eds.). *Piracy in the Early Modern Era: An Anthology of Sources.* Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2019.

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In Book 3 of Edmund Spenser's poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596), Florimell flees from various adversaries: a forester, a witch, the witch's son, and the witch's beast. After this series of pursuits, the maiden happens upon a fisherman's boat left idling on the shore, its master sleeping within as he dries his nets on the beach; the fortuitously placed vessel transforms into Florimell's getaway vehicle when she leaps in and pushes off out to sea. But the respite of the fisherman's boat proves illusory, and upon awakening, the mariner, overcome with lust, launches an attack. Proteus, the infamous shapeshifter, materializes at the fisherman's boat and notices the ensuing struggle: "And comming to that Fishers wandring bote, / That went at will, withouten card or sayle, / He therein saw that yrksome sight, which smote / Deepe indignation and compassion frayle / Into his hart attonce" (III.viii.31). Proteus delivers Florimell, it seems, from the fisherman's advances, and the sea god takes "that old leachour," ties him to his chariot,