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Temporal Instability, Wildernesses, and the Otherworld in Early Modern Drama

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Abstract: This article shows how temporal disorder diffuses into the wildernesses within early modern English drama. Those areas beyond the walls of cities and castles in—among other plays—*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Macbeth* thus flit free from the temporal rules that construct a play's quotidian world, and the conspicuous partitions that enclose an otherworld in medieval iconography no longer seem clear within them. I argue that these spaces enact an unfamiliar and chaotic 'otherworld' within quotidian space, and characters' ventures into these outer regions at certain points resemble movements into an 'afterlife'. Journeys into a wilderness, then, parallel a shift from one temporal sphere to another, and characters encounter a post-death state of being *within* the play's present.

Keywords: purgatorial existence; woodland; ecocriticism; supernatural; travel narratives

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1. Introduction

The 'evolution of Christian eschatology in the first centuries of our era', argued Daniel P. Walker, reduced the 'orthodox afterlife' to an 'untidy, evidently botched form' (Walker 1964, p. 34), and Peter Marshall has observed more recently how the 'polemical and strategic requirements of Reformation theology' shed light on 'the beginnings of a process by which hell could become less emphatically 'real'' (Marshall 2010, p. 298). But this article shows how those wildernesses, forests, woodlands, and rural landscapes in early modern English drama convey an 'afterlife' that flits free from those vivid pictorial representations of pre-Reformation cosmology, and an extraordinarily diverse range of locations beyond the safeties of the early modern abode conveys vividly to the playgoer a 'hell' closer to home. These spaces flit free from the remits of a play's present, and those individuals who venture into them take their place in an 'afterlife' *within* the everyday spaces of a play's world.

A meeting with a 'show of eight kings' (IV.i.110.SD) within a wilderness outside the walls of a castle in *Macbeth* (c. 1606) (Shakespeare 2020d) provides a good example. The ghost of Banquo comes onstage with this group, and their presence onstage unsettles greatly the play's protagonist:

> **Macbeth**: Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo; down.
> Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs. And thy hair,
> Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first.
> A third is like the former. Filthy hags,
> Why do you show me this?—A fourth? Start, eyes!
> What, will the line stretch out to th' crack of doom?
> Another yet? A seventh? I'll see no more;
> And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass
> Which shows me many more; and some I see
> That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry.
> Horrible sight. Now I see 'tis true;

> For the blood-boltered Banquo smiles upon me
> And points at them for his.
> *Exeunt kings and Banquo*.
>
> (IV.i.110–23.SD)[1]

The stage directions that conclude this passage are unsettling, and the '[e]xeunt' (123.SD) of the phantom and his entourage makes ambiguous their movement offstage. Banquo, then, may not exit the stage in a way that we would expect; a possible exit departure offstage may replace a descent beneath the stage, and those wildernesses within the remits of the play's present take the place of that hidden under-stage area to which the apparitions descend earlier in the scene (IV.i.70.SD; IV.i.79.SD) (Stern 2004, pp. 24–25; Power 2011, p. 276). This spectre, then, may not go 'down' (110) to an afterlife below after all.

This unorthodox exit offstage conveys the temporal instability of *Macbeth*'s heathland, and those uncharted landscapes that lurk beyond the portcullises of the castle seem to accommodate entities from an uncertain future. Facets of an infernal otherworld muddle the cosmological geography of the play elsewhere; those cauldrons in hell that await 'those women who besmirch their husbands' honour' in Jean-Baptiste Poquelin's *L'Ecole des Femmes* (c. 1622) take shape in the vessel that bubbles a 'hell broth' (IV.i.19) within the open expanses of *Macbeth*'s wildernesses (Steinberger 1992, p. 148), and the Harrowing that figures at the gates of hell disseminates into those incessant knocks at the 'south entry' (II.i.37) of the keep (Schreyer 2010).

Aspects of an afterlife bleed into everyday spaces in other dramatological works. Those hidden spaces beneath the 'homely stairs' (V.v.58) of Barabas's dwelling, for instance, contain another cauldron in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1590) (Marlowe 2008b); punishments from an ominous future take shape when Barabas cries for help from within it, and the scene 'visually recapitulates medieval pictures of sinners falling into hell' (Cary 1992, p. 194). And those 'ghosts [that] howl' from within the citadel of Atreus in Seneca's *Thyestes* take the shape of the 'fearful and confused cries' (II.ii.102), which echo from within those forested regions outside the walls of Rome in *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1594) (Shakespeare 2020g) (Perry 2019, p. 23); outer regions collapse the partitions that separate traditionally everyday space from an otherworldly counterpart and post-death states of being morph seamlessly into quotidian landscapes.

2. Hell Mouths and Horror: Distancing the Lands of the Dead

As Alan E. Bernstein has shown, the idea of a spatially separate otherworld elsewhere is not new: those who resided between the Euphrates and the Tigris in the third millennium B.C.E. believed that the dead resided in a faraway place, and the *Epic of Gilgamesh* spoke about a 'land of the dead at great remove from the human communities of Babylon' (Bernstein 1996, pp. 3–4; Tigray 1982). Another distant space accommodates the late Eurydice in Greek mythology, and her husband Orpheus journeys below to negotiate her release from Hades. But his enterprise does not go well: while the musician charms successfully Hades and his wife—Persephone—with music from his harp, a resurrected Eurydice returns immediately to Hades when Orpheus glances backwards, remaining incarcerated within an otherworld that Orpheus cannot access again (Burkett 1985, p. 195). *Sheol* (תשאול) also resists the dictums of a quotidian world in Hebrew traditions, and Scriptural accounts depict this area as a distinct geographical location (Rudman 2001, p. 241). Water, Dominic Rudman observes, figures conspicuously in this landscape; a descent into *Sheol* invokes 'the image of water closing over the individual', and the tempestuous waters within which these individuals submerge themselves convey the '*absence* of order and creation' (Rudman 2001, pp. 243–44).

These underworlds lay behind conspicuous thresholds, which separated them from quotidian space; volcanic craters provided openings to an infernal place thousands of miles beneath the ground in Catholic writings (Gurevich 1998, p. 183), and the tormented 'soules of men & women' utter 'miserable sound[s] & noise[s]' from the caldera of Mount

Hecla, a volcano in Iceland (Poole 2011, p. 116). In other cases, those abysses that appeared 'toward the west outside the curve of the earth' formed cosmological thresholds of their own, and a hell lay behind gaping chasms that split 'like a terrible mouth . . . flung open for the purpose of engulfing' in Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber divinorum operum* (c. 1163–73) (von Bingen 1965, p. 188). The gaping jaws of a 'dragon-like head with glowing eyes and sharp teeth' (Sheingorn 1992, p. 3) also figured in a thirteenth-century manuscript of Hildegard's work and, as Joyce R.N. Galpern has observed, the evil nature of Satan and his domain disseminated into the open mouths of the 'Behemoth, or huge land beast and . . . the Leviathan or sea monster' (Galpern 1977, p. 142).

Elaborate thresholds distanced the afterlife in dramatological performance, too, and an iron swing detached heaven, hell, and the performance space from one another in the Mercers' Last Judgement, which formed part of the York Cycle in 1433. This device may have enabled Deus to 'fly vppe to heauen' (Johnston and Dorrell 1971, p. 31), and the play's hell lurk lurked beneath the playing platform of the pageant wagon (Sheingorn 1992, p. 6; Holding 1980). A 'netted enclosure for the souls' also encloses an afterlife in a Harrowing play at Chester, and accounts of performance noted a 'hell mouth with collapsing gates', which provided a striking entryway into the depths of the pageant wagon within which long-dead souls resided (Meredith 1992, p. 161). The walls of a tall, covered, and netted tower likewise cordoned off an afterlife in stage directions of the Paris Resurrection, a play for the fixed stage, and the mesh that cloaked the structure shrouded an infernal clime from those areas where spectators stood watching:

> Limbo . . . should be made like a tall square tower surrounded by nets so that through the said nets one can see from the audience the souls who are inside when the Anima Christi has forced his way inside there. But before his coming the said tower shall be provided with black cloth curtains all round which will cover the said nets and prevent [the souls] from being seen until the entrance of the Anima Christi, and then the said curtains shall be cunningly pulled aside on small rings so that the people in the audience can see inside the said tower through the said nets. (Meredith 1992, p. 160)

Protestant iconoclasm suppressed 'actual representations of divine mysteries', and 'non-literal conceptions of hell' replaced the explicit imagery that conveyed traditional ideas in medieval theatre (Cary 1992, p. 187). Those partitions that enclosed an underworld remained, however; the floor of the dais shrouded unmarked spaces beneath the stage, which became environments that suggested—but did not directly stage—hellish landscapes, and the trapdoor that led to these hidden areas became an 'entrance to hell' (Stern 2004, p. 25). These obscure areas contained the furies in Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *The Tragedie of Gorboduc* (c. 1561) and, in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1592), a maddened Horatio considers those spaces beneath the stage to contain his dead son, Horatio, digging unsuccessfully through the stage floor with his dagger in order to bring his late son to 'show his deadly wounds' (III.xii.70.SD–72).

The floor of the stage obscures another hidden region in *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1594), and Martius, one of the sons of Titus, discovers the dead body of Bassianus within it, calling up to his brother—Quintus—from below:

> **Martius**: Upon his bloody finger he doth wear,
> A precious ring that lightens all this hole,
> Which like a taper in some monument
> Doth shine upon the dead man's earthly cheeks
> And shows the ragged entrails of this pit.
> So pale did shine the moon on Pyramus
> When he did lie bathed in maiden blood.
> O brother, help me with thy fainting hand—
> If fear hath made me faint, as me it hath—
> Out of this foul devouring receptacle,

As hateful as Cocytus' misty mouth.

(II.ii.226–36)

The space within which Martius finds himself accommodates the 'misty mouth' (226) of the Cocytus, a river within a classical hell, and a sinister iconography from prior Christian traditions disseminates into his dialogue. Indeed, a 'foul devouring receptacle' (235) ingests the speaker; Martius stands within its 'ragged entrails' (230), and the 'pit' (230) parallels those hell mouths that gormandise the damned soul.

An under-stage space also contains 'darkness and the burning lake' in *King Henry VI Part 2* (c. 1596–99) (I.iv.39) (Shakespeare 2020c), and a trapdoor encloses a territory that features in both scriptural and classical conceptions (Shaheen 1989, p. 46). Another inscrutable space beneath the dais receives the apparitions in IV.i of *Macbeth*; their descents to hidden spaces below seem 'indicative both of their demonic nature and of their access to a form of truth hidden from everyday experience' (Publicover 2018, p. 187), and the floor of the stage perseveres the cosmological concept of a spatially distant afterlife.

3. 'Playing' for Time: The Ghost, the Heath, and Purgatorial Futures in the Present

Facets of a purgatorial landscape also punctuate the speech of the spectre in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c. 1599–1601) (Shakespeare 2020b):

Ghost: I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain time to walk the night
And for the day confined to fast in fires
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could tell a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each peculiar hair stand on end
Like quills upon the fearful porcupine—
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood.

(I.v.9–22)

Old Hamlet speaks about a 'fast in fires' that burn and purge 'the foul crimes done in [his] days of nature' (11–13), and the dungeon within which prisoners must 'sit in darkness' (Isaiah 42:7) parallels the speaker's residence within his 'prison-house' (14). Those activities that take place within Old Hamlet's purgatory escape the rules and regulations of the play's world, and the recollection of this purgatorial space can 'freeze [Hamlet's] young blood, mak[ing] [his] two eyes . . . start from their spheres' (16–17).

But how does this spectre enter purgatory? The treacherous activities of Hamlet's uncle, Claudius, bring about the ghost's existence within this landscape, and the latter's sudden death brings about dire consequences:

Ghost: Thus I was sleeping by a brother's hand
Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatched,
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled,
No reckoning made but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head
O horrible, O horrible, most horrible!

(I.v.74–80)

Claudius 'cut[s] off' the life of Old Hamlet, concluding prematurely a life that remains 'even in the blossoms of [its] sin' (76). Murder, then, denies Old Hamlet with the time

needed to atone for his prior misdeeds; last rites, which grant otherwise an easier journey to paradise, do not counter the 'imperfections' (78) that have accumulated during life, and the spectre experiences a death 'unhouseled' and 'unaneled' (76).

Everyman (c. 1455) (Anonymous 2012), one of the most famous English morality plays, may shed further light on the predicament of Old Hamlet in Shakespeare's later tragedy.Death greets the drama's eponymous protagonist, here, appearing in an unexpected and most unwelcome fashion:

> **Everyman:** Alas, shall I have no longer respite?
> I may say Deth giveth no warninge!
> To thinke on the[e], it maketh my herte seke,
> For all unredy is my boke of rekeninge.
> But twelve yere and I might have abidinge,
> My countinge-boke I wolde make so clere
> That my rekeninge I sholde not nede to fere.
> Wherefore, Deth, I praye the[e], for Goddes mercy,
> Spare me till I be provided of remedy!
> **Dethe:** The[e] availeth not to crye, wepe, and praye;
> But hast[e] the[e] lightly that thou were gone that journaye,
> And preve thy frendes if thou can;
> For, wete thou well, the tide abideth no man,
> And in the worlde eche livinge creature
> For Adams sinne must die of nature.
>
> (I.i.131–45)

At the very least, Death unsettles Everyman greatly, and the latter's complaint that he has 'no longer respite' (131) conveys vividly the speaker's reluctance to leave the land of the living so quickly. Such surprise becomes panic in the subsequent lines; thinking on death, Everyman proclaims, 'maketh [his] herte seke' (133), and he recalls that his 'boke of rekeninge' is 'all unredy' for judgement (134). Time seems particularly important, here; 'twelve yere' grants the time needed for 'abidinge' [penance] (135), which would reduce the severity of the punishment, providing a 'rekeninge' the speaker 'sholde not nede to fere' (137). But a tide that 'abideth no man' (143) does not grant Everyman with the time he needs to atone for his prior misdeeds.

Death does offer his subject with a small pause to atone, however, and Everyman escapes narrowly what Stephen Greenblatt has called 'one of the worst medieval nightmares' (Greenblatt 2013, p. 208). This small period of time, he argues, grants Everyman with the opportunity to 'alter the "reckoning"', and purges for past sin in the present substitute to some degree 'the far more terrible pain that lies ahead' (Greenblatt 2013, p. 207). Faustus, too, pleads for time, which would spare him those tortures that unfold within the infernal spaces to which he must travel at the end of *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592–93) (Marlowe 2008a):

> **Faustus**: Ah, Faustus,
> Now thou hast but one bare hour to live,
> And then you must be damned perpetually.
> Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
> That time may cease and midnight never come!
> Fair nature's eye, rise again, and make
> Perpetual day, or let this hour be but
> A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
> That Faustus may repent and save his soul!
> *O lente, lente currite noctis equi!*
> The stars move still; time runs, the clock will strike;
> The devil will come, and Faustus must be damned.
>
> (V.ii.57–68)

But those 'ever-moving spheres of heaven' (60) do not grant Faustus the time to atone for his prior misdeeds; the scholar pleads in vain for 'but/A year, a month, a natural day' (63–64), since the hour that time otherwise grants him is not enough to 'repent and save his soul' (65). This show of desperation reaches its climax in the final three lines of the passage, and his Latin incantations cannot prevent those 'stars [that] move still': 'time runs', and the 'clock will strike' the fateful hour in which Faustus's damnation commences (67–68).

Time also grants Desdemona the opportunity to pray in *Othello* (c. 1603) (Shakespeare 2020e), and her pleas for heaven to '[h]ave mercy on [her]' (V.ii.34) resolve 'any crime/Unreconciled as yet to heaven and grace' (V.ii.26–28). Othello, too, enquires whether Desdemona has 'prayed tonight' (V.ii.25), and the chance to atone for prior misdeeds precludes his murderous intent. But the conversation between man and wife becomes heated as the scene progresses to its climax, and Desdemona's truthful expressions of fidelity seems—to Othello—another show of duplicity, countering the grace that repentance should otherwise provide:

> **Othello**: By heaven, I saw my handkerchief in's [Cassio's] hand!
> O perjured woman, thou dost stone my heart
> And makest me call what I intend to do
> A murder, which I thought a sacrifice!
>
> (V.ii.62–65)

The new sin of this 'perjured woman' (63), then, requires fresh repentance. But Othello does not give Desdemona time to righten what he sees as her latest wrong. He denies her request to 'say one [further] prayer' (V.ii.83), and he 'smothers her' (V.ii.83.SD), cutting short her fresh appeals for mercy and sending her—supposedly unrepentant—as a 'liar gone to burning hell' (V.ii.277).

The sudden death that unfolds within *Macbeth*'s heathland denies Banquo the time to repent for those 'cursed thoughts that nature/Gives way to repose' (II.i.8–9), which unfold in those moments prior to Duncan's death, and those thoughts that figure in his disposition remain unresolved, exacerbating the horror of his assassination outside the gates of Macbeth's castle:

> **Banquo:** Give us a light there, ho!
> **2. Murderer**: Then 'tis he: the rest,
> That are within the note of expectation,
> Already are i'th' court.
> **1. Murderer:** His horses go about.
> **3. Murderer:** Almost a mile; but he does usually,
> So all men do, from hence to the palace gate
> Make it their walk.*Enter* BANQUO *and* FLEANCE, *with a torch*.
> **2. Murderer:** A light, a light.
> **3. Murderer:** 'Tis he.
> **1. Murderer:** Stand to't.
> **Banquo:** It will be rain tonight.
> **1. Murderer:** Let it come down.
> **Banquo:** O treachery!
> [*The Murderers attack. First Murderer strikes out the light*.]
> Fly, good Fleance, fly fly, fly.
> Thou mayst revenge—*Exeunt Fleance*.
> O slave! [*Dies*.]
>
> (III.iii.9–18)

Little time, if any, grants Banquo with the opportunity to repent, which would counter otherwise his 'cursed thoughts' (II.i.8). The pace quickens, here; half-lines construct the first line of the passage, and two more half-lines—spoken by the First Murderer and the Second Murderer—follow (11). These lines seem metrically incomplete; the turns at talk tumble

over one another, and events unfold onstage at a speed that denies time for any speaker to complete a full line of verse. Three further turns at talk form line 14, and another three follow in the next line, maintaining the breathlessness of the scene. Banquo's '[i]t will be rain tonight', then, completes metrically the First Murderer's request to his associates to 'stand to't' (15). Banquo's turn at talk itself meets a premature end, however; we find it difficult to keep up with the pace, and the First Murderer wrestles control of the conversational floor immediately afterwards, finishing a line that Banquo began by responding to what Banquo said. The rain that shall fall within the landscape thus resembles ominously the blows that shall fall imminently on Banquo's body.

The rapid pace within which these activities unfold figures in the final line of the passage, too; the Folio text does not make clear the cause of Banquo's turned lines at 16, but something interrupts the rhythm of his speech. And, in Banquo's subsequent turn, the strong and consecutive stresses in 'fly, fly, fly' (16) spell out the disorder of the situation further. Fleance seems the recipient of the words 'thou mayst revenge' (17), here, but the assassins wrest Banquo's attention away from his son; Banquo's line remains incomplete, and the swords of his killers force him to turn towards those individuals with bloody purpose. These instruments cut Banquo to pieces, cutting short—too—any sense of natural closure.

The murder, then, takes place with alarming rapidity, and those individuals who battle onstage fall over the speeches of one another. Banquo, however, bears the brunt. He is the one who dies, after all, and his assassins deny him the delay required to make his peace with God. Like Old Hamlet, Banquo is (literally and figuratively) 'cut off . . . in the blossoms of his sin' (*Hamlet*, I.v.76), and his 'unhouseled, disappointed', and 'unaneled' corpse (I.v.77) now lies 'safe in a ditch' (*Macbeth*, III.iv.24), resting abused outside the walls of Macbeth's castle. Banquo, then, takes up residence in an afterlife with 'no reckoning made' (I.v.78), and his 'cursed thoughts' (II.i.8) parallel those 'imperfections' (*Hamlet* I.v.79) that condemn Old Hamlet to a purgative existence.

4. Outer Regions as Supernatural Spaces in Romance and Drama

But the Folio text of *Macbeth*, as I mentioned in the opening moments of this article, seems more ambivalent about those spaces to which Banquo's ghost may travel. Indeed, an exit offstage may replace a descent through a trapdoor below; the '[e]xeunt' (IV.i.123.SD) of this phantom makes possible a purgatorial existence within those wildernesses beyond the walls of the protagonist's castle, and those spaces within the remits of the play's present accommodate entities who should reside traditionally within an infernal future.

Those unexplored and uncharted regions within romance traditions may inform in part the posthumous Banquo's residence within *Macbeth*'s heathland. A wilderness within *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Anonymous 1940) a fourteenth-century chivalric romance, accommodates an undead adversary, for example, and the Chapel within which Gawain must meet his foe shirks free from the structures of this poem's present. This meeting place evades the enquiries of Gawain, and it is—to quote Angela Carson—'only when [Gawain] has come to Bercilak's castle that he receives the first assurance that the Chapel is near at hand' (Carson 1963, p. 600). Gawain seems no surer of its location after he leaves the house of his host, however:

> Þenne gyrde3 he to Gryngolet & Þhe rake
> Schowue3 in bi schore at a scha3e syde,
> Ride3 Þur3 Þe ro3e bonk ry3t to Þe dale;
> & Þenne he wayted hym aboute, & wylde hit him Þo3t,
> & se3e no sygne of resette bisyde3 nowhere,
> Bot hy3e bonkk3 & brent vpon boÞe halue,
> & ru3e knokled knarre3 with korned stone3;
> Þe skwe3 of Þe scowtes skayned hym Þo3t.
> Þenne he houed & with-hylde his hors at Þat tyde,
> & ofte chaunged his cher Þe chapel to seche;

He se3 non suche in no syde, & selly hym po3t,
Saue a lyttel on a launde, a lawe as hit we[re],
A bal3 ber3 bi a bonke Þe brymme by-syde,
Bi a for3 of a flode Þat ferked Þere.

(2160–73)[2]

[Then he puts the spurs to Gryngolet, and enters on the path. Following the line of a cliff at the edge of a grove, he rode down the rugged slope towards the dale. Then he looked about him, and it seemed to him that there was nothing that resembled a building in the vicinity. There were high and steep slopes on either side, and rough knobbly crags with gnarled stones, and the jutting rocks seemed to him to scrape the skies. Then he paused and held back his horse at that place, and often looked this way and that in search of the chapel. He saw no such chapel, here, and it seemed strange to him. But there was a mound within a clearing, the bulge of a naked hill [barrow] on the slope beside the water's edge by the channel of a [different] stream that ran there.]

A rugged and unfriendly landscape greets Gawain, here'; 'ro3e bonk[s]' enclose a deep 'dale' (2162), while 'ru3e knokled knarre3' and 'korned stone3' (2166), which 'skayn[ed]' the skies, overlook the space from above (2167). The Chapel, moreover, is no-where to be seen; there is 'no sygne of resette bisyde3' (2161), and Gawain 'chaung[es] his cher' in search of it (2169), seeing 'non suche' sight (2170).

The Chapel does come into view eventually, however, and the 'bal3 ber3'—which lies on the bank of a 'flode Þat ferked Þere' (2162–63)—resembles the crypt of a holy building. Other facets of a place of worship diffuse conspicuously into this disordered landscape later in the poem:

'Nowe i-wysse', quoÞ Wowayan [Gawain], 'wysty is here;
Þis oritore is vgly, with erbe3 ouer-growen;
Wel biseme3 Þe wy3e wruxled in grene,
Dele here his deuocioun on Þe deuele3 wyse'.

(2189–92)

['It is certain', said Gawain, 'that desolation is here, since this oratory is sinister and overgrown with weeds. It well befits the man in green to deal here his devotion to the devil's ways'.]

A sacred space takes the shape of an 'oritore' (2192), and the speaker matches the spaces within which he has found himself to a 'room or building for private worship' (Oxford English Dictionary 2022a, 'oratory, n. 1., a.'). But wild 'erbe3 ouer-growen' (2191) breach the borders of this sacred space, and Gawain seems to stand in a holy building that is both intact and in ruin.

Another wild and chaotic exterior figures in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (c. 1590) (Spenser 1903), and Errour, a creature who resists the structures of a quotidian world, resides within a 'hollowe cave / Amid the thickest woods' (I.i.11):

But, full of fire and greedy hardiment,
The youthfull Knight could not for ought be staide;
But forth unto the darksom hole he went,
And looked in: his glistring armour made
A little glooming light, much like a shade;
By which he saw the ugly monster plaine,
Halfe like a serpent horribly displaide,
But th'other halfe did womans shape retaine,
Most lothsom, filthie, foul, and full of vile disdaine.

(I.i.14)[3]

Those who venture into this space seem untethered from the world above, and the Redcrosse Knight, adorned in his 'glistring armour', seems a 'visible but impalpable form

of dead person' within it (Oxford English Dictionary 2022b, 'shade, n., 6., a.'). A creature who seems '[h]alfe like a serpent' and half like a woman lies in wait; 'bookes and papers', coupled with 'loathly frogs and toads, which eyes did lacke' (I.i.20) spew from its hideous maw, and the creature may embody vividly Spenser's wider, misogynistic concern about the speech of women. This monster's serpent-like form, argues Alice Leonard, resembles both literally and figuratively a 'fantastical mother tongue', while those books that diffuse from its open mouth convey a 'terrifying alternative for England of Roman Catholic state dominance, with a print culture and scriptural interpretative tradition of its own' (Leonard 2020, p. 103).

Those outer regions within Spenser's work, then, accommodate a 'personification of multilingualism: written, spoken, deformed' (Leonard 2020, p. 103), and those creatures who reside within them resist vividly the structures of everyday space. These disordered areas disseminate into dramatological works, and otherworldly characteristics structure those outer regions beyond the walls of Milan in Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (c. 1589–93) (Shakespeare 2020h):

> **Valentine:** And why not death, rather than living torment?
> To die is to be banished from myself,
> And Silvia is myself; banished from her
> In self from self—a deadly banishment.
> What light is light, if Silvia be not seen?
> What joy is joy, if Silvia be not by?
> Unless it be to think that she is by
> And feed on the shadow of her perfection.
> Except I be by Silvia in the night,
> There is no music in the nightingale,
> Unless I look on Silvia in the day,
> There is no day for me to look upon.
> She is my essence, and I leave to be
> If I be not by her fair influence
> Fostered, illumined, cherished, kept alive.
> I fly not death to fly this deadly doom:
> Tarry I here, but I attend on death,
> But fly I hence, I fly away from life.
>
> (III.i.170–87)

To the speaker, then, a residence in those places beyond the portcullises of Milan seems equivocal to death, and Valentine's stay in these regions facilitates a banishment 'from [h]imself' (171). Those individuals who reside within these areas seem 'away from life' (187), and elements of a quotidian world dissipate within them; the 'music of the nightingale' (179) no longer sounds, and the speaker considers an existence that transcends across natural markers of time. There is, Valentine claims, 'no day for me to look upon' (181), and those spaces to which he must travel escape any conspicuous markers of temporal progression.

These outer landscapes upturn the order of the play elsewhere, and the rules and regulations that structure courtly society within the city collapse within them. The 'overweening slave' (III.i.157), who departs Milan in disgrace, thus ascends in stature over the Duke, the person who banishes him in the first place. Within these anarchic regions, and surrounded by his fellow exiles, Valentine becomes to the Duke 'worthy of an empress' love' (V.iv.139), while the 'degenerate and base behaviour' of Sir Turio—Valentine's rival for Silvia's hand—within these wildernesses contravenes the nobleman's prior position both at court and as the suitor of the Duke's daughter (V.iv.134).

Those forested regions within both Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (c. 1593) and Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (c. 1599) disseminate disorder, too. And, in *Titus Andronicus* (Shakespeare 2020h), facets of a classical hell confuse the geography of those wooded regions that lurk outside the walls of Rome:

Tamora: Have I not reason, think you, to look pale?
These two have 'ticed me hither to this place:
A barren detested vale you see it is;
The trees, though summer, yet forlorn and lean,
O'ercome with moss and baleful mistletoe;
Here never shines the sun, here nothing breeds
Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven.
And when they showed me this abhorred pit,
They told me here at dead time of the night
A thousand fiends, a thousand hissing snakes,
Ten thousand swelling toads, as many urchins,
Would make such fearful and confused cries
As any mortal body hearing it
Should straight fall mad, or else die suddenly.
No sooner had they told me this hellish tale,
But straight they told me they would bind me here
Unto the body of a dismal yew
And leave me to this horrible death.
And then they called me foul adulteress,
Lascivious Goth, and all the bitterest terms
That ever ear did hear to such effect.

(II.ii.91–111)

As Curtis Perry has shown, those underworlds within Senecan tragedy diffuse into the wooded landscapes within which these characters find themselves in this play, and the 'secret area that confines an age-old woodland in a deep vale' (Perry 2019, p. 23), which lies deep within the citadel of Atreus in Seneca's *Thyestes*, parallels the 'barren detested vale' (93). Those 'death gods [that] groan', coupled with the 'ghosts that howl' (Perry 2019, p. 23), likewise take shape as those 'fearful and confused cries' (102), which echo from those expanses that lie outside the walls of the city.

Elements of a classical underworld confuse this landscape elsewhere in the speech, and the threat of incarceration 'unto the body of a dismal yew' (106) may recall those punishments within Kyd's classical hell; the desire of the Goth queen to enact with Aaron, her lover, an erotic embrace 'within a counsel-keeping cave' (II.ii.24–25) butts against the marital bond that otherwise tethers her to Saturninus, and the ugly snakes that restrain those 'wantons' [sexually promiscuous persons] (*The Spanish Tragedy*, I.i.68) (Kyd 2013) within Tartarus take the shape of the cords that restrain the 'foul adulteress' and '[l]ascivious Goth' (100) within this landscape.

Those sinister outer regions in *Titus Andronicus* diffuse into *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1597) (Shakespeare 2020f), too, and those spaces outside the walls of Verona secrete similar levels of disorder:

Romeo: 'Tis torture and not mercy. Heaven is here,
Where Juliet lives, and every cat and dog
And little mouse, every unworthy thing,
Lives here in heaven and may look upon her,
But Romeo may not. More validity,
More vulnerable state, more courtship lives
In carrion flies than Romeo. They may seize
On the whole of dear Juliet's hand
And steal immortal blessing on her lips,
Who even in pure and vestal modesty
Still blush, as thinking their own kisses sin.
But Romeo may not, he is banished.
Flies may do this, but from this I must fly;
They are free men, but I am banished.

> And sayst thou that exile is not death?
> Hadst thou no poison mixed, no sharp-ground knife,
> No sudden mean of death, though ne'er so mean,
> But 'banished' to kill me? Banished!
> O Friar, the damned use that word in hell;
> Howling attends it. How hast thou the heart,
> Being a divine, a ghostly confessor,
> A sin absolver, and my friend professed,
> To mangle me with that word 'banished'?
>
> (III.iii.29–51)

Those spaces beyond the walls of Verona deny Romeo a 'heaven' (29), and Juliet sources the paradise within them. Those entities who reside within the walls thus enjoy a state of bliss; mere 'carrion flies' boast 'validity' (35–37), and Romeo's residence outside the walls of the city deprives him of a 'more honourable state' and 'greater courtship' (33–34). The speaker, then, cannot—as others can—'seize upon the white wonder of Juliet's hand/And steal immortal blessing from her lips' (35–36), and those landscapes to which he must travel constitute his 'hell' (47). The 'damned' reside within them (47), and their howls offer a sinister soundtrack that detaches the speaker from the world to which he has become accustomed.

In many respects, those outer regions in these plays recall Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus*, and those areas that lurk beyond the walls of the city or castle parallel the landscapes that seem situated outside the walls of heaven. A residence within these areas denies Mephistopheles 'everlasting bliss' (I.iii.74), and the study of the scholar forms an everyday space that structures Mephistopheles' 'hell' (I.iii.77) as a consequence. Those climes that lie beyond the 'walls of brass' (I.i.74) in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* contain the foul punishments of Tartarus, and activities that resist the order of Pluto's court unfold within them.

5. Conclusions

To conclude, I would like to return—again—to the peculiar '[e]xeunt' of Banquo's ghost in *Macbeth* (IV.i.123.SD). For sure, Banquo fulfils the terms of transport to a place of purgation elsewhere. But, in the Folio text, an exit *offstage* may replace an explicit descent *beneath* the stage, and an imprint of a future state of being may take up residence within those outer regions of the play's present. The ghost of Banquo, then, seems to *persist* in the world of the play, and his exit offstage exacerbates the ambiguousness of those landscapes that lie beyond the remits of the play's vernacular world.

In such instances, a border does—to some extent—enclose an 'otherworld'. But the thresholds that guard these spaces come in an extraordinarily diverse array of forms, and the vivid pictorial definitions of medieval iconography diffuse implicitly into areas that lie within the world of a play. Thus, experiences that take place traditionally after death unfold within environments that lie beyond the borders of familiar space; the walls that enclose Macbeth's castle, Verona, and Milan become precarious bulwarks that protect against ambiguous, chaotic, and otherworldly regions just beyond their borders, and those who reside within these regions escape the rules and regulations of a play's present. Those individuals who venture into these uncharted landscapes, then, travel from one kind of temporal sphere to another; an uncertain future unfolds within wildernesses that lie beyond the walls, and 'fantasies [that] apprehend/ More than cool reason ever comprehends' (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I.i.213–14) (Shakespeare 2020a) unfold within them. That is not to say, however, that these outer regions accommodate an afterlife that may no longer be "real" (Marshall 2010, p. 298).

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Notes

[1] An Act number (roman numeral), scene number (roman numeral), and line numbers form all citations to dramatic text in this article and, when a stage direction forms part of the extract, 'SD' completes the citation, following the line numbers.

[2] Line numbers of the poem alone form those citations that follow extracts of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

[3] A book number (roman numerals), a canto number (roman numerals) and a verse number form all citations to Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*.

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