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## “With guiltles blood oft stained”: Spenser’s *Ruines of Time* and the Saints of St. Albans

Alban is conspicuously absent from Spenser’s *Ruines of Time*. Although Camden writes that Verulamium was “famous for . . . bringing foorth *Alban*,” Spenser’s Verlame is silent on Alban and again departs from Camden to claim Verulamium had been built on the Thames. This article argues that the key to Spenser’s puzzling approach to Alban and the Thames lies in Verlame’s description of the Thames’s “pure streames with guiltles blood oft stained.” Camden attributes the legend of the errant Thames to “a corrupt place in *Gildas*,” whose account of Alban’s martyrdom recounts his miraculous transit through that river. The article explores Spenser’s borrowings from *Gildas* and other medieval *lives*, arguing that Spenser supplies a shadowy allusion to the “guiltles blood” of Alban and other saints of St. Albans that root his poem within the “protestant” traditions of Britain’s pre-Saxon church. Complicating this, however, are Spenser’s several departures from Foxe’s reformed account of Alban, for Foxe dismisses many of the “Monkish miracles” found in *Gildas* and the later *Lyfe* of John Lydgate to which Spenser significantly alludes. Spenser’s inclusion of these “Monkish” legends thus works both to affirm and deny his poem’s protestant foundations, in the process shedding new light on Spenser’s religious sensibilities.

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The Roman city of Verulamium was ruined not only by time. William Camden relates how its stones and pillars had been plundered for use in rebuilding the Benedictine abbey of St. Alban—first founded by the Mercian king, Offa, in 793—under King Edgar in the late tenth century. Under Edgar, Camden writes in *Britannia*, abbots Ealred and Eadmer had excavated the foundations of Roman buildings. Camden describes how Eadmer had “met with old tables of stone, with tiles also and pillars, likewise with pitches and pots of earth made by Potters and Turners worke: vessels moreover of glasse containing the ashes of the dead, &c. To conclude, out of these remains of Verulam, Eadmer built a new Monasterie to Saint Albane.” Alongside pots and pillars, Eadmer here sacrilegiously uncovers the remains of pagan burial urns. But this act of sacrilege is overshadowed by Camden’s account of what Eadmer had already dug up. “In the hollow place of a wall as it were, in a little closet,” Camden writes, Eadmer had “hapned upon books covered with oken boords and silken strings at them: whereof one contained the life of Saint Albane written in the British tongue, the rest the ceremonies of the Heathen.”<sup>1</sup>

That book containing the life of Saint Alban—serendipitously buried among pagan burial manuals—offers an implicit vindication of Eadmer’s work in constructing his Christian monastery from the remains of pagan religion. Camden’s source—Matthew Paris’s history of the abbey of St. Albans from its foundation in 793, the *Gesta abbatum monasterii sancti Albani* (ca. 1255)—goes on to relate how the unearthed book was itself “soon reduced irreparably to ashes,” but not before Eadmer had “ensured its faithful and careful translation” into Latin—a miraculous survival (Paris speaks of it as a “mirum,” or marvel) that also helps underwrite the textual authority of Paris’s own account of his abbey’s patron saint.<sup>2</sup> In Spenser’s *Ruines of Time*, Verlame laments the “weeddes and wastfull gras” that epitomize the utter ruination of her city.<sup>3</sup> In *Britannia*, Camden looks beyond lament. Although he notes that Verulamium had been “turned into fields,” his account of Verulamium ends, like Paris’s, in Christian celebration of “the towne of Saint *Albans* raised out of the ruins.”<sup>4</sup>

I want to follow on from Eadmer’s example, and do some spadework of my own. Digging beneath the surface of Spenser’s *Ruines of Time* uncovers a hidden reference to the medieval legends of Alban, Amphibalus, and other saints of St. Albans, buried beneath a subtext of verbal patterning and intertextual allusion. The site of this critical excavation is Verlame’s reference to the “guiltles blood” that “oft stained” the “pure streames” of the Thames. The presence of the river Thames in the poem is itself the subject of controversy.

Camden dismisses the legend that the Thames had ever flowed past Verulamium. In Spenser's *Ruines*, by contrast, we encounter Verlame "beside the shore / Of silver streaming *Thamesis*," and to this legend Verlame adds one of her own, later explaining that the Thames had fled her "unhappie neighborhood":

for to shunne the horrible mischiefe,  
With which he saw my cruell foes me pained,  
And his pure streames with guiltles blood oft stained.<sup>5</sup>

Critics questioning the logic of Spenser's references to the Thames have pointed out that the river's symbolism reflects the poem's overall trajectory from pagan Rome to protestant England. As the river of time, Margaret Ferguson writes, the Thames flows from past to present; for Lawrence Manley, it flows from Roman Verulamium to protestant London—the city "older than Verulamium and yet still standing."<sup>6</sup> These binaries between Roman Verulamium and Elizabethan London appear in other assessments of the poem by Richard Danson Brown and Hassan Melehy. For both, the poem moves away from Verlame and worldly vanity toward its closing, Christian contemplation of Philip Sidney as the "heavens ornament."<sup>7</sup>

These approaches to Spenser's poem as a protestant fanfare to Sidney and the Elizabethan church do little, however, to explain Spenser's other departure from Camden—his omission of any mention of Saint Alban. Camden writes that Verulamium was "famous for nothing so much as for bringing foorth *Alban*," but Alban is entirely absent from Spenser's poem.<sup>8</sup> If Spenser's allusion to the Thames signifies his commitment to English Protestantism, then it is puzzling that his poem fails to reference a figure so central to the history of the Elizabethan church, as this history had been popularized under Elizabeth I in John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*. Foxe reveals Roman roots for the Elizabethan church, arguing that the prehistory of English Protestantism can be traced back to Alban's martyrdom under the emperor Diocletian. In which time, Foxe writes, "God rayseed vp then in this Realme of Britaine diuers worthy teachers and witnesses, as Elnanus, meduinus, Meltiuianus, Amphibolus, Albanus, Aaron, Iulius and other moe. . . . All this while about the space of foure hundred yeares, Religion remained in Britayne vncorrupt, and the word of Christ truely preached, till about the coming of Austen and of hys companions from Rome. . . . After that began Christen fayth to enter & spring among the Saxons, after a certayne romish sort."<sup>9</sup>

Alban and his fellow martyrs, Amphibalus, Aaron, and Julius, are, for Foxe, all witnesses to a flourishing Christian faith in ancient Britain, uncorrupted by “romish” abuses. According to Huw Griffiths, Alban’s absence from *Ruines* is symptomatic of Spenser’s “uneasy relationship” with Foxe’s account of protestant history.<sup>10</sup> However, Griffiths’s argument runs counter to the observations of other critics concerning the poem’s structural flow, along with the Thames, from Roman Britain to protestant England. Critics find it difficult to reconcile the presence of the Thames *within*, with the absence of Alban *from*, Spenser’s poem. Either *Ruines of Time* is committed to English Protestantism, and hence includes the Thames, or it is not, and thus excludes Alban.

It is the purpose of this article to offer a *via media* between these critical positions, and I do so by arguing that Alban is not, in fact, omitted from the poem at all, but retains a shadowy presence in Verlame’s reference to the “guiltles blood” of the Thames. The rationale for Spenser’s inclusion of the Thames in his poem is thus revealed by what I go on to relate about the river’s historical association with the bloody deaths of Alban and Amphibalus. My reading will show how Alban and the Thames, far from being mutually exclusive, in fact work side by side in Spenser’s poem to reinforce Foxe’s account of protestant England and its pre-Saxon roots in Alban’s martyrdom at Verulamium.

Nonetheless, if Spenser’s *Ruines* is committed to Foxe’s account of pre-Reformation history, the very shadowiness of its reference to Alban and other saints might give us pause to ask why Spenser elected to bury this allusion beneath the surface of his poem. In answer, I turn in conclusion to Spenser’s own ambivalence toward the religious violence of the English Reformation and its ruination, not just of medieval monasteries, but of the lives and legends of saints in monastic manuscripts. To this violence, the pages of *Actes and Monuments* themselves bear witness, for Foxe takes on the role of a protestant iconoclast in his own reform of Alban’s medieval lives. In *Ruines*, by contrast, Spenser’s allusion to the “guiltles blood” that “oft stained” the Thames arguably indicates his greater willingness to entertain aspects of the medieval legend that Foxe considers but ultimately casts out of his reformed account of saints’ lives in *Actes and Monuments*. Spenser’s shadowy allusion to the deaths of Alban and other saints of St. Albans thus works, we will see, to affirm as well as deny the Foxeian foundations upon which his poem is built.

The question of how the Elizabethan church should respond to its pre-Reformation past is a recurrent one in *Ruines of Time*. Bart van Es approaches

Spenser's poem as a meditation on the merits of preserving history, whereas Carl Rasmussen and Deborah Cartmell both argue that the poem iconoclastically rejects England's Catholic past for the pieties of its protestant present.<sup>11</sup> Spenser's speaker, Verlame, identifies with papal Rome, but Rasmussen writes that the poem itself rejects her "perverse or, at worst, subversive" attachment to popery; instead, the poem presents Philip Sidney as a model of protestant piety and a means for readers to move toward "hope of heaven, and heart to God inclined."<sup>12</sup> This dichotomy between Verlame and Sidney, pagan (or papal) Rome and protestant England, is also reflected in critical responses to why Spenser chooses to set Verulamium "beside the shore / Of silver streaming *Thamesis*," despite the consensus of Elizabethan antiquarians that the city had been built on the banks of the river Ver. For example, speaking of Verulamium in *A Tale of Two Swannes* (1590), William Vallans notes how "some haue supposed the *Thames* to haue runne that way, which error grewe by corruption of *Gyldas* booke, where he mentioneth of S. *Albons* death: but it is not so."<sup>13</sup> In *Britannia*, Camden also attributes the error to "a corrupt place in *Gildas*," while a generation earlier, John Leland had pronounced the Thames legend "absurd."<sup>14</sup> Although noting, and quoting, Spenser's use of the Thames legend in his commentary to Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, Selden nevertheless defers to "those two great Antiquaries, *Leland* and *Camden*, [who] haue ioid in iudgement against it."<sup>15</sup> Not so Verlame, who although praising Camden as that "nourice of antiquitie," laments the loss of the "christall *Thamis*" from her side:

Seemes, that that gentle River for great griefe  
Of my mishaps, which oft I to him plained;  
Or for to shunne the horrible mischiefe,  
With which he saw my cruell foes me pained,  
And his pure streames with guiltles blood oft stained,  
From my unhappie neighborhood farre fled,  
And his sweete waters away with him led.<sup>16</sup>

Why does Verlame give voice to this outmoded and "absurd" legend? Most critics assume Spenser's error was deliberate and, noting the pun on "Thames" and "time," argue that the poem flows, with the Thames, away from Verlame's "unhappie neighbourhood," to find its sanctuary in Sidney, in England, and in a protestant heaven. However, recognition of the Thames as a vehicle for the poem's meditations on Elizabethan Protestantism cannot adequately explain Verlame's own account of the river's motivations for

fleeing Verulamium. Far from shunning Verlame's pagan sympathies, the Thames, we learn, had sympathized with Verlame's suffering, fleeing her "unhappie neighbourhood" so as to shun the mischief "With which he saw my cruell foes me pained, / And his pure streames with guiltles blood oft stained." Given the emphasis in criticism on Verlame's Roman sympathies, one might assume Verlame's "cruell foes" were the Britons who, under "*Bunduca*, that victorious conqueresse," had besieged Verulamium and "with the *Romanes* fought."<sup>17</sup> But if Verlame's foes are Britons, then why almost immediately after mentioning Boudicca does Verlame speak of "hardie Saxons" who "with much bloodshed" had "at last by force . . . conquered" Verulamium?<sup>18</sup> The question of whose blood Verlame is here shedding tears for—whether the "guiltles blood" of Romans who fought with Britons, or of Britons who fought with Saxons—is further complicated by Verlame's readiness to commend the "brave" and "hardie" actions of both the Briton and Saxon armies who had besieged and "by force . . . conquered" her city. Camden claims that Boudicca's "bitter hatred against the *Romanes*" had been conceived by "deep love of her Country," this patriotism thus motivating her "bloudy and mortall Warre."<sup>19</sup> Verlame's own admiration for Boudicca's "brave heroïck thought" echoes Camden's patriotic approval for Boudicca's wars with Rome, but her praise of Rome's enemies here sits uncomfortably with her critical perception as a creature of Rome.<sup>20</sup>

For Philip Schwyzer, Verlame's muddying of identity in the poem is deliberate, her willingness to identify with multiple ethnicities a comment on "the impossibility of maintaining a fixed identity in the face of history," at a time when Elizabethan writers were actively appropriating Briton history for English nationalist ends.<sup>21</sup> Yet while Verlame's own bloodline is by no means as clear as the "pure streames" of the "christall" Thames, what is clear from her apparent identification with Romans, Britons, and Saxons in the poem is how far this triangulated identity also problematizes the identity of the "cruell foes" who inflict such "horrible mischiefe" on Verlame and the Thames.<sup>22</sup> Readers may be tempted to identify Verlame's "foes" with the Saxons, given what Verlame herself notes earlier in the poem about the role of the Saxons in recapturing Verulamium "with much bloodshed" from the Britons. Yet it is difficult to imagine Verlame chastising the cruelty of those whose "hardie" heroism she elsewhere admires, and it is notable that the reference to "cruell foes" comes in a different section of the poem to Verlame's account of the "bloodshed" of battle, separated from her allusion to the final Saxon victory over the Britons by some thirty lines. Moreover, neither Spenser nor his source, Camden—who also references the Saxon vic-

tory, but makes no mention of bloodshed—identify the blood of battle with the river (whether the Thames or Ver), and why would Spenser describe the blood of Britons shed by Saxons as guiltless anyway?<sup>23</sup> “Guiltless,” with its connotations of absolute innocence—as in Spenser’s description of Orgoglio’s castle, its floor defiled “With bloud of guiltlesse babes, and innocents trew”—could hardly be applied to Britons, who like the Saxons had themselves waged a “bloudy and mortall Warre” upon the Romans at Verulamium, as Camden writes.<sup>24</sup>

“Guiltless” was a word often associated in Elizabethan England with the blood of Christ and Christian martyrs, both protestant and Catholic. In *Actes and Monuments*, for example, Foxe uses the phrase “guiltles bloud” to refer to the Marian martyrs, John Bradford (d. 1555) and John Cooper (d. 1558), but the phrase is also applied to Edmund Campion in Thomas Alfield’s *A true report* (1582).<sup>25</sup> Its use with reference to “the giltles blood of Criste” occurs in several editions of sermons and moral works published in England in the 1580s.<sup>26</sup> “Guiltles blood,” in other words, is used elsewhere by Spenser and his contemporaries with reference to blood shed as an act of Christian sacrifice. In particular, the staining of water with the blood of English protestant saints is a recurrent motif in Spenser’s poetry, occurring in Spenser’s description of the “balefull Oure, late staine with English blood” in *Faerie Queene* IV.xi.44—a reference to the massacre of English troops at Glenmalur under the saintly Lord Grey, whose “sacred ashes” Irenius eulogizes in *A View*.<sup>27</sup> Particularly pertinent to the “guiltles blood” of the Thames in *Ruines* is Spenser’s image of the blood-stained waters into which Red Cross Knight falls in *Faerie Queene* I.xi.29. Its “sacred waues,” Spenser writes, had been all “defyld” with “innocent blood”—a reference to Christian sacrifice that helps reinforce the saintliness of Red Cross/Saint George’s own actions against “that cursed Dragon” at this point in the poem.<sup>28</sup>

It is this sacrificial connotation that most plausibly informs Spenser’s double use of the phrase in *Ruines*, the first of which—Spenser’s reference to the “guiltles blood” that stains the Thames—seems calculated to invoke associations with one particular Christian sacrifice that legend locates near this river’s banks: the bloody beheading of Britain’s protomartyr, Saint Alban. Gildas is a foundational work for all later versions of Alban’s life; his *De excidio Britonum*, written in the mid-sixth century, is the earliest surviving British account of Alban’s martyrdom and the first to connect Alban, not just with Verulamium, but with this saint’s miraculous transit through the Thames. It was Gildas’s account of Alban’s martyrdom that was the source



for the Thames legend recycled in *Ruines*. Camden attributes the legend to “a corrupt place in *Gildas*”; Vallans, as we have seen, is more specific, citing the passage where Gildas “mentioneth of S. *Albons* death.” In *Poly-Olbion*, Selden elaborates further on these connections between Gildas, Alban, and the Thames. “But the cause,” he writes, “why some haue thought” that the Thames once flowed past Verulamium, “is, for that, *Gildas*, speaking of S. *Albons* martyrdome and his miraculous passing through the Riuier at *Verlamcestre*, calls it *iter ignotum trans Thamesis fluuij alneum*: so by collection they guest that *Thames* had then his full course this way, being thereto further mou’d by Anchors and such like here digd vp.”<sup>29</sup> Gildas writes of the “miracle” of Alban’s crossing of the Thames in the same sentence as he relates “the taking of his blood” by beheading, and this same association between river and blood also occurs in Verlame’s version of events, where Spenser invents the legend of “guiltles blood” to explain why the Thames at Verulamium had, since Gildas, chosen to change its course.<sup>30</sup>

Critics searching for reasons why Spenser alludes to the legend of the errant Thames have overlooked Gildas as a possible source. Yet Spenser’s reference to the “guiltles blood” of the Thames might plausibly be traced to Gildas’s account of the Alban legend. If Spenser did not have access to one or both of the editions of Gildas published in the sixteenth century—Polydore Vergil’s 1525 edition, and the revised, critical edition of John Joscelyn, Matthew Parker’s Latin secretary, published in 1567 and reprinted the following year—he would certainly have been familiar with the references to Gildas’s account of Alban’s martyrdom in Camden’s history of Verulamium in *Britannia*, a known source for *Ruines of Time*.<sup>31</sup> Gildas was widely read and referenced by Elizabethan antiquarians and divines in the 1560s and 1570s. His *De excidio* is cited as a source in Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*, and in other less well-known works of this period, such as James Pilkington’s *The burnynge of Paules church* (1563) and Edward Dering’s *A Sparing Restraint* (1568).<sup>32</sup> Demand for Joscelyn’s 1567 edition was clearly significant enough to warrant its reissue the following year. Matthew Parker also made significant use of Gildas for the account he compiled of the Elizabethan church’s pre-Augustinian roots, *De antiquitate Britannicae ecclesiae* (1572). Parker’s archiepiscopal library contains copies of both Vergil’s and Joscelyn’s editions and was bequeathed to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in 1574—a time when Spenser was studying for his MA at Pembroke College next door.<sup>33</sup> Richard, brother of the noted bibliophile Gabriel Harvey, with whom Spenser exchanged books as well as letters, also owned or had access to a copy of Joscelyn’s edition when compiling his anti-Martinist tract, *A Theological*



*Discourse of the Lamb of God* (1590), which includes several direct references to Gildas's text.<sup>34</sup>

The case for Saint Alban's shadowy presence in Spenser's poem is made more compelling by the recurrence of that phrase "guiltles blood" in Verlame's later tribute to the saint-like Philip Sidney and his soldier's death at Zutphen:

Yet ere his happie soule to heaven went  
Out of his fleshlie goale, he did devise  
Unto his heavenlie maker to present  
His bodie, as a spotles sacrifice;  
And chose, that guiltie hands of enemies  
Should powre forth th'offring of his guiltles blood:  
So life exchanging for his countries good.<sup>35</sup>

There are obvious parallels here with Verlame's earlier passage. Both speak of blood shed by "enemies" or "foes"; both contrast the guilt of these enemies with the "guiltles" innocence of their victims. The poem's editors in the Yale edition gloss "guiltles" as "Christ-like," and these implied parallels between Sidney's "spotles sacrifice" and those of Christ and his saints help reinforce the suggestion that Spenser had indeed intended a specific allusion to the blood of Saint Alban in his earlier reference to the "guiltles blood" of the Thames.<sup>36</sup> If "guiltles blood" connotes blood shed in an act of martyrdom, then Alban is the martyr whose blood is most readily identifiable with the town that since Anglo-Saxon times has borne his name, and with the river that Gildas claims Alban had miraculously crossed on his way from Verulamium to meet a martyr's bloody death.

Griffiths speaks of Spenser's "uneasy relationship" with Foxe's claim that Elizabethan Protestantism had roots in Alban and the religious culture of Roman Britain.<sup>37</sup> But what if Spenser had indeed intended a shadowy allusion to Alban's martyrdom beneath his poem's protestant tribute to Sidney? Such recognition would help foster a new appreciation of the poem's commitment to the Foxeian version of protestant history, in which Alban is upheld as the protomartyr of the Elizabethan church. For Melehy, Verlame's lament that "nought at all but ruines now I bee" acts as a foil in the poem for Spenser's protestant recognition of "an immortality that surmounts earthly vanity."<sup>38</sup> But Verlame is by no means as detached from Spenser's protestant mind-set as Melehy and others have suggested. The "broken verse" of Spenser's closing "Envoy" laments the death of Sidney at the

same time as it erects, in ruins, a “moniment of his last praise” that draws on Sidney’s pious example to direct his sister, Mary Herbert, heavenward.<sup>39</sup> Verlame herself looks heavenward, however, beyond “this wretched world,” to contemplate the possibility of a Christian afterlife for Sidney. In her extended elegy to Sidney in lines 281–343 of the poem, Verlame balances remembrance of Sidney’s “spotles sacrifice” with recognition of his spiritual reward as “the heavens new joy.”<sup>40</sup> Verlame may lament the ruination of Roman Verulamium, but these are ruins she also recognizes as the site of Alban’s martyrdom and as the spiritual foundations upon which Spenser builds his poem’s closing “moniment” to Sidney as an English protestant saint.

Saint Alban’s centrality to the protestant themes of Spenser’s *Ruines* makes it difficult to imagine why Spenser would not have included a reference to Alban in the poem. Yet if the “guiltles blood” in the Thames is such a reference, then why, in a poem about Verulamium—a town, Camden writes, “famous for nothing so much as for bringing foorth *Alban*”—is Spenser so coy about naming Verulamium’s most famous citizen? Such reticence most plausibly reflects the controversies surrounding Alban’s legacy in post-Reformation England, a legacy riven as much by confessional division as historiographical debate. Camden voiced the verdict of Elizabethan antiquarians when he attributed the legend of Alban’s miraculous crossing of the Thames to “a corrupt place in *Gildas*,” and it is the improbability that the Thames ever flowed past Verulamium that leads Camden and others to declare the passage textually corrupt. But it is for reasons of moral more than textual corruption that Foxe condemns the miracle of Alban’s transit through the Thames in *Actes and Monuments*, along with several other “Abbeylike additio[n]s” to Alban’s life.<sup>41</sup> Van Es writes that *Ruines* is about “the failure to record history itself,” but Alban’s absent presence in the poem seems less a comment on what has been accidentally omitted from history’s annals than on what Elizabethan historians like Foxe deliberately sought to efface.<sup>42</sup>

Alban, as we have seen, was a significant figure in the new protestant history of post-Reformation England. Foxe regards him as Britain’s first proto-protestant saint, and celebrates his witnessing of a faith rewritten from the perspective of the Elizabethan church. But the medieval lives of Alban handed down to Foxe and his contemporaries were themselves in need of reform, and the legend of Alban’s miraculous transit through the Thames was one of a number of miracles that Foxe casts out of his reformed version of Alban’s life in *Actes and Monuments*. “With other such like Monkish miracles and grosse fables, wherewith these Abbey Monkes were wont in tyme past

to deceaue the Church of God, and to beguile the whole world for their owne aduauntage.”<sup>43</sup> Foxe singles out Bede’s account of Alban’s life and death for particular derision, dismissing the “prodigious miracles mentioned in his story”—“as of drying vp the Riuer, when Alban went to the place of his execution: then of makyng a welspryng in the top of the hill, and of the fallyng out of the eyes of him that did behead him”—as being “more legendlike, than truthlike.”<sup>44</sup> However, it is from Gildas that Bede’s account of the “drying vp of the riuer” derives, as Camden and other antiquarians who dismissed this “corrupt place in Gildas” well knew. Foxe drew heavily on Gildas’s account of pre-Saxon Christianity, but if *De excidio Britonum* was the soil in which Foxe uncovered the roots of English Protestantism, Gildas’s account of Alban’s martyrdom was also the seedbed from which Bede’s “monkish miracles” would later grow.

That Spenser was familiar with the more “legendlike” versions of Alban’s life to have emerged after Gildas in the accounts of Bede and later writers is itself suggested in *Ruines* by Verlame’s accent on how “oft” this “guiltles blood” had “stained” the Thames. That word “oft” implies that the blood of more than one Christian martyr had flowed into the waterways of Verulamium, and this is precisely what the version of the Alban legend narrated in Bede, and in the later, more apocryphal Benedictine accounts associated with William of St. Albans, Matthew Paris, and the poet John Lydgate, suggest. According to Bede and the Benedictine *Lives*, a second martyr had been beheaded with Alban on the hill, “almost half a mile,” Bede writes, from the northeast gate of the Roman city walls, on the site of the present Benedictine abbey on Holywell Hill.<sup>45</sup> This second martyr was a Roman soldier who had been designated Alban’s executioner, but who on witnessing Alban’s miraculous transit through the river had refused to behead the saint, was converted to Christianity, and was subsequently himself beheaded later on that same day. Paris names him Heraclius and elaborates on the story of his suffering, which is later taken up by Lydgate, who bases his English *Lyfe and Passion of seint Albon and saint Amphabel*, completed around 1439, and printed in 1534, on a now apparently lost Latin *vita* which amplifies the Anglo-Norman verse *Vie* of Paris and the Latin *vitae* of William of St. Albans (prose) and Ralph of Dunstable (verse).<sup>46</sup> The other surviving fifteenth-century English version—William Caxton’s abridged prose translation in the *Legenda Aurea*, printed in 1483—was also based on the same sources as Lydgate’s poem.<sup>47</sup> Lydgate narrates how the soldier—whom he likewise names Araclius—had taken responsibility for burying Alban on the site of his martyrdom, having himself been miraculously “restored agayne to his

strength" after being cruelly beaten and left for dead on the journey from the river to the top of the hill.<sup>48</sup> Bede's account is far less fanciful, noting only that the soldier was beheaded and thus by this means was "baptised in the bath of his owne blud," but both Bede and these later versions share details of Alban's second miracle—the legend of the miraculous spring—that associate the blood of both martyrs with the waters of the river below.<sup>49</sup>

Lydgate writes of how Alban had helped "staunche [the] thirst" of the people come to witness his death by calling on a "holsom streme" to spring up out of the side of the hill near the site of his execution, with such "habundance / That from above there came a ryuer downe"—a description that associates the miraculous spring with the "pure streames" of the dried up river.<sup>50</sup> These associations are also present in Thomas Stapleton's Catholic translation of Bede, produced at the English college at Louvain and printed in Antwerp in 1565.<sup>51</sup> Bede, in Stapleton's translation, takes particular pains to associate the spring on the hill with the water of the river below. When Alban came "vnto the top" of the hill designated as the site of execution, Bede writes: "He required of God to give him water: and strait there arose a spryng of fayer water before his feete whereby all might perceue that the river before was by his meanes dried. For he which left no water in the river, would not have required it in the topp of the mowntaine, but that it was so expedient, for the glory of God in his holy martyr. For beholde the riuier hauing obeyed the Martyr, and serued his deuotion, leauing behind a testimony of duty and obedience (the Martyr hauing now suffred) returned to his nature againe."<sup>52</sup> As Bede recounts it, therefore, it was the water of the river below that had risen on the hilltop to quench Alban's thirst before his death, and he writes that this same spring had remained on the hill until after Alban's beheading, leaving "behinde a testimony of duty and obedience" in the freshwater spring that would later supply water for the monks at the abbey.

A third martyr associated with the river is that of Alban's teacher, Amphibalus, who is barely mentioned by Bede, but whose role in the story is significantly amplified by Paris and the other twelfth-century accounts to have emerged from the scriptorium at St. Albans, following the discovery of Amphibalus's remains at nearby Redbourn in June 1177. Redbourn—upstream of Verulamium, on the river Ver—is a place, Camden notes, "renowned and resorted unto in regard of *Amphibalus* the Martyrs reliques heere found." Camden links the death of this saint with the name Redbourn—which, he continues, is "by interpretation *Red-water*, and yet the water thereby . . . is no more red than is the *Red-sea*."<sup>53</sup> Camden's discussion of

Redbourn’s “renown,” as the site of the invention of Amphibalus’s relics, hints at the continued popularity of Amphibalus’s legend alongside that of Alban’s in post-Reformation England, and although Camden only inserts his material on Redbourn into the 1607 edition of *Britannia*, Spenser could have learned of the legend of his martyrdom directly from *Actes and Monuments*, where Foxe recounts the more fanciful version of Amphibalus’s martyrdom—found “in the Englishe stories” of Caxton and Lydgate—even as he disavows the place of such “Monkish miracles and grosse fables” within the reformed life of Alban that his *Actes and Monuments* is concerned to promote.<sup>54</sup>

Foxe’s rationale for rehearsing the “Monkish miracles” associated with Alban and Amphibalus is so that he might, by recounting their details, more effectively question their claims to authenticity. Yet in so doing, the pages of *Actes and Monuments* also act as a sourcebook for the unreformed legends of Verulamium’s several saints, and it is a rich seam that Spenser may plausibly have mined when writing *Ruines*, informing his accent on how “oft” such “guiltles blood” had been shed at Verulamium. It is surely significant in this context that Foxe talks of the “many other” martyrs who, besides Alban and Amphibalus, had suffered at Verulamium, for “the same time with Alban, suffered also ij. citizens of the foresaide Citie of Verlancaſter, whose names were Aaron and Iulius: beside other, whereof a great number the same time no doubt, did suffer, although our Chronicles of their names doe make no rehearsall.”<sup>55</sup> Alongside *Actes and Monuments*, however, it is also possible that *Ruines* was informed by Spenser’s direct familiarity with one or more of Alban’s medieval *lives*. That Spenser knew Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* is clear from the evidence of E.K.’s prefatory letter and commentary to *The Shepheardes Calender*, while cases have also been made for Spenser’s indebtedness elsewhere in his writings to Lydgate’s *Legend of Saint George* and *Serpent of Division*.<sup>56</sup> The possibility that Spenser also knew and drew on Lydgate’s *Lyfe of Albon and Amphabel* when writing *Ruines* is therefore a plausible one, and it gains traction from the survival of a rare copy of the 1534 edition of Lydgate’s *Lyfe* at Deene Park, Northamptonshire.

The *Lyfe of Albon and Amphabel* was commissioned by the fifteenth-century abbot of St. Albans, John Whethamstede, as an intervention, Alexandra Gillespie writes, into the “well-developed textual culture” that had helped underwrite the reputation of St. Albans as the foremost Benedictine abbey in late medieval England.<sup>57</sup> Its printing by John Herford at the St. Albans press in 1534 has also been read as an attempt to safeguard the reputation—and, indeed, survival—of St. Albans abbey, in the same year that saw

the passage through parliament of the first act of supremacy (26 Hen VIII, c. 1).<sup>58</sup> Few of Lydgate's works other than *The Siege of Thebes* were printed after the accession of Elizabeth in 1559—a fact Joseph Dane and Irene Beesmyer attribute to Lydgate's post-Reformation reputation as a Benedictine monk—and the 1534 *Lyfe* was the only edition printed in the sixteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Like Stapleton's edition of Bede, however, Lydgate's *Lyfe* circulated among Catholic communities in Elizabethan England.<sup>60</sup> One of only four copies of the 1534 edition extant today has been in the library of Deene Park, Northamptonshire, since the mid-sixteenth century. In Spenser's lifetime, Deene Park was home to the Catholic Thomas Brudenell, first earl of Cardigan (1578–1663), who married the daughter of Sir Thomas Tresham, of nearby Rushton Lodge.<sup>61</sup>

Tresham is known to Spenserians as the Catholic reader of *Complaints*, whose letter of March 19, 1591, relates how Spenser's volume had been "by Superior awthoritie called in," on account of the scandal caused by *Mother Hubberds Tale*.<sup>62</sup> In his letter, Tresham claims never to have seen a copy of *Complaints*, but the letter, as Andrew Hadfield notes, contains a number of allusions to the language of *Mother Hubberds Tale* which suggest that, "despite his disclaimer, he had read Spenser's works."<sup>63</sup> Tresham's letter also reveals a surprisingly detailed knowledge of Spenser's life and career, including the observation that Spenser is "of the blood of the Spencers"—a detail, Hadfield suggests, that Tresham may also have picked up from reading *Complaints*, given Spenser's claims of his "private bands of affinitie" with the Spencers of Althorp, in his dedicatory letter to Alice, née Spencer, Lady Strange.<sup>64</sup> There is evidence that Tresham himself knew the Spencers, as did Brudenell; all three families belonged to the close-knit Catholic gentry community of Northamptonshire.<sup>65</sup>

Spenser had been forging links with the Spencers of Althorp since at least the publication of *Complaints*, and while his claims to kinship may have been mere aspiration on Spenser's part, his marriage three years later, in June 1594, to Elizabeth Boyle, of Bradden, near Althorp, suggests there may indeed have been some truth in Tresham's claim that Spenser was "of the blood of the Spencers." Without Northamptonshire connections of his own, Spenser's marriage into the Boyles—a Northamptonshire family with strong links to the Spencer family with whom Spenser himself claims familial connections in *Complaints*—seems otherwise too much of a coincidence. None of the above amounts to firm evidence that Spenser knew Thomas Tresham or Thomas Brudenell, or that he had access to the books in their libraries. However, what the textual and biographical evidence can tell us is that Spen-



ser had “wide-ranging religious connections” that brought him into contact with the Catholic gentry of Northamptonshire, and it is within this gentry community that we can locate the Brudenell copy of Lydgate’s *Lyfe* at Deene Park.<sup>66</sup> With its dedications to the Spencer sisters and its reception by their neighbor, Tresham, Spenser’s *Complaints* bears all the hallmarks of his Northamptonshire aspirations and connections. These provide a context for understanding how Spenser may have read Lydgate’s *Lyfe of Alban and Amphabel* around the time he was writing *Ruines* in ca. 1590.<sup>67</sup>

Blood plays a significant role in all Benedictine accounts of Saint Alban’s *life*, as the most recent translators and editors of Paris’s *Vie*, published alongside the *passio* of William of St. Albans in 2010, suggest.<sup>68</sup> Lydgate’s version is no exception. Indeed, in the *Lyfe* blood takes on a special, sacramental significance, the combination of blood and water featuring prominently in Lydgate’s account of both Alban’s first and second miracles—the drying up of the river, and discovery of the wellspring on the hill. This spring, Lydgate writes, had helped quench the thirst of the people come to witness Alban’s death, but the same people could not be satisfied with water alone. They harbored a thirst for “the blyssfull blode” of “hym that holpe them in great nede.”<sup>69</sup> It is a thirst for blood and water that returns Lydgate’s readers to the sacramental overtones of his description of Alban’s crossing of the river, a passage with particular relevance for our reading of the blood-stained water of the river Thames in *Ruines*.<sup>70</sup> In Lydgate’s account, Alban prays that the “red bloud and water clere” that sprang from Christ’s side intercede to part the waters of the river and allow Alban and the people to cross.<sup>71</sup> Lydgate is careful to emphasize the efficaciousness of Christ’s blood and water, as the effective cause of Alban’s miraculous transit through the Thames, and by recalling the spear that had pierced Christ’s side, he associates the legend of Alban’s transit over the Thames with the same Christological symbolism that had been used by the pre-Reformation church to explain the rationale for mixing water with the sacramental wine.<sup>72</sup> The miracle of the river crossing for Lydgate is in other words effected by the sacramental combination of blood and water, and it is an image that finds echo in Verlame’s own recollection of the “oft stained” water of the river Thames.

The two traditional miracles that surround Alban’s martyrdom both involve water, but in each Lydgate associates this water with blood in ways that anticipate Verlame’s reference to the “guiltles blood [that] oft stained” the Thames. In this line from Spenser’s poem, we might, then, read a memory, not only of the bloody martyrdom of Alban, Amphibalus, and the “many” other saints mentioned by Foxe, but also, following Lydgate’s as-



sociation of Christ's blood and water with Alban's transit through the Thames, of our sacramental remembrance of Christ's passion in the "oft stained" water of the communion cup. Spenser's only apparent reference to Alban's "guiltles blood" thus refers readers to the "Abbeylike" accounts of Alban's river crossing in Lydgate's *Lyfe* and Gildas's *De excidio*. Spenser may well have encountered much of this legendary matter in the pages of *Actes and Monuments*, but if so, then in *Ruines* he chooses to highlight "Monkish miracles" that had no place in Foxe's protestant history of Alban and the Elizabethan church. Such "fables" are recalled by Foxe only in order to renounce their claims to protestant credibility.

Recent decades have witnessed a welcome new emphasis on Spenser's religious sensibilities in *The Faerie Queene* and other poems, challenging traditional understanding of Spenser's "puritan" leanings.<sup>73</sup> These studies build on the work of church historians like Patrick Collinson, Michael Questier, and Peter Lake, who argue that the Elizabethan church was characterized more by permissive conformity than ideological uniformity, a broad church encompassing what Alexandra Walsham terms a "lively cocktail" of permissible beliefs and practices, and one that largely transcended those divisions between protestant and puritan that historians have since imposed upon it.<sup>74</sup> This revisionist understanding of the complexity of Elizabethan Protestantism has helped highlight the complexity of Spenser's own relationship to some of the beliefs and practices that have conventionally been categorized as puritan, with critics, for example, noting the confessional distance between puritan iconoclasm and Spenser's seeming sympathy for church ruins in *Faerie Queene* VI.xii.23–25.<sup>75</sup> In this, his account of the Blatant Beast "despoiling" a church and monastery, Spenser balances condemnation of the "filth and ordure" of the monks' "cels and secrets" with an equally strong denunciation of the desecrations perpetrated by "that foule Beast" in the church.<sup>76</sup>

From thence into the sacred Church he broke,  
And robd the Chancell, and the desks downe threw,  
And Altars fouled, and blasphemy spoke,  
And th'Images for all their goodly hew,  
Did cast to ground, whilst none was them to rew;  
So all confounded and disordered there.<sup>77</sup>

Schwyzler finds Spenser's "implicitly Catholic" tone of pity in this stanza "particularly surprising," given what we know of Spenser's seeming support

for acts of protestant iconoclasm elsewhere in *Faerie Queene*, such as Guyon’s destruction of the Bower of Bliss in II.xii.83, or Arthur’s breaking the Idol of Geryon in V.xi.19–33.<sup>78</sup> Yet Spenser’s attitude toward the iconoclasm of the Blatant Beast is perhaps less surprising when we consider it in the context of *The Ruines of Time*. In Spenser’s possible reference to Alban’s “guiltles blood” we see an affirmation of protestant pieties, one that roots the poem’s later celebration of the saint-like Sidney in a protestant tradition that stretches back to Saint Alban. In his reference to the Thames, however, Spenser alludes to the unreformed legend of Alban’s miraculous crossing of that river, while Spenser’s word “oft” highlights those other martyrs whose “guiltles blood” had flowed in the waters around Verulamium. In so doing, Spenser links his poem to the medieval accounts of Alban and Verulamium’s other saints that Foxe recounts but specifically rejects as “Abbeylike” and “monkish.” This inclusion of unreformed material drawn from within the pages of *Actes and Monuments* forms part of Spenser’s larger “moniment” to England’s pre-Reformation past in the poem. Like the iconoclasm of Anglo-Saxon abbots, or the dissolution of the Benedictine abbey of Saint Alban under Henry VIII, the fate of Alban’s “guiltles blood” in Foxe’s reformed *life* of Alban reminds Spenser’s protestant readers that ruins in sixteenth-century St. Albans were as often the products of religious violence as of time.

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## NOTES

1. William Camden, *Britain*, trans. Philemon Holland (London: George Bishop and John Norton, 1610), 411; cf. *Britannia* (Londini: per Radulphum Newbery, 1586), 221: “& in muri concauo tanquam in amariolo, in libros inciderunt asseribus quernis & sericie ligaminibus, . . . demum ex his Verolamij reliquijs nouum Albano monasterium extruxit Eadmerus.” Here and elsewhere, I quote from the first English translation of *Britannia*, with cross-references back to the original Latin text in the 1586 edition that Spenser most likely used as his source for *The Ruines of Time*. Note that the version of Camden’s Latin history of St. Albans that appears in the 1586 *Britannia* is identical to that published in the revised 1607 edition, the base text for Philemon Holland’s English translation of 1610. The only additions to the 1607 edition concern material at the end of the Hertfordshire chapter on the history of the area surrounding St. Albans.

2. Matthew Paris and Thomas Walsingham, *Gesta abbatum monasterii Sancti Albani*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longmans, Green, 1867–69), 1:27: “Abbas iste Eadmarus per prudentiores fratrum in Conventu fecit fideliter ac diligenter exponi, et plenius in publico praedicando edoceri. Cum autem conscripta historia in Latino pluribus, ut jam dictum est, innotuisset, exemplar primitivum ac originale,—quod mirum est dictum,—irrestaurabiliter in pulverum subito redactum, cecidit annullatum” (my translation).

3. *The Ruines of Time*, in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. W. A. Oram et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 225–61 (l. 42).

4. *Britain* (1610), 412; cf. *Britannia* (1586), 222: “Hodie[m] Verolano in agros conuerso, *Fanum Albani* ex eius ruinis eductum floret.”

5. *Ruines*, ll. 1–2, 146, 143–45.

6. Margaret W. Ferguson, “‘The Afflatus of Ruin’: Meditations on Rome by Du Bellay, Spenser, and Stevens,” in *Roman Images: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1982*, ed. Annabel Patterson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 23–50 (34–39); Lawrence Manley, “Spenser and the City: The Minor Poems,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 43 (1982): 203–27 (217).

7. Richard Danson Brown, “A ‘goodlie bridge’ between the Old and the New: The Transformation of Complaint in Spenser’s *The Ruines of Time*,” *Renaissance Forum* 2, no. 1 (1997), 64 paras.; Hassan Melehy, “Antiquities of Britain: Spenser’s *Ruines of Time*,” *Studies in Philology* 102 (2005): 159–83. See also Huw Griffiths, “Translated Geographies: Edmund Spenser’s ‘The Ruines of Time,’” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 4, no. 2 (1998): 7.1–26 (para. 5 passim). Griffiths sees the Thames as a vehicle for the poem’s investment in *translatio imperii*, the translation of empire westward, from Troy to Rome, and thence to London, or Troynovant. Note, however, that Griffiths is also concerned to emphasize the “ironies and inconsistencies” (para. 1) that disrupt a reading of *Ruines* as an unproblematic celebration of England’s imperial aspirations under Elizabeth I. *Ruines*, l. 674.

8. *Britain* (1610), 409; cf. *Britannia* (1586), 220: “& ad summam celebritatem peruenit, nulla tamen re aequè celebre, quàm quod ciuem sanctitate & fide in Christum singulari protulerit Albanu[m].”

9. John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London: John Day, 1583), sig. \*4r. All references are to this edition.

10. Griffiths, “Translated Geographies,” para. 2.

11. Bart van Es, *Spenser’s Forms of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 30–36.

12. Carl J. Rasmussen, “‘How weak be the passions of woefulness:’ Spenser’s *Ruines of Time*,” *Spenser Studies* 2 (1981): 159–81 (162); Deborah Cartmell, “‘Beside the shore of silver streaming Thamesis’: Spenser’s *Ruines of Time*,” *Spenser Studies* 6 (1985): 77–82; *Ruines*, l. 585.

13. William Vallans, *A Tale of Two Swannes. Wherein is comprehended the original and increase of the riuer Lee commonly called Ware-riuer: together with the antiquitie of sundrie places and townes seated vpon the same* (London: Roger Ward for John Sheldrake, 1590), sig. B4v.
14. *Britain* (1610), 411; cf. *Britannia* (1586), 221: “Vbi nostra[m] memoria[m] cum anchorae fuerint effossae, crediderunt nonnulli, corrupto Gildae loco inducti, Tamisim aliquando h[ae]c alueum egisse.” John Leland, *Cygnea cantio* (London: R. Wolfe, 1545), sig. o3r.
15. Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (London: Humphrey Lownes, 1612), 254.
16. *Ruines*, ll. 134, 141–47.
17. *Ibid.*, ll. 108, 110.
18. *Ibid.*, ll. 114, 115.
19. *Britain* (1610), 409; cf. *Britannia* (1586), 220: “cùm Bundrica Icenerum Regina acerrimo in Romanos odio bellum illis conflasset funestissimum à Britannis, vt habet Tacitus, erat excisum.”
20. *Ruines*, l. 109
21. Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 121.
22. *Ruines*, l. 134.
23. *Britain* (1610), 410: “Not long after, the English-Saxons wonne it: but Vther the Britan, surnamed for his serpentine wisdom, *Pendragon*, by a sore siege and a long recovered it. After whose death, it fell againe into their hands”; cf. *Britannia* (1586), 220: “Nec ita multò post in Saxonum potestatem deuenir, sed graui & diuturna obsidione Vther Britannus, cognomento *Pendragon* ob serpentinam prudentium, receipt: quo sublato in eorum demùm manus recidit.”
24. *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, 2nd ed., rev. Hiroshi Yamashita and Toshiyuki Susuki (Harlow: Longman, 2007), l.viii.35, 6.
25. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 1631, 1633 (Bradford), and 2124 (Cooper); Thomas Alfield, *A true report of the death & martyrdome of M. Campion Iesuite* (London: Richard Verstegan, 1582), sig. G1v.
26. William Chub, *Two fruitfull and godly sermons preached at Dorchester* (London: John Charlewood, 1585), 13; James Yates, *The hould of humilitie adioyned to the Castle of courtesie* (London: Iohn Wolfe, 1582), sig. L1v. Yates writes of “he which on the crosse / did buy it for your sake. Whose guiltlesse blood you know was shedde, / though he did not offend.”
27. *Faerie Queene*, IV.xi.44, 5; *A View of the State of Ireland: From the first printed edition (1633)*, ed. Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 105.
28. *Faerie Queene*, I.xi.29, 8, 7.
29. *Poly-Olbion*, 254.
30. Gildas, *De excidio Britonum*, 11.1: “ita deo inter sacram confessionem cruoremque coram impiis Romana tum stigmata cum horribili fantasia praeferentibus

placens signorum miraculis mirabiliter adornatus est,” in *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom (Chichester: Phillimore, 1978), 92 (English translation, 19).

31. *Gildae, cvi cognomentum est sapientis, de excidio & conquestu Britanniae*, ed. John Joscelin (Londini: Ioannes Daius, 1567 and 1568). For Vergil’s edition and its errors, see Leland’s comments in *A learned and true assertion of the original, life, actes, and death of the most noble, valiant, and renoumed Prince Arthure, King of great Brittain*, trans. Richard Robinson (London: Iohn Wolfe, 1582): “Gildas his historie is published abroade of Polidorus, vndoubtedlie a fragment of [the] old Gildas, but it is lame, out of order, and maimed, so farre forth, as if he were now againe restored to life, the father would scarce knowe his chylde” (sig. L2v). For Gildas’s influence on early modern English literature and culture more generally, see Lynn Staley, *The Island Garden: England’s Language of Nation from Gildas to Marvell* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

32. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 32. *The burnynge of Paules church in London in the yeare of oure Lord 1561, and the iii. day of June by lyghtnyng, at three of the clocke, at after noone* (London: William Seres, 1563), sigs. A6r and D2v. Edward Dering, *A Sparing Restraint, of many lauishe Vntruthes, which M. Doctor Harding dothe challenge, in the first Article of my Lord of Sarisburies Replie* (London: Henry Denham for Humfrey Toy, 1568), 28.

33. Of the two copies of Joscelin’s 1568 edition in the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (SP 281 and SP 450), SP 281 is a multivolume work in which Joscelin’s Gildas is bound in with other works on early church history, “compiled as a kind of reference in Parker’s linguistic and antiquarian research.” See Jeffrey Todd Knight, *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections, and the Making of Renaissance Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 46. Vergil’s 1525 edition also forms part of another of Parker’s multitext volumes (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge Y.7.27).

34. Over 180 volumes from Gabriel Harvey’s library have been identified in recent decades—a fraction of its original size, which has been estimated at well over 3,500 volumes. For details, see Virginia F. Stern, *Gabriel Harvey: His Life, Marginalia and Library* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 198–253. Evidence of book exchanges between Spenser and Harvey can be found in handwritten comments within Harvey’s copy of Murner’s *A merye jeste of a man called Howleglas* (London: William Copland, ca. 1528), sig. M4v, and his copy of Jerome Turler’s *The traueiler* (1575), inscribed “Ex dono Edmundi Spenserii.” See Stern, *Gabriel Harvey*, 228 and 237, and Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 97–98. For Richard Harvey’s references to Gildas, see *A Theologicall Discourse of the Lamb of God and his Enemies* (London: Iohn Windet, 1590), 144, 167. My thanks to Andrew Hadfield for pointing out these references to me.

35. *Ruines*, ll. 295–301.

36. *Yale Spenser*, 245, l. 300n.
37. Griffiths, "Translated Geographies," para 2.
38. *Ruines*, l. 39.
39. *Ibid.*, ll. 678, 682.
40. *Ibid.*, ll. 293, 303. Rasmussen, "'How weak be the passions of woefulness'" (168), notes that Verlame's elegy trades in Christian imagery but sees only "dim intimations" therein of Sidney's more saintly characterization in the poem's concluding visions.
41. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 89.
42. Van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History*, 39.
43. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 89.
44. *Ibid.*; cf. *The history of the Church of Englande. Compiled by Venerable Bede, Englishman*, trans. Thomas Stapleton (Antwerp: Iohn Laet, 1565), fols. 17r–19r. Stapleton's translation of Bede's *History*—the only English translation available in Spenser's lifetime—was notorious for Stapleton's attack on "the workes of Bale, Fox, and other," in his "Preface to the Reader" (fol. 3v), which defends "the miracles done at the toume of S. Alban that holy Martyr," pointing out that "the Actes and Monuments of M. Fox" contains as many "miserable miracles" of its own (fols. 8v–9r).
45. Bede, *History*, fol. 18r.
46. John Lydgate, *Here begynneth the glorious lyfe and passion of seint Albon prothomartyr of Englande, and also the lyfe and passion of saint Amphabel* (St. Albans: John Herford, 1534), sigs. A2r–E2v. For the textual history, see Martin Biddle, "Alban [St Alban, Albanus] (d. c. 303?)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1:564–67 (566) (hereafter *ODNB*). The title page to the 1534 edition notes that Lydgate had "translated" the *Lyfe* "out of frenche and laten in to Englishe," and it may be that Lydgate had also drawn on Paris's Anglo-Norman verse account alongside the various Latin versions when composing his poem.
47. *The legende named in latyn legenda aurea* (Westminster: William Caxton, 1483), fols. clxxxiii–clxxxvi.
48. Lydgate, *Lyfe*, sigs. O1r, M4v–N1r passim.
49. Bede, *History*, fol. 18r.
50. Lydgate, *Lyfe*, sig. N2r.
51. For the context of Stapleton's translation, and its place within the "Great Controversy" of 1564–68, see Hugh Magennis, "Not Angles but Anglicans? Reformation and Post-Reformation Perspectives on the Anglo-Saxon Church, Part 1: Bede, Ælfric and the Anglo-Saxon Church in Early Modern England," *English Studies* 96, no. 3 (2015): 243–63 (252–56).
52. Bede, *History*, fol. 18v.
53. Camden, *Britannia* (1610), 413; cf. *Britannia* (1607), 296: "Huic adiacet *Red-born* id est, si interpreteris *Aqua Rubra*, cùm tamen aqua praeterfluens non magis



rubeat quàm Mare Rubrum. Locus olim celebris reliquijs Amphibali Martyris cui S. Albanum Christiana fide imbuit.”

54. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 112.

55. Ibid.

56. Lydgate’s direct influence on the *Calender* is noted by E.K. in his notes to *Februarie*, *September*, and *November*, while in his Letter to Harvey, E.K. alludes to Lydgate’s description of Chaucer—in *Fall of Princes*—as “the Loadstarre of our language.” Lydgate’s more general influence on Spenser’s language is discussed in Lucy Munro, *Archaic Style in English Literature, 1590–1674* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), chap. 2. See also Willy Maley, “Spenser’s Languages: Writing in the Ruins of English,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 162–79, and William Kushkin, *Recursive Origins: Writing at the Transition to Modernity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), chap. 2. For Lydgate’s *Legend of Saint George* as a source for *Faerie Queene* I, see A. S. G. Edwards, “Lydgate, John (c. 1375–c. 1448),” in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A. C. Hamilton et al. (London: Routledge, 1990), 443. For the argument that *The Serpent of Division*, reissued in 1590, influenced Verlame’s lament for the fall of empires in *The Ruines of Time*, see William R. Orwen, “Spenser and the Serpent of Division,” *Studies in Philology* 38 (1941): 198–210, cited in Edwards, “Lydgate.”

57. Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books, 1473–1557* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 183–86 (184).

58. Ibid., 184–86. See also Julia Boffey, “John Mychell and the Printing of Lydgate in the 1530s,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2004): 251–60 (259).

59. Joseph A. Dane and Irene Basey Beesemyer, “The Denigration of John Lydgate: Implications of Printing History,” *English Studies* 2 (2000): 117–26. A useful list of Lydgate’s printed works—from 1477 through 1784—is included on pp. 121–23.

60. Stapleton’s 1565 edition, printed in Antwerp for an English market, was widely circulated among Catholic communities in England, and was one of the “objectionable titles” that Edmund Grindal’s searchers discovered in the library of John Stowe in February 1569. See Barrett L. Beer, “Stow [Stowe], John (1524/5–1605),” in *ODNB*, 52:982–86 (983), and A. C. Southern, *Elizabethan Recusant Prose, 1559–1582* (London: Sands, 1950), 39, cited in Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), chap. 4, n. 18. For discussion, see Highley, 84–91.

61. Nicolas Barker and David Quentin, “The library of Thomas Tresham and Thomas Brudenell,” introduction by John Martin Robinson (London: Roxburghe Club, 2006).

62. Tresham’s letter is transcribed in Richard Peterson, “Laurel Crown and Ape’s Tail: New Light on Spenser’s Career from Sir Thomas Tresham,” *Spenser*



*Studies* 12 (1989): 1–36 (23). For discussion, see Thomas Herron, “Reforming the Fox: Spenser’s *Mother Hubberds Tale*, the Beast Fables of Barnabe Riche, and Adam Loftus, Archbishop of Dublin,” *Studies in Philology* 105, no. 3 (2008): 336–87 (358–59), and Hadfield, *Life*, 266–68.

63. Hadfield, *Life*, 267.

64. “To the right honorable the Ladie Strange.” Dedicatory letter to Alice, née Spencer, prefacing *The Teares of the Muses*, in *Yale Spenser*, 268; cf. Spenser’s dedicatory letters to Alice’s sisters: Anne, Lady Compton and Mounteagle (*Mother Hubberds Tale*), in *Yale Spenser*, 334, and Elizabeth, Lady Carey (*Muiopotmos*), in *Yale Spenser*, 412.

65. Hadfield, *Life*, 266, citing “The Tresham Papers,” in *Reports on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, 8 vols. (London: HMC, 1901–13), 3:1–154 (136–37).

66. Hadfield, *Life*, 267.

67. The final version of *Ruines* must have been completed before the date of the poem’s entry into the Stationers Register in December 1590. It is possible, however, that the entire poem was composed as late as 1589–90. This is indeed what Spenser’s dedicatory epistle to Mary Herbert, which prefaces the poem in *Complaints*, suggests. Spenser speaks in this epistle of having “conceived this small Poeme” in response to promptings by “some frends of mine” since “my late cumming into England,” a probable reference to his visit to London in autumn 1589 to oversee publication of *The Faerie Queene* (*Yale Spenser*, 230–31 [230]). Spenser may have returned to Ireland by the end of May 1590, as Jean Brink suggests, but he was certainly in England again in July 1591, and Hadfield argues he may never have left England between October 1589 and July 1591. If so, then Spenser may well have “conceived” *Ruines* at any point between his “late cumming into England” in October 1589 and December 1590. Significantly, Spenser’s word “conceived” in his dedicatory epistle could be taken to imply that the entire poem was a product of 1589–90. See Jean R. Brink, “Who Fashioned Edmund Spenser? The Textual History of ‘Complaints,’” *Studies in Philology* 88 (1991): 153–68 (156–57); Hadfield, *Life*, 239 *passim*.

68. Matthew Paris, *The Life of Saint Alban*, trans. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Thelma S. Fenster, with William of St. Albans, *The Passion of Saint Alban*, trans. Thomas O’Donnell and Margaret Lamont (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2010), 36–39.

69. Lydgate, *Lyfe*, sig. N2r.

70. Mixing water with the communion wine was a common practice in the pre-Reformation English church, as it was in the Roman church more generally. It is still prescribed in the 1549 Prayer Book, although it disappears in later versions and was condemned as “monckery” by Elizabeth’s first archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, as his closing comments in John Joscelyn’s parallel text translation of Ælfric’s Easter homily on the Eucharist reflects. Ælfric’s *Testimonie* was published in the same year as Joscelyn’s edition of Gildas and for similar polemical purposes, both co-opted to help witness the existence in Britain of “protoprotestant”

beliefs in the period before the Norman Conquest. See Ælfric, *A Testimonie of Antiquitie, shewing the auncient faith in the Church of England touching the sacrament of the body and bloude of the Lord*, trans. John Joscelin (London: John Day, 1567), sig. i1r.

71. Lydgate, *Lyfe*, sigs. M2v–3r (M3r).

72. In *Summa theologiae* (1265–74), Aquinas notes that we mix water with sacramental wine in remembrance of the fact that blood and water had both flowed from Christ's side when pierced by Longinus's spear on the cross. See *Summa theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation*, ed. Thomas Gilby et al., 61 vols. (London: Blackfriars, 1964–81), 58 (1965): 3a.74, 6–8 (pp. 42–51, at 42–43).

73. See, for example, John N. King's focus on *The Shepheardes Calender*, in "Was Spenser a Puritan?," *Spenser Studies* 6 (1985): 1–13, and *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Hadfield's focus on Spenser's "Grindalian" connections within London, Cambridge, and Kent, in "Spenser and Religion—Yet Again," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 51, no. 1 (2011): 21–46; and my own attention to Spenser's metropolitan and continental influences, in "'Spenser's Dutch Uncles: The Family of Love and the Four Translations of *A Theatre for Worldlings*,'" in *Translation and the Book Trade in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jose Maria Perez Fernandez and Edward Wilson-Lee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 164–84.

74. Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559–1625* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982); Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560–1660*, ed. Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), ix–xx; Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8.

75. For Spenser's religious ruins, see King, *Spenser's Poetry*, 47–65; Maryclaire Moroney, "Spenser's Dissolution: Monasticism and Ruins in *The Faerie Queene* and *The View of the Present State of Ireland*," *Spenser Studies* 12 (1991; 1998): 105–32; Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), chap. 3.

76. See Joshua Phillips, "Monasticism and Idleness in Spenser's Late Poetry," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 54, no. 1 (2014): 59–79, who argues that Spenser is even sympathetic toward monasticism in this passage.

77. *Faerie Queene*, VI.xii.23.9; 24.4–5; 24.6; 25.1–6.

78. Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature*, 95, 93. For the Bower of Bliss and iconoclasm, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 157–92.