

Through the Looking Glass: Reflections of the Prodigal Daughter

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This contribution examines the submerged prodigal daughter plot within the dominant ‘prodigal son’ drama of Gascoigne’s Glass of Government (1575). Jerry Aline Flieger has suggested that we might reimagine the prodigal daughter not as merely ‘going beyond the fold of restrictive paternal law, only to return’, but as ‘lush, exceptional, extravagant, and affirmative ... to be prodigal in this sense is to alter the law, to enlarge its parameters and recast its meaning’. Instead of marginalizing and banishing the prodigal daughter, this article suggests that it may be worth passing through Gascoigne’s looking glass to imagine an alternative space for her to occupy.

Seeking to articulate a space for the feminist critic within psychoanalysis, Jerry Aline Flieger proposes the paradigm of the prodigal daughter:

like the prodigal child of the Biblical account — who is of course a son in the original parable — she goes beyond the fold of restrictive paternal law, only to return. But unlike the prodigal son of legend, who returns repentant, she returns enriched — for she is ‘prodigal’ in the second sense of the term as well: she is lush, exceptional, extravagant, and affirmative. To be prodigal in this sense is to alter the law, to enlarge its parameters and recast its meaning.¹

Imagining the prodigal daughter involves an act of what we might call, in light of Flieger’s description, prodigal reading. The biblical account is altered, its parameters enlarged, and its meaning recast. The only suggestion of female presence in the parable as told in Luke 15:11–32 comes in the elder brother’s accusation to his father that his younger sibling ‘hath devoured thy living with harlots’ (30).² Prodigally, we might ask: who were these ‘harlots’, and how did they come to engage in harlotry? Each one, perhaps, has a prodigal daughter story of her own.

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This possibility is, in fact, what George Gascoigne seems to suggest in his printed drama in the prodigal son tradition, *The Glass of Government* (1575).³ Sixteenth-century interpretations of the parable tended to conflate the elder brother's accusation with the earlier statement that the younger son 'wasted his substance with riotous living' (Luke 15:13), so that the 'significance of the "harlots" was not only greatly magnified in drama, ballads, woodcuts, stained glass, and other art, but often earned a starring role in exegeses that otherwise rarely strayed from the gospel text'.⁴ They became more than simply accomplices in the prodigal son's riotous living, instead actively leading him astray, as is a central issue in *The Glass of Government*. Gascoigne himself summarizes the story in his 'Argument' as follows:

Two rich citizens of Antwerp (being nigh neighbours, and having each of them two sons of like age) do place them together with one godly teacher. The schoolmaster [Gnomaticus] doth briefly instruct them their duty towards God, their Prince, their parents, their country, and all magistrates in the same. The eldest [Philosarchus and Philautus] being young men of quick capacity, do (parrot-like) very quickly learn the rules without book; the younger [Philomusus and Philotimus] being somewhat more dull of understanding, do yet engrave the same within their memories. The elder by allurement of parasites and lewd company, begin to incline themselves to concupiscence. The parents (to prevent it) send them all together to the University of Douay, whereas the younger in short space be (by painful study) preferred, that one to be secretary unto the Palsgrave, that other becometh a famous preacher in Geneva. The eldest (turning to their vomit) take their carriage with them, and travel the world. That one is apprehended and executed for a robbery (even in sight of his brother) in the Palsgrave's court; that other whipped and banished Geneva for fornication, notwithstanding the earnest suit of his brother for his pardon.⁵

In contrast to the repentance and forgiveness extended to the prodigal son in the biblical parable, the version of paternal law that this play enforces is particularly uncompromising. Moreover, Gascoigne specifies that it is 'by allurement of Parasites and lewd company' that his two prodigal sons, Philautus ('one who loves himself') and Philosarchus ('lover of the flesh'), 'begin to incline themselves to concupiscence'.

This 'lewd company' looms rather larger in the play than the single sentence allotted to it in the argument might suggest. Readers of the play, which one scholar calls 'a grimly sanctimonious morality without peer as a soporific text', have often been able to summon up more enthusiasm for this aspect.⁶ Richard

Hillman, for instance, considers that ‘by contrast with the relentlessly edifying prose of their betters ... their language stands out as plausibly colloquial’; it is ‘both insistently witty and wittily insistent, and by the latter quality, as much as by the former, it takes centre stage.’⁷ The members of the lewd company are Echo, described as ‘the Parasite’ in the *dramatis personae*, Pandarina, whose name even more directly indicates her occupation, Dick Drum (‘the Roister’), and Lamia, ‘the Harlot’ (4). Lamia’s name invokes a specifically female kind of monster in classical mythology; Thomas Cooper’s *Thesaurus* (1578) says that certain *lamiae* ‘do allure young men to company carnally with them: and after that they be consumed in the act of lechery, they covet to devour them’.⁸

Lamia also has a historical namesake, though, whom Gascoigne must surely have had in mind. Readers of Cooper’s *Thesaurus* would also be informed that this was the name of ‘a famous harlotte’.⁹ This was Lamia of Corinth, about whom more details could be found in Plutarch’s ‘Life of Demetrius’. In Plutarch, Lamia is presented as a threat specifically to the city. Demetrius was so enamoured of her that he levied an extravagant tax from the Athenians to ‘be given to Lamia, and among his other courtesans, to buy them soap’; a marginal note to the 1579 edition of Thomas North’s translation describes this as ‘Demetrius’ prodigal gift of 250 talents to his courtesans to buy them soap’.¹⁰ While North’s English translation postdates *The Glass of Government*, it shows how naturally readers at this time might apply the language of prodigality to the episode.¹¹ Moreover, Plutarch continues, ‘Lamia of herself and through her own countenance did get a great sum of money together of diverse persons for one supper she made unto Demetrius, the preparation whereof was of such exceeding charge, that Lycaeus born in the Isle of Samos did set down the order thereof in writing’, and for this reason ‘a certain poet no less pleasantly than truly called this Lamia “Elepolis”: to wit, an engine to take cities.’¹² In *The Glass of Government*, a central issue for the authorities to establish becomes the nature of one (off-stage) supper which Philosarchus and Philautus attend in the company of Lamia and her associates, and a second, paid for by Philosarchus, which never takes place. Were these innocent meals, as Lamia, Pandarina, and Echo claim, or evidence of a conspiracy to entrap the sons of a respectable citizen? The banquet is in itself potentially a site of prodigality, of luxurious spending and consumption, but it is the presence of Lamia in her capacity as ‘the harlot’ which is perceived to threaten the very fabric of civic order.

Gascoigne’s reference to ‘Demetrius, light set by for his lust’ (line 598) in another morally reflective work, *The Steel Glass*, published the next year (1576), indicates his awareness of this aspect of the life of Demetrius.¹³ Lamia and

Demetrius also appear in the second volume of William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (1567), which claims that Lamia 'haunted of long time the universities of Athens, where she gained great store of money, and brought to destruction many young men'.¹⁴ With this phrase, Lamia appears to step out of the classical context and into Gascoigne's. The elder brothers of *The Glass of Government* repeatedly wish to be sent to the University of Douay, for the company and enjoyment they anticipate finding there: 'I warrant you, when we come to the University, we shall have store of such [as Lamia] there', Philautus assures Philosarchus (*Glass of Government*, 51). Their parents and tutor, having decided to send the brothers there to keep them out of the clutches of the 'lewd company' they have fallen in with in Antwerp, immediately start worrying that Lamia and her associates might follow them there, and spend much of the rest of the play trying to prevent this. Lamia, then, poses more than a mythological threat of monstrous femininity; she is made to embody a distinct form of social threat in her potential to subvert the proper processes of education by which the bourgeois male is interpellated into society.

Lamia's designation in the *dramatis personae* as 'the Harlot' overlays the biblical context of the prodigal's harlots onto the meretrix of Latin comedy. Act 3 scene 1 opens with Dick Drum 'alone', addressing the audience; in response to Lamia's ruse of pretending to be an heiress, he scoffs: 'An *inheretrix* quoth you? Marry, that she is a *meretrix* I warrant her' (44). Gascoigne invokes Terence in his prologue in order to distance his own 'Comedy' from 'Terence phrase', the 'Deformed shows' of Latin comedy from the 'Reformed speech' that will be presented here (6). Within the play itself, Philosarchus reports that their humanist education so far has included reading 'certain comedies of Terence', alongside Cicero and Virgil; Gnomaticus admits that 'out of Terence may ... be gathered many moral instructions amongst the rest of his wanton discourses', if read properly (16–17). His method for the proper reading of classical texts is taking those which 'seem consonant to the holy scriptures, and ... joining the one with the other' (17). Philautus and Philosarchus, unsurprisingly, are bad readers of Terence: in 2.2, Philautus applies 'the old proverb ... which saith: so many men, so many minds' — *quot homines, tot sententiae* in Terence (*Phormio*, 454) — in the context of complaining about Gnomaticus's mode of instruction (34). The studious younger brother Philomusus offers the correct perspective, that although Gnomaticus' teaching is not as amusing 'in comparison to Terence's comedies and such like, yet ought we to have good regard thereunto, since it teacheth in effect the sum of our duties' (34).

Rather than rejecting Terence entirely, the play seems to approve Gnomaticus's cautious endorsement of reading him correctly, within a Christianizing framework,

when the pious and moralizing chorus compares Christ's care for his flock 'to father's care on child', and argues that 'That difference, each man may plainly see, / 'Tween parent's care, and master's bodes abused: / So Terence taught, whose lore is not refused' (26). This passage interprets Terence's plays as offering a lesson to parents, by illustrating the negative consequences of parental tyranny. 'Bodes' is something of an archaism, meaning 'commands' or 'orders', so that Gascoigne is introducing diction from the middle English tradition in order to transpose Terence's teaching into his own 'reformed speech'. The cautious note is preserved in the use of litotes — 'not refused' — and the following couplet goes on to qualify that 'yet where youth is prone to follow ill', parents should 'spare the spur, and use the bridle still' (the 'spur' in this case is 'bounty wisely used', while the 'bridle', which should be 'shame of sin', must be supplied by parental discipline if such shame is absent) (26).

The Glass of Government falls into the 'Christian Terence' tradition: 'Like the author of *Acolastus*, Gascoigne has fused the Roman comedy of Terence — parasites, courtesans, and trickery — with the parable of the prodigal son — fathers and sons, rebellion and obedience'.¹⁵ The Latin play *Acolastus* (1529), by Guilielmus Gnapheus (Willem de Volder), had been translated into English by a man coincidentally named John Palsgrave, and published in a bilingual edition with the Latin and accompanying notes in 1540. As Katherine Little argues, the use that Gnapheus makes of Terence in his play, while apparently endorsing the idea that reading Latin comedy can be morally beneficial, in practice suggests the opposite: Terence provides material for the prodigal scenes of riotous living, in which *Acolastus* loses his way, so that 'pagan classical texts do not lead toward Christian morality; they lead away from it'.¹⁶ The necessary subordination of the classical material to the Christian framework requires the reversal of 'the mainstays of Roman comedy, which include the sons' triumph over fathers; marriage and sex; and trickery'.¹⁷ Finally, Little notes that 'For Gnapheus, classical texts are both a resource for representing temptations, the son's disobedience and the tavern scenes, which are borrowed from Terence, and are themselves a temptation that must ultimately be rejected or at least controlled'.¹⁸

In *The Glass of Government*, not surprisingly, we find similar processes at work. In the prologue, Gascoigne invites an imagined (masculine) audience of 'Lords' and 'Grave citizens, you people great and small, / To see yourselves in glass of government' (6). Inasmuch as he promises that 'the whole comedy' will be 'a figure of the rewards and punishments of virtues and vices' (5), Gascoigne sets up a double glass: 'In addition to [the] positive mirror is the mirror of evil', and the latter is set up as a negative reflection of the former.¹⁹ In this play, though, the rejection

of the temptations represented by the scenes of ‘lewd company’ is remarkably violent. Unlike *Acolastus*, which follows the biblical model of repentance and forgiveness, Gascoigne’s play ends with one of his prodigal sons executed and the other whipped (probably) to death. Gascoigne was not alone in the English tradition in punishing his prodigals harshly: the truant brother and sister of the earlier Tudor interlude *Nice Wanton* (printed 1560), for instance, meet their ends via hanging and syphilis, respectively.²⁰ But where the siblings of *Nice Wanton* are led astray by the figure of ‘Iniquity’, Gascoigne presents us with an altogether more human representation of vice.

Lamia introduces herself as an unrepentant prodigal daughter in *The Glass of Government* act 1 scene 5. She enters complaining about the strict morals — or rather nosy ministers — of the day, which police interactions between the sexes, so that (as Echo jokes to her) ‘if they do but see two in bed together, they will say that it was for to commit some wickedness’ (23). Lamia’s response offers a significant snapshot of her background: ‘If’, she says,

I could have been contented to be so shut up from sight and speech of such as like me, I might have lived gallantly and well provided with my mother; who (though I say it) is a good old lady in Valencia, but when I saw that I must wear my good apparel always within doors, and that I must pass over my meals without company, I trussed up my jewels in a casket, and (being accompanied by my good aunt here) I bade Valencia farewell, for I had rather make hard shift to live at liberty, than enjoy great riches in such a kind of imprisonment. (23–4)

The passage establishes Lamia as a direct parallel to the prodigal sons of the main plot: the offspring of a well-to-do bourgeois family, who rejects the restrictions of conventional morality and instead privileges the pursuit of pleasure. The text’s firm endorsement of conventional morality on a macro level requires us to argue that Lamia is vain and shallow, and that she is fundamentally wrong in her value judgments — virtuous living is not imprisonment, if you are virtuous. But for a moment the prodigal daughter almost escapes from the text, asserting the validity of her experience and her claim to liberation.

The scene goes on to mirror, in much reduced form, the scenes of instruction between Gnomaticus and his students. In the previous lengthy scene, Gnomaticus commenced the delivery to his students of ‘wholesome lessons ... for the salvation of your souls, the comfort of your life, and the profit of your country’ (17). As a means of organizing his material, he demonstrated his penchant for grouping his precepts in threes: ‘As touching your duties unto God himself, although they

be infinite, yet shall we sufficiently contain them in three especial points to be performed: that is to say, *Fear, Love, and Trust*, which he then elaborates upon in turn (19). Here, Pandarina, Lamia's aunt, tells her that she must 'learn the way that may maintain your estate, for beauty will not always last, and if you provide not in youth, you may be assured to beg in age' (24). Echoing Gnomaticus's method, she instructs her student:

I pray you learn these three points of me to govern your steps by. First, *Trust no man* how fair soever he speak, next *Reject no man* (that hath aught) how evil-favoured soever he be. And lastly *Love no man* longer than he giveth, since liberal gifts are the glue of ever-during love. (25)

Instead of salvation of the soul and the profit of the country, Pandarina's lesson focuses on the physical body and personal profit, and her set of three precepts is given in negative rather than positive terms, and in relation to 'man' instead of 'God'. The play-text highlights the pointed nature of these inversions typographically, by the use of italics for the precepts of both Gnomaticus and Pandarina.

This mirroring has drawn critical attention. Richard Helgerson considered it in terms of parody: the 'cast of low life characters ... offer an implicit parody of the moral instruction of the good schoolmaster'.²¹ Ezra Horbury — the rare critic who pays substantial attention to the play's female characters — helpfully develops this idea further, contending that 'Pandarina's teachings are not only a *parody* of that instruction; they are themselves a competing form of pedagogy that positions corrupt feminine teaching as a threat to masculine didactic power'.²² Horbury concludes: 'Spurred on by heterosexual desire, the sons wander out of the classroom ... and are undone by Lamia's corrupting behaviour, something she learned from female intergenerational teaching'.²³ This reading, then, aligns with the judgment of the authority figures in the play, who hold Lamia responsible for the corruption of the prodigal sons. But this judgment rests upon two assumptions: first, that the process of transmitting corrupt feminine teaching has been a smooth one, and second, that this teaching is the cause of the prodigal sons' undoing. In the text itself, neither of these possibilities is presented quite as straightforwardly as might be expected.

To begin with, the play is quite insistent that only one of the prodigal sons, Philosarchus, is at all affected by Lamia's charms. The elder brothers do not become love rivals. And while Philautus's explanation that he has no interest in Lamia because she has expressed no interest in him ('I have not perceived that ever she lent any glance or liking look towards me ... and she that seemeth not with

greedy eye to behold me, it is very likely that I will not be overhasty to gaze at her' [49]) suggests that this might be a matter of mere chance (she saw Philosarchus first), the play, throughout, does not present lechery as his vice. Philautus loves himself, and desires excitement, variety, travel; while his friend is writing love poetry, he writes of martial exploits, and is eventually executed for robbery. As for Philosarchus, before Lamia has even seen him, he has spotted her and declared her to be 'passing fair' (36). He immediately asks Echo whether she 'is of the right stamp' — or rather, of the *wrong* stamp — and asks him if he'll 'carry her a present' for him (37). Certainly, in their subsequent meeting in act 2 scene 6, she spins a tale to attract him, but clearly there is hardly any need. The anxiety of the play's authority figures to prevent Lamia from following him to Douay proves unnecessary, since he easily finds someone else to indulge in fornication with, for which he meets his punishment in Geneva: one woman is apparently as good as another.

The play also resists presenting Lamia as an unequivocally apt pupil. Pandarina prefaces her 'lesson' by outlining Lamia's faults, which she describes as a tendency to fall in love too easily:

you are too much subject to your passion, for if you chance to be acquainted with a gentleman that is indeed court-like and of good deserts, you become straightway more desirous of him, than he is of you, and so far you dote upon him, that you do not only sequester yourself from all other company, but also you become so frank-hearted, that you suffer him not to bestow upon you any more than is necessary for present use. (24–5)

In this regard, Lamia seems to recall something of the *bona meretrix*, which according to Donatus was an innovation of Terence.²⁴ Just as the prodigal sons Philosarchus and Philautus are insistently described as being quick to learn, but equally quick to forget, and take a dismissive view of their education from Gnomaticus ('I have (in effect) all this gear without book already', says Philosarchus [35]), so Lamia assures her aunt dismissively that she knows her lessons ('As though I were to learn that at these years', she scoffs [36]). But apparently she forgets them just as fast: later in the play, Echo complains that Lamia 'beareth but evil in remembrance the good documents of that virtuous old lady her aunt' (61); she is apparently relapsing into her old ways. If Philosarchus and Philautus are bad students of a good teacher, Lamia is a bad student of a *bad* teacher.

In a play which is apparently intended to educate, education proves surprisingly useless; the substance of the play undoes its professed reason for existence.

Little reads it as ‘self-conscious’ in its ‘explicit focus on humanist education’: ‘not so much a play about a prodigal son (or sons) but a play about this kind of play’.²⁵ Others have diagnosed this apparent contradiction as a symptom of the play’s ‘profoundly pessimistic Calvinistic determinism’,²⁶ which means that the play ‘rejects the premise upon which the didactic intention and the formal elements of the morality depend, the premise that sinful man is capable of regeneration’.²⁷ Pessimistic Calvinism clashes in the play with a humanist view of the moral and ethical value of education, as found in Roger Ascham’s pedagogical work *The Scholemaster* (1570), with which the play engages extensively. In particular, as Linda Salomon has shown, Gascoigne dramatizes Ascham’s conviction ‘that those which be commonly the wisest, the best learned, and best men also, when they be old, were never commonly the quickest of wit when they were young’, while ‘amongst a number of quick wits in youth, few be found in the end either very fortunate for themselves, or very profitable to serve the commonwealth, but decay and vanish, men know not which way’.²⁸ However, as critics have often noted, this complicates things still further, since Gascoigne himself seems to have been particularly known for his quickness of wit; in the notes to Spenser’s *Shepherd’s Calendar*, for instance, ‘E.K.’ praises ‘Ma. George Gaskin a wittie gentleman, and the very chefe of our late rhymers’, in whom ‘gifts of wit and naturall promptnesse appeare ... abundantly’.²⁹ When they should be turning Gnomaticus’s improving precepts into verse, Philosarchus instead ‘spent the time in writing of love sonnets’, while Philautus ‘made verses in praise of martial feats and policies’ (60). In his time in the Low Countries, Gascoigne by his own account played both the lover and the soldier in life and in verse; his ruthless killing off of these avatars is, as Gillian Austen has argued, in the service of a deliberate project of self-fashioning, in which he ostentatiously and somewhat inconsistently adopted the stance of the ‘reformed prodigal’.³⁰ This act of male self-fashioning apparently requires the emphatic banishment of Lamia and all that she is made to stand for.³¹

At the same time, the play-text offers us glimpses in its glass of a prodigal daughter story taking place in the margins. Lamia, as we have seen, found her marginalized position as an early modern woman untenable and, in moving into the city of Antwerp, attempted to position herself at the centre. But this move is impossible, because women at the centre are doubly marginalized, both as women and as women of the ‘wrong stamp’. The play marginalizes her further, both in terms of the stage time it allocates her — just a few scenes — and by not giving these scenes the kind of marginal apparatus that lend extra authority to the scenes of legitimate instruction. The form her punishment takes is once again to be sent

back into the margins, banished from the city centre where her presence was such a threat to male education. But this is the point: it was her sheer presence, not any particular action of hers, that was a threat. The message of the play is that there is no place for a woman at the centre: she must stay in the margins.

The play dedicates considerable energy to the process of rooting out and expelling its 'lewd company'. In fact, as Lorna Hutson has demonstrated, this effort becomes a driving force of the plot in the second half of the play.³² In act 3 scene 5, the concerned parents have been informed that their sons have been seen to 'haunt a very dishonest house in this town', and with the help of Gnomaticus they deduce that Echo was responsible for bringing them to it (51). They resolve to tell the Markgrave, 'Who upon such means as we shall make, may banish the harlot with her train out of the city, and may also punish the parasite for so enticing the young men' (52). However, as Hutson shows, the matter is not, legally, as simple as this: the Markgrave does order the arrest and questioning of Lamia and the others, but, he admits, 'truly I cannot find hitherto any proof against them, whereby they ought to be punished: and though I desire (as much as you) to see them condignly corrected, yet with out proof of some offence I should therein commit a wrong'. Certainly, he says, Lamia

doth not seem to be of the honestest, but yet there is nobody which will come in and say this or that I have seen or known by her. She confeseth that Phylosarchus and Phylautus were there one night at a banquet, and that Phylosarchus should have supped there the same night that they were taken, and when I ask her to what end, she answereth that he was a suitor to her for marriage, and for witness bringeth in her Aunt as good as herself; in the meantime I have no proof of evil wherewith to burthen her. (82)

The danger of acting on insufficient evidence is presented not so much as risking miscarriage of justice, but as risking a negative public response. Act 4 scene 7 introduces a messenger, who does not just bring word of the arrest of Lamia and her associates, but has strong opinions about this 'open wrong' that 'an honest old gentlewoman with her kinswoman are commanded to the coup, only because they suffered an honest young man (and son to a wealthy burgher) to sup with them yesternight ... especially since they proffer good sureties to be always forthcoming until their behaviour be tried' (70). The issue, as Hutson has shown, concerns the circumstances under which a magistrate might permit or deny bail, and which had been the subject of reformative legislation in the 1550s that seems to have been slow to take hold. Hutson concludes that 'Gascoigne's play ... designedly contributes to

the reformation of local governance by representing popular ignorance and resentment of apparently summary justice, only to reveal, through the unfolding detective drama of the pre-trial examination and its sequence, the equity involved in the conjectural labour of gathering and evaluating evidence'.³³

By raising the spectre of public opinion in the form of the outraged messenger of act 4, the play also registers the possibility that its external witnesses may not be as convinced of the justice of its proceedings against the 'lewd company' as are its internal authority figures. If we have enjoyed the subversive energies that they have brought to the play, we might be inclined to hope that the messenger succeeds in his errand to go and find 'some pitiful mind, which moved with compassion, may speak unto the Markgrave in their behalf' (70). But the justice of this play is not notably tempered with mercy; as Little has observed, the only character to have a chance to ask for 'pardon' at the end (the duplicitous servant Ambidexter) is denied it, by the Markgrave whose name is Severus.³⁴ And yet, despite its strikingly harsh treatment of its prodigal sons, the play apparently lacks the confidence to convict either Lamia, Pandarina, or Echo of capital offenses. The harshest punishments are outsourced: Philautus and Dick Drum are executed for theft in Germany, while Ambidexter reports that Philosarchus 'was so sore whipped' that he left him for dead in Geneva (87); in both cases, the pleas of their respectable brothers were not enough to save them.

Meanwhile in Antwerp, Echo is sentenced to 'be whipped about the Town three several market days', and then banished on pain of death. Lamia and Pandarina receive the gendered punishment of being 'set on the cucking-stool in public three market days', and likewise banished (87). The cucking-stool was a chair in which 'female offenders ... were occasionally ordered to face the mixture of confinement and public ridicule that accompanied being locked into a structure of display for a stated period of time'.³⁵ As Marjorie Keniston McIntosh explains, at this time cucking-stools were a punishment 'normally used for both female scolds and prostitutes'; she reports an instance in 1575, the same year that *The Glass of Government* was printed, in which one Jane Haxoppe was sentenced, as a scold, 'to be carried through the city of York tomorrow in the market time' on a cucking-stool.³⁶ In spite of the repeated insistence that the prodigal sons were led astray by bad company, these punishments focus on the exposure of vice and its expulsion from the city, rather than its elimination. As Echo observed, 'if we have not them [Philautus and Philosarchus], we shall have others as good as they, thou mayst be sure that as long as Lamia continueth beautiful, she shall never be without suitors, and when the crow's feet groweth under her eye, why then no more ado but insinuate thyself with such another' (66). If Antwerp has expelled him, he

will presumably simply carry on his activities in another city, while another Echo will come in to take his place here.

But what of Lamia, our prodigal daughter? The play exploits her as a source of pleasure and plot, even as it insists that she is the one exploiting innocent young men. It treats her as just as disposable as she is considered to be by Echo and the elder brothers: having been unleashed into the text, she is excluded from the stage as soon as she has served her purpose, never to appear in person again after the end of act 2. Her arrest, examination, and sentencing all take place off stage, and the text has no interest in what will happen to her after her punishment is carried out. As a result, it sets her free. In setting her up as a reflection of the prodigal sons, the play opens up an unexpected space for the prodigal daughter, and gives her a place beyond the confines of the text to which she can return, unrepentant and enriched.

Notes

- 1 Jerry Aline Flieger, 'The Female Subject: (What) Does Woman Want?', in *Psychoanalysis and ...*, ed. Richard Feldstein and Henry Sussman (London, 2015), 54–63, 59–60, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315660158>.
- 2 All biblical passages cited are from the King James Version.
- 3 We have no evidence that the play was ever performed, though Gascoigne presents it with a consistent eye on his imagined staging. See Richard Hillman, 'Measure for Measure and the (Anti-) Theatricality of Gascoigne's *The Glasse of Government*', *Comparative Drama* 42.4 (2008), 391–408, 394–5, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/cdr.0.0028>.
- 4 Ezra Horbury, *Prodigality in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, 2019), 226, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787446069>.
- 5 Gascoigne, *The Glasse of Government*, in J.W. Cunliffe, ed., *The Complete Works of George Gascoigne*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1910), 5. All subsequent citations to the play refer to this edition, using page numbers and with spelling modernized.
- 6 Peter McCluskey, *Representations of Flemish Immigrants on the Early Modern Stage* (London, 2018), 45, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315197906>.
- 7 Hillman, '(Anti-) Theatricality', 395.
- 8 Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae & Britannicae* (London, 1565; STC: S107253), s.v. 'Lamia'.

- 9 Ibid.
- 10 *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes ... Translated out of Greeke into French by Iames Amyot ... ; and out of French into Englishe, by Thomas North* (London, 1579; STC: S1644), LLLL3r.
- 11 Gascoigne possibly saw a manuscript of North's Plutarch before it was printed, since Thomas's older brother Roger North was admitted to Gray's Inn, where Gascoigne was a member, in 1561. Roger acquired a manuscript of Gascoigne and Kinwelmarsh's *Jocasta* in 1568, a few years before it appeared in print.
- 12 North, *Lives*, LLLL3v.
- 13 *George Gascoigne's 'The Steele Glas' and 'The Complainte of Phylomene': A Critical Edition with an Introduction*, ed. William Wallace (Salzburg, 1975).
- 14 William Painter, *The Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure* (London, 1567; STC: S110236), Z2v.
- 15 Katherine Little, *Humanism and Good Books in Sixteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2023), 159, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192883193.001.0001>.
- 16 Little, *Humanism and Good Books*, 78.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Alison Jack, *The Prodigal Son in English and American Literature: Five Hundred Years of Literary Homecomings* (Oxford, 2018), 39, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198817291.001.0001>.
- 20 On the date of *Nice Wanton's* composition, probably in the 1550s, see John McGavin, 'Nice Wanton, c.1550', in Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama* (Oxford, 2012), 241–61, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199566471.001.0001>.
- 21 Richard Helgerson, *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Los Angeles, 1976), 51.
- 22 Horbury, *Prodigality*, 239.
- 23 Ibid, 241.
- 24 Donatus suggests this in his commentary on Terence's *Eunuch*.
- 25 Little, *Humanism and Good Books*, 159.
- 26 Hillman, '(Anti-) Theatricality', 396.
- 27 Sylvia Feldman, *The Morality-Patterned Comedy of the Renaissance* (The Hague, 1970), 150.
- 28 Linda Salamon, 'A Face in *The Glasse*: Gascoigne's *Glasse of Gouvernement* Re-Examined', *Studies in Philology* 71.1 (1974), 47–71.
- 29 Edmund Spenser, *The Shorter Poems*, ed. Richard McCabe (London, 1999), 146.
- 30 Gillian Austen, *George Gascoigne* (Cambridge, 2008).

- 31 Frédérique Fouassier-Tate offers a pertinent perspective on this phenomenon. Official early modern discourse defined the female sex worker 'as an abominable Other who should remain outside respectable society', while at the same time 'she is in fact at the very heart of the system and crucial to its existence', since according to Foucault 'marginal figures, like the repressed criminal, madman or sexual transgressor, give their central position to those occupying the centre' (Foussier-Tate, 'Fact versus Fiction: The Construction of the Figure of the Prostitute in Early Modern England, Official and Popular Discourses', in *Female Transgression in Early Modern Britain: Literary and Historical Explorations* ed. Richard Hillman and Pauline Ruberry-Blanc (Abingdon, 2016), 71–90, 72, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315582153>).
- 32 See Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford, 2007), 207–15, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199212439.001.0001>.
- 33 Ibid, 212.
- 34 See Little, *Humanism and Good Books*, 164.
- 35 Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370–1600* (Cambridge, 1998), 63, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511582783>.
- 36 Ibid, 115.