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Fairy Genealogy in Tudor England

Although popular culture, particularly in the wake of Disney, has convinced us that fairies are, by and large, harmless and benign creatures working for human wish-fulfilment, the fairies of history were quite different from their modern forebears. Historically, fairies have been viewed in a variety of ways ranging from the down-right sinister and demonic to the liminal, the inscrutable, and the unknowable. As a subset of the ambiguous supernatural, fairies have elicited significant theological and sociocultural discomfort, sometimes denigrated and condemned as handmaidens of their more explicitly diabolical counterpart, the witch and occasionally dismissed as the annoying vestiges of an ignorant and superstitious past of folkloric fantasy[1]. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, fairies were also persistently employed in works of literary fiction, appearing both in the works of printed texts as well as in dramatic performance. In tandem with their ontological ambivalence and hermeneutic heterogeneity, fairies were subject to modes of conceptualisation that were as diverse, shape-shifting, and oscillatory as their varieties of literary treatment. In such a case, reconstructing a monolithic and undifferentiated tradition of fairy in Tudor England is not only a fallacious undertaking but also, according to Matthew Woodcock, ultimately both unnecessary and futile. Instead, Woodcock encourages 'reading' fairies as definitive textual constructs, moving away from focusing on the essentialist attributes of fairies themselves to an analysis of "the rhetorical or formal role of fairy within [the] process of representation" by taking into account "the ways in which fairies are represented, described, depicted, or staged within texts"[2].

One of the uses to which fairies were put in literary works of the sixteenth century was for the political legitimation of the ruling monarchy in England as parallels were drawn between fairy genealogies and royal lineage, an associative link relying upon the cultural cachet of fairies within the English national imaginary. This paper will explore this link through a theoretical and historical lens, applying Stephen Greenblatt's theory of 'self-fashioning' to posit a rationale for understanding and deconstructing the network of associations between fairy ancestry, imperial ambition, and specular representation and offering an historical survey of connections between fairylore and monarchy in the legends of Arthur

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1 Richard F. Green, Elf Queens and Holy Friars. Fairy Beliefs and the Medieval Church, Philadelphia 2016 (The Middle Ages Series).
2 Matthew Woodcock, Fairy in *The Faerie Queene.* Renaissance Elf-Fashioning and Elizabethan Myth-Making, Aldershot/Burlington, VT 2004, p. 9.

and Mélusine and in the performative culture of the Elizabethan pageants and progresses. Subsequently, this theoretical and historical basis will be used to analyse the ontology of fairy as an embodiment of Tudor regnal politics in Book II of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene.*

The apparatus of fairy became a commonplace in English cultural life of the sixteenth century not only by the fervent and heated debates of theologians and the smattering of references to fairylore in the literary works, but also by being included in the performative imagery of the pageants, displays, and processions which characterised the ascent of Elizabeth I to the English throne. The link for the utilisation of fairy as an instrument of royal panegyric was provided by the literary-historical association of fairies with founding dynasties. The reasons for such an association cannot, however, be understood without looking at the precise nature of political power exercised by such ruling families and the complex ideological dependence of such power upon readily available cultural symbols for the purpose of its continued operation.

I Self-fashioning, Fairylore, and the House of Tudor

The use of fairy as a representational system of both performance and textuality by the Tudor regime can be related to Stephen Greenblatt's concept of 'self-fashioning,' particularly with regard to the fashioning of political identity[3]. In tandem with

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3 Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning. From More to Shakespeare, Chicago/London 1980. Although Greenblatt's work has been enormously influential in the field of early modern studies, his approach has not gone unquestioned. Soon after the publication of *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, criticisms were directed at his methodology, the tenor of some of his assertions, his myopic focus on individuals as case studies, as well as the fallacies of (unwittingly) implying that power could be abstracted from its specific political applications and for refusing to recognise the role played by literature in the production of ideology. For illustrations of each view, see Richard Strier, Identity and Power in Tudor England. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare*, in: Boundary 2 10 (1982), pp. 383–394; Jean E. Howard, The Cultural Construction of the Self in the Renaissance, in: Shakespeare Quarterly 34 (1983), pp. 378–381; Barbara L. Harman, Refashioning the Renaissance, in: Diacritics 14 (1984), pp. 52–65; Alan Sinfield, Review of *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, in: Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England 2 (1985), pp. 324–328; and Jan R. Veenstra, The New Historicism of Stephen Greenblatt. On Poetics of Culture and the Interpretation of Shakespeare, in: History and Theory 34 (1995), pp. 174–198. Greenblatt's work continues to generate controversy to the present day, and although I am cognisant of the potential pitfalls of his approach, I nonetheless find his concept of 'self-fashioning' (when divorced from the

the changes in social, cultural, economic, and political organisation that are characteristic of the early modern period, Greenblatt notes a parallel trajectory of change in the "intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities" in the sixteenth century, changes which are both complex as well as dialectical[4]. Linked to an increased self-consciousness about the possibility of moulding (human) identity as a manipulable and artful process, such 'self-fashioning' comes to denote the forming of a self[5]. According to Greenblatt, self-fashioning is a relational process, achieved by the fashioning subject (whom he calls "authority") against an oppositional force (the "threatening Other" or the "alien") which is perceived as unfamiliar, strange, or hostile and must consequently be denounced through representational practices which first give form to the alien in order to effect its destruction. The authority and the alien are not, however, hermetically sealed categories; presaged upon either the absence or the parodic inversion of order, the distinctions between the two are characterised by continuous slippage with the implication that one is constructed as a distortion of the other[6]. Further, in Greenblatt's theorisation, self-fashioning is always (though not exclusively) enacted within the domain of language.

Although Greenblatt talks primarily about individual subjects and the self-fashioning of autonomous selves, his concept can be applied equally well to the Tudor regime's self-fashioning of political identity through the use of fairy vocabulary. Read as a foundational process built upon the artful manipulation of identity for the creation of a unique 'self,' Tudor self-fashioning can be regarded as the attempt by the ruling dynasty to artfully manipulate both elite and popular opinion through the use of fairylore (among other things) in a complex representational culture of performance and textuality for the purpose of constructing a selfhood built upon the establishment of a distinct political and cultural identity. Tudor performative culture, particularly during the reign of Elizabeth (r. 1558–1603), included a series of pageants, processions, as well as commemorative performances. Although the ostensible function of this representational complex was the celebration of the Queen's accession, such performances also functioned as an emphatic

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specific individual case-studies presented in the work) sufficiently broad and encompassing to be valuable for the purposes of my argument.

4 Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning, p. 1.

5 Greenblatt notes that this epistemological and ontological change in the denotative field of 'self-fashioning' is itself related to the increasing use of the verb "fashion" in early modern literature. He also observes that self-fashioning's emphasis on representation makes it a natural correlative for the field of literature in general. Ibid., pp. 2f.

6 Ibid., p. 9. The "threatening Other" can include such diverse categories as heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor, or even the Antichrist.

assertion of hegemonic monarchical power through the use of visual spectacle and material display. While some performances were organised exclusively by the Queen's inner circle of courtiers and subjects and held in the country houses and mansions which belonged to a select nobility (such as the performances at Kenilworth, Woodstock, Ditchley, and Elvetham which will be considered shortly), others took the form of civic pageantry (such as those at Norwich and the coronation entry of 1559 in London) as well as performances organised in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The audiences of such performances could thus range from aristocratic court circles to university men and ordinary townspeople. As the 'authority,' Tudor self-fashioning required the prior invention of a rival Other or 'alien' which had to be subsequently destabilised in order to assert and uphold the legitimacy of the ruling line. Such a strategy is reminiscent of Spenser's allegorical fabrication (and consequent denunciation) of the Catholic Church in *The Faerie Queene* for the purpose of exonerating the credentials of the Tudor line under its newly crowned Protestant queen who is explicitly identified with a fairy empress and whose lineage is traced from an illustrious elven genealogy. Finally, Tudor self-fashioning via fairy can also be seen as operating within the realm of language, if the field of signification of 'language' is expanded to denote a representational system that is not merely linguistic but also textual, aesthetic, material, and performative.

II The 'Historical' Basis of Fairy Genealogy—the Legends of Mélusine and Arthur

The link between claiming fairy ancestry by dynastic families and the exigencies of political legitimation was not a novel development of the early modern period (although it was certainly its apotheosis) but can be traced back to the literary culture of the Middle Ages in both France and Britain. In fourteenth-century France, the fairy Mélusine emerged as the *fondatrice* of the house of Lusignan in the proto-Gothic romance of the same name penned by Jean d'Arras. Commissioned by Jean, the duke of Berry, count of Poitiers as well as tutor to Charles VI of France, the composition of the romance was directly influenced by the skirmishes of the English and French factions in the Hundred Years' War as well as the hotly contested English claims to both Poitou and Lusignan[7]. Jean d'Arras' mythic reconfigu-

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7 Stephen G. Nichols, Melusine Between Myth and History. Profile of a Female Demon, in: Donald Maddox/Sara Sturm-Maddox (Eds.), Melusine of Lusignan. Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France, Athens, GA 1996, pp. 137–164, here pp. 137 f.; Philippe Walter, La Fée Mélusine. Le serpent

ration of the history of the Lusignan line was intended to bolster the legitimacy of French lordship over a city and a region that had recently witnessed the danger of passing into the hands of foreigners by articulating an illustrious indigenous heritage that simultaneously validated French hegemonic claims to Poitou as well as asserted the appropriateness of such rule. The figure of the fairy Mélusine herself constitutes an almost organic connection with the land and, by extension, with the ruling family of the region. Building upon Jacques Le Goff's observation that Mélusine was both the creation as well as the symbolic guarantor of the feudal imagination, Philippe Walter observes that the fairy becomes a 'totemic genius' attached to the land, functioning as supernatural protectress safeguarding the dynastic line from danger and misfortune[8]. Her shamanic authority arises out of a complex ontological matrix whereby her conceptual roots can be traced back to the goddesses of sovereignty who figured prominently in Celtic myth and legend. Within such a hermeneutic framework, the marriage of Raymondin and Mélusine thus represents the conferring of territorial sovereignty (embodied by the fairy-as-goddess) upon patrilineal authority and subsequently to agnatic succession.

For the British Isles, however, the figure which bulks predominantly large in the cultural imagination insofar as questions of genealogy, fairy lineage, and political legitimation of dynastic houses are concerned is the iconic persona of Arthur. His presence in insular textual history was guaranteed by Geoffrey of Monmouth's portrayal of the figure in his liberally embellished account *Historia Regum Britanniae* and subsequently given further embodiment in the works of Wace and Laȝamon. In addition to the historicist reworkings of the Arthurian legend in the prose chronicles, epic and romance treatments of the material led not only to elaborate diversifications of the fiction but also allied the stories with elements of the fantastic and the supernatural[9]. However, what was common to all such modes of development was the necessary trigger provided by the contingencies of contemporary politics. Kathryn Hume has pointed out how the accounts in Geoffrey, Wace, Laȝamon, as well as both the alliterative and stanzaic *Morte Arthur* of the fourteenth century were each affected by the vagaries of English political engagements

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et l'oiseau, Paris 2008, p. 12; Pit Péporté, Melusine and Luxembourg. A Double Memory, in: Misty Urban/Deva F. Kemmis/Melissa R. Elmes (Eds.), Melusine's Footprint. Tracing the Legacy of a Medieval Myth, Leiden/Boston 2017 (Explorations in Medieval Culture 4), pp. 162–179.

8 Jacques Le Goff, Time, Work, & Culture in the Middle Ages, Chicago 1980, pp. 218 f.; Walter, La Fée Mélusine, p. 13.

9 Ad Putter, Finding Time for Romance. Mediaeval Arthurian Literary History, in: MA 63 (1994), pp. 1–16, here p. 2; Sif Rikhardsdottir, Chronology, Anachronism and *Translatio Imperii*, in: Leah Tether/Johnny McFadyen (Eds.), Handbook of Arthurian Romance. King Arthur's Court in Medieval European Literature, Berlin/Boston 2017, pp. 135–150.

with France whereby the vacillating fortunes of the English were paralleled in the turbulences of the literary Arthur's expansionist policies. The consequence of this literary-political correspondence, observes Hume, was an increasing interiorisation of romance treatments of the material to the island of Britain as way of by-passing the realities of English losses on the continent. Such movement went hand-in-hand with the fictive recasting of the insular kingdom as a fantasy empire and the incorporation of objects and figures imbued with magic, such as the fairy enchantress Morgan le Fay, the Lady of the Lake, Excalibur, and the land of Avalon[10].

David A. Summers has pointed out how the persona of Arthur became the locus around which certain cultural ideas constellated—the notion of a cultural, racial, or national messiah who would reverse the fortunes of a disenfranchised people and restore not only their former glory but also their identity as a cultural and political entity[11]. For the Welsh specifically, this idea of a champion who would liberate the oppressed and re-assert indigenous political and cultural might was a particularly attractive one, an association strengthened by the parallels between the historical Arthur's success against the Saxons and the fraught politics of engagement between Wales and the Anglo-Norman administration in the Middle Ages[12]. By the late medieval period, Arthur and his court had begun to serve as a particularly potent metaphor for British sovereignty, and the figure of Arthur was used by English monarchs and dynastic families to reinforce their political credentials through fictional genealogies that traced lines of descent from the legendary British hero. While such strategies were utilised both by the Plantagenets as well as by the Yorkist king Edward IV, nowhere was such an analogous identification more prominent than in the case of the Tudors[13]. Claiming descent from the Welsh, the Tudor dynasty found in Arthur a convenient and powerful emblem to justify both the necessity as well as the appropriateness of their claim to

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10 Kathryn Hume, The Metamorphoses of Empire in the Arthurian Tradition, in: Criticism 59 (2017), pp. 619–637; Patricia C. Ingham, Sovereign Fantasies. Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain, Philadelphia 2001 (The Middle Ages Series), p. 6; James Wade, Fairies in Medieval Romance, New York 2011 (The New Middle Ages), pp. 9–71.

11 David A. Summers, Spenser's Arthur. The British Arthurian Tradition and *The Faerie Queene*, Lanham/Oxford 1997, p. 26.

12 Anthony D. Carr, Medieval Wales, New York 1995 (British History in Perspective), pp. 27–82; Michael A. Faletra, Wales and the Medieval Colonial Imagination. The Matters of Britain in the Twelfth Century, New York 2014 (The New Middle Ages), pp. 3–8.

13 Peter Johanek, König Arthur und die Plantagenets. Über den Zusammenhang von Historiographie und höfischer Epik in mittelalterlicher Propaganda, in: FMSt 21 (1987), pp. 346–389; Martin Aurell, Henry II and Arthurian Legend, in: Christopher Harper-Bill/Nicholas Vincent (Eds.), Henry II. New Interpretations, Woodbridge 2007, pp. 362–394; Ingham, Sovereign Fantasies, pp. 52f.

the English throne[14]. The literary-cultural complex of medieval Arthuriana together with its apparatus of fantasy, supernatural, and magic was employed in the service of piecing together an illustrious family tree for the Tudors, a creative cultural process which peaked under the rule of Elizabeth I. In this adaptation of Arthurian material to Tudor genealogy under Elizabeth, the fairy associations of the legend played a significant part.

III Fairy Genealogy in the Elizabethan Entertainments

Four entertainments in particular—the lavish celebrations organised by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth in 1575, the pageants organised by Sir Henry Lee at Woodstock in 1575, the reception at Elvetham arranged by Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford in 1591, and Lee's continuation of the story of the Woodstock entertainment at the pageantry at Ditchley in 1592—were built upon foundations which utilised the apparatus of fairy in significant ways. However, at this point it is important to note that although these four entertainments utilised fairy motifs, they weren't the *only* performances to do so. Fairies were also used in the Queen's summer progress through Norwich in 1578 in a performance devised by Thomas Churchyard where the formerly planned water nymphs were replaced by fairies in the substitute entertainment organised the following day after heavy showers disrupted the usual schedule. Here, however, they were characterised in a manner harking back to 'popular' folkloric roots rather than the more 'courtly' connection of fairies with royal genealogy and political legitimation[15]. In the civic pageantry at Norwich, the fairy participants put on a musical interlude replete with dancing which seem to have been contrived purely for the sake of entertainment and not to hint at the political ramifications of fairy[16]. Moreover, unlike Norwich, the entertainments at Kenilworth, Woodstock, Ditchley, and Elve-

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14 Summers, Spenser's Arthur, pp. 85–124; James P. Carley, Arthur and the Antiquaries, in: Siân Echard (Ed.), The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature. The Development and Dissemination of the Arthurian Legend in Medieval Latin, Cardiff 2011 (Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages 6), pp. 149–178.

15 For the full text of the Norwich entertainment, see Thomas Churchyard, A Discourse of the Queenes Majestie's Entertainment in Suffolk and Norfolk, in: The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, vol. II, ed. John Nichols, London 1823, pp. 179–213.

16 Patrick Collinson, Pulling the Strings. Religion and Politics in the Progress of 1578, in: Jayne E. Archer/Elizabeth Goldring/Sarah Knight (Eds.), The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I, Oxford et. al. 2007, pp. 122–141.

tham were all private receptions. Although the organisation of such performances would typically involve the participation of the host's household (which would include, in addition to family members, members of the serving classes drawn from lower social ranks), their status as private reception rather than civic pageantry seems to imply that the ones most responsive to the cultural cachet of fairylore —and therefore to the socio-political significance of the genealogical pedigree claimed by the Queen—were elite, educated cliques. The most important bastion of approval sought by the House of Tudor as a hegemonic power for its political legitimation thus seems to have been the aristocracy itself. 'Mass' approval in sixteenth-century England was undoubtedly more classist than truly democratic.

At Kenilworth, the figure of the Lady of the Lake together with her connections with Arthurian legend was used as part of the broader chivalric setting which framed the celebrations. The welcome speech delivered by the Lady of the Lake (which rehearsed a splendid though fictitious lineage of possession for Kenilworth Castle from the days of Arthur, through the political skirmishes of the Saxons, Danes, and Normans, and eventually to the ancestors of Leicester's family) is exactly the kind of literary exercise in denoting the fairy configuration of genealogy that had by this time become an established part of ideological praxis seized upon by political families, although here the purpose seems to have been to extol the illustrious pedigree of Leicester in order to advocate his suitability as a potential husband for the queen[17]. In a second interlude, Elizabeth was implored by Tryton (who had been sent by Neptune) to release the Lady of the Lake from her imprisonment by Sir Bruse sauns pitie. Tryton's request was ostensibly prompted by Merlin's prophecy that the Lady of the Lake "coulde never be delivered but by the presence of a better maide than herselfe." Such a prophecy is not only well within the Arthurian mould but also establishes a genealogical link between Arthurian myth and Elizabethan self-assertion. Although a variety of interpretations have been offered by critics to explain the true (political) import of the Kenilworth entertainment, what is undeniable is that many of the devices which formed a part of this complex of celebratory shows were predicated upon an overarching framework of romance and Arthurian chivalry[18]. According to Jim Ellis,

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17 The full text of the Kenilworth entertainment can be pieced together from excerpts contained in the letter sent by Robert Laneham to Humfrey Martin as well as George Gascoigne's *The Princely Pleasures.* Detailed texts of both *A Letter* and *The Princely Pleasures* are to be found in The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, vol. I, ed. John Nichols, London 1823, pp. 420–484 and pp. 485–523 respectively.

18 For some influential readings of the Kenilworth entertainment, see Susan Frye, Elizabeth I. The Competition for Representation, New York 1993, pp. 56–96; Alex Davis, Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance, Cambridge 2003 (Studies in Renaissance Literature 11), pp. 79–81; Lesley

Kenilworth itself is to be seen as a synecdoche for the mythology of English national identity, and in such an ideological project, the vocabulary of fairy was utilised not only to construct a genealogy that simultaneously elevated Elizabeth to the status of supernatural imperatrix and validated the rightness of her rule, but also to articulate the entangled (and often inseparable) claims by which the house of Tudor vied for political legitimation as well as expressed its imperial ambitions[19].

After Kenilworth, Elizabeth was regaled by the celebrations organised by Sir Henry Lee at Woodstock later in the same progress. Fairy mythology makes an appearance here too, albeit in a different mould from that at Kenilworth. Following the story of Hemetes the Hermit, the Queen is greeted by the figure of the Fairy Queen in a speech which, singing the praises of the English queen, claims its speaker as an intimate "frende" of Elizabeth, not only privy to the facts of her life and her government but also in some sense her (spiritual and ontological) equal[20]. Lee revived some of these elements at the entertainment offered to Elizabeth at Ditchley in 1592 which saw the Queen assume the garb of the deliverer of imprisoned souls. In this entertainment, the Fairy Queen does not make a direct appearance but is introduced indirectly through the report of the knight in charge of the enchanted grove. The identification of Elizabeth with the Fairy Queen is, however, complicated in this case by the conflicting registers used to characterise the fairy. The knight recounts to Elizabeth how the Fairy Queen had punished him for the crime of inconstancy by condemning him to guard the grove peopled by doomed knights and ladies who had been similarly bewitched by her. Although the knight's story clearly attributes the cause of his incarceration to the "infernall Arte" of the "just revengefull Fayrie Queene", there is also an evident parallel drawn between the two queens when the knight references the Woodstock entertainment of 1575 and claims that on that occasion, the welcome offered to Elizabeth by the Fairy Queen had been a greeting of equals[21]. This bifurcation of tempera-

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Mickel, Royal Self-Assertion and the Revision of Chivalry. The Entertainment at Kenilworth (1575), Jonson's *Masque of Owls* (1624), and *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck* (1633), in: MLR 109 (2014), pp. 953–976.

19 Jim Ellis, Kenilworth, King Arthur, and the Memory of Empire, in: ELR 43 (2013), pp. 3–29.
20 For the full text of the Woodstock entertainment, see The Queenes Majesties Entertainment at Woodstocke, in: John W. Cunliffe, The Queenes Majesties Entertainment at Woodstocke, in: PMLA 26 (1911), pp. 92–141, here pp. 92–127.
21 The text of the Ditchley entertainment can be found in Jean Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth I, Woodbridge 1980 (Studies in Elizabethan and Renaissance culture 2), pp. 126–142; John Nichols also prints an account of the entertainment under the category "Masques," but his is a variant text which omits some of the sections included in Wilson while including "The Message of the Damsell of the Queene of Fayries," a speech missing in Wilson. See The Message of the Damsell of the Queene of Fayries, in: The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, vol. III, ed.

ment—just and honourable on the one hand and malicious and unpredictable on the other—is, however, not only in keeping with the ontological nature of fairies in history but also seems to hint at the potentialities latent in the figure of the English queen herself.

At the entertainment at Elvetham in 1591, the Fairy Queen makes a brief appearance on the fourth day of Elizabeth's sojourn at Hertford's estate to welcome the English queen with a garland shaped like an imperial crown, a gift from Auberon, the Fairy King himself. The speech delivered by the Fairy Queen, here explicitly named Aureola, adheres to the decorum expected of a royal greeting and combines both romance setting and pastoral detail. Earlier in the entertainment, the anxieties of legitimation via an illustrious genealogy had been simultaneously underscored and assuaged when the figures of the Graces and the Hours had sung a paean to Elizabeth in which she was luxuriantly praised as the "beauteous Quene of second Troy"[22]. Thus, once again we find the familiar matrix of royal genealogy and fairy identification repeated at Elvetham, although this was perhaps the last time that such connections were exploited in performance insofar as Elizabeth's reign is concerned.

Performative culture during the reign of Elizabeth was frequently predicated upon the axis of genealogical knowledge, correspondences that audiences were not only expected to pick up on but which were crucial to the communication of the queen's wider political message—her ascendancy as something which was ordained, almost prophetic. This is perhaps the most explicitly recognisable in the Kenilworth entertainment which relied significantly on the cultural validity of myth (both Graeco-Roman and Arthurian) to flesh out the genealogical matrix which tied together Elizabeth, Leicester, and Kenilworth itself. At Woodstock, the Fairy Queen's greeting to Elizabeth set up an almost sororal relationship between them, and although such a link was complicated at Ditchley almost seventeen years later, the deliberate evocation of the Woodstock entertainment on that occasion suggests that Lee wanted his audience (and Elizabeth) to remember the fairy associations of the Tudor queen. The triangulated network of pagan history, fairy genealogy, and English queenship returned at Elvetham where both the King and

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John Nichols, London 1823, pp. 198–213. Wilson notes that although the Ditchley entertainment was probably Lee's idea, the text was written either wholly or in part by Dr. Richard Edes, a royal chaplain.

22 For the text of the Elvetham entertainment, see The Honorable Entertainemene gieven to the Queene's Majestie in Progresse, at Elvetham in Hampshire, by the Right Hon'ble the Earle of Hertford, 1591, in: Wilson, Entertainments, pp. 97–118. Wilson notes that although one of the previous editors of the entertainment believed the text to have been written by John Lyly, this cannot be conclusively proved.

Queen of Fairy extended their welcome to Elizabeth (the former indirectly by means of his floral gift) and where England (and, by extension, its queen) was ideologically annexed to the glorious lineage of Roman history by virtue of its characterisation as a second Troy.

Fairy in the Elizabethan entertainments can thus be viewed within the context of the historical associations between fairy mythology, royal genealogy, and political legitimation that had been established in legends connected crucially with the figures of Mélusine and Arthur from the Middle Ages onwards. In the manner of Greenblatt's theorisation of the ideological fashioning of selfhood, the Tudor regime aimed to secure subject approval for the validity of its claim to the English throne by means of an elaborately constructed genealogy, one which was fundamentally predicated upon the ontology and vocabulary of fairy. One of the ways in which such ideological control was attempted was through the discourse of performativity – via the progresses, processions, and pageants which marked Queen Elizabeth's courtly peregrinations. Given this context, the conflation of fairy ancestry with genealogy and politics in contemporary literature in such a work as Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* now becomes clear.

IV Edmund Spenser's Fairy Chronicle—History, Myth, and the Politics of Lineage

In Canto Ten of Book II of Spenser's poem, fairy genealogy is presented within the context of the work's broader mythopoeic project of panegyric exhortation of Elizabeth allegorised as Gloriana. This canto rehearses the "famous auncestryes" of the English queen through the historiographical records contained in *Briton moniments*, "a chronicle of Briton kings" read by the figure of Arthur and the *Antiquitee of Faery lond*, a compendious volume encapsulating the "rolls of Elfin Emperours" perused by Guyon, the titular hero of the second book. The two figures read their respective histories in Eumnestes' chamber inside the corporal edifice of Alma's castle, and while Arthur focuses on a history that recounts the illustrious reigns of a succession of kings of Britain, the chronicle read by Guyon fashions an equally luminous genealogy of Gloriana herself, an ancestral heritage that can be traced back to the fairies.

Spenser's fairy chronicle begins with a description of how fairies were created by Prometheus, an account which blurs the ontological and hermeneutic distinctions between elves and fairies by employing a mélange of different traditions—classical, Celtic, as well as Christian:

> It told, how first Prometheus did create
> A man, of many parts from beasts deryv'd,
> And then stole fire from heven, to animate
> His worke, for which he was by Jove depryv'd
> Of life him self, and hart-strings of an Aegle ryv'd.
>
> That man so made, he called Elfe, to weet
> Quick, the first author of all Elfin kynd:
> Who wandring through the world with wearie feet,
> Did in the gardins of Adonis fynd
> A goodly creature, whom he deemd in mynd
> To be no earthly wight, but either Spright,
> Or Angell, th'authour of all woman kynd;
> Therefore a Fay he her according hight,
> Of whom all Faryes spring, and fetch their lignage right[23].

Pagan mythology is utilised to explain the creation of elves as Spenser's creative reimagination fashions 'Elf' as the sentient offspring of Prometheus' theft of fire from Jove/Jupiter. The creature encountered by the Elf—whom Spenser calls 'Fay'—itself partakes of the ontological ambiguity that characterised fairies in the Middle Ages as this progenitor of womankind is said to be positioned between supernatural spirit and heavenly angel.

Spenser then provides a summary account of the line of elven succession and of the monumental achievements of each fairy ruler. It is with reference to this genealogical chronicle that Oberon is introduced as the fairy father of none other than Tanaquill/Gloriana herself, the lofty dedicatee and subject of the entire work:

> After all these Elficleos did rayne,
> The wise Elficleos in great Majestie,
> Who mightily that scepter did sustayne,
> And with rich spoyles and famous victorie,
> Did high advaunce the crowne of Faery:
> He left two sonnes, of which faire Elferon
> The eldest brother did untimely dy;
> Whose emptie place the mightie Oberon
> Doubly supplide, in spousall, and dominion.
>
> Great was his power and glorie over all,
> Which him before, that sacred seate did fill,

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23 Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene, Book 2, ed. Erik Gray, Indianapolis 2006, p. 179, x.70–71 [Canto Ten, Stanzas 70–71]. All subsequent references to the text are to this edition by canto and stanza number.

That yet remaines his wide memoriall:
He dying left the fairest Tanaquill,
Him to succeede therein, by his last will:
Fairer and nobler liveth none this howre,
Ne like in grace, ne like in learned skill;
Therefore they Glorian call that glorious flowre,
Long mayst thou Glorian live, in glory and great powre[24].

Presented as the son of "wise Elficleos," Oberon is said to have ascended to the throne upon the untimely demise of his elder brother Elferon, thereby implying that he was not originally the intended heir to the fairy kingdom. However, his ascension proves to be both fortunate and momentous, ensuring the continuation of the achievements of his illustrious ancestors both in personal rule and succession. As a judicious and accomplished emperor, he has been a worthy claimant to the throne and as the father of Gloriana, under whom the elven crown was to reach its apotheosis, he has laid the foundations for the everlasting fame of fairy. However, with this account Spenser also cleverly grafts upon his fictive regnal chronicle of fairy a historical allegory of the Tudor political line as the intended identification is between Tanaquill/Gloriana and Elizabeth together with her predecessors. In this analogical progression, Oberon would thus be the fairy equivalent of Henry VIII who succeeds to the throne after the death of his brother Arthur (Elferon) and who appoints his daughter Elizabeth as his successor in his "last will"[25].

Spenser's treatment of elven history in Canto Ten of Book Two can be considered within the triangular matrix of fairy ontology, royal genealogy, and political legitimation that I have traced in the earlier sections of this paper. Given the robust associations between fairylore and the genealogical claims of dynastic houses to

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24 Ibid., pp. 180 f., x.75–76.

25 The "last will" is a reference to the amendment made by Henry VIII to his will on 30 December 1546 whereby the king stipulated that Elizabeth was to accede to the throne if her elder sister Mary died childless and if there were no male heirs remaining of any of his lawful wives. It is significant that Spenser presents Tudor genealogy as an unproblematic descent from Henry VIII to Elizabeth, glossing over the troublesome reigns of Edward VI and Mary I (although in a work whose purpose was to court favour with the reigning queen, such excision is quite understandable). According to Matthew Woodcock, such a move was intended to simultaneously provide (via an idealised fairy lineage predicated upon linear progression) an emphatic affirmation of the credibility and appropriateness of Elizabethan rule as well as keep the thorny question of Elizabethan succession open to debate. For a discussion of these points, see Woodcock, Renaissance Elf-Fashioning, p. 135. The biographical parallel is further reinforced by the poet's observation that Oberon's succession "doubly supplide, in spousal, and dominion" since Henry VIII not only ascended to the throne upon his brother's death but also married Arthur's widow Catherine of Aragon.

bolster their political credentials, Spenser's elven chronicle in *The Faerie Queene* is consistent with the hortatory and panegyric mythopoesis that underlies the poet's elaborate allegoresis of the Elizabethan political imaginary in the work as a whole. Patterned as a complement to the Galfridian vision of history laid out in *Briton moniments*, the self-conscious fiction of the *Antiquitee of Faery lond* does not merely furnish the poem's putative subject—Elizabeth—with an ancestry harking back to the retroactive genealogical configurations that informed the figure of Arthur himself in the Middle Ages, but also works to connect the two in a composite fusion of history and myth that constitutes the wellspring of cultural memory. Spenser's fairy mythopoesis can be interpreted as building upon the tradition of claiming fairy ancestry by dynastic families for the purpose of political legitimation, an association guaranteed not only by the historical cachet of fairies as founders of royal families (as in the legends of Mélusine in France and Arthur in the British Isles), but also by the fairy iconography of Elizabethan performative culture, a representational complex which can itself be theorised as an instance of 'self-fashioning' practised by the Tudor regime for eking out a distinct (and unimpeachable) political and cultural identity.

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