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Sarah Scott

The Empress of Babylon's 'carbuncles and rich stones': The Metaphorizing of the Pox in Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*[1]

Thomas Dekker's religious, political, and anti-catholic imbroglio, *The Whore of Babylon* (1605–6),[2] written on the heels of the Powder Treason of 5 November 1605, teems with images of contagious disease, pollution, and porousness. Dekker maps these images onto the body of the Empress of Babylon,[3] the whore of the play's title, a 'freckled face queane', 'speckled toade', and 'villanous drab', who dons 'carbuncles and rich stones' ('those red pimples' of syphilis as a result of harboring False Truth) and who copulates with multiple 'Nations' (4.1.58, 62, 70, 65, 72, 65). Her body, and those she manipulates, thus function in the drama to metaphorize anxieties and fears of the strange that exist both from within and from beyond Fairyland's (England's) geographical boundaries. The mapping of these anxieties onto the Empress of Babylon's body creates a female-gendered other, a construction pathologized through repeated descriptions of syphilis, the result of which is the pathologization not only of her corporeal body but also of those individual bodies with whom she comes in contact and those socio-political bodies she represents. Dekker's metaphorizing reflects the widely held early modern belief that the pox was first generated and transmitted by women to men and that illicit female behaviour is the *prima facie* cause of social ills. In *The Whore of Babylon*, the Empresse embodies what L. S., in the medical treatise, AD@NL8"6J46@< ['*Prophylacticon*'], *OR, Some Considerations OF A Notable Expedient To Root out the FRENCH POX From the English Nation. With Excellent Defensive Remedies TO Preserve Mankind from the Infection of POCKY Women* (1673), describes as an 'aggregative Evil [that] is like A"<*TD" (sic) [Pandora's] Box, out of which all other Diseases and Mischiefs issue', a comparison arising from his observation that 'When a man is attaqu'd with the Pox, he has not one single Disease alone, but a Legion of Maladies [that] presently after seize his miserable Body' (13).[4] In Dekker's play, the Empress of Babylon's body is the

disease-carrying incontinent vessel leaking toxic fluids that pollute Fairylanders' bodies, minds, and hearts, seeking to undermine hierarchal norms. Dekker's persistent metaphorizing of the female body in this manner sets off a series of shocking and repulsive episodes that direct our focus to the unsettling idea that immunity from alien penetration and contagion and the careful balance of health and stability are not as easily achieved as his contemporary audience would like to believe.

Pox and early modern pathology

The emergence of *morbus gallicus* in England acted as a catalyst that, when considered alongside the bubonic plague, precipitated a change in the way that physicians and scholars understood the nature of pathologic process. Commonly referred to as syphilis (a term coined by Girolamo Fracastoro in 1530) as well as myriad other epithets, the pox was unlike any disease previously encountered, partly due to its unique venereal nature. As Jonathan Gil Harris and many others, including Johannes Fabricius, Claude Quétel, Bruce Boehrer, and Anna Foa contend, 'more than any other disease, syphilis provoked considerable anxiety about the vulnerable orifices of bodies natural and politic. The obviously venereal nature of its transmission helped transform the understanding of both the etiology and the nature of disease'.[5] Fears of the unknown and of the alien resulting from this 'new' disease, alongside its very real presence, greatly altered sexual behaviour and concomitantly changed individuals' perceptions of their bodies, cultures, and world.

One widely circulated account of syphilis's origin promulgated by both physicians and laypeople during the early modern period is I. T. Westminster's lively and colorful poem, *The Hvnting of the Pox* (1619).[6] Given the content and tone of the text and also the author's association with the ward of Westminster (including the fact that he uses 'Westminster' as his surname on the title page), 'Westminster' functions somewhat surreptitiously as an advocate and representative of law, justice, and order. Like Dekker's drama, *The Hvnting of the Pox* questions the boundaries of social margins and couches such integration in the language of the corporeal and geographical. Here, for example, is Westminster crediting Pild-Garlike (an infected English 'Malecontent') with the origin of this infectious disease:

> But now to satisfie your minde how this Disease first came.
> So farre as Stories make record, Ile doe the best I can;
> One thousand foure hundred ninty three, the *French* with pusant power

Besieging *Naples* at that time, till *Charles* the fifth Emperour
Came there, and brake the siege perforce, and in time of his stay,
Columbus to the Emperour did, present vpon a day
A company of *Indians*, which the *Pox* had naturally,
And they disperst it in the campes of *France* and *Italy* :
Columbus was an *Italian* borne, and first that did discouer
West-India shore,and people there,and brought of one and other
To shew to Christian Princes,what strange Countries they had found,
What fertill Lands; what fruits, what mines, did in each place abound,
To moue them for to goe possess, such riches offered them,
Since in those Countries there was none, but naked sauage men :
The souldiers which that time lay there, did couet for to lye (by
With those strange womē which were brought, but what they got ther-
Too many know,to their much griefe ; the *French* did put the blame
Vpon the *Spaniards*, that brought it to *Naples* when they came;
The *Neapolitans* did say, the *French* did bring it them,
For they this painfull sore disease,did never know till then :
The *Flemmings* call it *Spanish Pox*,and sure they brought it first
To Christendome, as you have heard, and therefore most are curst :
The *Scots* likewise, when they have met,some part of this Disease,
They vse in iest to say that they are bit with *Spanish Fleas*,
Because they leaue red spots behinde, as Fleas doe vse to doe,
And iest is vsed in *France*, belike they vse it too.
But sure the *French* will speake in sport; and loue it now and than,
That he the *Pox* hath not three times, is not a Gentleman:
And that the dirt of *Parris* streets: withall, the *Pox of Roane*,
The one doth staine and rot their clothes, the orher foules the bone.
The *English* they in plaine good troth, will sweare it came to vs
From *France*, and therefore takes the name of *Morbus Gallicus*. (B^{v-r})

That syphilis was a disease carried back from the 'New World' to Europe by Columbus's men was a common belief during the period, and Westminster's playfully impudent treatment of the malady's origins (replete with rhymed couplets) further suggests that such an explanation was in wide circulation by the time of the text's publication. Conventional wisdom held that while searching for exotic, new-found 'riches', 'fertill Lands', 'fruits', and 'mines' in the late fifteenth century, Spanish sailors led by Genovese-born Columbus acquired an invisible and pernicious disease from 'strange womē', which was then transmitted by infected Spanish mercenaries fighting with the French on

behalf of Charles V in his attempt to gain the port city of Naples (B^{v}). Thereafter, the contagion spread virulently throughout Europe.

Explicit in Westminster's passage is an unabashed jingoism. Amidst the text's finger pointing, evidenced most obviously in the lengthy cataloging of vernacular phraseology for the disease, is the absence of language that would blatantly associate the transmission of the disease with the English. The countries France, Spain, and Italy are associated with the pathogen and are cited in one way or another as responsible for the spread of the sickness. One effect of the absence of a name that blames the English for the spread of contagion is to create a psychological as well as geographical distance between England and other 'contaminated' nations and peoples. A polarity results: on one side is England, and on the other a collective jeopardizing of English solidarity and health, composed of traditional adversaries of England, primarily France, Spain, and Italy. However, while Westminster's catalogue of names makes no *direct* mention of any English lasciviousness or impropriety, it is important to keep in mind that the English, by specific report, place the blame on the French, and more significantly that Westminster's didactic and colloquial narrative is written by an Englishman in English for English readers. These readers are unknowingly or knowingly infected with syphilis, or are in danger of becoming infected with syphilis, and are, so the author thinks, ignorant of the perniciousness of the disease.

In his introduction to *The Hvnting of the Pox*, Westminster explains that the book's expansion and subsequent publication resulted from a lengthy and fruitful conversation with Pild-Garlicke, a masterless man and 'Male-content', whom Westminster 'ouertooke' on his way to the theatre (A4^{v}). The name Pild-Garlicke clearly emblematizes the character's appearance: 'Pild', an obsolete form of 'pilled' and 'peeled', indicates despoilment and impoverishment, and colorfully describes the baldness resulting from the pox (see *OED*, Pill, 1a; and Peel 1a.). Aside from garlic's associations with pugnency, foreignness, and medicine, the 'Garlicke' was also the name of a popular seventeenth century jig or farce. Although the choreology for this jig is lost, it is not at all unlikely that the 'Garlicke' was a theatre afterpiece or a tavern entertainment and that some of the jig's movements were sexually suggestive, possibly reflecting the awkward gait caused by the pox's debilitating effects on the legs and groin. That the name Pild-Garlicke humorously describes some of the physical attributes and behaviours commonly associated with particular classes of disease-carrying people of the period is strengthened by Westminster the narrator's description of Pild-Garlicke's outward appearance: he wore a 'Hatt without a band: / A Sattin Dublet somewhat torne, with bootes and breeches

sutable', a 'falling Band', and 'no Cloke' (A4^{v}). This description states that 'He only seemd a Gentleman' and led a 'Plimmouth horse ... in his hand' (A4^{v}). Whether Pild-Garlicke possesses an actual horse or whether 'horse' is used here as slang to refer to some other trickery or object (or, perhaps, a prostitute he intends to 'ride'), 'Plimmouth' refers to the town of Plymouth, site of the Royal Navy, a military stronghold and commercial harbor that received riches and news of exotic lands.[7] Concurrent with these activities, the port and other water channels into the island (such as the Thames River system then notorious for its pollution) functioned additionally as an entrance for syphilis carried by humans by way of returning and foreign sea-faring vessels that visited, carried, or were run and operated by aliens. Signs of the pathologic sequelae of syphilitic contagion characterize Pild-Garlicke's physical and mental state, the most obvious of which are the 'Spanish Buttons' that embroider his forehead (A4v). As defined in the work's glossary, 'The Meaning of Certaine Words or Names', 'Spanish Buttons' are 'scabbes appearing in the head and forhead,and when they fall away, they leaue red stooles be inde, like Flea-bitings' (D^{r}). These 'red stooles', symptomatic of syphilis's secondary stage, are the scabs or areas irritated by a rash that has broken out and dried (D^{r}). Even though the location of these 'red stooles' on Pild-Garlicke's forehead may be coincidental, their position is highly suggestive. Given the work's context, these dried scabs symbolize Pild-Garlicke's diseased mental and moral states. Here, the visible and tangible indicates the invisible and intangible: the spots point metaphorically to the dark marks of sin resulting from illicit behaviour with diseased women.[8] Pild-Garlicke, with his disheveled appearance, 'Plimouth horse', and 'stooles', bodies forth the stereotypically undisciplined English vagabond who resides on the social margins, allowing Westminster the author to point to ways in which marginal, incontinent individuals are highly susceptible to pathogens entering through their corporeal openings (A4^{v}, D^{r}). Pild-Garlicke is described as a vagrant who lives his life on the road and exhibits behaviour difficult to contain and control.[9] In curious and telling detail, Westminster presents the vagrant's body as infiltrated by venereal disease in the same way as venereal disease penetrated England itself, by means of infected alien bodies entering through a watery geographical opening, a description metaphorizing waterways as bodily openings.[10] As an embodiment of such traits, Pild-Garlicke is positioned as an alien representative of a conflation of national threats to England. He potentially jeopardizes native English health by way of his diseased body and, by extension, his metaphorically diseased actions.Yet Pild-Garlicke dwells within English borders. Thus, in addition to the collective

other of England's alien enemies, another native other resides on the social margins under English law and within England's borders.

The idea that social margins are rather like geographical areas where water and land continually struggle for dominance is suggested further by the fact that Westminster the character tells his readers that 'Vpon an idle day' as he 'walkt to see a Play' he 'overtooke / *Pild-Garlike* on the way' (A4^{v}). Here, notions of marginality and disease are tied to the playhouse and point to the well-established infamy of the theatres as public gathering places and as loci for contagious disease resulting from morally lax activities, namely prostitution, gambling, and thievery. Given the tone and texture of the work, the playhouse that Westminster the character is heading toward most likely is a public rather than a private one. So as he moves beyond the area of Westminster and toward the theatre (located possibly in an area infamous for its alien population and lawlessness), Westminster the character can be thought to move from a place that legislates behaviour and that seeks to promote moral and physical health to one that instead sanctions unruly behaviour and harbors alien inhabitants.

One final aspect of Westminster's narrative bears discussion: the group whom he ultimately holds responsible for the disease is not of Western but of Indian origin, 'West-India' in particular, thus establishing an additional other in *The Hvnting of the Pox* (B^{v}). In an essay tracing the evolution of European reactions to the disease up to the early modern period, Anna Foa discusses Westerners's positioning of Indians as other:

> To attribute the origin of syphilis to the Indians was clearly not an innocent act. It meant searching for the origin of a sickness/evil of this kind, a sickness/evil tied to sexual excess and located as far from oneself as possible in the absolute Other, the person who had never known Christianity. This was an extreme projection: the disease was thrown back onto the 'nonhuman', onto the totally alien. To attribute it to a people outside of the Revelation of Christ served to attenuate the impact of the debates on blame and divine punishment which had been encouraged by endogenous theories of the origin as the result of lasciviousness. In turn, the reassuring value of this projection of the disease onto the myth of the 'lustful savage' is obvious, just as it is obvious that this process of alienation took so long that it was not to be among the first answers to the epidemic.[11]

In a general sense, Foa's observations serve to illuminate Westminster's text, but I find her assertions about the 'totally alien' somewhat overstated. While Westminster describes the 'strange' land as a non-Christian country, its

inhabitants are not 'nonhuman', although they are presented as 'savages', a label associated with those who resided 'outside of the Revelation of Christ' according to interpretations of Revelation during the period.[12] These women are alien in the sense that 'alien' (then as now) describes a '*person* (emphasis mine) belonging to another family, race, or nation; a stranger' (*OED* 1). Moreover, notably absent from Foa's essay is an examination into the relationships between the popular Indian origin account and the female other who is mentioned in such accounts.[13] Although Foa does mention numerous *fabulae* relating to the origin of syphilis, many of which involve female participants such as prostitutes and lepers, she does not discuss the symbolic significance of the female other in relationship to syphilis, although it may well be that such a connection was beyond her intended scope. In *The Hvnting of the Pox*, a conflation of the female other with the female Indian occurs when in the account of syphilis' origins female inhabitants of West India are described as 'strange womē' (B^{v}). Here 'womē' may be a homonym of 'womb', and, whether or not Westminster saw his text through the press, a sight pun (even with the printer's diacritical marks) between womē and womb appears peripherally, a pun that suggests mischievously that syphilis was transmitted to Europeans by disease-carrying female 'aliens', 'strange womē', with 'strange' wombs that generated a disease that engulfed nations.

Dekker and social pathology

Like *The Hvnting of the Pox*, *The Whore of Babylon* points to issues of physical, individual, and social health related to, and resulting from, *morbus gallicus*; for Dekker's play unabashedly performs the role of a social physician more than a personal one as it diagnoses and recommends treatment for that which corrupts national, religious, and social health. As in Westminster's poem, the physical and metaphorical bodies that Dekker's play presents as diseased all ultimately result from problems with female anatomy and reproductive capacity. Here, gendered images of the pathologic are used to define the religious, political, and social bodies of those alien-minded individuals who threaten the bodies of Elizabeth I's realm. Although many now use 'stranger', 'alien', and 'foreigner' interchangeably, Irene Scouloudi explains that in the early modern period, the terms 'alien' and 'stranger' referred to 'one who was of another nation and allegiance', and 'foreigner' referred to one who 'might be an Englishman, but ... who did not enjoy the freedom of the city or who hailed from a different city or county'.[14] Ian W. Archer adds that 'feeling against strangers was more bitter because of xenophobia and the ease with which they

could be identified. Anti-alien feeling sometimes threatened public order, whereas resentments against foreigners do not seem to have reached such dimensions.' In particular, free Lonodoners and Englishmen resented the competition with strangers over employment.[15]

Despite its flat characterization, blatant propagandizing, and textual corruption, Dekker's play tightly and complicatedly interweaves the threads of alien, foreign, and native others and colours them with xenophobic attitudes linked to venereal disease and sexual contagion, typically blamed on female sex and gender. Harris observes instructively that 'Dekker's political application of the notion that syphilitic infection originates in an external, feminine source is most evident in ... [this] play', in which the representation of the Whore of Babylon 'had acquired unmistakably pathological connotations, specifically of venereal disease'.[16] Although Harris acknowledges here the feminizing of the body politic, he does not explore the potential significance of such a move, which relies not just upon the gendering of a metaphorical body but upon reference to, and manipulation of, the maternal and generative capacities associated with the female body. Repeatedly in *The Whore of Babylon*, these references are used metaphorically to depict the health of the religious, political, and social bodies of the Queen as well as the pathologized state of the bodies of her chief adversary, the Empress of Babylon.

Dekker describes the drama in the *Lectori* as a '*Drammaticall Poem ... set forth in Tropicall and shadowed collours*' that portrays threats to the sovereignty of England spanning the reign of Elizabeth I and concluding with the celebrated defeat of the Spanish Armada (*Lectori* 2–3). Without doubt, *The Whore of* B*abylon* is an anti-catholic and anti-Spanish propaganda piece, and 'Dekker's simplistic and singular identification of Roman Catholicism with every assassination attempt in England since the Reformation and his conflation of Roman Catholicism with Spain contradict both court policy and the evidence amassed on the conspiracy'.[17] But of course the protestant playwright could hardly disassociate himself from the intense religious and political climate following the Gunpowder Plot.[18] Susan E. Krantz and Cyrus Hoy rightly view Dekker's close association of Catholicism with Spain as a deliberate, and, in a sense, a natural reaction to years of intrigue and conflict.[19] In the shadows of the Hampton Court Conference of 1604 lie the Ridolfi plot, the Council of Troubles, the Spanish Treason, and many other actual or perceived threats to the protestant cause and to the English crown. At the estimated time of the play's composition, a precarious peace was at hand with the accession of James I, although catholic hopes of tolerance within protestant England had by then fallen prey to an intense climate of protestant vigilance and acute xenophobia.

The Empress's and her agents' attempts to pollute Fairyland's pure streams and lush pastures and to conquer Titania's bodies are likened to penetration by sexually, morally, and politically diseased human bodies, described in provocatively rich detail by the Queen's servant Florimell as contaminated and contaminating offspring of that Ur-vessel, 'that mannish woman-Diuell, / That lustfull bloudie Queene of *Babylon*' (5.2.4–5). Repeatedly, these alien invaders seek out perceived portals, orifices in bodies politic, natural, and geographical, that are deemed as 'sites for potential corruption and contamination' in Fairyland.[20] The result is a complex one that questions the plasticity of these margins delineating the local from the strange.

Given the allegorical and (more frequently) quasi-allegorical treatment of the drama's *personae*, the plot of *The Whore of Babylon* is relatively straightforward. The Fairy Queen Titania (Elizabeth I), daughter of King Oberon (Henry VIII), faces various ill-intentioned plots against her crown. These stratagems are imputed ultimately to one enemy: the venereally diseased Babylonian whore of the play's title, the Empress of Babylon, an allegorical figuring of Rome as well as a female inversion 'of the invariably male pope.'[21] The constant attempts that the Empress's agents make against Titania's natural and political bodies — attempts that are predictably unsuccessful — fall into three groups. The first consists of the unsuccessful marriage proposals of the kings of France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire. The second includes the botched murder attempts on Titania's life by Marlovian-styled overreaching intellectuals who are lured into the Empress's bosom with promises of wealth and advancement for their work: Campeius (Edmund Campion, English scholar, deacon, and Catholic martyr), Ropus (Dr. Roderigo Lopez, Portugese physician to Queen Elizabeth), and Paridel (Dr. William Parry, London lawyer of Welsh origin). The third group consists of an ill-fated armada (the Spanish Armada) composed of an array of sea-faring vessels sailing under Babylon's flag. Collectively, these many-bodied alien oppositions represent an uncomfortable strangeness that threatens to envelop Fairyland and to transform the country into a Babylon; they scheme to poison and destroy notions of English identity embodied by Titania and her dutiful Fairy servants and mirrored in descriptions of the land itself.

The unabashed allegorical delineation of good (English Protestantism) from evil (Roman Catholicism) is most clearly recognizable in the drama's leading protagonist and antagonist, who represent distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil, justice and injustice. Queen Titania is likened to a peace-loving dove and the Empress of Babylon to a war-minded dragon. On the one end is 'the Greatnes, Magnanimity, Constancy, Clemency, and ... the

incomparable Heroical vertues of ... [the] late Queene' while on the other is 'the inueterate malice, Treasons, Machinations, and Vnderminings, and continual blody stratagems, of that Purple whore of Roome' (*Lectori* 2–6). The play presents Queen Titania as an embodiment of the native (English Protestantism, chastity, and goodness), whereas the Empress of Babylon bodies forth the alien (Roman Catholicism, whoredom, and corruption). While these allegorical divisions between goodness and badness are not as clear-cut as I suggest here, the general divisions are quite clear. Titania's physical person and political personae are depicted as healthy, whereas the Empress's are painted as diseased; in this sense, then, the Empress is similar to the exotic 'strange womē' of Westminster's text who generate and transmit disease to others, although the Empress differs from these women because she is described as both an infected and infecting wet nurse and whore. While each matriarch believes that she is in the right, Dekker leaves little ambiguity as to where the audience's sympathies should lie. The Empress's accusations of injustice are considerably less frequent than, and are all but drowned out by, those made against her.

Titania, her subjects, and other characters (including occasionally the Empress's subjects themselves) describe Babylon's behaviour, as well as her agents' actions, as pathologically diseased. While these judgments carry varying degrees of bias, even the least biased judgements – those of the play's most fully allegorical characters, Plaine-Dealing and Truth – argue that the contagion has originated in the Empress's harbouring, and indeed internalizing, the character False Truth. Consider, for example, one conversation between Truth and Plaine-Dealing that demonstrates the shaping of a strong moral character through the use of language and physical appearance. In the following, Truth sets out to prove to Plaine-Dealing that Truth is the 'the right truth' by showing and describing what she is not:

> TRUTH: vpon my tongue
> No vnchast language lies: my Skins not spotted
> With foule disease, as is that common harlot,
> That baseborne trueth, that liues in *Babylon*.
> PLAINE-DEALING: Why? is shee spotted?
> TRUTH: All ouer, with strange vglines, all ouer.
> PLAINE-DEALING: Then she has got the pox, and lying at my host
> *Gryncums*, since I left her company. (3.3.9–15)[22]

Truth describes 'baseborn trueth', embodied by the character False Truth, as a 'spotted' and 'foule' syphilitic harlot (3.3.12, 10, 11). Metaphorically, Truth

represents the belief held by Queen Titania and her subjects that the ideology originating from within the Empress is as dangerous as syphilitic contagion.

One of the most repeated and important images that runs throughout the play and through each of the three failed attempts to ruin Fairyland is that of the infected and infecting wet nurse. The first instance of such an image occurs near the end of Dekker's *Lectori*, where he compares the fate of his newly created play to that of a healthy newborn who becomes ill as a result of feeding from 'ill nurses' and asks readers to exonerate this so-called child of his labour from blame:

> The labours ... of Writers are as vnhappie as the children of a bewtifull woman, being spoyld by ill nurses, within a month after they come into the world. What a number of throwes doe we endure eare we be deliuered? and yet even then (tho that heauenly issue of our braine be neuer so faire and so well lymd,) is it made lame by the bad handling of them to whome it is put to learne to goe: if this of mine bee made a cripple by such meanes, yet despise him not for that deformity which stuck not vpon him at his birth; but fell vpon him by mis-fortune, and in recompence of such fauour, you shall (if your Patience can suffer so long) hear now how himselfe can speake. (*Lectori* 34–43)

Acknowledging that the play's performance was a miss rather than a hit (including a pun on 'mis-fortune'), Dekker asks his audience to forgive his play that was 'made a cripple' by the poor acting of the Prince's Players, whom he likens to 'ill nurses' (42, 40, 35). While there is nothing unusual about Dekker's comparison of his creative work to a child, what is unusual here is that the provocative image of a disease-infected nursing woman is used as a metaphor to describe the way in which the play's actors deformed the growth and development of the play. In light of the widespread fear and reality that nursing women could transmit many diseases – including syphilis – to infant children, it is curious that the use of an image that pathologizes the relationship between dramatists and their actors and readers was not more common during the period, especially in a time plagued by high infant mortality. Furthermore, while Dekker's comparison of his play to an innocent infant and of the Fortune's actors to diseased wet nurses does not explicitly employ metaphors of *morbus gallicus*, the analogy is implied, given that this kind of transmission occurred and was well-known at the time and given the numerous references to the pox in the body of the play. Interestingly, Dekker's analogy in some ways echoes Edmund Spenser's assertion in *A View of the Present State of Ireland* that nurses can damage a child's physical and mental wellness:

> the child that sucketh the milk of the Nurse, must of necessity learn his first speech of her .... [Y]oung Children bee like Apes, which will affect and imitate what they see done before them especially by their Nurses, whom they love so well ; they moreover draw into themselves, together with their sucke, even the nature and disposition of their Nurses; for the mind followeth much the temperature of the body, and also the words are the image of the mind, so as they proceeding from the mind, the mind must needs be affected with the words.[23]

Although such assertions can be thought to result primarily from an acute xenophobia toward the Irish in general and Irish wet nurses in particular, the anxiety that Spenser voices over the mysterious way in which mother's milk provides sustenance and immunity from disease or inhibits nutrients and transmits harmful pathogens applies to all nurses. Jacques Guillemeau also expresses the belief that either the mother or the nurse was directly responsible for syphilitic infection and other illnesses acquired by the child in a popular English translation of the French medical text *Child-Birth, or the Happy Deliverie of Women* (1612). Commenting upon the transmission of syphilis to infants, Guillemeau informs his readers that the 'French Pocks may happen to a child, either from his mothers womb or else by the Nurses fault, who may be defiled and infected with it', and explains that to cure the infant, the nurse 'must be put away'.[24] In addition to providing nourishment for the child, Valerie Fildes explains, the wet nurse

> was believed to transmit to the child, along with her ideas, beliefs, intelligence, intellect, diet, and speech, all her other physical, mental and emotional qualities. Effectively, she was seen to be reproducing herself; the child *was* the nurse; an extero-gestate foetus. What affected the nurse affected the child equally.[25]

The implications of the idea that a nursing child became a reproduction of the nurse are richly significant for both the *Lectori* and the play.

When the Empress and her agents surround and use topoi of the familial and the maternal to give shape to political relationships not only among themselves but also with their adversaries, the image of syphilis becomes more explicit, especially after it joins that of the alien 'ill' nurse in the play (35). Such usage occurs in all three of Babylon's attempts to wrest Fairyland from her Queen but is perhaps most pronounced in the first. Dekker repeatedly describes the Empress's 'sonnes and daughters', 'Emperors, Kings and Queenes', as those who 'sucke treason' from their 'Empres bosome', a bosom that is known to be 'spotted', a term repeated often in the drama, connoting syphilitic

contagion as well as sin (1.1.4–5, 1.2.254, 3.2.70). This treason is likened to contaminated secretions, effluents of diseased mother's 'milke' and 'poyson' that are released through a nursing woman's glands, physical openings hardly visible to the eye (1.1.133, 1.2.260). Importantly, the source of the contagion is unquestioned, since the Empress is described as both mother and nurse to the children. Dekker's rendering of the Empress as a syphilitic wet nurse personifies Roman Catholicism as a disease-carrying mother, whore, and wet nurse who infects and fosters mental and physical disfigurement as a result of lustful and illicit behaviour considered medicable itself but spreading incurable diseases of the will outward from the Empress to her members. The Empress, moreover, functions as a demonic representation of those catholic women who were thought to challenge traditional boundaries that were meant to distinguish public realms from private ones. Analyzing and exploring the significances of the Whore of Babylon trope in the period, Frances Dolan shows that those women who were labeled as such were thought to draw power from 'intimacy' and to spill that power into the public realm to the detriment of social and political life.[26] In *The Whore of Babylon*, these and other pathologized images give physical shape and structure to the invisible and intangible political relationship between the Empress and her agents; it is a shape that is deformed by venereal disease, and it is one that can almost be seen to take on a life of its own, intuitively seeking to deform. Like children who cannot understand that they are infected (and thus do not seek a cure), the kings continue to nurse from the infected Empress. That the kings continue to nurse suggests an inversion in hierarchal norms wherein the mother exercises power over her children after they have reached adulthood, which reflects a common fear most often associated with catholic mothers.[27]

While the natural bodies of the Empress and her agents can be understood to be marked by outward signs of contagion, so too can their deceit-filled language and intent. During Babylon's first move to possess Fairyland, the Empress and her subjects hide behind the arras of their language, attempting to lure the virgin queen into marriage with offers of power, riches, and loyalty. Wishing to regain power once held but now lost and facing economic straits, the Empress complains to her agents that Babylon's 'greatnesse hangs in ballance, and the stampe / Of our ... true Soueraignty, [is] clipt and abas'd' as a result of 'out-cast sonnes' (agents of Roman Catholicism who have lost power in Fairyland) (1.1.19–20, 22). Her solution is to send Spain, France, and Rome to Fairyland and for them to 'Dissemble, flatter ... and (like to serpents) creepe / ... in humilitie' and to 'beg' Titania that 'shee would but with vs ioyne a league' and 'wed her land to' Babylon's (1.1.108–12). Here the Empress's directive is

couched in Biblical allusions wherein the decadent serpentine Empress orders her devilish minions to tempt a chaste Eve (Titania) and to rob her of her virginity and Fairyland's wealth. In so doing, Dekker aligns the Empress with Satan and with penetration, which complicates the gendering of the Empress's otherness; she is gendered masculine and sexed female. Two effects of her masculine characteristics in this instance are that her mannish behaviour is demonized in such a way that her wicked intentions border on the unnatural and that her desire to penetrate is presented as a feared incongruous distortion of her sex, both of which reflect characteristics typical of unruly Catholic women during the period.[28]

The three foreign kings, insidiously self-styled suitors, play upon this 'body image' as their entrée into Fairyland and, as such, resemble Westminster's depiction of the countries of Spain, France, and Italy, who transmit the pox in Westminster's text. When the suitors enter Titania's court, however, the queen claims not to recognize their faces or to be informed of their purpose. Acknowledging them as alien to her land, she remarks plainly, 'You are no Fairies' and asks, 'We know you not: what are you? and from whence?' – after which the kings commence their speeches (1.2.83, 86). Despite Titania's directive to 'build about our waters wooden walles' to protect her openings against infiltration by the Empress's and her agent's 'wild-fire balles', the lasciviousness of Spain, France, and Italy finds admittance into the queen's presence without complication, suggesting that Titania's girdle is not as impenetrable as the Empress surmised (1.2.64, 63).

Even though the kings' proposals do not contain explicit images of the pathologic, readers have been forewarned of the kings' treachery by way of earlier dialogues between the Empress and her agents as well as between Titania and her court. The absence of such language in the proposal scene is thus conspicuous, and the unspoken suspicion that the kings' diseased natures lie just beneath the surface is confirmed when Titania refuses their offers. At that moment, the fabric of the kings' language rots through, as exemplified by Spain's outrage. In lieu of ineffectual dissimulation, he vows to 'vse open violence' and orders Rome and France to return to Babylon:

> Flie to our Empres bosome, there sucke treason
> Sedition, Herezies, confederacies,
> The violation of al sacred leagues,
> The combination of all leagues uniust,
> The dispensation for sacramentall oathes,
> And when ye'are swolne with theis, returne againe,

And let their poyson raine downe here in showres:
Whole heards of bulls loaden with hallowed curses,
With Interdictions, excommunications,
And with vnbinding Subiects fealties,
And with large pattents to kill Kings and Queens
Driue roaring hither, that vpon their hornes
This Empire may be tost. (1.2.208, 254–66)

Here Spain conjoins language of the vituperative and grotesque with the image of the Empress giving him suck, imparting venom to his body so that he can in turn spread disease and death. This erotization of violence and revenge reappears a few lines later when Spain repeats that the venom that can destroy Fairyland issues from the Empress's bosom:

Ile suck allegiance from the common brest,
Poyson the Courtier with ambitious drugs,
Throw bane into the cups where learning drinkes
... If the sweet bane
I lay bee swallowed, oh! a Kingdome bursts. (1.2.271–81)

These lines and those cited just prior reveal quite clearly that the collective power of those things that Spain intends to suck from the Empress, 'treason Sedition, Herezies, confederacies' and 'poyson', are pathologized alien instruments of discord; diabolical in nature, they aim violently to burst open and tear Fairyland apart 'ioint from ioint' (1.2.254, 260, 266). Moreover, this intensely pro-protestant language functions as a means to invert the catholic image of *ecclesia lactans*, an image used by late medieval catholics to describe the way that Christ's body was identified with and portrayed as a nursing mother.[29] Here, rather than conjoining images of Christ with those of the nurturing female, Dekker presents a 'mannish woman-Diuell, / That lustfull bloudie Queene of *Babylon*' and, in so doing, demonizes and pathologizes transgression of proscribed gender roles for women by arguing that uncontrolled lust bursts society open (5.2.4–5). Rather than presenting a lactating female Christ, Dekker presents his audience with a venereally diseased lactating female devil.

Although Babylon's initial efforts to wrest Fairyland from Titania's control fail, the Empress and her agents try again by targeting some of Fairyland's most vulnerable inhabitants. These subjects are those who are located on the political and ideological margins of Titania's political body, who to varying degrees are deemed to be her own 'members'. These misdirected subjects are particularly

vulnerable due to weak resolve, Catholic sympathies, or illicit behaviour. All of them fail to recognize the treachery of their actions until it is too late. Being socially marginal, they resemble both Westminster's character, Pild-Garlicke, the 'Male-content' who only 'seemd a Gentleman', and the 'naked savage men' who copulated with 'strange womē'; these members of Titania's body politic are described as being easily manipulated by lust and vice, and their actions against Fairyland are depicted as crude and base (A4, B^{v}).

Disguising himself as a professor, Spain appeals to the poor scholar Campeius (Edmund Campion, English scholar, deacon, and catholic martyr). At first, Campeius refuses to share Spain's thinking and to speak ill of his country, but he later vows to 'write in gall and poyson gainst … [his] nurce' (2.2.126). When he criticizes his country's failure to recognize his social and scholarly worth, the language of violence joins that of physick:

> this Tortois shell,
> (My countrey) lies so heauy on my backe,
> Pressing my worth downe, that I slowly creep
> Through base and slimie waies.
> ... She hangs
> Her owne brats at her backe, to teach them to begge,
> And in her lap sets strangers.
> ... Ile write in gall and poyson gainst my nurce
> This Fairyland, for not rewarding merit:
> If euer I come back Ile be a Calthrop
> To pricke my countries feet, that tread on me. (2.2.117–29)

Campeius complains bitterly that he has been marginalized and disenfranchised by the very country that claims to have his welfare at heart but that has reduced him to begging, and he compares Fairyland to a base, post-gravid animal that goes against natural instinct and favors instead 'strangers' over her own. Here, Dekker shows one of Fairyland's native members waver on the boundaries between the native and the strange and then become enveloped by the alien. In addition, Campeius points to a common English complaint of the period that alien immigrants received better treatment and economic benefit than native inhabitants. Observing that '"traditional" xenophobia was frequently linked with economic difficulties', Laura Hunt Yungblut finds that while 'anti-alien sentiment' in England was ever-present, especially in London, such sentiment 'frequently intensified in periods of real or perceived stress'.[30] Certainly, in the time following the Gunpowder Plot, such 'difficulties', including population growth, rising food costs, impoverishment, and the

continual threat of the plague, persisted,[31] and James I's Lord Treasurer, Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury, had already recognized James's infamous economic straits. Through his portrayal of Campeius, Dekker ties the problem of economic hardship to illicit sexual behaviour in such a way that this behaviour seems to *result* from, to be a consequence of, unhealthy economic conditions. Vowing to transform himself into a metaphorical 'Calthrop' (a variant of 'caltrop', 'an iron ball armed with four sharp prongs' [*OED* 2]) in order to harm his country's 'feet', the dejected scholar promises to 'pricke' those 'feet' that currently 'tread' on him (2.2.128–9). To an early modern audience, both 'pricking' and 'treading' carried sexual connotations. 'Pricking' referred to the way that copulation resembled 'penetration as if by a prick or thorn',[32] and 'treading' described the act of a male bird copulating with a female one.[33] Given the context of the lines, the 'feet' that Campeius speaks of issues from those persons who fail to recognize the scholar's worth as well as those alien inhabitants who are actually, or are perceived to be, favored within Fairyland. In essence, Campeius vows to wrest violently from others what he feels is deservedly his. He believes that he has been wronged and devalued, a marginalization and social injustice that he likens to rape and subsequent emasculation; his revenge is designed to achieve similar results.[34]

After quaffing 'wine out of a golden bowle' (one of many images in the play that deride the catholic mass) during his visit to Babylon, Campeius's mental and physical transmogrification is made complete (2.2.150). His return to Fairyland is represented by a dumb show wherein he reenters Fairyland, emerging snake-like from one of several 'conduit-pipes', vessels that the character Time describes to his son Truth as 'conduit-heads of treason, which conuey / Conspiracies, scandals, and ciuill discord, / Massacres, poysonings, wrackes of faith and fealitie' (4.1.6, 8–10). Such 'conduit-heads', the openings in pipes and fonts through which water was supplied to towns and cities, here convey 'discord' and 'poysonings' from an external foreign source to the political and social bodies of Fairyland; metaphorically, Campeius poisons the 'wells' (i. e. wombs) of Fairyland's female inhabitants in general, and Titania's womb in particular. The sexual nature of his diabolical intent is evoked later when, upon his capture, Parthenophill announces that a snake has been discovered and killed. Here such serpent imagery connotes duplicity and lust as it did earlier when the Empress instructed her kings to 'Dissemble, flatter ... and (like to serpents) creepe / ... in humilite' and reinforces the contention that the scholar's behaviour is duplicitous (1.1.108–10). Responding to Parthenophill's news and determining that Campeius is a pathological, lecherous Catholic traitor, Titania concludes the episode with the aphoristic comment that 'Good

sheapheards ought not care, / How many foxes fall into the Snare' (4.2.97–8). Thus Campeius, by conspiring with Babylonian sympathizers and the 'freckled face queane', has himself become 'infected' with that which precipitates a transformation from native to strange; his metamorphosis into an alien fox within his native fold results in ignominious disgrace and death (4.1.58).

Titania's personal physician Ropus, who has ironically vowed to the Empress to 'cure' the Queen with medicine, is another whose heart has been 'Babylonized' (3.1.68). Titania's request for 'a draught' gives Ropus the opportunity that he and the Empress have been waiting for, but the dose proves to be 'too hot' for the Queen, even though she had instructed him to 'giue it fire' as he chose (4.2.74, 104, 75). Her rejection of Ropus's burning physic squelches his attempt at literally and metaphorically 'burning' Titania, and her peers react with horror. Enraged by Ropus's intended poisoning, Fideli attempts to force Ropus to ingest his own fiery physic, crying, 'Dog: you whorsen dog' and orders the doctor to 'come sucke, Weezell, / Sucke your owne teat, you' (4.2.106, 110–11). In general terms, then, the Ropus episode depicts Titania's healthy bodies (both natural and political) as so immune to that which could do them harm that they resist harmful pathogens instinctively.

Ropus is foreign not merely because he has been falsely led and intends violence but also because the play's audience would regard him as an alien Jew (he is modeled upon Roderigo Lopez, Portugese physician to Elizabeth I) rather than a native protestant. With that fact in mind, it is tempting to imagine that Ropus would be portrayed in performance as conspicuously alien at the outset, complete with a thick 'foreign' accent, tell-tale clothing, and stereotypical accouterments. Fideli's warning to the court to look out for Campeius, whom he calls a devilish 'Glister-pipe' (a term pathologizing and sexualizing Ropus's intended actions), demonstrates another way that Ropus can be viewed as alien (4.2.112). Harris rightly argues, for example, that what lurks in this 'term of abuse ... is an anxiety about illicit, "back door" infiltration of the body of Queen and nation'.[35] While the word certainly carries homo- and heteroerotic overtones, especially when it is used as an epithet against a member of a despised group, the word 'Glister-pipe' may also recall in the reader's mind the 'conduit-pipes' providing openings in the bodies politic and natural, and delivering that which promotes or jeopardizes health.[36]

A third loyalist-turned-traitor is Paridell, whose 'intent of ill' has ruined his hopes of advancement and who seeks refuge in Rome before returning to his native land 'to cure all those / ... that are diseas'd within' (2.1.160, 3.2.38–9). Upon meeting a sympathizer from his native land, he wistfully, and yet eagerly, recounts Fairyland's recent fall:

> Deere countryman the parly we late held
> About the land that bred vs, as how order
> Was rob'd of ceremonie (the rich robe of order)
> How Truth was freckled, spotted, nay made leaprous. (3.2.67–70)

In these lines, he describes his country's ills as those that are as dangerous as syphilitic contagion.[37] Upon his reentrance into the Fairy kingdom after forming a 'polliticke league' with those 'on forren shores,' the climate of xenophobia increases considerably, for Ropus has been found guilty of attempted regicide (4.2.159, 151). When Fidelli recognizes Paridell as a 'Woolfe' and a 'Toade' that 'swelles red with poyson', he recalls Plaine-Dealing's earlier assessment of the Empress as venereally diseased (5.2.147). Even though an audience might not perceive Paridell as entirely alien (he is based on the London lawyer of Welsh origin, William Parry), it would not consider him entirely native either. Whereas Ropus is portrayed as foreign-born and foreign-minded, Paridell is more like Campeius, who is native-born and susceptible to foreign influence, though he is not nearly as resolved to harm Titania as is the poor scholar. More than any other character in the play, the lawyer wavers on the margins between native and strange – which is in keeping with his foreign origin – questioning his conscience repeatedly. Although ultimately he meets the same end as the other two traitors, he is perceived as less of a threat than either the native Campeius or the alien Ropus, a perception supported in part by the fact that he is permitted to live longer than the others, despite his multiple attempts on Titania's life.

The successfully thwarted regicide attempts by Campeius, Ropus, and Paridell result in the discovering of a dangerous catholic element existing within Fairyland that is nearly invisible although strongly suspected. In the minds of an anti-catholic early modern audience, all three doctors, once they embraced catholicism and declared allegiance to the Empress, would be engaging in behaviours judged effeminate and therefore transgressive, and when the traitors changed their allegiance to the Empress, the actors playing them likely wore physical, outward signs of the pox, signaling the Empress's covert corruption and internalizing of False Truth. Subordination to, and dependence upon, women – in the case of these traitors, subordination to a Catholic whore who doubles as their wet nurse – inverts traditional gender and social hierarchies and disrupts balances necessary to maintaining the health and stability of the body politic. As Dolan observes, such suppositions about subversive catholic activity ran rife in the period among protestant authorities and anti-catholic polemicists who attempted to regulate catholics through

penal laws: 'Perhaps because of their greater numbers but less visible presence in England, their resemblance to their antagonists, and their problematic status as "natives", catholics provoked more prolific and intemperate visual and verbal representation and more elaborate and sustained legal retribution than any other group'.[38] Early modern audiences would be acutely aware of such positioning, given the penal laws of the sixteenth century and the new 1606 legislation issued by James I requiring 'his subjects swear an oath of allegiance solely to him' and deny any power the pope claimed over England's king.[39]

Campeius, Ropus, and Paridell, lured to the alien with promises of fiscal and social gain, receive instead from Babylon's 'freckled face queane' the punishing 'carbuncles and rich stones' of syphilis resulting from the Empress's harboring of False Truth, who has 'trade' relations with multiple 'Nations' – in particular Spain, France, and Italy, who have no doubt received such 'riches' themselves (4.1.58, 65). By associating with such a 'speckled' woman, they have in turn become feminized and 'infected' (4.1.62). The ironic image of jewels to describe the sequelae of the pox also appears in *The Hvnting of the Pox*, where *Morbus Gallicus*, a Roman male formerly named *Superbus Publicus*, is described as endowed with new riches as a result of being venereally infected. His 'reward' for intercourse with an infected woman is to become 'rich in precious stones': 'a creature wrapt in woe', he had 'a Rich Pearle in his eye, a Ruby on his nose, / And in his tayle an Emrod faire' (B3^{r}). Rather than imparting notions of wealth and power, the pearl connotes blindness; the ruby, a carbuncle (pus-filled infection); and the emerald, decaying flesh. The 'precious stones' and 'carbuncles' of Westminster's and Dekker's texts describe larger fears of foreign trade and commerce. Such precious commodities were non-native to England, highly sought after, and often difficult and dangerous to acquire. The most prized pearls came from the Persian Gulf, India, and the Caribbean (though some freshwater pearl beds did exist in England at this time); rubies, from India, Afghanistan, and Burma; and emeralds, from Columbia.[40] Demand for these riches rose steadily during the early modern period so that toward the end of Elizabeth I's reign and during the early years of James I's, 'London became a major centre of the international gem trade'.[41] In Westminster's and Dekker's texts, these pearls and precious stones function as synecdoches to signify the larger problem of acute xenophobia that surrounds various kinds of intercourse with the alien on the social and commercial levels. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, London, in part as a result of increased migration and immigration, was rapidly becoming what F. J. Fisher calls a centre for 'morbid growth' and 'conspicuous consumption':

indulgences in luxuries 'not only threatened ... personal ruin but [also] ... endangered that favourable balance of trade to which so great importance was attached'.[42] Dekker's and Westminster's texts question trade with other nations by pathologizing and feminizing such commerce, which was considered by many to be a risky enterprise. The early years of the East India Company, for example, were notoriously 'stormy' for several reasons, not the least of which were the fears that such trade weakened 'national defense' and 'internal development' and 'created an uneven balance of trade', given that the demand for English goods was so low that England was forced to export bullion'.[43] Robert Kayll, who cautions against such commerce in *THE TRADES Increase*, uses Charles V's assertion that such traders are 'enemies of Christendom' because they 'carried away the treasure of Europe to enrich the heathen' to register Kayll's anxieties that England not loose her economic and political position among other countries by becoming dependent upon foreign goods (hence positioning England as less masculine and more feminine).[44]

Both authors caution against interaction with the alien by suggesting that such encounters, while enticing like jewels, jeopardize the health of individual bodies as well as hierarchal norms. They demonstrate this opinion in part through Pild-Garlicke and *Superbus Gallicus* in *The Hvnting of the Pox* and through Campeius, Ropus, Paridell, and, to a lesser extent, the three kings in *The Whore of Babylon*. The texts also suggest that while exploration of the foreign can result in the increase of wealth (including commodities such as precious jewels, which can fund further enterprise), such increase may ultimately prove more dangerous than beneficial.

The Empress's final attempt at conquering Fairyland is an invidious Armada of 'eightscore lustie saile' that is repeatedly described as though it were an hysterical floating womb (4.4.101). Bitterly disappointed at the failure of the first two waves of assault, the Empress cries out for a new plan of attack:

> our royall bloud,
> Beates in our veines like seas strugling for bounds,
> *Aetna* burns in vs: bearded Comets shoote
> Their vengeance through our eyes ...
> yet, (as the idle Cannon,
> Strikes at the Aires Invulnerable brest)
> Our darts are phillip'd backe in mockery,
> Wanting the poynts to wound. (3.1.12–19)

The image of the Empress with 'royall' blood that courses through veins like boundless seas (an image that points subtly to a later description of the Empress's 'sophisticated' wine and 'ranke poyson') represents early modern conceptions of female incontinence and transgressive, unchaste behaviour as those that can erupt any moment (3.1.12, 4.4.45, 48). In this description, her physical body is a diseased vessel that cannot hold all of its fluids; it is humorally imbalanced and filled with 'distempered blood' that is adversely 'affected by lust' and verges on bursting forth.[45] The grotesque nature of this image is intensified because her body has been 'burned' by syphilis; she compares her burning body to that of Italy's active Mount Etna, whose name is derived from *aithō*, 'I burn'. The relationship of heat to syphilis was noted by physicians of the period who (as we have noted) argued that the pox became more virulent when the female body carrying the disease was immoderately hot. Kevin Siena, in his studies of the gendering of syphilis, observes that 'heat was central to many discussions of venereal disease. Venereologists taught that people of a hotter constitution received infection more readily and transmitted the disease more effectively because heat "agitated" the venereal poison'; such heat in women was especially dangerous.[46] These lines associating the Empress with sexual burning recall those that describe Spain's desire to 'lay' Fairyland and to climax essentially with 'sweet bane', lines that by association imbue the Empress with characteristics gendered masculine (her desire to take Fairyland can be compared to male penetration); however, the Empress can also be thought to be associated with characteristics gendered feminine (1.2.280, 281). As Siena notes, some physicians during the period (Nicholas de Blegny in particular) asserted that while one important element of the creation of syphilis was the 'mixture ... of the seeds of divers persons', meaning men, it was the womb that corrupted the seeds and generated the disease.[47] The effect of this contention according to Siena was that some venereologists 'attributed actual agency to the womb and relocated power – the destructive power to create a deadly disease – from providence and the movement of celestial bodies to the female reproductive organs' (564).[48] Endowed with both male and female traits, the Empress wants to invade Fairyland and desires to deliver it to disease and discord. Toward the end of the play, however, Dekker uses masculine characteristics less frequently to describe the Empress than feminine ones, a point I will discuss in a moment.

Descriptions of the female body as vessel and emphasis on female reproduction continue throughout the dialogue surrounding the armada attack, as in the Empress's address to her 'sonnes most sweete':

> let our Galeons feele euen child-birth panges,
> Till their great bellies be deliuered ...
> ... burne, batter, kill,
> Blow vp, pull downe, ruine all, let not white haires,
> Nor red cheekes blunt your wrath, snatch babes from brests,
> And when they crie for milke, let them sucke bloud,
> Turne all their fieldes to lakes of gellyed goare,
> That Sea-men one day sayling by the land
> May say, there Faiery kingdome once did stand. (4.4.130, 115–26)

Taking the advice of the first Cardinal to 'giue ... reuenge, / A full and swelling saile', the Empress rouses her navy with vituperative language steeped in images of pregnancy ('child-birth panges'), childbirth (the delivery of 'great bellies'), and violence (crying children and 'gellyed goare') (3.1.27–8, 4.4.115, 116, 124). The images of envelopment, containment, and generation present in the Empress's distending body, here a diseased navy armed with syphilitic 'forraine wild-fire balles', contrast with Titania's contracted and contained body that is bounded and encircled by 'a girdle wrought of waues' and protected further by 'wooden walles', fortresses and ships (1.2.63, 1.1.97, 1.2.64).

Yet Dekker carefully reminds his readers, even in the play's final act, that Fairyland is not completely pure, that some of her soldiers participate in various 'abuses' (5.3.26). Plaine-Dealing and Time set about to 'purge the tents of all infectious aires' and to eliminate the thievery and prostitution that are blamed upon the Broker, who practices con-games and sells goods at inflated prices, and his wife, who entertains soldiers in her 'cabbin' and fires 'their flaskes and tuch-boxes' (5.3.29, 46, 47). These 'abuses' refer back to those mentioned by Plaine-Dealing in act 2. At that point, Plaine-Dealing informs Titania that some of her own members are harming themselves as well as other citizens. Such harm, Plaine-Dealing contends, is located within specific areas: within Fairyland is 'the Knights ward', 'the brauest prison', wherein 'most of our gallants ... are serued every day with woodcocks ... [and] lie there in a manner vpon Execution' (2.1.55, 53, 57–8). These prisons (and in particular 'one little Cocke-pit' where none go except 'those that haue spurs') are the brothels where men go to 'die', for which the Broker's wife's 'cabbin' at the camp is a metonym (2.1.99, 100). The behaviours of those who occupy the brothels and of those who visit the 'cabbin' inform the actions of those members who reside on the social margins by way of their illicit activities. Through the examples of the 'prison' and the 'cabbin', Dekker again problematizes the locating of the

strange by demonstrating that while the strange is embodied by invading aliens from other lands, it is also discernable within the same.

After Queen Titania praises and emboldens her soldiers' resolve, she embraces an obviously bastard infant born at the site, and the problems of the camp miraculously disappear, suggesting that pure Princely love and a body politic with a strong immune system can heal all maladies. Titania's speech, an overt reference to Elizabeth I's even-then legendary address to the English troops at Tilbury, is likened by her peer Florimell to 'balme' that heals all 'woundes' (5.6.54). Thus, rather than functioning as a destroyer of life, Titania becomes one who can cure the taint of otherness. Moreover, she does not attempt selfishly to raise the child herself, but instead gives the child to Plaine-Dealing with instructions to 'giue him fame', an act indirectly reinforcing protestant contentions that 'maternal power' must be closely controlled to prevent its undermining social hierarchies upon which much English stability depended (5.6.46).[49] Her physical and mental presence as well as her chaste behaviour – which is rewarded by a child and peace – combine to show that Titania's active role as leader effectively manages (although it cannot completely cure) the ills of her marginal members. Dekker's portrayal of Titania supports James's deliberate efforts to control his wife's influence over their children by distancing her from them and functions as well as a not-so-subtle message to James I (himself, as a Scot, a quasi-stranger) to embrace rather than shun his English subjects – including those who, like the bastard child, are 'marginal'. In the end, Titania is shown to exhibit characteristics more masculine than feminine, for although she is shown to represent Elizabeth I at various moments in the play, at others she represents James I, and her masculine characteristics are what are emphasized on the battlefield.

What follows Titania's rousing words (and the defeat of the armada and the '*Concubine* of Kinges') is increasing fragmentation within Babylon and the Empress's loss of confidence in her sons, whom she calls '*Syrian Panthers* ... / ... spotted or'e, from head to feete' rather than 'sonnes most sweete' (5.6.77, 122–3, 4.4.130). The miscarriage of all of the Empress's stratagems provides for a predictably comic end to Dekker's intensely jingoistic drama. The complex social, political, and religious issues that Dekker explores, however, are far from comic. Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* clearly participates in the acutely xenophobic attitudes toward catholics that followed the Gunpowder Plot and that continued throughout James I's reign by questioning the nature and location of the alien and by describing that which threatens English identity to be as dangerous as syphilis. In *The Hvnting of the Pox*, as well as in *The Whore of Babylon*, Westminster and Dekker caution against worldly

temptations of wealth and riches from foreign shores, temptations that are aligned with darkness and contagion, for what both texts maintain is that issues from such corporeal, topographical, and geographical explorations into other bodies are riches and jewels of another kind. And although attitudes toward the contagion may differ in the two texts, both authors use the pox to describe the fear that the identity of the native is in danger of being enveloped and transmogrified by an invading alien influence. Furthermore, both Westminster and Dekker suggest that within the bodies of marginal members of the native is a weakness for the strange that must be treated with care.

In *The Whore of Babylon,* threats to Fairyland's stability are associated primarily with Roman Catholicism and Spanish aggression and secondarily with a wider range of nationalities. Combined, these foreign threats are ultimately attributed to, and embodied in, one highly dangerous matriarch: the Empress of Babylon. While she can be understood to embody notions of the alien, and Queen Titania of the native, the difference between the two becomes blurred when it involves members of Fairyland who are described as residing on the social and political margins of Queen Titania's bodies, even though all dangers to Fairyland are 'treated'. That Dekker grounds his play in such lurid images and uses these graphic renderings to allegorize threats from invading aliens as well threats from native members who have been transmogrified into the strange is more than merely repulsive — it is provocative and unsettling. Dekker sets out to make his 'most grave' subject matter 'most delight' and likens such a focused treatment to a landscape painting:

> as in *Lantskip*, Townes and Woods appeare
> Small a farre off, yet to the Optick sence,
> The mind shewes them as great as those more neere.... (*Prologue* 9–11)

Although the use of a diseased foreign female body as a metonym for these threats is not unexpected, the graphic quality, scale, and intensity of his dark rendering is unsettling, and I suspect was unsettling for the play's early modern audience as well. Dekker's overt pathologizing and alienization of female reproductive capacities and maternal behaviours to represent the dangers of transgressive behaviour, in particular individual and social instability, virtually saturates the fabric of the play. The drama presents a portrait that 'swels with Inuenomed Spleene', and, as Plaine Dealing trenchantly remarks, 'its the maddest circle to coniure in, that euer raiz'd spirit' (1.2.10, 3.3.35–6).

Notes

1 A version of this paper was presented at the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, Denver, October 2001. The quotation is from Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon, The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, vol 2, Fredson Bowers (ed), (Cambridge, 1955), 4.1.65. All future references to Dekker's plays are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

2 While the date of the play is uncertain, Cyrus Hoy gives 1606 as the likely year of composition in his *Introductions, Notes, and Commentaries to Texts in The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, vol 2, Fredson Bowers (ed) (Cambridge, 1980), 304.

3 As the play makes clear, the source for the Empress of Babylon is the Whore of Babylon figure from Rev 17:3–5: 'I saw a woman ... arayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stone & pearles, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF EARTH'. See *The Holy Bible* (London, 1611; STC: 2217).

4 The initials 'L. S.' may be those of Laurence Sarson. See STC S702 and S112. Moreover, I do not contend that L. S. argues that the pox is passed solely from women to men. Although he acknowledges in several places in the treatise that the pox is passed from men to women, his text emphasizes the then popular notion that women are the primary transmitters of disease, an emphasis reflected by the work's title.

5 Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1998), 26. See also Johannes Fabricius, *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England* (London, 1994); Claude Quétel, *History of Syphilis*, Judith Braddock and Brian Pike (trans) (Baltimore, 1990); Bruce Thomas Boehrer, 'Early Modern Syphilis', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 (1990), 197–214; and Anna Foa, 'The New and the Old: The Spread of Syphilis (1494–1530)', *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective*, Edward Muir et al (eds) (Baltimore, 1990), 26–45.

6 I. T. Westminster, *The Hvnting of the Pox: A Pleasant Discourse betweene the Author, and Pild-Garlicke. Wherein is declared the nature of the Disease, how it came, and how it may bee cured* (London, 1619; STC: 23624.7). All future references to the Westminster text will be cited by line number parenthetically.

7 Although I have been unable to find the meaning of 'Plimmouth horse', the term 'Plymouth cloak' is first cited in the second part of Dekker's *The Honest*

Whore by Matheo: '[S]hall I walke in a *Plimouth* Cloake, (that's to say) like a rogue, in my hose and doublet, and a crabtree cudgell in my hand, and you swimme in your Sattins?' (3.2.32–4). Hoy, *Introductions, Notes, and Commentaries*, 99, describes 'Plymouth cloak' as referring to 'a cudgel or staff, carried by one who walked *in cuerpo*, and thus facetiously assumed to take the place of a cloak' and was associated with those newly arrived after travels. Possibly, then, Westminster's reference to 'Plimmouth horse' approximates that of 'Plimmouth cloak'.

8 Here, I have been influenced by Kim Hall's provocative and compelling book, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, 1995).

9 For a discussion of the relationship of vagabonds to venereal disease during the period, see Fabricius, *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England*, 88–93.

10 Two scholars (of many) who have written about the metaphorizing of conduits for corporeal bodies are Jonathan Gil Harris, 'This is not a Pipe: Water Supply, Incontinent Sources, and the Leaky Body Politic', *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (eds) (Ithaca, 1994), 203–28, and Andrew McRae, '"On the Famous Voyage": Ben Jonson and Civic Space', R. G. Siemens (ed) Spec issue of *Early Modern Literary Studies* 4.2 (1998), 18, <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/04-2/mcrayonth.htm>.

11 Anna Foa, 'The New and the Old', 33.

12 Foa, 'The New and the Old', 33. These West Indian women described by Westminster's text can be thought to be female counterparts to the 'Wild Men' that Stephen Greenblatt describes in his essay, 'Learning to Curse', from *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley, 1988). See especially 22–3.

13 In his article 'Infection and Cure Through Women: Renaissance Constructions of Syphilis', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 24 (1994), 499–517, Winfried Schleiner also notes such an absence in Foa's work, 500.

14 Scouloudi, 'Alien Immigration into and Alien Communities in London, 1558–1640', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London* 16 (1938), 27.

15 Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), 131.

16 Harris, *Foreign Bodies*, 64.

17 Susan E. Krantz, 'Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary in *The Whore of Babylon*', *SEL* 35 (1995), 273.

18 This climate was influenced in part by the rising numbers of catholics during this time. According to Alan G. R. Smith, *The Emergence of a Nation State:*

The Commonwealth of England 1529–1660, (London, 1984), 'The number of Catholics grew from about 35,000 in 1603 to perhaps 60,000 in 1640' (263).

19 Krantz, 'Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary', 271–91, and Cyrus Hoy, *Introductions, Notes, and Commentaries to Texts in The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 301.

20 Harris, *Foreign Bodies*, 25.

21 Frances Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Cornell, 1999), 53. Dolan observes, 'On the stage, which adeptly mobilized misogyny, deploying the visual associations between Catholicism and female bodies, popes were often depicted as women or allied with women' (54). See, for example, 53–6.

22 Hoy, *Introductions, Notes, and Commentaries*, 260, defines '*Gryncums*' as 'a cant term for venereal disease'.

23 Edmund Spenser, *A View of the State of Ireland* (London, STC S4965), 223.

24 Jacques Guillemeau, *Child-Birth or, the Happy Deliverie of Women. Wherein is set downe the Gouernment of Women* (London, 1612; STC: 12496), 113.

25 Valerie A. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh, 1986), 189.

26 Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 217–19.

27 Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 106–7.

28 Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 8.

29 Caroline Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1991), 93.

30 Laura Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us: Policies, Perceptions and the Presence of Aliens in Elizabethan England* (London, 1996), 37.

31 Archer's description of London's ills in the last decade of the sixteenth century characterize those of early seventeenth century London as well. See, Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), 9–13.

32 Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy: A Literary and Psychological Essay and a Comprehensive Glossary* (New York, 1969), 'pricking'.

33 Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, 'tread'.

34 Such sexual connotations reemerge when Parthenophill celebrates Campeius's capture, calling the turn-coat an 'Owle' and a 'Goshawke' who pecks 'tender blossomes off' (4.2.84, 87, 94).

35 Harris, *Foreign Bodies*, 68.

36 For an informed discussion of early modern typing of Jews as invaders, see Harris's 'Public Enemas: The Disjunctions of the Excremental Jewish Pharmakon' in *Foreign Bodies*, 79–106.

37 The confusion between syphilis and leprosy was of course common during the period; the lesions of the two diseases appeared to be virtually (if not completely) identical. As Fabricius explains in *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England*, 3, 'Right down to modern time, gonorrhea, leprosy and syphilis were confused by medical observers, who allowed such wholly different diseases to go undifferentiated'. See also 255–61.
38 Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 8.
39 Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 80.
40 Bruce P. Lenman, 'England, the International Gem Trade and the Growth of Geographical Knowledge from Columbus to James I', *Renaissance Culture in Context: Theory and Context*, Jean R. Brink, et al (eds) (Aldershot, 1993), 89–95.
41 Lenman, 'England, the International Gem Trade', 95.
42 Fisher, 'The Development of London as a Centre of Conspicuous Consumption in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 4.30 (1948), 49.
43 Charlotte M. Waters, *An Economic History of England: 1066–1874* (London: 1925), 227–8.
44 Robert Kayll, *THE TRADES Increase* (London, 1615: STC 14894.7), 32.
45 Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, 'distempered blood'.
46 Kevin P. Siena, 'Pollution, Promiscuity, and the Pox: English Venereology and the Early Modern Medical Discourse on Social and Sexual Danger', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4 (1998), 563.
47 Siena, 'Pollution, Promiscuity, and the Pox', 564.
48 Siena, 'Pollution, Promiscuity, and the Pox', 564. See also Thomas Sydenham, *A New Method Of Curing the French-Pox* (London, 1690; STC N672), 3–30.
49 Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 106. As Dolan points out, this was especially the case for catholic mothers, who found themselves at the center of legislative attempts to curtail mothers' power over their children. Additionally, Plaine-Dealing's remark that 'a Captaine shall beare him to the Fount' supports the notion that men should have more power than women in the rearing of children (5.6.49).