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“Watching to banish Care”: Sleep and Insomnia in  
Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*

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This essay investigates the roles of sleep and insomnia in book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* (1590). Sleep is typically a cold and deathly affair in Edmund Spenser’s epic, and his allegory of holiness uses these common early modern associations to suggest that somnolence is perilous for Redcrosse knight. The fall of sleep brings a period of psychosomatic dissolution during which the self loses its capacity to think and to act in a willed manner. It reduces the human to a state of physiological and spiritual precariousness, less than life yet more than death. As night arrives in the first canto of book 1, for instance, Archimago leads Redcrosse, Una, and the Dwarf “Vnto their lodgings” and the company is described as being “drownd in deadly sleepe,” whereupon the sorcerer begins to work his “mighty charmes, to trouble sleepey minds.”<sup>1</sup> It would therefore seem reasonable to claim, as both Northrop Frye and Deborah Shuger have, that the dark liquidity of sleep vexes Redcrosse as well as the author’s Reformed political theology in book 1.<sup>2</sup> For Frye, Spenser’s poem projects an “uneasy political feeling that the price of authority is eternal vigilance,” and so sleep “is one of the three divisions of the lowest world, the other two being death and hell.”<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Shuger aligns Redcrosse’s slumber with a patristic tradition that distrusts sleep’s compromising effects on the impassioned human soul. Yet no one has con-

For their thoughtful responses to this essay I thank Elisha Cohn, Drew Daniel, and Richard Halpern. I am also grateful to Richard Strier and to my reader at *Modern Philology* for insightful recommendations.

1. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas Roche (New York: Penguin, 1987), 1.1.36; hereafter cited parenthetically.

2. See Deborah Shuger, “‘Gums of Glutinous Heat’ and the Stream of Consciousness: The Theology of Milton’s *Maske*,” *Representations* 60 (1997): 1–21.

3. See Northrop Frye, *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1963), 73, and *Northrop Frye’s Notebooks on Renaissance Literature*, ed. Michael Dolzani, vol. 20 of *Collected Works of Northrop Frye* (University of Toronto Press, 2006), 12, 17–18, for references to Spenser’s irrational fear of sleep.

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firmed or challenged such claims through a focused reading of both sleep and sleeplessness in book 1, which requires us to unfold the overlapping theological, ethicopolitical, and physiological meanings of these events.<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary readers might well expect Spenser to treat Redcrosse's sleep in explicitly Pauline terms, since the author's prefatory letter asserts that the hero's arms are modeled on the "armor of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul" in his epistle to the Ephesians.<sup>5</sup> But as Daryl Gless has pointed out, this letter to Raleigh was either omitted from or inconspicuously "buried" within early editions of the poem both during and well after Spenser's lifetime.<sup>6</sup> It was not until the eighteenth century that readers of Spenser's epic would have encountered his explicit reference to the armor of Ephesians in prefatory form. Despite this fact, I believe that Redcrosse's struggles with sleep and sleeplessness in the early cantos serve well enough to alert readers at all familiar with the New Testament to the armor's Pauline valences. Paul's epistles constantly use sleep to figure spiritual danger, carelessness, or a lapse in vigilance that compromises faith and makes believers vulnerable to assaults by the devil.<sup>7</sup> In Romans 13, for instance, Paul describes the body of the Christian community experiencing an awakening and illumination that leaves behind the old life of sin; in Ephesians 5, the apostle likewise urges Christians to "haue no fellowship with ye unfrutefull workes of darkenes . . . for it is light that maketh all things manifest. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that slepest, & stand up from the dead, & Christ shal giue thee light" (Eph. 5:11–14).<sup>8</sup> For Paul, sleep symbolizes a spiritual backsliding into darkness and sin, against which Christians must struggle daily. And it is this Pauline perspective that I would like to situate against Spenser's images of sleep and sleeplessness in book 1.

I argue that Redcrosse's sleep is at best a temporary and minor threat to his spiritual fortitude—not nearly as calamitous as readers have presumed it to be. In fact, Spenser treats the hero's lack of sleep as a greater threat to

4. Garrett Sullivan Jr. argues that sleep challenges the moral physiology of temperance pursued by the hero Guyon in book 2 of *The Faerie Queene*. Sullivan's account fits with Frye's claim that Spenser's protestant epic displays an overarching distrust of sleep, though it seems to me worth thinking about the respective virtues allegorized by Redcrosse and Guyon in terms of their differing relationships to sleep and sleeplessness. See Sullivan's pathbreaking *Sleep, Romance, and Human Embodiment: Vitality from Spenser to Milton* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), chap. 1. See also the discussion of Guyon's sleep by Sullivan and Mary Floyd-Wilson in their introduction to *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1–13.

5. Spenser, *Faerie Queene* (ed. Roche), 41.

6. Darryl Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 48–49.

7. Romans 13, 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5, and 1 Thessalonians 5 provide Pauline images of sleep that figure spiritual laxity, sin, backsliding, and loss of faith.

8. Biblical quotations are from *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

his well-being and his spiritual virtue because it derails Redcrosse’s concern for his unique obligations as the patron of true holiness. I hope to show that, insofar as the hero’s insomnia constitutes a failure to attend to his basic bodily need to sleep, it marks a notable and paradoxical aspect of the early modern care of the self: to sleep means to relax one’s conscious guard against the forces of darkness and sin, but not to sleep means to refuse a crucial form of physiological and spiritual recovery that temporarily lifts the burden of worldly cares. For Redcrosse in particular, insomnia represents an undue pathological vigilance that blocks sleep’s unique form of unconscious self-care. Spenser thus brings Redcrosse’s physiological necessity for sleep and for phenomenal self-renewal into direct conflict with a stark approximation of Pauline ideals of unwavering spiritual vigilance and Christian militancy. The poem moreover suggests that Redcrosse embodies holiness even when he sleeps, and this situation resists the Pauline logic that for Christians the body’s most essential role is to serve as an active instrument promoting God’s will.<sup>9</sup> Spenser’s allegory of holiness suggests, contra such paradigms, that human beings are radically unable to arise from spiritual slumber and to remain constantly vigilant. Our bodies are simply incapable of wearing God’s holy armor at all times or of continually being armed and ready to do what the Lord requires of us in confronting the “workes of darkenes.”

It is no secret that Paul has been in vogue for Shakespeare criticism and for early modern literary studies in general, just as he is within a certain strand of contemporary continental thought. Recent and valuable work by a host of critics—including Julia Lupton, Graham Hammill, Ken Jackson, Gregory Kneidel, Catherine Winiarski, and Jonathan Gil Harris—has considered Paul’s multivalent influence on Renaissance writers in sanguine terms.<sup>10</sup> This view of Paul’s legacy equally characterizes (and in several instances, flows directly from) the recuperative spirit of work on the apostle by Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, Slavoj Žižek, and others.<sup>11</sup> In various

9. On this point, see Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 1976), esp. 195–97.

10. See Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* (University of Chicago Press, 2005); Ken Jackson, “‘All the world to nothing’: *Richard III*, Badiou, and Pauline Subjectivity,” *Shakespeare* 1 (2005): 29–52; Graham Hammill and Julia Reinhard Lupton, “Sovereigns, Citizens, and Saints: Political Theology and Renaissance Literature,” and Catherine Winiarski, “Adultery, Idolatry, and the Subject of Monotheism,” both in the special issue of *Religion and Literature* 38, no. 3 (2006): 1–12, 41–64; Gregory Kneidel, *Rethinking the Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Literature: The Poetics of All Believers* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matters in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

11. These reflections are commonly saturated with a sense of optimism regarding the histories and futures of Pauline thought. Philosophical accounts include Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford University Press, 2005);

ways, early modern literary studies have revisited the Pauline corpus, using his religious poetics of mixed temporality and mixed bodies as mixed communities to propose a more tolerant, politically ingenious, presciently liberal, radical, or even multicultural Paul who remains crucially relevant to the politics of our world. The discussion ahead, however, both shares and charts Spenser's skepticism toward a Pauline vision of the militant Christian. My argument reads the allegorical thrust of book 1 as a commentary on some limitations to the apostle's zealous political-theological standards—especially as perceived and disseminated by Reformation theologians such as Luther and Calvin.<sup>12</sup> Certainly, Paul's writings provide essential elements of Reformed theology in early modern England, and it would be foolish to argue otherwise.<sup>13</sup> But the story of Redcrosse knight and Una nonetheless suggests that Pauline theology and also his typological mode of allegory are not only insufficient for understanding the tasks of holy life but can in fact threaten its pursuit.

I shall argue that in lieu of the militant and individualizing spiritual fortitude advocated by Paul's exhortations and many of his Reformation inheritors, book 1 develops a paradigm of mutual care between Redcrosse and Una. Through their experiences of sleep and insomnia, each of these characters is subjected to moments of psychosomatic peril, insufficiency, or lack that demand the other's caring presence. Spenser's figurations of sleep and insomnia in book 1 enfold several meanings of care, locating the self amid a contradictory set of concerns for the material body, the passionate soul, and the spirit alike. For Spenser, care is an existential condition of worry, anxiety, and sorrowful constraint that determines waking life. In this sense, care is a burden that can envelop and even consume the self, and insomnia appears to exacerbate these damaging effects. But Spenser also implies that

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Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford University Press, 1997); Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), and *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009). Julia Lupton charts the influence of these and other accounts among critics of early modern literature in "The Pauline Renaissance: A Shakespearean Reassessment," *European Legacy* 15 (2010): 215–20.

12. My understanding of Pauline theology derives in part from Nietzsche's *The Antichrist* as well as the argument of Gilles Deleuze and Fanny Deleuze in their essay "Nietzsche and St. Paul, Lawrence and John of Patmos," in Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, ed. Dan Smith (London: Verso, 1998), 36–52. Much of that essay elaborates D. H. Lawrence's reading of the Apocalypse and his interest in an aristocratic image of Christ, whose doctrine of love preached individual refinement and care of the self over a collective political-theological orientation. Deleuze contrasts Lawrence's notion of Christ with Paul's doctrine of an infinite indebtedness to God, which Deleuze cites (by way of Nietzsche) as the structuring ecclesiastical principle of Christianity. As far as I know, this essay has not yet been considered among the recent discussions of Pauline thought and early modern political theology.

13. On the crucial relationship between Pauline scripture and the claims, ideologies, and interpretive practices of English reformers, see John Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England: Puritanism and the Bible* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970).

care can be a holy virtue and a good that alleviates such burdens when it is suitably given to others.<sup>14</sup> Both Redcrosse and Una are bound to the world and to each other through these dispositional tendencies. Book 1 depicts forms of care that they extend uniquely to each other—as solicitude, concern, and even passionate investment—which enliven the self and constitute a fulfilling bond between the two. But in the case of Redcrosse knight, book 1 complicates this reciprocal wholeness of mutual care through the urgency of the hero’s need to sleep, which acts as an ethical counterweight and necessarily, if temporarily, removes him from the concerns of waking life. Redcrosse’s sleep is a private and unconscious form of self-care that prepares him to face the world anew—to return to the waking cares placed upon him by Una and by his allegorical duty to embody the virtue of holiness.

## I

I begin with a brief reading of Paul’s link between sleep and the flesh, a link whose afterlife can be traced among Christian writers responding to Paul’s epistles, from Augustine to Luther and Calvin. My purpose is simply to remind readers that, in Spenser’s world, biological health and concupiscence alike were deeply entangled with theological and spiritual concerns and that the lax condition of a sleeping body seemed materially to foreground such worries. For early modern Reformed theologies, Paul’s concept of “the flesh” is crucial to these associations.<sup>15</sup> His epistles establish a figural link between sleep and sin, but more broadly the link between sleep and any form of worldly “darkenes” that characterizes living outside of Christian fellowship. He exhorts Jews, gentiles, and pagans alike to leave behind such darkened perspectives and to be joined, through the grace of the spirit, to the universal body of Christ. In 2 Thessalonians 5:2, Paul warns the faithful to be vigilant, because “the day of the Lord shal come, euen as a thefe in the night.” He goes on to characterize believers as “children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night nether of darkenes. Therefore let vs not slepe as do others, but let vs watch and be sober” (2 Thess. 5:5–6). And being vigilant, sober, and in the light is typically

14. Warren T. Reich identifies the duality of *cura* in the ancient Roman world with, on the one hand, Vergil’s depiction of “vengeful Cares” (*ultrices Curae*) at the entrance to the underworld in book 6 of the *Aeneid* and, on the other, Seneca’s claim that “in humans, the good is perfected by care (*cura*),” quoted in Reich, “History of the Notion of Care,” in *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1995), 319–31.

15. Diarmaid MacCulloch’s *The Reformation* (New York: Penguin, 2005) illustrates the centrality of the Pauline epistles (especially the letter to the Romans) to Augustine’s theory of original sin, which was in turn key to new ideas about human depravity and the flesh advanced by Reformation thinkers such as Luther, Calvin, Bucer, and Melancthon. See esp. 106–15.

equated with wearing the armor of faith that God provides, which not only keeps believers from having “fellowship with the unfruitful workes of darkenes” but also girds the faithful “euen to reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). Likewise, Paul’s letter to the Romans describes God’s once-chosen people as being led away from God’s love because “their foolish heart was full of darkenes” (Rom. 1:21), and so he urges “it is now time that we shulde arise from slepe: for now is our saluation nerer, then when we beleued it. The night is past, & the day is at hand: let us therefore cast away the workes of darkenes, and let vs put on the armour of light, So that we walke honestly, as in the day: not in glotonie, and dronkennes, neither in chambering and wantonness, nor in strife and enuying” (Rom. 13:10–13). Yet, however indispensable the body is to Paul’s soteriology, these and other Pauline images of sleep are not primarily concerned with its physiological effects. Rather, Paul uses sleep to figure the undue suspension of spiritual vigilance, increased vulnerability to satanic temptation, or a refusal to awaken from spiritual slumber and join the Christian community. Sleep serves as a metaphor for the human tendency to live outside of faith and “for the world,” which as John A. T. Robinson suggests, entails being ruled by the inclinations of the flesh.<sup>16</sup> Paul’s idea of “the flesh” is distinct from the body, though both body (σῶμα) and flesh (σάρχ) can be disposed either for God or for the world. Robinson explains the key difference as follows: “While σάρχ stands for man, in the solidarity of creation, in his distance from God, σῶμα stands for man, in the solidarity of creation, as made for God.”<sup>17</sup> Though this Pauline perspective implies that the inevitability of spiritual struggle might be likened to the inevitability of sleep, Paul’s epistles nonetheless construct an ideal of constant, vigilant faith that forgoes the “workes of darkenes” and defies spiritual slumber.

Both patristic and early modern theologians develop Paul’s doctrine of the flesh and his allegorical figurations of sleep to suggest that the experience of sleep actually aggravates the fleshly body, or the condition of depravity that defines the fallen human being. Augustine, for instance, extends the Pauline associations of sleep with spiritual peril and temptation by reading the letter to the Romans as a commentary on the divided will. He laments in the *Confessions* (ca. 397 CE), “False visions persuade me unto that when I am asleep, which true visions cannot do when I am awake. . . . Is not thy hand able, O God Almighty . . . to quench the lascivious motions of my sleep?”<sup>18</sup> Because sleep temporarily suspends the conscious will, it renders the embodied self more susceptible to sexual arousal. In this sense, Augustine’s

16. John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Chicago: Allenson, 1952), 28.

17. *Ibid.*, 30.

18. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. William Watt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912), 10.30.

writings serve as an important hinge between Paul’s predominately figural use of sleep and early modern worries over the entangled spiritual and corporeal aspects of sleep, which also draw on classical Platonic and Aristotelian discourses on moral physiology and ontology.<sup>19</sup> During sleep, our carnal nature temporarily but more completely binds the sleeping body, and the loss or retraction of rational sense becomes a perfect conceit for the misguided, fleshly life given over to the ways of the sinful world.

This is the life that Christians must fight to escape. The image more or less captures Augustine’s view of sleep, but it correlates with both Lutheran and Calvinist perspectives as well. According to Martin Luther’s reading of Paul’s doctrine of the flesh, the flesh defines our very being, so reason and sense, as well as body, soul, and spirit, are all subjected or “bound” to the power of carnality. As Richard Strier puts it, “Fleshliness or carnality, from this point of view, is fundamentally the condition of egotism or self-regard—the condition of being, as Luther wonderfully put it in Latin, ‘*incurvatus in se*’ (curved in upon oneself). Being ‘spiritual,’ from this point of view, would be a matter of being turned away from self-regard.”<sup>20</sup> From such a Lutheran vantage, sleep may represent the most fleshly of all bodily mixtures or dispositions; not so much because of sleep’s thickening effect on the earthy substances of humoral embodiment but because it amplifies to an absolute extreme the turning inward of the self that Luther chastises—a turning inward so complete that even self-regard loses the capacity to regard as such. The utter fleshliness and depravity of sleep can be understood, in theological and phenomenal terms, as a radical incapacity to look outward that equates to a lack of care for others in the world and thus for the spiritual community—hence Paul’s exhortations to “arise from slepe” and leave the “workes of darkenes” behind. To return to the way of the flesh is to fall back into the unholy void of spiritual and bodily sleep, because the body is the key pathway for the spirit of God to enter and infuse the fleshly self with grace.

In discussions of sleep and vigilance in the Pauline epistles, both Luther and Calvin extend Paul’s distrust of spiritual slumber, but they articulate the force of his conceit in more individualizing and moralistic terms. Luther’s commentary on Romans holds that “Scripture speaks of sleep in at least a threefold sense”; it can denote literal bodily sleep, as well as spiritual sleep

19. Consider Socrates’s discussion of sleep and the unruliness of tyrannical passions in book 9 of *The Republic* or Aristotle’s claim in book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that sleep is a state in which virtue can “be present and yet . . . produce nothing good.” See Plato, *The Republic*, trans. R. E. Allen (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 571a–572b; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe (Oxford University Press, 2002), 1099a1.

20. See Richard Strier, “Against the Rule of Reason: Praise of Passion from Petrarch to Luther to Shakespeare to Herbert,” in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotions*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 23–42.



that is either holy or unholy, depending on the condition of faith—"What is night for the former (*the believer*) is day for the latter (*the unbeliever*). What the former regards as an awakening, the latter looks upon as sleep, and vice versa."<sup>21</sup> So spiritual slumber leads unbelievers both to live for the world and to believe they are spiritually awake, despite actually being "asleep in the lusts of the flesh."<sup>22</sup> To guard against these proclivities, Luther writes, "The Apostle desires that Christians should take care of their bodies in such a way that no evil desires are nurtured thereby. . . . We should not destroy the body, but crucify its vices or evil passions."<sup>23</sup> Thus Luther concludes his discussion of Romans 13 with a perceived emphasis on the vigilant care of the embodied self, as dictated by Paul.

In his own commentaries on Romans 13, Jean Calvin likewise insists upon a personal responsibility to remain vigilant: "By *awakening out of sleep*," he writes, Paul "means that we are to be armed and ready to do what the Lord requires of us. . . . Paul says, *armour* rather than works, because we are to fight in the service of the Lord."<sup>24</sup> And with respect to Paul's image of the armor of light in Ephesians 6, Calvin writes, "To make us more vigilant, he tells us that we must not only engage in open warfare, but that we have a crafty and insidious foe, who attacks us secretly in ambushes."<sup>25</sup> Both Luther and Calvin present us with subtle yet meaningful variations on a core theme of Pauline theology: Paul's concept of the body of Christ radically deindividuates the fallen bodies of believers, only to reconstitute them corporeally and existentially as members of Christ's body, which is the body of the church infused with God's spirit.<sup>26</sup> Paul thus sets the terms for Luther's emphasis on turning outward toward the faithful community and the spiritual gift of grace, just as he does for Calvin's emphatic Christian militancy. But while the political-theological role of sleep in Paul's epistles is acknowledged in kind by Luther and Calvin, both inflect Paul's allegorical treatment of sleep with a heightened sense of personal obligation in obedience to God and to the holy community. The obligatory turning outward of the self to receive the spirit becomes a paradigm for godly living and spiritual battle, to which the darkened isolation of sleep stands in an antithetical relation.

Spenser undoubtedly responds to these theological associations of sleep with forms of moral and spiritual carelessness, but his attention to the perils

21. Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. J. Theodore Muller (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1976), 188–89.

22. *Ibid.*, 189.

23. *Ibid.*, 192.

24. Jean Calvin, *Commentaries*, ed. David Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, 11 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959–72), 8:286–87.

25. *Ibid.*, 11:217.

26. See Robinson, *Body*, 81–83.

of insomnia in book 1 also deserves some contextualization. Rather than “waking” or “insomnia,” the proper opposite of sleep in Spenser’s world is the term “watch,” which connotes vigilant care and wakefulness alike. In fact, it is not until Henry Cockeram’s *The English dictionarie; or, An interpreter of hard English words* (1623) that we find an English version of the word “insomnia” in print. And Cockeram defines it as “watching, want of power to sleepe,” suggesting that sleeplessness could mark a specific lack or inability—a “want of power”—on the part of the early modern self.<sup>27</sup> Rebecca Totaro has also shown that during the period, “watch” evokes a history of civil vigilance and protection in medieval towns against the vulnerability occasioned by night-fall, as well as a sense of constant spiritual care for one’s soul.<sup>28</sup> Just as early modern sleep paradoxically mortifies the self in order to restore it, watch can reflect both the presence of vigilant care and a lack of the ability to sleep.<sup>29</sup> While it seems entirely plausible to read Redcrosse’s sleeplessness as a sign of spiritual fortitude along such lines, I shall argue instead that the hero’s insomnia constitutes a pathological version of watch and that Spenser uses it to evoke misguided forms of vigilant care. For Redcrosse, sleep is a therapy of bodily recovery and a crucial form of self-care; sleep offers him a temporary respite from the anguish of waking cares. Redcrosse’s refusal to sleep becomes a harmful and overly vigilant attunement of his sensing soul.

## II

If Spenser’s Protestant allegory is unabashedly Pauline or, as some have claimed, even Calvinist in its leanings, it should not be difficult to find an ever-vigilant, unsleeping hero who embodies an ideal of Christian holiness. In fact, we can find one with ease in book 1. Only that figure isn’t Redcrosse knight—actually, it is not a person at all, but the lion that follows and protects Una in Redcrosse’s absence. The lion is the only creature in book 1 that, Spenser explicitly tells us, never sleeps; it guards Una tirelessly as they wander the wild: “Still when she slept, he kept both watch and ward, / And when she wakt, he waited diligent, / With humble seruice to her will prepard” (1.3.9). When Una and her protector seek shelter in Abessa’s cabin, the lion guards her through the night, keeping watch “at her feet” (1.3.15) in an image that contrasts with elements of the earlier scene of Redcrosse’s slumber in Archimago’s cabin, during which a dream spirit placed itself

27. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “insomnia,” “sleepless,” <http://www.oed.com/>.

28. See Rebecca Totaro, “Securing Sleep in *Hamlet*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 50 (2010): 407–26.

29. On nocturnal watch as a form of vigilant political care, which Shakespeare uses to expose monarchical fantasies of “perpetual wakefulness,” see Sullivan’s discussion of the *Henriad* in *Sleep, Romance, and Human Embodiment*, chap. 3.

“vpon his hardy head” (1.1.47) to play its wicked games. I will return to that image and discuss it at length but first want to develop a more substantial reading of Redcrosse knight’s temporary substitute, which in turn clarifies his struggles with sleep and sleeplessness in both the first and the second cantos.

Initially, Una and the lion seem to be a good fit; but there are plenty of clues that this coupling is less than ideal, the most obvious being the lion’s violent death at the hands of Sansloy. But there is also the lion’s horrific dismembering of the thief Kirkrapine, which Una must hear since Spenser tells us that she is wide awake all night in the cabin, and

In stead of rest, she does lament, and weepe  
For the late losse of her deare loued knight  
And sighes, and grones, and euermore does steepe  
Her tender brest in bitter teares all night  
All night she thinks too long, and often lookes for light.

(1.3.15)

Una’s lamentations keep her from sleep, and so must make her a witness to the lion’s mutilation of Kirkrapine, though she casually exits the cabin the next morning. We may not expect to see such embittered weeping and then indifference from an allegory of truth, unity, and Christian edification, but then again Spenser’s poem would hardly be of interest if its devices were so cut and dried. The exact terms of Una’s relationship with the lion are helpful here. Harry Berger Jr. calls the lion “inadequate for being too adequate”—a direct comment on the fantastical nature of the lion’s sleepless watch. Berger argues that the lion “measures the distance between an ideal of protectorship and the more complicated demands Una and Redcrosse have been shown to place on each other.”<sup>30</sup> In the context of literary romance, the lion cannot live up to the role Redcrosse knight plays as Una’s partner in love and chivalry.

But there is more at work in Spenser’s depiction of the lion, I think. The lion’s being exaggerates a key tension that animates and antagonizes Redcrosse knight’s character—the tension between basic physiological necessity and constant spiritual vigilance, as figured by extremes of sleep and insomnia. The lion combines superhuman wakefulness with a form of inhumanly brutish, “pure” physiology that calls attention to Redcrosse knight’s absence, both by exaggerating this facet of the hero’s allegorical core and by revealing the lion’s inability to stand in for the absent knight. And insofar as the lion only protects Una because she captures and transforms his animal affections, she temporarily gives to the creature’s humoral tempera-

30. Harry Berger Jr., “Sexual and Religious Politics in Book 1 of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 34 (2004): 223.

ment what appears to be a more humanlike disposition. When the lion first encounters Una, he sees her as just another meal and wants to devour “her tender corse.” But upon coming closer, he is enthralled by her appearance, “And with the sight amazd, forgat his furious forse” (1.3.5). The lion then begins to kiss her feet and lick her hands, and Una is overwhelmed: “Her hart gan melt in great compassion, / And drizzling teares did shed for pure affection” (1.3.6). Una adds to the lion an affective and perceptual capacity that it could not maintain without her, allowing the beast to visualize her as something more than a physical body to be devoured. This transformation in the lion further suggests that part of its allegorical duty is to call attention to the mutual demands of care placed on Una and Redcrosse—demands that only they can fulfill for each other. For while the lion at first appears to embody a cross-species form of care enlivened by the affective bonds between heroine and beast, it is in fact a pairing that Una clearly dominates and one that is doomed.

Una does not attend to the lion’s needs but rather transforms its brutish disposition in ways that secure her own immediate needs for protection and companionship. She herself remarks on the lion’s insufficiency even as she tames him, describing the dissolution of his “hungry rage, which late / Him prickt, in pittie of my sad estate” (1.3.7). The comparison to Redcrosse here is all too obvious, since Una’s use of “prickt” recalls the opening line of canto 1—“A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine.” And Una immediately qualifies her point of comparison by ruing Redcrosse’s absence and describing him as her own lost lion: “But he my Lyon, and my noble Lord / How does he find in cruell hart to hate / Her that him lou’d, and euer most adord, / As the God of my life? why hath he me abhord?” (1.3.7). Una’s “sorrowfull constraint” seemingly provokes a flash of human sympathy in the lion, but Spenser’s terms indicate that this outburst is due to Una’s ability to amaze and dominate the creature. For whatever compassion or affection she extends to it, the lion’s relation to Una remains routed through its utter captivation: “The kingly beast vpon her gazing stood; / With pittie calmd downe fell his angry mood” (1.3.8).

Insofar as Una squelches the lion’s anger, she attends therapeutically to a choleric, physiological disposition not unlike the one that leads Redcrosse into Error’s den and that later encourages him to abandon Una in Archimago’s cabin. But the immediate issue here, as in all of Una’s adventures with the lion, is that the beast simply cannot stand in for Redcrosse, who is the only partner capable of fulfilling the terms of mutual trust and care that both characters require. So while the lion guards her tirelessly when they take shelter in the cabin of “blind devotion,” Una continues to lament because her current protector cannot replace Redcrosse. The lion may try, and Una may even want him to stand in for the knight, but this burden is too much for the beast. Although the lion’s sleeplessness at first seems a

boon, it eventually shows the creature to be an oversimplified reconciliation of beastly passion and devoted protection, whose vigilance is an empty virtue. And this reductive framing of a complex ethic of care soon gives way to an allegory whose fate the poem determines unkindly, when Sansloy kills the lion. This episode foregrounds the knight's martial "puissance" as a combination of brute force and shrewd intellect that further emphasizes the lion's limited capacity to protect and serve as Una's companion. Sansloy is "strong, and of so mightie corse, / As euer wielded speare in warlike hand, / And feates of armes did wisely vnderstand" (1.3.42).<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, Una's sorrow remains as an affective binding or emotional "constraint" on her being—which is to say, a shackling of cares that only Redcrosse can break.

It is worth noting that Una only experiences her relative loss of faith in Redcrosse after he abandons her in Archimago's cabin. And Redcrosse's separation from Una at this moment is a direct consequence of his nocturnal struggles in cantos 1 and 2, as he slides across extremes of deep sleep, passionate dreaming, and frenzied insomnia. When Archimago's "fit false dream" troubles Redcrosse's sleep at the end of the first canto, the spirit's neoclassical katabasis and summoning of the dream from the Cave of Morpheus allegorize the hero's sleep in psychomachic terms. Redcrosse's responses to this dream episode, but especially to Archimago's illusions once the hero is awake, lead to the most egregious ethical failure of book 1, which is the knight's ill-fated decision to abandon Una.

When Archimago's messenger spirit first comes to the gates of Morpheus's house, it finds that "wakefull dogges before them farre do lye, / Watching to banish Care their enemy, / Who oft is wont to trouble gentle sleepe" (1.1.40). The image strategically splits care into two forms: a certain "care for" is implied on the part of the watchful, vigilant dogs protecting Morpheus, but worrisome "Care" is also the thing they wish to guard against, in preserving the god's state of perpetual slumber. Yet Archimago's messenger slips nimbly by these canine guardians, easily evading their zealous vigil, and the spirit manages to roust Morpheus's "lumpish head" (1.1.43) from its narcoleptic posture. Since the scene also anticipates core elements of the lion's guard over Una—a beastly yet devoted stand-in for Redcrosse knight, ostensibly guarding her sleep—it deserves further thought. The mistake that readers are perhaps encouraged to think they see at this moment is Redcrosse's falling asleep in Archimago's cabin, which suggests a lapse in watchful vigilance and care for Una. This would be allegorized by Mor-

31. The lion's death recalls Gordon Teskey's claim that, allegorically, death represents a closure of being in its capacities to become, since when allegories die they fulfill and complete whatever allegorical sense they are meant to have. See his essay, "Death in an Allegory," in *Imagining Death in Spenser and Milton*, ed. Elizabeth J. Bellamy, Patrick Cheney, and Michael Schoenfeldt (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 65–77.

pheus, whose sleepy head is “deuoid of carefull carke” (1.1.44) and seems to prefigure Redcrosse’s own sleeping condition, since we are told two stanzas later that when “that idle dreame was to him brought,” Archimago commands it to go to that “Elfin knight” who “slept soundly void of euill thought” (1.1.46). “Carke” is a synonym for burden or care, but I think Spenser’s doubling also means to play on Morpheus’s “carke” as “carcass,” both in its early modern meaning of “the living body considered in its material nature” and in its suggestion of being a corpse.<sup>32</sup> These connotations are also consistent with Hellenistic and biblical uses (Paul included) of the word *σῶμα* to describe bodies that are enslaved, nearing death, or materially burdensome.<sup>33</sup> But insofar as Morpheus is an allegory of unadulterated sleep, even if his posture literalizes the heavy sluggishness of sleep, it lacks both the weight of worldly cares and the matter of physiological necessity.

This is clearly not the same for Redcrosse’s body, which requires sleep as a fundamental form of care for his embodied self, and this fact unsettles Spenser’s immediate comparison between the two figures. I think the mistake that Spenser truly means to suggest at this moment, on the part of Redcrosse, is the false notion that he could ever entirely “banish Care”—understood both as the demands of care placed upon him in waking life and as care for his bodily life through the recovery and renewal of a good night’s rest. But devotion to the one entails abandoning the other, so Redcrosse’s sleep brings into focus a puzzling facet of his earthbound being: how to reconcile these contradictory demands of care, which are split along the lines of his sleeping and waking forms of life?<sup>34</sup> This conundrum returns during Redcrosse’s visit to the house of Pride, in Spenser’s depiction of Idleness, “the nurse of sin” who carries an unread prayer book and blindly leads Lucifera’s train: “For of deuotion he had little care, / Still drownd in sleepe, and most of his days ded” (1.4.19). Being “drownd in sleepe” reminds readers of the description of Redcrosse and company under Archimago’s roof. But Spenser also writes that “From worldly cares himself he did esloyne,” so the issue is not simply that Idleness sleeps and therefore fails in his spiritual devotion but rather that he sleeps as a means of evading all cares of the world, which are not solely theological in nature. Yet unlike Idleness or

32. This is the second, and now obsolete, definition given for “carcass” in the *OED*.

33. Gundry, *Soma*, 6–13.

34. Because Redcrosse’s sleep is an uncontrollable necessity, it displays Spenser’s awareness that the demands of bodily care and extreme forms of experience (including insomnia) can exceed conscious practices of self-regulation. Along those lines, as a reader at *Modern Philology* helpfully suggested, Spenser is probably alluding to the fate of Palinurus, the helmsman who falls asleep while steering Aeneas’s ship in book 5 of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. While Aeneas views Palinurus’s slumber as a personal failure in vigilance, the poet suggests that the episode is beyond Palinurus’s control, since he is charmed to sleep by Somnus.

Morpheus, Redcrosse demands a form of physiological, therapeutic care that only sleep provides. These pictures of sleep and sin thus confront Redcrosse as hypertrophic images of his own layered refusals of care, which enfold contradictory demands of his spiritual, bodily, and amatory being.

Moreover, because the initial description of Redcrosse's sleep in canto 1 tells readers that he is "void" of evil thought rather than of "careful carke," his physiological condition in sleep plays foil to Morpheus in another key respect: Redcrosse is at this moment nothing but a sleeping carcass or a *σῶμα* lacking any spiritual sense or instrumental function. There are some strange and potentially confusing ideas that seem to be at work in Spenser's description, and they suggest that he is grappling with Aristotle's account of the sleeping human soul and its biological as well as ethical significance. In book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle claims with respect to virtue that "it is possible for the disposition to be present and yet to produce nothing good, as for example in the case of the person who is asleep, or in some other way rendered inactive."<sup>35</sup> In Aristotle's ethical system, the nutritive function of the soul is "by nature devoid of any share in human excellence," and it can only actualize the potential to grow and decay that is common to all forms of life. A sleeping human enters a temporary condition of inability to actualize what makes it human. The sleeping human embodies a state of lack-in-being, though for Aristotle this lack simply denotes certain faculties being present only in their potential, nonactualized forms. Putting it somewhat differently, in *The Generation of Animals* Aristotle calls sleep "a borderland between living and non-living" insofar as "a person who is asleep would appear to be neither completely non-existent nor completely existent."<sup>36</sup>

Spenser's phrase "void of euill thought" thus suggests at least two loosely Aristotelian interpretations of the hero's sleeping condition: Redcrosse sleeps soundly because he has no thought of harm coming to him, or he sleeps soundly with no evil thought present in his mind—his soul, suspended in a deep and dreamless sleep, is emptied of its mindful content and rests secure in its vegetative state. According to the second reading, Spenser's hero has been plunged into the void of sleep but remains untroubled because no evil thought lurks therein. And yet, insofar as Redcrosse is "void" of evil thought, Spenser subtly opens a figural fault in what first seems to be an untainted condition of sleep. In other words, that which appears to be nothing but a lack of fault in Redcrosse's sleeping being becomes the very opening or "fault" into which Archimago's pagan dream deftly steps, in order to "abuse his fantasy" (1.2.46).

35. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1099a1.

36. Aristotle, *The Generation of Animals*, quoted in Cynthia A. Freeland, "Aristotle on Bodies, Matter, and Potentiality," in *Philosophical Issues in Aristotle's Biology*, ed. Allan Gotthelf and James G. Lennox (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 392–407.

In theological terms, the void attributed to Redcrosse’s sleep may mean that Spenser is thinking of Augustine’s concept of evil as absence or privation, a matter of distance from God. If sleep deprives the human of reason, it temporarily suspends the only means of accessing permanent and intelligible truths of God’s universe. Hence, sleep is evil, a lack-in-being that eliminates our potential to be the ideal whole represented by a singular, thinking body whose will is actively turned toward God. If Spenser does mean to summon this Augustinian tradition, then the ambiguous valences of Redcrosse’s sleep essentially fuse an Aristotelian ontology of the sleeping soul with an Augustinian anthropology of the fallen human. Such uneasiness concerning the mixed effects of sleep in Spenser’s poem reflects sleep’s incoherent position in early modern culture more broadly: sleep is stranded between empirically descriptive physiologies, medical discourses, and anthropologies of the human, on the one hand, and prescriptively moralizing theologies, on the other. But Aristotle’s model requires a bit of work on Spenser’s part, since Aristotle also views sleep as a process that actualizes the fundamental good toward which the vegetative function of the soul naturally inclines.<sup>37</sup> To understand sleep as a mode of lack or privation that is also evil contradicts the simple fact of sleep’s recuperative power as an actualized good. It moreover suggests that an unwilling and unintentional function of life could be inherently sinful—an idea that is decidedly un-Aristotelian in its presumption of fallen life. For Aristotle, the exercise of a natural function like that of the vegetative soul in no way entails an ethical fault.<sup>38</sup>

A further appeal to Augustinian theology may clarify matters here and help explain how Redcrosse’s sleep could at once signify a condition of privation and an actualized good, with respect to Spenser’s own ethical and ontological thinking. In his tractates on the Gospel of John, Augustine describes the origin of the Christian church and its sacraments as coming, quite literally, from a hole in the crucified body of Jesus, as if the wound opened in Christ’s side repairs the chasmic gulf between God and humankind. John 19:34 tells of Christ’s death on the cross and of a soldier whose spear pierces the side of his body, opening a wound. Augustine connects this moment with Genesis 2:21–22, when God draws Adam’s rib from a hole in his side while he sleeps in order to create Eve: “Here the second Adam, his head bowed, slept on the cross in order that from there might be found for him a wife—that one who flowed from the side of the One sleeping. O

37. See Aristotle’s claim that there is a form of excellence actualized by the sleeping soul, in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1102b1–1102b5.

38. This point is consistent with Aristotle’s extended discussions of excellence and the function of the human soul in book 1 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he argues that there are different kinds of excellence in which the human soul participates under various conditions, even if the proper function of the human soul is to actualize “complete excellence.” See esp. 1097a15–1100a5, 1102a5–1103a10.



death from which the dead live again! What is cleaner than this blood? What is more healthful than this wound?"<sup>39</sup> In further describing this wound, Augustine writes "Vigilanti verbo euangelista usus est" (the evangelist uses a wide-awake word) to signify Christ's being wounded during the sleep of death. The word Augustine notes is *aperire*, which he argues means to "open up" rather than simply to pierce or to cut, and so Augustine claims that John's use of *aperire* is quite intentional, meaning to point to the fact that "the door of life was thrown open from which the mystical rites [*sacramenta*] of the Church flowed, without which one does not enter into the life which is true life."<sup>40</sup> In other words, Augustine reads Christ's incarnated sleep of death as a holy sleep that saves us from the privation of sin and mortality by turning lack into plenitude. A series of biblical events, from Adam's wound to the door of Noah's ark to the pierced body of Christ, structure Augustine's typological series through a mystical form of Christian emptiness, a lack that moves through the biblical ages and culminates in the birth of the true church, unleashing the abundant flow of the holy sacrament that John describes.

Like the John of Augustine's reading, Spenser himself uses a "wide-awake word," in the form of a pun that speaks to the challenges of constant vigilance and the lack-in-being that badgers Redcrosse knight. Critics have long recognized that Spenser's allegory plays on an idea of wholeness as holiness in book 1, though the homophonic depth of this pun has been under-explored.<sup>41</sup> The English word holy is derived from the Old English term *hal*, which can mean whole, uninjured, healthy, safe, or complete, and each

39. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 112–124*, trans. John W. Rettig (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 51.

40. *Ibid.*, 50. The citation of Augustine's original is from *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina XXXVI: Sancti Avelii Avgustini* (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1954), 661.

41. Mention of the whole/holy pun in critical commentary on book 1 includes Harry Berger Jr., "The Spenserian Dynamics," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 8 (1968): 1–18; James Nohrnberg, *The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene"* (Princeton University Press, 1976), 279; Douglas Brooks-Davies, "The Faerie Queene, Book 1," in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (University of Toronto Press, 1990), 259–63; Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 40. With her comments in *Incest and Agency in Elizabeth's England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), Quilligan stirred up a minor debate over the phrase "perfect hole" that describes Amoret's wound at the conclusion of book 3. Quilligan does not mention Jonathan Goldberg's discussion of the pun in *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 3. Ken Hieatt attacks Quilligan's reading, and the debate among these three critics is summarized and given fresh meaning by Lauren Silberman in "'Perfect Hole': Spenser and Greek Romance," *Spenser Studies* 23 (2008): 283–91. I am inclined to agree with Silberman's account of the pun on Amoret's wound, as well as her suggestion that the scene probably alludes to Achilles Tatius's pun on the Greek term *ὁλόκληρον* (*holókleron*), meaning "entire" or "complete in all its parts," in his romance *Clitophon and Leucippe*. But neither Silberman nor any of the critics she responds to in this context address the whole/holy pun in book 1, and no

of these meanings seems pertinent to the trials of Redcrosse knight and the stumbling blocks that mar his marriage to Una.<sup>42</sup> The critical consensus has been that Spenser’s wholeness/holiness pun reflects a dyadic truth of Redcrosse’s virtuous task: to live a holy life is to live a life that is part of the whole, united with Una and with the holy Christian church.<sup>43</sup> I do not want to dispute that basic claim but rather to modify it by suggesting that Spenser’s pun also tends to undermine whatever possibilities of unity or wholeness it projects. This notion is already part of the pun itself, since the idea of a hole or a gap semantically inhabits and empties both wholeness and holiness of their harmonious, positively reinforcing meanings.<sup>44</sup> Spenser’s pun may be connected to the Geneva Bible’s translation of Ephesians 6, where Paul twice describes God’s suit of armor as a “whole”<sup>45</sup> that completes the Christian soldier’s preparedness to battle the works of darkness: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the assaults of the deuil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, *and* against the worldly gouernors, *the princes* of the darkenes of this worlde, against spiritual wickedness, *which are* in the hie places. For this cause take vnto you the whole armour of God” (Eph. 6:11–13). If Spenser modeled his hero’s arms on this passage, the poet nonetheless reworks its implications to deepen his own allegory. When Redcrosse sleeps in Archimago’s cabin, he removes his shield and armor, and so the hero’s fleshly life comes into sharper focus precisely because he is temporarily stripped of his Pauline markings and their attendant allegorical duties. In other words, he appears to be less than the ideal whole represented by Paul’s militant Christian because he has relinquished the burden of a constant, watchful vigilance associated with the armor of God. So while Redcrosse knight may enjoy an allegorical “de-vicing” when wearing his Pauline arms, when he removes these trappings at night he is deprived of the power they signify. The hero’s sleep thus calls attention to the limitations of vigilance—not to mention, of being a successfully Pauline hero—but I also want to argue that it implies that Redcrosse embodies holiness even while his sleep subjects him to a lack-in-being.

What I mean is that sleep’s mortifying power and its emptying effects on Redcrosse knight’s earthly body loosely connect him with Augustine’s

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critic has understood it to include any sense of “hole” as emptiness in the legend of Redcrosse knight and Una.

42. *OED*, s.v. “whole.”

43. See Brooks-Davies, “*Faerie Queene*, Book 1”; Quilligan, *Language of Allegory*, 33–37.

44. David Lee Miller approximates this claim when he argues that a logic of negation informs Spenser’s neo-Platonic representations of ideal completion, but Miller never explicitly calls out the pun, nor does he align this force of negation with either Redcrosse’s bodily presence or Spenser’s ontology of the virtue of holiness. See “Spenser’s Poetics: The Poem’s Two Bodies,” *PMLA* 101 (1986): 170–85.

45. Paul’s original text uses the Greek term *πανοπλιαν*, or panoply.

image of Christ, whose sleep of death and pierced side enigmatically opened the door to life. Christ threw himself into the ungodly void of death, or into the lack-in-being introduced by humanity's fall, in order to fill that void with the endless plenitude of his godly life. Of course only Christ could ever embody such an enigma, so only Christ could mystically transform the sleep of death into a sacramental abundance. Spenser's Redcrosse may be bound to a life of *imitatio Christi* in the Pauline tradition, but as a protestant allegory of holiness his character also more decisively emphasizes the privation of his earthly life from godly perfection as well as the bodily demand to care for that life in its mortal and physiological form through sleep. The comparison with Christ is thus a graded analogy: just as the incarnate Christ died, descended into hell, and rose triumphant, Redcrosse descends into sleep, recovers, and returns to the Faerie world to renew his quest. An ideal of constant spiritual vigilance is simply not possible for the hero of book 1, and this insufficiency is likewise marked by the ceaseless nature of the tasks assigned to him, even though he is the patron of true holiness. Redcrosse knight has a (w)hole complex, and try as he might to master it, his earthly being can never quite find its whole or holy completion within the allegorical world he traverses.<sup>46</sup>

And here, of course, is where Una fits in. Redcrosse must sleep, so he must remove his armor and relinquish his vigilant disposition, but he must also not leave Una's side, since she is an essential part of the wholeness and holiness that he seeks to sustain. That is not to say that Una, or anything else for that matter, could entirely cure Redcrosse's allegorical condition of a lack-in-being. But it does mean that the two require each other's presence and that they are obligated to measures of mutual care that fill the forms of being in which the other is lacking. Yet Redcrosse's tendency to constantly "dis-pair" from Una indicates just how challenging Spenser finds the task of holding together such an ideal whole—which binds love, faith, and Christian fellowship in an impassioned yet difficult unity.

### III

If we now return, perhaps better armed, to the scene of Redcrosse's sleep in canto 1 we can see that Spenser lays early ground for these ideas. When the

46. My reading of the "hole" in Spenser's pun owes something to the concept of holey space developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). But Spenser's pun suggests that he would be unfavorable to their notion of material vitalism, which imagines the universe in plenist terms and without lack. Redcrosse's mortal being rather presents a vision of immanent decay in sinful, fleshly life—a kind of paradoxically negative vitalism—closer to Reza Negarestani's imaginative variation and "demonization" of Deleuze and Guattari's concept. See Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (Melbourne: Re.press, 2008).

dream sits upon Redcrosse’s head and begins its assault, Redcrosse’s heart is “Bathed in wanton bliss and wicked ioy” (1.1.47). It seems that the dark and liquid elemental forces of Morpheus’s pagan spirit have unleashed a negative baptism of sexual licentiousness, threatening to wash away the inscription of God’s law and whatever claim to holiness the hero might make.<sup>47</sup> But the stanza goes on to tell us “That *nigh* his manly hart did melt away,” so the dream does not quite manage to dissolve Redcrosse’s spiritual fortitude or to erase the mark of “true holiness” that allegorically defines him. The hero has removed his armor, yet the spiritual shield that protects his heart seems to be working all the same. But while the dream spirit is not entirely successful in its intentions, it does manage to stir Redcrosse’s passion in a way that carries over into his waking life. As the hero begins to experience the dream, he begins to worry, and “In this great passion of vnwonted lust, / Or wonted feare of doing ought amiss, / He started vp, as seeming to mistrust, / Some secret ill, or hidden foe of his” (1.1.49). The spirit does not succeed in separating him from Una, however—that comes later, as the hero battles insomnia.

This reading of the dream episode qualifies Shuger’s account, which claims that the hero’s melting heart is a sign that he is having a wet dream.<sup>48</sup> That seems right, and Shuger’s reminder of the sexual nature of this struggle is a valuable rejoinder to countless readings that blithely evacuate concerns of the body and the erotic from Redcrosse’s quest.<sup>49</sup> But Shuger concludes that, insofar as Redcrosse has had a wet dream, he has involuntarily sinned, and so the dream has essentially achieved its purpose. For Shuger this episode confirms Spenser’s Christian pedigree, placing him in a line that begins with Paul’s claim in Romans 7:18 that “to wil is present with me: but I finde no means to performe that which is good,” runs into Augustine’s fear of the unruly member in *Confessions*, and goes on to determine both Luther’s and Calvin’s soteriologies of fleshly life born into sin. Shuger also cites book 10 of the *Confessions* as a likely source for Spenser’s image of the hero’s melting heart. Yet her argument that Redcrosse has in fact sinned cannot be the case, since Spenser clearly tells us that he awakens before “doing ought amiss,” and it isn’t the experience of the dream itself but rather its aftereffect on the hero’s awakening that severs Redcrosse from Una. This division and its exact cause demand scrutiny—especially since the supposedly relevant passage

47. For a clear account of distinctions between the strictly Calvinist and reformed Anglican views of baptism, and Spenser’s handling of these differences in book 1, see William H. Marshall, “Calvin, Spenser, and the Major Sacraments,” *Modern Language Notes* 74 (1959): 97–101.

48. See Shuger, “Gums of Glutinous Heat,” 6–7.

49. Jonathan Goldberg critiques many of these readings in *The Seeds of Things: Theorizing Sexuality and Materiality in Renaissance Representations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), chap. 3.

from the *Confessions* claims that “false visions” trump the faithful Christian’s will only when that will is compromised by sleep.

While Archimago’s lustful dream does aggravate and stir Redcrosse from his repose, the hero’s fear and ensuing actions suggest that the real danger of this moment lies with Redcrosse’s powers to perceive, to think, and to judge—which is to say, the power to make mistakes regarding the cares and obligations of his waking life. When he does wake up, a spirit disguised as Una suddenly appears at his side, offering him a kiss. Though his anger rises at her maidenly indiscretion, “He stayed his hand, and gan himselfe aduise / To proue his sense, and tempt her fained truth” (1.1.50). Here, Redcrosse manages to check his emotion and to weigh and measure the presentation before him. He suspends his sensory judgment, in favor of ascertaining the “truth” that may or may not underwrite the spirit’s words and appearance. She goes on to accuse the knight of a cold indifference: “Die is my dew: yet rew my wretched state / You, whom my hard auenging destinie / Hath made iudge of my life or death indifferently” (1.1.51). This accusation dovetails with the spirit’s suggestion, two stanzas later, that Redcrosse’s sleep constitutes an ethical failure insofar as it literalizes his lack of care for Una, and she contrasts it with her own insomnia and feelings of amatory alienation: “Loue of your selfe, she said, and deare constraint / Lets me not sleepe, but wast the wearie night / In secret anguish and vnpiitted plaint, / Whiles you in careless sleepe are drowned quight” (1.1.53). These charges essentially reverse the terms that actually and legitimately bind Redcrosse to Una. Their fidelity is not grounded in pity, though the spirit contends that Redcrosse should pity her unrequited love. Nor is it the case that his sleep constitutes an ethical lapse because it betrays Redcrosse’s lack of care or even that it shows him to be an indifferent “iudge” to Una’s emotions, which the spirit describes in absolutist terms.

Redcrosse falls for this trick, however, and during a moment of insomnia after the false Una departs, he first begins to doubt the true Una. He finds himself lying awake, “Much griev’d to think that gentle dame so light, / For whose defence he was to shed his blood” (1.1.55). Spenser’s play on “light” and Redcrosse’s doubt of his willingness to shed blood for Una may recall not just Paul’s images of the armor of God from Ephesians but also his claim that husbands must be ready to give themselves for their wives just as Christ gave himself for the sake of the church (Eph. 5:22–30). Yet the poet has already indicated that Archimago’s powers cannot transform the core of a faithful, sleeping heart, and so Redcrosse is wrong to put stock in the spirit’s deceitful claim that “careless sleepe” has drowned his concern for Una, or in the implication that this lack of care is a sign of allegorical failure. For when Redcrosse actually manages to fall back asleep, the dream renews its assault yet finds its “labour all was vaine” (1.1.55), and the spirit dolefully returns to Archimago to report this failure.

Hence, Archimago must reshape the two spirits summoned from Morpheus to suit his purpose more fittingly in the second canto:

Eftsoones he tooke that miscreated faire,  
 And that false other Spright, on whom he spred  
 A seeming body of the subtile aire,  
 Like a young Squire, in loues and lusty-hed.  
 His wanton dayes that eyer loosely led,  
 Without regard of armes and dreaded fight:  
 Those two he tooke, and in a secret bed,  
 Couered with darknesse and misdeeming night,  
 Them both together laid, to ioy in vaine delight.

(1.2.3)

Archimago spreads over the body of the dream a second body of “subtile aire,” and this act perversely recasts the suit of Pauline armor that Una provides to her hero, as we are told in the letter to Raleigh. It makes sense that, on the one hand, Redcrosse struggles with this insubstantial miscreation, “Couered with darkness and misdeeming night,” while, on the other, there are very substantial and fleshly consequences to said trickery. When Archimago wakes Redcrosse and shows him the two spirits that he has remade, Redcrosse’s “furious ire” (1.2.5) erupts and he nearly slays them both. But Archimago keeps the knight at bay, and Redcrosse then tries unsuccessfully to return to sleep:

Returning to his bed in torment great,  
 And bitter anguish of his guiltie sight,  
 He could not rest, but did his stout heart eat,  
 And wast his inward gall with deepe despight,  
 Yrkesome of life, and too long lingring night.  
 At last faire *Hesperus* in highest skie  
 Had spent his lampe, & brought forth dawning light,  
 Then vp he rose, and clad him hastily;  
 The Dwarfe him brought his steed: so both away do fly.

(1.2.6)

Redcrosse’s “anguish” becomes an agent of insomniac self-cannibalization, a twist of the flesh that gnaws at “his stout heart”—a heart that should remain faithful to Una and to God’s law of faithful love, since the heart is the site of its spiritual inscription.<sup>50</sup> Instead, Redcrosse’s sleepless heart becomes both the target and the engine of a spiteful force of self-consumption, and the

50. See Rom. 1:15, 21–28. On the metaphysical, juridical, and political implications of Paul’s relocation of the Jewish law of circumcision to the law of faith inscribed upon the heart, see Agamben, *The Time That Remains*.

failure to care for his basic bodily need to sleep only augments his lack of trust and faith in Una. The “guiltie sight” lingers traumatically in his sleepless mind, extending its influence to the point that Redcrosse breaks his bond with Una and flees her company. The phrase seems ambiguously to split responsibility for this moment between Archimago and Redcrosse, but I want to argue that Spenser ultimately places the guilt squarely on the hero’s shoulders—obviously, not because of the sight itself but because of Redcrosse’s particular response to it.

At this moment Redcrosse lacks care, both in the sense of giving his bodily demands their due and as a careful evaluation of the state of affairs presented to him by Archimago, especially since these concern his partner in love and faith. But by the same token, one might also say that Redcrosse cares too much, since his insomniac isolation feeds this unhealthy perceptual investment, figured as an overly vigilant watch directed toward Archimago’s empty illusion and its phantasmatic afterlife. When confronted by this trick, rather than give Una the benefit of his faith, Redcrosse assumes the worst and flies away—with both the dwarf and the armor that she initially brought and offered as a token of faith in her hero. Sleep may be an apt metaphor for the lapse of martial or spiritual vigilance, but Spenser also suggests that his use of that metaphor is a ploy and thereby encourages us not to fear the bodily transformation that resembles death and bereaves us of sense—a fear that seems to contribute to Redcrosse’s mistaken sense of guilt and to his insomniac vigilance, both of which damage his health, his quest, and his bond with Una.

Redcrosse’s insomnia, then, also plays upon the idea of emptiness that lurks in Spenser’s punning semantics. While the hero’s sleep seems to open a metaphysiological void or absence into which the dream lasciviously slides, his problematic relationship with (w)holes more pressingly extends into Redcrosse’s waking life—when holes of doubt become sources of self-consuming spite and fear, which further compromise his perception and lead him to abandon both partner and obligations of care. The dream spirit plays a part in this process: the fantasy it abuses refers to the organizing sense function of Redcrosse’s soul, which seems to have been agitated and shaken by his experience of the dream. But it is clearly his insomniac fit that triggers Redcrosse’s ill-advised act of judgment and that causes him to split from Una. This is because Archimago’s trickery works best when Redcrosse is awake and subject to his own mistaken perceptions, for which he does not take care or ethical responsibility before exercising judgment. Spenser’s depiction of the hero’s insomnia suggests that being overly vigilant and attuned to misguided perceptions is much more perilous than the inward turn of sleep. For Redcrosse, insomnia more adequately mirrors his being unduly attached to worldly cares and forms of passionate, fleshly strife that injure the self.

Hence, after this initial scene of Redcrosse’s sleeplessness, Spenser continues to tie moments of nocturnal vigilance to forms of fiery, passionate consumption and mistaken heroism. Redcrosse’s trip to the House of Pride, for instance, entails a suspect moment of insomnia at the beginning of canto 5, which makes it clear that Redcrosse bears the onus for the series of ethical mishaps surrounding his and Una’s bouts with sleepless isolation. The evening before his match with Sansjoy, Redcrosse falls prey to a watchful, fiery passion as he broods on an image of chivalric victory:

The noble hart, that harbours vertuous thought,  
 And is with child of glorious great intent,  
 Can neuer rest, vntill it forth have brought  
 Th’eternall brood of glorie excellent:  
 Such restlesse passion did all night torment  
 The flaming corage of that Faery knight,  
 Deusing, how that doughtie turnament  
 With greatest honour he atchieuen might;  
 Still did he wake, and still did watch for dawning light.

(1.5.1)

Redcrosse’s “noble hart” is full of “virtuous thought” that keeps him awake and watching, as he imagines “glorie excellent” to come. We may feel tempted to read this scene in positive terms, as if his brooding both protects Redcrosse and sets the stage for his martial victory. But that would be overlooking the fact that Spenser only dangles this bit of heroic and spiritual orthodoxy before his readers after having already undermined its truth-value through another scene of insomnia in the previous canto.

There, we were left under the cover of night in the House of Pride, with the entire court having succumbed to Morpheus’s “leaden mace”—except, that is, for Duessa and Sansjoy. Duessa arises “from her resting place” and comes to Sansjoy’s room, where she finds Sansjoy hell-bent on the next day’s fight, “broad awake” and “in troublous fit, / Forecasting, how his foe he might annoy” (1.4.45). Granted, one could argue that Redcrosse’s insomnia is somehow better than Sansjoy’s, since it protects him from an exposed and careless slumber during his night in the house of pride. If so, Spenser would intend this scene as a counterimage to Redcrosse’s virtuous lack of sleep. But we should perhaps linger on Spenser’s use of the word “Deusing” to describe Redcrosse’s plotting, which returns us to the description of his poem’s method in the letter to Raleigh: delivering “good discipline . . . clowdily enwrapped in allegorical deuises” (16). Here, “deusing” suggests that Redcrosse wrongfully invests his passionate care in an idea of martial honor that ultimately means nothing—he is simply wrapping up an empty present, as we shall see through events that soon take place on the battlefield. More than an image of heroism, Redcrosse’s watchful, nocturnal brooding recalls



the infestation of a “guiltie sight” that provokes his insomnia in canto 2 and that feeds an unhealthy form of passionate consumption.<sup>51</sup>

And so, the poem has done much to prepare us to view the scene of Redcrosse’s fervent, insomniac watch in canto 5 as a lack of sleep that is also an ethical lapse, because it constitutes a refusal to care for his embodied earthly life. When the battle finally takes place, Duessa begs Redcrosse to spare Sansjoy’s life, but the hero displays a rabid desire for vengeance that only extends the choleric passion nourished by Redcrosse’s insomnia: “Not all so satisfied, with greedie eye / He sought all round about, his thirstie blade / To bath in bloud of faithless enemy; / Who all that while lay hid in secret shade” (1.5.15). Duessa’s “secret shade” abruptly falls over her lover and shields him from Redcrosse’s piercing eye, whose fiery watch has burned through the night and into the day’s military struggle. These interwoven episodes of insomnia, fiery consumption, and misguided confrontation form a series across cantos 1, 4, and 5 in which the poetics of sleep, insomnia, and care point unfavorably to Redcrosse and to Una. Both are guilty of succumbing, though in different ways and perhaps with different degrees of accountability, to a mutual loss of faith resembling Duessa’s shallow infidelity, and Sansjoy’s “troublous fit [of] Forecasting.” In other words, heroine and hero alike have abandoned their common pursuit of the whole that only they can inhabit, because both have misdirected their passionate care toward unfitting others.

#### IV

When Spenser figures sleep and insomnia as moments of precarious nocturnal isolation, he imagines the self to be vulnerable and lacking in two respects—either psychically disarmed by the loss of reason and sense, or exposed to the corrosive effects of insomnia and unable to creep under the protective shroud of slumber. Both states deprive the self of a necessary good, so obviously these extremes imply a paradox of embodied life that occupies Spenser throughout book 1: sleep is frightening, but so is insomnia, and we must inevitably fall into the troubling void of sleep, because it is a fundamental need of embodied life. In seeking to accommodate this paradox, Spenser deploys the self-effacing, psychosomatic extremes of sleep and insomnia to develop a structure of mutual care between the hero and heroine of book 1. Book 1’s interweaving of sleep and sleeplessness with shifting affections, both false and true, slowly but methodically constructs

51. At this moment Redcrosse also resembles Duessa, when she frivolously tells Sansjoy that she is “Ioyous, to see his ymage in mine eye” (1.4.45), meaning she covets the reflection of her dead lover, Sansfoy, and sees his image in his brother’s face—a fact which only makes her new allegiance to Sansjoy all the more heinous.

this ethical paradigm by showing that couplings of Redcrosse and Una with other characters always fail to embody the forms of care that they give to and require from each other.

Not long after the two are first reunited through the efforts of Arthur, Redcrosse faces his most harrowing encounter with “Despayre” personified. He is tempted by the villain’s promise of an “eternall rest”—or a chance to lay his “soule to sleepe in quiet graue” (1.9.40) and thereby relinquish his life’s cumbersome tasks—which is to say, Redcrosse’s greatest temptation is that of utterly forsaking his cares in a permanent sleep that falsely promises to release him from all worry and concern. Despair’s seductive claim that “Death is the end of woes” then opens yet another psychosomatic fault in Redcrosse, as the fiend’s speech pierces and tunnels “through his heart. . . . And in his conscience made a secret breach” (1.9.48). Una’s partner nearly succumbs to the temptation of abandoning care; it is only her hand that stays the dagger angling toward his throat, as she chastises him: “Why shouldst thou then despeire, that chosen art? / . . . Arise, Sir knight arise, and leaue this cursed place” (1.9.53). So while the canto’s opening quatrain tells readers they will see that “Sir Treuisan flies from Despayre, / Whom Redcrosse knight withstands” (1.1.9), this gives us only a partial glimpse of the truth that actually arrives, since Redcrosse does not exactly stand up to Despair or manage to conquer the fear that Sir Trevisan could not. To say that Redcrosse “withstands” Despair is true only in the sense that by standing with Una that feat is made possible—both in the instance of this encounter and more broadly in Redcrosse knight’s struggles with his innate tendency to succumb to dis-pairing influences. Hence, Una watches and prays in canto 11 as he fights the dragon, twice sleeps the sleep of death and is twice reborn, which marks her as being capable of the lionlike vigilance that Redcrosse lacks. Both times that he falls, “All night she watcht, ne once adowne would lay” (1.11.32). Only Una can give Redcrosse the care he needs, and only Una’s caring presence can watch over his sleep in its physical and spiritual senses.

But while book 1 develops a structure of mutual care between Redcrosse knight and Una, which only they can inhabit and make whole, no final moment of allegorical wholeness ever quite arrives for this holy couple.<sup>52</sup>

52. There is a Heideggerian feel to this situation, though I do not want to overemphasize it given the theological underpinnings of book 1 that seemingly steer Spenser away from a notion of selfhood radically determined by finitude. But in chapter 6 of the first division of *Being and Time*, Heidegger offers a compelling footnote on how he came to identify *care* as the Being of *Dasein*, by way of thinking through Aristotle and Augustine: “The way in which ‘care’ is viewed in the foregoing existential analytic of *Dasein*, is one which has grown upon the author in connection with his attempts to Interpret the Augustinian (i.e., Helleno-Christian) anthropology with regard to the foundational principles reached in the ontology of Aristotle” (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson [New York: Harper

The stubbornly self-divisive energy that dogs the hero of book 1 remains a part of his being, despite the many procedures of correction to which he is eventually subjected in the House of Holiness. While the psychomachic register of the sprite's descent in canto 1 figures the cave of Morpheus as a cavernous emptiness in Redcrosse's soul, and Despair's seductive rhetoric likewise strikes a fault in the hero's conscience, the disciplining purge that attempts to reshape him in canto 10 is applied to his physical body and supposedly leaves "no one corrupted iot" (1.10.26). This course of therapy would seem to have erased any miniscule amount of lingering sin and thus to have effectively restored Redcrosse's spiritual being by way of bodily physic, discipline, and purgation.<sup>53</sup> Yet the stanza that follows this line tacks on another allegorical Christian figure whose aim to evacuate sin only adds to Redcrosse's regimen—"And bitter *Penance* with an yron whip, / Was wont him once to dispel euery day" (1.10.27). Redcrosse's convalescence does not—indeed cannot—purify him in any complete sense, because his contrition is never enough. Not unlike the purging whip of *Penance*, Redcrosse's sleep must bind and "dispel" his body each and every day, as part of a ceaseless cycle that regenerates his life through mortifying and constraining effects. And much like his unconscious sleeping body, the "corrupted iot" may be reduced to a minimum of expression, but it can never be eliminated—Redcrosse's body and the care it requires will always remain part of his earthly tasks because his body is the passionate engine that sustains his life and binds him to Una. And this binding to Una entails caring for his worldly partner, as Contemplation reminds him when Redcrosse longs not to "turn againe / Backe to the world, whose ioyes so fruitlesse are." Contemplation simply responds, "That may not be (said he) ne maist thou yit / Forgo that royall maides bequeathed care" (1.11.63).

If Redcrosse's necessity to sleep suggests that the care of the self remains essential to pursuits of holy truth, then Spenser also grounds that point in an unconscious and even brutish demand of Redcrosse's physical body. He parts ways with Augustinian and other Platonic legacies by resisting a notion of truth as an idealized, singular abstraction or as a transcendent escape

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Perennial, 1962], 492). I take Spenser's interest in an Augustinian idea of fallen humanity (or "throwness" as a dispersion of the created self after sin enters the world), and in an Aristotelian ontology of the human being, to provide philosophical grounds resembling those of Heidegger's investigation.

53. Concerning Spenser's (and more generally early modern Protestantism's) oscillation between forms of spiritual and bodily cure that fold into one another, see Beth Quitslund, "Despair and the Composition of the Self," *Spenser Studies* 17 (2003): 91–106. I am convinced by Quitslund's analysis in this respect, but I doubt her claim that after his visit to the House of Holiness, Redcrosse is completely "cured" of the psychosomatic ailment personified by Despair. I understand the point of this episode to be that such a cure is impossible, so long as Redcrosse knight remains bound to his earthly body.

from bodily encumbrance and the world of passionate sense. Spenser surely entertains these philosophical propositions, but he ultimately refuses to endorse them.<sup>54</sup> Book 1 rather suggests that tasks of thinking and living are entangled material processes and that the paths to be taken involve defeat, rest, and beginning anew with the struggles of flesh and blood that must sustain us, even as they subject us to agonies of privation and passion. As Spenser’s readers, we are left with an image of care that is far from universal in its particular configuration of the perils and demands of love, and at the same time recalcitrant to an ideal of unwavering heroic vigilance—be it Frye’s notion of political authority at the cost of eternal watchfulness or Paul’s model of unyielding spiritual care and Christian militancy. Spenser’s view of these early modern legacies of Pauline theology runs slightly askew to the foremost Reformed perspectives of his world; his exposure of such fault lines also gives reason to pause over the contemporary renewal of enthusiasm for Paul in early modern studies and critical thought.

I have argued that Redcrosse’s physical and fleshly embodiment both demands contravening forms of care and presupposes an incomplete condition that no suit of armor, nor any mortal pairing, can sufficiently cover, contain, or fill—because without this lack-in-being he cannot serve as an emblem of true holiness. Life’s ruptures will always undermine the pursuit of holiness and the desire to become whole. For this reason we must look to mutual trust in care, which Spenser finds to be a necessary and holy Christian virtue, despite its apparent paradoxes. Even the marriage covenant between Redcrosse and Una, which unites the hero with his partner in love and faith, is subjected to a narrative force and obligation to the queen that dis-pairs and again separates the two. For Spenser, the terms of care between persons bear much in common with those binding the holy church and its bodily members: they are fragile and incomplete, always under threat and always in the process of being constituted anew. Book 1 thus refuses to acknowledge the completion of Redcrosse’s pursuits or an end to his contradictory obligations of care. To leave the quest—and question—of holiness open, after all, is the only answer that Spenser’s poem provides.

54. My point here is not to suggest that Spenser is or is not a “Platonist” but rather that his poem directs energies toward what Nietzsche identified as the task of overturning Platonism, a task that Gilles Deleuze argues actually began with Platonic thinking. See his discussion of the “paradoxes of pure becoming,” which betray a buried dualism of copies/simulacra in Platonic thought, in Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 1–4.