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Recovering Disability in Early Modern England

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Published by The Ohio State University Press

Hobgood, P. & Wood, Houston.

Recovering Disability in Early Modern England.

Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013.

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Disabling Allegories in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*

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In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Paul Ricoeur explores the philosophical and linguistic significance of metaphors that lose their status as metaphors by means of “lexicalization,” a process by means of which “dead metaphors are no longer metaphors, but instead are associated with literal meaning.”¹ Without directly referencing Ricoeur, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson address the issue of dead metaphors and arrive at the opposite conclusion: “Expressions like *wasting time*, *attacking positions*, *going our separate ways*, etc., are reflections of systematic metaphorical concepts that structure our actions and thoughts. They are ‘alive’ in the most fundamental sense: they are metaphors we live by.”² Pervasive as they are, such lexicalized metaphors can provide insight into the conceptual frameworks underlying a given culture’s language and thought, including ideas about bodies and bodily differences. Lexicalized metaphors that associate sight with knowledge and blindness with ignorance,³ for example, or standing erect with moral and intellectual merit and slouching or sitting with sloth⁴ indicate a negative social valuation of physically impaired persons so ingrained that such metaphors have hardened for English speakers into “literal” expressions.

Judith Anderson, weighing in on the dead-metaphor question in regard to early modern England, argues that the multilingual educational system of the Renaissance would mean that many people, aware of etymological

roots of words, would be able to recognize a word or expression's genesis in metaphor.⁵ Further, Katharine Eisaman Maus points out that early modern belief in Galenic (i.e., humors-based) theories of the human body means that it is difficult to know, in encountering expressions that we read as dead metaphors (e.g., references to "hot-headedness" for an angry, "choleric" person), "when we are dealing with metaphor and when with a bare statement of fact."⁶ Michael Schoenfeldt echoes this conclusion, noting that "by urging a particularly organic account of inwardness and individuality, Galenic medical theory gave poets a language of inner emotion whose vehicles were also tenors, whose language of desire was composed of the very stuff of being."⁷ Despite present-day difficulties in assessing the "liveliness" to early modern readers of metaphors that have since become formulaic, the elaboration of metaphor into allegory certainly serves to enhance a reader's awareness of metaphor as metaphor. One can breathe new life into a dead metaphor by extending it into an allegory, giving it characters and plot.

In this essay, I discuss the ways that Edmund Spenser revivifies dead metaphors of physical impairment, creating impaired allegorical figures that lead readers to his intended moral judgments by calling on his audience's shared biases and preconceptions related to bodily differences. Spenser sometimes uses impairment allegorically to elicit an intellectual response, using the image of physical or bodily privation to signal a moral incapacity essential to the plot of the allegory, as in the case of Corceca and Abessa. More often, however, Spenser's allegories of physical impairment aim to create emotional rather than intellectual reactions from the reader—specifically, emotions related to disgust and rejection—to lead readers to the desired moral interpretations.

In this manner, Spenser "imports" the full weight of social stigmatization of bodily differences in early modern England into the text in order to convey moral meanings that have nothing to do with physical impairment. Spenser takes for granted that his readers share stigmatizing ideas about and rejecting emotional attitudes toward physical impairment; transferring these ideas and attitudes allegorically from representations of impaired bodies to abstract ideas serves as an efficient means of conveying meaning, because preexisting cultural biases perform some of the work. The social model of disability posits a dichotomy between "impairment," defined as "a problem in body function or structure," and "disability," defined with reference to the social process that turns impairment, understood as neutral, into a socially stigmatized and undesirable state; "disability" thus reflects "an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives."⁸ Thus, Spenser often creates impaired allegorical figures, taking

for granted that his readers will perform the work of “disabling” those figures, and they must do so in order to glean the correct interpretation of the allegory.

Cognitive Metaphor Theory and Allegory

In conceptualizing metaphor as a figure of *thought*, the cognitive metaphor theory developed over the past three decades (and its extension to allegory) represents a break with earlier theories of metaphor that understood it as a figure of language only. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson define metaphor as involving the mapping of ideas and images from one conceptual domain (the “source domain”) onto another (the “target domain”). Although this definition differs substantially from earlier twentieth-century theories of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson’s definition fits strikingly well with that put forth by George Puttenham in *The Art of English Poesy* (1589) when he asks, drawing upon the etymological background of the term, “for what else is your *Metaphor* but an inversion of sense by transport.”⁹ But what is transported? Although the number of possible source domains is as limitless as the number of possible target domains, metaphor has a tendency to describe the abstract in terms of the concrete. Research from the present moment finds much metaphorical meaning transported from the domain of the human body to other conceptual domains, and this was true as well during the early modern period.

Metaphors of the body enable one to “conceptualize the nonphysical *in terms of* the physical.”¹⁰ The importance of body metaphors is borne out by Zoltán Kövecses’s study of the most common source domains of metaphors; he places “The Human Body” and “Health and Illness” first and second, respectively, in his list of the thirteen most common source domains.¹¹ To the extent that two people experience similar bodily actions, the body as source domain can help in sharing understandings of more abstract concepts, as noted by numerous scholars addressing the significance of embodied action to metaphorical mental structures. In a discussion of metaphors that draw on physical orientation, Lakoff and Johnson argue that a spatial orientation as source domain depends upon “the fact that we have bodies of the sort we have and that they function as they do in our physical environment.”¹² Similarly, Mark Johnson follows an analysis of embodied understandings of *CONTAINMENT*, *FORCE*, and *BALANCE* with the summary statement that “certain abstract inference patterns are the result of metaphorical projections of image schemata . . . which arise in our bodily experience” (note that I follow the

usage of cognitive metaphor theorists in using small caps to notate cognitive metaphors and concepts).¹³

But of course these experiences, assumed to be universal, depend on the experience of unimpaired bodies, as Amy Vidali points out in her critique of Lakoff and Johnson's analysis of the KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor.¹⁴ George Lakoff and Mark Turner acknowledge the nonuniversality of the experiences underlying conceptual metaphors in general (though the example they provide refers to sexual experience, not embodied ways of being in the world), noting that "Metaphors may be grounded not only in recurrent direct experience but also in knowledge. . . . basic metaphors vary in the degree to which they have a grounding in experience or cohere with commonplace knowledge."¹⁵ Implicitly, Lakoff and Turner here acknowledge that a culture's collection of conceptual metaphors is created by the majority. Recent experiments by Daniel Casasanto suggest, though, that even when a minority group (in his study, left-handed people) follows the linguistic norms of a culture by, for example, using linguistic formulae that associate right with good and left with bad, their embodied experience can actually override this linguistic cultural blueprint. His experiments showed that "Right-handers were more likely than left-handers to associate *right* with positive ideas and *left* with negative ideas. Left-handers were more likely than right-handers to associate *left* with positive ideas and *right* with negative ideas."¹⁶ He proposes that

Good Is Right and Good Is Left mental metaphors are created in right- and left-handers, respectively, via correlational learning . . . over a lifetime of lopsided perceptuomotor experience. People come to implicitly associate good things more strongly with the side of space they can interact with more fluently (their dominant side) and bad things with the side of space they interact with less fluently (their nondominant side).¹⁷

Casasanto's research certainly offers suggestive possibilities for considering the distinctive qualities of physically impaired people's body-based conceptual apparatuses and how their experiences of metaphors derived from embodied action might differ as well.

Such research reminds us of the need to be attentive to the role of subjectivity in the creation and use of metaphors. Just as embodied experience can affect a person's ways of conceptualizing abstract ideas through metaphor, the imagined subject position of the receiver of a metaphoric message also contributes to the meaning of the metaphor. In the case of metaphors and allegories presented within a literary text, the author signals the expected

subject position of the person encountering a metaphor: for metaphors based on bodily experience, the reader will be expected either to identify with the metaphoric representation or else to see it as Other.

Between the two types of early modern English impairment-based metaphors that I will discuss in this essay, the most important distinction arises from the way the reader conceives the meaning, whether it be primarily through intellection or primarily through emotion. The frequency in *The Faerie Queene* of metaphors that invite an emotional reaction of disgust for and rejection of the impaired body illustrates David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder's observation that "disability as a narrative device—an artistic prosthesis . . . reveals the pervasive dependency of artistic, cultural, and philosophical discourses upon the powerful alterity assigned to people with disabilities."¹⁸ Many of Spenser's metaphoric representations of physical impairment assume that the reader will imaginatively reject as Other the body described; by importing into the reader's experience of the text preexisting cultural biases regarding impairment, these disabling metaphors exemplify Mitchell and Snyder's "narrative prosthesis," in that they allow Spenser to convey meaning with less work. They also illustrate the importance of emotion in the creation of metaphors or allegories; Spenser seems acutely aware of the emotional reactions his early modern readers are likely to experience in response to descriptions of physically impaired bodies, responses not entirely different from those identified by present-day theorists of the abject. Bill Hughes, for example, calls attention to the emotional responses of fear and disgust that result from the abjection of disability: "The role of fear . . . is hugely underplayed in personal tragedy theory. So [too] is the role of disgust, a mediating emotion in the relations between disabled and nondisabled people that is in need of considerable development."¹⁹ Spenser expects readers to transfer the fear and disgust activated by his disabling descriptions of impaired bodies to abstractions such as, for example, "wrathfulness" and "divisiveness."

We can see evidence of Spenser's goal of eliciting emotional responses from his readers to the personifications that inhabit Faeryland in his curious departures from traditional emblematic representations of such figures as Occasion and Ate. Spenser chooses to make them hideous and physically impaired, presumably in order to call on predictable responses of disgust in his readers. In doing so, he exemplifies some of the methods of meaning-making that distinguish allegory from metaphor. Peter Crisp argues that the essential difference between the two is that allegory does not refer directly to the target domain; instead, all the language refers to the source domain: "Allegory brings the metaphorical source domain to life in a way that no

other form of metaphorical language can. Its peculiar imaginative excitement . . . resides in the fact that a metaphorical source domain is given its own, strange and fantastic, fictional life, instead of just being mapped straight onto a target domain."²⁰ One way to help readers draw the correct target-domain inferences from the strange, fantastic fictional world developed out of the source domain is to elicit powerful emotional responses to guide their own analyses. Certainly, as Mark Turner notes, "One of the most basic of the personification metaphors is AN ABSTRACT PROPERTY IS A PERSON WHOSE SALIENT CHARACTERISTIC IS THAT PROPERTY."²¹ However, to make the personification compelling, an emotional reaction is desirable: "the way we feel about the appearance and character of the personification must correspond to the way we feel about the event."²² Spenser illustrates these ideas, teaching his readers how to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline" in part by holding up *un*-gentle, *ig*-noble personifications and inviting his readers to judge and reject them.²³

Impairment-Based Allegories of Bodily Difference

Although recent theorists have analyzed the philosophical and political problems with the dichotomy between "impairment" and "disability" described earlier,²⁴ I find the dichotomy useful for identifying two qualitatively different kinds of allegory based on bodily difference. In what I call "impairment-based allegories," an allegorical figure's physical inability to perform some task leads to an intellectual interpretation of the allegorical situation, whereas in "disability-based allegories," the allegorical figure's bodily differences elicit a rejecting emotional reaction from the reader, and the reader's emotions guide the interpretation of the allegory. All of the allegorical figures I will discuss here depend upon an implied acceptance of the metaphor A MORAL STATE IS A PHYSICAL STATE, and all of them take for granted that an impaired body is less valuable than an unimpaired body, but there are nevertheless important qualitative differences between allegories based on the intellect versus the emotions as the source of meaning-making.

A well-known example of impairment-based allegory appears in *Everyman*, where Good Deeds's inability to walk plays a significant part in the plot. Good Deeds lies on the ground, "sore bound" by the sins of Everyman, so that she "cannot stir."²⁵ Her mobility impairment makes it impossible for her to attend Everyman on his journey to Death, despite her twice-expressed willingness: "I would full fain" (498) and "fain would I help you, and I were able" (515). Because other allegorical figures have falsely indicated willing-

ness to accompany Everyman, the impairment is necessary to convince the audience that her repeated expressions of desire to help are not lies. She tells him, "I cannot stand, verily" and "on my feet I may not go" (498, 518). Throughout the play, Good Deeds is presented as a wholly positive character; her impairment prevents her from helping as much as she would like to, but she is always unambiguously good. The author here expects the audience to apprehend the meaning through intellection; the concept of privation is assumed to be connected with impairment in the audience member's mind, and transferring the idea of privation to the abstraction "good deeds" leads to the intended allegorical meaning: Everyman's spiritual heedlessness means that his good deeds are insufficient to help him achieve a good death.

Another example of impairment-based allegory, which will be relevant to the next section's discussion of Spenser's allegorical treatment of Ate, appears in Andrea Alciato's early sixteenth-century emblem representation of Ate, the goddess of discord. The emblem "Remedia in arduo, mala in prono esse" depicts Ate in flight, her wings making her even more capable of bodily movement than the average person, while the Litae, representatives of prayers and thus of goodness, chase after her despite their physical impairments:

Once Jupiter had cast Ate down from the heavenly abode, what an evil bane thereafter assailed poor man! Ate flies out fleet of foot with fast-beating wing and leaves nothing untouched by mishap. So Jove's daughters, the Litae, accompany her as she goes, to mend whatever ill she has brought about. But they are slow-footed, poor of sight and weary with age, and so they restore nothing until later, after long passage of time.²⁶

The illustration shows two of the three Litae using canes to support them in their pursuit of Ate. The process of allegorical meaning-making here again proceeds through an intellectual process of transfer of ideas, in the same manner as the example of Good Deeds in *Everyman*: the desire of the Litae to do good is inhibited by a physical impairment, again illustrating the metaphorical concept A MORAL STATE IS A PHYSICAL STATE.

These two examples, *Everyman* from the late fifteenth century and Alciato from the early to mid-sixteenth century, invite the audience to map meanings from the impaired body onto the moral and theological domain primarily through a transfer of ideas rather than through a transfer of emotional reactions. Similarly, in *The Faerie Queene* Spenser creates in the Corceca and Abessa episode an allegory based on bodily difference in which the reader's meaning-making depends upon intellect rather than emotion.

In this episode, physical impairments represent the lack of spiritual understanding that Spenser sees as typical of the Roman Catholic believer. The brief episode of Una's encounter with the blind Corceca (literally, "blind heart"), her deaf and mute daughter Abessa (presumably derived from Latin *abesse*, "absence of being"; reminiscent of "abbess" or "abbey"), and Kirkrapine ("plunderer of churches") serves as a clear allegorical indictment of Catholicism. Abessa's and Corceca's impairments are allegorically significant. Corceca, thrice referred to as "blind" (1.3.12.3, 1.3.18.3, 1.3.22.2), sits "in eternall night" (1.3.12.4), and her daughter Abessa "could not heare, nor speake, nor vnderstand" (1.3.11.4);²⁷ allegorically, Corceca's physical blindness maps metaphorically to a spiritual state of unthinking superstition, as becomes clear from references to the 900 paternosters and 2,700 aves she says daily, to her use of sackcloth and ashes, and to her regular fasting practice. Despite this impressive array of spiritual practices, however, upon the arrival of Una at the cottage, Corceca "for feare her beads . . . did forget" (1.3.14.5). Abessa meets Una and the lion by a well, and her inability to hear or speak renders her unteachable, in contrast to the Samaritan woman at the well described in the Gospel of John (John 4:3–42). Although the Samaritan woman at first reacts with confusion to the statements of Jesus, she eventually understands, believes, and evangelizes, whereas Abessa never overcomes her initial fear at meeting Una and the lion.²⁸ Abessa's impairments are understood by Spenser and his contemporary audience as making it impossible for her to learn and understand the truth. Darryl J. Gless connects Abessa with "various New Testament figures whose sensory deficiencies declare their need for the grace that roots out sin and enables perception of spiritual truth. Yet Christ heals these biblical figures,"²⁹ whereas Abessa's and Corceca's encounter with true faith in the form of Una leaves them unchanged.

The impairments of Corceca and Abessa are more germane to the allegorical plot than are the impairments of Occasion and Ate, but these are by no means positive characters. Spenser includes unattractive characterizing details for Corceca and Abessa, in line with the emphasis on eliciting from the reader an emotional reaction that matches the negativity of the allegorical idea. Notably, however, the impairments themselves are not treated with disgust. Instead, we are invited to judge Abessa harshly because of her sexual and financial dealings with Kirkrapine, who

whoredome vsd [with her], that few did know,
And fed her fatt with feast of offerings,
And plenty, which in all the land did grow;

Ne spared he to giue her gold and rings:
 And now he to her brought part of his stolen things. (1.3.18.5–9)

As for Corceca, she transforms from a superstitious but mild-mannered old woman into a railing hag when she pursues Una away from her house, where the Lion has slain Kirkrapine. Mother and daughter accost Una and begin to “loudly bray, / with hollow houlung, and lamenting cry, / Shamefully at her rayling all the way” (1.3.23.1–3).³⁰ Criticizing a young female allegorical figure for “whoredome” is as unsurprising as attaching a negative evaluation to an older female allegorical figure by connecting her with the many hag-figures who people Faeryland, but here at least physical impairment does not figure prominently in the negative emotional value Spenser attaches to these figures.

Disabling Allegories of Bodily Difference

Whereas the examples discussed in the previous section illustrate impairment-based allegories, some allegories are “disabling” in the sense that, as the social model of disability posits, they focus on eliciting emotional reactions to the disabled body based on social stigma and disgust. Spenser, with his reliance on emotional effects on the reader to convey allegorical meaning efficiently, creates a number of disabling allegories. I will consider here his personifications of Occasion and Ate; in both cases, Spenser’s figures differ from contemporary emblems of the same abstractions in representing them as having physical impairments. These departures from emblem-book treatments of Occasion and Ate support my contention that Spenser consciously aims to elicit feelings of disgust and stigmatizing reactions in readers; I argue that Spenser’s efforts to engage his readers’ emotions to convey his allegorical meaning exemplify Philip Sidney’s ideas about the ability of poetry to *move* readers to virtue.

I focus here primarily on Spenser’s use of disgust to encourage readers to turn away not simply the intellect but also the will from the vices portrayed in the allegorical figures of Occasion and Ate. Much scholarly work on early modern emotions has focused on melancholy and sadness, presumably because the period’s intense interest in and textual representations of melancholy make it a more knowable topic for transhistorical emotional analysis.³¹ Analyses of Spenser’s ideas about emotion have tended to follow this general emphasis on melancholy, but he certainly provides nuanced explorations of a multitude of emotions and affective states. Both Douglas Trevor and

Christopher Tilmouth see Spenser as endorsing the importance of reason in reigning in strong emotions.³² Trevor argues that although Spenser lauds “sadness” as a positive emotional state, he sees humoral psychology’s ideas about melancholy as enabling people to shirk spiritual responsibility for emotional self-indulgence. Similarly, Tilmouth finds in Spenser a “psychomachic” view of the human soul, in which reason should be victorious over passion. Yet, perhaps in line with Trevor’s discovery of positive “sadness” in Spenserian characters such as Redcrosse, Jennifer Vaught argues that Spenser presents men’s weeping as a source of strength for Redcrosse and for the emotional male figures in book 6, the Legend of Courtesy.³³

Yet these analyses, which focus on the sorrowful emotional experiences and expressions of allegorical figures *within* Spenser’s epic, do not address the issue of Spenser’s understanding of the role of emotion in conveying allegorical meaning or, more generally, in leading readers to virtue. Although, as Tilmouth argues, many Renaissance humanists did endorse a Stoic-inspired quelling of all affect, other ideas on emotion also influenced the discourse on emotion and thought. As Richard Strier points out, “insofar as self-consciously ‘Renaissance’ figures defined themselves as committed to rhetoric over against ‘mere’ philosophy or logic, they were committed to stressing the importance of the emotional and affective in life.”³⁴ The rhetorician’s emphasis on the importance of the emotional appeal in persuasion serves as secular support for the value of emotional experience, but religious ideas supported this as well, as Strier notes and as Gail Kern Paster develops in her discussion of Bishop Edward Reynolds’s *Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man* (1640), in which Reynolds compares Christ’s emotions to human emotions in order to argue, in Paster’s analysis, that “it is human sinfulness that makes immoderate passions an instrument of self-harm . . . not the passions themselves.”³⁵ Spenser himself seems to argue for the importance of emotions in the episode at the Castle of Alma, when Arthur and Guyon meet the bevy of female personifications of passions in the heart, and each chooses the one who represents his own emotional makeup. Michael Schoenfeldt argues that “this strange . . . encounter involves a wary affirmation of emotion in the well-regulated moral life. Where temperance could sometimes be imagined to entail the rejection of passion entirely, Spenser here situates the passions at the heart of his temperate self, as spurs to the very virtue he depicts rather than as forces opposing it.”³⁶

In *The Defense of Poesy*, Philip Sidney’s claims regarding poetry’s ability to teach virtue rest on the importance of emotional responses to the situations depicted by the poet, with depictions of virtue leading to emotional attraction and those of vice leading to rejection, so that readers learn virtue

“ere themselves be aware, as if they took a medicine of cherries.”³⁷ In line with Sidney’s prescriptions, when creating allegorical representations of virtue, Spenser aims to make them attractive to the reader; for the same reason, he emphasizes the unattractive qualities of allegorical representations of vice, and one way of creating an unattractive personification and thus eliciting a rejecting emotional response in his reader is to give a personification a physical impairment. In creating Occasion, Spenser both alludes to and departs from the emblematic tradition for this personification; in line with tradition, he gives her a long forelock and makes the back of her head bald, but unlike emblematic depictions of Occasion, Spenser’s is ugly, old, and physically impaired:

And him behind, a wicked Hag did stalke,
 In ragged robes, and filthy disaray,
 Her other leg was lame, that she no’te walke,
 But on a staffe her feeble steps did stay;
 Her lockes, that loathly were and hoarie gray,
 Grew all afore, and loosly hong vnrold,
 But all behinde was bald, and worne away,
 That none thereof could euer taken hold,
 And eke her face ill fauourd, full of wrinkles old. (2.4.4)

The iconographic detail of the forelock makes her identity clear to a knowledgeable reader, whereas the references to poverty, physical impairment, and her ugliness from age clarify Spenser’s intention to make Occasion a symbol of vice rather than an opportunity for good. Sheila Cavanagh’s feminist analysis of the hags in *The Faerie Queene* could fruitfully be extended to account for the impairment markers of many of the hags: “The poem’s insistence upon marking the sex and gender of these creatures allows a thread of misogyny to weave through denunciations of their behavior. In fact, it is often difficult to distinguish slurs against individual hags or witches from those against women in general.”³⁸ Just as the references to her clothing, hair, and face elicit a disgust reaction by activating stereotypes of old women that the audience already held, the references to her limp and the staff she uses to walk transfer to this personification the social stigma that Spenser can expect his contemporary readers already to associate with impaired bodies. Spenser creates an even more unpleasant association with Occasion’s impairment by connecting it with her violence in instigating Furor to harm Phaon: “Somtimes she raught him stones, wherwith to smite, / Sometimes her staffe,

though it her one leg were, / Withouten which she could not goe vpright” (2.4.5.5–7).

Scholars have noted the difference between Spenser’s Occasion and the emblem tradition on which he draws for the iconographic detail of the forelock and bald occiput. James McManaway summarizes the typical details that identify Occasion in emblem books: “the figure of a young, vigorous woman with winged feet (or standing on fortune’s wheel or on a ball and a dolphin). Her head is bald save for a long forelock, and in her hand she usually holds a razor.”³⁹ Both McManaway and Manning and Fowler have attempted to explain Spenser’s divergences from the traditional iconography of Occasion by finding other emblematic sources that, combined with details from emblem representations of Occasion, might add up to Spenser’s Occasion. McManaway argues for Spenser’s use of iconographic details from Discord and Envy, and Manning and Fowler add to this argument the assertion that Spenser draws as well on emblem representations of Penitence.⁴⁰

It seems to me that these analyses underestimate the complexity of Spenser’s inventing imagination, tying him to emblems as though these were his only source of inspiration for personifications. Surely, Spenser owes a huge debt to the emblem tradition, but a principal concern in his creation of these personifications is the importance of signaling not only intellectually, not only visually (ekphrastically, that is), but *emotionally* as well, the allegorical meaning of the personifications. Paul Alpers, commenting on Spenser’s allegorical method in this episode, hints at this idea in his suggestion that Spenser, in creating the episode, began with an image, not a verbal formula. Alpers argues that emblem creation begins by translating words into images, and he provides emblem examples of physically impaired women (including Alciato’s “Remedia in arduo,” discussed earlier) to arrive at an interpretation in line with my distinction between impairment and disability in metaphor: “The lameness of these personifications is a metaphor for the slowness with which . . . prayers and punishment take effect. But the lameness of Spenser’s hag . . . has no conceptual equivalent, and we therefore cannot assume that the formula ‘Occasion is lame’ produced this part of Spenser’s description.”⁴¹ Alpers posits that Spenser, instead of beginning with some verbal formula such as this, began instead with the image of “an allegorical hag who provoked wrath” and added details and iconographic signifiers from there.⁴² I am less concerned with the genesis of Spenser’s creativity than with its outcomes, especially the ways that readers come to understand the intended allegorical meanings. But to add to Alpers’s emphasis on the allegorical function of the *image*, as opposed to the *idea*, I would call attention to the reader’s

emotional response as another important part of Spenser's goals for this figure. Words such as "filthy," "feeble," and "loathly" do more than create an image—they also elicit negative emotions.

Like Occasion, Ate is one of Spenser's many "allegorical hags," and her representation is designed in part to illustrate an idea, but the process of meaning-making for this figure is not solely intellectual but emotional as well. Ate symbolizes discord and division among people, and Spenser represents this allegorically by giving her a discordant and divided body—her "monstrous shape" makes it clear that she "was borne of hellish brood" (4.1.26.7, 9):

And as her eares so eke her feet were odde,
And much vnlike, th'one long, the other short,
And both misplast; that when th'one forward yode,
The other backe retired, and contrarie trode. (4.1.28.6–9)

This allegorical personification differs significantly from Alciato's "Remedia in arduo." A woman who walks forward and backward at the same time would seem unable to wreak as much mischief as Alciato's flying Ate, and yet both Alciato and Spenser use physical impairment to make connections between source and target domains. However, whereas Alciato's connection is logical, Spenser's is emotional. The description includes numerous examples of words that convey not just an image but also a negative emotion: Ate's "squinted eyes contrarie wayes intended" (4.1.27.2); she has a "loathly mouth, vnmeete a mouth to bee" (4.1.27.3); and she hears with "matchlesse eares deformed and distort" (4.1.28.2). Spenser repeatedly uses this kind of emotional "argument" based on disgust reactions to personifications to lead his readers to the correct moral judgment of the allegorical situation at hand. I have discussed here the examples of Ate and Occasion because the fact that Spenser diverges from established emblem conventions provides evidence that Spenser was conscious of the meaning-making effects he hoped to achieve by creating physically impaired allegorical figures that his audience would read through the lens of disabling social stigma.

Emotional impact plays an important role in creating an effective personification, and for personifications in *The Faerie Queene* meant to represent moral failings, Spenser relies to a great extent on the emotion of disgust. William Ian Miller defends disgust as an emotion, noting that although it does have a "more 'embodied' feel than other emotions," it fits the definition of an emotion: "Emotions are feelings linked to ways of talking about those feelings, to social and cultural paradigms that make sense of those feel-

ings by giving us a basis for knowing when they are properly felt and properly displayed. Emotions, even the most visceral, are richly social, cultural, and linguistic phenomena.”⁴³ The details that Spenser uses to elicit disgust reactions from readers to his personifications of Occasion and Ate of course are not limited to their physical impairments—Cavanagh ably demonstrates the misogynist ideas and imagery that contribute to these figures, and one could easily make an argument about the ageism underlying Spenser’s depictions of hags as well. These overdetermined sources of disgust reactions provide signposts regarding both the emotional and ideological responses of early modern English people to categories of people understood as Other. Miller notes the wide-ranging, indiscriminate nature of such disgust, which “judges ugliness and deformity to be moral offenses” and “knows no distinction between the moral and the aesthetic, collapsing failures in both into an undifferentiated revulsion.”⁴⁴ For Spenser, to describe a category of people by his culture understood to be ugly—the disabled, the old, the poor—is automatically to create a moral revulsion to the allegorical situation. Georgia Brown notes the significance of disgust in bringing together the physical and the ideological in this way: “Since disgust grounds the moral and political in sensory and emotional impulse, it embodies ideology, in the dual sense of expressing a particular ideology, and in the sense of giving ideology a material existence.”⁴⁵ Spenser can count on the reader’s revulsion in response to the disgusting, frail bodies he presents in so many of his allegorical personifications; he thus calls on the ideology of the Other’s body in order to further his own, moral ideological agenda.

I HAVE AIMED to demonstrate two ideas in this essay. First, I argue in favor of finding and analyzing the distinctions among metaphors and allegories that use physical difference and impairment as source domain. Given the prevalence of the body as source domain for metaphors,⁴⁶ it is unrealistic to police the output of new metaphors and quite simply impossible to do so for the early modern period. It seems more fruitful to turn attention to the question of *how* these metaphors mean, and I have here metaphorically extended the distinction between impairment and disability to address the question of whether a metaphor or allegory derives its meaning solely from the mapping of a specific impairment onto another situation or whether the meaning derives as well from the stigmatizing emotional response associated with that impairment by the culture in which the metaphor or allegory originates.

My second point pertains specifically to Spenser’s allegorical practice with personifications, which frequently rely a great deal on emotional impact to

convey allegorical meaning. For this reason, these allegories based on physical difference are *disabling* metaphors, metaphors that serve to increase the audience's sense of the Other-ness of, and hence the necessity of rejecting, those with bodily differences. It is important to note, however, that Spenser does not single out physical impairment as the sole marker of Other-ness in his allegory; rather, stigmatizing disability is quite consistent with Spenser's use of disgusting details associated with other categories of people—women, the Irish, the lower classes, to name a few—to quickly elicit the necessary rejecting emotional response to clarify the negative valence to be attached to the allegorical figure. With this allegorical method, Spenser puts into practice the ideas of literary theorists such as Sidney, who argued for the supremacy of poetry—with its greater power than philosophy to move and its greater freedom than history to celebrate virtue—in spurring readers to virtue. His un-self-conscious reliance on preexisting cultural biases against unprivileged groups, such as disabled people, allows Spenser to import a whole system of emotional reactions to human difference into the moral world of Faeryland, leading, he hopes, to greater virtue in his ideal reader even as he reifies inequality and bias in his epic poem.

Notes

1. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 290.

2. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 55.

3. See Georgina Kleege, *Sight Unseen* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

4. See Nancy Mairs, *Waist-High in the World: A Life among the Nondisabled* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

5. Judith H. Anderson, *Translating Investments: Metaphor and the Dynamic of Cultural Change in Tudor-Stuart England* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 14.

6. Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 196.

7. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves*, 8.

8. See World Health Organization, *Disabilities* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2010). Web. 28 July 2010. <http://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/>.

9. George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 238.

10. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 59.

11. Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18–19.

12. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 14.
13. Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 96.
14. Amy Vidali, "Seeing What We Know: Disability and Theories of Metaphor," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 4, no. 1 (2010): 33–54.
15. George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 84.
16. Daniel Casasanto, "Embodiment of Abstract Concepts: Good and Bad in Right- and Left-Handers," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 138, no. 3 (August 2009): 360.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 51.
19. Bill Hughes, "Wounded/Monstrous/Subject: A Critique of the Disabled Body in the Sociological Imaginary," *Disability & Society* 24, no. 2 (2009): 408. The concept of "the abject" as rejected Other bears many affinities with the ideas regarding disgust that I use here, and I commend Bill Hughes and Minae Inahara for their works extending Kristeva's comments on abjection to the field of disability theory; see also Minae Inahara, *Abject Love: Undoing the Boundaries of Physical Disability* (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009). I do believe that Spenser creates and recreates abjection in his allegorical personifications, including abject representations of disabled bodies, but I find Kristeva's ideas about abjection, as expressed in *Powers of Horror*, too broad to serve as a precise analytical tool for understanding this process, and so I choose here to focus on disgust as an emotion; see William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
20. Peter Crisp, "Allegory: Conceptual Metaphor in History," *Language and Literature* 10 (2001): 10. Crisp asserts that although named personifications might seem to be examples of "direct linguistic reference to target domain entities," they are not, because such terms "function [not] as abstract nouns but as personal names. Idleness, Gluttony and Death . . . are named persons existing fictionally in their metaphorical source domains, from whom one maps onto the relevant abstract entities" (16, 17).
21. Mark Turner, *Death Is the Mother of Beauty: Mind, Metaphor, Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 21–22.
22. Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 79.
23. Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 714.
24. See Bill Hughes, "What Can a Foucauldian Analysis Contribute to Disability Theory?" in *Foucault and the Government of Disability*, ed. Shelley Tremain (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 78–92, and Shelley Tremain, "On the Subject of Impairment," in *Disability/Postmodernity: Embodying Disability Theory*, ed. Marian Corker and Tom Shakespeare (London: Continuum, 2002), 32–47.
25. *The Moral Play of Everyman*, in *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*, ed. A. C. Cawley (London: J. M. Dent/Everyman, 1993), lines 487–88.
26. Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata: Lyons, 1550*, trans. Betty I. Knott (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate-Scholar, 1996), 142. The original Latin reads:

Aetheriis postquam deiecit sedibus Aten
Iuppiter: heu uexat quàm mala noxa uiros?
Euolat hæc pedibus celer, & pernicious alis,

Intactúmque nihil casibus esse sinit.
 Ergo Litæ, proles Iouis, hanc comitantur euntem,
 Sarturæ quicquid fecerit illa mali.
 Sed quia segnipedes, luscæ, lassæq[ue]; senecta,
 Nil nisi post, longo tempore restituunt. (142)

27. Numeric references following quotations from *The Faerie Queene* refer to book, canto, stanza, and line numbers.

28. See Darryl J. Gless, "Abessa, Corceca, Kirkrapine," in Hamilton, *Spenser Encyclopedia*, 3–4.

29. *Ibid.*, 3.

30. In stanza 23, Spenser seems to have forgotten that Abessa cannot speak, because "they gan loudly bray" (1.3.23.1); by the next stanza, the use of the pronoun "she" presumably refers to Corceca.

31. See Paster et al., in the introduction to *Early Modern Passions*, for a thoughtful discussion of the dangers of reading emotions across a divide of centuries (1–20).

32. Douglas Trevor, *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Christopher Tilmouth, *Passion's Triumph over Reason: A History of the Moral Imagination from Spenser to Rochester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2007.

33. Jennifer C. Vaught, *Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

34. Richard Strier, "Against the Rule of Reason: Praise of Passion from Petrarch to Luther to Shakespeare to Herbert," in Paster et al., *Early Modern Passions*, 23.

35. Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 1.

36. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves*, 64–65.

37. Philip Sidney, *Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesy*, ed. Lewis Soens (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 25.

38. Sheila T. Cavanagh, *Wanton Eyes and Chaste Desires: Female Sexuality in The Faerie Queene* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 65.

39. James G. McManaway, "'Occasion,' *Faerie Queene* II.iv.4–5," *Modern Language Notes* 49, no. 6 (1934): 392.

40. John Manning and Alistair Fowler, "The Iconography of Spenser's Occasion," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 39 (1976): 263–66.

41. Paul J. Alpers, *The Poetry of The Faerie Queene* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 214.

42. *Ibid.*

43. William Miller, *Anatomy of Disgust*, 7, 8.

44. *Ibid.*, 21.

45. Georgia Brown, "Disgusting John Marston: Sensationalism and the Limits of a Post-Modern Marston," *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 4, no. 2 (2005): 137.

46. See Kövecses, *Metaphor*.