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Enter the Dragon: Desire and Meaning in a *True and Wonderfull* Encounter

JAN STIRM

I begin with desire. Much of ecocriticism begins, it seems to me, with desire and critiques of desire.¹ Using an ecocritical approach, I see two frameworks for approaching nature and desire. The first framework is what's seen as a Romantic desire to know "nature," especially in contrast to human culture/society. The ideological framework arising from Romanticism that Timothy Morton identifies in "Beautiful Soul Syndrome" posits "nature" as "over there," the object of investigation, of the gaze, of consumption; in contrast, the subject, the person looking at "nature" is "over here, separated."² Within this framework, "nature" is something apart from the human subject that desires its object but cannot make contact with it through the separation. The second framework is a critique that seeks to dispel the possibility of difference, and especially the possibility of nature without human culture. William Cronon, for example, argues that nature is a human creation, "the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history."³ According to Cronon, "as we gaze into the mirror [nature] holds up to us, we too easily imagine that what we behold is Nature when in fact we see the reflection of our own unexamined longings and desires."⁴ In the first framework, nature is "there" before the gaze, outside of and before human culture, while in the second framework, the gaze constitutes nature as a product of specific human cultural moment(s). Both frameworks center on desire for an authentic, real experience of or with nature.

In both frameworks, nature is frustratingly evasive. Indeed, Timothy Morton's Introduction to *Ecology without Nature* argues that

nature always slips out of reach in the very act of grasping it. At the very moment at which writing seems to be dissolving in the face of the compelling reality it is describing, writing overwhelms what it is depicting and makes it impossible to find anything behind its opaque texture.⁵

Morton points out here the problem with writing about nature, a practice he argues always ends in hiding rather than exposing or expressing whatever nature there might be. The desire to know nature as some "compelling reality," as something to be authentically experienced, as something "there," is not unlike our desires to know texts, as Robert N. Watson suggests in a chapter on *As You Like It* in *Back to Nature*:

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I have queried and quarried the determination to recover the pure original textual identity of *As You Like It*, yet I have . . . been stalking the play, loving it for reflecting my own mind, and claiming to uncover its naked self, its true meaning.⁶

Watson continues, emphasizing that “finding sermons in stones and finding them in Shakespeare may be similar impositions.”⁷ Yet teaching the play, I too point to Duke Senior’s lines and explain that early modern men and women thought of nature as being like a book written by God, requiring careful reading and interpretation, but having the potential to reveal God’s divinity in fullness. The idea of the wilderness as a challenging, dangerous place and also a place where one might, with effort, have an authentic spiritual experience would have been familiar to early modern English people through biblical references, such as in the Moses story or Christ’s forty days in the wilderness.⁸ Like a biblical text, then, nature demands to be read and interpreted.

Morton’s point about how writing “makes it impossible to find anything behind its [nature’s] opaque texture” and Watson’s stalking of *As You Like It* in order to “uncover its naked self, its true meaning” make the connection between a subject’s desire for nature as “compelling reality” and a reader’s desire for text as a “true meaning.”⁹ Duke Senior reads Arden as a text, desiring authentic knowledge of a compelling reality, created to mean and to make meaning available for the careful reader. The careful reader desires to know the meaning “behind” the opaque object of desire, and that object is at once nature and text, text and nature. The reader desires an authentic experience of meaning in both.

Thus, we readers might desire to know an early modern text in some full way, while the text itself reveals desires to know nature, to define and understand it in different ways. It is at this intersection of desire that I take up a report of a dragon in St. Leonard’s forest, Sussex in August 1614. The one thing I am absolutely sure of, despite my desire to find some there there, is that there was no dragon in Sussex in 1614. Yet, in 1614, John Trundle printed a pamphlet, *True and Wonderfull*, subscribed by John Steele, Christopher Holder, and “a widdow woman dwelling near *Faygate*” reporting a “True and Wonderfull” encounter with a “monstrous Serpent (or dragon)” in Sussex, claiming on its title page that the serpent or dragon was “yet living, to the great annoyance and diverse slaughters both of Men and Cattell, by his strong and violent poison,” and furthering its argument with a woodcut showing the dragon, along with two seemingly dead people, a dead dog, and a standing dog facing what seems to be poisonous dragon breath.¹⁰

In its very title, *True and Wonderfull* inscribes uncertainty about the supposed event it claims to represent and explain, since the thing is a “serpent (or dragon).”¹¹ Does the “or” here indicate an alternative naming or a redefinition? “Serpent” seems a broader category, one that includes snakes as well as dragons and other beasts.¹² In *True and Wonderfull*, the parenthetical “or” suggests on one level a sort of equivalence between the two, but the category difference suggests almost a second look, as if what’s identified first within the broader category “serpent” becomes on closer inspection a narrower category,

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“dragon.”¹³ Throughout, the text slides between serpentness and dragoness, teasing the reader’s desire. The woodcut on the title page (reproduced later in the text) narrows and defines the “serpent (or dragon)” too, but doesn’t look like typical illustrations of dragons, such as St. George’s.¹⁴

The anonymous pamphlet *The Flying Serpent, or, Strange News out of Essex* supports the early modern slippage I claim between “serpent” and “dragon.” Throughout this pamphlet the “creature” is named as a serpent (and not a dragon), though unlike the Sussex serpent/dragon, the illustration shows that this creature has wings (which look entirely inadequate for flight), but no feet.¹⁵ Like the Sussex serpent/dragon, this serpent has an arrow tipped tongue (and may have a second tongue), is 8 or 9 feet long, and is reported to be venomous.

True and Wonderful presents (and perhaps creates) a serpent/dragon as a “natural” phenomenon, which reveals a Christian God’s intervention in both “natural” and human activities to be read as Duke Senior reads his sermons in stones in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*. The pamphlet reads the serpent/dragon from a sort of natural history perspective as well as from historical and theological perspectives. Each reading attempts to create and discover the authentic nature of serpents/ dragons, and of this attack specifically, exposing how desire to know nature works when nature is “already known” as a divine creation. Exploring the various desires to know nature in the case of a clearly non-natural dragon helps reveal desires as desires: the printer’s desires to profit from the pamphlet, the anonymous writer’s desires to define and create meaning in the “event”; and modern readers’ (and my own) desires to find some real meaning and occasion for the text.

The pamphlet was entered in the Stationers’ Register by John Trundle on 24 August 1614 as

Entred for his coppie under Master Warden Leakes hand. A Discourse of a Monstrous Serpent nere Horsham in Sussex with this caution that if any exceptions be taken he shall stand to the peril therof himself.¹⁶

Interestingly, on 5 September he records Henry Gosson’s submission, “Received of him for printing a ballet of the manner of the killing of the serpent of Sussex.”¹⁷ While neither entry in the Stationers’ Register calls the serpent a dragon (though the title page of the surviving pamphlet does), the Gosson entry uses “the” as if there’s one serpent, a serpent well-known enough to be “the serpent” rather than Trundle’s “a serpent.” (I’ve found no modern record of such a pamphlet printed by Henry Gosson, so it either wasn’t printed or hasn’t made it to electronic records.)

Gerald Johnson notes that the serpent was memorable enough to be mentioned disparagingly in three later texts, including a ballad of 1652 which “promises: ‘heer’s no Sussex Serpent to fright you here in my bundle, nor was it e-ver Printed for the Widdow *Trundle*.’”¹⁸ In Ben Jonson’s *News from the New World Discovered in the Moone* (1620), a Jacobean masque, the Factor explains that

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I have hope to erect a Staple for newes ere long, whether all shall be brought, and thence againe vented under the name of Staple-newes; and not trusted to your printed Conundrums of the serpent in *Sussex*, or the witches bidding the Devill to dinner at *Derbie*: Newes, that when a man sends them downe to the Shieres where they are said to be done, were never there to be found.¹⁹

Jonson's Factor wants to create a marketplace for genuine news rather than news like the "serpent in Sussex" which would lack verification from the places they were supposed to have happened. Jonson, too, uses "the serpent," giving a sense of its being well-known and unique. In Richard Brathwaite's *Whimzies: or, a new cast of characters* (1631), Brathwaite gives a character of a ballad-monger who can "finde you out a *Sussex Dragon*" or other monster.²⁰ Here, Brathwaite refers to "a" dragon, rather than a serpent or "the" dragon. In all three cases, the reference disparages the veracity of Trundle's text, and suggests that Trundle's pamphlet itself was the memorable event rather than that it recorded a memorable external event.

In *True Relations*, Frances Dolan argues that "what a reader apprehended as true depended on his or her relation to the perspective espoused by the text in question."²¹ Like many of the texts Dolan discusses, *True and Wonderfull* begins with an epistle to the reader asserting the truth of its claims, arguing that

[t]he Corruption is nere us, Sussex; The Time Present, August; The Subject, a serpent; strange, yet now a neighbour to us: and it were more then impudence to forse a lie so neere home, that every man might turne in our throates: believe it, or reade it not, or reade it (doubting) for I believe e're thou has read this little All, thou will not doubt of one, but believe there are many Serpents in *England*.²²

The letter is subscribed by "AR."²³ In this letter, AR invites the reader to participate, first as a reader, perhaps doubting, but then invites the reader to read the text in relation to his/her general knowledge and knowledge of the local area, from which an untrue report might be denied. What's really important to my interpretation is that attending to the "artfulness of texts, stories, and fictions," as Dolan argues, "one might well say that all 'true relations' from the seventeenth-century are necessarily fictions without assuming them to be untrue."²⁴ Rather, the text is "defined by its ability to transact a relation between the event and representation, between reporter and reader."²⁵ The title asserts both the truth of the relation and the fullness of wonder the reader should experience; that is, it invites the reader to begin with both belief and wonder. The relationships of desires developed in *True and Wonderfull* include the reporter as a reader of nature as the Christian God's creation' of other texts, historical, classical, and religious; and the reader as a builder of relations between the text and his/her beliefs.

While *True and Wonderfull* opens with an epistle (subscribed by "AR") asserting its credibility, the pamphlet ends with the claim that John Steele,

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Christopher Holder, and “a widdow woman dwelling near Faygate” have “seen this serpent,” as have “divers others as the Carrier of Horsam, who lieth at the white Horse in Southwark” and can “certifie the truth of all.”²⁶ In contrast to AR’s anonymity, the ending teases the reader with specific names without locations, and with the locations of the unnamed widow and Carrier (tantalizingly close to London in Southwark).²⁷ Thus, at the end of the pamphlet, the reader is invited back into the relation of reader, reporter (AR), and promised that other reporters would tell much the same tale. Whether or not the discourse is “true” in any sense, it surely inspires wonder.

While we modern readers are probably most desirous of a description of the serpent/dragon and the “slaughters” it’s supposed to have committed, *True and Wonderfull* turns first to a discourse on the natural history of serpents, noting that while “God by his word created all things,” since the creation, “they are ingendered either naturally or prodigiously.”²⁸ The text invites the reader to imagine the “carnal copulation” of “beasts wanting feet” before explaining that serpents lay eggs, except for vipers, who “hatch their young ones in the wombe,” calling this a “prodigious generation, horrible to our nature.”²⁹ The natural history thus leads away from dragons and towards the broader category of serpents, most familiarly snakes.³⁰ The text then claims that dragons and serpents are abundant in Phrygia and Ethiopia, and recalls a “Serpent or winged Dragon brought unto Francis the French King. . . by a country-man: who had slain the serpent with a spade,” explicitly connecting serpents and dragons.³¹ It also reports an attack of “serpents with feete and winges, neere Stiria” in 1543.³² Dragons as a subcategory in this text seem to have feet and wings, but the larger category of serpents includes things that have neither, including snakes.

Thus, while the text includes a “natural” means of reproduction for serpents as snakes (“wanting feet”), serpents as dragons (with feet and wings) appear in its narrative relations without generation. They simply come or are brought. That is, the turn to nature for explanation fails to provide stories of generations for dragons. Instead, the text asserts the Biblical origins of serpents and the enmity claimed with mankind and marks dragons specifically as punishments. Problematically, “as the hidious creatures are hurtfull to man, so also are they most Inamored of man . . . which shows that it is a worke of divinitie as a just punishment to our Sinnes, to turne their affable natures to a most ravenous and devouring crueltie.”³³ The pamphlet gives narratives with dragons falling in love, licking a person’s hair and face, leaving their “desert habitation” to follow a person “like a spaniel” and becoming lovers of women.³⁴ *True and Wonderfull* sees these doting dragons as protecting people from sin. Dangerous dragons, in contrast, are specifically punishment, a sort of *deus ex machina* for the Christian God. For example, one of the short narratives tells of a man convicted of manslaughter, who is offered a pardon for attempting to kill a dragon. He kills the dragon, but raising his sword in victory, is himself killed by the dragon’s dripping blood. The text interprets this as “a heavie judgement of God.”³⁵ The point is clear, and made again in the next narrative: Dangerous, aggressive dragons are a sign of God’s judgment and punishment for human sin.

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After the discussion of “both cause and effect, sinne and Serpent,” *True and Wonderfull* “leave[s] oure morrall Serpents” for “the description of the Historically one.”³⁶ It describes the Sussex “Serpent (or dragon as some call it)” as “nine feet or rather more in length,” shaped somewhat like a cart, but with “a quantitie of thickness in the middest, and somewhat smaller at both ends.”³⁷ It has a white ring around its neck, and “so much as is discovered under his bellie appeareth to be red,” although the reporter acknowledges that seeing it closely enough to be sure would have been too dangerous. It has large feet, or not, “for the eye may be there deceived.”³⁸ And finally, it has growths on its back, each as “big as a large foote ball” which some think “will in time grow to wings;” the football image is at once familiar and, because of its placement, strange.³⁹ The serpent/dragon’s seeming immaturity here recalls the problem of generation while making it less mythic, less monstrous. This effect is furthered through the comparison of size with the familiar “foote ball.”

The description relies on uncertainty and revision in the same way that the title’s parenthetical “or dragon” does. It sets out a claim and then amends it. For example, while the size description, length, and shape give a sense of increasing certainty, other aspects of the description increase uncertainty. Similarly, the two growths on its back aren’t wings, but “as some thinke” may grow into wings.⁴⁰ The gradual “discovery” (with a sense more like uncovering for modern readers) is uncertain, the problem being especially important in regard to the uncertain feet. This uncertainty contributes to the difficulty of classifying the beast as a serpent, including snakes with no feet, or as a dragon, typically with feet and wings. The lack of belonging to one clear category teases the reporter and reader’s desires to know, to name, the experience.

The text goes on to say that the serpent can spew its venom about four rods.⁴¹ It is thought to live in a rabbit warren and leaves a slime trail like a snail (and unlike a snake). It has poisoned a man and a woman coming too near, and two dogs; the bodies are reported to be “sweld” though not preyed upon.⁴² The lack of predation points away from a “natural” predator and towards moral judgment.

The woodcut (both on the front of the pamphlet and within the pamphlet) looks like it was either cut to suit the description or the description was written to fit it. Neither recalls dragon images from the period familiarly seen in illustrations of St. George, for example. However, like St. George’s dragon, it is dangerous. The woodcut uses opposition and stark contrasts. The serpent/dragon takes up the center of the illustration, which shows his feet clearly, with three forward claws; the front feet also show a single backwards claw. It has a long tail with one curl (perhaps to fit in the frame), and rounded, upright external ears (looking almost bear-like). It stands somewhat erect, with an open mouth showing several pointed teeth and a tongue with an arrow-like tip (unlike a typically split tongue of a snake). The scales on its back are black and white in a sort of checkerboard pattern, which makes the white collar and rounded growths on its back stand out. The underside appears to be showing white scales.

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On the top right, an upright white dog with its tail raised faces left to the serpent/dragon's mouth, from which comes the arrow-ended tongue and seeming venom. Below the upright dog is a black dog on its side or back (depending on the perspective) facing away from the dragon and with a straight, outstretched tail, and a white uninked spot for an eye. Below the black dog appears a woman in white lying on her back or side, arms stretched up towards the serpent/dragon, mouth seemingly open. The serpent/dragon's front feet almost touch her left arm. (Thus, she and the white dog face towards the dragon.) Below her, near the bottom right corner, lies a man, mostly in black except for his lower legs, facing, like the black dog, away from the dragon. His left arm reaches away towards the corner of the woodcut. Thus the woodcut seems to illustrate the reported moment when the serpent/dragon poisoned a man and woman being too near, and two dogs. The white dog may be about to get poisoned in the moment of action.⁴³

Finally, in the upper-left area of the illustration stands a lone tree, apparently in the far distance, standing as a synecdoche for St. Leonard's Forrest in Sussex. (The tree's about the height of the dog, but stands on raised ground, and looks very tree-like rather than bush like, with a single trunk and almost conical shape, thus providing the appearance of being distant from the action). Timothy Morton argues that since "forests are iterations of trees [they are] highly uncanny," and "a quintessential image of the text."⁴⁴ The singularity of the lone tree in this illustration is thus especially notable. It stands for a forest, the very essence of which is multiplicity.⁴⁵ The reader both can and can't see the forest for the tree. It has the potential to speak, to provide the "tongue in trees" that Duke Senior in *As You Like It* seeks for authentic knowledge. But as with writing and meaning, nature here evades illustration.

Recently, Vin Nardizzi has written convincingly about the importance of forests in early modern England, and about concerns with deforestation, especially in areas near London, where demand for lumber and wood products was high.⁴⁶ Nardizzi quotes from John Manwood's *A Treatise and Discourse of the Laws of the Forrest* (1598), who defines a forest as "certen territorie of woody grounds & fruitfull pastures, priuiledged for wild beasts and foules . . . to rest and abide in."⁴⁷ Manwood's definition emphasizes both the productivity (of wood and pasture) and the space for wild animals.⁴⁸ *True and Wonderfull's* serpent/dragon problematizes the forest, which may remain productive, but becomes unavailable because of the "great annoyance and diverse slaughters both of men and Catell, by his strong and violent poison."⁴⁹ Nardizzi also quotes from a statute of 1585 "for the preservation of timber in the weilds of the counties of Sussex, Surrey, and Kent," noting that

it is thought that the great plenty of timber which hath grown in these parts hath been greatly decayed and spoiled, and will in short time be utterly consumed and wasted if some convenient remedy therin be not timely provided.⁵⁰

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Forests, especially those relatively near London, were areas of concern because of potential deforestation. Is this lone tree representing deforestation, or does it stand for a whole multitude, a forest? The reader is teased by the uncertainty, desirous to know what the lone tree means.

What is one to make of this description, this serpent of uncertain dragonness? The reporter of *True and Wonderfull* reveals that despite the assertions of validity at the beginning and end of the text, this serpent is not “litteral to be received” but rather should be “fear’d as an Eclips” or other prodigious natural happening, understood as a text to be read and interpreted from God. In this case, the serpent represents the “Serpentine sinnes that live amongst us.”⁵¹ Those sins include “back biters and slanderers” whose “breaths often poison” other peoples’ reputations, and also “drunkards,” and more interestingly, “the Serpentine sisterhood of Brotherly, the diseased strumpetrie of the Suburbs.”⁵² In this interpretation, the white ring around the dragon’s neck is likened to suburbs ringing London. This would include, no doubt, Southwark, where the Carrier is supposed to be located. This suburb is both the location of the sins producing the serpent and of a guarantor of the truth of the narrative. If the ring is the suburbs, does that make the serpent/dragon London? Again, the ring’s potential meaning in allegory builds further uncertainty and greater desire to know.

The serpent/dragon is at once a natural creature the text desires to understand through the natural history of reproduction, and also a creature whose origins go back to the Christian version(s) of Genesis, and also a serpent/dragon that appears anew as a result of human sin. In its metaphorical state, it’s descended from the Edenic serpent, inheritor of the God-decreed enmity with mankind. But the text also uses it as a pretext to describe dragons enamored of humans, almost dog-like, without that legacy of enmity. Its descriptions and interpretations stage it as both serpent and dragon, shaped like a cart but also (with a nod to Anne Elk), “thin at one end, much much thicker in the middle, and then thin again at the far end.”⁵³ It has a red belly, or not. It has feet, or not. It has a white ring around its neck, but this mark might be a sign of suburban sin. Or not.⁵⁴ It has growths that might become wings, or not.

As I began with desires, my own desires to understand this text, to find the “real” in this impossible narrative, I end with desires. Ecocriticism asks us to think about humans in and of nature and the environment, and problematizes both of those terms. It asks us to think about encounters and the ways that humans understand and attribute meaning to encounters, and it recognizes that we enact our desires by attributing meaning to encounters. *True and Wonderfull* excites and frustrates desires through its assertions and uncertainty. The text is the relation of a narrative whose truth-value is guaranteed by AR and the subscribers; but it is also relates a tale that is not to be understood as literal, a narrative impossibility.

The problem for the modern reader is that the serpent/dragon isn’t natural for us in the ways that Duke Senior’s deer or Corin’s sheep are, nor are we generally satisfied with biblical explanations of creation. Nor is the serpent/dragon mythic in quite the way that St. George’s dragon is. The text

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enables a metaphorical reading while refusing a strictly allegorical one. Instead, the serpent/dragon exists in multiple and none of the registers, sliding between them out of our grasp. This problem tends to leave us looking for more, wondering what, if anything, could have happened in St. Leonard's forest, and why the serpent/dragon was famous enough for other writers to allude to it, while seeming to have left no "real record." But ecocriticism asks us to question the "real" of our relations to "nature" and our desires for a "real" in nature and in history. In this case, the pamphlet, too, prompts us to question our desires to know it as a text, and to imagine a historical event, a "real" happening that could prompt its publication. The obviously fictional nature *True and Wonderfull* makes looking for an authentic/real event or nature "behind" the text impossible, and thus an ecocritical reading of the text reveals how desires drive our readings texts and nature. These desires are less exposed in many texts, but no less important or authentic.



Facsimile image from *True and Wonderfull. A Discourse relating a strange and monstrous Serpent (or Dragon)* published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. (Image produced by ProQuest as part of *Early English Books Online*.)

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Notes

1. I thank Holly Dugan and Karl Steel for leading the 2015 SAA seminar on “Animal Encounters,” for which I drafted this essay, and the participants of the seminar. I also thank my senior seminar “Early Modern Ecologies” participants from fall 2014 for discussions on ecocriticism and *True and Wonderful*. Finally, I thank Alan Benson, director of the UWEC Center for Writing Excellence, for helpful feedback.

2. Timothy Morton, “Beautiful Soul Syndrome,” last modified May 19 2009, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/15605734/Beautiful-Soul-Syndrome#scribd>, 10.

3. William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *The Great New Wilderness Debate*, eds. J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson (Athens, GA and London: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 471.

4. Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness,” 471.

5. Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 19.

6. Robert Watson, *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 107.

7. Watson, *Back to Nature*, 107.

8. Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness,” 473.

9. Morton, *Ecology without Nature*, 19; and Watson, *Back to Nature*, 107.

10. A.R., *True and Wonderful. A Discourse relating a strange and monstrous Serpent (or Dragon) lately discovered, and yet living, to the great annoyance and diverse slaughters both of Men and Cattell, by his strong and violent poyson, In Sussex two miles from Horsam, in a woode called S. Leonards Forrest, and thirtie miles from London, this present month of August. 1614. With the true Generation of Serpents* (London, 1614), *Early English Books Online*, accessed February 5, 2016. I have silently replaced long s with modern s in quotations, but retain the original spelling otherwise.

11. A.R., *True and Wonderful*, sig. A.

12. In addition, definition 1B from the OED, “a creeping thing or reptile, esp. one of a venomous or noxious kind,” provides textual evidence from 1553 to 1691, referring to reptiles, salamanders, and lizards. See “serpent, n.,” OED Online, December 2015, Oxford University Press, accessed February 5, 2016.

13. A.R., *True and Wonderful*, sig. A.

14. A.R., *True and Wonderful*, sig. B4.

15. A.R., *True and Wonderful*, sig. A2, sig. Av.

16. See *A transcript of the registers of the company of stationers of London*, ed. Edward Arber (London, 1875), 254, accessed August 20, 2015, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924092496045;view=1up;seq=559>. I’m very interested in the cautionary note that’s part of this entry. I looked at a number of entries, and saw relatively few with cautionary notes. However, Trundle seems to have gotten his share of them. For example, an entry on 12 March 1614 shows “entred for his copie, under Master Jackson’s hand and by direction from master Warden Leaks, to be printed at his owne perrill without further authoritie A booke called *The Cold Winter*” (532). Another entry from on 15 September 1615 shows, “entred for his copie under the hand of Master Warden Lownes a booke called newes out of Lancashire or the strange and miraculous revelacon of a murther by a ghost a calf a pigeon &etc. But not to be printed without further lawful authoritie” (571). According to Gerald D. Johnson’s study on Trundle, he was printing religiously interested material as sensationalized news. See his “John Trundle and the Book-Trade 1603-1626,” *Studies in Bibliography* 39 (1986): 177-99. Johnson handles the dragon report briefly, because he’s primarily interested in Trundle’s work as a printer rather than in the ways the text works to think about the desire to know nature, and through nature, a Christian God (193). Similarly, Tessa Watt characterizes Trundle as “notorious for the publication of sensational news items from every conceivable source, such as the story of the headless bear in *A Miracle of Miracles* (1614).” See Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 289. It might be momentarily entertaining to consider the conception of Trundle’s sources in light of his interest in the reproduction of serpents in *True and Wonderful*. David Cressy explores several pamphlets about

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monstrosities in *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

17. *A transcript of the registers of the company of stationers of London*, 254. Gosson and Trundle seem to have been affiliated. For more, see Johnson, “John Trundle and the Book-Trade.”

18. Johnson, “John Trundle and the Book-Trade,” 193.

19. Benjamin Jonson, *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson* (London, 1640), *Early English Books Online*, accessed February 5, 2016, 40.

20. Richard Brathwaite, *Whimzies: or, a new cast of characters* (London, 1631), *Early English Books Online*, accessed February 9, 2016, sig. B3.

21. Dolan, *True Relations*, 10.

22. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. A2.

23. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. A2r-v.

24. Dolan, *True Relations*, 18.

25. Dolan, *True Relations*, 18-19.

26. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. C3.

27. The Southwark connection is, perhaps, all the more interesting to modern readers of early modern literature, especially drama. This connection will become more important with the description of the serpent/dragon.

28. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. A4. The assertion here that “God by his word created all things” again connects nature and texts as creations that people desire/need to read/interpret for authentic meaning.

29. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. B.

30. Interestingly, it omits spontaneous generation, though that was a familiar belief about reptiles.

31. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. B.

32. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. B. A marginal gloss in the texts says that Stiria is a town in “Germanie.”

33. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. Bv.

34. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. Bv.

35. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. B2v.

36. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. B3v.

37. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. B3v.

38. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. B3v.

39. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. B4.

40. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. B4.

41. A rod is about 16 1/2 feet, thus the serpent can seemingly spit about 65 feet, or about 7 times its length. See “rod, n.1,” OED Online, December 2015, Oxford University Press, accessed February 5, 2016.

42. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. B3v.

43. The only other pamphlet representation of an attack by a similar creature, *The Flying Serpent, or, Strange News out of Essex* shows the winged serpent with numerous soldiers armed with pikes and other weapons. Like the Sussex serpent/dragon, the Essex serpent is shown in a side view, with its tail curled to fit the rectangular image. In both images, the full side view seems designed to enable the viewer to examine the creature laid out, much as modern field guides often provide an image of a bird, for example, that’s much clearer and easier than the casual viewer usually sees when birding. Certainly, in both cases, the clear side view is unavailable to anyone in the image. (*The Flying Serpent* illustration also includes a wonderful sun with a human face taking up the upper left corner.) See *The Flying Serpent, or, Strange News out of ESSEX being A true Relation of a Monstrous Serpent which hath diverse times been seen at a Parish called Henbam on the Mount within four Miles of Saffron-Walden* (London, 1669), *Early English Books Online*, accessed February 5, 2016.

44. Morton, *Ecology without Nature*, 178.

45. The lone tree in the well-known woodcut of Macbeth and Banquo meeting the three witches in Holinshed’s *Chronicles* does similar work, standing for “the woodes and fields” in the text. See Raphael Holinshed, *The firste [laste] volume of the chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*

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conteyning the description and chronicles of England, 2nd ed. (London, 1577), *Early English Books Online*, accessed February 5, 2016, 243.

46. Vin Nardizzi, *Wooden Os: Shakespeare's Theaters and England's Trees* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

47. John Manwood, *A Treatise and Discourse of the Laws of the Forrest* (London, 1598), sig. 1r; cited in Nardizzi, *Wooden Os*, 65.

48. Recall that the serpent is thought to live in a rabbit warren, an area of potential productivity, though perhaps limited in who has the rights to “harvest” rabbits.

49. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. 1.

50. A.R., Nardizzi, *Wooden Os*, 64.

51. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. C.

52. A.R., *True and Wonderfull*, sig. C. I don't know what to make of the “Sisterhood of Brotherly” except to think, perhaps, that the composer has reversed the “r” and “l” from “brothelry.”

53. “Anne Elk's Theory of Brontosauruses,” *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, BBC (London: BBC, 16 Nov. 1972).

54. “British Snakes - The Glass Snake,” *British Wildlife Guide*, accessed February 16, 2016, www.wildlifebritain.com. In one of my efforts to seek some sort of “real” in this narrative, I looked up different snakes in England. Interestingly, the largest of the three native species, the Glass Snake, is also known as the Ringed Snake, because it has a white ringlike feature just behind its head (visible in pictures), but not a red belly. It grows to about five feet, and is non-venomous. (“British Snakes - The Glass Snake.”)

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