

SAA 2016: Sleeping Through the Renaissance

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“The Heaviness of Sleep”: Monarchical Wakefulness in King Lear.

My paper explores how King Lear’s relationship to sleep connects and differentiates him from a succession of earlier Shakespearean kings who suffer from insomnia. Famously, in Henry IV, Part Two, King Henry encapsulates this condition when, remarking on his inability to sleep, he concludes that “Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown” (3.1.31). To Henry, Garret Sullivan has recently remarked, “Insomnia marks the king as king.” Later in his career, however, Shakespeare begins to vary his stance on what Sullivan refers to as “monarchical wakefulness.” For King Hamlet, who, like King Duncan in Macbeth, is murdered while sleeping, rest leaves the monarch in a state of dangerous vulnerability. In King Lear, by contrast, it is the king’s eventual submission to sleep that closes rather than widens the gap between Lear and his subjects, and allows him to extend his meditations on the relationship of man to different forms of life. In his madness, he sees visions and conflates past and present realities in a manner that early modern commentators would have associated with sleep deprivation. Sleep restores his sanity and allows Lear to recognize Cordelia. Even after he awakes, however, Lear seems to exist in a euphoric, dreamlike state that dislodges his relationship to the reality of the action on stage and renders him susceptible to the plots of characters that seek his demise. As the play ends, with Cordelia dead in his arms, Lear dies attempting to collapse the difference between the theatrical world that reality forces him to inhabit and the world of his dreams, a realm in which his daughter revives and he is free to atone for his sins against her.

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“Visions of the Night” in the Book of Job

At the end of the Book of Job, God famously appears to Job “out of the whirlwind.” In his sixteenth-century Biblical commentary, Sebastian Münster explains two ways of accounting for God’s appearance. Some say that God Himself took the form of a whirlwind as he spoke to Job. Others say that God appeared to Job “in a deep sleep, and out of mind” [“in gravi somno, mentisque excessu”]. Compared to other sixteenth-century commentaries on Biblical dreams and visions, Münster’s is unique for its indecisiveness—Job may have seen God in a whirlwind, or he may have had an “out of mind” experience while he was asleep.

I am interested in this uncertainty about Job’s consciousness, as well as Job’s other references to sleep and dreaming, in light of the book’s exceptional generic slipperiness. In the Renaissance, Biblical scholars became obsessed with proving that Job was a historical account, not a parable written for the sake of moral improvement. When Münster suggests that Job may have been sleeping at the moment of God’s appearance, he attempts to make the book’s inscrutable theophany explainable according to supernatural dream theories and thus supports his contemporaries’ efforts to turn Job into a living, breath person. Yet in keeping with Job’s linguistic, thematic, and generic indeterminacy, Münster ultimately cannot decide whether Job

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was awake or asleep. Contributing to other scholarship that correlates indeterminate consciousness with indeterminate genre, my paper examines how “visions of the night” in the Book of Job undermine Renaissance interpreters’ attempts to secure its status as history.

Jonathan Holmes

The Ohio State University

“By marvel wrought”: The Pageant of Ghosts and Richard III’s Extrinsicate Dream

Near the end of Richard III, Richard delivers his final soliloquy after he “starteth up out of a dream.” The audience has just seen the ghosts of Richard’s victims walk onto the stage, individually and in small groups, in order to bless Richmond and curse Richard. When Richard awakens, he mentions that the lights burn blue, which was believed to indicate the presence of ghosts. However, because the ghosts have exited the stage and Richard sees no one around, he thinks that the dream he has just had was brought about by his heretofore-nonexistent conscience. Richard’s soliloquy describes a dream that partially echoes the ghosts’ cries of “guilty!” But some details of the dream sound disconnected from the ghostly visitation. My paper examines the ghosts’ curses and Richard’s subsequent soliloquy in order to consider which parts of the dream are and are not inspired by the ghosts. I argue that early modern audiences would have thought of Richard’s dream as an example of an “extrinsicate” dream as it is described in the anonymous 1600 play, *The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll*. In that play, the character Alphonso distinguishes dreams that are “only physical” from “Dreams sent from heaven, or from the wicked fiends, / Which nature doth not form of her own power, / But are extrinsicate, by marvel wrought” (as qtd. in Holland 11). Thus, Richard mistakenly ascribes the dream to an internal conscience when it actually originated from the external ghosts.

L.L. Jacobs

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Northrop Frye notes that Shakespeare bases his late romance *Cymbeline* on a folklorish plot with “complications and intrigue” that, “like three-syllable rhymes, are inherently funny.” He believes that this structure creates a “difficulty” because its shape conflicts with the play’s seriousness. However, from another perspective (“a natural perspective that is and is not”?) this contradiction represents a method of depicting a “contrary” vision (30, 8, 27). Until then, says Nancy Hayles, a “heavy atmospheric pressure of unconsciousness” pervades—swooning, sleep, drugs—and characters must gather truth through “dreams, intuition, revelation,” through divine vision or something like the “rare instinct” of the two boys in the cave who immediately sense their kinship to Imogen. Hayles points out that the heroine enters “a curiously passive state” in which dream “interpenetrates reality” (72, 231, 244).

Sleep and dreams—one way of making the descent, of taking the “night journey” or *nekuia*—play an unusually important role in the physical action of this drama. In fact, motifs of the dark journey appear in multiple guises: travel over water, the cave, night, sleep, seeming death; being diseased, wounded, or drugged. Most of these experiences culminate in dreamlike visions or images.

Night sleep scenes in any art often serve as representations of the confrontation with the unconscious. In *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare structures the whole play around alternations between scenes of day and night, court and cave. This action approaches the dialectical interplay of consciousness with the unconscious that occurs during the process of psychological maturation. Midnight sleep scenes take place in Imogen's bedroom, in the cave, and in the forest over Cloten's dead body. One of the most powerful scenes is the one in Imogen's bedchamber: as it nears midnight, Imogen's eyes grow heavy and she says, "Sleep hath seized me wholly" (II.ii.7). Imogen, robed in white, lies on her bed, and the dark and devilish Iachimo rises out of the trunk where he has hidden. He whispers, "Sleep, thou ape of death, lie dull upon her / And be her sense but as a monument / Thus in a chapel lying" (II.ii.31-3). Dressed as the boy Fidele, Imogen also falls asleep in the cave, and her estranged husband Posthumus, imprisoned in a stockade, sleeps (V.iv). For both, the sleep suggests a symbolic acceptance of death—certainly the death of their old personalities and beliefs.

Shakespeare uses disease and drugs as other representations of psychic death. And the cave to which Imogen comes is described as a "prison, a "cell of ignorance, traveling abed." Imogen describes it as "some savage hold" (III.vi.18). According to Emma Jung's exploration of the treasure motif in literature, the Celtic caves represented survivals of pagan nature worship—caverns or burial mounds inhabited by fairy maidens who offered food and drink to travelers, and sometimes lured them under the hill forever. The story also resembles that of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves," a story about a sleeping woman who in turn parallels the Christian—and Jewish and Muslim---legend of the "Seven Sleepers' Den." The boys, Imogen's lost brothers, lament that in the cave, "We have nothing. / We are beastly" (III.iv.33-4).. Yet it also provides refreshment, food, healing—it becomes a kind of sanctuary for protection, and it lies at "Milford Haven" [italics mine]. Like the scarab, or dung beetle, also mentioned in *Antony and Cleopatra*, like "princely eagles," the family of Cymbeline hides inside a dark place of unknowing until time to "fly out."

Further examining various versions of the "Seven Sleepers' Legend" should help test the theological significance of early modern religious and alchemical meaning concerning the necessity for a time of hibernation or chrysalis transformation. Thus the outcome of Garrett Sullivan's more "horizontal"--and seemingly passive--"quest-romance" suggests that it too represents heroic endangerment and courageous embattlement, often performed in Shakespeare by both men and women, culminating in visions "strange and admirable."

Laury Magnus

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Dreams and Liminal States: Visions, Phantasmagoria, Nightmares, Premonitions, and Prayers in
Romeo and Juliet

Throughout *Romeo and Juliet*, that accomplished, early tragedy of Shakespeare's, dreaming and characters' responses to dreams play across the already complex tension between the play's sense of fatality and the bizarre freedom of the tale's unfolding, a tension that combines what formalists would call the play's free and bound elements. The liminal states of being that are invoked by its constant insistence on a time frame that is always rushing between

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states of being—"so like the lightning that doth cease to be / 'ere one can say it lightens" heighten this tension. It is always so late it's early, or so early it's late (especially in Act IV of the play as Juliet's wedding to Paris approaches). Waking and sleeping, consciousness and unconsciousness, life, death, sleeping aliveness that is death-like; death that is like a living sleep, shuttle audiences between a world of conscious sensory aliveness and a filmy world promising a transcendence that may or may not be illusory. The alternation of these worlds of consciousness embodies the highest degree of metatheatrical art.

The paper will examine the mesh of liminality woven by various speeches about dreaming and visionary events such as Romeo's premonitory dream and Mercutio's response in the Queen Mab speech, Juliet's voicing of her fears of waking in the tomb, Romeo's visions of "a lightening" as he nears death, and the lovers' imaginings as they prepare for their last embrace—a final tragic collision of life with death (264 words).

Claudia Olk
Freie Universitaet, Berlin

Metadramatic sleep in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*

Sleep on stage as in general marks an ambivalent state in which the bodily presence of the sleeper at the same time marks an absence, hence the common link between sleep and death. On Shakespeare's stage, as I would like to argue, the sleeping body itself becomes a performative event that suggests the identity of different states of being. In many of Shakespeare's plays this liminal state of the sleeper's body becomes a space of drama in which the boundary between reality and illusion is negotiated. The audience is included into this doubling of perspective when the dynamics between those who watch and those who are being watched, between active and passive characters on stage is further intensified by the presence of sleepers. Most prominently in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the sleeping body on stage functions as a reminder that the boundary between dreaming and waking is indeed permeable as is the boundary between individual and collective experience. In *Macbeth*, the perception of the sleepless protagonist marks an increasingly unstable world and in *The Tempest*, sleep becomes a formative element in the world of the play when it is correlated to the island as a transitory realm between life and death.

Rather than considering sleep as a motif, my argument will be that sleeping or not sleeping are part of the poetic structure of the plays and generate moments of pause in which the theatre reflects on its own status as theatre.

Colleen Ruth Rosenfeld
Pomona College

Withholding Sleep in *The Faerie Queene*

In Book 4 of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Scudamour lays down in the House of Care only to find that he cannot sleep for thinking: he tosses around—"oft chaunging side, and oft new place electing"—and dogs, roosters, owls (all of the animals) wail loudly (5.40.3). The blacksmiths that surround Scudamour bang away with Pythagorean regularity and the poem

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aligns this sleep-prohibiting racket with the products of their art. The blacksmiths manufacture the very thing that keeps Scudamour awake: they "to small purpose yron wedges made;/ Those be vnquiet thoughts, that careful minds invade" (5.35.8-9).

I am interested in reading this episode as an etiology for a peculiar kind of thinking in the *The Faerie Queene*: when a character tries to fall asleep but finds that thinking keeps him awake. Following Angus Fletcher, we have tended to read this kind of thinking as an index of daemonic possession and a catalyst of allegorical transformation. I want to suggest, by contrast, that when Care drills "vnquiet thoughts" down into Scudamour's skull, he offers a particular form of knowledge and its production, one that we might read against the kind of knowledge you get when you are able to fall asleep—The Dream Vision. I will argue that in *The Faerie Queene*, there is a kind of thinking that only becomes possible when sleep is withheld. It will be the final move of this essay to suggest that the poet of *The Faerie Queene* is well-acquainted with this kind of thinking: though we repeatedly hear the poet's call for rest, we never do see him sleep.

N. Amos Rothschild
St. Thomas Aquinas College

The Physiology of Free Will: On the Function of Faculty Psychology in *Paradise Lost*

In Book 5 of *Paradise Lost*, Adam responds to Eve's account of the dream that Satan has inspired by describing in detail the workings of the human mind. In particular, the first man discusses the functions and the characteristics of two mental faculties: Reason and Fancy. Editors of *Paradise Lost* have almost unanimously agreed that Milton simply rehearses the physiological science of his era in this episode. However, while it is true that the faculty science of *Paradise Lost* is not drastically original, it need not follow that Milton simply versifies concepts from a homogenous system. It is the goal of this paper to restore some sense of the complexities of seventeenth-century discourses of faculty psychology in order to clarify the subtle variations and emphases that characterize Milton's engagements therewith.

Doing so reveals the special emphasis Milton places upon the mind's balance of enclosure and exposure. Indeed, evidence within *Paradise Lost* suggests that Milton engages with the discourses of physiology and faculty psychology to render as robust and precise as possible one of the central foci of his poem: the freedom of the will. He may not invent an original system of faculty psychology, but his use of existent faculty science is calculated to demonstrate that God did, in fact, create the first humans with minds *structurally* "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (3.99)—minds physiologically equipped to attain and contain information that might prompt sinful action yet also able to maintain a dynamic state of innocence until the very moment the hand touches the apple.

Megan Smith
University of California Los Angeles

The world of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* awaits the imminent Nativity. It hovers between Christian before and after, and, thus situated, materialist and providentialist philosophies uneasily circle one another within. This caesura marks the play's sleeping bodies as well. In his

study, Garrett Sullivan uses the Aristotelian tripartite soul to map the different aspects and models of human identity that appear in early modern slumber. Yet, these tensions appear *within* an explicitly Christian framework, one that looks forward to include more recent ideas, as well. I reframe the divided subject in terms of (1) competing models of Christ and (2) the possibilities these models offer for both female subjects and feminist models of subjectivity.

In the aptly named Posthumus, continually reported to be man in divine image, we see the ultimate triumph of a Christian self that is autonomous, essential, and ideally male. Not only sleeping but also dreaming, Posthumus discovers himself—and the romance’s providential resolution—through divine revelation. As for his wife, Innogen spends almost as much time asleep as awake. Her insistently material body, which imagerially bleeds into its immediate surroundings, is dangerous: physically, spiritually, and politically. But this body also resonates with the Christ of feminist theologians who have resisted both the gender and the boundaries assigned by early modern Christology, imagining an ideal subjectivity continually reconstituted through a dynamic process of self-emptying. Cymbeline ultimately refuses this alternate ideal and contains the dangerous, feminine body, but it exposes the violence such containment requires. After all, Innogen’s final swoon comes in response to her husband’s strike.

Kay Stanton

California State University, Fullerton

Dreaming Consciousness:

The “Emperor Dream” in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*

Shakespeare’s two tragedies with couples as the eponymous protagonists each recount an “emperor dream.” In *Romeo and Juliet*, just before learning of Juliet’s “death,” Romeo states, “I dreamt my lady came and found me dead” then “breathed such life with kisses in my lips / That I revived and was an emperor” (V. i. 6, 8-9). In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra tells Dollabella, “I dreamt there was an emperor Antony. / O such another sleep, that I might see / But such another man!” (V. ii. 75-77). As the dreamers are of differing ages, sexes, time periods, cultures, and religious orientations, this dream could involve what Jung called the “collective unconscious.”

To contextualize Shakespeare’s treatment of these dreams, this essay surveys developments in modern dream science, including the discovery of REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, the identification of four stages of sleep as evidenced in electroencephalogram (EEG) tracings, the contributions of neurobiology, and the psychophysiological theory of activation-synthesis. Romeo’s account of his “doom dream” in I. iv. contrasts that of his “emperor dream” in V.i., with the latter a dream of REM sleep and the former of a different mode. Romeo and Cleopatra are each analyzed as “lucid” (conscious) dreamers. Carl Jung’s ideas on the collective unconscious and archetypes are relevant to the “emperor dreams,” as is his theory of synchronicity, in regard to its implications for new applications of quantum physics to brain and dream science. Shakespeare’s treatment of dreams, particularly the “emperor dreams,” is consistent with current theories of both neurologists and quantum physicists.

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Timothy Turner

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“Making” the Moor: On (Not) Sleeping in *Othello*

In a recently published essay on *Othello*, I argue that the play depicts the psychological torture of the title character by his scheming ensign, Iago.¹ In this essay, I pursue this claim further by contending that *Othello* is subjected to a form of torture known and used in the early modern period: sleep deprivation. Historical accounts demonstrate early modern torturers’ awareness that the deprivation of both food and sleep produce delirious perturbation and make it easier to compel the victim’s “confession” (both techniques are, of course, still employed). Reading the play in light of these historical materials suggests that we ought perhaps to attach more than metaphoric significance to Iago’s pledge to “practice[e] upon [Othello’s] peace and quiet / Even to madness” (2.1.310-11). This essay therefore augments my earlier account of psychological torture in the play by foregrounding the physiological basis upon which early modern psychology itself was founded—that is, by offering a humoral account of *Othello*’s tortured transformation as a result of sleep deprivation. Through an examination of early modern humoral accounts of sleep, I also aim to show that Shakespeare’s engagement with torture and/as sleep deprivation is deeply imbricated in the play’s representation, and perhaps even contribution, to the invention of a quasi-biological conception of race grounded in early modern humoral theory.